

# **TRUE LOVE WAITS? AN EXAMINATION OF THE MOTIVES AND METHODS OF THE TRUE LOVE WAITS ORGANIZATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

True Love Waits was created in 1993 with the intention of encouraging teens to refrain from premarital sexual activity. Despite the efforts of TLW most studies show rates of sexual activity for teens have remained relatively steady and that the majority of teens (including TLW participants) continue to participate in premarital sexual activity. In light of this apparent failure it seems reasonable to question why an organization like TLW continues to exist. In this paper I examine TLW to determine why it exists and what its primary motives are. I utilize Joseph R. Gusfield's theory of Symbolic Crusades and Status Politics as a lens through which the symbolic value of TLW can be further explored and understood. I evaluate TLW as a symbolic crusade proposing that the organization exists not only to prevent premarital sexual activity, but also to provide TLW participants with a sense of belonging and status by reinforcing their identity as Christian virgins through conferences, media, public action, and popular culture.