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Representations of Virginity in the Media

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REPRESENTATIONS OF VIRGINITY IN THE MEDIA

DAKOTA MURRAY
TSOC 455

VIRGINITY - WHAT IS IT?

CONVENTIONAL DEFINITION:
SOMEONE WHO HASN'T HAD SEX

IN REALITY, VIRGINITY IS A
COMPLEX TERM TO DEFINE

sex means different things to
different people, so virginity
can mean different things too

NEWSFLASH!

The state of your
hymen does **NOT**
control your
virginity*

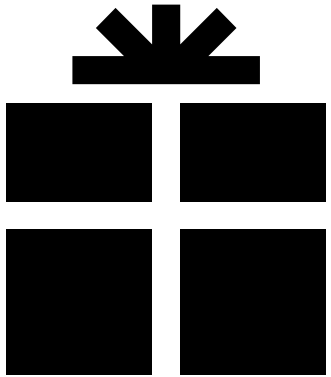
- ❖ Some believe sex requires penetration
 - ❖ Many LGBTQ+ will never have penis-in-vagina sex
- ❖ Others believe that oral sex counts
- ❖ Many believe that non-consensual sex does not count

*All hymens are *not* created equal. So many things other than intercourse can wear the hymen away, including horseback riding, biking, gymnastics, using tampons, fingering, and masturbation, which basically leads to "breaking" the hymen without ever having sex. Some women are even born without hymens.

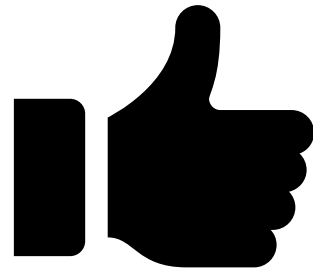
POP!



Virginity as a **gift**



Virginity as a
rite of passage



Virginity as a
stigma



**THE VIRGINITY SCRIPTS:
THREE METAPHORS**

THE ABSTINENCE SCRIPT: VIRGINITY AS A GIFT

In this metaphor, virginity is categorized as:

- A. Virginity as a gift
- B. Positive consequences with keeping virginity
- C. The physical and emotional danger of losing virginity

The Purity Ball Phenomenon: these fancy religious events are a celebration of the daughter's virginity. Daughters often wear ball gowns, spend the evening eating and dancing with their fathers, before vowing to remain 'morally pure' until married.

TV & Movie Examples

- ❖ **Jane** - Jane the Virgin
- ❖ **Marianne** - Easy A
- ❖ **Grace** - Secret Life of an American Teenager



The Purity Ball Phenomenon:

These fancy religious events are a celebration of the daughter's virginity. Daughters often wear ball gowns, spend the evening eating and dancing with their fathers, before vowing to remain 'morally pure' until married.

THE MANAGEMENT SCRIPT: VIRGINITY AS A RITE OF PASSAGE



In this metaphor, virginity is categorized as:

- A. sexual activity as inevitable, if not entirely desirable
- B. managing the physical, social, and emotional risk associated with virginity loss
- C. Strong use of contraceptives

Media Examples

- ❖ **Cher** - Clueless
- ❖ **Olive** - Easy A
- ❖ **Amy** – Secret Life of an American Teenager

Virginity & Masculinity:

The idea of a rite-of-passage for males is ingrained in men as early as the first notions of masculinity. The two are linked and considered mutually exclusive for males that expect to hold high social standing.

THE URGENCY SCRIPT: VIRGINITY AS A STIGMA



women: seen as a “slut” if they have sex on a hookup, “bitch” or “prude” if they don’t.

The Stigma of Male Virginity:

Society intrigues itself with these strange creatures who choose to forgo sex for specific reasons. We even take it one step further and tease people who make this choice.

In this metaphor, virginity is categorized as:

not only a highly enjoyable activity, but as necessary to affirm a gendered identity as a sexually sought-after individual, to be perceived by others as desirable, and to achieve social status.

Common Themes:

- A. stigma of virginity
- B. deception about sexual history and desperation to have sex
- C. positive consequences and increased status for successful virginity loss and negative consequences for unsuccessful virginity-loss attempts in the form of failed performances of masculinity



Why do we condemn virginity for men and praise their promiscuity?

The answer lies in how we conceive of their identity. Our image of an ideal, successful modern man links inextricably to his sexual prowess.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Caldwell, S. (2015, October 27). *How Characters Lose Their Virginity on Teen Shows Through the Years*. Retrieved from Vulture:

<https://www.vulture.com/2015/10/losing-virginity-teen-shows.html>

This web article was chosen as it gave relative information on the progression of loss of virginity through the last few decades. More importantly, it showed the consequences of each example, allowing for sociological examination. It uses teen television as its media source.

Cera, M. J., Ford, J., & England, P. (2017, August 7). *College women: seen as a “slut” if they have sex on a hookup, “bitch” or “prude” if they don’t*. Retrieved from Contexts: American Sociological Association: <https://contexts.org/blog/college-women-seen-as-a-slut-if-they-have-sex-on-a-hookup-bitch-or-prude-if-they-dont/>

<https://contexts.org/blog/college-women-seen-as-a-slut-if-they-have-sex-on-a-hookup-bitch-or-prude-if-they-dont/>

This web article explained the context of virginity as a tightrope for which women are juggling being seen as a prude or a slut. This is from the ASA, which meant that it was already understanding of sociological context for virginity.

Driscoll, B. (2014, November 6). *Photos Show The Uncomfortable Reality Of Purity Balls, Where Daughter Pledge Virginity To Fathers*.

Retrieved from The Huffington Post: [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/06/11/purity-ball-father-daughter-christianity-pledge-virginity-](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/06/11/purity-ball-father-daughter-christianity-pledge-virginity-marriage_n_5484341.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAALwXF0wRkFARKCDD5O3q_h0fYmjTWNQw3r7lmyewofEQ-wPx)

[marriage_n_5484341.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAALwXF0wRkFARKCDD5O3q_h0fYmjTWNQw3r7lmyewofEQ-wPx](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/06/11/purity-ball-father-daughter-christianity-pledge-virginity-marriage_n_5484341.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAALwXF0wRkFARKCDD5O3q_h0fYmjTWNQw3r7lmyewofEQ-wPx)

This web expose shows photos and commentary on the concept of purity balls throughout the United States. This was important to include as purity balls are an interesting phenomenon that comes from the ideas of virginity as a gift.

Fleming, C., & Davis, S. N. (2018). Masculinity and Virgin-Shaming Among College Men. *The Journal of Men's Studies*.

I found this scholarly article important because it is a peer-reviewed article. Further, it shows the struggles and stigma attached to adult men who have retained their virginity as well as connects virginity to masculinity.

Giha, D. (2018, October 18). *The Stigma of Male Virginity*. Retrieved from Iridescent Women: <https://iridescentwomen.com/2018/10/18/the-stigma-of-male-virginity/>

This web article discusses in laments terms the concept of male virginity and the stigma that surrounds it. It uses films such as *the 40-year-old virgin* as examples of the kinds of backlash men receive.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Kelly, M. (2010). Virginitv Loss Narratives in “Teen Drama” Television Programs. *JOURNAL OF SEX RESEARCH*, 479–489.

I chose this academic article as it is the main topic of discussion for my project. I found the concept of virginitv being examined through teen dramas to be important and an appropriate way of doing so. This project is based on the three metaphors presented within Kelley's work.

Planned Parenthood Federation of America, inc. (2020). *Virginitv*. Retrieved from Planned Parenthood:

<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/teens/sex/virginitv>

Planned parenthood provides some strong definitions of virginitv as well as a discussion of the perceived importance of a hymen and breaking the myths associated with it. It also discusses the different meanings for virginitv to different people.

Smith, E. (2019, March 27). *Why Jane The Virgin's Portrayal Of Adult Virginitv Was So Revolutionary*. Retrieved from Refinery29:

<https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2019/03/228160/jane-the-virgin-adult-virginitv>

Jane the Virgin presents many important stereotypes within the concept of virginitv. It especially breaks through many stereotypes and stigmas associated with adult virginitv. I specifically found the use of the flower as symbolism a great visual for the project.

Valenti, J. (Director). (2011). *The Purity Myth: The Virginitv Movement's War Against Women* [Motion Picture].

This film explains many of the misconceptions and myths associated with purity or virginitv, such as that of the hymen as a marker for virginitv. It also delves into the interesting world of purity balls which exist so heavily in the united states.

Wischhover, C. (2019, July 10). *Breaking the Hymen: 6 Facts and Myths About Virginitv*. Retrieved from Teen Vogue:

<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/facts-about-hymen-and-virginitv>

Just like two other articles in this project, this web article gave concise and to the point explanations of the various myths that tend to float around virginitv and purity. This explained thoroughly some important concepts that were touched on in my project.