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HARVARD INDEPENDENT

THE STUDENT WEEKLY SINCE 1969

Three Sex Issue



CONTENTS

3. **Uncertain Futures** by Pippa Lee '28
4. **Abortion Rights in the U.S.** by Frida López '27
5. **It's a Love Story, Boston, Just Say Yes** by Ellen Mollerus '26
6. **Staying the Safest** by Tyler Dang '28
7. **A Guide to DFMO-ing** by L'Embrasseur '27
9. **What (Wo)Men Want** by Anonymous
10. **The Sex Survey** Art by Annelise Fisher '26
12. **Beyond the Body Count** by Mia Wilcox '28
13. **Freedoms Restricted** by Anonymous
14. **Dating Apps: Hook-up or Hang-up?** by Mia Tavares '27
15. **Keeping it Casual** by Anonymous
16. **Let's Talk About Sex** by Anonymous
17. **Losing it All** by Anonymous
18. **Cocoa Kisses and Maca Makeouts** by Handjob Hershey
19. **Elements of Desire** by Anonymous
20. **Art** by Riley Cullinan '27
22. **Pre-Game Sex: Power Move or Energy Drain?** by Anonymous
23. **Indy Sportsbook: Swipe Right Madness** by Sir Lancelot
24. **Crossword: Intimacy Issues** by Han Nguyen '27

ABOUT THE INDEPENDENT

As Harvard College's weekly undergraduate newspaper, the *Harvard Independent* provides in-depth, critical coverage of issues and events of interest to the Harvard College community. The *Independent* has no political affiliation, instead offering diverse commentary on news, arts, sports, and student life.

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Uncertain Futures

How the 2024 election is redefining activism and autonomy.

BY PIPPA LEE '28

Nov. 5 was a pivotal day for the country. The 2024 U.S. presidential election was considered by many to be the most important national election of our lifetimes. For millions, this election was more than a political contest—it represented a pivotal moment for civil liberties, personal autonomy, and the safety of marginalized communities.

Across the country, hundreds of millions gathered around their TVs on election night, eagerly watching the news. Following President-elect Trump's win, a lot of Americans responded in different ways. The *Harvard Independent* looked at two voices who are committed to preserving women's rights in the coming months and believe reproductive rights are in jeopardy following November 5th.

On campus, Harvard's Institute of Politics(IOP) organized an election watch party in Sanders Theater for the first time in the College's history. The IOP's Communications Director, Hana O'Looney '26, described the event and its monumental impact in an interview with the *Independent*.

"We had over 2,000 RSVPs, and over 1,500 people showed up throughout the night, which was incredible," O'Looney said. "We received lots of positive feedback from people that it got them really excited about the election and democracy in general, which I think was the goal of the event."

The number of RSVPs reflects the significant turnout, representing 27.8% of the undergraduate population—more than a quarter of the College's students. As the night went on and the results became clearer, the crowd's energy began to wane, O'Looney said.

"I would definitely, in full transparency, say that the energy was very, very high at the beginning of the night when we kick-started things off at 8 p.m. and dwindled as the night went on," she said. "The IOP is a nonpartisan organization, but I think that a lot of people, most people in that room, were rooting for Kamala Harris to win, and as the night went on... It just became clearer and clearer that that wasn't going to happen."

In the past few months, and into the middle of the election day night, O'Looney called attention to how many Americans are now wondering how Donald Trump's return to office will look.

"I think what's scary about this election in particular is it's not just the presidency that Trump has. It's also the Senate and, most likely, the House and also the judiciary. So with all of that in line, it kind of gives him full reign to operationalize whatever he wants to," O'Looney explained.

O'Looney also expressed concern with abortion's unprotected status at the national level. "I also think that it is scary to continue to leave this decision up to states in terms of women's reproductive rights because we know that there are a lot of states that continually are making attempts to take those rights away from women," O'Looney said.

Although she understands that many people on campus and at the IOP may be discouraged following the election's results, O'Looney explained that there are still ways for students to get involved and fight for the issues they are passionate about.

Speaking from experience, O'Looney has always been involved in politics on the local level and was elected the Student Member of the Board of Education in Montgomery County, MD, in 2021. She explained that even though the presidential election gets the most media attention, it is not the only important election.

In fact, O'Looney said that local elections could have more of an impact on our day-to-day lives.

"One thing that I hope that we can refocus on and gain more energy for with the IOP in the spring and moving forward with students on campus is to get students more engaged in Massachusetts politics, but also politics with wherever students are from back home, especially if big decisions like reproductive rights are going to be left to states. That means that we have to organize really hard at the state level," said O'Looney.

On campus, Harvard offers numerous opportunities for students to get involved in political organizing: They can join advocacy groups, participate in campaign efforts, attend political forums and debates, or volunteer with student-run organizations focused on policy change and social justice.

But how are others responding around the nation? David Smith, a writer for *The Guardian*, explained how the election's outcome has sparked a surge of fear and uncertainty for many. He wrote, "the result is a catastrophe for the world."

Some women around the country have also started

taking action against what they fear is going to be a new era of infringement on their bodily autonomy. Instead of campaigning and grassroots activism, these individuals are responding to the election by rethinking their relationships with men altogether.

Jada Mevs, a 25-year-old living in Washington, D.C, is encouraging women across the United States to follow a movement started in South Korea: the 4B movement. The 4 B's are four Korean words—bisekseu, bichulsan, biyeonae, and bihon—which translate to "no sex with men," "no giving birth," "no dating men," and "no marriage with men." This radical feminist movement has recently gained popularity among American women on TikTok.

In an interview with *The New York Times*, Mevs explained why she believes in the movement. "If we can't control what they do in terms of legislation and abortion rights, we have to do something for ourselves," she said. "Starting with cutting out the male influence in our life, and making sure we're taking the safety precautions as well, visiting OB-GYNs, and making sure we are best prepared for when January comes and the years after that."

The rising popularity of the 4B Movement is emblematic of the range of responses to the upcoming shift in presidential administration. At a time when some individuals perceive their reproductive freedoms to be increasingly vulnerable, the 4B Movement is designed to offer women a way to assert agency over their lives, choosing to forego traditional expectations in favor of solidarity and self-determination.

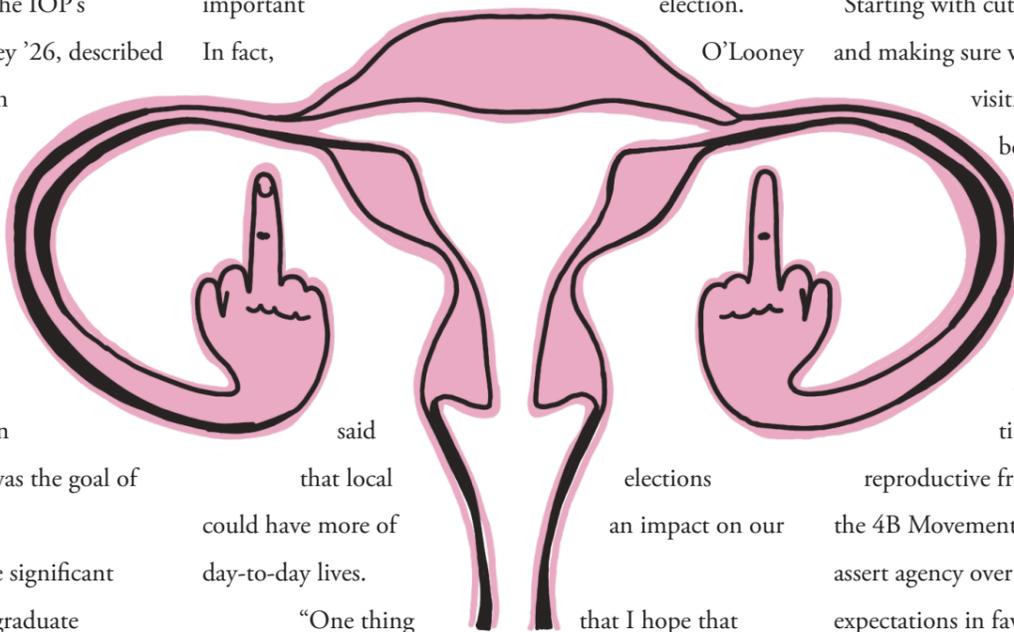
As this movement and these conversations gain traction, they underscore a growing sentiment in America: the need for unity, resilience, and creative resistance in the face of political challenges.

Whether through local political action, national advocacy, or personal choices to live life on their own terms, O'Looney noted that the road to safeguarding personal freedoms requires both legislative persistence and state-level engagement.

"I do think that we should continue fighting both within Congress, but also within individual states to protect women's right to choose," she explained.

PIPPA LEE '28 (PIPPALEE@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) IS INTERESTED IN HOW THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE WILL EVOLVE FOLLOWING THE RECENT ELECTION.

GRAPHIC BY EL RICHARDS '26



Abortion Rights in the U.S.

How history, the law, and recent elections have shaped access to abortion across the U.S.

BY FRIDA LÓPEZ '27

Abstion has been a widely debated and often practiced medical procedure in the United States. For decades, reproductive rights, including abortion, were unregulated and largely ignored by law. However, by the 1860s, abortion bans were established at the state level, and in 1910 abortion was banned nationwide.

In the past, banning abortion did not stop it from happening. Those with means, typically wealthy white women, could afford to travel to avoid the law or bribe professionals to get the procedure. But for working women without sufficient funds, throughout most of the 20th century, abortion was hard to access and could be dangerous. Estimates from the mid-20th century indicate that between 200,000 and 1.2 million illegal abortions were performed annually in the U.S. In 1965, illegal abortions accounted for 17% of all deaths attributed to pregnancy and childbirth.

In 1973, the Supreme Court reviewed years of strict regulations in the landmark case *Roe v. Wade* and established a constitutional right to abortion. Although *Roe v. Wade* protected the right to an abortion, the medical procedure was still difficult to access. Several states passed laws that made it challenging to obtain abortions. On top of this, the Hyde Amendment, passed in 1976, prohibited the use of Medicaid funds for abortion procedures, thus limiting access among certain low-income communities.

Abortion remained a constitutionally protected right for nearly 50 years, but in 2022, the Supreme Court overturned the federal right to an abortion and instead placed jurisdiction in the hands of the states. *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* overturned *Roe v. Wade* and gave individual states the authority to regulate abortions. In the months that followed, 16 states enacted highly restrictive legislation, with many others significantly restricting access.

These restrictions disproportionately impacted minorities and low-income individuals. Data from the Guttmacher Institute, a leading research and policy organization focused on sexual and reproductive health and rights, indicates that over 60% of those seeking abortions are people of color, and about half live below the federal poverty line. Many people of color reside in Southern states, which contain some of the most restrictive abortion laws.

The Texas Health & Safety Code prohibits abortions in nearly all circumstances. In June 2022, Louisiana began enforcing its trigger ban, which prohibits abortion at all stages of pregnancy with very few exceptions. As a result, people living in these states often face logistical and financial obstacles—forced to travel long distances, pay additional costs, and pregnancy termination without

medical assistance—creating barriers to accessing an abortion.

Since access to abortion clinics for a procedure has become more heavily regulated, many women choose to terminate pregnancy with abortive pills. One anonymous Harvard student who decided to terminate her pregnancy this way shared in an interview with the *Independent* that her experience with the abortion pill was challenging.

“Like most female reproductive-related procedures, there are no pain management meds offered. I was told to take some Advil or Tylenol...this was by far the most violent and relentless pain I have ever experienced. It felt like I was turning into a werewolf.”

After taking the abortion pill, she was forced to rely on friends for emotional support as she endured intense physical pain. She described the experience as overwhelming: “I was uncontrollably vomiting and shitting myself. The cramping was indescribable.”

But this method of abortion also has its risks, especially when it is not supervised by a professional. A woman in Georgia died of an infection caused by a complication after taking abortion pills. This does not exist in a vacuum: a 2021 study from the University of Colorado Boulder projected that a nationwide abortion ban could lead to a 21% increase in pregnancy-related deaths overall.

Research confirms that abortion bans do not significantly reduce the rate of abortions, either. A 2018 study by the Guttmacher Institute found that abortion rates in countries with restrictive abortion laws are only slightly lower than in countries where abortion is legal. What changes instead are the conditions in which abortions occur: without safe options, people often resort to unsafe, unregulated methods, risking injury or death.

Following last week's election results, a central question dominating the media is how these outcomes will affect reproductive rights, particularly access to abortion. Although during his campaign, President-elect Donald Trump made a promise via X that he would not ban abortion federally, there are still several ways in which he could limit it.

Trump appointees could restrict abortion access by pushing the FDA to limit access to mifepristone, an abortion pill. Mifepristone is a key medication used in over half of all abortions in

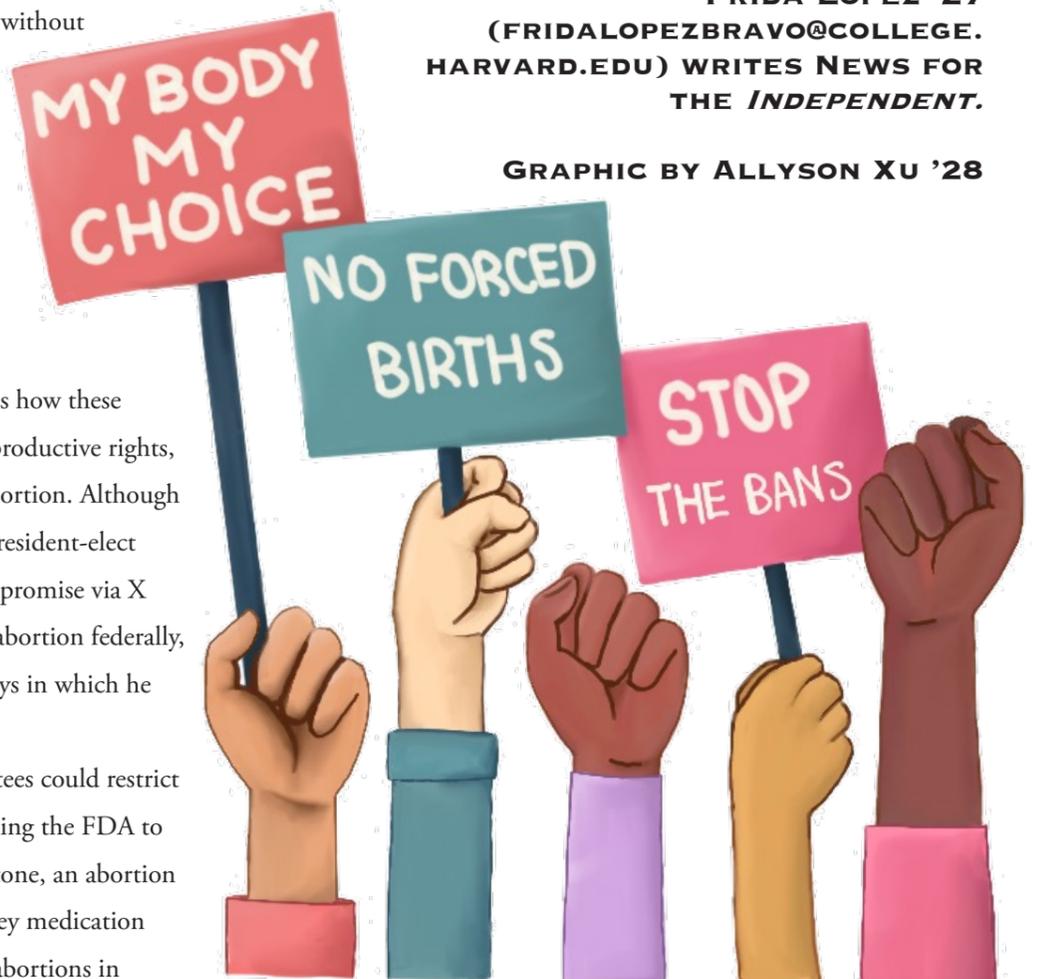
the U.S. It is crucial for medical abortions up to 10 weeks into pregnancy due to its safety, accessibility, and cost-effectiveness—typically less than \$100 per dose. Furthermore, despite his promise, Trump's close ties with the anti-abortion movement and conservative policy Project 2025—although he denied involvement—suggest he may push for nationwide restrictions. With Republicans likely taking control of both the House and Senate, the party could quickly advance federal restrictions on abortion.

The past election also saw a division across states on abortion rights. States like Missouri and Arizona passed ballot measures to protect abortion. New York, Maryland, and Montana passed measures that expand or further protect abortion rights, with New York enshrining abortion protections into state law. North Carolina's election results have blocked additional restrictions. The election officials who oppose tighter abortion laws, like Democratic Gov. Josh Stein of North Carolina, will prevent the state from implementing new limitations. In contrast, ballot measures in Florida and Nebraska fell short, leaving in place restrictive abortion laws and making it difficult for individuals to obtain legal abortions.

As states implement varying policies, and the new administration begins making turnover plans for January 2025, the future of abortion rights remains a critical issue in the nation for those on both sides of the debate. Abortion rights have evolved considerably over the years, so time will tell what is next for the ongoing legal battles and divisive nature across the states regarding reproductive healthcare and autonomy.

FRIDA LÓPEZ '27
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HARVARD.EDU) WRITES NEWS FOR
THE *INDEPENDENT*.

GRAPHIC BY ALLYSON XU '28



It's a Love Story, Boston, Just Say Yes

A conversation with the owners of Boston's pop-up romance bookstore.

BY ELLEN MOLLERUS '26

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single person in possession of the ability to read, must be in want of a good love story.

Romance novels have seen a huge uptick in popularity recently, with sales doubling over the past five years. In 2022, popular romance author Colleen Hoover's novels outsold the Bible. Romance-only bookstores are popping up across the country, drawing customers who travel specifically to visit them. Boston's first brick-and-mortar romance bookstore, Lovestruck, opens later this winter in Harvard Square. But romance fiends need not wait to find their fix, as pop-up romance bookstore Read My Lips Boston is already hosting all the bookish events one could desire. The *Independent* caught up with founders Lily and Hannah Barrett to hear more about the project.

The Barrett sisters' love for romance began during childhood, when they would trade recommendations with each other despite their different tastes in novels. "One of us loves villains and dark romance, while the other prefers cinnamon roll heroes," Lily explained. Even though they've been reading romance novels for years, it took the sisters, who both grew up using cochlear implants, until recently to find characters that they felt represented them. It was that experience that ultimately inspired them to start Read My Lips. "We wanted to curate and highlight love stories that give everyone the happily ever afters they deserve," said Hannah.

Diversity and representation are at the heart of Read My Lips' mission. "Stories that celebrate marginalized voices both comfort us and open our worlds. Seeing yourself centered in a love story—where it's clear you are someone who matters and is desirable, sexy, valuable, and worthy of

pleasure and joy—is affirming and important," Lily explained. "The books on our shelves explore themes of racism, chronic illness, homophobia, and more."

In addition to encouraging others to read diversely, Read My Lips donates ten percent of the proceeds from their pop-up book shops to organizations that promote literacy and support marginalized groups. In November, they are donating their proceeds to the Native American Disability Law Center.

Lily and Hannah are not just focused on selling romance books; they are also building a true community of romance fans. "We've received a ton of support from our bookish community, which we love to see. At our pop-ups, we've had incredible conversations with people, ranging from fun dating stories to the books they loved (and the books they definitely didn't!). Those one-on-one interactions are what makes our work the most meaningful."

The sisters are also finely attuned to the relationship between reading and current events. "The question of 'who gets a happy ending?' is political and always has been," Lily stated. According to PEN America, 5,894 books were banned during the 2021 to 2023 school years. This number includes many romance books banned on the basis of their "obscene" content and inclusion of diverse experiences, regardless of how explicit their depictions of sex and romance actually are.

"Romance novels are more than just feel-good stories," said the sisters. "They



put all kinds of relationships front and center, challenging rigid ideas about who gets to find love and what that love should look like. They give readers the tools to understand themselves and others better." The Barretts don't intend to let book bans scare them away, however. "We don't know what the next few years will bring for the books we love, but we plan to fight for the stories on our shelves."

Belief in the power of romance novels is a key part of what inspires Lily and Hannah to keep doing good, even in the face of bigotry and censorship, and they believe these books can do the same for others. "Hope isn't about being oblivious or sticking your head in the sand. It's about the will to get back up and keep fighting, and we believe that romance novels can help provide fuel for that hope."

Readers can find a full list of future Read My Lips Boston events on their website and shop Lily and Hannah's favorites online at their Bookshop.org page.

**ELLEN MOLLERUS '26
(ELLENMOLLERUS@COLLEGE.
HARVARD.EDU) JUST FINISHED
READING A DELECTABLE VAMPIRE-
WEREWOLF ROMANCE.**

**GRAPHIC BY MIRANDA CHAO
HWANG '28**

FORUM

Staying the Safest

A ranking of Harvard's free contraception locations.

BY TYLER DANG '28

During the summer of 2022, the Supreme Court of the United States made the historic choice to overturn *Roe v. Wade* (1973). The landmark decision of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* (2022) held that the Constitution does not confer a right to an abortion; instead, the decision to permit abortion would be decided by the states individually. Regardless of opinions regarding the Court's choice, one fact remains undisputed in the wake of this ruling: options for safe sex have never been more critical.

In recent years, more college campuses have been offering free male contraceptives, and Harvard is no exception. With so many options across campus where condoms are available, how can you know which location is best?

Here at the *Harvard Independent*, we have taken the liberty of compiling a ranking of all the condom spots on campus for your convenience. To determine the optimal location, this list will use different metrics on a scale of one (worst) to ten (best). The final rankings will be based on the average score from each category, which are as follows.

1. Convenience: Since housing is spread across the campus, determining the most convenient location for students in Currier might not align with the most suitable location for Lowell. Dispensaries will be judged from the central location of Memorial Hall. House-specific locations will be judged based on how easy it is to access that resource.

2. Discreetness: Sex, and especially safe sex, is never something we should be ashamed of. But regardless, some level of secrecy is nice when collecting handfuls of contraceptives. This metric considers how open the location is to the scrutinizing eyes of others as well as whether one must ask for the contraceptive.

3. Variety: There are many different brands of condoms, all of which present certain benefits aside from safety. This metric considers which brands are on offer.

With these three categories established, let's move on to locations.

The Houses

The Houses themselves have inconspicuous dispensaries, but the location is heavily dependent on the floor and the House. Some tutors have designated drawers full for anyone to grab at will, but others do not. A tutor in Pforzheimer,

for instance, had alerted his students of a discreet drawer that is always kept full. First-years are less lucky. Proctors in the first-year dorms do not provide any male contraceptives, nor are there places in the basement where a cache can be found. Convenience: 7/10. Discreetness: 7/10. Variety: 6/10. Overall Score: 6.7/10.

Peer Counseling

Many peer counseling resources also offer different forms of contraceptives. While some peer counseling teams focus on specific issues, the majority provide support over a wide range of topics. Spread across the campus, these resources are usually open throughout the night; yet given their mission to provide support, it may be more effective



to use a different distribution location and allow the peer counselors to focus on directly helping those in need. However, if you have questions regarding safe sex, these groups are available to assist you. Convenience: 7/10. Discreetness: 9/10. Variety: 6/10. Overall Score: 7.3/10.

Harvard University Health Services

The Harvard University Health Services (HUHS) describes itself as “multi-specialty,” and thus has many forms of safety and prevention. Primarily located in the Smith Campus Center, on the second floor within HUHS is the Center for Wellness and Health Promotion. There, you can pick up a range of safe-sex supplies such as external condoms, internal condoms, and oral dams. Since the Center for Wellness is open on Mondays to Fridays from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. as well as on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., it is easy to budget the time for a quick visit. However, finding the location takes some effort, prompting the Center for Wellness to have a separate page simply called “Getting Here.” While the Center is typically not

very busy, there are staff members who are present; however, they are more than willing and eager to help you keep yourself safe. Beyond the Center for Wellness, HUHS offers a wide range of emergency contraceptives too. Generic Plan B is sold at a kiosk just at the entrance of HUHS for the reduced price of \$15.

Convenience: 6/10. Discreetness: 7/10. Variety: 10/10. Overall Score: 7.7/10.

The Women's Center

Located in the basement of Canaday, the Women's Center is a welcoming space to decompress from a busy day and to prepare to stay protected when engaging in physical intimacy. Only a few minutes walk from Memorial Hall, the Women's Center is incredibly convenient. However, the Center is only open on weekdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., so plan ahead before any late-night excursions. Additionally, the condoms provided are out in the open, so while one does not need to ask for a male contraceptive, there is little secrecy in grabbing one. Fortunately, the Center has many options that are clearly labeled. Dividers separate the lubricated from non-lubricated, and non-latex have their own section. Numerous brands are also available such as Trojans, LifeStyles, and Glydes.

Convenience: 8/10. Discreetness: 7/10. Variety: 9/10. Overall Score: 8/10.

At the end of the day, where you get a condom does not matter as long as you use one. Beyond preventing unwanted pregnancy, safe sex is essential for protecting everyone's overall health. All of these locations are great resources with numerous options for staying safe. However, some are better than others: the most convenient location overall undoubtedly is the Women's Center with its central location. The most discreet locations are the peer-counseling resources, but you do have to ask the counselor for the condoms. The best variety is offered at HUHS, as they have everything you could ask for and more. Overall, we have ranked the Women's Center as Harvard's best location to secure contraception for its quality, convenience, and variety. But at the end of the day, they are all free!

TYLER DANG '28 (TYLERDANG@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) RECENTLY DISCOVERED SAFE SEX.

GRAPHIC BY REEVE SYKES '26

A Guide to DFMO-ing

A slutted out sophomore breaks down executing the perfect dance floor makeout.

BY L'EMBRASSEUR '27

The dance floor makeout, or DFMO, is an art form. Whether you're at a club, house party, concert, or even an outdoor festival rave, a successful DFMO requires extreme precision and immense skill. I, a DFMO enthusiast and self-proclaimed expert, am here to teach you how to perfect the act for your next night out.

There are a few key requirements for a DFMO to be great. First, the vibe needs to be favorable. Second, it needs to be the right type of person. Third, the kiss itself needs to be really fucking good! And finally, you must be able to gracefully end the DFMO and strategize how to either continue in a new setting or subtly exit the premises.

Curating the Vibes

Before anything else, the atmosphere for your DFMO needs to be right, or you risk looking like a fool and your friends will never let you live it down. The ideal setting has loud music, dim lighting, good drinks, and lots of distractions. The loud music gives you a great reason to get close to someone because you just have to whisper that really funny joke in their ear. Dim lighting is self-explanatory—no one's ever been turned on by fluorescent office lights. The drinks are non-essential, but they help take the edge off and make the whole experience a little more chill. Everything is unserious if you're drunk, so not only is rejection easier to stomach, but it also makes success a little bit sweeter.

Distraction is the final, and arguably most important, aspect of the perfect DFMO. Ideally, most people around you won't even notice that you've moved from dancing to making out. Depending on your comfort level, you might want to sneak around a corner to a less public area, but the *dance floor* part of DFMO does imply a certain devil-may-care attitude about the whole thing. No one wants to feel like the entire crowd is focused solely on them (unless they're into exhibitionism, in which case they *really* do), so make sure that when you finally go in for the kiss, both of you can fully enjoy it and not be worried about too many eyes scrutinizing your every move.

Finding A Target

Your match for the night can be someone you'll never see again in your life, a friend of a friend, or even your bestie that you've been harboring a secret crush on for months. Regardless

of their relationship to you, they also need to be down for a DFMO. It is an inherently public act—don't choose anyone you might be embarrassed to be caught in a blurry flash photo with (your so-called friends will *definitely* send said photo in the group chat after the morning debrief.) Consent is key, of course, so don't go in for the kiss just because you're dancing close to each other. Make a verbal indication of your intentions, and get verbal confirmation! You want to be kissing someone who also wants to be kissing you. Other than that, any hottie will do.

**Pro tip!* Ask for their age before engaging in any DFMO activities. Otherwise, you might find out later that the 8-year age gap isn't as sexy as you thought it was underneath the club strobe lights.

Doing the KISS!

At this point, you've found someone who wants to kiss you and the air is ripe with romance and sexual tension. This is everything you've been waiting for, but don't start too aggressively. Take your time! No one needs to meet your tongue before they've even processed the feel of your lips. Have fun with it, but do remember that you are still in a public setting. Skirts should stay down and pants must remain zipped. There are other people at the event who just want to dance and have a good time—be mindful of them! Don't bump into others and certainly don't try to get them involved in your activities (I'm not a prude, but I personally wouldn't want to participate in a three-way kiss in the middle of Bijou.)

Everyone has their own comfort level with groping, grinding, and heavy petting, so just be aware that you and your chosen partner may have different opinions of what is appropriate. I've seen an ass grab or two in my day, but going for tits is where I draw the line. Everyone has their own line, so respect it. Ask if what you are doing is okay, and maintain good communication, even if it's not verbal.

Perfecting the Exit

Now this is where the real fun begins. You have a decision to make. Do you want to continue engaging with your partner or are you racking your brain for a way to exit the situation? There are plenty of reasons one might want to end the connection. Here's a mini list that you can refer to if your friends ask:

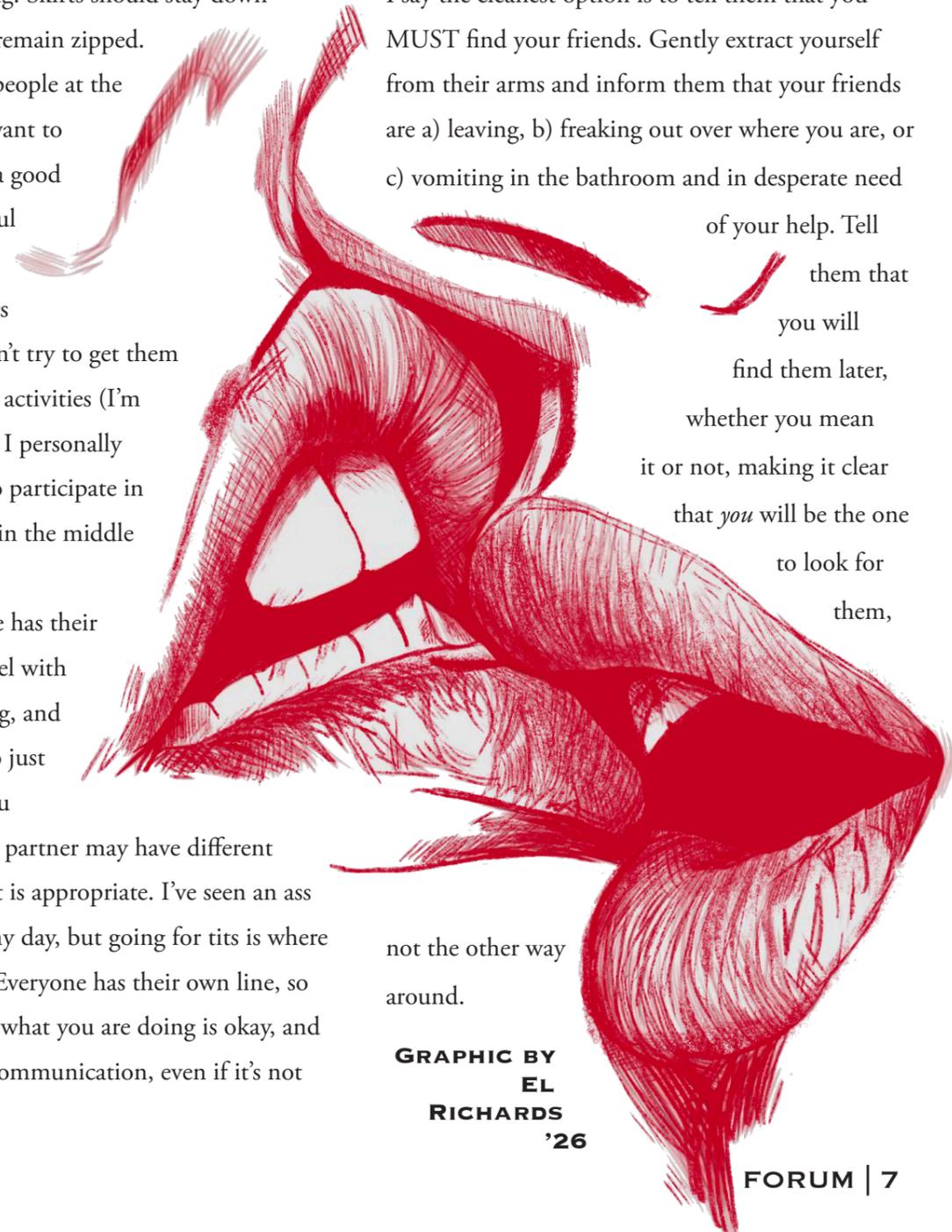
1. They kiss poorly—too sloppy; too much teeth; they went straight for the neck and left a heinous hickey.
2. When your friend took a flash photo you saw them in the real light and realized that the Harvard goggles are very, very real.
3. The buzz wore off.
4. Your ex just entered the room.
5. You spotted a much hotter person who is way more your type out of the corner of your eye and now you want to pursue them instead.
6. You're bored and want to kiss someone of a different gender.

There are a couple of ways that you can go about an exit. Some are better than others. I've tried a lot of different methods, so trust me when I say the cleanest option is to tell them that you **MUST** find your friends. Gently extract yourself from their arms and inform them that your friends are a) leaving, b) freaking out over where you are, or c) vomiting in the bathroom and in desperate need

of your help. Tell them that you will find them later, whether you mean it or not, making it clear that *you* will be the one to look for them,

not the other way around.

GRAPHIC BY
EL
RICHARDS
'26



Jump quickly into the crowd so that they are flustered and do not have a chance to convince you to stay with them or to offer their help. If you see them again later in the night, try a small smile or avoid eye contact altogether. Let your friends make a small barrier so they cannot reach you. When they request to follow you on Instagram the next morning or you realize that you mistakenly gave them your real phone number, simply ignore it. If you say you can't remember anything from the night, then who's to say that you actually did do anything?

**Pro tip for my non-confrontational readers!* If you are at a table that comes with security, life becomes much easier! Simply inform your bouncer that your ex-makeout-partner is not part of the table and thus must be escorted away. You can pretend to not notice when they inevitably wave their arms and try to prove that you are actually the one who invited them to the table.

On the other hand, if the kiss went great and you want more, you have a few

options. The transition to a bathroom or empty room is my personal go-to. I like to stay at the venue because no matter what happens, I leave with my friends. The bathroom is a super easy choice if you and your partner are the same gender! If not, you might have to get a little more creative about where and how to continue. Pitch a post-game at your place—invite your friends and theirs to celebrate the end of the night together. When everyone is busy debriefing the night's activities and gorging on Jefe's, slip away to your room and make use of that twin-XL bed.

However, if you're willing to just ditch your friends and exit with your partner, who doesn't love a little Uber backseat make-out sesh before arriving at your single? If you're choosing this option, please still make sure to let somebody know that you've left. There is nothing scarier than arriving at a new location and realizing no one actually knows where you are. I don't know about you, but I hate having to stop in the middle of taking off my pants because

my friends are blowing up my phone. Preempt their worry by letting them know what's going on! And if you intend to keep your link sneaky, make sure you have a lie or two on hand, because when you do the walk of shame on Sunday morning, it won't only be Jesus watching you.

The Morning After

In the morning, you likely feel a mix of emotions—regretful, happy, horny, hungover—and you'll need to process them all. Get brunch with your friends. Reminisce on your feral actions and vow to never do it again. Text everyone you know that you have nooooo idea what happened last night but maybe? You kissed that person and it was probably great. Feel accomplished, because you just pulled off the most iconic for-the-plot thing you could have. Celebrate your perfect Dance Floor Makeout(s).

THIS ANONYMOUS AUTHOR ONCE DFMO'D WITH FIVE DIFFERENT PEOPLE IN ONE NIGHT.

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What (Wo)Men Want

The sexual pressure women feel in the face of male desire.

BY ANONYMOUS

He leads when dancing. She should follow. He is the one who asks her out. She should accept. He makes the first move. She should consent. The gendered standards between men and women inevitably place sexual power in *his* hands, and she is taught to be all too eager to comply.

As women, we are often conditioned to seek male validation, even if it's at the expense of our own dignity. From high school homecoming invites to the complexities of real relationships, there is seemingly no room to reflect on our own desires when we as women are constantly shaped by the expectations of the male gaze. We should be "honored" that he wishes to pleasure us, regardless of whether we would have rather done nothing at all.

It's not that these interactions aren't consensual. Rather, it's more of a gray area. Women feel pressured to say "yes" instead of prioritizing their own sense of self—as if their body is meant to be shared rather than honored on their own terms. In my experience, I have found that when male and female desires don't align, we as women often feel like we have to satisfy his sexual appetites rather than reject advances to protect our own desires.

There's this anxious feeling that often comes after a hookup for most women. Even though we often give up so much of ourselves to please him, we nonetheless worry if we were enough the next morning. We obsess over every detail, questioning if he perceived us as beautiful or worthy or just another notch on his belt.

For me, I've had several nights where I've woken up wondering, "Why?" Why did I let a male sexual pressure compel me to consent to something I honestly had no interest in doing? Maybe it's the people-pleaser in me, bred by societal conventions of female passivity. Or maybe I felt as though I shouldn't want to find a way out of those moments.

I first felt the pressure of male sexuality in high school. New Year's Eve. Me with straightened hair. Eyeliner and a black top that shows more skin than fabric. *Who was this girl?*

"C'mon," he whispered, walking into the bathroom, catching my eye before pulling me around the door. His backwards hat was crooked—"Auburn University" typed in small print now angled just above his eyebrows.

Don't do it. I began to walk away and up the stairs, not knowing if I wanted to give up the one thing I could never take back.

I thought about our living room karaoke from earlier—11 p.m.—Billy Joel's "Piano Man" playing, his face close to mine, his breath prickling my ear, and his voice just as hoarse as mine. Neither of us hit the notes, but I guess that wasn't really the point.

I played into his embrace. I let his arms wrap around my waist, my head clouded. However, as he

shut the door behind us, drowning us in darkness, I realized for the first time that I was about to give up part of myself. His hands were in my hair. His mouth swallowed mine. But it wasn't what I thought it would be. Not Gabriela and Troy or Rapunzel and Flynn. I waited for someone to come save me from my own decisions. But what happened next felt inevitable.

It's not like I said no. He didn't force himself onto me. But rather, in that moment, I felt like I had to embrace the role I inadvertently chose for the night. And beyond that, I felt like I should have wanted to say yes. I should have been excited that he sought me.

In college, this sentiment continued.

"Wanna get out of here?" he asked as we sat with his roommates, playing poker.

"Sure." In the moment, my response felt safe. *What's the worst that could happen?* We were just friends.

But as we sat alone in his room, making small talk, I noticed the spaces between his words growing, his eyes wandering. He inched closer, moving his hands from the couch to my legs, tracing a line with his fingers from my knees to my waist. It should have been easy to interrupt his touch, to tell him I prefer us as just friends. But I couldn't. Again, I fell into the trap that I should relish in his attention, in the fact that he chose me.

I let him explore my body and pretended I wanted to do the same with his—pretended to enjoy every moment. His hands. His face. His voice. I felt my dignity slipping by, my standards lowering.

I nudged him away, but he subconsciously pulled me back, pressing the fabric of his oversized white t-shirt against my now-exposed stomach. Blood rushed to my cheeks. Nerves? Or shame.

When I quietly slipped out the door behind me the next morning, I felt violated. And beyond that, I was mad at myself for allowing a friendship to be ruined because I was too afraid to form the word "no."

The next time I sensed a friend was catching feelings, I thought I would take the time to finally stand up for myself—to preserve our relationship while putting my body first.

"Hey, can we talk?" Seemingly such a simple text.

However, when he opened the door in his boxers, I realized we had vastly different interpretations of my words. It felt rude to turn around and head home, even if what was in front of me really was not what I was looking for. I laughed to dispel the awkwardness as I walked into his room, assuring myself that I would stay on the floor. I was ready to tell him I wanted to be friends, even as he tried to nudge me into his bed.

But as I sat on his small rug, him lying on his



mattress just inches away from me, I realized I was too vulnerable. There was no escape as he pulled me off the floor and into his arms. Maybe part of me wanted him to pull at my shirt, unzip my skirt. Or maybe I was just conditioned to think that's what I should want.

Looking back, I hold nothing against any of these men. They had no ill will but rather were just acting on their own desires. However, I wish society made it easier for me to make it clear mine didn't align. I let the idea that I should want to be wanted overwhelm my bodily autonomy until I was merely a vessel for his sexual pleasure.

Over the years, I have found that I am not alone in this feeling. The female urge to cater to male attention often subsumes our agency and self-determination as women, whether or not we are conscious of it. There exists this unspoken sentiment that rejecting a man is something negative—a disruption to the existing romantic gendered power dynamics. And beyond that, as women, we feel like we should never want to turn away a man who has set his eyes on us. So, we find ourselves sexually providing for them at the expense of our own desires in our attempt to seem attractive and worthy to him.

We trap ourselves in the image of what it means to be the perfect female externally rather than who we are internally. However, in the aftermath, we wonder if it was worth it to sacrifice our genuine needs to the lust of another.

Ultimately, as a woman, my understanding of the importance of the word, "no" is always evolving. In everything from future relationships to hook-ups, I am working on protecting my body in the face of masculine desire.

WRITTEN ANONYMOUSLY FOR THE
INDEPENDENT.

GRAPHIC BY EMILY PALLAN '27

FORUM | 9

The Sex Survey

MOST DESIRABLE PROFESSOR:
Gov Professor Hirscox

MOST DESIRABLE GROUPS:
52.1% - Athletes
30.5% - Final clubs
23.3% - Theater/Music scene

RELATIONSHIP STATUS:

51.3% - single
34.8% - exclusive relationship
6.6% - It's complicated
4.3% - Friends with benefits

DO YOU PREFER IF YOUR PARTNER IS SHAVED?
35.6% - no preference
28.1% - clean-shaven
3.1% - Au naturale

DO YOU TRIM YOUR PUBES?
46.5 - Trimmed
35.6 - clean-shaven
17.8% - Au naturale

ARE CIRCUMCISED?
You 61.7% - YES
38.3% - NO

DO YOU PREFER YOUR PARTNER TO BE CIRCUMCISED?
57.6% - No preference
37.1% - yes
5.4% - No

GRADUATION YEAR:
2025: 29.6%,
2027: 25%, 2028: 24.4%, 2026: 21%

CONCENTRATION:
STEM: 54.2%,
social sciences, economics,
sociology, psychology, government:
42.8%, Arts & Humanities:
23.4%

GENDER IDENTITY:
Female: 54.8%
Male: 42.1%
Non-Binary: 2.5%

HOW LONG DO YOU WAIT BEFORE HAVING SEX WITH SOMEONE?
29.8% - I don't wait, 18.7 - months, 15% - 3rd date
13.8% - depends who, 5.4% - marriage

HAVE YOU FAKED AN ORGASM?
56.6% - NO
43.4% - YES

ARE YOU A VIRGIN?
80.6% - NO
19.4% - YES

HOUSES RANKED BY AVERAGE BODY COUNT:

- 1) LEVERETT
- 2) KIRKLAND
- 3) QUINCY
- 4) CABOT
- 5) PFOTTO
- 6) ADAMS
- 7) MATHER
- 8) LOWELL
- 9) DUNSTER
- 10) ELIOT
- 11) CURRIER
- 12) WINTHROP
- 13) FRESHMAN DORMS

CRAZIEST PLACE YOU'VE HAD SEX?

- 45.6% - With your parents next door
- 33.3% - outdoors
- 28.2% - In a public bathroom
- 10.3% - Windexer stacks

WHERE DO YOU FIND THE MAJORITY OF YOUR HOOKUPS?

- 22.1% - At parties
- 16.5% - Dating apps
- 15.2% - Random interactions

DANCE FLOOR ETIQUETTE:

- 90.7% - NO fingering
- 89.3% - NO removal of clothing
- 58.3% - NO penis grabbing

WHAT AGE DID YOU LOSE YOUR VIRGINITY?

- 22.1% → 18, 19.2% → 17, 18% → I haven't,
- 14% → 16, 14% → >18, 12.7% → <16

COMMON KINKS:

- ① Bondage/BDSM
- ② choking
- ③ Domination
- ④ Bodily restriction
- ⑤ spanking
- ⑥ Breeding

BIGGEST MISCONCEPTION ABOUT SEX?

- ① That everyone is having it in college
- ② Orgasm is the end-all be-all
- ③ That it must be penetrative to "count"

BODY COUNT: How many previous sexual partners is "TOO MANY"?

- 25.7% - I don't care
- 25.2% - 10+
- 17.7% - 20+
- 16.1% - 5+

SPIT OR SWALLOW?

- 50.3% - swallow
- 36.6% - No preference / I don't give head
- 13.1% - Spit

PERIOD SEX?

- 25.5% - yes, 25.5% - No
- 25.5% - If I'm horny enough,
- 23.6% - If it's light

FAVORITE PLACE TO NUT ON/GET NUT ON?

- 35.4% - on/inside vagina,
- 17.1% - in a condom, 12.5% - mouth,
- 11.7% - stomach

LENGTH OF FOREPLAY:

- 39.2% - 15-20min, 35.3% - 5-10min,
- 12.9% - 30+min

HAVE YOU EVER HAD SEX WITH...

- 64.2% - classmate, 50.5% - intra-house/fam
- 11.6% - teammate, 7% - TF

FAVE SEX POSITION...

- 41.4% - missionary
- 27.2% - doggy
- 16.2% - cowgirl

NUMBER OF FUCKS PER SHEET WASH?

- 50.1% - 1-2,
- 20.7% - 3-4,
- 12.3% - 7+

Beyond the Body Count

Slut shaming and sexual hierarchies.

BY MIA WILCOX '28

She slept with 1000 men! Peggy Guggenheim was an extremely influential art collector and socialite, who participated in the salvation of thousands of works of art during World War II. She *also* was widely known for her sexual promiscuity. Guggenheim's open embrace of her sexuality greatly defied the norms of her time, which tended to subject women to the roles of mother and homemaker, but her activities were not without scrutiny. Her career accomplishments were often overlooked, with people instead opting to cast judgment on her sex life.

Almost 80 years later, women to this day continue to face the scrutiny that Guggenheim faced, revealing deep-seated double standards toward women's sexuality. Men are often praised and looked up to by their peers for promiscuity and high body counts, whereas women face societal judgment not only from men, but from each other, too.

This double standard is ever-present in the media, from social platforms to popular TV. Stark examples of sexual double standards were ever-present in season six of *Love Island USA*, which was streamed by millions of Americans during its run. In episode three, the cast participated in a game in which they revealed their own body counts and the ideal body count for a partner. For the preferred body count in a partner, most of the women stated that they didn't have a preference, and if they did, it was a much higher number than their own body count. On the other hand, the men on the show tended to prefer their partners to have body counts exponentially lower than their own—Conner, with a personal count of 53, preferred partners with counts around 15, while Aaron, who had slept with 75 people, preferred 10. Coye, with a body count of 150, also stated a preference for 10.

In a scientific study titled "Lay Beliefs About Gender and Sexual Behavior," the authors explore

stereotyping enacted by both men and women towards women who engage in casual sex. They analyze the effects of the assumption that women who engage in casual sex intrinsically have low self-esteem, leading to negative discrimination in other areas of their lives. Another study published in the *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, "He is a Stud, She is a Slut!" reveals that women are slut shamed 30% more than men. Their findings included that "engaging in casual sex and having an early sexual debut were more expected and rewarded in men than in women." They also found that overall, highly sexually active men are viewed more positively than highly sexually active women. These double standards, perpetuated primarily by a patriarchal society, benefit men by suppressing women's sexuality through harsh judgment, so that men maintain control while alleviating their own insecurities.

The social costs of sex are higher for women than men in almost every culture. From online slut-shaming to Magdalene asylums—religious institutions for "fallen" (sexually promiscuous) women—women have been subjected to cultures of punishment and deep shame surrounding sex for centuries. Some cultures go so far as the practice of honor killings—the murders of daughters said to bring shame to the family through sex, a practice which dates back to antiquity that happens around the world, most commonly in the Middle East.

While there is no well-known word for promiscuous men, there exists innumerable terminology to slut shame women. Furthermore, society is constantly developing new terms, evolving from the classic "whore" and "slut" to Gen Z's most recent vernacular "bop," used to slut-shame women on the internet. Terms like "man-whore" and "man-slut" are merely variations of those used for women, diluting their impact and revealing a much weaker societal judgment placed on men.

Slut-shaming has been deeply ingrained in

history and the media and has evolved to persist as a pervasive force in the real world. College, for many, is a time for exploration. In my short experience at Harvard, I have found that many boys are as quick to slut-shame as they are to sexualize. This is where the ultimate hypocrisy of slut-shaming lies. Is it only okay for women to be sexual when it fulfills something for their male counterparts?

I have witnessed my male peers unsolicitedly comment on the actions of their female counterparts. As someone who is relatively secure and confident in my sexuality, it is easy for me to brush past these commentaries; however, for many of my female friends, this affects their confidence and comfortability. These boys are often the ones to jump at the first chance to benefit from promiscuity. Whether the hypocrisy reflects their own insecurity or simple sexist ideals, the standards held for women reflect a double standard.

In reflecting upon slut-shaming and hypocrisy in college environments, the media, and in history, it is important to ask ourselves how we can individually and societally defy hypocritical moral conventions placed on women, moving away from the policing of women's sexualities, and instead emphasize the importance of personal agency. We must become more accepting of people acting on what makes them feel happy, safe, and comfortable. Whether or not individuals choose to engage in sexual activity is their decision alone, and sex should never be a source of shame.

MIA WILCOX '28 (MWILCOX@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) ENCOURAGES MORE SUPPORTIVE DISCOURSE.

GRAPHIC BY RILEY CULLINAN '27



Top 8 Femtech Startups according to The Financial Times

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OUR STORY
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We started SheSpot to normalise the conversation around women's pleasure once and for all. We're passionate about supporting women through their sexual wellness journey no matter what life stage she's in.

It's (y)our pleasure!

What we do.
OUR SUBSCRIPTION

Discover the very best brands and hottest sexual wellness products at an affordable price.

Our quarterly, customisable subscription bundle contains a complete pleasure ritual, delivered discreetly to your door.

What we do.
OUR PLEASURE STORE

Explore our curated online store - a zero-sleaze, welcoming space to find pleasure products perfectly tailored to you.

Enjoy step-by-step guides, quality standards and expert guidance.

AS FEATURED IN

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Freedoms Restricted

How growing up in a red state shaped my sex education.

BY ANONYMOUS

I grew up in one of the 13 states that had a trigger law enacted after the Supreme Court's decision on *Roe v. Wade* was announced, affirming that abortions were no longer a constitutionally protected right. I immediately lost my ability to have a legal abortion. This is nothing but reflective of the ways that growing up in the community that I did has influenced my sexual and reproductive health. Sex, orgasms, abortions, and other related topics were all taboo words that created an environment where I was scared of ever needing to buy Plan B in case the cashier at the closest CVS recognized me. In light of the incoming administration that is about to take control of America, I fear for every young girl from my state and other red states who is about to have her rights even further restricted.

There was no place for any discussion of this forbidden topic in my household, to the point that I was only able to get on birth control because my dermatologist recommended it for my acne. I was taught nothing about safe sex until eighth grade, where the remarkably clear message was *the only way to have completely safe sex is to not have sex*. Even as I moved through high school and had a serious boyfriend, I never felt comfortable talking about anything without the fear of being judged. My parents placed me in environments where celibacy was expected, creating a self-imposed island that left me trapped without someone to confide in. I was deathly afraid that they would one day find something that would cause them to question their child's purity; to this day, I have yet to tell my mother about a single hook-up, situationship, or partner I have had at this school.

When I finally managed to schedule a

gynecologist appointment, it was only until I had been sexually active for over a year. I needed birth control, but my dermatologist couldn't prescribe it directly, forcing me to seek care elsewhere. I knew that I needed to have an honest conversation for the sake of my sexual health, but I refused to open up to my doctor until they forced my mom to leave the room. I immediately broke down in tears, sobbing as I recanted all of the information I had just told my doctor. If it hadn't been for doctor-patient confidentiality, I would have had no safe space to have an honest conversation.

By the time I left my home for college, my stance on reproductive rights was a stark contrast to that of my community. I am lucky that I was able to attend college in a state where abortions are legal up until viability. Many of my friends from home started college knowing that if they ever needed an abortion, they would need to travel to a different state in order to access one legally, and most importantly, safely.

In contrast, I have the privilege of being able to access abortion

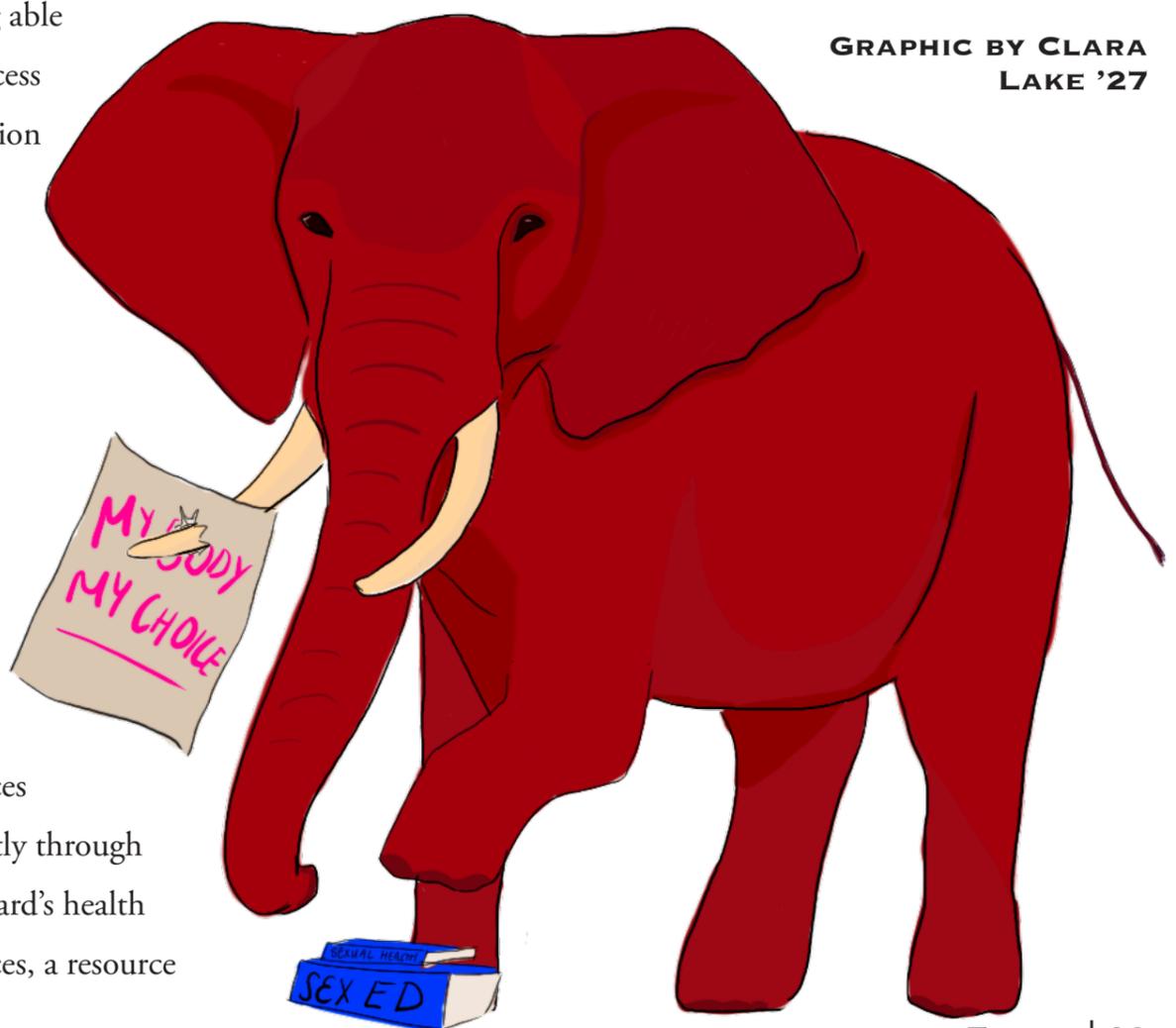
services directly through Harvard's health services, a resource

I am deeply grateful for. The status of reproductive rights in my state is one of the reasons I will never move back as concern grows that women will soon no longer be able to access certain contraceptives.

College has given me the opportunity to surround myself with friends who do not shame me for the choices I make with my body. I have access to all of the health services that I may need—a fundamental right I only fully realized upon leaving home. While I wish I had grown up in an environment more accepting of reproductive freedom, my experience has made me painfully aware of the dangers that emerge when women are shamed for having sex. Having awkward conversations is essential for protecting women from lifelong diseases and preventing medical complications that could be life-threatening. Every woman deserves the freedom to make informed choices about her body and not be left to guess or act out of fear, too afraid to ask for the help she needs.

ANONYMOUS PROUDLY VOTED TO REPEAL THE ABORTION BAN IN THEIR STATE.

GRAPHIC BY CLARA LAKE '27



Dating Apps: Hook-up or Hang-up?

A chaste sophomore downloads Tinder to conduct interviews about dating apps and hookup culture at Harvard.

BY MIA TAVARES '27

On Monday night, two hours after Indy storyboard ended, I downloaded Tinder. I chose my favorite photos that I felt depicted my best features: my silly personality and cheeky smile, obviously. Having heard the Tinder horror stories from my girl friends, I opted to make it clear in my bio that I was on the app for investigative journalism, not for a fast hookup.

Within a few hours of swiping right on every man that appeared, with the exception of those with profiles that made me physically revolt, and fielding meek “hi” dms, I received my first egregious message. A 22-year-old self-proclaimed “Harvard Dropout” with two shirtless photos in his profile chose to capitalize on the “i’m on this app bc i’m writing an article for the *Harvard Independent*” in my profile to say with no introduction, “come interview this di..” Not one to be discouraged, I continued swiping, hoping to engage in more intellectual conversations about the discrepancies between Harvard men and women on dating apps.

Out of every five men that came up on my feed, at least two were from Harvard. I recognized close friends, classmates, TFs, and even a few Indy members. I swiped through entire friend groups that had all used the same film photo in their profiles. But according to a 21-year-old Pforzheimer man who claimed I had “lev girl energy,” Harvard guys do not experience the same phenomenon with their female counterparts. He “definitely notice[s] a major lack of Harvard women on Tinder.” In his words, “I’d be lucky to see 1 or 2 out of every 20 women I swipe through be Harvard affiliates.” David, who agreed to be interviewed anonymously and identified by a pseudonym, also admitted that although he only sees 1 or 2 profiles from Harvard girls out of 20, a much higher percentage of his matches end up being from Harvard, even if he swipes right on all schools equally.

So why does it seem like Harvard girls aren’t on Tinder? A 20-year-old Harvard man, who has the hots for girls who “know how to dress,” explained that most of his Harvard girl friends are on Hinge. He once matched with someone who ended up deleting Tinder because “too many guys were asking her for nudes,” which he only learned later on when she found him on Instagram and messaged him. David explained that he thinks there is less stigma around apps like Hinge and Bumble because Tinder is more well-known for encouraging hook-up culture. His girl friends that *are* on Tinder, however, aren’t too shy about their presence on the app, though he attributes that to the fact that they are all bisexual and use Tinder mainly to find other women.

On the contrary, another bisexual senior, Jenny,

who also agreed to be quoted anonymously under a pseudonym, only uses Tinder to find guys. While she didn’t find that there was much of a stigma around being on Tinder within her friend group, she explained that she noticed a general anti-hook-up culture attitude among women at Harvard. For them, being on Tinder doesn’t necessarily correlate with engaging in hookup culture. In her words, Tinder is “so meaningless. I feel like so many people have Tinder and don’t really use it, like you could see someone’s profile and not really know if they’re active.” Yet when it comes to actually meeting up with people from the app, people generally “think hookup culture is worse for girls than it is for guys.”

During my freshman year, I felt like there was a stigma around girls having Tinder profiles (and by assumption,



engaging in hook-up culture.) When people found a female friend on the app they’d make comments like, “She’s too pretty to be doing this,” or “Wow... I can’t believe she’s fucking random guys.” But when we encountered one of our guy friend’s profiles, the responses were more along the lines of “He’s confident and putting himself out there!” or “A boy will do what he’s gotta do.” It wasn’t surprising to find a guy on any app, but screenshots of girl’s profiles circulated.

As my peers and I have gotten older and more comfortable with both sex and our fellow students, it seems like finding other Harvard students on the apps has become universally normalized, regardless of gender. Many of the boldest men in my Tinder DMs tended to be older, and I noticed significantly fewer freshmen on the app, with most, if not all of the Harvard girls tending to be upperclassmen. It’s no longer taboo to be looking for a primarily sexual connection with someone,

especially because we’ve gotten busier and less able to commit to time-consuming relationships. In comparison to freshman year, more people are looking to break their celibacy and find somebody to *match their freak*.

It’s fine to get with someone that you’ve never met before because as we spend more time at this school, we get more involved in the social web which provides a certain notion of assurance about someone’s character. Truly unknown people become rare because anyone you might match with is likely at least a friend of a friend. Anyone unsafe or secretly crazy has probably been identified by the time sophomore fall comes around, so your chances of ending up on a first date with an unfortunate partner significantly decrease.

So if you can save time and energy by finding someone eligible and interested in you on an app rather than having to put in all the work in person, Tinder is an attractive option. At the same time, many people are on Tinder for reasons other than pure hook-up culture. For the fashion-oriented 20-year-old, he’s “looking for a connection, not a hookup, but obviously not a relationship, because [Tinder] is too unserious for that, but a secret third thing [he has] yet to define.” Jenny’s friends use Tinder when they are bored and just want to swipe and chat, often without any intention of actually meeting up with people. David thinks Tinder is a great way to melt awkward social barriers. “A lot of the times you match with someone, you don’t necessarily [message them] immediately, and then you run into them at a party... [then] it’s a lot easier to go up and talk to someone you don’t know.”

My recommendation? Download a dating app, even if you aren’t looking for a hook-up. I’ve had plenty of casual conversations with people who had insightful takes on everything from age gaps in relationships to the perfect consistency of ice cream. It’s a fun opportunity to be inspired by creative pick-up lines and get to know the rest of the Harvard (and Greater Boston) community. And who knows? You could very well launch your next situationship at a party after lurking on their profile and introducing yourself with the classic: “Hey... You look familiar! Did we match on Tinder? HAHA—let me buy you a drink.”

MIA TAVARES '27 (MIATAVARES@COLLEGE.HARVARD.EDU) WAS APPALLED, FLABBERGASTED, AND FRANKLY DISCONCERTED BY SOME OF THE HARVARD TINDER PROFILES SHE ENCOUNTERED.

GRAPHIC BY REEVE SYKES '26

Keeping it Casual

How much should you be thinking about your hookup buddy?

BY ANONYMOUS

It's 11 p.m. on a Thursday and your hookup buddy is on their way to your dorm. You've showered, cleaned your room (stuffed all the clutter in the closet), filled in your roommates, made sure the lighting is absolutely perfect, and put on an effortless outfit. After all, this is a random, meaningless hookup—you've both established that you're not looking for a relationship right now. Just fun, nothing more. It's not like you're *actually* invested in this...right?

Even through the cuddling afterward, doing the mental math of how many hours it's been since they texted you back, and stalking every form of social media each ex of theirs has posted on since the age of 12, it's still casual. *If they get with someone else, so what?*, you tell yourself. *Just don't let me see it. Or hear about it. Or be within a five-mile radius of where it actually happens.*

72% of college students report having at least one hookup in college by the end of their senior year. Everyone swears they're not invested, and that casual hookups are just part of the college experience. And yet, many of these seemingly low-stakes connections end with never speaking again and silent resentments. The reality is, even in something as supposedly carefree as a casual hookup, emotions have a way of sneaking in, adding unplanned complications. While these casual connections are generally supposed to be no strings attached, as it turns out the "stringless" part is much easier said than done. For all the talk about staying "unattached," it's surprising how often the strings of these encounters leave us tangled up in expectations we never meant to have.

How do these seemingly carefree hookups get so complicated? Maybe it's because any connection, even a casual one, is driven by deeper psychological and physiological needs that can't just be "turned off." Our brains respond to physical intimacy by releasing chemicals like oxytocin, which can promote bonding and trust in nature. We might try to compartmentalize, but when our brains are literally wired to connect to keep us safe, it's hard to keep emotions out completely. So while you can tell yourself it's just a hookup, your body says differently.

There's also the emotional aspect of craving validation, something casual hookups do offer in the short term. For some, these hookups feel like

low-stakes fun, but for many, they become an ongoing measuring stick of desirability. Sometimes, you're hoping they'll text you back quickly—not just because it's polite, but because it's a sign that they value you. It's this contradiction that complicates things—even though we're looking for something "no pressure," our bodies and minds crave consistency and validation that these situations aren't set up to provide.

Where's the line between fun and over-investment? How much is too much to put into this hookup? Let's start with the time factor. You're planning your schedule around their texts, pretending you just happened to be free when they ask to hang out, and setting aside nights "just in case." Casual is supposed to be about spontaneity, but here you are mentally reserving weekends, coordinating with roommates to ensure privacy, and putting more thought into this than your *Justice* paper (which you haven't started). If "keeping it casual" is now something you're pre-planning, maybe it's already bordering on too much.

Let's revisit the emotional investment. Casually waiting for a text back becomes subtly intertwined with actual nerves, replaying every response to make sure it sounds chill. The game of not caring suddenly becomes the most stressful part of your week, and detachment starts feeling like a job. The more energy you put into analyzing each interaction, the more the attachment inevitably sneaks in.

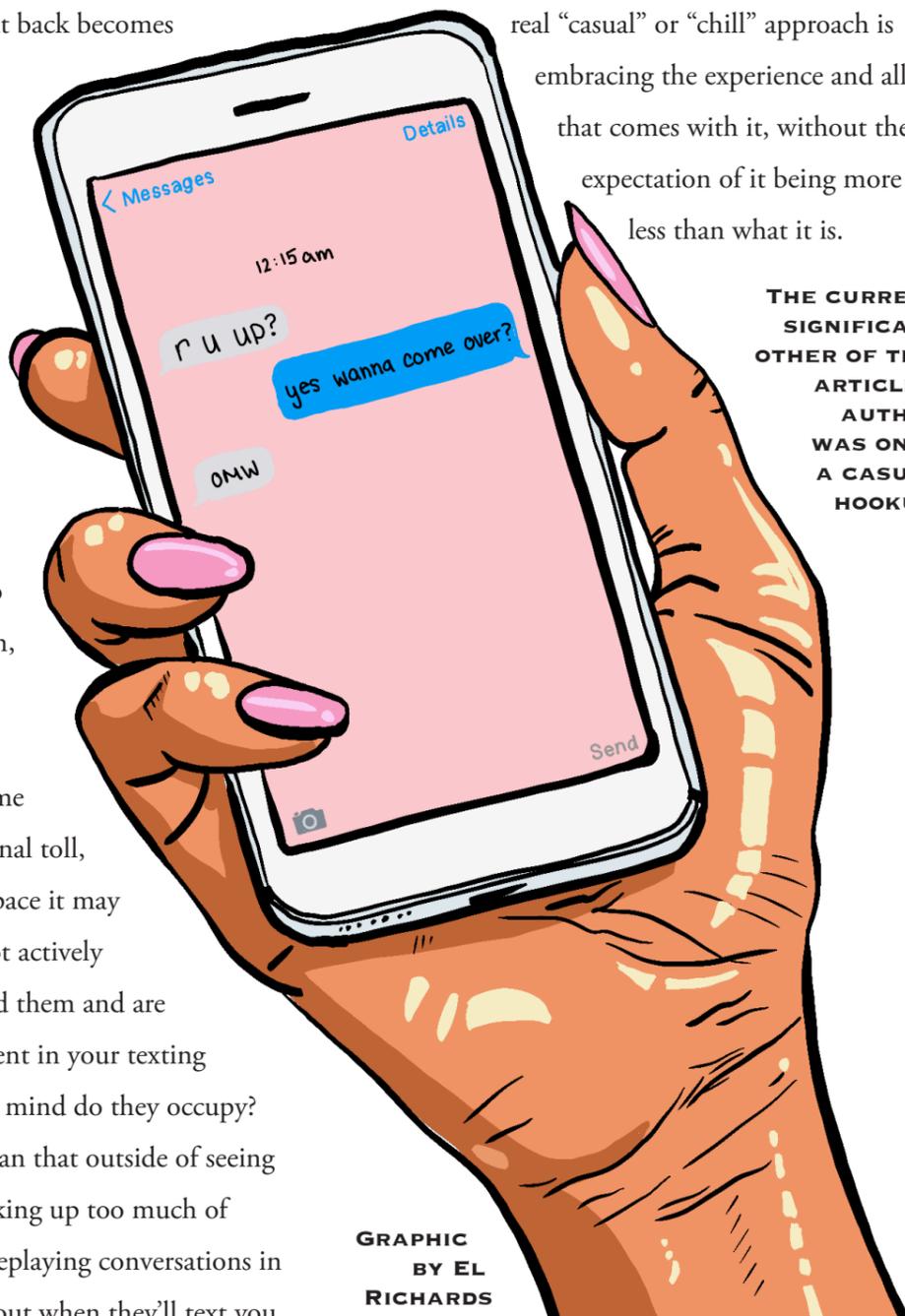
Outside of the time commitment and emotional toll, there is also the mental space it may take up. Even if you're not actively planning your day around them and are feeling reasonably confident in your texting game, how much of your mind do they occupy? Casual is supposed to mean that outside of seeing each other, they're not taking up too much of your thoughts. If you're replaying conversations in your head or stressing about when they'll text you

back, they've moved from "casual" to "constant background noise." It's one thing to occasionally think about them—it's another if they're becoming a central character in your life.

At the end of the day, maybe casual doesn't have to mean unaffected; maybe it's about staying honest with ourselves about what we want or need out of any given connection. When we're able to see hookups as meaningful in their own right rather than forcing them into a "chill" category, we can live in the moment and experience the fun and natural feelings that come with human connection.

"There's something to be said about sharing experiences with people—simply meeting people and sharing a moment with them. Some people take up more pages in our life story than others, but not everyone needs a full chapter. Sometimes a paragraph, however shortly lived, can still be a meaningful moment of our stories," an anonymous Harvard sophomore male said. The point isn't to shut out our emotions but to engage with them in a way that doesn't demand more from the moment than it's able to give at that time. Sometimes the real "casual" or "chill" approach is embracing the experience and all that comes with it, without the expectation of it being more or less than what it is.

THE CURRENT SIGNIFICANT OTHER OF THIS ARTICLE'S AUTHOR WAS ONCE A CASUAL HOOKUP.



GRAPHIC BY EL RICHARDS '26

Let's Talk About Sex

The healthiest thing you can do is talk about sex with your friends.

BY ANONYMOUS

Aren't you embarrassed? TMI. I didn't need to hear that. Wow, you're brave.

Talking about sex is bound to elicit one or many of these reactions. But there's nothing unpleasant about discussing sex, and in fact, we should be discussing it more. Women are made to feel like talking about sex is awkward and inappropriate. Sexuality is an isolating territory to navigate on your own.

here's a turning point in a girl's life when she watches *Sex and the City* from beginning to end for the first time. The SATC women—Carrie, Charlotte, Samantha, and Miranda—teach us what to wear, which cocktails to drink, how much is acceptable to spend on shoes, where to eat, and who to sleep with, how often, and in what ways. More than anything, *Sex and the City* makes women want to have sex. The series depicts sex as something that can be causal, spontaneous, empowering, or sometimes even glamorous.

I first started watching *Sex and the City* when I was 13, sneaking episodes in after my parents went to bed. Though I didn't understand the half of it, it was the first time I'd seen sexual women on screen. Since then, I've rewatched the series more times than I can count, as have my girlfriends. I've found that with each watch, we all increasingly long to become the kind of unabashedly sexual women we see on the screen. Seeing women talking unapologetically about orgasms, threesomes, and tantric sex at brunch is important, even when it may not seem like it.

My girlfriends and I were 16 when we first started having conversations about female intimacy and pleasure. Sitting at a table at our neighborhood Mexican restaurant, we stumbled upon the topic of female pleasure, dubbing female masturbation as “the feminist movement.” We had all thought we were abnormal for masturbating as teenagers, and we talked about the fear that pervaded our ability to tell and talk to each other about it.

We've always been on very different

when it comes to sexual liberation. I have girlfriends with various points of view about sex, from the friend who'd never admit they partake in “the feminist movement” to the friend who gifts us all rose vibrators. Regardless, it never ceases to amaze me how little all of my girlfriends and I know.

In our contemporary culture that claims to be sexually liberated, women still struggle to talk honestly about their sex lives. There exists an impossible double standard to simultaneously exaggerate positive sexual experiences, as well as feel embarrassed for encountering sexual struggles. Our lack of ability to talk comfortably about sex is a product of a sex education that taught us little to nothing about the mechanics of sex.

As my girlfriends and I became sexually active for the first time, we shared the “pee after sex” advice. Beginning to resent our uneducated sexual partners, we helped show each other where the clitoris is. Over the years, our conversations ebbed and flowed in content: we asked each other what morning-after pill we should take, if it was bad that we usually didn't have an orgasm, what sex positions worked and felt the best, and how we were all enjoying our rose toys.

There is something sacred about sitting with my girlfriends at a table together to share wisdom in a safe and supportive environment. *SATC's* fierce female foursome figured out how to ask for the kind of wild sex lives they wanted, and they gave us permission to do and say things that previously seemed too scandalous or embarrassing.

Talking about sex is healthy, especially when it's centered on our physical health—what's normal and

what's not. There's value in discussing our sexual experiences, even if it's just laughing about what happens when things don't go according to plan.

If we don't openly talk about sex, most of what we know comes from either sex education or mainstream porn, both of which often provide little information or harmful misconceptions. My girlfriends and I are now able to talk, and have talked, about almost everything. It's totally normal to have weird smells, interest in various kinks, and all the other kinds of queries we have as sexual beings. Without normalizing these conversations, we'll never get that reassurance, and we'll keep feeling abnormal when we're really not.

There are very few institutions that give women permission to talk, learn, and understand sex, let alone how to enjoy and embrace it. No one teaches us that women can have sex just for fun like men do. Girlhood and womanhood mean and encompass so many things, but dialogues about sexual education, pleasure, and liberation need to become a more prominent part of the narrative. It's okay to be curious, even from a young age. Sex is too fun and important of a topic to stay silent about, and it broadens our perspective.

WRITTEN ANONYMOUSLY FOR THE
INDEPENDENT.

GRAPHIC BY EMILY PALLAN '27



LOSING IT ALL

A reflection on the meaning of losing my virginity.

BY ANONYMOUS

The first time I had sex, I started crying.

It was delicately messy and awkwardly chaotic and uncomfortable, even with my loving boyfriend at the time. And it was undeniably painful, exacerbated by the all-encompassing stress I felt in the moment. In giving my body to someone else, it seemed like I had lost all control of myself, and in that unprecedented vulnerability, I froze. All I wanted was for it to be over.

My tears that followed were then a combination of not just physical pain but also frustration—a manifestation of emotional grief, that losing my virginity was not at all what I thought it would be. It neither felt romantic nor enjoyable. I knew this was not a reflection on my relationship or either of us in the slightest. Yet in my head, I had this grand concept of what my first time would be—amorously idyllic and transformative.

It's not like I was blindsided—I knew what sex entailed, I knew that it hurt most women the first time, and I knew the person I was having sex with. In the end, I was not overwhelmed with feelings of love but instead with shame and embarrassment, upset that it had fallen short of the expectations I had created in my head and placed on myself. My idealized perception of physical intimacy made me feel inadequate, as if I was the problem—not the narratives that shaped my naivete.

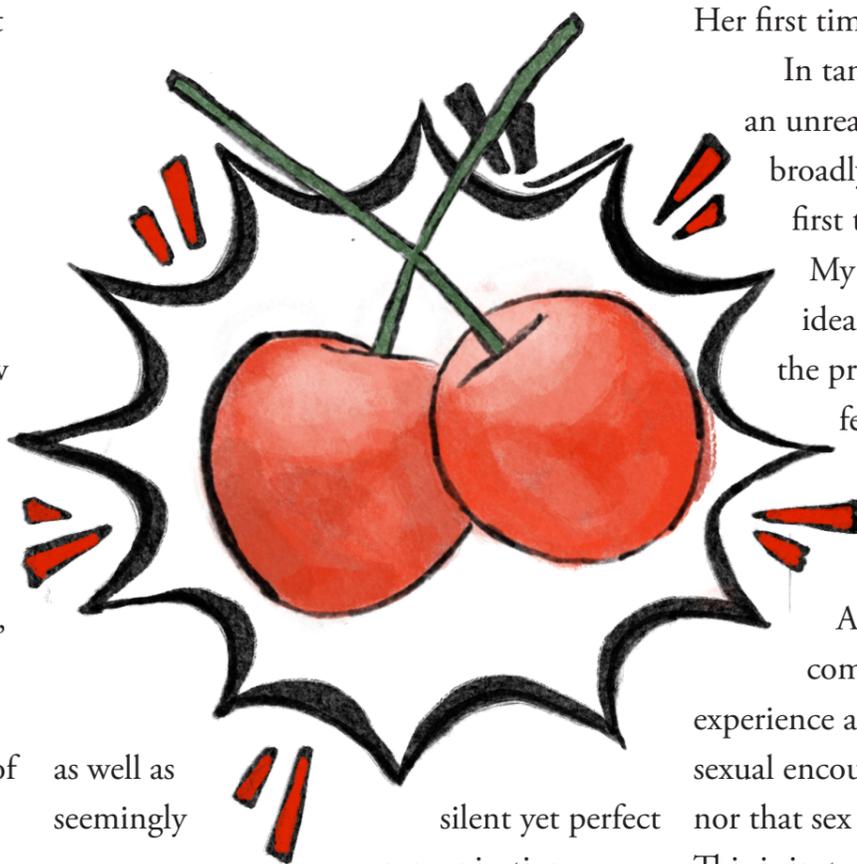
Sex was elusive. It persisted as an idolized and mysterious concept we could only grasp at—you didn't know what it really was until you did it, as if it was some fulfillment of maturity.

In my smaller high school, it felt like there was a clear divide: people were either constantly having sex or not at all. It was an all-too-pervasive topic of gossip and speculation, whispers of who was sleeping with who and whether or not a couple had done it for the first time. And it seemed omnipresently lingering, as some next step I would have to take and address with every boy I got involved with. So, it became overwhelmingly monumental in my head.

This, of course, is coupled with the unrealistic expectation for women to be effortlessly perfect. Women are held to a

distinct, higher standard of attractiveness and sexual desire. While this is not a new phenomenon, it only burdens us with pressure rather than allowing for the experience of true intimacy.

But sex seemed to be monumental in popculture too—in books and movies and TV shows—even from a very young age, influencing our perception of it through these glamorized glimpses of physical intimacy. The portrayal of sex in the media more resembles fantasy rather than reality; sex is idealized and romanticized as the pinnacle of beauty and romance, with flawless moments and people



as well as seemingly silent yet perfect communication and ease. But like most other things in the media, this is not real.

And while the woman has to be perfect, she too has to be innocent. It feels like it's always the woman actually losing her virginity—men just have sex.

The media feeds into this as well; many media portrayals paint a woman's first time as a moment of euphoria, a climactic transformation of a woman discovering her sexuality. A woman tenderly gives up herself and her body as a profound gesture of love and devotion. We place such gravity on women losing their virginity as if it should be some transformative event and rite of passage in a way we rarely see, if at all, with men. Men's sexual journeys are framed more casually, without the same level of scrutiny or consequence.

Take *Bridgerton*, famous for its

explicit sensuality: set in regency England, ladies are unforgivingly ruined with any sexual encounter where men face few consequences for their unchecked promiscuity. The first season depicts the main character Daphne's journey towards sex as a monumental plot point, the storyline revolving around her inexperience and mystery of sexual intimacy with her love interest Simon, whose sexual history becomes inconsequential. While admittedly set in an earlier time period, *Bridgerton* is still emblematic of broader media culture signifying a woman losing her virginity as pivotal, carrying an outsized significance. Her first time is seemingly magical.

In tandem, this all contributes to an unrealistic idea of what sex is more broadly—especially for a woman's first time—that I deeply believed.

My perception was flawed and idealized, but my expectations were the product of the narrative I had been fed. As a society, we've made sex to be elusive.

In reality, sex can be imperfect and complex.

And that's okay. This is not to complain that I had a disquieting experience and this is not to say that every sexual encounter is going to be unfulfilling, nor that sex isn't meant to be meaningful. This is instead to encourage that a woman's sexuality does not need to be a defining moment, laden with profound emotional significance and moral weight. This is to reassure you that your first time does not need to feel effortlessly amazing. The narrative proliferating television and literature that sex needs to be cathartic is inaccurate. When we unburden ourselves from these narratives, we can then truly experience and accept sex for what it is.

In the end, losing my virginity was about confronting that vulnerability, both with myself and with someone else, freed from all other expectations.

WRITTEN ANONYMOUSLY FOR THE INDEPENDENT.

GRAPHIC BY CHRISTIE BECKLEY '26

Cocoa Kisses and Maca Makeouts

My experience testing the powers of aphrodisiacs.

BY HANDJOB HERSHEY

The link between chocolate and sex long predates the invention of the Hershey Kiss. The Aztecs, famous for inventing chocolate and hot chocolate, might have been interested in the delight for more than just its delicious cocoa aromas. The Aztec emperor Moctezuma drank copious amounts of chocolate before rendezvousing with his lovers because of its aphrodisiac properties. As someone who loved the Aztec unit in 5th grade social studies, I decided to try a modern version of Moctezuma's special drink to see if it would enhance my own sexual experiences.

A quick Amazon search for "sex chocolate" yielded a plethora of results, and in less than a day, a box of Ignite Chocolate arrived for me in the mailroom. The brand markets to couples, and the bar had six squares each split into triangles, so I could easily include my oh-so-willing boyfriend in the experiment. Ignite promises to add an extra touch of bliss to any moment together, and I was ready to put this claim to the test.

Even without the addition of pleasure-enhancing ingredients, science still considers chocolate an aphrodisiac. The secret to chocolate's sex-enhancing powers lies in the serotonin and phenylethylamine that it contains, which are mood-boosting chemicals that induce feelings of pleasure and arousal. Ignite bars add epimedium (colloquially called "Horny Goat Weed") and maca root to further boost consumers' sex drive. I was excited to test the power of plants and see how my mood could be boosted.

As I carried the package back to my dorm from the mailroom, I could already feel a pep in my step, and I was hoping that pep would travel elsewhere through my body soon (queue Bubbly by Colbie Caillat "It starts in my toes..."). When my boyfriend greeted me at the door, I forwent the typical hug and kiss in hopes of starting the sexual tension early. We wasted no time getting to the chocolate. The outer packaging was an understated black box with Ignite's gold logo, a pleasing display that excited me for what lay inside. Unfortunately, the chocolate squares were

that necessitated my boyfriend's two-inch jackknife to open. Although a decidedly sexy act, I could easily see someone getting the ick if scissors were involved or if there was a failed attempt at a teeth opening.

Tastewise, the chocolate was fine. As chocolate goes, it was no

Ghirardelli, but as enhanced chocolate it

could have been a lot worse. My boyfriend appreciated the floral notes. Thankfully, the chocolate was not crumbly, but I had been imagining a warm melt-in-your-mouth sensation when it was placed on my tongue, and was left wanting more. With the chocolate consumed, it was time to let the magic happen.

Throughout my extensive research (reading Amazon reviews and WebMD articles), I found very little information on what to do in the 30 to 60 minutes before the chocolate kicks in. The Type A in me wanted to do the exact right thing to maximize the effectiveness of the chocolate. Cuddling seemed too obvious, so we decided to take the diametrically opposed option and instituted a no-touch rule to see who would crack first. As the saying goes, you want what you can't have, and suddenly the goosebumps on my skin made it seem like the 30-minute delay was all a ruse. With a swift scoop into my boyfriend's arms, it was time for the real experiment to begin.

Throughout the two-and-a-half-hour experiment, the effects of the chocolate waned and waxed. At the start, the excitement was palpable and we got into things with more vigor than usual. My senses felt heightened, and I was overwhelmed with a desire to try new things to make my boyfriend feel good.

Yet, in the back of my mind, I couldn't help but wonder if this was just a placebo effect. Even though our activities lasted longer than usual, I was hard-pressed to find a moment that felt *better* than normal. If anything, there were a few moments of stress where the pressure of having taken the chocolate made me worry I was not enjoying myself enough.

Two glasses of white wine would have made me equally as excited to tear off my boyfriend's shirt, so was the chocolate worth it?

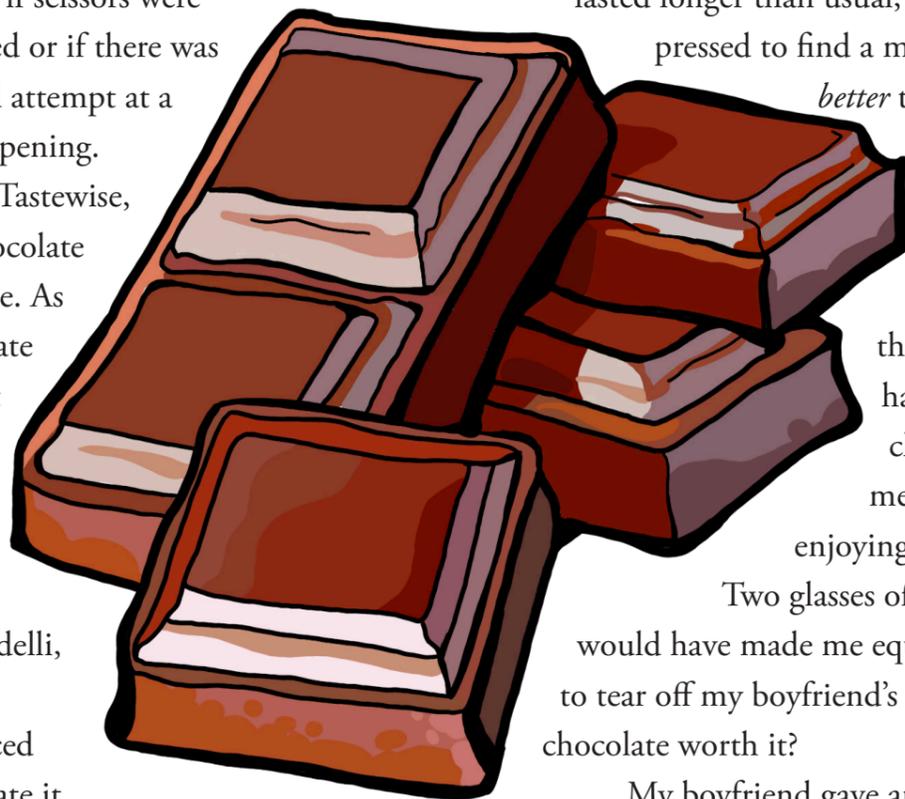
My boyfriend gave an apt metaphor to explain this stress: eating the chocolate is like being handed magic beans. You're told to expect a towering beanstalk to grow, but when you end up with a normal beanstalk, it seems like you should be upset. In the end, you enjoyed the fun in the anticipation of the magic beanstalk, even though the results weren't what you expected.

Sometimes expectations get in the way of a good time, but once I realized that I could still have fun even if the chocolate was not going to radically change my experience, I allowed myself to enjoy the moment and who I was with.

While I may not start guzzling down hot chocolate like Moctezuma, I do not plan to swear off sex chocolate for good. There is something special about texting your boyfriend that you want to try something new in the bedroom and having dedicated time together to look forward to. The anticipation turns me on, and a little placebo effect during foreplay never hurt anyone. If you're looking for a way to spice things up with your partner or sneaky link, see if a little maca root can get you macking.

HANDJOB HERSHEY HOPES HER PARENTS DON'T CHECK HER RECENT ORDERS FROM AMAZON.

GRAPHIC BY EL RICHARDS '26



ARTS

ELEMENTS OF DESIRE

A porn script with chemistry and about chemistry.

BY ANONYMOUS

1. INT. ORGANIC CHEMISTRY LAB – NIGHT

An organic chemistry lab. It is dark and empty. A GORGEOUS HOT CHEMIST in a tight lab coat that hugs her curves is conducting an experiment in one of the fume hoods. Her MALE LAB PARTNER walks in, tepidly. The two have always had a flirty vibe. This is their first time alone in the lab together.

GORGEOUS HOT CHEMIST
Oh... hi there. I didn't expect you in this late. How's your night going?

MALE LAB PARTNER
(In a nondescript, insufferable accent)
Hi love. I'm good, how are you?

GORGEOUS HOT CHEMIST
Good. A little sleepy. Just trying to finish up this step of the synthesis.

MALE LAB PARTNER
Not too sleepy, I hope.

GORGEOUS HOT CHEMIST
No— uh— what?

MALE LAB PARTNER
Because we have to get this part of the synthesis done tonight.

GORGEOUS HOT CHEMIST
Oh, right! Yeah. I'm not that tired.

Male Lab Partner leans in closer to the fume hood, placing his hand to the right of the hot plate. His face is inches from Gorgeous Hot Chemist's shoulder. He studies the Erlenmeyer flask (and the shape of her tits under her ridiculously tight lab coat.)

MALE LAB PARTNER
These are looking great.

Gorgeous Hot Chemist turns to her right and realizes how close Male Lab Partner is. She studies his face, realizing he's actually got decent facial harmony. She catches a glimpse of his abdomen through the slit in the side of his lab coat. She gasps and stumbles away, realizing he's not wearing anything underneath.

GORGEOUS HOT CHEMIST
(adjusting her glasses sheepishly, like she's a porn star or something)
I— I— that— that's a safety hazard!

MALE LAB PARTNER
(grinning like a predator looking at his prey)
What's a safety hazard?

GORGEOUS HOT CHEMIST
You're— you're—

Before she can get words out, she involuntarily reaches out with two fingers to touch Male Lab Partner's rock-hard abdomen through the slit in his lab coat. It's pretty fucking weird, but it's fine because she's hot. She pretends to be stunned by her actions (the little slut) and just barely moves her fingertips. Suddenly, Male Lab Partner's abs aren't the only thing that's rock-hard. Gorgeous Hot Chemist gasps like she's never seen an erection before.

MALE LAB PARTNER
See something you like?

GORGEOUS HOT CHEMIST
(abandoning the whole doe-eyed virgin act)
Yeah.

Male Lab Partner puts his hand behind Gorgeous Hot Chemist's neck, drawing her in. As their lips touch, their safety glasses slam together. It's pretty painful and awkward. But lucky for us, Male Lab Partner didn't get this far in life without some serious game. He pulls back, grinning slyly.

MALE LAB PARTNER
(seductively, licking his lips or some shit)
Let's get these off.

Male Lab Partner takes both of their safety glasses off. He leans into whisper in Gorgeous Hot Chemist's ear.

MALE LAB PARTNER (CONT'D)
Now I'm going to bend you over this lab desk and—
Gorgeous Hot Chemist silences him with a kiss.

GORGEOUS HOT CHEMIST
Or, we could debate the ethics of porn.

MALE LAB PARTNER
What good would that be? No one watches this part anyway.

GORGEOUS HOT CHEMIST
Everyone watches this part. Porn depends on the story.

MALE LAB PARTNER
No it doesn't. Porn depends on the sex.
Rough, dirty, sweaty, hot, animalistic, wild—

Gorgeous Hot Chemist silences him with another kiss.

GORGEOUS HOT CHEMIST
Steamy, sensual, ethically ambiguous, simultaneously both anti-feminist and revolutionarily feminist, erotic, heated—

Speaking of heated, they look to the left. Under the fume hood, the Erlenmeyer flask on the hot plate is bubbling over, spilling a white substance everywhere. Gorgeous Hot Chemist sees the sticky, goopy white substance and can't keep up the feminist act anymore. She shuts the fume hood and turns back to Male Lab Partner.

GORGEOUS HOT CHEMIST (CONT'D)
Nevermind. Just fuck me.

Gorgeous Hot Chemist yanks Male Lab Partner's face towards hers. The two make out passionately. Eventually, they shed their shitty blue lab coats.

MALE LAB PARTNER
Now THIS is a safety hazard.

GORGEOUS HOT CHEMIST
Shut the fuck up and don't talk again.

Male Lab Partner complies. He shuts the fuck up. The two start to shed the rest of their clothing.

The two fuck wildly. They successfully execute more positions than you ever thought possible in a chemistry laboratory. Beakers are shattered. The rotovap is mangled. Lab coats are rendered unusable. At one point, Male Lab Partner grabs ice from the bucket cooling some of their samples and does really unsanitary things with it. Gorgeous Hot Chemist likes it.

After about 14 minutes, Male Lab Partner can't last any longer. He makes the candid male *I'm coming* grunt. Gorgeous Hot Chemist chokes back a sigh of relief because the whole time she was sort of wishing he was a woman.

As Male Lab Partner erupts, so does the fume hood. The unmonitored Erlenmeyer flask spills toxic white shit all over the pair. They shriek and sprint over to the safety shower, where they proceed to have (safety) shower sex as the water washes over them.

END.

WRITTEN ANONYMOUSLY FOR
THE HARVARD
INDEPENDENT.

GRAPHIC
BY CLARA
LAKE '27







Pre-Game Sex: Power Move or Energy Drain?

How getting it on before sports games affects sexual performance.

BY ANONYMOUS

Among sports rituals that have been debated for centuries, pre-game sex stands the test of time. From the first ever athletes to modern Olympians, athletes have pondered the effects of sex before competition: does it build confidence and calm, or leave players distracted and drained? Dating back to the ancient Greeks, athletes would abstain from having sex before matches because their semen was a symbol of strength. For every legend who swore by pre-game celibacy, there's a modern athlete advocating for sex's benefits.

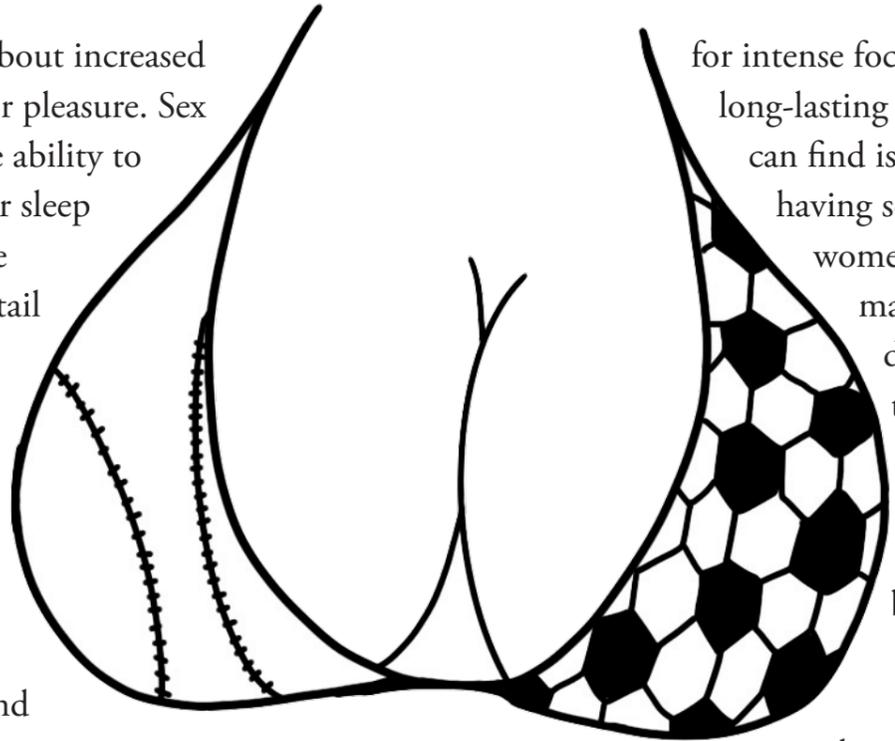
Ask any sports psychologist, and they'll tell you that managing pre-game nerves is crucial. There is no elite athlete on this earth who can perform at the highest level if their head is not in the game. Additionally, studies have found that having consistent sex is linked to better memory, which can be crucial in the heaves of competition. Oxytocin and endorphins, hormones that can help relieve feelings of stress and anxiety, are released while having sex and can leave some athletes in a blissful calm that translates to better performance.

For pre-match preparation, it is difficult to overstate the benefits of being calm and collected, and not letting your anxiety and outside pressures impact your performance. Athletes thrive on confidence; some swear that pre-game intimacy provides that extra edge. Famously, elite soccer player Ronaldinho Gaúcho spoke about having sex before every match he played while at FC Barcelona, saying that it helped him feel happier before he entered the field. Former NFL wide receiver Chad Ochocino often played football games while taking Viagra because the increased blood flow made him feel "ten times faster."

not simply about increased confidence or pleasure. Sex often has the ability to improve your sleep thanks to the natural cocktail of hormones that are released after sex. These hormones can improve one's sleep and increase restorative rest. Everybody knows that for athletes, quality sleep is as essential as practice or diet. A restful night sets them up for game-day focus, leaving them ready to perform at their peak. Not everyone is like Johnny Manziel and can play elite college football after being out until 2 a.m. the previous night. For many athletes, being in bed early and sleeping well is paramount to peak performance.

However, traditional wisdom holds that physical activity pre-game is risky, as it exhausts precious energy. To some athletes, sex feels like a waste of stamina, and they'd rather channel every ounce of their energy toward the game. This "energy drain" myth has been debunked, but some still insist that holding back allows them to feel more explosive when it counts. After all, why chance it when every bit of strength matters? This sentiment is especially true in combat sports, where certain athletes swear to be celibate for a month before intense matches. Most famously, Muhammed Ali was known to be celibate for roughly six weeks leading up to a boxing match.

Additionally, athletes aren't immune to distraction; intimacy right before a game shifts focus away from performance. Famously from the 1976 film *Rocky*, Rocky's coach stated that "women weaken legs." Athletes known



for intense focus and long-lasting strength can find issues with having sex with women before matches. A distracting text or thought can be the difference between a

championship moment and a missed opportunity. Pre-game abstinence is a superstition that stretches back centuries, and breaking a ritual—especially one ingrained by legends like Muhammed Ali—can sow doubt.

Ultimately, there's no one-size-fits-all answer to whether sex is helpful or harmful before a game. For every abstainer, there's an athlete who finds pre-game sex to be just what they need to relax, focus, and feel their best. Some even need it to perform their best. What's clear is that mindset plays the biggest role: confidence, focus, and calm are the real performance enhancers.

So, should athletes score before the game? It all comes down to what makes them feel like they've already won. Whether it's abstinence or some pre-game action, the key to success lies in doing whatever gets them in the zone. After all, game-day performance is as much mental as it is physical, and the best routines are the ones that work—even if they don't follow the traditional playbook.

HAVING SEX BEFORE SPORTS MATCHES SEEMS LIKE A GOOD IDEA—IF YOU CAN DO SO WITHOUT ANY STRESS OR STRINGS ATTACHED.

GRAPHIC BY REEVE SYKES '26

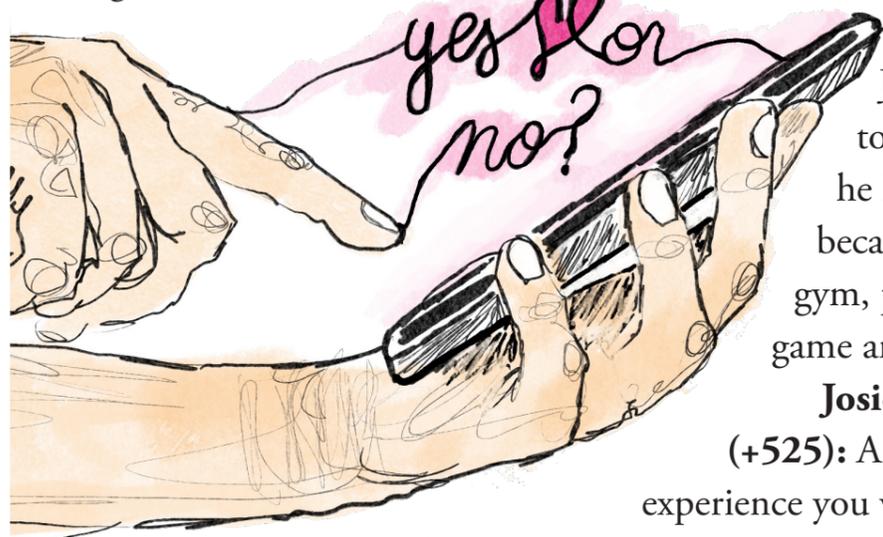
Indy Sportsbook: Swipe Right Madness

In search of the hottest college mascot.

BY SIR LANCELOT

It's the Sex Issue, and here at the Indy Sportsbook, we're laying down odds on which mascots we'd most likely swipe right on—which ones we think are the best for a one-night stand. From swoon-worthy swagger to unexpected charm, these mascots bring more than just school spirit. Let's dive into the top contenders, complete with odds on which ones we'd give the keys to our hearts, and which ones we would most likely match with while we're black-out swiping.

Spartan (Michigan State University) (-200): Spartan is that guy you meet and instantly think, This one's taking me home to meet his Spartan parents. He's always standing tall, flexing his triceps in just the right way; you know he could totally lift a chariot if he had to, or do the dirty work while you sit there like a dead fish. And let's be honest: if you're ever stranded on a deserted island, Spartan's the guy who's gonna build you a shelter or cook you a fish dinner and still somehow look amazing doing it. Our betting recommendation: go all-in. Spartan's the dependable bet with muscles and manners. We're swiping right, swiping hard, and hoping he's looking to settle down.



Wilma T. Wildcat (University of Arizona) (+150): Wilma isn't just a flirt—she's the kind of wildcat who knows exactly what she's doing. From the moment she flashes that coy smile, you'll know you're in trouble (and you'll be loving

it). She's playful, but don't mistake that for innocence. Wilma has no problem taking the lead, and she's not shy about going after what she wants. If you're into furies, she's the one. Wilma's got a way of making everything feel like foreplay, and let's just say you'll be hanging onto her every move. If you're lucky, she might just let her guard down for a more intimate connection when the night winds down—leaving you breathless and craving her touch before she's even gone.

Sebastian the Ibis (University of Miami) (+350): Let's be real—Sebastian is the ultimate bad boy with just enough danger to make you consider doing something you'd only confess with some level of shame and disgust. He's the type to pick you up in a convertible, toss you his shades, drive you to the beach at midnight, and lay it down. Imagine a night out with Sebastian: neon lights, pulsing beats, and drinks that just keep flowing. He's not the guy to whisper sweet nothings—he's more likely to pull you onto the dance floor and let his moves do the talking. And just when you think you're ready to head home, he'll flash that grin and somehow convince you to hit one more club. Just don't expect him to text you back after he leaves in the morning, because he's already at the gym, prepping for his next game and texting the next girl.

Josie Bruin (UCLA) (+525): A night with Josie is an experience you won't forget. She's not one to waste time with subtlety; from the moment you're alone, she's got her eyes on you, making sure to fully size you up. Her touch is confident, fingers trailing in a way that leaves no room for guessing what she wants. Every glance, every lingering touch sends

a jolt through you, the anticipation building with each second she's near. Josie doesn't play games—she's here to make sure you're aware of every inch of her, and by the end of the night, you'll be thinking about her long after she's left, yearning for another minute in her addictive presence.

Brutus Buckeye (Ohio State University) (+650): Brutus isn't just another cute face; he's the full package. Fun, dependable, and just nutty enough to keep things exciting. He's the type who'll have you laughing one minute and blushing the next. Imagine him leaning in close, grin on his face, saying, "Hope you're ready for this nut tonight." And Brutus has stamina—he's no one-night fling. Once he's invested, he's completely in it for the long haul. Brutus might not be your guy if you're looking for a one-night stand. But if you want to date, he could be the one for you.

So there you have it. Here we have hand-selected all of the mascots in college sports we would most likely swipe right on. Whether you're in it for Spartan's rock-solid reliability, Wilma's daring wildcat allure, or Sebastian's thrilling, no-strings-attached energy, these mascots know how to leave a lasting impression. Josie will have you craving her touch long after she's gone, and Brutus? Well, he's here to prove that good things come to those who wait—and maybe stick around for more than just a fling.

FOR THOSE WHO ARE A SWITCH HITTER—THESE MASCOTS ARE READY TO TAKE YOU FOR A RIDE. SWIPE RIGHT IF YOU'RE DOWN TO PLAY BOTH SIDES OF THE FIELD.

GRAPHIC BY CHRISTIE BECKLEY

'27

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Intimacy Issues

BY HAN NGUYEN '27
GRAPHIC BY CLARA LAKE '27



DOWN

- 1 Allure
- 2 Chess master
- Ivo ____
- 3 Cable channel
- 4 European trading bloc
- 5 Muddying
- 6 Charges towards
- 7 Eared seals
- 8 Until
- 9 Norma McCorvey pseudonym
- 10 Mercedes models
- 11 Poet cummings

ACROSS

- 1 Sexual relations
- 12 "I wouldn't touch that with a..."
- 13 Private matters
- 14 Oldsmobile model
- 15 "It ____" ("Who's there?" reply)
- 16 Scottish denial
- 17 Fast sports cars

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