

**Sex: The Critical Truth**

**Stories of Rejection, Resistance and Self-Discovery**

Joaquin Vargas

Senior Thesis 2016

Department of Anthropology, Haverford College

March 24, 2016

## Acknowledgements:

First, I would like to thank Christopher Roebuck my advisor, for all of his insightful help in making this work stronger and more interesting.

Second, I would like to thank Raquel Joyce for all the amazing support, time and energy she has invested in me. She believed in me when I didn't believe in myself, and helped me make this work what it is.

Third, I would like to thank my parents for all their support over the years. You are so wonderful and I am so lucky to be your son.

Fourth, I would like to thank all my interviewees. You are amazing, inspirational, and courageous. Without you all there would be no work. I write this for you, Find strength and power in yourself. For you are powerful and beautiful and wise beyond measure.

Fifth, I would like to thank all my freshman on the Tritton Upper East Hall. You are my rays of sunshine through the darkness.

Finally, I would like to my best friends, Kayla Montaque, Breanna D'Antonio, Rachel Davies, and last but not least Itzel Delgado. You are all my rocks, without you I would be here finishing this work. Thank you for your strength, and your love. You all mean the world to me.

**Abstract:**

Sexuality. What about it matters so much? Why is it a crucial part of who we are as humans? Why are we defined by it? For this work I set about interviewing people about their sexualities, as well their ideas surrounding sexuality (i.e. heterosexual is the only acceptable sexuality). With a particular focus on non-heterosexual identities and practices, I was particularly interested in understanding the ways that people stick out from “normal” ideas of sexuality and sexual practices and how they navigated through moments of stigmatization or disapproval. The five people I interviewed and their stories make up the body of this work. For, the focus of this thesis, among others, was to empower and give voice to these five, their experiences and identities. But, this thesis also functions as a sustained critique of the way society understands and conceives of sexuality. The experiences of the five demonstrate that sexuality is a critical truth inscribed onto the human body. It acts as a powerful identifier. This Truth is then heavily controlled and regulated by society to ensure deviation from the heterosexual and exclusive path is minimized. Those who deviate from the path can either face a life of “deviance” and “abnormality” or make their own path forward. These paths though varied and unique bring liberation, resistance and self-awareness.

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction .....	4-12
a. My story .....	4-5
b. Literature .....	5-10
c. Methodology .....	10-12
2. Molly's Story .....	13-19
3. Dan's Story .....	20-26
4. Lilly's Story .....	27-35
5. Alex's Story .....	35-41
6. Evan's Story .....	42-48
7. Our Story .....	49-51
8. Works Cited .....	52-55

## Introduction

### Section I: My Story

Let's talk about sex. Sex seems to dominate just about everybody's life whether they want it to or not. It seems to perpetually be the hot button issue. But why? Why do our sexualities matter so much? Why are they so central to our identities? Why do they function as our Truth?<sup>1</sup> Let me take you on a journey of discovery, hardship and resistance. It starts with a boy (me) and his story.

Growing up a curious young boy, I grabbed onto anything and everything around me. I touched it, felt it, and learned everything I could about it. As I got older that included knowledge, specifically sexual knowledge. I was so curious to learn about this topic. It was taboo and so interesting. I was embarrassed but so fascinated. Whether it was a movie with a sex scene, a sex therapy book, or a book explaining puberty, I got my hands on it, and explored it. The combination of arousal, desire and fascination was an irresistible combination. However, this knowledge took on an urgent feeling when I discovered, and eventually admitted to myself, that I was gay. Suddenly sexuality, sex, relationships, love, and gender took on this whole other meaning. I wasn't sure who I was allowed to be attracted to, what kinds of desire I could admit to. How horny was I allowed to be? What kinds of sexual acts was I allowed to have admitted doing? Was it vagina or nothing at all? My sexuality became a hotbed of activity. Once I was gay and out, sex was all I seemed to want to talk about. What kinds of sex do you have? Who do you do them with? Did/do you sleep with him or her or them? Gender and sexuality studies called my name. Michel Foucault and Judith Butler called out to me from inside

of their dusty bindings, with their detailed and intricate theories of socialization and sexuality. And so, I dove headfirst into the study of sexuality. Before I knew what had happened, it was my senior year of college and time to create my own body of work. The only logical step was to research and write a thesis centered on sex. And so it began.

I started with the question why is it hot for two women to make out but not two men. This was a broad question that allowed me to explore non-heterosexual identities while also exploring a lot of other subtopics of gender and sexuality. Topic in hand, I poured myself into book after book centered on gender, sexuality or sex. I slowly began to realize that at the center of this thesis was my own work to understand myself and my identity better. Every theory, every idea about sexuality helped me get closer to understanding my sexual self and how that relates to my larger identity. Coming out gay, I took myself off the common road, the heterosexual dating, sex marriage, and children. And so, I had to find myself and find my own road. And thus we have this work, the love child of my passion for sex and sexuality, my desire to find myself, and a newer but equally potent passion to reach out to others like myself, who forged their own paths (out of necessity), or will need to do so one day. There are so many of us out there for whom the “normal” road is too narrow and too exclusive. There is no clear path forward, so we must build our own. To those people, my people, please know that this is for you.

## **Section II: Literature**

In the course of researching this topic, I read many works of gender, sex, and sexuality. However, the influence of these scholars on my work and myself is far beyond that which I have physically included in this work. Thus I write this section in an

effort to illuminate you, my readers, to the many interesting and influential scholars and theories I have read in the creation of this work. Furthermore, I do so in hopes that you get a better understanding of what scholarship and thought this work comes from, so you can better understand my process and my result.

The first scholar, I read during this process was Jane Ward. The premise of and argument behind Ward's book, *Not Gay, Sex Between Straight White Men*, is that the heterosexual white man in particular, adamantly rejects homosexuality but also use homosexuality to reaffirm their own heterosexuality. Ward gave a wide array of examples ranging from fraternity events where pledges must engage in sexual behavior with each other to the 'navy initiation rituals involving cross-dressing, spanking, simulated ejaculation, nipple piercing'" to the way in which men " go to great and performative lengths to reject people and things associated with" homosexuality.<sup>2</sup> Ward's text was particularly powerful in the way that it complicated the way I understood sexuality. For, Ward effectively demonstrated that certain sexual behavior does not equate to a certain orientation as people use sex for many different reasons. Furthermore, she demonstrated that sexuality is much more of a complicated, multi-faceted identity than an straightforward informational label. Ward was also particularly influential because of the in which she introduced me to an expansive network of gender and sexuality scholar and theories. Through her work she exposed me to many gender and sexuality scholars, and explained a lot of their theories. Thus, Ward was a powerful introduction to my thesis research, effectively challenging the notions of sexuality I had before.

The next influential scholar I read was Lisa Diamond and her work, *Sexual Fluidity: Understanding Women's Love and Desire*. This work focused on the innately sexually fluid nature of women's sexuality and the ways in which we can break down sexuality into different parts and pieces (orientation, identity, and behavior) for a more complicated and nuanced understanding of sexuality. Diamond's idea about breaking down sexuality into certain pieces was extremely influential in how I began to personally conceive of sexuality. Thus, I used this in my questions, asking my interviewees about their sexual (orientation, behavior, desire, identity, and gender) in order to fully understand their sexuality. The work was also a great introduction to the concept of sexual fluidity; pushing me to think about the ways that people's sexual desire can shift and change over time. But, I found Diamond's notions about the innately sexually fluid nature of women to be lacking. While Diamond may have indeed found women to be sexual fluid in their sexual desire and behavior, biology is not the sole Truth (T meaning the only truth). Reading Foucault and Butler provides robust theory surrounding how laws and regulation of laws (society) shape and define people<sup>3</sup> and thus how the societal influence on our sexualities is prominent. I would thus pushback and say that women are sexually fluid because society allows them to be, more so than men.<sup>4</sup> Thus, Diamond was a great introduction into pushing back against certain gender and sexuality theory as well as understanding the social implications of our society regarding sexuality.

The next scholar that really grabbed my attention was Jonathan Katz, and his work, *The Invention of Heterosexuality*. His work set about challenging the notion that heterosexuality is the innate nature of human sexuality, doing so via a historical approach. Katz demonstrates that in the recent past of the United States and parts of

Europe, people had different ways of conceiving of sexual identities (reproductively focused in the 1600's, loved focused in the Victorian era, etc.). Thus he dissects heterosexuality, and the normalized way in which it functions as an identifier. For, a heterosexual man denotes a man who is sexually attracted to women, has sex with women, and who is romantically attracted to women. This all-in-one identifier drastically varies from the original meaning of the term, one that has sexual activity with someone of the opposite sex.<sup>5</sup> Katz's work really clinched for me the notion that the way we understand sexuality (via heterosexuality) is a modern creation and that it changes over time. Furthermore, Katz was instrumental in my belief that society creates notions of sexuality that they then label as innate and wield as truth. Finally, he was a great introduction to some of the history of sex and sexuality, providing me with a working understanding of the different ways people have conceived of sex and sexuality and the reasons behind it.

C.J. Pascoe and her work, *Dude, You're A Fag*, was the next scholar who really spoke to me. Her work was a powerful and illuminating ethnography about the ways schools and their environments heavily reinforce heterosexuality, focusing particularly on masculinity, and the way in which schoolboys use the word "fag" to monitor and check one another's<sup>6</sup> masculinity.<sup>7</sup> Pascoe was particularly influential because of the style of her work (ethnography), and the express focus on sexuality among teens. She was a great example to utilize when envisioning what I wanted for my own work. Furthermore, she powerfully illuminated the particular power our peers hold in influencing our sexualities, a theme that was central to my understanding of the influencers of sexuality. Pascoe also worked well with gender and sexuality theory, deftly applying theory I had previously

read about to specific and familiar situations, peers and schools. She demonstrated how to effectively use theory to magnify and explain situations. She was a great resource to read while envisioning my own ethnographic work.

Finally, Michael Warner with his works, *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, and *The Trouble with Normal*, was the last scholar to play an instrumental role in the creation of this work. His works were particularly influential in the way that they explained gay identity politics and drastically compared queer politics. *Fear of a Queer Planet* goes about explaining the goals and focus of queer politics as well as those of the identity queer; queer and queer politics focused on rejecting heterosexuality and normalcy in favor of inclusivity.<sup>8</sup> *The Trouble with Normal* on the other hand questioned notions and conceptions surrounding being normal, specifically linking these notions to gay identity politics and their work to be incorporated into “normal” society. In doing so the work described how lesbian and gay activists focused on turning gay and lesbian into an identity not a sexual practice, in their effort to become incorporated into society.<sup>9</sup> Reading the two works together, illuminated for me the vast difference in tactic and goals, queer being one of resistance and rejection of heterosexual society, while gay and lesbian was one of incorporation. Beyond this though, Warner got me thinking about the ways in which certain sexualities fit into our common understanding of normal, and how others flat out reject notions of normalcy in favor of inclusivity. Warner pushed me to think about what normal means and whether it is worth achieving or not.

Combined, the scholars and their works helped develop my theoretical framework, my understanding of sexuality, and the notions of sexuality to the point that I have included in this work.

### **Section III: Methodology**

To bring my passions and this project to life, I decided to interview people about sex and sexuality. Initially, I wanted to interview them about their sexualities (made up of their sexual desire, behavior, gender, orientation, and identity), ideas (and the people behind them) about sexuality they had encountered, and the influence of these ideas. I had a specific focus on non-heterosexual identities and “abnormal” sex practices, for I was very interested in how people navigated identities or practices popularly believed to be “abnormal”, unacceptable or strange. Regarding population sample, I decided to interview college students. Their availability to me, as well as the likely chance that they are sexually active and willing to discuss topics of sex and sexuality, made them ideal participants in my study. And so, I reached out to a nearby college community via an online forum, and obtained five willing participants to tell me about their sexual selves. Each of these five had a unique sexual identity and or sexual practice. I sent each participant an informational consent form to ensure every participant was informed and willing before the interview process began.

For each interview, I asked the same ten questions: how would you describe the concept of the five parts of sexuality (sexual desire, behavior, gender, orientation, and identity) and how would you describe your own sexual desire, behavior, gender, orientation, and identity. This was to get at their notions of sexuality and to get them to

describe their own sexuality. But, I also had a set of unofficial questions asking where their notions of these concepts came from, as well as how they navigated through stigmatized or shamed identities or behavior. These set of questions were much more individually based; delving deeper into the certain areas and experiences which stood out for me in each interview. During the process I was mostly silent, making sure to actively listen and let my participants speak their mind but did at times, ask clarifying and follow-up questions. Furthermore, at certain times I spoke about some of my sexual experiences so as to provide a sense of solidarity and connection with my interviewees. After the interview finished, I thanked each participant and gave them a copy of their signed consent form, to ensure that they would have it should they need it.

The next step was to personally transcribe each interview, so that I could not only quote my participants but also be thoroughly connected and familiar with each interview and participant. During the transcription process I made sure to transcribe nearly all of their words, only omitting filler words such as like or um. I was also sure to complete each sentence of each transcribed interview, as sometimes my participants did not speak in full sentences. The goal of the transcription process was to transcribe as much as possible while also ensuring that you, my reader, could in fact read and understand their words (in the form of quotes).

After the transcription process was complete, the next big focus was deciding what content to use and for what purpose. In the creation of this work, I very specifically wanted to create a piece that gave power and voice to my interviewees and their experiences. I wanted to share not only their unique sexualities but their struggles as well. Thus, I wanted my work to be dominated by story while also making a larger statement

about the way sexuality is understood and constructed. During the interview process, certain unique themes emerged in each of the five interviews. So, I decided to capitalize on these unique themes in creation of the story that I wanted to dominate my work. I pieced together the three unique themes that each interviewee talked about during their interviews, and created five narratives. Each narrative consisted of an introduction, briefly outlining the experiences that made up each of the themes, the three unique themes, analysis for each theme, and a conclusion. The analysis consisted of exploring interesting gender and sexuality questions and theories brought up by each of the themes. Combined the analysis made up a sustained critique of the way that society understands and constructs sexuality. Each conclusion connects the experiences of each interviewee, while also connecting the set of analysis demonstrating what the experiences of each interviewee tell us about sexuality.

Combined, these five people demonstrate the critical importance our society places on our sexualities, made up of our sexual desire, gender, sexual behavior, and our sexual identity. For, our sexuality effectively function as our Truth. Society actively seeks to control this Truth in order to keep us in line with the carefully constructed heterosexual and seclusive norm. Those who deviate from the carefully “constructed” normal path (masculine/feminine, sexual, penis-vagina, straight man or woman) are saddled with feelings of “deviance”, “abnormality” and exclusion. From here, these outcasts can continue to suffer or make their own path forward. These new paths offer liberation, agency and comfort. But they all look different, whether it’s blending in, standing out, or finding comfort in an all-inclusive label like queer.

## Chapter 1: Molly's Story

“Um well, me personally, I am pretty much down for anything. Um, whether it's you know BDSM<sup>10</sup>, or like aggressive sex, or you know soft romantic.” - **Molly.**

Meet Molly. Molly identifies as a very sexually open person who acts upon her desires. Growing up, Molly received most of her information about sexuality from her parent's religious views and her school's simplistic and heterosexually focused version of sex. So, when it came to understanding and expressing her own desires, which included sexual behavior beyond that which she was taught, Molly was lacking in knowledge. When Molly told others about some of her “abnormal” sexual behavior she was met with judgement and a lack of support, her private behavior coming under fire and control of others. However, Molly has found sex to be a particularly unique space. For, in this space gender expectations are clearly exposed and sex can be a liberatory and empowering force. Molly's narrative is centered around her parent's and school narrow and heterosexually focused sexual information, the ways in which her private sexual life has become public, and how she views sex as a space to expose gender expectations and as a liberatory space.

Molly draws us into her narrative by first telling us about the sexual information she received growing up. Her experiences of being denied certain information lead us to question notions of acceptable. Molly dives right into her narrative saying, “I guess I

would start with like parents, they are the ones who teach you about sex in general and um then you know like contraceptives but I remember having conversations about like sex and there was no mention about fetishes or anal sex or anything, it was just like you know, vaginal and the penis penetrates and then like that will be it and like just use protection.” Molly introduces us to her belief that parents are the ones who teach you about sex or should be the ones. However, Molly’s parents ended up giving her little else beyond talk of penile penetration and protection. Unfortunately, this was also the case with sexual education at school. As Molly said later in her interview, sex education at her high school was narrow and limited in nature, Molly specifically labeling this education as “heterosexually focused and very seclusive.” Thus, two major sources of sexual information turned out to be insufficient sources of information for anything beyond the basics of sex. So, when Molly and her partner at the time decided to first engage in anal sex, they had to figure “it out together”, exposing themselves to the dangers of trial and error sex because of their lack of information. After trial and error, Molly went looking for useful information but was either met with a sense of wrongdoing for their actions, or (with porn) a lack of good information. In this way, Molly not only received a lackluster education, but also was then denied access to other forms of sexual information.

Molly’s experiences allow us to explore the interesting notion of acceptable sexuality. Through her experiences we can begin to examine and question the ways in which society exercises control over sexual information and sexuality. Behind Molly’s sexual education, was an understanding of “normal”, acceptable sexuality. For both sexual educators, this was heterosexual vaginal penetration. Thus, this is was what she

was taught. But this notion about normal sexuality also extended to Molly's ability to access other forms of information. For, anal sex was/is not included in this understanding of normal, thus when Molly went looking for information beyond parents and school, she was met with resistance. Thus, I believe that the notions Molly's educators held about "normal" sexuality, stemmed from a larger understanding of "normal" sexuality, our societal understanding of "normal" sexuality. Following this line of inquiry, society and its' notions of sexuality then majorly controlled Molly's access and exposure to sexual information. They exercised a tight grip on the sexual information she was exposed to or access to. But, then the question is why. Why the tight grip on sexual information? What is our society trying to accomplish by exercising this control?

Moving beyond sexual information, Molly introduces us to the ways in which society tries to control our sexual actions themselves. Her second set of experiences effectively bring our attention to the peculiar notion of how the private sexual actions of people become public and thus shamed. Molly begins by saying, "I feel that if you're with a partner it shouldn't really matter what society is thinking because you're performing these acts with your partner, secluded in a room, there's nobody to stop you." Here, Molly speaks to the paradoxical experience of performing/engaging in socially unacceptable sex (anal sex), despite the fact that she is performing said acts behind closed doors. For Molly, it shouldn't matter what society deems appropriate or acceptable for sex happens behind closed doors. Molly mentioned later in her interview, that she had specifically experienced this judgement of her private life, while talking to a medical professional at her college's health center. When Molly went to get birth control at her school's health center, the staff member administering the birth control, asked about her

sexual behavior. When Molly mentioned anal sex she got the distinct sense of disapproval, the medical professional believing Molly's actions were "not correct". But why does this health professional care about Molly's behavior? Where does this disapproval come from? Is it because it strays from the societal notions of acceptable sexual behavior that Molly mentioned earlier? This experience, one of several for Molly, demonstrates how the private sexual acts of someone become the property and domain of the public. Interestingly I do a similar thing in writing this work, exposing her to the public. But, I do so with her permission in order to empower others like her who have faced judgement and othering. But, back to the narrative at hand, once in the public, Molly's actions are open to criticism and judgement. Her experience leaves us questioning. Why is our private behavior so important, so critical? Where does the judgement of certain sexual acts come from and why? What effect does a couple or group of people have on the outside world by performing consensual sexual acts?

Molly's particular experiences with acceptance, privacy, and sex lead us down the extremely interesting road of the public nature of our private sex lives. Furthermore, her experiences push us to question why our sexual behavior is matter of contention and control. Michel Foucault in his work, *The History of Sexuality*, is particularly helpful and relevant in answering this question. In this work, Foucault analyzed the Victorian era and the specific notion that this was an era of heavy sexual repression. In his analysis he uncovered more than repression, discovering an obsession with sex in the form of the heavy regulation surrounding it. For as Foucault pointed out, when a society is putting so much energy behind something, they are really fueling and fixating upon it.<sup>11</sup> So to in the case of acceptable and unacceptable private sexual acts today. Our society's actions of

judgement, and control of sexual information, reveal an avid fixation with sex. And so, perhaps in thinking about the question of why, we can begin to see the valuation our society places on sex. Perhaps our society views sex as something critical, that needs to be protected and preserved. But then to what end? What does our sexual behavior reveal about our larger selves in the eyes of society? What can they see?

Molly's narrative comes to end with her final set of experiences centered around the unique way Molly understands sex. For, Molly understands sex as a space which clearly exposes gender expectations and which empowers her. Molly draws us into her world saying, "Yeah, I definitely think your gender influences your sexuality, like with my sex life. Females are expected to be more like submissive and like more flirtatious and seductive whereas the man has to be like in control, and like he's in command, like what you do or like how you act or how you even like flirt with him on the cellphone." Molly tells us about the interesting ways gender or more specifically gender expectations come to life during sex. Her words provide a great example of how these expectations center around sex, what one gender expects of the other. Molly believes women are expected to be submissive and flirtatious during sex, while men are supposed to be in control. She builds on this notion, revealing later on in the interview, how men in the past have asked her to send them "something". Molly reads this as men positioning themselves as stereotypical aggressors and sexual beings while positioning women as their sexual objects, asked after. But this exposure of gender expectations is not restricted to the men Molly talks to.

When speaking about the more physical type of sex Molly engages in, Molly mentioned that people tend to misread the situation as abusive. They expressly place the blame on her male

partners. These people thus reify gender expectations, placing the agency and domination into the hands of Molly's male partners while robbing her of her own interests and agency. But, Molly challenges this, using sex, instead as a form of liberation. Whether it's anal sex or more physical/rough sex, Molly channels sex as a way to challenge the expectations placed upon her gender. She sees sex as a way to grant herself agency, engaging in all types of behaviors not often offered to her gender, whether it's control or specific types of sexual behavior. For Molly, sex can be powerful and freeing, offering a unique opportunity to grant her the agency and power she is denied in everyday society. Thus, Molly views sex as the interesting space in which to both expose gender expectations as well as challenge these expectations and empower herself. She really clinches this for us with her words saying, "I'm able to act upon these desires that go beyond the gender binaries and I'm able like to do these things in the bedroom that goes beyond what my gender is allowed to do and so that kind of makes me feel empowered."

Molly's experience opens up an interesting and unique avenue through which to read sex as liberatory. In conventional heterosexual sex, the man is the penetrator and the woman is the penetrated, respectively followed by dominant and submissive roles. However, as Molly illuminated, this is not the full extent of sexual expression. There are a plethora of different sexual behaviors, many which actively challenge traditional gender-based sexual roles and expectations, from strap-ons, to anal play, to dominatrices, the list is endless. Sex can effectively topple these traditional gender roles and expectations. The only barriers to these sexual behaviors are our own personal disinterests or societal othering via the labeling of certain sexual acts as "abnormal", "deviant" or "perverse". But here within lies the problem. How easily can one disentangle their personal disinterest from the societal othering and shaming of most

sexual acts beyond the traditional heterosexual acts (penetration, oral sex, etc.)? How deeply embedded into our minds, specifically our desire, are societal notions of acceptable sexual behavior and shameful, strange or dirty sexual acts. Molly's experiences demonstrate the unique power and liberation sexual behavior can offer from sexual expectations. They also demonstrate how intertwined sex and gender can be, specifically centered around the expectations surrounding the sexual acts one should perform based on their gender. Under the lens of sex, gender and its expectations becomes incredible magnified, allowing it to then be challenged.

Through Molly's eyes we witness, and can begin to understand, her identity and her set of experiences. From her limited access to sexual information she had growing up, to people and society commenting on her private sexual behavior, to the sexual expectations specifically surrounding gender, which she sees clearly and challenges. Molly has had to find her own path because of the way she strays from "normal" sexual behavior in her sexual desires and behavior. But, Molly has found agency, liberation and knowledge in her struggle to act upon her "deviant" sexual desires and sexual behavior. Through her eyes we can begin to uncover the fascination our society has with controlling the sexual information we access and our sexual behavior. Through her experiences we can begin to view sexual behavior as a critical site of control, as well as rebellion, liberation and agency. Thus, we can ask why does our sexual behavior matter? What investment does society have in our sexual behavior?

## Chapter 2: Dan's Story

“They usually notice that something is up when I don’t finish, when we have been doing things for hours, and I still don’t finish. I tell them oh no don’t worry about it or it’s ok, or I don’t want the mess, that’s usually one of my excuses.” - **Dan.**

Meet Dan. Dan identifies as “half-way to asexual”, lacking in sexual desire but not romantic desire. For this reason, he does not gravitate towards a particular sexual orientation, believing that sexual orientation is predicated on sexual desire. Growing up, Dan heard certain messages telling him how he as a man should behave sexually, from enjoying blowjobs, to having lots of sex, to liking women. Thanks to both media and personal sources, these messages successfully pushed Dan to believe sex was critical to a man. However, when it comes to his sexual identity Dan is a little more nuanced, choosing to identify as straight performing because of the comfort and safety he finds in the straight<sup>12</sup> label. Through his specific experiences with asexuality, heavily sexualized gender messages, and performing his identity, we can begin to challenge the supposed innately sexual nature of human beings, uncover the interlocked nature of sex and gender and examine the safety and validity behind performing certain identities.

Dan draws us into his narrative by first identifying his asexual nature. These first set of experiences lead us to effectively challenge the notion that sex is a critical part of human beings. When speaking about his feelings and desires surrounding sex Dan says,

“I realized that I would never seek sex for sex’s sake. I would never pay for sex and I don’t know why people do.” Dan gives us a sharp and specific insight into how he feels about the purely physical nature of sex. He has not taste for it and does not understand why others do it. For, as Dan said later in his interview, he would enjoy a “good back scratching a lot more than sex”. Specifically, Dan receives little to no amount of physical pleasure from sex. He mentioned that he might just be missing some nerves. But, sex is not that simple for Dan. For, he does enjoy and engage in sex, but for the express purpose of his partner’s sexual enjoyment. He likes to please them. However, it is also very important to note that Dan does enjoying pleasuring just anyone. He specifically enjoys pleasuring the people he cares about. For Dan, sex and enjoying it is all about pleasing those he cares about. The key element is the connection between Dan and his partner, for without some relationship sex is just a physical act for Dan, one that is not enjoyable. This strongly feeds into Dan’s identity as asexual but not aromantic. Dan’s specific connection and nature to sex thoroughly challenges and complicates the way we understand sex and connection. For, he is asexual but engages in sex. He does not enjoy the physical nature of sex, but enjoys the emotional fulfillment nature of sex. This indicates to me that the way sex is understood currently is too simplistic. For as Dan illuminates, sex is not solely pleasure or a lack of pleasure, it is about the situations and people surrounding it. Sex is also a mix of physical and emotional fulfillment, which coexist in varying degrees in everybody. Sex is not straightforward or simple and thus neither are the identities (heterosexual, homosexual, asexual, pansexual, etc.) behind them.

Dan's specific experience swiftly and deftly complicates the way we define and understand sexuality. As we learned, Dan identifies as asexual but does engage in sex and does get something out of it, not physical but emotional fulfillment. Is this inline with how we as a society define and understand asexuality? Does every person who identifies as asexual feel this way? Or does it depend on their romantic nature? Regardless of the answer, as Dan demonstrates sex, romance, and fulfillment combine in unique and intricate ways beyond that which are defined in the identity of asexuality. But the critique of sexuality does not stop there. Dan also pushes back against the way we largely understand and define sexuality. When speaking about sexual orientation, Dan believed himself to be unable to answer the question fully, because of his lack of sexual desire, for the concept of sex itself is uninteresting to him. In this moment he pushed back against my string of questioning that implied sexual desire and pushed back against the sexual labeling system at hand that does the exact same thing. In this implication it is flawed and basic. How can one have a sexual orientation without sexual feelings towards someone else? How can be sexually attracted to someone else without sexual feelings? Our terms for defining sexuality are designed for people who have sexual drive and in this way they queer (other, make abnormal) and exclude those who are not. This term (sexual orientation) indicates that sex has been inscribed onto the human body. We are understood and defined as sexual beings. But as Dan proves, this is simply not true, and has been inaccurately inscribed onto our bodies.

Dan's narrative moves to the topic of sexualized gender messages. Dan's second set of experiences expose us to the intertwined nature of sex (sexual behavior) and gender, leading us to questions what is gender without sex. Introducing us to this topic

Dan says, “My grandmother used to watch telenovelas and you would always see the stereotypes, it’s not just telenovelas you see them in Hollywood movies and everywhere else. The guys only want sex, they only want to be with women or court them because they want sex. That is the end all be all, which is fucked up in enough ways.” Dan identifies the specific messages about sex and gender he heard growing up, sex and sexual desire a defining and thus critical part of a man. He demonstrates how gender and sexual behavior become tightly interwoven in the body of a man. Furthermore, Dan received similar sexualized gender message from more personal sources like boys that Dan knew and his brother. While Dan’s brother would sometimes tell him about the sexual things he did with his girlfriend, boys Dan knew would sit around talking about the sexual acts they had done (regardless of how true their statements were). This is not at all surprising for as scholar C.J. Pascoe discusses in her work, sex, especially performing a sexualized identity is a critical part of masculinity.<sup>13</sup> Thus, Dan was successfully pushed (for a time) to believe that sex is what makes a man. Through Dan’s eyes we can see the specific ways that sex (sexual behavior) and gender come together to form what is understood as a man. However, this understanding of a man meets heavy resistance in Dan. For Dan identifies as man, not also identifies as lacking in sexual desire.

Examining the specific intersection between sex (sexual behavior) and gender in the identity of man we begin to deconstruct the two and ask larger questions of identity such as what is gender without sex (sexual behavior). Dan’s experiences illuminate how masculinity or the male gender identity is completely based on the desire to have sex. So without this sex (sexual behavior) or the desire for it, is a man a man? Specifically is

Dan a man without sexual desire? Dan himself has asked this question, giving further strength and purpose to this question as well as the notion that sex (sexual behavior) and gender are steadfastly linked. Dan says, “There’s like this disconnect, I’m not like the ideal man, as I was taught men were.” If gender, specifically male gender identity is left so uncertain and shaky without sex, is it a distinct identity? Is it a flushed out identity? Does it have enough substance to stand on its own? What does it mean to just be a man? Gender and sexuality scholar Judith Butler really grounds this notion with her work *Gender Troubles*. Here she talks about how gender as an identity is so entangled with other social factors and forces that it becomes impossible to define gender.<sup>14</sup> Applying this to masculinity we can say that the male gender identity is so entangled with sex (sexual behavior) that it becomes impossible to answer the question of what is a man without sex. Somehow (most likely through the evolutionary importance of sex) sex has embedded itself deeply and critically into the male identity, so much so that we don’t know who men are without being sexual.

Dan ends his narrative by speaking about sexual identity, how he chooses to identify himself. This final set of experiences demonstrate the power and security that sexual identities can bring and alternatives to the popular coming out narrative. Speaking on the subject Dan says, “All of my friends think I’m straight, and think I’m just straight and sexual identity will be straight even though there’s nothing behind it because that’s what I perform in public.” Dan tells us that his friends believe him to be straight because of the identity he performs in public. He introduces us to the way he chooses to be viewed by other people but also to the fact that he withholds part of himself from other people. He chooses to do so for his safety (finding physical and emotional comfort in the

label) and because he feels like it's nobody else's business besides his and his partners'. This particular label affords him a sense of security, because of the fact that using it he can blend in with other heterosexual people without fear of violence, hatred or disgust. But there is also an element of agency and power to this identity. Because this label is associated with the norms of society, Dan does not have to attract undue attention or questions. He can tell whomever he wants to whenever he wants. Furthermore, he has the power to represent/describe himself however he chooses, straight sometimes, asexual at other. Dan presents an interesting and opposite approach to dealing with a non-heterosexual identity than the common coming out narrative. For, instead of feeling the urge to tell everyone he knows about his inner truth, his sexuality, in order to feel free Dan finds security and freedom in not telling people. He feels secure in his asexuality and comfortable in performing whatever makes his life easier. He demonstrates that coming out is not for everyone, and that there are other legitimate paths. For his sexual identity, straight offers him the safety and agency and thus makes the most sense for Dan to adopt.

Dan's particular experience with sexual identity allows us as readers to explore the notion of sexual identity, particularly the freeing nature of it and its' disconnect from sexual orientation. Scholar Lisa Diamond, in her work *Sexual Fluidity: Understanding Women's Love and Desire*, introduces this concept to us, specifically in comparison to sexual orientation. Whereas orientation refers to one's sexual desire and a more innate concept, sexual identity refers to the group of people or history (gay, queer, lesbian, straight, etc.) gravitates towards and identifies with.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the seemingly inescapable nature of our sexual desire or sexual orientation does not necessarily dictate how we

choose to identify. Furthermore, the way we choose to identify to ourselves is not necessarily the way to choose to identify ourselves to others. This notion of sexual identity while relatively simple is also quite powerful. For, orientation is not everything. Sexual behavior is not everything. Sexual desire is not everything. Just because one has sex with man and is a man does not make him gay. All of these factors are pieces that combined make up sexuality; none more powerful or more in control than the others. Sexual identity functions as an alternative and a complication to the way society largely conceives of sexuality (sexual behavior equating to sexuality equating ones identity). For, sexual identity is liberatory, empowering, and wonderfully complicating.

Dan's narrative begins to give us some idea of Dan's life and his identity. From growing up surrounded by heavily sexualized messages of gender, to being asexual in a sex-centered world, to adopting a comfortable identity, Dan has had to push back against the ideals and messages he received growing up. He has had to honestly evaluate what sex (sexual behavior) is to him and veer off the common course. But when it comes to everyone else, Dan chooses to present himself as straight. In this way, he can blend in, letting certain people in while keep everyone else out. His experiences serve to thoroughly critique the way that mainstream American society understands asexuality, and sexuality itself. The current terms are dependent on having a sexual drive. Without this, one's identity is unclear, whether that is gender, or sexual orientation. Furthermore, humans are assumed to be sexual beings, but how just sexual are we? Dan also demonstrates that there are alternatives to coming out and living your truth. Dan chooses to empower himself, be honest with himself, and let a select view into his asexual identity. That is Dan's path.

### Chapter 3: Lilly Story:

“I still liked hooking up with him and stuff like that but

I also wanted to be hooking up with girls at the same time.

Later in the summer I kissed this girl while I was dating him.

I talked to him about and I was look this happened, I’m really sorry

and he didn’t care; he kind of gave this gross response that was just like,

oh that’s like kind of hot or something like that.” - **Lilly.**

Meet Lilly. Lilly describes herself as a very sexual person, thinking about sex a lot. Lilly grew up in a very supportive atmosphere, hearing positive things about non-hetero sexualities from both friends and family. However, Lilly also grew up without much exposure to trans and or gender fluid people. Thus, while she believes that she possesses the potential for the desire of these bodies, she is not certain and has not acted upon this desire. Lilly learned about sex from listening to her friends talk about sex and via porn. She found herself drawn to the girly, feminine women in porn videos. Thus she began to model her own sexual behavior off of them, adopting a submissive, and relational (responsive to what the other person wants) approach during sex. But she eventually discovered that she was in fact lost in this fluid, relational approach. She didn’t know herself sexually, and so began towards knowing and understanding her “sexual-self”. Lilly’s story is centered around the influence other people have had on her sexuality, the link between her sexual desire and sexual behavior, and her submissive

approach and her work to find herself. In the telling of her story, Lilly pushes us to think more critically about notions of sexual influence, sexual exposure, and sexual fluidity.

Lilly brings us into her narrative by telling us about the people who influenced the way she understands sexuality. Her first set of experiences demonstrate the power our influencers have in nurturing or blocking our non-hetero sexualities. Lilly draws us right into her experiences saying,

“I think that I learned that people could be attracted to more than just one gender or more than just the opposite gender from my friends talking about people that they knew or knowing people who were not straight. I think it just came from social interactions but particularly my friends in high school and how they talked about sex, and also how they talked about bisexuality. I had other friends who didn’t identify as straight, so when I would hear them talk about coming out or hear them talking about their sexual orientation I think that had a big impact on how I thought about my sexual orientation, I kind of came into it.”

Lilly’s friends exposed her to non-hetero sexuality, greatly impacting how she came to understand her own sexuality. Her friends not only talked about non-hetero sexuality positively (as she later explicitly revealed) but also, exposed her first hand to their non-hetero sexualities, demonstrating what such orientations and people look and sound like. This was huge for Lilly. Her friends effectively opened up the possibility of non-hetero sexuality for her and humanized it. She was thus able to listen in, and find herself in their words, without feelings of shame or strangeness or repulsion. But, it wasn’t just her friends; it was also thanks to her parents that Lilly came into her non-hetero sexuality. Lilly mentioned never remembering her parents uttering explicit homophobia, that so gay being Lilly’s prime example of what she never hear. Now, regardless of whether or not this is true, it means that Lilly grew up in a place she believed to be free of judgement, negativity or hatred towards non-straight people. Thus, she grew up without any hang-

ups or value judgments regarding non-hetero sexualities certain. Lilly's friends and family played a massive role in how Lilly came to understand sexuality, exposing her to and normalizing non-hetero sexualities. They demonstrate just how influential parents and friends can be, as well as how the power they have in normalizing sexualities.

The powerful influence Lilly's parents and friends had on her sexuality invite us to explore the particular reasons behind this. With the help of gender and sexuality scholars, Jane Ward, Sarah Ahmed, C.J. Pascoe and Michael Kimmel, we can see that parents and peers occupy particularly powerful roles because of the inherited nature of sexuality and the way in which peers heavily regulate one another's sexuality. We begin our look into scholarship with Jane Ward and her book *Not Gay: Sex between Straight White Men*. Here, Ward writes about the notions of inherited sexuality. This notion, originally coming from scholar Sarah Ahmed<sup>16</sup>, speaks about how children grow up watching their parents perform heterosexuality, thus associating it with feelings of comfort, familiarity and home.<sup>17</sup> In this way parents greatly influence their children's sexuality, putting them on a path of heterosexuality. This interesting idea can be effectively applied to Lilly's experience. Lilly grew up watching her parent's heteronormative<sup>18</sup> behavior (hetero-sexuality, marriage, family and children). But Lilly also grew up watching her parent's open-minded attitudes (lack of homophobia) in regards to sexuality. Thus, I believe that parents can not only can pass down heterosexuality, but can also pass down an open minded approach, providing the accepting space through which their children can safely their non-hetero sexuality, should they ever. But her friends played an equally powerful role in shaping Lilly.

Scholar C.J. Pascoe in her work, *Dude You're a Fag*, offers us an interesting theory on the subject stating that adolescents greatly look to each other for ideals about gender and sexuality. At a certain age they begin to care what their peers think of them so they begin to perform what they believe to be “normal” and acceptable gender and sexuality.<sup>19</sup> Scholar Michael Kimmel adds to this notion, stating that peers act as “a kind of gender police”(Kimmel 2008), commenting and or taking action when someone steps out of line in terms of “normal” gender (and thus sexuality) expression<sup>20</sup>. Combined, the two scholars demonstrate the power that our peers hold, that which we give them and that which they take for themselves. For Lilly, the people she was surrounded with acted as facilitators instead of obstacles to non-heterosexuality. Some of the potentially biggest obstacles became her biggest supports in terms of her figuring out her non-hetero sexuality. Thus, I believe that Lilly came into her non-straight orientation largely because of the lessons of her parents and the conversations and actions of her friends. As two of the most powerful influencers of sexuality, parents and peers were crucial in terms of how Lilly comes into her sexuality.

Lilly narrative moves on to the topic of how particularly strong influence her sexual behavior has had on her sexual desire. This, her second set of experiences push us to critique and question the innate nature of our sexual desire. Lilly dives right into stating, “I think for me, there’s definitely some less conventional things I am interested in, but I think generally my sexual desires are pretty vanilla, that I know of. I think it's interesting, because I think I am down for a lot of things, but I don’t think I fantasize about doing a lot of things that are kinky.” Here, Lilly explains to us the nature of her sexual desire, “conventional” or vanilla but with the potential for “deviant” behavior.

She also explains that her sexual desire is very linked to her sexual behavior, Lilly fantasizing about the sexual acts she has already done as opposed to ones she would like to try. Thus, for Lilly, exposure is key. The types of sexual acts she has actually been able to perform find their way into and dominate her desires. Regardless of how open-minded and fluid she is, desire does not really materialize for Lilly until she has had the chance to physically act it out. This to me indicates that Lilly has a fluid sexual desire, changing based on her experiences and her surrounding, but more importantly it indicates to me that her desires are inexorably bound to her surroundings, at the mercy of whatever she has access to. Lilly further demonstrates this when talking about her attraction to non-cisgendered bodies, saying that while she hasn't felt desire for "non cis or genderfluid" bodies before, it doesn't mean that she won't or can't in the future. She then linked this to lack of exposure. Lilly demonstrates that a massive part of her desire is based on exposure but also that there is an essential piece of her that is very open to the possibilities. Lilly is not everybody else, her desire is unique to her, but she does challenge us to question how much of our desire is based on our innate interests and how much is based on the exposure we have had.

Lilly's experiences open up a realm of questions surrounding exposure, specifically how the exposure to certain sexual acts and or identities is limited and or lessened, and by whom. With the help of scholars, Judith Butler and Michel Foucault, we can see that judicial powers and the laws they create effectively limit exposure to certain acts and identities. Judith Butler in her work *Gender Troubles* mentions an interesting and relevant theory; judicial systems of power create the subjects they represent. Judicial powers and the laws they create regulate and control people's behavior. By living under

these laws and powers, people are then massively shaped and defined by these laws. If a law uses the subjects of man and woman in its' wording, then the man and woman will be considered (or reaffirmed as) normal, while the transbody becomes abnormal. People who do not identify as men or women are then pressured to be more discreet and private about their identities, and those unsure now lack the incentive to identify as beyond man or woman. Thus, man and woman become the popular representation of gender, the laws (or in this case, the wording of the laws) shaping the people themselves.<sup>21</sup> From here we can take this notion, and apply it to Lilly's experience, saying that because trans people are considered abnormal and must thus be more discreet about themselves, the everyday person's (Lilly) exposure to trans people is then drastically limited. With the help of this theory we can begin to understand how certain identities and sexual behaviors are understood as "normal" or "abnormal" or "kinky", and then how the exposure to these "abnormal" identities or "kinky" acts is drastically limited. From her I ask, what have we all missed on, and or not been exposed to?

Lilly's narrative comes to an end on the subject of her submissive and fluid sexual behavior. In this, her last set of experiences, Lilly tells us about how this fluid behavior led her to losing sight of her sexual self, but then how she has worked to find herself.

Lilly begins this final section saying,

"I think that where I learned about sex was porn too and I think that had a really big impact on how I have sex. I think the porn I started watching even when it was not a guy and a girl, if it was lesbian porn or something like that, there was still a way that women acted that I found really sexy, and so because I found that really sexy I was like, I'll act that way when I have sex, because that's what I find attractive and that's a much more submissive and kind of girly type of persona."

Growing up Lilly used porn as a tool, to learn about sex and her sexuality, but also to fashion her sexual self. She turned herself into the women she was attracted to, these sexy, submissive, “girly” women. This translated for Lilly into submissive and relational sexual behavior, responding heavily to what her partners were interested in.

Furthermore, Lilly used her straight cisgendered male friends to explore her attraction to women. She would observe the way they looked at women, what type of women they liked. Thus, I believe Lilly was drastically shaped by men and what they liked, known affectionately as the male gaze (whether it was her friends, or the feminine, girly porn, no doubt created for men). But in doing so, she kept her attraction to women acceptable, normal, and comfortable. But, this was not to last.

The summer before Lilly came to Haverford, she very much wanted to hookup with women, but was dating a boy at the time. Feeling strange and “guilty”, Lilly ended up kissing a girl while still dating this boy. The boy was not mad, in fact he thought it was “kind of hot.” Lilly was grossed out by the boy’s response, feeling like she was “sexually deviant.” I believe that in this moment and previous ones, Lilly was performing a socially acceptable role, the woman attracted to another woman for the pleasure of a man. But what stood out in this particular moment was Lilly’s realization of her occupancy in this male space, and her realization that did not know who she was without it. Here, Lilly decided to discover and understand her attraction to women outside of anyone else’s pleasure or gaze. She decided to start the journey of discovery expressly for herself. The solution (as Lilly states) was to dump the boy, come to Haverford and begin to experiment for the purpose of uncovering her own desire and sexual self. Thus, coming into college Lilly, similarly to Molly, found a kind of

liberation in sex. For Lilly, college was a space to come into her own sexual self. While, Lilly has yet to completely find herself (outside of the socially acceptable role of a woman attracted to another woman for the pleasure of a man) she is making progress. Now, almost through her sophomore year, Lilly has hooked up with both men and women, and had a “successful relationship with a woman”, having made considerable strides for herself for the purpose of knowing herself sexually. Lilly said at the end of her interview that she wants to be more aware of what she likes (sexually) and be less relational, so that she can better understand her “sexual self” and thus prioritize her self and her desires when it comes to sex (sexual behavior).

Lilly’s experiences being attracted to women, is a drastically different kind of narrative than the ones I have been telling, and those I will tell in the coming pages. Her desire was “acceptable” and “normal” in a certain context. But what she shares with the others in this story is rebellion. For, Lilly rebelled against the system she grew up in, (one in which women were attracted to women for the pleasure of men) in favor of women attracted to women for themselves and for herself. Thus, she joins the ranks of outcasts who exist outside of “normal” society because of their sexuality. However, her narrative thoroughly complicates the “outcast” narrative I have been telling, for it’s not just those who are born outside of the “norm” but also those who choose to reject the “norm” in order to more deeply explore and understand themselves. But Lilly’s narrative does more than complicate the “outcast” narrative, it demonstrate the particular power of peers and parents in facilitating or blocking non-heterosexual identities, it push us to think about how our exposure to certain identities or sexual acts has affected our sexual desires and where this diminished exposure comes from and why. Lilly grew up

surrounded by positive and supportive messages but was deprived of exposure. Thus, it took her a bit longer to break from the “normal” path, but when confronted by the male gaze she chose to break free and find her own way. And so she finds herself amongst the outcast ranks of Molly, Dan, Alex, and so many others.

## **Chapter 4: Alex’s Story**

“By the way I don’t have a penis like you expected.” - **Alex.**

Meet Alex. Alex identifies as transmasculine as he does not identify with the sex he was assigned at birth and does identify with the gender binary term of man. While Alex identifies as a sexual being (one who has sexual desire) he usually engages in solo sexual behavior or has frustrating sexual experiences. This is because the medication he takes lowers his sex drive. He finds it frustrating to be a sexual being in nature, but not one in practice. At the start of college, Alex (now a senior) identified differently, in terms of his gender. He liked to hook up with people at parties, finding it “cool” and “freeing”. However, since coming into his new identity he no longer likes to go out and have “random hook ups” because of the complications involved with his newfound gender and the expectations surrounding it during sex. In terms of his identity, Alex particularly resonates with the term queer. He specifically likes the way queer incorporates gender and sexuality in a not-too-descriptive way, and the broad yet inclusive community created around the identity. Alex’s narrative is centered around his

decreased sex drive, the situational and expectation based nature of sex, and the inclusive yet rebellious nature of the label queer. His narrative push us to think about the importance of sexual release, the implications of sexual desire changing over time, the complicated nature of sex, and standing out as opposed to blending in.

Alex introduces us to his narrative with the first set of experiences about his lowered sexual drive and sexual performance abilities. His unique position allows us to question the effects of change in sexual drive or performance over time. Alex quickly brings us into his story saying, “I think my own sexual desire is really complicated for several reasons. First of all I take anti-depressant medication, which has sexual side effects. So, it basically lowers your sex drive a lot of the time, or sometimes your sex drive stays the same but it makes it really hard to orgasm, so then it’s like screw this it’s not even worth it to try because it’s just going to be frustrating and not fulfilling.” Alex introduces us here to the nature of both his sexual desire and sexual performance; lacking in desire or unable to achieve orgasm. Sex is thus complicated and frustrating for Alex. The frustration kicks in for Alex when is unable to orgasm by himself or when a partner keeps trying to help him achieve orgasm to no avail. The complication sets in when he involves partners as they can take it personally or believe that “they are doing something wrong” when Alex does not orgasm, even when he explains the situation to them. For Alex it is complicated and frustrating that he wants to have sex but feels like he “can’t have it”. Alex occupies a particularly interesting space for, unlike Dan who was most likely born without or born with very little sex drive, Alex at some point had sufficient sex drive to seek out sex but no longer finds himself able to achieve what he wants sexually. Thus he occupies the fascinating liminal space in between having no sex drive

and having sexual desire and the ability to sexually perform. His particular positioning leads to me wonder about the emotional and physical effects of not achieving sexual release. What happens when one wants to orgasm but is largely unable to? What happens physically, when one consistently does not sexually release? Furthermore, on a grander scale, how do we conceive of and understand changes in one's sex drive?

Alex's unique, liminal position allows us to explore questions relating to the importance of sexual release and changes in sex drive over time. Over the years there have been varying notions about the value behind or importance of sexual release. At one time it was believed that conserving one's sexual liquids and energies was beneficial, so that one might instead put these energies into their work or their creativity. At another time it was believed that sexual release should only be achieved during reproduction-orientated sex and all other release was a waste.<sup>22</sup> Now, sexual release is believed to be beneficial in the form of stress release among other things. Yet, how critical to the human body is sexual release? Do we need sexual release to survive as humans? Through Dan's experience we learned that our society views sex as important to us as human beings. Is sexual release (as an important part of sex) then just as important to us as human beings?<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, how do we account for a change in one's sexual drive? Can someone change from having sexual desire to asexual because of varying influences like stress, grief, loss? Does the way we label and thus understand their desire change with it? The way that we currently understand sexual drive (either asexual or sexual) leaves no room for complication or nuance, one either is sexual or is not. Stories like Alex's further complicate narratives of sexuality, adding the dimension of change over

time. But, in the mean time stories like Alex have no place, stuck in between narratives of asexuality and sexuality, begging for attention and exploration.

Alex's narrative moves onto the intersection between his trans identity and sex. This second set of experiences focuses on Alex's trans identity and how it complicates sex for him. In telling his story we are exposed to the expectation-based and situational nature of sex. Alex draws us right in saying,

“So, I'm a transgender person and that makes sex really complicated with partners who don't understand that part of my identity... I don't care about the gender of my partners, but I know that other people care about the gender of their partners. They have expectations about what your anatomy is going to look like and what they want to do with partners of another gender.”

Alex quickly exposes the way his trans identity intersects with sex; it makes it more complicated. As he tells us, the complications arise because of anatomy. In his experience sex has involved anatomical expectations and certain situationality based on gender. People want to have sex with someone of a certain gender but only with anatomy that matches up with that gender. Alex identifies as masculine but does not have the principal sexual organ expected of someone who reads as masculine, a penis. Thus, often times he does not meet the expectations of potential sexual partners, making it difficult to find interested sexual partners. But, because Alex does not meet these expectations, he is able to understand sex more deeply. He can clearly see how sex is situational and based on expectations (people often only interested in having sex with people of certain genders with certain anatomy). Alex has to break through these situations and expectations to engage in sexual behavior, and find people who are willing to do the same.

However, sexual expectations and situationality is nothing new to sex. They have been crucial pieces of sex for quite some time now. Since the beginning of European

settlement in the United States, sex in the United States has been bound up in expectations and situationality. In early “New England” from “1607-1740” (Katz 1990) sexual activity was only acceptable for reproductive purposes, between married man and woman. Any sexual behavior outside of marriage was completely unacceptable because of the dire necessity of structured and controlled reproduction in order to ensure the continued survival of these struggling civilizations. On the other hand, during the “1820-1850”(Katz 1990) in the United States, sexual behavior, usually short of intercourse before marriage<sup>24</sup>, was acceptable under the guise of love. Of course love was between a man and a women, indicated by genitalia. In the case of New England, sexual behavior was extremely situational, only permitted in a specific environment (the married bedroom for the express purpose of reproduction). During the early 1800’s, sexual behavior was also situational, acceptable in cases of marriages but more so than that acceptable when love is involved. Underlying both of these were anatomical expectations linked to sex, man and women being based in sexual genitalia, and the man and woman being the model for sex. Thus, situationality and expectations over the years have been pivotal elements to sex. But why? Do they help support the “normal” understanding of humans and sexuality and the heterosexual system; men with penises having sex with women with vaginas? Are they thus tools of control to keep people from straying from acceptability? What purpose do expectations and situationality serve us in our sexual lives? Do they limit us or help us?

Moving from sexual behavior to identity, Alex’s narrative comes to an end with his last set of experiences focused on his identification with the label queer. His gravitation towards this label demonstrates his choice to stand out against “normal”

conceptions of sexuality with his fellow queer people. Alex brings us into his world one last time saying, “I also just like queer because that incorporates gender as well as sexuality, and it’s more like vague about my gender and the gender of my potential partners. I think it also helps incorporate the fact that the ways I have sex or the possible relationships I want are non traditional or conventional.” Alex introduces us to the term queer, and the reasons he gravitates to it. For, he likes how the word identifies him as an outsider from traditional society in terms of gender and sexuality but does not reveal too much, giving him the power to do so (unlike labels like homosexual and heterosexual which reveal a lot about one’s sexuality). Alex also mentioned in his interview that he also likes the label because of the broader and more inclusive nature of it and the community that it creates. Queer generally stands for those who do not conform to “normal” gender or sexuality, and so there are quite a large number of people who can and do use this label. They come together and form an expansive and inclusive community, a community of non-conformity and non-conformists. Alex differs in many ways from the “normal” man or woman in terms of his anatomy, gender identity, sexual drive, sexual performance, but finds comfort and community within the queer label. He finds comfort and community in standing out as opposed to doing his best to blend in. He stands in community and solidarity with fellow queer people.

Alex used of the word queer invites us to explore the queer label and the politics behind it as well as gay and lesbian politics. Comparing the two, we can see two different but viable approaches to living with non-heterosexuality. As Alex mentioned the queer label stands for people who don’t fit into “traditional” notions of sexuality and gender orientation or expression. Through reading scholar Michael Warner, we can see

that queer politics function as an extension of this label, working to change our current society so that people are free to be themselves without discrimination or obstacle.<sup>25</sup> This focus greatly contrasts to the work of Gay and Lesbian politics. These politics and the activists behind it, work towards the societal incorporation and acceptance of gay people. Transforming gay into an identity as opposed to a sexual practice, the activists behind these politics divorced themselves from non-normative culture (non-monogamy, non-normal gender expression, anonymous and frequent sex). They worked within the current power system so that the gay identity could be “normalized” and incorporated into society at the cost of the queer community.<sup>26</sup> However, when we come back to the larger narrative of sexuality outcast, both of these paths are viable options. They are drastically different options and methods but both are used and both give comfort and purpose for those with non-heterosexual identities. Alex chose and chooses to stand side by side other queer people and stand outside of normative culture.

Alex sticks out. Sex is complicated. He has different anatomy than that expected of him. Because of his medication he has a lower sex drive. Other times he struggles to orgasm. But Alex is more than his struggle. Because of the specific ways he sticks out he is able to clearly see the expectations behind sex and it’s situational nature. He understands sex on a deeper level than others, and through his eyes we are able to see this nature of sex. We can also clearly see how sexual performance is understood as crucial to us human beings, as sexual beings. Furthermore we can see how limited and lacking in nuance our understanding of sexual desire is. For, one is either asexual or sexual without accounts for changes in sexual drive or time. But, Alex has found community

and solidarity with the queer community and with the label queer. He sticks out but sticks out alongside others, committed to standing out instead of working to blend in.

## Chapter 5: Evan's Story

“So how do I define losing my virginity?

Is it strictly oral sex, anal sex, is it a mix of the two.

I guess that put that into question and I wonder when

it was exactly that I did lose my virginity per say.” - **Evan.**

Meet Evan. Evan identifies as a cisgendered homosexual male. Growing up, Evan was heavily influenced by the Roman Catholic religious messages of his family. It was hard for him to reconcile his sexual attraction to men with the strict notions his parents and his religion held regarding sex and gender. But coming to college he found a much more supportive atmosphere, physically distanced from those who would believe his orientation is wrong. Evan has also struggled (and still does) to conform to gender expectations, specifically the pitch of his voice. For, he feels like it is too high for societal standards of men, and finds himself actively lowering his voice when he is at home. In high school and to this day, Evan has been/is influenced by his friends and their sexual behavior. Specifically, Evan feels and has felt pressured to match their sexual behavior. They bring out a competitive energy and need for acceptance within Evan. Evan's experiences weave a fascinating story of changing physical spaces, gendered

behavior, and sexual rites of passages, pushing us to think about our truths and who we owe these to, the not so standard standards, and the particularly pressing element of virginity.

We begin Evan's story by talking about his family. His first set of experiences speak about the messages (regarding sexuality) he heard growing up that drastically conflicted with his sexuality. His solution in changing spaces allows us to question the possible solutions to dealing with and navigating through unaccepting spaces. Evan brings us into his world saying,

“I went through twelve years of catholic education, the Roman Catholic has defined the male, female and this is type of intercourse these two sexes have and that's kind of it and if you don't fit into that then you're going to go to hell or your sinning. It's wrong and it's not acceptable and not tolerated. Family as well. My family is very Roman Catholic. They are influenced by the religion, which speaks that sort of stuff.”

Evan introduces us to his family and its heavy religious teachings. He also gives us a clear explanation of what his family and their religion believe when it comes to sex and sexuality; sex is between a man and a woman. Evan struggled growing up in this environment. He feels like his attraction to men has always been a central part of himself, but struggled to accept it because of how these feelings directly contradicted the messages his religion and his family gave him. Furthermore his family has a particular history of not being “very accepting” when it comes to deviating from the sexual standards set down their religion; members of Evan's own family have faced judgement and shunning from the rest of the family because of the way that they didn't meet the “standard”. Evan's solution was waiting till college, and then moving away from home; changing physical locations in favor of a more accepting atmosphere. He did not tell his parents and still has not (going into his junior year of college). Evan and his experiences

(similar to Dan) challenge the traditional coming out narrative, offering an interesting alternative. We are left with questions surrounding truth and ownership. Does Evan owe his parents the truth? What rights to his identity do they have?

Evan's alternative method of navigating his stigmatized sexuality leads us to ask questions surrounding ownership and debt. Who deserves access to our sexuality? Who deserves this truth? In answer to his unsupportive family atmosphere, Evan decided to not come out to his family and instead chose to change physical locations. But, when Evan does come home, he actively performs an acceptable sexuality for his parents (heterosexuality). He will switch the genders of his lovers when asked about his love life, and lie about where he goes when it is a recognizable "gay" place. In his interview he said that he feels like he owes his parents because of all that they have done for him. Thus, he chooses to appease them and perform an identity they approve of, when he is home. This question of ownership regarding sexuality is a particularly interesting topic. If sexuality is understood to be our truth, do we then owe this truth to other people? To whom? Turning to scholar, Sarah Ahmed, and her interesting theory about the debt of heterosexuality, we can begin to answer these questions. According to Ahmed, heterosexuality can function as a form of debt. Children are expected to repay the gift of their life with the continuation of heterosexuality and their familial line with children.<sup>27</sup> Combined with the popularity and commonality of the coming out narrative (Dan brought up), this notion about the debt of heterosexuality illuminates an expectation of sorts. We are to reveal our "truth" to family and friends. They are owed this, as it defines and represents us as our "truth". Without this they cannot know us. But, Evan actively rejects this narrative in favor of what makes more sense to him, appeasing his parents

when he is home and living in a more acceptable environment most of the time. He demonstrates that this is but a heavy expectation and not the path everyone must follow.

We continue Evan's narrative, moving on to gender expectations; those Evan has expressly struggled with. Evan's struggle with the pitch of his voice point us towards the notion that gender expectations are narrow and applicable for very few. Evan brings us into these experiences saying, "One thing I struggle with a lot is my voice. My voice is very high pitched, very up. Society says my voice should be lower, more masculine, and more manly and that kind of makes me feel bad or makes me feel I should change that to fit that mold. Men are muscular, they're strong, they're more physical per say, whereas I am not." Evan introduces us to some of the qualities that make up the ideal man, created by society. In particular, Evan has struggled with the pitch of his voice, feeling like it is higher than a man's voice "should" be. He mentioned later in his interview that his feelings about his voice used to connect to a sense of not fitting in and a belief that something was wrong with him. Because of his own perception of his voice, Evan felt like an outcast, feeling like there was something fundamentally wrong with him. However, Evan no longer feels totally at the mercy of these social expectations. In his interview he was able to see and clearly identify how certain societal gender expectations led to his feelings of wrongness and not fitting in, most likely due to his time in the accepting space of his college. These expectations have thus lost a considerable amount of their power. But they still hold some power over him. For, Evan still struggles with the pitch of his voice, not completely rid of his previous insecurities and feelings of abnormality. When talking about his voice in his interview he used the present tense saying, "One thing I struggle with a lot is my voice". Furthermore, he actively deepens

his voice when he is at home and he feels like it is too high. This is most likely to appease his parents, but it doesn't change the fact that he can't completely shake himself of these gender expectations.

Evan's experience struggling with his voice points us towards larger societal issues. Evan felt like he did not fit the male standard because of his voice, feeling like it was too high. However, this was just one piece that made up the ideal man, as decreed by society. The ideal man is physical, masculine, manly, does not have a high-pitched voice, rough and unemotional (as Evan says later in his interview). Thus, there must be millions of other people out there who feel similarly; strange and wrong because they are missing one quality that makes up the "normal" man or a woman. On the opposite end, the number of people who completely fit the mold for a man or a woman must be miniscule, far outnumbered by the people who don't fit this mold. This indicates to me that our society has created gender standards which are extremely difficult to adhere to, and that are labeled as "normal" and innate to men and women. They have set most of us up to feel abnormal, strange, and like there is something wrong with us. Thus, the standard is not very standard.

Evans's narrative comes to end on the subject of peer influence and sexual rites of passages. Through this final set of experiences we can begin to see the pressuring powers our peers can have and explore the notion of virginity. Evan brings us into this final piece of his narrative saying, "My best friend is a cisgendered heterosexual female and she values her virginity as very important. She defines her virginity or losing it, as having vaginal intercourse with a man and that's how she defines losing her virginity. I engage in sex acts that don't include or have a vagina. So how do I define losing my

virginity?” Evan introduces us to one of the sexual values of his friends. But he also introduces us to the effect his friend and her ideas on sexuality have had on him. Her conversation pushed him to compare the two of them, leaving Evan wondering what counts as his virginity as a homosexual man not interested in vaginal sex. Evan later said in his interview that this comparison led to a “pressured feeling”, and a need to prove himself sexually. But, it wasn’t just this one friend that brought out this comparison and pressured feelings out of Evan. Evan also mentioned that in the past he had felt the need to “match” what his friends thought was acceptable sexuality in particular spaces, in order to not “lose those friends or feel isolated or alone”. Thus, Evan seems to feel considerable pressure to compare to his friends sexually. Something about his friends and the space they create when Evan is around them draws out these emotions, and a need to conform. In coming to understand the particular power Evan’s friends have had over him, I would like to return to the notion of virginity.

I believe that if we analyze virginity we can better understand it as a sexual rite of passage. Reading it as such, I believe we can begin to further understand pressuring and peer-centric nature. I understand virginity as the lack of having had vaginal intercourse, and losing one’s virginity as having vaginal intercourse for the first time. I believe it to be commonly understood as the point in which one becomes a sexual adult. Teenagers advance together through the different sexual levels (kissing, groping, oral sex) towards their shared, ultimate goal of intercourse. C.J. Pascoe supports this notion with her theory that sex is such an integral part of performing masculinity.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, this action has a specific word devoted to it as well as a set of common rituals and regulations surrounding it, (one of the most common being waiting till marriage). Combined, I

believe we can clearly read sex as a sexual rite of passage. But the nature of virginity is heterosexual. How does it apply to those who never engage in vaginal penetrative sex? This popular rite of passage suddenly becomes inapplicable for a sizeable group of people. They most also grow up alongside others devoted to this sexual rite of passage, wondering how they can lose their virginity, what their sexuality means, and what rites of passage they possess. And so Evan and others like him grow up comparing their sexualities to those of others, devoted to following an accomplishing a “normal” and established sexual rite of passages.

Ending Evan’s narrative we can begin to understand who he is and what he has been through in terms of his sexuality. From, growing up in an unsupportive home, to been plagued by gender expectations, to comparing himself to his friends in terms of sexuality, and left wanting. But Evan has grown considerably, leaving home in order to get to a more accepting space, fighting the gender expectations that make him feel strange and wrong, questioning what his own virginity means as opposed to blindly comparing himself to his friends sexuality and the sexual rites of passage tailored to their sexualities. He is continually pushing our conceptions of sexuality. He offers an alternative to coming out and telling all his truth, he pushes us to see the way in which society gender standard’s fit very few people, and he helps us question the way that rites of passage exclude certain people while pressuring to achieve the sexual goals of their peers and not their own. Evan grows, challenges, and pushes from within himself and we have been fortunate enough to this share this process with him.

## Chapter 6: Our Story

Combined these five stories and the experiences behind them weave a powerful narrative, telling us quite a lot about our society today when it comes to sexuality, norms and acceptance. It is clear that society believes sexuality to be a critical part of our identities, the critical Truth if you will. Each one of the people mentioned here faced difficulties because of their sexualities, demonstrating how much our society values not only sexuality but, the right type of sexuality. For Molly it was engaging in anal sex and aggressive sex, thus stepping out of the acceptable model of sexual behavior (penetration) and moving into sex with the possibility of changes in power, agency and gender. Dan strayed off the straight and narrow path with his asexual identity, challenging the way that men have sexual desire and behavior and thus conceive of their gender. Lilly grew up with tons of positive messages but also lots of gendered messages pointing her towards submissiveness and the male gaze, but is fighting against these messages to find her own steadfast identity. Alex straddle(s) the line between asexual and sexual, does not possess the anatomy expected of someone masculine presenting, and identifies with the rebellious and inclusive label of queer. For Evan it was fighting against the negative message he received growing up, pushing back against gender expectations, and being pressured by his peers. This remarkable group of people have all been thrown off the straight and narrow path and have had to find their own paths, and have each done so uniquely. They effectively demonstrate the critically important (to society) nature of our sexual identities (to society) but also the many pieces of our sexual identities, which in

turn make it that much easier to stray from what is considered normal. Furthermore combined these stories tell us what is considered normal (masculine men who have penetrative sex with feminine women) as well as the many ways that our society controls our sexual selves, ensuring our conformity to these identities. From controlling avenues of sexual information, to creating heavily controlled notions of gender heavily tied to sex (men have lots of sex, women are submissive and fluid), to limiting exposure to “abnormal” sexual behavior and identities, to making sexual performance and desire a fundamental part of our beings, and finally to maintaining strict expectations for sex and narrow notions of sexual rites of passage. These methods all point to the massive investment our society has in our sexualities, constantly trying to maintain tight control over our collective expression of sexuality. But the system is failing.

Each of these stories represents struggle but they also wonderfully represent resistance, pushing back against harsh, narrow, and painful norms of sexuality. I believe that each of these person’s efforts to push back and make themselves comfortable with their sexual selves combined with the many millions of others who feel this way or have done similar things, are working to fight and eventually break the current restrictive system of sexuality. We are fighting back and making progress one-step at a time (gay marriage being legalized, new understandings of sexuality being created and or published, and more and more non-straight identities placing themselves into the public spotlight, Laverne Cox). This is how I view these powerful stories and the people behind them. I also view this work as an act of resistance and self-discovery.

Just as each of my interviewees has come to life and light within this work so to have I come to discovery of my being. Meet Joaquin. He identifies as a gay man with

sexual desire for men and women, only having acted upon his desires for men. He identifies as mostly male with leanings and ideas towards being a little something else other than a cisgender man. He grew up surrounded by certain ideas of what sex was and what acceptable expressions of masculinity were (from not liking female pop songs, to not crossing his legs, to being tough). When he discovered that he was gay he had a million and one questions and a lot of work to do to figure himself out. He was thrown from the conventional path into a gray area where he was forced to figure himself out. But today he finds himself and his path in the many books of gender and sexuality he reads, in interviewing people about their sexualities, and also in creating a powerful and detailed account of these people's experiences. I found myself and to all my readers out there, so can you.

## References

- Ahmed, Sara. 2008. *Queer Phenomenology Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke University Press. <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1169326>.
- Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Thinking Gender. New York: Routledge.
- Diamond, Lisa M. 2008. *Sexual Fluidity: Understanding Women's Love and Desire*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1990. *The History of Sexuality*. Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books.
- Katz, Jonathan. 2006. "The Invention of Heterosexuality." *Sage Pub*. July 8.  
[http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/11879\\_Chapter\\_1.pdf](http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/11879_Chapter_1.pdf).
- Kimmel, Michael S. 2008. *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*. 1st ed. New York: Harper
- Pascoe, C. J. 2007. *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Warner, Michael. 1999. *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*. New York: Free Press.
- Warner, Michael, and Social Text Collective, eds. 1993. *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*. Cultural Politics, v. 6. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ward, Elizabeth Jane. 2015. *Not Gay: Sex between Straight White Men*. Sexual Cultures. New York: New York University Press.

## Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> Truth meaning the only truth.

<sup>2</sup> Ward, Elizabeth Jane. 2015. *Not Gay: Sex between Straight White Men*. Sexual Cultures. New York: New York University Press.

<sup>3</sup> Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Thinking Gender. New York: Routledge.

<sup>4</sup> Diamond, Lisa M. 2008. *Sexual Fluidity: Understanding Women's Love and Desire*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

<sup>5</sup> Katz, Jonathan. 2006. "The Invention of Heterosexuality." *Sage Pub*. July 8.  
[http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/11879\\_Chapter\\_1.pdf](http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/11879_Chapter_1.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Pascoe, C. J. 2007. *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

<sup>7</sup> Kimmel, Michael S. 2008. *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*. 1st ed. New York: Harper

<sup>8</sup> Warner, Michael, and Social Text Collective, eds. 1993. *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*. Cultural Politics, v. 6. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

<sup>9</sup> Warner, Michael. 1999. *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*. New York: Free Press.

<sup>10</sup> BDSM stands for Bondage, Domination, Sadism, and Masochism.

<sup>11</sup> Foucault, Michel. 1990. *The History of Sexuality*. Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books.

<sup>12</sup> When I say straight I am referring to heterosexuality.

---

<sup>13</sup> Pascoe, C. J. 2007. *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

<sup>14</sup> Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Thinking Gender. New York: Routledge.

<sup>15</sup> Diamond, Lisa M. 2008. *Sexual Fluidity: Understanding Women's Love and Desire*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

<sup>16</sup> Ahmed, Sara. 2008. *Queer Phenomenology Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke University Press. <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1169326>.

<sup>17</sup> Ward, Elizabeth Jane. 2015. *Not Gay: Sex between Straight White Men*. Sexual Cultures. New York: New York University Press.

<sup>18</sup> The heterosexual norms that make up society, (hetero-sexuality, monogamy, marriage, family, children).

<sup>19</sup> While this notion is more about masculinity, I believe that the intertwined nature of gender and sexuality (best demonstrated by the identity heterosexuality), demonstrates that by girls looking to each other for gender ideals they are also looking at sexuality ideals.

<sup>20</sup> Kimmel, Michael S. 2008. *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*. 1st ed. New York: Harper

<sup>21</sup> Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Thinking Gender. New York: Routledge.

<sup>22</sup> Katz, Jonathan. 2006. "The Invention of Heterosexuality." *Sage Pub*. July 8. [http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/11879\\_Chapter\\_1.pdf](http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/11879_Chapter_1.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> For men or women?

---

<sup>24</sup> Katz, Jonathan. 2006. "The Invention of Heterosexuality." *Sage Pub.* July 8.

[http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/11879\\_Chapter\\_1.pdf](http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/11879_Chapter_1.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> Warner, Michael. "Introduction." *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*.

Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1993. Vii-Xxxi. Print.

<sup>26</sup> Warner, Michael. 1999. *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*.

New York: Free Press.

<sup>27</sup> Ahmed, Sara. 2008. *Queer Phenomenology Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke

University Press. <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1169326>.

<sup>28</sup> Pascoe, C. J. 2007. *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. Berkeley:

University of California Press.