

Pictures of Prom; Previous and Present
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The Senior Prom is an event that most high school graduates remember whether they looked forward to it for months or dreaded the entire concept. The prom has been significant throughout the years as a one-time dance to celebrate the end of one's high school career alongside those who shared the experience. Not only is this dance representative of leaving behind a part of one's life, but there is a complimentary aspect of embarking on the next portion of one's life. One's worldview and values are shaped by their environment and actors in their lives. At 17/18 years old, people have lived most of their lives primarily influenced by parents or guardians as well as the values and views of the community with which they grew up. As One graduates high school, they begin the journey towards finding their own worldview more based off experience and personal knowledge. Prom exemplifies the graduation onto finding one's own worldview. There are some aspects of this tradition that remain prominent after years of practice, while others have faded as social and political climates shift.

To exemplify this point, I chose to analyze an image of my mother in her prom dress in junction with an image of me in my own prom dress. These are both photographs taken the night of our senior prom, but the differences began before I even glanced at the pictures. To find my prom picture I went to Google Drive and made a search for 'April 2019'. To find my mother's I messaged her to send me what she had, and she returned with a few snaps of printed photos from her various proms. She sent me a total of four images from the three proms that she attended. I searched through somewhere near 100 photos from my one special night including professional photos, pictures my parents took, and selfies of my friends and I. Some of my

photos were posted on an array of social media sites, others sent to grandparents and relatives who care too much, and others filed away to be seen only on occasions such as now. My mother's photographs could serve only one use at a time, making them a bit more precious. This 'night to remember' as it is often referred to as was inherently captured for me to remember, with my mom holding few valuable memories. The importance of the prom stays strong, but there is less individual value to photographs.

In the image on the left my mother stands with her best friend outside of her friend's home. It is Superior, Nebraska in 1990 and it appears the sun is about to set. One can imagine that was the appeal of the setting for the pose. In the image on the right, I am sandwiched between a friend to the left, and to the right, my best friend and her girlfriend. We stand in a gallery of paintings in front of large old fashioned parlor windows that let the sunset in. It is 2019 in Lawrence, Kansas, almost exactly 30 years after the setting on the left. Both of our images feature exclusively women, but the relationship between the women is not the same. Neither me nor my mother have a date in the image, but my best friend is pictured next to me with her date. Lawrence is known for being a liberal, progressive dot in a sea of Kansas conservatism, so the composition of the relationships I was familiar with was quite broad. Superior had a population of a little over 2,000 at the time, featuring almost exclusively farm families and those in related industries. My mother grew up in a fairly progressive family considering the setting, but there is very little chance she would have been found at prom posing with a couple made of two women. The prom is still date-based with a tradition of attending alongside a romantic partner, but the definition of what the relationship looks like has adapted as the landscapes my mother grew up in evolved into the one I grew up in..

Prom is played out in tradition and media as a magical night that highlights one's high school experience. The dress one wears is meant to be perfect for them, so they turn heads upon entering the ballroom. The dresses my mother and I wore, perfect for us individually, could not be more different from each other. Me and the girls next to me are all in dresses with tighter bodices and skirts that flowed out and extended to the floor. My mother wears a sleeveless dress that forms to her figure but is not skintight. Along with the formal dresses, her and her friend have on these dramatic black gloves, with sheer black tights. The dress my mother wears stops just past her knees, evading the tradition of the floor length prom dress which has existed for decades and continues today. Aside from the length of the dress, the range of what is acceptable for women to wear to formal events such as prom has shifted since my mother graduated high school. The dresses my friends and I wear in the 2019 image are form fitting, emphasizing more of our bodies in a way that was out of the ordinary in 1989. The conservatism that stood strong as my mother graduated into adulthood took a multitude of forms, including what women were expected to wear and how much of their bodies they were 'allowed' to share. As the expectations of how women were to dress became more flexible, the "traditional prom dress" faded.

The world from 1989 to 2019 has changed dramatically socially and politically, and with that change, the events of importance in our culture have adapted. We still expect individuals to dress a certain way for the prom, but there are less strict 'rules' they must follow to be

accepted. We still value the romance of the dance, but we don't define romance as only man with woman. We hope to remember the night through photos, but we enlist less care into specific images as it is known there will be a plethora of content.