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SEX II

THE TABOO SEX IS BAD

The sexual taboo still exists in America due to fundamentalist Christian clout. Although Jesus Christ condemned only one sexual practice—adultery—fundamentalist Christians still strongly believe all extramarital sex is a sin. Not only is it a sin, but it is a sin responsible for most of society’s problems.¹ For these people the taboo’s maintenance is imperative.

The “sexual revolution” of the 1960s and 1970s did weaken the taboo on sex, and because of this there is currently a generational divide regarding the appropriateness of its discussion. Generally, detailed sex talk is still considered an inappropriate topic for conversation outside of close friends. In addition, there are still legal ramifications for those who transgress America’s sexual mores.

I

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

PREMARITAL SEX MAKES YOU CRAZY

The ignorance of sexual mechanics stems largely from the censorship in our school systems. Whereas mild social enforcement has been enough to keep the subjects of nasal mucus and excrement out of our schools, sex education is fiercely contested by religious conservatives, whose three main arguments are discussed below.

A. Arguments for Ignorance: Keep 'Em Dumb

(1) *They wouldn't know*—The first argument is that sex education shows kids how to have sex.² This is laughable because sex is an instinctual human drive. When they hit puberty, kids will naturally want to have sex *and be able to figure out how to have sex*, whether they are taught how to do it safely or not.

This argument not only counters common sense but scientific studies as well. It has been found that explaining the sex act does not incite sexual fantasizing in children,³ and over half of kids who masturbate learned how to do it on their own.⁴

(2) *It's the Hippies' Fault*—The second argument is that sex education and the “sexual revolution” have created an adolescent pregnancy crisis that requires a radical return to the good old days of the 1950s when sex was not in our schools or media.⁵ This is flawed reasoning because the 1950s had the highest rate of teenage childbearing in twentieth-century America.⁶

Additionally, if sex ed and our “sex-saturated” society have created this “disaster,” the Netherlands should be falling off a cliff. The Dutch start comprehensive sex education in preschool and have legalized prostitution. However, Dutch teens begin having sex almost two years later than their American counterparts,⁷ and boast a birthrate seven times lower.⁸

(3) *Family Values*—A third argument, which gets less promotion, is that practical consequences do not matter. It is the teaching of “family values” that is the overarching concern. Of course, these are Christian fundamentalist family values. The dark side of this argument is that those that do not follow these values should get the consequences they “deserve.”⁹

As will be seen in the next section, this argument is part of a thinly disguised use of the government to establish religion. However, the government's role is not to teach the populace values—in this case, values that counter the practice and beliefs of the majority of Americans,¹⁰ and which are not even practiced by the fundamentalist Christians themselves.¹¹

B. The Curriculum: Be Prepared to Die

Despite the flawed arguments of religious conservatives and their lack of public support, they lobby vigorously, and politicians have responded by censoring sex education. The Constitution bars the federal government from regulating for the public good—this is supposed to be the states' domain. However, even in an area traditionally left to the states—education—the federal government flexes its influence through monetary grants.

In 1996 the federal government allocated \$250 million to the states for five years for the exclusive purpose of teaching the social, psychological, and health gains to be realized by completely abstaining from sexual activity. Not surprisingly, all the states but California accepted the money and the accompanying restrictions. There were a few local holdouts, like Charleston County, South Carolina, who rejected the money, its school board chairman saying, "Let's not live in a fantasy land . . . [or] play Russian Roulette with the lives of our students."¹²

The fantasy land to which the chairman was referring was the Congressionally-mandated sex education curriculum. Sex education now could *only* teach that sexual activity outside the context of marriage was likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects. Even worse, contraceptive and safer-sex techniques could not be discussed, except to emphasize their failures, and discourage their use.

One of the sex education curricula that meets this conservative standard is "Sex Respect," created in the 1980s with federal money. Its founder, Phyllis Schlafly, protested in 1981 that, "nearly all existing sex education curricula . . . taught teenagers (and sometimes children) how to enjoy fornication without having a baby and without feeling guilty."¹³

"Sex Respect" pushes abstinence based on grossly exaggerated fears of emotional devastation, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and death. Its religious basis is barely hidden, as it has advised kids to attend worship services regularly, and has said, "nature seems to be making a statement about the wisdom of keeping sex within marriage through the current epidemic of STDs and teen pregnancy."¹⁴

Other questionable assertions have included, "there's no way to have premarital sex without hurting someone," the chances of getting pregnant while using a condom are one in six,¹⁵ and a film in which a student asks an instructor, "What if I

want to have sex before I get married?" The instructor's response (which has surely garnered cackles in classrooms across the country) is "Well, I guess you'll just have to be prepared to die."¹⁶

The federal government has instituted a fundamentalist Christian view of sex into our nation's educational system. Educators are not allowed to even answer questions about safe-sex aids, unless to criticize their effectiveness.¹⁷ They are required by law to teach children that "sexual activity outside of the context of marriage is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects."¹⁸ In other words, American children are being schooled not to orgasm until they are twenty-six.¹⁹

This program is surreal. In 2003 over sixty percent of American high school seniors had already had sexual intercourse.²⁰ By the age of eleven, twenty percent of boys are masturbating, and by the age of sixteen, ninety percent are doing so. By the age of sixteen, sixty percent of girls are masturbating.²¹ Ninety percent of Americans have sex before marriage.²² In addition, it is estimated 2.8 percent of males and 1.4 percent of females are homosexual.²³ In a society that does not allow homosexuals to marry, it is cruel to teach that they are never supposed to enjoy an orgasm. Sexual education in America is a very expensive hypocritical joke that spreads shame and misery among its young.

With a multitude of studies unable to demonstrate abstinence-only education's effectiveness, President Barack Obama cut its funding from the 2010 federal budget, but Senator Orrin Hatch added a last-minute provision before the budget's approval to provide \$250 million in funding for another five years.²⁴

II

CENSORSHIP

BE QUIET SO THEY DON'T FIGURE IT OUT

Thankfully, the truth about sex can now seep out through different channels in spite of politicians' best attempts. As with excrement, communication involving the topic of sex is restricted by our government. Sex must be sensitively discussed

over the airwaves from six a.m. to ten p.m. Indecent discussion of sexual organs or activities during these hours on broadcast radio or television can result in the federal government imposing a fine or even revoking a station's license.²⁵

Sex censorship by the federal government is done with the stated purpose of protecting children from hearing or viewing "harmful" material. How sexual references are harmful has never been scientifically explained by politicians. These "harms" are only alluded to in vague terms, as Senator Jesse Helms did when he introduced, and passed, a 1998 ban on broadcasting all indecent speech at all hours:²⁶

[W]hat happens when a child unintentionally tunes in and hears or sees material describing, by innuendo, how to have sex? Or when an eight-year-old girl turns on her radio to hear the deejay describe sex acts by the use of metaphors? . . . How much damage will be done? I hope that we will not have to find out.²⁷

Scientists have attempted to find out and they have found no damage. In the 1995 federal court case known as *ACT III*, Judge Harry Edwards wrote in his opinion that ". . . the simple truth is that '[t]here is not one iota of evidence in the record . . . to support the claim that exposure to indecency is harmful—indeed, the nature of the alleged 'harm' is never explained.'"²⁸

In addition to the government, social enforcement hampers candid discussion about sex. Prior to the "sexual revolution" of the 1960s and 1970s, any talk about sex was discouraged. It was a conversation reserved for a husband and wife to discuss in private, if it was discussed at all. Currently sex is commonly discussed among friends, and the closer the relationship, the more detailed the conversations can be. But discussing sex, particularly in detail, can be offensive to new acquaintances.