

Power Trip

Power can be useful, but can it also be misused?

By Angelica Cheyenne

Power can often be extremely seductive. Power is the capacity to influence the behavior of others over the course of events and is often an envied quality. Power can also be associated with masculinity, success, popularity, sex appeal, and control. Power can be enticing especially when the power is emanating from someone of status and a higher socioeconomic level. This is often displayed in Hollywood. The cult classic “Pretty Woman” starring the handsome Richard Gere, and the beautiful Julia Roberts, highlights the uncanny relationship between a high powered business man and a Hollywood red light district prostitute. The escort agreement between “Edward,” Gere’s character and “Vivian,” Robert’s character, evolves into a beautiful romance. Richard, a powerful rich man rescues the damsel Vivian from her life of distress, and makes her his companion. Although we applaud the ending, we shouldn’t forget the part where Edward’s business partner Phillip attempts to sexually assault Vivian, after she says no to his advances. He suddenly realizes that she is a prostitute and refuses to be denied.

However, Edward a man of high status, rescued Vivian and saved the day. In fairy-tales, there is always a rich and handsome prince that comes along and rescues his less powerful and often destitute fair maiden. Cinderella was practically a servant, and Snow White lived in a humble abode in the wilderness. Both were swooped up by a prince who was so smitten by their beauty and innocence, that they married them. We fawn over the idea of a happily ever after between a rich and powerful man and a “normal” woman. We seldom question what exactly occurred after the lovely wedding, and whether or not they really lived happily ever after.

In the days of autocracy under King Henry VIII, the infamous King beheaded the majority of his Queens . Power doesn't always equate to becoming a murderer, however it does equate to being in control. Control is beneficial, but can also be unwanted depending on the circumstances.

In the *Fifty shades of Grey* series the lead character Christian Grey (Jamie Dornan) who is a billionaire and entrepreneur actively seeks out college news writer Anastasia Steele (Dakota Johnson) while in pursuit of having a new BDSM submissive. Although they're under contract and Steele is aware of her role that she agreed to, often Christian pushes boundaries that Anastasia is sometimes uncomfortable with. In the first *Fifty Shades of Grey*, Christian whips Anastasia with a belt to demonstrate how he would punish her. Even though Anastasia was initially disgusted and felt violated, in the sequel *Fifty Shades Darker* we see the relationship is rekindled under Anastasia's requirements.

Even though the relationship is tumultuous, Anastasia still maintains a relationship with Christian. Anastasia was almost sexually assaulted by another boss, and held at gunpoint by one of Grey's former submissives. She is pressured into taking Christian's last name after their marriage, despite her own wants, with Christian still having majority of the control in the relationship. Not to mention the other characters in the film praising Christian, and reminding Anastasia how lucky she was to be wanted by Christian.

"You're so lucky to be with him." A phrase that is said in almost every movie whenever an "average" girl is in a relationship with a good-looking, popular, and or rich guy. Even if the relationship is toxic or an uneven distribution of power, the fact someone who is deemed important is interested in someone viewed unimportant is constantly portrayed in media.

In the *Fifty Shades of Grey* series everyone thought Anastasia was so “lucky,” and had nothing to “complain” about since Christian was the most desired man in the room. However, would they still desire Christian if they knew he was impulsive, borderline sexually deviant, and overall controlling? Being in a relationship that has an uneven distribution of power is only acknowledged from a positive aspect, while negating the consequences.

In the movie *Love Actually*, there is a budding romance between Prime Minister David (Hugh Grant) and Junior Member of the house staff of 10 Downing Street Natalie (Martine McCutcheon). Although Natalie pursues David, and relationship occurs, we are only exposed to the romantic ending following their public kiss. However what if this role was reverse? What if David overly pursued a reluctant Natalie? Natalie’s advances may have been welcomed and less intimidating since she wasn’t a Prime Minister however, it still blurs the lines when it comes to romance in the workplace.

The focus may be on their romance, but let’s take a look of how David became aware of Natalie. If it wasn’t for the movie’s U.S. President (Billy Bob Thornton) making crude comments about Natalie’s body, and the two engaging in “good ole boy” conversation, than David may have not taken a second glance at Natalie. Not because Natalie was inadequate, but simply because his focus wouldn’t be hooking up with his subordinates, but fulfilling his duties as Prime Minister. Once again we don’t see how the misuse of power which could’ve evolved negatively, since it’s overshadowed by David redeeming men in a position power as being saviors. After the second time of crude comments from the president, David moves Natalie to another part of the staff, and confronts the president.

Just like we see with the Me Too movement. If someone comes out in protest against a man who misuses power, than an equally powerful man stands in solidarity while the true issue which is sexual misconduct never is officially addressed. Even in the movie *The Devil Wears Prada*, we see Andy (Anne Hathaway) hooking up with a handsome magazine editor Christian Thompson (Simon Baker). Consent was obvious, but the casual way he offered to advance her writing career as long as they became an item implied that his request wasn't abnormal and almost expected.

Andy denies and is offended, however Thompson persists while indirectly blackmailing her about their rendezvous. The scene is swift and the interaction ends when Andy leaves with a smug expression. Although Andy lost nothing from refusing Thompson, the possibility of it wasn't made apparent either. There have been debates on why men and women who experience sexual misconduct didn't initially refuse or speak out against those who harassed or assaulted them. Most commonly, fear is used to explain the silence of victims of sexual misconduct.

Fear of what will happen to their careers, reputation, and or legacy. Similar to the reason why Topanga Lawrence (Danielle Fishel) didn't want to speak out against her professor Stuart (Fred Savage) when his sexual advances made her uncomfortable in Season 6 episode 7 of *Boy Meets World*. During the episode Topanga told her boyfriend Cory (Ben Savage) that she didn't want to say anything because she blamed herself, since she invited her professor into her dorm room. Even though professor Stuart utilized his position of power as a way to dissipate Topanga's social barrier, Lawrence still found a way to blame herself for his unwanted advances.

This theme is all too common in our society, and power is often used to conquer the powerless. Power can be useful, but when can it also be overused? How much power can one have before they begin to abuse it is a question society has yet to answer.

For more information about the #MeToo and #TimesUp movement, please visit the links below:

<http://time.com/5189945/whats-the-difference-between-the-metoo-and-times-up-movements/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/01/movies/times-up-hollywood-women-sexual-harassment.html>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/18/sisters-this-is-our-moment-to-say-times-up>

<https://www.usmagazine.com/celebrity-news/news/hollywood-men-launch-askmoreofhim-campaign/>

<https://www.cnbc.com/2018/01/18/how-business-leaders-can-stand-in-support-of-the-metoo-movement.html>

