

Contributions of the academic humanities to thought on gender and sexual identity have little impact on media coverage of these issues.

Contrary to what the WE1S team researching “the humanities and social groups” expected, the media does not generally talk about how the humanities, as *disciplines*, intersect with issues of gender identity and sexuality. Instead, the media discusses these issues directly as areas of social concern that, for those interested in the humanities, can at best be *described* as humanistic--i.e., as the humanities in the broader scene of social and cultural life.

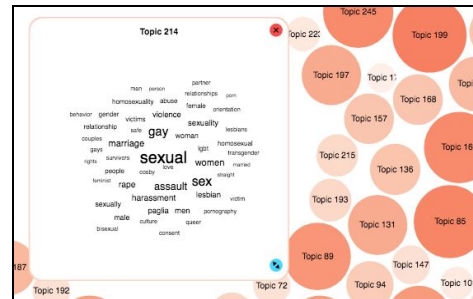
This is evident in our examination of Collection 2 (C-2), which consists of 94,816 articles mentioning *humanities* and/or *liberal arts* from 1989-2019 in 884 U.S. news sources. A topic model of the collection (C-2.250, 250-topics) helps us see that media coverage of gender and sexuality rarely brings to view the intersection of the issues with gender and sexuality discussion in the academic humanities. For instance, we find that searching in the model for high-frequency occurrences of the terms *women*¹ and *men* steers us to topics that mirror criticisms of, and issues in, gender discourse--but *not* to what these have to do with the humanities as areas of study.

Consider [topic 214](#) in C-2.250. Highest-frequency terms here include *sexual*, *sex*, *gay*, *assault*, *marriage*, *women*, *harassment*, *rape*, *lesbian*. An examination of articles highly associated with this topic (often appearing in university student

¹ See, e.g. the following topics in which *women* appears among top terms (sometimes along with terms referring to racial identity): [209](#), [10](#), and [5](#). Sample titles of top articles in these topics include: “The F-Files: What to tell those who aren’t feminists” (from topic 209), “LGBT community kicks off trans awareness week” (from topic 10), and “Society’s misunderstanding of black women” (from topic 5).

newspapers) shows that some explain different sexual orientations, such as *asexuality* (article [a](#)) and *pansexuality* ([b](#)), while several others report on *sexual harassment* (e.g., [c](#)). A few other articles advocate diminishing the stigma surrounding female masturbation ([d](#)), discuss sex education ([e](#)), and provide research on hook-up culture in colleges ([f](#)). There is much potential overlap with approaches to gender identity and sexuality in humanities academic disciplines; but the relevance of such disciplines is not visible.

While the academic humanities have been major contributors to the contemporary understanding of gender identity and sexuality, then, they rarely cross over visibly in public media to be actors in the stories told about such issues--which are thus instead primarily about the *non-academic* humanities of “ordinary life.”²



Topic #214 viewed in [TopicBubbles](#).

Document collection studied: [C-2 \(start page\)](#)

Topic model studied: [C-2.250](#) (250 topics)

Interesting sample topics: [214](#)

Representative articles: [a](#), [b](#), [c](#), [d](#), [e](#), [f](#)

Evidentiary documentation for this key finding:
[Module 6 Report](#)

² See [KF-5-3](#) on the humanities and “the art of ordinary life.”