

# Ask the Dean of Sex

By Gene Kelly

*Associate Dean of Intercultural  
Development/Director  
of Gender and Sexuality  
Programs*

We've all been there. That moment when we have this burning desire... wait, not that type of burning desire... I mean a burning desire... for KNOWLEDGE! You'd like to ask that question in class, or in a training session, or to one of your friends, but you're kind of afraid of judgment. Believe me, I know.

Here's the thing—when you're the Dean of Sex, people just sort of assume that you're a cool enough person to talk to about issues or things that are going on both in and out of the bedroom. Some of my neatest experiences that I've had on campus are hanging out in Post-QuEST/QuEST After Dark/Beyond QuEST discussion group times (Thursdays at 9 p.m.). These sex-positive discussions

allow for students to get into the nitty-gritty of where their sex-ed class left off (or didn't pick up if you didn't have one!).

That's where this column will step in. My goal is to provide a setting for what YOU, the Lafayette community, want to know more about in regard to healthy sex and sexuality. These questions or issues can range from how to create a sensual experience, to exploration of the "normal" versus "deviant" sides of sexuality, as well as sexual health, communication, healthy relationships, et cetera.

If you'd like to have your question answered, you must send an email to [gsp@lafayette.edu](mailto:gsp@lafayette.edu) with the subject line: Ask the Dean of Sex. Names and other identifying information will NOT be published in the article. You may also drop your questions in the Ask the Dean of Sex box located outside of Farinon 124. So, Lafayette community, what do you want to know? I am at your service!

# Ask The Dean of Sex: Pornography in Relationships

By Gene Kelly

Associate Dean of Intercultural  
Development/Director of Gender  
and Sexuality Programs

As was sung in the off-Broadway musical *Avenue Q*, “the internet is for porn.” A simple Google search of the word “porn” came back with 1,090,000,000 results in .17 seconds. While watching pornography is legal (as long as the persons watching and the individuals in the film are above the age of 18), there is an important question that often comes up when people who once utilized pornography for more “individualistic” pursuits, now enter into relationships. Are there problems to using pornography while in a relationship?

First, porn can have positive effects on relationships depending on the relationship itself, the content and the purpose. It is a safer way to explore alternative forms of sexuality or “taboo” subjects that the individuals wouldn’t be comfortable engaging in physically. For example, perhaps there is a couple that is curious about the world of dominant and submissive role play (as explored in

EL James’s *Fifty Shades of Grey* series). Rather than jumping right in, watching a movie that depicts this type of activity between consenting couples could be of great assistance. The same would be true of long-distance relationships, as long as the individuals are upfront with each other.

However, there can be situations where pornography can be harmful for a relationship. For example, if one party in the relationship is pressuring the other to watch to “get in the mood” or to watch content that the other is not comfortable with. In addition, using pornography on the side, withdrawing from physical contact with a partner, or if a person cannot be aroused by physical contact unless porn is involved (porn creep) would be cause for concern. Porn creep is a physical and psychological condition whereby an individual has trained his/her brain that arousal can only happen through high stimulus situations, such that pornographic movies provide. If you or your partner has a concern about the use of pornography in your relationship, I would encourage you to seek assistance at Lafayette’s Counseling

Center.

The simplest way to alleviate problems that pornography might cause is to be open and honest with your partner about your likes and dislikes and expectations in the relationship. We don’t like to show our vulnerabilities, but who else can we be our most authentic with other than our partners? Do you agree? Disagree? Have other thoughts? Join in the conversation by submitting a comment through [www.thelaf.com](http://www.thelaf.com).

This week’s “Ask the Dean of Sex” column came from a discussion held with students in another setting. While I didn’t receive any questions this week, I still encourage you to submit! Send an email to [gsp@lafayette.edu](mailto:gsp@lafayette.edu) or drop off your questions in the Ask the Dean of Sex box outside 124 Farinon.

*The editorial board of The Lafayette chose to move this column to the Opinion page—a more appropriate location for the work of an administrator who is not a staff member. We encourage our readers to send letters to the editor. If you want your voice heard, page 2 is your platform.*

Email us at [thelafayette@gmail.com](mailto:thelafayette@gmail.com).

# Ask the Dean of Sex: Is Being a Virgin an Option in College?

By Gene Kelly

*Associate Dean of Intercultural Development/Director of Gender and Sexuality Programs*

It. Is. Everywhere. Sex. Who's having it? With whom? Where? How often? "Wait, someone had sex in the community bathroom?" "Ugh, my roommate sexiled me again!" "I'm gonna hit that." "She did what?" "I was so drunk; I can't believe I did that." All of these are common phrases on many college campuses—not excluding Lafayette. It might seem like EVERYONE is having sex, but are they? Based on the pressure to "get some," is being a virgin an option in college?

Abstinence is an act or practice by which an individual freely chooses to withhold from engaging in certain behaviors. The decision to be abstinent from sex is individualized. For some, it is a religiously-based decision. Some faith backgrounds prohibit sexual activity outside of the confines of marriage and only

for the purposes of procreation. Others make the decision without deference to a religious tradition, but rather because they feel that sex is the ultimate form of intimacy and it should be shared with someone who they are deeply committed to.

Being a virgin in college isn't as unlikely as one might think. According to a report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Center for Health Statistics, virginity is on the rise. Researchers found that between 2006 and 2008, the percentage of 15- to 24-year-old men who had never had any form of sexual contact with another person was 27 percent (up from 22 percent in 2002) while the percentage of 15- to 24-year-old females who had never had any sex whatsoever was 29 percent (up 7 percent points from 22 percent in 2002).

The history of sexual and reproductive freedom has developed into today's hook-up friendly culture; freely allowing for no-strings-attached sex with different partners

or even limited friends with benefits arrangements. In no way are these arrangements or situations wrong, as long as the persons involved fully understand what the consequences are of their decisions. Something that is important to remember is that the same courtesies extended to those who choose to be sexually active should be extended to those who choose to remain a virgin until a time when they feel it is right to become active. Virgins are not weird or sexually-repressed. They have simply made different decisions than you may have. Respect that decision.

This question also grew out of a discussion with students. Next week's column will feature my answer to a question regarding sexual fetishism and its impact on relationships that was submitted by a member of the Lafayette community. If you'd like to submit a question, email [gsp@lafayette.edu](mailto:gsp@lafayette.edu) or drop it in the box outside 124 Farinon. Join in the conversation on Facebook visit [www.thelaf.com](http://www.thelaf.com).

# Ask the Dean of Sex: Fetishes and Relationships

By Gene Kelly

*Associate Dean of Intercultural  
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Hello faithful readers! I apologize about last week, but life took over and I didn't get my column done in time. On the other hand, what I'm happy to report is that I received my first submitted question that I'll respond to this week: "When a person discovers that their partner has a particular sexual fetish, what is the best way to be supportive and understanding while still balancing their own discomfort with the fetish?"

Well, my first suggestion is to consider the fetish itself. In all honesty, in my opinion, we each have our own things that may turn us on, some of which have been fetishized and others that have not. Random House defines fetish as: "any object or nongenital [sic] part of the body that causes a habitual erotic response or fixation." Take

for example, clothing. Some individuals have an intense response to shoes, boots, lace (e.g. lingerie), or even uniforms. Another example might be hair. Some people are really turned on by a natural looking pubic region while others might be by a lack of hair (or even the process of removing the hair). Both of these might be considered pretty "normal" in terms of sexuality. Other things like an interest in post-operative transsexuals or even significant age differences (e.g. sex between a legal adult and someone of a typical grandparent's age) might be considered deviant. I will argue that as time progresses, what was once considered deviant slowly becomes normalized.

If the fetish is something that you don't understand, seek to understand or explore within your own limits. Read up on it and be open in your communication with your partner in terms of why it turns the person on. If it is something that makes you slightly uncomfortable, but you might be willing to try to experience it with your partner in

a safe atmosphere (i.e. without coercion, pressure, or expectation to complete the act with disregard to your feelings), then consider trying it.

If the fetish is a complete deal-breaker—there is no way that you will ever consider engaging in the activity—you need to be honest with your partner. If your partner cannot fully enjoy sexual intimacy with you without engaging in the fetish, then perhaps it's time to consider that both of your needs are not being met and discuss ending the relationship or modifying the expectations that you have of the relationship. The biggest piece of advice I can give is to not judge anyone for what their particular interests may be. Every person deserves to explore their own sexuality.

Thanks to the person who submitted the question! If you'd like to contribute a question, email [gsp@lafayette.edu](mailto:gsp@lafayette.edu) or drop your question in the box in front of Farinon 124. You can also join the conversation at [www.thelaf.com](http://www.thelaf.com). Until next week!

# Ask the Dean of Sex: Women's Empowerment and the Sex Trade

By Gene Kelly

*Associate Dean of Intercultural  
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Reporting live from sunny Las Vegas—and it is a MUCH different world out here. By the time you're reading this, I'll have returned; however, I couldn't pass up the opportunity to speak a little bit about my observations while in "Sin City."

From my first night in town, as I walked along The Strip, I observed both men and women slapping cards in their hands to get the attention of passersby. As I looked over, they were handing out advertisements for prostitutes while wearing shirts with a phone number, guaranteeing that "girls" would be to you in 20 minutes. After about the 20<sup>th</sup> time (and hearing other such gems as "Titty, Titty, Bang, Bang"), the first thing I wanted to do was put a giant sign on my chest saying, "No! I'm gay!" just to make it stop. Interestingly enough, it took me a

little while to move past my feelings about the heterosexual assumption (card distributors were only handing out cards to men), and focus on my male privilege. In this sense, the structure of sexism was clearly at play. Once I did this, my mind wandered to all of the women who were making a part or all of their living in this profession.

Poof—my head started to hurt (have to love a little cognitive dissonance, eh?). I've directed *The Vagina Monologues* five times... I'm all about encouraging people to explore their own sexuality, especially those who have been made to feel that they don't have a sexuality, namely women. Break out *Fifty Shades of Grey*! Is working in the sex trade just another form of empowered sexuality?

The short answer is yes, it can be. As I've said numerous times to multiple parties, if you have made a conscious decision out of an empowered worldview and understand the potential risks and consequences to your actions, then by all means, go for it. If you have other options and are

choosing this one from among multiples, awesome. I might argue that there are some of these women out there; however, is it all, or even most, or even some? I doubt it. Sexism as a system of oppression silences individuals, blocks them from upward mobility, and flushes people out of the economic system (think Anne Hathaway in *Les Misérables*). When faced with a choice of a minimum wage job (\$7.25/hour = \$290 gross pay/week), or responding to an "out call" for \$100 an hour (or more), how long do you think it might take to bend one's own notions of right and wrong? In a place where women use their bodies as a commodity, how long do you think it takes for men (and women) to think of them as only tools for the buyers' pleasure?

*Agree? Disagree? Join the conversation at [thelaf.com](http://thelaf.com). If you're interested in submitting a question, email [gsp@lafayette.edu](mailto:gsp@lafayette.edu) or drop it in the box outside of Farinon 124. Don't forget, it's Women's History Month, so check out all of the awesome programs happening by visiting [gsp.lafayette.edu/whm](http://gsp.lafayette.edu/whm).*

# Ask the Dean of Sex: Expanding Sexuality

By Gene Kelly

*Associate Dean of Intercultural  
Development/Director of  
Gender and Sexuality Programs*

So, when we think of sexuality...we tend to focus on the first three letters of the word. Even my title gets shortened down out of convenience. There is tons more to sexuality than just the physicality behind it. As an example, if a person never engaged in sexual behavior, would they not have a sexuality?

When I speak about sexuality, I refer to it having four components: attraction, behavior, orientation, and identity. Some of these have a choice behind them, while others don't. I'll take each in turn and go into a little further detail.

Attraction is both physiological and psychological. We experience attraction throughout our day. We notice someone across the room, a person in class, someone we walk past. Something catches our eye—the way the person walks, his/her cologne or perfume, the person's smile. Sometimes it's when we hear them talk or when we interact with them. In any case, there's a reaction that happens when we are attracted to someone. We get physiological cues (e.g. palms sweating, butterflies in your stomach).

Behavior is different—behavior is the overt manifestation of our attraction (or sometimes lack thereof). Here is where there's some choice, right? We don't engage in sexual behaviors with every person we are attracted to. If so, we'd never get anything else done! Orientation is the complex set of

internal “wiring” that directs our attractions. There has been research completed that has attempted to answer what is different in lesbian and gay people when compared to heterosexuals and each is flawed. There is no specific genetic code or environmental condition that creates differing sexualities. Again, no choice here.

Lastly, we have identity. Identity is a) a sense of self and b) the person. In the end, sexuality is more than just sex. Hence the change in title to my column.

Do you agree? Disagree? Join the conversation by visiting [www.thelaf.com](http://www.thelaf.com). Submit your questions via email to [gsp@lafayette.edu](mailto:gsp@lafayette.edu) or at the Ask the Dean box outside of Farinon 124. These questions can be about anything! Don't hold back. Have a safe and wonderful break!

# Ask the Dean of Sex: Alcohol and hooking up

By Gene Kelly

*Associate Dean of Intercultural  
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Gender and Sexuality Programs*

Welcome back to campus everyone! I hope that each of you had a relaxing and fun Spring Break and that you're refreshed and ready to tackle the rest of the semester. This week's column comes out of a conversation I had with a colleague around the topics of alcohol and sex on campus. The discussion came down to a very important question: in terms of college sexual culture, does hooking-up happen as a secondary byproduct of drinking or are individuals intentionally drinking in order to hook-up?

The difference in the question, while minute, is very important in terms of examining sexual culture on campus. Many who consume alcohol cite its effects as a social lubricant (not that type of lubricant); it helps lower some inhibitions and allows for people to talk/connect. I certainly have said that I needed "to have a few" in order to get out on a dance floor or sing karaoke. Therefore, is it inevitable

that increased drinking will lead to greater numbers of random sexual encounters because people's inhibitions are lowered? Certainly.

The difference is intentionality. Ask yourself this question, have you or a friend said or thought that your intention was to hook-up with someone that evening, and thus, you decided to drink heavily in order to make sure it happened? While walking through the Farinon Atrium, I've overheard students say multiple times that they couldn't wait to blackout that evening in order to have sex. I'm honestly curious, what is the reasoning behind this? Is it a lack of self-esteem? Self-confidence in regard to sexual performance? A lack of comfort with sexual intimacy? A reason to explain away what, under different circumstances, might be considered a poor decision? That you think this is the only option you have?

If you're drinking because you're trying to use it as a way to feel more comfortable with yourself, your performance, or your decision, it might be important for you to take a step back and consider if you are ready to be sexually intimate. While there is immense pressure to be sexually active on campus, I

promise you that there are other options beside sex that you're trying to forget, including waiting until you are comfortable.

In my opinion, sex should be a pleasurable experience. In order for it to be pleasurable, there needs to be a connection between the physiological and psychological aspects of it. Our brains process physical sensations (e.g. sight, touch, smell) and give them perceptual meaning (e.g. the color of your partner's eyes, the way his or her lips feel against yours, the smell of his or her body wash or cologne). As you were reading those statements you may have even recalled fantastic memories of a particular encounter you had with someone. This is the immense power of our brains when it comes to sex and sexuality, which, since alcohol is a depressant, is decreased or extinguished when consuming alcohol. In the end, if you are drinking too much, how can you fully enjoy all what sexual intimacy can offer?

Agree? Disagree? Join the conversation at [thelaf.com](http://thelaf.com). If you're interested in submitting a question, email [gsp@lafayette.edu](mailto:gsp@lafayette.edu) or drop it in the box outside of Farinon 124.