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## Sexual intimacy in the development of the premarital relationship.

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SEXUAL INTIMACY IN THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE PREMARITAL RELATIONSHIP

A Dissertation Presented

By

JEFFREY H. LOCKHART

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 1974

Psychology

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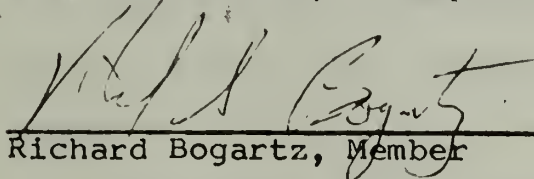
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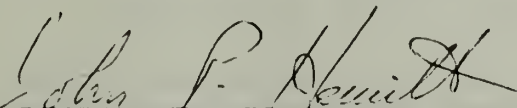
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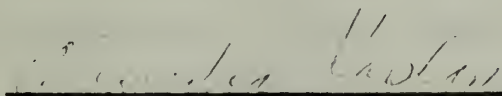
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These next words come very hard to me. I dedicate the effort and product of this whole study, the culmination of my graduate career, to one person who cannot see its final completion. I know that her pride in me and her happiness for me would have been unbounded at this time. God keep you, Mother.

Sexual Intimacy in the Development  
of the Premarital Relationship (August 1974)

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Directed by: Dr. Sheldon Cashdan

The present study investigated developmentally 1) the relational antecedents of first intercourse in the premarital relationship, 2) the effect first intercourse has on the subsequent development of a relationship, and 3) the personal significance of sexual intercourse to the partners themselves.

To do this, a process methodology was adopted which focused on phases in the development of the premarital relationship from the first meeting until the marriage ceremony. Separate interviews were conducted with the spouses of eight recently married couples, all of whom had engaged in sexual intimacy (intercourse) prior to their marriage. Contrary to culturally based expectations, it was found that 1) generally speaking, both sexes mutually decided to have intercourse, rather than by male initiation, and 2) sexual experience prior to the premarital relationship, and not gender, determined the relational antecedents and personal meaning of the first intercourse. Furthermore, the results indicated that males "moved" emotionally in the relationship as fast or faster than the females, a finding that may derive from the dif-

ferent meanings that marriage holds for the sexes. Based on the subjects' phase descriptions, the author proposed a four-phase developmental framework for the premarital relationship: 1) exploratory, 2) integration, 3) comparison, and 4) commitment. It was felt that a framework of this sort could form a basis for future studies of relationship development, marital or nonmarital, and for the role of sex therein.



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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

The decade covering the period from 1960-1970 is regarded by many as a period of marked change in sexual behavior. Despite the increase in premarital sex that occurred, little information is available regarding the role, function, or consequences of sexual intimacy in the development of the premarital relationship.<sup>1</sup> Sexual intimacy in the premarital relationship may be an important factor in the development of that relationship. But how important is it? At what point in the relationship is its impact most felt? How does it relate to the growth of intimacy, to trust development, etc.? The major aim of this work is to study the significance of sexual intimacy within the development of the premarital relationship, and to assess its personal meaning, functional relevance and consequence to the relationship from the perspective of the partners themselves.

Until very recently, most of our scientific knowledge regarding sex derived from the "sex survey". In the pre-Kinsey era, sex surveys typically found that 50% to 86% of men had engaged in premarital intercourse; while, for women, the same percentage ranged from 7% to 68% (Davis, 1929; Hamilton, 1929; Terman, 1938). Unfortunately, these early studies were

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<sup>1</sup>Sexual intimacy is defined for the purposes of this study as involving but not limited to sexual intercourse.



beset with methodological problems and sampling biases. It was not until the Kinsey studies (1949, 1953) appeared that empirical data about sexual behavior could be regarded with some degree of confidence. From 1953 to 1973 the Kinsey study stood as the authoritative word on sex. In 1973, a study, funded by the Playboy Foundation and reported by Morton Hunt (1973a, b, c; 1974a, b), surveyed 2,026 people in 24 urban areas, a sampling that generally matches the total U.S. population in most demographic characteristics. With some statistical adjustments, the Playboy survey can be compared directly to Kinsey's to discover the changes in sexual practices in the last 25 years. Limiting the comparison to premarital sexual behavior, the following data is of interest.

While two-thirds of noncollege men in Kinsey's sample had coitus by age 17, today (Playboy sample) the percentage is closer to three-quarters; for college bound men, only 25% had coitus by age 17 in Kinsey's sample, while in the Playboy sample, the figure is 50%. For women, covering all educational levels, less than a tenth of Kinsey's sample had coitus by age 17, and a third of his single women by age 26; today, more than twice as many have coitus by 17, and by age 25, half of the married women and three-quarters of the single ones have premarital intercourse (Hunt, 1973b). The table below demonstrates clearly the increase in premarital coitus, especially among women.



Ever Had Premarital Coitus (total married sample)<sup>2</sup>

	Under 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55 and up
Males	95%	92%	86%	89%	84%
Females	81%	65%	41%	36%	31%

Perhaps more important than the fact that the majority of women under 34 are engaging in premarital coitus, is with whom they are having it. Again, the Playboy sample compared to Kinsey's is interesting, and is shown in the table below.

Premarital Coital Partners of Married Females<sup>3</sup>

	Born before 1900	Born 1910-1919
Kinsey:		
Fiance only	40%	42%
Others only	20%	12%
Fiance and others	40%	46%
	Born 1938-1947	Born 1948-1955
Playboy survey:		
Fiance only	49%	54%
Others only	8%	4%
Fiance and others	43%	43%

As Hunt concludes, ". . . while many more single girls are having coitus, they do so with men they love and hope to marry--as did girls a generation and more ago" (p. 75).

Hunt's conclusion notwithstanding, the above table reveals that a greater percentage of Kinsey's sample of married fe-

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<sup>2</sup>From Hunt, 1973b, p. 74.

<sup>3</sup>From Hunt, 1973b, p. 75.

males had had premarital intercourse with "Others only," than is the case today (Playboy's sample). The change in the ratio of "Fiance only" to "Others only" is particularly noteworthy between the two samples. This suggests a decline of the "double standard" in sexual behavior among males and females.

Incidence figures are important, but they tell only part of the story. "Attitudes" are also very important. In Kinsey's sample, 60% of college-educated men had strong moral views to premarital coitus that prevented or curtailed their own activities; for women, the corresponding figure was 90%. However, today, 90% of men under age 25 believe that premarital intercourse is acceptable for men, and 80%, that it is acceptable for women--where there is only "strong affection" between the partners. Of the women under 25, 60% view premarital intercourse as acceptable for women where there is "strong affection", and 90%, where there is "love". Finally, where there is little or no affection between the partners, 60% of the men and 40% of the women condone intercourse for single males; and, 40% of the men, and 20% of the women sanction it for single females (Hunt, 1973b, p. 74).

All in all, the data from the recent Playboy survey, as well as that from other sources (Reiss, 1967; Broderick, 1970; Christensen and Gregg, 1970; Christensen, 1971; Brenton, 1972; Freedman and Lozoff, 1972; Walsh, 1972) seem to indicate greater permissiveness regarding premarital inter-

course, and a convergence of behavior and attitudes. In particular, the behavior and attitudes of women have changed dramatically such that there is now a "leveling off" between men and women. Brenton (1972) reporting on an attitude questionnaire given to 10,000 students at several Eastern universities, notes, "Whereas four years ago the two sexes were unlike in their responses, now they're so similar in attitudes that it's almost impossible to tell whether a male or female student filled out the questionnaire" (p. 55).

The sexual norm today appears to be what Reiss (1967) calls "permissiveness with affection", although Smith (1972) notes support for "permissiveness without affection" in that 39% of the females and 61% of the males he surveyed claimed "sexual relations for both male and female prior to marriage", with "no strings attached as their personal standard" (p. 8). Walsh (1972), however, maintains that love is a major factor in female sexual activity and "that the major reason for increased female permissiveness in sex is the belief that love justifies it" (p. 10).

The viewpoint that female premarital intercourse generally occurs in a caring relationship with perceived emotional commitment is supported by the majority of the researchers and writers in the field (for example, see Johnson, 1965; Lowen, 1965; Ehrmann, 1959; Rubin, 1971). Most researchers and writers are also in accord regarding male sexual behavior, feeling that the male's sexual response is much less



dependent on love or emotional commitment than is the female's. Males, however, seem to be moving away from "impersonal" sex. Hunt (1973a) notes that the frequenting of prostitutes by young males today is less than half as widespread as it was 25 years ago. He concludes from all the data on premarital sexual behavior that "while some of the young (both male and female) stress the purely physical, more typically they speak of the special meaning that sex has in a caring relationship and they report their peak sexual experiences as occurring only with partners with whom they have loving relationships" (Hunt, 1973b, p. 75).

Justification by love notwithstanding, the decision to engage in premarital intercourse is by no means easily arrived at by many of today's young singles. In a study focusing on students' perspectives about sex in their lives, Hicks and Taylor (1973) point out that "the student is confronted almost immediately with a need for a personal decision about his own sexual activity. What kind? How much? What partners? The pressure for action is extraordinary" (p. 43). The young single person now faces the challenge of choosing a personal standard for himself, rather than just accepting that of his parents. However, "the college student may now not suffer from the absence of choice, but from an excess of it! For some the burden of choice is heavier than the burden of repression" (Hicks and Taylor, 1973, p. 43).

For Reiss (1967, 1973), the choice of a personal stan-

dard derives from four major types of contemporary premarital sexual standards: 1) abstinence for both sexes; 2) the double standard, which forbids premarital coitus to women, but not to men; 3) permissiveness without affection, which allows coitus equally for men and women in relationships in which there is only physical attraction and mutual consent; and 4) permissiveness with affection, which holds that premarital coitus is acceptable for both sexes in the context of a strong, stable, and affectionate relationship.

As noted earlier, there is increasing movement to and acceptance of the last standard, permissiveness with affection; and probably, more acceptance of permissiveness without affection than in the past. The standard of abstinence and the double standard may be on their way out, although as Mazur (1972) points out in reference to the double standard:

. . . some people willingly accept the double standard and even seem to prefer it. And no wonder. In addition to offering temporary escape from embarrassing problems and upsetting confrontations, it did until recently enjoy the support or at least acquiescence of much of society; it was tacitly condoned by both Judaism and Christianity; social institutions provided for its perpetuation; the education establishment promoted it; and a host of myths reinforced it.

Despite the double standard's obvious defects, it will continue to shape relationships for a large proportion of people (Mazur, 1972, p. 42).

The double standard perhaps, but contrary to popular belief, males are not always trying to "make it" with their opposites. Kirkendall (1967) interviewed 131 college males,



92% of whom were between the ages of 20 and 24, and reported on 558 situations in which they had made decisions concerning possible heterosexual intercourse. He found that 42% of his subjects reported 90 decisions to reject the opportunity for intercourse when the female partner was willing to participate; and 57% reported a total of 111 mutual decisions between themselves and a female partner to avoid intercourse. Overall, Kirkendall obtained a ratio of seven acceptances of intercourse to every four renunciations by the male partner, i.e. in 36% of the opportunities to engage in intercourse, the male partner rejected it. It is clear, then, that it is not "automatic" to engage in premarital intercourse for many males as well as females, and that the decision-process is a major element in the total situation.

What happens if partners do decide to engage in premarital intercourse? According to Kinsey (1953), while most of his still unmarried females reported no regret, 31% did feel regret after their premarital coital activity. Among his married females, 23% reported regret after premarital intercourse. As for Kinsey's males, the vast majority reported no regret. The Playboy survey found more than a third of the males and almost two-thirds of the females felt regret and worry after their coital activity, and a "fair number" continued to be troubled by emotional and moral conflicts after many experiences (Hunt, 1973b). Swenson (1962, 1963) reported that college women who sought counseling revealed a great-

er amount of sexual behavior than did those who did not seek counseling; while, the reverse was true for males. In a study on the relationship between sexual behavior, personal adjustment, and avowed happiness, Miller and Wilson (1968) conclude:

Persons vary greatly in their sexual behaviors, yet sexual behavior shows little correlation with adjustment. In order to explain this lack of correlation, it is suggested that American society places persons in a conflict between sexual frustration, loneliness, and abstention from rewarding emotional relations, on the one hand, and guilt, social disapproval, and concern about disease and pregnancy, on the other hand. The more a person profits from sexual expression and rewarding personal involvement, the more he is likely to suffer from guilt and vice versa. The result: little over-all correlation between sex and adjustment (p. 30).

In sum, the bulk of the data on sexual activities reveals that there is an increase in premarital sexual behavior. Typically, this behavior is "meaningful" only if it occurs within a caring relationship. This is especially so for females. There is also evidence to show that women, particularly, have undergone a major shift in attitudes regarding premarital intercourse, that is, from a restrictive point of view to a permissive one. On the other hand, there appears to be an increase in regret following premarital coitus, especially among men. One explanation for this apparently paradoxical finding might be a divergence between publicly expressed attitudes and those privately held in regard to one's

own sexual behavior. A further explanation for increased regret might lie in the functional consequences of premarital coitus upon the "caring" relationship, that is, if the relationship were to "break" or "fall apart" after the occurrence of intercourse, one or both partners might attribute the break to the act of intercourse itself. Regret may follow intercourse only if the relationship terminates, and not if the relationship continues to develop with increasing intimacy and commitment.

It is apparent, then, that little is known about the precise role that premarital sex plays in the development of a love relationship. Most of the data reviewed is demographic in nature and focuses on premarital "variables" such as age, education, attitudes, etc. to the relative exclusion of relational "processes". The present author agrees with Bolton (1961) who states that:

The (study of) mate selection involves an imagery which compresses into a unitary nonprocessual, psychological act of choice what is actually a process of building over time a human relationship . . . . As a result, we know very little, scientifically, about mate selection either as a process or as a relationship as such--that is, as a love or intimate relationship (p. 234).

We therefore turn to studies that deal with the development of intimate relations.

Among investigators interested in the premarital relationship, Reiss (1960) was perhaps the first to formulate a



theory of the heterosexual love. He postulated a "Wheel Theory" consisting of four "processes" which sequentially follow each other. The first process in the development of a love relationship is the establishment of a feeling of "rapport", a feeling of ease with one another. At this point in the wheel, the partners are relaxed in the presence of the other; they talk about themselves and learn about each other. The rapport leads to the second process of "self-revelation", in which each person reveals "intimate aspects of his existence". In this phase, the couple, according to Reiss, would share their hopes, desires, fears, and ambitions. Self-revelation, in turn, allows the third process of "mutual dependences" or "interdependent habit systems" to occur. In this phase, each partner becomes dependent on the other "to fulfill one's own habits: e.g. one needs the other person to tell one's ideas or feelings; one needs the other person to joke with . . . ." (p. 142). And finally, there is the fourth phase of "personality need fulfillment", in which the partners mutually satisfy each other's personality needs. Regarding the "wheel" aspect of his theory, Reiss states that:

the circularity is most clearly seen in that the needs being fulfilled were the original reason for feeling rapport . . . the cultural background produces certain types of personality needs in particular groups of people, and when these people meet other groups which have similar or complementary backgrounds they feel rapport, reveal themselves,

become dependent, and thereby fulfill these personality needs (p. 143).

Reiss did not consider where marriage fits into his "Wheel Theory". He stated that the "wheel" can continue to turn indefinitely (as well as "unwind"), but gave no indication of whether marriage would result generally after one "turn" or more.

Reiss did, however, consider the role of sexual intimacy and concluded that it was one way of revealing oneself; as such, he implied that sexual relations would first occur in the second phase of the heterosexual relationship. Reiss seemingly attached no more importance to sexual intimacy than as a means of self-revelation; but, later in a typology of college love affairs, spoke of "sexual love where the sexual factor is dominant" (p. 144). He did not expound further on the significance of sexual intimacy within a heterosexual relationship. Reiss' work does suggest that the "meaning" of sexual intimacy may vary according to its time of occurrence within the relationship.

Though not a developmental study, the investigation of Levinger, Senn, and Jorgensen (1970) acts as a precursor of a study with strong developmental implications. The Levinger et al. study is essentially a replication of an earlier one by Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) in which both value consensus and need complementarity were found to facilitate progress toward permanence of "seriously attached" couples, the influ-



ence of each factor varying with the duration of the relationship. Using paper-and-pencil measures to assess value consensus and need complementarity, Kerckhoff and Davis concluded that a series of "filtering factors" operates in mate selection. Early in a relationship, social status variables, e.g. class, religion, are important elements in the development of the relationship. Later, consensus on values becomes salient in the relationship and finally, need complementarity becomes important.

Levinger, Senn, and Jorgensen found at best only marginal support for the previous findings. Additional analyses produced little or no confirmation or corroboration for the earlier results of Kerckhoff and Davis. In fact, Levinger et al. concluded that:

The present findings suggest that the individual partners themselves are better able to predict the fate of their pair relationship than are a small set of objectively derived pair-similarity or pair-discrepancy indices . . . . Perhaps the average progressing pair had jointly built a new set of common properties which outweighed any questionnaire-assessed discrepancies in attitudes (p. 441).

In the light of their findings, Levinger et al. proposed that two supplementary processes occur in "deep-going attachments". They suggested that:

One process entails encounter, disclosure, and the discovery of co-orientation . . . . A second process, not previously formulated, is the development of the relationship per se.<sup>4</sup> The first process

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<sup>4</sup>Italics added.

governs the manner in which two individual partners discover one another; the second pertains to their subsequent buildup of a joint enterprise (p. 441).

It should be pointed out that both Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) and Levinger et al. (1970) employed couples that were pinned, engaged, or "seriously attached", and investigated the progress of these couples toward permanence over a six-month period. The "permanence" did not necessarily include marriage, and, in fact, none of the couples in either study were married at the end of the six-month period. In addition, by using couples who were from the start pinned, engaged, or "seriously attached", an important phase in the development of a potential premarital relationship was omitted from consideration.

The idea of building a joint enterprise, one which entails commitment, was further expanded upon by Levinger and Snoek (1972). They conceptualized relationships along a single dimension of "relatedness", and differentiated three levels. The initial base, "zero contact", is simply a pair of persons who have not yet met, and thereby, are not aware of each other. The first level, "unilateral awareness", occurs when one person is acquainted with the other, but has no significant interaction with him. At this level, there are only unilateral attitudes or impressions. In level two, "surface contact", bilateral interaction and attitudes occur, but "the interaction is restricted and interdependence is very limited"

(p. 5). Finally, there is level three, "mutuality", representing a continuum of deeper states of interdependence and "intersection" in the partner's lives. At this point in the relationship, there is mutual development of joint attitudes, behavior, attributes, possessions; and, the behavior and attitudes of each partner are strongly influenced by that of the other. Levinger and Snoek (1972) summarized the characteristics of the three levels in the table reproduced below.

Characteristics of Interpersonal Relationships  
at Three Different Levels<sup>5</sup>

<u>Attributes</u>	<u>1. Awareness</u>	<u>2. Surface Contact</u>	<u>3. Mutuality</u>
Communication	Unilateral	Confined to role-required instrumental concerns; no self-disclosure	Self-disclosure concerning personal feelings and the evaluation of outcomes in the P-O relationship
Common Knowledge	None	Confined to O's public self-presentation	Much mutually shared information, including knowledge of each other's personal feelings and biographies
Process of Interaction	None	Stereotypic role-taking; trial-and-	Spontaneous and free-flow-

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<sup>5</sup>From Levinger and Snoek, 1972, p. 8; P means "person" and O means "other".



		error responses to novel situations	ing; P understands how O is affected by the interaction and has concern for his well-being
Regulation of interaction	None	By cultural norms; untested implicit assumption that O shares same norms	By joint construction of some unique pair norms, tested and found appropriate by both persons
Maintenance of Relationship	None	Of little concern; responsibility for maintenance is perceived to be vested in externally derived roles or organizational requirements. Cost of terminating relationship is low	P and O both assume responsibility for protecting and enhancing the relationship. Cost of terminating relationship becomes increasingly high
Evaluation of Relationship	None	Satisfaction on the basis of self-centered criteria; P compares his outcomes with prior experience and with alternate relationships	Based on mutual outcomes evaluated against joint criteria, reflecting mutual equity
Attraction	Based on O's reward potential or "image"	Based on P's satisfaction with experienced outcomes, as well as on Level 1 criteria. Determined considerably by adequacy of O's role enactment	Based on affection for O as a unique person and on P's emotional investment, as well as on Level 2 criteria

Neither Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) nor Levinger et al. (1970) discuss the issue of sexual intimacy in any detail. Only in the latter work (Levinger and Snoek, 1972) is the

matter mentioned at all and here it is discussed very briefly. The authors state only that:

. . . sexual attraction may occur at either Level 1, Level 2, or in the Level 3 relationship. At each of these levels P's attraction feeling would differ, ranging from early-level self-centered fantasy to later-level we-centered reality. At a superficial stage, P's own gratification will probably dominate his enjoyment; the more involved the relationship, the greater would be his awareness of the mutual significance of the partner's sexual feelings (p. 17).

It would seem, then, that Levinger and Snoek (1972) do not tie sexual intimacy to a particular phase in a relationship. Rather, they believe that sexuality, both in its affective and behavioral aspects, is influenced by the level or "depth" of the relationship in which it occurs. Furthermore, it is possible that regret for engaging in sex may more likely follow "early-level self-centered" sexual behavior of one's partner than "later-level we-centered" sexuality.

Stimulated by the work of Reiss (1960) and others, Lewis (1972) conceptualized "A Developmental Framework for the Analysis of Premarital Dyadic Formation". In an extensive review of the literature on mate selection, Lewis found empirical linkages to support a six-step developmental framework to "account for the formation of premarital dyads out of more casual dating pairs, prior to the final selection of a mate" (p. 19).

In Lewis' view, a couple that has "made it" in terms of



a sustained deep relationship (one not necessarily leading to marriage) has gone through a time-ordered sequence of: 1) the process of perceiving similarities in each other's socio-cultural background, values, interests, personality; 2) the process of achieving pair rapport, evidenced by ease of communication, positive evaluations of the other, satisfaction with pair relationships, validation of self by the other; 3) the process of inducing self-disclosure and achieving openness with each other; 4) the process of achieving role-taking accuracy with each other; 5) the process of achieving interpersonal role-fit, evidenced by observed similarity of personalities, role complementarity, need complementarity; and finally, 6) the process of achieving dyadic crystallization, evidenced by progressive involvement, functioning as a dyad, boundary establishment, commitment to each other, and identity as a couple (p. 22, 23).

To test the viability of his framework, Lewis (1973) gathered pre- and post-test questionnaire data from 91 dating couples who had either parted or remained intact for two years. Nineteen of his 24 developmental hypotheses were supported by the longitudinal data, leading him to conclude:

The significance of this study lies in the PDF (pre-marital dyadic formation) framework, which has related six pair processes in a time-ordered sequence, and . . . has generated developmental hypotheses, the findings of which, upon preliminary verification, have begun the long process of establishing construct validity for the framework (p. 24).

It is important to note that in both his PDF framework and his subsequent test of that framework, Lewis failed to include marriage as an anchoring point. It does seem that a conceptualization of the development of the premarital relationship should, to be complete, include the advent of marriage as the termination point in that development.

Rapoport (1962) was concerned with the critical transition points in the "normal, expectable development of the family life cycle" (p. 69). The initial exploratory study focused on the "getting married" phase and its three subphases: engagement, the honeymoon period, and the early marriage period up to three months after the wedding. Each of these subphases was thought to have a series of tasks associated with it. The development of the premarital relationship, then, was viewed by Rapoport in terms of task accomplishment.

In an initial study on the engagement period, Rapoport tried to characterize the nature of the tasks within this phase. To do this, she interviewed six couples "in a relatively intense way", and divided the problems confronting engaged persons into intrapersonal and interpersonal tasks. The intrapersonal tasks were three in number:

(I) making oneself ready to take over the role of husband/wife; (II) disengaging (or altering the form of engagement) of oneself from especially close relationships that compete or interfere with commitment to the new marital relationship; (III) accommodating patterns of gratifications of premarital life to patterns of the newly formed couple (marital) relationship (p. 74).

The engaged couple also faced interpersonal tasks to make their relationship a satisfactory and harmonious one. In this category, Rapoport saw "fitting together" efforts as most important to accomplish the tasks and specified the following interpersonal tasks:

1. establishing a couple identity;
2. developing a mutually satisfactory sexual adjustment for the engagement period;
3. developing a mutually satisfactory agreement regarding family planning;
4. establishing a mutually satisfactory system of communication between the pair;
5. establishing a mutually satisfactory pattern with regard to relatives;
6. developing a mutually satisfactory pattern with regard to friends;
7. developing a mutually satisfactory pattern with regard to work;
8. developing mutually satisfactory patterns of decision-making;
9. planning specifically for the wedding, honeymoon, and the early months of marriage that lie ahead (p. 77).

Obviously, by studying only the "engagement" period, Rapoport offers a somewhat truncated developmental segment, as well as a somewhat narrow viewpoint. In addition, the tasks themselves were not regarded developmentally, but were seen only as isolated prerequisites for a viable, harmonious relationship. Sexual intimacy, then, to Rapoport was more or less viewed as a "task" to be worked on together by the premarital couple, a task of "developing a mutually satisfactory sexual adjustment".

Finally, the work of Bolton (1961) provides a further model for the present study. Bolton interviewed twenty "re-



cently married" couples, and from his analysis, derived five types of developmental processes.

In Type I, "personality meshing" the interaction between the partners brings into "fit" their personality orientations. Bolton noted that "attraction is felt early, the developmental tempos of the pair are in close rhythm, and interactions increase in frequency to the saturation point, with erotic interaction, empathy, and idealization important" (p. 237).

In Type II, "identity clarification" the emphasis is on the clarification or change of identity in one partner or both. In this type, interactions highlight identity problems, which must then be resolved for the relation to progress into marriage. Bolton states that "the importance of interpersonal strategies is great; turning points are frequent; and a texture of shared understandings of considerable depth is built up. More than in any other type there is a withdrawal into the relationship and away from outside influences" (p. 237).

"Relation centered" processes form Type III. The major theme in this type is "the building up of images of the other, amorous identifications and bonds which lead the couple to the decision that theirs is a viable relationship for marriage" (p. 237). Bolton states that there is an initial superficial commitment, but then one or both partners have doubts, and the question of the relationship's viability is



raised. Characteristic of this type of relationship are "more ups and downs, breaks, rivals, incongruities of definition, and outside pressures to maintain the relation than in any other type" (p. 238).

Type IV, "pressure and intrapersonal centered processes", is in some aspects the opposite of Type I. In Type IV, the personalities do not "fit" at all. Bolton noted that one partner is direct, while the other uses subtle manipulation; and, one of the pair has "personality barriers to forming intimate involvements" (p. 238). Bolton claimed that several themes emerge:

(1) one member, being under an expediency pressure to marry, falls in love quickly and pressures the other for marriage, but the resisting or apathetic member blocks; (2) a concentration directly upon questions of indexes of marriageability and upon securing commitments; (3) a dependence of one or both members more upon the relationship per se than upon one another; and (4) a great importance of fantasy for one or both members . . . . There is an emphasis upon formality, romanticism, and role playing, with an avoidance of the directly erotic (p. 238).

Finally, in Type V, "expediency centered processes", there is a strong pressure felt by one or both of the partners to marry. In the event that one partner experiences this pressure, the other, according to Bolton, is "inexperienced in heterosexual relationships, highly suggestible, or apathetic toward his interpersonal fate" (p. 238). The process to marriage may be very brief if the pressure exists

from the start of the relationship, or the relation may go through a "series of sharp turning points and tactical maneuvers", and marriage may then quickly result.

Interestingly, the five types of developmental processes were almost equally represented among Bolton's sample of twenty couples. For Bolton, the heterogeneity of premarital relationships becomes readily apparent when the relationships are analyzed via their developmental process. Bolton believed that "the great differences in these types make clear the necessity of having multiple rather than monolithic explanations for mate selection" (p. 237).

Bolton's approach to studying premarital relationship development was novel and fruitful. He not only produced a typological framework, but also analyzed his couples in terms of "turning points", and process patterns by which the partners became committed to the relationship. In all of his typology and process analysis, however, the sphere of sexual intimacy was touched upon only twice, and even then most briefly--in Type I, Bolton stated that "erotic interaction" is important; while, in Type IV, there is "an avoidance of the directly erotic". Beyond this scant consideration is given to the role of erotic involvement.

In retrospect, very few investigations have focused on the development of the premarital relationship, as contrasted with variables in mate selection. Among the few that have are Reiss (1960) with his "Wheel Theory" of four processes,

Levinger and Snoek (1972) with their three levels of relatedness, Lewis (1972) with his six-step developmental framework, Rapoport (1962) who focused on "task accomplishment", and finally, Bolton (1961) with his five types of developmental processes.

Interestingly, little information about premarital intimacy can be gleaned from these studies since the investigators seem not to have devoted much attention to this subject. It is doubtful that any of the investigators believed that sexual intimacy was unimportant or irrelevant in the context and development of the premarital relationship. However, none saw fit to explore and delve into the significance of sexual intimacy and its "place" within the development of that relationship. Sexual intimacy, defined as involving but not limited to sexual intercourse, may not, of course, have occurred with many of the couples that were studied. That is certainly possible (although not probable) in the studies performed in the sixties. It is highly unlikely, however, in studies conducted in the seventies.

The present study investigated developmentally 1) the relational antecedents of first intercourse, 2) the effect first intercourse has on the subsequent development of a relationship, and 3) the personal significance of sexual intercourse to the partners themselves. To do this, a process methodology was adopted which focused on phases in that relationship development and the behavioral transitions that mark

these phases. Specifically, we asked:

- 1) Can partners delineate developmental phases in their premarital relationship from the day of first meeting until the day of the marriage ceremony?

Can they earmark the transition events from one phase to another?

How do they characterize the various phases in regard to how they related to each other?

- 2) Where, in the developmental phases of their premarital relationship, did sexual intimacy first occur?

What meaning did it have for each of the partners? Was this meaning "in line" with their attitudes about premarital sex? Was there any regret following first intercourse?

What did sexual intimacy "do" to the relationship--solidify it, or perhaps pull it apart?

Is sexual intimacy itself used as a defining characteristic of a particular phase?

And, finally, how did the partners decide to engage in sexual intimacy? Was it planned? Impulsive?



## CHAPTER II

## Method

Subjects. Married couples were obtained through advertising in the University newspaper, and were paid for their participation. The advertisement said only that recently married couples (6 to 18 months) were wanted for doctoral research on the premarital relationship. In order to investigate the total premarital relationship, and the development thereof, it was necessary to employ couples who had passed through the premarital period to its conclusion, i.e., marriage. In regard to the limits for the duration of marriage, it seemed advisable to utilize couples for whom the "romantic glow" surrounding the very early marital relationship had dissipated. It was hoped that this would facilitate a more open, "objective" account of the premarital relationship. On the other hand, since the couple had to look back at their premarital relationship, it was important that the courting experience possess some saliency for them--hence the arbitrary limits of six and 18 months.

A couple had to meet a second criterion for participation in the study--their premarital relationship had to have included sexual intercourse--an obvious condition, given the aim and scope of the study. Whether a couple met this criterion was known through a phone questionnaire (see Appendix A). Eight couples constituted the subject sample in this

study. In most cases, the couples were accepted in the order in which they phoned the investigator. Only the above two criteria were used routinely to screen couples, but other reasons for rejecting couples were: 1) completion of scheduling couples (the primary reason for turning down couples); 2) engagement or marriage to another prior to present marriage; 3) extremely long duration of premarital relationship, e.g. 10 years; and 4) inconvenience, e.g. one couple lived 35 miles away.

In all, there were 38 phone calls in response to the advertisement. Phone questionnaire data were obtained on 24 of these couples. Four couples turned down participation after learning more about the study, claiming lack of time as the reason. Only one couple of the 24 had not engaged in premarital intercourse (that is, 96% had had premarital coitus, as compared to 95% of the males' and 81% of the females under age 25 in the Playboy sample).

The characteristics of the "study couples" appear in Table 1. The mean age for the males is 23.5 years; for the females, 21.8 years. The mean length of marriage is 10.5 months, and the mean duration of the premarital relationship is 25.9 months.

The "non-study couples" (16 for which there is data) are very alike the "study couples" in all the noted characteristics. Their mean length of marriage is 10.0 months, and their mean duration of the premarital relationship is 26.7

months. They are very similar to the "study couples" in age, education, religion, and attendance at church.

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 Insert Table 1 about here  
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As Table 1 reveals, three females had had coital partners prior to meeting their spouse (and no other partner thereafter), and five had not had intercourse before meeting their spouse (one of the five did have other coital partners after meeting her spouse). This division in sexual experience is very similar to that found in the same age range of the Playboy survey (Hunt, 1973b): 54% of the married females had premarital coitus with their fiance only, and 43% with their fiance and others. The male subjects split equally: four had intercourse with their fiancée only, and four had had other partners as well (but prior to meeting their spouse). Neither Hunt (1973b), nor Kinsey (1949) report any directly comparable data on the number of premarital coital partners for males, but Hunt did note that the median number of premarital coital partners for his total sample of married males is six. The number of premarital partners for the "sexually experienced" males in this study is unknown, except that in every case there were "several". For the "sexually inexperienced" males, the number is one--their fiancée. It is difficult to say, then, whether the male subjects closely represent the larger college male population in sexual experience,

Table 1  
Subject Characteristics

	Age	Educa- tion <sup>b</sup>	Reli- gion <sup>c</sup>	Sexual- ly Ex- peri- enced <sup>d</sup>	Duration of Pre- marital Relation- ship <sup>e</sup>	Length of Mar- riage
The Sophisticates <sup>a</sup>						
Ken	29	BS,G	Ath-N	Y	9 mos.	5 mos.
Jean	23	MFA	Cath-N	Y		
The High School Sweethearts						
Roger	22	jr.	Cath-N	N	5 yrs.	8 mos.
Diane	22	sr.	Cath-N	N		
Chinese-American Style						
Dick	25	BS,G	Prot-N	Y	14 mos.	16 mos.
Eileen	24	BA	Prot-N	Y		
The Rollercoasters						
John	21	sr.	Prot-Y	N	2.5 yrs.	9 mos.
Sharon	21	sr.	Prot-Y	N		
The Veterans						
Rick	25	jr.	Agn-N	Y	1.5 yrs.	9 mos.
Karen	20	jr.	Agn-N	Y		
The Push-pull Duo						
Mark	21	sr.	Cath-N	N	5 yrs.	8 mos.
Pat	20	jr.	Prot-N	N		
The Loners						
Dave	24	BS	Prot-N	N	7 mos.	17 mos.
Marge	23	soph.	Cath-N	N		
The Greeks						
Larry	21	sr.	Cath-Y	Y	9 mos.	12 mos.
Anne	21	sr.	Cath-Y	N		

<sup>a</sup>Affectionate names for the couples, see text.

<sup>b</sup>Degree, if any; G = graduate student; present college year, e.g. sr.

<sup>c</sup>Ath = Atheist; Cath = Catholic; Prot = Protestant; Agn = Agnostic; N = does not attend church regularly; Y = does attend church regularly.

<sup>d</sup>Y = had sexual intercourse prior to meeting spouse; N = had not had sexual intercourse prior to meeting spouse.

<sup>e</sup>Considered to be from the day of first meeting until the day of marriage ceremony.



although Hunt's conclusions, and those of others, suggest that they do.

For the sake of aiding the reader in keeping the "study couples" separated, affectionate names have been given to them by the investigator. Hopefully, the names will give the couples a little more "richness" than a simple number. For a full description of the couples, the reader is referred to Appendix D.

"The Sophisticates", Ken and Jean, have a metropolitan air about them. He is a 29-year-old, debonair, ex-Navy pilot. She has a master's degree in fashion design, is career-oriented, and dresses stylishly.

"The High School Sweethearts", Roger and Diane, began dating in high school with "love" at first sight. Neither dated another throughout high school.

"Chinese-American Style" refers to the fact that Dick is Chinese-American and Eileen is not. They are one of the older couples in the study.

"The Rollercoasters", John and Sharon, met early in college, and had a turbulent, up-down relationship.

"The Veterans", Rick and Karen, are so-named because Rick lost a leg in Vietnam, and then met and married Karen.

"The Push-pull Duo", Mark and Pat, met early in high school. While Mark pushed to "go steady", Pat refrained from committing herself.

"The Loners", Dave and Marge, are shy and retiring peo-

ple. They are the oldest sexually inexperienced couple.

"The Greeks", Larry and Anne, are members of the fraternity-sorority set. They are the only "mixed couple" in reference to sexual experience.

Procedure. This author interviewed all eight couples, focusing generally on their premarital relationship and sexual intimacy patterns. Five sessions were held with each couple. The first session was conducted with both partners present, and was used to establish rapport, to fill out the information sheet (see Appendix B), and to relate in more detail the aim and method of the study. The couple was told that the investigator would like to have at least one, but probably two sessions with each partner separately, and that it was strongly preferred that they do not discuss the separate sessions with each other. They were further told that each session would be confidential in that the interviewer would not relate to one spouse what the other had said. Anonymity, of course, would be maintained in the final paper.

It was decided that separate interviews would allow each partner greater freedom to respond to the issues, but more importantly, interviewing each partner separately would highlight whatever sex differences might exist (particularly in regard to the personal significance of sexual intimacy). In order to avoid the resentment and suspicion that might be produced by the idea of separate sessions, it was emphasized

that the interviewer would not be asking them to report on each other, and that the separate sessions were simply to allow free rein for their own perspectives.

### Theoretical Considerations and Methodological Problems

Interviewing limited sample. It is clear that the present study aimed to explore a complex area of interpersonal relations; in the service of this aim, it seemed more fruitful to obtain qualitative and informational "richness" and "depth" from a few rather than "narrow" and quantitative information from many. As such, it yielded data not given to statistical procedures and manipulation, but rather to impressionistic interpretation (see Dean, Eichhorn, and Dean (1967) for some of the limitations and advantages of this method).

As Barton and Lazarsfeld (1955)' point out:

The only fully adequate way to test the existence of a relationship between two variables is through statistical analysis; to test cause-and-effect relations requires either a controlled experiment, or a rather large number of cases of 'natural change' observed over time. But research which has neither statistical weight nor experimental design, research based only on qualitative descriptions of a small number of cases, can nonetheless play the important role of suggesting possible relationship, causes, effects, and even dynamic processes. Indeed, it can be argued that only research which provides a wealth of miscellaneous, unplanned impressions and observations can play this role. Those who try to get suggestions for possible explanatory factors for statistical results solely from looking at tabulations of the few variables which were deliberately included in the study in advance often



can make no progress; sometimes even a single written-in comment by a respondent will provide a clue to additional factors (p. 182).

Lofland (1971) further notes:

Because of the quantitative researcher's typical distance from the phenomenon of his interest, and because, therefore, of his ignorance, he often finds himself turning to qualitative studies in order to gain a sense of what the phenomenon is like and what variables he ought to look for. In order to find substance for his technology, he is often found studying qualitative reports. This is as it should be. The qualitative researcher has gotten close to people somewhere in the world. He may not have developed a fully correct and definitive depiction of variations and auxiliary causal accounts, but he has provided indispensable and useful foundations for quantitative research (p. 63).

Certainly, the above is not meant to imply that the method adopted in the present study is without potential problems. Some of these problems are enumerated below, with means that hopefully reduced their influence.

Reluctance to discuss personal material. The majority of people do not divulge personal information readily, particularly of a sexual nature. Several aspects of this study attempted to decrease or overcome this reluctance; and, in fact, the subjects did readily reveal very personal material. First, the advertisement only mentioned "research on the premarital relationship" and not the sexual aspect. When subjects phoned they were then told that we were looking for open and frank couples because we would be asking



questions of a personal nature dealing with the development of their premarital relationship, and various aspects in it. The phone questionnaire was administered, and then any questions they had were answered. Second, the investigator established a "solid" rapport with the couple, and emphasized in the first session that this kind of research was important in understanding the complexity of male-female relationships. Third, separate confidential sessions allowed, perhaps, more openness than if the spouse were present.

Contamination of information through discussion between the partners. It was highly likely that the subjects would want to talk to each other about their respective interviews. Such discussion would have undoubtedly influenced the reporting in the remaining sessions, and, therefore, was undesirable. The only way to have totally prevented this possibility would have been to have had a rather lengthy simultaneous interview with both spouses and two interviewers (which would have led to further problems). It was hoped that the investigator's strong appeal (with rationale) for no discussion influenced the couple in this regard; and, in fact, the findings suggest little or no discussion between the partners.

Reportorial ability. McCall and Simmons (1969) report that ability to collect and retain information is "positively related to: length (but not recency) of exposure to the

situation; level (but not type) of interest; and generalized perceptual ability. Ability to communicate information is . . . positively related to level of education (p. 114)."

It was expected that the selection of subjects (of average or above average intelligence, presumably, and college students) and the topic of investigation (sexual intimacy in the development of the premarital relationship) would insure high reportorial ability. To facilitate the memory of the subjects in looking back over their premarital relationship, the Interview Guide (Appendix C) was designed to investigate the relationship in a "natural" sequence from first meeting through marriage.

The Interview Guide, used in the separate sessions, was further designed to explore first the developmental aspects of the premarital relationship, and then to look at the sexual intimacy therein. This sequence was based on the assumption that the exploration of the development of the relationship was less threatening and anxiety producing than questions of a sexual nature, and thereby should appear first; and further, that such an exploration would provide "anchor points" for exploring the couple's sexual behavior.

# CHAPTER III

## Results

### The Premarital Relationship: Subject Viewpoint

The results pertaining to the development of the premarital relationship (according to subjects viewpoint) are reported in Table 2, Table 3, and the following sections: number of phases; nature of phases; transition events between the phases; "emotional movement" within the couples; and parental "insertion" into the relationship development. The complete couple summaries of their relationship development with their phase divisions and transition events appear in Appendix D.

Number of phases. Table 2 reveals that all subjects, except one, could delineate developmental phases in their premarital relationship, and transition events between the phases. Only one subject, Anne (The Greeks) was unable to

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Insert Table 2 about here  
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report any phases. For those couples in which both partners spoke of phases, in all but one (The Loners), there was





Table 2 (cont.)

<u>Couple Name</u>		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<u>Chinese-American Style (cont.)</u>							
<u>Eileen:</u>	"Exploratory relationship" (3 months)	"Feeling more like a unit... doing things together" (4 months)	"Empty relationship--later frustrated" (3 months)	"Settling on date for marriage" (4 months)			
	E. back to school, and stayed with D. (E)	D. and E. went to respective homes for summer (E)	E. back home from California trip (E)				
<u>The Rollercoasters</u>							
<u>John:</u>	"Friendship phase" (12 months)	"Going out on a casual basis" (2½ months)	"Maturation of relationship--having chance to think apart" (5 months)	"Being with each other all the time" (3 months)	J. asked S. to marry him (I)	"Turbulent period--re-establish ourselves" (1½ months)	Big snowstorm led to discussion (E)
	First date (I)	J. told S. he loved her (I)	First intercourse (I)				"Engagement period" (5½ months)
<u>Sharon:</u>	"Friendship relationship" (13 months)	"Dating relationship--growing relationship" (6 months)	"Commitment" (4 months)	"Doubting phase" (1½ months)	J.'s crying episode (I)	"Acceptance and ready for marriage" (5 ½ months)	
	S talked with her old boyfriend (E)	Long discussion about S.'s feelings (I)	J. asked S. to marry him (I)				
<u>The Veterans</u>							
<u>Rick:</u>	"Dating, liking each other, companionship" (3 months)	"Enrichment of our relationship" (3 months)	"Purpose as a couple--planning" (12 months)				
	First intercourse (I)	R. asked K. to be his fiancée (I)					
<u>Karen:</u>	"Interested friends" (1 month)	"Dating relationship" (3 months)	"Total commitment" (4 months)	"Like being married--totally relaxed, open" (11 months)			
	First date (I)	Discussion and plan to have intercourse--K. went on pill (I)	R.'s proposal for marriage (I)				

Table 2 (cont.)

Couple Name	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<u>The Push-pull Duo</u>						
Mark:	"Growing to know each other" (6 months) M. received his driver's license (E)	"Dating alone . . . sharing affection" (21 months) M. started school at U. Mass. (E)	"Tough time on our relationship" (12 months) P. started school at U. Mass. (E)	"Good time together" (12 months) M. moved into his apartment (E)	"Premarital stage, very personal, very smooth relationship" (10 months)	
Pat:	"Up and down in my feelings" (15 months) M. told P. to "forget" relationship (I)	"A growing understanding and enjoying him more" (24 months) First intercourse (I)	"Togetherness, more intimacy, and fun" (17 months) M. asked P. to marry him (I)	"Solid relationship--talked of how to run a household" (4 months)		
<u>The Loners</u>						
Dave:	"Exploring each other mentally" (3 months) D. predicted they would be married (I)	"Beginning of physical relationship" (4 months) D. came back from his reserve camp (E)				
Marge:	"Distantly friendly" (2 months) M. purposely visited D. to talk to him (I)	"Becoming more interested in each other--seeing each other as potential boyfriend-girlfriend" (3 weeks) D. came back from his reserve camp (E)	"Intense excitement" (1½ months) Semester started, summer over (E)	"Seeing each other more and more alone rather than in a group" (1 month) First intercourse (I)	"Serious relationship--thinking of living together and marriage" (1½ months)	
<u>The Greeks</u>						
Larry:	"Pre-intercourse phase . . . general talk, very superficial" (1 month) First intercourse (I)	"Deeper relationship . . . found out more and more about each other" (2 months) Start of intercession (E)	"Living together. Together all the time" (1 month) End of inter-session (E)	"Pre-engagement phase; we talked of marriage all the time" (2 months) Engagement (I)	"Preparations for wedding" (2 months)	

Table 2 (cont.)

<u>Couple Name</u>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<u>The Greeks</u> (cont.)						
Anne:		("I can't really see any phases . . .")				

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\*First meeting precedes the first phase, and marriage as an event terminates the last phase.  
 (E) or (I) after each transition event indicates judgment by investigator of "external" or "internal" (see text).

agreement between the partners in the number of phases, differing at most by one phase. Not totally unexpected was the finding that the stated number of phases in the premarital relationship (ranging from two to six phases) varied roughly with the duration of that relationship--for example, Roger and Diane (The High School Sweethearts) each reported five phases for their premarital relationship of five years, while Dick and Eileen (Chinese-American Style) reported three and four phases, respectively, for their relationship of 14 months. However, more apparent than the number of phases varying with the duration of the relationship, is the amount of time within a particular phase or phases. Some subjects reported phases as short as three weeks (Marge, The Loners), while others, these notably having lengthy premarital relationships, reported phases spanning as much as two and a half years (perhaps a logical consequence of a rather long premarital relationship).

Inspection of Table 2 also shows that the sex of the subject had no bearing on the number of phases reported. With three couples, the wives noted more phases than their husbands (Chinese-American Style, The Veterans, and The Loners), while in three other couples, the reverse was true (The Rollercoasters, The Push-pull Duo, and The Greeks); and, with The High School Sweethearts, the husband and wife reported the same number of phases.



Nature of phases. The abbreviated descriptive characterizations of the phases as given by the subjects are noted in Table 2 (see the end of each couple summary, Appendix D, for the complete phase breakdown). More often than not, the phases given by one spouse are not directly comparable to those given by the other because of the differing time spans within each phase. However, it appears that with all the couples that mentioned phases (this excludes The Sophisticates and The Greeks), there is at least one named similar phase between the spouses. This is particularly noteworthy with Roger and Diane who both spoke of "infatuation" phases; ". . . going out on tangents of our own" and "dating others"; "thinking of a permanent relationship" and "commitment" as descriptions of various phases in their premarital relationship.

When spouses described different phases for the "same" premarital relationship, it is not clear to what general trends, if any, exist to account for the differences; for example, gender seems to have little or no influence in a retrospective account of one's premarital relationship in terms of phases. It appears, then, that one's individual psychological reality has more influence in this recounting than any "normative" factors, such as sex, age (within the very limited range in this study), etc.

The above notwithstanding, some similarities in phase determination across couples are suggested according to the

subjects' breakdown of their relationships (general phases in the development of the premarital relationship induced by the subjects' account will be addressed later). Not at all surprising is the finding that all subjects indicated that the first phase entailed the process of learning about each other, getting to know each other, exploring each other, etc. When this process was the main or total focus of the first phase, the phase was relatively short, e.g. one month or five weeks (see the first phase of Roger, Dick, Karen, and Larry in Appendix D). On the other hand, if the subjects included the happening of other events or processes within the first phase in addition to that of learning about each other, the phase was considerably longer, e.g. 23 months (Diane).

Again, not at all surprising, is that the final phase in the development of the premarital relationship was concerned to a large degree with the advent of the marriage itself--preparation, planning. The relationship between the partners in this phase was generally described as "smooth", "solid", "totally relaxed, open", etc. In some cases, this concern was not the whole focus of the final phase, but only the "tail end" of that phase--a notable example would be the final phase as described by Roger.

Finally, the subjects' account of phases in their premarital relationship suggests that if one or both partners experience doubt about the continuance of the relationship

(see The Rollercoasters), or "steer" away from or out of the exclusiveness of the relationship (see The High School Sweethearts), then one or both partners are likely to include a phase focusing on the particular issue.

Transition events between phases. The subjects in this study were asked to denote transition events between the phases in the development of their premarital relationship. Their responses appear in Table 2, and in more detail in the phase breakdown at the end of each couple summary (Appendix D).

The reader will note either (E) or (I) appearing with each named transition event. Both E and I represent our judgment as to the nature of the event. Each event was viewed either as an "external fortuitous or planned event (E)", or as an "internal dyadic event (I)". Examples of the former, (E), would be: starting school, ending the semester, obtaining driver's license, moving into an apartment, etc. For the latter, (I), we have: one partner's statement of love to the other, first date, first intercourse, decision or proposal to get married, etc. A quick calculation from Table 2 results in a total of 45 transition events: 27 (60%) "internal" events, and 18 (40%) "external" events.

The "internal" events split into 8 (30%) specifying a marriage decision or proposal, 6 (22%) naming the occurrence of first intercourse, 2 (7%) indicating a love state-

ment from one partner to the other, and 11 (41%) denoting various events specific to the particular couple.

Six subjects mentioned the decision to get married as the transition event ushering in the final phase. To reiterate, the final phase was generally "smooth", "solid", etc., and understandably, the couple in this phase of their relationship was concerned with the preparation and planning for the wedding. Both partners of The Rollercoasters, John and Sharon, also noted John's proposal as a transition event, but in this case, the immediate following phase was "problematic" in the relationship (Sharon had doubts about marriage), and a phase of resolution was described as the final phase of their relationship. Of the eight subjects who spoke of a proposal or decision to get married as a transition event, five were males, and three were females.

Six subjects (three males, three females) specified the occurrence of first intercourse as a transition event (one female subject, Karen, actually named the discussion and plan to have intercourse as the transition event rather than the act itself). Unlike the decision to get married, the transition event of first intercourse marks the beginning of various sequential phases in the premarital relationship; that is, it ushered in an early phase (Larry), a middle phase (Rick, Karen, Pat, John), or a late phase of the relationship (Marge). The phase immediately following the transition event of first intercourse was described by the subjects



in the following ways: "deeper relationship . . ." (Larry), "enrichment of our relationship" (Rick), "total commitment" (Karen), "togetherness, more intimacy, and fun" (Pat), "being with each other all the time" (John), and "serious relationship--thinking of living together and marriage" (Marge). (More on the effect of first intercourse later.)

In regard to the 18 "external" events (40% of all the transition events named), 11 (61%) are linked to the academic calendar--beginning or end of a semester, intersession, or summer; and introduced phases throughout the development of the premarital relationship (early, middle, late). The 11 events were mentioned by six subjects (four females, two males). Whereas an "internal" transition event appeared to be definitely and meaningfully associated with the processes and happenings of the immediate following phase, the same cannot be said to hold for an "external" event. The fact that subjects specified "external" happenings as transition events between one phase and another indicates association of the event with a change in the relationship, but the event itself had no meaningful connection with the nature of the change. It is certainly not surprising to find that couples who married while attending college (all the couples of this study) picked the marriage date according to the academic calendar; that is, four couples were married in August, two in December, one in June, and one in November. Settling on a date for a wedding ceremony is a conscious, hopefully ra-

tional, act between the partners (and their parents). More interesting is the finding that the same calendar with its regular events influenced the development of the premarital relationship to the extent it did in this study. One might wonder how the development of the relationships of those who mentioned the "academic" happenings as transition events between phases would vary had not they been attending college.

The remaining 7 (39%) "external" events are specific to the particular subjects and couples.

"Emotional movement" within the couples. The development of the premarital relationship begins with the first meeting and the impressions of, and feelings for, the other. Only three of the 16 subjects felt that the first meeting was "powerful", or had the nature of being "swept off my feet." Both partners of The High School Sweethearts felt this way, and both labeled the first phase, "infatuation" (although for vastly different time spans).

As soon as I saw her, there was something about her I liked. There was something I admired in her that I hadn't seen in any other girl up to that point. She was pretty popular in high school --she could have been in the 'in-crowd,' but I admired her maturity not to get in that group. I knew that she was athletic, and I enjoy sports very much myself . . . . She had a confident way about her. Plus, I have this thing for girls with long brown hair . . . . (After the first date) the next day I felt fantastic, like incredible. I could tell it was going to be a long relationship. I just had that feeling come over me. I don't know how to describe it . . . . I had no intentions of

going out with another girl after our first date; something just hit me (Roger, The High School Sweethearts).

I was going mad until he called me, and our first date was like the biggest thing in my life. The next day, I was really super excited, butterflies and everything--I just wanted to see him more often (Diane, The High School Sweethearts).

The Sophisticates progressed the "fastest" to the decision to marry--seven weeks from the day of the first meeting. While their first encounter had a great impact on Ken, it had much less influence on Jean.

(She was) a little too nice a package; I had looked for perfection and happiness in the past with girls, and now it came on so quick, so fast, so quickly in place (Ken, The Sophisticates).

He was OK; he wasn't handsome, he wasn't ugly --he looked like a bumbling idiot . . . . I thought of him as a nice, intelligent guy, a friend; and I wanted to see him again, to have him as a friend (Jean, The Sophisticates).

Karen, The Veterans, had feelings very similar to those expressed by Roger, The High School Sweethearts, although not as "explosive". The first meeting had little or no impact on her husband, Rick.

(When I first saw him) I felt like a premonition that he would be somebody; something about him that made me aware of him, I can't explain it, but I mentioned him to my parents that night. I didn't see him for about a month until the next semester, and he was in one of my classes at school, and I said hello to him . . . . I really looked forward to seeing him in class. I'd wear good clothes to class--that was a key that I knew I

cared about him because I wanted to look good . . . (After the first date) I knew our futures were bound together for some amount of time--I didn't know how long (Karen, The Veterans).

I registered the man-woman reaction that she was cute, and that was about it. As far as I knew, I would never see her again.

I saw her again in early February. We were in a class together. She said, "remember me," and I said, "yeah," and we talked. Maybe, six classes went by before I asked her out. I thought that she was real nice, smart, good-looking--that was about it. It wasn't love at first sight, or anything like that (Rick, The Veterans).

In three couples (The Rollercoasters, The Push-pull Duo, and The Loners), the partners knew each other before they actually dated. With two of these couples, the impression of one partner held by the other was negative before they actually dated.

We were introduced to each other, but I didn't give her a second thought, then. We had some brief conversations now and then; no heavy conversations, no seriousness involved at all. This was the way it was from late May until late June when we had, I guess, our first date. Marge needed a ride to go to a mountain to hike by herself. I offered her a ride, and we spent the whole day together, just riding around on my motorcycle. I first thought Marge was a snob. She hadn't come out and talked much. She is a very quiet person. I didn't think much of her until that first date. I liked her a lot after that time. It still wasn't serious, but I liked her as a person (Dave, The Loners).

I knew him before, but I didn't really make conversation with him. My first impression was that he was physically attractive, and I was curious about him because he always seemed to be doing something--at the time he was working on a small model ship. He had a motorcycle. He didn't talk much--he was a curiosity that way. He kind of went



his own way, and I was interested in knowing him. He was working the night shift as the desk clerk, and I went up to talk to him. It was an intentional act on my part--I wanted to talk to him. We talked for about an hour. He was very easy to talk to, and pretty straight-forward. There was nothing I disliked about him. I wanted to see him again more as a male partner, and not as a friend (Marge, The Loners).

The most extreme negative impression of the "other" was held by Pat, The Push-pull Duo. It is interesting to note Mark's account in the light of Pat's statement.

My first impression was I hated him--I thought that he was obnoxious; he would analyze people and he didn't know a thing about it. He liked to impress people with his knowledge, and when he spoke, he spoke as if it were the gospel truth, and I thought it was obnoxious. I did not like the attitude. After I got to know him, he really isn't like that. He just spoke that way. I felt that way about him for about a year, and I dated him during that year. After about two months, we had our first date; it was the beginning of October, or late September of my 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The first date, my brother told me to go. The second date, my mother told me to go. They both liked him . . . . I wasn't opposed to going out with him--I just wasn't thrilled about it (Pat, The Push-pull Duo).

I remember she was pretty, but not beautiful . . . . She was erect; she looked alert; she had a little bit of poise compared to the other girls, and she was happy. A lot of the girls I knew around that time were pretty glum for some reason. She seemed to be handling herself well and proud . . . . I was impressed with her overall honesty, lack of pretense, willingness to laugh at the dumb things that I said. She seemed to be very accepting of me as a person. At that time, I wasn't very open to girls. I tried to put on a little bit and act very important or very smart. I was conceited at that time. That didn't seem to bug her, nor did she seem to swallow it at all. That was what interested me about her--she seemed to accept me. There was nothing I disliked about her . . . .

When school started in September, we went to a concert--that was our first planned date. By that time I considered myself pretty much hooked on Pat --I liked her a lot (Mark, The Push-pull Duo).

After the first meeting, the premarital relationships developed generally in the following sequential order of "landmarks" with no apparent gender difference: 1) other partner is "special" and not just another date; 2) relationship with partner is important; 3) the partners see themselves as a "defined couple" (precipitated frequently by friends and/or parents asking about the other person, e.g. "How's Dick?"); 4) first love statements between the partners; 5) subjective feeling of "commitment" to the relationship; and 6) thoughts of the partner as a potential spouse. It should be emphasized that this sequence was, by no means, rigidly followed by each and every couple, and that several subjects reported that some of the "landmarks" occurred at the same time, e.g. love statements and a sense of commitment.

The definition of "commitment" varied with the subjects though its meaning seemed to hinge roughly on its point of occurrence in the development of the relationship. Examples from those subjects who felt committed to their relationship relatively earlier than other subjects are--

For me, it (commitment) meant that I shouldn't see anyone else, and that I couldn't toy with his affections (Karen, The Veterans).

. . . commitment meant that I couldn't date anyone else, and not think about his feelings--I would definitely consider Mark's feelings. If I dated anyone else, I would have to have liked them very very much (Pat, The Push-pull Duo).

For me, commitment meant I would not seek out companionship elsewhere, and that she, of course, would do the same; I'd take my problems to her, that we cared for each other--sort of an agreement between us that we liked the other person, and that we didn't want to hurt each other. Not only were we dating, but we recognized that each person had a stake in the other one, and that we could hurt each other easily, but we didn't want to (Mark, The Push-pull Duo).

I was committed because I didn't think of just myself. When I made decisions, I would think of the two of us, and our relationship. I was interested in doing things for us. I was thinking of Dick and I as a unit (Eileen, Chinese-American Style).

Examples from "late committers" would be the following--

Commitment to me means a life-long relationship (Dave, The Loners).

For me, 'committed' meant that I knew I was going to marry him, and that he was going to be the last man in my life (Anne, The Greeks).

It seems, then, that those subjects who committed themselves to the relationship relatively late as compared to other subjects, have a "heavier" definition for "commitment" in that it is for life.

The "sequential landmarks" mentioned previously were used to construct Table 3 and reveal sex differences in the rate of "emotional progress" in the development of the pre-

marital relationship. A note of explanation is in order.

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 Insert Table 3 about here  
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The couples were not compared with each other. Rather, the comparison was within each couple--male versus female in regard to who first felt the other was "special"; who first felt the relationship was "important"; etc. The row "totals" indicate how many "landmarks" the male reached first, how many the female reached first, and how many they both reached at approximately the same time. Similar "totals" are shown for the particular "landmarks" across the couples. Using the row "totals", each couple was judged as to which partner, male or female, "moved faster into the relationship." The Sophisticates was judged male; The High School Sweethearts, male; Chinese-American Style, equal; The Roller-coasters, male; The Veterans, female; The Push-pull Duo, male; The Loners, equal; The Greeks, female. In sum, the male partner in four couples progressed more quickly emotionally or was more quickly "tied" to the relationship than the female partner; the progress rate was the same in two couples; and the female partner moved faster in two couples.

The column "totals" are further revealing. There is not one "landmark" that the females as a group reached before the males. This is particularly the case with love state-



Table 3

First Partner to Reach Specified Developmental Steps in the Premarital Relationship\*

<u>Couple</u>	Feel the other was "special"	Feel the relationship was "important"	Feel they were a "defined couple"	Say 'I love you' (or similar) to the other	Feel "commitment" to the relationship	Think of the other as a "potential marriage partner"	<u>Total</u>
The Sophisticates	M**	M	M	MF	M	MF	4M OF 2MF
The High School Sweethearts	M	M	M	F	M	M	5M 1F 0MF
Chinese-American Style	F	MF	MF	M	F	MF	1M 2F 3MF
The Roller-coasters	M	MF	MF	M	M	MF	3M OF 3MF
The Veterans	F	F	F	M	F	M	2M 4F 0MF
The Push-pull Duo	M	M	M	M	M	M	6M OF 0MF
The Loners	F	M	MF	MF	F	M	2M 2F 2MF
The Greeks	MF	F	F	MF	F	F	0M 4F 2MF
	4M	4M	3M	4M	4M	4M	23M
	3F	2F	2F	1F	4F	1F	13F
	1MF	2MF	3MF	3MF	0MF	3MF	12MF

\*According to comparison of each partner's report about himself/herself.

\*\*M = male first; F = female first; MF = same time.

ments, and thinking of the other partner as a potential spouse--in all couples, except one, the male either reached the particular point first or at the same time as the female. Perhaps a hint of the "speed" with which various subjects progressed into the relationship can be seen in their accounts of their first meetings; for example, Karen generally moved faster than Rick, and their account of their first meeting suggests the differing "speeds". A glaring difference appears in the accounts of Mark and Pat, and Mark reached all six "landmarks" before Pat. Finally, an example of both partners moving at about the same speed would be Dave and Marge, and their account of their meeting does suggest an even rate.

In all, the results regarding "emotional movement" within the couples suggest that the female, and not the male, is the "slower investor" in the relationship, contrary to popular thought and folklore (speaking only of the college female, and not the working female--this study cannot address the development of the premarital relationships of working couples).

Parental "insertion" into the relationship development.  
As one reads the couple accounts of the development of their premarital relationships (Appendix D), the topic of "parents" is mentioned often and generally at certain points in the relationship development. Understandably, the most fre-

quent mention of parents occurs in Chinese-American Style-- Dick is Chinese (born and raised in the United States), but Eileen is not. Eileen was worried that Dick's family would not accept her:

I always felt that I had to prove myself to his family . . . . My greatest concern was not that Dick and I wouldn't get along, but that I wouldn't be accepted by his family, and I knew that his family was important to him (Eileen, Chinese-American Style).

Aside from the "intermixing" issue, Dick spoke of other points regarding parents that are shared by several other couples in this study--presentation of the partner to one's parents, and a definitive statement to one's parents concerning the seriousness of the relationship. Dick remembered:

Another (important event) was when my mother gave me a surprise visit, and they didn't know we were living together. I had to bring my relationship back home, and I am glad it worked out well. It made our relationship stronger. I stood beside Eileen . . . . I had to stand up definitely for Eileen. My father asked me if I were sure about the decision, and I said the decision was already made; there's no sureness, the decision is made, and my father thought that that was a very good reaction to have. I got a favorable response from my father, and that means a lot to me (Dick, Chinese-American Style).

A further example of bringing the relationship back home, and making the seriousness of that relationship known to parents comes from Marge's account:

My friends and his friends saw us as a couple. I had to make a real effort to make my parents see me paired with somebody other than that boy from high school. So, I was writing to them and telling them as much about Dave as I could; they didn't meet him until early September . . . . I was trying to impress upon my parents that this wasn't just a casual relationship, but that I had personal feelings for him--I wanted them to realize that I was beginning to feel commitment towards Dave (Marge, The Loners).

In speaking of important events in their premarital relationship, Marge noted:

When each of us met the other's parents. I met his in the late summer when we were out on a ride. It was important that Dave's parents see him with a woman because he hadn't had a girlfriend for a few years. I felt they were surprised. They asked about me. It was something for my parents to see us as a couple, too--that was in September (Marge, The Loners).

According to Dave, Marge asked to be introduced to his parents. "Self-presentation" to the partner's parents seems to be an important step in the development of the relationship. Anne noted that meeting Larry's parents was an important event in their relationship (The Greeks). When Roger introduced himself to Diane's parents, he remembered:

I was worried about what impression I would give--if I was going to have a relationship with Diane, I was going to have to impress her parents (Roger, The High School Sweethearts).

It seems that parents "insert" themselves as an influence generally early or late in the development of the rela-



tionship, rather than in the "middle" of that development. The "insertion" is not necessarily active on the part of the parents, but may be a subtle, but powerful, influence on the "movement" of the relationship.

I can hardly remember a time when I would say hello and they wouldn't say, "how is Pat?" By Christmas, we were definitely a couple. It was generally known among our circle of friends. I was definitely seeing us as a couple--I don't know if Pat was. I was very proud that I had such a nice girlfriend. My parents liked Pat from the very beginning . . . . (Mark, The Push-pull Duo).

Sometime in April, Dick and I went for the third time to visit my parents. This time it was like Dick and I visiting my parents. It was the first time I realized that we were a unit (Eileen, Chinese-American Style).

. . . sometime in May after I had been dating her for about three or four months. I think my parents kind of thought we should get married . . . . My mother said, "are you going to marry her? When are you getting married?" and stuff like that. She was jokingly serious. She wanted me to know that she thought it would be a good idea--they liked her very very much (Rick, The Veterans).

We talked about marriage in the middle of the summer. Eileen said her parents were asking her if we were going to get married, and I told her, it was definitely a possibility, and I really loved her, and we should think about it, and I kept saying that. The more I kept saying it was definitely a possibility, the more I was saying 'yes,' and towards the end of the summer, Eileen was thinking of a date (Dick, Chinese-American Style).

John remembered that his father put the idea of marriage into his head, but he also mentioned the notion of the relationship being "ready" for marriage (more on this later).

When I went home for Christmas, I kept asking my father about diamonds in New York City, because I was curious about the place where you get them, and not because I wanted to get one, but he thought I wanted to get one, and he kept saying, 'don't rush into anything--make sure you know what you are doing' and that kind of stuff. I think that's what put the idea in my head, that maybe I should ask her--maybe we are ready (John, The Rollercoasters).

Parental "insertion" brought about an interesting resolution regarding marriage for Dave and Marge.

. . . we intended to just live together without being married--I think we were pressured into marriage just by our thoughts; we might have been inhibited by what our families would think because both our families are devout and go to church regularly. Internally, we must have been pressured.

We didn't want to make a big deal of the wedding, so we told our families after the wedding. I had seen her parents two or three times before the wedding. I actually told them. We went to Marge's home. There was shock, disbelief, crying, but after the initial shock, they were happy (Dave, The Loners).

We were aware neither set of parents would approve of us just living together. I figured it wasn't worth the bother, and I felt at that time I was willing to live with him for life, so why not get married? It didn't make any difference to me whether I was married or not, so if it is really going to bother people, and alienate those people I do love, my parents and his parents, I don't want to bother with that pain, so we got married. I brought up the idea of marriage. He also suggested that we elope. I didn't want any part of the traditional wedding. We thought about it for a week or so, and we decided we would elope (Marge, The Loners).

The other side of the coin was also evident with the couples in this study--parental exclusion. The extreme example of this is Dave and Marge's elopement, but their case

is not an isolated example of parental exclusion. In only two couples (The High School Sweethearts and the Push-pull Duo--the two longest premarital relationships that started early in high school) were the parents of both partners aware or kept informed of the "progress" of the relationship. The parents of one or both partners in the remaining six couples were told of the extent of the "seriousness" of the relationship after a marriage date had been picked, engagement, or an engagement ring had actually been purchased (and, with The Loners, after the marriage ceremony, itself).

## C H A P T E R   I V

## Results

## Sexual Intimacy

The results regarding sexual intimacy between the partners in the development of the premarital relationship are reported in Table 4, and in the following sections: the occurrence of first intercourse in the development of the relationship; the relational antecedents of first intercourse; the effect of first intercourse on the development of the relationship; and the personal significance of sexual intercourse to the partners themselves.

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Insert Table 4 about here  
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The occurrence of first intercourse in the development of the relationship. The point at which intercourse occurs in the developmental phases of the relationship depends largely on the sexual experience of the partners. Inexperienced males and females reported its occurrence generally in the late part of their relationship (e.g. The High School Sweethearts, The Loners), while sexually experienced subjects (those that had had intercourse previous to meeting their future spouse) reported its occurrence early in the relationship development (e.g. The Sophisticates, Chinese-American Style).



Table 4  
First Intercourse in the Development  
of the Premarital Relationship

	Sexually Ex- perienced(a)	Progression in pre-in- tercourse intimacy(b)	Controller of rate of progression	Phase in which inter- course oc- curred(c)	Initiator of first inter- course	Intercourse named as tran- sition event	Intercourse named as im- portant event
<b>The Sophisticates</b>							
Ken	Y	N	--	--	F	--	N
Jean	Y	N	--	1(3)	M	N	N
<b>The High School Sweethearts</b>							
Roger	N	Y	MF(d)	5(5)	MF	N	N
Diane	N	Y	MF	4(5)	M	N	N
<b>Chinese-American Style</b>							
Dick	Y	N	--	1(3)	MF	N	N
Eileen	Y	N	--	1(4)	MF	N	N
<b>The Rollercoasters</b>							
John	N	Y	MF	3-4(6)	M	Y	N
Sharon	N	Y	F	3(5)	MF	N	Y
<b>The Veterans</b>							
Rick	Y	Y	MF	1-2(3)	MF	Y	N
Karen	Y	Y	M	2-3(4)	F	Y	Y
<b>The Push-pull Duo</b>							
Mark	N	Y	F	4(5)	MF	N	N
Pat	N	Y	F	2-3(4)	MF	Y	Y
<b>The Loners</b>							
Dave	N	Y	F	2(2)	MF	N	Y
Marge	N	Y	F	4-5(5)	MF	Y	N
<b>The Greeks</b>							
Larry	Y	Y	F	1-2(5)	MF	Y	N
Anne	N	Y	F	--	MF	--	Y

(a) Y = yes, N = no; for intercourse previous to meeting future spouse

(b) Typically, kissing to light petting to heavy petting to intercourse

(c) The phase number according to subject viewpoint; a dash number, e.g. 3-4, indicates intercourse named as transition event between the two phases; the number in parentheses indicates the total number of phases specified by the subject

(d) MF = mutual; M = male; F = female

Both partners of a particular couple tended to agree as to how the first intercourse came about--whether it was planned (Chinese-American Style, The Rollercoasters, The Veterans) or spontaneous (The High School Sweethearts, The Push-pull Duo). Examples of "planned" first intercourse would be:

It was right before Thanksgiving vacation, about two and a half weeks after I met him. Dick invited me over to watch a TV show that would end late . . . . I figured that he did not expect me to go home after the show. He had invited me the day before and I knew that that would be the first night for sex. I was using foam then, and I inserted it early in the evening before I went over to his apartment. I also took it with me. I was happy he invited me over, because I did want to stay with him, but I was a little nervous because it was our first encounter . . . . I would have been shocked and a little bit insulted if he had driven me home after the TV show. I was looking forward to it . . . . I liked him a lot, and I thought that he was a special person, and I wanted to get to know him in a sexual way, too. There was no discussion between us about sex. It was an individual decision on my part--he made an offer, and I accepted. It wasn't spontaneous. Dick pretended it was all spontaneous, but he planned it. His roommate left for the night so that we could use his double bed (Eileen, Chinese-American Style).

I remember we started talking about when we were going to have sex, and she was starting to chicken out of it--'I don't want to do it until I get the pill.' We started talking about getting the pill in the summer. She couldn't get an appointment until the end of October. She was thinking maybe on her birthday, or after her birthday. I thought she was just scared of actually doing it. I kind of talked her into it--there's no sense in waiting. I got some contraceptive foam and prophylactics . . . . We planned on it. I kind of pushed her into it. Sometimes Sharon has a tendency not to do what she really wants to do just from inertia. I said, 'Why don't we just do it to-

morrow night, or whenever it was.' I asked my roommate not to be around that evening. I told him what we were planning. It was a joint decision to have intercourse, with me pushing what date it would be (John, The Rollercoasters).

It was a foregone conclusion that we were going to sleep together--we just wanted to make sure it was safe. Prophylactics are not my bag; I hate them. The other stuff, creams, etc. isn't one hundred percent. So, Karen went on the pill . . . . (Rick, The Veterans).

Two couples in which both partners had not had intercourse before their relationship thought the first intercourse came about spontaneously, unplanned. An example of "spontaneous" intercourse would be:

We exhausted our patience for something we both wanted and wanted to try. We knew it wasn't just physical, but that there was intimate feelings involved with it, and that reassured both of us--I know it reassured me--that the actual meaning of love making wasn't just physical--it was with a person I loved very, very much. It seemed to magnify the feelings that we had--that's probably why it happened. It was spontaneous and a joint decision, but we never talked of having intercourse--we both knew eventually it would happen (Roger, The High School Sweethearts).

Pat (The Push-pull Duo) viewed the first time she considered they had intercourse to be spontaneous.

It was at night, and we were in his dorm room. I think it was the first night I stayed in his room because his roommate had gone home. I believe we had gone out to dinner. We had discussed intercourse before, and we were very sexually involved. As a matter of fact, I think for all intents and purposes, any medical doctor would say that we had had intercourse. It was never the full act. I had never considered it intercourse because I think I didn't

want to face it. Mark didn't ejaculate inside me. When I speak of first intercourse, it's when I realized I really wanted it, and he came inside me. It wasn't planned at all. It just happened. I didn't know it would happen until it actually did. In the evening I realized I wanted it to happen, but it was extremely close to the time when it did. We had discussed it a little while after I came to school--I don't really know if I was frightened of it; I don't think I thought it was morally wrong; I just think I wasn't ready for it. Mark was very careful to make sure nothing was rushed. He understood. He didn't try to talk me out of my feelings (Pat, The Push-pull Duo).

Finally, one couple "set the stage" for their first intercourse, and in two other couples, the male partner sensed his partner's readiness to have sex.

We were sleeping together in the dorm, before my roommate started using the room again. I had bought the rubbers about a week before. We talked about it, and up to this time we had explored each other's bodies--just learning about each other on that basis. It wasn't an impulsive thing--we had already made up our minds; she didn't want to get pregnant, and I had no desire to get her pregnant, so that aspect was definitely considered. We did it in the morning. I really can't say why it was that particular time. I guess everything fit together--we had been progressing more and more on a physical and mental level; exploring each other in many ways, and I happened to have the rubbers right then, thanks to my foresight. We had been talking about it, and things just meshed together . . . . It was a joint decision--it wasn't a surprise to either of us, but I initiated it that day (Dave, The Loners).

I would not make any attempts until I thought I would be successful . . . . I knew the moment was right from the responsiveness of her kisses and hugs, the tension of her skin--there was a tingling in her. I knew that I was going to go to bed with her while lying on the floor watching TV (Ken, The Sophisticates).



It was a party. I purposely didn't get too drunk, because I didn't want to fall asleep or become impotent. I think Anne was ready. Before that, she would say she didn't want to have intercourse, that she did not know me well enough. This night, I said, "How about tonight?" and she said, "I don't know--let's see how it goes." I asked her in bed during foreplay. I think she was the only girl I ever asked--I respected her opinion, the way she felt; I didn't want to lose this one. She didn't say OK--she just said she wasn't sure. I had the feeling that that would be the night--we were hanging on more to each other that night (Larry, The Greeks).

Overall, there does not appear to be a clear-cut pattern in how the first intercourse came about--some planned on it, and some stated it was unplanned and spontaneous, even though discussion about contraception and "preparing ourselves" took place. Sexual experience does not seem to dictate the degree of spontaneity of the first intercourse.

In regard to the nature of the physical intimacy before the occurrence of intercourse, Table 4 reveals that all "inexperienced" subjects "progressed" physically to intercourse itself, generally moving from kissing to light petting to heavy petting to intercourse. On the other hand, the four subjects that indicated that there had been no physical progression to intercourse were all sexually experienced. One could conclude, then, that for the sexually inexperienced, a progression in physical intimacy precedes the act of intercourse, while this may not be the case with the sexually experienced (more support for the former part of the statement follows). For some of the inexperienced couples in

this study, the actual act of intercourse was a small step in the physical progression. This was most notable with The High School Sweethearts, who were engaging frequently in oral sex several months before intercourse occurred; The Push-pull Duo (see Pat's account quoted earlier in which the psychological meaning of the act was most important), and The Roller-coasters who were engaging in oral sex and mutual masturbation. We will see later that the degree of physical intimacy preceding intercourse has an influence on the effect of the first intercourse on the relationship.

Four of the five "inexperienced" females took equal responsibility with the male for the occurrence of intercourse, and not one expressed guilt or regret following the act. The lone inexperienced female, Diane, noted that Roger was the initiator of the first intercourse (according to Roger, it was mutual), but she readily stated, and Roger agreed, that she initiated the oral sex prior to intercourse. Similarly, four of the five inexperienced males said there was mutual initiation of the first time. It seems, then, that gone are the days when "he got me drunk--I didn't know what I was doing!" were heard from an ex-virgin's lips. The first intercourse for the virgins in this study (both the male and female) occurred in a "solid" relationship with the responsibility for its occurrence shared equally by the partners. The rate of progression in sexual intimacy to the point of intercourse, though, was acknowledged by four of the five

virgin females to have been controlled by them, and not the male partner.

The relational antecedents of first intercourse. One way to view the relational antecedents of first intercourse would be to note where in the "sequential landmarks" (see Table 3), the first intercourse fell. Using the phase breakdown supplied by the subjects (and the events that occurred in each phase; see Appendix D), we can see that what precedes the first intercourse "emotionally" or "relationally" is in large part determined by one's sexual experience, and not by age (very limited range in this study), nor by gender. The first intercourse in the "inexperienced" couples generally occurred after the last "landmarks"; that is, after both partners, male and female, felt committed to the relationship, and had at least thought of their partner as a future spouse, if there had not been an outright discussion and planning for marriage (see The High School Sweethearts, The Rollercoasters, The Push-pull Duo, The Loners). The first intercourse in the "experienced" couples generally occurred early in the relationship landmarks, prior to "defined couple", love statements, etc. (see notably Chinese-American Style, but also The Sophisticates, and Rick, The Veterans). The Greeks, the "mixed" couple (Larry was experienced sexually while Anne was not), is interesting in that both reported first intercourse as occurring at about the same time,

but that in that same amount of time different processes were happening for each partner. Previous to intercourse Larry felt that Anne was "special", and he had told her that he loved her, but he did not yet feel that they were a "defined couple", that he was committed to the relationship, nor thought of Anne as a future spouse. It was quite the opposite for Anne--the first intercourse occurred at the end of the chain.

Another way to look at the relational antecedents of first intercourse would be to note directly what the subjects said had to be in the relationship before they had intercourse (see question 16, Appendix C). Again, and consistent with the above, it appears that one's sexual experience is the important factor influencing the subject's statement as to "conditions" before intercourse. Contrary to popular thought and folklore, inexperienced males as well as females need a "solid" relationship and commitment before intercourse occurs. Note also the notion of physical progression to intercourse in some of the accounts of the inexperienced subjects.

One of the things obviously is love, but to be more explicit, really being serious about each other, to be seriously concerned about the other's feelings . . . . You both have to be aware of the other's feelings and aware of what you are doing, and that you'll strengthen the relationship, and be pretty sure that you want to do that; that you don't have a rocky relationship and you're just using sex to strengthen a rocky relationship rather than have sex strengthen a strong relationship. I



had to love her definitely, and she had to love me (John, The Rollercoasters).

I had to have real confidence in him. I wouldn't have considered having intercourse with him unless I loved him before, and had real trust in him--just believe in him. I had to love him, and I had to be sure he loved me (Sharon, The Rollercoasters).

We had to both say that we loved each other. We had to both mean that we loved each other. We had to be willing to say to each other that we were willing to spend a long time, be open, be deep with each other. We had to have worked our way up to it. I don't know how people can have a few drinks together, and then jump into bed. That's almost frighteningly cynical, I think. There had to be a future aspect to the relationship. We knew that we would stay with each other--that's probably the most important part (Mark, The Push-pull Duo).

I had to truly feel that I loved him. I had to trust him. I don't like to hear people talk about their relationship in a casual manner, and I wanted to mean something to him, so he wouldn't go off and start saying, "Guess what I got last night?" I had to feel that Mark loved me--that was pretty sure; I knew that he loved me. I had to wait until I was sure that I loved him. There had to be the physical progression up to it because it was my first time. It just couldn't happen (Pat, The Push-pull Duo).

I think we had to be very familiar with each other in our minds if not verbally. I had to sense commitment from her and I had to feel committed to her in the sense of "for life", marriage--even though there was no discussion between us at that time. In my head, she was the woman for me, and I wanted to marry her. I had to sense that sense of commitment from her, too. She had to tell me she loved me (Dave, The Loners).

I felt that we had to know each other physically, to be familiar with each other's bodies, so that over a period of time we became more and more comfortable seeing each other nude. Both of us had to talk about it--so you know more about it; I felt at that time, I was pretty ignorant. It definitely

involved trust--I had to trust Dave, and he had to trust me . . . . I had to trust him with an open expression of my feelings. It definitely required love between us--I had to feel that Dave loved me, and I had to love him (Marge, The Loners).

Roger, particularly, talked of the necessity of familiarity with Diane's body, and her reactions to his touches, before intercourse could occur.

Experience in touching her, because I was conscious of my awkwardness, and if I had had intercourse with her before that I wouldn't have felt as capable of doing as well as I possibly could. I think that kept me from having intercourse with her before the time we did. Knowing how she feels, how she reacts when I touch her in different ways--all these things had to be learned before I could conceive of having intercourse with her--I was inexperienced; I didn't want to blow it. The relationship was also very important to me--to know that the girl had some feeling for me, not just going through the motions for her own self-gratification. It was a matter of respect for me. I had to get to know the person first, and find out how she feels about me, how she would handle me if I got into an awkward position; would she handle me very startegically or sensitively? That's what I was looking for (Roger; The High School Sweethearts).

The situation is different for the sexually experienced subjects. Their antecedent conditions were not as "stringent" as those of the inexperienced subjects.

Attractiveness, look clean; sense that she wanted to go to bed with me, that she just didn't want to satisfy herself, that she was sexually responsive, that she could climax . . . . (Ken, The Sophisticates).

It was necessary that I knew him fairly well. He had to stimulate me intellectually. It's very important for me. He had to be kind, gentle, and

want for my pleasure as well as his. I had to be a friend with him as well as a lover. He had to be my friend, my comrade before he could be my lover . . . . I needed to be just me, whatever that was (Jean, The Sophisticates).

Just a physical attraction. I had just met her--I really didn't have any emotional feelings for her (Dick, Chinese-American Style).

I didn't have to love her, and she didn't have to love me. I liked Karen, and I didn't push it with her. I wanted her to know I respected her before we got together sexually. It's different with someone you like a lot--you're not just out for a "wham, bang, thank you m'am." You walk easier (Rick, The Veterans).

Larry and Anne are interesting in that they represent the only "mixed" couple in the study (in terms of sexual experience). Anne's account is consistent with other accounts from inexperienced subjects, although she perhaps put more emphasis on her feelings rather than on what her partner felt for her. Larry's account is similar to Rick's.

That I loved him was the main thing, and that he respected me and wasn't using me just for sex. It was more important that I loved him than that he loved me. I had to feel totally committed to him, that he came first for everything. It was all my feelings, my readiness--it really had nothing to do with his actions, except that I knew by this time he really cared for me (Anne, The Greeks).

There was a time with her when I would try to have intercourse with her all the time, any time we were together purely for my own physical pleasure. Then, when we got a little more serious, I didn't even try because, even though we were sleeping together, I respected in what she believed in and I knew she would not accept it, and it would be useless to try to have intercourse with her. It would hurt me because it would hurt her. Why risk a good thing? Then, we moved to a point where she

would accept it, and not get too broken up over it. Her willingness to want to do it had to be there before we had sex. I was not going to do it until she was ready. I also wanted to be sure that I had strong feelings for her because she was putting a lot of meaning in this act, and together it would be a mutual exchange (Larry, The Greeks).

It generally seems, then, that the relational antecedents of first intercourse are similar for males and females that are inexperienced sexually--both feel the need for a "deep" relationship with commitment and a future to it. These subjects also feel the need for a progression in physical intimacy to intercourse--"wetting yourself before you jump into the pool".

The sexually experienced males, at least, do not require much in the way of relational antecedents to the first intercourse in their premarital relationship. There seems to be the tendency for the male partner to wait until the female partner is ready. It is not clear-cut what relational antecedents may be necessary for the experienced female. They appear to lie somewhere between those expressed by inexperienced subjects, and those noted by the experienced males. For example, Eileen mentioned,

I had to like him a lot. He had to be more than just some guy I was going out with, and even though I liked him, it was important to me that he thought that I was somebody special--that would mean that he would respect me more than just a girl, but as a person (Eileen, Chinese-American Style).



The effect of first intercourse on the development of the relationship. Ten of the 16 subjects (five females, five males) stated either directly or implied strongly that the first intercourse brought them closer together, allowed them to be more open, more relaxed with each other, and generally more intimate in non-sexual areas, e.g. conversation. Two female subjects spoke of the first intercourse as revealing a new aspect of their partner, and two subjects (one female, one male) stated directly that intercourse intensified their feelings for their partner. Examples follow:

It (the first intercourse) brought us closer together and it also made the relationship much less strained. It (the relationship) was much more comfortable. It made my feelings more intense. Everything started to gel, and John meant more to me than he had previously. It deepened our relationship. It was easier to talk to John after sex (Sharon, The Rollercoasters).

We were more as one as far as being a couple is concerned. There wasn't anything sudden. Everything was gradual up until then, and intercourse wasn't a tremendous step. We were more free and open with each other. I think the intensity of my feelings towards Marge increased (Dave, The Loners).

I felt that we were closer, and finally, there was nothing that we hadn't done. Now, we were together sexually. It pulled us together more. I enjoyed myself, and so did she. It was good. It's difficult to say that I loved her more. We were easier with each other; things were flowing along, instead of a little tense. We talked now on a more intimate level (Rick, The Veterans).

There was a ripeness in the relationship that had not been there before. I felt closer to him. I found another whole aspect to him. I didn't

feel bad or guilty or anything like that. I had lost that a long time ago. I was really happy. It was very pleasurable. Obviously, we would have sex again. I think we were pretty steady as a couple by then. I don't know how abstinence would have tested our relationship. I was more sexually affectionate towards him. I was more intimate with him in our conversations, more open. The next day we had intercourse; I think we had sex every day for the next week (Karen, The Veterans).

We spent a lot more time in bed. It helped our communication--the soul is more open after sex. I wanted to do more things with her now, for example, cooking, trips (Ken, The Sophisticates).

It broadened the whole thing--it opened up a whole new hunk in the relationship (Jean, The Sophisticates).

It really deepened our relationship immensely. There had always been that gap between us. You could almost sense it. There were some things we didn't talk about. And now, things came much more easily. Now, she wasn't afraid that we would have intercourse. We talked about more things, and spent more time together (Larry, The Greek).

. . . right away it made me more relaxed in all other phases of our relationship. It made me feel that I could open up a whole lot more than I had before. It made a big change on my part. I felt more like I belonged to him. I felt like I knew him for years--I was so much more relaxed and open with him. Of course, I started staying with him more, and we had sex again within a few days (Eileen, Chinese-American Style).

Eileen's partner, Dick, stated the effect of "openness" a little differently when he said:

I generally feel after you have intercourse with a girl, then you can get to know her; otherwise, it's very hard to get to know a girl. It tears down one of the barriers to communication. I don't think that it was that meaningful. My feelings didn't change. To me, it just meant that we didn't have to go through a lot of crap. I

don't think that it had much of an effect except that it got one thing out of the way, and we could go ahead and have fun together. There was no change in our behavior, or in my feelings towards Eileen (Dick, Chinese-American Style).

Three other subjects (John, Roger and Diane) also believed that the first intercourse had little or no effect on their relationship. As their statements indicate, it may be that "extensive" physical intimacy prior to actual intercourse minimizes the effect of the first intercourse on the relationship.

(There was) no effect for the first time, except that we had actually done it, and therefore we would be able to do it again. When we enjoyed it and it became more spontaneous, then it brought us closer together. But I don't see much difference between exciting each other until you come, and having sex, except you can get someone pregnant, which you can't do by oral sex, or by just exciting a person. I think that has almost as much effect in bringing people closer as having sex (John, The Rollercoasters).

None really (for effect). We already knew that we could satisfy each other sexually (heavy petting and oral intercourse), that we were compatible in that sense. It (intercourse) didn't change the relationship, but it added to the love she was already giving me. Still, the same basic relationship; no drastic changes. The desire for heavy petting and oral intercourse was always there, constant. My physical desires were very strong. Both of us had to be realistic--we didn't have the place to do it (intercourse) and the opportunity wasn't there . . . . the usual procedure was much oral sex and heavy petting--about three times a week in her living room after her parents went to bed. Oral sex for both of us was very gratifying. We enjoyed that as much as actual intercourse, and there was the threat of pregnancy with intercourse (Roger, The High School Sweethearts).

I just felt really good about it (intercourse). There were no inhibitions because of the oral sex before. I was a little nervous, I suppose, because it was the first time for me, but I was very comfortable with Roger. It was no big deal about being a virgin or not . . . . the first intercourse didn't change it (the relationship) that much, but it was a really good experience. I knew he could please me sexually (Diane, The High School Sweethearts).

Finally, one subject (Marge) noted a different and interesting effect of the first intercourse--a kind of "what now?" effect with some self-consciousness. .

I felt relieved emotionally. There was a certain amount of tension being built up because it was being held off by me. We were both relaxed. In some ways, we became a little more self-conscious for awhile. Because we knew now we've done it once, what goes on now? How does that whole thing start? Where it becomes not a routine, but something you do more often. I'd say we were also more interested in each other, teasing each other, and that sort of thing. It definitely changed the feeling I had for Dave. It didn't change the basic feeling that I loved him, but I recognized in myself a definite physical desire, and that was new to me. I felt it before, but now it could be fulfilled. The second time was less spontaneous, it was almost expected (Marge, The Loners).

Six subjects (three males, three females) of five couples specified their first intercourse as a transition event between phases in their relationship, so it can be assumed that for these subjects (some sexually experienced, some not), the first intercourse was associated with a change in their relationship. (It would be too much to say that events, happenings, and processes that occurred in the phases following first intercourse were due to or brought



about by the act of intercourse.) We can see from the phase breakdown in the couple summaries (Appendix D), that in every case when the first intercourse was named as a transition event, the following phase reveals a "tightening" of the relationship, e.g. commitment to the relationship, thoughts of the partner as a future spouse, serious talk of marriage, setting a date for marriage.

All in all, it can be concluded from the subjects' statements that the first intercourse draws the couple closer, allows them to be more open and relaxed with each other, and intensifies feelings (in some cases). If the first intercourse was a transition event, it introduced a phase in which the bond between the partners tightened. The two means of assessing the "effect" of first intercourse on the development of the relationship yield consistent findings, although in the subjects' minds there is more of a cause-and-effect quality to the first intercourse than can be said by using the phase approach. Note the difference in the following viewpoints:

. . . when you have sex with a person, even though I hadn't had sex then, I kind of thought that that really strengthens the relationship. Even if the relationship is not that good, sex would probably strengthen it to the point where you would get married if you are the marrying type. And so I must have started thinking whether or not I really wanted to become that attached to her. I was wondering if we really should or not (have sex) and if we did, then probably in my mind, I thought what was going to happen was that we would have a much stronger relationship, and end up getting

married (John, The Rollercoasters).

There was a progression in the feelings, and the time was right for sex (Pat).

It (first intercourse) didn't change the way we acted towards each other, and it didn't make us any more serious a couple--we were together already . . . . The sexual intimacy was almost the symbolism for the rest of our relationship, and when that was good, the relationship was good, and vice versa--when the relationship was bad, sex wasn't good and we didn't have it as much (Mark, The Push-pull Duo).

Finally, there is the suggestion that the effect of the first intercourse on the relationship development may be influenced by the extent of the physical intimacy prior to its occurrence; that is, the more intimate the petting (oral sex, mutual masturbation), the less the effect of the act of intercourse.

The personal significance of sexual intercourse to the partners themselves. The subjects were asked about the personal meaning of first intercourse in their relationship. Their responses varied in part according to whether they were sexually experienced before they met their spouse. Those who had had no previous experience did generally attribute the first time with a "deeper" sense of meaning than those who were sexually experienced. Four of the inexperienced subjects (two males, two females) spoke of the first intercourse (or sex) as representing a commitment or bond, but at the same time mentioned that it wasn't a "big leap",

"a big thing", or "an outstanding landmark."

It was very exhilarating. It was a first. I definitely sensed it as kind of a commitment, and I felt that we were committed to each other at that time. Both of us would not have gone to bed with just anybody. We hadn't up to that time. That might have made it even more significant than it would be for the average person. It really was something very special for us. It was extremely meaningful for us because it was a first, and it was a commitment to each other . . . . It was something that would come sooner or later . . . . it was kind of a gradual step in our relationship . . . . It wasn't a big leap. It was a natural transition . . . (Dave, The Loners).

Well, actually, in a way I felt it was kind of anticlimatic because I had been a virgin . . . . I don't consider it was an outstanding landmark, like many women might. It just felt like that was the natural thing to do--it wasn't anything that overwhelmed me. It actually started a commitment. It entered us into a different phase, and it did involve some kind of commitment because after the first time you're over the hump, in a sense. It did not blow my mind. I was relieved, happy, and felt that it was a good, right thing to happen.

Sex to me meant a form of commitment to a man, and to me at that time, to one man. It was something special that two people did together . . . .

It wasn't as though the first intercourse put into reality a lot of feelings or changed a lot of feelings, but it was the first time for both of us, and especially for me, I felt it was the first time I was relating to a man as clearly a sexual being. It was significant to me (Marge, The Loners).

I don't know. It wasn't a great big thing. I literally expected it to be different afterwards--it wasn't. We were still in love. We didn't rush into the next time, but we didn't avoid it either, so I don't think it was a too traumatic experience for either of us. I can't say that it deeply impressed me. I think it impressed Pat more than it did me. I didn't think of the idea that this was the first time I had intercourse at all--it was with Pat. It was a new bond in our relationship. Up to that time, our relationship had been pretty much above board as to what we could say to our parents . . . .

Sex meant to me, then, a real bond. A person you think about having sexual intercourse with, you really ought to think enough of to spend the rest of your life with that person (Mark, The Push-pull Duo).

I'd say it was a commitment, more of a commitment than I had felt before . . . . I felt much closer to him. Everything was more, everything I felt about him was more than I felt before. I don't recall thinking it was my first time with any man. It was tied up with Mark.

Sex meant to me a commitment. I think that's one of the reasons we didn't have it before. I think you have to realize you're not a girl, you're a woman. It's a change in how you view yourself . . . . I had held off so long. It was a decision, and not an occurrence. It was a difficult decision for me, and an active one. That's why it hadn't happened before--I hadn't decided "yes" before (Pat, The Push-pull Duo).

Similar to Pat, Anne's statement indicates a decision process in the occurrence of first intercourse.

It had a lot of meaning for me. I felt closer to him than ever before. I was disappointed--it wasn't as thrilling as everyone told me it was. It got more exciting as time went on. The big thing was--it was with Larry. I felt I had given my whole self to him . . . . It was very important. It was the first time I felt like I was really sure of myself. I had to feel I wouldn't regret it. Therefore, I had to be sure of the person I was having sex with. It was very important to me (Anne, The Greeks).

Just as "extensive" physical intimacy lessened the effect of first intercourse on the development of the relationship, so, too, does it appear to minimize the personal meaning of the first intercourse for the sexually inexperienced.

I guess it was kind of a disappointment--is that all there is? This didn't seem much more than



our fooling around sexually before; there didn't seem to be a big dividing line between fooling around and having sex. It was kind of nice to do it, but there wasn't the special something about it, that I thought there would be . . . . All I can remember was that it hurt her so much. It really hurt her. It wasn't the first time that had an influence--it was the third or fourth time when she began to enjoy it more. Then, it was a lot nicer thing . . . . Once she began to enjoy it, then it had a definite influence on both of us. I don't know if there was a personal meaning for me --everyone says there is, but I don't know for me. I didn't feel any different afterwards (John, The Rollercoasters).

It (intercourse) made me feel a great deal stronger towards Diane, because our sexual relationship was very slow in building over a long period of time--just added to all my feelings about her before--reassured me again, another step telling me that Diane is the one for me--another strong point in telling me that this is a definite relationship, serious. Now, the personal aspect and the physical aspect were being tied together, and once those two are tied together, you are getting the picture of the whole relationship . . . . It meant a great deal to me, but we were already having oral intercourse, and it was just another phase; no great significance, just another step in our sexual relationship because we had been patient about it (Roger, The High School Sweethearts).

. . . it (intercourse) was meaningful, but it wasn't such a fantastic thing for me to have sex, and for me not to be a virgin. It was really special that Roger and I had intercourse together, but it was such a gradual building up sexually that everything was important to me, not just that particular night. It wasn't a big finale, but it was a new beginning of sexual experience for us (Diane, The High School Sweethearts).

The personal meaning of the first intercourse in the pre-marital relationship of the sexually experienced subjects is quite different from the statements reported earlier about commitment or a bond between the partners. The three experi-

enced female subjects focused on the physicalness of intercourse, and knowing their male partner as a lover.

You can't know a person well without having sex with them because it is another whole side of that person, and if you're interested in really knowing a person, that has to be a part of it (Eileen, Chinese-American Style).

Well, now, I knew him fully as a lover, too. I kind of had expectations of what he would be like, and they were affirmed. Finally, everything had come together (Karen, The Veterans).

I could never marry a man that couldn't satisfy me sexually. It is important that the man I marry do more than satisfy me sexually, but satisfy me better than I had ever been satisfied before. Ken more than fulfilled those requirements. Ken could read me . . . . You learn a lot about a person by the way they make love, by the way they handle someone. You can tell whether they're rough, whether they're not rough enough. The first time was just the way I like it (Jean, The Sophisticates).

The experienced males, however, focused as much on the emotional element of first intercourse with their partners, as the physical aspect.

It (first intercourse) didn't really mean too much to me. It was probably one of the worst times ever . . . . I was more involved emotionally this time than in any other time with any other girl. Before, it was just a physical thing. It did mean a lot to me but not in terms of sexual fulfillment.

At that time in my life, sex was a pleasure thing--get what you can. That was before Anne. With her, it was more emotional (Larry, The Greeks).

It was very enjoyable. I was closer to Karen, then I had been to anyone else, and it was more emotional for me with Karen, I guess. In Karen's case, I loved her, and it was better (Rick, The Veterans).

It was nothing deeply committal--the committal part was saying 'I love you' right after intercourse. It was the first time that I had ever said 'I love you' after the first intercourse . . . . it was very important in my mind that she be very sexually responsive, and she lived up to those expectations, my needs (Ken, The Sophisticates).

Not much. There was no difference between the first time with Eileen, and the first time with other girls. Sex is a pleasure to me. Well, now, it's more than just pleasure, but up to about six months before we were married, it was just pleasure; then, it became more meaningful in a love relationship.

I wouldn't say 'no meaning,' because 'no meaning' is pretty callous, but as far as her being my partner, it had nothing to do with that (Dick, Chinese-American Style).

In speaking of the personal meaning of the first intercourse in the premarital relationship, it could be said that 1) first intercourse has typically more personal meaning of commitment among sexually inexperienced male and female partners than it does with the sexually experienced; 2) physical intimacy prior to intercourse may progress to such a point that intercourse itself has little personal meaning; and 3) that sexually experienced females may focus on the physical element of intercourse as the meaningful aspect, while experienced males may dwell equally or more so on the emotional aspect.

In regard to the overall importance of sexual intimacy in the premarital relationship, six subjects (three males, three females) "played down" its importance relative to other relationship variables. Typically, these subjects also saw



less personal meaning in the first intercourse. Examples follow.

Sex was not the overriding factor in our premarital relationship. It did not get us together, and it did not keep us together. It was our minds that got us together in the beginning, but the physical aspect of being together, of touching, of caressing each other, of holding each other is important (Jean, The Sophisticates).

It (sex) wasn't like everything to us. We didn't live to have sex. We just accepted it as part of our relationship, and we were happy and proud we did enjoy it with each other so much. It added to our overall relationship. It was part of our overall relationship, but it was still very very important to us . . . . When we first started going out . . . the desire was there (and) I enjoyed kissing her, but it didn't have much importance in our relationship because we were in the process of getting to know each other. When we started heavy petting we were getting to know each other sexually, and it was very very important because that was the main thing that was occurring. When we first had intercourse we were still in the process of knowing each other sexually. When we decided to get married . . . we were starting to think of our overall relationship, and not just sexual (Roger, The High School Sweethearts).

. . . it (sex) was important because it certainly satisfies a physical need, and it also is important because it is one way of expressing yourself. On the other hand, it is not so important that it forms a relationship, and that you can form activities around it. As far as becoming a mental relationship, it really doesn't have that much to do with it . . . . (Dick, Chinese-American Style).

Sex was sex--it was just part of our relationship now . . . it wasn't extremely important that we had it to the point that if we didn't have it, our relationship would break up. But it wasn't so unimportant (Anne, The Greeks).



The remaining subjects, however, viewed their sexual intimacy with some importance. Mark noted that sex was an increasing part of their relationship; for Larry, sex meant that Anne really cared for him; and, Ken thought that sex "cemented" their relationship.

During the early parts of the relationship, sex was less important . . . . Sex became important when we first had intercourse, and became more so till the time I asked her to marry me, when it leveled off. Sex was a bigger part of our relationship; not so much that the other things were less important, but that our relationship was a bigger pie, and the increasing part was the sexual part (Mark, The Push-pull Duo).

If she didn't feel very deeply about me, she wouldn't be having sex with me, therefore, it is of great importance because it actually shows that she really cares for me an awful lot. It was a continuous reinforcement for me to show me that she cared for me (Larry, The Greeks).

I now know that it did much to cement us, and it meant much more to her. It did much to open our discussion, gave us a common point of reference, gave us a sexuality, gave us a warmth which you can't emulate without sex (Ken, The Sophisticates).

The advent of marriage was linked to the importance of sexual intimacy in several accounts. Sharon (The Roller-coasters) felt that her marriage might have been delayed ("perhaps for a year") if they had not had sex. Dave (The Loners) believed that it is very important for people to be familiar with each other on a sexual basis ("that's a great part of your happiness and your life"), and noted that a "major schism" in marriage could result if the partners were

"unprepared" sexually for each other. Diane and Pat stated explicitly that they would not have married had they not had intercourse with their spouses; and, the same was implied by Karen and Marge.

If we had not had sex before marriage, I would have felt really bad about it. I probably would not have married him because that was really important thing in my life--the fact that we sexually went together. At the time, I really thought it was important to know how well we went together sexually. The emotional part of our relationship was really important, but if I had not had sex with Roger, I probably would not have been as confident (Diane, The High School Sweethearts).

It we hadn't had sexual intercourse, we would not have gotten married . . . . I can't imagine anyone getting married without having intercourse. Intercourse for me was part of the relationship growing; it wasn't something that just happened (Pat, The Push-pull Duo).

. . . . I could not conceive of getting married without having a premarital sexual relationship. It would be a real horror. In marriage, there are so many things to get used to, and I think that would be an added burden, and an important burden, too, if things don't work out right. Plus, I got to know him so much better through sex and through being intimate with him. I knew him better as a person, and was more able to judge him as a potential marriage partner (Karen, The Veterans).

For me, it (sex) was pretty important. It took me a long time to feel comfortable with him--just to have the first intercourse with him. I couldn't imagine anyone going into marriage "cold turkey." There are so many other things that happen once you get married, and if you have to deal with that, too, it would be pretty overwhelming (Marge, The Loners).

Simply put, for most of the subjects in this study (male

and female, sexually experienced and inexperienced), sexual intimacy in the premarital relationship was important. Some lessened its significance in the light of other "things" happening in the relationship, while several (notably female) connected marriage itself with its occurrence, and thereby perceived sexual intimacy as quite crucial in the premarital relationship.

In retrospect, we can see that 1) developmentally, intercourse first occurs later in the premarital relationship of sexually inexperienced partners as compared with the same of sexually experienced partners; 2) the act of intercourse was spontaneous only for some of the couples, though not so spur-of-the-moment that contraception had not been planned; 3) the inexperienced partners, both male and female, "demand" more prerequisites before first intercourse (physical progression and relational elements) than experienced partners do; 4) the first intercourse generally draws the partners closer together, allows them to be more open and relaxed, and is associated with a "tightening" of the relationship; but the effect may be minimized by "extensive" physical intimacy prior to intercourse; 5) inexperienced partners, male and female, typically see more personal meaning of a commitment nature in the first intercourse than do experienced partners, who, particularly the female partners, focus on the physical aspects of the act, and knowledge of their partners as "lover" as personally meaningful; and finally, 6) sexual intimacy is

seen by most partners to be important in the overall development of their premarital relationship--to the point where some, notably female, inexperienced and experienced, stated that marriage would not have occurred in the absence of premarital sex.



## C H A P T E R    V

## Discussion

Sexual Intimacy in the Development  
of the Premarital Relationship

It has been the aim of this study to look at the significance of sexual intimacy within the development of the premarital relationship, and to assess its personal meaning, functional relevance and consequence to the relationship from the perspective of the partners themselves. To achieve this aim, couple-members were asked first to talk of the development of their premarital relationship, and then, to discuss specifically the role of sexual intimacy therein. Chapter III focused on the results dealing with relationship development, while Chapter IV presented the results concerning sexual intimacy. The present and final chapter will attempt to discuss both sets of results in an integrated manner. It must be emphasized here that the developmental processes in the premarital relationship are far more encompassing and complex than implied by their treatment in this study, and that sexual intimacy is only one aspect in that development. One might say that the spotlight is on sex, and the broad backdrop is the relationship development. Let's examine the backdrop first.

"You, me, and the relationship makes three." All the

subjects in this study except for one could describe phases in their relationship development but some of them rebelled at the idea of breaking their relationship down into "distinct" periods or phases. A word heard constantly and continually from couple to couple was "gradual", something both Bolton (1961) and Levinger et al. (1970) imply in their studies of relationship building. These two authors were quoted in Chapter I, but their words are worth repeating here.

The (study of) mate selection involves an imagery which compresses into a unitary non-proces-sual, psychological act of choice what is actually a process of building over time a human relationship . . . (Bolton, 1961, p. 234).

A process, not previously formulated, is the development of the relationship per se . . . (it) pertains to their . . . build up of a joint enterprise (Levinger et al., 1970, p. 441).

The following examples from the couple-members in this study certainly support the above viewpoints.

. . . it was a gradual progression. It wasn't clear-cut. I can't really see any phases--it was just a gradual thing (Anne, The Greeks).

I feel our relationship was a steady progression, not marked by specific events, but a gradual increase in feelings towards each other (John, The Rollercoasters).

I don't think I ever made the decision not to see other girls--gradually, Anne and I saw more and more of each other, and there wasn't time. Things just fell into place (Larry, The Greeks).

It got tighter and tighter. It wasn't a glaring "I love her"--it was gradual, and our minds were getting closer together and so were our bodies (Rick, The Veterans).

It was a very gradual type of thing. Nothing happened quickly (Pat, The Push-pull Duo).

. . . there was no clear point when commitment was all of a sudden there. When you end up going out on a gradual basis, things kind of buildup, and it's like putting twenty coats of polish on a car--when do you say the car is really shiny?--it gets shinier and shinier (John, The Rollercoasters).

Bolton further suggests that "choice" has little to do with mate selection, a suggestion amply supported by the feelings expressed by the subjects in this study. Moreover, there is the hint that "choice" has little to do with relationship development overall. It seems as if there are two choices--sever the relationship, the bond, altogether, or ride with the "natural flow" of the relationship. John's words about "readiness" for marriage (p. 59 ) allude to the latter. Other statements point to the same "natural" movement of the relationship, a movement that seemingly controls the partners, rather than the partners controlling it. The fact that 40% of all the transition events named by the subjects were "external" to the relationship is consistent with the notion that the partners may have little control of their relationship.

It was a natural thing (commitment); there was no decision made on it or anything like that; to get married wasn't even a decision, it was a decision that was already made--we got married not because I proposed, but because that was the natural thing to do. It (commitment) didn't affect anything--you grow into a life style, and your life style is commitment (Dick, Chinese-American Style).

I never proposed to her--it was a kind of coming together, and our minds eventually focusing on the same thing (Dave, The Loners).

It was a gradual thing; you kept going further and further, and before you know it, the decision is already made, and three days later, you are suppose to get married. I really realized that I was getting married when I was standing outside the church with my best man (Dick, Chinese-American Style).

. . . it was a foregone conclusion that we were going to get married (Rick, The Veterans).

Our relationship had reached the point where we knew we would be together in the future, but we hadn't really said, 'well, let's get married' (Sharon, The Rollercoasters).

I couldn't see an end to our relationship, so, maybe, in the back of my mind, I thought I would be married to him . . . even now when I think of why we got married, I can't tell you a reason--it was just convenient for us to get married; we knew we would get married eventually, so, why not now? (Diane, The High School Sweethearts).

Not only does the relationship seem to have "controlling movement", but it further seems to have "substance", and is something you can almost touch--a notion alluded to by many of the couple-members. Examples follow:

I can't think of a time now when I wasn't thinking of Pat. It (the relationship) was just there (Mark, The Push-pull Duo).

I could feel the relationship developing. I had the feeling that I would have a much closer relationship with her, than I had had with anyone else. It was intuition. Nothing happened to make it so (Dave, The Loners).

. . . he wasn't just a friend anymore, he was someone who wanted to see me all the time, and didn't want me to see anyone else. I was part of the relationship, then (Karen, The Veterans).



There are definitely, then, two perspectives on relationship development. First, the existence of phases encompassing different processes and happenings as the relationship develops to the point of marriage. These phases can, in most cases, be readily described by the couple-members themselves as they look back over their premarital relationship. It has been found that gender has little to do with the phase descriptions, or the number of phases specified. Furthermore, the recounting of the relationship in terms of phases is highly individualistic to the degree that spouses rarely match phase for phase.

The second perspective is that the relationship develops gradually to the point of marriage and exerts more and more influence on the couple-members until "decisions are already made." This perspective was emphasized again and again by the couples, at the same time they were breaking down their premarital relationship into phases.

The two perspectives are not necessarily contradictory, nor is the phase breakdown an artificial imposition on the relationship development. A rough analogy might be the act of climbing stairs--you go up gradually, along a smooth plane, but the gradualness is predicated on a series of flat, horizontal steps. In relationship development, unlike the steps in a stairs, each step is different.

As one is "riding" with the relationship, he is more likely to be aware of the gradual "deepening", time sharing,

and doing things together, and less likely to be cognizent of phases in that relationship. Indeed, the build up of a relationship may not even be conscious, but there is a buildup, no doubt, that places an increasing "binding" force on the partners. The relationship seems to gather momentum, and certain events become natural spinoffs in the minds of many couple-members--events like the first intercourse, and more so, the decision or proposal to get married. The parental "insertions" (Chapter III) help to start the momentum, or to maintain it. It is no wonder, then, that couples do not think of phases in their premarital relationship until they are asked to do so.

Assuming all of the above to be the case, is it profitable to try and extract general phases in the development of the premarital relationship? The answer seems to be yes. As specific as each phase account is for each couple-member, there does seem to be a general overall phase sequence. What follows is a synopsized abstraction of all the phases and their sequence, compiled from the couple-members in this study. It constitutes a proposed framework for studying the premarital relationship in a developmental framework and is comprised of an exploratory phase, an integration phase, a comparison phase, and a commitment phase.

Phases in the development of the premarital relationship. The development of the premarital relationship starting with the first meeting of the couple-members and ending

with the marriage ceremony, begins with the "exploratory phase." During this phase, the partners are learning about each other, and discovering common or interesting facets of each other. The relationship is exciting, fresh, new, and may have high emotional "peaks". At this time the other partner becomes "special", and the relationship itself may become subjectively important. The first intercourse generally does not occur in this phase, but it may with some couples who are sexually experienced, and who perceive relatively little personal meaning in the act (Dick and Eileen, Chinese-American Style). It is likely that the exploratory phase may be a relatively brief phase in the development of the premarital relationship. Couple-member statements that exemplify this phase are:

Everything was new, everytime we were together, I learned something more about him. It was fresh, exciting (Jean, The Sophisticates).

It was an exploratory relationship. We were going out of our way to show the other that we liked each other (Eileen, Chinese-American Style).

. . . a growing phase. Every day we found out more and more about each other that we liked. It was a very exciting time (Sharon, The Roller-coasters).

We were becoming more and more interested in each other; seeing each other as potential boy-friend-girl-friend . . . it was just like "high school" excitement, intense excitement (Marge, The Loners).

Referring to the work of others noted in Chapter I,

Reiss' (1960) first process in his "Wheel Theory", the feeling of "rapport", would clearly be part of the "exploratory phase." However, the findings of this study indicate that his second process, "self-revelation", may be occurring later in the developmental sequence than Reiss suggests it does. Reiss defined "self-revelation" as revealing "intimate aspects of (your) existence", although self-revelation is, of course, a matter of degree and not an "either-or" process. Using the degree of self-revelation indicated by his definition, the couple-members in this work generally believed that they could not be self-revealing until relatively late in the development of their relationship. Thus Ken and Jean, The Sophisticates, and notably, Rick and Karen, The Veterans, felt that they could be completely self-revealing only after their decision to get married, or actual engagement. It might very well be that partners wait until the relationship is relatively secure before they "open up." The same point holds for Lewis' (1972) "Developmental Framework." He may similarly be premature in labeling the process of inducing self-disclosure and achieving openness his third developmental step in his series of six steps. The first step, the process of perceiving similarities in each other's background, values, interests, etc.; and his second step, the process of achieving pair rapport, clearly falls into our "exploratory phase."

In the second phase, labeled the "integration phase",



the couple-members do more things conjointly, and spend much more of their time together than they did in the "exploratory phase." The relationship has a sense of security and future aspect to it, and it is an unusually "good", happy time. The partners now begin to feel like a unit, rather than two distinct individuals who are "just seeing each other." A condensed sense of this unity was expressed by Jean:

. . . everything we did together fit during that weekend, no forcing anything, everything just fell into place--thoughts, actions, even brushing our teeth in the bathroom. We moved together as a unit, completely together for 48 hours on every level (Jean, The Sophisticates).

During this phase, the couple-members see themselves as a "defined couple", and typically exchange the first love statements. First intercourse between sexually experienced partners usually occurs in this phase, and may be the transition event that introduces it, e.g., see Rick, The Veterans; Larry, The Greeks. Using this overall phase framework, the subjects' accounts indicated that five of them did feel that they could be or were open and self-revealing with their partner in the "integration phase," e.g. Dick and Eileen, Chinese-American Style; Sharon, The Rollercoasters; Larry, The Greeks. Parental "insertion" into the relationship often occurs during this period when the partner is introduced to parents, and acts to "tighten" the unity. Couple-member

statements that exemplify the "integration phase" are:

We were enjoying our relationship . . . . We were feeling more like a unit. It was kind of a carefree stage; we were very happy; we had established a life for ourselves together; we were enjoying that we were a unit and we could be doing things together (Eileen, Chinese-American Style).

It was a time when we had so much fun together--I realized I really enjoyed being with John (Sharon, The Rollercoasters).

It was much more fun . . . . We were together much more, much more intimately. I was much more relaxed about everything (Pat, The Push-pull Duo).

We were doing a lot of things together, and we spent more time with each other . . . . We were more intimate, more isolated--we were seeing each other more and more alone rather than in a group (Marge, The Loners).

In Reiss' "Wheel Theory", the "integration phase" would encompass the third process of "mutual dependencies" or "interdependent habit systems", and undoubtedly to some degree, the fourth process of "personality need fulfillment." Regarding Lewis' framework, the "integration phase" would involve at least to some degree the remaining processes after his step two, that is, for some couples--the process of achieving openness, role-taking accuracy, interpersonal role-fit, and dyadic crystallization (see p. 18, Chapter I).

We have called the third phase in the development of the premarital relationship, the "comparison phase." This phase was most saliently depicted in the accounts of Roger and Diane, The High School Sweethearts; and Dick and Eileen, Chi-

nese-American Style; but it can also be seen in the relationship development of the Rollercoasters and the Push-pull Duo. One could say that in this phase the movement of the relationship slows down a little to allow the partners to take stock of the relationship. They weigh alternatives to the relationship, a process marked more by an "emotional" weighing than a "cerebral" one. The alternative could involve the possibility of a relationship with another person (known or unknown), or simply, no relationship. An "external" event, such as the beginning of summer with the partners leaving school for their respective homes, or the start of college for one partner, may herald this phase. Dejection, ambivalence, and rapid "peaks" and "valleys" in feelings are evident at this time, and the relationship can potentially terminate. This phase may be very rapid and may not even deserve the title of "phase" at all in some relationships. Much of the "work" in this phase is intrapersonal rather than interpersonal, and as such, may be hidden between the "integration phase" and the fourth phase, "commitment." Rapoport's (1962) intrapersonal tasks (see p. 19, Chapter I) may very likely fall within this phase, even though there is not actual engagement at this point. The partners may sense the "movement" of the relationship, the direction it is going, and project themselves into their future roles as husband or wife with their particular partner. If the scenario is appealing, the relationship continues--if it is not, the "movement"

halts and the bonds of the relationship start to deteriorate --and then break down altogether. Characteristic statements indicating the "comparison" phase are:

. . . we decided to go out with other people--the seriousness was still there, we wanted the relationship to continue, but it was something we had to go through . . . . It was more or less like breaking the unity to a point that we had already established--we were now going out on tangents of our own, but the purpose of doing that was to strengthen the relationship hopefully. It could have gone the other way (Roger, The High School Sweethearts).

When we went home for the summer, I was kind of lost for awhile. The beginning of that time was very confusing to me because I was trying to get myself together again, so that I could function. I would describe our relationship, then, as empty. My confidence grew that we really were going to see each other through the summer (Eileen, Chinese-American Style).

When we parted for the summer, we had a chance to think apart, to give the relationship time--we had a lot of time to think how we felt about each other--you might say the relationship matured a little bit considering we had more time to think about it (John, The Rollercoasters).

My attitudes changed a lot when I went to college. I was more open-minded and confused, and it showed in our relationship. We had some hard times that year in deciding if we would date or see each other anymore. It was a tough time in our relationship. We developed a real communication gap--I was interested in college things, and she was still interested in high school things (Mark, The Push-pull Duo).

Assuming that future projections are positive, the decision or proposal for marriage often ushers in the final phase in the development of the premarital relationship, the "com-



mitment phase." At this time, there is talking and planning for marriage, and the actual date is set. Parents frequently "re-insert" themselves into the relationship during this phase, either tacitly approving the marriage, or causing a reactive stand in one or both partners by their disapproval or doubts. However, "parental exclusion" often occurs in that the partners may not inform their parents about the depth of the relationship until the actual marriage date is picked. Sometimes "parental exclusion" may symbolically represent the final closure of the relationship.

In the "commitment phase", the relationship is generally "solid"; there is a deeper sense of security than that felt in the "integration phase", along with feelings of relaxation, openness, warmth, and happiness. During this phase, there is commitment to the relationship and thoughts of the other partner as a future spouse occur very early, sometimes carrying over from the "comparison phase". This also is the point at which first intercourse takes place for sexually inexperienced partners. It was noted in Chapter IV that the first intercourse often drew the partners closer together, and brought about a greater sense of openness and relaxation than existed prior to intercourse. It is not surprising, then, that the majority of couples reported feeling "completely" open and self-revealing in this phase of their relationship. We mentioned earlier that the findings of this study apparently contradict the relatively early sequential

placement of "self-revelation" in the Reiss' and Lewis' frameworks.

Subject statements typical of the "commitment" phase are:

It was total commitment for me. I was giving my total self. It was a real feeling of togetherness, and we were totally relaxed with each other--there was complete openness (Karen, The Veterans).

It was a foregone conclusion that we were going to get married. We had 'purpose' as a couple--we were working toward getting our own place. There was planning, preparation for the wedding (Rick, The Veterans).

Our relationship was very solid. We had a lot of the same ideas, and we didn't argue at all. I became much closer to his parents, especially his mother (Pat, The Push-pull Duo).

In sum, the foregoing represents a delineation of the premarital relationship into four phases: 1) exploratory, 2) integration, 3) comparison, and 4) commitment. It must be emphasized that these four phases do not match exactly the phases as reported by the subjects in this study--in many cases the phases according to subject viewpoint were collapsed, and the "lines" between phases dissolved. The four phases represent our view as to the "best fit" for the particular phases denoted by each subject.

An important point to bear in mind is that the four phases refer only to those couples who actually marry--the "complete premarital relationship", so to speak. We can only speculate about phases in relationships that terminate prior to marriage. It would seem that a relationship could readily

break in the "exploratory phase" when the bonds are just beginning to form, or not form at all, as the case may be. The next "go--no go" point might occur during the "comparison phase", and if the relationship were to end then, it may be that a "cooling out" phase would follow in lieu of the "commitment phase." It is also probable that "looping", or recycling, occurs within the developmental phases--notably after the "commitment phase" if one partner's sense of commitment to the relationship is "shaky". If various anxieties are raised by the thought of impending marriage, the relationship may "loop" back to phase three, "comparison", and depending upon the outcome of that phase, precede again to the "commitment phase" (see John and Sharon, *The Rollercoasters*).

One interesting finding of this study is the minimal influence of gender in the recounting of the relationship development. The one exception regards the "speed" of emotional investment in the relationship in which males surprisingly moved as fast or faster than females. The idea of the woman catching the man, or hooking him into marriage, seems no longer appropriate (or the women are exceedingly clever!). The explanation for this particular finding is not readily apparent. It could be: 1) that the popular belief that the male is always more reluctant than the female to get involved in a serious relationship is simply wrong; or, 2) that atypical subjects, i.e., college males and/or females, were in-



cluded in this study, and that personality dynamics or life situation dictated the different "speeds". Although the second alternative is certainly a possibility, we support the former viewpoint--namely, that the (college) male is as eager if not more than the female to establish a serious relationship with marriage as a goal.

There is some evidence, as reviewed by Bernard (1971), that there are two marriages--his and hers. Bernard believes that marriage in our society is more important for women's happiness than for men's (since our society "processes" women for wifehood), but paradoxically, "their (women's) marriages are more problem-laden and dissatisfaction-prone than their husbands' are. The psychological costs to women of the happiness achieved by this adjusting to the demands of marriage have been not inconsiderable" (p. 88). Bernard asserts that "because women have to put so many more eggs in the one basket of marriage, they have more of a stake in its stability. Because their happiness is more dependent on marriage than men's, they have to pay more for it. All the studies show that women make more concessions" (p. 88). Simply put, marriage is much more difficult for women than it is for men--who enter marriage maintaining their previous existence (job, location, friends) and have little expectation of changing it.

Is it not possible, then, that unmarried college women sense intuitively (if not outright through the experiences of married friends, and reading) the difficulties and dissatis-



factions they will encounter in marriage and hence, be less inclined than their male partners to enter quickly into a relationship potentially resulting in marriage? Perhaps, many women today do not view marriage as the sine qua non of their existence, and are actively checking out alternatives. Caution might be their key word when it comes to marriage--a caution that would slow their emotional pace in a serious relationship.

From the male perspective, marriage may be an important rite de passage into adulthood, along with the establishment of a career, financial independence, etc. The male, unlike his female partner, may want to get on with marriage, as suggested by Bernard's article, so that caution and deliberation may not be as evident in his emotional investment in a relationship that might culminate in marriage.

In light of the above, the finding that the males "moved" emotionally as fast or faster than the females in the premarital relationship seems quite understandable.

Sexual intimacy. Turning from the process of relationship development to the role of sex within it, we can see that the timing of first intercourse in the relationship is strongly influenced by one's prior sexual experience. If the partners are sexually inexperienced, the first intercourse will likely occur in the final, or commitment, phase of the relationship where often the act itself symbolizes the feel-

ing of commitment. In the interviews, the inexperienced subjects stated that they had to feel a sense of commitment in a love relationship before they would have their first intercourse. There is nothing surprising in this finding for the female partners. It is very consistent with the recent Playboy survey (1973, 1974), and with many other authors and researchers in the area of sexual behavior, as noted in Chapter I. What is perhaps a little surprising is that the inexperienced male requires practically the identical relational antecedents as those of the inexperienced female. Comparing the finding in this study with Brenton's (1972) findings about sex attitudes, the statements from the sexually inexperienced males and females regarding: 1) relational antecedents; 2) the effect of intercourse on the relationship development; and, 3) the personal meaning of the first intercourse, are likewise almost interchangeable. Gender seemingly has little influence, and the "double standard" among the sexually inexperienced, at least, is nonexistent. Both sexes in effect adhere to the standard of "permissiveness with affection" (Reiss, 1967, 1973) in the belief that sex is not only acceptable, but natural and good, in the context of a strong, enduring, love relationship. Moreover, not one subject in this study reported any guilt or regret about their sexual behavior. Both the males and the females generally went into sex with their "eyes open." The first intercourse was not an impulsive, spur-of-the-moment thing, and both

sexes shared the responsibility for its occurrence. In some of the couples, the male partner wanted to wait when his female partner was willing--supporting Kirkendall's (1967) finding that males frequently reject the opportunity for intercourse.

In addition to the need for commitment and love, the sexually inexperienced require a "physical progression" to their first intercourse. Sex is something new, unknown, and somewhat scary to them, and desensitization seems to be the preferred style rather than "getting it all at once."

While intercourse first occurs in the "commitment phase" for the sexually inexperienced, it generally takes place during the "integration phase" and is accompanied by less "stringent" relational antecedents for the sexually experienced. Liking, respect for each other, and a wanting for mutual sexual satisfaction (cf. Levinger et al., 1970 for a discussion of "we-centered" sexuality) may be important prerequisites. In essence, the sexually experienced see less of a personal meaning in their first intercourse than do the inexperienced. Contrary to popular belief, experienced females focus on the physical nature of intercourse, the knowledge of their partner as "lover", as contrasted with the emotional aspect. The experienced males, on the other hand, speak of the emotional as well as the physical, and a few even emphasize the emotional element. Moreover, "physical progression" to intercourse is not needed--they have been there before and know



what it is all about.

As for the effect of intercourse on the development of the premarital relationship--it is apparently the same for both the inexperienced and experienced. Sex brings the partners closer together, fosters more openness and relaxation between them, and produces more intimacy of a non-sexual character. Both males and females perceive the same effects.

Sex is seen by all partners regardless of sexual experience and gender to be important in the development of the premarital relationship; yet, at the same time, for most it is not an overwhelming step or an outstanding landmark. Loss of virginity in the case of sexually inexperienced partners is not salient or relevant to either partner. What is important is the context and with whom the "loss" occurs. Time and time again, what is heard is that "sex was part of the relationship growth", "a natural thing to do", "the time was right for sex", "everything started to gel", and "there was a ripeness in the relationship that had not been there before." Stated briefly, sex is a natural outgrowth of a couple's relationship, and without it the relationship would not be "complete." Sooner or later, both partners of a relationship know that sex is around the corner, and with this knowledge comes a sense of anticipation, excitement, and trepidation of what the act will portend. Since the experienced males and females have been there before, their feelings,



particularly the trepidation, are less than those of the inexperienced. Accordingly, the inexperienced more than the experienced want assurances that sex will not destroy the relationship. One sexually inexperienced male in this study stated this concern rather well.

I think we were both curious to find out what it (intercourse) was going to be like. We both wanted to have it way before that, but were afraid of the moral consequences, the moral idea that once you've had intercourse you've gone the road --what happens to your relationship then? But, we were caught up in the atmosphere, and everybody does it. We were both ready, and that's what we wanted to do.

We had discussed intercourse prior to the time it happened--the pros and cons. We both realized we would not wait until we were married, or realized that it was foolish to try and pretend that it was really bad between two people who loved each other, as we obviously did love each other. I think what really bothered us was what happens after you have intercourse? We were afraid we might find there was nothing really special about each other, and it was specialness that made us love each other, and if it wasn't special, why go on? I think we knew it was inevitable that we would have intercourse (Mark, The Push-pull Duo).

A final word. What is striking in the findings of this study is the lack of gender differentiation in areas (love relationship and sexual intimacy) that are popularly thought to be marked by sex differences. When a difference was found, as in the quicker investment of the male in the relationship, it was in the "opposite" direction than would have been expected. Sexual experience, not gender, seems to be the significant factor in predicting when intercourse will

occur in the developmental phases of the premarital relationship, its relational and physical antecedents, and its personal meaning. Gender and sexual experience, however, do not appear to influence the perceived effect and importance of sexual intimacy in the development of the relationship. It should be emphasized that sexual experience is influenced by the meaning one attributes to sex so that to fully understand the role of sex in relationship development one must study the belief systems of individual members. It must be further emphasized that the subjects in this study were college students with middle-class backgrounds, and that one should be cautious in any generalization of the findings to non-college, non-middle class populations.

A moralist might argue that the findings of this study support the idea that the more sex one has the more tainted one becomes--there is "less" personal meaning in the act, and it occurs "early" in a relationship before the partners are committed to each other. A realistic humanist would say simply that sexually experienced people know that sex is only one facet of a love relationship, and as such it should not be burdened with so high a value--there are other things that are equally or more important. Whatever the case, it is evident that "times have changed." The feminist movement is perhaps one factor. The Pill, another. Misbeliefs, still another. However, if there is one thing that emerges from this study, it is that the young college male and young col-

lege female are in agreement when it comes to sexual intimacy and its meaning in that relationship we call love.

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## Appendix A

Phone Questionnaire

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

1) When did you get married? \_\_\_\_\_

2) How long have you been married? \_\_\_\_\_

3) Do you have any children? \_\_\_\_\_

If "Yes"--age: \_\_\_\_\_

4) Were either you or your husband/wife engaged or married  
before? Husband \_\_\_\_\_; Wife \_\_\_\_\_

5) Are you a student? \_\_\_\_\_; Undergrad/grad

6) How long did you two know each other before you were mar-  
ried? \_\_\_\_\_7) Did you and your husband/wife sleep together before you  
were married? \_\_\_\_\_

8) What religion are you? \_\_\_\_\_

Husband/wife? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you attend church/synagogue regularly? \_\_\_\_\_

Husband/wife? \_\_\_\_\_

9) How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

Husband/wife? \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

Information Sheet

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(confidential; will not be used in thesis)

Present Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_  
(if doing part-time work, please indicate so,  
and nature of)Education: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Highest degree obtained; if presently in a degree  
program, please state program and year level)

Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you attend religious services regularly? Yes No

Your personal sense of "devoutness" (please circle  
number)Not devout  
at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 extremely  
devout

Date of marriage: \_\_\_\_\_

How long did you know your spouse before you two were mar-  
ried? \_\_\_\_\_

Formal engagement: Yes No

If "yes," date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

Sexual Intimacy in the Development  
of the Premarital RelationshipInterview Guide

## I. Premarital Relationship Development

## A. Background

1. Age at first meeting
2. Life situation at time of first meeting: e.g. student (undergrad or grad), working (kind of job, part or full time), living conditions (with parents, dormitory, with others in apartment, in apartment alone)
3. Aspirations at the time: e.g. career, education, travel, marriage
4. Awareness of \_\_\_\_\_: e.g. no awareness at all, knew who \_\_\_\_\_ was, but had never seen or met him/her, etc.
5. Opposite-sex relationships
  - a. Were there any "serious" relationships in your life before you met \_\_\_\_\_?  
Probe: . . . meaning of "serious"  
. . . number  
. . . "average" duration
  - b. At the time you first met \_\_\_\_\_, were

you "seeing" or dating anyone?

Probe: . . . number  
 . . . level of "seriousness"

B. "Early Development"

1. First meeting

- a. How did the two of you first meet?
- b. What was your first impression of \_\_\_\_\_;  
 that is, when you first saw \_\_\_\_\_, and  
 said but a few words?

Probe: . . . physical attraction

- c. What were your feelings toward \_\_\_\_\_ af-  
 ter your first time together?

Probe: . . . like about \_\_\_\_\_  
 . . . dislike about \_\_\_\_\_

- d. Overall, how did you feel after your time  
 with \_\_\_\_\_?

Probe: . . . desire to see \_\_\_\_\_  
 again  
 . . . desire to continue to see,  
 date others (if appropriate)  
 . . . feelings about self

2. Second time together

- a. Tell me about the next time \_\_\_\_\_ and  
 you were together.

Probe: . . . interval between first  
 and second meeting and how



determined: e.g. waited  
for phone call, scheduled  
event such as concert, next  
available free time, etc.

- b. How was your second time with \_\_\_\_\_  
different from your first?

Probe: . . . desire to see \_\_\_\_\_  
again

. . . . desire to see, date  
others (if appropriate)

. . . feelings about \_\_\_\_\_

. . . feelings about situation:  
e.g. anxious, at ease, etc.

. . . feelings about self

. . . if change in any of the  
above from first time, why

### C. "Middle Development"

#### 1. "Specialness" of the other person

- a. When did you begin to feel that \_\_\_\_\_ was  
not just another person?

Probe: . . . circumstances when first  
felt

. . . any associated events or  
actions

. . . feeling communicated to  
\_\_\_\_\_, and, if so, how

- b. At what point did you decide to date (or be with) only \_\_\_\_\_, and no one else? (if appropriate)

Probe: . . . subjective important aspects of the decision: e.g. \_\_\_\_\_'s feelings toward you, feelings toward \_\_\_\_\_, pressure from \_\_\_\_\_, pressure from other dates (if appropriate)

. . . time spent together after decision

. . . comparison of relationship after decision with that before decision: e.g. activities, verbal interaction, feelings

. . . meaning of decision regarding expectations in the relationship

2. "Specialness" of the relationship

- a. When did your relationship with \_\_\_\_\_ become very important to you?

Probe: . . . sense of "importance"

- b. At what point did you feel that \_\_\_\_\_ and you were a "defined couple"?

Probe: . . . meaning of word "couple"  
 . . . others, e.g. friends,  
 parents, view relationship  
 as "couple"

D. "Late Development"

1. Commitment

a. Did you tell \_\_\_\_\_ that you loved him/her?

Probe: . . . circumstances, when  
 . . . planned or spontaneous  
 . . . what reaction expected

b. At what point did you first feel committed  
 to the relationship?

Probe: . . . meaning of word "commit-  
 ted"  
 . . . circumstances  
 . . . communicate feeling of  
 commitment to others: e.g.  
 friends, parents  
 . . . example of an incident re-  
 vealing commitment  
 . . . tangible evidence of com-  
 mitment: e.g. pinning, en-  
 gagement

c. How did commitment (act or feeling) affect  
 your relationship?

Probe: . . . activities

. . . verbal interaction

. . . relating to others

## 2. Marriage

- a. At what point in your relationship did you start to think of \_\_\_\_\_ as a potential marriage partner?

Probe: . . . circumstances

. . . any communication to  
other

- b. When did \_\_\_\_\_ and you first talk of marriage?

Probe: . . . how topic arose, and by  
whom

. . . how discussion went, is-  
sues

. . . outcome of talk

. . . feelings generated by  
talk

- c. How was the marriage date settled upon?

Probe: . . . who picked the date

. . . effect of setting the  
date on the relationship

- d. What were your concerns about marrying  
\_\_\_\_\_?

Probe: . . . communication to others

. . . how resolved



## E. General Questions

1. When did you first discover that \_\_\_\_\_ and you had some "things" in common?

Probe: . . . nature of "things"

2. When did you two first have a disagreement or quarrel about something?

Probe: . . . about what  
. . . effect on relationship  
. . . how resolved

3. By the time of your marriage, what activities or interests did \_\_\_\_\_ and you share?

Probe: . . . nature  
. . . who introduced the activity or interest  
. . . when introduced  
. . . effect on relationship

4. As you look back over your premarital relationship, what important events stand out in your mind?

Probe: . . . why  
. . . effect of event on relationship

5. In retrospect, can you see any distinct phases or periods in your premarital relationship with \_\_\_\_\_?

Probe: . . . character of

- . . . transition events or actions

## II. Sexual Intimacy

1. Had you had sexual intercourse before you met \_\_\_\_\_?

Probe: . . . if yes, how "serious" a relationship in which it occurred, and how many partners

- . . . if no, reason: e.g. had not met "right" (explain) person, moral, lack of opportunity, fear, etc.

2. When did \_\_\_\_\_ and you first have sexual intercourse?

Probe: . . . circumstances: e.g. location

- . . . description of the hours preceding intercourse
- . . . why that time

3. What was the nature of your sexual intimacy with \_\_\_\_\_ before you had intercourse?

Probe: . . . progressive aspects:  
e.g. kissing, light petting (meaning), heavy petting

ting (meaning), etc. or  
sharp cut-off point

. . . what controlled the tempo  
of the progression or the  
cut-off point

4. Was there anything about the time you first had intercourse that led you to feel that that was the "time"?

Probe: . . . if yes, what

5. How did you decide to have intercourse with \_\_\_\_\_ the first time?

Probe: . . . individual or joint decision, or spontaneous

. . . discussion about intercourse before the first time

6. What personal meaning did the first time you had intercourse with \_\_\_\_\_ have for you?

Probe: . . . what intercourse represents personally

. . . differences from first time in prior relationships  
(if appropriate)

7. Was your first intercourse with \_\_\_\_\_ limited to only intercourse and no other sexual behavior?

Probe: . . . if yes, what determined  
the limiting: e.g. no de-  
sire for other behavior,  
fear of \_\_\_\_\_'s beha-  
vior, etc.

. . . if no, what other beha-  
viors: e.g. oral inter-  
course

. . . any change in this regard  
during the premarital rela-  
tionship

8. How did you feel immediately after the first  
time you had intercourse with \_\_\_\_\_?

Probe: . . . physically pleasurable  
. . . nature of emotional re-  
action

9. What effect did your first intercourse have on  
your relationship?

Probe: . . . feelings, quality and in-  
tensity  
. . . behavior  
. . . time together  
. . . communication: e.g. more  
openness, etc.  
. . . anticipation of next time

10. When did you have intercourse the second time?



Probe: . . . interval time between  
 first and second, deter-  
 mination thereof  
 . . . circumstances  
 . . . differences between se-  
 cond and first, physically  
 and emotionally

11. During your premarital relationship, generally  
 how many times a week did \_\_\_\_\_ and you  
 have intercourse?

Probe: . . . increases and decreases  
 in frequency, and, if so,  
 why: associated circum-  
 stances, etc.  
 . . . contentment with this  
 frequency level

12. Did \_\_\_\_\_ and you have any conflict about  
 sex in your premarital relationship?

Probe: . . . pressure to have inter-  
 course  
 . . . frequency level  
 . . . desired forms of sexual  
 stimulation

13. Was there any conflict in your mind about hav-  
 ing sex with \_\_\_\_\_?

Probe: . . . if yes, nature, and how

resolved

14. On a scale of 1 to 10; 1 representing "absolutely no importance," and 10 representing "extremely important"; what number would you give now to the overall importance of sexual intimacy in your premarital relationship?

Probe: . . . why that number

. . . what number back then  
when engaging regularly in  
intercourse

15. Again, on a scale of 1 to 10; this time 1 representing "absolutely no meaning," and 10 representing "extremely meaningful"; what number would you give to the personal meaning the first intercourse with \_\_\_\_\_ had for you?

Probe: . . . why that number

16. What "things" had to be present in your relationship with \_\_\_\_\_ before you had intercourse with him/her?

Probe: . . . reasons

. . . one's own feelings

. . . perception of \_\_\_\_\_'s  
feelings

. . . occurrence of a particular  
event or action

## APPENDIX D

## Couple Summaries

Appendix D is not included because of the confidentiality of the material.





