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Why I'm Scared of 50 Shades of Grey

Samantha Martin · Wednesday, July 30th, 2014

“The representation of BDSM relationships in *50 Shades of Grey* is inaccurate and that is what makes it dangerous.”

I should first establish that I am in no right an expert on *50 Shades of Grey*, on E.L. James, or even on film – but especially, in no quantity am I an expert on bondage, discipline and sadomasochism (BDSM). My lack of expertise in BDSM is a trait I share with a lot of my demographic.

I was born in '94, which places me in the fateful era of young women watching Miley Cyrus transition from Disney producers to Terry Richardson. As a generation, we've spawned 102 Renesmees in the US alone (to clarify, Renesmee is a name that was purely created by and for Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* franchise). Last year, Katniss (fictional lead character in *The Hunger Games*) was ranked in the Top 10 baby names of a commercial baby name directory.

The extent of mainstream media's influence on societal behavior has long been documented and debated.

The statistics I chose are fanciful proof. Naming your child after a fictional character is at most going to result in a family dispute and a few hundred pounds lost on deed-poll name changes – entering into what *50 Shades of Grey* presents to be a BDSM relationship however, poses a genuine risk to those, like myself, who are not educated in the world of power-exchange relationships.

Creating great fictional romance comes with great responsibility. A responsibility, I'm told, that has been greatly overlooked by E.L. James and the producers behind the 2014 release of *50 Shades of Grey*.

Plot synopsis: Anastasia Steele, the central female in the novel, is stalked, intimidated, isolated and generally controlled by the title character, Mr. Christian Grey, reducing her into blatant hallmarks of the victim in an abusive relationship.



Still image from the film adaptation of *50 Shades of Grey*.

The representation of BDSM relationships in *50 Shades of Grey* is **inaccurate** and that is what makes it dangerous.

Somewhere between E.L. James' keyboard, the publication of a trilogy, and the recent release of

the forthcoming film's trailer – Christian Grey's abusive emotional negligence has transformed him into a sexual deity.

Articles have already been published in *US News*, *NY Daily News* and *The Guardian*, amongst countless journalists and bloggers, regarding the abusive hallmarks in this fictional relationship.

“The book is a glaring glamorization of violence against women,” said Amy Bonomi, Chair of the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Michigan State University.

According to Loveisrespect.org, nearly **1.5 million** high school students experience abuse from a dating partner in a **single year**. **One in three** adolescents is a victim of physical, sexual, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner.

Sexual violence and entertainment are an ethically volatile mix. Unfortunately, there is no denying that it is a highly profitable market – with pornography a \$1 billion-plus and growing industry and with over 72 million searches for pornography logged each **month**.

A 2010 study into the aggression and sexual behavior in best-selling pornography videos, published in *Sage Journals*, found 88.2% of popular pornographic material contained physical aggression towards women. The study is [online here](#).

In short, it appears that studio executives are taking an audience of curious, at-risk youth and introducing a proven mainstream abusive relationship (supporting study to read [here](#)) disguised as an erotic BDSM relationship for a box office winner.

Granted – the film has not yet hit the screens – how much can we conclude from a trailer without seeming hysterical?

It doesn't take much qualitative research to see that BDSM is shrouded by myth, stigma and stereotyping created by pornography and mainstream media — if you have the curiosity, I recommend doing your own Google searches (although probably not in the workplace) so that you can make your own opinions on this franchise for the impending film release.

This was not a singular studio's pitch, but according to a report by the *LA Times*, Warner Bros., Sony, Paramount, as well as Mark Wahlberg's own Production Company, all pitched for the film before Universal and Focus Films secured the rights in March 2012. The profitability of a best selling trilogy will without question make the studios a hefty packet.

Right now I only hope that, should the film assert the studies' suggestions that the novel has **“contributed to a culture that encourages violence”**, Focus Films and Universal Studios will donate profits of this franchise to organizations dedicated to the awareness of domestic abuse and support for its victims.

So when I'm asked what I thought about the *50 Shades of Grey* trailer, there is no exclusive soundtrack in the world that could reduce my concern for the impact that the impending release of the film will have on impressionable audiences and on the standing of ethical studio film producing.

[embedvideo id="z4nJX8snP4s" website="youtube"]

Here is a list of more articles I've found regarding the inaccurate content of *50 Shades of Grey*:

<http://abcnews.go.com/Health/bdsm-advocates-worry-fifty-shades-grey-sex/story?id=17369406>

<http://www.thegloss.com/2012/06/29/sex-and-dating/real-members-bdsm-community-discuss-50-shades-of-grey-696/>

<http://health.usnews.com/health-news/health-wellness/articles/2013/08/12/whats-wrong-with-50-shades-of-grey-and-what-you-should-know-about-bdsm>

<http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/shortcuts/2012/jul/08/fifty-shades-grey-bad-bondage>

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