

SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN *GAME OF THRONES*

by

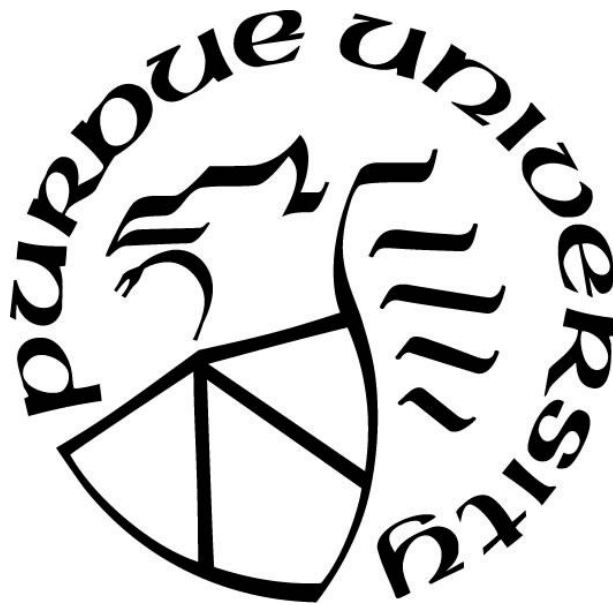
Juliana L. Russell

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Purdue University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts



Department of Communication

Fort Wayne, Indiana

May 2021

**THE PURDUE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL
STATEMENT OF COMMITTEE APPROVAL**

Dr. Sarah LeBlanc Chair

Department of Communication

Dr. Mary Ann Cain

Department of English

Dr. Kate White

Department of English

Approved by:

Dr. Steven Carr

Dedicated to all those who told me that I couldn't do it. You unknowingly pushed me forward more than you could ever imagine.

And to those that supported me through this tumultuous process, I am forever grateful:

To my kiddos, Kaeli and Nico, thank you for always believing in me.

To my spirit sisters, Anaya and Barb, your words of encouragement kept me moving forward, even when I wanted to just quit. Thank you for being my cheerleaders.

To my tribe, your support astounds me every day.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Sarah LeBlanc for her continuing support and guidance at every stage of this research project. Her advice, encouragement, and friendship eased my anxiety throughout the process and helped me create the work that follows. I greatly appreciate her taking on the responsibilities as committee chair and believing in me.

I also express my sincere thanks to Dr. Mary Ann Cain for the inspiration that became the basis of this work. Her class, *Composing the Self*, opened a world of research to me that propelled me to investigate sexual violence in popular culture and for that, I am forever grateful.

To Dr. Kate White, I extend my deepest thanks for her counsel, ideas, and encouragement throughout the research process. Her insights helped connect ideas and class on *Rhetoric of Popular Culture* helped cement my love of studying the intricacies of the culture that we live in.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	7
INTRODUCTION	8
LITERATURE REVIEW	11
Defining Rape and Sexual Violence on Television.....	11
Allowances of the Fantasy Genre	13
Patriarchy and Sexual Violence	14
Theoretical Grounding	15
Summary	16
Method.....	18
EFFECTS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE ON CHARACTERS	19
The Victims.....	19
Cersei Lannister.....	19
Sansa Stark.....	22
Theon Greyjoy.....	26
Daenerys Targaryen	27
Craster’s Daughters.....	30
The Perpetrators.....	32
Jaime Lannister.....	32
Joffrey Baratheon	33
Craster	33
Ramsay Snow/Bolton.....	34
Khal Drogo	35
How Sexual Violence Affects Characters and Their Relationships	35
DISCUSSION	40
Sexual Violence by Seasons	40
Season by Season	41
The Timing of Season 8.....	43
Conclusion.....	47
Future Research	48

REFERENCES50

ABSTRACT

Rape culture extended into popular culture, including the wildly well-received HBO series *Game of Thrones*. Between Seasons 7 and 8, the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements went viral, challenging rape culture in all aspects of American life. To examine the use of sexual violence in mainstream media, *Game of Thrones* was analyzed to explore three areas: the effects of sexual violence on characters, the effects of sexual violence on relationships, and how depictions of sexual violence changed between Seasons 1-7 and Season 8.

The method of inquiry used was critical analysis, which was employed after two viewings of each episode of the series. Instances of sexual violence were noted and details examined, before analyzing the number of instances in each season.

Results showed an unrealistic and problematic use of sexual violence in *Game of Thrones*. Victims of sexual violence were often portrayed as having few aftereffects. Relationships between the victim and perpetrator were a mixed bag, with Cersei proclaiming her love for her perpetrator, while characters such as Sansa exacted revenge. Lastly, a change was noted in acts of sexual violence, both in the number of instances and the intensity between Seasons of 1-7 and Season 8.

In conclusion, sexual violence was a main trope used in *Game of Thrones* to create and support male power in the patriarchal civilization of Westeros. The use of the trope changed with the popularity of #MeToo and #TimesUp, reducing the sexual violence, and the change was enacted in part by the actors playing the victims within the show.

INTRODUCTION

The United States defines rape culture as a set of social norms and attitudes that look at sexual violence that pervades daily life, which includes any non-consensual sexual act or conversation, as a part of normal life (Lexico, n.d.). Smith (2004) determined the second wave of feminism in the 1970s used the term rape culture, which now is generally used in describing the culture of the United States. While the term originated in the feminist movement, other areas of academia have studied the phenomenon, such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, and communication, making this a multi-discipline interest of study.

To confront the entrenched ideas of rape culture and highlight how prevalent sexual violence is, Tarana Burke created the #MeToo movement during the days of MySpace (Gilmore, 2019; Pelligrini, 2018). On October 24, 2017, with the nation reeling from the result of the Kavanaugh hearings, Rose McGowan and Ashley Judd publicly accused Harvey Weinstein of sexual violence, including rape and sexual abuse, prompting the #MeToo movement to explode on social media (Mendes et al., 2019). Twitter logged over 12 million uses of the hashtag within 24 hours after actor Alyssa Milano promoted the hashtag encouraging others to tell their stories (Mendes et al., 2019). The number of stories told under the hashtag illustrated, in a very personal way, how rape culture infiltrated our society. In January 2018, #TimesUp, a legal movement created to help with legal fees and provide lawyers for those who found themselves victim to harassment and violence, joined #MeToo (Buckley, 2018). These two movements burgeoned with support because so many people related to what was reported about Weinstein and others, creating a woven web of stories.

Despite these movements being prevalent in the news and social media for quite some time, very little has been studied about their impact on mass media. Studies about the Aziz Ansari scandal in relation to #MeToo (Na, 2019) as well as framing the movement within the several scandals of R. Kelly (Leung & Willaims, 2019), a once-popular musical artist, inspect particular aspects of the movement in relation to media figures. But oddly, studies about how media and entertainment dealt with #MeToo are mostly missing, despite the multitude of shows that contain sexual violence or harassment.

Studies do, however, show that sexual violence as acceptable in certain genres of entertainment, for very specific reasons. Byrne and Taddeo (2019) studied the entertainment sub-genre of historical dramas, in relation to rape and the #TimesUp movement. They determined that instances of rape or other sexual violence were seen through an erotic lens as if the act were appropriate and necessary for the plotline of the show or the formation of the male characters. Sexual violence is shown as a romantic trope, where the woman resists but ultimately gives in and finds her true love, despite being physically violated by him (Byrne & Taddeo, 2019). In some instances, such as on the show *Outlander*, sexual violence changed after #TimesUp, deviating from the original rape stories in the books to consensual sexual scenes; and in one specific episode where a violent rape was crucial to the plotline, the rape was more implied and heard than seen. The show warned viewers through a Twitter post and followed the episode with the telephone number of the National Sexual Assault Hotline (Byrne & Taddeo, 2019).

Game of Thrones was an HBO production uniquely placed in the timeline of the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements. Seasons 1 through 7 aired before the movements gained traction in the United States, with the eighth season not being aired until 19 months after the last episode of Season 7 and 18 months after the #MeToo explosion (*Game of Thrones*, 2011). Despite this

timeline, *Game of Thrones* has had scant research on the portrayal of sexual violence and its perception on viewers, or how the sexual violence in the first seven seasons, pre-#MeToo, compares to violence in Season 8. For example, Needham (2017) studied how sexuality in general was portrayed in the show and Kokkola and Valovirta (2016) focused strictly on the incest contained in *Game of Thrones*, ignoring other sexual violence within the show. Both Needham's (2017) work and Kokkoloa and Valovirta's (2016) were written in 2016 before the start of Season 6, lacking insight into Seasons 7 and 8's use of sexual violence.

The collision of an existing, exceptionally popular show such as *Game of Thrones* with the social awakening that the United States, and much of the world, experienced in relation to sexual violence is an interesting and underdeveloped crossroads in research. The intention of this thesis is to critically examine how sexual violence was portrayed, with emphasis on the effects of character relationships, as well as a look into viewer perceptions of the show and general perceptions of sexual violence. A special focus will be placed on how, if at all, the sexual violence of *Game of Thrones* changed between the first seven seasons and the last, after the #MeToo social movement explosion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Some may argue why it is a big deal to examine rape and sexual violence through a particular show, after all it is just entertainment. Research (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Anderson & Bushman, 2018, Hughes & Hasbrouch, 1996) finds a positive causal link between the violence viewed on television programs and the violence experienced in society. In the sections that follow, rape and sexual violence will be defined and examined as a trope in television programming. The role of the patriarchy in sexual violence will be discussed, especially as it relates to *Game of Thrones*, as well as how the genre of fantasy is treated differently than other genres when it comes to sexual violence.

Defining Rape and Sexual Violence on Television

Dillman Carpentier et al. (2017) found that 65% of the cable television shows researched had some form of sexual content, ranging from romantic love to recreational sex, in both consensual and non-consensual situations. Many of these shows were targeting teenagers as their main audience; Dillman Carpentier et al. (2017) noted the sexual development of the audience is partially shaped by what viewers see in the media, specifically through entertainment programs.

Television uses rape and sexual violence as a trope in many television shows (Brinson, 1992). In discussing rape myths, primarily on prime-time television, Brinson (1992) discussed the similarities in how the trope was used to devalue women in a patriarchally-modeled world. Myths that are widely circulated on television dramas can shape how rape is seen and dealt with in society, such as court cases and belief of the victim stories (Brinson, 1992). Before the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements, Byrne and Taddeo (2019) found a greater instance of sexual violence on

television romanticized, specifically period dramas such as *Poldark* and *Outlander*, often with the female victim eventually falling in love with her rapist. While some shows used rape to show the effects of war or other negative situations, they also show rape as a universal issue, not dependent on the society or era of the show (Byrne and Taddeo, 2019). Often, women are treated as a commodity; they are there for the use of men (Needham, 2017).

Sexual violence is a trope regularly used in fantasy-based entertainment (Borowska-Szerszun, 2019). Shows like *Game of Thrones*, which are loosely based in the middle ages, justifies the use of sexual violence as part of the society, representative of what the experience would be for people living during that timeframe (Borowska-Szerszun, 2019). The usage of whore is common, with sexually expressive women relegated to the whore role, which was frequently devaluing (Brinson, 1992); while those female characters who were “saving themselves” or not sexually expressive are epitomized in the virginal role as an example of the superlative woman that all women should aspire to be. Sexual violence, which is experienced by both the whore and virgin, is used to create a sense of horror at the situation, but also fascination at the acts being viewed, as if creating a voyeuristic experience to be enjoyed by the home viewer (Borowska-Szerszun, 2019).

In all of these horror-fascination experiences, the majority of scenes are portrayed through the perspective of the perpetrator, not the victim, which has created the concept of a “good rape” in entertainment (Phillips, 2017). Phillips (2017) describes a “good rape” scene as having the perspective from the victim’s experience, as it adds to the victim’s character, whether it be in the form of how it affected them or how they now relate to others. The focus is no longer on the perpetrator and there’s more to the story than just “this character got raped.” The aftermath of the rape is explored, not just swept under the rug and ignored. This concept of a “good rape” was

modeled by Jana Yuan, a writer for *Orange Is the New Black*, in the depiction of the rape of a character named Pennsatucky, where viewers saw the change in mental health and behavior of Pennsatucky as a direct result of the rape she endured (Phillips, 2017). Research has not applied this idea of “good rape” to many shows, including *Game of Thrones*, showing large gaps in knowledge about how rape was treated in the shows.

Allowances of the Fantasy Genre

The #MeToo movement brought into focus the magnitude of sexual violence that is experienced, putting the violence in entertainment into the spotlight. Airey (2018) determined more attention was being paid to not only the viewed sexual violence but also the violence experienced by actors that auditioned for parts. Through the #MeToo movement and the safe space perceived in social media such as Facebook and Twitter, Gibson et al. (2019) found that rape, whether it be real-life stories or fictional entertainment tropes, received more attention to what was happening by society at large.

Interestingly, even though society was awakening to the reality of the significance of sexual violence being experienced, the fantasy genre, such as *Game of Thrones*, was being given a pass. Baker (2012) defined fantasy as a genre that lets the consumer escape from their reality, and a genre that is framed primarily by the culture that is consuming it. Borowska-Szerszun (2019) further defined the subgenre of fantasy called grimdark using sexual violence as a plot feature. A *Song of Fire and Ice*, the book series that *Game of Thrones* is based off, is considered immersive fantasy as well as grimdark. Borowska-Szerszun (2019) discussed the author George R.R. Martin’s explanation of the use of sexual violence as his “obligation to tell the truth” (p. 3) of women’s lives in the historical context of the middle ages. Violence, both sexual and otherwise, were

commonplace in medieval Europe, to the point that violent torture was performed in public as a form of punishment and viewed as a form of entertainment (Impara, 2016). Ferreday (2015) found that Martin claims to create realistic depictions of how women are regarded, as well as how they are treated in a patriarchally constructed fantasy society.

Patriarchy and Sexual Violence

The basis of the society in *Game of Thrones* is strictly patriarchal, with Askey (2018) noting that toxic masculinity is shown throughout the series. Penny (as cited in Askey, 2018, p. 50) characterized *Game of Thrones* as a “racist rape-culture Disneyland with dragons.” Clapton and Shepherd (2017) note that women are merely objects to the men of Westeros, the main country in *Game of Thrones*, there to be used by the male characters. They even go on to say that Daenerys, a main female character that breaks out of the traditional gender role of a woman, is obligated to experience sexual violence in her determination to become queen (Clapton & Shepherd, 2017). Ultimately, Clapton and Shepherd (2017) determined Martin wrote power into gender in *Game of Thrones*, with men clearly on the top of that ladder of privilege.

There are a few female characters beyond Daenerys that turn away from the norm of patriarchy, forging their own way. Each of them is exceptional in some way, such as Arya, who has a penchant for assassinating with no remorse, Brienne who is as tall as a man and can fight just as brutally if need be, and Yara, who works to take her father’s place in ruling their lands (Marques, 2019). These three women refuse to let men rule over them, being against the values placed on women of child bearers and home-keepers. They face difficult moments from the patriarchal society in order to be themselves, including being threatened with sexual violence (Walton, 2019).

Theoretical Grounding

Throughout the series, a few areas lack research in regard to the sexual violence found in *Game of Thrones*. Very rarely do we see the lasting effects of rape on the survivors within the show. Occasionally, we view women who shy away from those that assaulted them but otherwise there is very little reaction to being raped. Rape, as a plotline, is more an inconvenience to the woman involved rather than a life-changing trauma. Expectancy violation, that is to say, how characters behave when other characters communicate or act differently than expected (Burgoon, et al., 2016) seems to be greatly at play in the relationships, both romantic and nonromantic, occurring in *Game of Thrones*, especially in instances of sexual violence. Burgoon et al. (2016) note three general actions involved with Expectancy Violation Theory: how the expectations are formed in relation to actions and communication, how those actions are evaluated based on the existing expectations, and how the violated expectations change further communications. Examining how the characters interrelate before, during, and after sexual violence in regards to expectancy violation is of interest to fill that gap in knowledge about the show.

In addition to that, the show is filled with dark communication, which Gilchrist-Petty and Long (2012) define as communication, whether nonverbal or verbal, that cause harm or that society would deem morally wrong or objectionable. Spitzberg and Cupach (1998) describe the seven main characteristics of dark communication:

“(1) the dysfunctional, distressing, destructive aspects of human action; (2) deviance, betrayal, transgression, and violations, including awkward, rude, and disruptive features of human behavior; (3) exploitation of victims; (4) the unfulfilled, the unpotentiated, underestimated, and unappreciated aspects of human endeavor, in other words, the worlds we wished we had created but did not; (5) the unattractive, socially isolated, unwanted, and

repulsive; (6) objectification or treating a person as a thing; and (7) the paradoxical, mystifying aspects of life that things are seldom what they seem to be” (p. 3).

Also included in dark communication aspects of relationships are negative behaviors, such as stalking, violence, and threats, as well as negative emotions, such as anger (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2011). The main premise of the series is that people are fighting and clawing their way to being the king or queen of Westeros. With that comes a myriad of dark communication techniques such as lying, pressuring someone to do something they are not otherwise willing to do, and manipulation of emotions and actions (Cupach & Spitzberg, 2011). Investigating how dark communication plays into the sexual violence in *Game of Thrones*, from before, during, and after the violent act, will explore how the show demonstrates this communication technique.

Summary

Rape culture, as a term, has existed for nearly 50 years and is studied in society across multiple disciplines of academia. It is used as a trope in television shows, presenting in a variety of ways from sexual harassment to violent sexual assault. *Game of Thrones* liberally used sexual assault as a story point for many characters in problematic ways which do not show the lasting impact of the violence on the victims. This is compounded by Westeros being a patriarchal fantasy world that promulgates the idea that men should be in control of women. Both expectancy violations and dark communications take a large part in how the story develops and how characters interact with each other.

This research, based in the entirety of the HBO series *Game of Thrones*, will look to answer the following questions:

Q1: What effect does sexual violence have on the characters?

Q2: What effect does sexual violence have on the relationships of characters?

Q3: How did the sexual violence change between the first seven seasons and the eighth?

METHOD

In regards to the show, *Game of Thrones*, a critical analysis approach is taken in analyzing each episode's sexual violence and the effects on the characters, with specific attention being given to dark communication and expectancy violations. Acts of sexual violence are analyzed with respect to how the act relates to character development. The instances of sexual violence in seasons one through seven is compared to that of season eight to determine if there is a change in patterns of sexual violence after the #MeToo movement took hold in the United States.

To achieve this analysis, the show, in its entirety, was watched twice. The first time through, themes were noted, the shock value of the sexual violence was detailed, and characters were explored. This information gave me insights for the second viewing, as the essence of the storyline was known, so details of individual stories could be concentrated on. In the second viewing, sexual violence, expectancy violations, and dark communication instances were noted, as well as pertinent character details. Upon completion of the second viewing, characters' narratives were compiled and analyzed for pertinent themes, the results of which are explained below.

A warning: spoilers ahead. If you have trouble reading about sexual or physical violence, this research discusses them both in detail going forward.

EFFECTS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE ON CHARACTERS

After viewing each episode and season twice, analysis determined that the bulk of the sexual violence experienced occurred because of 1) who the victims were and 2) the underlying relationship between the victim and the perpetrators. These themes are flushed out in the sections that follow, first by introducing the victims and the sexual violence, dark relational communication, character expectancy violations, and the impact all these things have on their life.

The Victims

A plethora of victims of sexual violence exists in the series, *Game of Thrones*, from main characters to minor characters, including men, women, and children. Very few characters have not witnessed or heard about sexual violence within the series. Four individual characters' experiences will be explored, as well as a subgroup of characters who live in the same home and have similar experiences. These characters stand out as enduring ruthless sexual violence.✚

Cersei Lannister

Cersei Lannister, introduced in Season 1, Episode 1, is present throughout the series of *Game of Thrones*. As her thoughts, life, and motives unfold in each episode, the audience sees her as an instigator of multiple varieties of violence, a supporter of others' power, and a victim of the types of violence she supports.

At the start of the series, the audience meets Cersei, the queen and wife of Robert Baratheon. At the end of Episode 1, the audience learns she is in an incestual affair, as the audience views Cersei and her twin brother, Jaime, the father to Cersei's three children, participating in a sexual act (Benioff & Weiss, 2011a). Later in the series, she divulges her incestuous relationship with her

younger cousin, Lancel (Benioff & Weiss, 2012c). Her penchant for incest is not a secret, as others in power, including her father (Benioff & Weiss, 2014c), discuss her relationships and her children's ancestry; but it was kept secret from Robert Baratheon and others.

Despite her position and power as the queen, Cersei is not safe from sexual violence. Some of the characters ponder violence but do not take action, such as a pirate in Season 2, Episode 1 (Benioff & Weiss, 2012a), who talks of "fucking" the queen in base terms, presumably without consent, and Ayra, whose quest to kill Cersei carries through many seasons. Violence towards Cersei talk continues through the series, with different foci as victims, and will be discussed later with other characters. Still, in nearly every incident, no consequences are felt by the perpetrator.

While Cersei does experience many forms of sexual violence, such as incest, the most violent attack on Cersei isn't by an unknown pirate, however. In Season 4, Episode 3 (Benioff & Weiss, 2014a), we see Cersei violently raped by Jaime as she begs him to stop. That alone should be appalling; however, there is the added disgrace of it happening in the sept, a religious building akin to a church, against the catafalque where their son Joffrey's body lays. Some may point out that this act occurs after Cersei rejects his advances, being angry because Jaime left her and because the audience sees her as being visibly disturbed by his right arm, now missing his hand. Jaime presents as being rejected, and the audience could see him as taking back what he deems his own.

One would think that there would be some consequences for Jaime's actions. At the very least, that his sister would push him away in anger. He violated her expectancies of the relationship, that she was safe with him and loved. His act of rape creates a dehumanizing (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1998) moment in her life; yet this instance of sexual violence does not create an issue between the twins with life going on just as before the rape occurred. In a later episode in the same season

(Benioff & Weiss, 2014c), Cersei seeks out Jaime, with the express purpose of telling him that she is choosing him when her father attempts to force her to marry into the family of Tyrell. Despite his violence against her, she risks everything by choosing him, including her reputation, saying that people can tell their stories about them but that she loves him and picks him over everyone else.

Since the scene contains violence and does not appear to have lasting impact on Cersei, Dodds (2014) classifies the scene as “borderline unwatchable.” The pairing of rape with the location of not only a religious place, but next to their dead son’s body elevates this scene to one that is exceptionally difficult to watch. The aftermath is also difficult to watch. This is evident as 1.) Cersei does not see herself as a victim and 2.) does not treat Jaime as a rapist. In the sense of the idea of a “good rape,” this does not pass the test. Cersei goes on about her life as if it had never happened, as does Jaime; there seems to be no emotional backlash because of the violence.

Cersei’s experiences with sexual violence do not end with Season 4, though subsequent experiences are not as physically sexually violent and instead are more mentally violent. In Season 5, Episode 10, the audience sees Cersei as a victim of sexual violence, this time at the religious elders’ hands. As a penance for the incestuous relationship with her cousin Lancel, the elders require Cersei to strip naked, have her hair shorn, and walk-through King’s Landing, having a religious elder ring a bell and yell “Shame! Shame! Shame!,” simultaneously, she endures citizens screaming obscenities and throwing rotten food and waste at her. This victimization impacts on Cersei significantly, as she is now livid at her treatment by the religious order, fueling her plans of revenge. This scene is filled with what Cupach and Spitzberg (2011) defined as dark communication. Aspects of distress, destruction of Cersei’s psyche, violation of her person between cutting her hair off and stripping her naked, and the dehumanizing way she was paraded

through the streets, being pelted with rotten food all point to the depth of dysfunction and dark communication created by religious order. She did not foresee this type of punishment, which also points to the expectancy violation (Burgoon et al., 2016) created by the religious elder. When she confesses to fornication with her cousin, she is told she can return to her home at the Red Keep but is not told all of the details of that return, which includes the atonement previously described. Cersei starts the series as a power-hungry woman, and this victimization propels her to destroy not only the religious order but also a good portion of King's Landing. The viewer finally sees Cersei experience something with which she has an external reaction.

Overall, sexual violence does not seem to have much of an effect on Cersei. She accepts it as part of her life, even counseling other young women, such as Sansa Stark, in the realities of being a woman in the kingdom. This reaction, or lack thereof, is in opposition to research. Bennice et al. (2003) found that Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was a common result of intimate partner sexual violence, and the severity of the intimate partner sexual violence predicted the level of PTSD experienced by victims. Cersei shows none of the typical signs of PTSD, making her lack of reaction to the sexual violence she endures is outside normal parameters. All of this points to a rape that is not "good" in the sense that Phillips (2017) defined because the violence does not lead to development of her character or the aftermath of her sexual violence experiences.

Sansa Stark

Sansa Stark is a young woman when we meet her in the first episode. She is the eldest daughter of Ned Stark, a powerful man in the realm. Throughout the series, she is victimized by several people, experiences expectancy violation and dark communication until she gains some

power and becomes less likely to experience sexual violence while mitigating negative communication patterns.

Her first brush with sexual violence comes early, in Season 1, Episode 8 (Benioff & Weiss, 2011f), when she flees as her enemies storm the castle. When she gains entry to her room, a man called The Hound is waiting for her, and he menacingly stalks her, saying he is there at the queen's request. While no sexual violence takes place on camera, it is hinted that it could happen by the way he continues to slowly advance on her, as a predator stalks its prey. In this scene, expectancy violation occurs not with The Hound, but in that he was sent by the Cersei, someone Sansa trusted. That trust was shattered when Cersei sent The Hound to Sansa for seemingly nefarious reasons. While no direct communication between Cersei and Sansa exists during this scene, Sansa's face as she processes The Hound's words of why he's there shows a look of panic, surprise, and betrayal. This betrayal points to the queen's use of dark communication to frighten and control the people around her.

Season 2, Episode 4 (Benioff & Weiss, 2012c) brings more sexual violence to Sansa, this time in a very real way. Sansa enters the court, and her intended, King Joffrey threatens physical violence with his crossbow aimed at her while insinuating that she had something to do with her brother's army's success. He then lowers the crossbow, saying his mother wants her alive, and has her stripped and violently beaten by a knight of the Kingsguard as the full court of dozens of people watch and gasp at the violence. It only ends when Tyrion walks in and chastises the knight for beating a girl before chastising Joffrey for his actions.

Two episodes later, the audience sees Sansa running to her room as violence breaks out in the castle. This time she is chased in a hallway and pinned down by men who attempt to rape her. The Hound redeems himself in her eyes by saving her and killing two of the men before they can

complete the act (Taylor, 2012). This action again violates her expectancy that she needs to protect herself from his violence. The lasting effect of this attempted rape radiates in Sansa's subconscious making itself known by reliving the attack through nightmares.

As Sansa's abuse at the hands of Joffrey continues, Cersei, his mother, notices. Sansa pulls away from Joffrey, looking physically uncomfortable to be in the same room as him or sitting next to him. Cersei realized that Sansa would not be able to control her son's depravity, bestowing Sansa to Tyrion, Cersei's dwarf brother, in a bid to discredit and devalue her (Benioff & Weiss, 2013d). This action serves two important functions: it shows that Tyrion is only worthy of something considered undesirable by the king and his mother, and it also shows that Sansa is of no political worth to the most powerful people in the kingdom. Both results are dark communication that affects not only those involved, but also society as a whole when they view the king's intended given to his imp uncle, who has never been regarded highly within his own family.

Despite escaping Kings Landing due to the unfortunate demise of King Joffrey, Sansa's plight with sexual violence does not end. Season 5 Episode 6 sees Baelish marry Sansa off to Ramsay Snow to avenge her family (Cogman, 2015b). Baelish uses Sansa as a pawn in his own political motivations, which destroys Sansa's expectation that he would be her protector and father-figure. He exploits her innocence, in that he convinces her that this move will avenge what has happened to various members of her family.

Games of Throne fans first encounter Ramsay in Season 3, Episode 2. As the season progresses viewers note Ramsay's sadist behavior; this behavior drives the character Sansa's experiences with his sadistic tendencies on their wedding night in Season 5, Episode 6 (Cogman, 2015b). Ramsey starts by mocking her virginity and previous unconsummated marriage. To

control her, he orders her to strip and for Theon, his captive, to stay in the room and watch as his childhood friend is “made a woman.” The audience is witness to the discomfort of Theon, who cries, and the violent rape of Sansa by her husband. As the storyline progresses, the viewer can see the psychological impact of Ramsay’s actions on Sansa. She begs Ramsay’s girlfriend Myranda to kill her to escape the abuse she is suffering. After a few episodes and her “brother” Jon Snow recapturing Winterfell, Ramsay is taken captive. It is during his captivity that Sansa can put her internal torment to rest. She seeks revenge on Ramsay; and while held prisoner in a cage under Winterfell, she sics his starving dogs on him, a punishment he has given out to others throughout his storyline, watching as the dogs begin to devour Ramsay alive then she slowly walks away.

Ramsay, like Joffrey, seems to only communicate in dark, manipulative ways. His sadism is destructive and deviant, even when his partner is agreeable to his violence. He exploits everyone around him, which will be seen with his relationship with Theon Greyjoy and others later in this paper. He dehumanizes Sansa by violently raping her on their wedding night.

As the viewer witnesses what Sansa endures, they also see its effect on her. She starts as a young, naive girl who has experiences that make her shy away from strangers who are threatening and from people she knows and, at one point, trusted. Sansa’s experiences with Ramsay cause her at first to be a scared victim, begging someone to kill her and put her out of her misery, but she hardens and becomes strong-willed and angry, which leads to her triumph over him and his grisly death (Benioff & Weiss, 2016d). In a later season, Baelish, once a close family friend, is condemned to death by Sansa, with his throat immediately being slit by Sansa’s sister, Arya (Benioff & Weiss, 2017c).

Towards the end of the series, the audience views Sansa being able to discuss her abuse with other characters. Sansa alludes to her abuse at Joffrey’s hands to her sister Arya in a discussion

about their father's death as if the abuse was just part of a bad time in her life (Benioff & Weiss, 2017b). In a conversation with Tyrion, Sansa says, "you are the best of them," referring to her various engagements and marriages (Benioff & Weiss, 2019a). The audience sees Tyrion as respectful of Sansa, and she shows her appreciation for that in the conversation. Finally, Clegane/The Hound remarks to Sansa that he heard she was roughly broken in, referring to her sexual abuse at Ramsay's hands. With a sly smile, Sansa comments that Ramsay got what was coming to him when she released his hounds on him, and she acknowledges that she would not have become who she is without those horrific experiences (Benioff & Weiss, 2019b).

Theon Greyjoy

The only male examined as a victim in this work is Theon Greyjoy. When we first meet Theon, he is quite the playboy, enjoying women and prostitutes throughout the first two seasons. The viewer sees him refusing to pay prostitutes (Benioff & Weiss, 2011d) and asserting himself over captive women (Benioff & Weiss, 2011e). He seems to be a character created by what is around him.

In Season 3, the viewer starts to see the changes in Theon after his capture and the sexual, physical, and psychological abuse endured by the hands of Ramsay, a ruthless bastard that delights in the harshest of sadistic pursuits. Over time, we see Theon transition from a boisterous misogynistic man to something barely acknowledged as a human being. Through tormenting Theon on a St. Andrew's Cross (Benioff & Weiss, 2013b) to gleefully cutting off his penis (Martin, 2013), Ramsay takes control over every part of Theon, eventually renaming him Reek because he refuses to allow him to bathe. Ramsay extends Theon/Reek's humiliation by having the detached penis delivered to his family (Martin, 2013).

When Ramsay forces Theon/Reek to strip and bathe, the audience sees the complete control Ramsay has over him, despite Theon/Reek acting completely uncomfortable with being touched and bathed (Benioff & Weiss, 2014c). Theon/Reek cringes at the touch and has a look of fear and anxiety in his face and body language. Ramsay has complete control of him thanks to the use of manipulative dark communication. The combination of language and actions works to transform Theon into someone or something that is unidentifiable from prior to meeting Ramsay.

Later, when Sansa talks to Theon/Reek, the audience sees how that complete control manifests itself when Ramsay isn't even present. Sansa tries to get Theon/Reek to help them escape, and he won't even respond to "Theon," screaming that his name is Reek and shying away from Sansa's touch (Benioff & Weiss, 2015a). He doesn't trust her kindness and shares in her humility of being brutally raped by Ramsay.

Ramsay's control of Theon/Reek manifests symptoms of PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) (Durand & Barlow, 2016). He lacks trust, attempts to avoid situations where Ramsay can touch him, and displays anxiety and fear in how he acts and moves in the scenes (Durand & Barlow, 2016). Of all the characters in *GoT*, Theon/Reek shows the most harmful impacts of his sexual violence experiences and is an extreme example of the psychological trauma one might go through.

Daenerys Targaryen

Daenerys is another complex character that goes through many varieties of sexual violence throughout her life. We see Daenerys oscillate between being a victim and gaining her power several times in the series. Those closest to her victimize her, while ancillary characters objectify her.

When the audience is introduced to Daenerys, she is a young girl being given to a man in return for his men as an army for Daenerys's brother, Viserys (Benioff & Weiss, 2011a). There are hints of an incestual relationship when Viserys strips her and critically views her naked body. Out of a sense of what the audience could view as shame, Daenerys enters a bath that her handmaiden exclaims is "too hot," as if she was trying to burn off her brother's touch in the water. Jung and Steil (2012) found that feeling contaminated and performing unusual bathing routines are common behaviors for those who have been victims of sexual abuse. Viserys further denigrates and betrays Daenerys by telling her he would let her soon-to-be husband's "whole tribe fuck you, all 40,000 men and their horses too if that's what it took" to get the army he needs for his plans to regain the throne (Benioff & Weiss, 2011a). Eventually, when she gains power in her new tribe, she strikes down her brother physically with a chain when he attempts to control her during an argument.

When we first meet Daenerys, her behavior shows the dehumanizing way in which her brother treats and exploits her. Viserys sells her innocence to Khal Drogo for an army, which seems to violate Daenerys's expectations of the relationship with her brother. The comment about 40,000 men and horses further dehumanizes her, making her a means to an end for Viserys, an end that he would do nearly anything to obtain. His use of dark communication gets him what he wants in the short term, at least until he crosses a line by disrespecting Daenerys and is executed.

When we see Daenerys at what we might call her wedding reception, she is visibly uncomfortable when a rape scene is carried out by members of her new tribe, as a precursor to what her marital bed will be (Benioff & Weiss, 2011a). Later in their first sexual act, Khal Drogo, her husband, brutally rapes her (Benioff & Weiss, 2011a). This scene was not how it was initially written in the book series and was questioned by those involved in the show. Both George R.R. Martin, the series author, and Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, who played Jaime Lannister, spoke out

against the violence Daenerys endured throughout Season 1 (Labonte, 2020). In the original version, the sex between Khal Drogo and his new wife was consensual, yet the series portrayed it as a brutal rape. Coster-Waldau revealed that the actress who played Daenerys, Emilia Clarke, had difficulties with the degradation her character experienced the first season (Labonte, 2020). Both Martin and Coster-Waldau have said in interviews that this violence was unnecessary in Daenerys's story.

Daenerys's strong will to survive manifests when she learns from other women in the tribe how to please her husband, and she takes back that power, insisting that she gain pleasure from their pairing as well as him (Benioff & Weiss, 2011b).

Daenerys gains more respect when she announces she is pregnant with a male heir (Benioff & Weiss, 2011c). This new-found respect gives her the power to save the women in a town the Dothraki tribe was working to destroy, as the men were going to rape them as part of the destruction (Benioff & Weiss, 2011f).

Once she is widowed, we see Daenerys being treated as an object through several scenes throughout the show. She recognizes this trend early on when she shows her disdain, claiming that men only give her pretty things when getting ready to sell her to another (Benioff & Weiss, 2012d). An example of objectification is when a man calls her a slut and asks to whip Daenerys as payment for the soldiers she's preparing to purchase (Cogman, 2013). She exacts her revenge by showing she can speak the language he does, and she's understood him all along, before having her dragon burn him to death (Cogman, 2013). When a Dothraki tribe captures her, the leader insists that Daenerys *is* property (Benioff & Weiss, 2016a). His attitude becomes more respectful when she divulges that she is the widow of Khal Drogo (Benioff & Weiss, 2011a).

In Season 7, Episode 3 (Benioff & Weiss, 2017a), Daenerys recounts her abuse and objectification, “sold as a broodmare” and more, to Jon Snow in their initial meeting. She explains that what has kept her moving forward in her life was a deep belief in herself. Despite all that has happened to her, she still believes in her person and power. Although the audience sees her cringe at her brother’s touch and cower from several others that want to do her harm, she finds strength in herself that has carried her through all the abuse and violence. For Daenerys, the sexual violence she has undergone has hardened her and propelled her to power. Each instance of violence creates a steppingstone that takes her towards more power, sometimes in acts of revenge, and sometimes in abject anger.

To this point, leading characters have been the focus. This next section examines female characters in supporting but significant, roles. Sexual violence in *Game of Thrones* is not limited to characters that connect directly to the main storylines. Sexual violence can be found in the background, just as one might find in society.

Craster’s Daughters

Craster’s daughters suffered severe abuse at their father’s hands for what the viewer could assume as their whole lives. When girls were born in his family, they were raised to a young age then married to their father to continue his incestuous habits. When his daughter-wives birthed sons, Craster abandoned them in the woods to die or be stolen by the White Walkers (Benioff & Weiss, 2012b).

The daughters of Craster received more abuse than just being raped by their father. He routinely demeaned them and treated them worse than the animals in the yard (Benioff & Weiss, 2012b). When strangers come, and Craster houses them, the girls and women are petrified to talk

to them. Craster mocks the male visitors for not having daughters and taking them as brides as if this behavior is socially acceptable. The men are uneasy, and only one daughter, Gilly, is saved by one of the men (Benioff & Weiss, 2013b). As such, Gilly's and the sister-wives storylines take different turns.

Later in the series in Season 3, Episode 4, the Craster's homestead is seized by Karl Tanner, a member of the Night's Watch, and Craster is executed (Benioff & Weiss, 2013b). As Tanner's men take up residence in the homestead, the audience sees the daughters naked, beaten, and raped as they cry out in pain and fear. Tanner's comment to the men about the women is to "fuck them until they're dead!" (Cogman, 2014a).

One of the storylines follows Gilly and her infant son. Soon after meeting Samwell, she shows signs of anxiety and PTSD, violently making herself smaller to not be seen and shrinking away when Samwell tries to help her. She is visibly afraid of her father's wrath. Later, Samwell finds Gilly a job at a local inn, and when the woman in charge tells him she could find her more work, implying sleeping with men for money, Samwell insists on no extra work (Benioff & Weiss, 2014a). Samwell's insistence sets Gilly at ease. In Season 5, Episode 7, Gilly is nearly raped by two brothers of the Night Watch (Benioff & Weiss, 2015a). Samwell attempts to save her, but gets beaten, and the would-be rapists are scared away by a direwolf named Ghost (Benioff & Weiss, 2015a). This scene shows Gilly how much Samwell cares for her and after tending to his wounds, Gilly and Samwell make love and Samwell loses his virginity (Benioff & Weiss, 2015a). Later, in Season 8, Episode 4, Gilly announces that she is pregnant with Samwell's child (Benioff & Weiss, 2019b). All of this shows how Gilly has healed, Samwell's part in the healing, and how much confidence she has gained since her father's abuse.

Craster's daughters are an excellent example of the long-term effects of ongoing sexual violence on a person. Their extreme distrust of others, especially men, is a visible reminder of what the women and girls have endured. It is unclear if they experienced expectancy violation. They were brought up in an environment of abuse, without contact to other people in society and might have no other expectations than abuse and rape. The communication between Craster and his daughters is clearly dark, with deviance, exploitation, and dehumanization being the center of what the audience sees of their relationship.

The Perpetrators

In the above examples of victims, the perpetrators exhibit common characteristics. The first common characteristic is that all the perpetrators are men who have power, whether it be localized in their own home or globally through their social standing in the realm. As part of this trait, the men also have large egos and believe they can do no wrong to anyone. They hold power over the people around them, and all of them have some aspect of cruelty in their personalities. Five male characters are examined in detail concerning who they are and how the sexual violence they perpetrate affects them.

Jaime Lannister

Jaime comes by his ego honestly. He is his father's favorite child by default since his siblings are a female and an imp, both not valued in Westeros society. He is praised for the things that he does throughout his lifetime, whether they are moral or immoral. His father's favoritism created a cruel side to Jaime, one that rarely shows a guilty conscience. This cruelty is seen when Jamie pushes a young Brandon Stark from a tower window early in the series, crippling the boy for the rest of his life. Jaime shows his lack of any guilty feelings by immediately returning to his

sister's bed. That same lack of guilt is apparent after he rapes his sister. But Jaime does have a caring side that shows itself before the rape when he travels with Brienne of Tarth. He saves her from being raped by men along the way and then saves her from fighting a bear in a pit. While this doesn't redeem his actions with his sister, it shows he can be a thoughtful person if he chooses to.

Joffrey Baratheon

Joffrey was the golden child of his family from his birth. He was raised with the knowledge that he would be the next king, as his father, at least to society, was Robert Baratheon, the first king we are introduced to in the series. The audience gets the image that Joffrey was always given what he wanted and could be compared to Draco Malfoy of the Harry Potter series: a child brought up to think he was superior to everyone else because of his birth (Satterly, 2017). As such, he has become a sadist who is cruel to anyone he thinks he can push around, including his mother. Even she can't control him, and he lashes out when she attempts to correct his behavior. Since he has no accountability, he has no fear of killing anyone. His lack of morals allows him to enjoy significantly being publicly cruel, as witnessed by his stripping Sansa in front of the court (Benioff & Weiss, 2012c) as well as privately cruel, with the crossbow murder of a prostitute in his bedroom (Benioff & Weiss, 2013c). His cruelty wins him no praise or trust, as even his momentary wife seems happy when someone murders him.

Craster

Craster, lacks a sense of common morals concerning his daughter-wives. There is no boundary for him regarding his female offspring, and they are all raised to be his slaves and sexual partners. Someone might explain that he was not subjected to society's morals because he isolated his family in the keep. But that does not explain his abject cruelty to his daughters and his lack of

empathy towards his sons that are left in the cold wilderness to be stolen by White Walkers. Craster's ego extends to everything around him as being possessions, even if they are living beings. When he interacts with his daughter-wives, you can see them flinching and recoiling in fear.

Ramsay Snow/Bolton

When allowed to capture Winterfell, a large fort in the North, Ramsay takes up residence, and we see his unfettered cruelty create havoc. Ramsay is, by far, the cruelest of all the perpetrators. His sadism knows no bounds, and he delights in breaking Theon over several episodes, to the point he has complete control over what is left of Theon. What makes Ramsay so horrendous is he is in for the long game. He takes great pains in extending the pain for Theon, slowly chipping away at his ego and personality until there is nothing left, then Ramsay recreates the creature he wants to serve him.

Ramsay shows, in many examples, that he enjoys causing women pain. In Season 5, Episode 5 (Cogman, 2015a), he verbally abuses Myranda, his mistress, telling her how worthless she is. His abuse of Sansa in Season 5, previously discussed, speaks to his sadism, not only in his treatment of Sansa, but also in making Theon/Reek watch. When she attempts to find help in escaping, Ramsay shows her the mutilated body of the woman that was helping her (Benioff & Weiss, 2015a). In Season 6, Episode 2 (Hill, 2016), Ramsay kills his father when they are told that Lord Bolton's wife, Walda, has birthed a son. Shortly thereafter in the same episode, Ramsay unleashes his starving hounds, which kill both Walda and the newborn. As a bastard, Ramsay has grown up with no real consequences - if he could get away with something that helped him survive, he did. This lifestyle created a monster that died the way he lived, with cruelty and a remarkable lack of compassion.

Khal Drogo

Drogo is a bit of an anomaly compared to the other perpetrators. Portrayed as a barbaric savage, he comes from a culture that is vastly different from Westeros. They live as nomads, raiding towns along the way and taking women as captured wives and slaves. He is considered a leader of his tribe, and therefore only his wife challenges him. While he starts as a barbaric character, the audience sees him change, becoming loving and protective with his battered wife. Once that change starts taking place, his wife Daenerys begins to infuse the tribe with her ideas of not raping women and, instead, saving them. By the time Drogo dies, he is a more likable character who protects his wife from the abuse she endured at her brother's hands. While he does rape his wife in their first sexual act, it is portrayed more as a condition of his culture, and his wife teaches him differently as the series progresses.

How Sexual Violence Affects Characters and Their Relationships

Much like in real life, each violated character has a different reaction to their experience. Some showed signs of what is classified as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Stockholm syndrome, or trauma bonding. Others seemed wholly unaffected by the violence they have endured or might endure in the future, such as Cersei. In Season 2, Episode 9 (Martin, 2012), the battle of Blackwater is happening around them, and in talking to Sansa, Cersei states that if the invaders sack the city, the women holed up with her will likely be raped. Sansa will be a bit of "cake" for the marauders, should they find her. When she states this, she has a very expressionless face and voice, as if rape was just a fact of life to be endured as a woman.

Stockholm syndrome, which the American Psychological Association (n.d.) defines as "a mental and emotional response in which a captive_(e.g., a hostage) displays seeming loyalty to -

even affection for - the captor,” became a trope throughout the series. Wallace (2007) outlines the conditions by which Stockholm Syndrome develop as four-fold: small acts of benevolence as recognized by the captive, a recognized inability to leave the situation of their own free will, seclusion from ideas and perspectives different from the captor’s, and an identified risk of detriment to the captive’s psychological or physical continued existence. The focus of Wallace’s (2007) writing revolves around the comparisons of Stockholm syndrome to domestic violence and the results of living in a violent environment.

Expanding on the idea of bonding between an abuser and the victim, Dutton and Painter (1993) detailed the theory of trauma bonding. While like Stockholm syndrome, trauma bonding does not include the concept of being a captive, although those immersed in a trauma bonding situation often feel trapped (Dutton & Painter, 1993). Trauma bonding is shown to occur when a power imbalance exists in a relationship that creates a dominator and a victim, and within that relationship, intermittent good and bad treatment of the victim occurs. At first, the abusive treatment seems rare or an “out of the blue” occurrence. It happens again, repeatedly, becoming something that can be avoided, in the victim’s mind, by completing tasks or exhibiting behavior that pleases the dominator. This power imbalance becomes more significant over time, strengthening the trauma bond, making the victim more reliant on the abuser, while the victim often takes on the abuser’s negative perspective.

Another aspect of victims of sexual violence is the presence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Rothbaum et al. (1992) state that PTSD, in its chronic form, is experienced by nearly half of all rape victims, both female and male. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, 5th edition (DSM-5) lists five criteria for diagnosing PTSD. These include, summarily, being exposed to an actual or threatening event, a list of intrusion symptoms that may be present, enduring

avoidance of stimuli similar to the event, mood or thoughts that turn negative, and that the duration of such symptoms lasts longer than a month, causing serious impairment to living (American Psychological Association, 2013).

When viewing the characters discussed as victims, some comparisons emerge concerning Stockholm syndrome, trauma bonding, and PTSD. Cersei wasn't a captive in the romantic relationship with her brother, nor was there much of a power difference between them. With Cersei as the queen, she had slightly more influence than her twin, but neither had direct power, even over each other. Within their relationship, Cersei and Jaime both treat each other well in some instances and abuse each other in others. For example, when Jaime returns to Kings Landing after having his hand cut off, Cersei has a gold replacement. Yet, at the same time, she shuns him as broken or "less than" because of his missing hand and what Cersei sees as his betrayal when he left. In the opposite direction, Jaime rapes his sister as she begs him to stop, an act that, for many, would end the relationship. At the end of the series, Jaime searches for his sister so he can attempt to help her escape from Kings Landing, a heroic and loving act for which they both died. This back and forth of both loving and cruel treatment created aspects of trauma bonding, and the pair always returned to each other after discretions.

Sansa displayed some symptoms of Stockholm syndrome (American Psychological Association, n.d.) and PTSD (Durand & Barlow, 2016) while she was captive of both Joffrey and Ramsay, although she always seemed to be looking for a way out of the situation. She was in fear of her life, as shown by asking someone to kill her so she could escape it (Benioff & Weiss, 2015c). Sansa was a captive in both relationships. But she never really defended either of her abusers or their behavior, nor did she empathize with them, which is in opposition to how the American Psychological Association (n.d.) defines Stockholm syndrome. While the situation existed in

which she could succumb to Stockholm syndrome, Sansa never fell prey to the heart of the psychological ailment. Sansa exhibited many signs of PTSD (Durand & Barlow, 2016) through the series, from nightmares of the attempted rape (Benioff & Weiss, 2012e) to avoiding certain situations that reminded her of the attempted rape, such as when she pulled away from Baelish while staying in her aunt's castle (Benioff & Weiss, 2016e). She carried this behavior until she could systematically dispatch each of the men who had wronged her.

Craster's daughters have a slightly different situation, mainly because their captor is also their father. The society of Westeros, being patriarchal, shows daughters being cared for and protected by their fathers or male heir until they are appropriately betrothed or married. Examples of this are Daenerys and her brother, Myrcella Lannister, before being betrothed to Trystane Martell, and even Sansa and both her father and, to some extent Petyr Baelish. Craster's daughters are minimally provided for by their father until they reach their first menses when he marries them. And while he protects them inside his keep, the torment and torture they receive are from their father-husband. The daughters are portrayed as loyal to their father, shunning most conversations with outsiders. They are afraid of Craster and do as they are told to avoid additional abuse. He repeatedly rapes and abuses them mentally and physically. Their relationship meets or exceeds the qualification for Stockholm syndrome.

While he continued to show fear of Ramsay, Theon was incredibly loyal to his captor, even trying to make his sister leave and not rescue him from his abuse (Cogman, 2014b). He pushed away Sansa when she tried to pull him out of his mental space. His behavior strongly hinted at Stockholm syndrome while he was in captivity by Ramsay. After being tormented by his captor for an extended period, Theon begged to be killed only to be renamed Reek by Ramsay (Benioff & Weiss, 2013e) and beaten until he gave up his name and called himself Reek. This psychological

breaking through torture set the stage for Ramsay to become the center of Reek's world. At this point, Reek begins to do anything to please Ramsay, no matter how much it emotionally damages him. And while he looks to Ramsay as someone who has power over him, it never seems as if Reek loves Ramsay in any way. Despite this, the relationship between the two contains all the markers for Stockholm syndrome.

Daenerys was a captive from the beginning of her story, first by her brother and then by her husband. The viewer witnesses Daenerys move from sibling abuse, which encompassed mental, physical, and sexual aspects, to sexual abuse by her husband in the same episode. She was forced into an unknown "savage" culture by her brother, who started her abuse cycles that continued into the first part of her marriage. Becoming her husband's property, Daenerys was trapped in the situation with no way out but death, and Daenerys was secluded from her own culture. Her rape on her wedding night put her physical existence in danger. Yet, as the viewer watches, Daenerys starts to act lovingly towards her husband, despite the maltreatment she experiences. By the time he dies, she is so bereft that she enters his funeral pyre to be with his body in the flames. This severe Stockholm syndrome case encompasses all the significant points Wallace (2007) includes in how the syndrome manifests. While this analysis shows Daenerys as a victim embroiled in Stockholm syndrome, the viewer sees a deep love relationship bloom between Daenerys and Drogo without considering the dysfunction of the entire situation.

DISCUSSION

Sexual Violence by Seasons

In looking at sexual violence by season, a few categories emerge for consideration. The first is on-screen rape. The following categories were coded for each episode in the series: on-screen rape, on-screen attempted rape, off-screen/audio rape, implied rape, talk of sexual assault with a specific target, talk of sexual assault with no specific target, on-screen simulated or play-acted rape, and lastly, other sexual violence. While some categories, such as on-screen rape, are self-explanatory, other categories need to be better defined. And it is essential to note that the few instances where a man was having sex with a prostitute and refused to pay her are considered rape for this research. Implied rape is rape discussed in general terms, such as in Season 2, Episode 1 (Benioff & Weiss, 2012a), when Craster implies that he has sex with his underage daughters. An example of on-screen simulated or play-acted rape in Season 1, Episode 1 (Benioff & Weiss, 2011a), is when, as part of Daenerys and Khal Drogo's wedding festivities, rape is play-acted between two participants. No sex or actual violence is perceived. Lastly, the category of other sexual violence encompasses that which does not fit in the previous categories, such as Season 1, Episode 7 (Benioff & Weiss, 2011e), when Theon Greyjoy threatens a captive woman as if he will rape her.

Total sexual violence by season decreased over the series, with Season 4 as an outlier, having more instances than each season before and after it. The mean sexual violence per season is 7.375 instances and 0.98 instances per episode, although seasons with more instances bring up both of those numbers compared to seasons with fewer episodes. There were no seasons found in which sexual violence was absent; however, there were episodes with no sexual violence found.

Season by Season

Season 1 had the most instances of on-screen rape and the second-highest number of overall cases of sexual violence. Rapes in this season were often violent, such as Daenerys's rape by her new husband (Benioff & Weiss, 2011a) and in Episode 8 (Benioff & Weiss, 2011f) when the Dothraki are sacking a town and raping the women that lived there. Overall, this season had 11 instances of sexual violence.

Season 2 also had 11 instances of sexual violence, with most of them being verbal with a specified target or sexual violence in the other category. For example, in Episode 2 (Benioff & Weiss, 2012b), Baelish threatens one of his prostitute employees, saying he will give her to a man who will force her to do unspeakable things. In Episode 4 (Benioff & Weiss, 2012b), while in court, surrounded by the upper class, Joffrey points a crossbow at Sansa before having her stripped and beaten in front of all present.

During Season 3, the instances of sexual violence drop to 10, with the highest number of instances again in the verbal with a specified target category. In Episode 3 (Benioff & Weiss, 2013a), Jamie talks to Brienne of Tarth, telling her not to struggle when raped by their captors because she will be killed if she does. Jaime talks about rape as if it is of no consequence in life. This season has only one on-screen rape scene, although it focuses on the verbal category previously discussed.

Season 4 brings the highest number of sexual violence instances with a total of 13. Both talk of sexual violence with a target and the other sexual violence category had four instances; however, the characters' violence was vast when looking at the three on-screen rapes. The first scene of on-screen rape in this season was the rape of Cersei by Jaime in the sept, which was previously discussed. This scene in Episode 3 (Benioff & Weiss, 2014a) was emotional not just

because of the act of rape, but also because the audience sees Cersei begging her brother to stop, claiming that what he was doing was wrong, and Jaime claiming he didn't care and continuing to rape his sister. Rape is also seen in Episodes 4 (Cogman, 2014a) and 5 (Benioff & Weiss, 2014b), a group setting at Craster's keep, with his daughter-wives being raped by Karl Tanner's men after they kill Craster. This complex scene shows the women being raped, beaten, and in a state of being mentally shut down, staring blankly into the room.

In Season 5, the sexual violence was cut nearly in half, with only seven instances identified. The majority of the sexual violence was talk of sexual assault with a target, such as when two men ask Arya, who is selling oysters from a cart, how much she would cost in Episode 9 (Benioff & Weiss, 2015b). There are two standouts in this season. The first is the rape of Sansa by Ramsay after their wedding in Episode 6 (Cogman, 2015b). This scene portrays a brutal rape of a wife by a husband, with Theon, by this point renamed Reek, forced to watch. Sansa was like a sister to Theon, being raised together at Winterfell as children. The second is a scene with Meryn Trent in a brothel in Episode 9 (Benioff & Weiss, 2015b). While brothels are common within Game of Thrones, this scene is memorable because Meryn desires to rape young girls. He repeatedly refuses girls that are too old, prompting the madam to offer a very young girl who looks barely in her teens, although her age is not explicitly known. He grabs her and leads her out of the room, telling the madam to have a "fresh one" for him the next day. The girl looks frightened of what is to come. While this season has fewer instances of sexual violence, they are quite memorable.

The next season again sees a drop in instances, with only three identified throughout the seasons six episodes. Two of these instances are talking about sexual violence, once with Razadamo Eraz, a slaver, identifying Daenerys as a master with "silver hair and tits" in Episode 4 (Benioff & Weiss, 2016b) and Episode 8 (Benioff & Weiss, 2016c) has Bronn and Podrick discussing the

“fucking” of Brienne as if she needs to have sex. Finally, in Episode 10 (Benioff & Weiss, 2016e), Walder Frey asks a serving girl if she is one of his, with the implications being one of his family members, and when she says no, he smacks her butt as if she were newfound prey. Compared to the previous seasons, sexual violence is minimal, but it is also much tamer.

Season 7 also has a lower instance of sexual violence, with three instances found that are all verbal with a specified target. It is essential to know this season strays from the previous seasons in the number of episodes, as all of the earlier seasons have ten while Season 7 only has seven. Even so, the sexual discussions in Season 7 are all fairly mundane compared to the previous examples. Daenerys and Sansa talk to Jon Snow in Episode 3 (Benioff & Weiss, 2017a) and Arya in Episode 6 (Benioff & Weiss, 2017b), respectively, about their sexual abuse. In contrast, Euron Greyjoy talks to Jaime about his sister’s sexual preferences in Episode 3 (Benioff & Weiss, 2017a).

Finally, in Season 8, which contained only six episodes, there are two instances of sexual violence, the first being when the Hound and Sansa discuss her marriage with Ramsay and how he roughly “broke her in” (Benioff & Weiss, 2019b) and the second when a soldier is trying to rape a woman. The woman is saved from the experience when Jon Snow kills the soldier (Benioff & Weiss, 2019c). This season contained a lot of violence through fighting but very little sexual violence.

The Timing of Season 8

Between each season in 1 through 7, there was an average of 10.4 months from the release of the last episode of the previous season and the next episode. When looking at the dates of each season’s first episode, they are approximately a year apart. However, between Seasons 7 and 8, there are 19.633 months. In several interviews, Benioff and Weiss, showrunners of Game of

Thrones, explained the production time was longer because Season 8 was going to be “bigger” than the other seasons, with each episode being movie length (Makuch, 2018). Yet, when looking at the playtime of episodes and accounting for the shorter season length, the average of Season 8 is 71.6 minutes per episode. The average length of a feature film is 90-100 minutes (Jarzabek, 2018), which disproves the movie length explanation.

Episodes in Season 8 are longer than in other seasons, however. Season 2, with the shortest average episodes, has 54.9 minutes per episode, while Season 7 has the longest in the first seven seasons, at 62.8 minutes per episode. When looking at the total time per season, Season 8 comes in the lowest, with only 7.167 hours. Season 1 had the highest at 9.449 and only took 13.5 months to create (Production timeline, n.d.), showing that Season 8 had over 2 hours less viewable time yet took far longer to produce.

When Season 8 was produced, the United States’ social fabric was changing concerning sexual violence with the #MeToo movement, which became prominent in October of 2017 (Mendes et al., 2019), three months after the last episode of Season 7 first aired. This movement, along with the #timesup movement, founded in January of 2018 (Buckley, 2018), endeavored to change how Hollywood worked in front of and behind the camera. While the producers and writers have never said that these movements played a part in how Season 8 was produced, both the extended production time and the lack of sexual violence in Season 8 seems oddly coincidental with the two social movements.

A myriad of articles has been published, outlining how condensing George R. R. Martin’s original books for television left out many scenes of sexual violence within the writings (Hawkes, 2015; Le Vine, 2015; Orr, 2015). The writers of the show expressly created some scenes for the HBO series. For instance, in Season 2, Episode 4 (Benioff & Weiss, 2012c), the viewer watches

Joffrey command a prostitute named Ros to brutally beat another prostitute who was naked with his scepter as he watches. In Season 3, Episode 6 (Benioff & Weiss, 2013c), we again see Ros, brutally slain by Joffrey and his crossbow while she was tied up and naked in his rooms. Two bolts to her genitals and one through a breast show the sexual depravity in which Joffrey was mired.

Researchers estimated that the book series, *A Song of Ice and Fire*, contains four times more sexual violence (Le Vine, 2015). With that estimate, could one expect that an entire season would have so little sexual violence? Or did the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements create change within the storylines? Sophie Turner, the actress who plays Sansa Stark, did not go so far as to say that the movements played a role in Season 8, however she indicated that the character is experiencing things in the show similarly to how women in society are experiencing the events that led up to the #MeToo movement (Dalton, 2018). Carice van Houten, who plays the character Melisandre, goes further by explaining that there were fewer nude scenes and sexual violence for female characters in reaction to what was happening with #MeToo and how it was changing the entertainment industry (Dray, 2019).

The writers themselves, David Benioff and D.B. Weiss, have not come out and said explicitly that #MeToo was the reason for less sexual violence in Season 8. However, during a panel at the Austin Film Festival, they have said that they were unsure why George R. R. Martin allowed them to be the writers for his work, as Benioff and Weiss essentially had no idea what they were doing. They were not ingesting the fans' feedback to assess what was working and what wasn't (Di Placido, 2019). The writers went so far as to say that they let the actors define the characters, which would explain why Sophie and Carise felt #MeToo affected their characters and the show's overall sexual violence (Di Placido, 2019).

Ultimately, Martin wrote the books about a fictional patriarchal society. Benioff and Weiss wrote the show from the vantage point of two privileged members of an actual patriarchal society. It seems that only change happened when the actors brought real-world experiences with sexual violence and the movements going on in society.

CONCLUSION

Game of Thrones was a massive hit show for HBO and over the seasons, it transformed, especially the eighth season. Sexual violence, which was used as a trope, decreased as the seasons went on. While most of the sexual violence was perpetrated against women, the audience saw the degradation of and sexual violence against Theon Greyjoy.

Phillips (2017) discussed the idea of the “good rape,” defining the concept as a rape that is seen from the victim’s perspective, including the effects and aftermath of the event. Rape should be used to develop a character, not as a trope just for interest's sake. Most of the sexual violence in *Game of Thrones* doesn’t stand up to this criticism. Cersei was unchanged by the violence she endured from her twin brother, even going back to him in a later episode. Sansa exhibited signs of PTSD from her attempted rape and marital rape. Theon became a new person, lacking most of his personality and suffering PTSD from the treatment he endured from Ramsay. Daenerys turned the violence against her around, eventually using it to become a queen and defeat her brother. Often, we didn’t see the violence from the viewpoint of the character. It was merely something the audience viewed.

In answer to research question 1, sexual violence had differing effects on the characters explored. Cersei was mostly left unaffected while Sansa was shaped by the sexual violence perpetrated against her, using it to eventually destroy her enemies. Craster’s daughters never knew anything other than sexual violence and the effects on them were catastrophic. When visited by men from The Wall, they did not engage with them and would barely look at them. Theon is completely destroyed by Ramsay’s abuse, becoming someone unrecognizable from who he was.

Daenerys, while having some issues after her brother's abuse, she used her anger to propel her forward, preventing other women from being raped and freeing slaves.

Relationships were affected by the sexual violence as well, which was research question two. Cersei became even closer to her brother, despite him brutally raping her. Sansa held on to the anger of her sexual violence and killed Ramsay in the same way he killed his stepmother and infant brother as well as Baelish, whom she held a trial before her sister carried out justice. The fate of Caster's daughters was never expressly explained after his keep was burned, but the relationship with their father ended when he was murdered by Karl Tanner. Theon Greyjoy endured being manipulated and forcibly castrated by Ramsay before having a trauma bonded relationship with him. And Daenerys, despite being raped by her husband, worked to make their sexual relations less like rape and more like a loving couple might have. Relationships were affected, sometimes in unexpected ways.

Lastly, the third research question asked how the sexual violence between seasons 1-7 and Season 8 changed. The #MeToo movement exploded into the social conscious between the ending of Season 7 and the beginning of Season 8. Instances of sexual violence in Season 8 is less than in previous seasons. And while the writers were fairly mum about the reasoning, Carice van Houten, who played Melisandre, confirmed that #MeToo had an impact on the level of female nudity in Season 8, especially reducing the gratuitous nudity (Dray, 2019).

Future Research

This paper concentrated on the contents of *Game of Thrones*, with no input from the audience. Research into if the audience had a conflict between their own personally held beliefs of sexual violence and their reaction to the on-screen sexual violence of the show could be an

enlightening way to view compromises made while watching. Comparing the change in sexual violence between what has been found in *Game of Thrones* to other shows that had seasons before and after the #MeToo movement was popular could provide an interesting look into how the movement changed the entertainment industry in forward-facing ways.

REFERENCES

- Airey, J. L. (2018). #MeToo. *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 37, 7-13
- Aksey, B. (2018). "I'd rather have no brains and two balls": Eunuchs, masculinity, and power in *Game of Thrones*. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 51(1), 50-67.
- American Psychological Association. (n.d.). Stockholm Syndrome. In *APA Dictionary of Psychology*. <https://dictionary.apa.org/stockholm-syndrome>
- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596>
- Anderson, C. A. & Bushman, B. J. (2002). The effects of media violence on society. *Science*, 295(5564), 2377-2379.
- Anderson, C. A. & Bushman, B. J. (2018). Media violence and the General Aggression Model. *Journal of Social Issues*, 74(2), 386-413. DOI: 10.1111/josi.12275.
- Baker, D. (2012). Why we need dragons: The progressive potential of fantasy. *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 23(3), 437-459.
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & VanPatten, T. (Director). (17 April 2011a). Winter is coming (Season 1, Episode 1) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Executive Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Home Box Office (HBO), Television 360, Grok! Television, Bighead Littlehead.
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & VanPatten, T. (Director). (24 April 2011b). The Kingsroad (Season 1, Episode 2) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Executive Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Home Box Office (HBO), Television 360, Grok! Television, Generator Entertainment, Bighead Littlehead.

- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Kirk, B. (Director). (1 May 2011c). Lord Snow(Season 1, Episode 3) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Executive Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Home Box Office (HBO), Television 360, Grok! Television, Generator Entertainment, Bighead Littlehead.
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Kirk, B. (Director). (15 May 2011d). The wolf and the lion. (Season 1, Episode 5) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Executive Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Grok! Television, Generator Entertainment, Bighead Littlehead.
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Minahan, D. (Director). (29 May 2011e). You win or you die. (Season 1, Episode 7) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Executive Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Grok! Television, Generator Entertainment, Bighead Littlehead, Home Box Office (HBO).
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Minahan, D. (Director). (5 June 2011f). The pointyend. (Season 1, Episode 8) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Executive Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Grok! Television, Generator Entertainment, Bighead Littlehead, Home Box Office (HBO).
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Taylor, A. (Director). (1 April 2012a). The North remembers. (Season 2, Episode 1) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Executive Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Home Box Office (HBO), Television 360, Grok! Television, Bighead Littlehead.
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Taylor, A. (Director). (8 April 2012b). The nightlands. (Season 2, Episode 2) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Executive Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Home Box Office (HBO), Television 360, Grok! Television, Bighead Littlehead.
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Petrarca, D. (Director). (22 April 2012c). Garden of bones. (Season 2, Episode 4) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Home Box Office (HBO), Television 360, Grok! Television, Bighead Littlehead.

Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Petrarca, D. (Director). (29 April 2012d). The ghost of Harrenhal. (Season 2, Episode 5) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Home Box Office (HBO), Television 360, Grok! Television, Bighead Littlehead.

Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Nutter, D. (Director). (13 May 2012e). A man without honor. (Season 2, Episode 7) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Home Box Office, Television 360, Grok! Studio, Bighead Littlehead.

Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Benioff, D., Weiss, D.B. (Director). (14 April 2013a). Walk of punishment. (Season 3, Episode 3) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.

Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Graves, A. (Director). (21 April 2013b). And now his watch is ended. (Season 3, Episode 4) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.

Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Sakharov, A. (Director). (5 May 2013c). The climb. (Season 3, Episode 6) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.

Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & MacLaren, M. (Director). (19 May 2013d). Secondsons. (Season 3, Episode 8) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.

Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Sakharov, A. (Director). (9 June 2013e). Mhysa. (Season 3, Episode 10) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.

Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Graves, A. (Director). (20 April 2014a). Breaker of chains. (Season 4, Episode 3) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.

- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & MacLaren, M. (Director). (4 May 2014b). First of his name. (Season 4, Episode 5) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Graves, A. (Director). (20 April 2014c). The children. (Season 4, Episode 10) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Sapochnik, M. (Director). (2 May 2015a). The gift. (Season 5, Episode 7) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Nutter, D. (Director). (7 June 2015b). The dance of dragons. (Season 5, Episode 9) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Sapochnik, M. (Director). (14 June 2015c). Mother's mercy. (Season 5, Episode 10) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Podeswa, J. (Director). (24 April 2016a). The red woman. (Season 6, Episode 1) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead, Embassy Films.
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Sackheim, D. (Director). (15 May 2016b). Book of the stranger. (Season 6, Episode 4) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Mylod, M. (Director). (12 June 2016c). No one. (Season 6, Episode 8) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Sapochnik, M. (Director). (9 June 2016d). Battle of the bastards. (Season 6, Episode 9) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.

- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Sapochnik, M. (Director). (26 June 2016e). The winds of winter. (Season 6, Episode 10) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Mylod, M. (Director). (30 July 2017a). The queen's justice. (Season 7, Episode 3) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Podeswa, J. (Director). (16 July 2017b). Dragonstone. (Season 7, Episode 6) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Podeswa, J. (Director). (27 August 2017c). The dragon and the wolf. (Season 7, Episode 7) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Sapochnik, M. (Director). (28 April 2019a). The long night. (Season 8, Episode 3) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Nutter, D. (Director). (5 May 2019b). The last of the Starks. (Season 8, Episode 4) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.
- Benioff, D., Weiss, D. B. (Writers), & Sapochnik, M. (Director). (12 May 2019c). The bells. (Season 8, Episode 5) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.
- Bennice, J. A., Resick, P. A., Mechanic, M., & Astin, M. (2003). The relative effects of intimate partner physical and sexual violence on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder symptomatology. *Violence and Victims* 18(1), 87-94. DOI: 10.1891/vivi.2003.18.1.87.
- Borowska-Szerszun, S. (2019). Representations of rape in George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Fire and Ice* and Robin Hibbs' *Livship Traders*. *Extrapolation* 60(1), 1-23.

- Brinson, S. (1992). The use and opposition of rape myths in prime time television dramas. *Sex Roles*, 27(7/8), 359-375.
- Buckley, C. (1 January 2018). Powerful Hollywood women unveil powerful anti-harassment action plan. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/01/movies/times-up-hollywood-women-sexual-harassment.html>
- Burgoon, J. K., Bonito, J. A., Lowry, P. B., Humphreys, S. L., Moody, G. D., Gaskin, J. E., & Giboney, J. S. (2016). Application of expectancy violations theory to communication with and judgments about embodied agents during a decision-making task. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies* 91, 24-36.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhcs.2016.02.002>
- Byrne, K., & Taddeo, J. A. (2019). Calling #TimesUp on the TV period drama rape narrative. *Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies*, 14(3), 379-398.
- Clapton, W., & Shepherd, L. J. (2017). Lessons from Westeros: Gender and power in *Game of Thrones*. *Politics*, 37(1), 5-18.
- Cogman, B. (Writer), & Graves, A. (Director). (28 April 2013). Kissed by fire. (Season 3, Episode 5) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.
- Cogman, B. (Writer), & MacLaren, M. (Director). (27 April 2014a). Oathkeeper. (Season 4, Episode 4) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.
- Cogman, B. (Writer), & Sakharov, A. (Director). (11 May 2014b). The laws of God and men. (Season 4, Episode 6) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.
- Cogman, B. (Writer), & Podeswa, J. (Director). (10 May 2015a). Kill the boy. (Season 5, Episode 5) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.

- Cogman, B. & Hill, D. (Writers), & Podeswa, J. (Director). (17 May 2015b). Unbowed, unbent, unbroken. (Season 5, Episode 6) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.
- Cupach, W. R., & Spitzberg, B. H.(Eds). (2011). *The dark side of close relationships II*. Routledge.
- Dalton, B. (2018). Sophie Turner talks #MeToo, Sansa’s struggles, and the final season of ‘Game of Thrones.’ *Screen Daily*.<https://www.screendaily.com/features/sophie-turner-talks-metoo-sansas-struggles-and-the-final-season-of-game-of-thrones/5130187.article>
- Dillman Carpentier, F. R., Stevens, E. M., Wu, L., & Seely, N. (2017). Sex, love, and risk-n-responsibility: A content analysis of entertainment television. *Mass Communication and Society, 20*, 686-709.
- Di Placido, D. (2019). ‘Game of Thrones’ showrunners David Benioff and D.B. Weiss confirm the worst suspicions of the fanbase. *Forbes*.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/danidiplacido/2019/10/28/game-of-thrones-showrunners-david-benioff-and-db-weiss-confirmed-the-worst-suspicions-of-the-fanbase/?sh=1ad1d89df37c>
- Dodds, E. (2014). What is *Game of Thrones* doing with Jaime Lannister? Time.
<https://time.com/70253/jaime-lannister-game-of-thrones-rape-scene/>
- Dray, K. (2019). How *Game of Thrones* changed after the #MeToo scandal, according to Carice van Houten. *Stylist*. <https://www.stylist.co.uk/people/game-of-thrones-metoo-sexual-harassment-nudity-carice-van-houten/278187>
- Durand, M. V. & Barlow, D. H. (2016). *Essentials of Abnormal Psychology (7th edition)* Cengage Learning.
- Dutton, D. G., & Painter, S. (1993). Emotional attachments in abusive relationships: A test of traumatic bonding theory. *Violence and Victims, 8*(2), 105-120.

- Ferreday, D. (2015). *Game of Thrones*, rape culture, and feminist fandom. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 30(83), 21-36.
- Game of Thrones*. (2011, April 17). IMDb. Retrieved 2020 August 5 from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt09444947/>.
- Gibson, C., Davenport, S., Fowler, T., Harris, C. B., Prudhomme, M., Whiting, S., & Simmons-Horton, S. (2019). Understanding the 2017 “Me Too” movement’s timing. *Humanity & Society*, 43(2), 217-224. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0160597619832047>.
- Gilchrist-Petty, E. S., & Long, S. D. (Eds). (2016). *Contexts of the dark side of communication*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Gilmore, L. (2019). Frames of witness: The Kavanaugh hearings, survivor testimony, and #MeToo. *Biography*, 42(3), 610-623. <https://doi.org/10.1353/bio.2019.0062>
- Hawkes, R. (2015). Sexual violence in George R. R. Martin’s novels is far worse than in the *Game of Thrones* TV series. *The Telegraph*. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/tv/0/sexual-violence-george-rr-martins-novels-far-worse-game-thrones/>
- Hill, D. (Writers), & Podeswa, J. (Director). (1 May 2016). Home. (Season 6, Episode 2) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.
- Hughes, J. N. & Hasbrouck, J. E., (1996). Television violence: Implications for violence prevention. *School Psychology Review*, 25(2), 134-151.
- Impara, E. (2016). Medieval violence and criminology: Using the Middle Ages to understand contemporary ‘motiveless’ crime. *Journal of Theoretical & Philosophical Criminology*, 8(1), 26-36.
- Jarżabek, P, (2018). Are new movies longer than they were 10, 20, 50 year (sic) ago? *towards data science*. <https://towardsdatascience.com/are-new-movies-longer-than-they-were-10hh20-50-year-ago-a35356b2ca5b>

- Jung, K., & Steil, R. (2012). The feeling of being contaminated in adult survivors of child sexual abuse and its treatment via a two-section program of cognitive restructuring and imagery modification: A case study. *Behavior Modification* 36(1), 67-86. DOI: 10.1177/0145445511421436
- Kokkola, L. & Valovirta, E. (2016). The disgust that fascinates: Sibling incest as bad romance. *Sexuality & Culture*, 21, 121-141. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-016-9386-6>.
- Labonte, R. (2020 Oct 14). *Game of Thrones* star criticizes Daenerys' degradation season 1 scenes. Screen Rant. <https://screenrant.com/game-thrones-daenerys-scenes-criticism-nikolaj-coster-waldau/?fbclid=IwAR3VIqA1nvrUOEDhR7t9Nok2IXetSVSIvWAcQyJu0GfIeMT7JgpCs6Zx-4c>
- Leung, R. & Williams, R. (2019) #MeToo and intersectionality: An examination of the #MeToo movement through the R. Kelly scandal. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 43(4), 349-371. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0196859919874138>.
- Le Vine, L. (2015). Someone tallied up all the rapes on *Game of Thrones*. *Refinery29*. <https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2015/05/88226/game-of-thrones-rape>
- Makuch, E. (2018). *Why Game of Thrones season 8 is taking so long*. Gamespot. <https://www.gamespot.com/articles/why-game-of-thrones-season-8-is-taking-so-long/1100-6461825/>
- Marques, D. (2019). Power and the denial of femininity in *Game of Thrones*. *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 49(1), 46-65.
- Martin, G. R. R. (Writer), & Marshall, N. (Director). (27 May 2012). Blackwater. (Season2, Episode 9) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. HBO (Home Box Office), Television 360, Grok! Studio, Bighead Littlehead.
- Martin, G. R. R. (Writer), & Graves, A. (Director). (12 May 2013). The bear and the maiden fair (Season 3, Episode 7) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Television 360, Startling, Bighead Littlehead.

- Mendes, K., Ringrose, J., & Keller, J. (2018). #MeToo and the promise and pitfalls of challenging rape culture through digital feminist activism. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 25(2), 236-346. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506818765318>.
- Na, A. (2019). #AzizAnsariToo?: Desi masculinity in America and performing funny Cute. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 43(3), 308-326. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2019.1639573>.
- Needham, J. K. (2017). Visual misogyny: An analysis of female sexual objectification in *Game of Thrones*. *Femspec*, 17(2), 3-19.
- Orr, C. (2015). Why does *Game of Thrones* feature so much sexual violence? *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/06/game-of-thrones-sexual-violence/396191/>
- Pelligrini, A. (2018). #MeToo: Before and after. *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 19(4), 262-264. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15240657.2018.1531530>
- Phillips, N. D. (2017). *Beyond blurred lines: Rape culture in popular media*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Production timeline. (n.d.). Fandom. https://gameofthrones.fandom.com/wiki/Production_timeline#Season_1_pre-production
- Rape culture. (n.d.). Lexico powered by Oxford. Retrieved 21 February 2020 from [lexico.com/definition/rape_culture](https://www.lexico.com/definition/rape_culture).
- Rothbaum, B. O., Foa, E. B., Riggs, D., Murdock, T., & Walsh, W. (1992). A prospective examination of post-traumatic stress disorder in rape victims. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 5, 455-475.
- Satterly, B. (2017). The spell craft of social work: Harry Potter and social justice. *Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work*, 22(1), 111-126. DOI: 10.18084/1084-7219.22.1.111

Smith, M.D. (2004). *Encyclopedia of Rape (1st ed.)*. Greenwood Press. Spitzberg, B. H. & Cupach, W. R. (Eds.). (1998). *The dark side of close relationships*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Spitzberg, B. H. & Cupach, W. R. (Eds.). (2007). *The dark side of interpersonal communication*. (2nd ed.) Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Taylor, V. (Writer), & Nutter, D. (Director). (6 May 2012). The old gods and the new. (Season 2, Episode 6) [Tv series episode]. In D. Benioff (Producer) *Game of Thrones*. Home Box Office (HBO), Television 360, Grok! Television, Bighead Littlehead.

Wallace, P. (2007). How can she still love him? Domestic violence and the Stockholm syndrome. *Community Practitioner* 80(10), 32-34.

Walton, P. L. (2019). "You win or you die": The royal flush of power in *Game of Thrones*. *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 49(1), 99-114.