

PREMARITAL SEXUAL STANDARDS

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As your experience has probably told you, sexual standards in the U.S. today are a mess. It is really hard for all of us to decide how to behave. Ira Reiss had said, "In our present state of affairs, the situation is such that, no matter which standard our young people abide by, there will likely be a goodly amount of conflict connected with it." The old adage "you're damned if you do and damned if you don't" really applies. Still we must all make decisions about what we will do and with whom. I think that decision must be based on two things. First we need to accurately picture as possible of what is happening around us in order to figure out what the outcome of our behavior is likely to be. Also we need to know what facets of the folklore knowledge we have about sex have been proven false. Second and most importantly we need to tune in to our own feelings, to find out what we believe in, and then to act unashamedly according to that belief. The second part of the decision making process is obviously an individual act. I'm going to try to deal with some of the first part by outlining some of the ideas of prominent sexologists.

In order to make discussion and study easier, Ira Reiss has divided the premarital sexual standards into four categories. The first is a single standard of abstinence. This is the formal code espoused by the church, the law and most parents. It says that premarital intercourse is wrong for both males and females. The second is the double standard. This is the informal code allowed by the church, the law and parents. It says that premarital intercourse is acceptable for the male but totally unacceptable for the female. A subset of this standard which Reiss labels the transitional double standard says that premarital coitus is fine for men and may be acceptable for women who are engaged. As the followers of the double standard grow up they often come to accept the transitional double standard. The third standard is called permissiveness with affection. This is a single standard which says that both men and women can engage in premarital coitus if affection is present. There are two subsets of this standard. One is that intercourse is acceptable if strong affection is present and the other is that it is acceptable if love is present. Obviously this can be ambiguous because there is a continuum between affection and love, and the feeling is defined by the participants. The fourth standard is called permissiveness without affection. This is a single standard and says that coitus is acceptable for both sexes if both partners want it. I'm going to discuss some of the reasons for each standard, the problems caused by it and the extent to which it is followed.

ABSTINENCE: This standard is still the most common in terms of belief if not in terms of behavior. However the definition of abstinence has changed

during this century. Where formerly mild kissing with a fiance or with someone you loved was countinenced, today abstinence can be stretched to include pretty heavy petting with any date. In other words, abstinence now means simply refraining from coitus. This new definition has given rise to a new term, "technical virgin." A woman may enter marriage with a great deal of sexual experience but still be a virgin technically because her vagina has not been penetrated by a penis. In fact many women define virginity as one step beyond what they have done. Thus there are women who think of themselves as virgins if penetration has not been complete. After they experience complete penetration, they consider themselves virgins as long as the male does not ejaculate inside them. Objectively this is obviously ridiculous, but we should remember that it is the social pressure for female virginity that causes this madness. The system which says "be sexy, advertise your sexuality, but don't act upon it" is crazy, not the woman.

The following information from Kinsey's study show what sexual behavior is experienced by virginal women born after 1910 who had kissed: 3

- 74% deep kissing
- 72% breast manipulation
- 32% oral stimulation of the breasts
- 36% received masturbation
- 24% performed masturbation
- 17% contact between bare genitals
- 3% received oral-genital contact
- 2% performed oral-genital contact

People who abstain from coitus suffer many problems besides just fighting to restrain their desires. As you can see from the above statistics, most of them do seek sexual release through various petting techniques. If you do this you have probably been confronted by the many myths of the dangers of petting. Albert Ellis insists there is virtually no truth in the stories that "petting for its own sake or petting to orgasm is abnormal, perverted, unhealthy, immature, frustrating, or frigidizing."⁴

The arguments against petting:

HEALTH: The medical objections generally refer to prolonged petting without orgasm. Only rarely does such tension cause health problems and it will probably only be a difficulty for people who are given to psychosomatic ailments. However,

the pelvic congestion which results from excitement may remain for a day and this can be uncomfortable and lead to depression. Also the woman may find that she has an exceptionally heavy discharge because her vagina has continued to secrete lubricating fluid. The cure for both of these problems is masturbation. You might also consider with your partner the possibility of petting to mutual orgasm.

NORMALITY: Petting is thoroughly normal and certainly not neurotic. It can be particularly good for avoiding some of the difficulties of coitus--like pregnancy. Even when coitus is available there are reasons for many normal people to prefer petting to orgasm over coitus. Both male and female partners may be overstimulated by coitus so that they reach orgasm too fast and don't get as much overall pleasure. Or, both sexes may be understimulated in intercourse and so require extra-coital techniques to satisfy them. This is particularly true of women, many of whom do not have orgasm during intercourse or have a better orgasm through manipulation.

MATURITY: It was once believed that having extra-coital orgasm was a stage of sexual development before the stage in which coital orgasm was "achieved." Women were made to believe that a "clitoral orgasm" (orgasm through manipulation of the clitoris) was immature and those who reached orgasm this way were immature, neurotic and in need of psychological treatment. The proper, mature orgasm was the "vaginal orgasm" (orgasm in coitus). Thanks to Freud and the male idea that women must enjoy the sex practices that males enjoy, many women have been really messed up. In fact, some women due to the psychological coercion of these beliefs underwent operations to move their clitorises closer to the opening of the vagina.⁵ Thus since their clitorises received more direct stimulation they had "vaginal orgasm." Masters and Johnson found out that there is no physical difference between coital and extra-coital orgasm. Unfortunately the myth has permeated our thinking and has left us psychologically unprepared to take an unprejudiced appraisal of the comparative satisfaction gained through coitus and manipulation. Women still are pressured both internally and externally to have coital orgasms. Perhaps we can be reassured by Ellis' statement:

As far as can be presently determined, most men and women experience quite the same kind of orgasm through petting as they do through copulation--providing that they do not have some significant psychological prejudices in favor of one of these two kinds of sex acts.⁷

In other words, as long as you aren't hung up on coitus, your petting orgasms should be just as satisfying.

FRUSTRATION: I think this is one of the most infuriating arguments. It is used by people who care about their own sexual satisfaction more than they care about the person they are arguing with. This argument may come from either sex, but it is most likely to come from the male. The line that men put forth usually involves such epithets as cock teaser and prick teaser. Due to a woman's socialization to be submissive and to always try to please men, these accusations have a strong psychological effect. Thus the woman is torn between two sets of guilt feelings--one her internalized standard of abstinence and the other her feelings about being decent to another person or about pleasing that male so he will continue to date her. Of course when she is involved in the situation she can't see that while she is trying to be decent to him, he is being anything but decent to her. In her mind she has to deal with choosing between being a whore and a cock teaser and the decision is often made under pressure. This line plays one set of guilt feelings and fears off against another--a pretty sick way of using a person's feelings to use her.

Women are socially conditioned to concentrate on the emotional aspects of physical relationships so they are likely to get some release of tension even if petting is not continued to orgasm. This is particularly true of the inexperienced woman. However, if an experienced woman, a woman who is used to coitus, falls in with a man whose standard is abstinence she may use some pretty dastardly psychological weapons in an effort to pressure him into intercourse. The idea behind cock teaser is not available to her since our society has always considered women's pleasure to be unimportant. But she can attack his masculinity which is attacking one of the central cores of his ego. She can accuse him of not being a "real man" because "real men" want all the sex they can get. Or she can accuse him of being homosexual, which is something that many men fear. By attacking his self concept she hopes to scare him into proving himself by having intercourse with her. Obviously this is pretty sick. It is also sad that those two ideas exist. Both the idea of men having to prove themselves through their sexual "accomplishments" and the idea that there is something wrong with homosexual love are cultural myths that mess up men's humanity.

So far I've talked about frustration due to coital abstinence. Obviously both partners are likely to be frustrated if petting is not carried to orgasm. But if both partners do have orgasms, there is no reason they should be frustrated. We are all victims of what Ellis calls the "Great American Coital Myth" which is that coitus is absolutely necessary and is the only means to gain sexual

satisfaction. If a couple, one of whom believes in abstinence, could understand and accept this -- that coitus is not the end-all and be-all -- they could probably come to a mutually satisfactory understanding regarding their sexual behavior.

FRIGIDITY AND IMPOTENCE: This is perhaps the most frightening argument. If petting is engaged in often, for extended periods of time, and always without orgasm, there is some chance that either partner will suffer psychological frigidity or impotence. And of course it is likely that both partners will obtain less enjoyment than they would if they had orgasms. The problem can easily be avoided by carrying petting to the point of mutual orgasm.

Now for the arguments in favor of petting. Many authorities see petting as a highly desirable behavior. Alex Comfort, a British sexologist, thinks that not only should we sanction petting, but we should actively encourage it. His argument is that it provides the sexual release that people need without the dangers often associated with coitus. Robert A. Harper believes that it is almost a "cultural necessity." He says,

Such education and practical experiences in love expression are crucially needed by youth because of the tendency in Western society to induce drastic inhibition of erotic feelings in the period from infancy through puberty. Many boys and girls in America grow up not only with strong sanctions against the direct and indirect feelings of affection, but with outright distrust and hostility toward members of the other sex.

He feels that the physical intimacy of petting will help to diminish the inhibitions against affection. He also supports premarital petting as a learning process which will help to avoid wedding night rape. That is, individuals are given time to develop their sexuality, their knowledge of the opposite sex, and their sexual techniques gradually and under circumstances in which they need not be embarrassed by lack of perfection.

DOUBLE STANDARD : This is the most prevalent standard in America today. Informally the institutions which control our mores sanction it. The standard is female abstinence and male indulgence. The indulging male is expected to feel pride in proving his masculinity, some guilt for "sinning," and an opinion of his partner which ranges from disrespect to disgust. This last reaction

is a method for transferring guilt feelings from the male who has done something wrong in his own mind to the female, who is "bad." Thus the deed becomes the woman's fault.

There are several rationalizations with which the adherents of this standard try to justify the sexual discrimination involved in it. Supposedly the male has such a strong sex drive that he "can't live without sex." This is obvious not since many men have lived for quite some time in a celibate state. In fact you might have noticed that most Popes manage to live to be quite old. In the same vein, it is assumed that a woman's sex drive is less than a male's. Recent evidence indicates that the reverse might be the case. Most women are multiorgasmic and so they want more orgasms than men do. Also as men age their desire decreases, while that of women does not. So while younger men may desire intercourse more often than their partners, older women are likely to want it more often than their partners. The Kinsey researchers indicated that this was probably due to a lessening of inhibitions in women. Thus we can assume that younger women would want intercourse more often if they had not been inhibited by society's teachings. Nonetheless, it is illogical to deny some people a thing because they need less of it than others. Try applying this standard to food. Some people eat less food than others so they shouldn't be allowed to have food? Another argument is that women should abstain because they face greater risks, such as pregnancy. With modern contraceptive methods the risk of pregnancy is minimized. Furthermore, a woman need not carry an unwanted pregnancy to term.

None of these reasons explain why women should be restricted and men should be free. A more realistic look at the roots of the double standard leads one directly to definitions of women as inferior beings and as property. The early civilizations of the West restricted female sexual behavior in order to avoid inheritance disputes. This reason was soon transferred into the idea that women were the property of men. A woman's father preserved her untouched so that her husband received unspoiled goods. An Appalachian ballad says:
Oh, hard is the fortune of all womankind,
She's always controlled, she's always confined,
Controlled by her parents until she's a wife,
A slave to her husband the rest of her life.

If it seems impossible to you that a woman could be considered as property, check out the tenth commandment where women are listed with such other important property as houses and sows. Or check the foot of our word family. It comes from the Latin familia which meant household servants. Given an economic demand for female chastity, monogamous pride and jealousy soon developed. A man who couldn't restrict the women in his custody

would lose face and of course the women would bear the brunt of his ego wound.

These conceptions of women as inferior beings and as property are part of what Ellis calls our sexual fascism. Fascist attitudes are arbitrary and scientifically groundless definitions of certain groups of people as inferior. We are all familiar with the fascism of Hitler's attitude toward Jews and with the fascism of many whites' definition of Blacks; however, we tend to be unaware of this society's fascist definitions of women. Like Jews and Blacks, women are considered "second class citizens whose main role should be that of catering to males and to the preservation of the race, rather than that of being personalities in their own right."¹³ Sexual fascism is still very strong in our society. Ellis asserts, "Although relatively few Americans could be legitimately labelled as political or economic fascists today, probably the great majority are sex fascists. What is perhaps even more surprising: the sex fascists tend, in some respects to be just as prevalent among the politico-economic liberal groups as they do among the social bigots and reactionaries."¹⁴

The following are some of the fascist ideas contained in the double standard: 1) women can easily get along with less sex than men can, 2) it's not too important if they don't have orgasms, 3) when they do they should do it as men do -- in coitus, 4) fellatio (oral stimulation of the male genitals by the woman) is great, but no "real" man would ever engage in cunnilingus (oral stimulation of the female genitals by the man), 5) women should remain virgins while men should get as much experience as is possible before marriage, 6) it's far greater an offense for a woman to have a child out of wedlock than for a male to father one, and 7) adultery is a heinous offense against morality when committed by a woman, but it is quite natural for a man.¹⁵

A subset of the double standard is the transitional double standard. This is still a double standard and discriminates against women, but it does allow them greater freedom. The adherents of this standard believe that sex is all right for a man anytime and that it may be all right for a woman if she is involved in a very serious relationship, preferably a relationship which is institutionalized by engagement. It often happens that those who have a double standard during high school will become more liberal as they mature, and will come to hold views that fall within the transitional double standard. Reiss sees this standard as transitional in terms of societal trends and also in terms of individual development. He believes that the sexual standards of society are moving gradually away from the double standard and toward a single standard of permissiveness with affection.¹⁶ In the case of the individual, relationships often progress from kissing during the early teens through

various stages of petting in the later teens to coitus during the college years. The changes in behavior are accompanied by changes in belief. A common pattern of change is this: both sexes kiss and believe in abstinence → males have intercourse, but "good girls" only pet → both sexes accept the double standard → both sexes have intercourse and accept the transitional double standard. The next step is to believe in and follow a single standard. Many people do take this step at least partially, but almost no one is able to rid himself completely of all the ramifications of the double standard. That is, women are free to enjoy sex without being classified as "bad", but many double standard attitudes persist in feelings about woman initiating sex or asking their partners to do something specific during sex play, in feelings about promiscuity, in feelings about women submitting or giving pleasure rather than getting pleasure from sex, in feelings about adultery, etc.

PERMISSIVENESS WITH AFFECTION: This standard gives men and women equal freedom and responsibility in deciding to enter premarital coital relationships. Two subsets of this standard may be distinguished -- that group which requires the affection to be defined as love and that group which feels content with feelings of strong affection.

In several important ways this code is better integrated with other values held by society than is the double standard. Society supposedly believes in equality and values respect and affection in relationships. Although the society as a whole is a long way from practicing sexual equality, there is certainly some discomfort over the injustice of sexual discrimination against women. As was noted, the double standard male does not respect the women he has sex with. Since in general we value respect highly and desire it in all of our associations, the double standard male is likely to feel some conflict and guilt because his behavior and attitudes lead to relationships without respect. Affection, which is very important to a society like ours in which spouses are chosen on the basis of love, is a dominant value in the permissiveness with affection standard and is absent from the double standard. However, the permissiveness with affection standard does conflict with some of society's other values. The idea and practice of female subordination is thwarted by this standard, and orthodox religions which preach abstinence for both sexes (while tacitly condoning the double standard) are opposed to this standard.

Reiss suggests that some general changes in society have brought us to the state where the permissiveness with affection standard is increasingly better integrated with society's other values. Industrialization caused a movement to cities where the individual had greater freedom of action due to his anonymity and where the patriarchal family system, which was one of the institutions which had restrained sexual behavior before, was

weakened. The rise of science weakened the hold of religion, another of the institutions which had opposed sexuality. As pragmatism and rational thought were applied to sex, irrational fears about the evil of the flesh were calmed. Also, a general rise in the level of education brought these ideas to the common people. As life became less physically rugged and work became less satisfying, a belief in pleasure arose in which sex was a very important element. Improvement of the status of women allowed them more sexual freedom and some of the most discriminatory attitudes were discarded as unjust. Finally a belief in romance as the basis for marriage, made it possible for the people involved to set their own standard for courtship procedures. They needed a standard which was not divisive like the double standard, but would bring the male and female together. This meant that women needed to stop using their virginity as bait and that men needed to stop using a line to seduce women. It also meant that a standard was needed in which women weren't required to fight men sexually.

There are of course many reasons both pro and con for engaging in coitus. Reiss and Ellis have compiled fairly extensive lists of these. The points that follow are basically a synopsis of their discussions:¹⁹

REASONS FOR ABSTAINING FROM COITUS

1) Pregnancy is of course the most often cited, oldest, and stalest reason. Modern contraceptives can eliminate this fear. Using contraceptives does require some thought and some honesty with yourself about what you intend to do. The various standards will have an effect on whether proper precautions are taken. A double standard male is apt to care little about the possible consequences for the woman. If he does, he may feel that she deserves to be punished for being "a bad girl." Also a woman who believes in female chastity and is breaking her standard may have a subconscious desire to be punished. Thus chances of honest self-appraisal leading to adequate precautions are slim for this group. The permissiveness with affection people, on the other hand, are likely to use contraceptives and to use them consistently because they have stable relationships based on mutual concern and mutual respect. These people may also become careless when they think they are so close to marriage that it doesn't matter or when they are over-confident and think that it "couldn't happen to me." The permissiveness without affection people are also likely to take adequate precautions because respect is present since the standard applies to both sexes. The people who have this standard are usually pretty sophisticated, and the basic idea of the standard is to obtain the maximum amount of pleasure for both people.

2) VD is another often cited reason for opposing pre-marital sex activity. Ellis says, "With the proper use of prophylactic devices, on the one hand, and modern antibiotics

on the other, the informed person who engages in pre-marital sex activity today has an infinitesimally small chance of suffering severely from a venereal infection."¹⁹ This means that you should be well-informed about VD, something that seems to be hard for most of us to do. We have some kind of block against finding out about VD because it is so frightening and so "dirty." If it seems absolutely necessary to have intercourse with a person who has VD or if you are unsure about the person, a rubber will lessen your chances of being infected. It is useful I think when considering the possibility of VD as a reason for abstaining from premarital sexual contacts, to remember that a marriage certificate is not a prophylactic. If we are genuinely concerned about VD, I think we should concentrate on eradicating it, not on using it as a sword to hang over unmarried people's heads. Again, adherents of different standards run different risks. The double standard male is in the most danger of contracting VD, because he has so many partners and most of them are not people he respects. The permissiveness with and without affection people have much less chance of contracting VD for the same reasons that they are safer from unwanted pregnancies.

3) Horrendous, all-consuming guilt feelings are often expected to follow indulgence, mostly for the woman. Since most educated and informed people don't consider sex sinful, there seems to be no rational reason for suffering from guilt. In fact most people who are engaging in sexual activity don't feel any guilt. In Kinsey's study 69% of the women who were still unmarried said they had absolutely no regret over having pre-marital sexual intercourse and 77% of the women who were married at the time of the survey expressed no regret.²⁰ It comes down to the fact that if you are acting on your beliefs you aren't going to feel guilty. It seems to be the people who have abstained or who are trying to convince others to abstain who see guilt as a huge factor. Most people who try premarital sex find that that bugaboo guilt that they've been cautioned about just isn't there.²¹ Even if initial pangs of guilt are felt, they disappear as a person continues to enjoy sexual intercourse. The situation which is most difficult, most guilt producing, is that in which a person tries to change his/her standard too fast. That makes sense. A strong abstinence believer who has never done anything but light kissing and who suddenly makes love is going to have a whale of a lot of adjusting to do in a very short time.

4) Worries about loss of reputation spring form the same source that guilt does. Society supposedly condemns premarital sex and so engaging in premarital sex should cause social condemnation. Today standards are so confused that fears about one's reputation (for both male and female) could work either way. Sexual activity is as likely to work for you as against you in the esteem of your peers. Women who believe in and practice abstinence have the security of knowing that double-standard

males will respect them. They also have the security of knowing that their virginity is a saleable commodity, one which makes them desirable marriage partners for double standard males. However, they will get neither the respect nor the security of being particularly desirable from single-standard males. Even with double-standard males, the level of condemnation for pre-marital intercourse drops as the amount of affection rises. The adherents of the permissiveness with affection standard get no condemnation from within their group and are not likely to get very much from outside because outsiders are not likely to know about their relationships (it is the double standard male who needs to brag about his exploits or smear the reputation of his partner) and as I have said, this standard is fairly well integrated with other social values. The permissiveness without affection standard people also receive no condemnation from inside the group. However, outsiders are more likely to condemn them. Their attitude is just too much for our Puritan heritage. Mobility means a woman can change her reputation. She can lose her virginity in one town and find it again in another town. That is to say, she can have a "bad" reputation in one town and a "good" reputation in another. In the larger towns you don't even have to leave. You can engage in light petting with your double standard boyfriend and be considered a "good girl." Then you can have intercourse with an out-of-town guy or a guy from another neighborhood and the people around you will still consider you a "good girl." Furthermore, depending on the standard of the out-of-town guys, you can have varying reputations with them. Say the guy has a double standard, then to him you're a "bad girl." On the other hand if he believes in a single standard, to him you're a "good girl." So the problem of reputation seems to boil down to the fact that you need friends and sexual partners who have the same standards that you have. This may not be so easy because so many people are unwilling to talk to others about sex or honestly state their attitudes when they do talk about it.

5) Frigidity and impotence were supposed to be the result of starting to have sex too early. The theory was that the sooner you start the sooner you'll run out. Potency isn't like money, however. Kinsey, Masters and Johnson and others who have done research on the sexual capacity of older men and women have found that it wanes in the 50's through 90's but does not disappear. Masters and Johnson stress that regular sex is necessary to maintain the ability.

Kinsey's data showed that the males who began early generally lasted longest. The best way to ensure potency in later life is through regular sexual activity and the worst way is through abstinence.

6) Supposedly if you engage in sexual intercourse and then break up, the pain will be unbearable. The feeling is that you have shared so much or given so much that you can't stand

having that relationship denied. Of course breaking up any important relationship hurts, whether the relationship has been sexual or not. Furthermore this hurt can be a positive thing because it is an integral part of emotional growth and development.

7) Fears about being exploited often play a part in people's fears of premarital sex. While this does occur when people are dishonest, it is not the fault of the sex, but the fault of exploitive attitudes and dishonesty. In fact, "the more open, honest and frequent premarital intercourse tends to become, the less does it remain potentially exploitive."²³ Statistically this is what is happening. Kinsey's data showed that 87% of the women in his sample who were married at the time of the survey married men that they had had premarital intercourse with.²⁴ That certainly indicates that the relationships are person-centered rather than exploitive. This situation represents a change from the behavior of people who were born before 1900. In comparing statistics on men who were born between 1890-1900 with statistics on men who were born between 1900-1910, it was found that only $\frac{1}{2}$ as many of the second group had intercourse only with people they wouldn't marry and 4 times as many of the second group had intercourse only with their fiancées.²⁵ This change parallels the change from the exploitive double standard to the equalitarian permissiveness with affection standard.

8) It is charged that premarital sex ruins family life. Evidence indicates the opposite. People who have had premarital sex tend to be more relaxed in their marriage and in raising their kids. If premarital sex did ruin family life, the family should have disappeared a long time ago, because in almost all times and places men have pretty freely indulged.

9) It is argued that premarital intercourse leads to sex without love. Many of the most famous love affairs in history have been outside of marriage. In fact, Ellis sees virginity as the true enemy of love because it often causes deep-seated hostility toward others, an inability to give of oneself fully and a habit of denying your own desires. "Sex without love, moreover, is hardly a heinous crime, and appears to be quite delightful and to add immeasurably to the lives of literally millions of individuals."²⁶

10) Premarital sex is depicted as being pretty icky anyhow. People imagine that it is done quickly in sordid surroundings with the fear of discovery added to other fears. Most couples are able to fix it so that chances of discovery are practically nonexistent. Actually conditions are usually just as good as those in marriage. In fact, due to the conditions the experience may be more romantic and exciting than it is in marriage.

11) Often one or both partners have changed their convictions in the process of becoming involved and as a result,

some people say, the more liberal partner lacks respect for the convictions of the less liberal partner. In a non-exploitive situation it is reasonable to assume that people can and do discuss their convictions with one another, and that in the course of the discussion and growth, convictions are apt to be altered. Ellis brings up the point that here as in many other attitudes about sex, we make assumptions about behavior and interpersonal reactions that aren't applicable to other areas. I'm sure none of us would feel it was immoral or wrong to argue politics, so why should it be wrong to argue ideas about sex.

12) Another argument is that the people who engage in premarital sex are getting the pleasure without the responsibility of marriage. They're getting something for nothing. People with platonic relationships or people who play tennis together get pleasure too, and we don't expect them to get married. This is an example of the reasoning behind sexual attitudes being inapplicable to other areas. Furthermore this argument makes the assumption that to be a good citizen, a responsible adult, one must get married. That may not be the case.

13) It is often believed that people who engage in premarital sex will automatically be adulterous. This has not been proved. In fact, premarital intercourse may increase faithfulness. When people have not limited themselves to one partner, they are less likely to be haunted by fears that they are missing something. They are also more likely to be sure of sexual satisfaction with a partner before they marry. In contrast the promiscuous virgin (the person who has guarded his/her virginity but who has petted extensively with many partners) is unlikely to have learned to value or to be able to practice sexual fidelity. This person is much more likely to be adulterous than the majority of people who have engaged in premarital coitus. Furthermore some couples do not disapprove of adultery and find it is not harmful to their marriages.

14) If you marry a person who you know has had premarital relationships you will always be suspicious that he/ she will have extramarital relationships. Ellis suggests that if you really suspect your partner of adultery just on the basis of premarital sexual behavior, and not on any other evidence, you need to see a psychiatrist.

15) Some people say that premarital sex will lead to marital unhappiness. In fact, clinical evidence tends to show that people who have premarital sex generally make a more satisfactory sexual adjustment in marriage than do those who have abstained. The habits of behavior and thought necessary to inhibit sexuality before marriage makes it difficult to respond sexually after marriage: "When there are long years of abstinence and restraint and an avoidance of physical contacts and emotional responses before marriage, acquired inhibitions may do such damage to the capacity to respond that it may take

some people say, the more liberal they are, the more they respect for the years to get rid of them after marriage, if indeed they are ever dissipated."

16) If premarital sex were accepted, general promiscuity would follow. The definition of the word is kind of a problem here. Actual promiscuity is almost nonexistent. The only cases of real promiscuity, where a person really is indiscriminate about his partners, are caused by emotional problems, not sexual standards. The people who make this allegation use the word promiscuous in another sense. It means premarital sex to them. With this definition their allegation is obviously correct, although a bit redundant.

17) Finally some people fear that if premarital sex were considered OK, nobody would get married. We can't really tell. Freedom to change partners without having to go to court might make affairs more attractive than marriage. On the other hand a person might learn through affairs that the benefits of marriage are worth the inconveniences. As far as present behavior goes, considerably more premarital intercourse occurs this century than did last century and marriage still seems to be a booming business. In fact, the average age at marriage is decreasing. It seems to me that we should be interested in people, in what makes them happiest, in what works best for them, rather than in preserving the institution of marriage at all cost. If people don't want marriage, it shouldn't be crammed down their throats; but if they do, they should be able to have it. At any rate the people should be the deciding factor on the existence of the institution.

REASONS FOR PREMARITAL INTERCOURSE

1) Sexual release. Most people need some regular sexual outlet to maintain maximum health, happiness and efficient functioning. Reiss says, "It is undeniable that most people who participate in premarital coitus feel the satisfaction of releasing nervous energy and of achieving certain pleasurable activities. This release often enables a person to carry on in other areas of life in a more relaxed and regulated fashion."

2) Psychic release. Many who abstain are beset with serious psychosexual strain and conflict, and tend to be obsessed with sexual thoughts and feelings.³⁰

3) Emotional satisfaction. People usually gain through intercourse a strengthened love, and the long range personality effects of feeling secure, and warm with another human being. Given the terrifying aloneness and alienation most of us feel today, this is a tremendously important reason and may make premarital intercourse a necessity for some people.

4) Sexual competence. Exposure is one way to prevent

psychological frigidity and impotence. The more a person makes love, the more relaxed a person becomes and the more enjoyable the intercourse becomes.

5) Enhances self-esteem. In order to feel that you are alive, you need to take risks with other people. "Confirmed male and female virgins in our culture usually dislike themselves immensely, knowing that they do not have the guts to live."²⁹

6) Need for adventure. Since there are few remaining frontiers to explore, man needs increased sensory, esthetic, and emotional experience to fight feelings of nothingness.

7) Improves marital selection. It is generally accepted that sexual intimacy and psychological intimacy intertwine, so that each can deepen the other. Thus people who become sexually intimate are likely to be able to get to know each other better and so be able to make a better and more informed choice of a marriage partner.

8) Allows people to wait until they are ready for marriage. One of the reasons that people rush into marriage is that "they just can't hold it back any longer." This leads to marriages which are based on nothing more than sexual desire, hardly a lasting basis for a relationship. In fact, that is what those people who think that marriage will disappear if premarital sex is allowed are basing their ideas on. While they scream "love" at the top of their lungs, they really think people get married out of a pressing sexual need.

9) Lessen discrimination against women. "The maintenance of premarital virginity, particularly among females, inevitably leads to a double standard of sex morality and to a fascistic-type discrimination against equal rights for women."³¹

10) Jealousy. With general acceptance of premarital sex the pathological jealousy which is in part caused by viewing one's mate as one's exclusive property would certainly be decreased. As long as women save themselves for their husbands, men will have a property hang-up about their virginity. A man needs to be the sole owner of his property, he thinks, so he gets jealous if he thinks anybody else has shared his possession.

12) Time. Just think of all that time and energy that is wasted because people are trying to find either direct sexual satisfaction and have to fight so many obstacles. Instead they could use their time constructively and enjoy themselves.

13) Avoid discrimination against the unmarried. There are people who either can't or shouldn't marry, perhaps temporarily, perhaps for life. These people are denied normal sex lives which is unfair and unpleasant for them.

14) Many people need sexual variety at least sometime during their lives. It seems most practical and least destructive to meet this need through premarital affairs.

15) We'd finally get something constructive done about abortion, illegitimacy and VD. "It is by combatting premarital affairs that we fruitlessly employ efforts that could much better be spent in eliminating certain dangers which, almost entirely because of puritan bolstering, are still connected with such affairs."

16) Reduce sex offenses. Most sex offenders are overly-inhibited, constricted types with little heterosexual experience. If this experience were open to them both because it was acceptable and because they hadn't learned to be repressive, they would be unlikely to engage in criminal sexual activities.

17) Marital sexual adjustment. Virginity definitely seems to be inimical to women's sexual enjoyment in marriage. Of women who had never had orgasm before marriage, 44% didn't have orgasm during the first year and after 10 years of marriage one in four still hadn't. Of those who had over 25 coital orgasms before marriage, only 3% didn't have orgasm during the first year.³³ Most authorities think that this is caused by the inhibition needed to retain virginity which is ingrained in women during their socialization; and by the loss of the ability to enjoy sex due to saving oneself. Society's standards are so messed around that they ask for a positive miracle in a woman. Before she is married she must be virgin and pure and sexually provocative. She must dress, walk and act in a sexual manner and at the same time deny any sexual impulses she might have. Then she gets married and she is suddenly supposed to be a good sexual partner, comfortable with sex and skilled at making love.

18) Sex is fun.

PERMISSIVENESS WITHOUT AFFECTION. This standard says that intercourse is acceptable for both sexes provided that both partners want it. It has fewer adherents than the other standards, but the number is increasing. Generally the people who follow this standard are sophisticated, educated and intellectually independent. They generally know enough and care enough to avoid such hazards as pregnancy and VD, and they are strong enough in themselves and their opinions so that they don't suffer from guilt. Since the object is the greatest pleasure possible for both partners, women are not considered objects as they are by the double standard followers, and they are not exploited.

While intercourse without affection may not be a person's first choice, it may be all that he can get or that he is capable of; or it might be what he needs at some particular time. In all these cases non-exploitive sex aimed at mutual pleasure

(Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1966) p.13-40.

13. Ellis, op. cit. p. 173.
14. Ellis, op. cit. p. 168.
15. Ellis, op. cit. p. 173-4.
16. Reiss, op. cit. p. 219-226.
17. Reiss, op. cit. p. 53-68.
18. Ellis, op. cit. p. 33-50.
and
Reiss, op. cit. p. 146-194.
19. Ellis, op. cit. p. 34.
20. Kinsey, op. cit. p. 316.
21. Burgess & Wallin as quoted in Reiss, op. cit. p. 182 & 167-8.
Burgess and Wallin did a study of college students in Chicago who intended to get married. 90% of them said that premarital coitus strengthened their love. 96% of the men and 84% of the women said they felt no guilt.
22. Rubin in Brecher, op. cit. p.251-59.
23. Ellis, op. cit. p. 37.
24. Kinsey, op. cit. p. 292.
25. Reiss, op. cit. p. 229-31.
26. Ellis, op. cit. p. 38.
27. Kinsey, op. cit. p. 328-30.
28. Reiss, op. cit. p. 181.
29. Ellis, op. cit. p. 44.
30. Ellis, op. cit. p. 45.
31. Ellis, op. cit. p. 46.
32. Ellis, op. cit. p. 49.
33. Kinsey, op. cit. p. 328-29.

can certainly add to a person's happiness and health. Even if I myself never want intercourse without affection, I see no reason to condemn it in others. Provided they don't hassle me to join them, they are doing nothing that would hurt me or should bother me.

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I hope this paper has been of some help to you in stimulating and helping you organize your thinking about premarital sex. If you are interested in discussing your ideas, you can call Maryanna for help in organizing a group.
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