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Modern American Evangelical Conceptions of Girls' Virginity: Their Origins in Patriarchal Property Discourse of Deuteronomic Family Laws

Carly Matas

Introduction:

On the modern-day American political scene, culture wars wage on regarding the sexual behavior of adolescents and how best to regulate it. Often, conservative Christians will fight for abstinence-only education programs for students, suggesting that sexual purity is the most Biblically sound option. However, an examination of the Deuteronomy 22 text regarding female virginity reveals that the Deuteronomic family laws were generally more concerned with maintaining patriarchal control and with fulfilling the practical contractual components that would ensure marriage and financial security for young women. Often it seems that modern Evangelicals project their view of abstinence as a purity concern onto the Biblical texts, despite the anthropological evidence that sexual laws belonged to the property code. Interestingly, both the ancient Israelites and the modern Church seem to have more investment in sexual purity as an issue of property than the modern Church seems willing to admit. It is this element of patriarchy and the view of women's virginity as male property that seems to have carried over into contemporary evangelical conception of teen sexuality, as fathers take vows to guard their daughters' virginity and girls wear purity rings proclaiming their fathers' ownership over them until their wedding day. However, it is this second aspect of ancient Israelite pragmatism that is both lacking and desperately necessary in today's world of competing sexual scripts and moral codes. A study of both the Deuteronomic family laws and of modern-day notions of virginity reveal the importance of increasing girls' sense of agency over their sexual behavior, both freeing them from the external pressure of patriarchal control of a father or church authority and allowing them to choose healthy sexual practices for themselves.

Context of Old Testament World:

As Biblical scholar L. William Countryman aptly points out, "To include the Bible in our conversations [of sexual ethics], we have to explore the differences between the worlds of the Bible and those of our times" (255). Thus, in exploring the underlying themes and intention of the marriage laws in Deuteronomy 22, it

is important to recognize the wholly different societal structure of the Old Testament world as compared to that of the modern Western world. First and perhaps most strikingly is the concept of “family” as it existed in Mediterranean antiquity: Rather than being the nuclear family we recognize as normative today, families in ancient Israel were laterally expansive kinship groups—in fact, the common biblical term *bet ‘abot*, meaning “father’s house,” refers to collective kinship sharing “a conscious solidarity based on communal ownership of lands” (Collins, 105). In a society of communal land ownership based on kinship identity, knowing who “belongs” where is both imperative and complicated to determine. Because women were generally viewed as a dominant male’s possessions (Countryman 146), marriage itself was thus rendered “a pragmatic instrument for securing rights to property and inheritance” (Collins, 109). In the Biblical world, a woman left her parents’ house to become “the property not merely of her husband, but of his family” (151). Thus, it was important for marriages to be contractual—hammering down details of bride price, familial connections, and paternity rights.

In the Old Testament world, the way of ensuring a proper and respectable marriage was if the woman involved was a virgin. Although in many ways the discourse on female virginity in contemporary society has become synonymous with issues of purity, Countryman argues that virginity’s main role in Biblical times as a guarantee of paternity and of the *bet ‘abot*’s ownership of a woman makes virginity more of a property issue than a purity one. Tivka Frymer-Kensky echoes Countryman’s sentiments, but raises an important question: “Western culture after the Bible has put so much emphasis on virginity and has attributed such importance to the biological condition of virginity...that we take such emphasis for granted and rarely ask ‘why’? Why should society place such great stock, or indeed care that its young women be virgins at marriage?” (81). Countryman offers several possible explanations, the foremost being the husband’s concern that he could “end up including in his household a child not his own” (153). However, Frymer-Kensky suggests that both the sheer “economic value in the labor of children” (81), and the fact that pre-marital pregnancy proves a woman’s fertility “and therefore... increases her worth” (81) disaffirm the prevalence of paternity as a main concern. Furthermore, Frymer-Kensky argues that, from a standpoint of sexual pleasure, it makes more sense for men to desire sexually experienced women. While there can clearly be endless speculation regarding the exact circumstances out of which women’s virginity came to be prized, Frymer-Kensky and other anthropologists agree that this valuation of virginity leads to the societal concept that “the male members of the family have the prerogative and the duty to maintain the chastity

of the young women of the family" (84), thereby turning a girl's chastity into "an indicator of the social worth of the family and the men in it" (84).

The importance of women's virginity in Mediterranean antiquity, then, was not simply a pragmatic issue of securing marriage between families, but involved strong issues of honor and shame that made up the social and emotional relationships between families in Old Testament society. As Carolyn Osiek explains, societal honor codes are generally "founded in gender roles and closely associated with sex" (325), in which "the honor of the family resides in its women, but men carry the responsibility for defending it, while women embody the potential for shame through their sexual conduct" (326). Thus, although the text of Deuteronomy focuses much on the sexual behavior of women, the true subjects of the text are the men who are responsible for her. While a girl is still living in her father's house, he is the master of her behavior and her virginity. Renata Rabcic explains, "A man of honor should possess integrity, nobility of spirit, he must be competent with regard to various problems and dangers, and know how to solve them" (53). For a woman to lose her virginity outside of a marriage contract arranged by her father, then, subjects her father and the other males of her household to the humiliation of not having been able to control the members of their household. If a man's duty is, in fact, to protect the honor of the women of his household, then cases of rape and adultery amount to the abject failure of this objective. Thus, although through a modern lens it might seem that the crimes of adultery and rape involve violation of the body or the individual, at the time of the Deuteronomic law it was a crime against of the honor of a family, a cause for shame to be brought down on the men whose responsibility it was to uphold certain societal expectations.

Interpretation of Laws as Progressive Texts:

Mosche Weinfeld argues that "the book of Deuteronomy...marks the transition from the narrow casuistic and statutory law corpus to the humanistic law code" (261). He posits that the laws of Deuteronomy 22, unlike their predecessors in other texts, are concerned with "securing the protection of the individual and particularly of those persons in need of protection" (261). While many scholars dispute this optimistic view of the Deuteronomic code as progressive for its time, there are several important arguments in its favor that cannot be ignored. Firstly, as Robert Hiebert reveals in his study of Deuteronomy 22, the use of a singular verb in the laws negates the possibility of women's guilt and responsibility in the text, thus placing "the focus of the legislation...on the man's responsibility for

the situation described, with respect both to its initiation and to its redress" (2). Women's lack of incrimination in the grammar of the text is suggestive of the fact that women are considered victims rather than perpetrators of the crimes listed. If Hiebert is to be believed, the texts were progressive in that they recognize rape as a crime and thus "consider the male involved to be the offender and the female to be the victim in no way liable for her misfortune" (10).

Another indicator of the laws' progressive nature lies in its differences from its prototype in Exodus. Exodus 22:16-17 reads, "If a man seduces a virgin who is not pledged to be married and sleeps with her, he must pay the bride-price, and she shall be his wife. If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he must still pay the bride-price for virgins." Deuteronomy 22:28-29, on the other hand, asserts, "If a man happens to meet a virgin who is not pledged to be married and rapes her and they are discovered, he shall pay her father fifty shekels of silver. He must marry the young woman, for he has violated her. He can never divorce her as long as he lives." In the first text, the father, as patriarchal head of the kinship group, has grounds to refuse to give his daughter to her rapist or seducer in marriage. From a modern perspective, this sounds like a more reasonable choice than that in Deuteronomy. However, in a context in which a non-virginal woman is considered unmarriageable damaged goods, to secure her a husband in the aftermath of her untimely defloration represents "decisive progress towards protecting the rights and titles of young women" (Otto 133). Furthermore, this law serves in a way to undermine the control of both the girl's father and her rapist, in that it "requires public shaming" (Matthews 110) of the man involved and also removes the father's authority to reject the marriage, which is perhaps the only way to salvage the woman's future.

Beyond simply providing women a source of financial and social security in the event of rape, some scholars argue that Deuteronomy 22 introduces the concept of subjective evidence, in which "the woman is a legal subject of her own... [and] her own will and intention becomes legally decisive" (Otto 134). To not only distinguish rape and adultery as separate offenses, but also to use evidence that suggests a woman's ability to consent or deny consent, gives women a legal identity wholly separate from that of her husband or father. The adultery laws also served to set women apart as legal subjects, requiring public trials to deal with cases of proven adultery so that issues of divorce were handled in the public eye by uniform regulations (Otto 136). From a modern-day perspective, these laws do not seem overwhelmingly progressive. However, their recognition of a woman's full participation in sexual acts "was a kind of limited (and back-handed) recogni-

tion of her humanity, that is, of her ability to make decisions for herself" (Countryman 153).

Alternative Interpretations of the Texts:

Eckart Otto may argue that the Deuteronomic family laws "paved the way for the modern emancipation of women already, in antiquity, and their authors deserve our respect" (140), but many feminist scholars tend to see these family laws as blatant continuations of patriarchal systems and male control. Beginning with the concepts of honor and shame, Carolyn Osiek argues that while women are accorded some agency in their ability to bring shame to a family, this potential to bring shame ultimately brands them "the 'weak link' that must be protected in order to be controlled" (326). Tikva Frymer-Kensky agrees with this assertion, systematically countering each of the arguments that could imply progress towards women's equality in the texts. Firstly, the argument that women are not viewed as perpetrators of the crimes in the text simply fuels Frymer-Kensky's belief that women were often simply used as pawns capable of inflicting loss of honor between men in society. Furthermore, the imposition of a law removing the father's privilege to deny the marriage of his daughter to her rapist simply serves to move the control "from the individual head-of-household in favor of the collective power of the local council and the state" (Frymer-Kensky 92), which is just a different and arguably more powerful form of patriarchal control. Thus, what looks on the surface to be a removal of oppressive patriarchal power is simply a reorganization of power to more centralized and regulated forms, which continue to leave women as subordinates whose own desires are largely left unconsidered.

Using the philosophy of Foucault, Harold Washington also raises issue with claims of progressiveness in the Deuteronomic family laws. In targeting the oversight that women can be raped in manifold circumstances, including in the town and city (if, say, her ability to loudly protest was forcefully removed or went unheard), Washington asserts, "The material issue of these laws is neither the consent of the woman nor the act of violence against her, but rather the man's status of ownership over the woman who is misused. The laws do not protect women against sexual violence; rather they secure men's property interests" (210). The fact that not the woman, but rather her father, receives payment in the event of a rape renders women a "fungible object...[thus] utterly effacing the woman's personhood" (Washington 211).

Despite Weinfeld's theory that the Deuteronomic family laws move away from casuistic law, the listing of consequences for various forms of adultery and rape

say otherwise; furthermore, they serve to make normative male violence against women, posing such violence as inevitable or natural acts for which laws must be made to regulate the outcome. Washington argues, “The laws are productive of violence: they render warfare and rape intelligible and acceptable, providing a means for people both to justify and endure violence. These laws valorize violent acts, construe them as essential to male agency and define licit conditions for their exercise” (186). I would posit that more than simply normalizing violence, these laws serve to gender violence as well, creating a societal script in which men’s violence against women is expected, and in which women’s role is to comply with the legal and social fallout of such actions without challenging the patriarchal system that regulates them.

Ultimately, there is much about the world of the Old Testament that will remain unclear to modern scholars. The purpose of the Deuteronomic texts—as either casuistic reforms of earlier laws or as a new set of humanistic codes of living—continues to be debated, as does the reason for the high valuation of female virginity in the first place. What can be clearly asserted, however, is the fact that issues of female virginity and sexual behavior—so often viewed as matters of purity in the modern world—were instead embedded in discourses of honor and shame related to property law. Because a woman’s chastity was the insurer of productive marriages, patrilineal continuation, and male honor in society, “virginity became a tangible reason for the family’s right to control their women” (Frymer-Kensky 85). Thus, as we enter a discussion of the modern evangelical focus on women’s purity, it behooves us to keep Deuteronomy in mind as a framework representative of a society in which “control and chastity are intimately related” (Frymer Kensky 85) to issues of men’s honor and the smooth functioning of society.

Girls’ Purity in the Modern American Evangelical Church:

As women have come to be viewed as human beings of equal value in their own right in the modern American church, constructions of women as property have largely given way to discourses of purity and morality. The moralization of women’s sexuality has profound effects on American society, and therefore cannot be taken lightly. As the culture wars over abstinence-only education and birth control availability wage on, it is important to determine how the intersection of modern-day purity ideals and Bible-based property rhetoric influence the position of contemporary Evangelicals.

Just as Carolyn Osiek argued that “gender is one factor among several: kinship structures, hierarchy, control of economic resources, and social networks”

(336) that must be analyzed in order to understand the nature of the family laws in Israelite communities, so do modern sexual morality discourses get influenced by social, economic, and gendered factors. Alan Hunt argues that laws dealing with sexual mores “involve a normative judgment that some conduct is intrinsically bad, wrong, or immoral” (410). This, he says, not only allows moral discourses to “impute blame and assign responsibility,” but also “constitutes the field of sexuality in such a way as to organize it by putting in place a series of dividing practices which transect the field, vice and virtue, indulgence and purity, natural and unnatural” (411). This ideology that pre-marital sexual acts are intrinsically wrong, particularly for young women, shapes much of what religious groups for teens choose to focus on—discussions of purity, modesty, and abstinence for young women in the Church. While I will explore the ways in which abstinence can be positive and useful for young women, there is also a problematic side to this abstinence-heavy teaching in the church, namely that it “encourages women to adopt the worldview that women are distinctly and essentially different from men and that sexuality is itself dangerous, resulting in, for example, the construction of sexual *violence* as ‘giving in’ to temptation” (Fahs 117).

The Modern Abstinence Movement as a Discourse of Purity

In the modern evangelical Church, most often the language surrounding God and faith are “steeped in masculine norms” (Bryant 555). In their interpretation of the Biblical texts, many evangelical churches choose to uphold a complementarian view of gender, espousing the “innate differences between women and men” (Bryant 556). These innate differences cite the role of men as leader, as spiritual head of the household, with prominence in the public sphere, and the role of women as encourager, supporter, submissive wife, and inhabitant of the private sphere. Along with these assigned gender differences comes the lingering emphasis on women’s sexual purity as opposed to that of men.

A number of different companies and organizations have sprung up to cater to this important ideological niche, chief among them being the organizations True Love Waits and Silver Ring Thing. Both companies sell a line of purity rings, T-shirts, and books for teen girls to buy in order to encourage them to guard their virginity until marriage. As suggested by the company’s name, the True Love Waits campaign believes “Sex outside of a committed marriage relationship violates God’s standards” (<http://www.lifeway.com/Article/true-love-waits-teens-faq>). Thus, girls have the idea consistently reinforced that not only is remaining a virgin until marriage a requirement of her social sphere, but also it is a requirement of her

spiritual life. In the sexual script based off of evangelical framework of complementarian gender roles and sexual purity, “the standard, or traditional, script assumes a man and a woman, and expects the man to advocate physical intimacy and the woman to regulate said intimacy” (Addington 6). This sexual script sets up girls to be both responsible for their own sexual conduct and blamed for the sexual conduct of men. As such, abstinence rhetoric has the potential to be used “as a sort of tool for punishing women [because] it is too narrowly defined as sexual purity, and that purity applies only to women” (Bush 23).

Girls’ Virginitly as Patriarchal Property

Although discourse on girls’ virginitly is couched in terms of personal purity and morality, there are many ways in which the Deuteronomic concepts of patriarchal property are visible in the evangelical fight for girls’ pre-marital abstinence. One of the clearest examples of this is in the increasingly popular trend of purity balls, in which fathers and their daughters participate in a formal dance and ceremony in which the girls sign abstinence pledges, receive a purity ring from their father, and even eat wedding cake as a symbol of their fathers’ ownership over them until their wedding day. At these pledges, the fathers receive large swords that they brandish symbolically, announcing that “they are prepared to ‘bear swords and war for the hearts of our daughters’” (Baumgardner 6). The imagery of warfare for a daughter’s purity, of a symbolic wedding of a daughter to her father until he passes ownership onto her husband, and the exchanging of purity rings represent the way “in patriarchy, a father owns a girl’s sexuality” (Baumgardner 3).

The existence of purity pledges suggests a level of agency for girls, an ability to choose between herself and God that she would like to abstain from sexual activity before marriage. However, as many purity pledges require girls to make a public commitment to “God, myself, my family, my friends, my future mate, and my future children to a lifetime of purity” (lifeway.com/Article/true-love-waits), it is clear that the bounds of purity extend beyond the personal into the social and political. Scholar Breanne Fahs expertly details the problematic nature of this patriarchal control of girls’ virginitly, in that it

Normalizes the oppression of women’s bodies via severe control over their developing sexual expression, resulting not only in a re-inscription of their bodies as sexual property but also in the acceptance of some of the most literal terms of patriarchal culture: women’s bodies exchanged between men, communities of women organized around the negation of their sexual desire, [and] little attention to the role of mothers in the sexual socialization process (118).

Amidst the intersecting rhetoric of purity and property in relation to their sexuality, young girls in the evangelical church are receiving conflicting messages about who gets to control her purity and why. The punishment of girls for both other men's and her own sexual behavior, versus the idea that she is incapable of fighting for her virtue herself (and thus her father must do it for her) creates a double bind in which girls are both powerless to defend their virginity and guilty when they do not.

The National Fight for Girls' Purity:

Alan Hunt describes the ascent of sexual laws to the forefront of national consciousness as an attempt by the American populace to restore some semblance of middle-class order and respectability in the midst of a rapidly changing world (413). As he explains, "Moral politics are an easy substitute for a more serious engagement with contemporary social and economic conditions. It is simply easier to focus on personal behavior than to get to grips with the structural conditions that underlie the facts of inequality and difference" (414). As such, it follows that controlling teenagers' (and specifically teenage girls') sexuality is a more immediate way of targeting the greater structural issues of STDs, teen pregnancy, and a growing divorce rate. Those fighting in the public arena for the implementation of abstinence-only education in public schools have increasingly attempted to link "the safer-sex movement with risk—primarily the risk of STIs, and link abstinence with the total elimination of such risk" (Hess 257), often arguing that encouraging safe-sex practices such as use of contraceptives and STD-testing lead to a higher risk for teens than the abstention from all sexual activity. In a basic sense, this is true—abstaining from all sexual activity is the most effective way of reducing one's risk of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. However, this simple equation leaves out the question of whether teens will actually choose to remain abstinent, regardless of the facts, and fails to plan for a situation in which teens are choosing sexual activity over abstinence.

It is this oversight that causes most abstinence-only education plans to be viewed as abject failures when it comes to lowering rates of teen pregnancy and STD contraction. Surveys of college students who had previously made virginity pledges showed that the majority (61%) had broken the vow, and that "of those who kept their virginity pledge, a majority reported having had oral sex (55%)" (Bersamin et al. 429). The study also found that pledge-makers were significantly less likely than their peers to use any form of birth control during their first act of intercourse. Many pledgers, in their desire to preserve the hymen and thus remain

a technical virgin, would choose to engage in oral sex and genital-touching as a substitute for penetrative sex, most often without a condom due to the general evangelical Christian stigma in regards to adolescent access to birth control (Bersamin et al. 432). Although teens engage in this “alternative” behavior as a means of keeping their virginity pledge, both the prevalence of other non-penetrative sexual acts and the absence of condoms actually make an individual more likely to acquire an STD. From an emotional health standpoint, pledgers were also more likely to report “higher negative psychosocial expectancies, negative health expectancies, and lower positive expectancies about sex than non-pledgers” (Bersamin et al. 432). Thus, virginity pledges, especially when paired with abstinence-only education or high religiosity of parents, are often correlated with high rates of the same behaviors that the pledges seek to diminish, often jeopardizing teens’ sexual and psychological health.

However, the negative aspects of purity pledges do not disprove the importance of teaching America’s adolescents the value of abstinence. From a purely scientific perspective, it is true that abstinence is in fact the only 100% guaranteed method of preventing pregnancy and STDs. On a more social and interpersonal level, Mary Lewis explains the way abstinence teaching can “give kids a lot of positive activities that are self, you know, self-satisfying, that are teaching them about the world in a positive way— decision-making, responsibility” (Hess 264). From this standpoint, Lewis and Hess both argue for the importance of abstinence education, but only as part of a continuum of options open to adolescents as they grow into their sexual selves. Many sex educators recognize the place that abstinence has among teaching kids how to make healthy choices in their sex lives. However, given the evidence that abstinence-only education does not tend to lower risks of unplanned pregnancy and disease, it seems that students need to be provided with other options that will keep them safe regardless of the decisions they make about their sexual activity. Educator Tameka Mathis affirms this need for a continuum of choices and an emphasis on adolescent agency and health, telling her students, “Whenever there’s something you can make a decision about, then you are in control of it and you need to be the one in control of it” (Hess 263). It is this element of choice that is truly influential for teens: What researchers have found really makes a pledge to abstinence meaningful for adolescents is their level of agency over the decision—making a personal pledge to delay sexual activity rather than a public one led to significantly lower rates of initiation of oral or vaginal sex for adolescents (Bersamin et al. 432). Thus, what really counts when teaching teen girls about their options regarding sexual activity is that they

have the opportunity to make an “intrinsically motivated” decision (Bersamin et al. 435), based out of personal conviction rather than external pressure.

Overarching Themes and Connections to Old Testament World:

In the contemporary American evangelical Church, much of the rhetoric surrounding girls' virginity is manifested in terms of purity and Christian morality; however, events such as purity balls, wherein fathers “choose before God to cover [their] daughter as her authority and protection in the area of purity” (Baumgardner 3), reveal the lingering influence of patriarchy in the contemporary purity movement. It is this idea of patriarchal ownership of girls' virginity that is so reminiscent of the Deuteronomic family laws—says feminist scholar Carol Gilligan, “In patriarchy, a father owns a girl's sexuality. And like any other property, he guards it, protects it, even loves it” (Baumgardner 3).

Honor and shame also emerge as a modern theme parallel to that of ancient Israelite society—just as men were charged with the ability to control their daughters' sexual behavior in the ancient Mediterranean, so are fathers now “the heroes and villains of the abstinence narrative” (Hess 255), either honored for their ability to guard their daughters' purity or brought shame for their daughters' indiscretion. Especially as the rigid lines between the public and private arenas begin to blur, there is a modern demand on Christian men to assert themselves as leaders of both the workplace and the home. This leads to a new set of values regarding respectability and honor, which “require men not only to espouse the values of familialism, but also to manifest self-control by confining sexual activity, like social activity, to the domestic sphere” (Hunt 427). The ability to control the sexual activity of his family members, then, places girls' purity in an evangelical Christian father's hands as an issue of both property and honor. Thus, one begins to see the underlying similarities between Deuteronomic family laws and the current moral battles over girls' purity.

Conclusion:

Ancient Israelite society was one in which patriarchal structures of control and property laws reigned supreme for the sake of maintaining order and hierarchy. Deuteronomy 22 offers just one example of the types of family laws through which this paternal control was exerted through the regulation of young women's virginity and sexual behavior for the pragmatic purposes of marriage contracts and positive neighborly relationships. However, this type of hierarchical and male-controlled approach to keeping young girls abstinent have been shown to spur

negative effects for girls, including psychological aversion to sexual acts, lowered use of contraceptives, and lower likelihood of getting tested for STDs once sexually active (Fahs 124).

In both the modern American Church's construction of girls' virginity as the domain of a father and in the subsequent hesitance to provide girls with information and resources regarding sexual health, female virginity remains an issue played out in the realm of patriarchal power and property, although it is dressed as one of purity and morality. I posit that, in retaining this Deuteronomic ownership ideology of girls' virginity, modern Christian families are twisting the original intent of the Deuteronomic family laws and harming the physical and emotional health of their girls. Just as the early Israelite society's family laws were based out of a practical desire to maintain order and acquire a solid, respectable marriage for their daughter (thus ensuring security for her and the family), so does America need to invite a healthy dose of pragmatism into our modern conceptions of purity and teen sexual behavior. In light of the failure of abstinence-only education to prevent pregnancy and STD rates among adolescents, it seems imperative that we begin offering our teenage girls access to education and resources that allow them to make healthy and informed decisions about their own sexual behavior. The seminal question then becomes, "Can we capitalize on women's assertion of *agency* in the sexual decision-making process *without* relying upon patriarchal constructions of limiting sexual desire as the means to liberation?" (Fahs 137). In other words, how can we respect abstinence as a viable option for adolescents while providing them with a working understanding of their sexual selves, so that teen girls learn how to own their sexuality, whether that means to say yes or no to sexual activity outside of marriage?

As feminist scholars wrangle with this question, one important theme emerges: that of affirming "the role of active female sexual desire and decision-making in the development of women's healthy sexualities" (Fahs 139). As high teen pregnancy and STD rates shock and shame parents, it may seem that the only way to combat the onslaught of competing sexual scripts in American society is to offer a teenager only parent-prescribed abstinence. However, research on the effects of personal versus public virginity pledges reveals an unexpected and beautiful truth—that by raising a child to recognize her own agency and worth, parents can equip her to make healthy decisions on her own. This is, as Jennifer Baumgardner phrases it, "the real secret of womanhood: The key to any treasure you've got is held by one person—you" (7).

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