

Chapter 12

Sexual Behavior in Adolescence

In previous chapters we have discussed the endocrine changes of pubescence and their more general psychological consequences in sex awareness, drive, and interests. We have also pointed to the existence of various psychobiological problems associated with gonadal maturation: the universal need to adjust to the perplexity and uneasiness generated by a strange and potent new drive; the necessity of subjecting, for the first time since early childhood, an emergent drive of physiological origin to initial control and direction in accordance with social expectations; the cultural pressures exerted on adolescent individuals to assume an appropriate biological sex role; and the general developmental trend for modes of sexual gratification to become increasingly more specific and differentiated with the progress of adolescence.

Our task in this chapter is fourfold: (1) to consider the extent to which the psychological consequences of gonadal maturation are culturally modifiable; (2) to assay the importance

of sexuality in adolescent personality development and adjustment; (3) to examine various psychosocial aspects of adolescent sexuality; and (4) to formulate some principles of sex education and guidance appropriate for our culture.

Psychosocial Aspects of Sexuality

In contrast to the psychobiological problems of adolescent sexuality that enjoy universal cultural distribution, psychosocial sex problems are culture-bound, reflecting the influence of the particular values, regulatory devices, and social conditions that prevail within a given culture. We shall be concerned here with five main categories of psychosocial sex problems: (1) peculiarities of psychosexual maturation that follow from the general cultural (or subcultural) orientation to sexuality—e.g., attitudes of acceptance or depreciation; of shame, guilt, and avoidance, or of naturalness and enjoyment; emphasis on psychophysiological or psychoaffectional aspects of sexuality; degree of sameness or difference in conceptions of male and female biological sex roles; (2) differences in patterns of socially provided opportunities for and restrictions on adolescent sexual gratification, and in the degree to which social sanctions for violations of the cultural sexual code are internalized by the

adolescent; (3) differences in specific

practices and varieties of sexual expression, in the frequency and types of sexual outlets available to adolescent boys and girls growing up in different social environments; (4) differences in means of regulating and formalizing the social and interpersonal aspects of erotic relationships between the sexes, for example, courting behavior and heterosexual activities in the peer group; and (5) differences in social sex role, in the personality attributes and socioeconomic functions customarily associated with masculinity and femininity.

In this section we shall consider the first two of these problems. It will be more conducive to understanding to reserve consideration of the remaining three problems until some attention is given to the modifiability of hormonally conditioned sex behavior and to the general importance of sexuality in adolescent development.

Different Cultural Orientations toward Sexuality

Some idea of the tremendous variability in cultural orientation toward sexuality can be gained by comparing the sex attitudes of the four primitive cultures in the South Seas (Mead, 1939) with those of our own culture.

Adolescent sex practices in Samoa reflect an elaboration of the physiological and sensuous aspects of sexuality, which are culturally emphasized, in contradistinction to the affectional components, which are relatively ignored. For both men and women, physiological sex urges are regarded as natural and pleasurable, although requiring more stimulation and having slower maturation in women. No unfavorable moral judgments are applied to sexual gratification on a physiological level, the only strictures being aesthetic, and directed against overt "unseemliness." No importance is attached to deep or permanent emotional attachments; the stability of marriage depends on social and economic factors. Adolescent premarital sex adventures mirror the general promiscuity and lack of deep emotion or ego involvement in sex relationships. No attempt is made to synthesize seriously the physiological and affectional components of sex. Whereas in our society comparable sexual behavior is regarded as more typical of adolescent emotional immaturity, in Samoa, adolescent sex conduct is not considered to be unrepresentative of the adult approach to sexuality. The Samoan attitudes toward virginity and fidelity are typical of their whole philosophy of sex: desirable in theory, intriguing in practice, but hardly credible considering the "sexual nature of man"—except where it is demanded by considerations of social status.

The Mundugumor attitude toward sexuality, like the Samoan, seems to reflect the characteristic personality constellation of the culture. Just as the easy-going Samoan expresses his casual style of life in the carefree and superficial emotional expression that characterizes his promiscuous sex activity, so the hard, aggressive, individualistic Mundugumor reveals his personality in the type of sex relationship that he establishes. Rigorous social taboos against promiscuity satisfy his passion for "keeping up appearances"; but these are in no sense internalized sufficiently to prevent the adolescent's vigorous, aggressive individuality from breaking through the frustrating barriers of adult-made social standards to gratify passionate physiological needs by skillful clandestine efforts. Like the Samoan, the Mundugumor accepts the desirability of the physiological aspects of sexual expression which also supersede the affectional components; the Mundugumor, however, is characteristically more vigorous, passionate, aggressive, and possessive in his attitudes and overt behavior. Also unlike their Samoan contemporaries, Mundugumor girls are more aggressive and take more initiative in arranging the clandestine liaisons. As one might imagine, the Mundugumor places more value on virginity than the Samoan, but this is not sufficient to discourage premarital sexual ardor.

Among the Arapesh, psychosexual development follows an

entirely different pattern from that of either of the two latter cultures described. Because of long years during which husband and wife live together like brother and sister, actual sexual intercourse does not spring from a different order of feeling from the affection that one has for one's daughter or one's sister. It is simply a more final and complete expression of the same kind of feeling. And it is not regarded as a spontaneous response of the human being to an internal sexual stimulus. The Arapesh have no fear that children left to themselves will copulate, or that young people going about in adolescent groups will experiment with sex. The only young people who are believed likely to indulge in any overt sex expression are "husband and wife," the betrothed pair who have been reared in the knowledge that they are to be mates (Mead, 1939).

Both Arapesh men and women find complete satisfaction of their sex needs in monogamous marriage. There is, however, this difference from monogamous marriage in Victorian society: the physical component is not often regarded as something inherently ugly and shameful (made tolerable by the marriage tie), but rather as a natural and acceptable accompaniment of an adult affectional relationship. Although sex is desirable affectional play in the mature relationship between man and wife, it is regarded as dangerous and antithetical to growth in those who have not yet

attained their maturity.

If the Victorians had ever a felt need for a model of their sexual behavior, it is a pity that they did not know of the existence of Manus society. Of all these four peoples, the Manus have approximated most closely the Victorian and dual standard of sex morality currently undergoing change in our culture. Only they carry their Puritanism one step further. They recognize, as we do, the strength and naturalness of the male physiological sex drive and, just as consistently as we do, apply strict taboos that aim at seriously outlawing its adolescent expression; but secretly, rape remains the ideal goal of sexual behavior. Women are not supposed to experience physiological sex drives; but whereas our Victorian morality concedes the right of women to enjoy marital sex relations on an affectional basis, so much shame and repugnance is attached to sex in Manus society that even in the legalized marriage relationship it is distasteful. This difference might partly be a result of the fact that the Manus marriage is from start to finish a pure business proposition with no affectional elements. In a very literal sense it corresponds to legalized prostitution. Men do not deny their strong physiological urges; but because they fear the wrath of the spirits, they confine their overt activities to enforced marital intercourse, enjoying rape mainly in fantasy.

Doctrinally and traditionally our own cultural orientation toward sexuality parallels the Manus orientation. The sexual urge was regarded by the Church as an inherently evil and reprehensible drive that was tolerated only because it is necessary for the reproduction of the species. In the case of the male, a concession was made to the acknowledged strength of the sexual urge in that its existence was given a certain recognized status; but, nevertheless, it was formally expected that repression would be practiced until marriage. In the case of the female, physiological sex drive was presumed to be nonexistent, and sexual expression was regarded as permissible only as part of her affectional duties as a wife. Since so many parents in our culture take the view that sex must be denied, and not even discussed, it is hardly surprising that children and adolescents have such distorted attitudes toward sexuality—attitudes that combine all the elements of shame, disgust, fear, guilt, mystery, and anxiety (Ausubel, 1950).

But the status of sexuality in our culture is much more complicated and confusing than that among the Manus. For coexisting with our repressive doctrinal approach are lower-class norms that are comparable to those of the Samoans: scientific notions of the "naturalness" of sex expression; the "sexual revolution" embracing a large percentage of both middle-class

adolescent boys and girls, who are "sexually active" (i.e., engage in sexual intercourse); romantic ideals and affectional standards that are also applied to male sex behavior; and increasing acknowledgment of the legitimacy of psychophysiological sex behavior among women. When to this cultural repression, distortion, and confusion is added the abnormally slow pace of emotional and social development in adolescence, it is no wonder that psychosexual maturation proceeds so slowly, especially in girls. Thus, boys and girls are generally incapable at 16 or 18 of the deep emotional involvement that our culture theoretically regards as necessary and desirable for successful marital love relationships.

Nevertheless, in the post-war Western world, Catholic Church doctrine about marital sexual expression has undergone significant change in the direction of prevailing cultural belief and practice. The Second Vatican Council in 1963-65 extended the centuries-old dictum that sexuality in marriage was legitimate only for purposes of procreation, to include an appropriate role of also enhancing love and intimacy between the spouses. Simultaneously with this shift in ideology there has been an upward diffusion of lower-class sexual morality and practices from the lower to the middle class: An increasing percentage of middle-class boys and girls every year become "sexually active" (i.e.,

practice sexual intercourse) at an ever lower age in a purely casual and often promiscuous psychophysiological manner, without any affectional involvement or commitment whatsoever. This, of course, has been accompanied by a corresponding rise in teen-age pregnancy and sexually-transmitted infectious disorders. Thus, what was formerly regarded as quasi-acceptable sexual intimacy for only engaged couples is now becoming the norm for purely casual sexual relationships.

Cultural Patterns of Regulating Adolescent Sex Activity

From this limited ethnological survey of sex behavior, it is evident that the social regulation of adolescent sex activity is closely related to the broader constellation of attitudes and values that the culture applies to sexuality in general. These regulatory practices can be classified on the basis of (1) the degree of tolerance or repressiveness toward adolescent sex expression, (2) the relative degree of emphasis placed on psychophysiological or psychoaffectional sex behavior, and (3) the extent to which different standards are set for boys and girls.

At one extreme of cultural permissiveness (Samoa), no restrictions whatsoever are placed on adolescent sex activity. At the other extreme (Manus girls, Puritanically raised girls in our culture, largely in the past), the prohibitions on sex activity are so severe that no sex drive at all, not even

psychoaffectional, is developed. Between these extremes, in increasing order of repressiveness, are (1) formal prohibitions against sexual intercourse that are not seriously enforced and are not internalized by the adolescent; (2) social taboos against premarital intercourse that are not internalized but are enforced seriously and rigorously enough to require clandestine gratification of sex (Mundugumor boys and girls); (3) social recognition of the existence of physiological sex drives accompanied by serious cultural expectations of sexual abstinence until marriage that are effectively internalized by some adolescents (Manus boys, some middle-class boys in our culture);* and (4) social denial of psychophysiological sex drives modified by tolerance for psychoaffectional sex activity during marriage (middle-class girls in our culture). Among the Arapesh, the dimension of cultural permissiveness is somewhat irrelevant. It is true that no overt restrictions are imposed; but at the same time it is implicitly expected that adolescents will develop only psychoaffectional sex urges restricted to betrothed marital partners.

Regarding the relative emphasis placed on the psychophysiological and psychoaffectional aspects of sex, the Arapesh recognize only psychoaffectional sexuality, whereas the Samoans, Manus, and Mundugumor cultures primarily emphasize the

psychophysiological. In our own culture both components are prominent and vary in importance with sex and class membership. The same types of sexual urges are attributed to both males and females in the Samoan, Arapesh, and Mundugumor cultures, and

*This degree of repression and indulgence in premarital intercourse also characterizes adolescent girls in our culture who have embraced the permissive standards of the "sexual revolution." until relatively recently, our culture (at least, formally), made sharp qualitative distinctions between male and female sex drives.

From even the limited ethnological data reviewed above and in other parts of this volume (Leighton & Kluckhohn, 1947; Whiting, 1941), it is apparent that primitive cultures cannot be contrasted to our own as having nonrepressive, matter-of-fact, and simple attitudes toward sexuality. Restrictions of varying degrees of severity against adolescent sex activity have been described for the Kwoma, Mundugumor, Navaho, and Manus cultures; and in the Manus culture, the rigorousness of the repression, and the aura of shame, ugliness, prudery, and sinfulness surrounding sex exceeds by far anything known in our own culture. Neither have we been alone in adhering to a double standard of sex behavior. All we can say with definiteness is that in our own culture marriage is

delayed longer and attitudes toward sex are more heterogeneous and more confused than in most other cultures.

Cultures also pattern the degree of acceptability of various forms of sexual behavior and at different stages of life.

In some societies such as the Revala Bedouins of Eurasia, homosexuality is so strongly opposed that both male and female offenders are put to death; in other societies, such as the Mbundu of Angola, it is simply considered immature and ridiculed; in still others, it is considered an essential part of sexual and social maturation. For example, among the Sievans of Africa, all men and boys engage in homosexual intercourse, and although assuming a feminine role is strictly limited to sexual situations, 'males are singled out as peculiar if they do not indulge in these homosexual activities.'

(Mussen et al.)

The Nature and Cultural Modifiability of

Sex Behavior

True (adult and postpubescent) sexuality can only be conceptualized as a form of self-expression that is related to the

individual's experience of himself in a biological sex role. The adoption of a biological sex role is dependent on: (1) the individual's ability to experience the unique feeling tones and psychological content that is either functionally or historically related to hormonal stimulation; and (2) cultural sanction of such experience, and recognition of the individual as a sexually mature adult. It follows that although biological sex role may be largely or (in certain instances of postpubescent castration) completely maintained by psychological stimulation, some degree of contact with functional quantities of gonadal sex hormones is necessary at some prior point in development.ⁱ

It is also apparent that the gonadal stimulation can be regarded only as a necessary, not as a sufficient condition for the development of biological sex role. The mere presence of gonadal hormones does not guarantee the emergence of sex drives if the culture decrees that these are not to develop or that the individual is not yet sexually mature. Sex hormones never stimulate sex drives in Manus girls, and several years elapse between Samoan girls' pubescence and the onset of their sexual activity (Mead, 1939). There is a similar lag for many girls in our own culture. And among the Arapesh, gonadal hormones do not result in sex impulses without primary affectional content.

Once the gonadal basis of biological sex role is laid,

further differentiation inevitably occurs. One type of differentiation is in the distinction between psychophysiological and psychoaffectional sex drives. Other aspects of differentiation include the sex object desired, the type of activity or erogenous zone implicated, the degree of passivity or initiative displayed, and the appropriateness of the sex role adopted. The factors that facilitate or retard the adoption of an appropriate (heterosexual) sex role and the various inappropriate outcomes have already been discussed. That the differentiation of appropriate biological sex roles depends on psychological factors over and above the hormonal substrate of sexual behavior is shown by the fact that injection of appropriate male or female sex hormones does not necessarily intensify heterosexual behavior, but merely reinforces the preexisting sex role, whichever it may be (Ford & Beach, 1951).

Preadolescent versus Adolescent Sexuality

Since the enactment of a biological sex role implies the existence of feelings and impulses in the individual that are dependent both on gonadal stimulation and on social recognition of him as a sexually mature individual, it follows that there must be a qualitative difference between preadolescent and adolescent sexuality. There is considerable evidence of sensuous sex activity, sexual curiosity and exploration, and experimentation

with and imitation of adult sex roles in prepubescent children; and although the extent of such activity varies from culture to culture, contrary to psychoanalytic theory, there is no evidence of a "latency period" during the years of middle childhood and preadolescence (Ford & Beach, 1951; Kinsey et al., 1948).

But it is an assumption of quite another order to equate these activities with adult sexuality even if similar organs are involved in both instances. A child and biologist may both peer through a microscope, but one would hesitate to refer to the former as a scientist on this basis (Ausubel, 1952). Data of Kinsey and others (1948) already cited, indicate that after pubescence, there is always a complete break in the **qualitative** meaning and significance of sex activity, and frequently considerable temporal discontinuity as well.

Such discontinuity, in no way incompatible with general principles of child or adolescent development, is certainly to be expected following the introduction of any new potent variable (i.e., functional levels of gonadal hormones). And since this discontinuity in experience is biologically inevitable, the culture can at best avoid discontinuity in training by refraining from inculcating in the child attitudes about sexuality that he must perforce unlearn before he can function effectively as an adult (Benedict, 1938).

The Repressibility of Sex Urges

Strictly speaking, sex urges can be repressed only in the sense that as a result of extreme cultural denial they are never actualized from their hormonal substrate in the first place. Hence, agenesis would be a more precise designation for this phenomenon than repression. It occurs, as we have seen, among Manus girls and among Puritanically reared girls in our own culture. Among the Arapesh, agenesis is restricted solely to the psychophysiological sex drive. The advocates of the sex repression theory of adolescent emotional instability have committed the double error (1) of minimizing in a general way the power of the culture to suppress or modify successfully the development of even basic potential drives, and (2) of assuming that sex drives are either preformed entities stored in the "unconscious" or inevitable consequences of gonadal stimulation rather than potential derivatives of sex hormones dependent on favorable experience for eventual consummation.

Once sex drives have been actualized from their physiological substrate they become much too urgent and insistent to be repressed by the majority of individuals. Several investigators have reported that in our own culture only rarely do postpubescent males have extremely low sexual outlets (Kinsey et al., 1948;

Kirkendall, 1940); and usually when this occurs, special reasons (general apathy and incapacity to respond to sexual stimuli) exist for this anomaly (Kinsey et al., 1948). When social sanctions or moral scruples prevent sexual gratification through premarital intercourse, some direct (genital) substitutive outlet such as masturbation or petting is the general practice (Kinsey et al., 1948; Kirkendall, 1940).

The psychoanalytic doctrine of sublimation, which proposes that the energy of frustrated sex drives directly provides the motivation for all of the constructive pursuits of adolescents and others, and that through such pursuits vicarious sexual gratification is achieved, is hardly credible. Obviously there can be no sublimation if sex drives are not repressed but are gratified through premarital intercourse or through direct substitutive sex activity. Second, there is no reputable evidence to indicate that the same "blocked" energy of frustrated sex urges powers other activities, or that any of these activities yield vicarious sexual satisfaction. It is true that any constructive, self-enhancing activity provides some compensation for frustration; but this does not necessarily mean that the compensatory activity is energized by the frustration or that the compensation makes up in kind for the specific deprivation.

It is more reasonable, we think, to conceive of motives as

being continually and independently generated in the course of reacting to new experiences and expectations rather than as derivatives of a single fountainhead of drives; and although frustration admittedly is a powerful spur to compensatory activity, positive impulses to know, explore, and master the environment, independently of frustration, can also motivate purposeful activity. During adolescence the individual is confronted by numerous status problems (apart from sexual frustration) that are sufficiently insistent to instigate adjustive efforts such as peer-group activity; and the functional origins of these efforts are either freshly generated or rooted in adjustments found successful in the past (preadolescent group formations).

Detrimental Effects of Sex Repression

Mead's Manus data (Mead, 1939), as well as psychiatric experience with Puritanically-reared women in our own culture, indicate that suppression of nonaffectional sexuality (Arapesh) or the imposition of either rigorous (Mundugumor) or merely formal (lower-class American) prohibitions on premarital intercourse are not accompanied by psychological stress. As long as the adolescent does not internalize moral obligations to abide by these taboos, and as long as opportunities for clandestine gratification are

available, no more mental conflict is generated than under conditions of unrestricted freedom, as in Samoa.

Serious psychological stress from sex develops in chaste middle-class adolescent boys because of (1) the ideological confusion that results in attempts to rationalize the logically incompatible cultural position (which the culture refuses to acknowledge as illogical) that psychophysiological sex urges are "natural" but at the same time must be repressed on ethicoreligious grounds until marriage; and (2) the psychological impossibility of completely repressing a drive that they are morally obligated to repress. They are placed in the unenviable forced choice situation in which self-denial leads to unbearable psychophysiological tension, and self-indulgence gives rise to strong guilt feelings.ⁱⁱ The only realistic solution to this dilemma is to relieve the psychophysiological tension through autoeroticism and petting, and to find moral comfort in the fact that by refraining from intravaginal intercourse, they preserve technical virginity. But they still cannot avoid guilt feelings resulting from the substitutive equivalence of these activities with the interdicted goal of complete sexual intercourse; and the chronic existence of such guilt necessarily plays havoc with self-esteem.

The frustration of acknowledged sexual goals has other

deleterious effects on self-esteem: Incomplete self-expression sexually eventually comes to symbolize the adolescent's subadult status in society and causes pervasive and gnawing feelings of deprivation, inferiority, and demoralization. He becomes preoccupied with this frustration, overvalues its importance, and lets it distract him from other activities. Some adolescents find in masturbation a preferred escape from, rather than a substitute for, normal heterosexual reality; and others become fixed at the level of sexual satisfaction that can be derived from petting and regard intercourse as an anticlimax.

Not to be ignored either are the exaggerated defenses which some adolescents erect against their sexual impulses. This may result in asceticism or in an overintellectualization of all the emotional problems of living. It is possible to explain in such a fashion some cases of adolescent preoccupation with philosophical, social, and political problems.

Middle-class girls reared in traditionally Victorian or orthodox religious environments are spared most of these consequences. Theirs is not the difficult task of reconciling the idea of moral guilt with the seemingly overpowering strength of a natural biological impulse. They don't face the temptation that if they transgress only occasionally—especially if they are not caught—they can probably get away with it. Instead, the matter is

settled very simply for them; they are told, and usually accept the fact, that they simply do not have these urges.

But times are changing for girls. As a result of recent trends in adolescent education, girls are beginning to wonder if they too are endowed with physiological sex urges. And as they wonder they are forced to wrestle with the moral problem of repression. There is evidence of a higher level of guilt among girls , compared to boys, for the same degree of religious activity, for instance, which is inversely related to sex activity (Langston, 1973). In any case, there is considerable overlapping. The late-maturing boy suffers less than the early-maturing boy since he has less need of a sexual outlet.

For the adolescent girl, however, sex repression creates marital problems that usually do not arise for boys. To effect a successful marital adjustment, she will have to harmonize her own feelings and attitudes with their less inhibited correlates in her husband. Total repression results in frigidity; and even for those girls who eventually accept a psychoaffectional sex role, the idea of sex may be associated with such odium and repugnance that even in connection with affectional purposes there are strong inhibitions that are only gradually overcome. According to Kinsey's data, one of the two most important sexual factors which most often cause difficulty in the upper-level marriage is the

failure of the female to participate with the abandon necessary for the successful consummation of any sexual relation (Kinsey et al., 1948). The other factor listed by Kinsey—"the failure of the male to show skill on sexual approach and technique"—may also be attributed in part to the effects of extreme sex repression.

The Importance of Sexuality in Adolescent Development and Adjustment

Relationships between Sexuality and Adolescent Personality Maturation

The hormonal changes, the alterations in body form, and the psychological correlates of both naturally play a major role in adolescent personality development. We have referred to these characteristics of pubescence as the consummatory factors in precipitating the transitional personality phase of adolescence. They accomplish this not only through their effect on cultural expectations, but also endogenously by their impact on the individual. The adolescent reacts to his adult body form, his newly acquired reproductive capacity, and his mature sexual drives by raising his aspirations for volitional independence and earned status. However, just because pubescence is the consummatory catalytic phenomenon that initiates the adolescent period of

development, sexuality cannot, therefore, be regarded as the central problem of adolescence.

Newly acquired sexual urges also pose a significant obstacle to personality maturation since they are the chief source of hedonistic need during adolescence. The control and regulation of a new physiological drive creates an emergent problem of adaptation that had not arisen since early childhood. It is true that the individual is now older, more experienced in self-control, more responsive to moral obligations, and more highly motivated by status considerations to postpone the need for immediate hedonistic gratification. But, by the same token, he is also more self-assertive and resistive to adult standards and direction.

Insistent sex needs not only threaten other long-range goals, but also, as the Rankians point out, threaten the individual's newly acquired volitional independence (Hankins, 1943). Genuine affectional relationships imply considerable self-surrender and limitation of personal autonomy. These can be avoided either by asceticism or by entering into numerous and superficial psychophysiological sex relations (promiscuity).

Sexuality and Adolescent Adjustment

Sexuality is an important area of adolescent adjustment.

Whether existing sex needs are gratified or denied affects the total balance between frustration and satisfaction and, hence, the overall stressfulness of adolescence. Stressfulness is also influenced by conflict or guilt feelings about sex, and impinges on the individual's behavioral reactivity and emotional stability. Frustration of sex needs may result in preoccupation with and overvaluation of sexuality, bothersome distractions, and compensatory attempts at self-enhancement in other directions. By symbolizing his subadult status or by instigating guilt-producing substitutive sex outlets, these frustrations may impair self-esteem.

Because of the intense psychological conflict until relatively recently about sex in middle-class boys (and now also in middle-class girls) in our society, and because of the unrealistic cultural "avoidance and deprecation of the subject of sex in the face of their positive knowledge of its actual importance," these adolescents subjectively overvalue the relative importance of sexuality in the total scheme of things. But regardless of its **actual** intrinsic importance, there is no gainsaying the phenomenological reality of this overvaluation to these adolescents. In a much different category is the social scientists' interpretive overvaluation of the importance of sexuality in adolescent adjustment.

Much of this interpretative overvaluation can be attributed to deficiencies in the type and sources of information about sex behavior. Before Kinsey and coworkers' (1948) monumental studyⁱⁱⁱ of the sexual expression of the American male, most available conceptions of adolescent sex activity were conjectural.^{iv} Previous studies were superficial and did not sample large or representative enough segments of the population. And in keeping with their psychoanalytic orientation, many psychologists and psychiatrists were too liable to overgeneralize from case histories drawn from middle-class patients and from their own middle-class backgrounds. Pornographic and overexplicit sex in the media have had much the same overvaluing effects on adolescents.

Among those who were concerned with the theoretical interpretation of adolescent psychology in our culture, the point of view had been steadily gaining ground until relatively recently that the American adolescent owed the greater part of his characteristic emotional instability to the inordinate amount of sex frustration he experienced. This opinion was customarily bolstered by citing Mead's Samoan data, which was overgeneralized to support the hypothesis that an invariable, one-to-one causal relationship prevailed between the stressfulness of adolescence and the degree of cultural repression of adolescent sex activity.

When we consider all of the evidence, however, it becomes apparent that sex frustration is only one of many factors in adolescent status deprivation, and actually one of the less crucial factors leading to a stressful adolescence. First, there is no simple relationship between the severity of cultural restrictions on sexual expression and the degree of psychological conflict from sex. Such conflict develops only when simultaneously sex drives are generated and moral prohibitions against their expression are internalized. In our society, therefore, psychological conflict about sex is hardly characteristic of adolescents generally, since as early as 1948 studies led by Kinsey established that 85 percent of American male adolescents accepted premarital intercourse as natural and desirable, and despite the existence of formal expectations to the contrary, exercised this conviction almost as freely as Samoan adolescents (Kinsey et al., 1948). Further, twenty-eight studies of premarital sex behavior conducted since Kinsey's report in 1953 on female sexual behavior indicated that there has been an increase in the percentage of young people engaging in premarital sexual intercourse. Moreover, this change has been more revolutionary for women to the extent that even two decades ago there was almost no difference then between the proportions of young men and women who engage in such behavior (Dreyer, 1975). Psychological stress from

sex is relatively impressive only in some middle-class youth, and not because of psychophysiological tensions produced by repression per se (since such tensions are relieved by masturbation, petting, and sexual intercourse) but because of the psychological ambiguity of the situation, the guilt feelings engendered, and the invidious reflections on self-esteem.

Second, there is little relationship between experienced degree of conflict about sex and the total stressfulness of adolescence because other nonsexual factors are more crucial in determining that stressfulness. Depending on the operation of these other factors, absence of sex repression and lack of psychological conflict about sex can coexist with either a relatively unstressful adolescence (as in Samoa) or an extremely stressful adolescence (as among present-day youth in our own culture). Whenever adolescence is simultaneously nonstressful and unaccompanied by little mental conflict about sex, other more compelling reasons unrelated to sexuality can usually be found for the idyllic nature of adolescent development. Samoans, for example, adopt an extremely casual approach to life and do not engage in any frantic struggle for status; and Arapesh adolescents are warmly accepted and eagerly integrated into a benevolent noncompetitive culture.

On the other hand, in primitive cultures in which a stressful

adolescence coexists with considerable conflict about sex, there are also **other** reasons for the experienced difficulty of adolescence. In the Mundugumor, Manus, and Kwoma cultures, greater emphasis is placed on status, the culture as a whole is more competitive and aggressive, the adolescent has a more marginal position in society, and status is more persistently withheld from him. Hence, although sexual problems undoubtedly add to the stressfulness of adolescence in the Manus (Mead, 1939) and other primitive cultures, greater weight must be given to the traumatic potential of these nonsexual factors.

If this proposition holds true for primitive cultures, it can be applied with even greater validity to our own culture; for the differences among primitive cultures in nonsexual determinants of adolescent stress are relatively minor in comparison with the corresponding difference between primitive and complex cultures. When so many important variables contributing to a stressful adolescence are simultaneously operative, the presence or absence of sexual conflict is a relatively negligible factor. Thus, although the lower-class adolescent male in our society is spared the trauma of psychological conflict about sex, his adolescence on the whole is no less stressful than that of his middle-class contemporary.

Adolescent Sexual Expression in Our Culture

The "Sexual Revolution" among Adolescents

An abundance of data exists (see below) to begin to answer the question about whether there has been a "sexual revolution" among youth. The results of numerous studies of premarital sex behavior conducted since Kinsey's last report in 1953 clearly indicate that there has been an appreciable increase in the percent of young people who engage in premarital sexual intercourse, but that this change has been more momentous for women than for men. In general, the percent of white men aged fifteen to twenty-five who have had sexual intercourse before marriage has not risen very much in the past few decades, but the number of white women aged fifteen to twenty-five who have had premarital sexual intercourse has increased dramatically until today there is virtually no significant difference between the proportions of young men and women who engage in such sexual behavior.

The so-called "sexual revolution" that has taken place in the past quarter-century has, therefore, largely inhered in the fact that the sexual behavior of female adolescents and young women (formerly much more restrained than that of males) has gradually come almost to approximate the behavior of corresponding males

(see above). Similar trends are also evident in the comparative increases in the rate of extramarital affairs among young married women and in the comparative percentages of male and female attitudes of approval and disapproval of premarital intercourse provided that a degree of emotional involvement is implicated. Despite verbal professions by adolescent boys to the contrary and the closeness of the male and female attitudes of approval (as well as corresponding behavior), there is reason to believe that this latter proviso is ideologically and functionally much more important to girls and young women than to boys and young men.

Parameters of the Sexual Revolution

This so-called "sexual revolution" has been characterized largely (1) as an upward diffusion in the past four decades of lower-class adolescent values, attitudes, beliefs, and behavior regarding premarital sex practices (e.g., especially sexual intercourse) into middle-class and upper-middle-class teen-age circles in whom these practices had heretofore been only sparsely and spasmodically prevalent; and (2) as the achievement for the first time of parity by girls with boys in these attitudes, beliefs and behaviors (particularly petting and sexual intercourse).

The middle-class folk-lore value and belief system about sex

still generally prevailed, of course, as before, but at a much higher level of permissive belief and practice. Girls continued to remain wholly responsible for their own chastity during and after the "revolution" but were almost as permissive about sex as the boys, and sometimes even became the sexual aggressors.

Nevertheless it is important to realize that although the girls equaled the boys quantitatively in frequency of casual and permissive sexual encounters (e.g., premarital sexual intercourse especially), very significant qualitative gender differences on the part of girls still existed and persisted, not only in sexual practices but also in underlying attitudes and beliefs (Birch, 1991; Levenson et al., 1995; McLean, 1995). In any case, as a result of this "revolution" the "double standard" in sex was largely abolished, girls gave many of the same reasons as boys for indulging in casual sex, i.e., mainly to express their sex drives uninhibitedly. However, these important differences were still expressed: Boys were more psychophysiological and less psychoaffectional than girls in their sexual orientation and more opportunistic, recreational, exploitative and promiscuous; whereas girls were more concerned with love and affection (Berganza et al., 1989), engaged more in casual sex in order to become popular with the opposite sex (Levenson et al., 1995) and as a means for establishing more intimate, affectional

relationships (Stanton et al., 1993). Boys tend to perceive parents as more accepting of their sexual expressions but much less accepting of their daughter's participation in premarital sexual intercourse (Moore & Rosenthal, 1991). In spite of the "sexual revolution" and the resulting greater resemblance of the middle- to the lower- and upper-classes with respect to the frequency of premarital sexual intercourse, it is still the case that such sexual intercourse is more common in both lower and upper classes than in the middle class.

Masturbation and Petting

There seems to be relatively little change in the past few decades in the incidence of either male or female masturbation. Anxiety, conflict, and guilt, however, have decreased and there is more scientific information and objectivity (Mussen et al., 1974) about the practice. Masturbation is the chief sexual outlet of early adolescence and shows a marked increase in incidence with the onset of puberty (Kinsey et al., 1948). Heterosexual petting increases in frequency and in intimacy of contact with increasing age (Kinsey et al., 1948); it eventually involves almost all boys (Kinsey et al., 1948). Thirty percent of Kinsey's adolescent male population reporting petting to orgasm. Premarital intercourse constitutes 25 percent of the total male sex outlet before the age

of 16, and 40 percent of total outlet between the ages of 16 and 20 (Kinsey et al., 1948). As adolescence progresses, the average boy's frequency of orgasm increases, "reaching a lifetime peak of about 3-4 times per week between 16 and 17 years of age" (Mussen et al., 1974). This frequency tends to persist with only slight diminution until the age of 30, after which there is reported gradual tapering.

Girls report much more variability in frequency of masturbation than boys. Some girls report in Kinsey's studies of 1948 and 1953 never masturbating, others report a frequency of masturbation as low as once or twice a year; still others masturbated as many as 10 to 20 times a week.

Another relevant evaluative consideration regarding masturbation as a sexual outlet is that its autoerotic nature tends to overemphasize and isolate those who practice it, almost to the point of characterizing its sensual, hedonistic, mechanical, immature, egocentric, and narcissistic features, and to ignore and trivialize, almost to the point of mockery, the relationship, reciprocal, and affectional aspects of human sexuality.

As in petting, there is also the danger of extreme canalization, if prolonged excessively (i.e., the danger that it will pre-empt all other sexual outlets, becoming the preferred and

only outlet capable of yielding sexual gratification. Under these circumstances, it becomes more than just a transient substitute for currently unavailable heterosexual outlets and evolves as an end in itself. Finally, because it is doctrinally proscribed by certain religions (e.g., Roman Catholicism, Orthodox Jewish), the practice carries with it an additional burden of sin, shame, anxiety, and guilt for the believers in these faiths.

Homosexuality

Objective evaluation of homosexuality as both a minor sexual outlet of adolescence and as a primary sexual orientation with respect to the desired gender of the sexual object, is unfortunately complicated by the injection of both proponents and opponents of several pseudo issues that are essentially irrelevant to the core issue of its psychological and moral merit as a deviant form of sexual orientation. For example, most Americans today would agree that homosexuals are entitled to the same civil rights and protection of the laws against assault and discriminatory practices in employment and housing as any citizen. A smaller majority perhaps would also agree that as long as homosexuals restricted their sexual attentions and activities to adults of their own sexual persuasions and left male minors unmolested, they should enjoy freedom of sexual expression without

fear of prosecution. The majority religious view (i.e., of the clergy), of course, is that to be so deviantly sexually oriented as to be physically attracted to like-sexed individuals and to harbor homosexual desires and inclinations is not sinful per se as long as the latter urges are thoroughly repressed and not put into practice or converted into actual homosexual acts (Brooke, 1993).

Since the legal and extralegal sanctions have been generally lifted, many homosexuals have figuratively "come out of the closet" and become militant advocates of "gay rights." From this latter stance of equal rights it was but a short step to the position that homosexuality and heterosexuality are merely different but psychologically equal psychosexual expressions of sexual maturity in terms of the developmental level determining sexual orientation.

From this implausible thesis some homosexuals then proceeded imperceptively to the more radical contention that homosexuality is by far the superior and much more mature sexual orientation fated to become both the individual and the ideal cultural goal with respect to the gender of the desired sexual object.

On at least two counts, however, it can be convincingly maintained that homosexuality is sexually a **less** mature and emotionally a highly inferior form of psychosexual expression. First, different variants of homosexual expression are not

uncommonly found in adolescents as transitory and preliminary trial expressions of more mature adult sexuality that make their developmental appearance later. It is logically difficult, therefore, to regard early-appearing and unstable behavior in the developmental sequence as more stable, sophisticated, and permanent, yet to emerge later in a final consummatory form.

Second, it is quite apparent that the gender of one's sex partner normally serves as a contrast medium for, and thus, greatly enhances the functional experience (awareness) of one's own sexuality. This potential enhancement in the homosexual intercourse situation is obviously greatly attenuated when the gender of one's sex partner is no different than one's own.

Third, the fact that a homosexual love object is identical, by definition, to the physical and sexual self image implies absolutely that a homosexual loves himself more than he is capable of loving others—or that he is thoroughly narcissistic—the least mature form of love available.

Last, the same issue of "naturalness" raised regarding the premarital intercourse outlet for adolescent sexuality has been raised for homosexuality. However, as in the previous issue, naturalness cannot be used logically as a positive criterion for cultural approval of a given sexual practice, inasmuch as normal socialization for purposes of cultural welfare and/or survival in

many instances implies the vigorous suppression of "natural" desires and inclinations. Also, considering the great intra- and inter-cultural degree of variability in deviant sexual practices, what is "natural" in one cultural setting may not be "natural" in another.

The American Psychiatric Association took a somewhat different evaluative stance in expunging homosexuality per se from its roster of mental disorders. Basically adopting a permissive mental health position that avoids making any value judgments, it ruled that the condition is a mental disorder only if it is not accepted by the individual and thereby leads to negative mental conflict, undue guilt feelings, maladjustment, etc.

Although relevant statistics on incidence are not available, many clinicians have a strong impression that homosexuals are more prone to involvement in sexual seduction, abuse, molestation, and prostitution of male minors. These activities reflect the frequent unavailability of steady gay partners and involve them often in legal prosecution.

Adolescent Sex Offenders

Adolescent sex offenders form a sizable percentage of the population of any male residential treatment center—probably because sex itself in this age group is a matter of such

overwhelming overvaluation and urgency. It is also a prime preoccupation of adolescents because sexual urges have not as yet had time to become appropriately regulated, controlled, and socialized and, therefore, tend disproportionately to occupy the center of consciousness. Common adolescent sex offences are typically aggressive, violent, and coercive; they include sexual abuse, molestation, assault, rape, and exhibitionism.

Sexual molestation and assault are very common indeed but their frequency is usually underestimated inasmuch as they are most often "hidden" or "undetected." This is the case because the victims are often unsophisticated children, because they are part of a "dating" sequence, because they are disguised as part of horseplay or "kidding around," or because the victim doesn't want to make a "fuss" or angry scene leading to a ruptured friendship.

Sex offenders are considered under the more inclusive heading of types of sexual outlet in adolescence both because they undoubtedly serve these delinquent purposes and because they are all characterized by varying degrees of aggressiveness, violence, coerciveness, and violation of the basic rights of others. They also tend to have various elements of personal history, temperament, and social class in common.

As in most deviant behavior, the etiology of these aberrant conditions is almost invariably multiple, although in any

particular case one cause may stand out as definitely salient.

Almost all of my numerous sex offender patients had been sexually and/or physically abused as children by either an adult or by a post-pubescent adolescent, often by their own fathers. Thus, the underlying motivation in this and similar sex offender cases is to retaliate, exact revenge, and in a sense undo the humiliation that was forcibly foisted on him, by coercively imposing a comparably humiliating scenario on an innocent and unsuspecting victim.

It has become fashionable in the last two decades to deny that exaggeratedly potent sex drives have any etiological connection with violent sex crimes. The latter sexual events are interpreted as merely the non-specific instruments through which aggression, power, and the expropriation of another person's basic identity are expressed. Although some non-sexual factors may very possibly be expressed in a crime like rape, one should certainly not overlook the influence of such directly-related variables as the potency of the sex drive and the ability to control it; the ease of sexual arousal; the strength of the internalized moral obligation to inhibit illicit sexual impulses that would violate the rights of others; and compulsive tendencies linked to weak impulse controls.

Group Differences

There is general agreement in the current data that along with a "sexual revolution" there has been a general reduction of differences among sex, social class, and racial groups. For instance, the concept of a double standard of sexual behavior that made it more acceptable for men than women to engage in premarital sexual intercourse has practically disappeared. Recent studies reveal that the percentage of women engaging in premarital sexual experience is equal to that of men.

Similarly, social-class differences in sexual behavior do not appear to be as great as reported in studies made in the 1940s and 1950s.

In the past it was often noted that lower-class youth began sexual activity earlier than middle- and upper-class youth and the larger proportions of lower-class youth were sexually active before marriage than either middle- or upper-class youth. The recent data seem to show that in terms of the age at which sexual activity begins, the percent of men and women engaging in sexual intercourse, and the variety of sexual acts practiced, the middle and upper classes are not much different than the lower classes. (Dreyer, 1975)

In fact, in line with other manifestations of the youth revolution or counterculture, the available evidence indicates that the greatest percentage increase in premarital sexual intercourse in recent years has been among higher socioeconomic adolescents and especially among better educated middle- and upper-class girls (Sorenson, 1974).

Another trend supported by available data is that racial differences in sexual behavior appear to be disappearing also. "Black women aged fifteen to nineteen tend to begin having sexual intercourse at an earlier age than white, with 80 percent of the blacks and 40 percent of the white women reporting having had sexual intercourse by the age of nineteen. This racial difference tends to decrease and level out after age twenty" (Dreyer, 1975).

However, in spite of the lessening differences in sexual behavior patterns along sex, social class, and racial lines, regional differences remain. Thus, Packard found that college women in the East were more active sexually than midwestern men but less active than southern men (Packard, 1968). In another study of the sexual behavior of black and white men at high schools and colleges in New York and Virginia, Reiss found that in both states black men were more active sexually than white men, but that white men in New York were more active sexually than black men in Virginia (Dreyer, 1975; Reiss, 1967).

Teen-age Pregnancy

Adolescent pregnancy has increased world-wide by leaps and bounds in the post-World War II decades. Although it has tended to stabilize recently, the frequency is still high enough to constitute a serious public health, family, and social problem: one million adolescent pregnancies annually yielding approximately 500,000 live births. About 40% of the original pregnancies are terminated by abortion (Marchbanks, 1999). The current trend, however, is for the adolescent mother to keep and raise her baby rather than resort to abortion or adoption.

The burgeoning of the adolescent pregnancy problem in the post-World War II world (in developed as well as developing countries) largely reflects the outcome of an interaction between the "sexual revolution," on the one hand, and an extension of this phenomenon from mostly African-American, ethnic, and minority-group adolescent girls in whose case regular premarital sexual relations were traditionally very prevalent but whose out-of-wedlock pregnancies were not significantly socially stigmatized. In the course and aftermath of the war, and the accompanying "sexual revolution," the more casual and permissive sexual attitudes and practices of the latter adolescent girls spread to their middle-class counterparts, resulting in their becoming

sexually active and in producing their share of the annual crop of one-half million babies.

Other contributing causes of the adolescent pregnancy "epidemic" include the following:

1. A very large number of the adolescent girls having premarital sex relations apparently believed to some extent the widespread fable that they were invulnerable to becoming pregnant after unprotected sexual intercourse.

2. Most of the girls were not knowledgeable about the various uses of contraceptives; and, even if they were, they declined to use them.

3. The great increase in female sexual activity (and consequent contact with males), leading up to premarital sexual intercourse, greatly increased the number of conceptions followed by pregnancy.

4. The much earlier occurrence of female pubescence naturally increased the amount of time in which the more sexually active adolescents were exposed to male impregnation.

5. The failure of emotional and intellectual maturation of lower- and upper-class adolescent girls to keep pace with sexual maturation is responsible in part for the lack of adequate control of the sex drive and its implementation in casual and permissive sexual activity.

6. Excessively casual and permissive sexual activity on the part of adolescent girls often serves a compensatory function in relieving the hopelessness, poverty, and drabness of their existence. This activity is both socially expected by the community and accepted by the adolescent girl; and if pregnancy ensues little or no stigma is attached to it. In fact, their self-esteem is often enhanced by the pregnancy.

7. In unmarried adolescent girls the occurrence of pregnancy sometimes causes a non-specific and reactive retaliatory or vindictive behavioral response against the presumptive father.

Evaluation of the Major Sex Outlets ^v

Masturbation

Informed professional opinion about the alleged detrimental consequences of masturbation holds that there is little or no foundation in fact for this folklore belief. Most investigators today agree that the chief damage caused by masturbation comes from experiencing (1) related feelings of guilt and impaired self-esteem, and (2) anxiety about incurring the manifold forms of physical, mental, and moral deterioration popularly associated with the practice. Although this new position is essentially

sounder than the earlier one, since no physical or psychological damage has ever been traced to the effects of masturbation *per se*,^{vi} the implications of the practice as a potential escape from heterosexual reality must be considered. From what we know about canalization, the danger also always exists that through conditioning it may become more than a transient substitute for heterosexual activity and evolve as an end in itself.

On the positive side, as an outlet for accumulated psychophysiological sexual tension which might otherwise interfere with the satisfactory performance of the adolescent's school and other responsibilities, it fulfills a useful function, especially in the case of those individuals who have compunctions about sexual contact with the opposite sex on any but a psychoaffectional basis.

Petting

The same dangers—guilt feelings, anxiety and canalization—exist for petting. However, since it is closer to the goal of heterosexual activity, and, under any circumstances, is a more meaningful and emotional sexual experience, it must be regarded as preferable to masturbation. An exception to this statement applies when, on idealistic grounds, an adolescent feels

obliged to refrain from interpersonal sexual outlets unless he entertains feelings of genuine affection and intimacy for the person involved.

In addition to involving less moral conflict for middle-class adolescents, petting also offers certain practical advantages to individuals who are either ignorant about prophylactic measures regarding birth control and sexually transmitted diseases, or who are very alarmed about these possibilities. It also probably serves a desirable function by reducing autoeroticism, and by releasing some of the unnatural inhibitions about sexual expression, especially in the female. The nervous tension presumably aroused by petting has been grossly exaggerated (Kinsey et al., 1948). If orgasm results there is no residual tension. If orgasm does not occur, any tension which does not subside spontaneously is frequently relieved by masturbation, the event which would otherwise have transpired in the first place.

Premarital Intercourse

It is argued by those who favor premarital sexual intercourse as the preferred sexual outlet for adolescents, that it is the most "natural" sexual activity for all sexually mature human beings. Naturalness, however, is a very slippery argument because in the course of civilization's advances man has learned to

inhibit and curb many "natural" drives and impulses the expression of which would have jeopardized his well-being and welfare. The more germane questions, therefore, are: What are the necessary preconditions for extending this marital practice to adolescents prior to marriage? What are its advantages, disadvantages, and hazards?

The first obvious precondition is that the adolescent must have already attained sufficient psychosexual maturity to be able to express a psychoaffectional form of sexuality, that is, to express in his sexual activity love, affection, and a desire for enhanced intimacy with his sexual partner—not merely sensuality, hedonism, and sexuality as an end in itself. Implied also in mature sexual intercourse is a certain degree of exclusiveness, of affinity, fidelity, and permanence, otherwise the individual in question is dealing merely with casual, permissive, and promiscuous sex. This would be a reasonable assumption both in later marriage and in a serious current liaison.

The unfortunate reality of the situation among "sexually active" adolescents, however, is that only a very small minority of those adolescents whom I have evaluated psychiatrically—and of these only a bare handful of the older teen-agers—meet this precondition. This age limitation is relevant, of course, because

the earliest one could typically expect all of the essential facets of psychosexual maturity to be sufficiently developed, under current cultural and familial conditions, to make premarital sexual intercourse a reasonably affectional and loving experience, is at the end of adolescence or the beginning of early adulthood.

The consequences to a psychosexually immature young adolescent engaging habitually in casual and purely hedonistic and promiscuous sexual intercourse are far from innocuous: Through the psychological mechanism of canalization, this kind of sexual expression could become the **only** and preemptive type of sexual outlet that he would find gratifying, even in marriage. He tends to become conditioned and sensitized by this habitual orientation to sexual experience and, thus, to become unresponsive to the psychoaffectional aspects of sexuality—both at the receiving and expressive ends. When such an individual marries, therefore, it is only reasonable to expect his psychophysiological orientation to prevail. Thus, the psychosexual level at which he operates maritally is qualitatively lowered, rendering impossible of fulfillment a basic function of the marital relationship in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Further, there is the high risk of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases that do not exist in the alternative strategy of abstinence. Not only are condoms unreliable for both purposes,

but if distributed by the State or by the school the official approval of this type of sexuality by these agencies would also be implied.

Ideally, from both a secular and religious standpoint, adolescents and young adults are traditionally expected to practice abstinence from intercourse until they are married. Although this ideal is no longer honored very much in practice today, it still has much to recommend it. On the negative side it is the best preventive against unwanted out-of-wedlock pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, and it also avoids the canalizing and sensitizing effects of an immature approach to sexual expression becoming permanent and persisting into marriage. On the positive side, it saves the most affectional and intimate aspects of sexuality for sharing with one's spouse—the person whom one professedly loves most deeply and to whom one has a permanent commitment of love. Finally, for those adolescents who have professed sincere religious convictions, abstinence from premarital intercourse avoids the troublesome moral conflict and guilt feelings, both currently and later in life. It is certainly a psychologically tenable and morally supportable position in the modern world—even if an increasingly lonely one.

The current major ethico-religious minority view on premarital sexual intercourse, that this act should be reserved

solely for the marital relationship, is largely based on the same moral and practical grounds as the psychological and philosophical positions just considered above—with one significant exception: All Christian religions doctrinally proscribe sexual intercourse for all persons except with their duly married spouses. This procedure, from the standpoint of everyday morality, is somewhat arbitrary, but it avoids all negative social judgments as well as all adverse criticism of the newly married pair and imputations of sin. More important, this position rules out unmarried sexual intercourse that satisfies all of the preconditions of premarital intercourse specified above except for the current impossibility of marriage for pressing practical reasons.

Differentiation of Social Sex Roles

Components of Social Sex Role

In contrast to biological sex role, which refers to feeling tones, behavior, and impulses, functionally or historically dependent on gonadal stimulation, social sex role refers to the differential functions, status, and personality traits that each culture traditionally assumes to inhere in the very fact of sex membership. Social sex roles in a given culture are generally regarded as self-evident reflections of the essential nature of

man and woman. That men and women perform social and economic functions that vary widely from culture to culture in degree of similarity is an anthropological commonplace; and to a greater or lesser extent, different cultures provide differential training for boys and girls that will equip them for the distinctive tasks they will perform as men and women. Such differential training takes place in our own culture as well as in more primitive cultures (Leighton & Kluckhohn, 1947; Mead, 1939), but is less thoroughgoing as a result of the greater discontinuity between the status worlds of children and adults. In our own culture, as Parsons (1942) points out, girls suffer less than boys from this discontinuity in training, since as children both are reared primarily by the mother who can provide a visible model of behavior as well as concrete experience with tasks appropriate only for the female sex role.

Another important aspect of social sex role is the hierarchical ordering of relations between the sexes in terms of (1) the relative values placed by the culture on maleness and femaleness, respectively, and (2) the degree of access each sex has to positions of social power and privilege. In most familial, vocational, and institutional situations in our culture, except for very recent changes, the male is trained for the superordinate positions. As in other types of inferior social rankings, however,

the female position allows a certain tolerated degree of chronic aggression, sabotage, and cleverness against the superior rank (Davis, 1941).

From an early age boys learn to be contemptuous of the female sex role; and although girls resent and complain about the disrespect shown their sex, Simmons and Rosenberg (1975) found that girls are less likely than boys to believe its "great" to be their own sex, that they are more likely to perceive themselves acting like the opposite sex, and that they are also less likely to think it is important to avoid acting like the opposite sex.

The third important component of social sex role is the prevailing cultural conception of masculinity and femininity. This consists of a stereotyped, composite personality portrait of man and woman, defining the emotions, interests, moral attitudes, and character traits thought proper and desirable for each sex.

Our culture, for example, claimed until recently that men and women "are different kinds of people. Men are strong, bolder, less pure, less refined, more logical, more reasonable....Women are more delicate, stronger in sympathy, understanding, and insight, less mechanically adept, more immersed in petty detail and in personalities, and given to 'getting emotional over things'" (Lynd & Lynd, 1937). These notions of masculinity and femininity have deep and often obscure roots in the culture. In general, however,

they are derived from the retrospective socioeconomic functions and statuses of men and women, and from the culturally determined characteristics of appropriate male and female body types and biological sex roles. The conventional differences between masculinity and femininity tend to decline as both sexes assume the same roles in the labor market, as commonly happens in our postindustrial society today.

Impact of Pubescence on Social Sex Roles

It is self-evident that American children develop a sex role identity by the age of 6 or 7; during adolescence, moreover, the youth in our culture acquire clear-cut and unambiguous conceptions of adult masculinity and femininity. The facilitating effect of adolescence on the emergence of social sex roles can be attributed in part to (1) greater perceptual sensitivity to social situations and interpersonal relationships, and to (2) the greater importance of social sex role at this stage of personality development.

During childhood social sex role is primarily differentiated for purposes of play. But in adolescence the aim of this differentiation is more serious by far, involving a more or less permanent assignment of social, vocational, and family tasks and aspirations, together with their appropriate personality traits.

Pubescence **per se**, therefore, must be an important factor in

the development of social sex role in view of the fact that pubescent individuals make higher scores on the Masculinity-Femininity test than nonpubescent individuals of equivalent chronological age (Terman & Miles, 1936). This does not mean that sex hormones exert a direct influence on the individual's development of appropriate masculine or feminine personality attributes. The immediate effects of sex hormones under favorable conditions are merely to increase sex consciousness and awareness of sex differences, and to develop differential sensitivity to the distinctive characteristics of male and female body types. But as a result of this increased sensitivity to sex differences, the individual becomes more aware of the **social** expectations and values attached to the male or female body. As a result of reacting to his own changed body form, of reacting to the sexuality of others, and of being reacted to as a sexual object, he comes to identify with a given adult sex clan and to incorporate the personality characteristics compatible with the social expectations of membership in that clan. He thus acquires the complete constellation of differential personality traits associated with male and female socioeconomic functions, with the physical criteria of masculine and feminine attractiveness, and with the properties of male and female biological sex role.

The mere development of the body-type characteristics that

follows from the sex-appropriate pattern of endocrine stimulation does not of itself result either in cultural norms of masculine or feminine attractiveness or in individual identification with and incorporation of the appropriate physical criteria of masculinity or femininity. The physical values that are culturally chosen as criteria of masculine or feminine physical attractiveness are not implicit in the sex differences themselves; they are arbitrarily selected from a large number of secondary sex characteristics and at arbitrarily designated points on a continuum of male and female body types.

The same holds true for biological sex role: neither its original emergence nor subsequent differentiation is implicit in pubescence. In cultures in which a sharp distinction is made between male and female biological sex roles (Manus, American), there is correspondingly greater polarization of the concepts of masculinity and femininity; and when this distinction is not made (Mundugumor, Arapesh), the essential natures of man and woman are conceived as more alike.

Once learned, the concept of social sex role is continually reinforced by the availability of vivid perceptual cues, i.e., objective and culturally determined differences in the appearance, behavior, and presumed personality traits of the two sexes. Thus, not only the cultural existence of polarized concepts of

masculinity and femininity, but also the adolescent's identification with these concepts is facilitated by the presence of culturally defined differences in sex-appropriate physical traits, biological sex role, and socioeconomic functions. Biological and social sex roles are simultaneously differentiated in our culture, and each mutually reinforces the other.

Transitional Social Sex Role in Adolescence

Since the adolescent is not admitted to membership in society at large, he can play a social sex role only in his own peer group. It is inevitable that this role will be transitional and discontinuous with both its childhood and adult counterparts. The appropriate constellations of masculine and feminine traits associated with high peer-group status have been discussed in detail earlier in this book. They are related, at least in part, to the unique interim goals and values of the peer group.

In relation to preadolescence, the social sex role of adolescence requires a break with the derived status inherent in the role of emotionally dependent son or daughter. Boys must primarily aspire to an extrinsic (earned) status based on their own performance abilities; and girls must aspire both to a derived status related to their own homemaking abilities and their more circumscribed vocational roles. In relation to the adult social

sex role, a similar degree of discontinuity prevails. Thus, in contrast to responsibility as a dominant characteristic of this role, the orientation of the youth culture is more or less specifically irresponsible.

In choosing its leaders, the youth culture places great emphasis on the importance of being an "all-round" personality, and relatively little weight on competence in a narrow field of specialization. Male athletic prowess carries little prestige value in the adult culture; and sexual attractiveness or glamorousness in the female is a relatively minor component of the social sex role of adult women.

Nevertheless, despite this evidence of discontinuity (just as in the transmission of major social-class goals, values, and attitudes), the essential differential aspects of social sex role filter down into and are transmitted by the peer culture. It is true, of course, that in the middle- and upper-middle classes there is up through college no sex differentiation in the process of formal education; such differentiation takes place first at the postgraduate level where there is a "direct connection with future occupational careers." But despite the presumption of sex equality in future vocational roles that is initially engendered by this nondiscriminatory preparatory (high school and college) education, neither boys nor girls seriously doubt that eventually

considerable differentiation of occupational status will take place on the basis of sex membership. Girls adopt a more ambivalent and less ego-involved attitude than boys toward expressed vocational choice because in anticipation of marriage the belief is still deep rooted that the husband must be the superior achiever in the occupational world and the wife the caretaker of young children (Komarovsky, 1973).

Whereas the middle-class boy fully anticipates that he will be expected to create through his own vocational efforts and achievements the social status of his future family, relatively fewer girls in the same social class^{vii} as married women intend to compete with men in their own fields or at occupational levels of equivalent social prestige. They expect to fall heir to a derived status dependent on their husband's station in life, and to acquire earned status in the roles of mother and housewife, supplemented perhaps by participation in cultural and community welfare activities. Adolescent girls are less likely, even today, to envision future educational and presumably occupational opportunities as available to them. "While the boy emphasizes future opportunity, she is more likely to place primacy on interpersonal skills" (Simmons & Rosenberg, 1975).

Sex Differences in Acquisition of Social Sex Role

In some ways the acquisition of a social sex role is more difficult for boys, but in other ways it is more difficult for girls. Boys in general are required to undergo greater personality change. The implications of emancipation—independence, self-reliance, striving for earned status—are applied more thoroughly in their case. For boys there is also less continuity from the adolescent to the adult social sex roles. Athletic ability and heterosexual effectiveness are less related to the adult male role than glamorousness is to the adult female role.

Girls, on the other hand, experience more difficulty in the transition between preadolescent and adolescent social sex roles since they lack a core value, such as athletic prowess, which persists from one stage to the next as a significant determinant of peer group status. The concepts of femininity and female sex role in our culture are also less stable and less consistent than the corresponding concepts for boys.

More recently, however, as noted earlier, especially children of working mothers, see their own sex as having some of the traits usually associated with the opposite sex. Females feel more "aggressive and assertive and males more tender and warm," and when they are college students, they feel freer than their parents to engage in overlapping sex roles (Starr, 1974).

Nevertheless, girls still feel less positive toward

themselves and their sex and more self-conscious about their role (Simmons & Rosenberg, 1975). They do not yet quite visualize themselves as filling an important place in the adult world. They rate their sex role more harshly than boys do. This is true even of African-American girls who, compared with white girls, hold a more favorable self-picture and a favorable position as females in their community.

The trend as a whole, however, is clearly toward feminism, notably in attitude. In a comparison of two samples between 1969 and 1975, Parelus (1975) noted the following attitudinal shifts among women who were attending college as freshman.

Attitudes toward work, financial responsibilities, and the division of labor in the home showed the greatest amount of change....Attitudes toward the importance of marital and maternal roles changed also, but to a lesser degree....Few would sacrifice marriage or motherhood for occupational success. The far-reaching changes observed in the women's attitudes and expectations were not accompanied by equal shifts in their perceptions of men's willingness to marry feminist women.

Since most of these women were interested in marriage and

motherhood, it is probable that they experienced anxiety about their future.

Thus, social sex role definitions have been shifting rapidly. Women, at least in certain segments of society, reject both economic dependence and the "unalleviated household responsibilities" of the traditional wife-mother role. Their goals, therefore, suggest restructuring of the family but not its dissolution.

Much research indicates that the experience of higher education tends to depolarize the sex roles among students, mostly, of course, among women.

Terman and Miles (1936) established long ago that increased education has the effect of reducing the "masculine" score of men and the "feminine" score of women on the scale they devised to measure such differences. Kamorovsky (1972) reported from her research that "intellectual qualities are no longer considered unfeminine and ...the imperative of male superiority is giving way to the ideal of companionship between equals." Riesman has observed that greater femininity is being increasingly permitted to educated men in this country...There are many institutions

throughout the country where men can without embarrassment be interested in art, in English, in dance, and in music (1959).

This, however, is more than matched by the new interest of girls in medicine, science, biology, architecture, etc.

The major shift is in the female social sex role, which dictates corresponding modifications in the male role, particularly in the family constellation. Yet girls are not really driven by the culture as are boys to prove their adequacy and maintain their self-esteem through their accomplishments. And lacking this powerful cultural instigation to achievement, in comparison to her average male counterpart, the career-oriented girl must either be intrinsically motivated by an unusually high order of intellectual curiosity and creativity or have unusually great needs for ego enhancement that are rooted in her individual personality development.

Current trends, however, lend increasing social support for women who are adopting feminist perspectives. Women's centers, communes, consciousness-raising groups, literature, and pro-feminist organizations extol the virtues of feminist life-styles and provide some of the structure within which these life-styles

might be realized" (Parellis, 1975). Moreover, some women seem ready to maintain feminist attitudes in spite of their perceived male rejection. Komarovsky (1973) found that women in the 1970s were much less likely to hide their ability than women in 1950.

Biological or Social Determination of Social Sex Role

Since the culture determines the socioeconomic functions, the relative status, and the biological sex roles of men and women, as well as the physical criteria of masculinity and femininity, social sex role is primarily a cultural derivative rather than an inevitable consequence of endocrinological differences. In all cultures social sex roles constitute institutionalized patterns of behavior that are transmitted to boys and girls by differential treatment, training, and expectations; and it is especially during adolescence, when physical changes in body form make identification with an adult sex clan possible, that these roles are effectively incorporated into ego structure.

All of this becomes much more evident when we look outside our own culture and discover that its concepts of masculinity and femininity are not the only ones that are natural and possible in human societies. When the difference in the socioeconomic roles of the two sexes lies in a direction opposite to that of our own culture, as among the Tchambuli, our notions of masculinity and

femininity are precisely reversed (Mead, 1939); and, on the other hand, when little distinction is made between these roles, as in the Soviet Union, there is correspondingly less of a "dichotomy of personality characteristics between man and woman" (Sherif & Cantril, 1947). Similarly, when male and female biological sex roles are presumed to be more identical intraculturally (Arapesh, Mundugumor), both sexes are expected to conform to similar ideals of character (Mead, 1939).

In taking this position it is not necessary to assume, as many social psychologists and anthropologists do, that biological factors play no role whatever in determining sex differences in personality. We have cited evidence in support of the proposition that gonadal hormones and prolactin can bring about significant changes in such temperamental characteristics as aggressiveness and motherliness. Nevertheless, personality differences that are conditioned by hormonal factors would not prevail unless they were supported by cultural variables operating in the same direction. And since cultural influences are able to negate and even reverse the consequences of biological conditioning, they must be accounted the prepotent factors in determining social sex role.

Heterosexual Peer Group and Courting Behavior

Our culture, like all other cultures, establishes formal and institutionalized practices and regulations governing the interpersonal relationships between the sexes. Invariably, the formality and rigorousness of these regulations increase as children reach adolescence; for beginning with pubescence, heterosexual relationships seriously impinge on such culturally important matters as biological sex role, social-class status, and family organization. Whatever the mores that govern the approaches children of opposite sex can make to each other (physically or socially) they are almost invariably significantly different from those in relation to adults (Benedict, 1938).

Since in our culture the adolescent's social life and opportunities for sexual expression are almost entirely limited to his peer group, he is obliged to devise instrumentalities for formal heterosexual contact within its structural organization. In contrast to preadolescent group formations, adolescent peer groups are generally predicated on heterosexual membership and their activities are undoubtedly stimulated by gonadal maturation, as evidenced by their earlier appearance in girls than in boys. But the facts that an interval of at least a year usually occurs between pubescence and the appearance of these interests in girls and that a further interval of time is interposed between the initial appearance of these interests and their translation into

suitable activities (Jersild, 1946) shows that other factors (parental attitudes, identification with peer group activities, the learning of new social techniques) are also involved.

Courting relationships in the peer group serve several important functions. They provide for both sexes the major source of recreational activity during adolescence. For both boys and girls they are the source of most romantic and psychoaffectional sex experience and the basis for locating and choosing a suitable mate. They provide an important source of sexual gratification; and for both sexes, but especially for girls, they are a significant determinant of intragroup status and prestige.

Developmental Changes in Heterosexual Relationships

Preadolescent Segregation. Characteristic of our culture is a voluntary segregation of the sexes during the years of middle childhood and preadolescence. This is manifested by a lack of cross-sex sociometric choices, marked preference for like-sex individuals, avoidance of physical contact with members of the opposite sex, extreme sex-typing of games and activities, and numerous expressions of indifference, dislike, and rivalry. This state of affairs does not come about accidentally.

Transitional Heterosexual Patterns. Because of this tradition of segregation and antagonism, and the consequent absence of any recognized channels of communication, early homosexual interests cannot be manifested frankly and overtly. Hence arises a need for various covert and transitional ways of expressing heterosexual interests. One of the most widely practiced of these utilizes elaborate patterns of pseudo-disapproval and of studied and labored simulated hostility.

Boys and girls form in clusters of their own furtively eyeing each other while carrying on no organized activity of their own. Again there may be chasing and pushing and tussling reminiscent of the fracas of nursery school children. (Jersild, 1946)

Embarrassed and self-conscious about their emergent hormonally instigated interest in the opposite sex,

a feeling which is disallowed by the childhood social code, children approaching adolescence first reveal this interest in the only socially acceptable way open to them—in antagonism. (Ausubel, 1950)

The increasing depolarization of sex roles also enhances more positive possibilities of richer and more complex male-female relationships. There is some evidence of an earlier peer relationship between boys and girls displacing the segregation of the sexes prevailing during the years of middle childhood and preadolescence.

Although boys and girls 10 to 13 years of age still tend to prefer the company of their own sex, the old preadolescent pattern of cross-sex hostility and withdrawal appears to be declining significantly. In a middle-class southern urban school population, 38% of seventh-grade children, both boys and girls, preferred the companionship of a member of the opposite sex (as opposed to a member of the same sex or being alone).
(Starr, 1974)

A transitional heterosexual pattern manifests itself at this age in the form of atypically early dating.

Another transitional form of development that does not markedly conflict with recognized preadolescent patterns and requires no new social learnings in relation to peers of the opposite sex is the early adolescent "crush." It involves strong

attraction to, and admiration of, a peer of the same sex or an older person of the opposite sex. It is a well-suited substitutive outlet for heterosexual interests when adolescent boys and girls are still self-conscious and awkward about approaching each other.

The first type of "crush" is more common in girls than in boys, and involves a majority of girls. This sex difference is compatible with the previously noted tendency for girls to be more concerned than boys with intimate interpersonal experience. However, such "crushes" are of relatively short duration and are replaced in almost all instances by normal heterosexual relationships as soon as these can be established with greater ease. Although they frequently involve very close association, some physical affection, and even jealousy (especially in girls), sexual connotations are seldom present and homosexuality is only a rare consequence. "Crush" behavior toward an older person of the opposite sex partakes more of romantic idealization and hero worship. Silent adoration is usually the only feasible way of expressing the felt devotion that is intense but quickly dissipated.

Development of the Romantic Pattern

Once past the initial self-consciousness and bewilderment, when their status as adolescents is clearly enough established,

boys and girls allow their heterosexual interests to come into the open frankly and unabashedly. Initially these overt manifestations are apt to be exaggerated, boisterous, silly, affectedly uninhibited, and randomly directed. Gradually, however, they become more restrained, dignified, patterned, and selective. Giddy interest in all members of the opposite sex gives way to a more concentrated interest in one person or in a favored few. Formal dating displaces diffuse, unorganized activity. With increasing age, "going steady" becomes more common, involving one fourth to one third of high-school students and more than half of college students (Cole & Hall, 1970). The college group was also found to be more critical of their dates.

In addition to greater selectivity, other factors add to the growing stability of adolescent heterosexual relationships. As adolescents grow older, their relationships become more romantic and affectional, with greater depth of emotion. As dating becomes increasingly oriented toward mating needs, these relationships necessarily become less casual.

The current romantic pattern of courtship involving the notions of voluntary selection of a mate, "special affinity" between the betrothed pair, and idealization of the loved one is neither typical of most cultures nor is of very long standing in our own culture. To a large extent it is a reflection of our

cultural concept of the traditional feminine sex role, of our official psychoaffectional orientation toward sexuality, and of the general aura of mystery surrounding sex. All psychoaffectional expressions of sexuality, however, need not be based on romantic love. Among both the Arapesh (Mead, 1939) and the Navaho (Leighton & Kluckhohn, 1947), for example, marriages are "arranged" by parents and families. Also, "the Navaho theory is that one woman will do as well as another as long as she is healthy, industrious, and competent" (Leighton & Kluckhohn, 1947). Nevertheless, in neither culture is there an absence of deep emotional content in the relationship between the sexes. It is interesting to note that despite the great emphasis we place on psychological compatibility in marriage, marriage partners generally are much more similar in social background factors than in personality characteristics.

Dating and Courting Beliefs and Practices

In one study (Purdue Opinion Poll, 1961) of 2000 adolescents the typical age of respondents for beginning to date was judged to be 13 by nearly half of them and 15 or 16 by nearly the other half. The actual facts, however, would likely indicate that dating starts somewhat earlier, certainly for girls, since they are socially more mature than boys.

There is a growing consensus of opinion that a shift has

occurred in the main purpose of dating (Collins, 1974). Whereas dating was once a central part of courtship, it has now become an end in itself. Almost every date now has an erotic component, providing the adolescent both with a pleasant social experience and a socially approved outlet for his heterosexual interests. Hurlock (1968) believes that petting is undoubtedly so widespread during dating that it could truly be called a characteristic of present day youth. She contends that boys expect to pet on every date, regardless of affection, whereas girls, at least in theory, focus more on petting with affection.

Some adolescents, but boys more than girls, date infrequently or not at all due to absorption in sports or other activities, physical immaturity, or unwillingness to accept such peer values as dancing, kissing, necking, and petting.

Of the characteristics thought desirable by adolescents in a prospective mate, physical and mental fitness, desire for a normal family life with children, dependability and trustworthiness, compatible interests, good personal appearance and manner, pleasant disposition, and a sense of humor are chosen most frequently by high-school students (Cole & Hall, 1970). These students are prudently aware that both partners must understand about the management of money. Girls want their prospective mates to have jobs, and boys want their prospective wives to know how to

manage a household and how to cook and keep house. Girls (especially those from high income groups) are concerned with their mates' prospects for making money and getting ahead. In general boys place more value on physical attractiveness, whereas girls lay greater stress on their parents' approval of their choice and on the traits of dependability and considerateness.

Our ideals of social mobility are reflected in the fact that overwhelming majorities of college students want their mates to have equal or better intelligence and education than themselves, but that only relatively few of a comparable group of students would not marry into families with a social status inferior to that of their own. As many as twenty percent of college students expressed the view that Catholics and Protestants could not intermarry successfully, and forty-two percent believed that marriages between Jews and non-Jews could not be successful. A majority of high-school girls prefer their prospective mates to be one to two years older than themselves, whereas the reverse is true of boys. Except for older men and persons in upper socioeconomic groups, residential propinquity is an important limiting factor in the selection of a mate.

Courtship Problems and Heterosexual Adjustment

The courtship problems that bother adolescents most have to

do with (a) the legitimacy of premarital sex intimacies—kissing, petting, intercourse; (b) dating practices—"blind," "pick-up," "girl-made" dates; (c) characteristics limiting the suitability of a prospective mate—age, religious, and educational differences; and (d) difficulties experienced in love affairs—quarrels, loss of interest, fear of over-involvement, the nature of "true love," "two-timing," long engagements, terminating engagements.

Factors Influencing the Outcome of Heterosexual Adjustment.

Whether or not heterosexual adjustment during adolescence will be successful is not a matter of chance. Depending upon the personality characteristics of the individual and upon the favorableness of his environment, he may either fail to adopt an appropriate biological sex role (e.g., sex perversion, sex delinquency, asexuality), or he may experience delayed or inadequate heterosexual maturation. The importance of learning experiences in achieving heterosexual adjustment is pointed up by the series of developmental changes in the relationship between the sexes during the course of adolescence, by the relatively large number of love affairs of most individuals before choosing a mate, by the increasing degree of dissatisfaction from high school to college age with members of the opposite sex, and by the

increasing degree of affectional success in successive love affairs.

Three main categories of unfavorable factors are implicated in heterosexual maladjustment during adolescence: (a) **unfortunate parental attitudes and parent-child relationships**: the example of an unhappy marriage in the home, the parents' deprecation of sex or of the sex of the adolescent, parental clinging to the adolescent child or preventing him from making heterosexual contacts with his peers, parental ridicule of early heterosexual ineffectiveness, unwholesome family relationships; (b) **personality traits** associated with asocial tendencies (excessive introversion, timidity, insecurity, anxiety, impaired self-esteem, asceticism, and overintellectualization), and with inappropriate differentiation of biological sex role (narcissism or overidentification with the sex role of the parent of opposite sex); and (c) **insufficient opportunity for learning experiences**, due to extreme physical unattractiveness, isolation from peer group or from members of the opposite sex, and lack of social skills.

The less serious of these influences, such as parental restrictiveness, asocial personality traits, and insufficient opportunity for heterosexual experience, usually limit only the rate and maximum extent of normal heterosexual maturation or lead

to transitory aberrations in psychosexual development. In the latter category belongs the situational homosexuality associated with sexual deprivation. On the other hand, defects in personality traits directly influencing the appropriate differentiation of biological sex role may lead to permanent homosexuality; and extreme parental deprecation of sexuality or of a particular (male or female) sex role may lead to asexuality (e.g., frigidity, psychic impotence, absent sex drive) or to sex delinquency.

Sex Education and Guidance

Adolescent Sources of Sex Information

Age-mates through friendship continue to provide the most frequent single source of sex information (Inman, 1974), but the family constitutes the most significant source (Inman, 1974). In one study (Inman, 1974) of ninth through twelfth graders the majority of respondents had received first sex information during grade school from talks with friends or reading sexually oriented magazines with friends. Mothers alone provided much more information than did fathers. Schools were an important source of sex information, but the family (especially mothers) was the preferred information source. However, a substantial minority of both boys and girls said they would prefer both parents to

dispense sex information rather than having one parent do it.

Teens report that they feel more comfortable discussing substance abuse than sex with their parents and that their parents would be more upset by discovering that they were sexually active than they were using drugs. The extent to which sex was discussed with parents depended on the latter's degree of openness in family communication and on whether their own parents had discussed sex with them when they were adolescents (Fisher, 1990).

The Need for Sex Education in the Schools

An increasing plurality of sexual attitudes, values, and life styles and an increased awareness of problems related to sexuality such as venereal disease, AIDS, unwanted pregnancies among adolescents, and numerous yearly abortions make sex education in schools an urgent need. Over 50 percent of married couples have some sort of sexual dysfunction. One half of all marriages end in divorce. Sexual anxieties are related to drug usage (Welbourne, 1975).

Given the urgency of adolescents' sex-related problems and anxieties, the extent of their ignorance and misinformation about sex, and the reluctance of parents to provide sex education because of embarrassment, lack of rapport, of sufficient relevant knowledge, and of pedagogic skills in presenting it, the school

obviously has an obligation to counteract the existing paucity of knowledge and valid information, and to forestall risky experimentation prompted by curiosity, ignorance, and perplexity. Realistic sex education would also deal with the problem of preventing adolescent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

A Program of General Sex Education

To be satisfactory and unoffensive to parents of different moral beliefs and persuasions, the school can attempt to offer only a very general sex education. Such education would be concerned with the physiology and psychology of normal sexual development and with the emotional and ethical goals of sex expression. It would leave to individual guidance specific problems about various sexual practices.

Any effective program of sex education would also have to be geared to developmental "changes in the form of children's concern as they move from the early adolescent into the late adolescent period."

It is...ironic to recall that when boys and girls are most eager to make an approach to each other, to

discover what a man and woman mean to each other, and how they should act toward each other, we can only offer them sex education, i.e., teaching about reproduction.

We must persistently insist rather in maintaining that sex education is really meaningless unless it can be related to the meaning, the role, and the importance of sex in the modern world. To separate these questions from the province of sex education is to make of it a meaningless jumble of isolated facts, merely to substitute five-syllable for four-letter words. The writer, in other words, cannot accept the point of view that sex education must be only factual and descriptive in nature and can't presume to tell an individual how to behave in an activity that is primarily personal rather than social in nature.

What is forgotten in all such arguments is that every culture accepts an implicit set of ethical values for significant behavior and proceeds as a matter of self-preservation to educate the young to accept these values. Does any one after all object to the "one-sided" advocacy of the virtues of democracy, honesty, truthfulness, and kindness in our schools?

Since it is impossible to conceive of any directed behavior which is devoid of either purpose or moral content, how can sexual education neglect either aspect? The individual still retains his right of self-determination by being free to accept or reject the

goals and standards offered him, providing his behavior does not infringe on the rights or interests of others.

It is also unnecessary to avoid comparative moral judgments with respect to alternative approaches to sexual experience and type of orientation to sameness or difference in gender of the sexual object from the person seeking sexual gratification.

Objections against such judgments are frequently made by advocates of and apologists for homosexuality and permissive sexuality on the grounds that they (the judgments) are authoritarian, absolutistic, and repressive of freedom of choice and of legitimate human variability. They would merely have us state that either heterosexual or homosexual, psychoaffectional or physiological forms of sexual expression are only different from each other but are equally meritorious and desirable, rather than better and worse. However, we have already taken the position that every culture has an indisputable right to adopt certain central moral alternatives on an absolutistic basis and to inculcate them exclusively in the socialization of the young, without being accused of authoritarianism or the abridgment of freedom.

One position on the ethical orientation of sex education that could be taken but seldom is (at least explicitly), is that our culture should adopt the Samoan code of sex morality. This would be consistent with the widespread attitude that the stressfulness

of adolescence is directly correlated with the severity of social restrictions on sexual expression. But we have already seen that there is no single, inevitable, or universal pattern of psychosexual development, and that the suppression of physiological sex urges is not invariably associated with psychological conflict. In the light of this finding it is possible to suggest a more realistic solution, which is also more appropriate for the emotional and aesthetic ideals of our society. And the finding that the Arapesh are able to prevent effectively the development of psychophysiological sex drives merely through passive de-emphasis and to channel all sex urges and unconsciousness along affectional lines lends credence to the belief that a psychoaffectional goal of sex behavior is neither unrealistic nor impossible (with proper sex education) in our culture. All of the major religions in America already profess as much, although the beliefs and practices of the majority of their adolescents do not conform to Church doctrine.

The argument that "free expression of the psychophysiological component of sex" is more "natural" is psychologically irrelevant since practically every other "natural" drive in man has been drastically modified and channeled into highly differentiated and limited modes of expression. In advocating a psychoaffectional goal of sexual behavior, however, it need not be given the same

negative connotations which it has acquired in our own Anglo-Saxon culture. In other words, our present-day acceptance of psychoaffectional sexuality need not be regarded as the lesser of two evils, as something intrinsically ugly and reprehensible, as "something to be relegated to the darkness of the night" but to be tolerated in relation to marital affectional needs. Instead, it can be given a more positive emphasis as in the Arapesh society where it is regarded as an added means to enriching and enhancing an affectional relationship between man and woman.

Sexual activity, then, could become a component of the emotional expression of the total personality, instead of a partially repressed emotional outlet in most women and a combination of physiological and affectional behavior in men (each of which is frequently pursued independently of the other). This concept of sexuality presumes a high degree of ego involvement which disallows a casual attitude toward sex activity, such as that which underlies sexual promiscuity, experimentation, and flirtation. The goal toward which it strives is the monogamous type of marital relationship which we have already adopted in our society. The difference, however, would be that marriage would be advocated as the best possible medium for enhancing a psychoaffectional sexual partnership rather than as the factor which in itself legitimizes something inherently shameful.

If our culture would adopt and teach this point of view. "Psychosexual development would proceed accordingly," and adolescent boys and girls would really feel this way about sex. The problems associated with psychophysiological sex needs would for the most part vanish. And if marriage could occur at a reasonably early age, the sexual turmoil which now characterizes adolescent development in so many individuals would be a thing of the past.

Sex Guidance

The advocated program of sex education is concerned with general problems in sexual development and expression and with a long-range attempt to redirect psychosexual development in accordance with certain specified cultural value judgments on the goals of sexuality. Sex guidance, on the other hand, deals with **individual** problems of sexual adjustment and can be handled effectively only within the framework of a counseling relationship.

This does not mean that guidance (any more than education) must take place in an amoral setting, that the counselor is concerned only with clarifying the sex problems of his client or with helping him adjust his inner sex needs to the limitations imposed by the environment. In the counseling relationship, sexual

problems must first be placed in an ethical context of meaning and objectives. It is the counselor's right (and duty) to communicate his own moral formulations and judgments to the client. He cannot, of course, insist that the client accept his position, but he can give him the benefit of reacting to a set of mature moral expectations representative of the culture at large. And in so doing he encourages the individual to approach his sex problems from the standpoint of some system of moral values rather than from the standpoint that one way is as good as another provided it reduces tension or yields satisfaction.

Two persistent ethical problems arise in modern sex needs, (1) the management of existing psychophysiological sex needs, and (2) the management of psychoaffectional sex needs before marriage. Adolescents might very well be able to accept the proposition that society should so regulate psychosexual development in the future that individuals will develop only psychoaffectional sex drives. But what are they to do in the meantime with their own psychophysiological drives? The only answer consistent with the sex philosophy advocated above is that the reduction of physiological sex tensions by autoeroticism is more in keeping with the psychoaffectional ideal than with the use of a "socio-sexual" outlet such as petting or intercourse. If this principle is acceptable, what then are we to tell adolescents who are

genuinely in love, but unable to marry, about the ethics of premarital intercourse? To remain consistent we would have to admit that although premarital sex relations are obviously less satisfactory than marital relations, they are nevertheless compatible with one psychoaffectional approach to sexuality if they meet the strictures already discussed.

Realistic sex guidance, however, cannot ignore the social reality in which adolescents live. By the time they appear for guidance, depending on their social milieu, they have already incorporated a vast array of sexual attitudes, urges, inhibitions, taboos, and morally weighted opinions about the desirability and legitimacy of various forms of sexual activity. One can only present certain moral considerations to them and point out how they can be applied in practice. But because of the course which psychosexual development has already taken, one cannot expect that these precepts will be either acceptable or realistically applicable in every case. In practice, therefore, after a counselor has put the question of sexuality in its proper context of moral values, goal, and purpose, the best he can do is to equip the boy or girl for intelligent self-determination. To do this, he must supply precise and reliable information about the advantages and disadvantages, the issues, and the implications of the various forms of sexual expression. And to be meaningful and helpful,

answers to such questions must be specific and applicable to the adolescent's actual problems.

Chapter 12

Notes

¹Prepubescent castrates, for example, typically do not develop sex drives.

²A large part of the subcultural middle-class expectations regarding repression of psychophysiological sex drive and the practice of chastity by adolescents is no longer operative today.

³"Kinsey's data has been subjected to statistical attack on the grounds that they are not adequately representative of the lower educational levels. It has also been suggested that the median rather than the mean would be a more valid measure of sexual outlet [since it would be less distorted] by the inclusion in the data of high outlets conceivably due to compulsive sexuality."

⁴Kinsey's differential findings by social class, however, were foreshadowed in various studies of social stratification (Davis & Dollard, 1940; Lynd & Lynd, 1937).

⁵This evaluation of sex outlets is based only on psychosocial criteria. Complete evaluation must also take into account the relevant moral issues. These are discussed in a later section of this chapter.

⁶Kinsey points with justice to the fact that most medical writers help to perpetuate such anxieties by virtue of their unwillingness to make this statement unequivocally (Kinsey et al., 1948).

⁷With the tremendous expansion of women in the work force—both single women and married women with and without children—the vocational roles of women have been correspondingly expanded.

Chapter 12

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