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Could Stats Speak Louder Than a Picture?

“Good evening! I hope you were able to digest last week’s exchange,” I said. “Tonight it will be a mouthful. It’s been said that a picture is worth a thousand words. Well, I’m hoping that if you all make sound presentations, we will prove that statistics could speak just as loud as pictures. Ms. Bynum, I believe you’re up.”

“Thank you. Throughout my research during the last week, I found that in major court decisions about pornography and overt public display of sexuality by the entertainment industry, judges and advocates of freedom of speech have pointed to the absence of victims, stating that while pornography may appeal to prurient interests or even to deviants, in the end, it’s still only sex.

“As many like to say, in porn, *no one gets hurt*. When I undertook this research, I did so with an open mind, not expecting to find strong links between sex in the mainstream media and the results Mr. Hunt and I had gathered. So, I was very surprised when we came across some startling statistics that seem to provide support for Dr. Planas’s hypothesis that the Sexual Revolution that has taken place in the last forty-five years, has coincided with an overall increase in sexual and social victimization.

“One question we have to ask ourselves when we examine the data is, to what extent and with what degree of certainty may we say that there is a cause-effect relationship between what the entertainment industry puts out and the outcome that we will describe to you? Mr. Hunt and I discussed the issue *ad nauseum*, and there is no doubt there are some obstacles in trying to answer this question.

“To begin with, our culture has demanded very rigorous standards of evidence when it comes to prove something as sensitive as the impact that sex in the media has on our society. The problem lies in the fact that social scientists haven’t yet developed sophisticated tools of inquiry capable of isolating specific types of behavior and attitudes that would in turn generate highly reliable empirical evidence to meet those demands. Although certainly not in the same

category as trying to prove God's existence, establishing such correlation is not an easy task, largely because not a whole lot of research has been done exclusively in this area. And yet, the results of various studies that have been completed *do* reveal very interesting and relevant observations."

"Ms. Bynum, if you please, may I say something?" Mr. Brandon interrupted.

"Yes, go ahead."

"Before we go any further, I would like to state that I side with those who advocate unrestricted freedom of speech, unless I'm shown that there is a grave necessity to curb speech. But when you begin by saying that we cannot yet prove a cause-effect relationship beyond a shadow of a doubt, I think you are placing an extraordinary burden, perhaps even an unfair one, on the media, by assigning blame or responsibility to a relationship that *at best* might be negligible and *at worst* spurious.

"The stakes in this debate are so high that, in my view, it is going to take more than just a few studies to blame mass media for whatever it is you are going to show us."

"In principle, I would have to agree with what you said, Mr. Brandon," she replied. "I'm being very straightforward when I say that there are some difficulties. I would suggest, however, that once we make our presentation we decide for ourselves the validity or lack thereof of such a cause-effect relationship.

"In the mean time, the fact remains that simply because we haven't been able to establish a cause-effect relationship doesn't mean there is no relationship whatsoever. All it means is that we haven't been able to prove it; not that it cannot be proven.

"But I will say this. You speak of high stakes as if unrestricted freedom of speech is all that matters. Once we examine the human and social cost of what I would term *unbridled sexuality*, and once we have the two sets of high stakes before us, we need to ask ourselves the following question: 'If we have to err on one side, given the difficulties in establishing such relationship, on which side would we rather err?'"

That was a poignant question. Ms. Bynum had managed to silence not only Mr. Brandon but the entire class as well. *They're thinking*, I thought. I'll have to wait to see where this will lead.

She continued. "If, indeed, there has been a sexual revolution, we should see the first indication in terms of increased sexual activity among single people, since this is where everything begins. There's an important reason why we ought to be concerned with increased sexual activity among unmarried people, particularly teenagers and young adults: statistically speaking, chances are much higher of sexually transmissible diseases, pregnancies, children born out of wedlock, abortions, delinquency, crime, divorce, and a host of emotional and psychological problems being associated with unmarried teenagers and young adults than with married ones.

"Let's take a close look at what the numbers tell us. Our point of departure

is premarital sex among adolescents and young adults. U.S. Government reports indicate that the percentage of adolescent women, ages 15-19, who reported having had premarital sexual intercourse, increased steadily from 1970 to 1988 while it declined slightly by 1995 and again by 2003. However, it should be noted that, even when we take into account reductions during the last decade, premarital sexual intercourse among 15 to 19-year-old females had increased nearly ninety percent in thirty-three years, from 28.6% in 1970 to 53% in 1995 to 47% in 2003.¹ “By 2008, seventy percent of male and female teens have had sex by age nineteen. Bear in mind that these percentages refer only to vaginal intercourse among heterosexual couples. The studies do not reflect homosexual activity or even non-vaginal intercourse among heterosexual teenagers, which, of course would likely have increased those percentages considerably.

“These studies also provide us with another possible indication of how an overly sexualized culture may be conditioning sexual activity among youth. For example, these studies indicate that about 65% of female teenagers and 37% of male teenagers who had engaged in sexual activity did so while having serious misgivings about it!

“This means that sexual intercourse among a significant percentage of these youths was not entirely by choice. In 2002, there were nearly 2 million female under 14 years of age who already had had sex; 4 million between the ages 15-16, and 4 million between ages 17-19. Well, 18% of those under 14 years, 10% of those ages 15-16, and 5% of those ages 17-19 reported that sex had not been voluntary.² This does not necessarily imply forced rape; rather it may suggest other circumstances such as peer pressure.

“Overall, this extraordinary level of sexual activity by teenagers tells me that they regard sexuality as care-free as going to an amusement park.”

“So what!” remarked Mr. Edson. “We already have acknowledged that sex is pleasurable, so in a way, it’s like going to an amusement park. And it’s not as if we’re talking about leaving three year old children by themselves to wonder around Disneyworld. You’re implying that teenagers and young adults might not be sufficiently mature for sex.”

“You’re right,” replied Ms. Bynum as she searched through her papers. “Let’s see here. I ran into this interesting study involving anecdotal reports and limited formal research, which found that oral sex among the 15-19 years category has considerably increased in the last few years. Do you know why?”

Mr. Edson shrugged as his face registered a pronounced *How the heck should I know* look.

“It so happens that among other reasons, many teenagers do not consider oral sex as sex. Stupidly so, many consider it a way to avoid sexually transmissible diseases; also, if you can believe this, many teenagers equate oral sex with sexual abstinence! And, some teenagers don’t even consider mutual masturbation or anal intercourse as sex!³

“Would you call this maturity, Michael?

“Now, when you combine sex with ignorance, what do you get? You get approximately 3 million teenagers between the ages 15 and 19 and about 6.1 million between the ages 20 and 24, contracting a sexually transmissible disease (STD), including HIV, in the year 2000 alone!

“But, not only are the numbers for America’s youth troublesome; those individuals in the supposedly more responsible age category, 20-24 years, fare worse, not only because the level of sexual activity is higher among them, but also because they seem to be more careless. Altogether, it is estimated that there were 18.9 million new cases of STDs in the year 2000.

“The Guttmacher Institute estimated that direct medical costs associated with STDs were \$14.7 billion in 2006 dollars. If you happen to think that these numbers are not a big deal, just think that we all end up picking up the tab through higher healthcare costs that are passed on to consumers.⁴

“We’ll go next to pregnancies. While most people will agree that sexual intercourse may be pleasurable in many instances, I believe that most of society will accept the view that there is nothing amusing about teenage pregnancies, abortions, out-of-wedlock childbirths, or sexually transmissible diseases.

“According to researchers, most pregnancies among unmarried teenagers and young adults are unintended and the result of unprotected sex. The Guttmacher Institute places the percent- age of unintended pregnancies at seventy-five percent!⁵

“This means that unwanted pregnancies, no matter how they end, place an incredible physical, emotional, and spiritual burden on female teenagers and their parents, not to talk, again, about the social cost to the taxpayer.

“Further, results from a U.S. Government report indicate that the rate of unmarried teenage and young adult female pregnancies that end in live births parallel the pattern in teenage sexual activity. In 1966, the birth rate for the 15-17 years category was 13.1 per thousand. This rate increases progressively throughout the years reaching a high of 31.7 in 1994 before it began to show a steady decline in 1995. Following a ten-year decline, in 2006 the rate had held steady at 20.0 per thousand. Overall, however, the birth rate experienced a fifty percent increase from 1966.

“The rates for the 18-19 and 20-24 years categories show similar progressions but are exceptionally higher than the 15-17 age category. In 1966, the rate for 18-19 year old was 25.6 per thousand. Following an 8.0 decline from 1995 to 2002, it increased to 62.0 per thousand in 2006. Overall, it represented an increase of nearly 150 percent in forty years.

“In the 20-24 age, female category, despite some fluctuations, the rate for this age group increased from a low 9.5 in 1940 to a high of 41.4 in 1962, then dropped to 30.5 in 1974, only to go up again steadily throughout the eighties, nineties, and the early years of the twenty-first century. In 2006, the rate stood at 80.0 per thousand.

“So, overall, birth rates for unmarried women in the 15-24 age category

increased progressively for the most part throughout the years.⁶ The eye opener, of course, is that when we refer to the 20-24 age category, we're no longer talking about teenagers, but young adults.

"Jennifer," called out Mr. Hunt, "before you go any further, I would like to insert the human dimension into this issue. Sometimes, rates and percentages tend to cover the real human drama behind teenage mothers and their children. I wanted to find out what these rates actually meant in terms of real lives, so I crunched the numbers.

"Although I could not find studies on teenage pregnancies going back to the 60's, it is likely that the trend would be similar to what we are seeing today. That is, there were probably far less unintended pregnancies in the early sixties than there are today, both in terms of numbers and rates. Still, according to a U.S. Government Report on females ages under 15-19, once we set aside the 5 percent who were likely married, in the year 2000, 852,000 unmarried teenagers had become pregnant.⁷

"And, in the year 2007, following several years of declining birth rates, there were approximately 394,436 babies born out of wedlock to teenagers in the United States.⁸ Many of these unwanted pregnancies ended in live births, meaning that these babies, and their mothers already started their lives at social and emotional disadvantages when contrasted to the potential advantages enjoyed by babies born of married couples.

"According to a study prepared for the U.S. Congress, poverty rates for these mothers and their babies tend to be higher than for women who are divorced, separated, or married, as this condition exacerbates their already financially strapped situation.

"For example, these children tend to score lower on various standardized tests and measures of home environment quality than children born to older mothers do. High school dropout rates tend to be considerably higher than in the case of two-parent families. Also, as might be expected, this condition leads to higher rates of welfare recipients, and thus higher social costs that taxpayers have to burden. Another detrimental consequence of being a child born out-of-wedlock is that he or she likely will become a single parent, thereby, *affirming*, as one author says, such a life style. This study indicates that, even when young mothers get married, most of them become divorced before their children get to be eighteen.⁹

"In the end, we see that teenage out-of-wedlock births set off a social multiplier effect. That is, out-of-wedlock births result in a series of problems, including the ones I just mentioned, plus others such as, higher divorce rates, drug abuse, delinquency, and emotional disturbances including low self-esteem, depression, and poor health, all of which lead to additional social ills, including all categories of crime.¹⁰ This is the real social multiplier effect that sometimes doesn't seem to dawn on us."

"Thank you, Ted," said Ms. Bynum. "And, you're right, all too often we recite numbers but we lose sight of the human dimension. Okay, are there

any questions so far?"

"I have a question," said Ms. Williamson. "You mentioned that males share responsibility for these problems. But you have not provided much in terms of statistical information about male sexual behavior. Is there any?"

"I'm glad you raised the issue. We don't want to give the impression that teenage girls are the cause of these social ills," replied Ms. Bynum. "Pregnancies, after all, are the outcome of intercourse between male *and* female. Let me share with you the results of two studies regarding boys' sexual behavior," she said as she posted a large hand-written paper on the wall:

- The older the teenage boy, the more sexually experienced he becomes; and this is not the same thing as being sexually knowledgeable, okay? Well, in 2003, 33 percent of 9th graders and 62 percent of 12th graders were sexually experienced. The implications here are very important. By 12th grade, when boys have become quite sexually experienced, they're at an age when they can have more access to many more elements of the Sexual Revolution. So, talk about mixing fire and gasoline, this is it.
- Boys are more likely than girls to have had four or more sex partners. And, promiscuity for boys increases with age. These percentages, however, had dropped somewhat between 1993 and 2003.¹¹

"Boys, naturally, present a much more serious problem when it comes to sex than girls, due to a culture that works toward pushing them to have intercourse. For example, according to the study,

- it is more embarrassing for boys to admit that they're virgins than it is for girls;
- boys enjoy less negativity for having had sex than girls do;
- boys feel slightly more pressured than girls to have sex, and in their case the pressure comes from their friends;
- boys seem to care less than girls about what their parents might think about sex, about what sex education teaches them, or what their religion tells them about sex;
- sex seems to be more trivial to boys than it is for girls;
- four out of ten boys ages 15-19 agree with the view that getting a girl pregnant will make them feel *like a real man*.¹²

"And, I will bet that parents, particularly fathers, care less if it's their boys having sex than their daughters; boys habits tend to die hard.

"Oh, before I forget, let me bring another interesting piece of information from a previous study. Once they father a child, boys are not in a condition to pay child support. And, despite federal and state laws, 75 percent of teenage mothers do not receive any or complete child support from the fathers, who I may add, include men in their twenties and older.¹³

"So, there you have it. That is the result of *boys being boys*. Not a pretty

picture, I think you will agree.”

Mr. Hunt spoke next. “Although we may have focused mostly on teenagers so far, we have to remember that the twentyish or young-adult crowd is just as problematic. Some of the statistics we have shown indicate that the *non-married twenties* category exhibits higher pregnancy and birth rates, and similar abortion rates to teenagers. So, let me present another indicator relating mostly to the young adult category. Cohabitation.

“Cohabitation has been referred to as *co-residential sexual unions*.¹⁴ It’s a nice euphemism that encapsulates the reality of this modern day social practice. Whether fueled by a fear of commitment, economics, a critical view of marriage as an institution, or the desire for companionship and sex without the risk and hassles of a divorce, in most instances this type of relationship is an easy and temporary fix; another outcome stemming from the Sexual Revolution.

“Case in point: in the mid 1960s, only 3% of women would find themselves cohabitating before age twenty-five; twenty years later, in the mid 1980s, this percentage increased to 37%. For 1995, I wasn’t able to find a similar statistical format, yet a U.S. Government report published in 2002 showed that 41% of women in the 15-44 age bracket had cohabitated.¹⁵

“I think it would be safe to say that, today, this percentage is higher and likely to become even higher in the future. Why? Because according to a U.S. Government study on teenagers and sex, 67 percent of boys ages 15-19 and 63 percent of girls do not see anything wrong with unmarried couples living together.”¹⁶

“Hey, so what!” exclaimed Mr. Edson. “Who are you hurting by cohabitating? Frankly, I wish I could do it myself. I think it would be fun.”

“I believe you,” said a resigned Mr. Hunt. “You definitely give credence to my hypothesis that maturity doesn’t correlate highly with age when it comes to sex.”

“Mr. Hunt, please,” I stepped in. “Let reason be your weapon and try to abstain from personal put-downs; they’re usually neither logical nor too persuasive. Once again, all, remember that when you resort to derogatory remarks, you are signaling to others that you have run out of convincing views, and frankly, Mr. Hunt, in your case, I don’t think you have.”

“I apologize. You’re right. My apologies, Michael.”

“Accepted. Still, I simply want to know *why* cohabitation is something negative.”

“Fair enough,” said Mr. Hunt. “For many, cohabitation is marriage without commitment; being friends with benefits, I believe it’s called. It’s a way in which many good people play at being married. Many do so while having a cynical view of the institution of marriage. Others do it to escape modern social emptiness, a very unpleasant and uncomfortable feeling that can be temporarily alleviated by companionship and sex.

“Yet, cohabitation does not seem to fare better as an alternative to marriage,

and more often than not, the outcome is worse.

“Studies have shown that cohabitation is responsible for a substantial proportion of out-of-wedlock births, 41%, according to one. Yet, cohabitation does not appear to lead to long-term stability between the partners. Even couples that do marry following cohabitation, according to another study, are more likely to divorce, compared to those that did not cohabit before marriage. And, still another report, *The State of Our Unions 2005*, indicate that cohabitating couples have twice the breakup rate of married couples.¹⁷

“Granted, marriage alone is not the cure for family stability, but its components are. I’m talking about love, commitment, responsibility, sensitivity, respect. And, although these elements tend to be forgotten in marriage at times, it is my impression that, in many cases, they’re not highly regarded in cohabitation, simply because the motivating factors for engaging in this type of arrangement don’t call—or require—these elements.

“So, from the standpoint of family stability and the well being of children, or the stability of relationships, for that matter, cohabitation is not likely to be the solution to the problem. In a way, it’s a cop-out. Legal papers do not make a marriage; its components do. Granted, there are couples who have not taken the religious or the civil ceremony approach but who are nonetheless committed to each other. That to me is like marriage, but it seems to be the exception to the rule. I may be wrong but I still think most cohabitating partners like to take the short-cut approach, because in the end they are more afraid of commitment and of accepting responsibility for the relationship. That is why I do not see cohabitation as fun, Michael.”

“I see. Thanks,” replied Mr. Edson.”

“Not to belabor the issue,” said Mr. Dickerson, “but I see cohabitation as the product of changing mores and values. There is more sexual permissiveness today than there was forty years ago.”

“How is this change related to the Sexual Revolution? Mr. Dickerson,” I asked.

“Well, let’s think about this. Hundreds of thousands of people do not start living together all of a sudden. Even distrust or misgivings about marriage alone don’t necessarily force people into cohabitation.

“Now, let me ask, do any of you remember seeing scenes of cohabitation very often in the movies or on TV programming from back in the early sixties? The answer is probably, No. Cohabitation was not an entertainment media motif at the time.

“But as time went by, scenes of cohabitation appeared more frequently on TV and in the movies until it began to gain social approval throughout the years. It’s interesting that, very recently, experts on the matter have pointed out that increases in cohabitation begin to increase in the 1970s, at which time the divorce rate also goes up.¹⁸ Media-led behavior? Would that be too simplistic, and deterministic? Maybe so, but what about media-conditioned behavior?

“There’s something to a spiraling synergistic phenomenon that Mr. Edson brought out last week, by accident I tend to think. If it’s shown in the entertainment media, it’s okay to do it. And if someone takes a particular action, it can be depicted in the media. This is a self-reinforcing behavior in which our real experiences and the media interchange to validate each other.”

“Thank you,” replied Ms. Bynum, as she continued with her presentation. “Now, I want to turn to another outcome of the Sexual Revolution, one that is rather unpleasant for me to talk about. I’m referring to rape. Rape is defined as an act of violence, and rightly so. But it would be difficult to deny that the sex drive has nothing to do with this type of crime, which is why I describe rape as the violent fulfillment of an uncontrolled sexual urge.

“In rape we see one of the lowest and most degrading human acts both for the aggressor and the victim. While controlling our emotions and our instincts is precisely what separates us from animals, in rape, the aggressor is someone who is unable and/or unwilling to do so. Not too many species in the animal kingdom that I know of, engage in this type of behavior.

“As for the victim, rape is not about sex. It is about the cowardly invasion of one’s body and the violent theft of one’s dignity. It is an aberration, a perversity, no doubt. So, I looked at rape statistics to see if they correlated with the period of the Sexual Revolution.

“The FBI deals with recorded cases that have been reported to the police, as opposed to unreported cases, and its numbers allow us to look way back to 1960. In that year, the rate of rape per hundred thousand was 9.6, which amounted to one rape incident every thirty minutes.

“By 1992, the rate had increased to an all time high of 42.8 instances of rape every five minutes. After 1992, this rate began to decline into the 30s. Yet, despite declines in the last decade, the rate of forcible rape in 2007 stood at 30.0, three times as high as in 1960.”

“What about recent news of “stunning reductions” in forced rape that I seem to have read a while ago?” asked Mr. Radusky.

“I also have read something similar,” she replied, “however, perhaps we should take those reports with a grain of salt. While reductions are always good news, the number of victims shows us a different picture. As Mr. Hunt reminded us, statistics sound less meaningful than the number of individual victims. In sheer numbers, there were 90,427 reported cases of rape or sexual assault in 2007 in the United States, a little over 5,000 less victims than in 2002.¹⁹

“From 1993 to 2004, well over one million people reported they had been victims of a sexual assault, an attempted rape or a forcible rape. In other words, the case is not one in which ninety thousand people were once victims of a sex crime—as high a number as this may be; No, the number will repeat itself year after year after year. So, when well over ninety thousand human beings are victims of rape every year, slight ups and downs in rates don’t mean much.

“And, lest we think that these numbers are high, they’re not. FBI statistics

for example, do not include statutory rape, sex with a minor without force, or any other type of sexual offense such as sodomy or fellatio; nor does it consider rapes in which the victim is a male.

“In addition, there is the issue of un-reporting. Anywhere between fifty to sixty percent of all sexual crimes go unreported each year. This is why for the past few years, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, under the Department of Justice, has been conducting national surveys that include unreported sexual crimes in order to provide a more realistic picture. For instance, while there were over 90,000 reported cases of rape and sexual assaults in 2007, the total number of rapes uncovered by the survey was approximately 248,300.²⁰

“This means that, in reality, a sexual crime is taking place every two minutes every year, without interruption. Eighty-seven percent of these victims were female and thirteen percent male.²¹ These numbers exclude crimes to children under twelve, which the Department of Justice estimated to be one-in-six victims.

“Moreover, about forty-four percent of the victims were under age 18!²² I don't think it's mere coincidence that sexual crime has increased so incredibly in the last forty five years. Okay, I'm done. I don't know if there are any questions,” she queried.

Ms Lewis raised her hand. “Ms. Bynum, aside of what you both have shown us, I believe that in the past decade, numbers have gone down on sexual activity, pregnancies, births, rapes, almost everything you and Mr. Hunt have mentioned. If so, how do you explain the relationship you say exists between increased sexual activity indicators and the Sexual Revolution?”

“I wanted to come to that,” responded Ms. Bynum. “Studies do indicate that the levels of sexual activity among teenagers, teenage pregnancies, teenage births, even abortions, have declined in the last ten to twelve years.

“How do we explain these declines? There is a multitude of reasons. According to a latest U.S. Government study, sex education programs, religious and non-religious, appear to have made teenagers more sensitive to sex-related issues. About 40% of teenagers who had never had sexual intercourse in 2002, pointed to religion, morals, and fear of getting a sexually transmitted disease as the reasons for not having sex.

“And of course, the fear of HIV. AIDS has enjoyed a great deal of publicity in the last decade. All this means that a slight percentage of teenagers is delaying sexual activity or has reduced its frequency. Ironically, an increase in oral sex among teenagers appears to have contributed to a reduction in pregnancies. And, there is also the economic expansion of the 1990s leading to higher incomes, since high income correlates well with education and declines in pregnancies.²³”

Mr. Hunt interrupted. “In the case of rape, a combination of factors account for its decline. A most significant one is the increase of rape cases being reported to police by victims. As a result, there are more convictions and thus, more criminals are being incarcerated. Tougher approaches to crime, including three-

strike laws and longer sentences mean that rapists who tend to be involved in other criminal acts are being placed behind bars for a variety of non-sexual crimes.

“Also, education and safety procedures established in schools, universities, and places of work have created both a sense of awareness among potential victims and increased deterrence against criminals.”²⁴

“So what’s the problem, then?” asked Mr. Edson.

“Complacency, allowing complacency to set in,” replied Mr. Hunt. “Let’s take a look at two distressing statistics. While some studies do report a decline in sex crimes, a 2004 U.S. Army task force report has indicated that the number of reported sexual assaults in the military increased each year between 1999 and 2003 by a total of nineteen percent, while the number of reported rapes during the same period increased by twenty-five percent.

“The study further indicated that, in spite of admitted underreporting, Defense Department officials conceded that the data represented a small percentage of the total. And, don’t forget the 2003 report by the Air Force Academy’s Inspector General that indicated that twenty percent of female cadets had experienced some form of sexual assault within the academy.”²⁵

“The other item I would like to present is rather chilling. In June, 2004, a new study presented to the Congress indicated that *more than 4.5 million students endured sexual misconduct by employees at their schools, from inappropriate jokes all the way to forced sex*. According to the report, the most common offenders were teachers, then coaches, substitute teachers, bus drivers, and teacher aides.”²⁶

“Granted, there might be cases of false accusations against teachers, however, I would still find it very disturbing if only half of the total number, 2.2 million, turns out to be accurate. These types of incidents, bordering anywhere from highly inappropriate to criminal behavior, are taking place in our schools!”

“I guess what I’m trying to convey is that results are inconclusive in terms of what the future holds. We don’t know if declines will continue or how fast. This is important because we are talking about human beings. So, assuming that the Sexual Revolution in our culture continues unabated, and there is nothing to suggest it will not, meaningful reductions in indicators of sexual activity will require, at the very least, a drastic combination of sexual abstinence and/or protected sex among teenagers and young adults.

“This will entail much greater sexual awareness, incredible individual discipline on the part of both sexes, and significant declines in all the negative factors that correlate high with increased levels of sexual activity, such as early pubertal development; high testosterone levels; being African American, and I may add Hispanic, too; permissive sexual attitudes, use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs; psychosocial deviance; poverty; living with a single parent; sibling and peer sexual activity; poorly educated parents; low religiosity; and lack of close parent-child relationships.

“And, as yet another statement corroborating the view that sexual behavior can be socially stimulated, the study I’m citing says that the media, along with social policies, could play a positive role in bringing about *a major shift in public disapproval of non-marital childbearing.*”²⁷

“If I may interrupt for a second,” said Mr. Dickerson. “Should we be asking the media and the government to assume responsibility for these social ills? Aren’t we removing a great deal of individual responsibility from parents as well as from young adults? Aren’t we being a bit paternalistic?”

“That’s a valid question,” replied Ms. Bynum. “However, we must take into account what has been said before, that all social policies, all governmental action, are inherently paternalistic. The presence of government in our lives suggests that there are things beyond the control of individual citizens, which is when government steps in; sometimes to make things better, sometimes to, inadvertently, make them worse.

“I agree that the first line of responsibility lies with the individual. But there’s an important question to be considered: whether the government, an institution entrusted with the well being of its citizens, should become involved in citizens’ lives when problems become so widespread. Is the government being paternalistic when it requires mandatory use of seat belts to save lives or when it regulates emission controls from automobiles or the release of pesticides on land and water to provide for a safer environment? Probably so, but do the majority of citizens consider this type of paternalism as something bad? I don’t think so.”

“I have a question,” said Mr. Radusky. “At this point, are we as a society prepared to say that we have in our hands a serious social problem with the Sexual Revolution, given how extensive or widespread its various manifestations have become?”

“Yours could be a two-sided question, Mr. Radusky,” argued Ms. Bynum. “We may have a social problem in our hands but we may not be ready or willing to accept the reality of its scope or its consequences. This is where the issue of the validity of establishing some sort of correlation comes in.

“The data we have presented should speak for itself, and I think it does. Perhaps, we need a different type of data; something that might provide specific answers to the following: What accounts for over one and a half million pregnancies to unmarried teens and young adults every year? What accounts for an average of over 380,000 babies born out of wedlock to teenage mothers, or over 200,000 abortions every year? What accounts for three million cases of sexually transmissible diseases among teenagers? Or over 200,000 incidents of sexual assaults and rapes each year? Or the billions of dollars spent every year due to the negative multiplier effect of an unbridled sexuality, children without fathers, delinquency, drugs, mental health issues, crime, poverty? Is it all due to parental irresponsibility?

“And, let’s suppose that it is. Should we try to do something about it or should we simply sit back and relax, and somehow allow things to sort out for

themselves, like allowing supply and demand to dictate the outcome?”

“Hey, supply-side sex! What a concept,” said Mr. Edson.

“I know, it sounds funny,” replied Ms. Bynum. “Still, does anyone have a sound explanation for the likely effects of the Sexual Revolution?”

“Okay, jest aside,” said Mr. Edson, “our sexual mores have changed; we’ve discussed that!”

“Michael, that’s like saying that there’s daylight because the sun has come up,” she answered. “We need better explanations and wiser solutions. In the mean time, can anyone tell me why educators are beginning to say that sex is increasing at school! Yes, on school grounds! And why are high school students so desensitized by sex in public that many will tell you that they can hold a conversation with their friends while two other students are copulating a few feet away, in their presence?²⁸

“One day, I’m browsing the *Ask Amy* column and I read about a mother who had found out that while she and her husband were dining out, her daughter and female friends, ages 14-15, were swimming with their tops off in front of the boys, and when confronted, the daughter said that none of the girls thought that there was anything wrong with that.²⁹ Of course, that incident is easily topped by a recent story someone told me about several boys and girls ages 11-13 having sex in an unattended class in front of other students!”

“And you’re saying that TV and films are to be blamed for that?” asked Mr. Edson.

“It’s more than just TV and films, Michael,” she replied. “We’re not even talking about a sub-culture anymore, but mainstream trivialization of sex and the commercialization of a sex culture. You walk into Urban Outfitters, a nationwide favorite teenagers store, and, other than clothing, what do you think they sell? How about sex games, books validating and praising pot. They had a book on *Orgasms: How to Get Them, How to Give Them, and How to Keep Them Coming*. In Aeropostale, another popular teenager store, I saw T-shirts with screen prints reading, *Foxy, Boys Locker Monitor*, and this one, *Wanted: Meaningful Overnight Relationship*.

“And, of course, we all have seen that television ad urging tourists to visit Las Vegas, because, as the ad reminded visitors, ‘what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas.’ This is a major city inviting us all to engage in personal indiscretions and sexual escapades, knowing that our indiscretions will never make it out of the city walls.”

“I think that we have to go back to our initial question, the one that in my mind shapes the current debate,” I said. “We need to ask ourselves whether the value we place on sexual freedom should outweigh the magnitude of the millions of lives that are being affected by the Sexual Revolution.

“I, too, think that the statistics you both have presented make a compelling case for taking a look at this issue from a social problem perspective. Granted, the results are somewhat inconclusive, but again, remember, they’re incon-

clusive on both sides. In other words, we cannot assume that there's no danger if we simply lack knowledge on the whereabouts of a reef. That's not the same as saying that there's no reef underneath."

"I'd like to view the problem from a different angle," said Mr. Hunt. "We agreed that sex is a strong drive; it's an instinct that can be triggered or be stimulated. But how? What stimulates sex within us?"

"A combination of thoughts along with some sort of visual aid will do it," replied M. Edson, "like when you're attracted to someone you see."

"I agree. Now, let me ask you, Michael, do you think that smoking will make you have sex?"

"Actually, according to established practice, it's the other way around," said Mr. Edson. "You light up the cigarette after you finish having sex," he replied. Then, staring at Mr. Hunt's serious demeanor he added, "sorry, I didn't mean to treat your question as a joke, and no, the answer is no."

"Thank you. What about being poor, or living with a single and uneducated parent, will that stimulate a teenager's sexuality?"

"Well, I can see that having little or no means of recreation, no parental restrictions, no positive role models and no sex education., yeah, these situations could lead to increased sexuality. But by themselves, I don't think these circumstances will necessarily predispose anyone to have sex."

"Good insight! We're both in agreement," said Mr. Hunt. "Let me go on, statistics will tell you that sexual activity is twice as high among African Americans and Hispanics, than among whites, even though celibacy doesn't necessarily run high among white teenagers. So, do you believe that race or ethnic background, by themselves could predispose someone to have sex?"

"No, I don't think so," said Mr. Edson. "However, I realize that negative factors such as low income and low education correlate with increased sexual activity, why? I don't think anyone knows. But if these factors are more prevalent among African Americans and Hispanics, at the very least it provides some explanation."

"Yes. Nonetheless, statistics would tell us that kids who smoke, who are Black or Hispanics, or who are poor or who come from low education backgrounds have a higher rate of sexual activity than those who don't share these conditions.³⁰ And yet, would you say that any of these conditions would directly stimulate anyone to engage in sexual activity? Of course not!

"What I'm trying to say is that, for reasons that have yet to be investigated, there is an assortment of circumstances that correlate with teenage and young adult sexual activity. This means that people affected by one or more of these conditions somehow will end up being more sexually active.

"All these elements correlate with increased sexual activity; it's like putting logs in the fireplace. But you still need both the kindle and the match to create a fire, and I think that, based on the data we have seen here tonight, an overly sexed culture would seem to be the igniting factor."

"And that's where the case of the missing link comes in; we need validation," argued Mr. Brandon.

“Yes we do,” jumped in Ms. Vanhurst. “Nonetheless, let’s think for a minute, many of these factors that correlate with sexual activity existed back in the 1960s. There were likely as many if not more families below the poverty line and more parents with lower levels of education back then than today. There was deviance and low religiosity in the 60s, and African Americans were around, too.

“Now, I don’t know whether we have statistics establishing these correlations back in the 1950s and 1960s, but I doubt that the level of sexual activity or even pregnancy and birth rates were as high as they are today. That, in and of itself, tells us something about the impact of the Sexual Revolution on attitudes and behavior throughout the last decades.”

“Point well taken, Ms. Vanhurst!” I said. “The implication of what you are saying is that, if those factors that Mr. Hunt mentioned existed in the early 1960s and yet the level of sexual activity, pregnancies, birth rates, STDs, rape, and abortion were not as high as they are today, something must account for their progressive increase throughout the years. My hypothesis has been that an entertainment media-led sexualized culture accounts for a great deal of that. I think that the entertainment media has contributed greatly to the changing of our mores.

“By the way, no one brought up the thousands of cases of pedophilia and child sex abuse within the Catholic Church, the great majority of which took place in the last thirty and forty years. I think these cases are important because we are talking about individuals who were trained and educated into observing celibacy as a way of life. This means that the Sexual Revolution likely has made its inroads even among those that were thought to be impervious to this type of behavior.

“In addition, there’s another category of individuals that should concern us: registered sex offenders. They are in the hundreds of thousands—90,000 are said to be residing in California alone!³¹

“Mostly men, they are out in the streets, not behind bars. Despite our need for protection and their need for help, including our compassion—assuming we’re dealing with mentally or emotionally ill individuals—they are susceptible to recidivism. To what extent, we may ask, are they not being conditioned, day in and day out, by a culture that is saturated with sex? How do they manage to stay away from that which prompts in them a most awful behavior? To what extent our culture becomes their enemy in their rehabilitation? I don’t believe that you were able to get longitudinal statistics that would allow us to compare the 1960s with current numbers, but I wouldn’t be surprised if we were told that the rate for this phenomenon has increased dramatically over the last three or four decades.”

“I’d like to make a point,” said Captain Francis. “Let’s take four activities: doing drugs, consuming alcohol, smoking cigarettes, and overeating. It’s interesting that the government regards all these as hazardous to one’s health, largely because in the long run they all cause serious health problems and in quite a lot

of instances they're death-related. Well, three of the four activities are heavily regulated, and the fourth one, obesity, is today the subject of a campaign—you might call it a *crusade*—by the government, health insurance companies, the American Medical Association and others. Yet, when it comes to the millions of victims of an overly sexualized society, the government, and society, seems to suffer from a serious case of inattention.”

“How would you frame the issue from a government perspective, Captain?” I asked.

“I think that the government sees the sexual problem in terms of its individual components; teenage pregnancies, abortions, out of wedlock births, rapes, STDs, what have you, instead of as one big issue with various ramifications. So, what elected officials do is to confront each category separately, individually, which might be why they fail to address the root-cause.

“Another part of the problem is that the sex industry has so many reputable” or legitimate sources cashing in, *including* conservative-minded Republicans,³² that I do not see how Congress or any President would dare tackle the issue. Then, we have the courts and freedom of speech. As long as freedom of speech is regarded as the foundation of the Sexual Revolution, things will remain pretty much the same.”

“There's something else, too,” said Mr. Dickerson. “Let's face it, I don't believe that most elected officials, or even the courts, really like the state of our pop culture. I tend to think that many not only don't know what to do, but also are afraid of the slippery slope once we start regulating verbal or visual expressions dealing with sexual matters. I mean, where would it stop?”

“Now, now, I think there is a lot of irony in your remark,” said Ms. Vanhurst. “Talk about a slippery slope, can there be a more vivid example of the slippery slope phenomenon than the outcome of the Sexual Revolution? Early in the 1900s, the courts made critical decisions that tore down the Victorian wall, which as we have said, was an extreme wall, not a very human wall. But the courts didn't replace it with anything else in the name of freedom of speech. Now look where we are today. While society continues to engage in self-gratification, the number of victims continue to pile up.

“Sure, I don't want my freedom of speech being limited, but I cannot fail to see the irony. Theodore Schroeder, the early twentieth century reformer who was so critical of censorship in sexual matters, was one among many within his generation who argued that sexual emancipation would lead to the *moral elevation of humanity*. He and others believed that full disclosure in sex-related matters would result in a more normal sex life, would end prostitution, increase social health, and end mental illnesses caused by sexual repression!³³ And while society has benefited from sexual openness, talk about the opposite of sex reform predictions becoming a reality!

“One reason their experiment has gone amok is that at the time, sex reformers argued that there was no cause-effect relationship between anti-social behavior and vulgarity, obscenity and pornography. But we could ask, how

would they have known? Much of what today is considered sexual victimization was not adequately recorded at the time. Furthermore, sex reformers were looking in the wrong places. Sure, rapists belong in the category of anti-social behavior, but reformers could not have imagined the outcome of a very openly sexual society; the staggering numbers on promiscuity, pregnancies, STDs, AIDS, unwed mothers, or even legalized abortions among teenagers and young adults.

“We aren’t talking about bad people at all. We’re not talking about psychopaths. We’re talking about our teenagers, young adults, friends, and relatives.”

“Well, you may have a point there,” said Mr. Dickerson. “I recall that in her book, Gurstein mentions a very influential article attacking the remnants of a Puritan mentality in which the authors argued, rather successfully, that free speech with regard to literature was far more important than the harm that obscenity could cause.

“But then, these very liberal authors made this incredible, almost prophetic observation, when they asserted that, *the many other influences in society that stimulate sexual desire are so much more potent in their effect, that the influence of reading is likely, at most, to be relatively insignificant.*³⁴

“They knew! They were sensitive to the proposition that sexual behavior could very well be socially stimulated, he added, and today, it seems that we’re witnessing the outcome of what they knew could happen.”

“We’re now talking about restricting speech,” I said.

“We’re not talking about restricting freedom of speech in general terms,” replied Mr. Hunt. “We’re not even talking about legislating new customs. We are specifically considering how to deal with negative social consequences derived from excesses in the area of sex-related matters, not anywhere else. The argument is not about restricting the free exchange of social, political, economic, scientific, religious, or philosophical ideas. As a matter of fact, this exchange is both necessary and welcomed. On the other hand, haven’t we discussed and agreed that that speech is human action, and any human action is subject to regulation for very significant reasons?

“Do we, by any chance, believe that it’s anti-democratic to be in favor of regulating an unrestrained sexual culture? If there were no perniciously harmful social consequences, there would be no need to restrict such behavior; agreed! But what if the opposite is true? What if the entertainment media were, indeed, fueling an unrestrained Sexual Revolution that appears to be instigating the social ills we have discussed tonight? Do you allow these conditions to go unchecked?

“Isn’t the whole notion of civilized progress to be able to prevent the bad and support the good? Isn’t that why we attempt to curb smoking and drinking, and now even obesity? The proposition that in order to be democratic one needs to accept the unhealthy behavior derived from obscenity, pornography, or indecency, even at the risk of these behaviors taking over our culture, would seem to

me to be self-defeating.”

“Good point!” said Ms. Vanhurst. “What do you all think about this? The federal courts have ruled that the tobacco industry has been deceiving the public by selling a product that they knew was harmful to the physical health of those who use it.

“My question. Can those who publicly display or sell sex-related material, be it films, literature, products, advertising, *et cetera*, can they assure the public and the government that their product is safe? Safe in the sense that it doesn't contribute to harmful sex-related behavior or outcomes?

“Since the government and the health sector have to pick up the tab for the cost of so many sex-related social ills in many cases, shouldn't the government ask the entertainment industry for a safer product guarantee in the same manner it asks pharmaceutical companies, the food industry, the tobacco industry, the automobile industry to ensure that their products are safe? Just a thought.”

“Yeah, but in those instances the government is regulating tangible products,” argued Mr. Edson. “Here, you're talking about messages, ideas, visual aids. I mean, Wow! It appears to be a different ball game.”

“But, the government doesn't only regulate products, Michael,” replied Mr. Hunt. “It regulates speech, it regulates visual aids, as you call them. The people themselves even regulate ideas. Tell me, what are the chances that a school district would allow the use of public funds to inculcate our children communist values and beliefs instead of civic lessons about democratic values? Wouldn't citizens themselves react and demand an end to this type of education?”

“What about educating the population?” asked Ms. Williamson. “You know, a sloganeering campaign, ‘Just Say No,’ ‘Do it Later,’ ‘Being a Teenage Mother is No Fun.’

“It does work,” I said. “It raises awareness of harmful behavior, helps create social pressure among peers, and provides social endorsement to alternative positive behavior. However, the approach lacks an essential component. Can we imagine trying to curb the use of drugs in our society without eradicating or severely limiting the supply? Imagine how young people may react when they're being asked to practice abstinence while being aggressively bombarded with images and talk about sex in radio, TV, movies, ads, music, department stores. Or how can they be asked to practice safe sex when the messages the entertainment culture sends out is the opposite of what they're being asked to do. There are no easy solutions, mostly because there's no public will.

“Okay, it's late. I will see you next week. Have all a good night, and enjoy your weekend.”

Endnotes

¹ The percentage of adolescent women, ages 15-19, who reported having had pre-marital sexual intercourse, increased steadily from 28.6% in 1970 to 51.5% in 1988. By 1995, this percentage had not changed much, declining slightly to 49%. By 2002, this percentage had dropped again, this time to

45.5%. Data for 1970 and 1988 is found in, Current Trends in Premarital Sexual Experience Among Adolescent Women in the U.S., 1970-1988, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 39 (51-52); 929-932 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. January 4, 1991. Data for 1995 is found in, Abma, JC, Sonenstein, FL. Sexual Activity and Contraceptive Practices Among Teenagers in the United States, 1988 and 1995, *National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat.* 23(21). 2001. Cumulative data for 1988-2002 is found in, Abma, JC, Martinez, GM, Mosher, WD, Dawson, BS. Teenagers in the United States: Sexual Activity, Contraceptive use, and Childbearing, 2002. *National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat* 23(24), 2004. Data for 2003 is taken from CDC, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2003, in U.S. Teen Sexual Activity, Kaiser Family Foundation, January, 2005. 2006-2008 data is taken from, Abma JC et al., Teenagers in the United States: sexual activity, contraceptive use, and childbearing, National Survey of Family Growth 2006-2008, *Vital and Health Statistics*, 2010, Series 23, No. 30

² When asked if they wanted their first intercourse to happen at the time it did, 13% of female teenagers indicated that they didn't want it to happen at the time while 52% had mixed feelings about it. Males, however, were a bit more certain, and yet, 6% didn't want it to happen while 31% had mixed feelings. Abma, et al, 2004.

³ Remez, L, Oral Sex Among Adolescents: Is It Sex or Is It Abstinence? *Family Planning Perspectives*, Vol. 32, N. 6, The Alan Guttmacher Institute, November- December, 2000.

⁴ Weinstock, H, Berman, S, Cates, Jr W, Sexually Transmitted Diseases Among American Youth: Incidence and Prevalence Estimates, 2000, *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, Vol. 36, No. 1, January-February 2004, p. 6. See also *Facts on Sexually Transmitted Infections in the United States*, Guttmacher Institute, June 2009.

⁵ Darroch, JE, Singh, S, Why is Teenage Pregnancy Declining? The Roles of Abstinence, Sexual Activity and Contraceptive Use, *Occasional Report No. 1*, The Alan Guttmacher Institute, December 1999.

⁶ Ventura, SJ, Bachrach, CA. Nonmarital Childbearing in the United States, 1940-1999, Table 3, *National Vital Statistics Reports (NVSR)*, vol. 48 no. 16 (Revised), Hyattsville, MD; National Center for Health Statistics, 2000. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Oct 18, 2000. From 1991 to 2002, see Table 18, in NVSR, Vol. 52, No. 10, Revised in June, 2004. For 2006 rates see, Ventura SJ. Changing Patterns of Nonmarital Childbearing in the United States. NCHS data brief, no 18. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2009.

⁷ Ventura, SJ, Abma, JC, Mosher, WD, Henshaw, S. Estimated Pregnancy Rates for the United States, 1990-2000: An Update. Table 2. *National Vital Statistics Reports*; vol 52 no 23, Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2004.

⁸ Ventura, SJ.

⁹ McLanahan, S, The Consequences of Nonmarital Childbearing for Women, Children, and Society, pp. 231-235, in *Report to Congress*.

¹⁰ Miller, BC, Risk Factors for Adolescent Nonmarital Childbearing, in Report to Congress.

¹¹ U.S. Teen Sexual Activity.

¹² Flanigan, C, The Sexual Attitudes and Behavior of Male Teens, *Science Says: No. 6*, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, October 2003.

¹³ McLanahan, pp. 233-234.

¹⁴ Ventura, SJ, Bachrach, CA, Hill, L, Kaye K, Holcomb, P, Koff, E. The Demography of Out-of-Wedlock Childbearing, p. 31. in Report to Congress.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Abma, et al., Table 36, p. 39.

¹⁷ Ventura, et al., p. 31. Also, the 41 percent of first births to unmarried women data is taken from, Bumpass, Larry, and Lu, Hsien-Hen, (2000). Trends in Cohabitation and Implications for Children's

Family Contexts in the United States. *Population Studies*, 54: 29-41, online in, Alternatives to Marriage Project, an organization advocating for "equality and fairness for unmarried people." The 1995 percentage appears in Bramlett, MD, Mosher, WD. Cohabitation, Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage, in the United States. *National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat* 23(22). 2002, Table B. Also, *The State of Our Unions 2005*, The National Marriage Project, Rutgers University.

¹⁸ Numbers Drop for the Married With Children, *The Washington Post*, March 4, 2007.

¹⁹ Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime in the United States, 1960-2007. *Uniform Crime Reports*. Criminal statistics normally include three categories under rape: sexual assault, attempted rape, and rape. Instances of rape are recorded in two different manners and by two different institutions, the FBI and the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

²⁰ Criminal Victimization, 2007, *National Crime Victimization Survey*, Bureau of Justice Statistics, December 2008.

²¹ Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) Statistics, as shown Online in June, 2004. There are no reports beyond 2004 indicating if these rates have undergone considerable change.

²² Ibid.

²³ Abma, et al., 2004, Table 29. Also, Darroch, JE., Singh, S. Why is Teenage Pregnancy Declining? The Roles of Abstinence, Sexual Activity and Contraceptive Use, *Occasional Report No. 1*, The Alan Guttmacher Institute, December, 1999. Also, see Remez.

²⁴ RAINN Statistics.

²⁵ Sexual Assaults in Army on Rise, *The Washington Post*, June 3, 2004, p. A1.

²⁶ Sex Misconduct Common in Schools, *CBS 5 News/wfrv.com*, June 30, 2004.

²⁷ Miller.

²⁸ Sex at School Increasing, Some Educators Say, *The Washington Post*, November 6, 2005.

²⁹ Ask Amy, *The Washington Post*, July 21, 2005.

³⁰ In terms of sexual activity, the differences between rich and poor among teenagers are minimal. In 1995, 45.6 percent of teens aged 15-17 whose families were below the Federal poverty line (under \$20,000) indicated they had had intercourse. The percent for kids whose families were above the Federal poverty line—34.3—however, would not suggest that white teens are celibates. The older category fares worse; teenagers 18-19 years who were below the poverty line, 72.7 percent reported having had intercourse, compared to 69.5 percent for those above the poverty line. Singh, S, Darroch, JE, Trends in Sexual Activity Among Adolescent American Women: 1982-1995. Table 3.

³¹ Brown rebuffed again in effort to make sex-offender law retroactive, *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 23, 2007.

³² GOP Corporate Donors Cash In on Smut, *The Washington Post*, December 21, 2004.

³³ Read these views in Chapters 3 and 4 in Gurstein.

³⁴ Lockart, William B. and McClure, Robert, *Literature, the Law of Obscenity, and the Constitution*, in *Ibid.*, pp. 241-249, emphasis added.