

Notions abordées : « Lieux et formes de pouvoir - Espaces et échanges »

An interview with Lisa Wade, US, professor

Questions by Shelly De Vito

Sex and the States

Shelly: Seeing the American culture from the outside, we often hear about how there's no intercourse before marriage, especially in some very faith-based cultures in the United States... Basically, you've got people who have the strong faith belief that they're not going to do anything before marriage, anything sexual, they're not going to have intercourse, let's say, before marriage, but they can express themselves sexually in other forms, like...a limit to what you can do I suppose?

Professor Wade: Today, in America, the idea that you shouldn't have sex before marriage is pretty unusual actually. That's really a minority of people who still think that that's the way it should be, and even amongst those communities, that rule isn't as carefully followed as you might think. So, as a kind of example, we think of the 1950s in the US as being... as our most conservative time, but the 1950s was our highest rate of teen non-marital pregnancy in all of American history. But again, they had ways of getting them back into the fold, so, what would happen in 1950s was, if you got pregnant as a teenager, is the boy that got you pregnant would marry you and you would have a baby "prematurely". So as long as he married her then we could sort of wipe away the sin, and we could pretend like it wasn't really happening. So, I think that, in the United States today, as in the past, even though we have these lovely ideas, like saving sex for marriage, generally these rules are not followed.