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## Laughing All the While: Race, Gender, and Recreational Violence in the Mechanisms Fanwork

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# Race, Gender, and Recreational Violence in the Mechanisms Fanwork

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## Introduction

The Mechanisms were a queer folk punk storytelling cabaret band from Oxford who performed from 2010-2020.

- **Space Pirates** They performed with the frame story that the band members were immortal space pirates recounting the things they'd seen on their travels.
- **Fun and Violence** Immortality has destroyed most of the crew's morals. They find murder and violence entertaining, and often incite it themselves.
- **Fandom** Fans of the band make their own creative works inspired by canon, and lean into canon-typical behavior. However, some fans have criticized trends in portrayals of characters, arguing that some are treated more harshly than others, often in ways reminiscent of bigoted narratives.

**Table 1- Self-Reported Attitudes**

Character	Violence Score	Sympathy Score
Dr. Carmilla	2.84	3.69
Jonny d'Ville	4.1	3.37
Ashes O'Reilly	3.56	3.83
Ivy Alexandria	3.13	3.46
Marius von Raum	3.39	3.79

Averages of the answers on survey questions designed to measure violence and sympathy, with 5 being the highest possible.

## Methods

My goal was to see if characters of marginalized racial groups and genders were treated differently by fans, and if this treatment aligned with stereotypes about the groups they are part of.

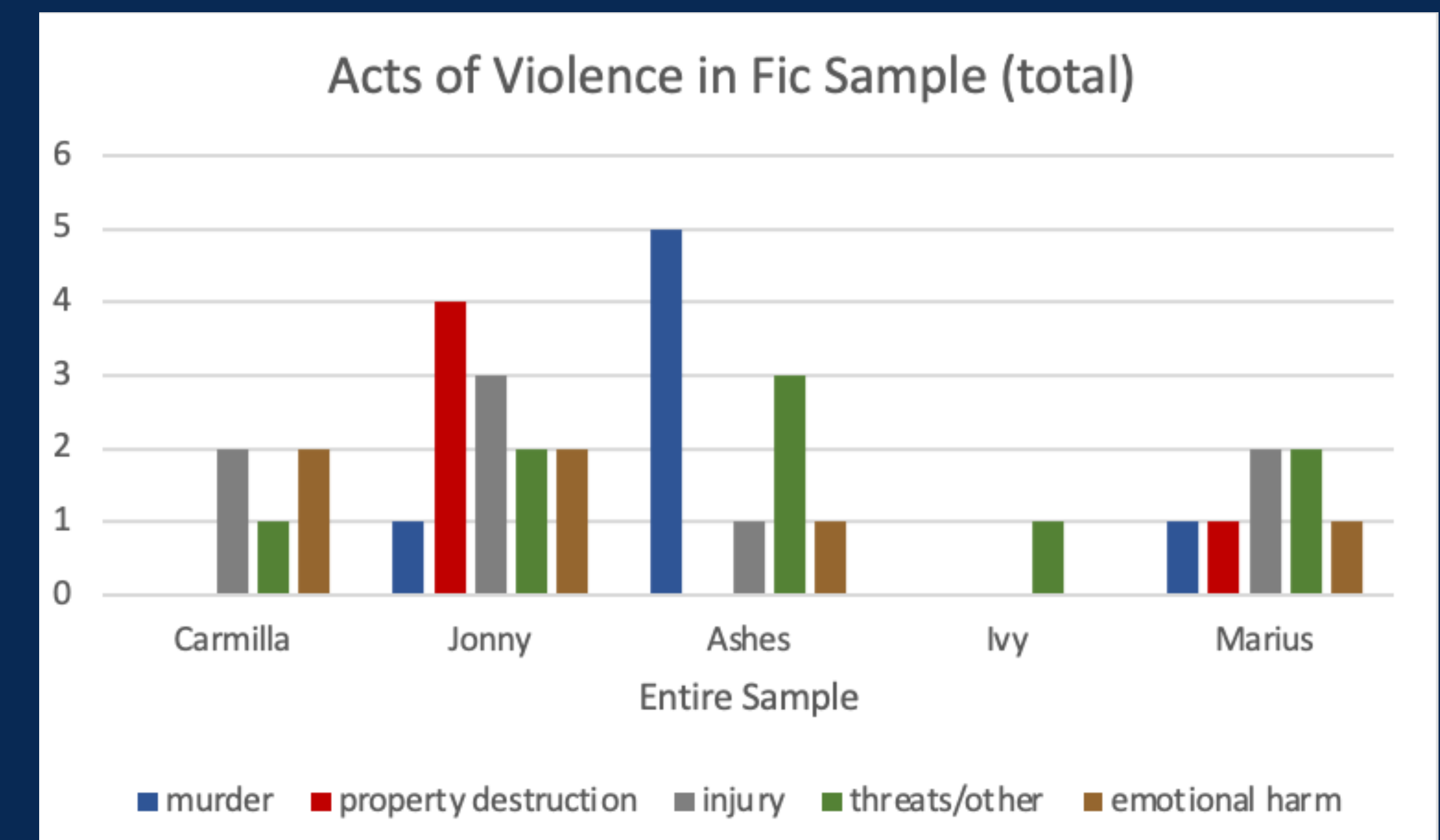
1. **General Fan Survey** I put out a survey on tumblr to measure fans' self-reported attitudes toward 5 characters.
2. **Fanfiction Analysis** Using a random sample of fanfiction, I analyzed for frequency and severity of violence, and how it was treated.

**Figure 1 – The Mechanisms in 2014**



From left to right: Raphaella la Cognizi, the Toy Soldier, Nastya Rasputina, Marius von Raum, Jonny d'Ville, Drumbot Brian, Gunpowder Tim, Ashes O'Reilly, and Ivy Alexandria. Dr. Carmilla not pictured. Photo credit to Wicked Ace Photography.

**Figure 2 – Results from Fic Sample**



Number of violent acts committed by each character across the sample, broken into categories for specificity.

## Results

- In the survey, violence seemed to correlate with prominence, and sympathy scores were fairly similar between characters.
- However, more discrepancies appear in the fic sample, especially when the character's number of appearances is proportionally taken into account. Carmilla and Ivy each only physically appear in one fic, but have vastly different results.

## Conclusion

The inconsistency could be related to methodological limitations, or a dissonance in how people report their perceptions versus how they portray the characters.

More study would be required before making a confident conclusion, but preliminary evidence from this study suggests that while fans self-report egalitarian attitudes towards characters, those characters may be written in ways that are not consistent with those attitudes.

