

Why sexuality breeds responsibility

MORAL CHOICES
A NEWSPAPER

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second of 16 articles on Moral Choices in Contemporary Society and is being used as the text for an Oakland University credit course. The class, led by Christopher R. Holliday of the philosophy department, meets at 9:30 a.m. Saturdays in the Birmingham Center for Continuing Education, 746 Purdy. Late enrollments will be accepted May 7 only. Copyright 1977 by the Regents of the University of California.)

By JEAN LIPMAN-BLUMEN

Most 20th century analysts forget they are not the inventors of the moral dilemmas surrounding sexuality. The issues of morality that infuse sexual behavior have always been with us.

Technology and changing values merely create the illusion that the current crop of problems is new and different.

Mass media's obsession with details of pre-, post-, extra-, intra- and intermarital sex, in pairs, trios, small groups or large crowds, falsely emphasizes their diversity and obscures their commonality. We lose sight of the important understanding that all forms of sexual behavior are linked by the same underlying moral issue: the relationship between intimacy and responsibility.

WHEN PROCREATION was seen as the essential rationale for sexual relationships, the responsibility bred by intimacy was apparent.

With advanced medical technology and forms of birth control, the non-procreative aspects of sex have become the major and often disproportionate focus of concern. Our interest is more readily titillated by details of the latest fads in sexual behavior than by the "heavy" subject of

Jean Lipman-Blumen is a senior research associate and director of the Women's Research Program at the National Institute of Education (NIE). She was previously on the faculties of University of California at Santa Cruz and Harvard. At Radcliffe Institute she directed a project on life plans of married women. The views here are her own.



responsibility. But the question of responsibility and intimacy barks at our heels.

IN ONE SENSE, we are never quite ready for intimacy. The human condition is one of polarity between essential separateness or uniqueness and union or communion with others. Because we are never totally "ready" for intimacy—never totally prepared to relinquish our separateness—the question of responsibility looms large.

Sexual union expresses the duality of human separateness and connectedness. It represents striving after confirmation of our uniqueness as an individual, at the same time that it reaffirms our loss of self in a larger cosmic process.

This is true with regard both to the immediate sexual act with our partners and to the new life that may result from such a union.

Sexual relationships, the physical epitome of intimacy, inevitably breed responsibility, whether or not we choose to recognize it.

Sexuality creates responsibility because our sense of ourselves as sexual beings—particularly sexually acceptable, attractive and adequate beings—is central to our human identity. And, it is the exposure of our essential being, our core meaning, that creates responsibility in ourselves and in the

individuals who would accept our offer of intimacy.

SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS involve exposing our most vulnerable selves to one another. Protecting the other person's vulnerable self from harm, humiliation, rejection and embarrassment is a serious responsibility. The degree to which we do this is one measure of our own humanity.

While we may be mature in years, sexual maturity is a long, complicated process not systematically linked to physiological and chronological development.

Unlike the social and intellectual dimensions of the self, which are involved in human interaction and growth from the day of birth, the sexual self in modern society usually is protected from deliberate and conscious development and experience at least until adolescence.

Perhaps our awareness of the disparity between the childlike state of our sexual being and experience and the sophistication of our intellectual, social, even political selves complicates the problem.

NOVELISTS FROM F. Scott Fitzgerald to J.D. Salinger have portrayed the anxiety of the young man's first sexual encounter.

It is a picture that arouses sympathy, horror and humor, because we recognize his "brand-newness," his raw vulnerability. It is this very vulnerability—both in women and men—that creates responsibility.

Often we are so concerned with self-protection that we fail to recognize the other person's equally great need. Opening oneself to another person, revealing an aspect of oneself that is at the center of one's identity, is an act fraught with both danger and great potential.

There is the danger of being diminished by rejection, the potential of being enhanced by confirmation and union.

The responsibility we assume for both the other person and ourselves can act as a heavy burden or as a source of great joy, growth and awareness, depending in part on the motivation behind sexual relationships. The feminists have been quick to see that the moral issue at the heart of sexual intimacy is not "if" but "why" we establish sexual relationships.

DO WE SEEK sexual relationships simply because we perceive the person as a sex object, someone who turns us on?

Does the relationship mean the creation of "convenience sex," not unrelated to "convenience foods" in an increasingly plastic society?

Does the relationship signify a conquest, a power or ego "trip"?

Do we enter sexual relationships because refusing may label us as unsophisticated, unliberated, repressed, unmanly, unwomanly?

Or do we engage in sexual relationships because we fear refusal will jeopardize other valued aspects of the relationship?

Do we do so because we sense that denial will damage the other person's sense of self?

Do we enter such relationships to transform ourselves and others? Do we seek sexual union to create new life or instill vitality in old lives? Do we enter sexual relationships in order to give or to take or to establish a balance between the two?

Very often, the emotional and intellectual intimacy that we seek with another person is absent, and we attempt to create it artificially through sexual intimacy. But when sexual intimacy stands alone, unintegrated with the development of knowing, caring and feeling, we face the "super-sensitization," the anonymity of sex.

THE NEW BUZZWORDS—"depersonalization" and "sex object"—bespeak our concern with protecting our sense of self. When our sexual identity is reduced to sexual functioning, replaceable bodily parts, we experience the anomie, the existential isolation that transforms sexual relationships into a parody of human existence.

Only the responsibility that we take for protecting one another's unique individuality and self in sexual relationships insures us against the tragic realization that our most central self is simply "another body," not a special unique being to another person.

Trust is an important component of responsibility. When we enter sexual relationships before we have exposed the nonsexual aspects of ourselves, it is impossible to guarantee responsibility for protecting this unknown, unique individuality of another person. And when one individual cannot hold out the promise of responsibility, the other individual cannot hold out the expectation of trust.

YET GETTING TO know another person takes time. Marathon self-revelation is no substitute for seeing an individual's personality reveal itself under different circumstances over time.

When we telescope the interpersonal aspect of knowing another person and entering a sexual relationship on the basis of "instant understanding," we cannot guarantee that we will truly like, respect, and be responsible for, this individual whom we shall know differently as time passes.

This disjunction between the physical intimacy and the interpersonal anonymity takes its toll in loneliness and despair.

The relationship between responsibility and intimacy is obviously very complex. The complexity arises from the interweaving of responsibility, trust, common self and other. The moral dilemmas posed by this relationship cannot be reduced or understood by separating the inseparable parts.

NEXT WEEK: The changing role of the family in our modern technological society.

Tech Hifi invites you to peak-unlimit, downward-expand, and autocorrelate your music system.

The Phase Linear 1000 is a remarkable signal processing device that allows you to restore much of the dynamic range lost during the recording process. At the same time, the Model 1000 reduces background noise (hiss and hum) to inaudible levels. Designed to be used



Phase Linear

with the tape monitor connections of any good component amplifier, the Phase Linear 1000 actually performs three functions simultaneously — and unobtrusively! The result is a significantly heightened sense of realism, with any program material, in any listening room.

First, the Phase Linear 1000 is a **PEAK UNLIMITER**. During the recording process, high level explosive transients are intentionally reduced to make the signal easier to record. Unfortunately, the exciting "feel" of live music is reduced at the same time. The Peak Unlimiter reverses this process, restoring much of the impact that's been lost.

Second, the Phase Linear 1000 is a **DOWNWARD EXPANDER**. Recording engineers often employ a technique known as "gain riding," which increases the volume level of quiet passages so the music doesn't get masked by the background noise. But the sense that some instruments are playing close to the listener while others are playing some distance away is compromised. The 1000 electronically senses the presence of gain riding and restores the volume relationships — and sense of space — present in the original program.

Finally, the Phase Linear 1000's **AUTOCORRELATOR** circuit distinguishes between music and background noise. The Autocorrelator removes up to 20 dB of this noise (without affecting sound quality), so you hear music produced from a silent background.

The Phase Linear 1000 adds an exciting element of realism to any good component system. Come in for a demonstration of all the musical relationships you've been missing. At Tech Hifi, we take your listening pleasure seriously.

Shop and Compare

Sansui 5050 receiver.....	\$179.
Pioneer 1250 receiver.....	\$499.
Sansui 771 receiver.....	\$249.
Sansui 331 receiver.....	\$ 99.
Mazda 6300 receiver.....	\$150.
Mazda 6100 turntable.....	\$ 75.
Mazda Imperial 5G sp. (pr.).....	\$ 99.
TEAC A2300S open-reel deck.....	\$219.
Technics 5760 receiver.....	\$469.
Technics 5160 receiver.....	\$169.
Advent Utility speakers (pr.).....	\$199.
Studio Design 46 speakers (pr.).....	\$149.
EPI 100 speakers (pr.).....	\$169.
B11C 960 turntable (complete).....	\$129.

Tech Hifi Takes Hifi Seriously.

3555 Plymouth Rd. (World Camera Bldg.), Livonia 525-7360 / 4528 N. Woodward Ave., Royal Oak 578-4433 / 125 Main St., Rochester 652-HIFI

In Michigan: Dearborn, Mt. Clemens, Detroit "The Bargain Center," East Detroit, Southgate, Ann Arbor and East Lansing. Stores also in New England, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and in Ohio.

For Mother's Day May 8th

\$1,000

\$1,600

\$325

\$250

\$200

\$250

\$250

\$200

\$200

\$200

\$200

\$200

\$200

\$200

\$200

\$200

\$200

\$200

\$200

\$200

\$200

\$200

\$200

\$200

\$200

\$200

\$200

\$200

\$200

\$200

\$200

Diamond earrings

Tiffany set

in white or yellow gold.

Screw-back or pierced.

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

\$125 \$250

Fredrick Jewelers

Hours: Mon. thru Sat. 10-5:30
Thurs. 10-9 p.m.
Appraisals by App.

160 West Main Street, Detroit, Michigan 48226



Get together... plan now for your family outdoor color portrait.

bill williams
STUDIO, INCORPORATED

1107 Crooks at Main • Royal Oak • 548-7660