

Former professor's concept

# Sexual gradualism viewed as a middle ground

By Ward W. Triplett III

The book cover claims sexual gradualism is a "solution to the sexual dilemma of teen-agers and young adults."

Its author, a former UNL professor, says gradualism is a middle ground between the prevalent choices regarding sex, and, if enough people listen, it could become a third, workable choice for adolescents to have sexual fun and integrity.

Sexual gradualism is a process-oriented approach to learning the physical skills of sexuality along with the psychological aspects of sexual intimacy.

"The emphasis is on informed caring," said Paul Cameron, the author of *Sexual Gradualism*, who is currently in private practice in marriage and family counseling in Lincoln.

"Our current sexual setup is like a go-no-go system. Either a person has to abstain from sexuality, or he has to go all the way," Cameron said.

Through his experience in counseling he came to believe that neither way was totally reasonable. Cameron said he developed the gradualism concept and is now preparing to go national with the idea.

"The average book in America sells

about 500 copies, and we sold 3,000," Cameron said. "That was the first printing. Now we will have our first ad in a large national magazine next month in *Psychology Today*."

The gradualism system is divided into five "informed-caring" categories, and eight levels of physical intimacy, which Cameron said should go hand in hand.

**Conversation important**

The five caring levels depend much on conversation time, which Cameron measures by hours. Level five would include the couples considering what kinds of accommodations the two can make for each other, who is giving in to whom and why, and more.

The eight physical levels begin with just being near another person, where barely brushing against a person, or touching, has special meaning.

Level two includes holding hands, touching arms, hugging and embracing, while level three involves kissing.

While these levels can be reached very easily, the next five should take more time to master, Cameron said.

Level four is breast fondling. The most significant, and most carefully thought out, step is made to level five, which Cameron calls mutual manual genital manipulation.

Level six is nudity, accompanied by physical stimulation. Level seven is oral-genital activity. Level eight, sexual intercourse, should always follow marriage, according to Cameron.

Cameron explained that these steps should provide a couple satisfying sexual pleasure without the risk of pregnancy, venereal disease, loss of status and other problems that accompany premarital sex.

"Children of our society ought to ascend the sexual ladder gradually," Cameron writes at the beginning of his book.

Gradualism's most important part is communication, Cameron said.

"The major problem with most of the couples I see is that they don't talk; to do."

they won't communicate. We're a pretty verbal society, so it shouldn't be impossible to do."

**Both must agree**

In gradualism, nothing happens unless both agree, he said. A couple should not advance to another level before the couple talks things out to decide if they are compatible and want to continue.

"I don't think it's unreasonable to talk about sexual matters," Cameron said.

"The usual way of doing things says the guy is supposed to be aggressive, and he makes all of the 'moves.' If the couple is kissing, he lets his hand grab or run across

**Correction**

In Tuesday's article on India Night, C. S. Sodhi, president of the India Association was misquoted. The story said Sodhi said he had set up the program without much help from Vice President Ahley Gokhale. Sodhi said Gokhale actually had a big part in planning the Sunday-night event.

the breasts. If that's OK with her, he goes on."

Cameron said the proper procedure would be for the male to express his desire to fondle the breasts to the female.

"I know that's kind of a hard thing to say. When I was young, I remember it was hard to talk about anything, much less sexual matters," Cameron said.

"But you ought to have courage to say that if it's serious, and people have to remember sex is a serious matter."

Gradualism also is intended to remove some of the reticent attitudes women have about sex, as well as the "genitalia only" ideal most men are reared with, Cameron said.

"Very frequently, I talk to people who did not really know each other when they got married," Cameron said.

He added that gradualism could reduce his counseling clientele substantially since there would be a good chance that couples would already be aware of problems that arise in marriage, and an even better chance that they could resolve them a lot easier.

**Virginity**

"I am concerned about virginity, under the notion that it's a good thing for a couple that's getting married to give something special to one another," Cameron said.

"Three of my clients just this year, all young fellows who married non-virgins, tell me it is horribly distressing to them now. They don't think very highly of their own wives," Cameron said.

While Cameron said he hasn't received any significant negative reaction to the book, he admitted, there are objections and doubts about the theory.

"If you rear people to believe sex is uncontrollable, they will think that. If people are taught it is controllable, it will be," he added.

The average time for levels two through seven should take two to three years for the normal couple, Cameron said.

"I have talked to couples who may have reached level six or seven and stayed there for sometime, and have yet to reach level eight," Cameron said. "So it definitely can be done and it is," he added.

How realistic is gradualism?  
"I have hopes," Cameron said. "I'm hoping for a culture change more in line with sexual gradualism."

"I have young adolescent children and I want them to have some sexual fun," Cameron said. "I think that's kind of neat."

Cameron said the concept is very much in line with Christian principles. He said the idea has been supported by several Lincoln churches, although other groups have wavered on it.

"The right-to-lifers have criticized it for being too liberal, and Planned Parenthood has said it's too conservative," Cameron said.

He said he expects about 70 percent of the population could profit from the book.

"It's always the extremists who talk to each other through the letters to the editor and so forth," Cameron said. "But the middle is really the group that runs our social structure."

"If they can pick this idea up, start teaching it to their children, I think in a few years the abortion rate will drop, teenage pregnancy would be nearly eliminated, and I may get put out of work," he said.

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