

Sandra Caron. *The Sex Lives of College Students: Two Decades of Attitudes and Behaviors*. 2013. Maine College Press.

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1 Sandra Caron, the author of *The Sex Lives of College Students: Two Decades of Attitudes and Behaviors*, produces the largest survey on college students' sexual lives over a span of two decades. With an annual survey with students in her human sexuality class at a mid-sized public university, the University of Maine, she traces the similarities and differences between the two-decade old generation and the present generation. The survey, with close to 5000 students, includes 100 questions on almost all aspects of sexual attitudes and behaviors. In addition, to reflect the changing trend, she also adds questions relevant to today's students and social context. As she acknowledges, the survey cannot be generalized to all college students in the country. Her work is to provide a portrayal of the changing trend on sexual patterns among college students. It is definitely one of the most ambitious academic studies on sex among college students.

2 The author mainly focuses on the comparison between men and women as well as generational difference between two decades. The former focus enables us to know how college men and women at present are similar or different in their sexual behaviors and attitudes. The latter enables us to see if men and women have changed and what has changed. She divides her book into several sections, including sexual behaviors, sexual attitudes, parental influence, safer sex and HIV/AIDS, etc. One section contains new questions. I will discuss a few results that are worthy of in-depth exploration.

3 One major issue that stands out is surprising yet predictable at the same time. It is the persistence of double standards for men and women irrespective of the progress women have made through the women's movement in the 1970s. These college students are asked if they have lied about how many people they have been with sexually. 78% of college students reply that they are always honest, which seems surprisingly high. The present statistic is no different from that from 20 years ago. What is interesting to note is the difference between men and women among the 22% of the students who lie. For men, they will increase the number of partners when asked by other men. They will decrease the number when asked by potential female partners. This should not be a surprise since the number of sexual partners heightens

these young men's sense of manhood and proves their 'heterosexual' hegemonic masculinity. This would elicit the approval and respect from their peers. For women, they would underreport regardless who asks the questions. This is where the double standard comes in. Women, if they admit that they have been with a number of partners, would be deemed as promiscuous, slutty and immoral. Other scholars have also pointed out a paradox. That is, women are expected to be sexually demure in public yet sexually sophisticated in bed. With the progress of women's status in society, women are still not truly empowered to express their sexuality. Women's sexual desire and sexual behaviors continue to be under intense scrutiny. Sexuality remains at the forefront of social regulations and the most difficult battle in achieving gender equality.

4 Another question that reflects the double standard is if these students have ever faked orgasms. More than 56% of the students indicate that they have faked an orgasm. What is more astonishing is that, while 28 percent of men indicate that they have faked an orgasm, a high percentage of women (69%) indicate that they have done so. Furthermore, there is a huge increase of faking orgasms among college students from early 1990s to 2010, from 33% to 50%. This huge gap is a result of the increase of women faking orgasms. While women fake an orgasm in order not to hurt their partner's feeling and to boost their ego, it is also a way for women to ensure their partners and themselves that there is nothing wrong with them. The question is why a much higher percentage of women these days feel pressured to perform orgasms. Why do young women feel the need, more so than two decades ago, to ensure their partner's ego and manhood through faking orgasms when the main goal of sex should be about pleasure? Why do women as well as men continue to believe that they would and should experience orgasms through intercourse? It should not come as a surprise that the Internet and the availability of pornography are students' primary source of information about sexual acts. Students learn how one should react, act, and talk during sex. They also learn that orgasms should be the end goal of sex rather than pleasure itself. Women in pornography have orgasms through intercourse when most women do not. College students might not understand that these women are the object of (male) gaze and the focus of the camera is mostly on the performance on their face throughout. The money shot is a demanded scene and cum on women's face and her enjoyment of it reinforces the idea that women deserve and enjoy humiliation and degradation. Sex ends when

men orgasm. As the author points out, most college students are simply performing what they think sex should be rather than actually having sex.

5 While the data allows us to have a glance of all facets of college students' sexual attitudes and behaviors, there are also some major weaknesses in this study. The author compares only men and women in the survey. Yet gender is only one component of one's identities. Men and women of different races, class status, religion, culture, and sexual orientation would have different sexual attitudes and behaviors. Simply focusing on gender differences is to lose out the complexity and intricacy of college students' sexual lives. As the author admits, the majority of the students are white and Christian. This particular background among survey participants definitely determines certain results. Second, the survey questions are hetero-centric. For example, sex is defined as intercourse between men and women. It raises the question how gay and lesbian students answer the survey questions. It seems to make sense for the author to have a critical reflection on the above issues and the specific positional and epistemological frame that constrains what and how questions are asked. The other issue is that the book suffers from the lack of in-depth discussions to explain the results. The explanations provided only scratch the surfaces and can broaden readers' knowledge to a certain degree.

6 The most problematic issue of the book is its self-presentation. The survey is taken at a particular human sexuality class at a mid-sized public university. The students who take this human sexuality class mostly come from social sciences majors and are already self-selective. The survey results do not even represent the student population as a whole at the University of Maine, not to mention college students at the region and in the whole country. The author briefly mentions that the survey results do not represent the whole student population in the country in both introduction and conclusion without stressing more specifically what implications of this limited scope mean. Even though the author mentions that the survey cannot be generalized, she states that the results give us some knowledge of college students' sex lives. I applaud the fact that the book is written in a very accessible way that can appeal to a wide range of audience, including undergraduate students and the general public. Yet the brief mentioning of limited generalizability, the contradictory claim of a glimpse of college students' sex lives, and the general title are rather misleading, particularly for undergraduates or the general public. Unfortunately this problem colors the ambitious efforts the author has taken.