

By the same author

Political Psychology

The Revolutionary Ideas of the Marquis de Sade (1934)
The Life and Ideas of the Marquis de Sade (3rd edition 1964)

Travel

Africa Dances (1935)
Bali and Angkor (1936)
Hot Strip Tease (1938)

Political Satire

Nobody Talks Politics (1936)

Social Anthropology

Himalayan Village - a study of the Lepchas of Sikkim (1938;
2nd edition 1967)
The Americans - a study of national character (1948)
Exploring English Character (1955)
Death, Grief and Mourning in Contemporary Britain (1965)
(in collaboration with Dr John Rickman)
The People of Great Russia - a psychological study (1949)

Collected Essays

The Danger of Equality (1966)

SEX & MARRIAGE IN ENGLAND TODAY

A study of the views and experience of the under-45s

**GEOFFREY
GORER**

Nelson

2 *Sexual experience before marriage*

i

Despite the impression given by contemporary mass-communications with all the emphasis on the 'permissive society', 'swinging London', and the like in reporting, and the prevalence of erotic themes in much fiction (not to mention the disappearance of the taboo on printing a few common-speech words), England still appears to be a very chaste society, according to the replies of our informants; and, as a later section of this chapter will demonstrate, their replies are internally consistent. A quarter of our married male informants (26%) and nearly two-thirds of our married women (63%) said they were virgin at marriage; and a further 20% of the men and 25% of the women married the person with whom they first had intercourse. For this latter group intercourse obviously started at betrothal, or was the precipitating cause of betrothal; and if one treats betrothal, rather than the formalization of the marriage, as the relevant point of reference, it would appear that just under half the men (46%) and nearly nine-tenths of the women (88%) reached that stage as technical virgins.

These inexperienced husbands and wives are most numerous in the middle and lower middle classes, the Registrar General's AB category, and are fewest in the skilled working and working classes, the Registrar General's DE category. The regional differences are slight, with a little concentration in the South-West. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of those who left school at the age of 14 (who, it will be remembered, are our older informants) had no sexual experience before betrothal; for their juniors, there appears to be a slight tendency for prolonged education and virginity at betrothal to be correlated.

Of the 52% of the men who did not marry their first partner,

4% had only had one other woman, 8% had had two, 7% three, and 25% more than three; 8% did not answer this question on the number of partners. Three per cent of the 9% of the women who admitted to more than one partner did not say how many they had had; of the remainder 1% said only one other man, 3% two, 1% three and 1% more than three. These experienced people are somewhat heavily concentrated in the working classes (especially the skilled working class) and the Registrar General's DE category; they are fewest in the lower middle and middle classes and in the Registrar General's AB category.

Rather interestingly, those who left school at 14 have the highest percentage of people with numerous partners (16%) as well as the highest percentage of virgins at betrothal; it would seem that in this group the population divided itself between the 'respectable' and the 'wide boys and girls' very early and very markedly. As education continued, there is a slight tendency for promiscuity to be less general.

ii

Immediately after the question: 'How old were you when you first started getting really interested in boys/girls?*' informants were asked: 'How soon after this did you have full sexual intercourse?†' Only 4% of the men and 2% of the women refused to answer this question. Seventeen per cent of the men and 14% of the women said they had never had it, predominantly the young and the unmarried (a couple of the marriages appear not to have been consummated); these virgins were 55% of those aged between 16 and 20, 19% of those aged between 21 and 24, and 4% of those aged between 25 and 45.

Twenty-six per cent of the men and 63% of the women replied 'not until marriage'. It will be recalled that these are

* See Chapter Two, section v, p. 24.

† This form of the question came fairly early in the interview. As a possible test of our informants' accuracy, they were asked quite late in the interview: 'How old were you when you first (if ever) had full intercourse?'; but the discrepancies between the two tables are so insignificant – not more than could be accounted for by coding ambiguities – that it has not seemed worth while reproducing the second table.

the same percentages given in reply to the question about pre-marital partners analysed in the previous section. These virgins were concentrated in the middle and upper working classes and, among our older respondents, those who had left school at 14.

Sixteen per cent of the men and 5% of the women said they had first had intercourse under the age of 17; these were 18% of those aged between 16 and 20, 17% of those aged between 21 and 24, 8% of those aged between 25 and 34, and 6% of those aged between 35 and 45. These early starters are concentrated in the skilled working class (14%) and the working class (13%) in the Registrar General's categories C2 (skilled manual - 11%) and DE (semi-skilled and unskilled - 15%) and in those who left school at the minimum legal age - 7% of those who left at 14, 12% of those who left at 15. An early start to full heterosexuality is uncommon in the South-West, with 8%, the other regions all being between 10% and 11%. Nothing suggests that such early entry into sexual life is confined to the biggest cities.

Thirty per cent of the men and 26% of the women first had intercourse after their seventeenth and before their twentieth birthdays, 20% of those aged between 16 and 20, 32% of those aged between 21 and 24, 31% of those aged between 25 and 34, and 25% of those aged between 35 and 45. Between 30% and 31% of the working classes first started intercourse in their late teens, compared with between 25% and 27% of the middle classes. There is again some concentration among early school-leavers: 29% of those who left school at 14, 34% of those who left at 15, and 27% of those who left at 16 or later. The people of the South-West catch up with the rest of the country in their later teens, with 34%, compared with 26% and 27% for the other regions.

Nineteen per cent of the men and 36% of the women first had intercourse after their twentieth and before their twenty-fourth birthday, 23% of those aged between 21 and 24, 37% of those aged between 25 and 34, and 36% of those aged between 35 and 45. This seems to be the preferred age for starting intercourse among the middle classes (37% and 32%) and in the Registrar General's AB (professional and managerial) category with 35%, compared with 26% of the working class and 24% DE (semi-skilled and unskilled). The age of leaving

school does not appear to influence this group; regionally they are most numerous in the South-East (30%) and fewest in the two Northern regions (27%).

Finally, 11% of the men and 12% of the women named some age over 24, 10% of those aged between 25 and 34, and 23% of those aged between 35 and 45. A high proportion of the lower middle class (16%) started their heterosexual life so late, compared with 8% of the working class. Twenty-one per cent of those who left school at 14, 7% of those who left at 15, 11% of those who left at 16, and 20% of those who left at 17 are late starters. These figures again suggest that our older informants who left school at 14 divided themselves into the 'rude' and the 'prudish' in a fashion which has little echo among their juniors. Among the younger groups there does seem to have been a marked shift towards earlier intercourse.

Table one

This is a cumulative table; each age-level is a total of all those who said they were married or had first had sexual intercourse at or under that age.

<i>Age</i>	<i>Married (total percen- tage)</i>	<i>Men (mar- ried)</i>	<i>Women (mar- ried)</i>	<i>First inter- course (total percen- tage)</i>	<i>Men (first inter- course)</i>	<i>Women (first inter- course)</i>
17 or under	1	0	1	10	16	5
17-17.11	4	1	5	18	25	11
18-18.11	10	3	14	29	37	21
19-19.11	18	8	26	38	56	31
20-20.11	27	13	39	47	52	42
21-21.11	39	22	54	56	58	54
22-23.11	57	39	72	67	65	67
Over 24	82	71	90	76	76	79
Never and refused	—	—	—	18	21	16

A check on the reliability of our informants' statements about their premarital experience can be obtained by collating the informants' age at marriage (about which they would surely be accurate) and their statements about the age at which they first started intercourse.

This cumulative table shows that at the age of 19 3% of the men were married and 37% having intercourse; by the age of 21 13% are married and 52% having intercourse; at the age of 24 71% are married and 76% having intercourse. These figures are reasonably consistent with the number of premarital partners claimed by men.* As far as women are concerned, there are between 3% and 6% more who have started intercourse than have been married up to the age of 22, with the highest figures in the later teens. Most women over the age of 20 would seem to marry their first partner.

iii

There is a slightly larger percentage of people theoretically in favour of pre-marital experience than of those who admit to any. Sixty-four per cent of the men and 40% of the women answered positively the question: 'Do you think that young men should have some sexual experience before marriage?' Twenty-six per cent of the men and 48% of the women said 'No', and the remainder had not made up their minds. This uncertainty is particularly marked among the young, aged between 16 and 20, nearly a fifth of whom have not made up their minds.

In general, the young are markedly more in favour of pre-marital experience for men than are their elders; 58% of those aged 16 to 20, 65% of those aged 21 to 24, 55% of those aged 25 to 34, and 41% of those aged between 35 and 45 approve of such experience; 25% of those aged between 16 and 24, 36% of those aged between 25 and 34, and 49% of those aged between 35 and 45 disapprove. Twenty years ago there was far less contrast between the views of the different age-groups: those under 18 had 33% in favour and 40% against; those aged 18 to 24 had 36% in favour and 49% against; those aged 25 to 34 had 39% in favour and 48% against; and those aged 35 to 44 had 35% in favour and 51% against.

* See p. 31.

According to these figures, those people who were under 24 in 1950 and between 35 and 45 in 1969 apparently have hardly modified their attitudes on this topic at all in the light of experience; this suggests that people's attitudes towards sexual behaviour (like their political preferences) are determined in late adolescence or very early adulthood and subsequently maintained unquestioned. The figures also suggest that there has been a marked change in the valuation of pre-marital sexual experience for young men in those born since the end of the last war; but even in the most 'permissive' age-groups at least a third consider it undesirable and unnecessary.

The skilled working class (57%) and the working class (56%) are most in favour of a young man having sexual experience, the upper working class (42%) and lower middle class (43%) least, with the middle class in the middle position (50%). Regionally, the South-East and North-East (55%) have the highest percentages in favour of such experience, compared with 51% from the South-West, 50% from the North-West and 47% from the Midlands.

Forty-seven per cent of the men and 24% of the women are in favour of young women having some sexual experience before marriage; 41% of the men and 67% of the women are against, and the remainder are uncertain.* This disparity in the answers of men and women to a question about female sexual behaviour is the first introduction of a theme which will recur in several different settings in this study: the strongly differing views of men and women about the sexual nature of women.

The views of the different age-groups on the desirability of young women having some sexual experience before marriage echo those given in the answer to the same question about young men: those aged 16-20 have 41% in favour and 45% against; those aged 20-24 have 43% in favour and 45% against; those aged 25-34 have 37% in favour and 53% against; and those aged 35-45 have 27% in favour and 65% against. In 1950, those aged between 18 and 24 had 24% in favour and 61% against; as in the case of young men, there seems to have been

* These figures are a slight increase on those in *Exploring English Character*. Then 38% of the men and 14% of the women approved of sexual experience for unmarried young women and 55% of the men and 73% of the women disapproved.

very little change in the views of this age-group. The views of the different social classes follow the same pattern as in the case of young men, with the skilled working class (43%) and the working class (38%) being most in favour, and the lower middle class (30%) and upper working class (22%) least; but there is no corresponding difference in the views of the inhabitants of the different regions.

These figures suggest that the double standard of sexual morality, by which men are allowed licence which is denied to women, still has fairly wide currency and, it would appear, it is predominantly women who maintain this double standard: 39% of the women who are in favour of pre-marital experience for men are against it for women: the parallel figure for men is 22%. An anomalous group of 2% of both sexes think that sexual experience before marriage is suitable for women but not for men.

Women who support the double standard are liable to invoke generalizations about the differing nature of men and women (some of these will be quoted later in this chapter); whereas men tend to invoke abstract principles of justice, typically with the adage: 'What is sauce for the goose, is sauce for the gander.'*

iv

Those who expressed approval for pre-marital experience for either sex were further asked: 'Should it be restricted to one person or persons he/she loves? or with just anyone he/she feels attracted to?' This question was intended to make the distinction between approval of a love-affair before marriage and approval of (at least hypothetical) promiscuity.

A love-affair before marriage was approved of for a young man by 32% of our male respondents and 29% of the female; in the case of a young woman, 31% of the men and 20% of the women approved. Here is one further example of men applying the principle of equality and justice and of women discriminating between the 'nature' of the sexes.

It does appear that there is increasing acceptance of a 'real' love-affair before marriage among the younger generation; for a young man having an affair with someone he loves

* A similar distinction is made in *Exploring English Character*, pp. 94, 111.

approval is given by 33% of those aged 16-20, 37% of those aged 21-24, 30% of those aged 25-34, and 26% of those aged 35-45. Corresponding figures in the case of a young woman are 28% of those aged 16-20, 32% of those aged 21-24, 27% of those aged 25-34, and 19% of those aged 35-45. Approval of such behaviour in the case of both sexes is highest in the skilled working class and lowest in the upper working and lower middle classes; this is one of the few situations in this survey where the views of the middle class and of the working class are identical.

Promiscuity, sleeping with just anyone he or she is attracted to, is advocated by 29% of the men and 9% of the women in the case of young men, and 13% of the men and 3% of the women in the case of young women.* Here again there is slightly more approval from our younger respondents: in the case of a young man 24% of those aged 16-20, 25% of those aged 21-24, 19% of those aged 25-34, and 13% of those aged 35-45; the corresponding figures in the case of a young woman are 9% of those aged 16-20, 8% of those aged 21-34, and 7% of those aged 35-45. In this situation the views of the working class and the middle class diverge markedly; 22% of the working class and 17% of the middle class approve of promiscuity for young men, and 9% of the working class and 6% of the middle class in the case of young women. The skilled working class give slightly less approval than the working class without modification, and the upper working class is the most disapproving in both cases, with the lower middle class trailing them very close.

Although approval and practice of promiscuity are not absolutely identical, the 27% of the men who approve of sleeping with just anyone they are attracted to is near to the 25% who admitted to more than three partners. The 3% of women who theoretically approve of a young woman sleeping with just anyone she is attracted to is higher than the 1% who admitted to more than three partners, but nearly the same as those who admitted to two or more. This quarter of our male respondents and one-thirtieth of our female respondents is the largest group to whom the journalistic phrase 'permissive' can possibly be applied with any accuracy.

† Three per cent of the men and 2% of the women, very evenly distributed, could not make up their minds between the alternatives.

v

After they had given their views on the desirability of pre-marital sexual experience, all the informants were meant to be asked why they held the views they advocated; but, owing to an ambiguity* in the lay-out of the questionnaire, a number of the interviewers did not ask those who disapproved of sexual experience before marriage the reasons for their disapproval; no replies were recorded from 20% of the male informants and 37% of the female informants to the question about a young man, and of 27% of the male informants and 45% of the female informants to the question about a young woman. These are not the totals of those disapproving of pre-marital sexual experience, but they do represent a very high proportion of them: the reasons why a quarter of the men and nearly half the women advocate virginity at marriage for young men and two-fifths of the men and two-thirds of the women advocate virginity at marriage for young women are quite inadequately represented.

As a consequence, this survey provides an adequate analysis of the reasons of those who think pre-marital sexual experience desirable, but quite an inadequate one of the reasons for disapproval. Only partial comparisons can be made with the answers to the same questions given in 1950.

The major change in the last twenty years is the increase in the proportion of those who think sexual experience has a good effect on the person's character, making him or her more mature. This is now advanced by 22% of the men and 9% of the women in the case of young men (with much the highest emphasis coming from those under 24); 15% of the men and 3% of the women thought this applied to women also. In 1950 this argument was advanced by only 6% of the men and 7% of the women in the case of a young man, and 3% of the men and 2% of the women in the case of a young woman.

There has also been quite an increase in those who state that

* Since the design of the questionnaire was a co-operative effort, I share the responsibility for this ambiguity. Because of the very large percentages who were not questioned about their reasons for disapproving of pre-marital sexual experience, the tabulations of these answers are not reproduced in Appendix Three.

sexual experience before marriage is normal and natural: 9% of the men and 4% of the women in the case of a young man; and 5% of the men and 2% of the women in the case of a young woman; the corresponding figures in *Exploring English Character* were 6% of the men and 2% of the women in the case of a young man and 4% of the men and 1% of the women in the case of a young woman.

The major reason advanced in 1950 in favour of pre-marital experience was to avoid ignorance and maladjustment on the honeymoon; 15% of the men and 9% of the woman thought this justified a young man and 9% of the men and 4% of the women a young woman; in 1969 the corresponding figures were 10% of the men and 7% of the women in the case of a young man, and 6% of the men and 2% of the women in the case of a young woman.

In *Exploring English Character* I wrote:*

What seems to me most noteworthy is the high seriousness with which the great majority of English people approach and regard marriage. Whether pre-marital experience is advocated or reprobated, the effect on the future marriage is the preponderant consideration. Secondly, the high value put on virginity for both sexes is remarkable and, I should suspect, specifically English. Thirdly, it is interesting to note that what might be dubbed the hypochondriacal attitude towards sexual activity has apparently achieved very little currency. This hypochondriacal view, derived from assorted popularizations and vulgarizations of psychology and psychiatry, connects sexual activity with physical and mental health, so that abstinence becomes, as it were, a rather more dangerous type of constipation, and sexual activity a kind of prophylaxis. In some other societies this view would appear to be widely held.

Today these generalizations would need some modification, even though the valuation of virginity in both sexes is still remarkably high (to recall the percentages: 27% of the men and 49% of the women are against sexual experience before marriage for a young man and 43% of the men and 68% of the women in the case of a young woman); but where pre-marital experience is approved of, it is usually as a good thing in itself without considering the effects on the future marriage. This is

* *op. cit.*, p. 97.

particularly marked among those under 24, born since the end of the last war.

The range of attitudes can only be illustrated by quite a large number of quotations. All the informants quoted in this section are married; the views of the unmarried and of the divorced and separated will be given in subsequent chapters. Where informants have differing views on the appropriate behaviour for young men and young women the words 'for women' will be included in square brackets; where these do not appear it will signify that the informant applies the same standards to the behaviour of both sexes.

Married men commend sexual experience before marriage in the following terms:

'It's up to the man himself. It's a normal act and holding himself back until marriage would be abnormal. It would be a strain on a growing boy' (a 29-year-old free-lance caricaturist).

'He should have experience, because it makes sexual life happier. It is physically good for you – healthy body, healthy mind, etc. You should not try to seduce a girl if you are reasonably certain that as a result she will fall in love with you and be hurt, so this depends completely on circumstances. If she will accept it on the same terms, no reason why he should not do it' (a highly educated writer, aged 31).

'The sensible thing is to have it off if you feel the desire. [For young women?] She can't appreciate love with sex unless she has experienced sex without love' (a 35-year-old commercial designer).

'They should sleep with just anyone, but only if he finds someone he likes. It isn't really necessary to have experience before marriage. [For young women?] Just anyone. I'd want them to go with me, wouldn't I, if I were single?' (a 20-year-old building worker).

'Gives him more experience – makes him a better husband and less likely to go off the rails later. [For young women?] Equality these days – in 1969' (a 41-year-old plumber).

'A young man should have experience with just anyone – one or two isn't enough. It's like he's not getting a chance of picking his own partner. He must feel he's picking his own' (a skilled engineer, aged 32).

'It doesn't interfere with marriage at all – I can't think of anyone wanting to marry a virgin! One can have a very much happier married life after having some sex experience. [For young women?]

From the disease part of it – the girl being ignorant about these things – it is better for her to gain experience with a person she is happy with and whom she loves. Gives her a chance without being tied in any way' (a 39-year-old chauffeur courier).

'If more than one person it's lust rather than love. It's inquisitiveness in the first instance; feeling doesn't enter it really. [For young women?] What's good for the goose. . . . The days are gone when a man can go with anyone and expect his wife to be a virgin' (a responsible corporation worker, aged 38).

'One person or persons. It is not all it is made up to be and they should try it. [For young women?] One person or persons, so that they won't get married just for sex' (a 39-year-old insurance executive)*.

'A young man should sleep with just anyone. Young women should not be an old bag, but be reasonable about it. It's quite fair' (a 37-year-old holiday camp attendant).

'Just anyone. It makes them a man when they get married. It doesn't always work out if they are learning when they do get married. [For young women?] One person or persons. It gives them an idea and also gives them confidence when they do get married' (a 44-year-old foreman in a nationalized industry).

'Lots of men I'm sure would like to think young women have not had sexual experience, but this way it gives them a deeper understanding of the relationship, and having been with a few men they are more likely to remain faithful in marriage and not crave excitement' (a 36-year-old chartered accountant).

'Gives them some idea before they get married – most men tend to have several affairs first – probably be disillusioned otherwise – should be some feeling there, though; doesn't enjoy it so much otherwise. [For young women?] Same as above, but more definitely with someone they are in love with. It means more to a woman, so there must be some feeling there for her to want to, or enjoy it' (a 27-year-old painter and decorator).

'It is dangerous if you do it just by attraction – disease, promiscuity. They should have some experience because it gives them an insight into what is going on. They must know about it all before marriage; if not, it can break the marriage. [For young women?] They are entitled to the same freedom as men, provided they are sensible about it (a 41-year-old builder).

* This informant did not have intercourse until three years after his marriage at the age of 26.

Most of our married women informants were a little more circumspect. Thus, the pious Roman Catholic wife of a labourer, aged 32, said:

'Not to the full extent, but must have a little experience. [For young women?] Not to the full extent, but must know if she can stand to be touched by a man.'

'I am not for trial marriages, but I think some marriages fall down for lack of experience. It is only getting married for the icing on the cake, and if the icing doesn't turn out too good, you're just left with the cake. Love must be in it – not just for the experience' (another pious Roman Catholic, the wife of a technical representative, aged 39).

'Nothing more disappointing than if you married a man without any experience. On one's honeymoon you would feel let down. [For young women?] The same reason as a man; it makes a happy basis for marriage if one has experience' (the 27-year-old wife of a printer).

'It is up to him really. It would be better if it were with the woman he was going to marry. [For young women?] I was very inexperienced and I think there is less tension, especially during the honeymoon, if one has some experience before marriage' (the 30-year-old wife of a mechanical engineer).*

'These things need practice; and he should have some experience of sex. [For young women?] To get experience of sex, because everyone is different. It takes some time to adjust sexually, and if you do not know how to set about it, it isn't very satisfying' (the 33-year-old wife of a partner in a building firm).

'Experience does help to start off life – more mature and knows what to do. [For young women?] I know from experience friends who didn't have sex before marriage and are not as happy in their sex life as we are' (the 22-year-old wife of a sales representative).†

'He can't gain experience from books and he needs it for marriage. [For young women?] Yes, to gain experience for marriage, the art of making love. A lot of people think you just get on top and "Bang" but it is an art. To gain this you have to have experience' (the 33-year-old wife of a skilled worker in a hospital).‡

* This informant did not have full intercourse before marriage.

† This informant said she had had two partners before she became betrothed.

‡ This informant said she had had no experience at all before her marriage.

'I think it makes you appreciate that when you do get married it's not just for sex, but there's true affection between you. I think you might miss a lot if you only have sex with one person, and it's better before marriage than after' (the 31-year-old wife of a maintenance electrician).

'If you are thinking of getting married you should try your partner out. [For young women?] It helps to know you are more suited to the man you marry' (the 41-year-old wife of a welder).

'It makes them more experienced if, when you get married, you are not marrying a boy. [For young women?] Sometimes they get married and they go to bed, and you find they are quite different from what you thought they were' (the 23-year-old wife of a demolition worker).*

'I think if they intend to marry, it is all right to find out if they are suited. [For young women?] I don't think it's a good thing for any sort of promiscuity, but again, if they are intending to marry, I don't see it is wrong then' (the 37-year-old wife of a bakery supervisor).

'I think the sex side is very important and the ability to satisfy a woman. Therefore he should have some experience – and it is more hygienic with someone he is fond of. I'm a great one for hygiene. [For young women?] I think that it stops them getting married just for sex and again, for hygienic reasons, it is best to be someone you know' (the 33-year-old wife of a design draughtsman).†

All the informants quoted so far represent those who think that the same standards should be applied to men and women. Although, as can be seen, some women advocate this view, it is predominantly a masculine response (see p. 36). The belief that different standards should be applied to the sexual conduct of unmarried young men and unmarried young women is predominantly a feminine response among the English-born, though there are a few Englishmen who advance similar views, as will shortly be illustrated; and for most of our male informants born in Asia or the West Indies it is self-evident that men should have sexual freedom and women should not.

When, in the next group of quotations, there are no square brackets [for young women?] it should be understood that the informant has stated that young women should have no sexual

* This informant had three partners before betrothal.

† This informant said she had had no sexual experience before marriage.

experience, but has not elaborated his or her answer in any way; in a very few instances women have approved of sexual experience for young men, without any elaboration, and have given their reasons for disapproving of it for young women, like the 35-year-old wife of a mechanical fitter who was born in Eire and is a pious Roman Catholic who said: 'A man likes to think of the woman he marries as pure; and then, it is sinning for a woman.'

Since the double standard is so predominantly feminine, we will start with our married women informants:

'Men should have experience with one person or persons; they might get disease if they went with any Tom, Dick or Harry. Women do not need experience' (the 30-year-old wife of a steel-erector).

'No need; men don't need experience. [For young women?] I think women need sexual experience before marriage so that they are prepared. I mean only a short time before marriage (the 21-year-old wife of a scaffolder).

'A young man should have experience with one person or persons so that he understands what he is going in for. [For young women?] Personally, I am a Roman Catholic and I enjoyed being pure so that I could have the full blessing of the Church' (the 21-year-old wife of a machinist).

'It depends on the girl. If a girl allows a man to make love to her then you can't really blame him, and I think it is better for him to have experience. [For young women?] If you've only ever slept with one man you don't know whether any failings are attributable to you or your husband' (the 26-year-old wife of an insurance clerk).*

'Young men should make love with anyone they are attracted to, because then once married he can please his wife more if he has had some experience. [For young women?] She should have a taste before marriage and then she is not so blind to the male anatomy. To some people the male must be awful' (the 26-year-old wife of an industrial executive).

'I think it's natural for a man to want to experiment with sex. As long as the girl is willing and he doesn't make her pregnant it is all right' (the 25-year-old wife of a sheet-metal worker).

'He'd make a better husband. He'd be more experienced in the sexual side which a woman needs. [For young women?] It's not so

* This informant did not admit to any experience outside marriage.

good for a woman to have experience; she can learn from her husband' (the 34-year-old wife of a station foreman).

'Young men should make love to one person or persons; he then understands more how a person feels the first time a person's married and has intercourse, he's tolerant and gives you time. [For young women?] I am still old-fashioned in that way. You should be a virgin when you get married (the 22-year-old wife of a driver).

'Young men should make love with just anyone. He knows how to handle the situation. If two people are married and are both innocent, that's bad. If one has experience he can help his wife to enjoy it. [For young women?] I think I'm a bit old-fashioned about this, because I regret it – because my first experience was not with the man I really love' (the 22-year-old wife of an export manager, married to a Roman Catholic husband).

'I think most men do, and I think it helps them to choose the right woman when they want to settle down. [For young women?] No; you find all this out when you get married' (the 24-year-old wife of a setter operator).

'I think if one is a bit more experienced, I think it makes him less nervous of sexual relations when he eventually marries. [For young women?] No. I think, though, it is up to the individual. Now there are so many contraceptives available; so that makes some difference if the main reason was originally fear of the result. I personally don't approve, though' (the 24-year-old wife of a warehouse man).

'Men are a bit clumsy, and they can learn on other people before marriage. It makes them feel better and they can really "master mind" the act. [For young women?] It is not necessary; you learn quickly enough' (the 28-year-old wife of a warehouse manager).

'Feelings are more genuine if real affection is there – the relationship is mutual and more satisfactory. [For young women?] If fear is not there, maybe Yes' (the Irish-born wife of a docker, aged 44).

'A man is different, and he wouldn't feel a man unless he had sown some wild oats. [For young women?] Just the person that she is to marry; this is just to see if they are physically suited' (the 35-year-old wife of a press operator, born in Edinburgh).

'Because men are built this way, and have not got as much control as women. [For young women?] I was brought up in India to feel it is so important to be a virgin on marriage, so I feel my upbringing has a strong influence on me' (the 24-year-old wife of an industrial engineer).

'Yes; I don't think it matters, if they don't get a girl into trouble, like me. [For young women?] No; but I did' (the 22-year-old wife of a labourer).

'Men are more shy than women. It gives them more confidence and they can probably satisfy their wives when married. [For young women?] Will get a bad reputation, and there is danger of disease' (the 41-year-old wife of a maintenance supervisor).

'To me a man is there to learn you things. [For young women?] I don't think it is right to just go from one to the other. It is different for men. I suppose once a woman has been with a man, other men don't want to go with her. They always know' (the 24-year-old wife of a long-distance lorry driver).

'In most foreign countries, young men are sent to an establishment to gain sex experience and be taught about sex, so that on marriage they know the right way of things. I think this is a good idea as young girls can be hurt by an inexperienced lover. [For young women?] Some men take the attitude that they are getting second-hand goods, and this could go all through the marriage and tend to spoil things' (the 22-year-old wife of a computer engineer).

'Yes – he needs experience for his wife's satisfaction. Just anyone – free to do as he likes – not much danger attached to his character. [For young women?] Yes, as much freedom as a man, but restricted to one person or persons; she gets a bad name otherwise' (the 29-year-old wife of a press operator).

As I have already written, relatively few English-born husbands advocate a double standard of sexual morality, though this does find a few advocates. The views of our fellow-citizens born overseas are typified by a 32-year-old barber from Jamaica who states that young men should have experience with just anyone: 'It doesn't do you any good to stay single and not have experience'; as far as women are concerned he says he does not know: 'It is not so important for a woman.'

English-born male upholders of the double standard can be represented by the following informants:

'Young men should have experience with just anyone. Before you marry you should have your fling. But women should have no experience. Most men would not like to marry a woman who had intercourse with someone else' (a 22-year-old lorry driver).

'It is a question of practice; this is essential; you can't do things with a person you love; the only way to learn is with a person one is not

mentally involved with. [For young women?] If she falls in love with the right person she is going to marry he will – or should – have all the experience she will need' (a chief cashier, aged 45).

'Young men should have some experience, because it could be very embarrassing when you are just married. Men should have some experience because, until they have, they do not think women have a climax.* [For young women?] Women have more to lose than a man; that is why it should be with someone they care for' (a 22-year-old swimming instructor).

'Sex before marriage – definitely, if engaged. If not – well it doesn't matter. Use contraceptives. No harm done if they both want it. [For young women?] Only if engaged; if not she's just an old brass' (a lift-erector's mate, aged 25).

'If he doesn't get quite a lot of experience before, he'll want even more after marriage. When you're just a kid, physical attraction is enough to start with. You love to experiment a bit before "love" comes into it. [For young women?] As a safety valve. They are more idealistic than men, and it is better if they think they're in love. They shouldn't make themselves too cheap' (a 28-year-old engineer).

'Otherwise he is as bad as a clumsy man; with anyone, because the one he loves may be a failure in that particular field. I say this from personal experience. [For young women?] Not so important as for a man. Too much makes her a loose woman' (a mildly observant Roman Catholic worker in transport, aged 40).

'It is learning all round and learning all the time. No reason why this should be restricted in any way. It gives him the necessary experience. [For young women?] A girl has more to lose than a fellow. She would otherwise get a bad name and might get into the family way' (a self-employed driver, aged 33).

'One person or persons, merely so that they can appreciate just what a woman does for them – so that it is not just a passing acquaintance and so that they are aware of the person involved in a relationship. [For young women?] No. I think it affects them; I think it is a mental strain to them somehow, or an emotional strain certainly, to do with fears of parents finding out, or worried about convention' (a 36-year-old architectural assistant).

'Just anyone; it is a man's way of proving himself a man and the development of masculine instincts is natural and healthy. [For young women?] One person or persons: better for her to know what

* This informant is mistaken. See Chapter Five, p. 126.

it is all about. A woman risks so much more than a man so it's better that she's "in love"; then if she becomes pregnant it becomes easier to handle – i.e. have baby, possibly marry the man' (a self-employed painter, aged 25).

As I have already explained, a majority of the 27% who disapprove of sexual experience before marriage for men and of the 49% who disapprove of it for women were not asked the reasons for their disapproval, owing to an ambiguity in the instructions to the interviewers. For many, their disapproval was based on religious grounds – a topic which will be explored at greater length in the next section. Such religious objections can be illustrated by the following informants:

'I do not think it is necessary. I can see no reason why sexual experience cannot be obtained with one's wife after marriage. [For young women?] Most men like to have their wives first and they would like to teach their wives how to make love themselves. If a woman has had intercourse before marriage she might feel her husband is not as good as the other man or men' (a 30-year-old schoolteacher, a pious Pentecostal Nonconformist).

'No; because it doesn't help them at all as far as marriage is concerned; it only proves he is capable of the act. I don't think it helps towards a happy marriage; without love it means nothing. [For young women?] The same thing. It is destructive. They are using intercourse as a physical means of satisfaction instead of it being a culmination of the act of love' (the 44-year-old wife of a dairy worker, a very observant member of the Church of England).

'Knowledge they should have, but not experience. Physical contact is not necessary as long as they have full knowledge. [For young women?] Same as above. It gives a source of deliverance of mind after marriage; and it means a woman can slip over and break up the marriage' (a 25-year-old anaesthetist who was born in Pakistan and is an observant Moslem).

'It is not right from the religious viewpoint. Neither a man nor woman should have experience before marriage. On marriage they should go to each other as virgins' (a 29-year-old lorry driver, a very observant Jehovah's Witness).

'The maintenance of virginity is most important, because when marriage takes place the husband has much greater respect for himself if he is in fact a pure virgin. [For young women?] She has greater respect for herself if still a virgin when marriage occurs and

her husband has deeper feelings for her if she is in fact pure and virgin on the wedding night' (a 45-year-old draughtsman, a very pious Baptist).

A majority of those questioned who disapproved of pre-marital experience, however, were not observant practisers of whatever religion or sect they claimed membership of, and some did not even claim any religious membership. They were just against pre-marital sexual experience, either on principle or through distaste; and what I find striking is the smugness of many of the replies, particularly from the male respondents. 'I didn't have any experience, and it didn't do me any harm' (a heating engineer, aged 44); 'I didn't have relations before marriage and it has not been a hindrance' (a 33-year-old schoolmaster who describes himself as an agnostic); 'I didn't have and have since done O.K.' (a 40-year-old builder's agent); 'If they think anything of the girl they wouldn't; if my wife had done that I wouldn't have married her' (a 28-year-old tyre-fitter). I think it worth while calling attention to the fact that none of these informants, or the rest of the group of whom they are typical, say that their wives were happy and satisfied, despite their lack of experience; it is always 'I have done O.K.', never 'We'.

A few men and more women advance rather obscure moral arguments against pre-marital experience. Thus, a 23-year-old bank clerk:

'If you sleep around it is not good for one's moral attitude to life. One wouldn't appreciate the act of love when one is married' (a 23-year-old bank clerk).

'I don't see the need if he's going to be married. [For young women?] I feel a virgin has the advantage in married stability' (a 45-year-old lorry driver).*

'It is too dangerous – leads to trouble. [For young women?] I have had a step-daughter of mine in trouble; I know the bad it can do' (a 40-year-old fitter).

For women who do not practise their religion, even when they claim nominal adherence to a creed, the danger of an unwanted pregnancy is a major reason for disapproving of pre-marital sexual experience; as will be shown in Chapter Ten, this is a realistic fear as so many of the young unmarried English boys

* This informant did not have intercourse before his marriage.

and girls do not take any birth-control precautions. A few, too, adduce their own unsatisfactory experiences before marriage as a reason for disapproving of pre-marital sexual experience; thus:

'It is not important; you can learn without actually doing. [For young women?] I just regret it because it was not the man I married. You feel you have given yourself to someone else, and not the man you love' (the 32-year-old wife of a heating engineer).

'Young men should wait for marriage. [For young women?] Looking back, I now see it is wrong and do not agree with it at all – much better to wait till you get married. I did not really understand; I was too young at sixteen' (the 23-year-old wife of a tool-maker).

'I wouldn't like to think his experience was gained at my child's expense. [For young women?] Sake of children; being conceivers morally wrong' (the 30-year-old wife of a systems analyst programmer).

'They will be sorry later in life when he has not kept himself pure for his wife. [For young women?] They will live to regret it. If a baby comes along it spoils everything for a start in married life' (the 38-year-old wife of a welder).

'It's better to wait and meet the right person that they intend to marry. I just don't believe in sex before marriage. [For young women?] Just the same reason. It should not be any different for a man than a woman. I think they should both wait until they are married' (the 23-year-old wife of a plumber).

'No: because I think it is a very cruel thing otherwise, and it is not the way love was meant to be. [For young women?] No: because it is not something to be treated lightly, it is not just giving your body to someone when you feel like it' (the 36-year-old wife of a businessman).

'Not necessary at all – doesn't gain them anything – marriage isn't just that' (the 27-year-old wife of a semi-skilled factory worker).

One informant, the 41-year-old wife of a tool setter, was intellectually prepared to modify her own rigid views; she was unique among those questioned on the reasons for their disapproval:

'I would say NO myself, but times are changing. I disagree with the young teen-agers having sex before marriage, but as they get older it is their own business and how they feel about it. I wouldn't like

to say Yes or No here. [For young women?] The same applies in reverse. Perhaps it helps, but with immature people they don't know the implications. Again, if they are older it depends on their nature, on their own inclinations, and whether it is a serious affair or not.'

vi

Several cross-correlations were made in an attempt to establish, if it were possible, the influences which determined our informants' attitudes towards pre-marital sexual experience and also their practices.*

The most marked influence on people's views and practices is the active practice of religious observance.† Between 35% and 42% of those who visited their church once a month or more frequently were virgins at marriage, compared with 33% of those who only enter a place of worship for weddings and funerals. The people who said they were without sexual experience at the time of the interview (15%) consisted of between 27% and 29% of those who visited their place of worship monthly or more frequently, and between 10% and 12% of those who visited it once or twice a year or less frequently.

The influence of regular church-going is obviously strong in determining the age of starting heterosexual intercourse. Those who first had intercourse before the age of 17 comprise between 3% and 6% of those who go to their place of worship monthly or more frequently, and between 10% and 15% of those who only go for weddings and funerals, or never. Intercourse before their twentieth birthday was experienced by 21% of those who attended more than once a month, 33% of those who attended monthly, 36% of those who attend once or twice a year, 45% who only attend for weddings and funerals, and 50% of those nominal Christians who never enter a church or chapel. These figures, of course, include the 18% who were married before

* Their attitudes to birth control were also cross-correlated. These findings will be reported in Chapter Six.

† This is in accord with many previous studies of people's sexual views and behaviour. See *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* by Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin, Chapter 13, pp. 465-87; *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* by Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin and Gebhard, pp. 304-7; *Exploring English Character* pp. 117-18.

their twentieth birthday; but the figures are significant and consistent.

Those who said they had had more than one partner before marriage comprise between 4% and 7% of those who visit their place of worship once a month or more frequently, and 21% of those who attend only for weddings and funerals, or never. Those who said they had had more than three partners before marriage comprise 6% of those who visit their place of worship monthly or more frequently, and between 10% and 11% of those who attend only for weddings and funerals, or never.

Their views are consistent with their practice. Of those who visit their place of worship monthly or more frequently, between 38% and 44% are in favour of sexual experience for young men and between 14% and 28% in the case of young women; those who go only for weddings and funerals, or never, have between 55% and 59% in favour of experience for young men and between 35% and 42% in the case of young women.

The attitudes of most of our observant informants are consistent with conventional Christian doctrine concerning the 'sacredness' of sex and its restriction to marriage;* but the very pious Jehovah's Witnesses appear unique in giving religious sanctions to the roles of husbands and wives within marriage. In the words of a 45-year-old baker 'a wife should be loving and in subjection to her husband, provided the husband is not dictatorial'; and the importance of wives being submissive is stressed by all our informants adhering to this sect. The sect is popular in the West Indies, and a 23-year-old woman factory worker from St Lucia, who has been in this country three years, and is a very frequent worshipper, spoke for many of her brethren in stating that the faults wives tend to have is that they resent their subjection to their husbands and try to be boss, and the faults of husbands is that they bully their wives and take

* Among the sects represented in significant numbers in our sample, the Methodists and Baptists are particularly restrictive in their views about sexuality outside marriage, and in most cases their acknowledged behaviour is consistent with their views. The views on, and practices of, birth-control of some of our Roman Catholic informants are analysed in Chapter 6.

advantage of their subjection to them. Envisaging a married woman having an affair,* she said: 'If she does it once and repents, the husband must forgive her, but if she goes on doing it the husband may divorce her – that is my religion.' This doctrine is confirmed by a 29-year-old married lorry driver: 'Divorce, but only if adultery is committed; no divorce for any other reason.'

Although the active practice of religion seems to have the most marked influence on sexual behaviour, even nominal adherence to a creed seems to have some restraining influence. It will be recalled† that 23% of our population stated that they had no religion; and the contrast between this approximate quarter of the population and the majority who retain nominal adherence to some creed, even if they are completely non-observant, is consistent on every level. Thus, of those who had not experienced intercourse before betrothal, 53% were 'believers', compared with 38% without religion; 37% of 'believers' retained their virginity until marriage, in contrast to 23% without religion. Of those who first experienced intercourse before the age of 17, 9% were 'believers' and 15% were without religion; of those who had intercourse before their twentieth birthday 35% were 'believers' and 47% were without religion. Of those who admitted to more than three partners before marriage 7% were 'believers' and 13% were without religion; of those who admitted to extra-marital love-affairs, 4% were 'believers' and 7% were without religion. Forty-eight per cent of the 'believers' were in favour of pre-marital sexual experience for young men and 32% for young women; the corresponding figures for those without religion are 65% for young men and 45% for young women.

In the last paragraph I have placed the word 'believers' in inverted commas, because in the majority of the cases their adherence to the creed they claim appears to be completely nominal; they are willing to put 'C. of E.', and 'R.C.' and the like on forms they fill up or in answer to questions; but they never enter a place of worship, save, for some, on such social occasions as marriages and funerals. But even when religious observance is minimal, echoes of puritanism can be heard in

* See Chapter Eight.

† See p. 10.

many replies. Thus, a 31-year-old postman, who only goes to the C. of E. church for weddings and funerals, disapproves of pre-marital experience 'on religious grounds'; a 26-year-old bank clerk, similarly non-observant C. of E., says of pre-marital experience: 'It is not necessary; it is wrong on religious grounds and spoils the marriage - takes the gloss off. It makes it almost pointless - i.e. marriage.' A 43-year-old lecturer, who says he has no religion, considers the idea of casual adultery 'sinful', and the wife of a driver, aged 29, who also says she has no religion, considers pre-marital intercourse 'not necessary; it isn't moral'. A 40-year-old building trade labourer, who goes to church (C. of E.) once or twice a year is against the birth-control pill because 'everything is put on this earth for a reason. If the Lord intended this He would have done it Himself.'

A minor determinant in the preservation of virginity is geographical immobility. Twenty-two per cent of those who had never moved were virgins at the time of interviewing, compared with 7% who had grown up in a different district to that in which they were interviewed.

In general, living in a rural district seems to limit sexual adventurousness, compared with living in a town. Of those who had grown up in the districts where they were interviewed, 38% from rural and 31% from urban districts did not have full intercourse before marriage; of those who did not marry their first partner 17% were from rural and 26% from urban districts; of those with more than two partners before marriage 14% were from rural, 18% from urban districts.

Among those who were born in other parts of the British Isles but resident in England, the Irish from Eire have the highest rate of any group (57%) marrying as virgins, and the Scots, Welsh and Northern Irish almost the lowest (31%). Only 16% of the Irish from Eire had more than one partner before marriage, compared with 33% of the Scots, Welsh and Northern Irish. In their views of the desirability of pre-marital experience, 46% of the Irish from Eire are in favour for a young man and 19% for a young woman; the parallel figures for the Scots, Welsh and Northern Irish are 57% for young men and 39% for young women.

After marriage, the picture changes somewhat. Six per cent

of the Irish from Eire admitted to adultery,* compared with 3% of the Scots, Welsh and Northern Irish; of course, as Roman Catholics, divorce is not generally available to the Irish from Eire.

The West Indians and Asians hold to the double standard of sexual morality both in theory and practice; but the numbers are so few (17 from the West Indies, 26 from Asia) that the percentages are not very meaningful. In their individual replies to questions about different aspects of marriage it was remarkable how often these informants from overseas invoked religious reasons for the views they held.

Figures of distribution

No intercourse before marriage

Self-ascribed social class Middle 45%; lower middle 41%; skilled working 33%; upper working 39%; working 35%; blank 29%.

Registrar General's categories AB 51%; C1 41%; C2 40%; DE 29%

Regions North-East and North 36%; Midlands 42%; South-East 41% South-West 42%; North-West 30%.

School-leaving age 14 47%; 15 35%; 16 36%; 17 47%.

Married later person with whom had first intercourse

Self-ascribed social class Middle 18%; lower middle 20%; skilled working 18%; upper working 16%; working 20%; blank 17%.

Registrar General's categories AB 12%; C1 16%; C2 20%; DE 20%.

Regions North-East and North 21%; Midlands 15%; South-East 16%; South-West 19%; North-West 26%.

School-leaving age 14 17%; 15 22%; 16 16%; 17 13%.

Married someone else

Self-ascribed social class Middle 17%; lower middle 19%;

* See Chapter Seven.

skilled working 32%; upper working 20%; working 24%; blank 30%.

Registrar General's categories AB 15%; CI 22%; C2 23%; DE 25%.

Regions North-East and North 25%; Midlands 19%; South-East 22%; South-West 23%; North-West 22%.

School-leaving age 14 29%; 15 22%; 16 19%; 17 20%.

How many partners? One

Self-ascribed social class Middle 18%; lower middle 28%; skilled working 25%; upper working 18%; working 23%; blank 21%.

Registrar General's categories AB 10%; CI 18%; C2 24%; DE 24%.

Regions North-East and North 20%; Midlands 19% South-East 21%; South-West 23%; North-West 24%.

School-leaving age 14 20%; 15 25%; 16 18%; 17 16%.

How many partners? Two

Self-ascribed social class Middle 6%; lower middle 4%; skilled working 4%; upper working 1%; working 5%; blank 4%.

Registrar General's categories AB 5%; CI 6%; C2 5%; DE 5%.

Regions North-East and North 4%; Midlands 6%; South-East 4%; South-West 7%; North-West 5%.

School-leaving age 14 5%; 15 5%; 16 5%; 17 3%.

How many partners? Three

Self-ascribed social class Middle 3%; lower middle 1%; skilled working 4%; upper working 4%; working 2%; blank 4%.

Registrar General's categories AB 1%; CI 4%; C2 3%; DE 3%.

Regions North-East and North 3%; Midlands 1%; South-East 3%; South-West 2%; North-West 5%.

School-leaving age 14 4%; 15 2%; 16 2%; 17 2%.

How many partners? More than three

Self-ascribed social class Middle 7%; lower middle 3%; skilled working 16%; upper working 10%; working 11%; blank 18%.

Registrar General's categories AB 7%; CI 7%; C2 10%; DE 12%.

Regions North-East and North 13%; Midlands 8%; South-East 10%; South-West 8%; North-West 9%.

School-leaving age 14 12%; 15 10%; 16 8%; 17 11%.

Age at first intercourse: under 17

Self-ascribed social class Middle 7%; lower middle 6%; skilled working 13%; upper working 7%; working 11%; blank 13%.

Registrar General's categories AB 4%; CI 7%; C2 10%; DE 13%.

Regions North-East and North 10%; Midlands 9%; South-East 10%; South-West 6%; North-West 10%.

School-leaving age 14 7%; 15 12%; 16 8%; 17 8%.

Age at first intercourse: between 17 and 19.11 years

Self-ascribed social class Middle 26%; lower middle 27%; skilled working 32%; upper working 31%; working 33%; blank 6%.

Registrar General's categories AB 19%; CI 26%; C2 32%; DE 30%.

Regions North-East and North 25%; Midlands 29%; South-East 29%; South-West 35%; North-West 29%.

School-leaving age 14 29%; 15 32%; 16 27%; 17 27%.

Age at first intercourse: between 20 and 23.11 years

Self-ascribed social class Middle 37%; lower middle 36%; skilled working 34%; upper working 25%; working 29%; blank 22%.

Registrar General's categories AB 40%; CI 34%; C2 28%; DE 29%.

Regions North-East and North 29%; Midlands 32%; South-East 35%; South-West 31%; North-West 29%.

School-leaving age 14 29%; 15 28%; 16 28%; 17 27%.

Age at first intercourse: over 24

Self-ascribed social class Middle 14%; lower middle 17%; skilled working 12%; upper working 14%; working 10%; blank 17%.

Registrar General's categories AB 21%; C1 17%; C2 11%; DE 9%.

Regions North-East and North 13%; Midlands 12%; South-East 13%; South-West 14%; North-West 14%.

School-leaving age 14 21%; 15 7%; 16 11%; 17 20%.

Age at first intercourse: not yet or never

Self-ascribed social class Middle 8%; lower middle 9%; skilled working 7%; upper working 21%; working 10%; blank 8%.

Registrar General's categories AB 10%; C1 10%; C2 8%; DE 13%.

Regions North-East and North 8%; Midlands 12%; South-East 8%; South-West 9%; North-West 11%.

School-leaving age 14 3%; 15 8%; 16 17%; 17 7%.

Do you think that young men should have had some sexual experience before marriage?

Self-ascribed social class Middle: Yes 48%, No 40%, D/K 10%; lower middle: Yes 44%, No 44%, D/K 9%; skilled working: Yes 56%, No 34%, D/K 7%; upper working: Yes 45%, No 41%, D/K 13%; working: Yes 54%, No 35%, D/K 9%; blank: Yes 58%, No 38%, D/K 5%.

Registrar General's categories AB: Yes 42%, No 47%, D/K 6%; C1: Yes 46%, No 41%, D/K 11%; C2: Yes 53%, No 36%, D/K 9%; DE: Yes 59%, No 32%, D/K 8%.

Regions North-East and North: Yes 54%, No 36%, D/K 10%; Midlands: Yes 47%, No 39%, D/K 12%; South-East: Yes 55%, No 35%, D/K 8%; South-West: Yes 51%, No 29%, D/K 13%; North-West: Yes 50%, No 44%, D/K 6%.

If Yes, should it be restricted to one person or persons he loves, or with just anyone he feels attracted to?

Self-ascribed social class Middle: one person 30%, just anyone 15%, D/K 3%; lower middle: one person 26%, just anyone 14%, D/K 4%; skilled working: one person 34%, just anyone 19%, D/K 3%; upper working: one person 29%, just anyone 14%, D/K 4%; working: one person 30%, just anyone 21%, D/K 2%; blank: one person 30%, just anyone 24%, D/K 2%.

Registrar General's categories AB: one person 29%, just anyone 13%, D/K 0%; C1: one person 24%, just anyone 18%, D/K 3%; C2: one person 32%, just anyone 18%, D/K 3%; DE: one person 35%, just anyone 22%, D/K 2%.

Regions North-East and North: one person 30%, just anyone 21%, D/K 2%; Midlands: one person 29%, just anyone 15%, D/K 3%; South-East: one person 30%, just anyone 22%, D/K 2%; South-West: one person 30%, just anyone 19%, D/K 5%; North-West: one person 34%, just anyone 13%, D/K 2%.

Do you think young women should have some sexual experience before marriage?

Self-ascribed social class Middle: Yes 32%, No 58%, D/K 9%; lower middle: Yes 29%, No 62%, D/K 9%; skilled working: Yes 43%, No 48%, D/K 8%; upper working: Yes 25%, No 62%, D/K 11%; working: Yes 36%, No 53%, D/K 10%; blank: Yes 35%, No 61%, D/K 5%.

Registrar General's categories AB: Yes 28%, No 64%, D/K 7%; C1: Yes 34%, No 57%, D/K 9%; C2: Yes 36%, No 53%, D/K 10%; DE: Yes 39%, No 49%, D/K 11%.

Regions North-East and North: Yes 36%, No 54%, D/K 10%; Midlands: Yes 36%, No 53%, D/K 10%; South-East: Yes 35%, No 55%, D/K 9%; South-West: Yes 36%, No 50%, D/K 12%; North-West: Yes 34%, No 58%, D/K 8%.

If Yes, should it be restricted to one person or persons she loves, or with just anyone she feels attracted to?

Self-ascribed social class Middle: one person 25%, just anyone 6%, D/K 2%; lower middle: one person 20%, just

anyone 6%, D/K 2%; skilled working: one person 32%, just anyone 8%, D/K 3%; upper working: one person 17%, just anyone 5%, D/K 3%; working: one person 25%, just anyone 9%, D/K 2%; blank: one person 23%, just anyone 12%, D/K 0%.

Registrar General's categories AB: one person 21%, just anyone 6%, D/K 0%; C1: one person 23%, just anyone 9%, D/K 2%; C2: one person 26%, just anyone 8%, D/K 3%; DE: one person 28%, just anyone 9%, D/K 2%.

Regions North-East and North: one person 23%, just anyone 10%, D/K 2%; Midlands: one person 28%, just anyone 5%, D/K 3%; South-East: one person 24%, just anyone 9%, D/K 1%; South-West: one person 24%, just anyone 12%, D/K 1%; North-West: one person 28%, just anyone 4%, D/K 3%.

3 *Symmetrical marriage: The modern pattern*

i

Throughout most of our history, and in most of the known world, the ideal roles of husband and wife have been envisaged as *complementing* one another: the husband should be the provider, strong and aggressive outside the home and completely dominant within; the wife should be the home-maker and mother, succouring and submissive, easily tearful.* These complementary roles were envisaged as God-ordained and 'natural': 'He for God only, she for God in him'; 'When Adam delved and Eve span'; 'Men must work and women must weep' and many more saws, proverbs and quotations illustrate this traditional view of male and female characters. Contempt was felt for those couples who did not fit this complementary picture, particularly for couples where the wife 'wore the breeches' and the husband was 'hen-pecked'.

Within the household, it was considered to be a bad marriage if the husband did any housework which was not dependent on his greater physical strength and imputed mechanical skills (such as carrying coal or mending fuses); a typical 28-year-old working-class wife from Enfield complained in 1950 of husbands being 'afraid of being thought a cissy; mine hates people to know he helps at all in the house; won't push pram',† and a woman who didn't spend all her time looking after her home and her children but went 'gadding about' was a bad wife and a bad mother.

These traditional views of the complementary roles of

* For a detailed discussion of sex roles, see Margaret Mead: *Male and Female* (London and New York, 1949)

† *Exploring English Character*, p. 135.