

A PILOT STUDY OF THE ABORTION STANDARDS OF COLLEGE WOMEN

by

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INTRODUCTION

The Problem

American society has, in recent years, manifested increasing interest in the practice of induced abortion to terminate pregnancy. Specifically, it can be said that this new interest in abortion is a reassessment of the standards for acceptance of abortion. Evidence of this new awareness of abortion standards can be found in the wide-ranging public discussion in the various news media and professional journals in numerous fields including medicine, psychiatry, psychology, sociology, and law. Perhaps most significant in this reassessment is the scope and intensity of current efforts to institute reform in abortion laws. These efforts at legal reform have served as both stimulus and response to broad social re-evaluation of abortion standards.

One contribution of sociologists to this contemporary issue would be construction of a theoretical framework to explain abortion standards in America. At present no such theory appears to exist, although there have been a number of descriptive studies and several tests of limited theoretical models. Construction of a comprehensive theory on abortion standards must, however, be preceded by formulation and testing of other limited models which will, in time, form the structural units of a broad theory. It will, then, be the purpose of this study to examine the literature on abortion standards and to

develop and test a model which contributes to an explanation of the abortion standards of one particular segment of the American population, the unmarried female.

A study of standards may be approached from several levels of analysis.¹ (1) One level focuses on the standards of the whole society in order to determine what is acceptable to the total social unit. From this perspective, attention is directed toward determining the degree to which standards for the particular behavior are reflected in the institutional structures of society. (2) Another level of analysis involves investigation of the social unit or aggregate most immediately affected by the standards. Primarily, this investigation is directed toward ascertaining the standards of those individuals most likely to practice the behavior under consideration.

In the case of abortion standards, most research has been on the first level of analysis and has concentrated on the relationship between abortion laws and informal social norms as revealed in attitude and opinion surveys of the general public. Research into the standards of those likely to have an abortion, i.e. sexually mature women, has been more limited. An adequate theory explaining all abortion standards can, however, be derived only from hypotheses based upon both levels of analysis. Further consideration of the abortion standards of sexually mature women is, then, necessary if such a theory is to be developed.

¹For an elaboration of the concept of levels of analysis, see Johan Galtung, Theory and Methods of Social Research (New York: Columbia Press), 1969, pp. 37-48.

In particular, there is an absence of data on the abortion standards of single women. Available research has focused solely on women who are married. In a society where marital status affects the status of the pregnant woman, it would seem necessary that differentiation be made between the abortion standards of the married and unmarried female. The single female in American society could be considered especially likely to accept abortion given traditional negative values on premarital pregnancy.² Precisely what the standards of single women are, however, remains to be investigated. A study of the abortion standards of single women is needed, therefore, in order to expand knowledge in this specific area and to contribute to the development of a theoretical framework to explain all abortion standards.

Definition of Terms

The term abortion as used in this thesis refers to induced abortion, which is the expulsion or removal of the embryo, preceded

²For a discussion of American values on premarital pregnancy, see Clark E. Vincent, Unmarried Mothers (New York: Free Press), 1961, especially Chapter I, "Attitudes Concerning Illicit Sexual Behavior". Also see, Ira L. Reiss, Premarital Sexual Standards in America (New York: Free Press) 1960, especially Chapter II, "America's Sexual Heritage".

In considering the likelihood that unmarried women seek abortions, it is noted that one study (Gebhard et al., 1958:56) found that of the women in the study who became pregnant while married, 89% terminated their pregnancy by induced abortion. A limitation of this study, based on the Kinsey data, is the middle and upper class bias.

by, and presumably the result of, some intentional act by the mother or another person, before it has developed to the point where it can survive in a non-fetal environment (Gebhard et al., 1958:2). In other words, induced abortion is the result of some act intentionally committed to terminate the pregnant state of the female.

The term standards has broad implications that have never been precisely defined in sociological research. A general definition of standards would refer to morals, ethics and habits established by the individual, authority or custom as acceptable. It is in this context that the term has been applied in previous research (Reiss, 1960, 1968) and that it will be applied in this study.

CHAPTER I

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Abortion in Historical Perspective

...it appears that abortion is a universal phenomenon, and that 'it is impossible to construct an imaginary social system in which no woman would ever feel at least impelled to abort.' There have always been women who became pregnant against their wills, and different cultures have chosen different ways of dealing with this problem. Abortion has been incurred for almost every conceivable reason, and through a vast array of techniques. Cross-cultural evidence also reveals tremendous variation in the acceptable grounds for abortion (Schur, 1965:11).

Although abortion has always existed in American society, it has, until very recently, been a taboo and criminally sanctioned activity. Within the past decade, however, there has been an increasing concern with the acceptable grounds for induced abortion. Changes in the public standards on abortion will be reviewed in order to place this analysis in historical perspective.

During the nineteenth century, restrictive laws on abortion were passed by all of the states (Gebhard et al., 1958:192). In general, these laws prohibited abortion except under the most stringent conditions, e.g. to save the life of the woman or prevent serious physical injury. Some states included clauses allowing abortion in the case of rape or incest.

Several reasons have been suggested for passage of these laws. The explicit reasons given are to protect the life and health of

women by keeping them out of the hands of incompetent abortionists and to restrain them from attempting dangerous self-induced abortions. Implicit reasons for these laws, however, include a much broader framework for their passage.

Their implicit cultural purpose was primarily that of embodying the Judeo-Christian belief in the right to life and the necessity of preserving human life even when the existence of 'human life' was problematic to some degree (Callahan, 1970:126).

Others argue that restrictive laws "reflect a puritanical attitude toward sex or are, latently, designed to punish and subjugate women" (Callahan, 1970:126). According to Edwin Schur, abortion laws are influenced by many areas of American life including woman's role in the social system, family organization, national demographic policy, and the role of formal and informal sanctions (1955).

For whatever reasons these laws came into existence, they remained restrictive until the mid-1960's when public opinion began to liberalize. The liberalization of attitudes toward abortion appears to be a part of a broader movement to extend individual freedom, especially sexual freedom in the United States (Schur, 1968). Consistent with this trend, abortion laws in thirteen states were reformed in the period from 1967 through 1970.³ Most of these laws were formulated

³These states are: Colorado, North Carolina, California, 1967; Georgia, Maryland, 1968; Arkansas, Delaware, Kansas, Oregon, New Mexico, 1969; New York, 1970. Hawaii abolished all laws on abortion in 1970.

according to the recommendations of the Model Penal Code of the American Law Institute and allow abortion in the case of medical, psychiatric, fetal, or humanitarian (rape or incest) indications (Callahan, 1970:140).

Specifically, the effort to liberalize abortion laws can be traced to several sources. From the viewpoint of medicine, abortion has been generally available in spite of the law. Estimates of the number of illegal abortions performed annually have ranged from 200,000 to 1,200,000 (Callahan, 1970:133). The injury and even death that can result from lack of access to medically trained personnel and adequate medical facilities is apparent. Partially, as a result of this concern, the American Medical Association's house of delegates in 1967 voted in favor of liberalized abortion laws (Callahan, 1970:10).

In the legal field, the American Law Institute undertook an investigation of current laws on abortion and found them unduly restrictive on the freedom of the American woman. In its Model Penal Code, adopted in 1962, it recommended that abortion be allowed for women in cases where there were medical, psychiatric, fetal, or humanitarian reasons for desiring that a pregnancy be terminated (Callahan, 1970:140). The cultural basis of this legal position is the high value placed in American society on the right of individual choice. Restrictive abortion laws denied this right to women and gave those who wished to terminate pregnancy little choice except "compulsory pregnancy" (Hardin, 1968). Re-examination of these laws resulted in recommendations that some latitude be permitted in the legal alternatives available to the pregnant female.

Also involved in the re-evaluation of abortion standards were a variety of religious groups.⁴ These religious bodies sought liberalized standards for abortion from a concern for the quality of all life and not the more narrow interest of the humanity of the unborn fetus. Abortion law reform has also been supported by various organizations concerned with equalizing the rights and opportunities of women, including the National Organization of Women.

There is, then, ample evidence that the movement for the reform of abortion laws and the implementation of new standards for permitting abortion has had support among a large proportion of influential groups in American society. It should be emphasized, however, that a permissive standard on abortion is by no means the rule as yet. For example, although the law has been liberalized in thirteen states, bills introduced in the legislatures of over half of the remaining states were not passed (Callahan, 1970:10-11).

In summary, abortion standards are in a state of change with a strong trend in the liberal direction. It is this very state of change that has generated interest in standards for acceptance of abortion. Because the subject is unsettled and very new, it continues to be discussed, analyzed, and debated.

⁴These are the American Jewish Congress, American Baptist Convention, General Board of the National Council of Churches of Christ, Church Council of the American Lutheran Church, General Assembly of the Unitarian-Universalist Church (Callahan, 1970:10-11).

Review of The Literature

Before presenting a model for analyzing abortion standards, the relevant literature will be reviewed. This review serves not only as an overview of previous research but also as a basis for the theoretical model.

Most research on abortion standards has consisted of opinion and attitude surveys to determine the reaction of the public to proposed reform of abortion laws. The most comprehensive of these surveys was conducted in 1965 on a representative sample of 1,484 adult Americans by Alice Rossi.

These adults were asked the following question:

'Please tell me whether or not you think it should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a legal abortion ...'

They were presented with six varying circumstances ranging from impairment of the mother's health, to that of a married woman who did not want any more children. The survey results ... show the majority of the American population support the view that women should be able to obtain a legal abortion under the following circumstances:

71 percent if the woman's health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy.

56 percent if she became pregnant as a result of rape.

55 percent if there is a strong chance of serious defect in the baby.

What the American public clearly does not support, however, are abortions in situations which all studies indicate to be the predominant circumstances for women who seek abortions. Support for the remaining three situations is as follows:

21 percent if the family has a very low income and cannot afford any more children.

18 percent if she is not married and does not want to marry the man.

15 percent if she is married and wants no more children (Rossi, 1966:8).

In attempting to relate attitudes toward abortion laws to various characteristics of the population, it was found that there were little differences according to religion, but high church attendance among both Protestants and Catholics was correlated with conservative views of abortion laws. The study also revealed little differentiation according to political party affiliation. One characteristic that did seem to be a reliable indicator of views on abortion was attitudes on premarital sex. Those liberal on premarital sex were also liberal on abortion. Rossi concluded that while abortion is clearly accepted as a safeguard of maternal health or as prevention of bearing a deformed child, "any suggestion of abortion as a last resort means of birth control is firmly rejected" by the majority of Americans in the sample (1966:9).

More recent opinion surveys have concentrated on the abortion views of particular segments of the American public. A survey made in 1967 among 190,000 doctors found that 86% of those responding (40,089) favored liberalization of the abortion law. Among American Catholics, a Harris poll conducted in the same year found 58% of a national sample willing to support their church's position on abortion, with some 28% opposing and 14% uncertain (Newsweek, April 13, 1967). In a survey taken in 1969, another Harris poll found that 60% of a national sample of Catholics did not agree that abortion decisions should be determined by law (Newsweek, July 13, 1970).

A study of college students sought to determine how accurately abortion laws reflected the views of youth and to learn what factors were associated with these views (Maxwell, 1970). A twelve-item

Likert scale was constructed to measure the dependent variable, attitude toward abortion. Scale results of 323 respondents showed a relatively even distribution along the continuum from anti- to pro-abortion. Independent variables hypothesized to affect attitude toward abortion were sex, year in college, family size, church activity, attitude toward premarital sex, exposure to abortion, religion, marital status, social class, and residence. All variables but social class, religion, and marital status were found to be positively associated with abortion attitudes.

A criticism which may be made of Maxwell's study is the inadequate description of several independent variables, including attitude toward premarital sex, and church activity. Correlation of abortion standards with the demographic data does, however, provide a wealth of descriptive data on the abortion standards of a young, predominantly unmarried (73%) population.

Another theoretical model to explain abortion standards is found in a study by Finner and Gamache (1969), who hypothesized that religious commitment directly affects attitude toward abortion. Likert-type scales were used to measure both the independent variable, religious commitment, and the dependent variable, attitude toward abortion. Questionnaires were mailed to a random sample of 200 men and 200 women in a New England community of 6000. The results, based on 122 respondents, showed qualified support for the hypothesis that strong religious commitment is positively related to negative attitudes on abortion.

In turning to the abortion standards of women only, we find one study, a comprehensive work analyzing the results of the abortion section of the 1965 National Fertility Study (Westoff, Ryder, and Moore, 1969). The purpose of the abortion portion of this study was to determine what grounds for abortion were viewed as acceptable to married women and the relation of these views to socio-economic variables. A national probability sample of 5,600 married women under the age of 55 was interviewed.

Each woman was asked whether she would endorse the practice of abortion under the following circumstances: if her [the woman's] health were endangered, if the woman were not married, if the couple could not afford another child, if they did not want any more children, if the woman had good reason to believe the child might be deformed, or if the woman had been raped. As of late 1965, married women in the United States were overwhelmingly in favor of abortion if the mother's health is threatened [87% favored], they are about evenly divided in the case of deformity [50%] or rape [52%] and they are overwhelmingly opposed if the woman is not married [87% opposed], cannot afford another child [89% opposed], or simply does not want any more children [92% opposed].

The most common combinations of responses are rejection of all reasons except health, and acceptance of the grounds of deformity, rape, and health, but rejection of the other three reasons. Nine percent reject all six reasons; five percent appear to endorse the principle of abortion on demand by accepting all six reasons (Westoff, Ryder and Moore, 1969:32-33).

Consideration of the socio-economic variables showed that favorable attitudes to abortion are related to age and education: the higher the level of education, the more favorable the attitude toward abortion; the greater the age, the more favorable the attitude toward abortion. Religion was also significant, with Catholic women the

most opposed and Jewish women the most favorable. By race, nonwhite women were less favorable than white women. Other variables showing some relation to attitudes toward abortion were region and size of place of residence, income and occupation status, woman's work history, religiousness, fertility, and attitudes toward contraception and sterilization.

Summary of Review of Literature

In summarizing the previous research on abortion standards, several conclusions may be drawn. First, most of the studies are descriptive. Finner and Gamache (1969) and, to a lesser extent, Maxwell (1970) are the exceptions. Certainly, descriptive studies are valuable in laying the groundwork for theoretical development. It seems, however, that the development of abortion theory should now move beyond this stage to the formulation of more theoretical models.⁵ Second, as has been noted previously in this paper, most research on abortion standards has concentrated on the relationship between informal social norms and abortion law. Research on the standards of those likely to have an abortion, i.e. sexually mature

⁵For a more elaborate discussion of the process of theory construction, including the relationship of descriptive studies and hypothetical models to general theory, see Hans Zetterberg, On Theory and Verification in Sociology (Totowa, N. J.: Bedminster Press) 1965, also Selltitz et al., Research Methods in the Social Relations (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston) 1959, pp. 25-145.

women, has been limited. Westoff, Ryder, and Moore (1969) present the exception here. Research on the abortion standards of the non-married woman remains completely uninvestigated. It will be the purpose of this thesis to develop a model which will add to our understanding of the abortion standards of this population.

Developing a Model

Construction of a model to explain the abortion standards of single women involves analysis of available research to determine what findings are pertinent to this particular population. Probably the most significant finding applicable to an unmarried population is the association of attitude toward abortion with attitude toward premarital sexual activity. Rossi found that

Men and women who oppose premarital intercourse between an engaged couple are considerably less likely to approve a legal abortion than those who have a permissive or ambivalent attitude toward premarital intercourse ... even where maternal health is endangered or the woman has been sexually assaulted (Rossi, 1966:9).

A similar conclusion was reached by Maxwell in his study of college students:

As the subjects' premarital sexual permissiveness increased, so did the liberality of attitude toward abortion. The likelihood of requiring an abortion as a result of premarital sexual attitudes and behavior seems to be directly related to attitude toward abortion. The probability of conception and the favorableness with which abortion is viewed seem to increase together. On the basis of these data, therefore, it could be hypothesized that those who adopt the ideal of abstinence would experience the lowest abortion rate and those

who espouse permissiveness without affection would have the highest abortion rate (Maxwell, 1970:250-251).

Based on this evidence, the following propositions relating abortion standards and premarital sexual standards may be drawn: (1) the more permissive the standards for acceptance of premarital sex, the greater the likelihood of premarital intercourse and conception; (2) the greater the likelihood of premarital conception, the more permissive the standards for acceptance of abortion. The resulting hypothesis to be tested is:

Hypothesis I

There is a positive relationship between standards for acceptance of premarital sex and standards for acceptance of abortion.

An hypothesis may be derived from several sources. It may be based on the findings of other studies, as in the hypothesis formulated above, or "it may be simply based on a hunch" (Selltiz et al., 1959:36). More precisely, this "hunch" means that the theorist formulates hypotheses on the basis of assumptions not supported by available data. This exploratory method is applied when there is little or no body of research. As has been noted, the research on abortion standards fits this situation; there is not an abundance of information to be found. This lack is particularly apparent in reviewing the literature on an unmarried female population. Development of a second hypothesis will therefore of necessity be of this exploratory type. The assumptions upon which this hypothesis will be based are outlined as follows.

It is already hypothesized that abortion standards are related to standards for acceptance of premarital sex. There is evidence indicating that acceptance of premarital sex is, in fact, strongly associated with one other factor of particular relevance to an unmarried population. This factor is romantic involvement, as measured by the number of times in love (Reiss, 1967:117, 47-48; Ehrman, 1959:209-211). This association may indicate that acceptance of premarital sex and number of times in love are interrelated dimensions of a broader concept of premarital heterosexual involvement. If this is the case, then it can be hypothesized that romantic involvement, as measured by the number of times in love, is also positively related to acceptance of abortion. A glance at the literature on romantic involvement will provide indirect support for this point.

Reiss and Ehrman both present evidence that being in love correlates positively with acceptance of increased levels of sexual activity, especially for women. According to Reiss,

As the number of times a woman has been in love increases, so does her permissiveness (1967:48). It is the contact of the female's basic values ... most importantly with particular males for whom there is deep affection, that is proposed here as being the most important current factor affecting the change in female permissiveness (1967:119).

Similarly, Ehrman, in his study of premarital dating behavior concluded:

The going steady relation ... reflects not only a more profound relationship to the increased sexual activity of the females than to that of males, but also seems

to be a greater determiner of their behavior than any other or perhaps all other matters which have been investigated so far (1959:211).

On the basis of this evidence, it may be concluded that romantic involvement, as measured by the number of times in love, and standards for acceptance of premarital sex are interrelated for the single woman. It is therefore posited that both factors are related to abortion standards.

From the preceding discussion the following propositions are derived: (1) the greater the number of times in love, the more permissive the standards for acceptance of premarital sex; (2) the more permissive the standards for acceptance of premarital sex, the greater the likelihood of premarital intercourse and conception; (3) the greater the likelihood of premarital conception, the more permissive the standards for acceptance of abortion. The resultant hypothesis to be tested:

Hypothesis II

There is a positive relationship between the number of times in love and standards for acceptance of abortion.

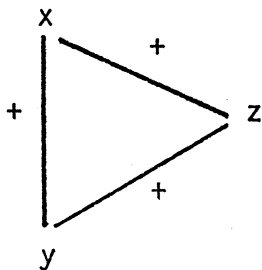
Controls

Two control variables will be introduced into the hypothesized relationships between independent variable I, independent variable II, and the dependent variable of abortion permissiveness. The function of these controls will be to determine if the hypothesized relationships are valid or if they result from the interaction of other factors.

The two control variables considered to be of importance to this study are religion and age. Religion is deemed important because of the strong opposition of the Roman Catholic church to abortion. Single Catholic women could therefore have standards on abortion determined by religion and not by premarital sexual permissiveness or number of times in love. The second control variable, age, is a primary demographic variable often found to be of significance in sociological research. If age is found to be of significance in this study, this will indicate that other experiences which are related to age are more important in determining standards for abortion than premarital sexual permissiveness and number of times in love.

Summary

Two hypotheses to measure abortion standards have been proposed. One is drawn directly from available data; the other, exploratory, with indirect support from the literature. The resultant model to be tested may be illustrated



X = standards for acceptance
of premarital sex
Y = number of times in love
Z = standards for acceptance
of abortion

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter will present the methodological procedures employed in the study. Included will be discussion of population selection, research instrument, measurement design, and analysis techniques.

Population and Sample Selection

As stated in Chapter I, the purpose of this study is to develop and test a model of the abortion standards of non-married women. In order to accomplish this purpose, a population likely to contain a large proportion of single, sexually mature women was necessary. Selection of a population of college women was therefore deemed appropriate, not only for its accessibility to the researcher, but also because it met the criteria of being sexually mature and largely unmarried.

The colleges from which the sample is drawn are Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and Hollins College. (The original plan was to draw the whole sample from Hollins, but unanticipated scheduling difficulties made this impossible.) Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University is a state institution located in Blacksburg, Virginia. Total undergraduate enrollment for 1970-71 is 10,816, of which 2401 are women. Hollins College is a private liberal arts college for women located near Roanoke, Virginia. Undergraduate enrollment for this academic year is 860.

The sample itself is composed of women attending lower-level sociology classes. Because lower level classes in sociology are service courses for many other curricula, enrollment in these classes, while not random, is assumed to represent a cross section of the female student population. The original sample total was 270, with 200 respondents from VPISU and 70 from Hollins College. However, incompleting questionnaires reduced the final sample size to 263.

Research Instrument

The standardized questionnaire with close-ended questions was used to collect the data. There are several reasons for selecting this technique over others. First, the questionnaire can be administered quickly and economically. Second, responses to the predetermined, close-ended questions can be easily standardized and tabulated. Finally, the questionnaire has an established reputation for reliability, especially in research on sexual behavior. In a study undertaken in 1967, Knudsen, Hallowell, and Irish found that a higher percentage of reliable responses to questions on sexual behavior are elicited by the questionnaire than by the interview technique. In light of these advantages, the questionnaire was considered the most appropriate instrument for the study.

Data Collection

The questionnaire was administered by the researcher to all single female students present in lower level sociology classes at VPISU and Hollins College on two days in May 1971. All males and any

married females were dismissed; single females were allowed to complete the questionnaire during class time. In order to facilitate computation, questions were precoded and transcribed onto automatic data processing cards.

Measurement Design

The study variables were operationalized in the following manner.

Index of Independent Variable I: Standards for Acceptance of Premarital Sex

This variable is measured by a Guttman scales designed by Ira L. Reiss (1964, 1967) to determine standards for acceptance of premarital sex. The scale is called the Reiss premarital sexual permissiveness scale and is composed of the following 12 items for females.

1. I believe that kissing is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is engaged to be married.

	Strong		Strong
Agree	Medium	Disagree	Medium
	Slight		Slight

2. I believe that kissing is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is in love.

(The same six-way agree-disagree choice follows every question.)

3. I believe that kissing is acceptable for the female before marriage when she feels strong affection for her partner.

4. I believe that kissing is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is not particularly affectionate toward her partner.

5. I believe that petting is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is engaged to be married.
6. I believe that petting is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is in love.
7. I believe that petting is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is strongly affectionate for her partner.
8. I believe that petting is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is not particularly affectionate toward her partner.
9. I believe that full sexual relations is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is engaged to be married.
10. I believe that full sexual relations is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is in love.
11. I believe that full sexual relations is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is strongly affectionate for her partner.
12. I believe that full sexual relations is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is not particularly affectionate for her partner.

The coefficient of reproducibility of the scale is, for the five schools Reiss tested, .95 with a minimal marginal reproducibility of .75 (Reiss, 1967:221-222). Reiss states that because the scale has been widely tested, it may be assumed that a Guttman scale exists. Therefore, to ease computation of scale scores, he suggests that although all 12 items be administered, analysis may be limited to a scale of the following items: 5 or 6, 7, 9 or 10, 11, 12 (Reiss,

1967:221-222).

Reiss' assumption, however, did not hold true for either his 12-item scale or his 5-item sub-scale in the sample tested in this study. Accordingly, certain modifications were necessary in determining a measure of premarital sexual permissiveness. The difficulties encountered using the Reiss scale are outlined as follows.

First, the items, although comprising a Guttman scale, did not fall in the order predicted by Reiss. Instead of the expected order of 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12, the Guttman scale order for this study is 3,2,1,5,6,7,4,9,10,11,8,12. Although Reiss mentions the instability of items 4 and 8 (1967:221), the reversal of 1,2,3 was not anticipated.

Second, many items in the scale had marginal frequencies of over 80 percent or less than 20 percent respondents. If standard Guttman techniques are to be followed (Miller, 1970:94; Torgeson, 1967:324), these items should be dropped or, if included, should not be used in computation of the coefficient of reproducibility or of scale scores. In the sample tested for this study, only items 4,8,9,10,11 had acceptable marginal frequencies.

A solution to these unanticipated problems is not given by Reiss. Therefore, it was concluded by this researcher that, since the Reiss scale is considered to be a Guttman scale standard Guttman techniques for analyzing the scale would be followed with only the non-marginal items used in determining scores. The result is a new five-item scale to measure premarital sexual permissiveness. The scale, as given below, is Guttman -- ordered according to the results of the

sample responses. Numbers in parentheses indicate original ordering by Reiss.

1. (4) I believe that kissing is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is not particularly affectionate toward her partner.
2. (9) I believe that full sexual relations is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is engaged to be married.
3. (10) I believe that full sexual relations is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is in love.
4. (11) I believe that full sexual relations is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is strongly affectionate toward her partner.
5. (8) I believe that petting is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is not particularly affectionate toward her partner.

The coefficient of reproducibility was not affected by the dropping of marginal items and remained at .96 for both the original 12-item scale and the final new 5-item scales. The minimal marginal reproducibility was improved using the revised scale with .83 for the original scale and .67 for the 5-item scale. A comparison of the minimal marginal reproducibility with the coefficient of reproducibility indicates that a high degree of improvement (31 percentage points) occurs when the five items are fitted to the Guttman model.

Using the revised scale, possible scores range from zero (non-acceptance of all items) to five (acceptance of all items), with

middle range scores of one, two, three, and four. A score of one indicates acceptance of item 1 and rejection of 2,3,4,5, while a score of two indicates acceptance of items 1 and 2 with rejection of the remaining items. Scores of three and four are computed in like manner. Accomodation of error types is achieved through use of the Cornell technique for analyzing Guttman scales.

To facilitate data analysis, the scores were divided into two categories. Scores of 0,1,2 were combined into a single "low" score and 3,4,5 combined to form a single "high" score.

In terms of face validity, the five-item scale would seem to be primarily a measure of conditions for acceptance of premarital sexual involvement. The important criterion for any kind of intimate behavior is affection. That is, it is not the degree of physical intimacy per se that is of concern to the contemporary single young woman, but rather the extent of the emotional involvement in the relationship. One might hypothesize that this criterion is a reflection of a more "person-centered" and less "body-centered" morality than was present when Reiss' original scale was constructed.

Index of Independent Variable II: Number of Times in Love

This variable is considered to be an indication of romantic involvement and is measured through use of a single item which requests a subjective interpretation of the number of times one considers having been in love. Similar operationalization of this concept is found in Reiss (1967:192). The item reads as follows:

How many times have you been in love with a member of the opposite sex?

0. Never
1. Once
2. Twice
3. Three times
4. Four times or more

Index of the Dependent Variable: Standards for Acceptance of Abortion

Measurement of this variable was achieved by construction of a Guttman scale by the researcher. Pretest of an initial scale indicated that abortion is acceptable to over 90 percent of single college women in cases where life or health is endangered or where rape or incest has occurred. Although these are the indicators commonly used in available research or abortion standards, it was concluded that finer discrimination is necessary in order to more precisely measure the abortion standards of this population. Because the researcher had had experience counseling single college women seeking abortions, the scale constructed for this study is based largely on knowledge of abortion standards gained from interviews with these women. The scale consists of 15 items which scaled in the following order.

1. I would never have an abortion for any reason.

	Strong Agree Medium Slight	Disagree	Strong Medium Slight
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2. I would have an abortion if a doctor told me it was necessary in order to prevent serious physical injury.

(The same six-way agree-disagree choice follows every question.)

3. I would have an abortion if I could not emotionally cope with being pregnant.
4. I would have an abortion for any reason that was important to me.
5. I would have an abortion if I could not provide the child with the kind of environment I wanted my children to have.
6. I would have an abortion if I did not want to marry the boy who got me pregnant.
7. I would have an abortion if I felt my pregnancy would cause the boy who got me pregnant a great deal of hardship.
8. I would have an abortion if I wasn't ready to get married.
9. I would have an abortion if I didn't want my parents to find out that I was pregnant.
10. I would have an abortion if I felt being pregnant would make it difficult for me to continue my education.
11. I would have an abortion if the boy who got me pregnant would not marry me.
12. I would have an abortion if I would have to give the child up for adoption.
13. I would have an abortion if I did not want my friends to find out that I was pregnant.
14. I would have an abortion if I felt I would be left out of social activities.
15. I would have an abortion if I felt no one would date me while I was pregnant.

Analysis of the scale revealed that items 1 and 2 had marginal frequencies of over 80 percent; consequently these items were not included in computing reproducibility or scale scores. The coefficient of reproducibility for the 13-item scale is .91. This figure meets the .90 criterion for Guttman scales accepted by most methodologists and indicates that the scale is measuring a unidimensional concept. A minimal marginal reproducibility of .63 indicates that a high degree of improvement in measuring the concept is achieved by use of the Guttman model. The minimal marginal reproducibility also reveals that, for this scale, the reproducibility is not skewed by a large number of extreme marginal frequencies. It can be concluded from this analysis that the scale devised for this study to measure standards for acceptance of abortion is a reliable measure of the concept.

Individual scores on abortion standards are dichotomized in a manner similar to the dichotomization of the premarital sexual permissiveness scale. With a 13-item scale, there are 14 possible scores, ranging from 0-13. Scores of 0-6 are defined as "low" and scores of 7-13 are considered "high".

Although it is difficult to evaluate the validity of the scale, certain observations concerning face validity can be made. The scale seems to tap situational differences in abortion standards rather than moral issues. The issue, then, is not so much whether abortion is acceptable, but when. This social rather than moral consciousness is evidenced in part by the results of the pretest, mentioned earlier in this chapter, in which abortion was overwhelmingly acceptable in

the extreme situations of rape, incest, or endangered health. In this context, the scale seems to offer discrimination among the situations in which abortion will be accepted by single young women. These situations are ranked according to the severity of social and personal consequences for remaining premaritally pregnant. For example, the continuum revealed by the scale ranges from conditions where pregnancy would cause great hardship (emotional disturbance, item 3; providing properly for the child, item 5; unwanted marriage, item 6) to situations of mere inconvenience (isolation from social activities, item 14; no one to date, item 15). Acceptance of abortion in these varying situations offers therefore a measure which differentiates abortion standards.

Control Variables

The control variables in this study are age and religion. Age is dichotomized as 18 and under and, 19 and over. This cutting point is based upon the fact that for college students, those near age 18 have very recently been associated with a home environment in which they were assumably somewhat dependent. Those aged 19 and over have had more opportunity to acquire new ideas from their new environment, college friends and experiences. Religion is classified as Catholic and non-Catholic. The relationship between the dependent and independent variables will be examined when each of the controls is introduced to determine whether the relationship remains constant.

Data Analysis

Three types of statistics will be employed to analyze the data collected in this study and to test the hypotheses. Percentages will be used to describe the characteristics of the sample. Chi-square, a test of statistical inference, will determine the probability that the frequencies obtained empirically differ significantly from those that would be expected by chance. A .05 level of significance will be used. Yule's Q, a correlation coefficient used appropriately with dichotomous ordinal data, will measure the strength of association of the variables. The Davis application of Yule's Q will be used when controls are introduced in order to correlate three variables (Davis, 1971).

In addition to the demographic variables, the sample may be described in terms of the variables to be measured in the tests of hypotheses, i.e. premarital sexual permissiveness, abortion permissiveness, and number of times in love (see Table 2). Abortion permissiveness, the dependent variable, is dichotomized according to scale scores as was explained in Chapter II. The sample is closely divided on this variable with 55 percent scoring high on abortion permissiveness and 45 percent low. Independent variable I, premarital sexual permissiveness, also measured by scale scores, is not as evenly distributed with 65 percent scoring high and 35 percent low. A measure of independent variable II, number of times in love, shows 17 percent of the sample never in love, 45 percent in love only once, and 39 percent in love twice or more. It may be concluded that the majority of the sample has had experience in heterosexual love relationships and views abortion and premarital sex favorably.

Tests of Hypotheses

This section will discuss the results of statistical tests of the two hypotheses proposed in this study and will also examine the effect of control variables on the relationships. The hypotheses will be stated in null and alternate form in order to render proper statistical interpretation.

CHAPTER III

DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected in the study. The first part is a description of the characteristics of the sample according to demographic variables and scores on the independent and dependent variables. The second part discusses the statistical tests of the hypotheses.

Sample Characteristics

The sample contains 263 single college women attending Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and Hollins College. Of this number, 98% are white. The age range of the sample is approximately 18-22 with the majority aged 18 and 19. By religion, the sample is overwhelmingly non-Catholic; 70% are Protestant, 4% other, and 10% are not affiliated with a religion. Father's educational attainment as an index of social class reveals over half the sample (55% having a father with at least a bachelor's degree). Home community size is used as an index of rural-urban background and indicates a fairly even distribution of respondents in the three community sizes of 10,000 and under (26%), 10,000-100,000 (41%) and over 100,000 (33%). In summary, the population, as represented by the sample, is composed of white, mostly non-Catholic single young women from middle-class non-rural backgrounds (see Table 1).

In addition to the demographic variables, the sample may be described in terms of the variables to be measured in the tests of hypotheses, i.e. premarital sexual permissiveness, abortion permissiveness, and number of times in love (see Table 2). Abortion permissiveness, the dependent variable, is dichotomized according to scale scores as was explained in Chapter II. The sample is closely divided on this variable with 55 percent scoring high on abortion permissiveness and 45 percent low. Independent variable I, premarital sexual permissiveness, also measured by scale scores, is not as evenly distributed with 65 percent scoring high and 35 percent low. A measure of independent variable II, number of times in love, shows 17 percent of the sample never in love, 45 percent in love only once, and 39 percent in love twice or more. It may be concluded that the majority of the sample has had experience in heterosexual love relationships and views abortion and premarital sex favorably.

Tests of Hypotheses

This section will discuss the results of statistical tests of the two hypotheses proposed in this study and will also examine the effect of control variables on the relationships. The hypotheses will be stated in null and alternate form in order to render proper statistical interpretation.

Hypothesis I

Null Hypothesis

There is no relationship between standards for acceptance of premarital sex and standards for acceptance of abortion.

Research Hypothesis

There is a positive relationship between standards for acceptance of premarital sex and standards for acceptance of abortion.

The relationship between abortion permissiveness scores and premarital sexual permissiveness scores may be found in Table 3. Examination of the table indicates that 65 percent of those who scored high on premarital sexual permissiveness also scored high on abortion permissiveness. Of those low on a premarital sexual permissiveness, only 35 percent are high on abortion permissiveness.

Calculation of the chi-square test of statistical significance reveals that there is an association between premarital sexual permissiveness and abortion permissiveness that is statistically significant at the probability level of .001. Q was computed to determine the strength of the association of the two variables. A value of .57 was obtained. According to Davis (1971:49), a Q value in the range of +.50 to +.69 indicates a "substantial positive association." In summary, the probability of a substantial positive correlation of .57 occurring by chance is one in a thousand.

The null hypothesis is therefore rejected and it is concluded that premarital sexual permissiveness and abortion permissiveness are positively correlated at an acceptable level of statistical significance.

Hypothesis I Controlling for Age

Table 4 represents the statistical relationship between abortion permissiveness and premarital sexual permissiveness with age controlled. Use of the chi-square test shows that the relationship is statistically significant at the probability level of .001 for those aged 18 and under and at .01 for those aged 19 and over. Calculation of Q , using the Davis method for controlling three variables (1971:81-107), indicates that, because there is less than ten percentage points difference between the zero-order Q_{xy} of .57, the partial correlation of Q_{xy} :tied T of .54 and the differential correlation of Q_{xz} :tied T of .63, the relationship between abortion permissiveness and premarital sexual permissiveness is not explained by age.

It may be seen from this analysis that the relationship between independent variable I and the dependent variable is not explained by age and that this relationship remains statistically significant when age is introduced as a control.

Hypothesis I Controlling for Religion

The relationship between premarital sexual permissiveness and abortion permissiveness with religion controlled remains significant at the probability level of .05 for Catholics and .001 for non-Catholics using the chi-square test (see Table 5). The Q values, with religion controlled, indicate that because there is less than ten percentage points difference between the zero-order, the partial, and the differential correlations, the relationship between premarital

sexual permissiveness and abortion permissiveness is negligibly affected by religion.

It is concluded that the relationship between independent variable I and the dependent variable is therefore not explained by religion in that this relationship remains significant at a statistically acceptable level when religion is controlled.

Hypothesis II

Null Hypothesis

There is no relationship between the number of times in love and standards for acceptance of abortion.

Research Hypothesis

There is a positive relationship between the number of times in love and the standards for acceptance of abortion.

Since this hypothesis is exploratory and is based upon the finding (outlined in Chapter I) that premarital sexual permissiveness and number of times in love are interrelated, it is desirable to retest this underlying assumption before testing the second research hypothesis. Explicitly, the underlying assumption is that there is a positive correlation between number of times in love and premarital sexual permissiveness. Dichotomizing number of times in love into two categories of "never or once" and "twice or more," it was found that chi-square is significant only at the probability level of .10 (see Table 6). Correlation of the two independent variables using Q indicates a "low positive association" for the value of .23. Because these results seemed incongruent with previous findings, a

second test was run on the relationship between number of times in love and premarital sexual permissiveness, with number of times in love dichotomized as "never" and "once or more." Calculation of chi-square for this relationship revealed significance at the probability level of .001 (see Table 7). A Q value of .37 suggests that a "moderate positive association" exists. On the basis of these results, it was concluded that the test of the relationship between number of times in love and abortion permissiveness will be based upon the dichotomization of number of times in love as "never" and "once or more." It should be noted here that a significant qualitative difference exists between persons who have never been in love and those who have been in love one or more times. What is important is not how often one has been in love, but if one has been in love.

Table 8 presents the results of the statistical tests of hypothesis II. Examination of the table reveals that 56 percent of those who have been in love once or more scored high on abortion permissiveness while 38 percent of those who have never been in love scored high on abortion permissiveness.

The chi-square test shows that the relationship between number of times in love and standards for acceptance of abortion is statistically significant at the probability level of .02. A Q value of .39 was obtained as a measure of the strength of the relationship and indicates a "moderate positive association" of the two variables.

In summary, the tests reveal that the probability of a moderate positive correlation of .39 occurring by chance is two in a hundred. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected and it is concluded that

number of times in love and standards for acceptance of abortion are positively correlated at a statistically significant level.

Hypothesis II Controlling for Age

The relationship between abortion permissiveness and number of times in love with age controlled is found in Table 9. The chi-square value shows that the relationship is statistically significant at the probability level of .001 for those aged 18 and under and at .05 for those 19 and over. Analysis of Q with age controlled reveals that because the difference between the zero-order (.39), the partial (.38), and the differential (.36) correlations is less than ten percentage points (see Table 9), the relationship between abortion permissiveness and number of times in love is not affected by age.

In summary, it may be said that age does not explain the relationship between independent variable II and the dependent variable and that this relationship remains significant when age is introduced as a control.

Hypothesis II Controlling for Religion

Table 10 presents the relationship between abortion permissiveness and number of times in love with religion controlled. Calculation of chi-square shows that the relationship is not statistically significant at the probability level of .05 or less. In other words, the relationship between number of times in love and abortion permissiveness disappears when religion is introduced as a control.

TABLE 1
 SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS FOR DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Age							
	Under 18	18	19	20	21	22 or more	Total
f (%)	1 (.003)	99 (38)	97 (37)	28 (11)	25 (9.5)	12 (4.5)	263 (100.003)

Religion					
	None	Protestant	Catholic	Other	Total
f (%)	27 (10)	183 (70)	42 (16)	11 (4)	263 (100)

Community Size				
	Less than 10,000	10,000-100,000	Over 100,000	Total
f (%)	69 (29)	108 (41)	86 (33)	263 (100)

Father's Educational Attainment						
	Non-High School Graduate	High School Graduate	Some College or Vocational	College Degree (Bachelor's)	Training Beyond Bachelor's Degree	Total
f (%)	24 (9)	41 (16)	54 (20)	63 (24)	81 (31)	263 (100)

TABLE 2
 SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS FOR TEST VARIABLES

Number of Times in Love						
	Never	Once	Twice	Three Times	Four Times or More	Total
f (%)	45 (17)	117 (45)	70 (27)	17 (6.5)	15 (5.5)	263 (100)

Premarital Sexual Permissiveness Score			
	Low	High	Total
f (%)	93 (35)	170 (65)	263 (100)

Abortion Permissiveness Score			
	Low	High	Total
f (%)	119 (45)	144 (55)	263 (100)

TABLE 3
 FREQUENCY OF ABORTION PERMISSIVENESS SCORES BY
 PREMARITAL SEXUAL PERMISSIVENESS SCORES

		Abortion Permissiveness		
Premarital Sexual Permissiveness		Low	High	Total
High	f (%)	58 (34)	112 (66)	170 (100)
Low	f (%)	61 (66)	32 (34)	93 (100)

chi-square = 24.036

df = 1

p < .001

Q_{xz} = .5727

x = premarital sexual permissiveness

z = abortion permissiveness

TABLE 4
 FREQUENCY OF ABORTION PERMISSIVENESS SCORES AND
 PREMARITAL SEXUAL PERMISSIVENESS SCORES BY AGE

Age	Premarital Sexual Permissiveness		Abortion Permissiveness		
			Low	High	Total
18 and under	High	f (%)	15 (27)	40 (73)	55 (100)
	Low	f (%)	32 (71)	13 (29)	45 (100)

chi-square = 19.0946

df = 1

p < .001

19 and over	High	f (%)	43 (37)	72 (63)	115 (100)
	Low	f (%)	29 (60)	19 (40)	48 (100)

chi-square = 7.2806

df = 1

p < .01

Q_{xz} :tied T = .5436

Q_{xz} :diff T = .6379

x = premarital sexual permissiveness

z = abortion permissiveness

T = 18 and under

TABLE 5
 FREQUENCY OF ABORTION PERMISSIVENESS SCORES AND
 PREMARITAL SEXUAL PERMISSIVENESS SCORES BY RELIGION

Religion	Premarital Sexual Permissiveness		Abortion Permissiveness		
			Low	High	Total
Catholic	High	f (%)	17 (63)	10 (37)	27 (100)
	Low	f (%)	14 (93)	1 (7)	15 (100)
chi-square = 4.610			df = 1	p < .05	
Non-Catholic	High	f (%)	41 (27)	102 (73)	153 (100)
	Low	f (%)	47 (60)	31 (40)	78 (100)
chi-square = 21.0112			df = 1	p < .001	
Q _{xz} : tied T = .5664		x = premarital sexual permissiveness			
Q _{xz} : diff T = .5239		z = abortion permissiveness			
		T = Catholic			

TABLE 6
 FREQUENCY OF PREMARITAL SEXUAL PERMISSIVENESS SCORES BY
 NUMBER OF TIMES IN LOVE

Number of Times in Love	Premarital Sexual Permissiveness		
	Low	High	Total
Twice or More f (%)	29 (29)	72 (71)	101 (100)
Never or Once f (%)	64 (40)	98 (60)	162 (100)

chi-square = 3.170

df = 1

NS

TABLE 7
 FREQUENCY OF PREMARITAL SEXUAL PERMISSIVENESS SCORES BY
 NUMBER OF TIMES IN LOVE

Number of Times in Love		Premarital Sexual Permissiveness		
		Low	High	Total
Once or More	f (%)	70 (32)	148 (68)	218 (100)
Never	f (%)	23 (51)	22 (49)	45 (100)

chi-square = 10.879

df = 1

p < .001

TABLE 8
 FREQUENCY OF ABORTION PERMISSIVENESS SCORES
 BY NUMBER OF TIMES IN LOVE

Number of Times in Love		Abortion Permissiveness		
		Low	High	Total
Once or More	f (%)	91 (42)	127 (58)	218 (100)
Never	f (%)	28 (62)	17 (38)	45 (100)

chi-square = 6.314

df = 1

p < .02

$Q_{yz} = .3969$

y = number of times in love

z = abortion permissiveness

TABLE 9
 FREQUENCY OF ABORTION PERMISSIVENESS SCORES AND
 NUMBER OF TIMES IN LOVE BY AGE

Age	Number of Times in Love		Abortion Permissiveness		
			Low	High	Total
18 and under	Once or more	f (%)	31 (43)	41 (57)	72 (100)
	Never	f (%)	16 (57)	12 (43)	28 (100)
chi-square = 11.6231			df = 1	p < .001	

19 and over	Once or more	f (%)	60 (41)	86 (59)	146 (100)
	Never	f (%)	12 (71)	5 (29)	17 (100)
chi-square = 5.3707			df = 1	p < .05	

Q_{yz} :tied T = .3890

Q_{yz} :diff T = .3620

x = number of times in love
 z = abortion permissiveness
 T = 18 and under

TABLE 10
 FREQUENCY OF ABORTION PERMISSIVENESS SCORES AND
 NUMBER OF TIMES IN LOVE BY RELIGION

Religion	Number of Times in Love	Abortion Permissiveness			
		Low	High	Total	
Catholic	Once or more	f (%)	22 (69)	10 (31)	32 (100)
	Never	f (%)	9 (90)	1 (10)	10 (100)

Chi-square = 1.780

df = 1

NS

Non-Catholic	Once or more	f (%)	69 (37)	117 (63)	186 (100)
	Never	f (%)	19 (54)	16 (46)	35 (100)

chi-square = 3.632

df = 1

NS

Q_{yz}:tied T = .3451Q_{yz}:diff T = .4230

y = number of times in love

z = abortion permissiveness

T = Catholic

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study was designed to develop and test a theoretical model which would help to explain the abortion standards of single women. The two factors hypothesized to affect these standards are premarital sexual permissiveness and number of times in love. A test of the hypotheses on a sample of 263 single college women yielded the following results: (1) there is a substantial positive association between standards for acceptance of premarital sex and standards for acceptance of abortion that is not affected by age or religion; and (2) there is a moderate positive association between number of times in love and standards for acceptance of abortion which is not affected by age but disappears when controlled for religion. The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies which report a relationship between premarital sexual permissiveness and abortion permissiveness, but they fail to support the exploratory hypothesis that number of times in love and abortion permissiveness are positively correlated.

The purpose of this chapter is to elaborate upon these findings and place the results within a broader theoretical perspective. More specifically, the following topics will be discussed:

- (1) the measurement of standards for acceptance of premarital sex
- (2) the measurement of standards for acceptance of abortion
- (3) the relationship between premarital sexual permissiveness

and abortion permissiveness

- (4) the relationship between number of times in love and abortion permissiveness
- (5) summary evaluation of the results.

The Measurement of Standards for Acceptance of Premarital Sex

The most surprising result of the study is the failure of the Reiss premarital sexual permissiveness scale to perform in the manner predicted by Reiss and confirmed by his and other studies. The nature of this unanticipated finding (discussed in detail in Chapter II) indicates a decided change in the criteria for acceptance of premarital sex from the time the scale was originally constructed and tested in the early sixties.

The first indication of a change in criteria is the fact that the scale no longer discriminates among the population upon which it was originally tested. In the present study, over 80 percent of the respondents gave the same response to seven of the twelve items, giving the results a rather permissive weight. One might argue that the original tests included both male and female college students while the present study is composed of females only. However, if previous research is reliable (Reiss, 1967:48; Ehrman, 1959:211), women tend to be less and not more permissive in their views on premarital sex than men. On a mixed sample then, it could be presumed that the scale would discriminate even less.

The second indication of a change in the criteria for acceptance of premarital sex, which is revealed by the present study, is an

increasing emphasis on the degree of affection required in the premarital sexual relationship. Reiss' original expectation was that petting would be acceptable, regardless of the degree of affection, prior to any acceptance of full sexual relations. He does concede that petting without affection (scale item 8) may not always fit this expectation, yet he does not predict the reversal of this expectation to the degree found in the present study. The findings of this study are that, for single college women, full sexual relations are more acceptable when the couple is engaged, in love, or strongly affectionate than is petting in a relationship in which there is little affection present. This finding would seem to indicate that for the single female the old standard of "I'll do anything but go 'all the way,'" has been replaced by "I won't do anything except kiss unless I feel strong affection, but, if I do feel strong affection, then anything goes."

The implications of these findings for further research are three-fold. First, further research studies using Reiss' scale are needed to substantiate the findings of the present study. Second, if these findings are substantiated, new scales should be developed which discriminate premarital sexual permissiveness along the lines suggested by this study. Third, the cultural and social milieu which has contributed to a change in these standards must be reexamined. Particularly pertinent here would be a re-evaluation of Reiss' research into the social context of premarital sexual permissiveness (1967).

The Measurement of Standards of Acceptance of Abortion

A primary goal of this study is the development of an instrument to measure the abortion standards of single young women. Based on the criteria for construction of Guttman scales, it would appear that this attempt has been successful. One conclusion to be drawn from this scale is that abortion permissiveness is a unidimensional concept for a population of single women. A second conclusion concerns the meaning of the concept. Careful consideration of the scale items reveals that the concept of abortion permissiveness, as operationalized in this study, reflects awareness of the social consequences of premarital pregnancy. In other words, the results show that for many contemporary young women abortion is viewed as an acceptable solution to a personal and social dilemma and not simply as a medical or moral question. For example, 55 percent of the women in the study scored "high" on abortion permissiveness. This means that over half of the sample would find abortion personally acceptable if they were pregnant and did not want to get married. This figure conflicts sharply with earlier studies (Rossi, 1966; Westoff, Moore, and Ryder, 1969) which show that less than 20 percent of adult Americans find abortion unacceptable for the single woman who wants to avoid marriage.

A number of suggestions for further research may be drawn from these findings. First, research into the abortion standards of single women should be expanded. This is desirable not only to substantiate the results of this study, but also to further discern other factors which make up these standards. A second and broader

implication of this study is the obvious need for comparative studies of the abortion standards of single and married women. Do married women today hold the same views on abortion that they did in 1965 (Westoff, Moore, and Ryder)? If so, why do their standards differ from those of single women? If not, what factors have influenced the change? A third issue which remains unresolved concerns the isolation of other social standards which might affect abortion standards.

The Relationship Between Premarital Sexual Permissiveness
and Abortion Permissiveness

Hypothesis I in the study proposed a positive relationship between standards for acceptance of premarital sex and standards for acceptance of abortion. The results support this hypothesis in that the two factors are positively associated. The strength of this association is such that it remains unaffected by either the controls of age or religion.

While the hypothesis is supported, the study should be replicated in order to determine the reliability of these findings. The sample and population used certainly place limitations on generalization of the results. One limitation is the non-random process of selecting the sample; a second limitation is use of a population of students attending two select institutions in a particular geographic region. To generalize, therefore, to the population of all single female college students would not be justified. Replication should first, then, be undertaken to determine the applicability of these results to all single female college students. Further replication would

involve non-student populations and also populations from other age groups.

Perhaps a more significant limitation of the results of this study is the specificity of the theoretical model tested. As was noted in Chapter I, there is presently little research and almost no theory to explain the findings that are available. There is a need for further studies to develop more comprehensive and inclusive models. While this study was designed to test a limited theoretical model of abortion standards, the results do suggest the possible development of a more comprehensive theory based on the concepts of individualism and rationalism. Specifically, there is reason to believe that single college women in American society see themselves as unencumbered by traditional values on abortion and permarital sex. According to Edwin Schur (1968), the liberalized trend on abortion is a manifestation of an increasing social value on individual freedom, especially in the areas of private sex behavior, fertility control, and the social role of women. Stokes (1962) considers changing sex ethics to be evidence of a new belief in man as a rational creature capable of making decisions which will control his destiny. From this perspective, man does not need to rely on religion and tradition for guidance but is instead able to analyze his options and determine which are most desirable for any given situation. This viewpoint represents a sharp departure from traditional ideology on the Judeo-Christian ethic and the role of women which specifically proscribes abortion as an alternative to pregnancy and childbirth. In summary, the interrelationship of the concepts of individualism and rationalism may offer

the foundation for development of a theory of abortion standards.

The Relationship Between Number of Times in Love
and Abortion Permissiveness

The second hypothesis tested in this study proposed a positive relationship between number of times in love and standards for acceptance of abortion. The results fail to support this hypothesis and indicate that for this sample any relationship that does appear to exist is a function of religion. The data in Table 10 (Chapter III) show the apparent relationship between number of times in love and abortion permissiveness is spurious, resulting from Catholics having been in love less and scoring lower on abortion permissiveness than non-Catholics. The implications of these findings are intriguing. Do Catholic single women fall in love less? While this is a plausible explanation, it is also possible that Catholics and non-Catholics have different definitions of love. This is only conjecture, however, and there is no obvious explanation for the unanticipated outcome. It should be noted that the population used in the study is not cosmopolitan in character and, in fact, contains a small number of Catholics. Extensive testing of this hypothesis among populations containing more Catholics is therefore necessary before any conclusions can be drawn.

Probably the most important implication of the finding that there is no relationship between number of times in love and abortion permissiveness, is the need to examine more carefully the exact meaning of the concept of love. Certainly, as operationalized here, it has many weaknesses in that each response is based totally on

self-definitions of love. Such a measure could incorporate a number of objective indicators of emotional involvement such as intensity, duration, priority, physical intimacy and reciprocation. Although number of times in love was not proved to be related to abortion permissiveness, this may reflect the measurement rather than the theoretical insignificance of the concept. A number of studies suggest that emotional involvement is a critical factor in explaining premarital sexual involvement particularly for the female. The whole question, then, is how to better operationalize the concept of commitment to love relationships.

Summary and Discussion

The major objective of this study has been to develop and test a model which will contribute to a theory of abortion standards. As was noted previously, a comprehensive theory should incorporate various levels of analysis. The levels range from a broad societal level, as manifested in social institutions, down to a more specific population. Most studies concerned with the general standards of Americans toward abortion have neglected the standards of those groups most likely to be affected by unwanted pregnancy. This study focused on the abortion standards of single females because it was felt that this population is most affected by unwanted pregnancy, given the negative value placed on illegitimate birth in the United States. The standards of societal members in general are significant for development of a theory in that they provide the social context within which abortion is defined. However, the standards of sexually mature women

are most critical in predicting abortion standards since the women are most directly affected by abortion.

An interesting question that is raised by the findings of this study is, do single women have the most permissive abortion standards of all population groups? A comparison of this study with previous studies would suggest that they do. Studies of both the general public, male and female (Rossi, 1966; Maxwell, 1970), and married women (Westoff, Moore, and Ryder, 1969) indicate that abortion is generally accepted only when there is concern with preserving the life of the woman or preventing serious physical or mental injury.

These results are in sharp contrast with the present study in which abortion is overwhelmingly supported not only for medical reasons but also for social considerations. More precisely, many women in the study see abortion as a reasonable alternative to any pregnancy which would entail negative social consequences. They are likely to favor abortion to avoid marriage, continue education, and pursue various individual goals.

Although the abortion standards of single women appear to be the most permissive, there is at least one alternate explanation for the discrepancy between this and previous findings. It is possible that the permissive abortion standards of women in this sample reflect a recent broad societal change in abortion standards. There is little doubt that attitudes toward abortion have been liberalized in recent years. Consequently, previous studies of abortion standards may be dated. For example, the only research on the abortion standards of married women (Westoff, Ryder, and Moore) was published in 1969, but

the data were collected in 1965. While it is impossible to determine the extent to which the abortion standards in the present study reflect greater permissiveness among single females or changes in the society as a whole, it is likely that both factors are operating. In other words, single females are probably the most permissive groups, but abortion permissiveness is increasing among all groups in the population.

The apparent abortion permissiveness of single females suggests an interesting hypothesis for further testing: the abortion permissiveness of a group is proportionate to its involvement with unwanted pregnancy. Other things being equal, women should be more permissive than men, persons of child-bearing age more permissive than older persons, and single persons more permissive than married persons.

The data do not permit generalizations about changes in abortion standards because the study is cross-sectional rather than longitudinal, but one can speculate both on the nature and the explanation of changes in abortion standards. There are many indicators which suggest that acceptance of abortion has been increasing. One obvious example of this apparent change is the modification of legal codes.

This study suggested another hypothesis, which remains untested, that in American society individualism and rationalism have contributed significantly to changes in abortion standards. If the current trend is carried to its logical extension, abortion would be accepted by the female in any situation where she feels pregnancy is not desirable. This would suggest that rates of abortion would continue to increase in the future. However, this presents an interesting paradox since

as abortion permissiveness increases, so should the acceptance of premarital pregnancy. The ultimate result of this trend would be that, at some point, the rate of abortion should decrease for single women as some of them come to accept parenthood without marriage. Evidence of this proposed trend can be found among certain segments of the population today who deviate from current codes. These groups include politically radical women and some entertainment celebrities.

In conclusion, this study has raised many questions of various nature concerning not only the concept of standards for acceptance of abortion, but also premarital sexual permissiveness and romantic involvement. A model has been developed and tested. It will remain, however, for future research to determine the reliability of the model, to further explore the questions raised here, and to construct a complete theoretical framework to explain abortion standards.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

In this section of the questionnaire, please provide the following demographic information about yourself by putting a circle around the number of the most appropriate response to each of the following items. Be certain to answer all questions. Approximate time required: 3 minutes. Thank you.

	Col.
4. What is your age?	4
1. Under 18	
2. 18	
3. 19	
4. 20	
5. 21	
6. 22 or more	
5. What is your race?	5
1. White	
2. Black	
3. Other (specify) _____	
6. What is your present marital status?	6
1. Single	
2. Separated, Divorced Widowed	
3. Married	
7. What is your religious affiliation?	7
1. None	
2. Protestant	
3. Catholic	
4. Other (specify) _____	
8. What is the approximate size of the community where you have lived most of your life?	8

Col.

- 1. Farm or Open Country
- 2. Less than 1,000 population
- 3. 1,000 - 10,000 population
- 4. 10,000 - 25,000 population
- 5. 25,000 - 100,000 population
- 6. 100,000 - 250,000 population
- 7. Over 250,000 population

9. What is the highest grade in school your father completed?

9

- 0. Does not apply
- 1. Less than seventh grade
- 2. Seventh through eleventh grade
- 3. High school graduate
- 4. Some college but no degree
- 5. Vocational training beyond high school
- 6. College degree (bachelor's)
- 7. Training beyond bachelor's degree

.....

Below are listed several questions designed to gather information of a more personal nature. Please answer accurately. All your responses will remain anonymous and will be used for statistical purposes only. Approximate time required: 2 minutes.

Col.

10. How many times have you been in love with a member of the opposite sex?

10

- 0. Never
- 1. Once
- 2. Twice
- 3. Three times
- 4. Four times or more

11. Have you ever engaged in sexual intercourse with a member of the opposite sex to whom you were not married?

11

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

- | | |
|--|------|
| | Col. |
| 12. Have you ever been pregnant while unmarried? | 12 |
| 1. Yes | |
| 2. No | |
| 13. Have you ever had an abortion while unmarried? | 13 |
| 1. Yes | |
| 2. No | |

.....

The purpose of this portion of the questionnaire is to determine what you might do in a given situation in which you are single and pregnant. Although you may feel that this would never happen, try to imagine that it has and respond according to what you think you might do. Answer each statement as if it is the prime reason influencing your decision. Circle the response that most accurately reflects your feeling. Approximate time required: 5-7 minutes.

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | Col. | | |
| 1. I would never have an abortion for any reason. | 16 | | |
| <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> Agree 1. Strong
 2. Medium
 3. Slight
 1 </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> Disagree 1. Strong
 2. Medium
 3. Slight
 2 </td> </tr> </table> | Agree 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
1 | Disagree 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
2 | |
| Agree 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
1 | Disagree 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
2 | | |
| 2. I would have an abortion if a doctor told me it was necessary in order to prevent serious injury. | 17 | | |
| <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> Agree 1. Strong
 2. Medium
 3. Slight
 1 </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> Disagree 1. Strong
 2. Medium
 3. Slight
 2 </td> </tr> </table> | Agree 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
1 | Disagree 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
2 | |
| Agree 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
1 | Disagree 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
2 | | |

Col.

3. I would have an abortion if I felt that I could not emotionally cope with being pregnant. 18
- | | | | |
|-------|--|----------|--|
| Agree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
1 | Disagree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
2 |
|-------|--|----------|--|
4. I would have an abortion if I did not want to marry the boy who got me pregnant. 19
- | | | | |
|-------|--|----------|--|
| Agree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
1 | Disagree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
2 |
|-------|--|----------|--|
5. I would have an abortion if I could not provide the child with the kind of environment I wanted my children to have. 20
- | | | | |
|-------|--|----------|--|
| Agree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
1 | Disagree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
2 |
|-------|--|----------|--|
6. I would have an abortion if the boy who got me pregnant would not marry me. 21
- | | | | |
|-------|--|----------|--|
| Agree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
1 | Disagree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
2 |
|-------|--|----------|--|
7. I would have an abortion if I felt that being pregnant would make it difficult for me to continue my education. 22
- | | | | |
|-------|--|----------|--|
| Agree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
1 | Disagree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
2 |
|-------|--|----------|--|
8. I would have an abortion if I felt that no one would date me while I was pregnant. 23
- | | | | |
|-------|--|----------|--|
| Agree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
1 | Disagree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
2 |
|-------|--|----------|--|

Col.

9. I would have an abortion if I wasn't ready to get married. 24
- | | | | |
|-------|--|----------|--|
| Agree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
1 | Disagree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
2 |
|-------|--|----------|--|
10. I would have an abortion if I didn't want my parents to find out that I was pregnant. 25
- | | | | |
|-------|--|----------|--|
| Agree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
1 | Disagree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
2 |
|-------|--|----------|--|
11. I would have an abortion if I felt that I would be left out of social activities. 26
- | | | | |
|-------|--|----------|--|
| Agree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
1 | Disagree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
2 |
|-------|--|----------|--|
12. I would have an abortion if I would have to give the child up for adoption. 27
- | | | | |
|-------|--|----------|--|
| Agree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
1 | Disagree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
2 |
|-------|--|----------|--|
13. I would have an abortion if I felt my pregnancy would cause the boy who got me pregnant a great deal of hardship. 28
- | | | | |
|-------|--|----------|--|
| Agree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
1 | Disagree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
2 |
|-------|--|----------|--|
14. I would have an abortion if I did not want my friends to find out that I was pregnant. 29
- | | | | |
|-------|--|----------|--|
| Agree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
1 | Disagree | 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
2 |
|-------|--|----------|--|

Col.

15. I would have an abortion for any reason that was important to me. 30

Agree	1. Strong 2. Medium 3. Slight 1	Disagree	1. Strong 2. Medium 3. Slight 2
-------	--	----------	--

.....

In the following section, please circle the degree of agreement or disagreement you have with the statements below. Please read each one and circle the number of the appropriate response. Remember, WE ARE NOT INTERESTED IN YOUR TOLERANCE OF OTHER PEOPLE'S BEHAVIOR OR BELIEFS. PLEASE ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS ON THE BASIS OF HOW YOU FEEL TOWARD THE VIEWS EXPRESSED. Approximate time required: 5-7 minutes. Thank you.

Col.

1. I believe that kissing is acceptable for the female before marriage if she is engaged to be married. 34

Agree	1. Strong 2. Medium 3. Slight 1	Disagree	1. Strong 2. Medium 3. Slight 2
-------	--	----------	--

2. I believe that kissing is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is in love. 35

Agree	1. Strong 2. Medium 3. Slight 1	Disagree	1. Strong 2. Medium 3. Slight 2
-------	--	----------	--

3. I believe that kissing is acceptable for the female before marriage when she feels strong affection for her partner. 36

Agree	1. Strong 2. Medium 3. Slight 1	Disagree	1. Strong 2. Medium 3. Slight 2
-------	--	----------	--

Col.

4. I believe that kissing is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is not particularly affectionate toward her partner.

37

Agree	1. Strong	Disagree	1. Strong
	2. Medium		2. Medium
	3. Slight		3. Slight
	1		2

5. I believe that petting is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is engaged to be married.

38

Agree	1. Strong	Disagree	1. Strong
	2. Medium		2. Medium
	3. Slight		3. Slight
	1		2

6. I believe that petting is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is in love.

39

Agree	1. Strong	Disagree	1. Strong
	2. Medium		2. Medium
	3. Slight		3. Slight
	1		2

7. I believe that petting is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is strongly affectionate for her partner.

40

Agree	1. Strong	Disagree	1. Strong
	2. Medium		2. Medium
	3. Slight		3. Slight
	1		2

8. I believe that petting is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is not particularly affectionate toward her partner.

41

Agree	1. Strong	Disagree	1. Strong
	2. Medium		2. Medium
	3. Slight		3. Slight
	1		2

9. I believe that full sexual relations is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is engaged to be married. Col.
42
- | | |
|---|--|
| Agree 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
1 | Disagree 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
2 |
|---|--|
10. I believe that full sexual relations is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is in love. 43
- | | |
|---|--|
| Agree 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
1 | Disagree 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
2 |
|---|--|
11. I believe that full sexual relations is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is strongly affectionate for her partner. 44
- | | |
|---|--|
| Agree 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
1 | Disagree 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
2 |
|---|--|
12. I believe that full sexual relations is acceptable for the female before marriage when she is not particularly affectionate for her partner. 45
- | | |
|---|--|
| Agree 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
1 | Disagree 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
2 |
|---|--|
13. I believe that full sexual relations is acceptable for the female before marriage when there is no particular affection and that this type of relationship is just about as acceptable as full sexual relations which involve strong affection or love. 46
- | | |
|---|--|
| Agree 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
1 | Disagree 1. Strong
2. Medium
3. Slight
2 |
|---|--|

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A PILOT STUDY OF THE ABORTION STANDARDS OF COLLEGE WOMEN

by

Elizabeth L. Hammer

(ABSTRACT)

This study has developed and tested a model to explain the abortion standards of single women. A sample of 263 college women was used to test the two hypotheses proposed by the model. The findings show support for Hypothesis I that abortion permissiveness and premarital sexual permissiveness are positively associated for single women. This association is not significantly affected by either the controls of age or religion. Hypothesis II, which proposed a positive relationship between abortion permissiveness and number of times in love, is supported when age is controlled but not when religion is introduced as a control. Specifically, the failure of this hypothesis results from the fact that Catholics in the sample have been in love less and score lower on abortion permissiveness than non-Catholics.

Additional findings of the study include successful development of a 13-item Guttman scale to measure standards for acceptance of abortion. This concept, as operationalized by the scale items, measures a concern for the social consequences of premarital pregnancy and childbirth. A serendipitous finding of the study is that the

Reiss premarital sexual permissiveness scale failed to perform in the anticipated manner. This suggests the need to revise the Reiss scale so that it incorporates changes in premarital sexual standards.