

PRESS & MEDIA

*Sex Without Consequences*

"Sex in Primetime Television: 1979 Versus 1989" by Barry S. Sapolsky and Joseph O. Tabarlet, in *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* (Fall 1991), Broadcast Education Assn., 1771 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Every couch potato knows that primetime television is full of sex. How full? To find out, Sapolsky and Tabarlet, both professors of communication at Florida State University, scrutinized a week's worth of 1989 primetime TV. Along with a team of graduate students, they hunted for instances of touching, kissing, hugging, and intercourse as well as sexual violence and sexual references. All told, they found that sex comes up once every four minutes during primetime. (Curiously, however, frequency tails off after 10 P.M.) A 1979 study, by contrast, found one sexual act or reference every five minutes.

To justify all of this on-screen steam, the networks assert that they are only reflecting society's shifting values. Critics, however, say that networks lure audiences with sex to gain higher ratings and more

ad revenue. Indeed, according to Sapolsky and Tabarlet, in 1989 the number one rated network, NBC, had the most sexual content (44 percent of all incidents). The number two network, ABC, came in at 41 percent. In 1979, NBC had the least amount of sex and was in last place, and ABC, with the most sex, was number one.

What bothers Sapolsky and Tabarlet most, however, is what has *not* changed on TV. Although the incidence of (and public concern over) teen pregnancies and dangerous sexual diseases has jumped, in 1989 only a tiny fraction (4.4 percent) of the networks' sexual material touched upon such issues. AIDS went completely unmentioned during the week under study. Television's celebration of sex without consequences, the authors say, reflects neither reality nor good sense.

*Personals or Politics?*

"Hip Weeklies are Hot!" by Ed Avis, in *The Quill* (Jan.-Feb. 1992), P.O. Box 77, Greencastle, Ind. 46135-0077.

The nation's daily newspapers are reporting the economic recession in their headlines and feeling it in their bottom lines. Advertising revenues have been shrinking; several dailies have folded. Meanwhile, reports Avis, associate editor of the *Quill*, free "alternative" weeklies are thriving.

From Phoenix to Boston, the alternatives have targeted the lucrative 18- to 34-year-old market "by doing what alternatives do best: keeping a skeptical eye on the establishment... providing comprehensive arts and entertainment coverage, concentrating on local issues, and serving heavy doses of wit and sarcasm." They also have succeeded in matching their audience to a strong advertising base of small merchants. Classified ads are an important source of revenue (and reader interest), especially personal ads that many innovative weeklies have tied into telephone voice

Too short, too quiet, too... not cool, and not rich. Now you know what the catch is. But if you can look beyond those shortcomings, you would find a warm, wonderful, sincere, caring human being with lots of love to share. This SBM professional, 33, 5ft.6in., 140lbs., is seeking a SF, 21-35, who still believes in love and enjoys dancing, theatre, music and nature. ☎ 58315.

**ARE YOU A SINGLE FEMALE**, (black or white, 5-35, intelligent, affectionate, athletic, slender, non-smoking, perhaps a little shy, w a good sense of humor and no dependents) interested in developing a lasting, monogamous relationship? I am a tall, good-looking SWM (6ft.1in., 185lbs., blue eyes, salt and pepper hair, 45, athletic body, creative mind, financially secure w own business) who loves music—jazz, blues, classical as opposed to top-40 and rap—skiing in the winter, loafing by the water in summer, foreign films, ethnic cuisine, champagne, reading, romance, quiet intimate evenings. ☎ 58345.

SBM, 39, businessman, educated, 5ft.9in., very handsome, very healthy, open-minded, enjoys biking, travel, tennis, progressive rock and jazz, classical music, seeking SF, 25-39, with similar interests for friendship, travel and whatever develops. ☎ 59182.

3, no children, successful professional, traditional values, many interests. '8-28 (any...)

ISO SBF. SWM, blue eyes, a would like to be married and... You're at least 5'10" a non-smoker who to music.

Sensitive Latin SWM, mantic, dependable ar woman, 20-30, carin-ship or relationship.

WM 41, 5ft. 10in., spectacled, interested in plump, hair. Pursue should at least be of nationality.

SBM, twenty, 5ft.11in., omore at local univer likes lunch-hour beer guitar/piano rent event. SBF, 18-25, games peop, druggies plea.

SWM, mid '30s, music (rock, tr...

*In search of profits: Personal ads are a big money-maker for alternative newspapers.*

mail systems, allowing lonely hearts to exchange messages by calling a "900" number (and paying 95 cents per minute). Now some dailies are attempting to incorporate facets of the alternatives' formula, such as 900 number personals, and at least one daily, the *Scranton Times*, has purchased its own alternative.

Magazine-length investigative articles are "the real heart, the real soul of an alternative paper," asserts Bruce Schimmel, the *Philadelphia City Paper's* editor. Coverage in the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, for example, prompted a successful proposition to limit city development; in many cities the alternative press led the way in reporting the spread of AIDS. The alternatives also act as watchdog of the

mainstream media. "Their press column is a must-read," *Washington Post* media reporter Howard Kurtz says of the alternative *Washington City Paper*.

Yet even among alternative journalists there is no consensus on what makes weeklies go. Jack Shafer, editor of the *Washington City Paper*, takes a skeptical view—papers become financially successful, he says, then concentrate on editorial quality. Readers pay more attention to the personals than to the muckrakers. "News-papers," asserts Shafer, "are advertising flyers with a story written on the back." Avis disagrees, arguing that it is precisely the weeklies' anti-establishment character that will enable them to survive the inevitable ad-poaching of the dailies.

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

### *God Belongs In Public Life*

"A New Order of Religious Freedom" by Richard John Neuhaus, in *First Things* (Feb. 1992), Inst. on Religion and Public Life, 156 Fifth Ave., Ste. 400, New York, N.Y. 10010.

Does the constitutional separation of church and state require that religion have no place in public life? Not at all, asserts Neuhaus, editor-in-chief of *First Things*. In a democracy, opinions should not be disqualified from the public realm for being religiously inspired, any more than they should be for being founded on atheism or psychoanalysis. "Ours is not a secular form of government, if by 'secular' is meant indifference or hostility to opinions that are thought to be religious in nature," Neuhaus says. "The civil government is as secular as are the people from whom it derives its democratic legitimacy. No more, no less."

In recent decades, he contends, some scholars and jurists have turned the First Amendment's religion clause ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . .") on its head. "One gets the distinct impression from [them] that no-establishment is the end to which free

exercise is something of a nuisance." He cites the statement of Laurence Tribe in *American Constitutional Law* (1978) that there is a "zone which the free exercise clause carves out of the establishment clause for permissible accommodation of religious interests."

But it is free exercise—not the no-establishment provision—that takes precedence, Neuhaus maintains. "Why on earth should we need a no-establishment provision? The answer is that no-establishment is required to protect the rights of those who might dissent from whatever religion is established. In other words, no-establishment is required for free exercise." Therefore, he concludes, any interpretation of the no-establishment provision that hinders free exercise of religion is a misinterpretation.

That is not to say that anything done in the name of religion should be permitted. "Sometimes—reluctantly, and in cases of supreme and overriding public neces-