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Theorizing Conscious Black Asexuality through Claire Kann's *Let's Talk about Love*

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Abstract: Asexuality is often defined as some degree of being void of sexual attraction, interest, or desire. Black asexual people have been made invisible, silent, or pathologized in most fiction, scholarly literature, and mainstream LGBTQ movements. Claire Kann's 2018 young adult romance novel, *Let's Talk About Love*, explores Black asexuality at the intersection of race and (a)sexuality. Through the story of the Black, bi-romantic, asexual, 19 year-old college student Alice Johnston, this text illuminates the diversity of Black sexuality in the Black Diaspora. Using a Black feminist sociological literary analysis to complete a close reading of the novel, I interrogate what *Let's Talk about Love* offers for defining a Black asexual politic. To consider Black asexual politics beyond the controlling images of the asexual Mammy figure, and not merely in juxtaposition to the hypersexual Jezebel, calls us to instead center agency and self-definition. This project seeks to answer what Conscious Black Asexuality is, why it is a necessary concept for asexuality studies and the Diaspora, where we locate Black asexuality in Black history, and how *Let's Talk about Love* by Claire Kann presents a depiction of Black agentic queerness that reclaims agency and intimacy within one's sexual politics.

Keywords: asexuality; young adult fiction; Mammy

1. Introduction

Today, there are refreshing and alternative media platforms for creatives to publish their work. Through strategies such as crowdsourced publishing, marginalized narratives can access larger platforms. Claire Kann published her first novel, *Let's Talk About Love (LTAL)*, with support from Swoon Reads. Swoon openly seeks reader feedback and reviews on submitted manuscripts using a crowdsourced method ([Swoon Publishing 2019](#)). However, readers were not kind to this novel, which centers around a Black asexual woman. *LTAL* tells the story of Alice, a Black, bi-romantic, asexual college student, as she works to find (a)sexual empowerment during her transition into new adulthood. After being dumped by her white ex-girlfriend after coming out as asexual following years of processing her own sexual politics and preferences, Alice considers what it means to put her wants and desires first. As she debates between studying law at her parents' wishes and her own love of interior design, Alice works to prioritize herself in all facets of her life. While she watches her best friends and roommates Ryan and Feenie, who are dating one another, shift towards conversations about marriage, she begins to become hopeless about her romantic prospects. Suddenly, she finds herself falling head-over-heels for her new coworker at the local public library, a Japanese man named Takumi; we follow part of Alice's journey through a budding summer romance ([Kann 2018](#)).

Despite praise for its diverse representations, readers of earlier versions felt the representation of asexuality was inaccurate and problematic, and found the final version to be juvenile ([Swoon Publishing 2019](#)). In literary studies, an explicit exploration of asexuality has not occurred with major force, despite gaining heavy traction in young adult fiction and other disciplines ([Hanson 2014](#)). Therefore, somewhere between literature and sociology, this manuscript seeks to more clearly expand the definition of asexuality by exploring the boundaries, variances, and limitations of our

current understanding. I argue that *Let's Talk About Love* offers a foundational definition of Conscious Black Asexuality. Conscious Black Asexuality complicates the binary nature and boundaries of the imposed asexual and hypersexual narratives imposed on Black bodies by articulating a radically queer and agentic Black narrative. Considering Black (a)sexual politics beyond the Mammy figure, and identifying why she fails as a definition of Black asexuality, allows us to consider a radically agentic understanding of Black asexuality as an often unseen and unheard narrative in the Diaspora.

2. Sociological Black Feminist Analysis as Method

I employ a Black feminist sociological literary analysis to complete a close reading of *LTAL* to interrogate what it offers in defining a type of Conscious Black Asexuality. Literature reflects the social world it is produced within and also projects creative imaginaries of what could be (Albrecht 1954). A sociological frame enables us to explore the context in which the work was produced, as well as the institutional and structural dynamics that confine the narrative, and ultimately the sociological implications of the story (Burke 1971; Goldmann 1980). Specifically, *LTAL* calls for an intentional sociological framing in that it highlights how the forces of race, gender, and sexualities interact to shape Alice's life experiences. Learning about structural institutions in society through this Black woman's narrative depicts a reciprocal relationship between literature and socio-historical processes and constructions (English 2010; Hegtvedt 1991). "... [A]ny cultural activity, such as literature, cannot be fruitfully studied apart from the economic, social, and political organization of the society that produced it" (Witte 1941, p. 89). Additionally, compounding a sociological frame with a Black feminist lens bolsters the contextualization of the analysis by indicating which types of literature to draw on to support the novel's claims. Black feminist literary criticism employs intersectionality, connects the narrative to a historical tradition, considers the political implications, and challenges assumptions made about Black folk (Christian 1985). By considering macro- and micro-narratives in *LTAL* using a sociological literary analysis and a Black feminist frame, I am able to nuance components of the text to discern its potential meanings and contributions.

Black women's narratives often go unheard, and the generative possibilities of their life experiences as an indictment of larger structures in society go uncredited (Christian 1985). In an effort to contribute to the pressing task of lifting the voices of Black women, I—a queer Black woman—draw on a text about a queer Black woman that is written by a Black woman. Multiple points of subjectivity call into voice an unapologetic centering of storied lives that are silenced through oppression that takes place at the axes of race, gender, and sexual politics (Collins 2009; Collins 2004). It is out of these intersections that marginalized folks share their experiences, which subsequently defines their histories on their own terms (Hooks 1989). Additionally, "[b]reaking silence enables individual African-American women to reclaim humanity in a system that gains part of its strength by objectifying Black women" (Collins 1998, p. 47). There are many ways to break silence, and telling one's story is one way to do so. "The practice of storytelling or Narrative is deeply rooted in African American culture. It is a tradition based on the continuity of wisdom, and it functions to assert the voice of the oppressed. Storytelling is not merely a means of entertainment. It is also an educational tool, and for many, it is a way of life" (Amoah 1997, p. 84). Black feminist tools and frameworks cannot be separated from narrative and storytelling; they are intertwined.

Using Black feminism as a tool for analyzing literature requires an unpacking of how interlocking systems of oppression function to erase and further marginalize Black women and erase their contributions (Christian 1985). It is in the stories that are told that "oppressed peoples are able to create their own sphere of theorized existence, and thus remove themselves from the marginalized position to which the dominant society has relegated them" (Amoah 1997, p. 85). The stories and the storytellers are data in that they provide knowledge about their world. There is a dialogic process between society, stories, and storytellers. While young adult fiction is often dismissed as trivial, it has the capacity to center, uplift, and speak to those who sit in the margins; in this case, a young Black asexual and biromantic woman. Additionally, the accessibility of this narrative as young adult fiction is

central to a Black feminist frame, as it can help foster hope and visibility for those unseen and unheard. Narrative as data makes apparent how the personal is political (Combahee River Collective 1997).

3. Defining Asexuality in Academic Literature

Asexuality is often defined as some degree of being void of sexual attraction to others, sexual interest, or desire. Historically, asexuality has been framed as either pathological or non-pathological in different contexts. Asexuality was originally defined as non-pathological when it was considered a lack of sexual interest towards other people with the potential to engage in sexual activities. This is differentiated from the more frequent, medically pathologized people who have a lifelong disinterest in any sexual activity (Chasin 2013; Cerankowski and Milks 2010). The framing of asexuality as an indication of an inherent biological problem comes from the belief that humans are naturally sexual. However, this fails to recognize the role of dynamic sexual politics, which challenge the notion of asexuality as unnatural.

Furthermore, a confusion about asexuality persists where asexuality is conflated with celibacy. While (not) performing sex because of celibacy or asexuality is a choice, asexuality is a sexual politic that is present regardless of one's choice to engage in sex or not. Asexuality as an orientation is social, biological, agentic, and not simply situated in whether or not a person has sex; celibacy is more simply a choice to abstain (Hanson 2014). Confusion about the definition and boundaries of asexuality is tied to its erasure and exclusion from mainstream queer narratives. Asexuality as a queer identity is often left out of general queer knowledges that stops short of understanding what LGBT means. While asexualities rest in the margins of unfamiliarity when considered against other queer identities such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans identity categories, expectedly, within asexual identities, there are hierarchies of privilege. These stratified relations prioritize cisgendered, hetero- or aromantic, white, middle-class people (Chu 2014). These identities are more legible than asexuality in their hegemonic navigation of power structures in society. As a result of this illegibility, asexualities are made invisible, including the ways which they differently challenge norms and cultural expectations of eroticism.

Asexuality has been included in recent calls for greater inclusivity and representation in sexuality literature (Cerankowski and Milks 2010). As part of a call for critical sexuality studies, asexuality was situated as a necessary topic of further exploration to adequately explore power and privilege as they intersect with sexuality (Fahs and McClelland 2016). Additionally, a recent study of asexual women of color found that the identity construction processes tied to self-definition and acceptance are strongly shaped by the inseparability of race, gender, and asexuality (Foster et al. 2019). These more recent academic calls to more broadly interrogate asexuality in theoretical explorations and clinical practice aim to improve general knowledge of asexuality and the interpersonal experiences of asexual folks (Foster and Scherrer 2014). These studies indicate a shift towards and need for more radical conceptions of asexuality beyond the meanings we currently use.

4. Defining Asexuality in *Let's Talk About Love*

The primary definition of asexuality in *LTAL* is similar to the one found in most academic literature. The foundational definition the text provides is a politic where sex simply does not "matter" (Kann 2018, p. 3). This approach centers the way asexual people define their sexuality, rather than scientists or non-asexual people. Margot, Alice's ex-girlfriend, refers to asexuality as "unnatural" because she struggles to understand it (Kann 2018, p. 6). This mirrors the biological framing of asexuality as unnatural to humans in some academic contexts. Despite the similarities between the foundational definition of asexuality in *LTAL* and those provided by scholarly research, Kann more noticeably normalizes asexuality as a spectrum. Specifically, Kann refers to graysexual identity by explicitly describing asexuality as not "... something that's black or white. There is a multitude of shades of gray in between" (Kann 2018, p. 79). For reference, a graysexual is "[s]omeone who identifies with the area between asexuality and sexuality ... [T]hey may experience sexual attraction very rarely, only under

specific circumstances, or of an intensity so low that is ignorable" (AVEN 2019). While this broader language appears in some asexuality research, dominant narratives perpetuate monolithic asexuality.

LTAL, a narrative that centers a Black biromantic asexual young woman, describes a Black sexual politic as it navigates and undermines a more rigid logic of sexuality. Specifically, Alice notes the ways her parents would understand what it meant to be a lesbian but would see her biromantic asexuality as cause to see a doctor or a phase (Kann 2018, p. 80). Alice has little confidence in the general knowledge that folks have about asexuality, which directly impacts her comfort with coming out to her family. This lack of understanding about asexuality is often compounded with outright discrimination that cannot be divorced from her Blackness. When Alice comes out to her ex-girlfriend Margot during their break up, "Margot laughed—a tiny giggle, as if Alice had told a mildly funny joke. [She then said,] 'But you're Black'" (Kann 2018, pp. 4–5). Despite Margot going on to acknowledge this comment as racially insensitive, she still believed it to be lighthearted, tongue-in-cheek comment. *LTAL* recognizes the ways Alice's experiences of bias around her asexuality is compounded by her race, gender, and sexual identity. Nonetheless, Black asexuality is not a joke, and *LTAL* calls us to resist such notions in the ways we understand it.

Additionally, asexualities readily challenge notions of pleasure in both academic research and *LTAL*, except the latter nuances this with a more intersectional presentation. In Alice's case, she highlights the pleasure in aesthetics, and the intimacy of appreciation and admiration in a conversation with her love-interest, Takumi. She explicitly describes being able to appreciate the way things look, and how she specifically admires cuteness, all without sexual over or undertones (Kann 2018, p. 237). As a 19 year-old college student, there is a youthfulness to the joy derived from things that bring Alice pleasure. Her Lisa Frank references and coyness may make it is easy to trivialize Alice's asexuality. However, the queerness and positivity of the protagonist reference the resurgence of youth as liberation, as found in the #BlackGirlMagic and #BlackBoyJoy movements. Both of these hashtags apply to adults and children and depict a counter-narrative. This is a narrative that challenges limiting notions of what is possible for Black people's emotional health, their successes, and their happiness despite pervasive anti-Blackness in the world (Bennet 2017; Walton and Oyewuwo-Gassikia 2017). *LTAL* defines asexuality as a radical politic of queer possibilities that centers joy and pleasure despite the absence of sex and existing in the margins. This radical and racialized counter-narrative is necessary in the scholarly literature across disciplines.

This text asks us to consider and explore a sexual politic that does not fully strive for legibility within the mainstream. Instead, the implication of its narrative and tone is that we are called to consider a positionality that is inescapable from the marginalized identities of folks who occupy and claim this standpoint. Therefore, central to Black asexuality is a reclamation of what that exactly means and its relationship to more traditional definitions of asexuality. Working to define a Conscious Black Asexuality, it does not imply that there is no pre-existing conception of Black asexuality; however, this essay works to clarify and articulate an alternative definition.

5. Theorizing Conscious Black Asexuality

The traditional notion of people who are socially permitted to be asexual in a non-pathologized medicalized way are white, middle class, non-disabled, straight or bisexual adults with no history of abuse or disgust with sex (Chasin 2013). Differences around race, age, class, and sex become subordinated against the mythical norm of the white, male, young, straight, thin, economically secure person, both generally and as these relate to asexuality (Lorde 1980). In this way, asexuality has been inaccessible to Black people in the ways that both Blackness and asexuality has been disempowered because they are threats to white supremacy. Conscious Black Asexuality, as developed from the themes found in *LTAL*, requires (1) a commitment to acknowledging intersectional experiences, (2) an explicit claim to asexuality and understanding of what that means, (3) and an expanded lexicon and geography of Black love and intimacy. Intertwined with these principles are considerations for agency, discrimination, and healing or therapy.

6. Intersectionality & Black Asexuality

Stereotypical tropes and those embodied in historical notions of inferiority and reproductive threats have been linked to a discrediting of Black sexual agency. In the late 19th century, Black sexuality was described as savagery because it challenged the sexual reservations of white people; the early 20th century saw more ethnic white people associated with sexual vigor being absorbed into whiteness, as a shift in cultural emphasis towards white reproduction that allowed asexual-like sexual politics to become threatening (Owen 2014). A Conscious Black Asexuality requires the knowledge of the sexual politics imposed on Black people as part of a historical genealogy. Furthermore, as Black feminists thought, this is intertwined with action, reflection, and reflexivity as a key part of the development of a critical consciousness (Collins 1997).

Controlling images are imposed on Black people, and Black women are forced to negotiate between hypersexual and asexual frames (Collins 2009). The hypersexual figure of the Jezebel is used to further disempower and discredit Black women who were sexually assaulted by white people (McGuire 2010). Similarly, the asexual Mammy is used politically to decenter Black women's agency and prioritize white men's sexual desires (Owen 2018; Collins 2009). Furthermore, the Mammy as asexual imposes a sexual orientation onto her regardless of her own sexuality (Owen 2014). While the Mammy sits at the intersection of Blackness and asexuality, she fails as a representation of a possible Conscious Black Asexuality. For the Mammy, the asexual label becomes totalizing in that it is one of the primary descriptors of her sexuality, rather than the reality that it is used as a scapegoat to avoid accountability for her sexual exploitation at the hands of white people (Owen 2014). Ianna Hawkins Owen's work on Blackness and asexuality is a necessary starting point for interrogating Black asexuality. We cannot move forward in understanding Black asexuality without the historicized work that complicates how we have understood Black asexuality in the past. Owen's work is the necessary jumping-off point to understand the role of race, racial politics, and Black feminism in defining Conscious Black Asexuality.

In a similar way to race being a possible totalizing identity, asexual people often have anxiety around their sexuality, becoming the defining element of not just who they are, but what they are perceived to be able to offer the world (Scherrer 2008). Alice said, "[s]he didn't want to be known as Alice the Asexual. . . . Being asexual would trump everything else about her, good and bad and weird" (Kann 2018, p. 57). Alice wants to be seen for her quirks and her Black cultural knowledge, such as eating ice cream in the winter and doing *Soul Train* dance lines. Alice is looking to own her sexual politics rather than having them be determinant of her, which is inseparable from her Blackness. "By eschewing racial designation, visibility and consciousness-raising efforts result in an idealised asexual agent imagined to have broad appeal such that white asexuals may assert, 'I exist!', while black asexuals might wonder, 'for whom do I exist?'" (Owen 2018, p. 72). This question for Black asexual people is linked to the rhetoric of the Mammy figure as asexual and the dominant typology of a healthy asexual being a white person.

Subsequently, Conscious Black Asexuality must interrogate sexual politics as they intersect with race. While being annoyingly pursued by a white guy dressed as a clown at a costume party, Alice notes common sexual assertions that Black women and girls experience. Alice has to roll her eyes at being told she's "[c]ute for a Black girl" and that Clown Boy has "[n]ever been with a Black girl" (Kann 2018, p. 117). These statements work to invalidate Black women's sexual agency and power, which become part of the burdens they must bear. While this is relevant across the sexuality spectrum, Owen (2014) asks us to recognize an asexual politic that "in a larger political project aimed at abolishing the problem of sexuality as a handmaiden to racial domination. Asexuality for itself must reconsider its interpellation into the maintenance of racialized relations of power" (p. 131). Heeding this call is key to the development of a Conscious Black Asexual politic. In particular, at the intersection between Black feminist work in the humanities, Black feminist work in new adult literature, and lived experiences of Black asexual people, an initial framework can be theorized that cannot be divorced from stratified racialized hierarchies.

7. Racialized Asexual Knowledges

Black women and asexual people work to resist oppressive narratives and structures in their lives, but it is difficult because of the ways that “asexual people are particularly susceptible to unwanted or coercive sex, particularly when in relationships with non-asexual individuals. Asexual people experience the strain of maintaining their relationships through sex, of meeting their partners’ sexual needs, and of doing performative work to convince their partners that they are enjoying sex” (Przybylo 2011, p. 188). Alice spent time pretending to have crushes in middle school and feigning endless love in high school with a guy she did not even like as a person to fit in with her peers. Faking her way through teenage hypersexual lust helped her seem “normal” to her peers; however, she was still punished with a nickname, “The Corpse”, when her performed interest in sex was not sufficiently convincing during actual sex acts (Kann 2018, pp. 31–32). Bullying and exclusion made Alice’s journey to self-discovery more difficult. However, Alice’s ultimate journey is that she grows to understand her sexuality and how she wants to express it on her own terms. “I’m not going to sleep with people to make them happy anymore. It’s kind of my thing, but I don’t want it to be.” (Kann 2018, p. 225). This quote is one example of Alice employing her sexual agency—a key tenet of Conscious Black Asexuality.

Throughout *LTAL*, there were multiple instances of Alice taking on a more agentic role in her sexuality. After reflecting on the times when she has come out as asexual, she settles into the reality that telling her love interest, Takumi, was the first time she felt that she fully trusted someone enough to be confident in her decision to speak her truth (Kann 2018, p. 209). Trust is central to Alice’s journey, including trusting herself. There have been times when Alice has decided to opt-out of dating altogether, and especially coercive sex, as a way to display her self-assuredness in her own agency: “...Sex is too much a part of everything, and I don’t think it’s reasonable to tell my partner I don’t ever want to sleep with them and expect them to stick around. I’m not saying they wouldn’t agree. I personally am not okay with asking. And I’m not saying I wouldn’t want to try again someday, but I don’t want them to have the expectation that I will. It has to be my choice and a lot of people don’t respect that” (Kann 2018, p. 226). Resisting the pervasive ways by which sex permeates how most mainstream relationships think about sex is a radical reclamation of one’s own power to challenge structural politics. While Alice’s narrative is overall about empowerment, her negative experiences around her sexuality are disheartening and damaging.

Black women’s burden of having meanings imposed on their sexuality requires healing, especially for conscious Black asexual women, for them to be empowered enough to be able to stand in their unique standpoint fully. Standpoint theories are tools that help shift from the surface-level inclusion of marginalized folks to really centering them and using that as a starting point (Harding 1991). Some of the unique struggles of Black asexual people, and Black asexual women, are situated around their difference in comparison to larger asexual communities.

“The black asexual comes up against the visibility mission to vocalise absence while insisting on the movement of asexuality into a group called ‘everyone’, requiring the absenting of the other Other: blackness. This might explain the range of silencing practices directed against outliers; black asexuals have at times been, in both friendly and hostile manners, urged to yield the desire for multidimensional senses of belonging in the name of neutral space (a familiar tactic used in other identity-based movements). I suggest that the simultaneity of black and asexual disturbs one another’s stability. Since her ‘mark of difference’, as Hall (Hall 1996, p. 474) defines blackness, speaks unceasingly, it cannot be concealed; the black female asexual will never be ‘just like everyone else’”. (Owen 2018, p. 76)

Black asexual people and their unique struggles are made invisible and silenced within the asexual movement. The pain of marginalization and erasure generally, and particularly within queer communities where you expect to be embraced, can be traumatizing and ongoing. While marginalized identities call for self-definition and agency within a social structure in which they are subjugated, that does not protect them from intra-group discrimination among queer folk. In one instance, Alice

attended a Pride event at school and made a friend, Moschoula: “[s]he was the only girl in that group who didn’t snub Alice for being bi” (Kann 2018, p. 8). This interaction describes one of the times Alice experiences discrimination from people who she understands to be her peers. While this experience is outside of her asexuality and instead centered around her biromanticism, Alice exists in the position of the Other in a way that is compounded by her gender, bi-ness, Blackness, and asexuality, all separately and together.

Feelings of exclusion and erasure because of one’s queerness and race can be compounded. When Alice’s mother was explaining why she holds Alice to such high standards in her declaration of what she wants to study, she explains:

“Living in this world, in this country *is* hard. You don’t know much about it because we chose to shelter you as long as we could. Black people have to be perfect, inhumanely good at everything, and even then we can fail, because that’s the way the system is set up. It is *rigged* against *us*. The environment, the opportunities we created gave you a leg up so you wouldn’t have to fight *as* hard. But we still expected you to fight.’

She knew that and wasn’t quite as sheltered as they thought.

Twitter, Tumblr, and even Facebook if she was willing to risk blind rage, kept her well-informed of what the world thought of her. She was Black, female, *and* queer. There weren’t many spaces left for her to feel safe online, and the real world had just started to get its claws into her. When she was stronger, braver, when she found her voice, she wouldn’t hesitate to use it”. (Kann 2018, p. 259)

Alice’s mother does not know that Alice is queer, but she certainly knows that she is a Black woman. While her mother can describe some of the harsh realities of what that means, she is missing a pivotal part of Alice’s story—Alice’s asexuality. Alice has had to learn more about the way the world sees than her parents know, especially when she has struggled to find community and acceptance. Furthermore, when Alice recognizes the way upward class mobility has impacted her struggle to relate to her family, she says, “I’m Black and grew up in the suburbs, whereas the rest of my family did not. You might want to strap in for this ride I like to call *Not Black Enough to Be the Black Sheep of Black Excellence*” (Kann 2018, p. 158). Coming to terms with the ways in which isolation, disconnection, and exclusion have impacted our journeys in life can be difficult and painful, particularly when it is a result of identities that we cannot control.

Experiences of queer-phobic racialized trauma require healing. One way to heal from this trauma is through therapy, which Claire Kann uses as a tool for Alice to find some resolve about her sexual politics. Alice asks her friend to connect her with her therapist to discuss “Sex-related stuff”, which she clarified, “I mean, it’s nothing bad. I read some stuff online, some answered asks on Tumblr, but I kinda want something a bit more personal, you know?” (Kann 2018, p. 57). This experience proved fruitful for Alice, as noted by the time she asked her therapist, “Where were you when I was in high school? Do you have any idea how much angst and anguish I had to sort through on my own? I would have started therapy *years* ago” (Kann 2018, p. 213). Conscious Black Asexuality calls upon Black asexual people to heal from their struggles and traumas, which they otherwise would have gone through alone.

8. Black Asexual Intimacies, Community, and Love

Finding a place that serves as a combined community builder and healing site in one can be very important. In *LTAL*, Tumblr and other online social spaces are described as places where healing can occur for conscious Black asexual people struggling to find community. While talking to her therapist, Alice discussed the benefits and limitations of school clubs and online sites. However, Alice establishes that affinity groups in school “are great for some people, especially if you’re the right color, not bi, and certainly not ace” (Kann 2018, p. 155). Even as she navigates institutions she is a member of, she still exists on the margins of the already marginalized groups. This lack of community makes online spaces

far more hopeful. Alice acknowledges how she has been able to find support and internalize uplifting rhetoric around the intersections of her race and asexuality, particularly on Tumblr (Kann 2018, p. 155).

Finding validation in these online spaces allows them to be places of support, in that they draw attention to and bring together marginalized folks that may otherwise have a difficult time connecting. The Asexuality Visibility and Education Network (AVEN) is the largest digital community of asexual people in the world (AVEN 2019). Since AVEN adopts a colorblind approach to asexuality and has not asked about race or ethnicity in surveys they have distributed, asexual folks of color have cultivated spaces of validation in other digital places such as YouTube and Tumblr (Chasin 2015). Even in online spaces, the refuge provided is often a temporary place of support and love. Subsequently, Black queer folks often seek other ways to foster loving communities and environments.

While love is love, love is not a universal term that looks the same or is defined in the same way among all people. Exploring the way queer folks love is key to understanding how there can be a reclamation of power in the erotic, the queer, and places of love and pleasure that fuel the challenge systems of Black queer erasure (Collins 2009). Queer folks have always defined love, their relationships to recipients of their love, and what that love looks like in unique ways. To expand into an exploration of queer kinship and alternative intimacies, we must explore "...love as both necessary and the sufficient criterion for defining kinship" (Weston 1997, p. 107). Queer love is a radical act that subverts the cruel notions that they not only do not belong but that they are alone in this world as well.

While a Conscious Black Asexuality framework includes agency, a major way this is manifested is through families of choice and fictive kin among queer folks. These relationships are often situated within close friendships; however, the degrees of intimacy in these relationships are broad for those who exist in the sexual margins (Donovan et al. 2003). Fictive kin and chosen family ties often have practical benefits such as financial support, but there are other products of these relationships that are more symbolic (Muraco 2006). "The essential character of these 'chosen' families is that they are actively created as a positive step to underpin a non-heterosexual life style which both affirms this identity and provides a new way of 'belonging' in the social world" (Finch 2007, pp. 70–1). Alice redefined what she thought was possible for how she could belong and be loved. She ultimately came to understand her best friends as her chosen family despite their challenges and to see Takumi grow to expand his understanding of sexuality, desire, romance, and intimacy (Chu 2014).

Overall, Conscious Black Asexuality cannot ignore the social or historical forces that have called upon its emergence; it has rearticulated something that has always been present, in some form, as resistance. From this fact, Alice as Black asexual girl magic is a threat to sexual politics that seek to erase or ignore Black queerness. In a reclamation of asexuality from a site of empowerment, Alice is threatening in her ownership of her own sexuality outside of white naming logics for what that should look like. By centering primarily intersectionality, asexuality knowledge, and intimacy, and secondarily agency, discrimination, and healing, the utility of this framework becomes apparent. These emergent themes have sociological implications for how folks navigate the world and, specifically, how their storied lives are theory. Locating the connection between oneself and larger narratives across history, while remaining situated in one's unique standpoint, we are able to conceptualize an asexual politic that can make sense of silenced Black sexual life in the Diaspora.

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