



Photo Illustration by Meg Plank

Sex Standards

Double standards still affect males and females in modern era

Senior Amber Michaels* lost her virginity when she was 15 years old. As her freshman year began, she walked down the hallways of the school to the taunting words of upperclassman girls.

They would call her “slut,” “whore” and even toilet paper her house or write insults on her driveway in shaving cream. Michaels’ struggles are just one of the many examples of a sexual double standard that exists between males and females when it comes to sex and reputations.

Double Standards

Assistant professor of sociology at Wichita State University Jennifer Pearson studies gender roles and sexuality.

“A sexual double standard means we have different expectations for sexual behavior or desires for men/boys and women/girls,” Pearson said. “In other words, we expect men to behave a certain way sexually, and punish them if they don’t meet those expectations, and we expect women to behave differently, again with punishments if they don’t meet those expectations.”

Double standards commonly exist between genders and are especially obvious in adolescence.

“There is a double standard for males and females. Guys don’t want girls to sleep around with other guys because they don’t want to get someone’s ‘sloppy seconds,’” senior A.J. Scholfield said. “It’s ironic, though, because they want these girls to sleep with them, but when they make fun of them for sleeping around, it makes it less likely for them to get anything.”

In adolescence, these standards are especially prominent because of the many interactions that teens have with each other at school and in social environments. Pearson said teen girls themselves often police these double standards, openly calling other girls “sluts” or “whores” in order

to raise their social status, while boys use the phrase “fag” to bolster their own masculinity.

Junior Bailey Kilian said from a female perspective, it is unacceptable for girls to have sex with a different guy every weekend.

Adults, on the other hand, generally have less of a double standard, according to Pearson. While teens are constantly put in situations of social communication, adults generally occupy smaller social circles without as much gossip. History teacher Joel Schaefer said adults generally emphasize other ramifications that go beyond sex, like economic implications of income earned.

Senior Karlyn Bradford said adolescents shouldn’t be treated differently than adults when it comes to sex.

“I believe once you’re old enough to drive, you can be old enough to make decisions like having sex or not,” Bradford said.

How the Standards Have Changed

Before the 2000s, sexual standards were different.

“It used to be the case that wanting and having sex, even with more than one partner, was expected for boys but not for girls,” Pearson said.

“Girls who were seen as too sexual — because they wanted sex or had sex outside of a committed relationship or had more than one partner — were labeled as ‘sluts’ or ‘whores’ and lost status with their peers.”

English teacher Elizabeth Miller said society is more accepting in general than it was in her adolescence, and that the changes were especially obvious in the arts (movies, music, television, etc.) The media today often portrays sexual behavior freely, for both males and females. Though some object to singers like Miley Cyrus openly displaying sexuality.

“If we know that most teens are having sex, it is important to give them the knowledge and tools to make smart choices,”

- jenniferPEARSON

“Today, sexual behavior is a normative and expected part of adolescence. Anyone who argues otherwise does not know the research,” Pearson said. “About seven in 10 young women and men have sex by age 20, and the average age of sex for young women and men is about 17.”

Even at Andover High School, opinions about sex and sexuality are changing and becoming less prejudiced.

“I don’t see an issue with it; whatever good or bad that may come out of it is theirs to deal with,” junior Nick Harrelson said.

Some girls, like Bradford, still think that girls are shamed for having sex.

“Students at Andover treat sex as a much bigger deal than it is, and it’s ridiculous,” Bradford said. “Girls should be able to do whatever they want without a double standard being involved.”

Scholfield disagreed, saying he has not been around any bad slut shaming.

With many differing opinions, double standards and sex are still hot topics, and will continue to be. Although adolescents and sex is becoming less of a taboo, it is still important to consider long-term implica-

tions.

Schaefer said there should be concern about adolescents and sex.

“Frequent sexual activity (or sexual activity, in general) is not something to be taken lightly, and I fear too many young people don’t recognize this until later in life when they look back with regret(s) to past choices made,” Schaefer said. “It should never be acceptable to shame or humiliate someone for choices made, but the consequences of actions can be life altering and the consideration for such actions should be thought about considerably beforehand.”

The implications of having sex as a teenager are also greater if measures to be safe are not taken.

“If we know that most teens are having sex, it is important to give them the knowledge and tools to make smart choices, not just about preventing pregnancy and disease but also about how to treat their partners with respect and how to distinguish good, safe relationships from harmful relationships,” Pearson said.

According to the Guttmacher Institute, in 2006–2010, 86 percent of female teens

and 93 percent of male teens reported using contraceptives the last time they had sex. These statistics have increased more than 10 percent in each category since 1995, a sign that teenagers may be more aware of these implications.

Along with teen pregnancy, there is also risk of STDs and emotional trauma.

“I never understood why the boy I lost my virginity to would get congratulated for having sex but I would get slut shamed and threatened by older girls,” Michaels said.

Slut shaming falls under the same category as bullying, and must be treated as so. While this may be a hard situation to deal with, Michaels thinks it is better to just move past it.

“Sex is neither as bad or as amazing as people make it out to be, and no one should ever be concerned about what other people are doing unless it includes you,” said Michaels, “I just never want other girls to go through what I went through.”

*Name has been changed

- abbyBRADSHAW

student opinion >>



kenonBRINKLEY

Student reflects on sexual morals in high school

Our seniors and elders of years to decades supervise our most infinitesimal actions through mild or hyperbolic provisions. It is our burden and blessing to abide by the suggestions and lessons, but what about the hypocrisy? When the actions teens want to take exceed minor rebellion, like sexual activity, is it

anyone’s right to judge them?

Think about it. Kids are going to do what they want to do, period. The more difficult it is to rebel, the harder we work for it. It is just one of those extremely cliché facts of life.

Stanford University did an experiment with children where they put toddlers in a room and sat them at a table. On the table was a marshmallow. The children were told if they could resist eating the marshmallow by the time the supervisor re-entered the room, they would be rewarded with a second marshmallow.

How many kids were successful? Out of 600, only 200 were able to resist the urge and more than 100 ate the marshmallow immediately. It’s just in our nature, people. So when it comes to the big, “no sex before marriage” subject, how many kids will realistically comply?

Now that the inevitability is out there, let’s discuss the morality.

Students are having sex when they’re 15 or 16 years old. Is that OK, or is it downright blasphemous?

The answer is no, they probably should not be having sex so soon. They probably are not picking people they would want to spend their lives with or anything like that, and many are becoming teenage moms by their sophomore or junior year.

It is not even a life choice; it is almost like a responsibility and a contest to lose your virginity in high school. In most high schools, it is not uncommon for a kid to be ridiculed if he or she has not had sex.

But that’s just the peer aspect; what about from adult to child? Does the adult have the right to bash a kid for having sex? We can not go out and ask but who knows how many of the judging adults were sexually active as teens themselves. And no just because they may have done it when they were young it does not mean that any of us should follow suit, but where is the empathy?

When does an adult stop to think about their own childhood when they judge a kid? Or in contrast, when does the adult stop trying to mimic their abstinent lifestyle on the kid? The fact is, we are all a bit different with some of the same habits. We do things differently, but somewhat alike as well.

That being said, there is really no room to actually pass judgment on someone for the things they do in their life, while at the same time it is not okay to use that as an excuse to make dumb decisions. Things are going to happen; it is all about how we react that matters.