



# SEXUAL BEHAVIOR IN THE 1970s

article

By **MORTON HUNT**

*the first major national survey since the kinsey reports reveals marked changes in the sex habits of americans*

AMERICA IS IN THE MIDST of a sexual-liberation movement. In the quarter century since Dr. Alfred Kinsey made his celebrated census of American sexual behavior, there have been dramatic increases in the frequency with which most Americans engage in various sexual activities and in the number of persons who include formerly rare or forbidden techniques in their sexual repertoires. This distinct trend toward liberation—long intuitively recognized but never confirmed by actual measurement—has now been investigated in an extensive national survey funded by the Playboy Foundation. The survey, conducted by a private research organization, studied the sexual attitudes and behavior of 2026 persons in 24 cities and suburban areas; it re-examined most of the sexual practices studied by Kinsey and his associates, and thus provides measurements of change. In a few instances, it explored areas of behavior not reported on in the Kinsey research.

Here are some of the key findings:

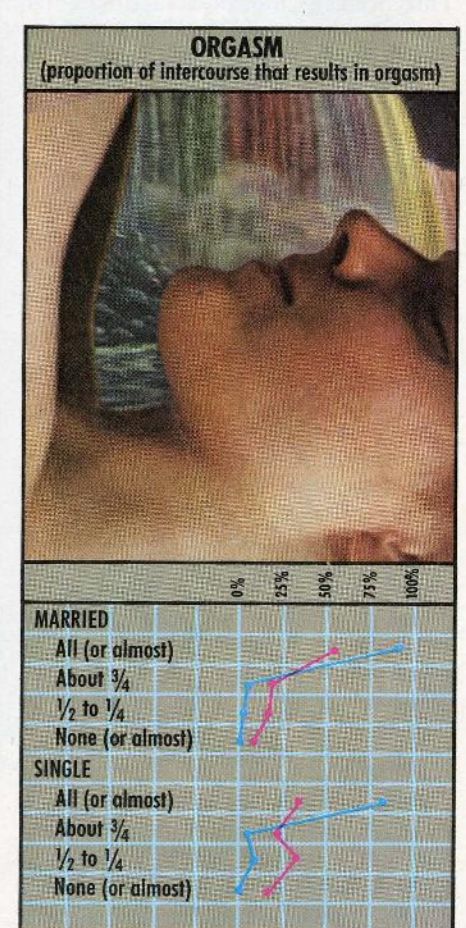
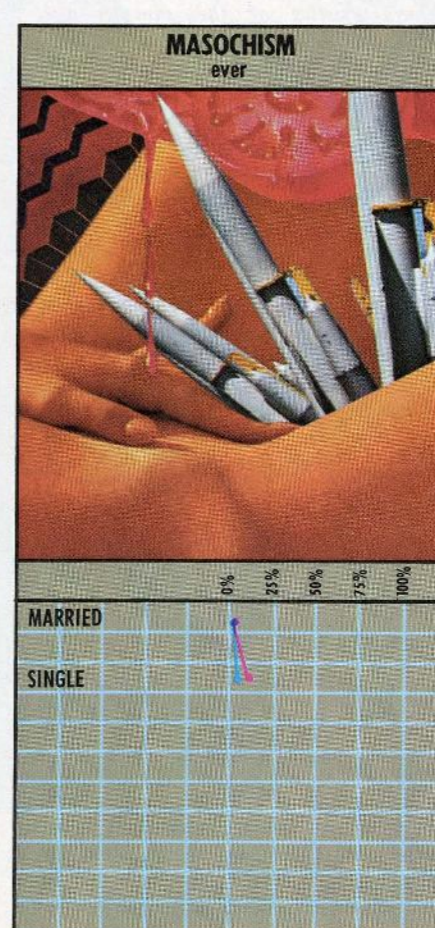
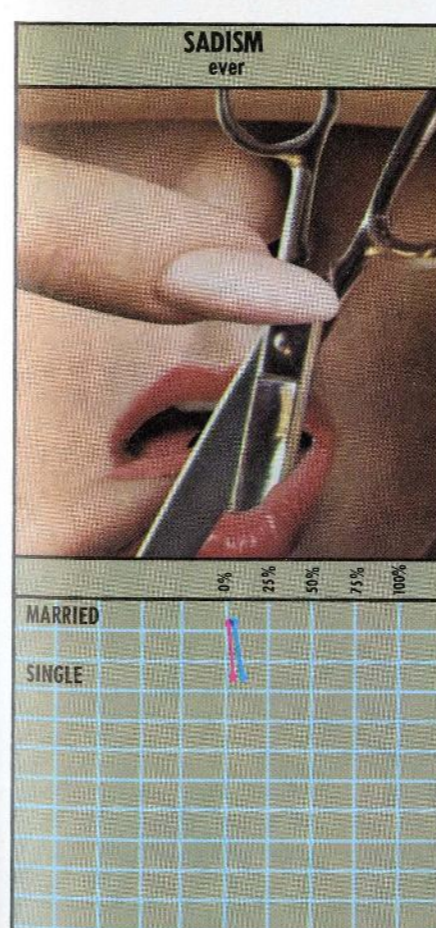
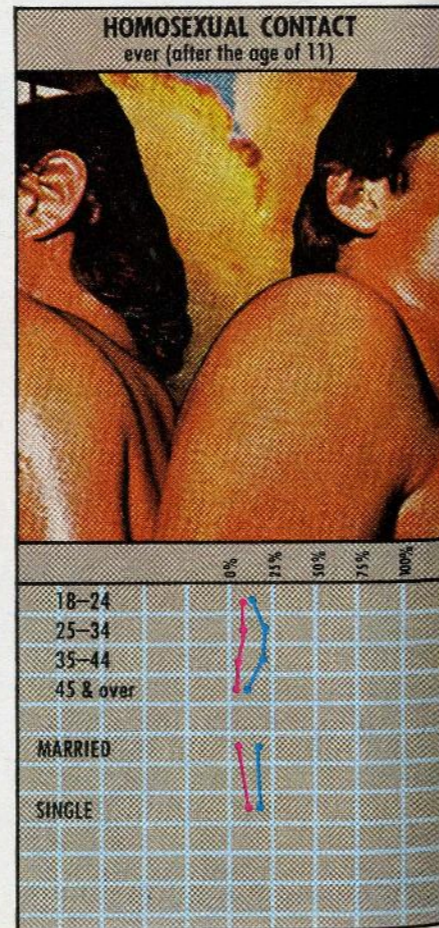
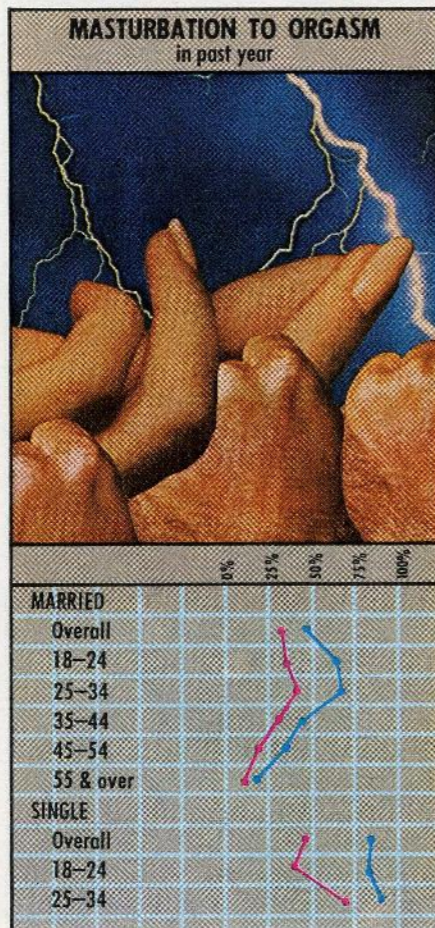
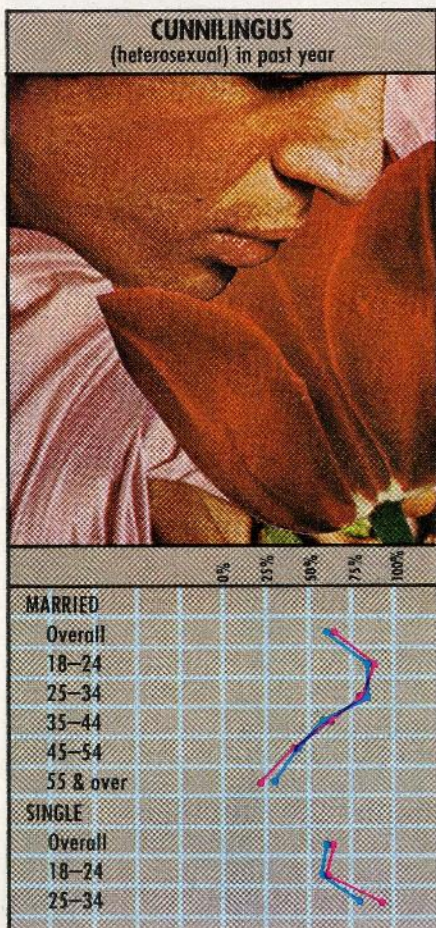
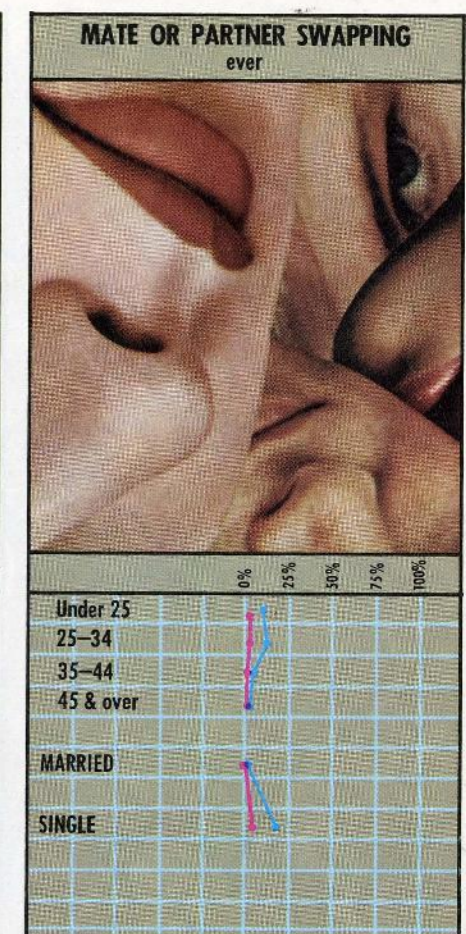
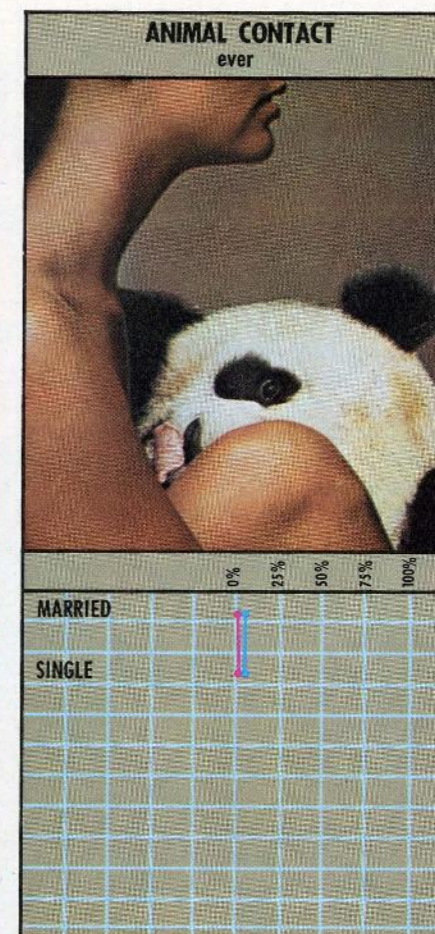
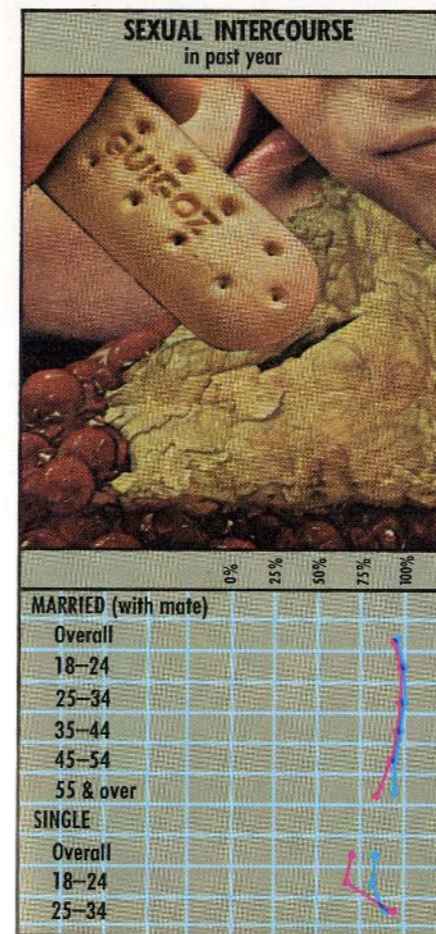
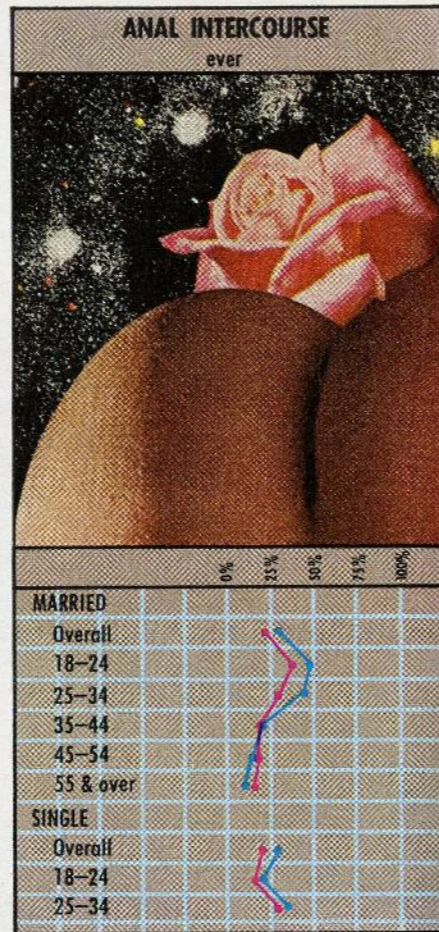
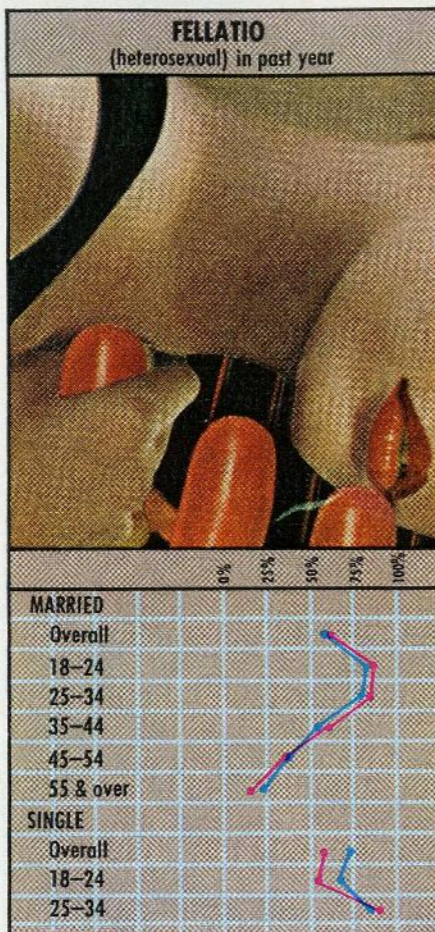
- Premarital sex has become both acceptable and widespread; the change is especially noteworthy in females. Kinsey reported that one third of the single women in his study had had intercourse by the age of 25; the Playboy survey found that today, about three quarters have done so before they are 25. (Kinsey's published data deal with white-only samples; in all direct comparisons of our own data with his, we use only the white portion of our sample. The charts on pages 86-87, however, are based on our total sample, some ten percent of which is black; figures in the charts therefore differ somewhat from those used in our direct comparisons with Kinsey's data.) Kinsey reported that nearly half of the women who married before the age of 25 had had premarital sex; in the Playboy study, too, half of the women who married before 25 had done so, and among our youngest married women, four fifths had done so. The over-all incidence of premarital sex (text continued on page 88)

# SEXUAL PRACTICES

Beginning on the previous page is a full account of a far-reaching sexual-liberation movement in the United States—charted in a comprehensive survey sponsored by the Playboy Foundation and conducted by a private research organization. On these two pages are graphic reports on the incidence of a variety of ordinary and extraordinary sexual practices among contemporary Americans—fellatio,\* anal intercourse,\* cunnilingus,\* masturbation, homosexual contact, sexual intercourse,\* animal contact, mate or partner swapping,\* sadism and masochism—and on the proportion of intercourse that results in orgasm. The data in the graphs are taken from the survey's complete representative urban sample, which includes blacks. In the article, some data are presented on whites only to compare them with Kinsey data, which are based only on whites.

\*Heterosexual

MALE — FEMALE —



among males has increased only slightly, but single males are beginning their premarital coital experiences earlier: By the age of 17, nearly three quarters of our noncollege males had had premarital coitus, as against about two thirds of Kinsey's; of those males in our sample who have had at least some college education, more than half have had premarital coitus by 17, as against about a quarter in Kinsey's sample.

• The virtual abandonment of the double standard has affected the choice of coital partners by young single males. In Kinsey's sample, nearly a third of the men who were single between 16 and 20 had coitus with prostitutes at least once during those years; the same was true for men who were single between 21 and 25. In our own sample, only three percent of single men in the 18-to-24 age range had had contact with prostitutes in the past year; this one-year basis is not directly comparable with Kinsey's five-year basis, but the figures suggest that the use of prostitutes by young single males today is, at most, only about half as widespread as it was in the Forties, and possibly much less so. Young husbands are only a little more likely, but young wives are much more likely, to engage in extramarital sexual activity today. Kinsey reported that fewer than one wife in ten under the age of 25 had had extramarital coitus; the Playboy survey found that no fewer than 24 percent of wives under 25 had done so. This incidence, though smaller than that of husbands under 25 (32 percent), is much closer to it than a generation ago; in this area of behavior, women are attaining sexual equality.

• Oral sex is far more widely used than it used to be. Kinsey reported that fewer than four out of ten husbands with more than grade-school education had ever made oral contact with their wives' genitals or had ever had their own genitals orally stimulated by their wives; the Playboy survey found that more than half again as many had engaged in marital cunnilingus and fellatio in the past year alone. (In Kinsey's sample, men with only grade-school education were much less likely than other men ever to have had oral-genital experience. Since our sample includes virtually no grade-school men, we use only the relevant part of Kinsey's sample, in order to avoid exaggerating the change from his time to ours.) These practices are especially common today among younger men and women: More than four fifths of single males and females between 25 and 34 and about nine tenths of married persons under 25 had practiced cunnilingus or fellatio, or both, in the past year.

• Heterosexual anal intercourse is much more widely used today than formerly, although it remains primarily an experimental or occasional variation, chiefly among younger persons. Kinsey commented in his volume on male sexuality

## HOW THE SURVEY WAS DONE

*With this article, PLAYBOY presents the major findings of a comprehensive survey of the sexual behavior and attitudes of the American people, a study that explores the principal areas investigated 25 years ago by Alfred Kinsey and his associates and, in a few important instances, goes beyond the Kinsey work.*

*The Playboy Foundation retained The Research Guild, Inc., an independent market-survey and behavioral-research organization, to do the field work with a representative sample of urban and suburban adults throughout the nation. The Research Guild staff developed a basic questionnaire of more than 1000 items with which it examined the backgrounds, sex education, attitudes toward sexual practices and complete sex histories of 2026 persons who participated as subjects in the survey.*

*The sample, collected in 24 cities, closely parallels the composition of the adult (over-17) American society: It includes 982 men and 1044 women and is roughly 90 percent white and ten percent black; 71 percent are married, 25 percent never married, four percent previously married (and not remarried). All other major demographic characteristics of the sample—age, educational attainment, occupational status, geographical location—roughly match those of the entire American population.*

*Morton Hunt supplemented the questionnaire data with in-depth tape-recorded interviews in which he sought clues to the meanings of the trends that showed up in the data. His interview sample consisted of 100 men and 100 women and was similar in character to the questionnaire sample. Hunt interviewed the men; his wife, author Bernice Kohn, interviewed the women.*

*Hunt's complete report on the survey is to be published as a book, "Sexual Behavior in the 1970s," by Playboy Press. This article is adapted from the book manuscript. Detailed reports based on Hunt's book—on (1) premarital sex, (2) marital sex, (3) extramarital and postmarital sex, (4) masturbation and (5) homosexuality and other variant behavior—will appear in installments in PLAYBOY in succeeding months.*

that "anal activity in the heterosexual is not frequent enough to make it possible to determine the incidence of individuals who are specifically responsive to such stimulation." In sharp contrast, we found that nearly a quarter of all females and

more than a quarter of all males in our total sample had experienced anal intercourse at least once, and that nearly a quarter of married couples under 35 had used it at least once in the past year.

• Couples have, in general, considerably increased the variety of their coital techniques. Kinsey's study indicated that virtually 100 percent of American males who were having intercourse used the missionary (male-above) position much or most of the time; our survey shows that today, six percent of married men and 11 percent of single men had not used this position in the past year. Three out of ten married males in Kinsey's sample used the female-above position at least occasionally; in our sample, nearly three quarters do so. Only one out of ten married males in Kinsey's sample used rear-entrance vaginal intercourse occasionally or more often; four times as many of our married males do so. Fewer than a quarter of the married males in Kinsey's study sometimes or often used side-by-side intercourse; half of ours do so. As for the sitting position, a favorite in many other cultures, fewer than one tenth of Kinsey's married males used it occasionally or more often, as compared with more than one quarter today.

• Sexual liberation has resulted in measurable, and sometimes noteworthy, increases in the frequency of sexual intercourse by the single and the married, the young and the not-so-young. In Kinsey's sample, those single males between 16 and 25 who were having sexual intercourse (with nonprostitutes) were, typically, doing so some 23 times a year (this is the median, or mid-point; half of these males were having less intercourse than this, half were having more). In the Playboy survey, the median frequency for single males between 18 and 24 who are having intercourse is 33 times a year, a definite, though not remarkable, increase. In the case of young single females, however, the increase is both definite and remarkable: In Kinsey's time, single females between 16 and 20 who were having intercourse were doing so about once every five to ten weeks, and those between 21 and 25 about once every three weeks; in our study, single females between 18 and 24 who are having intercourse are doing so with a median frequency of more than once a week. The married, similarly, show increases in coital frequency—and in every age group. In Kinsey's studies, the frequencies based on male statements differ here and there from those based on female statements; but if we assume that the truth lies somewhere between them, the median frequency for married people 25 or younger, a generation ago, was about 130 times a year; today, to judge from our sample, the figure is about 154. The increases in older groups are proportionately larger: For the ages of 36 to 45, for instance, the Kinsey median was some

*(continued on page 194)*

## SEXUAL BEHAVIOR *(continued from page 88)*

75 times a year, while our 35-to-44 married people have a median of about 99; and for married people beyond the mid-50s, the percentage increase is even larger, the median having risen from 26 to 49.

• The rates of orgasm for females have increased along with frequencies of intercourse; this can be taken as one measure of the satisfactoriness of intercourse for today's females—and, considering the general nature of contemporary male-female sexual interaction, an indirect measure of the satisfactoriness of intercourse for today's males. In Kinsey's sample, only about half of the younger females who were having premarital intercourse were having any orgasms at all, as compared with three quarters in our sample; and the median frequency of orgasm for our single females was three

times as high as that for Kinsey's females. Among married women, similarly, there is evidence of an increase in orgasmic regularity: 53 percent of our married women, but only 45 percent of a comparable subsample of Kinsey's married females, have orgasm all or almost all the time, and the percentage of those who only sometimes or never have orgasm has dropped from 28 to 15.

• Homosexuality, as well as we can tell from the somewhat untrustworthy data, has not increased in incidence, although it most definitely has increased in visibility. Kinsey's figures, and our own, present difficult statistical problems, with which we will deal in more detail in a later installment in this series; our guarded conclusions, however, are that some 20 to 25 percent of all American males have at least one homosexual experience and

that this figure is about the same as an educated downward correction of Kinsey's exaggerated incidence. Our female figures, smaller to begin with, also show no increase. Much of the homosexual experience included in both Kinsey's figures and our own is early or adolescent play or experiment. When we look only at those persons with homosexual experiences beyond the mid-teens, or at those who are mainly or exclusively homosexual in adult life, we again find figures seemingly smaller than Kinsey's or close to his when statistical adjustments are made—but at no point were we able to find proof of any increases whatever.

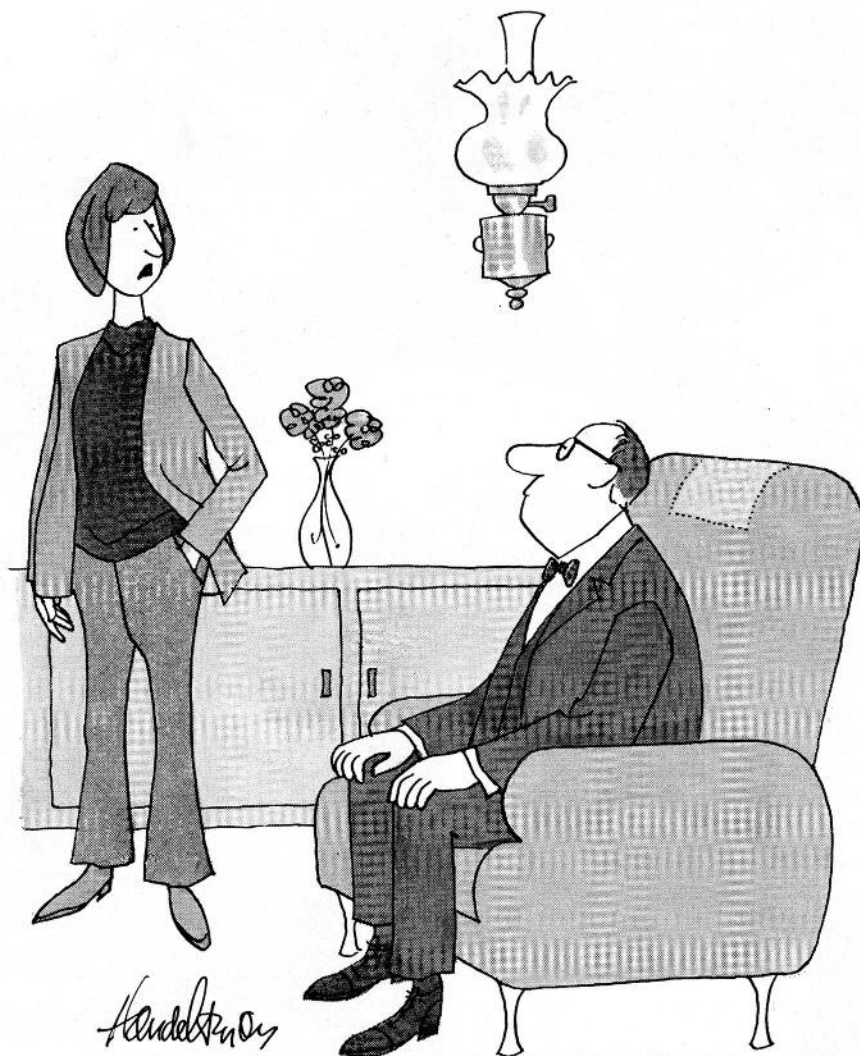
The social changes related to sexual liberation have been vast, profound and unprecedented. For the most part, they have been highly visible—in newspapers, magazines, books, television and movies. There is no doubt that sex has become the property of the media and a major concern of the public at large.

Consider these examples:

• Although Kinsey's first volume (published in 1948) was immediately acclaimed as a major contribution to knowledge, much of the public and many academic persons regarded Kinsey, his associates and their work as unwholesome and suspect. By the end of the Sixties, however, sex research had become so respectable that any number of doctoral candidates were engaged in it and foundations and Government agencies were funding projects that studied such phenomena as prostitution and homosexuality.

• In 1944, anthropologist John J. Honigmann wrote in the *Journal of Criminal Psychopathology* that sexual interaction in the presence of a third party would unquestionably be considered obscene in our society and, indeed, that "our cultural norms would scarcely tolerate such a situation [even] in the scientific laboratory." (Kinsey witnessed and filmed some sexual acts but said nothing about them in print.) Scarcely a decade later, Dr. William Masters and Mrs. Virginia Johnson were closely scrutinizing couples in coitus in the laboratory and recording the condition of organs and tissues at every stage of intercourse. When they published their findings in 1966, under the title *Human Sexual Response*, medical men and the general public alike hailed the work, and only a few intellectual troglodytes considered the book obscene. Professional journals of sexology and sociology have followed suit boldly, even publishing articles by researchers who have attended group-sex parties and who have been participants and/or observers at pickup bars and at homosexual public-toilet encounters.

• In recent years, the border between the showable and the unshowable, the



*"Your head still isn't in the right place. In my book, dreams about the Dow-Jones do not rate as true occult experiences."*

speakable and the unspeakable, the printable and the unprintable, had practically disappeared—at least until the Supreme Court's ruling in June of this year opened the way for a new border somewhere short of total freedom. During the past decade, female and male nudity made the grade in X-rated films, in the theater—on and off Broadway—and in mass-circulation magazines. Onstage, copulation was represented explicitly (simulated) in *Oh! Calcutta!*, cunnilingus in off-Broadway's *The Beard* and homosexual rape in *Fortune and Men's Eyes*. Hard-core blue movies showing full-color close-ups of erect penises penetrating every available orifice and freely spouting semen began to be publicly exhibited at erotic-movie houses in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, Des Moines, Kansas City, Nashville, Dallas, Denver and elsewhere. At the bottom of the literary ladder, low-grade hard-core pornography of no discernible literary or artistic merit, but of great explicitness and infinite perversity, became available by the millions of copies in some 850 bookstores that specialized in erotica and, to some extent, in many of the more conventional bookstores throughout the country.

Even in respectable literary works, descriptions of sex acts ceased to be poetically allusive and indirect. Novels by such writers as Philip Roth and John Updike began to include clinically graphic scenes of masturbation, fellatio, cunnilingus, buggery—oh, yes, and intercourse—of such explicitness that Lady Chatterley seemed second cousin to Heidi. Words such as fuck, cock, cunt, prick and the like began to be freely used in respectable books and magazines, and in late 1972, the unthinkable happened—the magisterial *Oxford English Dictionary*, for nearly 90 years the ultimate authority on the English language, included the word fuck in its long-awaited supplement.

• In the Thirties, the most advanced and liberal marriage manual in print was Theodore Hendrik van de Velde's *Ideal Marriage*. Dr. Van de Velde advised the use of foreplay—he included (daringly, for that time) oral-genital stimulation—and described, in most refined terms, a number of alternative positions. Here's a sample:

In the astride attitude, there is no possibility of mutual embrace or kisses. On the other hand, the full unimpeded view of each other's bodies . . . has a strongly stimulant effect. . . . And the opportunity, often missing in other attitudes, of gazing face to face, into one another's eyes, of beholding, in the reciprocal play of expression, the rising tide of excitement to its ecstatic culmination, greatly enhances all the other stimuli of this attitude.

He recommended the genital kiss (if needed), but he warned the husband to use it with "the *greatest gentleness, the most delicate reverence,*" and cautioned the wife, in employing fellatio, to exercise utmost "aesthetic delicacy and discretion" in order not to cross "that treacherous frontier between supreme beauty and base ugliness." (Presumably, this meant that she should not carry it through to the point of ejaculation; Van de Velde, like most other authorities of the time, regarded fellatio to orgasm as a species of perversion.)

Today's marriage and sex manuals take a lustier, earthier approach. They urge readers to attain maximum sensation and some of them recommend—along with a wide variety of positions—simultaneous oral-genital stimulation to orgasm, anal play with the finger or tongue, anal intercourse and the use of vibrators, mirrors and crushed ice (a handful of which, jammed into the crotch at the moment of orgasm, immensely heightens the experience, according to Dr. John Eichenlaub). The tone of the prose employed in such books has changed radically from that of Van de Velde. For example, in *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex . . .*, Dr. David Reuben describes 69 as follows:

She feels the insistent throbbing of the organ against her lips and experiences a slightly salty taste, as well as the characteristic but not unpleasant odor of the sudoriferous glands of the area. Because the penis is much larger in comparison to the clitoris she can also see the male genitals as she proceeds. By simultaneous cunnilingus and fellatio every possible sense is brought to a fever pitch and a mutual orgasm occurs rapidly unless the couple switches to a penis-vagina position. The most presumably undersexed man or woman will be brought to an explosive orgasm by using this technique providing they are willing to do it.

Indeed, the immensely popular sex manuals written by "J" (*The Sensuous Woman*) and "M" (*The Sensuous Man*) employ a palpating, salivating eroticism not far removed from the hard-core pornography that once was sold only under the counter:

Put your girl in a soft, upholstered chair and kneel in front of her so your head comes about to the level of her breasts. . . . Now slide her off the chair and right onto that beautiful erect shaft. The feeling is dizzying. She is wet and very, very hot; you are face to face and in about as deep as you can be. . . . You lean back with your hands on the floor

and raise your pelvis to plunge into her for a few moments, and then she should take over the action by moving her pelvic area up and down on your penis—faster and faster. . . . [It's] an exciting way to come. When you do explode, you'll find yourself in each other's arms—exhausted, wet, beautiful—a total state of A. F. O.—all fucked out.

—*The Sensuous Man*

He may wish to investigate you anally with his mouth and tongue and expect you to reciprocate. Now don't freeze. If you have washed in this area, it is *not* dirty and, if you'll stop wailing like a banshee or playing Purity Raped for a moment, you will notice the beginning of a curious, warm and divinely demanding sensation and be secretly hoping he'll go on to the next step.

—*The Sensuous Woman*

• In addition to all this talk, we are now surrounded by evidence that people are openly doing things that a generation ago were unthinkable, or at least were among the most guarded of personal secrets. Sex-therapy clinics and nude encounter groups are burgeoning, and not just in New York and on the West Coast. Students of both sexes room together openly in many colleges. Pickup clubs and singles bars have spread like crab grass. So-called massage parlors provide paid-for sexual services. Sex magazines and direct-mail companies offer dildos, equipment for sadomasochism and assorted other sexual devices; New York and a few other cities have shops that openly sell such merchandise. Gay baths that function as places for quick sexual encounters now flourish in a number of cities.

• Open marriage and flexible monogamy have been advocated by a number of best-selling authors. Group marriages have become a reality; close to 2000 communes were located by one newspaper survey in 1970, a large number of which involved some form of group marriage. Unwed alliances have either grown in number or come out into the open, or both: One reads every day of actors and actresses, jet setters and other celebrities who openly live with their lovers or who have children out of wedlock, by choice.

• Several states have moved toward the model penal code adopted by the American Law Institute in 1962 and have revised their sex laws so as to drop from the list of crimes most or all private sex acts between consenting adults. Illinois, Connecticut, Colorado, Oregon, Ohio, North Dakota, Delaware and Hawaii have wiped out their long-standing penalties against private consensual sodomy, both heterosexual and homosexual. In most states,

the old laws against fornication, cohabitation, adultery and sodomy still stand, but, with a few notable exceptions, such laws are now rarely enforced.

In January 1973, the Supreme Court handed down its epochal decision that recognized the constitutional right of women—as part of the right of privacy—to decide for themselves whether or not to terminate pregnancy by abortion. (However, states still can proscribe abortion in the final trimester, when the fetus is viable, except when abortion is necessary to preserve the life or health of the mother.) Ten years ago, legal, safe and easy abortion in the United States was unthinkable; five years ago, it was thinkable but nonexistent; in 1972 it was legal, subject to certain limitations, in half a dozen states; and in 1973 it is legal everywhere.

Thus, things unseen and unheard of a generation ago or even a decade ago are now to be seen and heard on every side. And yet, for all the words and the strange new phenomena around us, we have had no good way to judge whether the changes that have taken place affect only a highly visible minority or the large unseen majority; whether the increase in freedom, whatever its scope, has strengthened love relationships and marriage among the sexually liberated or weakened them; whether sexual liberation is bringing the liberated greater satisfaction or only a frenetic quest for stronger sensations and new kicks; and whether America is becoming a dissolute and degenerate nation or a sensuous and healthy one.

The Playboy survey attempts to provide a body of information from which such judgments can be derived. We sought, in resurveying the territory that Kinsey mapped out during the Forties

and reported on in 1948 and 1953, to measure, scientifically and precisely, the changes that have taken place since then. Many of the measurements yielded astonishing results—some because they revealed change greater than expected, but some because they thoroughly refuted certain widely accepted beliefs about the scope and meaning of sexual liberation.

In the 2026 completed questionnaires and in 200 supplemental depth interviews, our survey teams and interviewers examined sexual attitudes before they investigated behavior. The Kinsey group had attached little value to verbally expressed attitudes, reasoning that an individual's acts show what his attitudes really are, while the things he says are "little more than reflections of the attitudes which prevail in the particular culture in which he was raised." Kinsey himself had originally been a biologist dealing with infra-human creatures—wasps, in fact—which may account for his antiverbal bias. Most sociologists and psychologists, however, do not share his bias against attitudes. In fact, sociologist Ira Reiss, a leading investigator of contemporary sexual mores, recently compared the attitudes expressed by a sizable group of unmarried college students with their actual behavior and concluded that "in the great majority of cases, belief and action do coincide."

Because attitudes were so sparsely reported in the first and second Kinsey volumes, we can make few direct comparisons with those works. But even without a firm statistical base line, it is abundantly clear to anyone who is acquainted with the state of sexual attitudes a generation ago that in many particulars, our data show a dramatic shift toward permissiveness. Americans are much more tolerant of the sexual ideas and acts of other persons than formerly and feel far

freer to envision various previously forbidden acts as possible for themselves—and, hence, to include such acts in their own sexual repertoires.

The Roper polling agency asked national samples, in 1937 and again in 1959, "Do you think it is all right for either or both parties to a marriage to have had previous sexual intercourse?" There was virtually no change over that span of years: In both 1937 and 1959, 22 percent said it was all right for both men and women, eight percent said it was all right for men only and somewhat more than half said it was all right for neither. Our own survey shows a major shift: Depending on the degree of emotional involvement between the partners, premarital sex is considered acceptable for males by a large majority of our men and by 37 to 73 percent of our women. It is considered acceptable for women by 44 to 81 percent of our males and 20 to 68 percent of our females, again depending on the closeness of the relationship.

More than half of all women and almost half of all men in our survey disagree with the statement "Homosexuality is wrong." Nearly half of the men and women, in fact, believe that homosexuality should be legal; slightly smaller proportions feel it should not and the rest express no opinion. Near majorities or even large majorities of our total sample take the supposedly unpopular or avant-garde view on similar issues. For instance, distinct majorities favor legal prostitution and legal abortion, and divorce laws that would eliminate the need to offer reasons to the court.

Christian civilization has always viewed anal intercourse as among the vilest of perversions and the blackest of sins. We expected to find some measure of tolerance for it as a result of the general

liberal trend, but we were in no way prepared for the results that came out of the computer: Only a little more than a quarter of all men and women in our survey agree with the statement "Anal intercourse between a man and a woman is wrong," while substantially more than half of each sex disagree. The data are worth listing here in detail:

ANAL INTERCOURSE IS WRONG  
(percentages are rounded)

	Men	Women
Agree strongly	17%	18%
Agree somewhat	10%	9%
Disagree somewhat	26%	25%
Disagree strongly	33%	32%
No opinion	14%	16%

The explicit permissiveness of the "Disagree" replies is, if anything, understated by this table, since the unusually large proportion of "No opinion" replies probably signifies unwillingness to criticize the practice. This is not to say that the majority of our sample considers anal intercourse appealing, exciting or mutually satisfying; clearly, however, the majority no longer accepts the traditional negative evaluation of the act.

The Congressionally authorized Commission on Obscenity and Pornography found that only a third of all Americans feel that adults should be allowed to read or see any sexual materials they wish, but more than half indicated that they would feel this way provided it were proved that such materials do no harm. Our data indicate a similar mixture of restrictive and permissive feelings about erotica: Four tenths of the men and women in our survey sample say that pictures, drawings, movies and prose that show or describe sexual acts either disgust them or cause a mixture of disgust and delight—yet from half to more than nine tenths of our sample also admit to being sexually aroused by material of this sort. The latter figures are two to four times as large as the comparable figures reported for women by Kinsey and are consistently larger, though by a smaller degree, than his figures for men. In some part, the greater capacity to be aroused probably has to do with mere opportunity. But in all likelihood, a substantially larger number of persons than formerly—particularly women—today see erotic material with some frequency; and while they continue to feel some revulsion or guilt, probably attributable to cultural conditioning, they have become sufficiently uninhibited to be aroused by it.

Generally speaking, we found that permissive attitudes about sex were more common among the young and among males than among older persons and females. Permissive attitudes generally were associated with higher education, political liberalism, white-collar status



"Mister, I can make your dollar go farther."

and the absence of strong religious feelings. Conservative attitudes about sex, on the other hand, were more common among older persons and among women and generally were associated with lower educational attainment, political conservatism, blue-collar status and religious devoutness. We were surprised, however, by the magnitude of the age factor; with certain exceptions, it overshadowed the other major influences on sexual attitudes.

We found the young, the middle-aged and the old in substantial accord only on those sexual issues that threaten no one and represent no danger to marriage or social stability. The statement "Sex is one of the most beautiful parts of life" won the agreement of nine tenths or more of the men and women in every age group. In contrast, women under 25 are three and a half times as likely as women of 55 and over to believe that premarital intercourse makes for better and more stable marriage (the percentages were 64 and 18, respectively). Again, nearly twice as many persons under 35 as over 35 think that homosexuality should be legal, and similar differences exist on the importance of virginity and the wrongness

of masturbation. These permissive attitudes, though they are correlated with youth, do not necessarily express youthful irresponsibility and general rebelliousness; they may do so to some extent, but they are also part of the contemporary culture and have been learned and adopted by every age group, though to a declining degree all along the dimension of increasing age.

This raises the question Do the differences associated with age represent a natural evolution from liberalism to conservatism that is repeated in every generation, or has something been happening that does not replicate the past? One would expect that the status and habits that go with increasing age would naturally make people more conservative about sex, as they do about politics, money and many other things. Reiss and others have pointed out, too, that there is a strong tendency for the sexually permissive to become more conservative as their own children approach puberty, because, as parents, they feel responsible for what may happen.

But the differences in attitude between the very youngest group in our survey

### FREQUENCY OF SEXUAL INTERCOURSE IN PAST YEAR

	SINGLE				MARRIED									
	Male		Female		Male					Female				
	18-24	25 & over	18-24	25 & over	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55 & over	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55 & over
None	21.7%	12.1%	31.5%	11.6%	—%	—%	1.0%	4.9%	5.1%	—%	0.5%	2.4%	5.1%	13.0%
1-3 times	7.6	2.8	4.3	—	—	—	1.0	2.8	6.4	—	1.4	1.0	—	5.2
4-11 times	6.5	7.5	5.1	7.2	—	—	1.5	1.4	2.6	1.2	0.5	2.4	4.4	—
12-24 times	14.1	9.3	8.1	8.7	1.4	2.5	6.7	9.8	16.6	1.2	2.8	5.2	19.0	18.5
25-52 times	10.9	15.0	14.0	15.9	6.8	11.4	18.5	31.0	34.6	12.0	11.3	23.3	20.3	20.8
53-104 times	10.3	22.4	9.8	14.5	18.9	27.8	29.8	30.3	20.5	21.7	31.5	31.6	30.4	15.6
105-156 times	9.8	19.6	8.9	10.1	23.0	27.8	24.2	12.0	6.4	22.9	25.8	16.8	7.6	6.5
157-208 times	6.0	4.7	8.1	11.6	23.1	13.4	7.2	1.4	—	18.1	15.9	9.6	3.2	2.6
209-313 times	2.7	—	5.5	8.7	17.7	8.9	5.7	2.1	—	13.2	5.6	3.9	1.2	—
314-365 times	1.6	2.8	1.3	1.4	1.4	2.5	1.5	—	—	4.8	0.9	1.0	—	—
More than 365 times	1.6	1.9	0.9	2.9	6.8	2.0	0.5	—	—	4.8	0.9	—	0.6	—
Not ascertained	7.1	1.9	2.6	7.2	—	0.5	0.5	1.4	2.6	—	1.4	0.5	3.2	10.4
Median last year (number of times)	22	103	24	99	155	148	102	52	50	153	117	99	52	49

and the 35-to-44 group—the first in which pubertal children would be involved—showed no sudden discontinuity, nor was the curve flat thereafter, as it should have been if children were the cause of conservatism. While some part of the swing to conservatism is surely due to the inherent nature of the life cycle, we feel that the data may suggest something more interesting than this: They suggest that for the past generation, a major—and permanent—re-evaluation of sexual attitudes has been occurring throughout our society, a process that has left its mark on each age group. The greater part of one's attitudes toward sex is acquired in the learning years of the teens and young adulthood, and the attitudes of each age group therefore tend to indicate what the norm was for that group when it was at the formative stage. Here, for instance, is the striking record of the growing tolerance of men and women toward heterosexual cunnilingus:

CUNNILINGUS IS NOT WRONG  
(percentages who agree)

	Under 25	25-34	35-44
Men	85%	89%	77%
Women	86%	89%	81%
	45-54	55 and over	
Men	56%	48%	
Women	67%	47%	

(The paradoxical dip for those under 25 does not signify a revival of puritanism but, rather, the inexperience and inhibitions of the very youngest members of this group; by the age of 20 or thereabouts, however, permissiveness on this matter is even more predominant than it is in the 25-to-34-year-old group.) In each age group, virtually the same percentages are permissive about fellatio as about cunnilingus, showing the same degree of change along the age parameter.

A considerable number of the under-25 men and women report that the use of some stimulants and depressants makes their sexual experiences more pleasurable; others report the opposite:

Thirty-six percent of the women and 30 percent of the men state that alcohol makes intercourse more pleasurable; however, 12 percent of the women and 27 percent of the men find that it makes intercourse less pleasurable.

Six percent of the women and 11 percent of the men state that barbiturates make intercourse more pleasurable; six percent and nine percent, respectively, report the opposite effect.

Twelve percent of the women and 15 percent of the men state that hallucinogens make intercourse more pleasurable; four percent and seven percent, respectively, say the opposite.

Forty-one percent of the women and 45 percent of the men state that marijuana makes intercourse more pleasurable; only

two percent and four percent, respectively, vote the other way.

Two percent of the women and six percent of the men state that hard drugs make intercourse more pleasurable; two percent and five percent, respectively, say the opposite.

Slightly smaller percentages of persons in older age groups say that alcohol makes intercourse more pleasurable, but only very small percentages of older groups have anything good—or anything at all—to say about the other drugs. In the age groups from 35 up, only about five to ten percent have ever had intercourse while using marijuana, but nearly all who have done so thought it made sex more pleasurable. Only a few scattered individuals have had sex while using the other drugs mentioned above; nearly as many of them reported negative effects as reported positive ones.

The real significance of what is happening, however, begins to appear when we compare the importance of the age factor with the other major variables in determining attitudes. In most cases, age has never been as important as such other factors as educational level or degree of religious feeling; today it is generally as powerful as—and in many cases more powerful than—these or the other classic determinants of sexual attitudes. The process of change has been affecting all kinds of Americans, significantly narrowing the gap—among the younger people—between the devout and the non-devout, the blue-collar people and the white-collar people, the college-educated and the non-college educated, the political liberals and the political conservatives.

In the older half of our sample, for instance, college-educated women are considerably more permissive about fellatio than their noncollege peers: Three quarters of the former do not think fellatio wrong, compared with a little more than half of the latter. Among women in the younger half of the sample, however, four fifths of the college-educated—and almost as many of the noncollege—women no longer think that fellatio is wrong.

Occupational status is also correlated with sexual attitudes, but again, we found that younger persons are more permissive than older persons at both blue-collar and white-collar levels, and that young blue-collar men are now generally as permissive as the older white-collar men. Consider this example:

HOMOSEXUALITY SHOULD BE LEGAL  
(percentage of males who agree)

	Under 35	35 and over
White collar	65%	43%
Blue collar	41%	27%

The more lurid accounts of the growth of sexual liberation might lead one to imagine that younger Americans balk at

nothing in the catalog of sexual behavior and that sexual liberation means the casting off of all internal and external restraint. Indeed, among our interviewees, we found some advocates of sexual liberation who took this view—and were embarrassed by their own inability to enjoy every activity suggested to them. As one young divorcee said, "I feel so silly—this fellow I'm seeing is keen on rimming me [performing analingus], but I always get embarrassed and turned off by it. I guess I'm not as loose as I'd like to be." And a young man said, "Some of my friends tell me I'm still hung up because I can't bring myself to try it with guys. Maybe they're right—I mean, what difference does it really make?—but I'm chicken, or something; I just can't do it."

Most people, however, read a different meaning into sexual liberation; they regard it as a freedom within which they have the right to remain highly selective, choosing only those sexual acts that meet their emotional needs. Many persons have adopted or at least tried a number of practices that were proscribed and avoided by all but the sophisticates a generation or so ago, and many contemporary Americans are somewhat less fettered in enjoying their sensations than their precursors were; but by and large, they have added to their regular repertoires only acts that are biologically and psychologically free from pathology, they have remained highly discriminating in their choice of sexual partners and they continue to attach deep emotional significance to their sexual acts rather than regarding them as sources of uncomplicated sensuous gratification.

Consider our finding that premarital intercourse has become the prevailing standard. Young women today are much more likely than their mothers were to feel they have a right to complete sexual lives before marriage, but they do not exercise that right in a purely exploratory or physical way. The inhibitions of the *demi-vierge* of the Forties have been replaced by sexual freedom within the confines of emotional involvement, not by free-and-easy swinging; in Reiss's terminology, the contemporary norm is "permissiveness with affection." In Kinsey's study, almost half of those married women who had had premarital intercourse had had it only with their fiancés; in our own sample, while twice as many have had premarital intercourse, an even larger proportion—slightly over half—limited it to their fiancés; and among the youngest women in our study, the figure is still higher. It is very likely that there are more single women today who are willing to have intercourse on a purely physical level, without emotional ties, but most sexually liberated single girls



*"I think we should make it a point to come in some night and find out what the hell's going on with this watchman."*

still feel liberated only within the context of affectionate or loving relationships.

Even parents are beginning to accept the new premarital freedom and to regard it as healthy. One woman, a 50-year-old saleslady, commented:

Ten years ago, I would have wanted my daughter to go with a fellow, fall in love, have a courtship and get married. Now, I only want to get across to her that what's important is to know when she's ready to handle sex, ready to take care of herself physically and emotionally. I want her to feel that the important thing is to have a real experience with

someone, and not to think she has to marry some guy just because she's slept with him.

Premarital sex in a loving relationship still has marriage as its implied goal—and the quality of sex within marriage still seems to be integrally connected to the strength and security of the emotional relationship. A young housewife described the growth of her sexual life in the following terms:

I thought it was quite good before we got married, and no doubt it was, but being married and having our own place made a big difference in

my whole mental state about sex. Of course, there had been a certain excitement before marriage—we were always trying to get together, and find some privacy, and keep it hidden—but that was an artificial excitement. Once we could take our minds off those extraneous concerns and pay more attention to each other, it rapidly got very much better, and we took a lot more time and seemed to penetrate much deeper into total feeling. We had varied our lovemaking before marriage, but in the first few years of marriage, we varied it a lot more and tried out many new things; we kept some and

dropped others as we came to understand what we both enjoyed most. Sometimes there's a lot of foreplay, sometimes not, depending on the mood we're in. We both like oral acts very much, with the one limitation that he doesn't like me to bring him too close to climax that way, because it makes it difficult for him to last long inside me. Now I, as it happens, can climax more than once, and I just love to do so, so we try to arrange it so that he sends me off into one and then another, and then joins me for the grand finale, and I do mean grand. The best position for me is the standard one, but I also get great pleasure out of being on hands and knees and being entered from the rear, which he likes best. We've tried just about everything possible, including my sitting up on him with my back toward him. We even use anal intercourse, although everything has to be just right, in terms of my stomach and bowels, for me to want to do that. At first we did that very rarely, because there was pain, but he found it very exciting, so I persisted and learned to relax so that there is no pain, and now—though I don't know how it's physiologically possible—I actually climax in that position. . . . We have sex less frequently now than we did seven years ago, at the beginning of marriage, because it's not so novel a thing anymore, but at the same time it's lots

more exciting because of the familiarity and ease of it, and a much richer and freer experience than ever before. The only thing that limits it is when we're unhappy with each other about something, because it isn't possible for either of us to enjoy the physical thing unless we're emotionally in tune.

Even masturbation continues to be linked to sexual acts of emotional significance; a large majority of men and women in every age group say that while they masturbate, they fantasize about having intercourse with persons they love. But they do feel notably freer than they formerly did to administer such sexual relief to themselves in times of tension or deprivation.

While we found very small increases in the percentage of all males, or all females who have ever masturbated (a little over nine tenths of all our males and six tenths of all our females have done so at some time in their lives), we did find that girls are far more likely today to start masturbating early in adolescence, and that boys begin somewhat earlier; both single males and single females, moreover, masturbate considerably more frequently in the mid-20s-to-mid-30s group than formerly. Both of these trends indicate lessened guilt feelings, rather than sexual hunger, since these same people are also having more intercourse.

Even more indicative of lessened guilt feelings is the increase we found in mas-

turbation among the married. An example: Kinsey's data showed that in the Forties, more than four out of ten married men between the ages of 26 and 35 still masturbated, and with a median frequency of six times a year; today, according to our data, more than 70 percent of married men in that age group do so, and with a median frequency of 24 times a year. Kinsey found that a third of the married women in the same age bracket masturbated, their median rate being ten times a year; while we found no increase in the median rate, more than twice as many do so today.

These remarkable increases might mean that there is more sexual disharmony in the marriages of the young today than there was a generation ago, but other data from our survey—the answers to questions on marital happiness and marital sexual satisfaction—effectively eliminate this possibility. It is more likely that young husbands and wives feel more at liberty than their counterparts of a generation ago to turn to masturbation whenever sexual frustration develops out of sexual or emotional conflict, unavoidable separation or abstinence caused by illness, pregnancy and other extrinsic factors.

Our data concerning sex outside marriage further amplify our general finding that liberation has not cut sex loose from significant personal relationships or from the institution of marriage. As mentioned earlier, there is a small but distinct increase in the incidence of extramarital behavior among under-25 males and a major increase among under-25 females, but a close look at the over-all curves, and an examination of how early in marriage persons with extramarital experience begin having it, makes us think that there is little lifetime change. What has happened is that the males who will be unfaithful start being so earlier; as for the females, they apparently are on their way to catching up to the males in the incidence and earliness. But in the over-all picture, there is very little change thus far. The great majority of people still feel that love and sex are too closely interwoven to be separable at will or for fun. Anywhere from 80 to 98 percent of the men and women in our study say that they or their mates would object to any kind of extramarital sex experience by their partners. And extramarital affairs, at least in the eyes of those who are currently divorced, are related to the disintegration of marriage—more than half of the divorced males and females who had had extramarital relations say that such activities caused their separations or divorces. This is much the same range as Kinsey reported; apparently, for many contemporary persons—and certainly for most of those who have had extramarital relationships and whose marriages have subsequently broken up—sexual activity



*"Of course you don't believe in nudity on the stage—you don't believe in it off the stage either!"*



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cent of his postmarital males under 30 (he included widowers in this category) were sexually inactive, the figure being higher among older men. None of the divorced men in the Playboy survey are sexually inactive. Our divorced males have a median of eight intercourse partners a year (there are no comparable Kinsey figures), while our single white males under 25 have only 1.5 partners a year and our single white males from 25 to 34 have four. Kinsey reported that from 28 to 64 percent of the divorced women and widows under 56 in his study were sexually inactive, depending on age. Only nine percent of the comparable divorced women in the Playboy survey are sexually inactive. Those who are active, moreover, have a median of 3.5 partners per year, as compared with only one partner for our single women under 25 and three for our single women from 25 to 34.

It is in the phase of sexual testing, and avoiding emotional entanglement, that they often say things such as this young woman says:

I had always thought that sex with my husband was very good, but after

the feeling myself get too involved with someone.

But consonant with our other findings, liberation has not really sundered sex from emotion, even for the divorced, as is clear from the fact that four out of five of them eventually remarry, most of those marriages enduring for life. In our interviews, moreover, it was often clear that much of the postmarital behavior of the divorced is aimed at the restoration of ego strength and is a preparation for renewed intimacy—when it can be found. The following narration by a middle-aged, formerly divorced man illustrates the point:

I was shaken up pretty badly by the breakup of my marriage. I didn't even date for half a year. Then I started in, and gradually got into the sex thing, and realized that I'd been pretty stuffy and blocked as a sex partner up to then. I opened up and learned a hell of a lot from different women; I had a real ball. But I didn't want to get too close to anybody, and I was honest about it—I

In those aspects of sexual behavior that we have viewed so far, we have found no evidence that sexual liberation has produced sexual *anomie*. Despite the extensive changes that the liberation has made in the feelings that most Americans have about their own bodies, about the legitimacy of maximizing sexual pleasure and about the acceptability and normality of a wide variety of techniques of foreplay and coitus, sexual liberation has not replaced the liberal-romantic concept of sex with the recreational one. The latter attitude toward sex now coexists with the former in our society, and in many a person's feeling, but the former remains the dominant ideal. While most Americans—especially the young—now feel far freer than their precursors to be sensation-oriented, at times, rather than person-oriented in their sexual activities, for the great majority sex remains intimately allied to their deepest emotions and inextricably interwoven with their conceptions of loyalty, love and marriage. The

web of meaning and social structure that surrounds sex has been stretched and reshaped; it has not been torn asunder.

But sex supplies a vocabulary for love, and liberated Americans today use their greater freedom as a broader and more expressive language, as well as an end in itself. Educated, nondevout, politically liberal and white-collar people feel freer to use advanced techniques of foreplay, both expressively and sensuously, than do noncollege, devout, politically conservative and blue-collar people. Yet, as we have noted already, the shift toward liberalism among the young is narrowing the gap. There is a dominant, near-consensus sexual ethic among the young, despite the diversity of their life styles. As an example, in the older half of our sample, there is a wide gap between noncollege males and college-level males in the incidence of cunnilingus, while in the younger half of our sample, more men in each category have practiced cunnilingus and the gap

has vanished; indeed, the noncollege men seem to have gone beyond the college men:

	CUNNILINGUS, EVER PERFORMED: ALL MALES	
	Some college	No college
35 and over	68%	50%
Under 35	75%	83%

Actually, noncollege and college men under 35 probably are closer in their behavior than these figures indicate: The difference shown is due to the fact that the noncollege men start coitus sooner and marry sooner, and so get around to cunnilingus activity earlier.

Still more remarkable is our evidence that the buttocks, and even the anus—regarded as erogenous and sexually attractive areas in many other cultures—are gaining some measure of sexual acceptance among Americans. We do not find evidence of increased perversion in this trend; there was no response in our survey or interviews indicating obsessive anality or coprophilia and coprophagia (fecal fetishism). However, we do find that

rather large minorities of men and women have had at least some experience of non-pathological forms of anal stimulation. We did not determine how many persons respond strongly to such stimulation or employ anal foreplay regularly, but a sizable minority of younger Americans (almost a majority) and a small but measurable minority of older ones have experimented with such techniques as fingering, kissing and tonguing of the anus, and, as mentioned earlier, about a quarter of married couples under 35 engage in anal intercourse at least now and then. (In our youngest group—18 to 24—the incidence of anal techniques was not as high as in the 25-to-34 group; presumably, many of the former have not yet broken through early inhibitions but will do so.)

Since the new freedom does not jeopardize the basic conception of marriage and does not disjoin sexuality from affection or love, sexual liberation has occurred within a framework of cultural continuity. A genuine break with the past and a repudiation of all cultural values concerning sexual behavior, such as some sexual revolutionaries advocate, would have quite different characteristics. Among them:

- Nonvaginal and nonheterosexual sex acts such as masturbation, sexual union with animals, sadomasochistic acts and homosexuality would replace vaginal coitus altogether for an increased number of persons.

- There would be a major increase in sexual acts that fundamentally alter the connection between sex and marriage, such as mutually sanctioned extramarital affairs, mate swapping and marital swinging.

- There would be a growing preference for sex acts that are devoid of emotional significance or that are performed with strangers.

There is no evidence that any such radical change, or such violent discontinuity with the past, has occurred.

The Playboy survey found that sex acts with animals are actually less common today than when Kinsey was taking histories. Only five percent of our total male sample and two percent of our total female sample have ever had any kind of sexual contact with animals; Kinsey's figures were eight and 3.5 percent, respectively. Homosexuality, as indicated earlier, is apparently no more common now than it was in his time. Kinsey published no data on sadomasochistic acts, but for all their popularity in contemporary humor and pornography, we find them uncommon in reality: Only three percent of married men and fewer than one percent of married women, and ten percent of single men and five percent of single women have ever performed sadistic sexual acts; fewer than one percent of married men

and two percent of married women, and six percent of single men and ten percent of single women have ever been on the masochistic end of an SM interaction; and very much smaller percentages of our whole sample have had sadistic or masochistic experiences in the past year. For most of these persons, such experiences have been very few in number. Finally, oral, anal and masturbatory methods of gratification have not been substituted, in any systematic or significant way, for vaginal intercourse.

We also found that the much-publicized sexual practices that greatly alter the relationship between sex and marriage are far less common than they are generally alleged to be. In our total sample, only two percent of married males and fewer than two percent of married females have ever participated in mate swapping with their spouses, and most of them on very few occasions. (The incidence was somewhat higher for younger couples—five percent of the husbands and two percent of the wives under 25 have practiced mate swapping; five percent of the husbands and a little more than one percent of the wives between the ages of 25 and 34 have done so; but some of this activity seems to have taken place prior to marriage.) The incidence of secret extramarital intercourse, despite the popular impression that it is virtually universal, has not, as noted earlier, increased measurably for the over-all sample for either sex, though it has risen moderately for under-25 males and markedly for under-25 females. The great majority of all married people, including the young, still are not inclined to grant their mates permission for overt extramarital sex acts.

If sex had become devoid of emotional significance, we would expect to find an increase in recourse to prostitution and in group sex, especially with multiple partners. There is no increase in the use of prostitutes. As for multiple-partner sex, only 13 percent of our married males and two percent of our married females have ever engaged in such activity, and most of this took place before marriage; also, for two thirds of the married males and nearly all of the married females, there was only one such episode. Among our single people, there has been a little more of this kind of thing: Twenty-four percent of the single men and seven percent of the single women in the sample have had multiple-partner experiences, but a third of the men and half of the women have done so only once. We did find that many persons today are willing to abandon the privacy—at least on an experimental basis—that our culture has always held to be essential to sexual intercourse: Eighteen percent of our married males and six percent of our married females have had sex in the presence of

others, although some part of this was premarital and, in any case, three quarters of all these persons have had only one such experience. An astonishing 40 percent of our single men and 23 percent of our single women have had sex in the presence of others, but it is hardly a way of life, since nearly half of the men and more than three quarters of the women with such experience have done so only once.

Finally, in an attitude section of the questionnaire, we offered the statement "Sex cannot be very satisfying without some emotional attachment between the partners"; there was very little difference in the reactions of the various age groups, large or very large majorities of all of them agreeing with the statement—most of them strongly.

Analysis of our questionnaire data leads us to conclude that sexual liberalism is the emergent ideal that the great majority of young Americans—and a fair number of older ones—are trying to live up to. Sexual liberalism covers a broad range of possibilities, but essentially it combines the spontaneous and guilt-free enjoyment of a wide range of sexual acts with a guiding belief in the emotional significance of sexual expression: It identifies liberated sexuality as the expression, the concomitant or the precursor of monogamous heterosexual love, whether within or without marriage.

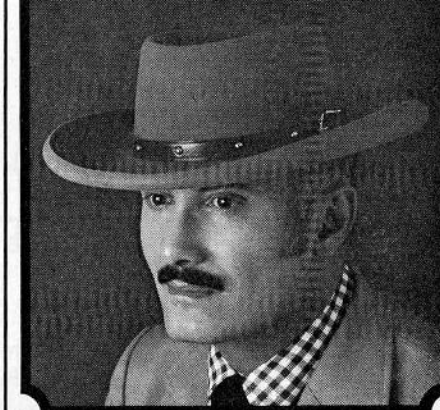
We thus find our survey results contradicting what both the evangelists and the Cassandras of sexual liberation have been saying; we find ourself agreeing with the more balanced appraisals made by such sociologists as Reiss and Erwin Smigel and by psychologist Keith Davis, sexologist Isadore Rubin and other behavioral scientists, who say that there has been no chaotic and anarchic dissolution of standards but, rather, a major shift toward somewhat different, highly organized standards that remain integrated with existing social values and with the institutions of love, marriage and the family.

This by no means belittles the scope or significance of the changes; it merely quantifies and defines them. The changes that have taken place are none the less important and profound for having done so within the culture rather than by breaking with it; indeed, they may be more valuable than total, radical change would be, for while they have brought (and are bringing) so much that is pleasurable, healthful and enriching into American life, they have done so without destroying emotional values that we rightly prize and without demolishing institutions necessary to the stability of society itself.

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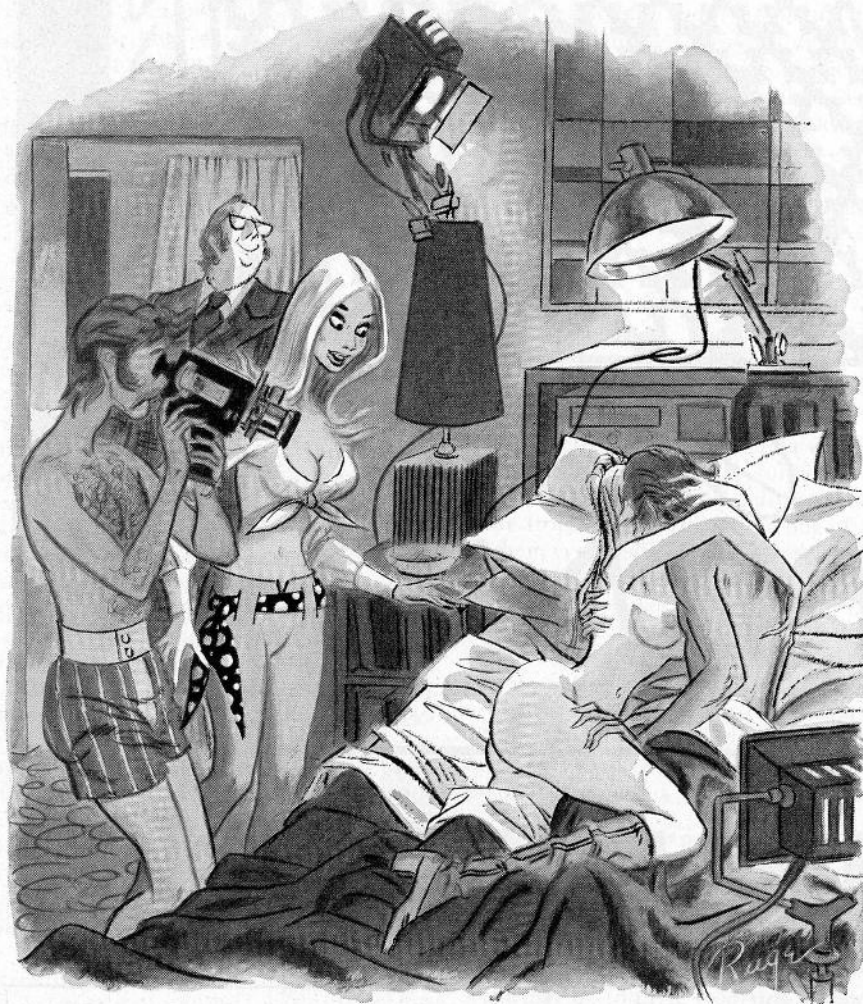
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