

Please stop telling me what to do with my body.

Women sexualizing themselves in the media is a way to reclaim power over their bodies and shame that infringes on their personal freedoms.

By Ariana Hensley



Why is it that as soon as women begin to own and take pride in their sexuality, society has a problem with it? They had never had a problem with women being sexualized by men, but now there is a stigma surrounding women who make their own choice to be sexual.

A woman's sexuality is powerful.

It has caused a thousand ships to be launched upon Troy, allowed concubines to shape empires, and ruined a multitude of political careers. In the past decade, women have begun to outwardly express their sexuality as a way to shape public perception. The most recent example being the Kardashian Empire being built off a sex tape and lucrative PR moves.

Women are finally learning to reclaim the ownership that men had over the way their bodies and sexualities were perceived. It is a great moment for women everywhere for many reasons.

Society should be supporting a woman's expression of her sexuality rather than shaming her decisions.

Promoting a choice

In the past, women who acted on behalf of their sexuality were socially outcast at best and stoned to death on worse occasions.

Recently, eight women were shot because a man saw them as sexual temptations.

We as a society must do all we can to destigmatize a woman's sexuality, and celebrities are doing so by outwardly expressing their sexuality in the media.

This normalized women owning and expressing their sexuality and pushes society to remove their sexist and repressive ideologies surrounding women's bodies.

There is a misconception about the movement to promote power over a woman's sexuality, that it is doing the opposite of "slut-shaming" and shaming those who are less expressive with their sexuality.

This is false; the purpose of normalizing the display of a woman's sexuality is not to force all women to do the same but instead to allow them the choice to act how they wish without fear of shame or societal reprimand.

Girls should have role models that promote body positivity and show that they can control their sexuality in a healthy and liberating way.

It is not my job as a woman to control the sexual urges of a man.

When I was in 7th grade, I got sent home for wearing a tank top with straps that were half an inch too thin. The reason they told me? They thought my pre-adolescent shoulders were too distracting for the boys and the male teachers.

Why was it my fault for wearing a tank top in middle school and distracting the male teachers instead of the 40-year-old male teacher's fault for being distracted by a 13-year-old in a tank top?

We teach girls shame and extreme self-preservation from a young age. We teach them to sit up straight, cross their legs, and be ashamed of their sexuality.

Meanwhile, boys are praised for their sexuality from a young age. "He's going to be a real lady killer," was something I heard said about my newborn cousin.

The double standard surrounding girls' and boys' sexuality is astronomical and puts the responsibility of healthy and safe sexual practices on women.

Men like to claim that they are the great protectors of women when in reality, the burden of preservation and protecting our virtue has fallen upon the shoulders of women since they were old enough to be sexualized.

Not only do we protect ourselves, but we are charged with protecting men from their sexual urges. We go through great lengths not to tempt men, lest people think we are "asking for it."

Because girls physically and mentally mature faster than boys, girls are often given the duty of monitoring the boys their age.

The phrase "boys will be boys" and the idea that boys have less control over their sexual urges is just a way society let's boy's escape responsibility and continue to be sexually immature.

It is not a woman's responsibility to control a man's sexual urges. It is one of society's great failures that we have yet to teach boys not sexually to harass women, yet have provided women an extensive education about how to avoid getting sexually harassed.

To make women in mainstream media stop expressing their sexuality to stop men from sexualizing all women is accommodating to men's toxic behavior and will allow the behavior to continue without consequence.

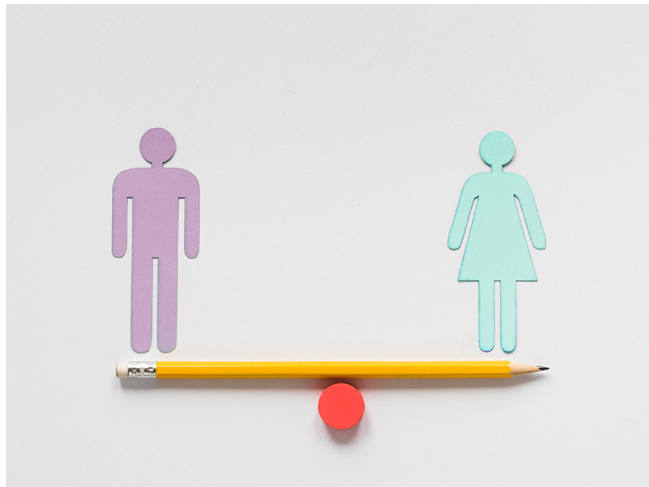
The double standard

If you turn on the radio today, or any day in the past 40 years, the chances of you finding a song in which a man graphically expresses his sexuality are very high. Not only do men claim their sexuality so barbarically, but they do it in a way that objectifies women.

While I am not arguing against the expression of a male's sexuality, I emphasize the unfair and oppressive double standard of women in mainstream media.



Toxic masculinity has been normalized, so healthy femininity should be normalized without question. It is a double standard, as many gender norms are, that should be eradicated.



It promotes the common misconception that men are more sexual than women, which is harmful because it can lead to women being shamed for their sexuality.

The misbelief that women should not enjoy sex as much as men generates toxic sexual relationships in which a man's pleasure is prioritized over a woman's.

Women expressing their sexuality in the media is challenging the superiority of a man's sexual pleasure and promoting

healthier sexual relationships that emphasize both men's and women's sexuality.

Does it put too much emphasis on a woman's body?

There is a common concern among people regarding the heavy expression of a woman's sexuality in the media. Women have worked hard to be seen as more than sexual objects and accessories to men. Unfortunately, the emphasis on a woman's body never left.

The emphasis has always been there. We are simply changing the dialogue around women's bodies. It is no longer about how men see a woman's body; it about how women see their bodies.

The male gaze is no longer directing how women display their bodies and sexualities but rather the female gaze. Women are expressing themselves the way they want to, by their own choice.

Women are also doing it in a far more inclusive and positive way. Not only the conventionally attractive and fit women are showing their bodies. Women with all types of body types display their femininity while simultaneously promoting body positivity and self-love.

It is all about equality and having a choice.

Women's bodies are not something to be ashamed of and hidden from the world.

To tell a woman that she cannot own her femininity and sexuality tells her to be ashamed of herself. We cannot continue to teach our girls shame and unhealthy preservation for boys' sake.

They need to have control over the dialogue over their bodies. Promoting the expression of a woman's sexuality in the media allows for strong examples that teach girls to be proud of their bodies and sexualities.