

Ejaculate Responsibly: A Whole New Way to Think about Abortion

by Jodi VanderHeide

Book reviewed: Blair, Gabrielle. 2022. *Ejaculate Responsibly: A Whole New Way to Think about Abortion*. Workman Publishing Company

Reviewer: Jodi VanderHeide is the Manager of the Sex Education Resource Centre at the Dalhousie Student Union, where she has the privilege of working with students on important issues relating to sex, sexuality, and gender. She has a BA in Social Work (UNBC) and an MA in Women and Gender Studies (St. Mary's University). She will continue her studies in the fall of 2025 at Dalhousie University, in Sociology (PhD), where she will further her research on the intersection of sexuality, religion, and community belonging.

In 2022, the Supreme Court of the United States overturned the hard-won battles of *Roe v. Wade*, leading to the restriction of abortion and access to reproductive contraception in many of the states. As a researcher interested in the intersections of sexuality, politics, and religion, I felt drawn to read *Ejaculate Responsibly: A Whole New Way to Think about Abortion* by Gabrielle Blair who, in the introduction to her book states, “I’m a religious mother of six” followed by “the most important essay I have ever written, an essay about abortion” (1) (referencing her earlier work “Men Cause 100% of Unwanted Pregnancies, 2018”). This statement immediately piqued my interest, as there is a liminal space in which feminist or progressive viewpoints and religious identities co-exist publicly. Throughout the book, Blair navigates her positionality, and I appreciated the nuanced tone in which she confronted conservative rhetoric rather than bypassing these beliefs altogether. Despite her biting satirical narrative, in which it sounds as if she is poking fun at the simple anatomical process of unwanted pregnancies, Blair spends time addressing the foundational arguments of those who want to restrict abortion and the “fundamental mistake” (2) they are making in their efforts (hint, it has to do with men!). The premise of the book, as stated in the title, is that unwanted pregnancies are the result of [male] ejaculation. To expand upon this argument, Blair organizes the book’s chapters into 28 succinct and numbered arguments, directing the audience to the unacknowledged yet tenable facts of reproductive health (e.g., “men are 50 times more fertile than women”, 6), thereby dispelling the myths that position women as intuitively responsible for fertility and issuing a call for crucial refocus: it’s the men (1).

To contextualize the tensions related to reproductive health and abortion in the United States, Blair contends that the “for-or-against” abortion debate is ineffective. I paused here. While I understand her intention in bypassing the debate and moving straight into her synopsis of the issue as a means to engage a wider audience without presenting a particular socio-political stance, this bypass could be perceived as a dismissal of past (and present) reproductive rights efforts, which were/are immensely political and publicly debated. Nevertheless, Blair’s overall argument is logical: simply put, abortion is not a women’s issue but, rather, inherently a men’s issue as males, on average, are significantly more fertile. Flipping the narrative to place responsibility on male fertility would drastically shift the “abortion debate” by decentralizing women as the primary character in unwanted pregnancies. Let us pause again here. Blair has laid out an almost obvious argument but in doing so has completely under-minded the patriarchal power entrenched in western society and a government that actively works to displace male responsibility and forefront women as being reproductively responsible. The hyperbolic image of the fertile woman flows right into the narrative of the nurturing mother, who is expected to breastfeed, be a stay-at-home mom, and be responsible for “family life.”

Granted, Blair's commentary about the tragicomic nature of the female contraception industry, in comparison to the marginal attention focused on male fertility, paints an unspoken picture of patriarchal pursuits. She taps into her comedic voice to denote the unjust burden on women to access contraception, from attending doctor's appointments and filling prescriptions (with or without insurance) to adjusting to the potential side effects. The book is clear about the various barriers to procuring and taking birth control in the United States, barriers that do not account for the multiple intersecting layers that might affect a woman's access to reproductive health. In the same vein as the author's note on language at the beginning of the book, in which she acknowledges the exclusive cis-gendered, heterosexual focus of the manuscript, it is also critical to recognize the many variables entwined in reproductive health that impact women in various ways. For example, experiences of reproductive health care for women of colour can be profoundly impacted by systemic racism embedded in the health and scientific community.

Ejaculate Responsibly is full of interesting facts, with informative, concise, and easy-to-read arguments that confront the deficits of positioning reproductive responsibility as a women's issue. Blair provides a note at the end of the book stating, "This book was thoroughly and deeply fact-checked, and the end notes for this little volume are almost as long as the book itself" (129) and proceeds to provide a link to a 105-page citation guide—I checked! Each of the arguments is listed followed by multiple sources, ranging from peer-reviewed journals to medial based web sources. Despite the many reputable cited sources, it is unclear how many reliable deductions Blair made from the various data sources, noting she is not a trained medical professional.

As a feminist reader, my opinion fluctuated between whether Blair was strategically comedic about calling out a rampant toxic masculinity that evades reproductive responsibility or if there was an unnamed passivity that was reluctant to confront the ongoing harm of reproductive injustices. However, in the end, I felt Blair succeeded in presenting a comprehensive overview of the realities of sex and reproduction with candour. She does not shy away from addressing more personal reproductive issues, such as the notion of reduced sexual satisfaction with condom use or diminished masculinity in the aftermath of a vasectomy. Furthermore, in Argument No. 17, Blair states that "the uneven power dynamic between men and women is real and can turn violent quickly" (81). While the majority of the book is focused on stating facts with surface level remarks on sexism, here Blair takes the opportunity to address the patriarchal violence ingrained in American society and, in her satirical style, presents a "pop quiz" (referenced 82–84) for men with questions aimed at confronting the power dynamics inherent in many [hetero]sexual relations, thereby grounding Blair's overall argument in the realities of sexual violence for many women.

In conclusion, if you are looking for a book that delves into a socio-political analysis of reproductive rights, Blair's book may not be for you. As noted earlier, Blair's introductory statements, as well as her concluding chapter, address those advocating for abortion restrictions, stating, "If you want to reduce the number of abortions in your country..." (118). From this perspective, her approach seems strategic; she highlights statistics and bare facts and avoids delving too deeply into the religious, political, and patriarchal powers that enable the continued injustices shaping female sexual reproductive health. In summary, *Ejaculate Responsibly* is a condensed handbook that highlights critical reproductive injustices with an amusing dose of sarcasm. I would heartily recommend it to those looking for a succinct and informative read, especially the [hetero] men needing further education about their reproductive responsibilities.