

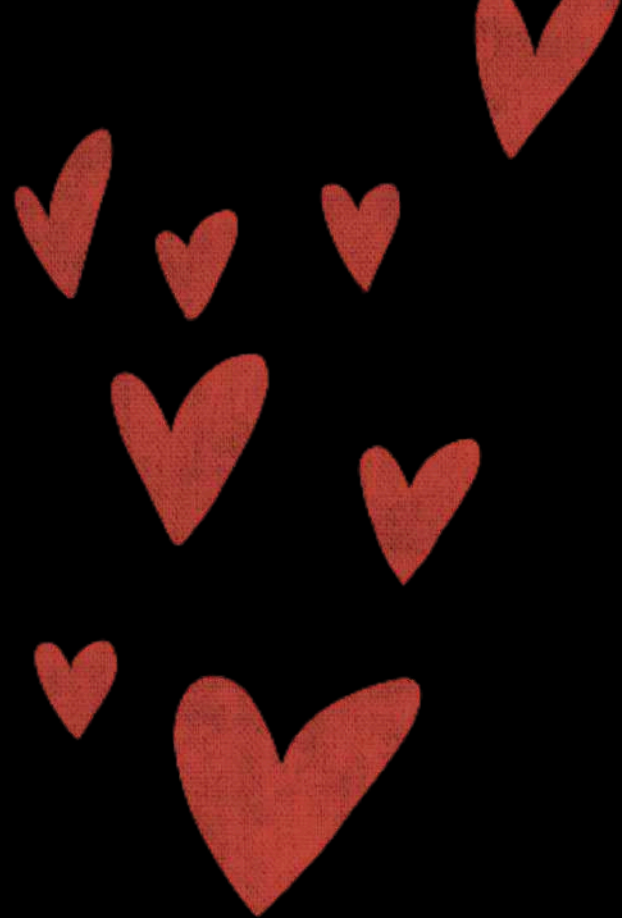
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THE

STUDENT NEWS MAGAZINE

CHRONICLE





ISSUE TWO

THE CHRONICLE

The North Central College Chronicle is published once a semester by students of North Central College as a forum for providing news, opinion and information of interest to the campus and the greater community.

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On the cover

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Letter from the Editors

Sex. It's where we all started and not all of us finish.

As we write this letter, we are all sitting alone at home. In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic of 2020, we have all been quarantined. In fact, this issue was not able to be distributed as much because everyone is locked up at home.

Regardless, sex is everywhere and nearly unavoidable. They say that there will be a rise in babies born because when you lock people in their houses with their options being either to play Monopoly for the sixth time or have sex, well, were going to get a lot of babies.

But talking about sex and writing about it is way more than just the sexual act of intercourse itself. Rather it's about understanding the ways boys and girls are being taught vastly different ideas regarding sex or how apps like Tinder have made consent blurry.

Sex is about self-love. Whether that's learning what you're into (as freaky as it is), being abstinent, self-partnered or choosing to wear a purity ring.

Clearly, we have a lot of talking left to do and that's why you're reading this.

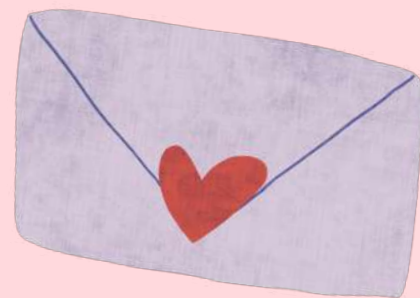
It seems that some people have zero concept of what it means to respect other people's boundaries and their bodies. Many people still have their daughter's hymen checked to see if it's intact (hey, T.I., stop), or we judge people for being virgins, or we treat the characters on-screen like bodies meant to sexualize.

Whatever you choose to do with your sexual life is none of our business, but own what you do. Virginity rocks, but if you want, your bed can do the same.

As we finish off our year, for many of us on staff our senior year, we are connected through only our computers. We have never craved the idea of intimacy more.

Hopefully, this will let us finish strong.

Madison Miller
Madeleine O'Connell






IN THE ISSUE

FALL 2019

Let's talk about sex	6
Virginity rocks?	11
The Chronicle after dark	13
Why I don't have sex	14
Call me back or be my ghost	16
Swiping right to consent	18
What does your zodiac say about your sexuality?	20
Sorry, do my shoulders distract you?	22
Lucy Liu isn't your sex bot	26
Hey, you, are you freaky and fresh?	30



Can purity rings really be a burden?	34
Song of Songs, hot or not.	38
Engaged at 21	40
Hey man, let's talk about the hymen	44
Faces of NCC: What was your worst date?	48
A rose for the deflowered	50
Day 154 with no relationship, still breathing and ovulating	54
Young and risky with STDs	57
Senior Yearbook: "Before Puberty . . ."	60

SEX

SEX

Sex

Let's talk about sex

Cheyenne Daniels – News Editor
Illustration by Jasmine Pomierski

“My body, my choice!”

A chant heard most often from pro-choice advocates marching through streets and posting on social media. But the phrase applies to more than just a woman's choice to terminate a pregnancy; it applies to her right to choose sex — to have sex, to not have sex; where and when to have sex; who to have sex with and who not to have sex with.

When I look back on my childhood, I think of when my mom had “the talk” with me. It was informative, awkward and slightly traumatic considering that my cat died in the middle of it. But there was no shame; that message of choice was clearly emphasized. I thought that was how everyone looked at the topic.

Then came middle school, when a friend of mine lost her virginity. Suddenly, she was a “slut” and a “whore” and none of the other 7th grade girls wanted to be friends with her. Her boyfriend, however, received no attention for the “event.” It was my first encounter with the double standard.

While my friend cried and was ostracized by a majority of the 7th grade class for a private action, her boyfriend went about his life like nothing had happened. What became quite clear to me was that there is a discord between a woman's ability and right to choose when to have sex and, more specifically, when it's appropriate for her to have sex.

The reason for this discord can easily be blamed on a patriarchal, misogynistic society that decides a woman's worth based on her sex. The fact is, there is an ever-present focus on determining the value of a woman's sex and sexual experience (and from there her worth to society). Unfortunately, this focus on women's sexual experience(s) affects the way in which society presents sex and sexual intimacy to girls and boys.

According to The U.S. National Library of Medicine and National Institute of Health's 2009 study on sexual double standards and peer acceptance in adolescents, “The belief that women and men are held to different standards of sexual conduct is pervasive in

contemporary American society.” The common belief is that while women are punished for their sexuality, men are praised and even encouraged for theirs.

For Visiting Professor in the Shimer School of Great Books Ann Dolinko, this presentation and the subsequent beliefs of who is allowed to experience sexual intimacy has a clear, traceable line that stems back to gender reveal parties.

“I think you can make a very clean line between gender reveal parties, dress codes, pornography (and) contemporary, grown-up sexual relations,” said Dolinko.

Dolinko argues gender reveal parties reinforce gender stereotypes. Girl gender reveals favor gentle ideas, like soft colors and frills. Boy's gender reveal favors the idea of dominance. In effect, the construction of childhood is created.

“Boys are not supposed to cry; they're supposed to be adventuresome; it's OK if they're a little mean,” said Dolinko. “Girls are supposed to be sweet. They're supposed to be nice. They're supposed to be passive.”

This passivity transcends every aspect of a girl's life, including their sexual life, when it begins.

The socially constructed narrative around sex follows a specific path. For girls, they are discouraged from speaking about sex.

“They're not encouraged to talk about sex. They're not encouraged to masturbate. They're not encouraged to know their own bodies,” said Dolinko.

Religious Studies Professor Shelley Birdsong adds that, in some cases, a girl's sense of self-worth stems from her lack of sexual knowledge. Birdsong, who grew up in a conservative Evangelical home says abstinence was emphasized, but much more harshly for girls than boys.

“Girls were taught much more often than boys about how we should guard ourselves and that's where our value would come from, was whether or not you were a virgin,” said

Birdsong. “We were devalued if we were no longer virgins. And I don’t think that that was the same message that young boys were being given.”

Instead, males have been indoctrinated with the concept of sexuality at a young age: males learn about sex through the inaccurate visualization of pornography.

And even worse, there is no convergence between the two extremes. Girls and boys are discouraged from talking about sex with each other.

Because of the discrepancies in their exposure to sex, the first sexual experiences of many result in “one person who thinks he has to be invulnerable, dominating and penetrate, and another one who ... can’t say what she wants,” said Dolinko. “She has to be gentle and she has to wait for him to make her feel good. And her own sexual pleasure doesn’t matter because porn shows that what matters is whether he gets off. And she’s supposed to enjoy just being there along for the ride.”

But this discussion — or lack thereof — of sexual intimacy impacts the male ego just as much as women’s. While men are being told they must be sexually dominant in order to fulfill their masculinity, the idea of what masculinity is becomes skewed.

Birdsong explains men are also harmed in the sexual social construct. When society tells men they must get the “notches on (their) belt,” the only perceived way to achieve that is through sexual conquest.

“I think that harms men who don’t necessarily want that image of what it means to be a man,” said Birdsong. “And of course, it harms women as well. (The woman) who is in that relationship feel like they’re becoming victimized by toxic masculinity just as much as men are. I think that toxic masculinity ... unfortunately hurts men just as much as it hurts women.”

Despite the obvious issues in the discussion of sexual intimacy, both Birdsong and Dolinko said there are ways to minimize the damage of the double standard.

Birdsong said that, although media doesn’t always help in reducing stereotypes, new portrayals are helping end the stigma around discussing sex.

“I think that the media actually has done a good job of prompting us to have this

conversation right now,” said Birdsong. “That might have been taboo 30 years ago, for a young student to come to a woman who teaches religious studies and for us to talk about sexuality and to put it in our student newspaper. I think big media has had a huge role in allowing us to have an open conversation.”

However, she adds that more steps must be taken on a larger scale, particularly when it comes to inclusivity. For Birdsong, the longer a binary system is perpetuated, the longer the double standard of sex will ensue.

“I hope that we’ll get out of over-categorizing people and ... assigning values to certain parts of their behavior,” said Birdsong. “Sexual identity is part of those categorizations. ‘Oh, you’re a boy so you can have sex; it’s part of your masculinity. But you’re a girl and so you should be prim and proper and modest.’” Moreover, Birdsong adds that the fact that there is no discussion of any other genders is extremely harmful to society’s progression.

For Dolinko, the change in narrative needs to focus on communicating sexual intimacy as an “exploration” between partners, rather than the portrayal seen in porn.

“We need to begin to talk about sexuality as a mutual, sensual exploration between two adults that are exploring what feels good,” said Dolinko. “And I think what porn is showing us is ... sex based on domination and the like. What looks good, not focusing on feelings, both sensuality in terms of just touch. Even watching women and men communicate of what feels good to them because there’s no emphasis on that. So I think it’s really focusing on communication, mutuality and sensuality.”

**“THEY’RE NOT ENCOURAGED
TO TALK ABOUT SEX.
THEY’RE NOT ENCOURAGED
TO MASTURBATE. THEY’RE
NOT ENCOURAGED TO KNOW
THEIR OWN BODIES.”**

In 2017, the Me Too movement struck the world. Decades worth of harassment and assault, which people struggled talking about, suddenly were being given attention by the mass media. Since then, we have been in the process of calling out those in unhealthy positions of power. The process is not short and for many of the accused, there has been minimal action taken against them and little fallout on their personal lives and careers. While names like Harvey Weinstein have been at the forefront of the conversation, there are other examples of less discussed cases of sexual misconduct.

TONY ROBBINS

Famous self-help guru Tony Robbins was accused of inappropriate sexual advances by his former female fans and employees in 2019. The report from BuzzFeed said that Robbins berated victims of abuse during self-help sessions and he expected women to work alone with him while he was naked in his hotel room. Robbins has received little fallout so far for these accusations.



**“P AND V
PENETRATION IS
WHAT IS CONSIDERED
VIRGINITY LOSS
FOR WOMEN, DOES
THAT MEAN EVERY
LESBIAN THAT I
KNOW IS A VIRGIN?”**

Virginity rocks?

Jordan Bradley – Sports Editor

The textbook definition of virginity is simple: never engaging in sexual intercourse. It is a word with one definition, but possesses many meanings. Being a virgin can be embarrassing when you reach a certain age. It can be a title held with pride or it could be a title that is kept till marriage based on religion. In a society that is open to talking about sex and sexuality, the term will always carry many meanings.

Early to middle teenage years are when people begin to form a sexual identity and could potentially become sexually active. Virginity loss, however, is not as high as some would think. According to the Resource Center for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention in 2015, 59% of students grades nine to 12 indicated that they have not had sex. Just 30% of all high school students admitted they are sexually active.

Despite the decrease of sexually active teens, STDs are on the rise. According to University of Washington Medicine, in 2016 there were over 2 million reported cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis, mostly coming from ages 15 to 24 years old. It has been determined that the lack of sexual education could be responsible for this issue.

“What we need to understand about human beings is that they are going to have sex,” said Media Studies Professor Sabryna Cornish. “I think that it is still talked about but I think we just realize they are going to do what they are gonna

do, but safe sex should always be a part of the talk.”

Even though the rate of sexually active teens has dropped, there are still problems in society with people being self-conscious or confused about their virginity. A man would be embarrassed if he was still a virgin at a certain age. A woman may be considered “slutty” if people think she had sex too early, and other genders or the LGBTQ community may be considered virgins by others because they have not participated in the “traditional” form of sexual penetration.

There are other forms of sexual acts besides penetration such as oral or anal sex. These acts put virginity into question as well.

“P and V penetration is what is considered virginity loss for women, does that mean every lesbian that I know is a virgin?” said Communications Professor Mara Berkland. “But then for men, we allow them more freedom, like did they orgasm when they penetrated.”

Berkland discussed more about where the word virginity originated from and what the term was originally used for.

“The idea of virginity is used when we are trying to track down the concept of pregnancy and to whom a baby belongs. In matrilineal cultures where inheritance is passed through women, virginity is a non-issue and sexuality is a non-issue,” said Berkland.

The discussion in the media and amongst

peer groups has evolved the word into many different meanings and makes people self-conscious.

Movies like “The 40 Year Old Virgin” and “Easy A” show both sides of insecurities with sexual experience. A man was shamed because he was 40 and still has not had sex. In “Easy A,” Emma Stone’s character is shamed for having an overactive sex life, despite it being an act to help virgin guys’ images at her school. Virginity has become a stereotype for certain genders.

“Virginity is still sort of portrayed as this thing you are supposed to keep, but there are stereotypes,” said Cornish. “If a woman talks about sleeping with multiple men, then she is still portrayed as slutty. On the man’s side that is OK. The point of all the high school movies was for the nerdy, virgin guy to have sex.”

As society starts to become more tolerant, the talk of abstinence has dwindled over the years. Safe sex is taught more often than abstinence, but in some instances like with religion, people choose to keep their word and wait until marriage.

One prominent person in the public eye that has chosen abstinence is former NFL player and college star Tim Tebow. For years he has been mocked on social media for his beliefs, especially when his ex-girlfriend Olivia Culpo broke up with him after he refused to have sex, standing by his beliefs.

Tebow followed through with his beliefs despite the harassment from social media. He recently got married to Demi-Leigh Nel-Peters after they had been engaged for a little over a year.

There will always be many opinions and stereotypes about the idea of virginity and how it is talked about in society. There will always be risks to sex and finding the right partner to be comfortable with. But everyone will approach losing their virginity a different way.

“People feel less shamed to talk about (virginity). This new generation has been a lot more open probably because of discussions of sexual orientation ... we need to treat it as a less big deal than it is,” said Berkland.



THE CHRONICLE AFTER DARK

Peter Hunt Szpytek – Multimedia Editor
Graphics by Jasmine Pomierski

There are few things that go together quite like lovemaking and music. No matter what kind of vibe you and your partner or partners are feeling, there's always a song that can set the mood perfectly. Hopefully you have the stamina to get through The Chronicle's playlist of songs to make love to.

"Never, Never Gonna Give Ya Up" by Barry White

The introduction to this song says it all without even using a complete sentence. "Never, Never Gonna Give Ya Up" starts with a slow build of synthesizers and a hi-hat until it finally explodes into Barry White's smooth voice whispering sweet nothings and breathing heavily into the microphone. The rest of the song is a passionate love song that encapsulates all the emotions people feel while having sex, a perfect addition to the sensory experience of making love.

"Pony" by Ginuwine

This song is a classic R&B addition to any sex playlist. While the lyrics are extremely on the nose, (or in this case, on the junk) the song sets the mood perfectly with its synth-driven-rhythm and its catchy chorus that will keep your night of fun stuck in your head for days to come.

"Any Time, Any Place" by Janet Jackson

Sex isn't just limited to the bedroom at night. Being adventurous and getting down, regardless of where you are or who's around you, is a great way to keep things fresh in bed (or out of it). Jackson says it best, "any time and any place, I don't care who's around, nononono." This song sounds like the feeling of having your partners nails slowly running down your back.

"Thinkin Bout You" by Frank Ocean

A great beat is essential to making good songs to bang to and "Thinkin Bout You" completely nails it in that department. The beat has a nice tempo without being too fast, while the simplicity of this song allows the sounds of you and your partner to fill the empty space. The lyrics about longing and "first times" are the cherry on top of this great sex jam.

"Debra" by Beck

The saxophone is one of the sexiest instruments of all time and it helps "Debra" set the mood by laying down a criminally smooth melody right as it starts. The triumphant chorus of this song feels like the

moment you finally end up with the person you've been thinking about for weeks and the trance-like guitar parts keep the rhythm going when things slow down for the verses. Sex is all about the highs and lows, the fast and slow, and "Debra" expresses all that with grace.

"Fooled Around and Fell in Love" by Elvin Bishop

Casual sex is extremely common nowadays, and Elvin Bishop does a great job at describing the journey that many people take from meeting someone they have casual sex with to falling in love with them. The piano and bass-driven song takes the listener on a ride through sex and love that makes it a fitting addition to any sex playlist.

"Under Your Spell" by Desire

A song doesn't need to be extremely wordy to express passion. Desire manages to say everything needed to get you in the mood with just four lines and some killer synths. The song's minimalist lyrics work to its advantage, allowing the synths and beats to take the lead and help you and your partner to find a rhythm and flow to your lovemaking session.

"All That" by Carly Rae Jepsen

Common components to good sex songs are smooth pianos, bass grooves and spacious synths. "All That" has all that and more. Carly Rae Jepsen's voice in the verse sets the mood in a way that's reminiscent of someone whispering in your ear. This slow jam gives off major sex vibes with its '80s pop influence and lyrics that express longing.

"Summertime Magic" by Childish Gambino

"Summertime Magic" has got a lot going for it: a good beat, enticing instrumentals and smooth lyrics about remembering summer love performed by Childish Gambino. If you're really trying to set the mood to get things going, this is the way to go.

You can listen to our playlist on Spotify right here:



WHY I DON'T HAVE SEX

OPINION

Jack Plewa – News Editor

Illustration by Jasmine Pomierski

As Coach Carr said in “Mean Girls,” “Don’t have sex, because you will get pregnant and die! Don’t have sex in the missionary position, don’t have sex standing up, just don’t do it, OK, promise?”

Basically, Coach Carr is trying to promote abstinence.

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, abstinence is “the practice of not doing or having something that is wanted or enjoyable.” More specifically, people often abstain from food, drugs, alcohol and, of course, sex.

There are many reasons why people choose to abstain from sex. For one, it prevents both pregnancies and STIs. Some people choose to be abstinent because of religious reasons and wait to have sex until marriage.

Sometimes, choosing abstinence is more complicated. Of course, I definitely do not want to get someone pregnant or contract an infection, but I’m not sure I care about waiting until I’m married to have sex.

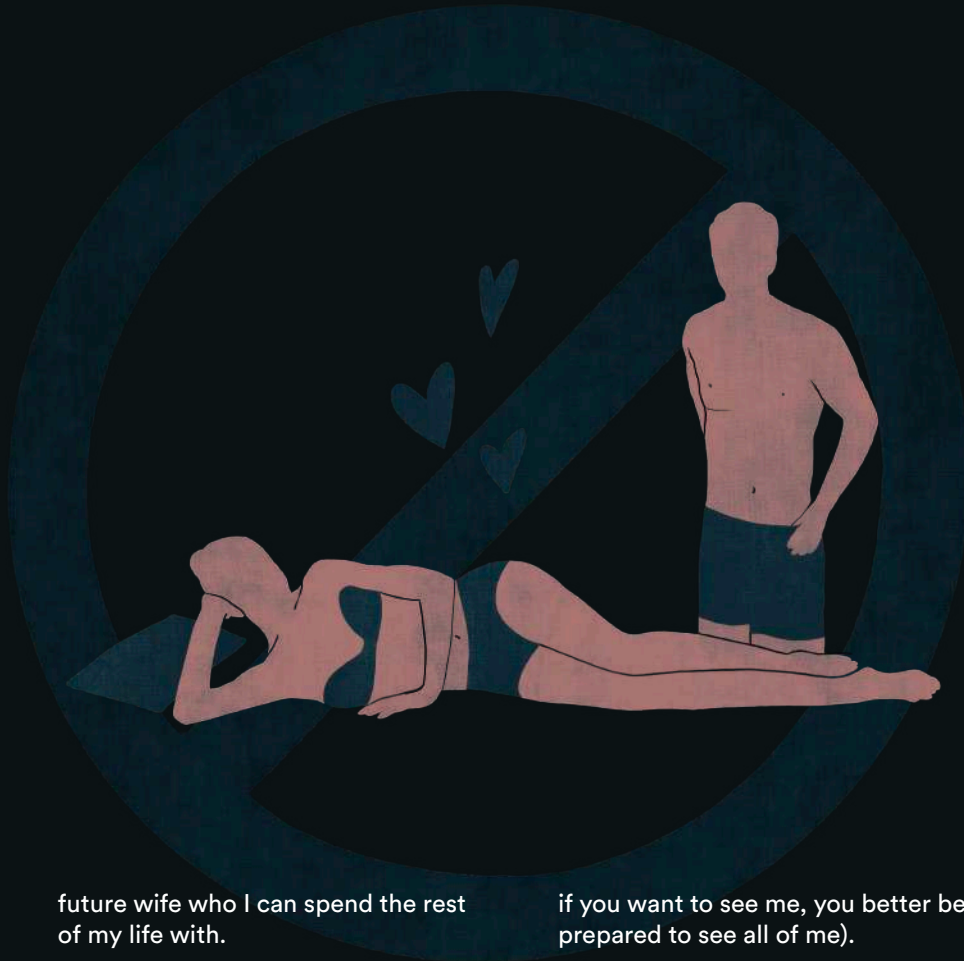
That’s a big misconception people have about abstinence. It’s just a period of time that a person decides not to have sex. There isn’t a specific time frame that comes with it. You can decide how long or short of a period you want to be abstinent for.

It’s easier for me to be abstinent right now for a few reasons. To start, I want to have sex with someone who I am in a relationship with.

Although sex is a physical activity, there’s a large mental and emotional component that should be a part of it too. This latter component isn’t always present in hookups as it usually is in relationships.

However, I don’t want to focus my time and effort on a relationship while I’m in college. As a pre-med biology major and honors student, I have a lot to worry about. I’m trying to set myself up to live a successful life where I am happy with my career.

My goal at the moment is to get an education, not a wife. If I’m looking for a girlfriend, then I’m looking for a



future wife who I can spend the rest of my life with.

Plus, to have a good relationship, you have to spend a lot of time getting to know someone. In my field of study, there's not much time to get to know myself let alone another person.

Nevertheless, things happen when you least expect it, so I would make time to be with someone if the right person came along.

Some people might say there's nothing wrong with having fun while waiting to find "the one;" I just want to have fun with the right person.

Plus, I need to be comfortable enough with someone before I expose my whole naked body to them (and no, I won't keep some of my clothes on or turn the lights off;

if you want to see me, you better be prepared to see all of me).

If that can happen, then everything else physical will fall into place naturally.

When I find someone, I don't want to be comparing our sex life to previous sexual encounters I've had because that could be damaging to our relationship.

The thing is, nowadays it seems like you can't have a relationship without there being pressure to have sex very soon into it.

This shit is so complicated that it's just easier to not worry about it at all for now. So, I'm just going to keep focusing on school and continue being single and abstinent.



CALL ME BACK OR BE MY GHOST

Shealeigh Voitl – Assistant Arts & Lifestyle Editor
Illustration by Jasmine Pomierski

Olivia Smith, '21, remembers a pretty good date she went on recently. The two were there for about three hours, laughing and learning about one another in ways that felt important. They found out they had a ton in common, and at the end of the afternoon, he kissed her.

“And then he asked me, ‘Do you want to go see a movie this weekend?’” said Smith. “Like, he initiated a second date, right? I didn’t ask him. And then he ghosted me.”

The popular dating site Plenty of Fish recently released a survey estimating that 78% of singles between the ages of 18 and 33 have been “ghosted.” This means they were communicating with someone, either virtually or out in the world, and then without any warning, that person stopped responding, as if vanishing into thin air.

“I don’t think people take dating that seriously anymore,” said Nicole McCellan. “A lot of what some people consider a relationship might just be casual for the person they’re talking to. So, there might be differences in the understanding of the magnitude of the relationship.”

In an interview with the New York Times, Psychology Professor Wendy Walsh shared that there are levels to this cultural phenomenon.

Occasionally not answering a text or two would be considered “lightweight” ghosting. Meeting up several times, then exhibiting strong avoidance behavior would be categorized as “midweight.” And finally, engaging in a sexual relationship, then cutting off all communication without any explanation is the monster, “heavyweight” champion.

“I feel like it’s only ghosting if you’re seriously talking to the person,” said Smith. “If we match on Tinder and we chat for two days, and you stop responding, you have no obligation to me. I don’t know you. I don’t consider that to be anything.”

Last summer, MTV aired their new series “Ghosted: Love Gone Missing,” in which two hosts, similar to “Catfish,” investigate the “ghoster” online, in hopes of tracking them down and guilting them into explaining why they disappeared on national television. At the end of every episode, the two people must choose

whether they’d like to make-up or ghost.

But if a person doesn’t want to be found, why force them into the light?

“My attitude is, ‘Why do you want to be with someone who doesn’t want you?’” said Smith. “So, even if it was after two dates or seven months, whatever the situation was, if the person isn’t responding to you, why do you want their attention?”

Still, there’s an unavoidable curiosity that comes with ghosting in a hyperconnected world, even if we hate how badly we want the truth.

“If you guys were together, talking for months on end, and you play a big part in each other’s life, and then you were ghosted, I think that’s an extreme case,” said McCellan.

Gili Freedman, whose research focuses on the language of rejection, shared in a Journal of Social and Personal Relationships study from 2018, that ghosting is closely related to the way that someone feels about their future. Additionally, those with “stronger destiny beliefs” are more likely to ghost.

But Freedman’s broader message is to understand that ghosting indicates more about the ghoster than the haunted, and perhaps their discomfort in starting a new relationship. Whatever the reasoning, Freedman said, it shouldn’t deter you from putting yourself out there again.

“These things used to happen on ‘Catfish’ all the time,” said Smith. “Where it would be like, ‘Oh, we were talking, and then they said, Oh, I got into a car accident, or the sister messaged me, and told me they died,’ and it’s like, clearly, whether they’re in the hospital or doing fine, they don’t want to talk to you.”

Freedman advises those who routinely ghost to consider changing their means of rejection. Start by avoiding apologies; Not being interested isn’t something to be sorry about. Freedman recommends being honest about one’s boundaries, so both parties are on the same page.

“When I have been ghosted, I’m like, if anything, ‘Don’t waste my time if you’re not interested,’” said Smith.

Swiping right to consent

Brandon Cruz – Arts & Lifestyle Editor
Illustration by Jessica Sciabica

You get on Tinder and start swiping right. You get a match. Once you get that match, you're consenting to chat with your match for a little, meeting up and hooking up. That is the cycle of Tinder.

Well, that is what some users on Tinder think they are consenting to.

On its official website, Tinder defines itself as “the world’s most popular app for meeting new people.” Even though this is what it describes itself as, Tinder has a well-known stigma.

Stereotypically, Tinder is known as a hook-up app. It is a place where you can score a one-night stand with ease. You match and bang. But where is the consent in that?

According to the Business of Apps, there are 57 million Tinder users around the world. With that many users, consent is impossible to be viewed equally. Professor of Communication and Faculty of Gender and Sexuality Studies Mara Berkland defines consent as “explicit affirmation of permission.”

“If I said ‘can I borrow your phone right now?’ and you didn’t answer, but I take it, you haven’t given consent,” said Berkland.

Consent is a straight-forward concept. Yet, online it is blurred. When one swipes right and gets a match, communication between both users is granted. A match consents to at least talking between both users. However, this is not an indication of sexual consent. Even though Tinder is known as a hook-up app, that doesn’t mean everyone has the same motive.

According to Psychology Today, a 2017

study surveyed 395 young adults on why they joined Tinder. Their ages ranged from 18 to 34.

The most common reason for joining Tinder was the hype surrounding the app. It was found that 48.3% of participants said Tinder’s popularity got them to join, as opposed to the 5.1% that joined to find casual sex.

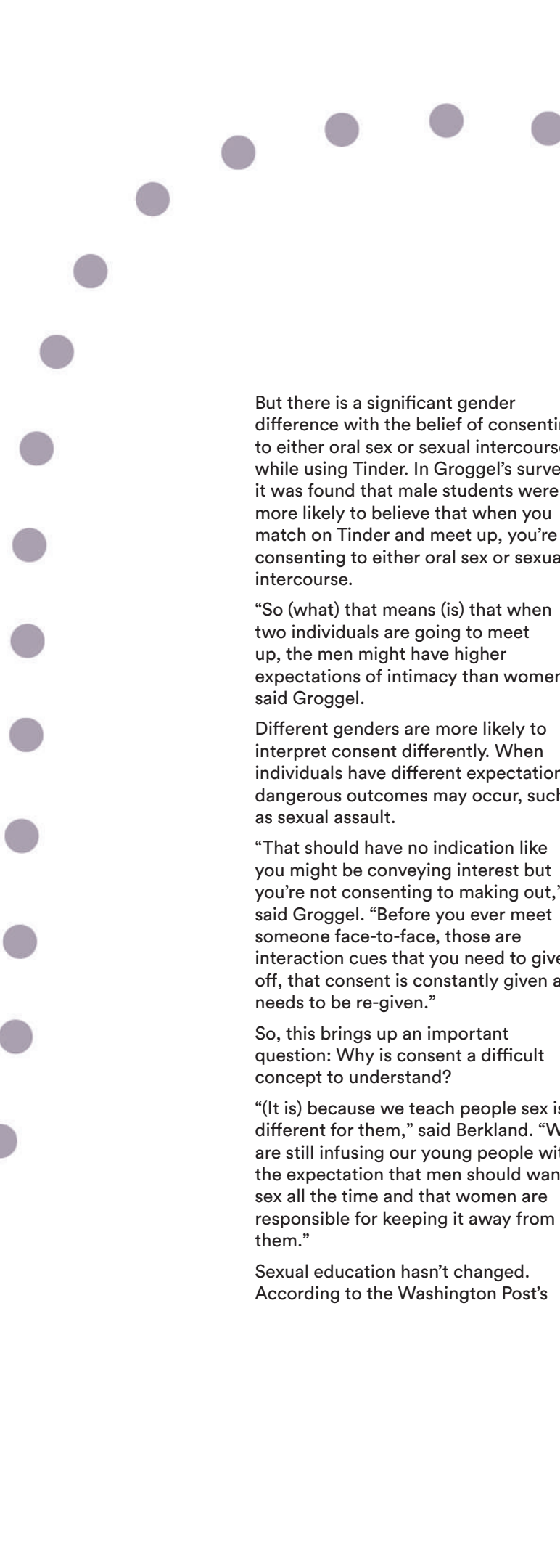
Even with a small number of users intending to use Tinder for finding casual sex, that doesn’t mean that users don’t expect some sort of physical activity to occur. Assistant Professor of Sociology Anne Groggel has conducted her own research going deeper on consent and Tinder.

“We started first with qualitative interviews, using a vignette, which is a description of a scenario, just kind of unpacking students’ meanings of consent,” said Groggel. “In other years, we conducted a survey asking students’ meaning of consent just on Tinder interactions. So, we ask questions like ... are they consenting to sexual intercourse, or kissing or oral sex and then we tested for differences, between men and women’s perceptions.”

In the years in which Groggel conducted this survey, it was overwhelmingly found that students believed if you match on Tinder and meet up, you are consenting to at least making out.

“There is uniformity in that. Everyone agrees,” said Groggel.

Before even meeting face-to-face, the belief that some sort of physical activity will occur is there.



But there is a significant gender difference with the belief of consenting to either oral sex or sexual intercourse while using Tinder. In Groggel's survey, it was found that male students were more likely to believe that when you match on Tinder and meet up, you're consenting to either oral sex or sexual intercourse.

"So (what) that means (is) that when two individuals are going to meet up, the men might have higher expectations of intimacy than women," said Groggel.


Different genders are more likely to interpret consent differently. When individuals have different expectations, dangerous outcomes may occur, such as sexual assault.

"That should have no indication like you might be conveying interest but you're not consenting to making out," said Groggel. "Before you ever meet someone face-to-face, those are interaction cues that you need to give off, that consent is constantly given and needs to be re-given."

So, this brings up an important question: Why is consent a difficult concept to understand?

"(It is) because we teach people sex is different for them," said Berkland. "We are still infusing our young people with the expectation that men should want sex all the time and that women are responsible for keeping it away from them."

Sexual education hasn't changed. According to the Washington Post's



article "Why we shouldn't be separating boys and girls for sex ed," it is still a common practice for boys and girls to be separated when receiving sex education. However, in a study that surveyed high school students, 65% actually prefer mixed-gender instruction.

Teaching sex in different ways to both genders could lead to continuing misconceptions and stereotypes. Historically, the topic of sex hasn't been discussed as sex is seen as "taboo."

"The reason it is, is because we have so many historical issues with sexuality being considered dirty, or wrong or problematic," said Berkland. "Then we have gender issues regarding women, who are not technically allowed ... positive affirmative permission to do sexual acts."

We live in an age where it is more common to meet your romantic partner online. We are switching from the classic face-to-face communication to the modern digital form of communication. According to eHarmony, 40% of Americans use online dating while 20% of current, committed relationships began online.

Apps like Tinder are here to stay, but if we don't give more attention to the meanings we attach to online interactions, interpretation will be up in the air.

"This is the whole problem, is that we are not comfortable talking about relationship negotiation," said Berkland.

WHAT DOES YOUR ZODIAC SAY ABOUT YOUR SEXUALITY?

Jasmine Pomierski – Design Editor
Graphics by Jasmine Pomierski

ARIES

Fire Sign | Compatible with Gemini, Leo, Sagittarius, Aquarius, Libra

Aries are pretty well known for being the dominant ones in a relationship. Try to take the control from them, and you might have a problem.

TAURUS

Earth Sign | Compatible with Cancer, Virgo, Capricorn, Pisces, Scorpio

Turn on that record player and prepare a fine dinner for your Taurus. You can guarantee you'll be getting lucky tonight.

GEMINI

Air Sign | Compatible with Aries, Leo, Libra, Aquarius, Sagittarius

Due to their inconsistent nature, Geminis become bored with the ordinary fairly quick. If you're dating a Gemini, be prepared to have sex in the most unexpected places.

CANCER

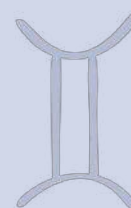
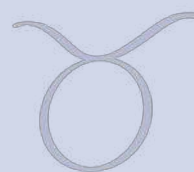
Water Sign | Compatible with Taurus, Virgo, Scorpio, Pisces, Capricorn

Cancers take commitment seriously, so don't expect a one-night stand. However, once you've earned their trust, expect to be going at it every night.

LEO

Fire Sign | Compatible with Aries, Gemini, Libra, Sagittarius, Aquarius

Leos are very affectionate lovers, but if you're not complimenting them on how great they make you feel or how sexy they look in that lingerie, prepare for drama.



VIRGO

Earth Sign | Compatible with Taurus, Cancer, Scorpio, Capricorn, Pisces

As the nurturers and perfectionists of the zodiac signs, Virgos are eager to give and take pride in what they do well — especially in the bedroom.



LIBRA

Air Sign | Compatible with Gemini, Leo, Sagittarius, Aquarius, Aries

You're at a candlelit dinner. The violins are singing. You're surrounded by the most luxurious ambiance. You must be dating a Libra.



SCORPIO

Water Sign | Compatible with Cancer, Virgo, Capricorn, Pisces, Taurus

You've heard of "Fifty Shades of Grey," right? Yeah. That pretty much sums up Scorpio.



SAGITTARIUS

Fire Sign | Compatible with Aries, Leo, Libra, Aquarius, Gemini

Sagittarius' are the explorers of the zodiac signs — spontaneous and always down for a new adventure in bed.



CAPRICORN

Earth Sign | Compatible with Taurus, Virgo, Scorpio, Pisces, Cancer

If you're into PDA, then Capricorns might not be for you ... but when you two are alone, you'll find your Capricorn to be madly passionate and determined to impress you.



AQUARIUS

Air Sign | Compatible with Aries, Gemini, Libra, Sagittarius, Leo

In order to feel a connection with their partner, Aquarians feel the need to spice it up often. If you're not the daring type, then you might not handle an Aquarius well...

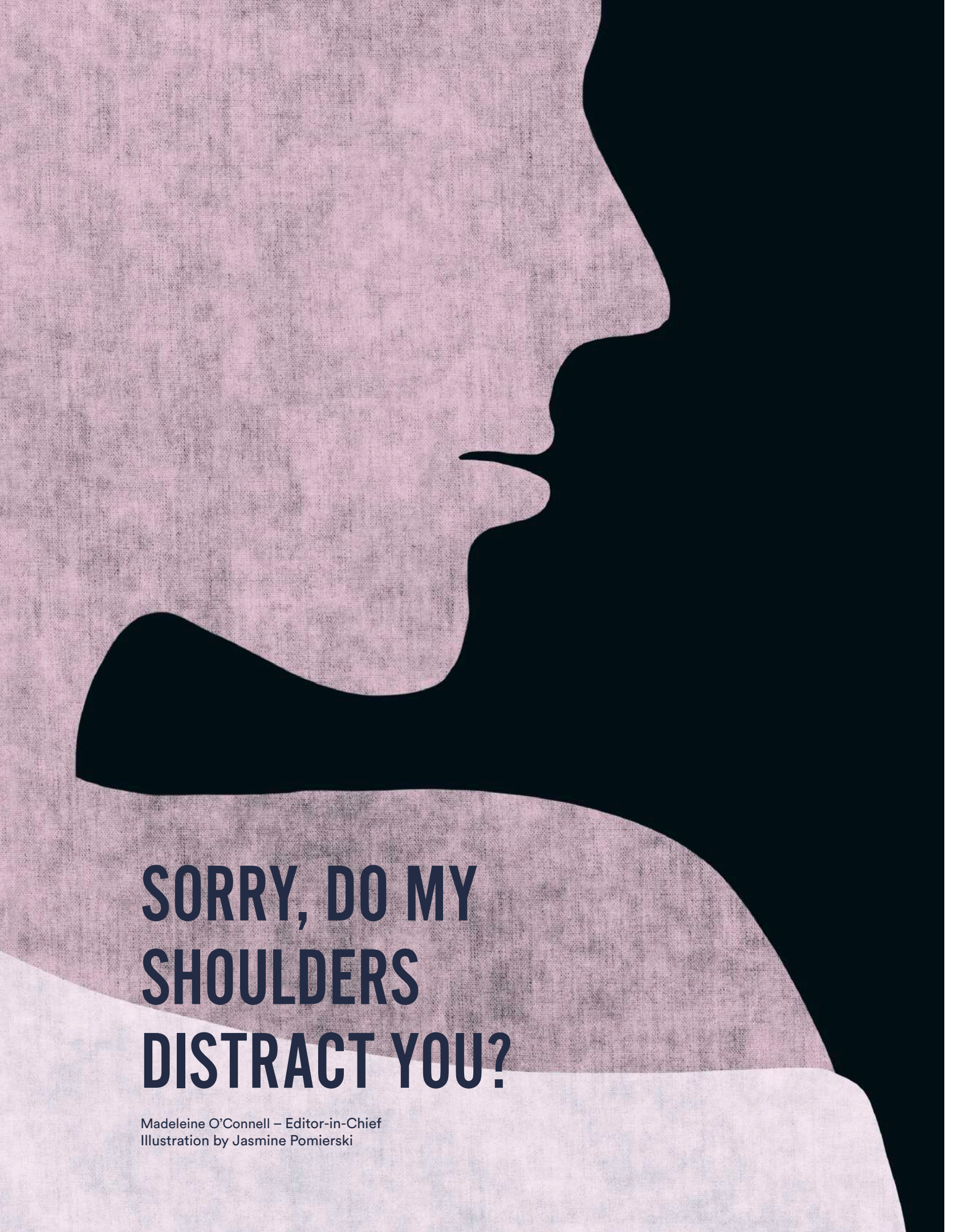


PISCES

Water Sign | Compatible with Taurus, Cancer, Scorpio, Capricorn, Virgo

Pisces thrive on emotional connection between their partners and long for true love. Be careful, though — once they've fallen in love with you, it may be difficult for them to fall out.





**SORRY, DO MY
SHOULDERS
DISTRACT YOU?**

Madeleine O'Connell – Editor-in-Chief
Illustration by Jasmine Pomierski

Wearing short skirts and clothing that shows off her figure means she's asking for it. This is the message that some schools give to students because of the dress code policy in place.

If a student is told to leave their prom because they have too much skin showing or asked to change during school because their clothes revealed their figure, it can be very embarrassing for a teen. These responses to a student's wardrobe can have long-term effects.

It's one thing to teach a student how to dress appropriately for certain occasions, but it's another for there to be repercussions for something as menial as wearing a strap that is the width of two fingers instead of three in the classroom.

The Everyday Sexism Project works to acknowledge the instances where sexism takes place on a daily basis. On this site, people are able to share their stories of harassment and inequality in their everyday lives.

In "How School Dress Codes Shame Girls and Perpetuate Rape Culture," Laura Bates wrote a passage that was sent into the Everyday Sexism Project.

"I got dress coded at my school for wearing shorts. After I left the principal's office with a detention, I walked past another student wearing a shirt depicting two stick figures: the male holding down the female's head in his crotch and saying 'good girls swallow.' Teachers walked right past him and didn't say a thing."

The blame should not be placed solely on male students because the teachers and administration are the ones enforcing these rules and deciding who gets punished for what.

While these dress code policies are

meant to be broad and geared toward any gender, they seem to be directed toward young women, attacking them for distracting male students. Female students have much stricter dress code policies they must follow as opposed to male students who don't get as much attention toward their clothing choices.

The plaid skirts and polo shirt uniforms were first introduced in schools in the U.S. in the 1900s. Since then, students attending private schools have generally had to wear the chosen attire for their school. This form of dress code was put in place so that students would all look equal, allowing them to focus more on their studies.

Public schools adopted the first dress code policies that did not include uniforms in 1969 by the Supreme Court. This law was put into place after the case of "Tinker vs. Des Moines Independent School District" when black armbands protesting the Vietnam war were worn to the high school by several students. The Court wanted to keep students from expressing themselves at school in ways that could potentially promote violence or violate the rights of their peers.

As someone who wore a uniform for about 13 years in Catholic schools, I can say that they are restrictive in expression and even though we all wore the same thing, female students were the ones most often told to button their shirts higher and roll down their sleeves. So, uniforms or no uniforms, the same issues are prevalent.

The standard uniform for girls consisted of tights without rips, a skirt of the appropriate length, a button up shirt with the school logo in the corner, hair of a natural color and shoes that were flat, had a closed toe and a closed heel. For boys, the rules were a bit simpler.

Khaki or navy-blue pants, the same button up shirt, the same style shoes, and hair that was not long enough to touch the collar of their shirt.

With traditional and outdated policies, students may feel as though they cannot express themselves with the gender that they identify as. Luckily at this particular school, female students were also allowed to wear navy or khaki pants if they chose to, making the policy more gender neutral.

If someone was caught during school hours with an untucked shirt or a rip in their tights, they would be sent to the front office to change, given a detention or worst of all, sent home to change.

Being called out in class or told to leave and change can be distressing for a student. This takes away time that they would instead be in class learning.

Most of these dress codes also apply in grade schools. This is a time when students' minds and bodies are starting to have significant developments. Being a tween or a teenager can be difficult because of the new changes that are happening to their bodies. Being told a shirt is too tight because their breasts are more developed than other classmates or that their skirt is too short because their legs got longer over the summer can make a student feel even more insecure and uncomfortable.

"The feedback that their dress elicits is an important variable in their ongoing identity development," said Associate Professor of Psychology Paul Mullen.

Being heavily criticized for what they are wearing in school could be a student's first memory of harassment.

Dress codes are not only found in grade schools and high schools, but also in college, in the workplace and on sports teams.

Once students get to college, they generally do not have to follow as strict of a dress code that they had in the past.

"That's a real privilege of the discipline," said Assistant Provost for Teaching and Learning Jennifer Keys. "Students come to college and this is a time of self-expression and finding yourself and ... to institute these types of rules would be very paternalistic for students and I can't imagine that it would be well-received."

Many offices are now implementing a more informal dress code for their employees. The rules are not so strict on wearing jeans, having tattoos or shirts that show what the individual's beliefs are. Maybe this is something for schools to consider.

When a student wears something that could be considered distracting to the other students, why should that student get in trouble? Why is it their fault that the other students can't stay focused on their own bodies and their own work?

The message that school dress codes teach young women is that their bodies "are dangerous, powerful and sexualized, and that boys are biologically programmed to objectify and harass them. It prepares them for college life, where as many as 1 in 5 women are sexually assaulted but society will blame and question and silence them, while perpetrators are rarely disciplined," said Bates.

BRYAN SINGER

Director Bryan Singer has had accusations against him since 1997, when he filmed underage boys on the set of “Apt Pupil.” He was sued for sexual assault against a minor in 2014 and again by an anonymous plaintiff. In 2017, Cesar Sanchez-Guzman filed a lawsuit against Singer for raping him when he was a teenager. The Atlantic published an article with four men detailing the abuse and assault they faced from Singer. Despite the allegations and accusations, he remains listed on the Freddie Mercury biopic and has still received other noteworthy jobs in the industry.





Lucy Liu isn't your sex bot

Maya Bryant – Vision Editor
Illustrations by Jasmine Pomierski

Sex and film, the two have always coexisted, and women are usually at the forefront of that duo.

Salma Hayek is considered one of the sexiest women alive for her stunning looks and overly sexual characters. But what if all that eroticism was manufactured to make her seem like a sex object?

Communications Professor Steve Macek said that the male gaze frames the way we see women on-screen.

“I think one of the clues is whether or not what is being focused on is the face ... or, say, certain erogenous zones in the body. Say there is a character on-screen and the camera is focusing on their backside or their chest or their groin or even their bare shoulder or something, that's fetishistic” said Macek.

Halle Berry is another example of a walking sexual figure in the 2000s and 2010s. She was the sultry Storm in the “X-Men” franchise; she was Bond girl Jinx in “Die Another Day” alongside Pierce Brosnan. Her work in “Monster's Ball” even won her Best Actress at the 2002 Academy Awards.

In 2004, she starred in what is considered one of the worst films of all time, “Catwoman.” But this role is what solidified her fetishization in American cinema. Most of her roles, and Hayek's, are about their bodies and their supposedly inherent sexual nature.

But what does that even mean? And is it a problem?

Film and Screen Studies Professor Chelsey Crawford said moments and roles like this are considered fetishization.

“Fetish is lust, is a desire that's targeted toward something that doesn't have anything to do with the individual,” said Crawford. “We (also) describe fetish as something that is unhealthy or taken to an unhealthy extreme.”

The overt fetishization of minority women, in particular, is continually present in modern film.

“I think conventionally, it's far more customary now to have women of color to only exist as token sexual characters, but I think it's interesting that, from the perspective of whiteness, this can happen regardless,” said Crawford.

In a University of Exeter 2008 study by Jonathon E. Schroeder titled, “Fetishization,” objects or people who are fetishized “often symbolize control and release, power and helplessness, sexuality and infantilism.”

If thought about in this way, then the fetishization of minority women is a way for Hollywood directors and producers to control their identity off-screen and leave them helpless to objectification from audiences.

Macek said that “objectification is dehumanizing in and of itself so when somebody is valuing you just for your body or your looks you feel lessened. You feel like your identity is being denied and that's especially hurtful and impactful for a

group of women who have always been dehumanized in American history.”

Part of this can be attributed to the lack of representation in the directorial scene. In a 2019 Hollywood Diversity Report by the UCLA College of Social Sciences, only 1.3 out of every 10 film directors are of color and only 1.3 out of 10 film directors are female.

Crawford said this is part of the reason minorities and women are placed in a perspective of the white male gaze.

“There’s a very real question about the fact that only certain types of people are permitted to produce films in the United States and so the result is that every film is inherently viewed through the lens of whiteness, largely through the lens of masculinity and through the lens of heteronormativity,” said Crawford. “If it’s a story involving a critical mass or predominant casting of white people, then that’s just a film for everyone and the people who can do films for everyone are white directors.”

Few movies have key characters that are women and people of color, unless the director is also a part of that minority group. An example could be the 2000 iteration of “Charlie’s Angels.”

Considering the film, which of the three women receive the least amount characterization and backstory information that is integral to the story and isn’t a subplot? The answer is Lucy Liu, the only minority main character.

She does earn a small B-plot that involves an interracial relationship, but that is glossed over and does not add anything important to the story itself. Furthermore, she fulfills the stereotype of the stoic, sexy, robotic Asian woman, which still makes itself present today.

Crawford and Macek agreed that there is a certain “rigidity” in the stereotypes of Asian-American women as two characterizations: the sexual, exciting, erotically-aggressive woman, and the demure, passive schoolgirl.

Through the white male gaze, the excitement of the Asian woman, or any minority woman, lends to the lens of whiteness that creates the overarching control of fetishization.

“It’s all about representing, for whiteness, that people of color supposedly represent experience ... they’re supposed to already exist with more knowledge of sexual practice just by being persons of color because that’s how whiteness ... has been structured to view otherness,” said Crawford.

The embedded structure of “whiteness versus otherness” can create a norm that is harmful to those who do not fit into said norm.

“What is not white can be either completely eroticized and sexualized or rejected, monstrous and ugly, and there is no kind of in-between,” said Macek.

African American women tend to hold the brunt of hostility in the use of fetishization and dehumanization. Macek said that there are three categories these women are usually placed in: the passive and uneducated “Mammy,” the sex fiend “Jezebel” and the aggressive, emasculating “Sapphire.”

While the names for these stereotypes come from popular culture and sometimes racist depictions, it lends to a theory about black bodies, presented by Georgia State University’s Charleen Wilcox.

In said theory, there is a mask that people of color have veiled over themselves because of the “predetermined perception of (their) body because of racial stereotypes that help establish a racial hierarchy,” said Wilcox.

In essence, the theory states that people of color are fetishized because our culture leans on whiteness and white normativity to further emphasize differences between races.

This way of thinking can be applied to Latinas as well. From the hip shimmying and fruit-wearing Carmen Miranda to the

sassy, cha-cha attitude of Sofia Vergara in “Modern Family,” sex is embedded into the Latina character.

Shortly after the beginning of the MeToo movement, Salma Hayek wrote an article in 2017 for the New York Times. It exposed her over-sexualization on the set of one of her most famous films, “Frida.” Harvey Weinstein produced the film and forced her to do things like “full-frontal nudity” and “getting naked with another woman.”

Macek responded to the article and said, “He was trying to force her to be a willing participant in her fetishization as a woman of color.”

This assertion of power through fetishization and sexual tension is all too common in Hollywood. But is there a way to change that?

Both Macek and Crawford agree that a culture shift needs to take place, however, they hold different ideas as to how we should do so.

Crawford said that at an institutional level, Hollywood will not change the ways they portray minority women “unless something significant has occurred to lead to a decline in the box office and earnings.”

“It seems like the film industry in the United States always has the excuse that it’s a mass media and they are just producing audiences and viewers with what they want,” said Crawford, “It’s Hollywood’s way of doing business.”

Macek, on the other hand, thinks that teaching children from a young age about the wrongdoings and inaccuracies of media will help diminish fetishization.

“There needs to be media literacy education and another thing that we need to address is the miseducation from the media in general,” said Macek.

The issue of fetishism in minority roles is unlikely to go away, but it can be prevented by proactively pointing out current issues. This would include



having representation from all races, genders and sexualities.

When it comes to the issue of representation in all facets and why we need it, Crawford put it in the simplest way she could: “When you’re not given the opportunity to look at different sides of an issue, you side with the dominant version you are given. And that (caused) a lot of damage to individuals and to communities.”

HEY, YOU, ARE YOU FREAKY AND FRESH?

Madison Miller – Editor-in-Chief
Illustrations by Jaidene Samiec

People like what they like. This has been the validation for accepting people's, sometimes strange, sexual fetishes. We can't judge someone for enjoying getting sexy with robots when, maybe, you enjoy a good time with someone wearing a tail. Humans are pretty diverse in their sexual interests and arousals. According to a Healthline article titled "What Causes People to Have Sexual Fetishes," part of this may be about the past, "Generally speaking, a typical case may be somebody happens upon an object by accident or through exposure to leather, or dolls, or part of a human that's nonsexual, such as a foot or toe, and finds it pleasurable, so they continue using it in a sexual way."

Take this short quiz to figure out which fetish you may have (based on short questions that don't really establish much).

1 Do any of the following quotes sound like something you'd say in a normal conversation: "Me and Kyle kissed and sparks flew, girl." "We're just really electric together." "You know the scene with Edward and Bella where sparks are flying out of her head while they're sleeping together? That's so cool!"

Yes (Follow up question) No (Move on)

1a. Do you own a tazor?

Yes (Option A) No (Move on)

2 Did you find a weird satisfaction with playing with those finger trap toys when you were a kid?

Yes (Follow up question) No (Move on)

2a. Did you ever, at any point, think David Copperfield escaping from things was super hot?

Yes (Option B) No (Move on)

3 Have you ever jokingly called a male celebrity "daddy" or a female celebrity "mommy?"

Yes (Follow up question) No (Move on)

3a. Was that celebrity double your age?

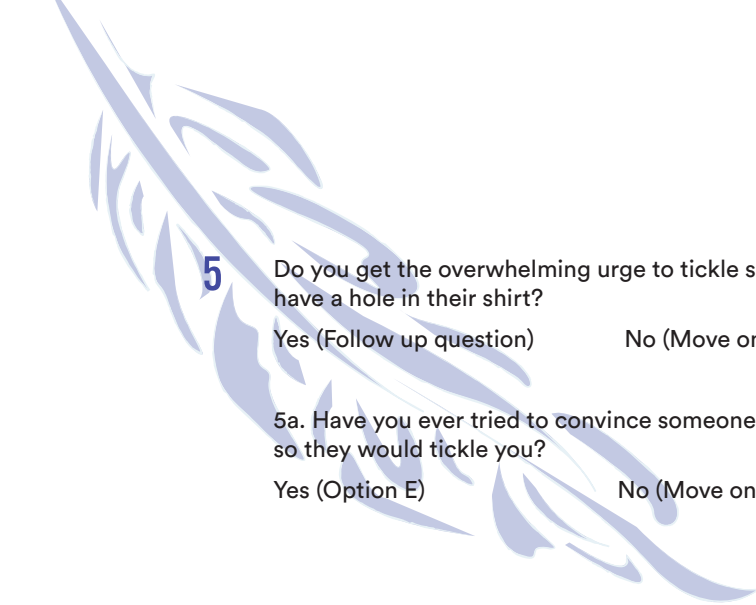
Yes (Option C) No (Move on)

4 Do you wear sandals with no socks all the way up until October?

Yes (Follow up question) No (Move on)

4a. Do you get pedicures more than three times a month and rave to your friends how good it feels to have your feet massaged?

Yes (Option D) No (Move on)



5 Do you get the overwhelming urge to tickle someone's armpit if they have a hole in their shirt?

Yes (Follow up question) No (Move on)

5a. Have you ever tried to convince someone you're not ticklish, just so they would tickle you?

Yes (Option E) No (Move on)

6 Have you ever wondered what it would be like to date your tattoo artist?

Yes (Follow up question) No (Move on)

6a. Have you ever had to visibly restrain yourself from trying to put your hand through someone with very large gauges because you think it would be cute and fun?

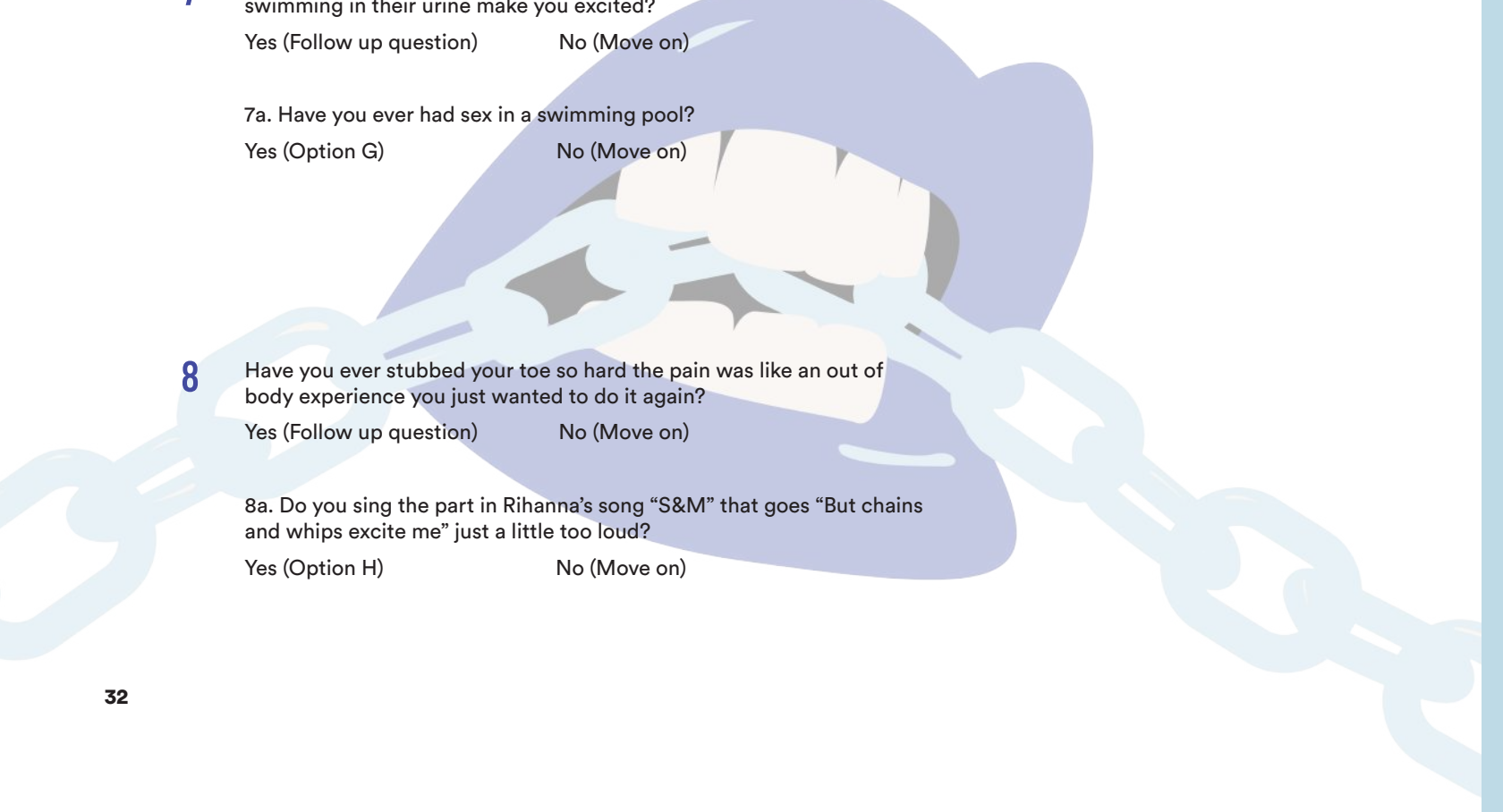
Yes (Option F) No (Move on)

7 Does the thought of swimming with someone and possibly even swimming in their urine make you excited?

Yes (Follow up question) No (Move on)

7a. Have you ever had sex in a swimming pool?

Yes (Option G) No (Move on)



8 Have you ever stubbed your toe so hard the pain was like an out of body experience you just wanted to do it again?

Yes (Follow up question) No (Move on)

8a. Do you sing the part in Rihanna's song "S&M" that goes "But chains and whips excite me" just a little too loud?

Yes (Option H) No (Move on)

ANSWERS

Option A:

Congrats! According to me, you may just be on your way to electrostimulation. I know, shocking right?

Option B:

Yay! You're totally into bondage. I hope you can find someone to bond over that mutual interest with you.

Option C:

Hey! According to only two made-up questions, you may just be into anililagnia, which is only being attracted to someone significantly older. Age is just a number, right?

Option D:

You know which direction this is going. You may be into podophilia, which is commonly known as a foot fetish. I'm guessing the internet has plenty of foot pics to go around.

Option E:

You may just be into knismolagnia, which is the sexual arousal that comes from being tickled. The tickle monster doesn't have anything on you.

Option F:

Congrats! You may be into stigmatophilia, which is getting sexually aroused by looking at someone's piercings or tattoos. I bet matching couple tattoos would really put you over the edge, huh?

Option G:

You may be into urophilia! This is when you have a sexual arousal to urine. This means you may like being peed on (I'd suggest getting stung by a stingray if you need a valid excuse) or enjoy having your partner pee on you. There's even a possibility to have sex in a tub of pee (most of us just call it a swimming pool, though).

Option H:

Hey there! You may be into masochism, which is getting pleasure from pain, whether it is physical or emotional. Please be careful.



Can purity rings really be a burden?

Erika Rosas Lopez – Assistant Sports Editor
Illustration by Jessica Sciabica

On my 15th birthday, I stood in front of my entire church and made a promise to save myself for marriage.

It wasn't uncommon to see a young adult with a purity ring on. Even celebrities like the Jonas Brothers were wearing them at the time.

In 2008 Kevin Jonas, the oldest of the brothers, said in an interview with The Huffington Post, "My ring represents a promise to myself and to God that I'll stay pure until marriage."

Did I really know what the ring represented?

At that age, I knew it meant that I would remain a virgin until I was married. What I couldn't quite understand was why it was such a big deal to everyone but me.

Growing up in a strict, Christian household, I was always taught to value my body. One way I did that was by making a vow to both myself and God that I would remain pure until marriage.

Although I received it at a young age, I didn't start wearing the ring until I was much older. It was mostly because I wasn't used to wearing jewelry.

I had kept my vow, but never wore my ring. I didn't start wearing the ring every day until I was a senior in high school.

I remember hearing one of my close friends talk about how she had just had sex for the first time. She didn't know how she was going to explain to her parents why she had stopped wearing her ring.

I decided then that it was a conversation that I never wanted to have with my mom. Not because I was afraid that she might be angry, but because I didn't want to disappoint her. I decided that I would never take it off.

I went through life wearing this ring with so much pride, but it wasn't until I was halfway through my freshman year of

college that I realized how much of a burden it actually was.

Purity rings are meant to be worn on the ring finger of your left hand. They are supposed to be worn until it is replaced by an engagement ring.

I started to get questions like, “Are you engaged?” or “Are you married?” People would also just stop and stare. They would look from my face to my ring and you could see both judgement and confusion on their faces.

I started off answering with the truth but the more I was asked about it, the more ashamed and embarrassed I felt. I felt ashamed

because I was a virgin and didn’t want to publicly share that with others.

It felt weird being ashamed for not being sexually active. I remember thinking, “How could I be ashamed for not doing something? Isn’t it supposed to be the other way around?”

As thoughts swirled around in my head, I started to notice that this topic was causing me a lot of anxiety. I wondered if this was normal.

Linda Kay Klein, author of “Pure: Inside the Evangelical Movement That Shamed a Generation of Young Women and How I Broke Free” said in an interview with the Chicago Tribune, “I was sure that I was the only one that was experiencing this extreme sexual shame and fear and anxiety that for me was manifesting in ways that mimic post-traumatic stress disorder.”

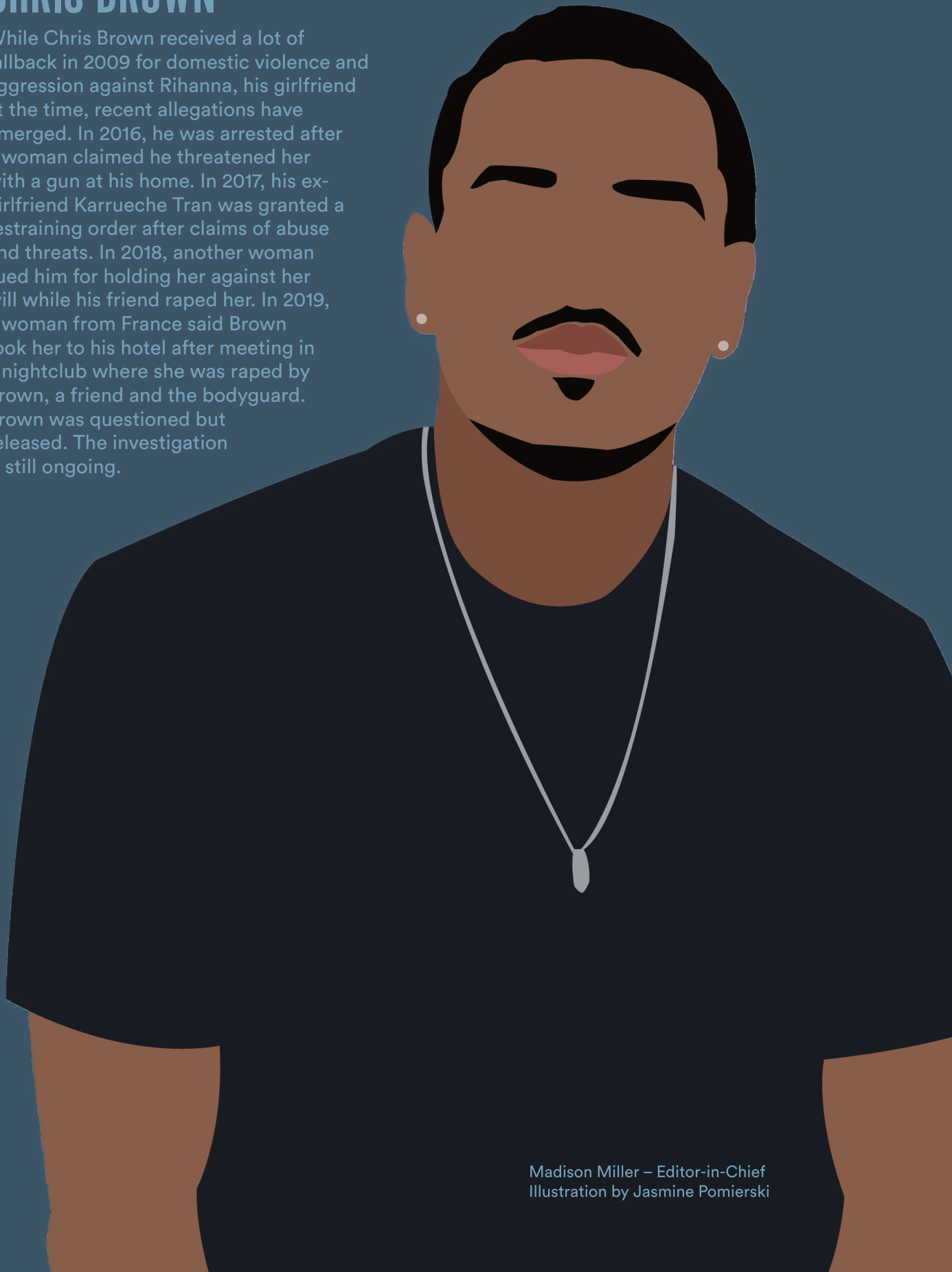
How could something that was supposed to represent something pure cause so much turmoil on the inside?

As I got older, I realized that I wasn’t the only one going through this. After talking with others about the doubts I was having, I realized that the reason I wore my ring wasn’t because I didn’t want to disappoint my mother, but rather because it was a choice I made for myself.

**“HOW COULD
SOMETHING THAT
WAS SUPPOSED
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CAUSE SO MUCH
TURMOIL ON THE
INSIDE?”**

CHRIS BROWN

While Chris Brown received a lot of fallback in 2009 for domestic violence and aggression against Rihanna, his girlfriend at the time, recent allegations have emerged. In 2016, he was arrested after a woman claimed he threatened her with a gun at his home. In 2017, his ex-girlfriend Karrueche Tran was granted a restraining order after claims of abuse and threats. In 2018, another woman sued him for holding her against her will while his friend raped her. In 2019, a woman from France said Brown took her to his hotel after meeting in a nightclub where she was raped by Brown, a friend and the bodyguard. Brown was questioned but released. The investigation is still ongoing.



Song of Songs, hot or not.

Peter Hunt Szpytek – Multimedia Editor
Illustration by Jasmine Pomierski

The books in the Bible are full of a lot of things: adventure, peril, treachery and even romance. King Solomon's "Song of Songs" is a part of the Old Testament and, according to theBibleProject.com, is a "collection of ancient Israelite love poems that celebrates the beauty and power of God's gift of love and sexual desire." In other words, it's old-timey smut. Let's take a look at some passages from the book and decide whether they hold up to the modern standards of pillow talk.

Before we begin, I think it's important to get a few things straight. I am in no way making fun of Christians or Christianity, instead I'm inviting you to be able to laugh a little about an interesting book that has some peculiar passages in it. As a Christian myself, I believe that it's crucial to have the ability to think critically about the Bible and possess a sense of humor about my own religion.

"Kiss me and kiss me again, for your love is sweeter than wine. How fragrant your cologne; your name is like its spreading fragrance. No wonder all the women love you!"

(NLV, Song of Songs 1.1-3)

These verses start the book off with some fire. Not only does the woman ask for a handful of smooches, but she also gasses up the person she's talking about by saying that it's no wonder that everyone has the hots for them because they smell so nice.



Overall, this totally holds up and is a really nice way to say, “hey, I want to kiss you a bunch and you smell super good. Everyone likes you and I’m glad that you’re with me.” Verdict: Hot.

“You are beautiful, my darling, beautiful beyond words. Your eyes are like doves behind your veil. Your hair falls in waves, like a flock of goats winding down the slopes of Gilead.”

(NVL, Song of Songs. 4.1)

During a tender moment in bed, hearing the first 95% of this passage would be beautiful. However, once a flock of goats is involved, the moment is sure to be gone. Being compared to a goat just isn’t what it used to be. In biblical times, livestock was much more of a commodity than it is now here in suburban Illinois and so being compared to it was a big compliment. It’s basically saying, “you remind me of that thing that I place a lot of value in.” But now it means, “you remind me of a bunch of goats!” Verdict: Not.

“How beautiful are your sandaled feet, O queenly maiden. Your rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of a skilled craftsman. Your navel is perfectly formed like a goblet filled with mixed wine. Between your thighs lies a mound of wheat bordered with lilies. Your breasts are like two fawns, twin fawns of a gazelle.”

(NVL, Song of Songs. 7.1-3)

Let me give you some advice. If you’re interested in a woman, don’t tell her that her breasts are like two fawns. Are fawns cute? Yes, but should you compare a woman’s breasts to them? I would say no. These verses clearly tell us that compliments that were considered romantic and hot several thousand years ago may not be seen the same way now. Comparing someone’s stomach to the glass of wine they’re holding is a great way to get that glass of wine thrown right in your face and I don’t even know how to process the comparison of what’s between your thighs to a mound of wheat and lilies. Verdict: Not.

“I aroused you under the apple tree, where your mother gave you birth, where in great pain she delivered you.”

(NVL, Song of Songs. 8.5)

I’m going to speak for all of us and say that as things start to heat up, you shouldn’t talk about your partner’s mother. You shouldn’t be mentioning how bad it hurt for them to give birth and you definitely shouldn’t make it a point to “arouse” them in the same place that they were born. I don’t think you even need to wonder if this holds up today because I don’t feel like this held up even then. “Don’t talk about my mom right now, I thought you wanted to make out!” Verdict: Not.

Engaged at 21

Brandon Cruz – Arts & Lifestyle Editor
Illustrations by Jessica Sciabica

“Will you marry me?”

That phrase will cause split reactions amongst college students. Getting on your knee and proposing to your significant other in college is a double-edged sword. It can be a moment you cherish or regret forever.

According to Business Insider, “Seventeen relationship facts everyone should know before getting married,” waiting until you’re 23 years old might be a better age to get engaged. The reason stated is couples who wait are less likely to get divorced. At 23, you wouldn’t be an undergraduate anymore. The stress of being a college student is off your shoulders. Less stress means a happier lifestyle, thus a happier time to get engaged.

While there is evidence as to why waiting after college to get engaged is beneficial, I disagree. I got engaged my junior year. It has been over a year since I popped the question to my significant other. I have had plenty of time to experience what it is like to be engaged in college. Quite simply, engagement in college boils down to communication.

Before proposing to my fiancée, we had multiple discussions about our future. Having these conversations with your partner is essential. I know thinking about the future in college is dreadful, but you are going to enter the real world whether you are ready or not. While we cannot see into the future, communicating with your partner on what you want it to look like can help shape it.

Think about it. Most college students are just going with the flow. Trying to plan out your life during college, a time of continuous stress, seems impossible. But this is why you need to communicate with your partner. Having productive conversations can align the future with what you both want.

Of course, even with productive conversations, not every couple will agree on a mutual future. Some will be able to figure out a solution, but sometimes there is no solution. Therefore, you should not blindly hope your futures align. You are going to spend the rest of your life with this person. Having a different agenda than your partner does not equal a recipe for success.

There is a reason why I am putting so much emphasis on being on the same page as your partner. Once engaged, life isn’t a solo journey anymore. You are committing to spending the rest of your life with only them. If all you care about is what you want, there is no relationship. Thinking only about yourself creates a “me versus them” dynamic.

At the end of the day, a relationship is a team effort. Engagement furthers that team dynamic. It is the start of your significant other and you against the world. If you are still arguing about you doing more chores than your partner, instead of realizing that both of you do a lot for each other, then you are not ready for engagement.

The team dynamic also brings up a





positive aspect of being engaged in college. According to Priceonomics' article "How long do couples date before getting engaged?" women tend to get engaged around 27.2 years old while men tend to at 28.7 years old. It is logical to think that getting engaged in college is early. While most college students are not fully-grown adults yet, being young is why being engaged in college is a beautiful thing.

Once engaged, you solidify yourself as your partner's No. 1 fan. Think of it as being a sports fan. Your favorite team is not the best they can be right now. However, after some time, your team makes some decisions and continues to work hard. Before you know it, they become one of the best teams in their league.

This is exactly how it is in college. Your partner is going to change and become a better version of themselves. Now, as their No. 1 fan, what could be better than seeing them grow up?

Honestly, watching each other grow up together is the best part of being engaged in college. In the future, you get to look back and smile at how you both made it through college classes, tackled your goals and launched your respective careers. You are always going to have those memories with so many more to come.

Now, if you choose to go down the route of being engaged in college, criticism will come. Do not get me wrong, when I announced that I was engaged, I had a ton of overwhelming support. Many people congratulated my partner and I. However, I also had my fair share of people saying I made a mistake.

The overwhelming consensus I heard

was "why now?" Those who disagreed thought I was rushing the relationship. That doing this would result in heartbreak. They couldn't understand the difference between maintaining a long-term relationship and getting engaged.

Engagement is a formal commitment to marriage. Getting engaged shows that you want to marry your partner. While a long-term relationship shows length, it doesn't show any official signs of wanting to marry your partner. If you both know that you want to get married to each other, especially in college, why wait?

This is where the college experience comes in. There is no direct definition of how you should go about college. From focusing on school or focusing on partying, only you decide your experience.

While people may never understand choosing to be engaged in college, they never have to understand. For me, being engaged in college made sense, as I knew it would shape the college experience I wanted. For others, being engaged would ruin their college experience.

It is easy to listen and focus on what others have to say. But they are not a part of your relationship. A relationship is two people — you and your partner. If you are both happy in the relationship, it doesn't matter what others think.

If you are someone who can't ignore the critics, maybe engagement in college isn't for you. It is hard at first, but once you remember all the support you have behind you, any criticism will become white noise.

**HEY MAN,
LET'S TALK
ABOUT THE
HYMEN**

Cheyenne Daniels – News Editor

Imagine you're a 16-year-old girl and on your first trip to the gynecologist — which, as every girl knows, is terrifying — your father tells you he'll be coming along, not to support you, but to make sure your hymen is intact. Your father is going to accompany you to one of the most invasive appointments of your life to ensure that you're still a virgin. As if the appointment wasn't already traumatizing.

The above scenario really happened. Rapper T.I. recently spoke in an interview on the podcast Ladies Like Us that he has taken his 18-year-old daughter for regular “hymen checks” since her 16th birthday. There's quite a few problems with T.I.'s comments, so let's break this down.

First and foremost, because gender is a non-binary concept, the terms “female” and “male” will be used to describe one's biological sex, not their gender or gender-identification. It's important to acknowledge that not all females who have a vagina consider themselves a woman nor do all who identify as a woman have a vagina.

The idea that a female's virgin status can be measured on the basis of her

**“GENERALLY IN A
HETERONORMATIVE
PATRIARCHY, MEN
ARE DEVALUED FOR
BEING VIRGINS.”**

hymen is an inherently false idea.

The hymen is a thin piece of tissue located at the opening of the vagina. Just as no two bodies are the same, neither are all hymens.

“There are some females that are born with no hymen. There are some with very little. And there are some that have this tissue that completely covers the vaginal opening,” said Pat Hamalis, family nurse practitioner. “And actually in those cases, they would need to have a surgical procedure to remove some of that tissue to allow for menstrual blood to exit.”

The idea that a female's virginity rests on whether the hymen is broken is where things start to get ... sticky.

“When a female child is born, that hymen is very thick,” said Hamalis. “But as the female grows and gets older, it thins out and the hymen itself can be stretched open or torn.”

While that stretching or tearing might occur the first time one has vaginal intercourse, there are also other activities that can cause stretching and tearing.

“Riding a bike or playing in sports or putting something else in the vagina, such as a tampon or a finger or a sex toy or something like that can ‘break’ the hymen,” said Hamalis. Once the hymen “breaks,” it doesn't grow back.

Because there are many activities that can cause the hymen to break, the concept of virginity becomes more complex; it's not nearly as straightforward as some might think.

Historically, Hamalis said, a virgin was someone who had not had

“penis-in-vagina” intercourse. The problem, of course, is that there are other sexual acts individuals can engage in. This is when the idea of “virginity as a social construct” pops up.

“There’s oral sex, anal sex, digital penetration,” said Hamalis. “And there are people who participate in these other forms of sex and have never had a penis-in-vagina intercourse yet they don’t consider themselves virgins.”

On the other hand, there are individuals who have engaged in the above actions and do consider themselves virgins.

“What I find is that individuals ... have their own interpretation of what virginity means for them,” said Hamalis.

In short, said Hamalis, “Having a hymen and being a virgin are not the same thing.”

But besides T.I. not understanding that the state of a female’s hymen is not indicative of her sexual experience, his comments highlight a frightening thought process.

Religious Studies Professor Shelley Birdsong explains how T.I.’s comments symbolize an almost cult-like rage, one that is evident in many religious societies.

“I would say we certainly see in lots of religious communities that it’s the responsibility of the woman to maintain her virginity,” said Birdsong. “Oftentimes in those societies, the men in that woman’s family also protect her virginity and her sexual rights.”

In effect, a female’s virginity becomes synonymous with her worth to society. “It’s sort of like the price the value of virginity is placed on a woman’s body as opposed to a man’s. And that’s just been like historically true, unfortunately, for a really long time. And that continues to be perpetuated,” said Birdsong.

The basis for this thought process stems from the cultural distribution of power. And, in most cases, this value of a woman’s virtue appears in patriarchal societies.

“We have come from very patriarchal societies and in patriarchal societies, men owned women, women’s bodies, and they ... essentially bought and traded women’s bodies,” said Birdsong. “We didn’t buy and sell and trade men like that. And I think that has just continued throughout human culture for a really long time as a result of most cultures being patriarchal.”

The idea of who owns one’s virginity and who “takes it” is a complex question. Visiting Professor of Shimer Great Books School Ann Dolinko said that this “owning” and “taking” of virginity affects men just as much as women in a patriarchal society.

“Generally in a heteronormative patriarchy, men are devalued for being virgins,” said Dolinko. “Women are devalued for not being virgins because our sexuality is considered something we own and it’s a gift we can give away, which is a little disturbing.”

Looking back to T.I.’s comments about his daughter, the disturbing factor kicks in when it becomes apparent

that he believes he owns his daughter and, by extension, her virginity. More than that, his comments indicate that he considers his daughter's status as a virgin as the most important aspect of her character.

But T.I. is not alone in this thought process. As Dolinko points out, the idea that a father owns his daughter's sexuality is something our society practices without even knowing it; this ownership is seen most clearly in wedding ceremonies.

"What does the father do?" asked Dolinko. "He gives his daughter, who is pure — she's wearing white, he has to vouch for the virginity of his pure daughter — and he gives her away to her husband, who then gets to claim her virginity. So that's the fundamental patriarchal narrative that's played out to us and sold to us as romance."

So can T.I. really be blamed for his comments when this trope of ownership is paraded to us as "romantic?" Yes, he can. The fact is, if T.I. sees his daughter first and foremost as a sexual being, then it becomes impossible for him to see her as anything else.

"If he sees his daughter as a hymen that he has to keep intact does he see his daughter as a president? Does he see his daughter as a philosophy professor?" said Dolinko. "No. He's protecting his daughter's sexuality. And that's why she's valued. Her value is in her sexuality. It's not in her accomplishments."

Of course, the other problem with T.I. admitting he forces his daughter to

go through with virginity testing is the fact that the American Academy of Obstetrics and Gynecology has denounced virginity testing. Additionally, the World Health Organization released a statement in 2018 condemning and calling for an end to the practice.

"As health care providers, it's our duty to do no harm to our clients that come to us," said Hamalis. "Virginity testing really violates that ethical principle. It can be humiliating. It can be painful. It can be traumatic, especially if it's done without the female's consent and it's not even reliable."

WHO's statement explains that there is no scientific research that indicates any sort of medical utility for the practice of virginity testing. It reviews the psychological consequences that correlate with virginity testing and the statement details the violation of human rights.

"Technically, if it's done without the female's consent, it can be considered sexual assault because the testing itself obviously is a genital exam and can include the insertion of fingers into the vagina, which without consent is sexual assault," said Hamalis.

T.I.'s comments have brought outrage for many of the aforementioned reasons. But his comments have also reminded many that while the U.S. claims to be a progressive First World nation, it continues to practice patriarchal ideas that harm many of its citizens.

FACES OF NCC

Lauren Kainrath –
Contributing Photographer

Illustrations by Jasmine Pomierski

WHAT WAS YOUR WORST DATE?



Alexis Munoz, '22

“It was my sophomore year in high school actually, and I told the girl I was dating at the time that I wanted to play a game of pool. There was a table kinda open, a guy was there just shooting around, so I ask him, ‘Hey, you wanna get a game in?’ And he says, ‘Yeah.’ So we’re playing and I’m all nonchalant about it, trying to be cool. I come to find out that the guy I’m playing pool with was her father!”



Amanda Osman, '21

“My sophomore year in high school, I went on a date and he took me to see “Maze Runner” and instead of talking to me, he threw popcorn at me when it got awkward because he didn’t know what to say.”



Evan McCarthy, '23

“It was just a first date and her breath smelled like Fritos the entire time.”



Morgan Knight, '22

“So he picked me up at my house and we were gonna go to dinner and a movie. He didn’t plan it well, so we had like two hours in a middle-of-nowhere town with nothing to do in between dinner and the movie, so that was awful. And then he hit on the waitress. He told me how hot she was at dinner. It was great.”



Stephanie Garcia, '22

"In sixth grade I started dating this guy and we went on our first date at the park and his grandma provided us McDonalds and was sitting in the car like a little bit further down. We hung out for a little bit in the park. He then took out his Nintendo DS and was like, 'Hey, let's take a picture on it!' And so we took a selfie and that was just a very, very awkward date. It was bad."



Kenneth Helberg, assistant men's and women's track and field coach; adjunct instructor of chemistry and physics

"It was 1977, we went to Bakers Square and both had a piece of pie and hot tea. I went to pay for the bill, it was like \$2.50, I went to open my wallet and I had no money. She goes 'don't worry about it, I'll pay for it' and pulls out a \$50 to pay for our \$2.50 pies and tea. I felt really small."



Zachariah Robinson, '22

"On a first date it's just me and this girl and we go and sit down at the table and there is not a word spoken, it was just silent. And then she goes to eat the chips they serve us and says that they're disgusting, and I love their chips, so it made me feel some type of way. It was bad because there was no communication but ended up good because we started talking more."



Elizabeth Hodonicky, '21

"So he took me to this really old diner at 8 p.m. I got a waffle, not expensive at all. This guy's card got declined at the counter for his food and made me pay for him even though he said he was going to pay for himself and then right when I was about to leave the car, he started turning into me for a kiss and I was just like, 'Oh my god, gotta go! I-I have a bloody nose.' And then I bolted out the door."



Peyton Schulz, '22

"It was someone I went to high school with and we go to this one ice cream place, but it was closed so we drive 20 minutes to another ice cream place. When we got there, I sat on the booth side and he sat next to me, not like across from me, and we had small talk and it was super awkward. Then he goes to drop me off and he just went in for a kiss and I was like 'bro, this was so awkward!'"

A rose for the deflowered

Shealeigh Voitl – Assistant Arts & Lifestyle Editor
Illustration by Jasmine Pomierski

Over a dreamy candlelit dinner with Becca Kufrin on the fourteenth season of “The Bachelorette,” Colton Underwood told Kufrin, and consequently the rest of “Bachelor Nation,” that he’d never had sex. Ultimately, this seemed to be the relationship’s undoing. Underwood was tearfully eliminated at the next rose ceremony after taking Kufrin on a visit to his hometown.

“I think part of living in a heterosexist, patriarchal culture is we value men for their experience,” said Visiting Professor Ann Dolinko. “And men are supposed to have a lot of experience because the idea is that they should be sexually in control.”

The following year, when Underwood was chosen as “The Bachelor,” fans were reminded of his deeply personal reveal almost every episode. The fascination grew, as host Chris Harrison delivered brutal lines like, “Will Colton find the love of his life? Or will he remain a virgin forever?” (As though the only choices in life are to have sex, or to not and be eternally doomed.)

The show’s promotional tagline was: “What does he have to lose?”

“That language itself reflects where we place the value,” said Dolinko. “Women have to save (their virginity) because their value is in their purity. Men have to lose it.”

No one seemed to understand how this conventionally attractive, twenty-something football player could have gone so many years without losing his virginity. During his heartfelt moment with Kufrin, Underwood shared that he spent so much of his life focusing on school, on work, on his NFL aspirations, that he neglected the part of him that longed for romance.

According to a 2011 study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the average American man or woman will lose their virginity, narrowly defined by vaginal sexual intercourse (excluding many sexually active LGBTQ+ people), at 17 years old. The study also found that, conservatively, less than 5% of men and women aged 25-29 identify as virgins.

“I feel like it’s kind of dangerous,” said Claire Coughlin, ’21. “It’s almost like virginity is supposed to be for women, like we’re supposed to stay virgins until marriage, and men are expected to, have a ton of sex.”

Ashley Iaconetti, who appeared on season 19 of “The Bachelor” with Chris Soules, spoke candidly on the show about staying celibate. However, the discussion that followed wasn’t one of urgency, like it was with Underwood, but one of patience, virtue and purity.



“We’re taught through fairytales and rom-coms that what a woman and girl does is wait for her prince, for somebody to awaken her sexuality,” said Dolinko.

Similar to Underwood, however, was the need to define each participant by their inexperience.

“I remember there was a girl on Colton’s season who was like, ‘I haven’t had my first kiss yet,’” said Coughlin. “And her job, you know, when they have descriptions below their names, hers was, ‘never been kissed.’”

But even if this was an important conversation to have, as Colton has maintained since the show wrapped in 2019, what have we really learned about abstinence and its many complexities? And how does someone’s real-world experience compare to the way that sex is depicted on television?

“I think TV pushes an ideal,” said Coughlin. “When, in reality, it’s just not that serious. Virginity is a social construct.”

In the summer of 2019, according to *Cosmopolitan*, Miley Cyrus received backlash for repeating Coughlin’s exact sentiment on her Instagram. Followers were quick to point out that virginity was “in the Bible,” that it was plainly “biology.”

However, The World Health Organization insists that “virginity” isn’t a medical or scientific term at all, but rather one that has broader cultural, and often religious implications.

According to the WHO, feeding into

the stress and importance placed on a woman’s virginity is, in fact, a form of gender discrimination.

“I think (the way we see virginity) will evolve,” said Dolinko. “But I only think it’ll evolve when we really challenge a patriarchal system that values women as sex objects.”

Maybe the media are moving in the right direction, departing from the lazy tropes from teen dramas like “One Tree Hill.” These dreamy universes often portray sex as a “rite of passage” or a “gift,” solely shared between a man and a woman, as said by Sociology Professor Laura Carpenter in her 2009 study. But what’s left?

“I think (these narratives) estrange women and men from mutually satisfying sexual relationships, because one thinks that they should be in charge and know what they’re doing and dominate, and the other has no idea what they like sexually and they don’t know their own body, and they’re taught to be passive and not express their desires and their wants and what makes them feel good,” said Dolinko.

Dolinko said that the less emphasis the media place on virginity and the more they place on actively understanding one’s own body, the better.

“You might have two people that don’t know how to communicate sexually,” said Dolinko. “And they don’t know then how to have intimacy. They only know how to engage in an act ... but not have a mutually satisfying experience where they can communicate with their bodies and their minds.”

PAUL MARCIANO

Paul Marciano, Guess cofounder, was accused of sexual harassment in 2018 from model Kate Upton. According to Time, Upton said that he “forcibly grabbed my breasts and started feeling them ... he continued to touch me in a very dominating and aggressive way, grabbing my thighs, my arms to pull me closer, my shoulders to pull me closer, my neck, my breasts, and smelling me.” Marciano was removed from day-to-day responsibilities and a special committee helped investigate the claims. He stepped down as executive chairman and paid \$500,000 but was still allowed to stay on the Guess board until 2019. He was also still allowed to stay as a chief creative officer and his employment would be “at will.”



Day 154 with no relationship, still breathing and ovulating

Madison Miller – Editor-in-Chief
Illustration by Jasmine Pomierski

Adult life for women starts when you get married.

At least, that's what society has always trained women to think.

Rebecca Traister writes in her book "All the Single Ladies: Unmarried Women and the Rise of an Independent Nation" that "the proportion of American women who were married dropped below 50 percent."

"When people don't follow traditional paths, they are often treated with suspicion or even fear by mainstream society. This particularly affects women, who have long been expected to be wives, mothers and caretakers," said Julia Bartz, a therapist who specializes in sexuality and gender. She also runs an online blog that focuses on being single or self-partnered.

Society has often felt threatened by the emergence of a powerful group of women reclaiming their right to not be claimed.

A new movement started that encourages women that there is power in being single. Behind this single positivity movement is embracing yourself. As cliché as it sounds, there's a lot of fulfillment that comes from knowing what you want and who you are.

Recently, actress and feminist icon Emma Watson, who could literally slap me and I would say thanks, declared that she identifies as self-partnered in an interview with British Vogue.

"If you have not built a home, if you do not have a husband, if you do not have a baby, and you are turning 30, and you're not in some incredibly secure, stable place in your career, or you're still figuring things out ... There's just this incredible amount of anxiety ... It took me a long time, but I'm very happy (being single). I call it being self-partnered."

After coining this term, she received both support and some backlash. Saying self-partnered, to some, seemed a little too close to "it's complicated."

So the real question is, does it really make any difference to use the phrase self-partnered as opposed to just saying you're single?

Bartz said that being self-partnered does not necessarily mean being single.

"If you're in a relationship, being self-partnered is actually a great indication of your relationship's strength ... Many people expect their partners to meet their needs and while mutual support is important, it's not your partner's responsibility to sort out our issues," said Bartz.

As a society, we have assumed that at a certain age women shouldn't be single anymore. We have assumed that the sole purpose of a woman is to get married and pop out a few demons — I mean, babies. We have assumed single people are unattractive or lack personality. We have assumed that being single is sad, pathetic and lonely. We make a lot of annoying assumptions.

We need more women like Emma Watson, who could probably, realistically, be in a relationship if they really wanted to, making a point to say it isn't what they want. We force people, women specifically, to find meaningful relationships and to leech onto them even if it isn't what they want or the timing is bad. We want women to be in relationships, married and having kids so much that many women start to feel guilty and selfish when that's not what they want.

Obviously, men face a certain level of pressure too, but they don't have the ticking time bomb that are ovaries. With each year closer to your thirties, it feels like your ovaries have been placed in a protective glass bubble and people come tap on the glass to see if the ladies are still functioning. What if, in reality, the closest we want to get to babies in our lives is when we pass the baby supplies section on our way to the alcohol section in Target?

"Oftentimes we're taught as children that it's selfish to take care of ourselves. In using the term 'self-partnered,' we can externalize ourselves and remind ourselves that we're worth taking care of," said Bartz. "In a sense, it's a way to trick our brains into realizing that all of the time, energy and resources that we put towards other people, we can and should also put toward ourselves."

If you think that a woman's sole purpose is to get married and procreate, congratulations, you're the problem. During the holidays we endure sitting at a table of Boomers who ask why you're still single, but the answer and their response to your answer never really changes.

"I like being single."

In fact, some studies suggest that being single is healthier. According to an article from The Independent titled "It's better to be single, according to science," being single causes increased social connections that can lead to happy and sustained friendships, which are a strong predictor of health and happiness. Single people also have, on average, a slightly lower BMI, so take that.

Freelance Journalist, Nicola Slawson, writes a newsletter aimed at single women titled "The Single Supplement." In it, she explores how being single can be a form of self-acceptance and even covers tips to live on one income.

In one of her latest installations, Nicola discusses New Year's Eve and specifically the concept of "cuffing" during the holiday season. This is basically the concept that the holidays are a difficult time for people who are single because it's all about creating the perfect image



or "Christmas card" life.

In reality, the holidays are tragic and draining for nearly everyone I've ever met — whether they are single, engaged, married or divorced. It's a month of expectations and being fake, it's hard. In the end, it all just seems like a ploy to call women failures.

"What the unease boiled down to was that I was feeling like a failure. My age

has a lot to do with this. In 2009, I was 25 and now I'm 35. That age range from 25 to 35 is surely when women are under the most intense pressure from society, our mothers and, of course, our biological clocks. In the decade where I should have hit all the major life milestones, I managed not to hit a single one," wrote Slawson.

I'm single myself. Which at this point I'm guessing most people have assumed (even though I wrote earlier that assuming things is annoying). But I'm not single in the bitter, sits-at-home-knee-deep-in-Chinese-take-out single. I'm just single. It's not a myth to be that, and it's possible to see that in a really positive, self-love kind of light.

Being single can be my choice. There are periods of time where I think I'm more hyperactive in my hunt for a relationship. But at the end of the day, how many boys holding a fish, named Chad, that love "The Office" can I swipe past before I want to gnaw my eyes out with fishing hooks?

We all have our limits and I think I reached mine a long time ago with that. After downloading and deleting, I've realized that the only thing that dating apps do is make me feel like a huge, artificial piece of shit. That's not true for everyone, but it never really made me feel important or empowered.

If the best image you can find of yourself is holding up a minnow-sized fish in one hand and a can of Bud Light in the other, maybe you deserve to be single.

A lot of people are really deserving of being single. I'm not even saying that

in a bitter way, but instead I'm saying that being selfish is healthy and important. We don't exist to satisfy others. We need to satisfy ourselves and enjoy our own company before we can even think about adding someone else to that equation.

So despite being a big fan of the sentiment behind being "self-partnered," we really don't need a new word for "single." But we absolutely need the single positivity movement now more than ever. It doesn't need to be creating words like "self-partnered" or even "conscious uncoupling," it needs to be about redefining single rather than rebranding.

We don't need to correct being single, we need to own it. We need to continue the movement for independence and self-love, whatever that may be called. We need to be single ladies, and not the kind that are just wishing that you liked it enough to put a ring on it. When in reality maybe we all need to be a little more like Lizzo and not worry "bout a ring on my finger."

As children, we are taught that love is about finding our "other half" or "the missing piece of the puzzle" our "soulmate" someone who will just totally and completely, well, "complete" you. In reality, none of us were created to wait around for what society has trained us to think we're missing. To me, it all just sounds like an excuse to mope around and have an excuse for never really starting your life.

Young and risky with STDs

Madeleine O'Connell – Editor-in-Chief
Illustrations by Molly Haupt

It only takes one time.

Not to get pregnant, but to spread a sexually transmitted disease. Americans might be having less sex, but they are being riskier with their actions. This has led to an increase in STDs in young adults.

The average age for those having unsafe sex is between 15 and 24 years old.

“Each year, there are an estimated 20 million new STD infections in the United States,” according to the Center for Disease Control. “Anyone who is sexually active can get an STD.”

Regardless of the type of sex and gender of each partner, the risks are still there.

It might seem as though an increase in STDs would be associated with more sex, but that's not the case. So why are Americans having less sex? And why aren't they being safer even with the advancements in contraceptives?

“American adults had sex about nine fewer times per year in the early 2010s compared to the late 1990s,” said Jean Twenge in the study “Declines in Sexual Frequency among American Adults, 1989–2014.”

This 2017 study found two main reasons why the frequency of sex decreased for Americans in their 20s. One reason is that not as many are married or have a steady partner. The other reason is that those who are married aren't as sexually active.

People who are single have access to more frequent and casual sex. Dating apps such as Tinder and Grindr suggest that sex can be just a few clicks away. Two people can see each other's profiles online, feel an attraction toward their photos and have a one-night stand without ever meeting face-to-face beforehand.

The discussion of how technology is affecting



relationships continues in “America is in a ‘sex drought’ and here’s why it matters,” by Meghan Holohan. In this article, Holohan often referred to Christine Whelan, director of Money, Relationships and Equality Initiative in the School of Human Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

“If we are less and less able to engage in physical intimacy, then we are moving away from something that is an evolved tendency that actually signals success,” said Whelan. Generally, “Sex is associated with healthy relationships and overall wellbeing.”

With the rise in popularity of social media, younger generations are starting to look to influencers for advice and taking note of how they live their lives. Generation Z “accounts for more than half of new STD diagnoses last year,” said Claire Hartman, ’20, former media relations intern at Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Not many online celebrities will talk about the importance of safe sex or how to prevent STDs. Maybe they don’t talk about it because either they have not experienced having an STD or because they have and are embarrassed to admit it to their audience. It could be beneficial for these influencers to be explaining this topic to their viewers but then again, they probably aren’t all experts.

Since these are the people most young adults are listening to, the messages that are put out there are

crucial because it could affect their decisions.

The bad news? Just because the sex might be safe, doesn’t mean that the chance of getting an STD is off the table. Condoms can lessen the risk of getting a disease, but the skin-to-skin contact still brings the possibility of contracting an STD like HIV or herpes. Ultimately, the only way to completely avoid these is to refrain from oral, vaginal and anal sex.

The most popular form of contraceptive is a condom, but there are other options, including the pill and withdrawal, usually known as “the pull-out method.” According to Planned Parenthood, the only forms of birth control that can help prevent STDs are synthetic condoms and the internal condom.

If the decision is to not use a condom, each partner should be tested first. If the sex will be between partners who don’t know each other’s history, one or both could have unknowingly gotten an STD from a previous partner.

“It remains a very important message for this generation and each generation just to have that level of education that lets you make a good choice ... so that there is an openness so that people can talk about the problem and the prevention and feel like they have the information to make decisions,” said John Visick, professor of biology.



SENIOR YEARBOOK

“BEFORE PUBERTY . . .”



Madison

“I thought it was OK to flirt with guys by sticking a pad to their back during English. It was not OK.”



Madeleine

“I thought it was okay to go out in public without brushing my hair and only wearing clothes that were comfortable. I clearly did not care about my appearance.”



Cheyenne

“Baby Cheyanne was NOT amused.”



Brandon

“I thought my fashion choices were off the charts.”



Maya

“I really thought I was doing something with that hair ... but I just ended up looking like Magneto. The glow up was real.”



Jordan

“Yes. I could shoot water out of my front teeth.”



Peter

“All I did was daydream about being in ‘Star Wars.’ Now, I still do that, but I’m taller and have better hair.”



Kailee

“I owned Pink yoga pants in every color and thought I would be the next model for dELiA’s.”



Claire

“I overused the word ‘artsy’ and acted like I was the star of a coming-of-age John Green book — I was not.”



Jaidene

“CEO of emotional eating.”

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