Sexology by William Henry Walling

By: Horwitz, Rainey

Walling. He makes the claim that physical weakness of female anatomy provides evolutionary evidence that women are unfit to cope with certain life difficulties.

In “Part IX. Psycho-Physiological Comparison of the Sexes,” Walling compares the physical and psychological differences that he claims exist between men and women. For example, he describes physical and mental differences and the roles they should play. According to Walling, women only engage in non-penetrative sex, and the medical symptoms associated with it. Additionally, Walling argues that women who engage in masturbation develop nymphomania, a mental disorder that is associated with hypersexuality. Also, Walling demonstrates that he opposes female same-sex romances, stating that those relationships cause girls to become depraved.

Walling describes menopause, he claims that a woman’s reproductive organs become non-functional, and that those who engage in masturbation become pale, spiritless, and sad, and develop a dry cough and shortness of breath. Walling also claims that masturbation can cause women to develop nymphomania, or a mental disorder that is associated with hypersexuality. Also, Walling demonstrates that he opposes female same-sex romances, stating that those relationships cause girls to become depraved.

Walling promotes the idea of marriage as a Christian practice that is natural for men and women, bringing them closer to God. According to Walling, citing the Old Testament of the Christian Bible, only men and women can consummate their marriage. Walling describes the groom as a monster, forcing himself on the bride and beginning a cycle of continuous horror for their marriage. He explains that the information he provides is a God-given privilege that people should not doubt. In that part, he details his moral opposition to abortion, criticizing advocates for family planning and population management through birth control. He employs religious arguments in his opposition to abortion, stating that the medical procedure constitutes murder. Walling also asserts that women do not have a decision as to whether they want to be a mother, as motherhood is the primary duty of women.

Next, in “Part IV. Masturbation, Female,” Walling provides anatomical diagrams of the reproductive organs and provides medical explanations for why male masturbation is detrimental to male health. Masturbation is the touching of one’s own body, specifically the genitals, for sexual pleasure. Walling states his opposition to male masturbation, explaining that sexual pleasure outside sexual intercourse would result in what he refers to as horrible consequences. Walling claims that male masturbation at any age, regardless of the cause, could easily lead to prolonged uncontrollable sexual desire.

Similarly, in “Part V. Masturbation, Female,” Walling discusses the apparent dangers of female masturbation, which is an act that he identifies as an evidence of a disorder that exists in both genders. Walling further details his belief that girls’ boarding schools are dangerous, because careless administrators run those schools and overlook young girls who teach each other to masturbate. Walling identifies some medical symptoms and psychological effects of masturbation in both men and women. He states that masturbation can cause women to develop nymphomania, a mental disorder that is associated with hypersexuality.

In 1836, William Henry Walling was born in Smithville, New York. Walling served for the Union hospital service in the US Civil War during the 1860s, receiving a Congressional Medal of Honor for his service. In 1889, Walling received his medical degree from Medico-Chirurgical College in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He worked as a physician and professor of gynecology at Eastern College in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, as well as a professor at Medico-Chirurgical College. Walling also served as the editor for the Philadelphia Medical Times and Register, a bi-weekly medical journal, and was a member of the Medical Society of the State of Pennsylvania.
Continuing with that part, Walling also claims that women’s brains have a more developed region toward the back of the head and a less developed region toward the front of the head, providing an explanation for why he believes women show more sentiment and less reason. Walling’s theory also claims that women have more cellular tissue than men, causing them to appear more curvy than men and lubricating her organs to enhance physical movement. Walling states that the abundance of cellular tissue in women is the reason that women are less advanced in personal development and destined to provide for their children.

According to Walling, though women tend to live longer than men, they are usually more likely to develop health complications due to childbirth. He also states that the influence of reproduction on the uterus [18] is a primary factor in the development of mental and physical health. Walling details his theory that female reproductive organs [19] govern the female body and states his belief that the brain connects to other organs, which are dependent on the uterus [18]. He explains that nerves connect the wom [8] to the heart, lungs, brain, stomach, breast, lips, and throat; so if a disease ever infected the womb [8], then the disease would also affect those parts of the body. He then provides arguments that in response to women, a disease is more likely to develop harm than to men. Men by comparison, Walling claims, can willfully suppress such sensations.

Continuing in Part IX, Walling details what he perceives as the differences between men and women. He justifies that men have a lack of sensitivity, stating his belief that a man’s brain is more dense, compared to a woman’s more soft brain. Walling further claims that the anatomy of the female brain does not allow her to make observations or concentrate on one task at a time. Walling supports that claim by stating that no woman has ever created significant music or art. He states that most women are naturally not intellectually and physically inferior to males. Walling continues to evaluate anatomical differences between men and women in ways that people of the twenty-first century may view as sexist ideas.

Next, in the fourth major section of Sexology, Walling focuses on pregnancy [8] and the care of infants, though he mentions other topics as well, such as birth, miscarriage during pregnancy [8], and labor. That section includes five parts, titled “Part X. Sterility,” “Part XI. The Womb and its Appendages,” “Part XII. Pregnancy,” “Part XIII. Maladies During Pregnancy,” and “Part XIV. Labor. Occupation Of The Mother During Pregnancy.” First, in Part X, Walling defines sterility as when an individual is unable to reproduce. However, Walling speculates that people only use the terms to refer to women who are unable to become pregnant, claiming that such male sterility is extremely rare. Walling attributes sterility in women to young married couples to homosexuality, though he provides no evidence for that claim. According to Walling, women may also be naturally sterile, if an egg [40] cell escapes the womb [8].

In “Part XI. The Womb and its Appendages,” Walling details the anatomy of the womb [8] as it relates to human reproduction. He provides an anatomical diagram of female reproductive organs [16], as well as descriptions of body dimensions and brief definitions of terms for the various organs. Walling claims that women who develop in warm climates, live in cities, read romance novels, or have discussions at not of romantic topics are more likely to begin puberty at a younger age than normal. Walling details his understanding of the processes of puberty, the menstrual cycle, or the process that prepares the female body for pregnancy [8], and conception [8].

Next, in “Part XII. Pregnancy,” Walling details the expectations and common symptoms of pregnancy [8]. According to Walling, lack of menstrual periods, excessive gas, the presence of milk in the breasts, and morning sickness are the main symptoms of pregnancy [8]. He outlines the stages of pregnancy [8] in two-month increments, and lists common symptoms at each stage, including breast tenderness and vomiting. Walling also advises pregnant women not to run, jump, ride horses, dance, or submerge themselves in cold water, as well as avoid crowds, heated rooms, and excitement. Walling then addresses any worries of dangers and difficulties in bearing children, reassuring women that if they do not have any physical abnormalities, then they are able to bear children.

In “Part XIII. Maladies During Pregnancy,” Walling describes mental diseases that, according to him, can affect a woman’s pregnancy [8]. Walling advises husbands whose pregnant wives suffer from mental illnesses during pregnancy [8] to help calm their wives. He provides examples of things that husbands can do to help their pregnant wives, such as going on leisurely walks and bringing home visitors like friends and family.

Lastly, in “Part XIV. Labor. Occupation Of The Mother During Pregnancy,” Walling describes the necessary preparations for pregnant women during labor and childbirth. He provides a list of supplies that the mother should have before she gives birth, including cotton night dresses, bandages, napkins, face towels, bedroom slippers, diapers, a baby basket, soap, and powder. Walling then makes the claim that women prefer to have men deliver their children rather than a female, because women tend to feel safer with men and can rely on their courage during labor. He then details that pregnant women must prepare for childbirth and have warm water, a sponge, and lubrication oil in the birthing room.

Walling published Sexology in 1904, but in a later reprint, the front pages of the book contained several endorsements from people who held prominent positions in medicine, academia, religion, and government. The endorsements demonstrate that many people supported and appreciated the book, at the time of its publication, including Frederick Hamilton, who served as the president of Tufts University in Boston, Massachusetts. In his endorsement, Hamilton notes that every parent should own a copy of Sexology.

However, Walling made several claims that, as of the twenty-first century, some people may consider to be sexist and oppressive toward women. For example, idosexology, Walling repeatedly stresses the importance of preserving femininity and traditional gender roles, claiming that women would devolve if they were to become involved in academics or politics. Despite that warning, throughout the twenty-first century, women in the US continued to advocate for equal rights, eventually earning the right to vote and become politically active in 1920. Also, the Boston Women’s Health Collective [32], formed in Boston, Massachusetts, during the 1960s, helped educate and spread accurate information about women’s health.

As of 2021, many experts have disproved the claims that Walling makes throughout Sexology. For example, although Walling states that the uterus [18] shrinks during menopause, the Mayo Clinic, a medical research center, states that menopause is a normal natural decline of the hormones [20] that cause the menstrual cycle and does not impact the size of the uterus [18]. Also, Walling describes birth control [21] methods as dangerous to the health of both women and men, but as of 2021, reproductive health organization [22] Planned Parenthood asserts that birth control [21] methods are safe and effective ways to prevent pregnancy [20] and contraception [20]. Planned Parenthood also asserts that abortion is an important reproductive right that provides women with the option of choosing whether or not to have a child. In 1973, the US Supreme Court decision Roe v. Wade [23] established a woman’s right to choose whether to continue a pregnancy [20].

Walling’s views on human sexuality are that women are naturally not intellectually and physically inferior to males. Walling continues to evaluate anatomical differences between men and women in ways that people of the twenty-first century may view as sexist ideas.

Sources


In 1904, physician William Henry Walling published Sexology, a medicine family reference book. In his book, Walling proposed that his guidance would help people who were married or single and young or old, as well as anyone who wanted to conform to, what he claims are, gender expectations. Sexology discusses issues such as masturbation, abortion, pregnancy, labor, and marriage. Despite Walling’s limited scientific explanations and evidence for his medical claims, the Puritan Publishing Company printed and distributed the book, which received many positive reviews and endorsements from other physicians, college presidents, politicians, and religious leaders. However, in the twenty-first century, people may consider many of Walling’s claims to be sexist and oppressive toward women. Sexology provides readers with examples of historical medical misconceptions of male and female anatomy and provides context for the logic of reproductive medicine at the turn of the twentieth century.

Subject

Topic
Publisher

State University of Arizona. School of Life Sciences. Center for Biology and Society. Embryo Project Encyclopedia.

Rights
Copyright Arizona Board of Regents Licensed as Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 3.0 United (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0) http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/.

Format
Articles [40]

Last Modified
Tuesday, July 13, 2021 - 04:01

DC Date Accessed
Tuesday, July 13, 2021 - 03:53

DC Date Available
Tuesday, July 13, 2021 - 03:53