

A Clinical Appraisal of Some Sexually Promiscuous Females

MARCUS S. W. MCBROOM, Ph.D.

*Psychotherapist, Psychometrist and Marriage Counselor,
Julian W. Ross Medical Center, Los Angeles, California*

THERE have been many guesses as to what makes a woman "easy". Maybe she did not have a careful upbringing. Maybe her mother never had a heart to heart talk with her and never pointed out that unless she were discriminating she would not get a husband. Maybe she is over-sexed, stronger and lustier than most women, and consequently finds men irresistible. These are the more common guesses. But how accurate are they?

For the last 50 years, scientists have studied female psychology more intimately than ever before. By analyzing thousands of cases, psychologists have discovered the behavior patterns of "easy women". We no longer have to guess what makes these women different from women of normal virtue. We know.

By "easy women" we do not mean prostitutes. Many members of the "oldest profession" are driven to it by poverty, a large number are feeble minded and almost all are frigid.

We are talking about the large number of women in the American communities today who simply do not say no. This includes the woman who falls into your bed—or anyone else's—on the first date; the woman who gets a terrific crush on every man she meets; and the woman who just isn't comfortable with a man until she sleeps with him (nymphomania).

All of these women, psychotherapists tell us, have one thing in common: they use sex as a means of escaping from their anxieties. They use it like a drug to allay their economic insecurity; to lull the fear that they are unwanted, despised, and unlovable; to hop them up to the point where they can trap and dominate men; to free themselves from feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Sex is no longer a great pleasure and a deep satisfaction; for these women, it becomes the panacea for all ills, what the famous psychiatrist, Dr. Karen Horney, has called the "neurotic need for affection". This neurotic need, Dr. Horney points out, often takes the form of a sexual infatuation or an insatiable hunger for sexual gratifi-

cation.^{1, 2}

In order to understand more clearly what the late Dr. Horney was getting at, let us first look at the case of an "easy woman" who uses sexuality to deaden her sense of economic insecurity. "Anise" was employed on a newspaper. She earned a good salary and had many friends and contacts in her profession. She was beautiful, young, and popular. One evening, the boss propositioned her, and she did not say no. Then, several other men important in the newspaper world also propositioned her. She said yes to them all. She soon had the reputation of being a good-time girl, and she thought of herself that way.

Anise never lets herself think for an instant that there was any economic motivation in sleeping with these men. She always thought of herself as an independent woman who did not have to lean on men for anything and certainly as one who could make her own choice when she wanted a jolly bedfellow.

However, one striking fact emerges from even a glance at her relationships over a five-year period. All of her numerous sexual partners were men of power and prestige. She was bitter about the fact that she was at a disadvantage in a man's world; she felt that she was at a disadvantage with all male competitors. Sleeping with men of power and prestige gave her an edge over these male competitors. They had no possibility of getting close to the boss in quite the same way. Sexual contact with men in important positions gave her a feeling of reassurance, that she might call on them later if she needed them, and that they might help her to success.

Anise had had an insecure childhood, with a father who did not support the family and who never gave her the love and protection which every girl needs from her father. She grew up with a fierce determination to rely on herself and herself alone. She was repressing the longings for the male protection that she had been denied. She actually had a stronger craving for male protection

than most women, precisely because these feelings remained buried in her unconscious, hidden under an exterior of self-sufficiency and over-independence. Sleeping with men of power and prestige was her way of searching for that protection. Anise was not a "gold digger" in the ordinary sense. She would have been insulted had a man offered her money, for instance, such as in the part portrayed by Elizabeth Taylor in "Butterfield 8". Yet, she exploited these men by borrowing money and using them in a great variety of ways.

Anise's idealizations of herself seem silly and naive in view of the cold facts that she never slept with any man who did not have money and prestige, and always slept with her bosses. She kidded herself that she was choosing all these men to gratify her super-abundant sexuality, but the fact is that most of these men were not particularly virile. They had sedentary jobs, and in varying degrees had been softened up by inertia, nervousness, ulcers, and alcoholism. It is not surprising that Anise's co-workers and friends were all aware of her exploitative motivations. Anise's own inability to look at the fact is typical of neurotic behavior.

Of course, not all women who sleep with the boss are as blind in reality as Anise. Many women candidly admit that they sleep with the boss because they are insecure. As one woman told a social worker recently, "If my job runs out, I won't necessarily have to pay an agency. There are several men in the city I've gone to bed with who would be delighted to give me a job or place me with a friend." She had been brought into a neighborhood home for wayward girls because of a violent fight with one of these men; and there, in talks with the psychologist, the story of a whole series of such affairs came out. But she resented her subservient, shameful position, and the psychologist found out that each one of these affairs had ended in a similar violent fight.

Thousands like this young woman and like Anise who are "easy" for economic reasons find it too painful to admit that they, like prostitutes, sell their sexuality. These young women make up an amazing variety of rationalizations to cover up the true motives for their behavior.

The second type of "easy" woman whom the psychologists have studied is our friend the Bohemian rebel. Take the example of "Dorothy", a painter from the New Orleans French Quarter,

who revolted against Victorian restrictions and advertised her emancipation to anybody who would pay attention. It was her belief that she was the most highly-sexed woman since Cleopatra.

An art collector admired some of Dorothy's paintings in an exhibition and made an appointment to discuss buying one of them. When he arrived at her flat and pulled the bell-rope, a feminine voice called, "Come in." Pushing open the heavy antique door, he entered a large, dim room. In the center of it was a canopied Victorian bed upon which reclined the artist, naked as a jaybird. He recognized her immediately from her self-portraits. "Why did it take you so long, baby?" she crooned, and held out her arms. The flabbergasted art collector excused himself as well as he could. Ironically, he didn't care for women (homosexual).

Whenever Dorothy appeared in public she was surrounded by men, and generally from three to five men took her home.

Dorothy, like Anise, thought of herself as "highly-sexed", and proclaimed everywhere that she could never get enough men. The fact is that she was frigid and that in all relationships she never reached a sexual climax.

Dorothy was the daughter of prudish and unusually hide-bound parents. Even as an adolescent, her greatest fear was that she, like her folks, would miss the pleasures of life. The movie, "Savage Eye," serves as an example of this. At 16, she ran away from home. She made of her whole life a wild and voracious quest for sexual gratification. Every time she went to bed with a man, it was an act of rebellion against her over-strict parents.

Yet, she never escaped from her prudish background. For all her unrestrained sexual activity, what she feared most was a lover who could arouse strong feeling in her and thus give her true sexual fulfillment. All her parents' teaching that sex was evil and dirty remained in her mind under the facade of Bohemian rebellion. Unconsciously, afraid of "Hell's Fire", she engaged in a series of hit-and-run affairs so that she would never have a chance to become fully involved sexually. She lived at such a hysterical pace that she never saw reality, she never realized how pathetic her glorification of herself as a highly-sexed rebel against convention really was.

In ancient Rome, there was an empress named

Messallina with such an insatiable hunger for men that she used to disguise herself as a prostitute and pass her nights in an élite bordello, a gathering place for the sensualists and sybarites of the period. No amount of exacerbated sexual relations—in this den of iniquity or in the other fleshpots that hastened the fall of the Roman Empire—enabled the empress to reach a climax, with its blissful, relaxing aftermath balm of marriage which some of her friends were cruel enough to describe to her. Although Messallina claimed that she was making a passionate search for satisfaction, her chief motive was to prove that no man was potent enough for her, that she was stronger than any of them.

The famous Vienesé psychiatrist, Dr. Wilhelm Steckel, has called Messallina the prototype of the modern woman who uses her sexuality in the attempt to dominate men and to prove herself superior to them.³ The kind of "easy" woman who suffers from this neurosis is said to have a Messallina complex.

Like Messallina herself, women with this complex are frequently rich and powerful. A well-known actress, who comes from a wealthy and socially prominent family, gets her men anywhere and everywhere, so long as they have brawn and sexual vigor. And she also likes women—not so much because she is a lesbian, but because she is one of those types described by Dr. Horney as being so indiscriminate that they do not even care to which sex their partner belongs.

This actress is strictly the aggressive type. She lets her partners, invariably of a lower economic class, know first, last, and always that she is the boss. During the course of all her relationships, she manages to humiliate her partners and to show her own dominance.

A husky sailor who was picked up by the actress, and had no idea who she was, was led from her bedroom into a drawing room full of her fashionable and decadent friends. After several ladies had examined his muscles as though he were the prize bull in a "Fat Stock Show," the actress then led all the guests in making sexy wisecracks at his expense. They finally goaded him into swinging at one of the men. Then two liveried butlers beat him up for the entertainment of one and all and threw him into the street.

Like Messallina, this actress kids herself that she is a sexual super-woman. Actually, remaining

in control, keeping 100 per cent power over other people, is much more important to her than pleasure. Since having a sexual climax is a kind of letting go, an admission that one's sexual partner has the power to move one, our thespian can never tolerate this. Accordingly, she can never reach sexual orgasm. Gratification of the power drive becomes her own twisted version of fulfillment.

"Daisy" was another patient that fell into an interesting Messallina homosexual involvement. She was the product of a broken home and promiscuous and alcoholic border-line mother. She "hates her father." She had been raped by a "church deacon" as a girl of eight and fondled by a teacher in high school. She readily agreed to become the "wife" of a "dear" older woman friend. However, on several occasions she would make attempts at heterosexual adjustment. On one of these sojourns when she was "drinking heavily" she permitted her closest male friend, a musician, to make love to her. She returned home pledging ever to love her "husband" and unknowingly passed semen to her. Shortly after, both discovered themselves to be pregnant. The child of the older woman was aborted and the other was born with diabetic complications.

Daisy has refused to give the baby to the father although there are fears about "who is really the father." This is a rare case of sexual perversion in which the patient wants to feel she was impregnated by her mother. The older woman insists "nobody is going to take 'our baby'".

The last kind of "easy" woman whom psychologists have described and tried to help is a product of our impersonal and lonely city life. This is the woman who is so friendless and isolated that she is really desperate in her need for affection. She uses sexuality whenever she can to establish any human contact at all.

Take the tragic case of "Susan", who came to Los Angeles during the war from Des Moines to take a job in an office. She had a quiet and retiring personality and no friends in the city. She was not the kind of woman who stands out in a crowd—she was not beautiful, vivacious, or talented. But she was a decent, fine woman who should have had a husband and children, but never found the chance even to get well acquainted with any men. Several years of being cold-shouldered in the hard, impersonal business world

made her a push-over for any man who cared to look at her twice.

Susan was naturally a passionate woman, but her opportunity for a well-adjusted sex life had been thwarted by circumstances. She was a "nice girl," and didn't think it was proper to go out of her way to attract the attention of a man (bad girl).

Hoping to make friends, she took a course at night school. When her teacher commended her work, it was the warmest approval she had received for years. So she began to center all the passionate hopes of her poor, starved life around this man whom she did not know at all, except in the friendly but formal atmosphere of the classroom. For months, she spun fantasies about him as her lover. She never spoke a word in class and never dared to show by even a glance what her feelings really were. Yet, had he made the most casual pass at her, she would have been a complete pushover.

At the end of the term, she suddenly realized that he was about to go out of her life forever, and in deepest despair wrote him a declaration of passionate love, and an invitation to a rendezvous. She warned him that her life would be ruined, and that she would regard herself as failure if he refused her.

Being quite a Don Juan, the teacher hopped into a cab and rushed over to her apartment, congratulating himself that he could cut another notch in his bedpost. Afterwards, when she called him again, he brutally and cynically fobbed her off. Having given all, and feeling now that she had lost all, Susan committed suicide.

She was a victim of a situation described by Dr. Kinsey, who points out that women's need for sexual outlet and the opportunities provided are not commensurate.⁴

Those of us who flatter ourselves on making easy conquests often say that the women can not resist our male prowess and charm. Actually, there is nothing to brag about, because there is seldom anything personal in the "easy" woman's choice. What we think of as an eager, passionate haste to enjoy our unique charms is with the great majority of such conquests the cold, compulsive behavior of a woman driven by *insecurity, desperate loneliness, or the wish to dominate*.

We preen ourselves over the passionate experiences we have enjoyed with such women. The

fact is that women like Anise, Dorothy, and the actress with the Messallina complex are almost invariably frigid because of their neuroses, although they may be adept at simulating passion.

A truly passionate woman tends to be discriminating. She knows that she is quite a juicy apple for any man, and that consequently she can pick and choose to please herself. She has the common sense to realize that she will not find real sexual fulfillment in casual contacts, or with men she hardly knows. If we are looking for deeply satisfying sex, let us not kid ourselves that we will find it by taking advantage of some "easy" woman.

The women with strong, healthy sex are not "easy". They are not frigid and give to life one of its greatest meanings—the sharing and the begetting of a miracle—new life coming from the old.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Description of the promiscuous sexual behavior of a number of women has been presented. The patterns have been shown to have both sociological as well as psychological roots. In this context, on a clinical level, sociologically several of these women used sex to escape from economic insecurities. Psychologically, these women are the prototypes of many women in the United States today suffering from feelings of not being wanted, that they are unlovable, despised and isolated. In a word, they suffer from a severe unresolved Oedipus complex. In the main, they suffer from a break down in the fusing process, the inability as children to accept their parents as both "heroes" (fathers) or "angels" (Virgin mothers)—the good (or God) and as sexual beings (having or enjoying sex, 'dirty-bad-Devil') plus over-abundance of dehumanizing and deadening influences from the culture. All suffered from total or partial frigidity occasioned by incestuous fantasies that plagued them from their days of masturbation. Several were bi-sexual. Their homosexuality was revealed to be related to "castration anxiety". One woman who played the aggressive (male) role imagines herself capable of introjecting the passive partner (female) role. One patient having lost the parent object upon which she depended for narcissistic supplies, felt totally rejected. She regressed to the oral stage and incorporated the object (lover).

The sadism, which was originally directed against the "deserting father", with the resultant

guilt, was taken up by the patient's super-ego and she committed suicide. This occurred not so much as an attempt on the ego's part to escape the inexorable demands of the super-ego, but as an enraged attack on the incorporated parent, in retaliation for having deserted the parent in the first place.

All the women were depressives. Only one of these women had had the strong secure protectiveness that each girl needs from her father.

LITERATURE CITED

1. HORNEY, K. *The Neurotic Personality of Our Times*. N. Y., 1937.
2. HORNEY, K. *The Problem of Feminine Masochism*. *Psychoanalytic Rev.*, v. 22, 1935.
3. STECKEL, W. *Frigidity in Woman*, Vol. I, II, Liveright, 1926.
4. KINSEY, A. C. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*. W. B. Saunders Co., Phila., 1953.

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION TWICE PICKETED

On two occasions two weeks apart the American Medical Association was picketed by two different groups in protest of its inaction and apparent indifference with respect to hospital discrimination. The first demonstration was on June 20, 1963, in front of the Hotel Traymore in Atlantic City, N. J., where the A.M.A. House of Delegates was meeting during the Annual Convention of the A.M.A. The second was on July 3 before the A.M.A. headquarters at 535 N. Dearborn St. in Chicago.

The June 20 demonstration was sponsored by the Medical Committee for Civil Rights, a new bi-racial body formed by Dr. Walter J. Lear, a public health consultant of New York City. Dr. John L. S. Holloman, a trustee of the National Medical Association, is chairman of the Committee. In addition to Drs. Lear and Holloman, Dr. Robert Smith of Jackson, Miss., participated in the picketing.

The Chicago demonstration was held under the auspices of the N.A.A.C.P. which was holding its annual convention there. Three physician members of the N.A.A.C.P. national Board of Directors, participated. They were Dr. W. Montague Cobb, chairman of the N.A.A.C.P. National Health Committee, Dr. Maurice Rabb of Louisville, Ky. and Dr. J. Leonidas Leach of Flint, Mich. From the Cleveland Branch were Dr. Kenneth W. Clement, president-elect of the National Medical Association, and Harold Williams, executive secretary of the Branch. There were also two dentists, Dr. Nathan K. Christopher of Cleveland, a member of the national N.A.A.C.P. Board and Dr. R. C. Delph of Mississippi.