

THE CENTRAL Dissent

A JOURNAL OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY



Fall 2018

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University of Central Oklahoma
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The Central Dissent: A Journal of Gender and Sexuality

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FALL 2018

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THE CENTRAL DISSENT: A JOURNAL OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY

FALL 2018

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Foreword

In the year since the publication of the first issue of *Central Dissent*, New Plains Student Publishing has experienced a great restructure. Even amid this rebuilding period, our editorial staff has searched far and wide for the best works to bring to you—our readers and colleagues. The works of research, prose, poetry, and art displayed within truly represent the best *Dissent* has to offer.

As we at NPSP and *Central Dissent* move forward in this new era, we remember the mission we set at the very beginning: to seek and disseminate the best quality creative and academic works that explore the many nuances of gender and sexuality. Now, more than ever, it is important to uphold this principle. With cultural paradigms on the brink of great shifts, we must remember to be accurate with our facts and show compassion with how we use them. We must support each other as we navigate through such trying and divisive times. Most importantly, we must use our research, art, and creative writing to speak up amid the fracas.

We must dissent.

On behalf of the New Plains Student Publishing staff, and on behalf of UCO's Women's Research Center and BGLTQ+ Student Center, we proudly present to you the second issue of *Central Dissent*.

Jacob Jardel
Editor-in-Chief

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having sex was alluded to in the 2005 film, shows like *True Blood* (2008 – 2014) and *HTGAWM* (2015) followed suit, trying to push the notions and ideas about gay sex imposed on society by the media. But, just like the lesbian sex scenes, the gay sex scenes are often erroneous, hardly showing any sign of intimacy between the characters, or cutting the scene before it becomes too sexual.

By looking at the dichotomy of representation that lesbian and gay sex scenes received just within the last decade, it becomes clear that the LGBT+ community is very underrepresented and that new shows and movies are trying to bring this injustice into the spotlight. This paper is a discussion of the different representations Hollywood has given to society on the LGBT+ community. I want to begin by mentioning a few films: *Jennifer's Body*, *Carol*, *Brokeback Mountain*, and *Blue is the Warmest Color*; then I will move on to the television shows *True Blood* and *HTGAWM*. Results yielded from the research are as followed: *Carol* and *HTGAWM* provide the biggest breakthrough in LGBT+ representation, despite both sources buying into clichés that have become toxic to the LGBT+ community.

The lesbian sex scenes present in *Jennifer's Body*, *Carol*, and *Blue is the Warmest Color* provide a holistic look at how this particular sexuality is handled by the media. Each film has vastly different sex scenes. *Jennifer's Body* is the tamest of the group, while *Blue is the Warmest Color* is by far the NC-17 portrayal of lesbian sex. Before examining the sex scenes, it is important to note "that no matter how realistic or natural a representation is, it is never simply a window onto the world or a direct, unmediated reflection of something" (Richardson 57). Additionally, both female protagonists are shown having an intimate relationship with men in the beginning of their stories. Hollywood is so uncomfortable showing a genuinely true lesbian story that they have to add a man into the mix, on the chance that it will draw more people to see their film.

Jennifer's Body (2009) was given the review that it is "outlandishly gorgeous and unapologetically sexual" in *Slate* magazine (Stevens). While no sex actually happens between two women in this film, there is a very sexual and passionate kissing scene between the two female protagonists. The scene itself lasts just a little under a minute. Neither character displays any type of emotion, it is not sensual, and it was clearly done to indulge the male fantasies. Interestingly enough, men are shown playing a more domineering role in sex scenes. Typically, "analysis showed that men were usually the dominant actors, whereas females were submissive recipients of what was sometimes seen as abusive treatment" (Gunter 44). While there are no men present in this scene, it is clear that there is still a more dominant participant and a more submissive one. Jennifer is the dominant one in the scene, while Amanda Seyfried's character is the submissive;

ironically enough, Seyfried's character is named Needy. This representation of lesbian sexuality paints the picture that lesbians are very sexually driven, and that they may even seek to satiate their needs with their close girlfriends. Needy and Jennifer are both depicted as straight women, yet throughout the entire movie there is clearly sexual tension between the two.

This is vastly different in comparison to *Carol* (2015), one of Hollywood's most recent attempts to accurately portray lesbian sex scenes. The script is based on Patricia Highsmith's 1952 scandalous novel *The Price of Salt*. The sex scene in this film runs about two minutes and forty-seven seconds and features no scissoring or any other male perpetuated fantasies of lesbian sex, making this sex scene one of the most accurate portrayals of lesbian sex. The filmmakers did follow the stereotypical idea that, after having committed homosexual acts, one of the participants is to feel some sort of regret or remorse for what they have just done. In the end of the film, they shatter the biggest stereotype of LGBT+ film, being that any homosexual character dies at the end, and finish the film with the two of them presumably getting back together. With comments made by Allison Hope, popular writer at the *Huffington Post*, saying, "It felt like someone had taken a big sewing needle and popped all my birthday balloons" (Par. 6). This was only furthered by the extremely bizarre event that happened with Delta Airlines when they chose this adult rated film for their flights.

Delta Airlines put the film in their options for in-flight entertainment, for both international and domestic flights, but edited out all of the same-sex scenes. Not only was the movie "stripped of its mild romantic scenes," they also edited out any of the same-sex kissing scenes (Bitette Par. 2). This ordeal was later clarified that Delta was not given an option on which version of the film to receive, but being that they cannot show nudity on the flights, "they opt for the edited version" (Par. 6). This conservative idea drew the attention of the titular actor in the film, Cate Blanchett. As one of the main actresses, she was interviewed about the increased acceptance of gay rights in gay culture, "There are 70 countries in the world where homosexuality is illegal" Blanchett went on to say, "we're living in deeply conservative times" (Par. 6). What makes this whole situation baffling is the fact that Delta chose to provide the film as an option, when the film was rated R for strong sexuality throughout; however, this is not the first or biggest issue that lesbian films have come up against.

The most controversial film that attempts to portray lesbian sex is *Blue is the Warmest Color* (2013). This French film caused major backlash when it found its way to America, but it did cater to American audiences with its portrayal of women. This movie showcased the sex appeal that Hollywood typically pushes; Manohla Dargis said in his *New York Times* article titled, "Seeing You Seeing

Me," that, "it was her derrière that first caught my eye" (Par. 1). He said this in reference to the main character in the film, Adèle, when she has her first intimate moment in the film. What makes this film interesting is that it features a woman who has sexual relations with both male and female characters. However, the most notorious topic of the film is definitely the sex scene.

The sex scene clocks in at six and a half minutes long, much longer than the average sex scene that typically lasts seconds shy of a minute. Betsy Sharkey from the *LA Times* states in her article, "Review: Love at its finest in 'Blue is the Warmest Color', that the scene is "graphic" and "extensive" and is the ultimate reason the film received an NC-17 rating." (Par. 8). In fact, the sex scene was so graphic that the actresses were forced to wear prosthetic vaginas in order to prevent actual stimulation while filming. The film does a decent job of portraying lesbian sex, the scene is very sensual and emotional for both characters, to the point of even having them cuddle after the act. Shortly after the cuddling starts, the film cuts to the very next day where they attend a parade where Adèle is hypersensitive to the sights and sounds around her.

From the research compiled for this essay, on lesbian sex scenes, it was obvious that out of the LGBT+ members that are portrayed in film, lesbian sex scenes have the most representation. Due to the high fetishizing of girls having sex with girls, Hollywood capitalizes on this topic and runs with it. This can possibly be attributed to why movies with lesbian sex scenes are not, overall, horribly received. However, one of the more underrepresented groups of the LGBT+ community would be gay representation, and films featuring this group are usually very poorly received.

In addition to lesbian sex scenes, gay sex scene portrayals in *Brokeback Mountain*, *True Blood*, and *HTGAWM* provide very differing views and portrayals on gay sex. The three sex scenes range from mild to quite honest in terms of what happens during gay sex. Each of these portrayals is important for the education of our society so that they know that LGBT sex, while somewhat different from heterosexual sex, is not wrong or invalidated by any means; however, the most recent portrayal of gay sex, *HTGAWM*, is in the counterpart to Carol. The sex scenes in this show are phenomenal at breaking barriers, yet it is still not quite accurate.

Starting first with the only gay film used in the research, *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) is arguably the most controversial film being discussed in this research. Theaters refused to show the film, and were often very vocal about their censorship. In the film, the sex scene occurs with a muted pallet, low lighting and allusion rather than specific shots. Bermudez-Emmanuel describes the scene in their thesis, "The Social Impact of *Brokeback Mountain*: A

Reception Study," as a "graphic and sudden love scene" (1). The sex scene lasts for one minute; it was shown in extremely dark lighting, both men keep their clothes on and just partially remove their pants. Both partners do not engage in kissing or foreplay, and there is no climax present.

After the minute is up, the scene cuts to the next day where Ennis rides his horse alone in the mountain out of regret, while Jack stays behind. This is an example of Hollywood shaming the act of gay sex, by showing that if someone partakes in the act, they should be embarrassed or disgusted about it the next day. The guilt that Ennis feels could also be akin to his role during the act of sex: dominant. In the scene Jack is forced, by Ennis, into the submissive role, even though Jack is the one who initiated the sex. In addition to the guilt Jack feels, both of the men show no emotion at all, it is clear from the start that the intercourse is clearly just for satiating their sexual needs while they are away from females.

The biggest issue with *Brokeback Mountain* is that, while it showcases homosexual love, it still manages to push the heterosexual agenda. Both men end up going back home to the women they love, not mentioning a word about what they did at all. Therefore, the sexuality of the characters can accurately be described as fluid, but not gay. This causes problems because they are inadvertently stating that the idea of being gay is simply an experimental phase, not an actual sexual orientation. But, even with the gay sex scene portrayal in *Brokeback Mountain*, other cable network shows present the same problem.

Starting with the mildest portrayal, *True Blood* (2008-2014) on HBO has never been prude in terms of displaying the human act of sex. The scene in question occurs in season seven episode two, the parental section on the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) refers to the sex scene as, "two men kiss shirtless building into a sex scene that cuts away before things get sexual" (IMDb). The sex scene lasts for one minute and forty-five seconds and the dominant and submissive roles switch often throughout. The scene relies heavily on foreplay; for example, Eric, one of the men, makes a martini and shakes it in the motion of a hand job while staring at Jason, the other man. It is important to note, this sex scene happens after Jason feeds off Eric's blood, an act that intimately links drinker with provider.

The sex scene cuts away just as Jason is about to receive fellatio from Eric. Jason then wakes up in church realizing he had been having a dream and looks down to see that he has an erection and then shyly smiles about it. The fact that this entire sexual encounter happens during a dream sequence further distances the scene as being real. The *True Blood* portrayal of gay sex is very sexual, and the showrunners did a great job at making the act of gay sex something to not

be ashamed of. When Jason wakes up in church, he is happy he had the dream, but Jason has been very strictly a heterosexual male throughout the entire series. Scenes like this are allowing people to have honest conversations about LGBT+ sex scenes in the media.

Yet, Hollywood has made strides with more recent portrayals such as *HTGAWM*. A very recent controversial portrayal of gay sex in the media is Shonda Rhimes' production of *HTGAWM*. In season one, episode one portrays Connor Walsh as a very hypersexualized gay man who uses his libido to get information on the court cases he is working. In the show, sex is used as a treat that is only bestowed if someone gives Connor the information he needs to win a case. While this is not unduly great, Rhimes' is attempting to portray an honest and realistic relationship, regardless of sexuality, and it has resonated well within the LGBT+ community. This particular sex scene caused a ripple effect throughout social media, Hollywood, and families. For the first time in primetime television, the topic of "rimming" is displayed to the world. People with no understanding of the term were blatantly introduced to it, whether they wanted to be or not.

The infamous sex scene lasts for fifteen seconds and was very dark, to the point where all the audience could even see were their silhouettes. It is made well known that both partners in the scene are extremely sexually frustrated and are potentially just in it for releasing the frustration. Soon after the scene aired, people took to social media to slam the use of gay men in a show that plays at a time when families are supposed to be watching TV together. Twitter user @d_Ah25 says, "the gay sex scenes in scandal and how to get away with murder are too much. There is no point and they add nothing to the plot" (Twitter). In addition to how they felt about the sex scene; Shaw states in their article, "How to Get Away With Murder And Sex," the line Connor used to describe that particular sexual encounter: he says, "He did this thing to my ass that made my eyes water;" (qtd. in Shaw) to which Shaw says, "it was the post-coital line heard 'round the world" (Par. 1). *HTGAWM* is showcasing topics within the gay community and educating our heteronormative society on LGBT+ topics and issues. Additionally, what makes *HTGAWM* so interesting, is that it is a show featured on ABC, an on-air network.

It is phenomenal, if not shocking, that the one barrier breaking contender in the research is a show that is aired on a network television channel. By having the first major realistic portrayal set the tone for all others and be accomplished by a primetime network shows just how far Hollywood has progressed. While this is certainly not the first network show to push LGBT+ boundaries, readers should think back to *Glee* and its enormous success within

the LGBT+ community for its portrayal of a healthy homosexual relationship. Research shows that to start seeing change in film and television, it has to start from the bottom. Only by having small budget productions start the conversation for the major productions, do viewers begin to see a change in how we depict LGBT+ characters realistically. Hollywood has come a long way in accurately portraying gay and lesbian sex in the media.

The portrayals of sexualities that are not the standard for what Hollywood portrays is important to society as a whole. Richardson says in his book that it is important to have "non-normative sexualities in the media" (57). They go on to say that:

Many viewers may have little knowledge of, for example, gays and lesbians, to the extent that some may never have knowingly met a gay or lesbian identified person in their life. In this respect, the viewer's only encounter with sexual minorities may well be the re-presentation on the screen, which then stands for all gays and lesbians. (Richardson 60)

This directly ties back into the morality issue, because those in society who have never knowingly met anyone from the LGBT+ community only know the image they are given in the media. Thus, when those portrayals are wrong, it paints an inaccurate picture of this marginalized community, thereby causing members of this group to be stereotyped and generalized.

In conclusion, gay and lesbian sex scenes are constantly being produced inaccurately. Hollywood has made some strides to be better in their portrayals of LGBT+ sex scenes, and they have been major for such a small amount of time. With our culture being much more welcoming to new topics and issues, one day Hollywood will be able to accurately portray gay and lesbian sex scenes in the media without the fear of repercussions. This allows our community to be educated on LGBT+ and possibly eliminate the stigma that Hollywood has created for this community. With Hollywood's pathetic excuse for trying to accurately portray LGBT+ sex scenes, time and time again, they follow the same tropes they have used for years. Anybody who does not adhere to heteronormativity always dies at the end of the films. If they are not going to use the trope in which the LGBT+ character dies, they end up single, thereby showing that when someone identifies as anything other than LGBT+ they cannot find happiness.

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Fighting for the Right Not to Choose: The Emergence of the Modern Anti-Choice Movement

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On April 1, 1984, a newspaper reported the activity of the militant American anti-abortion movement. The article editorialized the sexual assault of a fifteen-year girl. The girl, her parents, and the child's doctor faced charges as codified by the Wisconsin Fetal Life Act. Under the legislation, the victim's parents and her physician faced life imprisonment. The victim received a prison sentence and probation for thirty years.¹ By the 1980s, the modern pro-life movement dominated the discourse of reproductive politics in the United States. Prior to this period, anti-choice activism remained a whisper among the shouts of the liberal voices during the 1960s. The contemporary anti-choice movement developed simultaneously with the Religious Right, with both movements objecting to the open displays of sexuality and reconfiguration of gender norms engendered by the Sexual Revolution. Most notably, however, the *Roe v. Wade* decision acted as a catalyst for the emergent pro-life movement and nascent Religious Right.

Wisconsin's law mirrored other legislation advanced by the Religious Right during the 1970s and into the 1980s. The Buckley-Proxmire Human Life Amendment, for example, established a Statewide Pregnancy Monitoring Board to investigate women who they believed attempted to self-abort or had pregnancies that ended in spontaneous abortions.² The Hyde Amendment, passed in 1976, further hastened anti-choice legislation. The Hyde Amendment gave state and local governments the authority to not pay for abortions and permitted hospitals to refuse to perform the procedure.³ The post-Hyde period witnessed an aggressive anti-choice movement. For instance, legislation mandated that women ask their husband's permission before obtaining an abortion, instituted twenty-four hour waiting periods, mandatory counseling, and required minors to obtain permission from their parents prior to having an

1 Anne Nicol Gaylor, *Abortion is a Blessing*, (New York: Psychological Dimensions, 1975), xi.

2 Ibid., xlii.

3 Gloria Feldt, *The War on Choice: Right Wing Attack on Women's Rights and How to Fight Back* (New York: Random House, 2004), 9-10.

abortion.⁴ The proliferation of pro-life activism was not unique to the twentieth century.

Changes in the patterns of immigration, the rise of first wave feminism, and the evolution of the medical field led to the first pro-life movement in the United States. Between 1850 and 1900, the anti-choice campaign burgeoned. Frustrated doctors spearheaded the movement, which developed around the idea that women were too ignorant to understand the immorality of abortion and through the doctor's claim of newfound "scientific evidence" concerning the procedure.⁵ Before the nineteenth century, no laws existed that regulated abortion prior to quickening. By 1900, however, laws forbidding the procedure existed in every state, permitting the procedure only when the mother's life was in jeopardy.⁶

Similar to the changes during the nineteenth century, post-WWII America witnessed social, political, and cultural transformations that significantly altered the sexual landscape. The gay liberation movement, the introduction of the birth control pill, and most prominently, *Roe v. Wade*, shaped society during the Cold War. Dismantling the stringent abortion laws of the mid-19th century, the *Roe* decision marked a monumental achievement for second wave feminists and an unfathomable defeat for the emergent Christian Right.⁷ The Women's Liberation Movement engendered a reconfiguration of gender roles. Rather than limiting women's role to mothering, second wave feminists viewed forced childbearing as an assault on women's reproductive autonomy and abortion as fundamental to full gender equality. Authored by the Boston Women's Health Collective, the feminist publication, *Our Bodies, Ourselves: A Book For Women By Women*, explained the essentiality of abortion and the birth control pill to women's liberation. Rather than constantly worrying about pregnancy, the introduction of the birth control pill and the legalization of abortion allowed women to enjoy sexual freedom. With these shifting sexual mores, women began to enter the workplace, challenging long-held notions of gender.⁸

Like the second wave feminists of the Cold War era, right-wing, evangelical women participated in political activism. Women remained largely excluded from the pro-life movement during the 1950s and 1960s, which consisted

4 Ibid.

5 Kristin Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 15-17.

6 Ibid.

7 Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*, 126.

8 Boston Women's Health Book Collective, *Our Bodies Ourselves: A Book For Women By Women* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), 13-14.

almost entirely of Catholic, male professional men.⁹ After the passage of *Roe v Wade*, however, women's activism in the anti-choice movement proliferated. The women who supported the growing pro-life movement shared demographic markers, including having three or more children, their education level was often not more than a high school diploma, and they remained in the home with their children.¹⁰ Since they remained largely isolated from the politics, many of the women remained unaware of the liberalized abortion laws throughout the country prior to *Roe*. For example, in 1970, New York repealed their abortion law, making it legal for women to obtain an abortion until twenty-four weeks of pregnancy.¹¹ One pro-life activist, declared that the *Roe* decision was so unexpected that it was like a "bolt out of blue."¹²

Anti-feminism also played a key role in the development of the anti-choice movement and the appeal of the Religious Right for many women. As noted by feminist author Andrea Dworkin, in her work *Right-Wing Women*, the ultra-right promised women shelter, safety, structured lives, and potentially love as long as they remained subordinate to their husbands and their other male counterparts.¹³ The transformation of sexual mores and reconfiguration of gender roles precipitated by the Sexual Revolution and the Women's Liberation Movement resulted in feelings of discontent among housewives and erupted into activism.

Rejecting the shifting social, cultural, and sexual transformation of the Sexual Revolution, evangelical Christians became a political force in the late 1970s. At a summit meeting in August 1980, thousands of evangelicals met in Dallas, Texas. Evangelical preachers assembled the gathering to mobilize their congregations, which built the political backing of their movement. At the meeting, prominent Christian leaders spoke of their antipathy of the shifting sexual mores during the 1960s. James Robison, a television evangelist from Fort Worth declared, "I'm sick and tired of hearing about all of the radicals and the perverts and the liberals and the leftists and the Communists coming out of the closet."¹⁴ As a new political force, the Religious Right utilized radio and television and established a considerable following. Significantly, in 1979, the Christian Broadcasting Network's viewers contributed \$54 million to the

network.¹⁵ Although ultra-conservatives continually attacked the *Roe* decision by passing intrusive anti-abortion legislation, the legalization of the procedure still allowed many women to lead healthier lives.

Prior to the legalization of abortion, women went through illegal channels to gain access to abortion. The doctors and sanitary conditions when seeking these back-alley abortions were frequently subpar, putting the women's life at risk. In a collection of oral histories, a woman, Kathleen, discussed her illegal abortion that she sought in 1969. As a Catholic woman from rural Missouri, Kathleen received inadequate sex education from both her family and high school. Additionally, her faith characterized birth control and sex before marriage as sinful. Because of this, when she became pregnant during her senior year of college, she decided to seek out an abortion, rather than getting married. In her narrative, she described the abortionist as "smelling of booze" and "very awkward."¹⁶ She also noted the unsanitary conditions of his office. Unlike many women who sought back alley terminations during the pre-*Roe* period, Kathleen survived the procedure.

Through both legislative and violent means, the *Roe v. Wade* decision remained under attack throughout the 1980s and into the present day. In *Our Bodies Ourselves*, the authors discussed how to improve abortion services to accommodate all women, not just wealthy ones. At the time the book's publication, several areas included no abortion services or were significantly inadequate. Women in areas without service were forced to go out of state for the procedure. Without money to travel, many women went without services and continued to seek out back alley abortionists.¹⁷ Anti-abortion activists committed violent attacks against abortion clinics during the post-*Roe* period. Rachele "Shelley" Shannon, for instance, committed arson in 1992, when she set an abortion clinic on fire.¹⁸ Right-wing politicians' continuous push for anti-abortion laws and violence against abortion clinics are both still major concerns for American women seeking abortions.¹⁹ The fight for abortion rights continues.

9 Luker, *Abortion and the Politics*, 139.

10 Ibid.

11 Boston Women's Collective, *Our Bodies*, 218.

12 Ibid., 141.

13 Andrea Dworkin, *Right-Wing Women* (Perigee Books, 1982), 22-23.

14 L.B Taylor, Jr., *The New Right* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1981), 12.

15 Ibid., 17.

16 Ellen Messer and Katheryn E. May, *An Oral History of the Illegal Abortion Era* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1988), 10-12.

17 Boston Women's Collective, *Our Bodies*, 220.

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Voicemail to God

Cynthia Wiley

University of Central Oklahoma

**God is not here to take your call right now.
Please leave your name and number.
And we will get back to you
As soon as possible.**

Hey, God! I've been trying to contact you for hours.

I started praying but the connection's been spotty and I'm sure every message before this one was only caught in snippets of Latin and hiccups. I always find myself back in a bathroom. Leaning my jaw on the white marble cools my flushed face and reminds me of what it felt like to be blessed by my mother's hands. But this is not my mother's hand and I cannot seem to find enough faith to pretend her touch was as soft as this stone. I can't seem to find faith anywhere in me. Why won't you pick up when I call? I hope I see you through my empty faith with your presence shining through so I can finally say, "Oh my God, God. You're not as white as I pictured." I have been questioning the congregation. I've been begging the priest for relief ten shots later, I can feel your hand on my forehead. When he put his hands on me, I screamed my prayer to heaven, but silence was the only member in attendance for the show. The struggle was the dance of the members who spoke in tongues and raised their hands in praise. His force was that of the preacher's palm pushing me firmly into the cool watered tub before I could hold my breath, water sputtering, swallowing until the Lord's Prayer was concluded with an "amen." When it was done he asked, "Where is your god now?"

I didn't respond because I didn't know the answer.

I still don't know the answer.

**I can't move on until you answer me
pick up the phone.
Where were you?**

Empty Handed

Cynthia Wiley

University of Central Oklahoma

Since I made my appearance in life, I have been covered in hands. I was welcomed by latex, then deposited onto the soft bank of my mother's palms. These too-early lined hands held me to breast and bade me drink, scream, and sleep. The rocking of her digits lingered and pulled me, unwillingly, and yet irresistibly into slumber. Her hands were my hands. Everything I reached, it was only for her grasp; everything I ate was in answer to her digging.

Over time, these hands hardened and changed, and I was left to massage and pull softness out of them. Fingers stubborn and thick, I was encouraged to milk and shake the watered-down remnants of her maternal presence into my cottonmouth. Her infinite fingers eventually shriveled, sending me in search of other tributaries. As I walked away, I looked back briefly to see her gently waving her mismatched hand at me, hair donning the left hand more generously than the right. The large hand reached and pulled her waving limb down, pinning it to her side.

There are many hands in the world. Some hands are soft, lingering for a week and then falling off like the fall leaves, moving like seasons to different towns, clinging to different people. Some hands rest on shoulders—never moving beyond cloth—and regularly offer food. I kissed these hands goodbye and understood that all hands need to detach and move on when their time comes. I thought of them often. At the age of sixteen, I was sporting two and a half sets of hands. My sister's hands stayed looped on my belt, my mother's left hand was locked in my hair, and my own hands swung from wrinkled sweatshirt sleeves.

Life is easier with their guidance. At the supermarket, I know I'm always getting the best deal when my mother's hands tighten around my ear, and my sister's hand raps in agreement. My sister likes to pick out my outfits. Her hands yank denim over thighs, making me jump in time to shimmy blue over white. My mother's fingers turn my chin to and fro, modeling my profile in the mirror; both hands throw a thumbs-up

my way. Every day existed just like this. For a brief time, it was good.

One man was the beginning of the end. He described the first day he laid eyes on me as a rainy Tuesday in the middle of drought. He said I was watered enough to face his rampant fire without being burned, my soaked state allowing me to get close to this flame. He was handsome. I didn't think much of it the first time he stopped to compliment my hair, taking a strand into his hands and claiming we were not so different. I ignored the cautionary tug of my mother's hand on my roots and pushed her deep into my back pocket.

The one peculiar thing about this man was his lack of supporting hands. He walked like no other; two hands swinging from sides, making choices all on his own. I envied him in that way, but I couldn't help but feel sad. I couldn't imagine walking so alone. I wrapped my arms around his broad shoulders as grey hair tickled my cheek. When I pulled back, his hands locked together and his face pressed against my neck. His skin branded my hips. No pulling could separate our welded form. Tearing at blood and skin, my sister and mother were removed from me and collected by him. He force-fed me his being, running spoon over mouth corners to catch all parts; a ringing commandment to chew, chew, swallow. His hands snaked down my throat, made a nest, and napped within me. That day, they detached from him and clung onto me.

I am the new home of these unfamiliar appendages. Past my threshold sleeps a pair of hands too big for my stomach and indigestible as lead. Normally, they slumber unbothered, walking only to slither up and press index against lips. The hands do not like it when I speak. They like it less when I fuck. Hands that used to caress and pass like old friends are barred at the door, pushed out by rough knuckles and a gold-ringed finger. These passing friends pet my hair and tell me they understand, but they cringe and step back when I reach to touch them with my new hands. I show them the scars of our surgical joining and they excuse themselves to a restroom. I know they won't come back. Sometimes you can't come back.

Sexual Abuse Against Black Males and the Effect on Their Masculinity

Jordan Broiles

University of Central Oklahoma

Abstract

This research explored the lived experiences of collegiate Black and multiracial (Black being one of the races) males who have been sexually abused in the past and the effect on their masculinity. In this study, sexual abuse is self-defined as a minimum of one unwanted sexual encounter by the force of the perpetrator. The context of masculinity is defined by Harper (2004), who conceptualized masculinity among Black male achievers on six predominantly white campuses. Participants in Harper's study defined masculinity within the structure of hegemonic gender norms, including dating and pursuing romantic (oftentimes sexual) relationships with women, any type of athletic activity (organized sports, individual exercise, and bodybuilding), competition through sports and video games, and accumulation and showing off of material possessions. In this mixed method study, Intersectionality and Critical Race Theories were used as theoretical frameworks within which to understand the relationship between past sexual abuse of Black male college students and their masculinity. Since there is limited empirical research that discusses sexually-abused Black or multiracial male college students, this study focused solely on providing insight about those experiences and how they relate to Black male masculinity.

Introduction

Researchers have found that one in six men in the United States has been sexually abused before the age of 18 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005). The rates are significantly higher for Black men affected by systemic poverty, broken homes, high unemployment rates, and sociological problems (Foston, 2003). Biased mass media has framed victims of sexual abuse as white and female, which has led to the sexual abuse of Black boys simply not being acknowledged. The experience of Black male victims of child sexual abuse has not been seen as traumatic because of the historic stereotype that Black men are hypermasculine and have to display this certain image of masculinity. Portrayals of Black men as deviant, corrupt, and ill-behaved are largely based on comparison with hegemonic white ideology (McClure, 2006). Black male voices continue to be negated in conversations about sexual abuse, resulting in minimal services

provided for the victims, which can also lead to the development of toxic emotional and sexual coping habits (Maikovich, Koenen, & Jaffee, 2009).

In this research, I explore the lived experiences of collegiate Black and multiracial (Black being one of the races) males who have been sexually abused in the past to determine if it had an effect on their masculinity. Sexual abuse is self-defined as a minimum of one unwanted sexual encounter by the force of the perpetrator. The context of college student masculinity is defined by Harper's (2004) study, in which he conceptualized masculinity among Black male achievers on six predominantly white campuses. Participants in Harper's study define masculinity within the structure of hegemonic gender norms such as dating and pursuing romantic (oftentimes sexual) relationships with women, any type of athletic activity (organized sports, individual exercise, and bodybuilding), competition through sports and video games, and accumulation and showing off of material possessions. In this mixed method study, the use of Intersectionality and Critical Race Theories will be used as the integral framework to capture the relationship between past sexual abuse of Black male college students and their sense of masculinity. Since there is limited empirical research, this study focuses solely on providing insight about those experiences and how they relate to Black male masculinity.

The Black Male Body

Historically, the Black male body has been a tool manipulated by a white dominant culture also fixated on both desire and horror. Winthrop Jordan notes the conflicting messages embraced by Anglo-American (U.S. and British) culture as it sought to control and circumscribe the bodies of enslaved men and women—on the one hand voicing repulsion for Africans and framing them as beastly, ugly, and unappealing, while on the other hand viewing them as hypersexual. The Anglo-American culture had a long-standing view of Black men as “particularly virile, promiscuous, and lusty” (Winthrop, 1968). Through the institution of slavery, the slave owner utilized Black male bodies to control Black existence, which led to brutally torturing, raping, and enslaving Black bodies. For Black men, their form of punishment for their resistance to their oppressive, racist slave owner was lynching. Oftentimes the punishment took the form of sexual relations with their slave master (Foster, 2011). These acts were used to dehumanize and emasculate the Black male body. So much of the ritual sexualized torture of the Black body indicates the intensity of both white hatred of Black bodies and their longing to consume those bodies as a symbolic way of asserting white hegemony (hooks, 2004). When slavery was abolished in 1865, the racist, sexist white culture had to figure out ways that they could continue its

control over Black existence. Through many different systematic structures, whites continued to create legal loopholes that executed slavery tactics.

The Jim Crow Laws, which regulated social, economic, and political relationships between Whites and Blacks, were passed principally to subordinate blacks and to enforce rules favored by dominant whites on non-conformists of both races (Woodward, 1974). Blacks were not allowed to work certain jobs and were paid at lower rates than their white counterparts. Blacks were not allowed to ride in the same car as their white counterparts. A prominent court case, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, set a legal precedent by imposing the doctrine of "separate but equal," in which Blacks were not allowed to attend the same school system as their white counterparts. This was later turned over by the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which concluded that separate was not equal.

Throughout history, Black boys have been targeted by law enforcement for petty crimes, that land them in prison. The prison system is arguably another form of slavery. Law enforcement obediently and uncritically follows the protocol of a system already engineered to target, exploit, and criminalize poor, Black, brown, queer, trans, and immigrant people. Black males, such as Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and Philando Castillo, all died at the hands of police officers, who were all acquitted of wrongdoing. Media reports of these incidents are affecting the social interactions of Black men who are taught to fear law enforcement personnel. "Fuck The Police" by N.W.A. (1988) was a prime example of Black males rising up against police brutality and voicing their thoughts through music:

Fuck the police! Comin' straight from the underground

A young n**** got it bad 'cause I'm brown

And not the other color, so police think

They have the authority to kill a minority

Fuck that shit, 'cause I ain't the one

For a punk motherfucker with a badge and a gun. (1988)

In *Invisible Man, Got the Whole World Watching* (2015), Mychal Denzel Smith discusses how Black males in this white dominant society are often invisible unless something tragic happens (i.e., armed robbery or killing of an unarmed black man). The livelihood of Black men is defined by a hashtag or prison system. According to the NAACP Criminal Justice Fact Sheet (n.d.), Blacks and Hispanics make up approximately 32% of the US population, and they comprised 56% of all incarcerated people in 2015. The non-white body is rendered immaterial even if innocent. Many times in the prison system, male inmates, regardless of race, are raped. A United States

Department of Justice report titled "Sexual Victimization in Prisons and Jails Reported by Inmates" states that "In 2011–12, an estimated 4.0% of state and federal prison inmates and 3.2% of jail inmates reported experiencing one or more incidents of sexual victimization by another inmate or facility staff in the past 12 months or since admission to the facility, if less than 12 months" (Beck, A., Berzofsky, M., Caspar, R., & Krebs, C., 2013, p. 8).

During the Reconstruction Era, Black male sexuality became a major theme in white Southern politics, which led to Black males being objectified (Painter, 1991). Objectification occurs when individuals focus on a person's physical characteristics (e.g., attractiveness) and neglect a person's psychological characteristics (e.g., intelligence). This reflects the perception of people as objects, merely physical bodies, rather than as complete persons (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Furthermore, the White male understood that sexuality was being seen as prominent within the Black male by women. Sexuality has become the ultimate quest for freedom pursued by Black males in a world that denies Black males access to other forms of liberating power (hooks, 2004). Women, in particular White women, entertained a fantasy of having sex with a Black man. Compared to White men, Black men became more commonly falsely accused for the rape of White women. Sexual relationships between Black men and white women were being frowned upon partly because these relationships threatened the white man's power (Hodes, 2014). *The State of Connecticut v. Joseph Spell* is a famous case about a Black man named Joseph Spell and his relations with a White woman. In this case, Joseph Spell spoke to his employer's wife about getting money to help take care of his sick mother. In the midst of getting the money, there was mutual consensual interest to pursue a discreet affair. When on the verge of getting caught, the White woman cried out "rape," which landed Joseph Spell in prison. Joseph Spell was found not guilty and freed. This case is one of the many instances of Black men being imprisoned for having sexual relations with White women. Within this racist, sexist Reconstruction Era, White men were acted violently or systematically oppressed Black males because of their own inadequacy. Because society has deemed Black males hypersexual, the sexual abuse of Black boys is simply not acknowledged, or when it is acknowledged, the presumption is that it has not been traumatic (hooks, 2004).

Heteronormativity

Biased mass media has focused on the stories of upper middle class and wealthy White women and their experiences with sexual harassment, sexual violence, misogyny, and rape. The metanarrative of sexual abuse is generally seen through a heteronormative lens. Heteronormativity is the belief that

individuals should conform to the social norm of heterosexual cisgender male or cisgender female (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). Implicit gender norms are learned from family, peers, media, schools, etc. Heteronormativity has positioned women, especially white women, as vulnerable and fragile. The White woman's reality is visible, acknowledged, and legitimized because of her privilege. However, women have been in the position of inferiority or second-class citizenship in relation to men, because of the concept of patriarchy. The word patriarchy means the rule of the father or the "patriarch," and originally it was used to describe a specific type of "male-dominated family"—the large household of the patriarch, which included women, junior men, children, slaves, and domestic servants all under the rule of this dominant male. Now it is used more generally "to refer to male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and to characterize a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways" (Bhasin, 2004). Patriarchy is embedded within social, legal, economic, political, and cultural systems across the world. Women have been placed within the framework of gender norms that only allow them to perform work that benefited men, slowing their own advancement and development. In the context of heteronormativity, there is an unconscious bias and assumption that sexual abuse only happens to women.

#MeTooMovement

With regard to addressing sexual abuse in America, one of the most recent and prevalent revolutions is the #MeTooMovement, which aimed to address sexual assault and harassment in the workplace. This movement was organized by Tarana Burke, who is a Black civil rights activist from the Bronx, New York. The #MeTooMovement stemmed from many women speaking out about being sexually abused by American film producer Harvey Weinstein. The hashtag "MeToo" began manifesting itself across all social platforms. Many women were creating content discussing their experiences with being sexually assaulted and/or sexually abused. Support groups were being formed online and offline within communities. Policies were being formed within the workplace. Businesses were beginning to host speakers to address the topic within the office. Title IX, across all college campuses, began to reexamine their role in being a resource for victims.

However, there is a group that is not being discussed in the context of the #MeTooMovement. Questions have been raised about how male survivors of sexual abuse fit into the movement. For some, the movement can also be looked at as #WhatAboutMe. Male survivors who have also created content about their experiences have received some backlash from women and mass media. For example, actor and former football player Terry Crews spoke out

about being sexually assaulted by a "high-level Hollywood producer," but did not proceed to expose what happened out of the fear of being blackballed from the entertainment business. Terry Crews's actions are similar to what most victims do after the experience: they cope with the experience within themselves, which creates internal and external issues. In his NBC interview, Terry explained that if he retaliated with anger or violence he would be seen as a stereotypical Black man. With Terry weighing over 200 pounds and being dark-skinned, the biased mass media would have defamed his image within the entertainment business while resorting to racist tactics. What separated Terry Crews from the women of the #MeTooMovement is that his voice was being negated because he was a male. Terry posted a series of tweets explaining his encounter with sexual assault and showed that victims can come in different size, gender, and color. While women embraced each other's stories as they grieved publicly across social media and television commentary, Terry was not only questioned about his sexuality, but also his manhood. Daytime talk show host Wendy Williams stated that Terry was "just talking," and big-time entrepreneur Russell Simmons stated that "Terry should let his abuser get a pass." Twitter participants have labeled Terry as "gay" for coming forward. My analysis is that everything Terry Crews experienced after coming forward about his encounter with sexual assault is one of the main reasons why Black men do not report on being sexually abused. This leads to fewer conversations, support groups, and resources for victims.

Long-Term Effects

Very little research has analyzed the differential long-term effects on males who have been sexually abused as children by males versus by females. The negative effects of child sexual abuse on men are well documented. Among them are such psychological difficulties as conduct disorders, personality disorders, suicidal ideation, depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, intense difficulty expressing emotions, and relationship challenges (Alaggia & Millington, 2008). The "norm" of being a male is violated when that male is placed into a submissive position, whether the perpetrator of the sexual abuse is male or female. Men have been taught throughout history to perpetuate patriarchy and to be the dominator in any form of relationship. When being sexually abused, the male victim is powerless, contradicting what society/history states that a man should be. This experience can lead to the overindulgence of hyper-masculinity and adds another factor to the development of toxic emotional and sexual coping habits. Current research suggests that negative effects are more likely when the abuse is perpetrated by someone to whom the victim is emotionally

close, for example, family members, friends, mentors, etc. (Finkelhor, 1984).

Sexual abuse by a male perpetrator may produce two contrary effects on male victims later in their emotional relationships. First, being sexually abused as a male by a male, creates conflicting internal issues in which the victims adopt the mindset of traditional masculine culture: that the male is dominant in the sexual relationships. Male sexual abuse victims may become more aggressive and dominant in their relationships with their partners. Secondly, being sexually abused as a male by a male allows the victim to develop empathy for people who have also been victims, which is predominantly seen as women. Because of this, male victims may tend to care for and nurture their female partners.

Thus, it is probable that same-sex sexual abuse perpetrated by a male has long-term effects on the male victim's sexual identity, gender identity, and masculinity. Reactions to same-sex sexual abuse can include behaviors and thoughts that adhere to homophobia. Although there is no evidence of an association between being gay and being a sex offender, the idea that most sexual abuse of males is perpetrated by gay men is widespread (O'Donohue & Geer, 1992). There is very little research on the correlation between child sexual abuse and the male survivors' adult sexual orientation. However, experts in human sexuality do not believe that sexual abuse or premature sexual experiences play a significant role. There is no good evidence that someone can "make" another person homosexual or heterosexual. Sexual orientation is a complex issue and there is no single answer or theory that explains why someone identifies himself as homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual (Myths & Facts About Male Sexual Abuse and Assault, n.d.). Furthermore, same-sex male sexual abuse victims may fear that they were selected because they were seen as homosexual by the perpetrator. When the sexual perpetrator is a male, the boy has no script of sexual coolness that would allow him to process openly this experience, so he must internalize and hide his shame and his pain (hooks, 2004).

The sexual abuse of males perpetrated by a female violates the traditional gender norms because the female is now acting in the dominant role and the male is acting in the submissive role. Women are generally seen as a nurturing and play a prominent role in the daily intimate care of adolescents where sexual abuse can go unnoticed, making it difficult to assess the abuse of males by females (Duncan & Williams, 1998). I am curious to understand the driving factors that lead women to sexually abuse boys. Was she coerced? Had she been sexually abused herself, which led to her trying to regain power that was lost? Is engaging in sexual acts with

women, especially older women, evidence that a boy is a "real man"? A result might be, as a man, to overcompensate for power, which might lead to a high level of physical and sexual violence in intimate relationships.

Theoretical Framework

Crenshaw's (1989) Intersectionality Theory and Lynn, Yosso, Solórzano, and Parker's (2002) Critical Race Theory were used as the integral framework to capture the relationship between past sexual abuse against Black males and the effect on their masculinity.

Intersectionality is a framework designed to explore the dynamic between co-existing identities (e.g., women, Black) and connected systems of oppression (e.g., patriarchy, White supremacy). For this study, I looked specifically at 15 collegiate Black male victims of sexual abuse. Intersectionality, alongside Critical Race theory, was the foundation to the development of this study, as I wanted to explore how Black male sexual abuse survivors conceptualize their idea of masculinity. Through the lens of Critical Race Theory, I utilized personal stories/narratives to provide a lens for these victims to counter the narrative that sexual abuse against Black males does not affect their masculinity. Moreover, I sought to understand the ways in which these men cope with their experiences of being Black and a survivor of sexual abuse. Lastly, these two particular frameworks align with my research interest in redefining the Black male narrative by providing insight into those experiences and how they can also factor in the holistic picture of how Black males form their idea of masculinity. This study was guided by the following research question: does experiencing sexual abuse have an effect on the masculinity of Black college males?

Research Design and Methods

Hermeneutic phenomenological methods were used to unpack Black male sexual abuse survivor experiences and their effect on the survivors' sense of their masculinity. Phenomenology is the study of phenomena, nature, and meanings. It focuses on the way things appear to us through experience or in our consciousness where the phenomenological research aims to provide a rich, textured description of lived experience (Finlay, 2009). Hermeneutic phenomenology is focused on the subjective experience of individuals and groups. It is an attempt to unveil the world as experienced by the subject through their life stories (Kafle, 2011). A hermeneutic phenomenological approach was useful, as it allowed me, through the participants' accounts of their own subjective experiences, to uncover what it's like to be a Black male sexual abuse survivor and to examine the effects this identity has on their masculinity.

Participants

Persons were eligible for the study who met the following criteria:

- (1) self-identify as a Black or Multiracial (Black being one of the races) male, (2) over 18 years old, (3) attending any college or university, and (4) experienced sexual abuse as a child—self-defined as a minimum of one unwanted sexual encounter by the force of the perpetrator.

Surveys were distributed via email to Black and multiracial male students at a moderate-sized public university in the midwest. I also utilize social media as another tactic to invite participants. I posted the survey in multiple social groups, such as BLKSAP (Black Student Affairs Professionals), Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Future Student Affairs Professionals, etc. Fifteen men participated in the survey.

Data Collection Procedures

Each of the 15 participants completed a 20-question survey, which took, at the minimum, 15 minutes. From that group, I sampled two respondents who agreed to participate in an interview lasting between 30 and 60 minutes. Pseudonyms are used for all interviewees. Desmond, age 21, bi-sexual, and perpetrator was male. Trey, age 20, bi-sexual, and perpetrator was male. A semi-structured interview technique was used in the face-to-face interview sessions, which simultaneously permitted data collection and authentic participant reflection (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Additionally, each interview was recorded using an electronic recording device and was later professionally transcribed. The interviews were beneficial because they provided a safe space for the men to deconstruct their masculinity. Although standard questions and interview protocol were used in the interviews, discussions often became conversational, thus allowing the participants to reflect on the experiences and relationships they deemed most significant. The survey and interview questions refrained from addressing the details of the abuse event, but were directed toward the effect that it has had on the person's masculinity as defined in the Harper (2004) study.

In contemplating my approach to examining the lived experiences of my participants, I wanted to also take a non-traditional approach to my qualitative inquiry by extracting an aspect of Shaun McNiff's (1998) art-based research method. Art-based research can be defined as the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people they involve in their studies. I sampled an additional two participants and encouraged them to share their experiences through their art. Paul, age 24, bi-sexual,

and perpetrator was male. Kendall, age 21, bi-sexual, and perpetrator was male. Both participants chose poetry as their art expression.

Researcher Positionality

This study and my approach to researching Black male sexual abuse survivors is a direct result of my lived experience. As a Black male collegiate scholar who experienced sexual abuse as a child, I too struggled with defining my masculinity. I wrestled with, and was very combative with, the social norm of what society has placed on me and the idea that I am abnormal. With so many feelings of doubt, fear, isolation, and anxiety, I rationalized that my story had no place in the mainstream narrative. I became a slave to my own mental suffering, with an epistemology of death that God had made a mistake with me. I could not imagine how my identity as a Black, cisgender, bisexual, hearing impaired, child sexual abuse survivor could fit into the mold of mainstream society. As I conceptualized this research, I wanted to better understand how other Black men who have had similar experience of child sexual abuse navigate the spaces of this world. Thus, through the lens of the 15 men, I sought to create a narrative that could provide insight about our experiences and how they relate to our idea of masculinity.

Data Analysis

Qualtrics survey software was used to gather all survey responses and produce the quantitative analysis. Moustakas's (1994) approach was used to analyze the data collected from the interviews and poetry. I refrained from bracketing my impressions and assumptions as I interpret the participants' surveys and transcripts. Bracketing is a methodological device of phenomenological inquiry that requires deliberate putting aside of one's own belief about the phenomenon under investigation or what one already knows about the subject prior to and throughout the phenomenological investigation (Carpenter, 2007). After interpreting the data, I looked for significant statements that explored how these men conceptualize their masculinity. These statements were identified and grouped into themes. They explore how the men were grappling with their identity and formation of their understanding of masculinity.

Limitations

Through the completion of this research, I ran into a two limitations. First, as a researcher in the University of Central Oklahoma Ronald E. McNair program, I was given a short time frame to conduct and complete my research. Research had to be complete during the Summer of 2018; therefore, it was challenging for me to reach out to students via school emails, which led to a lower participation rate.

I'm a firm believer in the quote, "you can rush the writing, but you can't rush the story." This leads into my second limitation, which revolves around the sensitivity of my research topic. My topic is asking Black men to disclose personal information that many haven't disclosed within themselves. Trust has to be mutually shared in order for me to create a space where they feel comfortable enough to disclose that information.

Despite these two limitations, I was able to find 15 courageous Black men to provide insights into a narrative that is not discussed in the mainstream media.

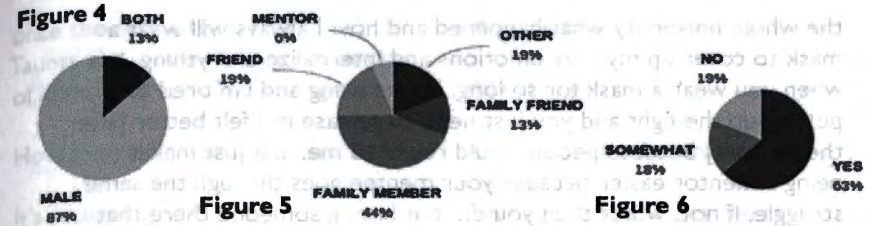
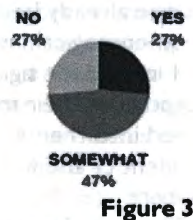
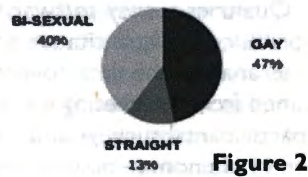
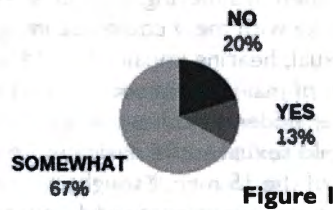
Findings

My research question (Does experiencing sexual abuse as children have an effect on the masculinity of Black college males?) is addressed in Figure 1; 80% participants answered "yes" or "somewhat."

The following questions deconstruct the definition of masculinity as defined by Harper (2004). Figure 2 shows the breakdown of how the participants identified their sexual orientation. Roughly 13% identified as straight, 40% bi-sexual, and 47% gay. Figure 3 indicates 27% of participants said that being sexually abused had an effect on their sexual orientation (47% said "somewhat")

(See Figure 3). The sexual abusers were identified as 87% male and 13% both male and female, as indicated in Figure 4. In Figure 5, we see that almost half of the abusers (43%) were family members; other reported identities were friend (19%), family friend (13%), and other (19%). When respondents were asked if they felt powerless due to being sexual abused, 47% said "yes," 14% "somewhat," and 40% "no" (see Figure 6).

In the interviews with two participants, I was able to come to a better understanding of the survey data. In the beginning of the interviews, both Desmond and Trey struggled with defining masculinity; however, they mentioned keywords and phrases such as "being strong," "confident," and "stand [sic] on his (or my) his own two feet." When asked if their definition of masculinity altered after being sexually abused, they both



answered yes, but it affected them in different ways. Desmond stated:

I see myself as strong but not as strong as I want to be. I'm able to stand on my own, but having that sense of strong mindset has kinda dwindled due to the fact of that situation.

Trey stated:

I feel like it made me more of a dominant masculine male.

I then asked if he felt he had to assert his dominance. He responded:

Yeah, because I didn't [during the time of the situation]. It made me feel like I don't want to be in that situation again.

Both identified as bi-sexual, and both felt that being sexually abused had an effect on that. Both mentioned how they struggle with being confused about their sexual orientation. Both agreed to questioning a higher being (power), trying to figure out why things happened the way they did.

Both identified their sexual abuser as a male and expressed that he was a close friend and family friend. Trey explained how hurt he was knowing that his abuser was a male. He stated:

It hurt because the way I grew up. I grew up in a Christian household and with me being a male, it is frowned upon and so how is he willing to [do] something like that. The fact that it happened and it was a family friend; by day, they was like "that's that gay shit" and then all of the sudden there was a different story.

Then he expressed:

I feel like if it was a female, I wouldn't be so ashamed to open up about it, but since it's a dude, "yeah I'm going to keep my mouth closed about this one" because then it's all these people saying "you wanted this to happen" or "it's your fault that you allowed it to happen."

However, when discussing coping mechanisms, Trey discussed how he used a pageant platform to share his story, which created a sense of liberation for him. He stated:

So I was running for a pageant (which I won) to represent a prestigious role at my university. In that pageant, I basically told

the whole university what happened and how I always will wear a mask to cover up my true emotions and internalize everything, but when you wear a mask for so long, it gets tiring and I'm tired of putting up the fight and you just need to release it. I felt better [after the pageant] because people could relate to me. ... it just makes being a mentor easier because your mentee goes through the same struggle, if not, worst then you do, but having someone there that can relate to you and having open and honest conversation was very refreshing. It was very important for me to open up and tell my story.

Desmond had a different approach to coping with being sexually abused. He explained how he goes about the situation—staying positive and refrains from thinking about it:

When I think of things or even when I see the person, I try not to think about it. I just try to keep going about my day or I think positive because that was kind of a bad experience.

I have to mention that this interview was the first time

Desmond had actually opened up about his experience.

Encouraging two other participants, Paul and Kendall, to utilize their artistic expression allowed for me to also tackle a non-traditional approach to addressing the topic. Both Paul and Kendall had some similar reflections to what Desmond and Trey stated during their interviews.

Paul and Kendall each wrote some poetry to express how they feel about their experience with being sexually abused.

The Forgotten Shore Paul, 24

It rushes in suddenly,
but remains still.
Refreshing to the wandering soul.
Almost as if it calls for an awakening.
Pulls at the turmoil and
longs for tranquility.
But how can there be peace?
How can you awaken
something... someone who
sleep has evaded for so long?

drowning
When did you go to sleep?
There it goes again rushing in.
This time broken and disturbed.
Pulling at the wanderer.
As if to say "come into me."
It beckons for interaction.
Reflects something

once thought lost.
Taunts the idea of fluidity, the sense
of identity as it pulls away again.

How long have you been lost?

It's returning now,
higher than the last time.
Creates shade from the light.
Darkness has become comfortable.
It resonates a sanctuary.
Hides the truth of what happened,
how it got so out of hand.
Shrouds the hurt, guilt,
shame and defeat.

It crashes in,
the light returns.
In that brief moment of contact,
lost is found.

It draws away with the soul.

Why did you surrender?

There's a beauty in drowning.
The will to not let the water in,
to keep your mouth
closed until it hurts.
Right up until you fear
your head will explode.
Then you open up.
The pain stops.
Peace comes.

Why do you deny yourself?

The soul drifts deeper.
Submerged into still movement.

Baptized!

breathing

Can you hear the alarm?

The cool liquid kisses the skin.
Awakens the subconscious
just enough to fight.
What are you afraid of?
Scratching and clawing to
reach the surface.
The anchor continues to
weigh down the soul.
With each struggle syphoning energy.
It calls out.
Begs "let go".
Let the pain, betrayal, faults
and mistakes go.
Your soul....You
Lost in self-pity.

Who hurt you?

The pain runs deep.
Unable to forgive.
Unwilling to move forward.
You cut yourself.
Constantly looking for
others to blame.
You reflect yourself.
You are the master of your
fate, the captain of your soul.
But you've let someone
drive your vessel.
Navigate you over the edge.
You don't recognize yourself anymore.

Who are you?

been in a space where he feels comfortable to express his experience. His expressed coping mechanism of continuing to avoid thinking of his experience is going to continue to affect his emotional well-being.

When looking into mainstream media, the #MeTooMovement is considered a space to address sexual abuse. When posed with the question of whether they identify with the movement, both interviewees expressed that they do. However, they talked about the movement being seen through a one-fold lens. These are real issues happening to Black men. They express how we as a society need to deconstruct anti-Blackness and homophobic subconscious thoughts and actions so there can be a space developed for this conversation to occur.

In conclusion, I hope this research provided some context and data about these experiences and how they relate to Black male masculinity. I look forward to seeing more dialogues and spaces provided so we can talk about this as a community. I believe we need to change our language when we talk about sexual abuse and not make it heteronormative. We need to continue to challenge the notion of what "traditional" masculinity is and not allow that to negate these experiences. I look forward to seeing more research conducted around this topic and believe that this will add to the multitude of Black liberation movements happening in our society.

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Permission

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“Don't look there”
was the thumb rule.
Not even in night—no
Or in the shower
Or under the quilt
Not even in the theater at night.
I am watching you,
she screamed whenever
my eyes went
down.
That day I looked at it in the shower.
She saw me through
the half-shut door.
It was never fully closed.
It is for fresh air to get in she said.
After that she made sure
to bath me herself.
Everyday.
It will be quick. She laughed.
It was.
It was her hands all over
me with the soap bar.
My eyes were always
covered with foam.
Itching.
Drying.
Red.

Wailing.
Wrapped in a towel
I got out like a dying bouquet
hoping to get wet somehow.
I took the towel to rub myself.
Let me do it—she yelled again.
You will ruin it.
It is private.
Sensitive.
You will hurt yourself.
Stay away you idiot.
But it is with me. It is mine—I cried
No. it is not, doll—she
stroked my head.
Not until you are married.
Not until he tells you to go there.
Not until he sees it first.

Artist Spotlight

Kateryna Bortsova

MFA

I think that art means confrontation between life and aesthetics.

It is a hard struggle for both of them, and the understanding of art is one of the artist's main working specialties.

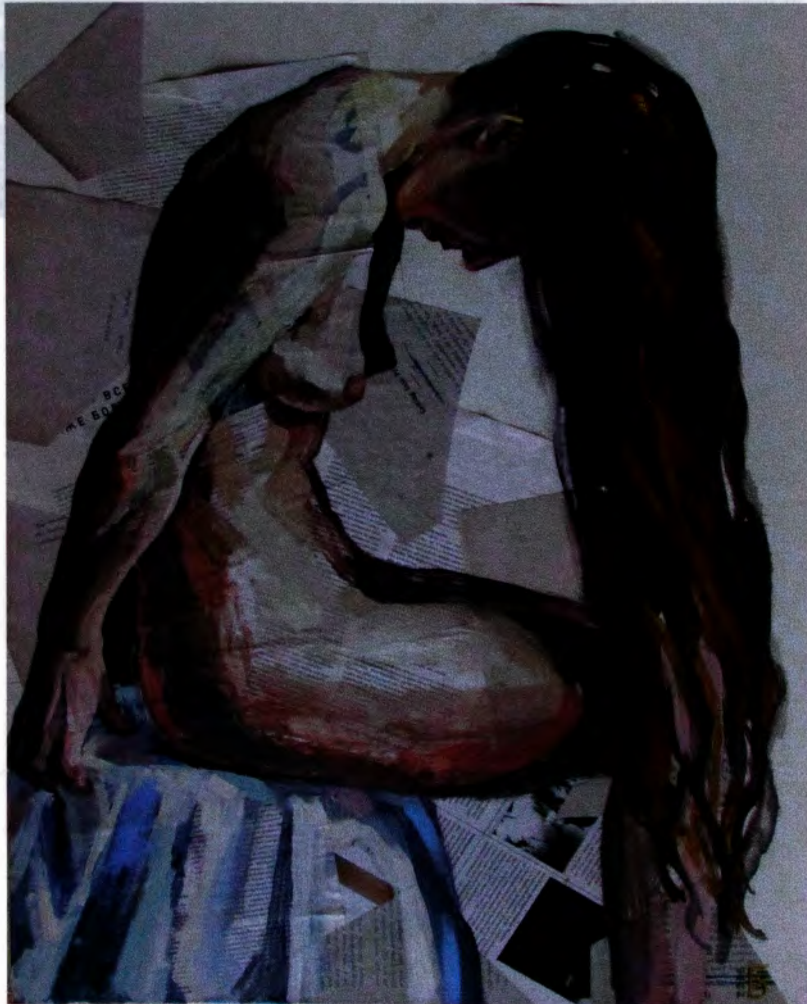
In the modern multipolar and multinational world, art and art objects have been dissolved in the routine human life. After Marcel Duchamp created a 'readymade' art in the 1940s, we surely may find art objects around us without any force. But in order to make an art object of a simple spoon or staple, there needs to be a creator – a man with endless fantasy, who sees not a dirt but a star in a pool, as Immanuel Kant said. Any person may possess technical skills and practice their craft by means of hard work. But not everyone may fill their work with philosophic sense, with such images which would enchant audience for ages. Now the only factor of art modernity is that it is present in art galleries and on the Internet.

Regarding definition of art modernity, I do not divide art works into mainstream, underground, and classics. It is important for me that great masterpiece should have a response in the audience's soul. Pictures with such quality will be always up-to-date.

As an artist, I believe that keeping up with ephemera fashion shall not serve as a factor of art work modernity. Human development takes the form of a curve: everything new is a well-forgotten old but at the new curve of civilization.



Feelings Broken
Acrylic on paper



Melancholy
Oil on canvas, collage



Motion
Acrylic on canvas

“Le genre hétéro trèès curieuse”: Biphobia in *Le Bleu est une couleur chaude*

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In today's increasingly frequent discussions of the LGBT+ community, the third letter of the series is all too often ignored, excluded, or outright denied. As representation of queer characters in media and pop culture leads to greater acceptance of queer people in real life, this same media is often reinforcing harmful stereotypes about bisexuality that actively harm bisexual individuals' acceptance in both queer and straight communities. This article addresses such negative representations of bisexuality in the French graphic novel *Le Bleu est une couleur chaude* by Julie Maroh and Tunisian filmmaker Abdellatif Kechiche's film adaptation, *La Vie d'Adèle*, which won the Palme d'Or at the 2013 Cannes Film Festival—the first comic book adaptation to earn an award of such prestige. The film, titled in English *Blue is the Warmest Color*, earned a reputation upon its U.S. release as ‘that lesbian sex movie.’ While the film does include several graphic sex scenes between the two main characters, both female, this reputation demonstrates precisely the issue I explore in this article: despite the fact that the film's main character has relationships with both men and women, any sexual act between two women is immediately labeled “lesbian” and contributes to the pervasive problem of devaluing or erasing bi identities.

In 2015, the Equality Network (a Scottish organization) released a report on the experience of bisexuals, finding that the majority of bisexuals (between 66 and 69%) feel unsupported or unrecognized in both LGBT+ and non-LGBT+ communities (HRC Biphobia). In 2010, the Center for Disease Control reported significantly higher instances of sexual and domestic violence against bisexuals, so much that “bisexual women were twice as likely to experience sexual violence as other groups in almost every category” (Rauch). Disturbing statistics such as these make it essential to reveal and discuss biphobia and bi-erasure in pop culture. In this article, my analysis focuses on two perspectives of biphobia in *Le Bleu est une couleur chaude*: the protagonist, Clementine's, treatment by her girlfriend, Emma, and the author's biphobia as shown through the text's themes and plot. Since the film is more well-known than its source text, I will also use comparisons with the story's cinematic interpretation, *La Vie d'Adèle*, where it highlights and exacerbates the biphobia. My argument highlights these themes as

representative of problems in the community at large.

A brief summary of the graphic novel will be helpful to situate the moments that are the focus of this analysis. Set in Lille, the story takes place between 1994 and 2008, following the life of a high school student, Clementine (whose name becomes Adèle in the film), as she struggles to come to terms with her sexual identity after meeting Emma, an art school student and out lesbian activist. After plenty of teenage melodrama (even Maroh now refers to the text as “*une ridicule histoire*” “a ridiculous story” [my trans.; Coeurs-forêts, Maroh] that she wrote when she was only 19), the couple splits after 12 years together because of Clem's infidelity with a fellow teacher at her school, a faceless male who appears in only three panels, cropped into anonymity by the panels' design. The story passes through several unfortunate tropes of LGBT+ representation: internalized homophobia and struggle to accept one's own identity, rejection by homophobic parents, promiscuity and infidelity in the queer community, and an untimely death due to addiction that tragically separates the couple. It is because of these clichés (rather than in spite of them) that the biphobia in the text demands examination: it represents a trope in itself, one dangerous to the acceptance of bisexual identities. It is important to note here that Julie Maroh identifies as lesbian, not bisexual, and the text's erasure of bisexuality must be read with this in mind.

First, it is important to understand Clementine's perception of her sexuality as this clearly matters more than assumptions about her identity. Unfortunately, there's little to go on to understand how Clementine self-identifies. Most of her early journey consists of coming to terms with her own sexuality, often in the form of clichéd self-rejection as she asks Emma if she is ashamed to be a lesbian. Only one time does Clementine claim the identity “*lesbienne*” for herself, and she does it only in a humorously stereotyping internal dialogue: “*Mais c'est quoi ce cliché? La lesbienne qui joue au baby-foot avec ses potes mecs... et puis merde. Je m'amuse. Je suis bien*” “What's with this cliché? The lesbian playing foosball with her guy friends? Eh, screw it. I'm having fun” (my trans.; Maroh, *Bleu* 119). However, it is important to note the comic's use of color as it offers clues to Clementine's sexuality. The blue is a repeated motif throughout the mostly grey-tone story, putting the reader into Clementine's point of view so that we are struck by the same images as she. While the reference to Emma's hair in the title is evident, it is important to note that Thomas's blue is equally striking to Clementine, even before blue becomes associated with Emma in her mind. While she never feels love for Thomas like she does with Emma, Clementine is clearly attracted to him and even dates him for six months, a long time from her sixteen-year-old perspective.

The film version Adèle never reveals how she self-identifies to the audience, but bisexuality is more emphasized here than in the comic, while still carefully avoiding the label. Adèle engages in sex with her high-school boyfriend Thomas; however, in the graphic novel, Clementine changes her mind before completing the act. Adèle also develops a relationship with the male co-worker that ends her relationship with Emma, but the audience gets no insight into Clementine's relationship with the faceless man in the comic. Finally, Adèle flirts with one of Emma's male friends at a party, and the film concludes with him chasing her down the street, heavily implying a new romance.

In both formats, the biggest problem is that there is no acknowledgment whatsoever of the 'b-word,' as is so often the case with recognizably bisexual characters in media and pop culture. Any same-sex encounter leads to frantic Internet debates about whether a character is gay or straight as the majority either forgets or denies that bisexuality is real. Prominent examples of this include Xena the Warrior Princess, Wonder Woman, Hikaru Sulu in the *Star Trek* reboot, and Willow from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, among many others. In both the graphic novel and its film adaptation of Maroh's story, the audience primarily experiences Clementine's identity through others' eyes—eyes that, like the examples above, suggest repeatedly that one must be straight or lesbian, with nothing in between but experimentation or closeted behavior. This becomes even more problematic when we take Maroh's description of her work:

...ce qui m'intéresse avant tout c'est que moi, celles/ceux que j'aime, et tous les autres cessions d'être: insulté-e-s, rejeté-e-s, tabassé-e-s, violé-e-s, assassiné-e-s. Dans la rue, à l'école, au travail, en famille, en vacances, chez eux. En raison de nos différences. Chacun aura pu interprété [sic] et s'identifier au livre à sa convenance. (Maroh *Cœurs-forêts*)

What interests me above all is that me, those that I love, and all others cease to be: insulted, rejected, beat up, raped, murdered. In the street, at school, at work, among family, on vacation, in their own homes. Because of our differences. Each person can interpret and identify with the book how they please. (my trans.)

Maroh speaks to the importance of representation in media as protection against harassment for herself and her queer peers. However, both Maroh's character Emma (and by extension the story itself) perpetuates the queer community's rejection of bi identities by reinforcing biphobic stereotypes, creating an unwelcome space for bi people. She claims all readers can identify with the story in their own way, but Maroh may not have considered bisexual audiences' reactions when confronted with the text's biphobic tendencies.

The graphic novel's biphobia is most evident in the first interaction between Clementine and Emma. Clementine accompanies her friend Valentin to a gay bar for the first time; bored watching her friend's drunken flirtations, Clementine wanders away from Valentin and into a lesbian bar she passes on the street. She immediately notices Emma's blue hair from their brief crossing in the street months previously, but Clementine sits at the bar on her own. Emma approaches to buy Clementine a drink, intrigued by the fact that "C'est rare de rencontrer des gens dans ton genre ici..." 'It's rare to meet your type in here...' (my trans.; Maroh, *Bleu* 50). When asked what she means by "your type," first Emma notes the fact that Clementine is alone and underage in a bar, but then she makes her real meaning clear: "Et ensuite, le genre hétéro très très curieuse apparemment" 'also, the reeeaaally curious straight type, apparently' (my trans.; Maroh, *Bleu* 51). Before even asking Clementine's name, Emma has effectively shut down the possibility of Clementine defining her own sexual identity. Coming at a moment when the main character is just beginning to question this identity for herself (Emma clearly notices from her comment), Emma's biphobic labeling is particularly damaging. In representing sexuality as a straight/gay dichotomy, Emma (seeming to be an authority to Clementine in this new queer space) closes the door to other possible identities outside this dichotomy, as so often happens in both queer and non-queer communities. Therefore, the space that should be helping Clementine discover her identity instead forces her into further confusion by insisting she must fit in one of these two boxes.

Now, some will notice that the "curiosity" Emma remarks in Clementine represents some space between the gay/straight dichotomy. I argue that rather than indicating acceptance of another sexuality, this comment reflects common criticisms that bisexual people often endure: "It's just a phase," "You're young and experimenting," "Pick a side already," "You're really gay but still half in the closet," and the like. As Pauline Plazas describes such reluctance to accept bisexuality as an identity in its own right, "Bisexuality is widely seen as an exploration, not an option" (Plazas *IndieWire*). This line of thinking, that bi people are simply undecided or somehow dishonest about their sexuality, develops into Emma's refusal to get involved in a relationship with Clementine because of her confused sexual identity, a problem that again occurs all too often in real life.

Emma's biphobia becomes the primary obstacle that Clementine has to overcome to begin their relationship. Despite having a serious girlfriend, Emma's objections to Clementine's interest consistently only reference the latter's perceived sexuality, never Emma's own relationship status. Emma, unquestionably attracted to Clementine, tells her "Quand tu tomberas amoureuse, ce mec sera

le plus chanceux de toute la terre" 'when you fall in love, that guy will be the luckiest in the whole world' (my trans.; Maroh, Bleu 91). Due to the gendered nature of the French language, the idea of a future male lover is unambiguous with usage of the word "mec" and the masculine version of the adjective "chanceux." Because of her own assumptions about Clementine's identity, Emma never allows her the chance to define her sexuality or express her feelings.

Once the couple becomes physically intimate, Emma refuses to receive oral sex from Clementine: "Non, attends, ne...tu n'as jamais fait ça," 'No, wait, don't... you've never done that before' (my trans.; Maroh, Bleu 96). Emma continues to treat her partner as if she were uncommitted to sex with a woman, in spite of Clementine's insistence to the contrary. Even after sleeping together for the first time, Emma clings to her perception of Clementine as heterosexual as some sort of martyric reason to not act on her feelings for the younger girl: "Qu'est-ce que ça changerait? À un moment ou un autre... tu finiras bien par rencontrer un gars qui te plaît et tout te poussera à être avec lui, vous serez heureux et moi j'airai l'air d'une conne. Alors franchement... à quoi bon...?" 'What would that change? Sooner or later, you'll end up finding a guy you like and everything will push you to be with him. You'll be happy and I'll look like an idiot. So really... what's the point...?' (my trans.; Maroh, Bleu 105). Indeed, Emma's refusal to enter a relationship with Clementine despite her evident feelings perpetuates the "it's just a phase" stereotype that is so harmful to bisexual individuals.

This is not an isolated incident, but rather a theme throughout much of the text; Emma repeatedly insists that any form of relationship just isn't worth it because Clementine will, undoubtedly, leave her for a man: "Clem, tu n'es pas homo, tout ça te passera, tu ne veux pas..." 'Clem, you're not gay, all this will pass, you don't want...' (my trans.; Maroh, Bleu 100). In one of the few moments Clementine stands up for her right to define her own sexuality, she cuts Emma off shouting, "Ça n'est pas à toi de me dire ce que je veux" 'It's not up to you to tell me what I want' (my trans.; Maroh, Bleu 100). So adamant is Clementine that her jagged-edged speech bubble covers Emma's, underscoring her frustration at being constantly defined by others.

Though this defense of a person's right to define their own sexuality may initially appear to be the author's rebuttal to the biphobia in the story up to that point, Maroh instead proves Emma's fears justified as Clementine engages in a sexual relationship with a male colleague. Even though her first girlfriend in the story, Sabine, was frequently unfaithful, with Emma's knowledge the infidelity was not a seriously enough transgression for Emma to end the relationship. Even Sabine also knew about Emma's six-month affair with Clementine and took

no action to stop it. (Here, I will specify that Emma and Sabine did not define their relationship as open, and infidelity is clearly represented as such.) It is evidently not the infidelity that destroys Emma and Clementine's relationship. Rather, infidelity with a man poses the real problem for Emma. She declares, "Il n'y avait rien de pire pour me briser le cœur!" 'There was nothing worse for breaking my heart!' (my trans.; Maroh, Bleu 135). Emma's biphobic fears were correct all along: Clementine 'reverts' to dating men. This representation is problematic because it reflects and even encourages a very real bias in both straight and queer communities: the idea that bisexual people cannot be satisfied in a relationship and will eventually cheat with or leave for someone of another gender.

Both film and comic reflect this bias as the main character cannot fit in with Emma's community. In the film, Adèle is completely closeted outside of her home life with Emma, implying that Emma is once again correct, and Adèle is actually straight. More problematically, in the graphic novel, the couple's problems stem from Clementine's disinterest in activism. The election of conservative Nicholas Sarkozy to the French presidency in 2007, shown on the couple's television screen, is superimposed by a text box containing Clementine's admission that the couple is growing apart. This moment represents an important point in LGBT+ history in France as Sarkozy has long been a vocal opponent of both marriage equality and separation of church and state. This situation drives a further wedge between the women as Clementine refuses to involve herself in activism. She tells the reader that, "Pour Emma, sa sexualité est un bien vers les autres. Un bien social et politique. Pour moi, c'est la chose la plus intime qui soit. Elle appelée ça de la lâcheté, alors que je cherche juste à être heureuse..." 'For Emma, her sexuality is a good towards others. A social and political good. For me, it's the most private thing there is. She calls that cowardice, but I just care about being happy...' (my trans.; Maroh, Bleu 131). Though this could represent a personal difference in any couple, the constant questioning of Clementine's sexuality makes this scene particularly problematic.

Combined with the previous instances of biphobia, this ideological difference further removes Clementine not only from Emma, but also from the queer community. As a bisexual person, Maroh represents Clementine as fundamentally separate from this space because bisexual individuals neither care for activism nor speak for the queer community. The couple has a fight over the Pride flag as Clementine grabs hold of it to prevent Emma walking out the door. This is arguably the most problematic image of the entire text, since it suggests that Clementine is actively to disrupt Emma's equality activism. Emma has to

free herself from Clementine's grasp in order to engage with and fight for the queer community.

Published in 2010, the writing, publication, and textual focus on activism in the 2000s reflect an important period in the equality movement in France. From 1999, civil unions called PACS (Pacte Civile de Solidarité) have been open to same- and different-sex couples alike, but it was not until 2013 that marriage became legal in France for same-sex couples. With France's neighbors the Netherlands and Belgium becoming the first two countries to legally recognize same-sex marriages in 2001 and 2003 respectively, Clementine and Emma's relationship takes place at a crucial moment in French LGBT+ activism. The fact that Clementine, presented as "not a real lesbian," threatens not only her relationship but the movement itself is deeply problematic in its historical context.

It is important to consider the impact of these observations about *Le Bleu est une couleur chaude*. Though a well-known graphic novel in French-speaking communities, the book remains obscure elsewhere. However, the high-profile awards of the film brought the biphobia into the spotlight, though it was overshadowed by the explicitly male gaze through which the story was filmed. All complexities of the story were reduced to the previously mentioned title 'that lesbian sex film,' a moniker particularly problematic for those attuned to biphobia and bi-erasure in the media. A critique of the film published in *Autostraddle* represents the larger problem with misrepresentation of sexualities in pop culture:

Queerness as portrayed by straight people, as envisioned by straight people and directed by straight people, is Oscar bait. *Brokeback Mountain* isn't an example of gay cinema anymore than *Blue is the Warmest Color* is an example of lesbian cinema, and I'm sorry if that comes as a shock to you.... A narrative about queer people as directed and portrayed and produced by straight people cannot be considered a work of queer cinema in the same sense that a film written, directed, and portrayed by queer people is. (Kate Audostraddle).

I will take this observation a step further and point out that erasure of a sexual identity within the queer space of the graphic novel is even more damaging because it comes from a place that should (in theory) be better at accepting non-hetero identities. Especially when we return to Maroh's comments on her own work, that she intended *Bleu est une couleur chaude* to represent a space for all, yet here, a queer author repeatedly excludes bisexuality from the queer spaces and queer communities of her text.

Yet as many (if not all...) bi people have experienced, biphobia exists in

both queer and non-queer spaces, making it harder to live when the very existence of your identity is erased. As Plazas writes in response to the ubiquitous labeling of *Blue is the Warmest Color* as a 'lesbian' film:

Perhaps... it is public judgment about bisexuality which stops Adele from saying anything. This raises another important point: How does a bisexual come out of a 'Narnia' sized closet? It isn't enough to declare who you are; you must then justify your own existence to the world. Adele [sic] chooses not to explain herself but in the process remains an outsider to both gay and straight cultures. (Plazas, *IndieWire*)

What is telling to me is this article's own discomfort with terminology to describe queer culture. How can we discuss bi-erasure in the LGBT+ community when all but the L and G have been erased from this particular narrative, and many like it? To my mind, *Le Bleu est une couleur chaude* is an example of problematic representation in media that reflects the larger-scale issue of bisexual people struggling to find spaces that validate or accept their identities. This is precisely why biphobia and bi-erasure need to be called out when and where we see them. It is only through discussion of the issue and increasing bi-visibility that progress can be continued in fighting bi-erasure and biphobia.

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Made to Order

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Sexual cannibalism: it's a thing. Several species (at least 30) including insects and arachnids participate in this scintillating lifestyle around the mating clock. Gives a whole new meaning to "wham, bam, thank you, [man]," am I right? If you're devoid of any deductive skills whatsoever, the kicker is that the female in each species is the cannibal. Some males will offer themselves up for the greater cause, allowing their demise to provide nutrients for their lover and ultimately to facilitate procreation—their last crack at martyrdom.

She-mantises often savagely sever the heads of their one-night stands before the suitor even has a chance to ejaculate. What's the use of a living male when even headless ones can still inseminate an egg? I imagine she-mantises as the brutal bitches of the insect world—their slender, aerodynamic, pea-green bodies looming over their apathetic appetizer until the crunch of conviction once the mandibles perfectly pluck the unlucky bastard's head off his unimpressive abdomen. A black widow will strategically align her male mate between her fangs during sex. Easy access has never been represented so seamlessly, and at least she lets him finish first.

Sexual cannibalism within the insect world is no doubt representative of how utterly useless males are outside of their potential for procreation, but it also represents the dramatic denouement on the stage of a series of striking events. Preceding the predation of female to male, the latter participates in varying forms of penance. Eligible suitors compete to be in the running for the slaughter.

Peacock spiders feverishly frolic in front of and around their counterparts. Their intricately colored abdomens flick like a fire licking the edge of a fireplace, flirting with a flammable hardwood floor. Their lithe legs whip about in a stream of metallic and neon like those inflatable men used as eye-catchers for car lots and useless spaces in useless shopping corners. What a fucking nuisance.

He-mantises similarly make a spectacle of themselves. They take pleasure in posing, prickly forelegs and wings outstretched, legs planted apart, as if they were nude models displayed in front of zealous art apprentices, or perhaps

brawny break-dancers ready to bust a move on America's Got Talent. They often erotically gyrate like greased-up strippers, clicking their plastic, pellucid platforms together to call attention to themselves.

Females involved in this type of sexual tussle-tango are the ultimate hustlers. You see, the males think they're big and bad because they get caught up in showing off. They think they've got that suave sway. However, it is exclusively the female that constructs the continuing creation of the species. She's like a traffic conductor trumpeting her shrill whistle, holding up a flat, white-gloved palm. Stop right there, buddy. She directs the desired color sequences, body movements, and visual vibrations like an omnipotent fashion designer, astute and austere in what is and is not permitted down the runway. Without her, populations would cease to exist. I'm just saying, maybe we human women should be taking notes.

Males engage in demonstrative behavior for an explicit effect: reaction in their best interest. The stakes are even higher and the performances even more pompous when they're in some station of superiority (which is usually assigned to them as early as birth). I'm not sure when I first noticed this. I mean, I've always noticed it. It's as tangible and repulsive as a steaming pile of puke sizzling on asphalt during a 100-degree day in the middle of a theme park. What I mean is—I can't say when I was finally able to label it, when I finally relinquished this perpetually passive perception and said, "Fuck this."

He towered over me—the National Guard Sergeant—not directly facing me. I was sitting on the gritty, waxed gym floor, my back flush with the rippled concrete wall that all gyms have. While he was standing, thrashing his jagged, buttery teeth about something irrelevant toward a coach seated in a chair at my right, I sat quietly waiting for the bell to ring. His thin-wired glasses, their magnifying lenses cut into perfect rectangles, hung heavily on his steep, ski-slope nose. He showed up first.

He was noticeably short—not too short to ride a rollercoaster, but too short to drive a jacked-up dually without someone thinking he's compensating for something. His hair was charcoal and salt, and his small, beady eyes reminded me of a rat. As I continued quietly waiting for the bell to ring, the boom and havoc bouncing off the gym made me feel like my head was encased in a racquetball court filled with a circus—bullhorns, stampeding elephants, and all. He looked so tired I thought a pebble had been thrown into the pools of his eyes, creating all the ripples beneath them. He showed up later.

"Why you so quiet?" Forcing my eyes up to meet his peaked nose instead of immediately rolling them was like trying to stop a head-on collision—almost impossible. "I have nothing to say." Silence. Crises averted. He'd been there for

ten minutes, tops.

"How you doin'," his Chicago-skyline teeth chomped.

"Fine. How are you?"

"Good, good, good. You just down there bein' all quiet."

"Yuuuuup." Exasperation. He'd been there for twenty minutes.

I actually have a whole hell of a lot to say, but not when it's expected I lurch like a horse ready to burst out of containment at a derby. There's always this deep pull inside me, like the pendulum in a grandfather clock laboriously swinging—answer or don't answer, what to do. I answer, because what the fuck. I answer, because, even though "eat my dick" would convey how much I don't conform to societal norms of what femininity, it's not quite the tongue-whipping I'd like to deliver. Their approaches were about as original as today's toast. What a fucking novelty.

The Relationship Between Sexting, Sensation-seeking, and Risky Sexual Activities in Emerging Adulthood: *Sexual Communication is Not that Risky*

Abstract

Communicating sexual messages via technology, also known as sexting, may be related to risk-taking, sensation-seeking, and risky sexual activity (RSA). Such relationships in emerging adults (EA) may be due to immature frontal cortices and peak levels of sex hormones. However, most of the research on sexting as a risk factor uses child and adolescent samples. A qualitative analysis of a sample of 407 EAs from a four-year university in the Southwestern region of the U.S. revealed a sexting content difference; however, both women and men reported a similar sexting frequency. We examined possible sex differences in the relationship between sexting, sensation-seeking, and RSA. We predicted that those who engage in sexting would report higher levels of sensation-seeking and RSA. We also predicted that men would report more sexting than women. MANOVA analyses indicated that sexters scored higher in aspects of sensation-seeking related to boredom susceptibility and disinhibition than non-sexters, men reported higher boredom susceptibility and disinhibition than women. No differences in RSA between sexters and non-sexters existed. It is possible the risky nature of sexting found in child and adolescent samples decreases during EA. Future studies using a longitudinal sample to evaluate the impact of brain maturation are needed.

Cultivation theory posits that widespread, recurrent exposure to media gradually shapes our worldview and social reality (Gerber, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002). Millennials, those born in the '80s to '90s, also known as emerging adults (EA), are reshaping previous methods of learning and communication (Twenge, 2014). Emerging adults' attitudes and beliefs about sex, as well as their sexual behaviors, are likely cultivated from exposure to sexual content in the media at earlier ages. Bleakley, Hennessey, and Fishbein (2011) reported that 63.4% of adolescent boys and 39.5% of adolescent girls actively seek sexual content from media sources. Furthermore, these students (47% boys, 28% girls) also reported actively using the internet to learn about pre-coital sexual knowledge. Among EA samples,

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75% of college students disclosed that their first exposure to sex in the media occurred when they were minors, and 15% experienced persistent thoughts or imagery from that exposure (Cantor, Mares, & Hyde, 2003). According to Roberts, Foehr, and Rideout (2005) two-thirds of college students considered it acceptable to access Internet pornography. Taken together, the findings suggest the frequent and widespread access to media, coupled with young adults actively seeking sexual content presented in the media, may cultivate sexual attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Similarly, Collins and colleagues (2004) found that exposure to higher amounts of sexual content on television was related to a higher likelihood of initiating sexual activity.

It is likely that, through the use of devices and platforms such as smartphones, YouTube, and social media applications, the references being presented by media are no longer only actors in scripted productions but also classmates, neighbors, and intimate partners. Additionally, individuals within more economically developed cultures are using electronic media devices, including smartphones, as part of their daily lives at an increasing rate. For example, in the United States, smartphones capable of wireless internet service comprise 77% of internet traffic (CTIA-The Wireless Association, 2015). Additionally, subscriptions to wireless services increased by 21.50% over the past six years (CTIA-The Wireless Association, 2015). Research shows that the texting option on cellular devices is the single most utilized feature (Smith, McGeeney, Duggan, Rainie, & Keeter, 2015). Texting options typically exist as applications that allow for sending and receiving of text, picture, and video content. Recent research estimates that almost 100% of EAs in the United States who have access to texting applications reported using texting at least once a week (Smith et al., 2015). The messages sent via texting application sometimes consist of sexually explicit text, photographs, or videos (Drouin, Vogel, Surbey, & Stills, 2013). Recent estimates indicate that 44% of EAs report

having sent sexual content via texting applications, or sexting (Benotsch, Snipes, Martin, & Bull, 2013).

The effects of increased texting, sexting, and other smartphone use can be difficult to study, because media and technology are diverse and constantly evolving. However, it is imperative to study these effects because, as modes of electronic communication become more portable, the influence of the media in the socialization of its viewers and producers will become increasingly pervasive. Additionally, socialization and cultivation through the media begins early in the lifespan. The changing landscape of social interaction through electronic communication, such as cyber-bullying and sexting are new problems for researchers to study and understand. In the case of sexting, sexual texts and images transmitted electronically may be difficult, if not impossible, to erase, which may create lasting negative consequences born out of a young person's isolated, impulsive action.

In response to the development and rise of sexting, research efforts focusing on sexting have begun to offer indications of the prevalence and outcomes associated with it (Cooper, Quayle, Jonsson, & Svedin, 2016; Judge, 2012; Rood, Thackeray, Letson, Leder, & Berlan, 2015). Early findings indicate that adolescents who sext frequently are more likely to engage in risky and addictive behaviors such as alcohol abuse, gambling, and binge-eating when compared to children, EAs, and other adults (Ahern & Mechling, 2013; Dir, Cyders, & Coskunpinar, 2013). Findings across multiple studies suggest that sexting frequency may increase with age (Lenhart, 2009; Mitchell, Finkerhor, Jones & Wolak, 2012; Strassberg, McKinnon, Sustaita, & Rullo, 2013). Although prevalence reports indicate that between 7-27% of adolescents sext (Cooper et al., 2016), research indicates that as many as 44% of EAs sext (Benotsch, et al., 2013; Gordon-Messer, Bauemeister, Grodzinski, & Zimmerman, 2014). Research shows that approximately 31.80% of EAs report sexting prior to engaging in sexual activities with a new partner (Benotsch et al., 2013). Further findings indicate that EAs who frequently sext are more likely to engage in unprotected sexual intercourse than their non-sexting peers (Davis, Powell, Gordon, & Kershaw, 2016); however, this research does not specify if the sexting is being exchanged between committed partners. When the likelihood of unprotected sexual intercourse increases, sexting places individuals at a heightened risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or having an unplanned pregnancy (Benotsch et al., 2013; Davis et al., 2016).

Although exposure to sexual content in the media can affect all ages, what emerging adults perceive and accept about sex is a downstream consequence of exposure during adolescence. Adolescence is an age during which individuals

may be particularly susceptible to sexual messages in the media, because gender roles as well as sexual attitudes and behaviors are being formed (Committee on Communications, 1999). Research shows that adolescence and EA is associated with elevated risk-taking and sensation-seeking behaviors due to the incomplete development of frontal lobe regions responsible for impulse control and long-term planning (Thompson-Schill, Ramscar, & Chryssikou, 2009). Although brain structures and processes change throughout a person's lifespan, the orbitofrontal cortex within the prefrontal cortices does not reach full maturity until age 25 to 27 (Peper, Koolschijn, & Crone, 2013; Shaw et al., 2008). Underdevelopment of these areas is thought to result in impaired behavioral, emotional, and cognitive control, as well as impulsivity, risk provocation, and aggression (Thompson-Schill et al., 2009). Similarly, the influx of sex hormones that peak in adolescence and gradually decline during EA, contributes to increased risk-taking and thrill-seeking behavior. For example, higher testosterone levels in men and women predict increased risk-taking, sensation-seeking, and possibly sexting (Peper et al., 2013). Dir and Cyders (2015) also found that impulsivity and lack of planning were strong predictors of sexting and hookups. Research also suggests that, because EA men engage in more impulsive tendencies when compared to EA women, it is possible that EA men engage in more sexting than EA women.

Champion and Pedersen (2015) found, among a Canadian EA sample, that very explicit sexters (i.e., those who reported sexting with nude images and videos) reported positive thoughts of sexting behavior and reported more risky sexual activities when compared to those who did not report frequent or explicit sexting behavior. They also found that global sensation-seeking, alcohol use, and sexual risk taking increased among those who reported engaging in explicit sexting. Global sensation seeking is a prominent factor among those who sext, with men scoring higher on sensation-seeking scales than do women (Champion & Pedersen, 2015; Dir & Cyders, 2015).

As developed by Zuckerman (2009), some researchers evaluate global sensation-seeking, while other researchers focus on four subscales of sensation-seeking. The four subscales of sensation-seeking include thrill and adventure seeking (TAS), experience seeking (ES), disinhibition (DIS), and boredom susceptibility (BS). An individual with high sensation-seeking may exhibit behaviors such as desiring thrill and stimulation (TAS), a preference for new and exotic experiences (ES), lack of self-control (DIS), or having an intolerance of monotonous or repetitive people and events (BS; Rosenbloom, 2003; Zuckerman, 2009). To extend this line of research, it is important to investigate the relationship between sexting and these specific factors of sensation-seeking.

Because risk-taking behavior is thought to be more prevalent when there is a lack of maturity in the frontal lobe region of the brain (Thompson-Schill et al., 2009) and when levels of sex hormones peak in adolescence (Peper et al., 2013), it is possible that the risk-taking aspects of sexting behavior found during adolescence may diminish in EA. The view that sexting is always a risk-taking behavior is incongruent with the evidence that sexting prevalence increases with age while other risk-taking behaviors decrease (Cooper et al., 2016; Dir & Cyders, 2015; Gordon-Messer et al., 2013). On the other hand, research shows that EAs who sext also tend to engage in risky sexual activities (RSAs; Benotsch et al., 2013; Davis et al., 2016). More research is needed to investigate the relationship between sexting and RSA in EA samples.

There were two purposes within this present study. We first constructed a qualitative analysis of self-reported frequency and content of sexting behavior in a sample of EA men and women. The second purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between sexting, sensation-seeking subscales, and RSAs in a sample of EA men and women. Although the biological aspects of risk-taking behavior are less pronounced during EA (Thompson-Schill et al., 2009; Peper et al., 2013), research shows that sexting is related to increased RSA in EA samples (Benotsch et al., 2013; Davis et al., 2016). Due to an inconsistency in the previous research, we sought to explore that relationship between RSA and sexting in our sample of EAs. In line with past research, we predict that those who sext will report higher levels of sensation-seeking (Champion & Pedersen, 2015), and that men will report higher levels of both sexting (Dir & Cyders, 2015) and sensation-seeking than women will. This prediction was made due to research showing that men, as a result of higher testosterone levels, are more susceptible to sensation-seeking (Dir & Cyders, 2015; Peper et al., 2013), and that sexting is related to aspects of sensation-seeking such as a preference for novelty, thrill, and stimulation (Champion & Pedersen, 2015). We expect to replicate the findings presented in Champion and Pedersen (2015) and extend these findings to show a relationship between sexting and thrill and adventure seeking (TAS), experience seeking (ES), disinhibition (Dis), and boredom susceptibility (BS). We also expect to extend the findings that suggest that men will sext more than women (Dir & Cyders, 2015). More specifically, we expect to find that the interaction between sex and sex type will result in different outcomes for men and women.

Methods

Participants

At a southwestern university within the U.S., we collected a sample of 407 emerging adults (233 women, 174 men) who had internet access on

their smartphones. We recruited participants enrolled in psychology courses by offering them course credit representing no more than 5% of the overall course grade. The average participant age was 19.32 years ($SD = 1.25$), ranging between 18-25 years. Sixty percent ($n = 248$) of the sample reported a sexual history in the past 30 days, 33.70% ($n = 139$) reported no sexual history (i.e., the absence of oral, vaginal, or anal sex), and 6.10% ($n = 25$) did not respond to the sexual history demographic questions. Approximately 81.57% of the sample self-identified as Caucasian ($n = 332$), 5.90% as African-American ($n = 24$), 4.42% as Native American ($n = 18$), 3.68% as Hispanic/Latino ($n = 15$), and 3.19% as Asian/Asian-Pacific American ($n = 13$). An additional 1.23% reported mixed racial and ethnic affiliation ($n = 5$). By dividing yearly income by number of people for whom the income was provided, we calculated participant economic status during childhood. In our sample, 35.38% reported upper-middle to upper economic income (more than \$20,000 per year per person; $n = 144$), 33.90% reported middle income (\$12,000-19,000 per year per person; $n = 138$), and 30.71% of the participants reported low to middle-income (\$11,000 per year or less per person; $n = 125$).

Materials

Sexual Communication (SEXT). The Sexual Communication measure assesses the *frequency* with which individuals send and receive sexts and the *content* they send and receive (Madewell, Whelan, Ponce-Garcia, & Page, 2011). The measure consists of 15 questions on a four-point Likert scale questions with answer choices ranging from *extremely rare* to *four extremely often*. The content items address the nature of the *content* and whether it was sent in text or image form. An example item states, "How often do you send PICTURE messages with an obvious sexual meaning?" Finally, participants were asked to respond to 10 open-ended questions regarding the types of sexts they send and receive. Sample questions include, "How often do you openly communicate about sex over text messaging, including but not limited to, discussing intent to engage in oral sex, flirting, masturbation, anal sex, vaginal sex, dry humping, etc.?" "If you send sexy pictures of your face, please describe your most common facial expression in your picture (e.g., smiling, smirking, flirty, seductive, goofy, serious, etc.);" and "If you have sent picture messages showing naked body parts, please list which body parts you included (i.g., breasts, buttocks, genitals, etc.?" The internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha coefficient) of the sexting items was .89.

Sensation-Seeking Scale (SSS-V). The SSS-V, first introduced by Zuckerman, Eysenck, and Eysenck (1978), contains 40 items with each item featuring two options from which the participant is forced to choose one.

and 33.00% stated that they send implicit or explicit image messages. Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics of self-reported text and sext activity. Similar to previous research (Brown, Keller, & Stern, 2009; Gordon-Messer et al., 2013), men and women exhibited differences in sext-text practices, $X^2(2) = 13.65, p = .008$ and in sext-image practices, $X^2(2) = 18.02, p = .001$. According to the chi-square analyses, women were more likely to receive more sext-text messages than they sent. Men were more likely to send genital and naked body images. We detailed all sext-text and sext-image frequencies in Table 1. Based on these findings, sex was included as an independent variable and a possible moderator in all subsequent analyses.

Table 2

Summary of Correlations for Sexting and Sensation-seeking by Sex

	M_M (SD_M)	M_W (SD_W)	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. TAS	7.28 (2.47)	6.64 (2.61)	-	.26**	.29**	.07	.08	-.02
2. ES	4.37 (2.15)	4.54 (2.10)	.38**	-	.34**	.07	-.02	.06
3. Dis	4.91 (2.85)	3.97 (2.55)	.16**	.40**	-	.40**	.36**	.06
4. BS	3.25 (2.02)	2.32 (1.77)	.07	.24**	.41**	-	.24**	-.07
5. SEXT	1.94 (.92)	1.70 (.85)	.04	.25**	.44**	.21**	-	.11
6. RSA	4.24 (3.24)	3.96 (3.00)	-.04	-.04	.05	-.01	.13	-

Note. $N = 407$. * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$. Subscript W denotes women and M denotes men. $n_w = 232, n_m = 175$. TAS = Thrill and Adventure Seeking; ES = Experience Seeking; Dis = Disinhibition; BS = Boredom Susceptibility. Correlations for women are below and men are above the diagonal.

Content Analysis of Sexual Communication

Among the EAs in the sample, we found that 16.40% sent a sexy image of their face. The most common sexy expression by women was a smile or flirty expression and the most common sexy expression by men was a serious look with a clenched jaw. Seventeen percent of our sample reported sharing

a sexy image of their body, 12.10% shared an image of a naked body part, and 9.00% shared an image of their penis or vulva (i.e., female external genitalia). Both women and men reported sending and receiving similar amounts of sext messages.

Women reported a higher prevalence of sending sext-images of their face; whereas, men reported sending sext-images of their abs, biceps, buttocks while flexed, or an image of their genitalia. Upon evaluation of the open-ended responses, women reported themes of sending sext-images having "goofy" expressions on their face (34%), a seductive look (17%), an image of their cleavage/breasts without any identifying properties (7%), or reminiscing about past sexual acts with that person (7%). The men reported themes of sending sext-images of a flexed body part (17.00%), naked body part/genitalia (8.00%), or sext-text about meeting up for sex (7.80%). Based on this evaluation, we found that both women and men were sending sexually explicit messages that differ in content, which is similar to previous research (Drouin & Landgraff, 2012; Gordon-Messer et al., 2013).

Preliminary Quantitative Analyses

We conducted Pearson's product-moment correlations between the sensation-seeking subscales (TAS, ES, Dis, and BS), sexting practices, and risky sexual activity for women and men. The ES, Dis, and BS subscales were significantly positively correlated with sexting practices among women. For men, Dis and BS were significantly positively correlated with sexting practices. Contrary to our hypotheses, TAS was not correlated with sexting (see Table 2).

The Relationship between Sexting, Sex, Sensation-seeking and Risky Sexual Activity

Using SPSS 23.0, we conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) examining the relationship between sexting (i.e., non-sexters vs. sexters) and sex (women vs. men) as the independent variables and sensation-seeking (i.e., TAS, ES, Dis, and BS) and risky sexual activity (RSA) serving as the dependent variables. Similar to previous research by Champion and Pedersen (2015), we hypothesized that those who report sexting would report significantly higher rates of sensation-seeking and higher rates of RSA when compared to those who do not send or receive sext messages. Specifically, we hypothesized that those who sext were more likely to report higher rates of experience seeking, boredom susceptibility, and RSA. We evaluated homogeneity of variance matrices and no assumptions were violated. According to Wilks Lambda (Λ), the MANOVA results for sexting were statistically significant, Wilks $\Lambda = .90, F(5, 398) = 9.14, p < .001, \eta^2 = .10$, and Power = 1.00. The MANOVA results for gender were statistically significant, Wilks $\Lambda = .92, F(5, 398) = 6.91, p$

< .001, $\eta^2 = .08$, and Power = .998. The interactions between sexting and gender were not significantly different according to the DVs.

Univariate Sexting Differences. Given the significance of the overall effects, the univariate main effects were analyzed next. Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was non-significant for all of the sensation-seeking subscales and RSA ($p > .27$). The univariate analyses partially supported our hypothesis in that the main effects of sexting resulted in statistically significant differences in Dis and BS (see Table 3). Those who sext exhibited statistically higher sensation-seeking scores of disinhibition and boredom susceptibility than those who did not sext. There were no statistically significant differences in thrill and adventure seeking, experience seeking, or risky sexual activity in relation to sexting practices.

Table 3

Relationships between Sexting, Sensation-seeking and Risky Sexual Activity

Factor/variable	Non-Sexter (n = 208)	Sexter (n = 199)	F, p-value	η^2	Power
(1) Disinhibition					
M	3.54	5.24	39.47,	.09	1.00
SD	2.43	2.75	p < .001**		
(2) Boredom Susceptibility					
M	2.27	3.20	21.36,	.05	.99
SD	1.66	2.09	p < .001**		

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$ for $N = 407$. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; F = ANOVA F test; η^2 = Eta-Squared which denotes effect size. Dependent variables = Sensation-seeking subscales; Disinhibition; Boredom Susceptibility.

Univariate Gender Differences. Univariate analyses partially support our hypothesis in that the main effects of gender resulted in statistically significant differences in Dis and BS, with men reporting statistically significantly higher scores than women. There were no statistically significant gender differences in TAS, ES, or RSA. Refer to Table 4 for univariate analyses of sex differences in sensation-seeking.

Discussion

The first purpose of the present study was to report the rates of sexting

Table 4

Relationships between Sex and Sensation-seeking

Factor/variable	Women (n = 232)	Men (n = 174)	F, p-value	η^2	Power
(1) Disinhibition					
M	3.97	4.91	8.90,	.022	.84
SD	2.55	2.85	p = .003*		
(2) Boredom Susceptibility					
M	2.32	3.26	20.98,	.05	.99
SD	1.77	2.02	p < .001**		

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$ for $N = 406$. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; F = ANOVA F test; η^2 = Eta-Squared which denotes effect size. Dependent variables = Sensation-seeking subscales; Disinhibition, Boredom Susceptibility.

frequency and content among an EA sample. Based on qualitative analyses of young adults, we find that a large majority of young adults are cultivating a sense of a normative style of communication when sexting one another. We also find that women are sending more implicit-hidden sexual messages that contain hidden sexual scripts; whereas men are sending more explicit-obvious sexual messages that contain images of a flexed body part. This finding supports previous research (Dir & Cyders, 2015) that both women and men are likely to sex, but there is a qualitative gender difference in sexting content. Our qualitative analyses support previous research that suggest that approximately 33 to 60% of emerging adults report sending and receiving sext messages. However, our findings do not support previous research (Champion & Pedersen, 2015) that suggests that EAs are sending either sext-text messages, sext-image messages, explicit-sext messages, or no sext messages at all. Instead, our findings suggest that EAs are either engaging in sexting, which includes sext-text, sext-images, and explicit sext messages, or they are not engaging in (or not reporting) any sexting behavior. Among the EAs who reported sexting, they are sending sexual content between 1-5 times a day, suggesting that this form of communication is a normative style of sexual scripts within this age group.

The second purpose of this article was to examine the possible relationship between sexting, sensation-seeking, and risky sexual activity (RSA) in a sample of emerging adult (EA) men and women. In contrast to previous research findings that sexting in EA samples is associated with elevated RSA

such as initiating sexual intercourse with a new partner and engaging in unprotected sexual intercourse (Benotsch et al., 2013; Davis et al., 2016), the findings of the present study indicate that RSA was not higher in those who sext compared to those who do not sext. The findings of the current study may be explained by past research indicating that the risk-taking aspects of sexting behavior found during adolescence may diminish during EA due to brain maturation and the leveling off of sex hormones (Cooper et al., 2016; Gordon-Messer et al., 2014; Peper et al., 2013; Thompson-Schill et al., 2009). Future research investigating these factors in a longitudinal sample is needed to better understand RSA across adolescent and EA development.

In addition to exploring the relationship between sexting and RSA, we predicted that those who sext would report higher levels of sensation-seeking than those who do not sext and that men would report higher levels of both sexting and sensation-seeking than women would. Similar to past research (see Champion & Pedersen, 2016), we found that those who sext reported significantly higher sensation-seeking. Our findings extend previous research by focusing this relationship on two aspects of sensation-seeking, specifically disinhibition and boredom susceptibility. Our findings suggest that those who sext report higher rates of disinhibition, meaning they are more adventurous and open to new experiences when compared to those who did not sext. Furthermore, we found that those who sext report higher rates of boredom susceptibility, meaning that they are interested in new experiences and variety in their lives. Together, these findings suggest that sexters are possibly sexting as a means to be adventurous and to get varied sexual stimuli.

Additionally, we found that men reported higher disinhibition and boredom susceptibility than women, regardless of sexting activity. This finding is supported by past research indicating a link between sensation-seeking and testosterone (Peper et al., 2013). Previous research shows that sensation-seeking is related to unfinished maturation of the prefrontal cortices and higher levels of sex hormones associated with adolescent development (Cooper et al., 2016; Gordon-Messer et al., 2014; Peper et al., 2013; Thompson-Schill et al., 2009). It is possible that the current findings will not replicate in samples of adults over the age of 25 to 27 and will be more pronounced in samples of adolescents.

Limitations of the current study include the lack of a longitudinal sample, the lack of testosterone levels to verify the mechanism behind the sex difference found in the current study, and the reliance upon self-reported sexting behavior. In general, research examining sexting behavior is sparse, and the majority of the articles focus on adolescents (see Cooper et al.,

2016). Although a longitudinal sample would be beneficial, the findings of the present study can be compared cross-sectionally with findings from previous research and are helpful in informing the development of a study using a longitudinal sample. Due to the relative scarcity of sexting research, data indicating testosterone levels in our sample may have allowed us to explore the relationship between testosterone and sexting; however, the evidence that higher testosterone leads to higher levels of sensation-seeking has been firmly supported in the literature (e.g., Peper et al., 2013), and we could not justify the intrusiveness of collecting a biological sample in combination with already sensitive questionnaires regarding sexual activity. Granted the use of self-report indices may be a limitation of the current study, but self-report indices of sexual behavior and sexting are the basis of the majority of current research among samples of EA. This is because it may be considered a violation of privacy to request access to an individual's sext messages or private sexual interactions. Additionally, it is possible that individuals willing to allow such invasive procedures would be qualitatively different from the general population, and the use of such procedures may inhibit the generalizability of the results.

Future research is needed to examine the relationship between sexting, sensation-seeking, and RSA in a longitudinal sample. As the use of technology becomes more pervasive within society and occurs at younger ages, the need to understand how technology influences human behavior increases. The present study is an important addition to the literature, as the findings indicate the need to examine sexting within the context of human development. It may be that the risks associated with sexting diminish with age, as individuals form more stable relationships and become better able to consent to and to understand the risks associated with sexual choices.

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Changing Perspectives: What is Woman?

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I started this semester like so many others: wondering about my future and asking myself if I can justify another loan in the pursuit of higher learning. Will the chase be worth it in the end? Will I find a job that pays enough to stay ahead? Is my second degree necessary? These questions ring true for many college students. January proved particularly challenging as I faced yet another review from financial aid questioning my academic and threatening to cut off the funds I so desperately needed to continue. My dilemma deepened. To keep my job, I needed to be enrolled, to be enrolled I needed money. I work for the school, you see, and we are made to take time off over the Christmas holiday. This left me broke, without the money to pay my rent, and with no way to pay the tuition bill lingering on my account. So the choices became wrapped in a horrible Catch 22 scenario. Like always, I found a way and a new semester dawned. Hopeful and slightly uneasy, I took each day for what it was: a challenge. Going to class, studying, and reading; finding time to work, sleep, and eat, usually in that order, proves more difficult with every passing semester.

All of this detail and not one time does it factor in that I am a woman. In fact, until this moment, the story could have been true about any college student. So why is it different for a woman? Is it? The patriarchal formation of societal norms dictates that the female is the weaker sex, so naturally this shades all of my experiences and new questions arise. Will I be evaluated on my achievements or my looks? Will I be able to convince an employer of my need for the highest paid position with no justification of a family to raise? Should I apply for jobs dominated by men? Will I stand a chance? Will I be respected in the classroom? These thoughts probably never even enter the minds of men. Why would they?

The truth is, if my life were simply to experience these things as a human, another person struggling to understand, make sense of, and plan, as if I were only human, the burden would be worth it. In a perfect world, my gender would not matter. No one would question my capabilities before first testing my skill, because everyone would be given the chance to succeed. My research in

a “dangerous” place would be applauded as ground breaking rather than brave. My body parts would not be legislative leverage because my place in the world would not be judged by my ability to give birth. My job as a mother would be a choice not an assumption. My cancer would not be perceived as a problem for an imaginary husband or a religious dilemma for my doctor. It would not define me as less of a human for my inability to conceive. My choice of partner would not matter because people loving other people is natural. In short, a genderless world would be a kinder place to be a person, but we do not live in this world. My second reading this semester, Chandra Mohanty’s *Third World Feminism and Politics of Feminism*, and the lecture that followed, assured me that no one does. The first question posed during that lecture inspired the research for this paper. What is Woman?

It seemed an easy answer: I am a woman. The definition for me should have been completely apparent. As the class struggled, our professor offered another puzzle: What is woman if you remove all biological definitions? Stumped by a simple definition, our professor challenged the class to think of false constructions. Was a woman the weaker sex? Did she not use her parts in the same way? Was she not capable of all a man could do? More, even? And if so, did that make her different? Is pink naturally her favorite color? Did long hair, makeup, or her style of dress define her? Were her reasoning skills outweighed by her passions? By the end of the lecture, I was no closer to answering this question than you are now. The one thing I was certain of, this class was about the “third world,” and of all the different categories of peoples who fit into that very broad term, and women should be somewhere near the top of that list. Women in any society strongly influenced by patriarchy are living in “third world” conditions.

A woman is politically manipulated into a system doomed to fail her. In many (nearly all) countries, she is paid less for the same work, and she is limited in how she can work, if she can at all. Her options never realistically include the top positions. Her healthcare, if it exists, is subpar and subjected to legislative oversight because only rich white men know what is best for her. Dismissed, treated as a child in constant need of supervision, a woman is portrayed as a princess in need of rescue whose body cannot be trusted to her own devices. Sheltered without her consent, she is made to believe she is fragile her entire life. However, the moment she is not precious (or heaven-forbid falls from grace), she is labelled the harlot, a sexual object, to be dismissed all over again, this time as an untouchable. She is set up to fail, never good enough for societal norms, taught to question her natural instinct, told that perfection is not attainable but must be the goal. Women are experiencing the

same contradictions young “third world” nations discovered at the beginning of the Cold War. The reality for those places after decolonization is much the same, they too have been politically manipulated into a system doomed to fail. Even after the white man is no longer officially in charge, his racial profiling remains strong and certain groups are labeled as the “other.” Their healthcare is decided for them in much the same way it is for a woman. The few countries that have “developed” sufficiently by Western standards did so with all the same contradictions mentioned above, and those that did not follow the weird parental rules set by their European counterparts have been dismissed by the West as poor, underdeveloped, backwards states, regardless of their progress. The trap that colonization (or patriarchy) had laid for them ensured neither could succeed, even with freedoms, political recognition, and autonomy. Always one step behind and encouraged to submit, she struggles to find her own identity. Even the vague definitions of “woman” share similarities with definitions of the “third world,” insofar as neither can be clearly defined.

What follows is a small sample of the current definitions. According to Webster’s dictionary, “woman” is defined as, “A. an adult female person, B. a woman belonging to a particular category (as by birth, residence, membership, or occupation).”¹ This definition continues by defining “womanliness” as a “woman who is a servant or personal assistant.”² From here, the definitions get derogatory and insulting. Definitions.net’s second noun description states woman is “a female person who plays a significant role (wife, mistress, or girlfriend) in the life of a man.”³ Urban Dictionary intends to be funny and inform its readers of alternative meanings of words. On this subject, they fall short of that mark, which makes me wonder if they have even one female writer on staff:

Beings not seen or touched by 98% of the men who have posted on this subject thus far. Highly attracted to males of the species who are reasonable to look at, have jobs, are relatively kind, sometimes take out trash, and treat them like equals (not superiors, not inferiors—equals.) Happily give blowjobs in return... Are paid seventy five cents for every dollar a man makes in the exact same job, same demographic, and same education level... When said beings reject such specimens of men or express an intelligent opinion, they are bitches. When they don’t put out,

1 Webster’s online dictionary, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/woman>

2 Ibid.

3 Definitions, <http://www.definitions.net/definition/woman>

they are also bitches. When they do, they are sluts.⁴ Several websites mimic these words only defining women in relation to their male counterparts. The only significant description, *adult female person* explains little, as the word "female" is still only the antonym or an accessory of male. The "third world" experiences similar problems with definition.

Using the same websites, Webster's defines the "third world" as "a group of nations especially in Africa and Asia not aligned with either the Communist or the non-Communist blocs."⁵ This tells us little to nothing about their beliefs, ideology, or country of origin. This definition, like the one for "woman," identifies what they are not but does not clearly define what or who they are. Definitions.net is a collection of several websites compiled on one page. Surprisingly this site is where I found something closer to a truth:

The term Third World arose during the Cold War to define countries that remained non-aligned with either NATO, or the Communist Bloc. This terminology provided a way of broadly categorizing the nations of the Earth into three groups based on social, political, and economic divisions ... It was also sometimes taken as synonymous with countries in the Non-Aligned Movement ... the Third World has also been connected to the world economic division as "periphery" countries in the world system that is dominated by the "core" countries. Due to the complex history of evolving meanings and contexts, there is no clear or agreed upon definition of the Third World ... Because many Third World countries were extremely poor, and non-industrialized, it became a stereotype to refer to poor countries as "third world countries," yet the "Third World" term is also often taken to include Newly Industrialized Countries like India, Brazil or China.⁶

The Urban Dictionary's quick summary explains that the "third world" is a collection of "less economically developed countries that hugely rely on richer countries ... The Third World is all poor because of the richer countries."⁷ Here again the "third world" is defined by what it is not rather than what it is. It is not rich, it is not white, and it is not developed.

This paper argues a change in definition, one that dismisses the notion of "woman" defined by her relation to a man, but rather focuses on her

4 Urban dictionary, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Women>

5 Webster's online dictionary, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/thirdworld>

6 Definitions, <http://www.definitions.net/definition/third%20world>

7 Urban dictionary defines the third world, <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=third%20world>

relationship with the human race. If the word "man" can be used to describe all of humankind, I argue that adding the prefix "wo-" should simply stand for creator. In this interpretation *wo-man* rather than being an antonym would be the completion of the term (*wo-man*= creator of humankind, *man*=humankind). Women are the creators of humankind, biologically speaking. It may be a chicken and the egg argument, asking which came first, but there is absolutely no disputing the fact that women continue to give life to our species. If we are truly going to have a biological definition, this is an appropriate switch.

In this research, the focus has been on patriarchal construction. However, it is worth mentioning that perverting language for religious purposes is another common factor between women and the "third world." Redefining pronouns and phrases that no longer represent a majority and changing language to fit our new understandings of the human race is paramount in assuring accurate histories are recorded in the future.

Wo-man [woo-muhn]:

Noun, plural (women)—creator of humankind, a person; pronouns—she, her—*someone, a creative spirit*
—*a caregiver, mother, daughter, sister, aunt, or a friend.*

I will agree with Webster's that a woman does belong to a particular category (as by birth, residence, membership, or occupation) but I argue this is incomplete. Womanliness is an experience, a way of living, an alliance, and the ultimate rejection of patriarchal leadership. I do not assume any one experience is more important than another, or that all experiences are the same. These characteristics are important to highlight because it is within this definition of womanliness that we share our most common bonds to the "third world."

Third World:

Noun—an obsolete phrase used when referring to countries that did not identify with either Western or Eastern politics during the Cold War. This term never described a specific geographic location, people, or specific political ideology. Historically fluid, it is useless for future generations. In its place, I argue the use of the phrase, *Third Power.*

Third Power:

Noun—an experience defined by economic growth, a way of life measured by cultural expansion in reaction to decolonization and a rebirth of nativism (or cultural nationalism), rejection of Cold War norms and social constructions, an alliance against the colonizer. These countries, territories, and marginalized groups are those that have been handicapped by either colonization, slavery, or patriarchy, and for some a combination of all three.

The current definitions are outdated and insultingly vague. By changing

the phrase "third world" to "third power" and adding "creator" to the basic definition of "woman," I hope to influence future scholars to discuss and address these groups with the respect they demand. Economically, politically, and culturally speaking, those that identify as part of the Third Power (women in particular) have the most potential for growth in the global market.

According to statistics from the United Nations, "when more women work, economies grow."⁸ Their spending power is geared toward education, children, and the home, ensuring increased educational attainment, investments in future growth, and solid sustainable economic growth. A study using data from 219 countries from 1970-2009 found that, for every one additional year of education for women of reproductive age, child mortality decreased by 9.5 percent.⁹ "It is calculated that women could increase their income globally by up to 76 [percent] if the employment gap and wage gap between women and men closed."¹⁰ Calculated to have a global value of 17 trillion dollars, women stand as the greatest potential economic stimulus left in the Western World.¹¹ It is time the world takes notice.

Gender differences in laws affect both global and domestic economies and women in all regions. "Almost 90 [percent] of 143 economies studied have at least one legal difference restricting women's economic opportunities. Of those, 79 economies have laws that restrict the types of jobs that women can do."¹² The international community must address these contradictions to ensure the healthy progression of society. Women's economic equality is good for business. Companies significantly benefit from increasing leadership opportunities for women, which is shown to increase organizational effectiveness. "It is estimated that companies with three or more women in senior management functions score higher in all dimensions of organizational effectiveness."¹³ Despite this, it is still acceptable in many countries to limit female participation in life outside

8 "Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment," *UN Women* (2015), accessed April 2, 2017.

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>

This article deals directly with women but the comparisons between women and the third power are striking. The statistics show that they are spending money on the same things and by doing so have increased their influence on the global market.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid. The figure itself comes from the article the argument is mine. It is reasonable to assume that no other factor in the Western world can stimulate the economy more than a force that could muster 17 trillion dollars in revenue by simply being treated on an equal footing.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

the home. One must only look at their governing bodies to see a physical representation of that limitation.

A lack of representation has started revolutions, broken empires, and split countries in two. Politically, there is no one group less represented than that of women. Female politicians, though sorely underappreciated, are responsible for some of the strongest governments in the world today. Germany and Sweden both maintain a high rate of feminine representation, and Third Power countries with the most aggressive economic growth share their political power almost 50/50 with women.¹⁴ The correlation between women in power and their direct effect on the economies in their area cannot be denied. Given the opportunity, women improve every aspect of life. Culturally, she is the torchbearer for all tradition.¹⁵

Cultural development begins with a woman, generally speaking, because of their constructed role in society. In nearly all communities, women are responsible, (in nearly all communities) for rearing children and maintaining the home. Childhood development is crucial in establishing societal norms, but often ignored as a critical factor in cultural development.¹⁶ The curiosity of life is encouraged in those first years, artistic ambitions sparked, confidence built. They are not referred to as the formative years as misnomer. Even if men are reshaped by their fathers for "the world" of men, they are first molded by women.¹⁷ Women are not only the greatest potential for economic and political growth, but they are the catalyst for development and the advancement of our society. Historically ignored, women are the last great frontier for reexamining our past. In a competitive academic world, Women's Studies/Gender Studies are

14 Ibid. Comparing the statistics from both show that countries projecting the most potential for growth also have the greatest female representation in government.

15 Without women, society and culture would fade away. (I feel stupid even explaining this. But I thought I should add this note in case someone want to question the source.) I am of course the source because you do not need research for this. It is common sense. However, it is important to remember this is also how we perpetuate are own continued socialization of women as a weaker sex. We are our own worst enemies most of the time.

16 Sherry B. Ortner, *Is the Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?*

M.Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (eds), *Woman, Culture, and Society*
Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press (1974), pp. 68-87

For an in depth analysis of why women perpetuate their subordinate role in society this is a good read. I do not agree with the paper entirely as it generalizes too much. She leaves out economic factors and does not take in to account that poverty drastically changes these dynamics. Large portions of the poorest parts of our society are ignored and their psychological profile has been dismissed in this study.

17 Ibid.

the source for the greatest potential of new growth in any field. In the words of the University of California-Santa Barbara Global Studies Department:

Feminist studies has suggested that both policies and analytic/critical work are impoverished if adequate attention is not paid to women. That is, the invisibility of women in most writings about global and international developments has meant that the labor, cultures and histories of women are rarely taken into account ... such work also rarely comments upon how women's role in the private domain impacts upon the public domain.¹⁸ Women are important and active members of society. Pretending otherwise has only crippled our past. History is doomed to repeat itself if those charged to remember instead forget. The first step in remembering is simply recording and reporting, but if definitions are unclear and words degrade the memory, the historian has failed in their most basic task. This is why a writer must constantly research and educate themselves, understand that change is a natural process, and be willing to embrace those changes while never forgetting the past. The research here has led to personal introspection. It started as an examination of the definitions of "woman" in Argentina (as shown in the bibliography), and became a personal challenge to define myself. A woman struggling to identify femininity, a force for good in this world, a human being expecting nothing but understanding of her world. I am woman, and I am powerful.

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Artist Spotlight

Kristi Smith

Texas Tech University



Two Humans
Watercolor on canvas

Women in the Military: The Reappearance of Arguments Used against Black Soldiers in the First World War

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University of Central Oklahoma

The role of women serving in the military has been a fiercely debated topic in the last three decades. The arguments against the women all suggest the idea that women cannot perform to the standards of men when it comes to competitive nature, unit cohesion, unit morale, and physical strength. These arguments are identical to the reasons given for racially segregating the military in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Comparing the arguments against the integration of black soldiers then and women today, I argue that the best way to move forward is to take a step back. Women can overcome all of the arguments against them by copying the methods used by black soldiers in the early 20th century. This can be shown by looking at how women are treated in the United States and other countries' militaries, looking at the arguments against allowing women to serve and comparing them to arguments against allowing black soldiers to serve, and showing how the black soldiers overcame the opposition.

Women have served in the United States military in some capacity for more than 150 years. The American Revolution saw figures like Deborah Sampson, who bound her chest and fought the British under the name Robert Shurtleff.¹ Four hundred women fought in the Civil War, like Frances Clayton, who disguised herself as Frances Clalin.² Twenty-five thousand women joined up as overseas nurses and support staff in the last two years of World War I. By the Second World War, that number had increased more than fivefold.³ Operation Desert Storm deployed more than 40,000 women to the Persian Gulf, making it the largest deployment of women in U.S. history.⁴ This

- ¹ Alessandra Codinha and Jackie Nickerson, "The Brave Faces of a New Generation of Women on the Front Lines," *Vogue*, March 03, 2017, <http://www.vogue.com/projects/13528881/american-women-in-the-military-female-soldiers/>.
- ² Sam Smith, "Female Soldiers in the Civil War on the Front Line," *Civil War Trust*, <http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/untold-stories/female-soldiers-in-the-civil.html>.
- ³ Codinha and Nickerson.
- ⁴ "Forgotten No Longer," *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 20, 1997, www.newspapers.com.

phenomenon is not a recent one, though, since women have taken part in every American war.

Despite this history of participation, women were banned from serving in ground combat roles in 1994. On December 3, 2015, Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta lifted the military's official ban.⁵ This allows women to now serve in combat roles in artillery, armor, infantry, and other frontline combat roles. However, women still are not fully accepted in these roles. They face restrictions, harassment, and public outcry when they attempt to fill roles that have always earned high esteem, such as the Navy Seals. Counter to this, about a dozen other countries around the world allow women in combat roles, which are defined as engaging an enemy on the ground while being exposed to hostile fire and a high probability of physical contact with the hostile forces personnel.⁶

The United States is now studying these countries because, as one unnamed official said, they have had "three to ten years to go through this process, to integrate women." The main countries looked at are Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Israel, New Zealand, and Norway.⁷ The findings that follow are from 2013; therefore, the numbers are now more likely to be higher.

In Australia, women account for roughly 10 percent of all deployed troops. In Canada, around 15 percent of military forces and 2 percent of combat troops are women. This includes the first female assigned to serve as captain of a Canadian warship and the first female deputy commanding officer of a combat arms unit. In Denmark, research showed that women performed just as well as men in land combat roles. However, physical requirements had prevented them from joining the country's Special Operations Forces. In France, women made up nearly one-fifth of the military but only made up 1.7 percent of combat forces by comparison. In Germany, nearly 800 female soldiers were serving in combat units. In Israel, women were serving in artillery units, in rescue forces, and in anti-aircraft forces. In New Zealand, women have been able to serve in all defense units, including infantry, armor, and artillery units. A report in 2005 found that the move helped drive a societal shift within New Zealand that "Values women as well as men." Finally, in 1985, Norway had become the first

5 Elisabeth Bumiller and Thom Shanker, "Pentagon Is Set to Lift Combat Ban for Women," *The New York Times*, January 23, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/24/us/pentagon-says-it-is-lifting-ban-on-women-in-combat.html>.

6 "8 Other Nations That Send Women to Combat," *National Geographic*, February 23, 2017, <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/13/130125-women-combat-world-australia-israel-canada-norway/>.

7 Ibid.

country in NATO to allow women to perform military service in all combat capacities.⁸

In being the first country to allow women in combat roles, Norway is the best example for the United States to follow. Colonel Ingrid Gjerde, who was the commander of the Norwegian forces in Afghanistan in 2012, said "I have to be clear: You have to meet the physical standards, because the job is still the same. It works very well as long as women hold the standards. It's not a big deal because women who go into these fields know the standards, and it's not that hard for women to train up to the standards if they really want."⁹ By holding women to the same standards of the men, the United States would counter all arguments against a woman's strength not comparing to a man's. In fact, a study on the integration of female combatants in the Israeli military between 2002 and 2005 found that women often exhibit "superior skills" in discipline, motivation, and shooting abilities, yet still face prejudicial treatment stemming from "a perceived threat to the historical male combat identity."¹⁰

This "threat" to military men's combat identity is just one of the many arguments against women. Some of these arguments focus on a woman's biology, such as the argument Newt Gingrich proposed in 1995 when he said, "Females have biological problems staying in a ditch for 30 days because they get infections and they don't have upper body strength."¹¹ Some arguments focus on emotions and sex, such as the argument Rick Santorum made in February 2012, "I do have concerns about women in front line combat. I think that could be a very compromising situation where, where people naturally, you know, may do things that may not be in the interests of the mission because of other types of emotions that are involved."¹² These arguments boil down to menstruation, jealousy, and the fear of men putting themselves in harm's way to rescue the women.

Other arguments against women in the military focus on breaking tradition or the impact women will have on the unit. These arguments eerily echo the cries of American military leaders when faced with desegregation in the early 20th century. Black soldiers, like women, have served since the Revolutionary War. After the Civil War, all black units were established under

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Chris Good, "Gingrich, Santorum on Women in Combat: Infections, Emotions," *ABC News*, January 23, 2013, <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2013/01/gingrich-santorum-on-women-in-combat-infections-emotions/>.

12 Ibid.

white officers such as the famous Buffalo Soldiers. When the First World War finally drew the United States into it, the arguments on whether or not blacks should be allowed to serve in combat roles came to the forefront. These arguments drew on the racist idea that black soldiers were inferior to all white soldiers.

During World War I, segregation was the norm for American institutions, including the military. During the 1890s, the Navy, which had previously been integrated, began to segregate the black troops by quietly assigning them to positions of menial labor.¹³ The Army had traditionally maintained four black regiments since the days of Reconstruction, however these units were not sent to Europe during World War I.¹⁴ This discrimination did not allow for many black Americans to advance to the rank of officer. Therefore, white officers, many of whom discriminated against their own men, led the black units that were sent to France.¹⁵

The first black troops sent overseas belonged to service units. This work was absolutely invaluable throughout the war. As soldiers took to the battlefields, black labor units became responsible for digging trenches, removing unexploded shells from fields, clearing disabled equipment and barbed wire, and burying soldiers killed in action. Despite all of this, the black troops received horrible treatment, more so than the combat units.¹⁶ The combat units received better treatment than the laborers, but faced the most scrutiny.

Articles ran in newspapers around the country arguing that black soldiers could not be effective in combat and backed up the claims with false information. One example of these arguments is an article that ran in the publication *Harvey's Weekly*. On November 1, 1919, the paper ran an article titled "The Negro Soldier."¹⁷ It claims that "much has been written in praise of the exploits of the negro troops in France" but "it is essential that facts be presented."¹⁸ This is followed by several "facts" about the black troops.

The first "fact" is that the legislation for allowing black soldiers "must inevitably lead to waste of great sums of Government money in training men whose record proves them incapable of meeting the demands of modern

warfare."¹⁹ This claim from 1919 that black soldiers cannot meet the demands of modern warfare reads the same as Mona Charen's 1997 argument against women when she states "men are physically stronger ... and physical strength is not yet irrelevant to warfare."²⁰ The second argument is against the Ninety-Second, which is one of the two black combat divisions that fought in France, and states that "the average period allotted for training white troops in France was four weeks. The Ninety-Second was in the training area seven weeks."²¹ Again, this argument that black soldiers take longer to train up to standards can be heard today on the website Sisters in Arms. A passage in the *Cons of Women in Combat* reads, "The standards of physical fitness have been set to suit men, and women attempting to reach them will over-stretch themselves."²²

The final argument in the *Harvey's Weekly* article is that the "quality of the negro enlisted man must be thoroughly understood. He cannot face a grilling fire. He is only fitted for the staff branches, where he will [be] far from the range of the artillery."²³ This argument of the lack of aggressiveness is yet again repeated today in Charen's article when she states, "Men are also more aggressive. War is horrible ... do we not want the toughest members of society to fight our wars?"²⁴ These arguments rely on ignorance. Therefore, facing these challenges, the black troops had to prove themselves in order to overcome the prejudice.

During the war, two black combat divisions were created, the 92nd and 93rd Divisions. The 92nd was created in October 1917 under the command of Brigadier General Charles C. Ballou, who had organized the first African American officer candidate school.²⁵ This unit was subject to setbacks from the onset of their training. Unlike almost every other American unit training to go into battle, soldiers from the 92nd were forced to train separately while in the United States because the War Department feared racial uprisings. Thus, they sacrificed the unit's ability to develop strong unit cohesion and pride.²⁶ This culminated at the Argonne Forest during the the Meuse-Argonne offensive in September of 1918. The 368th Infantry Regiment of the 92nd Division immediately

13 Sherie Mershon and Steven L. Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines: Desegregating the US Armed Forces* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). 12.

14 Ibid, 7.

15 Ibid, 4.

16 Jami Bryan, "Fighting for Respect: African-American Soldiers in WWI," *On Point*, 2003, <http://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/wwi/articles/fightingforrespect.aspx>.

17 "The Negro Soldier," *Harvey's Weekly*, November 1, 1919, books.google.com.

18 Ibid.

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20 Mona Charen, "Seven Reasons to Oppose Women in the Military," *The Daily Oklahoman*, August 27, 1997.

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22 "Women in Combat: Pros and Cons," *Sisters in Arms*, 2009, <http://sistersinarms.ca>.

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26 Ibid.

received orders to fill a gap between the American 77th Division and the French 37th Division.²⁷ However, due to their lack of training, shortages of equipment, and unfamiliarity with the terrain, the regiment did not successfully complete this important assignment. The failure to accomplish this tarnished the 92nd Division's combat record, and the example was used by military authorities for more than thirty years to prove the inadequacy of African American soldiers in combat.²⁸

Nevertheless, after the disaster in the Argonne, the entire division received high praise from the French while the American commanders used them as examples of inadequacy. They were sent to a relatively quiet area of the front in the Marbache sector where their primary mission was to harass the enemy with frequent patrols. For their aggressiveness and bravery at this post, the French decorated members of the 365th Infantry and 350th Machine Gun Battalion—all while the American commanders argued their dissatisfaction with the unit.²⁹

While the 92nd Division struggled to clear its reputation, the 93rd Division had a much more successful experience. The 93rd Division was also organized in December of 1917 and was commanded by Brigadier General Roy Hoffman.³⁰ The 93rd was comprised of National Guard units from New York, Illinois, Ohio, Maryland, Connecticut, Massachusetts, the District of Columbia, and Tennessee.³¹ In training, they faced the same obstacles as the 92nd and were forced to serve under racist commanders. Nonetheless, they were able to prove themselves early in their deployment.

France was exhausted and their armies were dwindling, so they begged the United States for men. General John Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Force, decided to give them the regiments of the 93rd Division. The first black combat troops to set foot on French soil belonged to the 93rd Division, and they were then armed, organized, and equipped as French units.³² The troops experienced some language difficulties but quickly adapted to their new role as they were treated as equals.

The 369th Infantry was the first regiment of the 93rd to reach France. After training with the French, the regiment was sent to the front lines in a region

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

just west of the Argonne Forest. They held their position against German assaults for nearly a month; then, after only a brief break from the front, they were placed in the middle of the German offensive at Minacourt, France. Here they helped the French drive the Germans from their trenches.³³ Through their tenacity in battle, the Germans nicknamed them the "Harlem Hellfighters."

During this time, the Germans were making many small night raids into Allied territory. During one of the raids, Corporal Henry Johnson of the 369th Infantry, fought off an entire German raiding party using only a pistol and a knife. He killed four Germans and wounded many more, allowing a wounded comrade to escape capture, and leading to the capture of a stockpile of German arms. Johnson and his comrade were both wounded and received the French Croix de Guerre for their gallantry, becoming two of the first Americans to receive it.³⁴ On June 2, 2015, Henry Johnson received the Medal of Honor for his actions almost one hundred years prior.³⁵

The 369th participated in the Meuse-Argonne offensive, and continued to fight exceptionally well throughout the remainder of the war. The regiment fought in the front lines for a total of 191 days, five days longer than any other regiment in the AEF. France awarded the entire unit the Croix de Guerre, along with presenting 171 individual awards for exceptional gallantry in action.³⁶ The other regiments in the division also performed well and won French awards, but the glory went to the 369th.

During the war, the black American soldiers won great fame in the eyes of the French. This was because they were treated as equals and given the opportunity to prove themselves. Their resolve also won them some fame back in the United States during the war. One newspaper article published in the *New York Age* stated that the French opinion of the black soldiers was "enthusiastic in their praise of 'El Yankie de Color,' both as a fighting man and men possessing all of the qualities and attributes of the superior races."³⁷ After the war, the men returned home as heroes. Even though the race issue was still prevalent, and race riots were taking place in different areas of the country, news articles sang their praise.

Articles detailing the stories of individual heroes such as Henry Johnson

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 "Family Gets Medal of Honor," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 4, 2015, www.newspapers.com.

36 Bryan, "Fighting for Respect."

37 "European Sentiment as to Black Soldiers," *The New York Age*, September 21, 1918, www.newspapers.com

Beauty Beyond the Kinks

Elizabeth Noel

University of Central Oklahoma

I shaved my head on January 7, 2017.

It was odd to feel the weight of shoulder-length hair slowly evaporate with the buzz of the razor. To not have to use shampoo and conditioner in the shower. To no longer have the need to brush or comb your hair when you get up in the morning. To feel the cold winter air blow over your head quicker than you can pull a hat down over your ears. To look in the mirror, right at your reflection, and still question if the person looking back is really you to begin with. To realize that one little thing, a small part of you, could leave such a large hole in your life.

During that time, no one knew that I shaved my head because I wore beanies until I had something that resembled hair again. School was starting back the following Monday, and I quickly decided that I was going to hide what I did, not because I was ashamed of it—cutting off my hair—or how I looked without it, but because doing so kept me from talking about things that I wasn't ready to address.

African-American hair is unique in a variety of ways. Some women wear wigs or extensions and others don't. Some like it long and others keep it short. Some love their hair and others hate it. After I shaved my head and my hair began to grow back in its natural state, I began to question my place in those groups, wondering if I lost a part of myself back on the 7th of January.

If you see a black woman in media these days, she most likely has straight, wavy, or slightly curled hair. Rarely will you see a black woman with a natural pixie cut — even rarer an afro — in film or television. Natural Black hair is not the “norm,” not how things are done or what is accepted. Black hair is often called or “disheveled,” “messy,” or “uncontrolled,” encouraging black women to turn to chemicals in an effort to straighten out their kinks and coils, just so they can “fit in” with the rest of the world.

I decided to get a relaxer after high school. Trying to do my hair in its natural form was very difficult. I wanted things to be easier. I did not want to spend hours every morning trying to make my kinks somewhat presentable

before I went to work. I did not want to pile handfuls of gels and creams onto my coils in an effort to keep the frizz at bay. I did not want to braid my hair every night, just to have a fighting chance of having working with something tame the following day. I wanted to be like the women I saw on television, waking up in the morning and being ready to go out the door after a few quick strokes of a brush. I wanted to wear styles that I knew were impossible to accomplish with my hair in its natural state.

I wanted normal, not unique.

Normalcy and I got along for two years, but by then I realized that the chemicals meant to straighten out my kinks were causing more harm than good. I noticed that I was missing chunks of hair from the back of my head it fell out and refused to grow back again, forcing me to wear my slowly thinning hair either down or in a low ponytail whenever I left my house. I went back to wearing hats. If I couldn't wear a hat, I wore a large headband. I tried to tell myself that it was nothing, that it happens, that it was typical. Deep down, I knew that it wasn't.

Another year passed before I accepted the fact that my hair wasn't going to grow back, that it was damaged beyond repair, and that I needed to do something. After months of research, I decided to “Big Chop” — a method of cutting off all of the chemically relaxed/damaged hair and leaving your natural hair behind. But for me, everything was damaged. There was no “natural hair” left.

So I shaved it all off.

Nearly two years have passed since my Big Chop, and I've come to realize one thing: I do not love my natural hair. I fall into the group of people who hate their natural hair. I don't like wearing it out for the world to see because, inevitability, someone will ask, “What's wrong with your hair?”

I don't talk about the day I shaved my head for a few reasons, but mainly because nobody around me knew about it. Anyone I met after the fact didn't know what I had done. I lacked friends who knew what I was going through to confide in. Not having anyone who knew what I was thinking or considering made this day seem very lonely to face. Even after the deed was done, I kept to myself, wondering in the back of my newly bare head if I made a mistake.

Was straight, albeit damaged, hair better to have than kinky hair that shrinks by 90 percent? Was being “normal” better than being unique?

It is odd, looking at yourself in the mirror, but it can also be empowering. Kinks and coils may not be normal, but they are beautiful. And I may not love them, but they are me.

Contributors



Jessica Appleby is an assistant professor of French at the University of Central Oklahoma with a PhD from the University of Colorado. Her research interests focus on medieval and Renaissance epic poetry, with secondary interests in the French graphic novel, gender and sexuality studies, sci-fi/fantasy, and pop-culture pedagogy. Her current project maps the violence of epic poetry as enacted on the female body.



At present time **Kateryna Bortsova** is a painter/graphic artist with BFA in graphic arts and MFA. Kateryna's works have appeared in many international exhibitions (Taiwan, Moscow, Munich, Spain, Macedonia, Budapest etc.). She also won a silver medal in the Realism category in participation in "Factory of Visual Art," New York, and the 2015 Emirates Skywards Art of Travel competition, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.



Jordan Broiles is a senior at the University of Central Oklahoma pursuing a bachelor degree in Strategic Communication with a minor in Gender and Sexuality Studies. He is currently the president of UCO's Diversity Round Table and is part of the 2018 Research Integration Strategies Evaluation (RISE) Grad Prep program at the University of Southern California. His academic research interest is studying how African American males conceptualize their idea of masculinity, gender, and sexuality.

Jacob Crystal is a second-year graduate student at the University of Central Oklahoma. He is currently studying to get his Master of Arts in Literary Studies. Jacob's research interests include gender and sexuality, feminism, and post colonialism. He divides his time between teaching first-year composition courses, and archiving the oral history of the grassroots activist group Herland Sister Resources.



Bridget Cuadra is a History major and Gender and Sexuality Studies minor at the University of Central Oklahoma. Her research interests are the African Diaspora and Gender history. Bridget works at UCO's Women's Research and BGLTQ+ Student Center, where she researches women's reproductive rights and topics related to sexual health.



James P. Gregory, Jr., is a second year Master's student in History: Museum Studies at the University of Central Oklahoma. He works as a Teaching Assistant in the Department of History & Geography. His research interests include military history, specializing in World War I and the Cold War.



Abigail Griffin is a true 90's kid and a fan of foul and foreign language. She's an American Sign Language interpreter by morning, a UCO Creative Writing student by afternoon, and a German student by night. She loves to laugh and will probably be the loudest person laughing/sneezing, in any room. Abigail enjoys finding new ways of sticking it to the man in her daily life, believes black lives matter, trans individuals are as important as the rest of us, and is a proud member of the queer community.





Elisabeth Ponce-Garcia is the corresponding author for "Sexual Communication." She holds a PhD in developmental psychology with a specialty in resilience. Her Science of Protective Factors Lab focuses on building resilience in adolescence, where she initiates research to better understand the developmental tasks of emerging and early adulthood, the dynamic interplay between factors of childhood development and adult development, and how best to measure resilience in populations with specific, and sometimes unique, risk factors and trauma.



Elizabeth Noel is a student studying English (Creative Writing) and Psychology at the University of Central Oklahoma. In her free time, she enjoys researching new ideas for her projects, rereading her favorite novels, and taking pictures. "Beauty Beyond the Kinks" is her first publication.



Ankita Rathour is a PhD candidate living in Baton Rouge. Her research interests include postcolonial theory, crime films and literature, and gender studies. She has authored a poetry book, several poems, and short stories including a detective story. Her work has appeared in India, in the United Kingdom and the United States.



Kristi Smith was born and raised in Oklahoma. She completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at Cameron University, and is now working towards a Master of Fine Arts at Texas Tech University. She has been creating artwork all of her life, and hopes to continue that passion by hopefully working with art students through teaching.

Cynthia Wiley is an English major with a Creative Writing minor in her senior year at the University of Central Oklahoma. She currently holds presidency over UCO's Golden Ponies Writers Guild and dedicates the majority of her time to creative non-fiction and social activism. When she is not bribing local venues to let her read her work publicly, she is taking her unwilling and grumpy, elderly cat on walks and reading anything Kurt Vonnegut.



Stephanie Wooley is a graduate of the University of Central Oklahoma, where she obtained a B.A. in Museum Studies and an M.A. in Latin American History. She was an avid member of the German Club and a longtime worker in the Women's Research and BGLTQ+ Student Center. Her research focuses on the erosion of Palestinian land from removal of olive trees.



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