HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Sexuality in Cinema

The Chapman Report (1962)

George Cukor (1899-1983)



Director George Cukor was born in Manhattan to Hungarian-Jewish immigrants. His family was quick to acculturate, leading Cukor to abandon his Jewish faith and culture early in his life, becoming a noted anglophile. As a child, he loved to perform, and this led him to a stage career beginning in 1920. He would call on an acting troupe he helped to form in 1925 frequently in his Hollywood career. He started with Paramount in 1928, performing accent coaching for the film *River of Romance*. He co-directed several films before his directorial debut, *The Tarnished Lady* (1931). He would continue directing for the rest of his life, including notable successes like *My Fair Lady*. Cukor's homosexuality was an open secret in Hollywood. In the time he spent working at MGM, he was arrested in a vice sting, though the studio acted quickly to bail him out and cover up the incident. His work in romantic film still has an impact to this day, helping to push films about women and sexual desire out of the deep rut the 1940s and 50s had left them in.



Film *The Chapman Report* could be described as a prime example of 1950s Hollywood fluff. A shame it was released in 1962. This aside, the film is a perfect portal into 1960s Hollywood life, giving us glimpses of the mundane often completely overlooked by other Hollywood films. The melodrama and chaos on the screen unfold over a shockingly humdrum portrayal of the town not seen in the likes of any other Hollywood picture at the time. *The Chapman Report* only exists because of a loosening of Hayes Code stipulations, and these are on full display throughout the film: Not only is sex the main focus, violence and depravity are shown on screen like never before. Some advanced viewers called it "the sexiest mainstream movie ever made." Many modern viewers are frustrated with the film's contradictory ending, where after all the drama and disorder we've been shown, American women are just sexually normal. The original ending hasn't been released, and the one in circulation is a reshoot at the behest of the Legion of Decency's demands for a cleaner film.

Background This film denies expectations by having such raw portrayals of sexual violence, suicidal tendencies, sexual disorder, and adultery, and that's part of the polarizing quality of this move. Shelley Winters was hot off of her role as Charlotte Haze in Stanley Kubrick's *Lolita,* bringing some controversy and public outcry with her to another film about sexuality. At the box office, *The Chapman Report* made between $2,270,000 and $2,500,000, doing just a bit better

than breaking even on its nearly $1.7 million budget. Modern critics usually have harsh words for the film, with ratings hovering at the 4.5 to 5.5 star range. They dislike the typically early-60s treatment of women, the surface-level portrayals of sexual disorder and infidelity, and the ending message. Viewing it for what it is, however, we see a surprisingly gritty look at the world and how it treats women, even those with relative wealth and power such as the characters in this story. Even in a modern world where gritty, sexual-violence-fueled gorefests such as *Kill Bill* are seen as critical and financial successes, *The Chapman Report* still has some capacity to shock and horrify today's audiences.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Sarah Garnell – A bored housewife who has an affair with her acting teacher

Kathleen Barclay – A rich young woman with an intimacy problem

Naomi Shields – A successful young fashion designer who suffers from alcoholism and nymphomania

Teresa Harnish – A middle-aged artist and writer who seeks a new sexual thrill after years of marriage

Paul Radford – Dr. Chapman's assistant who falls in love with Kathleen

Fred Linden – An acting coach and director who has an affair with Sarah

Ed Kraski – A young football player trying to go pro

Dr. George C. Chapman – The man behind the titular Chapman Report; a Psychologist studying sexuality in American women

Geoffrey Harnish – Teresa's husband, an art dealer and producer

Frank Garnell – Sarah's husband

SYNOPSIS

Renowned psychologist Dr. George C. Chapman and his team travel to an affluent Los Angeles suburb to conduct an anonymous survey on the intimate lives of American women. Presenting their research to the local women's club, Chapman frames the study as an effort to replace ignorance with knowledge in the hope of gaining their anonymous participation. Attendance is lower than expected due to opposition from a local physician, who argues that the project reduces sex to statistics and risks disturbing participants without offering guidance. Chapman's assistant, Paul Radford, begins conducting interviews despite these objections.

Four women become central to the study. Kathleen, a young widow who fears she is frigid, breaks down during her interview but gradually forms a relationship with Radford. Teresa, a

contented wife, grows anxious after reviewing her recorded answers and impulsively pursues a young athlete, only to retreat when the encounter proves uncomfortable and unfulfilling. Sarah, a middle-aged mother involved in an affair, reassesses her marriage after confronting her dissatisfaction during questioning; she attempts to leave her husband but ultimately returns home when her lover decides she's not worth divorcing from his wife over.

Naomi, a divorced woman with a pattern of compulsive behavior and heavy drinking, recounts a history of unstable relationships and sexual risk-taking. After a sexual assault and a previous failed suicide attempt, she takes her own life. Her death intensifies criticism of the survey, with the opposing physician blaming the inquiry for exacerbating her distress. Chapman and Radford review their findings, which suggest that most marriages in the community are stable, and Radford announces his engagement to Kathleen.

PLOT



Airport – A jet airliner races across the sky. Inside, in a business-class section of the plane, a doctor discusses a stack of papers with his assistants. "Ten percent of the married women," one of the assistants pipes up, "were strongly aroused, twenty-seven percent somewhat, and sixty-three percent not at all." The doctor murmurs about the similarity with data from Chicago as the plane's captain performs his typical landing speech, describing the weather at Los Angeles International Airport. The plane lands, and the doctor disembarks, finding a crowd of journalists gathered for him. They pester Dr. Chapman with questions about male and female sexuality, and he simply responds that, until they finish their data collection and analysis, they won't be able to answer with any accuracy. One of his assistants steps forward and shoos the journalists away: Dr. Chapman is due for an appearance at the women's club.



The women of Briarwood – Outside a large house, a woman runs toward a school bus: "Driver? Would you wait a minute, please?" She turns around, and her husband meets her at the door, asking what's going on. "Debbie hasn't got her lunch!" she says, frantically, but from the bus, little Debbie displays her lunchbox with a wave as the bus pulls away. From their conversation, we learn the parents' names are Frank and Sarah. Sarah complains about Frank wanting to stay home before kissing him goodbye and sending him on to work. Inside their house, she makes a phone call, a mysterious flute solo playing. "Fred?" she says softly. "It's me. I'm gonna be a little late, but I'll be there." Not too far away, a big convertible comes honking down the road. A young woman exits her house and hops in. She and her friend chat: They're headed to Dr. Chapman's talk at the women's club. Kathleen, the woman in the passenger seat, discusses writing her husband's autobiography, and her friend says she wishes she could move on and find a new man. In another house in the affluent neighborhood, a woman rushes to her car with her husband's help. She jokes about the "fascinating things" she's going to tell Dr. Chapman, saying, "You, my darling, are going to be in a book!" The two laugh as she drives toward the women's club.

Water man – A peaceful flute plays as a young man carries a ten-gallon bottle of water from his truck into an affluent hillside home. Inside, a woman lies on the bed. "Water man!" the young

man says, knocking and letting himself in. He continues to announce himself until the young woman emerges from her bedroom. “Should I leave an extra bottle?” he asks before she’s near enough for him to properly see inside the dark house, and he’s instantly struck by her beauty and hypnotic gaze. She tries to strike up a conversation, but the water man keeps it professional. Teasing him, she says, “Here’s your money,” before disappearing into her bedroom. While putting on some lipstick, she hands him a large bill, and he starts to make change. “What’s your name?” the woman asks, and the man replies, “Bob.” After another couple moments of tension, the woman approaches him and kisses him wildly. Suddenly, she stops, shouting, “Leave me alone! Go away!” Confused and frightened, Bob runs back to his truck, his clothes in a state of disarray. From the balcony, the woman’s small dog barks, and she goes to him.



Women’s club – In front of a crowd of women, Dr. Chapman speaks: “…And I know that if years ago, my wife had come to me and told me she was attending a lecture of this kind, why, I’d’ve hit the ceiling. I probably would have told her to stick to her washing and ironing.” This gets a chuckle out of the group. Dr. Chapman continues, “… In many sections of this country, sex is a secret, shameful function. An unhealthy attitude persists, and too many women suffer from too little knowledge about a subject that occupies a major and crucial part of their lives.” He continues speaking on the subject of sexual ignorance while the women seen in the past few scenes are spotted among the gathered women. Dr. Chapman says he believes the data they collect from their anonymous interviews will serve to help the women of America understand sexuality. The doctor then ends his speech by asking those interested in an interview to fill out the cards found in their information booklets and mail them to his secretary. “Do not sign,” he warns, saying, “You will be known to us only by the number you find in the upper right-hand corner.” The women applaud or act out in disgust over the topic of sexuality as Dr. Chapman leaves the room.



Mr. Radford – “Eighty-two,” a secretary says, disappointed. “Weren’t we promised a full turnout?” The man standing by her looks over a newspaper while he responds, “I think the doctor figured on one fifty.” He comments on the study being on the front page when the co-worker’s conversation is interrupted by a woman demanding to see Dr. Chapman. The secretary says that Dr. Chapman isn’t available but gestures to the man nearby, introducing him as Mr. Radford, Dr. Chapman’s assistant. The woman represents the women’s club and is outraged by the smear campaign in the news, pledging to bring in more volunteers for the study “if I have to march them in at gunpoint.” Mr. Radford thanks her for her efforts, and she leaves. The scene fades into the face of the man who’s causing them so much trouble, Dr. Jonas. “You can correct me if I’m wrong,” he says, “but I’m not aware that Dr. Chapman ever used the word 'love,' either in print or speech.” His outrage about the study is based in this: Not once does Dr. Chapman try to quantify love in his examination of female sexuality. “This is separating sex from affection, warmth, tenderness, devotion,” he continues to Mr. Radford. “How can you measure love?” Mr. Radford asks, a valid question. “Why pretend the physical act is a measurement of love?” Dr. Jonas quips back. The doctor keeps talking in circles, refusing to back down from his public statements.



“**Two long, cold years”** – “Kath!” Kathleen’s father calls from the front door. “In here, Father!” Kathleen shouts back. She reads over papers studiously. “You’re home early,” he comments with a chuckle as he enters the room, crossing to give his daughter a kiss on her forehead. She tells him she’s participating in the Chapman reports, and he reacts with disgust. She defends the study, saying it’s valuable information. “I don’t care what it explains,” her father interrupts, complaining about what her participation could mean for the reception of her late husband’s memoir. “You mean the sale,” she scoffs. “I don’t think the public gives a hoot whether I live or die.” Her father says that her home life with her late husband should be kept private, and she is captured by a memory, a fight between herself and her husband over her inability to have sex. He dresses to leave, insinuating he’s going to find a woman to take out his sexual frustrations on, and she begs for patience and grace. “I’ve been patient,” he growls, “for two long, cold years!” He goads her, calling her a woman of ice. Kathleen comes back to the present, shaken by the memory. Frustrated, she goes to bed.



Kathleen’s interview – The next day, a secretary invites Kathleen to sit in the interview room. A screen separates the interviewer from the interviewee. Unseen to her, Mr. Radford enters and begins the interview, asking if she’s comfortable. He then asks Kathleen to read the number from the card she was given at the presentation: 481J. After confirming this with her file, he runs down her demographic information—twenty-four years old, widowed, educated. Mr. Radford begins the questions with Kathleen’s adolescent years. Nervously, Kathleen fiddles with the postcard with her confirmation number. She tells Mr. Radford she was never sexually active as a teen, resisting all physical advances besides the occasional kiss, saying her decisions to not engage in sexual activity come from her moral beliefs. After being asked about her late husband, she lights up a cigarette, visibly shaking. She is unable to speak about their foreplay and sexual activities, mostly because they didn’t happen. Eventually, she breaks down, demanding, “Why do you have to put so much emphasis on physical love? Why do you have to keep asking all these sickening details? Can’t you just ask me about love?” She stands and leaves, unable to continue. With a sigh, Mr. Radford closes her file.



Lost wallet – The secretary enters the interview room to prepare it for the next volunteer, and she finds Kathleen’s wallet. Unable to catch Kathleen on her way out, the secretary mentions the forgotten wallet to Mr. Radford, saying she’ll post it to her in the afternoon. Mr. Radford then moves into Dr. Chapman’s office, asking him to take a look at Kathleen’s file. “Unusual?” The doctor asks, taking the file. “Yeah,” Mr. Redford replies before admitting he had a meeting with Dr. Jonas. “And?” Dr. Chapman asks. “He’s intelligent. He has good points,” Mr. Radford says, implying Dr. Jonas’ ideas about the absence of love in the study might be true. A secretary interrupts them, asking if Dr. Chapma is ready for his next interview. Mr. Radford leaves and spies the forgotten wallet lying on the desk. Overcome with temptation, he takes it.



Wifely duties – Sarah walks into the living room of her home with a bowl of popcorn as a baseball game blares on a nearby television. She gives the popcorn to her husband, who tells her it’s perfect, and she begins tidying the room. As Sarah sits down to work on a sewing project, an advertisement comes on the television, and Frank mutes it, asking Sarah how her

nurse's aid class went. "Why do you ask me?" Sarah responds, turning away from him. "You don't have to answer," he says, sounding a little hurt. "I was only making a little conversation." Sarah apologizes and blames her jitters on the diet pills she's taking: "I wanna lose four pounds." "What are you trying to be?" Frank jokes. "Miss America? To me, you're exactly right. Isn't that enough?" With a guilty look, Sarah is lost in the memory of a flirtatious drink with her acting coach, the man she's cheating on her husband with. Snapping back to reality, Sarah says it's getting late, asking where the children are. Frank says they're out late at the theater, saying they're just like their mother in that aspect. Again, Sarah is lost in a memory; this time Fred, her acting teacher, kisses her and gently pushes her onto a nearby couch. She comes to, and Frank is offering her a drink. "Frank," she pleads, "let's go some place." Frank says he can't with work the way it is, disappointing Sarah.



"**Yes, I'm disturbed"** – The doorbell rings at the Barclay home, and Kathleen rises to open the door. It's Mr. Radford with the wallet. She invites him in, but after a few moments of conversation, she recognizes his voice. "You were on the other side of that screen," she hisses. "You interviewed me!" Mr. Radford tries to explain himself, but before he can say three words, Kathleen shouts at him, "You ask me those questions, and then you come here! Why did you come here?" Mr. Radford says he feels responsible for her breakdown, "I thought if you were still disturbed…" "Yes, I'm disturbed," Kathleen snaps. "Can you blame me? I went through with that stupid interview! I don't know why I did. But they told me it would be anonymous. And now the first thing I know is the interviewer is in my house! Staring!" He apologizes and turns to leave, but she confronts him again, and he turns to look at her. She sees judgment and pity, saying, "I'm not one of your pathological cases. Boyd and I had a wonderful life together!" Tears form in the corners of her eyes. Mr. Radford leaves, and Kathleen leans against the wall, repeating, "I'm not a pathological case!"



Poetry on the beach – The waves crash against Venice Beach as Teresa lies on the beach with her tape recorder, reading aloud Ernest Dowson's "Cynara" poem: " I have forgot much, Cynara! gone with the wind, Flung roses, roses riotously with the throng…" As she enters the last stanza, a group of young men burst into frame chasing after a football. They yell and wrestle riotously, interrupting her reading. Frustrated, Teresa calms herself and projects into the microphone. "I have been faithful to thee, Cynara!" she repeats louder and louder as the men shout closer and closer to her. Unable to find the peace she desires, she simply packs up her things and leaves. "Oh, the louts!" she complains later that evening, carrying a flambé of some sort to the table. "I had to repeat that third verse five times." She vows to let it go, saying, "Darling, it's Thursday; our night." They clink their glasses before drinking, arms intertwined, her husband leaning forward for a kiss. "Followed by Friday," he says excitedly, "your big day." They're both overjoyed to be included in Dr. Chapman's research. "I think Dr. Chapman should interview husbands with their wives," her husband says, feeling a bit left out. "You just gave me an idea," Teresa says with a roguish look.



Clandestine recording – "At one point you used the word 'endurable' in relationship…" Dr. Chapman says. "Oh!" Teresa interrupts. "I'm sure I that meant 'pleasurable'!" She holds the tape recorder's microphone up so it catches Dr. Chapman's voice before asking if he is in fact the one interviewing her. He says he is, and she replies, "I am deeply moved, sir. My husband and I

have read your two books, and we venerate you." Later that day, Teresa plays the recording for her husband. "Marvelous!" he says. "Your voice is marvelous!" She taps his arm, gesturing for him to quiet down. In the recording, she describes their sex life as "orderly, civilized, and constant." While listening, Teresa begins to doubt her responses. She asks her husband if their sexual relationship is abnormal, but he ignores the question, saying, "We must put that voice on stereo! I'll have the art department get right on the album cover. Uh… 'Readings at random, by Teresa Harnish.'" Teresa asks the question again, and her husband responds, "We have abnormally good taste! We're abnormally happy!" Teresa is worried Dr. Chapman sounded bored, feeling insecure about that. "Are we doing it for his enjoyment or ours?" her husband asks before consoling her. Teresa pulls out Dr. Chapman's first book and uses it to back up her insecurity: "Geofferey, I think we're missing something." She leaves the room with the book in her hand.



Mrs. Garnell's interview – "How long have you been married?" an interviewer begins. On the other side of the blind, Sarah Garnell responds, "Twelve years." She struggles to answer the interviewer's questions about her satisfaction in her marriage. "He's a very fine person…" she begins. The interviewer interrupts, "Your physical relationship." She calls it 'tolerable' and tells the interviewer they have sex once a week on Saturdays. The interview moves on to some questions about extramarital relationships. "Have you been in a sexual relationship with any man other than your husband?" Sarah looks extremely torn before replying, "Yes." "One man, or more?" The interviewer continues, unphased. "One man," Sarah replies, the emotional strain of the confession clear on her face. "When did it happen?" asks the interviewer. "Now," Sarah says, holding back tears. She continues answering questions, occasionally wiping her nose or eyes with a handkerchief. Sarah says her affair has lasted for three months, with her seeing her lover two or three times each week. "He's married, but separated," she continues. "His wife won't give him a divorce." She also tells the interviewer that her husband doesn't know about the affair. When asked how she expects the affair to end, Sarah is confused. She's never given it any thought.



Another woman—After the interview, Sarah walks along a dock toward a sailboat. She passes another richly dressed woman, and the two share an odd look before she heads inside. Inside, a man is shocked to see Sarah: "What the devil are you doing here?" She said she had to see him and couldn't wait before asking about the other woman. Fred admits the woman is his wife, saying she only came by to discuss some business transaction before reiterating to Sarah that she should call before she comes. Sarah kisses Fred before asking a few more insecure questions, and Fred comforts her, just saying he wants to avoid any awkwardness. Sarah asks to recite some Madame Bovary to him, and they sit. "Her innermost heart was waiting for something to happen to her," Sarah begins. "She turned a disparaging gaze over the solitude of her life, searching for some white sail on the darkness of the horizon. Nothing happened to her. The future was a dark corridor, the door at the end shut fast." With a sad smile, Sarah touches Fred's face and calls him her white sail, and they embrace. "Let's not ever spoil this by being rash," Fred says. "I want this to last forever."



Dinner date – In a dressing gown and with her hair disheveled, Kathleen calls Dr. Chapman's office asking for Mr. Radford. She leaves a message when he's found to be occupied, and the scene fades to Kathleen seated in a fancy restaurant. She tells a waiter she's about ready to leave when she sees Mr. Redford enter and waves to him. "I was positive you wouldn't have shown up. Wouldn't have blamed you if you hadn't," Kathleen says before sighing. "It's hell to apologize." "Then don't," says Mr. Radford. "I shouldn't have come to your house… I should be doing the apologizing." After ordering two martinis, Kathleen asks Mr. Radford about his work and life, and he says he was a writer and teacher before falling under Dr. Chapman's wing. Eventually, he stops himself, saying he's talking too much. "It's all fair," Kathleen quips. "You had the advantage of learning; the interview." Mr. Radford talks a bit more about the interviews, and Kathleen tells him, "I was childish the other night." They laugh about how easy it was for her to apologize after she said she was dreading it.



Neighbor – The woman who tried to seduce the water man drinks a cup of coffee in her bedroom, looking over some fashion designs while putting on a fashionable new dress. The doorbell rings, interrupting her, and she rushes to answer, her dress slipping down her shoulders. A man in sunglasses stands outside, saying he has her mail. Eventually, she lets him in after he asks for a cup of coffee "for the road." She introduces herself as Miss Shields, mentioning her divorce and that she lives alone. He says he's in a band and invites her to come see him sometime. As she pours him a cup of coffee, she throws back a few shots of gin. As they chat, he claims to be single, and he starts coming on to her. At a point, Miss Shields shouts at him and tries to push him away, but he embraces her and pushes her down to the couch. "I don't want to," she groans as the doorbell rings again. It's a child, the man's child. His wife sent their son to come fetch him. Everything the musician said was a lie.



Jazz club – At a jazz club, the man plays a clarinet with a band. Miss Shields watches from the back row of tables, tapping her hand in time with the music and sipping at a glass of whiskey. Eventually, they lock eyes from across the room. While it's clear that she wants the man, she eventually rises and rushes out of the club. The song comes to an end, and the musicians put down their instruments. The drummer tells the clarinet player, "That's a beer you owe me." "She'll be back," the clarinet player says confidently.



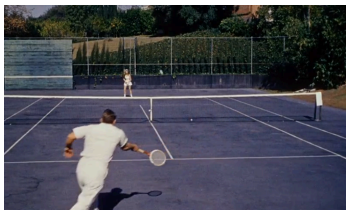
Magnificent animal – Again we find Teresa reading from a book of poems at the beach. Again, the football players interrupt her recording. This time, however, it's physical: One of the young men bowls over her trying to catch the ball. After recovering from a fit of laughter, he apologizes. Teresa says it's alright and that she likes to watch them play. She then asks if he's a real player, and he says he's second string on a pro team, hoping to make first string really soon. He then introduces himself as Ed, and Teresa introduces herself. They part, but Teresa can't take her eyes off of Ed. As she tries to record again, she murmurs her thoughts into the recorder: "What a magnificent animal… Why look at him, showing off his muscles… Look at those long legs… I wonder what sort of girl goes out with him… He's the kind of man who needs a woman to help him, a woman who's better than he is, a woman with taste… Not me, but somebody like me…" Realizing what she's recorded, she quickly wipes the tape.



New bathing suit – Geoffrey stands over a series of paintings, admiring them. Teresa's enters, gesturing at her dress and asking, "How do you like this?" "On the orange side," he says before asking about the guest list for a dinner party. "I thought we'd do it together tonight," Teresa replies, taking off the poncho-like dress to reveal a bathing suit, again asking, "Do you like this?" "It's perfect," Geoffrey replies, but his mind is on the new paintings he's busied himself with hanging. Teresa reaches out to him, grasping his arm and finding it scrawny. She asks if they could join a health club, but he doesn't seem interested. They continue talking, but both are distracted. A bit later, under the guise of recording the poem again, Teresa steps out of her car near Venice Beach and takes off her overcoat, revealing a new two-piece swimsuit. Confidently, she strides toward the football players, but she's shocked to realize Ed isn't among them. She interrupts their game to ask where he is, learning that he works at the nearby amusement park. She then asks them to relay a message for her: She wants to see him tomorrow morning.



Tennis – Kathleen and her father play a tennis match on a bright, sunny day. Kathleen shouts as she fails to reach the ball in time after her father's skillful return. "Out?" he asks. "In," she corrects, tapping the spot where the ball dusted the court with her racket for emphasis. "Right, in front of the line. Congratulations." The old man grins as they move off the court for a break. "You gave me quite a run for my money," her father says, wiping the sweat from his face with a nearby towel. Kathleen suggests they play doubles when it's this hot, and her father responds, "I'll take up doubles when they put me out to pasture." Mr. Radford approaches down the hill, and, in hushed tones, Kathleen asks her father to behave, and he makes several underhanded comments about Mr. Radford and Dr. Chapman. Mr. Radford greets Kathleen and shakes hands with her father. The old man quickly excuses himself to take a shower, asking Kathleen if she has plans for the evening. "Paul is giving me a lesson in bowling," she says, gesturing at Mr. Radford, who smiles at her. Kathleen apologizes for her father's coldness after he leaves, saying he and her late husband were very close.



Dockside date – In a bar by the dockside, Sarah sits smoking a cigarette. Fred approaches from behind. "What a morning," he says cheerfully. "No hello?" asks Sarah. "No 'how are you, Sarah?'" "You promised to phone me," Fred replies. "Remember?" Sarah complains that her finger has gone numb from trying to call him these past few days. He apologizes for being hard to get in touch with, saying he was on the tail of a new job, but it didn't pan out. "Now, I'm all yours," he says, grinning. Sarah smiles back. She tries to discuss their agreement around meeting, and he pulls back, saying this isn't the time or place for such things. "Fred," Sarah eventually asks, "what if we stopped being so sensible? What if you ask your wife for a divorce? What if I leave Frank?" Fred laughs, saying, "Let me get out of this suit before you hit me over the head with all that serious talk." He invites her back to the boat, but she says she can't come, promising to call him first thing in the morning. Later that evening, Frank says to Sarah that he wants to have an intimate conversation, "like we used to." It seems for a moment Sarah is going to confess to seeing another man, but instead she asks, "What would you do if something happened to me?" They eventually agree that Frank will call on her sister to help care for the kids if anything should ever happen to Sarah.



“**You can buy me that beer anytime”** – The jazz musicians at the club undo their ties and remove their jackets, done for the night. As they file into the rear of the club, they spot a woman standing in the entryway, shrouded in darkness. “You can buy me that beer anytime,” the clarinet player murmurs to the drummer as he steps away from his bandmates to greet Miss Shields. “Soon as I get out of this, we’re going home.” He says without any warmth. Just like everything he’s said before, this too is a lie: They go to a dingy little apartment nearby the clarinet player keeps to keep his flings private from his wife. Inside, he pushes himself onto Miss Shields. The screen fades to black. When it fades back in, Miss Shields exits the little bedroom of the apartment to find the band all playing poker, drinking, and puffing on cigarettes. She asks the clarinet player to call her a cab, but he ignores her. One of the men grabs her and pulls her close, asking if he can ‘have a go.’ The clarinet player mockingly defends her before shoving her into the arms of another two musicians. The men quickly overpower Miss Shields and push her onto a nearby couch as she screams.



Morning after – Miss Shields’ scream morphs into the squealing of tires on asphalt as a sedan shrieks to a halt outside her home the next morning. Without any care for her, the clarinet player pushes Miss Shields out of the passenger’s seat, telling her to “sort herself out here” before peeling out and driving away. Kathleen overhears the noise and exits her home to find her neighbor lying on the ground by her mailbox. “Naomi!” she shouts, taking only a moment to cover herself before exiting the house to care for her neighbor. She helps the panicked and sobbing woman inside. When Kathleen tries to undress her, Naomi reacts, telling her to leave her alone. Kathleen notices the bruises and moves to draw a bath for her neighbor. When she returns, she sees Naomi pouring herself a big glass of gin and scolds her. Naomi reacts with anger, telling Kathleen to get out.



Amusement park – Teresa wanders around an amusement park looking for Ed. Eventually, she finds him working at a hanging monorail ride, and this surprises him. Teresa asks to speak in private, but Ed says his supervisor won’t let him go. As the nearby workers begin a test run of the ride, she pushes Ed inside a gondola and jumps in after him. As they ride, Teresa praises his agility and figure before asking if he’d be willing to pose for a painting. “Me?” the football player asks. “You mean oil paintings?” Teresa confirms this, telling him it may be printed in magazines or books. He seems more concerned with how much time it will take. “An hour or two,” she says, “nothing more.” Ed scoffs at this, but he quickly changes his mind when Teresa offers him a payment for his time. She suggests they meet at his apartment tomorrow at eleven for the first session, but he says he’s not free until five. “Five’s fine,” she says, asking him to write down his address. “Tomorrow,” Teresa says as he writes, unable to hide the dreamy quality of her words, “at five.”



Memoir edits – Kathleen sits in her home, working by lamplight. A car horn honks outside. Excitedly, she runs to answer the door, manuscript in hand. It’s Paul Radford. “Kathleen Barclay?” he asks. “Yes,” she replies with playful haughtiness. "Where is my wallet?" “Well, with the large number of credit cards you carry,” Paul responds, entering the home, “I just couldn’t resist the temptation.” Both laugh at the little joke. She asks about his day, and after mentioning the number of interviews he completed, she tells him about editing her late husband’s memoir. “Is it always this way?” she asks, looking for writing advice. “I want to rewrite everything.”

“Always,” he says, commiserating. Kathleen asks Paul to read it. He says he’d be happy to help as a professional, but as a partner, he doesn’t want to read about her and another man. “It’s his life,” she smiles, but it fades quickly. “I don’t play a very big part in it… I appear, briefly, as the ‘conventional, happy bride.’” “What was he like?” Paul asks, continuing to say he wants to know about her past marriage. “You’ll just have to read the book,” she jokes, but she quickly realizes Paul is probing her psyche, not her past. She starts to open up a bit, but her father interrupts them. “I’m still his little girl,” she complains as her father leaves.



Miss Shields’ interview – “What about your early teens?” Mr. Radford asks back in the interview room. Naomi Shields sits on the other side of the blind. “I engaged in lovemaking during my early teens,” she says, sounding more like a woman at confession than an interviewee for a study. She begins pacing as he continues to quiz her, only reacting when he asks if she ever accepted gifts in return for sexual favors. “No one ever touched me unless I wanted them to,” she says, defiantly, offended by the implication of sex work. Eventually, she passes the screen, demanding to speak face to face with Mr. Radford. As they continue talking, she demands gin, obviously having a strong trauma response to the questioning. She admits to cheating on her husband often when they were married. She crosses back to the other side of the blind before talking at length about her cheating. The only thing she truly regrets is being unable to stop and getting caught by her husband with a young man from the neighborhood. “I wanted him to beat me,” she says. “I wanted him to kill me… You know what he did? He cried. Poor thing… That was the worst part of it.” Naomi then admits to suicide attempts, some as soon as the last night. As soon as she returns home after the interview, Naomi begins emptying her gin bottle as if in some sort of race, drinking and chugging cup after cup.



“**This is for art”** – Teresa talks to her house staff about the preparations for the night’s party. Her lead maid seems to have things under control, so she leaves to go see Ed. In a fancy, nearly backless dress and gloves, Teresa carries her art things up to Ed’s apartment that sits behind a clunking and thunking oil well. “Hey, there she is!” one of Ed’s football buddies whispers to the others. Another sings a little tune, insinuating that Teresa is crazy or clueless. In his apartment, Ed plays the guitar, finishing his song before standing and offering Teresa a beer. “Only if you have one,” she says, and he enthusiastically accepts, pulling the remainder of a six pack from his fridge. Teresa wants to talk, but she’s more excited to begin her sketches. Ed says he kicked out his roommate, and Teresa is pleased with this, as she wants to sketch Ed as a Greek Olympian, preferably in the nude. He reacts a bit strongly to being asked to disrobe, but Teresa says she won’t stand for false modesty: “After all, this is for art.” Meekly, Ed begins undressing. He keeps his undershorts on before striking the pose again, Teresa feeling his muscled limbs as she puts them in the proper position.



“**A lot of pepper” –** She dances around it for a moment, but Teresa soon reveals she isn’t interested in painting him this time. “I want…” she starts. “The first time I saw you, I fought the feeling inside of me. I knew that I was enamored of you… and now, I just want your love.” Ed gives her a strange look as if deciphering something in a foreign language. Seeing his

confusion, Teresa comes right out and says it, “Kiss me, Eddie!” Ed’s face shifts in an instant, and he says his friend was right. “He had a hunch!” he says. “He said, ‘boy, there’s a lot of pepper in that tomato.’” “And do you like pepper, Ed?” Teresa asks. Ed grabs her and pulls her into a deep kiss. It’s clear Teresa instantly regrets her decision, finding the young man brutish and rough, not at all to her liking. They struggle around the room for a moment before Teresa finally manages to push him away, and she runs down the stairs and all the way back to her car. Ed’s football buddies laugh as she peels out and drives away.



Newfound appreciation – Back at her home, Teresa hears her husband ordering the household servants around. “I am absolutely lost without her,” we hear Geoffrey say as Teresa enters the room. “You’re home early,” he comments, smiling at his wife. “Oh, let me look at you!” Teresa says, taking his hands and spinning around the room. “You look marvelous, so slim! Give me a kiss!” Geoffrey smells beer on her breath, and she says it was hot. The servants leave to tend to the kitchen, and Teresa tells Geoffrey, "We haven’t missed a thing.” Not understanding her meaning, he gestures at the party preparations, agreeing with her. “We can live our lives to the fullest,” she continues. “Just the two of us.”



Drowning in gin – In her bed, Naomi sobs, waking up from a fitful sleep. Without a thought, she reaches for a glass and a bottle of gin. “Wash away my trouble,” she mumbles, drinking deeply. “ Wash. Wash. Wash.” she repeats. “Wash in a tub. Rub-a-dub dub… Three men… in a tub…” She stumbles from her room to the phone, where she places a call to the jazz club, asking for the clarinet player. Unable to get the operator to help her, she hangs up and begins dialing another number. It connects her to the bar, and she demands to speak with the clarinet player. He answers but hangs up after a very short conversation in which she invites him over. Sobbing, she stands, straightening her dress in the mirror. Upon seeing her face, she makes a sudden decision, going back to her bedroom and swallowing a handful of pills with a glass of gin.



Dinner party – Geoffrey and Teresa’s party is in full swing, and we recognize many faces there, such as Paul and Kathleen. Sarah and Frank are seen mingling and chatting as well. Sarah reacts at the mention of her lover Fred as another partygoer plans to put on a play and needs a director. Overhearing that Fred is booked to work a TV directing gig in Mexico, Sarah quickly and secretly makes her way to a phone, calling Fred. She confronts him, saying she wants to hear it from him. “I was planning to write you a note,” he says, and Sarah reacts tearfully. “You’re pulling my life out from under me,” she complains, barely maintaining her composure. She says she’ll go with him and won’t take no for an answer. “You can keep me from coming,” she says. “You tell me that you don’t love me.” “I can’t say that, Sarah,” Fred says. Geoffrey enters the hall with an armful of drinks and bottles, and Sarah asks him to tell Frank she’s going to check on the children.



Ruth Linden – At her home, Sarah puts a note and her wedding ring in an envelope before leaving. Back at the party, everyone listens to Teresa’s new album of poetry. Their applause fades into dramatic music as Sarah makes her way to Fred’s boat. “Fred,” she says, coming

aboard, “I’ve left my suitcase out in the car…” She’s shocked to see the woman from before, Fred’s wife. “I’m Ruth Linden,” she says plainly. “Mrs. Linden,” Sarah says, trying to regain her composure. “Where’s Fred?” “He’s around,” Mrs. Linden says, “hiding. Hiding while I do his dirty work.” Very plainly, Mrs. Linden tells Sarah that Fred doesn’t love her. “I’ve left my husband,” Sarah says. “We’re going away together.” Mrs. Linden says Fred left her on the boat to tell Sarah the affair is over. Sarah refuses to believe this, hunting down Fred where she’s sure she’ll find him: The nearby bar. Sarah finds him there, partying with friends. Fred looks her up and down before turning away, pretending she doesn’t exist.



The note – At the Garnell home, Frank reads the note Sarah left. He places her ring in his pocket and puts the note back in the envelope, and as he sets it back down, he hears Sarah pulling up. She’s nervous to see him, unsure how to act. Has he read the note yet? She tries to pick it up without him noticing but decides to mention the weather. His reaction tells her everything: “You read it, didn’t you… The note?” “Yeah, I read it,” Frank says, a weary tone to his voice. “Why didn’t you say something?” asks Sarah. “I didn’t know what to say,” he replies. “To tell the truth, I still don’t know. You love someone for twelve years… what the hell can you say?” They spin into a deep conversation, and Sarah tells him that Fred abandoned her before offering to stay at a hotel. Frank goes back and forth between rage and forgiveness, eventually telling Sarah they’ll get through this challenge together, just like all the others they faced in the past dozen years.



“**No reason to kill yourself”** – “If only I’d stayed with her,” Kathleen laments. “I shouldn’t have left her alone.” Paul sits near her, listing off reasons why Naomi took her own life: “She had no one.” “Lots of people have no one,” Kathleen interrupts. “That’s no reason to kill yourself.” “I keep remembering something she said: ‘There’s no substitute for guts.’ She really wanted to escape,” Paul says. “I don’t want to be alone,” Kathleen says, scooting closer to Paul on the couch. The next morning, Dr. Jonas enters the office building where he and the Chapman Report both work, and he’s quick to confront Paul about Naomi’s suicide, saying they found a Chapman Report card at her home. Dr. Jonas says it was her interview that triggered the suicide, but he has no evidence to back that up. “Naomi Shields was doomed,” Paul retorts. “It was only a matter of time.” He then begins asking advice for how to help Kathleen with her issues. After he admits that he loves her, Dr. Jonas begrudgingly gives him some advice: “Kathy’s a fine girl, but she had the misfortune of going from a domineering father to a husband who was—to put it plainly—crude. But, what is more important for a girl with her emotional problems, the findings of her report may make her feel that her premarital innocence was not normal. Might make her feel… inadequate as a wife.” In his own way, Dr. Jonas wishes Paul luck, telling him to let her know that statistics don’t make morality.



Frigid – Later that night, Paul returns to Kathleen’s home and kisses her before sitting on the couch next to her. “Marry me,” he asks. Kathleen smiles but says nothing, growing rigid and cold when he tries to kiss her again. She pushes away, saying her late husband was right and calling herself frigid. “You don’t want to go through with it?” Paul asks. “I can’t!” Kathleen says. “Because I love you.” “That makes sense to you?” Paul asks, unable to keep his anger down. “You decided to crawl back in your shell because you love me?” They begin to fight, Kathleen

saying it's better for him to know now than later. "You crawl back into the role of a mourning widow!" Paul accuses. "Well, it's a bore. I am—and I'm sure your friends are—bored with your problems!" "Don't you think I know that!" Kathleen says, distancing herself from him again. Paul regains control of himself, commiserating with her struggles, saying it *was* her husband's fault for being insensitive. But Paul promises to be sensitive, to try to help her overcome her fear. Kathleen tries once more to kiss him as romantic music swells. She embraces him, pulling him closer.



Cold statistics – "Getting a late start," Dr. Chapman comments as Paul enters his office. Paul quickly brags about his proposal to Kathleen going well before they get to work. They begin discussing the statistics they've gathered, and to comfort the younger man's nerves about the success of his upcoming marriage, Dr. Chapman explains: "I've found that—within a percentage point—good marriages to bad, the same as Boston, New York, Chicago… But the bad ones are so vivid, we lose sight of the fact that the vast majority fall right into this column: happily married women. And men." With a warm touch and another congratulation, Dr. Chapman continues asking for Paul's tabulations.



THEMES

<u>Sexuality</u>

Affair Affairs and what causes them are a frequent focus of *The Chapman Report.* We're shown Sarah's ongoing affair quite early on. Having grown bored with her husband, she falls into a whirlwind romance with her director at the community theater. As their relationship unfolds, we learn that Fred, her lover, is also married and frequently cheats on his wife, saying she won't give him a divorce. As the story unfolds, we learn that Fred is actually preying on vulnerable women like Sarah and using his wife, who won't leave him for some reason, as the strong arm to get rid of his unwanted flings while she funds his lifestyle. We learn of Naomi's affair and the guilt associated with her nymphomania. This moment is short but interesting because it is the only regret Naomi openly expresses about her disorder and behavior. Her guilt about this incident drives her to drink heavily in order to forget how she hurt her husband. Teresa, too, tries to have an affair, though her naïve pursuit of a brutish football player quickly ends with her returning home to her husband with a newfound appreciation for his physique and sensitive demeanor.



Illustrative moment As stated above, affairs come up often in this film, but one of the odder moments comes when Sarah plans to run away with Fred. After leaving a note for her husband along with her wedding ring, Sarah rushes to the dock where Fred lives in his boat. Instead of finding him, a woman meets with her, Mrs. Linden, his estranged spouse. Fred doesn't have the guts to tell Sarah he doesn't love her, so Mrs. Linden does it for him. Sarah tries to fight for him for a moment, but Mrs. Linden tells her Fred doesn't love either of them. Despite spelling out his behavior and womanizing, Mrs. Linden not only "does his dirty work" for him, she funds his lifestyle and even finds him jobs, such as the directing gig in Mexico that Sarah wants to follow him to.

Assault While this moment in the film is brief and far from vivid, its appearance is enough to put most viewers off of the movie. After spending the evening with the clarinet player, Naomi emerges from his bedroom to find him playing poker with his friends. She asks for him to call her a cab, but he ignores her. Instead, his friends grab and molest her before pushing her onto a nearby couch. The scene fades to black after watching Naomi struggle. The next morning, the clarinet player dumps her in front of her house before speeding away. Kathleen rushes out to help her neighbor back into her house, and it's there we see Naomi's bruises and hear her visceral reaction to being helped out of her clothing and touched. While this portrayal is short and relatively unfocused, the open nature of such a crime, the jazz musicians' lack of payment for their crime, and Naomi's eventual suicide are far too negative and even disturbing for the average viewer, especially in light of the Hayes Code norms that this film was pushing back against. Perhaps the realism of the perpetrators facing no backlash or punitive justice (as demanded by the Hayes Code) is what drives people away in disgust. Even in its melodramatic representation, Naomi's assault and the response to it hits too close to home for people, even today.



Lust There are a few moments of lust shown in *The Chapman Report*. Naomi struggles with this from the very beginning of the film, clearly shown in how she tries to seduce the water man. Time and again, she is drawn into sexual contact with men she doesn't necessarily want to be with, all to satiate a disordered urge for sex, lust in its purest, most harmful form. We're shown a moment of lust between Sarah and Fred early in the film when she has a flashback to the first time they kissed. It's clear she doesn't get that type of romance from her husband anymore, and so lust holds more sway over her decision-making than it normally would. Teresa is driven by lust and a desire to stand out to her idol Dr. Chapman with her sexual history when she pursues the football player Ed. Kathleen struggles with the idea of lust, over-applying the concept and diving into disconnection and panic when faced with even a hint of attraction. To her, such thoughts are equivalent to cheating on her late husband. Her disordered thinking comes from the over-moralizing of her controlling father and insensitive husband, but Paul does his best to help her escape this cycle that is making her miserable.



Illustrative moment One of the clearer moments of lust in the film comes at the midway point. While recording her poetry reading on the beach, Teresa once again spots the football players. This time, their game physically interrupts her recording when one of their number, Ed, barrels into her while diving after a ball. He apologizes, but, struck by his masculine beauty, Teresa begins fawning. When he returns to his game, Teresa's thoughts come out, and she records herself calling him a "magnificent animal," wondering what kind of women he sleeps with and wishing she could be the one to "tame" him. Lost in a moment of pure sexual fantasy, she has to wipe the whole recording, as her husband is her producer. It's after this scene that she begins pursuing an affair with the young football player in earnest.

Dysfunction Sexual dysfunction is a small but clear theme throughout *The Chapman Report*. We're shown it mostly through Naomi's experience with nymphomania. While we see her come on to men several times or melt at unwelcome touches from the clarinet player, where this becomes most clear is during her interview. Paul Radford leads the interview, and, for whatever reason, she walks to the other side of the blind, saying she likes to see the man she's talking to.

He asks her question after question about her sexual history, and Naomi reveals that she's slept with more men than she can count, that she has a compulsion to do it, and that it has existed since her early teenage years. While to viewers in the 1960s, this may have been simply scandalous, more modern understandings imply that she was likely abused in her youth, leading to feelings that sexuality was a comfort or way to control her situation or emotions. Another form of sexual dysfunction we're shown comes from Kathleen. She is unable to accept or initiate romantic or sexual intimacy because of an overblown and disordered sense of morality. In her mind, any action in these realms will detract from her purity and worth as a woman. Like Naomi, we learn a lot about Kathleen's dysfunction during her interview. She is completely inexperienced, perhaps even still a virgin after marrying her late husband. She fears the sexual act, or perhaps more accurately, the judgment that may follow from her father or other male figures she looks to for self-worth.



Ilustrative moment Naomi's sexual dysfunction is clear from the beginning of the film. Only eight minutes in, she tries to seduce the water man before pushing him away and telling him to leave. She is portrayed at first like a predatory cat stalking its prey, leading it into an ambush, but when he begins to hold and kiss her back, she pushes away, changing her mind. While a short and—frankly—sensationalized representation of nymphomania, Naomi's story wastes no time setting up that this is a long and persistent struggle for her. She wants to change, but her compulsions and addictive personality are too strong, as shown by her frequent heavy drinking.

Love We're shown several different kinds of love throughout the film. The love between Kathleen and her father is so strong, it drives her away from potential romance: She doesn't want to disappoint him. Teresa and her husband have a very loving relationship, but when comparing herself to other women and desiring to stand out to Dr. Chapman as a unique case, Teresa feels dissatisfied and seeks out an affair. She can barely go through with it before she's sent running back to her husband with a newfound appreciation and love for him and his sensitivity. A lack of love in Naomi's life drives her to suicide, several characters saying it was her being all alone that made it inevitable. While this may not be true, a loving influence in her life may have made getting and accepting treatment for her nymphomania more effective. Sarah and Frank show us a love that has worn thin. Franks sees nothing wrong with their relationship, but Sarah is so dissatisfied, she begins an affair with her acting director and plans to leave Frank for him. In the end, their love is strong enough to endure such a betrayal, Frank swearing he'll do anything it takes to get through the aftermath of Sarah's affair.



Illustrative moment In my opinion, the clearest and most realistic depiction of love in the entire film comes toward the end when Sarah returns home after being rejected by Fred. Just before she returns home, her husband reads the note and takes the ring. Sarah tries to play things off like normal but realizes that he's read the note. Instead of making a scene or kicking her out, Frank swears that they'll work through this challenge just like they have every other challenge in twelve years of marriage, telling her to stay in the home and try to repair things. While the other portrayals of love are a bit more Hollywood romance than real life, this moment stands out as realistic and nuanced.

<u>Society</u>

Class Like many Hollywood dramas, *The Chapman Report* is a story about upper-class people. The most modest of the bunch, Sarah, is living a charmed life in a large, expensive house with her own car. The fact that Frank can afford all of that on a single income shows us that he is at least upper-middle-class. The others have even more wealth and affluence. Naomi is a successful fashion designer, able to afford her home all on her own even in spite of her struggles with addiction and nymphomania. Kathleen is able to live off of her late husband's wealth and stays with her father at his luxurious home. They're seen at the country club and in fancy restaurants throughout the film. Teresa and Geoffrey live in a luxurious home with a fairly large staff. Geoffrey is shown swapping out paintings, having many clearly worth hundreds or thousands of dollars simply lying out on the floor as he makes his decisions. There are very few lower-class characters, most of them with no lines. We're shown Ed's squalid living conditions, but it's not clear whether he lives like that because he's poor or because he's a twenty-something trying to be a pro football player.



Illustrative moment Teresa and Geoffrey's home is one of the most obvious shows of wealth in the whole film. While the other main characters are certainly wealthy, none of them seem to have household staff like the Hanishes do. They prepare for their party hours in advance, with both Geoffrey and Teresa bossing them around, having them scoot flower vases an inch to the left or right, drawing them baths, and instructing them how to set the dinner tables. After returning from her failed affair, Teresa's first thoughts aren't on her husband but on directing the household staff. While there are many small moments highlighting class, this is one of the clearest.

Gender *The Chapman Report* is inherently a romance film for women. In this respect, it contains countless moments highlighting the femininity of its main characters. Sarah is a mother. Kathleen is a grieving widow. If it weren't for her alcoholism and nymphomania, Naomi would be a jet-setting female professional. Teresa is an artist in her own right, but she is also a housewife to Geoffrey, who brings in most of their wealth with his producing business. As a snapshot of 60s femininity, we see these women spending their time unproductively for the most part, taking part in leisure activities most of the time they're on screen. Frequently, they say goodbye to their husbands or Kathleen to her father when the men go off to work. *The Chapman Report* doesn't make any strong statements about femininity, simply portraying a group of affluent women and their interpersonal struggles. It does stand by the idea that women should be married and serve their husbands somehow, closer to the 1950s understanding of gender than the late 60s and early 70s women's liberation understanding of femininity.



Illustrative moment Midway through the film, Teresa attempts to seduce Ed. She drives herself to the beach to see him wearing a brand-new two-piece swimsuit. As she strolls toward the stretch of beach where she normally sees him, she's disappointed to see he's not with his friends and won't see her in her swimsuit. While there are many moments of femininity throughout the film, this one stands out in Teresa's expectations around seduction and how devastated she is to not see Ed, the object of her desire. While the male gaze is present, there's an element of the female gaze here too: She wanted to be seen as attractive by a specific man, a man she lusts after.

<u>Appearance</u>

Secrets It's hard not to have secrets in a film frequently focused on infidelity. Sarah's entire plotline is about her secret affair with another man. She eventually decides to leave her husband, Frank, to go with Fred to Mexico. In his own way, Fred was keeping a secret too: He'd tell Sarah he wanted their relationship to go on forever, but he was just talking to keep her around, and he sends his wife to "do his dirty work" by telling Sarah their relationship is over. In a similar vein, Naomi wants desperately to keep her alcoholism and nymphomania a secret, but her urges and the sexual assault by the jazz musicians make this secret impossible to keep. Being unable to keep her secrets is part of what leads Naomi to commit suicide. Teresa and Kathleen have secrets, too, but they're much smaller than the other two women's. Teresa has a secret fling she quickly abandons when it proves unsatisfying. Kathleen wants to keep her history of frigidity and her lack of sexual experience secret.



Illustrative moment Very early in the film, we're shown our first secret. After saying goodbye to her daughter and husband, Sarah retreats into the family home and places a call. "Fred?" she says. "It's me. I'm going to be a little late, but I'll be there." This adds an element of mystery to the film right off the bat.

Psychology

Boredom Boredom in the bedroom or with a relationship are behind most of the affairs in this film. Sarah is bored with her relationship with Frank: It's made clear at one point they don't really talk or spend time together like they used to. Part of Naomi's nymphomania comes from a desire to avoid boredom and the triggering thoughts it brings. Teresa's affair only begins when she feels that Dr. Chapman doesn't find her and Geoffrey's relationship interesting and wants to be a stand-out case for his book. She realizes, however, that boredom isn't always a good motivator, and she comes away from the experience with more adoration of her husband.



Illustrative moment We see evidence of Sarah's marital boredom early in the film when she's doing her "wifely duties," making a TV-time snack for her husband before tidying the house. When she sits to work on her sewing, she fantasizes about the first time Fred kissed her and the first time they made love. She pushes back against this desire, asking Frank to take her away somewhere. Very reasonably, he has to decline because of his work, but Sarah takes this as a sign that her boredom is justified.

Shame Much of the personal strife in *The Chapman Report* revolves around shame. This is most clear in Naomi's story. Textually, we see her struggle with her nymphomania, turning to alcohol in an attempt to dull the feelings of shame such actions make her feel. Subtextually, Naomi obviously suffered some deeper trauma in her childhood that drove her towards overly sexual behavior at a young age. In our modern psychological understanding, it is easy to see how she would feel shame around her sexual experiences, especially in more repressed and overtly Protestant 1960s American society. Sarah's shame comes to the fore quickly as well. During her interview, she breaks down in tears after admitting she is in an affair and her husband does not know. We can assume this is the first time she has expressed this in words to anyone but herself and her lover. To deal with her shame, she makes a rash decision to leave her husband only to learn her lover was toying with her and had no intention of making her his

wife. Teresa's shame is small and quick, resolving over the course of a scene before she and her life go back to normal. Kathleen's shame, however, is complex, caused by an overly moral upbringing clashing with her very normal and natural desires to be with men. This causes her to freeze and distance herself from men when they try to touch and kiss her, a trauma response brought on by learning the lessons that 'loose women' are sinful or worthy of scorn. Her shame multiplies when she adopts the mantle of a mourning widow even long after her husband's death. To be attracted to any other man is to be unfaithful to him and his memory. While many critics note the surface-level analysis of women's sexuality in their reviews of *The Chapman Report*, with a little work, we can find a lot of valuable information between the lines.



Illustrative moment The clearest, most visceral moment of shame comes after Naomi is assaulted by the jazz musicians. Kathleen finds her in a heap outside of her house, and Naomi can do nothing besides cry and moan as Kathleen drags her into her home. Inside, Kathleen tries to help Naomi out of her clothes so she can lie down, but Naomi pushes her away, saying she wants to bathe in scalding water. This has both physical and spiritual meaning: She wishes to rid herself of the shameful filth of her sexual assault, and the spiritual idea of bathing or baptism allows one to clean the body and soul of sin.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Sarah Garnell – Sarah is a typical upper-class housewife of her time. She has a providing husband and a young child: What sets her apart is her secret lover, Fred. She spends several days a week with Fred, eventually choosing to leave her husband, Frank, for Fred.

Admiring Sarah greatly admires many people. We see this most in her view of Fred. He holds a special place in her heart and mind, and it's what leads her to accept his sexual advances and triggers their affair. Because of her admiration for this actor and director, she fails to see the signs that he's just leading her on. This causes a lot of embarrassment and trouble toward the end of the film when, after leaving her husband, he rejects her. Not only does he reject her, he has his wife deliver the news, too cowardly to face Sarah himself. Sarah teaches us to be wary of admiration: Some people seek to misuse and abuse such idealism for their personal gain.

Bored We don't get to see a lot of Sarah's day-to-day life, but we quickly learn she's bored of it. She doesn't want to be a housewife and does so mostly because it's expected of her and she cares for her daughter. Her boredom leads her first to fall into an affair with Fred, then to leave Frank in an attempt to run away with her lover to Mexico.

Kathleen Barclay – Kathleen is twice rich but unlucky in love. Her first marriage to a famous test pilot ended with his untimely death, leaving her a small fortune. Kathleen has a secret she doesn't want to share: She cannot be intimate with a man.

Sensitive Kathleen is a sensitive woman. It doesn't take a lot to trigger an outburst from her, especially in the context of sexual activity. Just the mention of intimacy is enough to make her "go back into her shell" as Paul puts it. When pressed, she starts lashing out, screaming and making accusations. When this first happens to Paul, he leaves her alone, hoping she'll cool off and understand what he was trying to do in attempting to counsel her through the grief of losing

her husband and the probable causes of her frigidity. The implication that she might be a “pathological case” drives her to deep self-flagellation. Paul does her best to assure her she’s feeling a perfectly normal effect of a deeply moral upbringing, and it's his own sensitivity that allows her to come out of her shell, contrasting her husband’s insensitivity toward her intimacy issues.

Helpful Kathleen wants to be seen as helpful. While this is frequently a positive trait in film, we’re shown how it can cut both ways. When Naomi is kicked out of the car in front of her house after being sexually assaulted, Kathleen responds quickly and very helpfully. Even when Naomi lashes out, Kathleen keeps helping as best as she can. In her helpful way, she married her husband and stayed with him despite her inability to initiate sexual contact and his cheating. Even after his death, she helps to portray him in a kind light, writing and rewriting draft after draft of his memoir.

Naomi Shields – Despite a very successful career in fashion design, Naomi suffers. She is a nymphomaniac and an alcoholic. In trying to hide these issues, she ends up diving deeper into them until she eventually succeeds at a suicide attempt.

Addictive personality While this isn’t really examined explicitly in the film, Naomi acts much like a childhood sexual abuse victim, though in a very sensationalized way. In her interview for Dr. Chapman’s report, she admits to being sexually promiscuous from a young age. It was in her youth she began drinking as well. On a surface level, we are shown just how dependent on alcohol she is. From the time she wakes up until she goes to sleep, she can consume a half to a whole 1.75-liter bottle of gin or vodka, even more after she is assaulted. While it could be deeper and more realistic, we can still learn a lot about Naomi’s past experiences and how people in those situations react to them from her portrayal in *The Chapman Report*.

Hopeless While this comes up mostly toward the end of her story, Naomi has a mean streak of hopelessness. Ultimately, it leads to her suicide. After years of trying again and again to get her nymphomania under control, she finally gives up. She also admits to countless suicide attempts after she cheated on her husband some three-odd years before. A lack of meaningful connection in her life and the support that brings drives her to an early, avoidable grave after a sexual assault brings her self-worth and mood to an all-time low.

Teresa Harnish – Teresa is a happily married and successful artist. Like many people in her age group, she begins feeling the fear of losing out. In a moment of weakness, driven by lust, she attempts to start an affair with a young football player, the opposite of her art critic and music producer husband.

Creative We’re not shown a lot of it on screen, but Teresa is known in art circles for her expressive paintings. We’re shown some of her abstract pieces at a point when Geoffrey is deciding how to decorate their home for a listening party for Teresa’s new poetry album. In her discussions with both her husband and the football player, she shows herself to have a creative view of romance and pleasure, connecting desire to Greek myth and poems. While watching the football player from across the beach, she has about a dozen thoughts about his body and how it must be like to sleep with him, speaking them aloud as if she were still reading her poem.

Curious As an artist, Teresa is a very curious person. She is drawn to poetry, sculpture, and nature by her profession. Her curiosity allows her to branch out, such as when her husband

decides she should make a spoken-word album of her favorite poems. It's also her curiosity that creates a desire to cheat on her husband. The fear of missing out strikes her when Dr. Chapman seems under-enthused about her and Geoffrey's sex life. While on the beach, she grows more and more curious about what it would be like to make love to the hunky young football player who so frequently interrupts her poetry recording sessions by the waves. Teresa's curiosity gets the better of her, and—under the guise of a portrait sketching—she learns what the football player is like. He's rough and thoughtless, driving her back into the arms of her sensitive and thoughtful husband.

Paul Radford – Paul is Dr. Chapman's right hand man. Formerly a writer and teacher, he fell into his new job helping Dr. Chapman conduct interviews with women all across the nation. It's during one of these interviews that Paul is driven to make contact with Kathleen, feeling he can do something to help her with her intimacy issues.

Analytical Part of why Paul is Dr. Chapman's assistant is his analytical mind. He is very aware of his situation and is frequently shown piecing together parts of women's histories based on how they answer his questions. This is what leads him to Kathleen: Hearing her history and her reaction to just the idea of physical intimacy, he realizes she must have had a repressive upbringing and desires deeply to help. His analytical skills are often shown in his head for numbers. Dr. Chapman trusts him with tabulations and often calls on him to remember specific statistics, and each time Paul remembers.

Stable Paul is incredibly stable in his demeanor and emotional expression. Only once at the end of the film does he experience an emotional outburst, but even then, he quickly regains his composure and course-corrects toward understanding and care. It's his level head and slowness to anger that allows Kathleen to come out of her shell and accept his marriage proposal at the end of the film.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Would you describe this narrative as female-centered or male-centered? Explain and provide examples.

2. How do you feel about Naomi's assault and eventual suicide? Did this event feel resolved at the film's end? What do you think was Cukor's intent with this?

3. In what ways does boredom drive the plot?

4. Describe *The Chapman Report* as a snapshot of 1960s society. How does it portray men and women? What does it consider normal or abnormal? Who and what does it exclude?