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SEXUAL ACCESSIBILITY AS A FUNCTION  
OF MARITAL AND PARENTAL STATUS

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University  
San Bernardino

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by  
Donna Cohen  
May 1984

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Approved by:

  
Chairperson





6/1/84  
Date

SEXUAL ACCESSIBILITY AS A FUNCTION  
OF MARITAL AND PARENTAL STATUS

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A Thesis  
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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science  
in  
Psychology

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Donna Cohen

May 1984

## ABSTRACT

This study measured the influence of a woman's marital and parental status on her perceived sexual accessibility. The prediction was that a divorced woman would be viewed as more sexually accessible than a single woman and a divorced woman with children would be viewed as more sexually accessible than a divorced woman without children. Forty-five male and forty-five female subjects read a short script that described a woman in a social situation and completed a questionnaire. The script varied only in the described marital and parental status of the stimulus woman. A 3 X 2 between subjects analysis of variance with three experimental conditions and sex of subject as a secondary independent variable was used in the statistical design. Questionnaire responses indicated that there was no overall significant difference in the perceived sexual accessibility among conditions nor was there any main effect of sex of subject. It was concluded that a woman's sexual experience, at least as defined by her marital and parental status, is probably not a primary or sole factor in the devaluation of women.

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the fastest growing groups in America today is divorced women. In 1976 there were 2,133,000 marriages while the divorce rate indicated that one out of every three marriages would end in divorce (Bardwick, 1979). The divorce rate has been increasing faster than the marriage rate but the rate of remarriage is much lower for women than for men. In 1973 there were 1,600,000 divorced women between the ages of 40 and 65 as opposed to 935,000 divorced men in the same age range. The remarriage rate for women begins declining at about the age of 30 and after 40 remarriage is rare (Bell, 1975; Keys, 1975).

Each year the number of divorced women increases (Bell, 1975) and yet there is very little empirical research available that specifically addresses the social or sexual issues of divorced women. Currently in existence is the theoretical, conceptual literature written from a feminist perspective (for example: Griffin, 1976; Safilios-Rothchild, 1977; Wiseman, 1976); there is the view of women from authors documenting the male point of view (for example: Komarovsky, 1976; Pietropinto & Simenaur, 1977); and there are authors who

write on the emotional and social problems of divorce but do not differentiate the separate problems of men and women or compare statuses of married, single or divorced women (for example: Bohannon, 1970). Some of the research done concerning the victims of rape (Jones & Aronson, 1973; L'Armand & Pepitone, 1977) give indications that divorced women are perceived differently by society than married or single women. The explanation and discussion of this data is frequently derived from literature that emphasizes the woman's role from a cultural and sociological perspective, such as feminist literature (Wiseman, 1976).

Bardwick (1979) states that in spite of the high divorce rate marriage is considered "normal", and that in a society such as ours which is socially organized in terms of couples those who do not marry tend to be thought of as neurotics and losers. Since, to a large extent, marriage establishes who we are and with whom we belong (Bardwick, 1979), marriage represents more than the achievement of the status of adulthood but is also a measure of the quality of one's life and the ability to attain that quality. In a study designed to measure how people feel about the quality of their life, Campbell, Converse and Kogers (1976) reported that divorced women presented themselves as being less satisfied with their

life and felt more stress and pressure from life's difficulties than did divorced men, singles, marrieds, widows, and widowers. While some divorced women apparently do not remarry by choice, feminist authors (Bell, 1975; Key, 1975) suggest that the low rate of remarriage for women is due to the tendency of middleaged men to marry women much younger than their first wife. The difference in the rate of remarriage for men and women has been attributed to the double standard that it is socially acceptable for men to marry someone five years older and anyone younger; but to stay within the boundary of social acceptability, women should only marry someone their own age and older.

The uniqueness of the social status of the divorced woman lies in the assumptions that are made about her, assumptions that are not made about her male counterpart. It is flattering for a man to be considered sexually experienced, and actually those with no sexual experience are subject to teasing and ridicule. The sexually experienced woman receives no social gains from her past and despite the fact that age and experience enhance a man's value, it is said to diminishes a woman's value (Pietropinto et. al., 1977; Safilios-Rothchild, 1977; Wiseman, 1976). This traditional sexual double standard infers that sexual experience is

a measure of masculinity not femininity and to comply behaviorally with the double standard, women should limit their sexual experience to monogamous or marital relationships (Griffin, 1976). Conversely, the woman's role is in the pursuit of love and romance and it is through "love" and not sex that she will catch her man (Pietropinto et. al., 1977; Safilios-Rothchild, 1977).

In a study on the methods of social control of women, Fox (1977) states that "a woman's honor rises and falls on the nature of her comportment around men... and because women are viewed as creatures of insatiable sexuality who cannot be trusted to control themselves, they must be carefully protected within or secluded from the world of strange men" (p. 810). Fox defines a "nice girl" as chaste gentle, gracious, ingenious, good, clean, kind, virtuous, noncontroversial, and above suspicion and reproach; but says that the term "nice girl" is attached to behavior and not the person. A "nice girl" is therefore continually in jeopardy and under pressure to demonstrate her newness by her behavior in each new social interaction. Ironically, the double standard that describes a woman as a sexually unquenchable creature who must keep her drives in obedience defines man's role as one whose sexual drive is even more urgent than a woman's. The man is expected to, or at least

excused when he seeks out sexual relationships with or without the sanction of marriage (Wiseman, 1976). In contrast, many women will not risk presenting themselves as sexually assertive for fear that they will be construed to be sexually low caste harlots, which renders them undeserving of man's protection (Griffin, 1975). Hence, the presumption that once a woman has experienced a sexual relationship with a man she will automatically want to continue to have sexual encounters when the primary relationship is ended puts divorced women in the insidious position of needing a steady man to assure society of her chastity or face a male population who largely assume that she is in sexual need. The defense of one's niceness generally comes early after one's divorce which is documented by the common complaint made by newly divorced women that the men friends of their former husbands suddenly begin to make sexual passes at them (Bohannon, 1970). Conveniently, Bohannon states that because of the sexual experience obtained in marriage society allows greater sexual permissiveness to those who are divorced even though this permissiveness is condemned publically and condoned only privately. But since men have always had the sexual freedom they desired, the public condemnation for sex outside of marriage must be focused on the women

in which case the social permissiveness for coitus would seem to support the masculine ethos rather than sexually free the woman.

Evidence that a woman's worth corresponds to her marital status is illustrated by the sentences given to rapists. In a study by Jones et. al. (1973) it was determined that longer sentences were given for the rape of a married woman or a woman who had never married than for a divorced woman. They suggest that these results are due to an attitude by jurors that divorced women, owing to their sexual experience, are less respectable and more responsible for their own rape than married or single women are perceived to be. In partial support of these findings, Armand et. al. (1978) showed that the previous sexual experience of a rape victim could often sway the jury to attribute some responsibility for the crime to victim.

Griffin (1975) suggests that laws against rape do not exist to protect the rights of the woman but are designed to protect the rights of the man who possesses the woman. A woman's consent to sexual intercourse is thus viewed as an item of social currency whose value is enhanced by a man's sole ownership. The fact that a raped woman is considered defiled even when it is agreed that it was not her fault indicates that rape

is not only a crime against the body but also a transgression against chastity as interpreted by men (Griffin, 1975; Wiseman, 1976). Both Griffin and Wiseman blame this situation on the double standard that describes a man as dominant, aggressive and sexual, and a woman as passive, dependent, subordinate, and sexual only in the service of a man. Hence, the lesser sentence given to the rapist of a divorced woman seems to connote not only that a woman without a man has less social worth, but also the devaluation of women who once belonged to a man and no longer do. Therefore, a woman is debased, according to Griffin, not only when she is raped, but any time she rebels against the double standard by having sexual intercourse outside of marriage and in the absence of a commitment to a relationship. This would lead one to deduce that the mere status of being divorced depreciates a woman's worth which consequently earns her the label of "divorcee", a word defined by Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary as one of feminine origins and applied only to women.

The propensity to define men's and women's sex role by two different standards was examined by Komarovsky (1976) in interviews of college males. Komarovsky found that while a double standard of behavior for men and women was rejected intellectually by her

subjects in favor of an equalitarian ideal, the operative morality of the majority of these men was with the double standard. For example, most of the subjects initially denied the importance of the sexual conquest of a woman as a measure of their masculinity but subsequently admitted that they would brag to their friends about it if they had no feelings for the woman or viewed her as bad or unchaste. Other significant departures from an expressed belief in a single standard was the expectation of fidelity in the female, a greater censure of the dissociation of sex from affection (casual sex) for women than for men, and severe censure of women who would initiate sexual contacts. Consistent with feminist and other writers (Bardwick, 1979; Safilios-Rothchild, 1977) belief that there is a slow erosion in the rigid uniformity of the double standard, Komarovsky explains that this duality between opinion and action is due to male attitudes being liberalized far more rapidly than their behavior. The censorship of women who would initiate sexual contacts and the rejection of what subjects called "promiscuous women" was strongly linked to an attempt to live up to a norm of masculine superiority and the need to be in control. Since the majority of these males did not demand that their girlfriends be virgins, the distinction between

promiscuous women and sexually experienced women was unclear. Komarovsky associated the prerogative to initiate sex with power which is connected to the traditional expectation that the male will be more sexually experienced than his partner and will perform the role of teacher rather than learner to be in full command of the relationship. In as much as some of the pressure to be more dominant and decisive, and to present a strong self assured masculine image came from the mates or girlfriends of these subjects, women were considered to play a prominent role in their socialization.

In another study on male sexuality with over 4,000 male subjects, Pietropinto et. al. (1977) found that there is not only a double standard of behavior between men and women but there is also a double standard within men themselves. They explain that the internal double standard is the desire by men to have a woman who is as innocent as a virgin yet one who is sexually adept in the bedroom. Very often men tend to evaluate women on their youth and physical attractiveness which, according to Pietropinto et. al., has been a commodity for exchange in social liaisons approximately equal in value to material wealth in men. It is women's physical beauty, however, that makes men more anxious than any of her other

characteristics because of the fear that they will be in competition with what they imagine to be an infinite number of former partners. Hence, a woman's discomfort in pursuing a man to whom she is attracted may be surpassed only by the pursued man's fear and discomfort of investing any feeling in a woman over whom he has limited power. Pietropinto, et. al. stated that a man will often justify his irrational fears and flight by devaluing the woman as an undesirable reject in the love-sex market and thus limit the relationship to a purely sexual one so that he can maintain control over his emotions and limit the relationship to a short duration. While these authors feel that the label of "badness" given to the sexually active or sexually experienced woman is simply a carry over from the past which is socially both ambiguous and meaningless, the theme of devaluation that results from it exists within the present.

The penchant for categorizing women into social stereotypes can best be illustrated by the images of American women portrayed in popular songs. Popular songs sum up many of the ethics, habits, slang, and intimate characteristics of a generation and reflect the culture at a particular point in history (Reinurtz, 1975). Reinurtz writes that in the mythology of

popular songs the tendency to dichotomize women's character as either an angel - someone elevated to an absurdly unreal and hypocritical ideal, a pure humble servant of man and God who bears children - or as the embodiment of evil - a corrupt and deceitful person bringing only sorrow to man, to be avoided except for superficial contact - is referred to by many psychologists as man's virgin-prostitute complex. These views delete a woman's individuality and, according to Reinurtz, are expressed with "metronomic monotony" in the theme of sadness of the man's lot as a result of some woman's mistreatment or in the expression of vague, giddy, frivolous feelings of love which are frequently euphemisms for sexual desire.

Slightly less than 90 percent of the popular songs today are written by men in which the vast majority of them discuss the three things men want most from women - service, sex, and love. Songs that relay the need for service cultivate the idea that a woman's position in life is to support her man without any personal demands of her own and to strive to keep the interest of her man by retaining her youth, beauty, and the romantic qualities for which he supposedly married her. Commonly, women have been referred to as masochistic because of their presumably obsessive need for a man's love in which love

itself becomes a woman's foolishness. Few songs convey man's unqualified acceptance of a woman and instead describe sorrow and unhappiness for women who lose their man because of the pursuit of a career. Additionally, many song themes in the past decade reveal man's feeling that woman is trying to dominate him, which is countered by his desire to tie her down in marriage or fix her or cut her down to size. Reinurtz believes that songs such as these exhibit man's general fear of woman's sexuality; and his reaction combines the conventional way of controlling women through the institution of marriage and with an image of sexual sadism. She states that "although political, education, and social equality for the sexes is a modern ideal, the ageless prejudices against women...continue to exist on a level that is only slightly less obvious today than before."

Whenever there is pronounced social inequality between the sexes and as long as sex-role stereotypes limit and define the role of women into a clearly disadvantaged and inferior sociological status, men and women will use their personal resources as objects for bargaining power in a game of exchanging sexuality for commitment and security (Safilios-Rothchild, 1977). The sex-role stereotype that men will pursue sex and women will pursue love relegates women to the insidious

position of becoming love experts, basing their self-esteem on the man they can hold and hence, bartering their sexuality and feelings of love for the highest level of matrimonial security attainable. In turn, men, having the dominant role, have learned to mistrust and avoid love; for it is only through love that they are vulnerable, and instead they prefer to engage in brief sexual encounters with experienced women until the ideal relationship transpires. This exchange model, proposed by Safilios-Rothchild, also suggests that women's value had traditionally depended on her youth or newness, attractiveness and her ability to serve men. Yet, even the marketability of these assets relies on the woman's social behavior where lies the black and white distinction made by society as to whether she is good - deserving of man's protection by her virtuous conduct - or bad - used by men but not good enough to keep. Safilios-Rothchild states that the whole rationale for good and bad women has created a cruel dilemma for many women who are forced to choose between making themselves precious for marriage and respectability while cutting themselves off from desirable and enjoyable experiences, or cheapening themselves to taste life and risking or destroying their chances of marriage. In the midst of this cruel dilemma is the

divorced woman, for she is older, sexually used by another man and perhaps has children. Her respectability is tainted by the social title given to her of "divorcee" which defines her as sexually experienced woman without a male protector. Since it is further assumed that once one begins to experience coitus the desire for it will continue, the image of the divorced woman is necessarily devalued, which allows men to assume they can experience sexual intimacy with her without long term attachment.

In summary, the stereotype of the marketable woman inherent in the exchange model (Safilios-Rothchild, 1977) implies that the more sexual experience the woman has had the less worthy or desirable she is viewed by others. A woman's sexual experience, and by implication her perceived sexual accessibility, thus decrease her marketability by reducing her number of saleable assets. The divorced woman is, accordingly, devalued on the basis of her marital status and former sexual use in which the desirability for long term commitments with her has been decreased. Additionally, although not explicitly stated, the exchange model suggests that a divorced woman who has children would be viewed as even more sexually active in that the presence of children are perceptible and observable evidence of her former

sexual activity. Hence, divorced women with children are likely to be more devalued than a divorced woman without children. This study seeks to measure a woman's perceived sexual accessibility as a function of her marital and parental status; the variables of physical attractiveness, age, and ability to serve men, also considered as women's marketable assets, are beyond the scope of this paper. The hypotheses to be tested are the following:

1. Men will view divorced women as more sexually accessible than women who have never married (single).
2. Men will view divorced women with children as more sexually accessible than either divorced women without children or single women.
3. No differences between the above conditions are expected to be found with female subjects.

## METHOD

### Subjects

Forty-five males and 40 females in undergraduate psychology classes served as subjects. Each subject was randomly assigned to one of three conditions: single (never married), divorced, and divorced with children.

### Procedure

The subjects were administered the experimental materials while attending class, at which time a general introduction and rationale was given (See Appendix A for the complete rationale). The subjects were informed that this was a social experiment that was concerned with how men and women respond to other women and the personal judgments they make about them. The subjects were asked to read a short script that described a social situation with a woman and then to complete the questionnaire that followed. The female subjects were asked to read the script and complete the questionnaire as if they were a man. Each subject was informed that their participation in this experiment was voluntary and was given the opportunity not to participate.

Each script presented to subjects described a blind date with an imaginary woman. The three descriptions

of marital and parental status - single, divorced, and divorced with children - were the only variation in each script (See Appendix B for the complete script).

#### Dependent Measure

The dependent variable was the perceived sexual accessibility of the woman in the script, which was measured by both men's willingness to initiate sexual advances and the perceived responsiveness of the woman in response to those advances. Ten items were presented to subjects in which there were five possible points on each item and 50 points total. On all items a higher numerical score indicated greater perceived sexual accessibility and a low score indicated lower perceived sexual accessibility (See Appendix C for the complete questionnaire).

#### Statistical Design

A 3 X 2 between subjects analysis of variance with three experimental conditions, marital and parental status, and sex of subject as a second independent variable was used for the statistical analysis in this experiment.

## RESULTS

The hypotheses that subjects would view divorced women as more sexually accessible than single women and that divorced women with children would be viewed as even more sexually accessible than divorced women without children were not supported. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was done on the scale of nine of the ten items to measure the degree of sexual accessibility perceived by subjects in each of the three conditions, single (S), divorced (D), and divorced with children (DWC). Item number six was omitted because it was determined to be confusing to subjects. There were no main effects of sex of subject or on the experimental conditions and there was no interaction between the experimental conditions and sex of subject on perceived sexual accessibility. Table 1 presents the mean ratings for the nine items for all subjects. The sum of items one through five, the items measuring the subject's perception of the total sexual interest of both partners, showed no significant difference between conditions ( $F(2,84) = .516, p > .05$ ) and there was no main effect of sex of subject ( $F(1,84) = .455, p > .05$ )

Additional ANOVAS were completed on six sets of

Table 1\*

Means for Items 1 through 10 for Male and Female Subjects

<u>Item</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>DC</u>	<u>Overall Mean</u>
1	What she might permit	2.56	3.20	2.97	2.91
2	What he would attempt	3.10	3.10	3.30	3.17
3	What he would like to do	3.63	3.90	3.77	3.77
4	What she would want him to do	3.00	3.33	3.13	3.16
5	How sexually accessible do you see her	3.33	3.50	3.27	3.37
6	If she does not respond, would you like to see her again	3.57	3.23	3.73	3.51
7	If she does not respond, would she want to see you again	3.13	3.40	3.53	3.36
8	If she does respond, will he want to see her again	3.80	3.93	3.80	3.84
9	If she does respond, will she want to see him again	4.00	4.20	4.00	4.07

\* An item measuring perceptions of the female's selectivity in her sexual responses to a man, was omitted because it was concluded by the data that this item was confusing to subjects.

measures taken two items at a time. Each pair of items served as repeated measures in order to observe any difference in the male sexual response toward the woman in the script and her sexual responsiveness toward him. Table 2 gives the mean scores and ANOVAS for these item pairs. There were no significant differences observed across the three experimental conditions in any of the six item pairs. On item one versus two, however, there was a partial effect between the two experimental conditions of the single and divorced woman, ( $F(2,84) = 3.675, p < .05$ ), in which subjects viewed the man as wanting to attempt more sexually than a single woman wanted to permit, while there was no difference in what he would attempt and what a divorced woman would permit. The subject's response toward the divorced woman with children was more consistent with the subject's responses toward the single woman in that the divorced woman with children was also viewed as permitting less than the man would attempt. Item one versus two does not, therefore, support the predicted greater sexual accessibility between the two experiential conditions of divorced women and divorced women with children.

Item seven versus nine indicated that subject's viewed the man as more willing to see the divorced woman

Table 2

Mean Scores and ANOVAS for Repeated Measures for All Subjects

<u>Item Pairing</u>	<u>Marital and Parental Status</u>		
	<u>S</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>DWC</u>
1 - What she might permit	2.567	3.200	2.967
2 - What he would attempt	3.100	3.100	3.300
	t = -3.158**	.592 (NS)	-1.974*
3 - What he would like to do	3.633	3.900	3.767
4 - What he thinks she would want	3.000	3.333	3.133
	t = 2.713**	2.427***	2.712**
7 - If she does not respond will he see her again	3.567	3.233	3.733
8 - If she does not respond will she see him again	3.133	3.400	3.533
	t = 2.180*	-.838 (NS)	1.006 (NS)
7 - If she does not respond will he see her again	3.567	3.233	3.733
9 - If she does respond will he see her again	3.800	3.933	3.800
	t = -1.012 (NS)	-3.039**	-.289 (NS)
8 - If she does not respond will she see him again	3.133	3.400	3.533
10 - If she does respond will she see him again	4.000	4.200	4.000
	t = -3.147**	-2.905**	-1.695*
9 - If she does respond will he see her again	3.800	3.933	3.800
10 - If she does respond will she see him again	4.000	4.200	4.000
	t = -1.320 (NS)	-1.752*	-1.320 (NS)

\* p &lt;.05

\*\* p &lt;.01

\*\*\* p &lt;.001

again if she did respond to him sexually than if she did not. Consistent with items one versus two, the subject's responses showed no difference in whether the man would see the woman again if she did or did not respond to him sexually for both single and divorced women with children. There were no other significant comparisons that would show expected differences between conditions in the remaining item pairs.

## DISCUSSION

In the present study the idea was advanced that when a woman is viewed as a commodity her marketability to the potential male consumer would largely depend on her saleable assets of youth, looks, and newness. Additionally, the degree to which she is perceived as sexually used would decrease her marketability and attractiveness to men and render her more as an object for sexual desires rather than for long term emotional commitment. The marital and parental status of a woman was thought to be a social indicator of a woman's sexual use in which the status of the woman who was divorced and increasingly the woman who was divorced with children were seen as devaluing factors. The prediction, however, that subjects would assume that a divorced woman would be more sexually accessible than a single woman and that a divorced woman with children would be assumed to be more sexually accessible than a divorced woman without children was not supported.

Although not conclusive, the data suggests that a divorced woman was viewed as more sexually accessible than a single; and surprisingly, the divorced woman was also viewed as more sexually accessible than a

divorced woman with children. The findings lead one to assume that other unanticipated social factors may be operating to influence the perceptions of divorced women with children and their sexual availability. Stoll (1976) stated that part of the "social mythology" that defines traditional sex-roles is the belief that a woman's self is defined by her relationship to a man; that she is a domestic creature; and that a woman's place is in the home. The woman who is divorced with children will likely be more domestic than a divorced woman without children by the necessity of providing child care and routine within the home and will have less time and freedom to pursue her interests in single men. To the extent that the children legitimize the woman's former relationship with her husband and her lasting tie to him through the children, casual sexual encounters may pose a threat for many men who see her identity as partly belonging to another man's children; and the void that is there by his absence that is not yet filled. The divorced woman with children may, therefore, be viewed as more traditional than a divorced woman without children in that she has already made a commitment to a home and family which may frighten away some men who want no commitment from attempting a casual sexual relationship with her. On the other hand, the divorced

woman without children could be assumed by men to be sexually experienced, available and unencumbered by present or former ties. The sexual availability of a single woman, however, would, on initial encounter, be a mystery to a man for he has no social indicator such as marital status to determine the amount of her sexual experience.

One inference that can be drawn from the primarily negative results of this study is that sexual experience, as defined by one's marital and parental status, is no longer a primary or sole factor in the devaluation of women. Exchange theory proposes that youth and physical attractiveness as well as one's sexual newness are a woman's primary feminine assets (Safilios-Rothchild, 1977), but the validity of the importance of these assets may rest on possessing them as a whole rather than in part. In particular, the age of divorced women was not considered in this study as a factor that devalues women even though the remarriage rate for women over the age of 40 is very low (Bell, 1975; Keys, 1975). Nevertheless, it is possible that with the increased divorce rate and the increasing number of divorced women, the traditional stereotypes for women may be breaking down by the weight of sheer numbers. Women who are sexually experienced vis-a-vis marital and parental status may no longer

receive the label of "badness" in which the label may find its fundamental use in the minds of men intimidated by women's budding sexuality (Komarovsky, 1976).

Some of the authors mentioned in this study believe that men and women are moving toward more parity in their sex roles. Bardwick (1979) states that there is a gradual shift to perceive sex as morally acceptable outside of marriage in which the change that is most apparent is in the increased number of young couples who are unmarried and living together. The largest direction of change appears to be that men are adopting women's traditional morality so that the precondition for sex is affection and love. While this is still a minority pattern, Bardwick feels that these values signify what the majority opinion will become. Another important emerging change, according to Safilios-Rothchild (1977), is the decline of the sexual double standard that defines virginity and sexual ignorance as desirable traits for a woman and the beginning of a new definition of desirability that includes sexual expressiveness and sexual competence. Komarovsky (1976), reported, however, that women's expanding sexual freedom would pose a threat for many men who retain the sexual double standard, and therefore the belief that the sexual initiative is exclusively the man's domain.

These men, according to Komarovsky, feel menaced and repelled by the woman's sexual initiative because it challenges their sense of male superiority in the area of sexual activity where making love to a woman who is more skilled sexually would make them feel less masculine and less in control of the relationship.

Komarovsky, Pietropinto & Simenauer (1971) and Wiseman (1976) believe that social attitudes among men and women are changing toward a single standard or parity in their respective sex roles; but that these attitudes are not always observed in practice so that the double standard is often strongly rejected intellectually, yet practiced behaviorally in the relationship.

The transition from old traditional standards of sexual behavior to a new standard that approves of sexual experience and competence from women may make the sexual issues for divorced women and divorced women with children the same sexual issues all women have regardless of their marital and parental status. Single women may now be viewed as sexually experienced and are delineated by their marital status rather than an assumption of sexual purity. Hence, there may be few single women who chose to remain virgins if there is no social stigma connected with sexual competence.

The uniqueness of the status of divorced women

and the dissatisfaction many of them feel about their life (Campbell, et. al., 1976) may be the result of psycho-social factors other than or in addition to those concerning their sexuality. Speculatively, one of these factors may be the trauma to one's identity attributed too heavy a dependence upon the identity of their former husbands and thus substituting his identity for her own. Women who are likely to suffer most from identity loss through divorce are those women who are unskilled or lack a profession of their own (Wiseman, 1976). Another factor that may lead some women who are divorced with children to despair is the conflict between the fear that a new husband will not accept their children and the emotional need for male companionship. Additionally, the market of men willing to share in the rearing of children that are not biologically their own may be more limited in actual numbers than the market of men available to women without children.

The method utilized in this study was to present a script to subjects of an evening out with a woman and vary only the woman's marital and parental status in each script. (See Appendix B) The questions that followed were designed to quiz subjects on their impressions of the woman in the script and in particular, how sexually accessible they viewed her. There was no

particular attempt to disguise the intent or purpose of the study, and two of the male subjects became openly angered at the notion of the researcher's attempt to measure any possible prejudice toward women that they may have. Hence, three factors appear to be most prominent in the explanation of the negative results of this research. One factor is that the intent and purpose of the study was too obvious to the subject. For subjects who were intellectually aware of possible sex role disparities, the easily discernable nature of the script could provoke an attitudinal or philosophical reaction to the study rather than a response that coincides with their actual feelings or behavior. The second factor is the choice of subjects. All subjects were chosen from undergraduate psychology classes whose awareness of sex role stereotypes is likely greater than the population at large; and because they are involved in the study of human behavior, it is more probable that they have developed an idealistic-philosophical or intellectual stance on this issue, whether or not they practice it in their own life. Finally, the script itself appeared to be too weak a stimulus to provoke an emotional or visceral response from the subjects. The short length of the script and the impersonal nature of the script, which was designed in order to avoid

extraneous factors, required that subjects bring too much of their own life experience into a brief imaginary situation. The low impact of the experimental manipulation was particularly inadequate with the population of subjects utilized.

In conclusion, the major results of this study did not support the hypotheses. The marital and parental status of a woman were not viewed by subjects as significant social indicators of her sexual accessibility and, hence, divorced women did not appear to be devalued in respect to their sexual experience or use that was a result of their former marriage. One explanation that was offered for these findings was that the traditional methods of evaluating a woman's worth are breaking down so that the sexual experience of a woman may be seen as somewhat irrelevant. Another explanation of these finding was in the area of the methodology in which the experimental manipulation of the independent variables of marital and parental status appeared to have too little impact on the subjects, possibly due to the script that was overly simplified and relied too heavily on the subject's imagination. Issues that are unique to divorced women and divorced women with children were also addressed. Further research for these special groups is needed to more fully understand the impact

of divorce on women's lives. Further research on the sexual discrimination toward divorced women should be done using a more substantive and engaging set of stimuli, possibly videotape.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

Instructions to Subjects

This is a social experiment that concerns how we perceive and act toward others. So much of what we know is how women feel and think about men, but there is a great deal to be learned about how men and women respond to women. Everyday we make judgements about the people we meet in which we may not always be aware of the experience we have had that have come together to form that judgement. The materials I am about to give you describe a social situation with a woman. I would like you to read the script as if you are the man in the script and answer all the questions that follow. If you are a woman, please respond as if you were the man, and not the woman.

## APPENDIX B

Script

A co-worker has approached you at work and asked if you would be willing to go on a blind date. This person stated that she had little description of this woman other than she is single (divorced, divorced with children) and thought you might have a good time. Thinking that you have been wanting to meet new people, you obtain her phone number and call her. As you talk with her you learn that she enjoys dancing, so arrangements are made for dinner and dancing.

Early Saturday evening you arrive at her home to pick her up. When she greets you at the door she smiles and introduces herself to you. As you introduce yourself you notice that she really looks good in the dress she is wearing. You tell her so and she laughs and thanks you for the compliment. You are off for the evening.

Over dinner you notice that she is quite at ease with you; and you are pleasantly surprised that she is an easy person to talk to. In no time you are sharing back and forth spontaneously; and you note a witty and energetic quality in the way she expresses herself.

In response to one of your questions you learn how she feels about being single (divorced, divorced with children).

From dinner you go straight to the disco club. You really have a good time dancing and talking with her; but before you know it, it is time to take her home. What do you think will happen next?

## APPENDIX C

Read each question and circle one answer.

1. Which of the following do you think she might permit?

do	kiss her	neck	feeling her	have
nothing	good night	with her	body intimately	intercourse
<u>I</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>I</u>

2. Which of the following would you attempt?

do	kiss her	neck	feeling her	have
nothing	good night	with her	body intimately	intercourse
<u>I</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>I</u>

3. Which of the following would you like to do with her?

do	kiss her	neck	feeling her	have
nothing	good night	with her	body intimately	intercourse
<u>I</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>I</u>

4. Which of the following do you think she would want you to do?

do	kiss her	neck	feeling her	have
nothing	good night	with her	body intimately	intercourse
<u>I</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>I</u>

5. Given the information that you have, how sexually accessible do you see this woman?

not at all	1	2	3	4	5	highly
sexually						sexually
accessible						accessible

6. Do you think the particular man she is with will make any difference in her sexual responsiveness?

highly	1	2	3	4	5	highly
unlikely						likely
to make a						to make a
difference						difference

7. If she did not respond to you sexually, how likely is it that you would want to see her again?

highly	1	2	3	4	5	highly
unlikely						likely
to see her						to see her
again						again

8. If she does not respond to you sexually, how likely is it that she will want to go out with you again?

highly unlikely to go out with you	1	2	3	4	5	highly likely to go out with you
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9. If she did respond to you sexually how likely is it that you would want to take her out again?

highly unlikely to go out with her	1	2	3	4	5	highly likely to go out with her
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10. If she did respond to you sexually, how likely is it that she would want to go out with you again?

highly unlikely to go out with you	1	2	3	4	5	highly likely to go out with you
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