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Callie Torres's (Im)Perfect Operation of Bisexuality on *Grey's Anatomy*

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Now in its fourteenth season, *Grey's Anatomy* (also referred to as *Grey's*) debuted on ABC in March 2005. Created and produced by Shonda Rhimes and her production company, Shondaland, the show is centered around the lives of surgical interns, residents, and attendings at the fictional Grey Sloan Memorial Hospital in Seattle, Washington. Focused on the medical pursuits, friendships, and romantic relationships of the main characters, the show is largely narrated by Dr. Meredith Grey, who is the daughter of famed surgeon Dr. Ellis Grey. *Grey's* has been recognized with multiple Emmy, Screen Actors Guild, Golden Globe, American Latino Media Arts (ALMA), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) awards.¹ One of *Grey's* most well liked and developed characters is Dr. Calliope "Callie" Iphegenia Torres, portrayed by openly bisexual, Tony Award winning, Mexican American actress Sara Ramirez.² Since joining the cast in season 2, Ramirez's character emerged as one of the most multidimensional bisexual characters on network television, and her performance was recognized by the National Council for La Raza (NCLR) and the NAACP through multiple nominations for ALMA and Image Awards.³ Ramirez describes Callie as a "kickass orthopedic surgeon, who happens to be smart, driven, strong, vulnerable, funny, female, Latina, and bisexual."⁴

While Callie's race is not often depicted as the central aspect of her character, she is coded as Latina via specific clues, including her upbringing in Miami, Florida, which marks her as Cuban American. She is also marked as a Catholic, wealthy, well-educated woman who pairs with only white romantic partners. We argue that Callie's proximity to whiteness constructs her bisexuality to satisfy white heteronormative

U.S. audiences. These audiences, traditionally targeted by television networks, often disregard overtly diverse identities, resulting in poor ratings. ABC intermittently addresses some of these challenges; for example, *Black-ish* (ABC 2014–present) and *Cristela* (ABC 2014–2015) premiered in 2014 as two diverse new series although the latter was canceled after the first season.⁵

To cater to normative audiences and thwart accusations of homophobia, networks typically create palatable queer characters that are cisgender, homonormative, and not necessarily transgressive. As such, we argue that Callie's bisexuality is cushioned by her romantic relationships with white partners. Whether intentional or not, keeping Callie's bisexuality in close proximity to whiteness gives Rhimes leeway to pursue storylines through Callie that attempt to complicate representational queer politics in the media. Thus, we specifically theorize how Callie complicates discourses surrounding sexuality by examining how her bisexuality achieves palatability through a careful negotiation of her intersectional identities as an upper-class, Catholic Latina. Interestingly, these identities work to both privilege and disenfranchise Callie by situating her sexuality in relation to the possible loss of money, family, and religiosity. Moreover, because of her likability as a holistically developed character, the showcasing of her other identities mark her as a positive depiction of a Latina character. The implications of these perceptions have been measured in a study by Tukachinsky, Mastro, and Yarchi that theorized how blacks and Latinxs⁶ are perceived by white audiences.⁷ The study revealed that "the number of highly professional and social Latinos characters had a significant positive effect on Whites' attitudes toward Latinos."⁸ Therefore, theorizing the implications of how Callie's identities are presented is imperative to underscoring how she is perceived by wider audiences. We present our argument through queer of color and feminist theories that guide our analysis by situating Callie within the historical landscape of mediated representations of Latinas. Doing so allows us to examine how the character of Callie—always in close proximity to whiteness—represents a pedagogy of bisexuality.

QUEER OF COLOR THEORIES, CHICANA FEMINISMS, AND BISEXUALITY

Queer scholars of color challenge the progress narrative that governs coming out of the closet by pointing out how whiteness and Eurocentrism uphold this narrative.⁹ Ross argues, "(White) queer theory and history are beset by what I call 'claustrophilia,' a fixation on the closet function as the grounding principle for sexual experience, knowledge, and politics, and that this claustrophilic fixation effectively diminishes and disables the full engagement with potential insights from race theory and class analysis."¹⁰ Opposed to whitewashing queerness, it is important to consider how coming out for queer people of color may lead to the potential loss of not only familial relationships, but also racial and ethnic identity connections

and support.¹¹ Furthermore, Cohen adds that scholars must challenge the dominant heterosexual/homosexual binary that governs most queer scholarship by addressing intersectionality and the matrix of domination—concepts that emerge from black feminist and critical race inquiry.¹² Nero echoes this call by advocating for scholars to be attentive to the racial privilege and potential class privilege afforded to white queers.¹³ Additionally, Muñoz asserts that queers of color are subject to what he terms “the burden of liveness,” meaning that our everyday lived experiences are constantly being surveilled.¹⁴ Therefore, queer people of color are always performing under the surveillance of whiteness in everyday life. Perhaps no one’s bodies are more surveilled than those of women of color.¹⁵ Cultural surveillance is particularly omnipresent in the media, where the visibility of women of color caters to palatability for wider (read: whiter) audiences.

Though often overlooked within the queer canon, Chicana feminist scholars Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga are foundational to queer theorizations of identity, embodiment, performance, and representation. These scholars richly contribute to understandings of how *mestizaje*, family, and religion inform Chicana (queer) identities, which in turn expands queer scholarship by challenging privileged homogeneity within the canon.¹⁶ Anzaldúa argues for understanding Chicana identities through the lens of *mestizaje*, which embraces mixed-race or hybrid identities created via colonialism and the slave trade.¹⁷ *Mestizaje* can be likened to intersectionality as Anzaldúa calls for us to understand how class, gender, sexuality, and ability inform Chicana mixed-race identities. Queerness is at the heart of Anzaldúa’s understanding of *mestizaje*; this is important because it places at the center that which has been historically maligned in Chicana/o movement rhetorics. Deepening theorizations of race and sexuality, Calafell highlights the ways that *mestizaje* marks Chicana and Latina as queer within the exclusionary black/white racial binary; for those who are lesbian or bisexual, this queerness is magnified.¹⁸

Like Anzaldúa, Moraga argues for an unapologetically queer Chicana feminism that attests to the queer complexities of Chicanas.¹⁹ Additionally, both she and Anzaldúa understand the importance of religion in the lives of Chicanas. Moraga argues that the virgin/whore dichotomy governs and disciplines Chicana sexuality. This dichotomy operates in relationship to the Virgin of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico, and Malintzin Tenepal (La Malinche), the symbolic Eve figure who aided Spaniard Hernán Cortés in the Spanish colonization of what is now Mexico. Through the story of Malintzin and Hernán Cortés, heterosexual and interracial violence is at the core of the “origin” narrative of Chicanas and Mexicanas. While the Virgin of Guadalupe is upheld as an impossible standard for Mexicanas and Chicanas, Malintzin is seen as the whore/traitor who could not control her sexuality. Though these cultural and religious figures are connected specifically to Mexicana and Chicana histories, it is important to note that the virgin/whore dichotomy governs a great deal of Latina experience, regardless of

country of origin. For example, one of the central ways Spanish colonialism was enacted was through meshing Indigenous mother goddess figures with the Virgin Mary, which shifted some of the religious beliefs of Indigenous peoples while still allowing them to hold onto Indigenous practices.²⁰ While Mexicans and Chicaxs worship the Virgin of Guadalupe, many Cubans and Cuban Americans worship Our Lady of Charity.²¹

Religion plays a prominent role in the lives of Chicanas and Latinas and often holds them to an unattainable and often undesirable patriarchal standard. Supported by a family structure that can be very patriarchal, religion also informs how Latinas are socialized to think about their sexuality.²² While Latinxs may have some shared histories, they lead to different lived experiences because of factors such as colonialism, religion, gender role expectations, and language.²³ *Latinidad* is what allows us to think about possibilities for connection across differences among various Latinx groups.²⁴ For example, the virgin/whore dichotomy often governs media representations of Latinas and typically results in stereotypical and one-dimensional characterizations.²⁵ Thus, *Grey's* portrayal of Callie's religion as elemental to her desire to perform the good, heterosexual, obedient daughter (i.e., virgin-like coding) as part of her core identity is imperative to understanding how Latinas exist within these complicated intersections.

Moraga further articulates the multiple challenges faced by many Chicana lesbians who are often constructed symbolically as Malinches: betrayers of their culture, patriarchy, and religion.²⁶ Additionally, Moraga argues that Chicana lesbians must negotiate shame both as colonized people and because of their queerness. Rodriguez elaborates that the "connection of shame and the inhibition of pleasure has particular resonance for racialized women for whom victimization functions as an ontological condition."²⁷ Anzaldúa challenges the shame associated with *mestizaje* or colonial mixed-race identities as well as queerness, instead seeing these liminal or borderland places as spaces of radical possibility through *mestiza* consciousness.

Similar to the ways queer theories often recenter white gay male experiences at the cost of white queer women and queer women of color, much of the work in gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) studies ignores the experiences of bisexuals. Michaela D. E. Meyer argues that, in many cases, bisexuality is seen as a stop on the road to one's "true" identity as either gay or straight.²⁸ She contends that "those who profess bisexuality past this intermediate stage are seen as promiscuous swingers or sexual predators. Often, bisexuality is defined *in relation to* gay/lesbian identities rather than being defined as a unique sexual identity."²⁹ Meyer further argues that bisexuality is often challenged by the LGBTQ community.³⁰

Bisexual characters in dramatic television narratives are typically depicted as "female[s], portrayed by non-white actors, thus signifying a cultural struggle over the matrix of oppression through gender, race, and sexuality."³¹ Meyer argues that

these characters are “intersectional hybrids” who “serve hegemonic and counter-hegemonic functions simultaneously.”³² Meyer further contends that when a television character is already marginalized, the acceptance of bisexuality by other characters showcases the readiness of others to be accepting or tolerant.³³ Among the characters Meyer discusses is *Grey’s* Dr. Callie Torres, whose “instability” makes the behaviors of the bed-hopping heterosexual characters seem more stable.³⁴ She calls for scholars to critically unpack how these types of characters both challenge and uphold hegemony.³⁵ We take up Meyer’s call by critically reading Callie through queer of color and Chicana/Latina feminist theories. We examined all of the episodes of *Grey’s* available at the time of this writing, seasons 1 to 11, focusing primarily on Callie’s familial storylines and relational partners. We critique *Grey’s* episodes as the primary text as well as their extra-textual elements to critically examine the impact of Callie’s representation of bisexuality. We begin with Callie’s coming out narrative as it relates to her family, proximity to whiteness, and her relational partners.

DECONSTRUCTING DR. CALLIE TORRES’S WHITENED VISI(BI)LITY

Callie’s “Coming Out” as Bi

Meyer notes that in many cases, bisexual characters “do not ‘come out’ as bisexual, rather their sexuality is introduced casually, usually as a secondary plot device.”³⁶ This was certainly the case with Callie, as she was first introduced as heterosexual. Following a failed marriage to Dr. George O’Malley, Callie developed romantic feelings for another surgeon, Dr. Erica Hahn. While sorting out her feelings, Callie slept with Erica and Dr. Mark Sloan—from whom she solicited tips on how to sexually please Erica. Ultimately, with Mark’s guidance as her best friend and sexual partner, Callie accepts that she enjoys sex with both of them, marking herself as bisexual without labeling herself as such. This is best exemplified when Erica realizes she is, in fact, a lesbian, comparing the revelation to putting on eyeglasses and finally being able to clearly see leaves on trees. Erica’s coming out is framed through Callie’s reaction, which indicates, by comparison, that while Callie enjoys sex with Erica, she did not have the same epiphany. Biphobia is articulated here through the metaphor of eyeglasses, wherein Erica inevitably “chose” one preferred gender and could see clearly while Callie could not. Because heteronormative scripts necessitate the heterosexual/homosexual binary, bisexuality is often seen as a temporary pit stop toward one or the other. Erica’s rejection of Callie’s bisexuality underscores how biphobia exists within the lesbian-gay (LG) community, highlighting the disbelief or questioning of unclear sexual identities. In their final scene, Erica and Callie argue over the actions of a surgical intern, which leads to Erica steadfastly dismissing the notion of ‘grey’ areas. In the end, Erica responds resentfully, “You can’t *kind of* be a lesbian,” before walking to

her car, never to be seen again.³⁷ Here, Erica's discomfort with Callie's bisexuality acts as a catalyst for the character's departure.

Following fan outrage about Erica's sudden departure as a series regular and its implications for LGBTQ visibility on television, Rhimes determinedly set out to continue telling Callie's story.³⁸ Rhimes cast Jessica Capshaw as Arizona Robbins, an openly lesbian pediatric surgeon who became Callie's new love interest.³⁹ Callie and Arizona begin dating in season 5 and quickly became a fan-favorite couple.⁴⁰ Thereafter, many fans and media commentary reactions marked Callie as a lesbian and not bisexual, since she had gone from one relationship with a woman to another.⁴¹ Rhimes vehemently disagreed with this assertion and turned to Twitter to clarify, "Callie's not a lesbian. Arizona is a lesbian. Jessica, Sara and I really wanted to tell both experiences."⁴² Rhimes further elaborates, "I love that she's determinedly bisexual. She's not somebody who is straight who discovers she's a lesbian; she's bisexual and feels very strongly about that."⁴³ Presenting an authentic account of Callie's sexuality has been one of Rhimes's major objectives, in hopes of deviating from the typical trope of bisexuals on a path to choosing one side of the binary. In fact, Rhimes has been so committed to telling Callie's bisexual story that she and her team of writers have scripted Callie to explicitly name her sexual identity on a number of occasions. During a pivotal scene when Meredith and Callie are intoxicated at Joe's Bar, the popular postshift hangout across from the hospital, Callie drunkenly turns to Meredith and exclaims, "So I'm bisexual! So what! It's a thing, and it's real. I mean, it's called LGBTQ for a reason. There's a B in there, and it doesn't mean badass. OK, it kinda does, but it also means bi."⁴⁴ Callie's statement, while seemingly inconsequential, is poignant as one of the only times a prominent prime-time television character has confidently self-identified as bisexual.

Once Callie's bisexuality has been firmly established, her story unfolds as she: gets pregnant and has a baby named Sofia Robbin Sloan Torres with her best friend Mark, marries Arizona, raises Sofia with Mark and Arizona, hooks up with Dr. Alex Karev (in a flashback), divorces Arizona, dates women both on and off screen, and—at the writing of this chapter—begins a new relationship with Dr. Penelope Blake.⁴⁵ Interestingly, as Callie and Arizona's relationship progresses, Callie's bisexuality is a constant point of contention within their relationship. Callie's sexuality is understood as an area of mistrust and is regularly brought up during arguments. Early in their relationship, after their first breakup, Callie confronts Arizona's insecurity during a hospital lockdown, asking her, "When are you going to forgive me for not being a good enough lesbian for you?"⁴⁶ In this context, Arizona reifies negative stereotyping of bisexuals within the LGBTQ community by imploring Callie to prove that she and their relationship are different than Callie's previous loves. Arizona's discomfort with bisexuality is best exemplified by her reactions to Callie's relationship with Mark. Arizona is scripted as extremely jealous, fearing Callie will eventually leave her for him. In season 6 she

says, "Oh my God, you're breaking up with me. Mark? Is it Mark? Are you sleeping with Mark again? Are you one of those fake lesbians having a va-va-vacation in lesbian land?"⁴⁷

During season 7, Arizona earns a grant to offer pediatric care in Malawi, Africa, which ultimately leads to their second breakup. Realizing she cannot live without Callie, Arizona returns to Seattle to mend their relationship. When she arrives, Arizona discovers that Callie is pregnant with Mark's baby. Obviously upset, Arizona cries, "I'm mad that you slept with someone else, and I know we were broken up, but you slept with someone else. And I'm even madder that that person has a penis," suggesting that her worst nightmare had come true.⁴⁸ Not only had Callie embodied her bisexuality and slept with a man while they were broken up, but that man was Mark. Arizona's jealousy, conceptually examined through biphobia, is common in the gay and lesbian community. According to Weiss, internalized homophobia causes many gays and lesbians to exclude bisexuals from the community, feeling instead that "bisexuality and transgenderism are detrimental to the social and political acceptance of gays and lesbians."⁴⁹ Several factors ranging from internalized homophobia to ignorance inform biphobia, yet the most common struggle often has to do with a fear that bisexual women will eventually choose a heterosexual relationship. In other words, they are not quite gay enough.⁵⁰ Symbolically, this can be read as a subtle articulation of heteronormative patriarchy winning out, displacing lesbianism to center the phallus. It offers a pedagogy of bisexuality that conveys bisexuals cannot be trusted, will never truly be able to commit to one partner, and therefore, are a threat to heteronormativity and homonormativity.

After eventually reconciling and committing to tri-parent the baby, Arizona's insecurities heighten and her critique of Mark's role in their lives becomes even more explicitly linked to Callie's sexuality. When discussing Mark's role as a father, Arizona exhaustedly exclaims that Callie is living "some kind of 'bi' dream come true" because she gets to be with the woman she loves and "the guy best friend who's also a great lay."⁵¹ She continues, "Then you get a baby. I mean you get it all. And me? This is not my dream. My dream does not look like this."⁵² Soon after, Mark gets brought up again during another fight, leading to Callie suggesting that Arizona is jealous of Mark. Arizona asks, "Do you blame me? I mean he gets most of you. The straight you, the Catholic you, the girl who loves baby showers. I just get, you know, the gay you, which is really only about twenty minutes a night."⁵³ This theme of mistrust, steeped in biphobia, is bookended during a scene in which Callie and Arizona attend couples therapy. When Arizona explains to their therapist that their issues began when she returned from Africa to find Callie pregnant, Callie interrupts and clarifies, "I'm bisexual. I'm attracted to both men and women and that freaks her out."⁵⁴ Once again, Callie's bisexuality is marked as the cause of their relational troubles, glossing over all other potential sources of tension and conflict. The repetitious implication here points to how

biphobia catalyzes most of Callie's relational troubles. Despite the fact that Arizona agreed to raise Sofia as her child, married Callie, and ultimately was the one who cheated, Arizona repeatedly blames their relational turbulence on not trusting Callie because she is bisexual. This works to construct bisexuality as "abnormal," positioning heterosexuality and queerness on opposite static poles in accordance with dominant logics.

Familial Reactions

While *Grey's* clearly defines Callie's sexual identity and racialized partner preference, there has been less clarity in naming Callie's ethnicity other than as Latina. Moreman and Calafell mark a similar strategy in *Chasing Papi*, which, after the media constructed the "Latino explosion" in the late 1990s and early 2000s, relied on generically Latinx characters devoid of specific ethnic origin.⁵⁵ The characters in the film, though generically identified as Latina, did have some regional coding that could be identifiably interpreted as Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Cuban American to Latinx viewers.⁵⁶ Creating characters and casting actors that can still be ethnically read through markers of whiteness (e.g., light skin), but are marked with palatable undifferentiated differences (e.g., accented speech without regional distinction or slang, stereotypical behaviors) is marketable to white audiences and their desire for otherness. However, these images flatten and homogenize a very heterogeneous Latinx community.⁵⁷ Similarly, Callie's racial and ethnic coding are particularly important to theorizing her sexuality in relation to her religious Latinx family. In this context, the generic coding of Latinx characters is important to challenge in order to comprehend how various ethnic communities underneath the umbrella of Latinx may understand and perform queerness differently due to factors including, but not limited to, citizenship, immigration history, and class.

Callie's family joins *Grey's* storyline when her father Carlos visits shortly after she and George are married during season 5, only to discover they had already divorced.⁵⁸ When Carlos sees George, he grabs him by the shirt and manhandles him for committing adultery. Callie distracts her father by screaming that she too committed adultery with Mark, who then receives Carlos's angry attention. Callie stops the attack by sharing that she is happily in a new relationship, to which her father responds, "I'd like to meet this new gentleman suitor."⁵⁹ A nervous Callie glances over at a nearby Arizona as she begins her pronoun-void elucidation, "They're pretty busy because they're a doctor here. But you will love them. You will love them. Because they're smart and funny and handsome and beautiful. And very supportive. Daddy, please be okay with this."⁶⁰ A second later she brings Arizona over and shares, "Dad, this is Arizona Robbins. This is who I'm dating now."⁶¹ A short time later we see Arizona watching from a distance as Callie and her dad argue in Spanish. We learn that her father has given her an ultimatum. He threatens to cut her off financially unless she "comes home," and much to Ari-

zona's surprise, Callie tells her that she "cut him off."⁶² This leads to financial woes, causing Callie to contemplate Dr. Cristina Yang's suggestion to lie to her family by telling them that she and Arizona have broken up. Thus, we see another woman of color (Cristina) advocating for familial nondisclosure marking the reification of homophobia that can exist within nonwhite families and cultures. Callie briefly entertains this option but ultimately decides against it, telling Mark, "I can't lie. Even if they think I'm wrong. Even if they don't understand. Even if they think I'm crazy. I'm me. They're supposed to accept me. They're supposed to support me. They're supposed to love me. You know? I can't lie."⁶³ The tension Callie experiences, and that Cristina understands, is the stress that queer of color scholars such as Ross and Moraga allude to—the need to at times be closeted because of fear of losing not only family and cultural ties but also in this case financial support. Callie understands that if she plays the good dutiful daughter, symbolically located at the virgin end of the virgin/whore dichotomy, she can maintain her connection to her family versus being ousted if she is the symbolic "traitor" or whore figure, Malinche, who is often connected to discussions of Chicana lesbianism.

In season 6, Carlos returns to the hospital with a priest, Father Kevin.⁶⁴ Imploring Callie to talk with him, Carlos says, "We'd always work it out *mija*."⁶⁵ Seeing her father with the priest, Callie asks outright, "You think you can pray away the gay?" followed by, "You can't pray away the gay!"⁶⁶ Her father yells after her as she walks away, clearly enunciating the Spanish pronunciation. She yells back, "You can't pray away the gay!"⁶⁷ Her clear, unaccented English response stands in contrast to his accented English, marking her family as Latinx and her queerness as white. In this way, we see Callie's anger toward her father's reaction to her queerness as a rejection of his intolerance. Presumably, much of the conversation about LGBTQ identity that surrounds Callie is consistent with the white homonormative understanding of queerness (i.e., visibility equals power or "it gets better"). The divisionary juxtaposition between Callie's race and sexuality continues throughout the show and is hypervisibly noticeable because all of Callie's relational partners are white.

After her argument with her father, Callie vents to Arizona. To Callie's surprise, Arizona merely encourages her to have a conversation with her father, suggesting that she shocked him by coming out after thirty years of what he experienced as his daughter's heterosexuality. Callie, presuming that Arizona had a similar coming out experience, believes she should be more understanding of the situation. However, Arizona shares that her being a lesbian was not a surprise to her family because she never dated men. Drawing a comparison between her and Callie, Arizona explains that she feels that Callie's father has a right to be shocked. Here, Arizona, the white woman who has always been queer, counsels Callie to ease up on her Latinx father. While Arizona's race is not the only factor determining how she and her family understood her sexuality, it does underscore how LGBTQ identity is communicated differently within families of color. Furthermore, Arizona

gets to appear caring, benevolent, and rational while Callie is marked as overly emotional, a coding that is commonly associated with Latinas. Arizona's statements about always knowing she was a lesbian also assume a fixed identity narrative steeped in white privilege—a trope we see more often with gay men. This is interesting given that gay white male narratives are the most common in representations of queerness in the popular imagination, rhetorically silencing the experiences of queer white women and queer people of color.

Later in the episode, Callie is seated at a table with the white priest and her father. Symbolically, the priest sits between Callie and Carlos, mediating Callie's symbolic move toward white queerness and her intersectional Latina Catholic identity. Callie challenges her father to see that queerness has been present in their family for some time whether he has chosen to acknowledge it or not. She mentions her Uncle Berto who has not been single for six years "for no reason."⁶⁸ This is both a familiar queer code of the lifelong bachelor and a common way that Latinxs frame family members who are not out of the closet officially, though their queerness is a well-known secret. Callie tells her father, "You should have adjusted by now."⁶⁹ Carlos responds, "I love you with all my heart. . . . I'm scared for you. It's an abomination. It's an eternity in hell."⁷⁰ Father Kevin, a literal and symbolic source of righteousness, interjects in his role as mediator and the white voice of patriarchal reason, "Let's not start with words like hell."⁷¹ After Carlos refuses to apologize and pleads against Callie's queerness, she and her father passionately exchange Bible verses. At the end, Callie retorts, "Jesus is my savior daddy, not you. And he would be ashamed of you for judging me. And he would be ashamed of you for turning your back on me."⁷² Her response is important because she refuses to let go of her Catholicism or her queerness, both of which are fundamental to her intersectional Latina identity.

After comforting a devastated Callie, Arizona decides to speak to Carlos herself. Arizona explains that she was named after the USS Arizona, the ship her grandfather died on during the bombing of Pearl Harbor after saving nineteen men from drowning. His heroism and love of country was a cornerstone of Arizona's upbringing. When she came out to her father, a colonel in the Marine Corps, she was prepared for him to kick her out of the house, but instead he asked, "Are you still who I raised you to be?"⁷³ She tells Carlos, "My father believed in country the way that you believe in God. And my father is not a man who bends, but he bent for me because I'm his daughter. I'm a good man in a storm. I love your daughter. And I protect the things that I love."⁷⁴ By relating strict military life to religiosity, Arizona appeases some of Carlos's fears. After their exchange, Carlos waits for his daughter outside of the hospital and Callie scoffs and walks past him. Carlos asks her if there is hope for a wedding between her and Arizona and eventually grandchildren. Pacified by Callie's affirmation of marriage and children, Carlos hugs his daughter. Again, we see how Arizona's military upbringing and masculine narrative style provides the white voice of "reason," which ultimately

prompts Carlos to forgive Callie, underlining the resolution of the conflict via Callie's Catholic Latinx family being swayed by and adhering to norms associated with white queer familial acceptance. Arizona functions as a normative buffer of sorts between Callie and Carlos. Importantly, Carlos's inquiries about a wedding and children highlight his need to negotiate his daughter's sexuality while simultaneously retaining and emphasizing his ties to culture and religion. These ties reinforce his reliance on traditional Catholic and Latinx values concerning honor and family, and they point to a desired performance of homonormativity rather than queerness.

Carlos's reaction is complicated in that while it maintains associations of Latinx families as homophobic and unsupportive, it also disrupts the hegemonic coming out narrative that is governed by white queers' access to racial privilege. Through Carlos, we witness how coming out has the potential to cut Callie off from her cultural and familial ties, which visually makes her angry and breaks her heart. In the end, Callie's coming out is a triumph mediated by whiteness, which results in associating Latinx identities with primitivism because they do not perform 'correctly' within the white queer progress narrative of coming out. This interpretation is further supported by Carlos's furious reactions to George and Mark; in defense of his daughter, he was driven by a sense of overprotective machismo. Importantly, throughout all of these relationships, Callie vehemently refuses to be cast in the trope of the bad woman/whore that must be atoned back into the virginal, dutiful daughter. She does so by standing up for herself, her sexuality, her autonomy, and her intersectional identities.

As previously mentioned, Callie and Arizona eventually marry. Callie's father and mother, Lucia, are set to attend the wedding. However, from the moment they arrive, we see Lucia's discomfort overshadow the joy of the event and all subsequent familial interactions. During the rehearsal dinner attended by both sets of parents, Carlos displays his newfound acceptance by attempting to connect with Arizona and (over)excitedly sharing, "We sat next to a charming young man on the plane today, and he said he was going with his partner to march in a parade. For pride."⁷⁵ Sensing Lucia's agitation, Callie interjects by asking if she would like to hold her grandchild, Sofia, for the first time. Lucia quickly declines by offering eating as an excuse and tensions thicken. Then Callie sits Lucia down and explains that she has tried hard to please Lucia's Catholic sensibilities throughout the wedding planning process, including wearing Lucia's veil. Lucia retorts, "Don't you dare imply that there's anything about a wedding to a woman or a baby out of wedlock that's for me."⁷⁶ Callie responds, "So what bothers you more? My bastard child or my lesbian fiancée?"⁷⁷ Lucia, mournfully homophobic, replies that she will not see Callie in heaven and that her marriage to another woman does not make her a bride.

Eventually, Lucia resolves not to attend the wedding. At Callie's insistence, Carlos reluctantly leaves with his wife. However, during the wedding reception, we see Carlos return when he realizes he cannot miss the opportunity to dance with

his daughter on her wedding day. This is significant as Latinx families have traditionally been framed within the trope of machismo and marianismo, meaning that men are seen as the head of the household who may hold sexist qualities, while women are seen as virginal, religious makers of home. Carlos's attendance at the wedding serves as a sign of support from the patriline; however, to Callie, her mother's absence signifies her failure to perform proper (i.e., heterosexual) Latina identity and homemaking. This is highlighted during the conversation between Callie and Dr. Miranda Bailey after Callie's painful interaction with her mother. Callie says, "My mom's right. It's a joke. It's not a wedding. It's not happening. I can't have a priest. I no longer have a minister. I'm not being given away by my dad. The wedding isn't legal. What's the point? This isn't a wedding. It's not even in a church. It's nothing. It's a couple of girls playing dress up."⁷⁸ Following this emotional exchange, Callie tearfully calls off the wedding. Thus, although Callie has the blessing of her father; her mother, as the symbolic keeper of culture reflecting a trait often associated with women, refuses to give her blessing. This portrayal stigmatizes women of color while framing patriarchy in a positive light because it is Carlos who shows up for his daughter despite Lucia's homophobic inability to do so.

Whiteness and Romantic Relationships

Callie's relationships play an imperative role in her life and, therefore, in interpreting the pedagogy of her bisexuality. In addition to theorizing her race-culture and her family, it is important to recognize that all of Callie's relational partners have been white. Callie's steady stream of white romantic partners marks the manifestation of Callie's palatable queerness. According to Meyer, "Bisexual characters are typically non-White women whose unstable discourses serve as a 'contemporary site for the production and consumption of identity.'⁷⁹ Meyer further argues that,

The bisexual character serves to stabilize heterosexuality in his or her immediate relational and work environment. Bisexual female characters are not the leads and are often the foils to White, heterosexual women protagonists, whereas bisexual men exist only to complicate existing relationships between White, male protagonists. Although the presence of characters that embody intersectionality can potentially unfix dominant discourses of identity, scholars must pay close attention to the ways in which these images serve to challenge and maintain the status quo simultaneously.⁸⁰

Meyer's insight fittingly extends to Callie because she is a bisexual Latina whose character both fits within and functions outside of the status quo.

Each of Callie's partners, including the aforementioned George O'Malley and Erica Hahn, have been white. Because Callie inhabits multiple intersectional

identities simultaneously, we argue that Callie being paired with only white partners is a missed opportunity to contest normativity on television. We see Callie's proximity to whiteness as an intentional industry practice employed to connect with white heteronormative audiences and to foster normative comfort, thus taming both her sexuality and her Latina identity. As Holtzman and Sharpe contend,

While Asian and Pacific Islander and Latina/Latino characters such as Grey's Anatomy's Cristina Yang and Callie Torres are prominent and complex characters, their onscreen life partners and best friends are white, and they rarely, if ever, have to face either individual prejudice or racial barriers to their personal and professional success. These kinds of characters and themes are choreographed to assimilate in such a way that allows the characters to be treated as white to keep audiences in a comfort zone that discourages any observation or analysis of racial tension or discrimination.⁸¹

Similarly, Callie's selection of white partners who identify either as solely gay or solely straight and her serial monogamy frames her bisexuality as less intimidating because she is always in close proximity to normativity.

Because promiscuity is stereotypically assigned to bisexuality, Callie's adherence to and belief in monogamy works to defy the stereotype, which we believe is done intentionally to, once again, keep her in acceptable proximity to normativity. In other words, Callie is never given the benefit of the doubt, despite her proclivity for monogamy. For example, Callie's fidelity is constantly called into question by Arizona in relation to her bisexuality; however, she is paradoxically shown to consistently want a strictly monogamous relationship. This paradox contributes to Arizona's suspicions and is made evident through an underscoring of biphobia, even within the LGBTQ community. This is of particular interest because the type of monogamy attributed to Callie's romantic relationships differs from that of the straight characters on the show, many of whom are in monogamous relationships but have cheated on their relational partners. Moreover, in season 9, Arizona cheats on Callie with Lauren Boswell, which leads to Callie and Arizona's subsequent divorce.⁸² While Arizona's cheating is portrayed as a marital transgression, it is not portrayed as innate to her sexuality. Conversely, mirroring Arizona's constant fears that Callie would cheat, we believe that if Callie had cheated—especially with a man—that her doing so would have been read by audiences as an inevitable circumstance of her bisexuality. In this context, Callie's scripted monogamy should be read as a purposeful narrative move to counter longstanding tropes of bisexuality that suggest bisexual women are sexually promiscuous and, as such, incapable of monogamy. While many of the straight characters on the show such as Mark Sloan and George O'Malley were

incapable of monogamy throughout the series, Callie's racialized, lived experiences seemingly make any potential indiscretions on her part appear more prominent, particularly when read against the larger context of heteronormativity.

GREY'S (IM)PERFECT PEDAGOGY OF BISEXUALITY

Callie Torres provides us with an interesting example of what Meyer terms an "intersectional hybrid"⁸³ character. She offers a complicated intersectional performance of bisexuality connected to her Catholic, upper-class, and Latina identities; all of which she importantly refuses to sacrifice. Overall, we interpret and experience Callie as a progressive representation of queer women of color. However, as noted earlier, some of her transgressive potential is tempered by the ease with which her storylines reify progress narratives that associate being "out" with liberation and being closeted as primitive, while ignoring the complex presence of race, ethnicity, and religion alongside sexuality. Progress narratives position white lesbian and gay politics in conversation with assimilationist tendencies (e.g., middle- or upper-class respectability, homonormativity) and thus are liberatory, while Latinx identities are positioned as comparatively oppressive. Therefore, Callie's stream of white relational partners and the positioning of her family in relation to this progress narrative offers important implications to consider with regard to the workings of normativity and acceptability as presented on television.

After ten years, Callie Torres left Grey Sloan Memorial Hospital to move to New York City with another white partner, intern Penny Blake, in season 12.⁸⁴ Though Ramirez requested the time off, catching Rhimes off guard, Callie's exit cements much of the critique we lay out in this chapter.⁸⁵ Leaving her friends and career behind for yet another white partner underscores how Callie subscribes to many of the normative depictions of queer characters of color we continue to see in the media. Though it is unclear if Callie will return to Seattle at some point before *Grey's* ends, it is clear that despite being unanticipated, Callie's departure is a telling punch line to the potential end of her storyline.

Overall, our critique of *Grey's* pedagogy of bisexuality through Callie complicates theorizations of queer women of color and offers a nuanced intersectional analysis of bisexuality. Latinx media figures are the most palatable when they are marked with ambiguous difference but still situated within close proximity to whiteness.⁸⁶ As we can see with Callie's character, this trend continues with queer Latinx representations in television. Certainly, Callie adds an *other* sexuality to *Grey's* narrative canon; however, her otherness is tempered by white gay male norms of coming out and class politics of respectability, which ultimately work to recenter white patriarchy. While we see the potential of having had such an unapologetically bisexual Latina character on screen, we also recognize the multiple ways transgressive possibilities function in service to discourses of

whiteness and homonormativity. Thus, we must ask: who benefits from these representations? As Griffin demonstrates in her critical analysis of *The Help*, a film that exploits black women's experiences to bolster white femininity, perhaps Callie's narrative is less about the empowerment of bisexual women of color and more about normalizing discourses of white (patriarchal) queerness.⁸⁷ One of Rhimes's newer characters, Annalise Keating, on *How to Get Away with Murder* (ABC 2014–present), is a bisexual African American woman. Differently from Callie, she has been portrayed with at least one romantic partner of color in addition to her white husband. Shondaland's expansion offers an opportunity for Rhimes and her team of writers to develop the pedagogy of bisexuality far beyond appeals to normativity; it will be interesting to see what the future of bisexuality looks like on television, within and beyond Shondaland.

NOTES

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61. *Grey's Anatomy*, "Sweet Surrender."
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