Hegemonic negotiation and LGBT representation in contemporary teen films

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Abstract

Research has shown that media influence the beliefs and behaviours of audiences, including their acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. With LGBT youth facing high levels of victimisation, understanding the ‘common sense’ representations articulated by entertainment media specifically for a youth audience remains an important area of scholarship. While most of the existing literature on LGBT representation in youth-oriented media provides insightful analysis, it tends to concentrate on a small number of teen television programs or films produced as part of the New Queer Cinema movement, and often adopts a subversive approach informed by queer theory. This thesis addresses a current gap in the literature by systematically examining LGBT representation in mainstream American teen films released between 1995 and 2013 through a framework of cultural hegemony; it examines the range of LGBT representations, their commonalities, and contestations of established tropes.

First theorised by Antonio Gramsci, hegemonic negotiation refers to an ongoing, dynamic, and complex process of ideological change in which alternative and oppositional forces are excluded, absorbed, or domesticated by the dominant, continually altering and realigning hegemony. Willingly adopted by the populace and internalised as ‘common sense,’ hegemony is reflected and reinforced in popular culture which both articulates the dominant and operates as a space of struggle and contestation between the dominant and alternative/oppositional. Media representations, understood as hegemonic ‘provisional stabilisations,’ provide insight into the active process of hegemonic negotiation.

Contextualised within a cultural history, this thesis traces LGBT representation in film and television since the early 1900s, paying particular attention to the onscreen intersections between youth and homosexuality. It employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to explore LGBT representation within the genre and to interrogate the hegemonic negotiation of LGBT portrayals and onscreen heterosexual responses. As such, this thesis examines the evolving visibility/invisibility of LGBT characters within the genre, as well as thematic treatment of coming out, victimisation, sexual desire, and the heterosexual/homosexual binary. It looks at the onscreen responses of heterosexuals to LGBT interactions – including LGBT characters, LGBT-themed language, and LGBT-relevant visual jokes – and explores the range of homophobic and LGBT-friendly responses demonstrated by straight characters. Examining these LGBT characters and onscreen heterosexual responses reveals the uneven and contradictory nature of hegemonic negotiation that both includes/domesticates certain aspects of the LGBT community and simultaneously maintains hegemonic heteronormativity.
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Introduction

Numerous scholars have pointed to the ‘explosion’ in representations of gay men and lesbians in mainstream American popular culture during the 1990s and 2000s (Becker 2006, Capsuto 2000, Walters 2001, Gross 2001, Gomillion and Giuliano 2011, Bonds-Raacke et al. 2007, Raley and Lucas 2006). Academic work has tended to focus on how adult lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) portrayals on television and film have increased in visibility, and yet further marginalised certain members of the LGBT community and reinforced heteronormativity and homonormativity (Avila-Saavedra 2009, Gomillion and Giuliano 2011, Walters 2001, Dow 2001, Gamson 1998, Steiner, Fejes, and Petrich 1993, Shugart 2003). Much less scholarship, however, has examined LGBT depictions in youth-oriented media. The limited literature that exists tends to examine a limited number of individual youth-oriented television programs (most often the television program Glee), and to a lesser extent films, often independent films created as part of the New Queer Cinema movement (Aaron 2007, Henderson 2007, Halberstam 2007, Lehman 2014, Marwick, Gray, and Ananny 2014). Research has also explored how media portrayals of LGBT youth, or lack thereof, may impact LGBT youth identity formation and resilience (Marshall 2010, Kielwasser and Wolf 1992, 1993, Craig et al. 2015, Dell and Boyer 2013). While there is no doubt that this research is vital, it has overlooked the routine depictions of LGBT characters in mainstream youth-oriented media. This research therefore aims to address this gap by examining predominantly gay and lesbian, and to a lesser extent bisexual and transgender, representations in American teen films released between 1995 and 2013. It aims to address questions including: what are the LGBT representations in teen films released between 1995 and 2013? How do onscreen heterosexuals respond to LGBT interactions? How have these depictions changed throughout time? How do filmic representations relate to televisual representations in youth-oriented media? What do they reflect and reinforce about contemporary understanding/tolerance/acceptance of LGBT people? How do these representations operate to both complicate and privilege heteronormativity?

Taking a systematic approach, this research goes beyond textual analysis of a limited number of individual films to identify common LGBT characterisations throughout an entire genre, identifying how these are promulgated and disrupted. It also examines onscreen heterosexual responses to LGBT interactions, exploring boundaries of tolerance/acceptance and inclusion/exclusion with regard to the LGBT community. This research presupposes that often-derided for-profit entertainment products are ideologically infused and serve to reflect and reinforce both hegemonic provisional stabilisations and the challenges to them; they contribute to, communicate, solidify, and complicate the ‘common sense’ of mainstream American society.
To understand this ongoing, messy, lived ideological negotiation, this research employs cultural hegemony as its theoretical framework. Cultural hegemony refers to an ever-shifting cultural consensus that is naturalised and appears as ‘common sense’ within a specific cultural and social context (Gramsci 1999, Williams 1977, Buttigieg 2005, Ludwig 2011). Hegemony is not static domination, but rather an ongoing process that incorporates or excludes aspects of alternative and oppositional forces. Popular culture, acting as hegemony’s ‘battleground,’ operates both as a space where the dominant is relayed and reproduced, and also where struggle and contestation occurs between the dominant and alternative/oppositional (Turner 2003, Bennett 1986, Gitlin 1979, Storey 2009). Adopting hegemony as the theoretical framework for content analysis, I aim to explore routine LGBT representations and onscreen heterosexual responses, which function as tangible manifestations of hegemony, to delineate the shifting boundaries of inclusion/exclusion.

These representations in entertainment media matter; as demonstrated by numerous audience studies, the media teaches us about our world and how to act in it, affecting our beliefs and behaviours (Arpan, Heald, and Visse, Sargent et al. 2002, Dalton et al. 2001, Bahk 2001, Stern 2005a, Sargent et al. 2006). Understanding the LGBT representations that are portrayed to youth is of significant importance, especially when recognising that heterosexual youth are most often the perpetrators of LGBT youth victimisation (Plummer 1999), which, in turn, is linked to mental health problems, substance use, sexually transmitted infections, and self-harm and suicide among LGBT youth (Aromin 2016, Marshal et al. 2009, Morewitz 2016, Garofalo et al. 2007, Russell and Fish 2016). Because adolescence is an important period for identity formation, sexual development, and the emergence of sexual identity (Klimstra et al. 2010, Savin-Williams 2006, Luyckx et al. 2008, Johns, Zimmerman, and Bauermeister 2013, Rosario et al. 2006), representations dealing with sexual orientation and/or gender identity may be particularly salient for youth audiences, impacting on their acceptance of LGBT peers (Marwick, Gray, and Ananny 2014, Meyer and Wood 2013), and on the identity formation of LGBT youth (Gomillion and Giuliano 2011, Bond, Hefner, and Drogos 2009, Evans 2007, Craig et al. 2015).

**Theoretical framework**

In the *Prison Notebooks*, Antonio Gramsci (1999) developed the concept of cultural hegemony, which involved the ‘spontaneous consent’ of the masses to the values, ideas, beliefs, and worldview of the ‘dominant fundamental group,’ forming the ‘common sense’ of a culturally, geographically, and historically specific period. Raymond Williams, reflecting on Gramsci’s theory, describes cultural hegemony as

> a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived
system of meanings and values – constitutive and constituting – which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives. (1977, 110)

Hegemony goes beyond ideology’s “relatively formal and articulated system of meanings, values, and beliefs” (Williams 1977, 109) to conceptualise “the whole lived social process as practically organized by specific and dominant meanings and values” (109). This view of hegemony, which is less formal and ‘messier’ than ideology, includes the “relatively mixed, confused, incomplete, or inarticulated consciousness of actual men [sic] in that period and society” (109).

Importantly, hegemony does not occur through coercive use of force, but is achieved through the consent of citizens who willingly adopt the worldview of the dominant group (Gramsci 1999, Williams 2001, Buttigieg 2005). As Joseph Buttigieg points out,

[w]hat makes the modern liberal democratic State robust and resilient ... is not the power of coercion that it can exercise through political society (the legislature, the executive, the judiciary, the police, etc.) but, rather, the myriad ways in which the core elements of its self-definition and self-representation are internalized or, to some degree or another, freely endorsed by most of its citizens – including those who belong to social strata other than the ruling or privileged groups. (2005, 43)

To secure consent, hegemony involves an ongoing process of negotiation. It is never static nor stable, rather,

[a] lived hegemony is always a process ... It has to be continually renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not all of its own. (Williams 1977, 112)

Gramsci characterised this ongoing process of struggle as the “continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable equilibria ... between the interests of the fundamental group and those of the subordinate groups” (1999, 406). Stuart Hall notes that Gramsci “conceives of ideological change, not in terms of substitution or imposition but rather in terms of the articulation and dis-articulation of ideas” (1990, 434).

The active process of hegemonic negotiation involves the incorporation of oppositional and alternative forces. As Williams states,

[t]here is a simple theoretical distinction between alternative and oppositional, that is to say between someone who simply finds a different way to live and wishes to be left alone with it [alternative], and someone who finds a different way to live and wants to change the society in its light [oppositional]. (1973, 11)

He observes that the line between alternative and oppositional forms is often narrow and hard to distinguish. Indeed, the alternative is often seen as part of the oppositional and converted to
become part of it (Williams 1977). This interweaving of the dominant with the alternative/oppositional can be seen as optimistic, with elements outside of hegemony gradually working their way into the system, realigning hegemonic common sense to incorporate that which had formerly been excluded (Turner 2003).

To provide nuance to the process of hegemonic change, Williams proposes the concepts of ‘emergent,’ ‘dominant,’ and ‘residual’ forces, noting that “in any real process, and at any moment in the process, [the residual and emergent] are significant both in themselves and in what they reveal of the characteristics of the ‘dominant’” (1977, 122). He describes residual forces as those that were formed in the past but continue to be active and effective elements of the cultural process. ¹ According to Williams,

> certain experiences, meanings, and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practiced on the basis of the residue – cultural as well as social – of some previous social and cultural institution or formation. (122)

Some residual forces may act as alternative or oppositional hegemonic forms, while others may be “wholly or largely incorporated into the dominant culture” (122). Emergent forces are “new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship [that] are continually being created” (123). Williams warns that distinguishing between truly emergent forces and those that form part of a new phase of the dominant culture (which he characterises as ‘novel’) is extremely difficult, and must be made in comparison to a ‘full sense’ of the dominant. As he points out,

> what has really to be said, as a way of defining important elements of both the residual and the emergent, and as a way of understanding the character of the dominant, is that no mode of production and therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human intention. (123, emphasis in original)

This complex process of incorporation changes hegemony, and it is through these iterative changes that hegemony remains dominant. As noted by Todd Gitlin, “it is only by absorbing and domesticating conflicting definitions of reality and demands on it, in fact, that it remains hegemonic” (1979, 264). Those elements that are “indigestible” (264) are repelled and excluded. Excluded elements are those “alternatives and opposition which question or threaten [hegemony’s] dominance” (Williams 1977, 113), yet this exclusion is not total and elements of oppositional and alternative forces become incorporated (Gitlin 1979).

¹ Williams differentiates the residual from the ‘archaic,’ which he describes as “that which is wholly recognized as an element of the past, to be observed, to be examined, or even on occasion to be consciously ‘revived,’ in a deliberately specialized way” (1977, 122).
The activeness of hegemonic negotiation means that it is characterised by a messiness, an undecidability, and an unlimited potentiality. Engaging with the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2014), Maria do Mar Castro Varela, Nikita Dhawan, and Antke Engel characterise hegemony as “always only provisionally stable” (2011, 7) and “no longer defined by universal or structural laws” (7) but by “contingency and the impossibility of closure” (7).

This lack of universality means that hegemony should be understood as fundamentally part of a geographical, cultural, and temporal ‘moment’ that is deeply embedded in a particular historical past (Ludwig 2011, Laclau and Mouffe 2014, Castro Varela, Dhawan, and Engel 2011, Hall 1990). Gundula Ludwig maintains that “hegemony is always a historically and geographically specific formation of power – an effect of social practices within civil society” (2011, 52). Thus, hegemony grounds, and knits together, a constellation of interrelated factors: the social, cultural, legislative, economic, and historical.

The alternative and oppositional ideas, values, opinions, and worldviews that arise within a given ‘moment’ are, in fact, intrinsic to the consensual adoption of the hegemonic; without them, hegemony would be considered coercively imposed and no longer credible to the population (Buttigieg 2005, Turner 2003, Bennett, Mercer, and Woollacott 1986). As Buttigieg states,

[in] the sphere of civil society ... ideas circulate and worldviews are formed ‘freely,’ so that when these views and ideas reaffirm or endorse the basic principles underlying the existing social, economic, and political arrangements, they do so (or are seen as doing so) more or less spontaneously and thus legitimize them. (2005, 43-44)

Paradoxically, while hegemony must constantly undergo negotiation and shifts resulting from alternative and oppositional pressures in order to stay hegemonic, hegemony simultaneously limits the potential for, and nature of, its opposition. As noted by Williams, “dominant culture ... at once produces and limits its own forms of counter-culture” (1977, 114). Hegemonic change is thus limited by the very ‘taken for granted-ness’ that characterises hegemony. Hall suggests that,

[r]uling ideas may dominate other conceptions of the social world by setting the limit to what will appear as rational, reasonable, credible, indeed sayable or thinkable, within the given vocabularies of motive and action available to us. (1988, 44)

Thus, hegemony appears ‘natural’ and ‘taken-for-granted,’ and becomes internalised as ‘common sense’ and expressed through everyday social practices, attitudes, and ways of being by most citizens (Buttigieg 2005, Ludwig 2011). Ludwig (2011) provides everyday examples of contemporary lived hegemony, including participating in paid employment that takes up a substantial portion of one’s time, entering into heterosexual marriage, and seeing prisons as socially beneficial; such beliefs and social practices are seen by most citizens as “agreeable, useful and meaningful” (50). Thus, such social practices and beliefs, presented as natural, ordinary, and
taken-for-granted, are willingly adopted and perpetuated by most people. Judith Halberstam suggests that these beliefs are persuasive “precisely because they do not present themselves as ideology or try to win consent” (2011, 17).

It should be noted that, while hegemony’s organic nature is inherently responsive to alternative and oppositional forces, it does not assume equality in the relation of society’s power structure (Buttigieg 1995, 2005). As noted by Buttigieg, “[c]ivil society is not some kind of benign or neutral zone where different elements of society operate and compete freely and on equal terms” (1995, 27). Privileged groups have increased opportunities to exert their influence over, and through, various facets of civil society, and hegemony has consistently privileged a particular group and worldview. As noted by Ludwig, “[m]odes of governing class, gender, sexual and racialized relations through hegemony change over time. Yet these changes still allow the persistence of a bourgeois, androcentric, heteronormative and white hegemony” (2011, 51).

Gramsci characterised hegemonic formation and negotiation as primarily grounded in civil society (Gramsci 1985, Buttigieg 1995, Ludwig 2011, Hall 1990). His comprehensive list of civil society’s components included, among others, churches, schools, courts of law, libraries, the family, media, unions, a multitude of clubs, and even architectural elements and urban design. Buttigieg (1995) observes that topping the list was the press, what Gramsci described as “the most dynamic part of the ideological structure” (1996, 53). Indeed, Graeme Turner underscores the primacy of the media and popular culture within hegemonic negotiation:

[i]n Gramsci’s view, popular culture is the battleground upon which dominant views secure hegemony; further, it is a permanent battleground, the parameters of which are partly defined by economic conditions, but that specializes in political struggle expressed at an ideological, representational level. (2003, 178)

Popular culture is thus a “terrain of exchange and negotiation” (Storey 2009, 10) – a space of ideological struggle – between the dominant and oppositional/alternative that is marked by absorption and domestication. Gitlin points out that “[c]ommercial culture ... relays and reproduces and processes and packages and focuses ideology that is constantly arising both from social elites and from active social groups and movements throughout society” (1979, 253, emphasis in original). Indeed, Halberstam posits that

[i]n order to grasp the flux of hegemony, its constellation of ‘pressures and limits,’ the seemingly banal pop cultural text, with its direct connection to mass culturally shared assumptions, is far more likely to reveal the key terms and conditions of the dominant than an earnest and ‘knowing’ text. (2011, 60)

Thus, popular culture provides a way to examine hegemonic negotiation through a series of ever-shifting provisional stabilisations that articulate the dominant and act as a space of struggle. This
active negotiation in hegemony’s ‘battleground’ “opens up the field of popular culture as one of enormous political possibilities” (Bennett 1986, xvi).

For this research, I employ hegemony as a framework to explore the constructedness of hegemonic ‘common sense.’ I conceptualise the hegemonic process as a continual, ongoing negotiation of meaning, marked by the potential for iterative change but a potential that is constrained and often not realised in the recuperation of privilege by the privileged. It is not simply the ‘co-opting’ of movements or meaning, but a weaving together of dominant, oppositional, and alternative ideologies that favours certain elements and discards others.

Popular culture plays an important role in hegemony; representations within entertainment media are inherently ideological, serving to reflect, reinforce, and amplify hegemony, but popular culture is simultaneously the ‘battleground’ where hegemonic struggle occurs. Understanding media representations as manifestations of provisional and contradictory hegemonic change allows me to identify how these representations can be simultaneously progressive and regressive, and highlight the contestations arising from struggle, their (re)negotiation, and (re)normalisation. Using hegemony as a framework exposes how processes or moments of rupture/fracture/contestation can make their way into the mainstream, realigning hegemony’s borders, and provides insight into the subtext of meaning and privilege built into the everyday representations literally sold back to the population through popular culture.

While the roots of cultural hegemony as theorised by Gramsci are clearly Marxist (Gramsci 1999), hegemony has been used by a number of scholars to examine cultural struggles beyond those which are class-based. Hall (1990) details the myriad ways that Gramsci’s theories go beyond class structure towards a wider conceptualisation of culture, ideology, and identity. He argues that

> [t]he point is therefore not to apply Gramsci’s distinction literally or mechanically but to use his insights to unravel the changing complexities in state/civil society relationships in the modern world and the decisive shift in the predominant character of strategic political struggles – essentially, the encompassing of civil society as well as the state as integral arenas of struggles – which this historic transformation has brought about. (429-430)

Scholars like Gitlin (1979), Hall (1990), R.W. Connell (1995), Guillermo Avila-Saavedra (2009), Castro Varela, Dhawan, and Engel (2011), and Halberstam (2011) have employed hegemony in ways that move beyond class to analysis of other forms of social conflict. This research similarly employs hegemony to examine non-class based struggle. In this research, LGBT rights are understood as a social movement that is undergoing hegemonic negotiation, absorption, and domestication; as an example of a “social conflict … being transported into the cultural system” (Gitlin 1979, 264, emphasis in original). Employing a hegemonic framework, I explore how LGBT
representations within entertainment media function as manifestations of hegemonic negotiation, tracing the ever-shifting hegemonic boundaries of LGBT inclusion/exclusion.

The term heteronormativity, coined by Michael Warner (1993), can be regarded as “the hegemony of heterosexuality” (Ludwig 2011, 25). Heteronormativity is a regime that organises sex, gender, and sexuality to reflect heterosexual norms, and maintains rigid, fixed, and hierarchical binaries of gender and sexuality (Ludwig 2011, Castro Varela, Dhawan, and Engel 2011, Montgomery and Stewart 2012). It can be understood as the institutions and practices that normalise and privilege heterosexuality; willingly adopted and internalised by the populace, the superiority and desirability of heterosexuality appears as ‘common sense.’ The very ubiquity and common-sense-ness of heteronormativity means that it is “accepted without being reflected upon” (Castro Varela, Dhawan, and Engel 2011, 15) and remains socially invisible (Westerfelhaus and Lacroix 2006). As noted by Robert Westerfelhaus and Celeste Lacroix,

as long as sexual orientation is a term applied primarily to those who are not deemed sexually ‘straight,’ then heterosexuality will continue to serve as the taken-for-granted norm against which all other forms of human sexuality are defined, measured, and judged. (2006, 428)

In Hegemony and Heteronormativity, Ludwig (2011) proposes the concept of ‘heteronormative hegemony’ to address what she perceives as limitations in Judith Butler’s conceptualisation of the heterosexual matrix. As suggested by Butler (1993) herself, approaching the heterosexual matrix from a hegemonic perspective allows for an understanding of the subtle and dynamic operation of heteronormativity. Ludwig describes heteronormative hegemony as

a power formation that is heteronormative since it constitutes the binary division of sex as a criterion for the constitution of intelligible subjects. These effects of power are naturalized through the constitution of femininity and masculinity as the only intelligible forms of subjects. (2011, 53)

Ludwig proposes that heteronormative hegemony is a constellation of power that is: historically and culturally specific; formed through social struggles; fluid, dynamic, open, and contradictory; situated in civil society; and conducted in every day practices.

As work by scholars like Ludwig (2011), and Castro Varela, Dhawan, and Engel (2011) suggest, there are multiple points of intersection between queer theory and cultural hegemony. One such intersection is their shared aim to interrogate and deconstruct that which appears taken-for-granted and natural. Queer theory has been instrumental in recognising that sexualities are not ‘natural’ but rather discursively produced (Sullivan 2003). As summarised by Harry Benshoff, queer theory “examines the social construction of all human sexualities ... in order to deconstruct the ideologies and institutions of heteronormativity” (2009, 196). Similarly, Randi Gressgård notes
that “[q]ueer theory, like theories of hegemony, opposes all claims to stable or natural identities, including gay and other non-heterosexual identities” (2011, 25). Hegemony can be similarly employed to examine the construction of that which appears natural. Understanding that “[h]egemony ... depends on consent ... [but] consent is manufactured, albeit through extremely complex mediums [sic], diverse institutions, and constantly changing processes” (Buttigieg 1995, 7), hegemony can be used to deconstruct the naturalness of ‘common sense,’ unveiling the hegemonic process that constructs provisionally dominant ideology from the tensions and struggles between the dominant and oppositional/alternative. Thus, both queer theory and cultural hegemony can be used to examine the construction of that which appears taken-for-granted, whether it be sexuality or ‘common sense’ more broadly. In addition, both queer theory and cultural hegemony aim to capture complexity, messiness, and contrariness in their approaches; both recognise the importance of the historic moment. This research, utilising both a hegemonic framework and the concept of heteronormativity, recognises the construction of sexualities, and sees media representations as a tangible manifestation that can be closely examined to expose the ongoing and dynamic negotiation of sexualities.

While this research employs aspects of queer research, I do not envision it as primarily part of the queer project. ‘Queering’ lies at the heart of much of queer theory, a process described by Nikki Sullivan as:

> to make strange, to frustrate, to counteract, to delegitimise, to camp up ...
> heteronormative knowledges and institutions and the subjectivities and socialities that are (in)formed by them and that (in)form them. (2003, iv)

Much of the queer project is inherently subversive, problematising accepted norms and knowledges, finding avenues for resistance and change, and envisioning what should be or what could be. Indeed, hegemony can be similarly utilised; Leslie Good describes hegemony as “a conceptual framework for understanding and potentially subverting the ‘consent’ of the masses to their own oppression” (1989, 61, emphasis added). While both approaches can be used for subversion, my aim in this research is to take a step back and examine what is – not what could or should be – by systematically surveying LGBT representation in the teen film genre. I aim to take stock of what is present, examine the hegemonic boundaries of inclusion, and understand the ways in which heteronormative hegemony is both contested and remains privileged. Thus, I focus on contemporary, explicit LGBT representations with an aim to understand what is there, rather than attempting to ‘queer,’ ‘frustrate,’ or ‘make strange.’

Related to ‘queering’ is the power of the audience in textual meaning-making, often seen in ‘against the grain’ queer textual analysis. This framework is emancipatory and empowering for the reader, enacting a “potentially transgressive response to marginalisation ... and vilification”
Such readings aim to expose the “normative logic, ideology and injunctions at work underneath … offer[ing] alternative readings and significations of those textual practices to demonstrate the necessary instability of such ‘natural,’ ‘fixed’ or ‘stable’ discourses” (Ramlow 2010, 131). The polysemic power in such readings has been criticised by some scholars for giving too much agency to the audience and denying or downplaying the power of the media (Brooker and Jermyn 2003, Morley 2006, 1992). As stated by David Morley,

some recent audience work has exaggerated, and wrongly romanticized the supposed power and freedoms of media consumers, imagining that all audiences everywhere are engaged in a continuous form of ‘semiological guerrilla warfare’ (Eco 1972) with the media, in which they constantly produce oppositional readings of its products. (2006, 102)

The fragmented nature of audience research has been succinctly summarised by Carolyn Michelle who proposes an analytical framework that offers “a set of conceptual tools with which to categorize, analyze, and theorize audience receptions in more systematic and productive way” (2007, 182). Michelle’s framework underscores the importance of undertaking detailed textual analysis in such a way that it “accommodates both theoretical concerns regarding the ‘problem’ of interpretation … and the practical realization that certain forms of textual encoding can and do place certain constraints on textual polysemy” (208-209).

Michelle proposes that

it is possible to engage in forms of textual analysis that acknowledge a certain level of polysemic undecidability and polyvocality within media texts (in the sense that they are theoretically able to convey various alternative meanings and are thus ‘readerly’ [Barthes 1977]), whilst simultaneously recognising that the range of meanings that are likely to be made is limited by the internal organization of the text, which prefers particular readings and potentially places certain parameters around audience interpretation. Of course, to identify a preferred reading offers no proof of its ideological effectivity, both because the meaning of the text cannot be singularly fixed once and for all, and because authorial intention cannot guarantee that this preferred meaning will be the meaning discerned by any individual reader. (209, emphasis in original)

Thus, she acknowledges that while there are a multitude of possible alternative readings, texts are encoded with intended meanings that are likely understood by the audience, potentially limiting polysemy. Indeed, while conceptualising the audience as potentially active, she reminds us that many readers engage in dominant readings.

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2 Examples of reading youth texts ‘against the grain’ include Jeffrey Dennis’ (2006) *Queering Teen Culture*, which explores same-sex love and desire in teen texts, including film, television programs, comic books, novels, music, and other relevant ephemera produced between 1955 and 1995. Dennis examines a variety of media to uncover the same-sex sub-text and reconsiders the heteronormative depiction of teenagers, especially male teenagers, in mainstream media.
[W]hile audience members have the potential to be ‘active,’ critical, and creative, they are not always so in the same way, nor to the same degree. A significant proportion of audience reception does not critically deconstruct what is seen or heard ... and while creative and idiosyncratic interpretations are clearly documented in the existing scholarship, there is little evidence to suggest that these reflect the predominant mode of response most of the time. Further, all viewers (including media researchers!) have times when they allow themselves to be completely absorbed and engulfed by some, generally their favourite, media texts. (195).

Michelle provides a framework that accounts for audience agency, outlining a number of ways that audiences can be ‘active,’ yet avoids the potential problem of discerning unrealistic levels of audience autonomy.

I adopt a position similar to Michelle’s framework for the textual analysis that is presented in chapters three and four, acknowledging the possibility of wide polysemic variation while recognising that a dominant reading is often privileged. While not resorting to textual determinism, I undertake textual readings in the manner that is most likely adopted by the teen audience (though, of course, without audience ethnography, it is impossible to know the variety of readings actually undertaken by this cohort). Implicit in this reading is the perhaps contentious conception that teen film audiences primarily view these films for pleasure and become absorbed in the stories onscreen, rather than engaging in critical deconstruction. This should not, however, be confused with passivity; indeed, many contemporary teen films, such as Scream (1996) or Not Another Teen Movie (2001), rely on audiences actively engaging with generic norms to understand and derive enjoyment from these films.

**Media impact on youth**

Media representations impact on the beliefs and behaviour of audience members. This may be particularly true of teens who are voracious consumers of entertainment media (Stern 2005a) and constitute Hollywood’s biggest and most reliable demographic (Doherty 2002, Shary 2014, Leitch 1992, Callister et al. 2011); teen films have consistently been commercially successful, indicating a strong following by teen audiences (Sloniowski 1997, Wood 2002, Doherty 2002, Considine 1981, Dixon 2000). Evidence suggests that people, teens in particular, gain an understanding of the world and appropriate behaviour through the media they consume (Stern 2005a, 2005b, Callister et al. 2011, Robinson, Callister, and Magoffin 2009, Steele 2011, Kalof 1999, Pardun, L'Engle, and Brown 2005, Bleakley et al. 2008).

There are a variety of theoretical frameworks used to examine how audiences are influenced by media. Once such framework is Albert Bandura’s (2014) social cognitive theory which asserts that viewers may vicariously learn from media in ways that impact their beliefs and behaviours. The
theory postulates that audience members pay closest attention to characters that are similar to themselves, desirable, or attractive, and that audiences develop expectations of consequences based on whether behaviours are ‘rewarded’ or ‘punished’ onscreen. Social cognitive theory underpins numerous content analyses (Stern 2005a, 2005b, Callister et al. 2011, Ortiz and Brooks 2014), including Susannah Stern’s (2005a) study of substance use in teen films. She theorises that “films can serve as important sources for observational learning and for conveying cultural values and norms” (336). Indeed, a variety of ethnographic studies employing social cognitive theory do indicate that youth beliefs and/or behaviours are correlated with media depictions (Behm-Morawitz and Mastro 2008, Ortiz and Harwood 2007, Vezzali et al. 2015). Particular to gender portrayals, Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz and Dana Mastro (2008) cautiously suggest that audience exposure to ‘mean girls’ in teen films is associated with “negative stereotypic beliefs about female friendship as well as unfavourable attitudes toward women in general – differentially so for [male and female study subjects]” (141).

Another theoretical framework that examines the impact of media on audiences is cultivation theory, which broadly posits that audience members who watch a lot of television are more likely to accept the attitudes, beliefs, and ideologies presented by the media (Morgan and Shanahan 2010); or, in the words of George Gerbner,

> those who spend more time ‘living’ in the world of television are more likely to see the ‘real world’ in terms of the images, values, portrayals, and ideologies that emerge through the lens of television. (2014, 47)

While the effects have been modest, studies using cultivation theory, including those involving adolescent participants, suggest that these links exist (for example, Signorielli 1993, 1991, Calzo and Ward 2009, Rössler and Brosius 2001, Ward 2002).

Besides social cognitive theory and cultivation theory, a variety of other frameworks have been used to examine how media impact the behaviours and beliefs of teen audiences. Jeanne Steele, for example, conducted a teen audience study and suggests that

> [movies ... are interlocutors or participants in a dialectic give and take between what teens know about themselves and society and what they still have to learn ... [media] are like third parties that engage teens in conversations they cannot imagine having with their parents, teachers, or even friends. (2011, 238)

While the teen participants in Steele’s study could clearly differentiate between films and ‘real life,’ the films they watched nevertheless provided information, set agendas, acted pedagogically,

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3 The study undertaken by Michelle Ortiz and Jake Harwood (2007) involved undergraduate students rather than teens.
and influenced behaviour. Steele suggests that teens “look to movies (and television, too) to understand reality, to understand the world they have inherited” (249).

Youth ethnographic research was also undertaken by Michaela Meyer and Megan Wood (2013), who interviewed university students to see how viewers made sense of television program Glee’s LGBT representations and to understand how these representations impacted sexual identity formation. While participants consistently saw Glee as ‘progressive’ and as dealing with ‘real issues’ in their lives, the LGBT content “did not produce a broader acceptance of non-heterosexual identities. Viewers normalised their own (real [lived], straight) identities in relation to the (fake [fictional], queer) identities shown in the narrative” (434). That is, the mostly heterosexual participants identified LGBT content as progressive and important for LGBT youth identity formation, but overlooked or dismissed heterosexual representations as important to heterosexual identity formation, thus reifying the existence of heteronormativity.

Alice Marwick, Mary L. Gray, and Mike Ananny (2014) similarly examined audience interaction with Glee, however, this study focussed on how LGBT-identifying college students and their allies ‘used’ Glee in their everyday lives. They found that audiences used the program to “appreciate and navigate their own sexualities and experiences” (642) and “imagine and articulate queer desires and acceptance of them” (628). Audiences also used it as a signifier of LGBT support.

Overall, while these theoretical frameworks differ in approach and methodology, they all provide evidence that adolescent audiences’ behaviours and beliefs are affected by the films and television they consume. In short, these media representations matter because they impact on the everyday, lived experiences of teen media consumers. This may be particularly salient for LGBT representations provided to mainstream, mainly heterosexual audiences because, as Larry Gross notes, “the media are likely to be most powerful in cultivating images of events and groups about which we have little firsthand opportunity for learning” (2001, 11). It is therefore important to examine the ways in which LGBT representations are portrayed in youth-oriented media to begin to understand what is communicated to mainstream teen audiences through these portrayals.

While this research aims to gain an understanding of what is communicated to youth audiences through LGBT representation, without audience engagement it is not possible to actually know how audiences make sense of a given text or, indeed, the range of audience interpretations. For this reason, I phrase my textual analysis as speculative instead of factual, but I recognise that, while it is beyond the scope of this research to engage in audience analysis, ethnographic work would enhance and bolster my argument. As Edward Schiappa notes,
It is not that essays containing audience conjectures without audience-generated data are ‘wrong’ or somehow deeply flawed. Rather, the point is that audience conjectures would be more interesting as arguments, important for theory development, and persuasive as scholarship if they were supported with evidence generated through audience research. (2008, 36)

I agree with Schiappa’s assertion that the best research involves textual analysis couched within a representation ‘ecology’ and broader social context that is complimented by audience engagement. My research aims to provide the first two (textual analysis and context), and sees audience research as a compelling and important ‘next step.’

**Teen film: a genre approach**

Genre is often defined by the conventions, iconography, and narrative elements that form a corpus of films (Altman 1995, Neale 2000); the teen film genre, in contrast, is defined less by stylistic or narrative elements than by the characters themselves: teenagers (Shary 2014, Doherty 2002, Driscoll 2011, Kaveney 2006, Neale 2000, Tropiano 2006, Lewis 1992, Brickman 2014).

Timothy Shary notes that

> unlike other genres that are based exclusively on subject matter, the youth genre is based on the ages of the films’ characters, and thus the thematic concerns of its subgenres can be seen as more directly connected to specific notions of different youth behaviours and styles (2014, 13).

Teen films’ focus on teenage characters often serves to define the content, including plots that focus on rebellion or ‘fitting in’ with peer groups, and locations that typically revolve around the home, school, or ‘trendy’ leisure locations like drive-in movie theatres or shopping malls.

Catherine Driscoll observes a number of generic similarities:

> the youthfulness of central characters; content usually centred on young heterosexuality, frequently with a romance plot; intense age-based peer relationships and conflict either within those relationships or with an older generation; the institutional management of adolescence by families, schools, and other institutions; and coming-of-age plots focused on motifs like virginity, graduation, and the makeover. (2011, 2)

While not all teen films include these specific narrative conventions, they do centrally focus on youth characters, their struggles and successes.

While authors tend to agree that teen films are defined by the age of the characters they portray and a commonality of narrative conventions, there is less agreement on where to draw the limits of the genre. Roz Kaveney is perhaps the most exclusive in her definition of teen film, limiting the genre to

> a body of work which is in large part a creative response to the 1980s John Hughes films and to a lesser extent other films that appeared at roughly the same time. (2006, 3)
Her definition includes a long list of exclusions: teen films made before the 1980s; the slasher sub-genre and ‘daft dude’ comedies; adult-teen ‘age-swap’ films (for example, *Freaky Friday* [2003]); those focussed on people of colour or homosexual teens; and films treating teenagers “as a problem to be solved” (6).

Shary’s (2014) approach is, in contrast, much more inclusive and taxonomic. He examines how young people and their coming-of-age processes have been presented in American film since the 1980s, comprehensively including all available American feature-length films that focus on ‘youth experience’ released between 1980 and 2013. Shary includes films focussed on teens aged 12 to 20 years that “includes the actual teen years as well as the traditionally recognized entrance into adolescence ... as well as late adolescence and entry into the post-high school world” (19), and excludes films about college experiences because they “do not concern the same issues about youth as do teen and high school films” (19). Shary effectively classifies these films into a number of sub-genres that are broad enough to allow for inevitable hybridity and variation, but detailed enough for the purposes of identification. Shary does not provide a single definition of the genre, nor a unified definition of each sub-genre; instead, he favours flexibility to account for the large number of films in his study, keeping his descriptions broad to account for generic evolution, hybridity, and the historical circumstances of film production. Shary notes that “I have attempted to be as precise as possible while still appreciating that the codes and patterns I am studying are quite malleable and arguable” (296).

Driscoll (2011) broadens the definition of the teen film genre still further, to include all films focussing on the discourse on adolescence, including, for instance, college films.

Both ‘youth’ and ‘adolescence’ might be more appropriate names for what centres teen film than ‘teen’. While ‘teen’ names a set of tendencies and expectations rather than identity mapping onto the years thirteen to nineteen, the concept ‘teenager’ is too narrow to define a genre that is preoccupied with the difficulty as well as the importance of borders. The fact that we label this genre of films ‘teen film’ is nevertheless significant. ‘Teen’ describes a historical extension of, and limit on, a period of social dependence after puberty. The contradiction between maturity and immaturity that ‘teen’ thus describes is central to teen film. But if the genre label is useful, teen film is not defined by representing teenagers. It is actually as difficult to establish the boundaries of ‘teen film’ as it is to specify when ‘adolescence’ begins or ends, and this difficulty is entirely appropriate. (2-3)

Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s traces the genre’s emergence and various cycles through an economic framework that intertwines the teenage audience with the teen film genre. That teen films are made for teens, a demographic that is able to provide adequate financial support to the industry, is central to his study and clearly indicates that the genre is at least partially defined by its target audience. This is taken one step further by Jon Lewis (1992) who, in his study of youth film and youth culture, notes that “the [entertainment] industry has embraced the adolescent as its ideal audience” (2). Lewis’ point – that teenagers are a lucrative market and courted by Hollywood – is echoed by a number of other authors (Considine 1985, Shary 2014, Balio 2002, Doherty 2002, Dixon 2000, Driscoll 2011, Bernstein 1997, Tropiano 2006) and is an important one. Indeed, not all films that target a teen audience can be considered part of the teen film genre; a distinction needs to be drawn between films that target a teenage audience but are excluded from the genre, such as Star Wars (1977) and Dumb & Dumber (1994), and those that target a teenage audience and are included in the genre.

In a similar vein, not all teen-focused films teens target a solely teen audience. Driscoll (2011) and Emma French (2006) both problematise the concept of a ‘teen audience’ as a specific demographic. Driscoll asserts that, while most teen film literature assumes that “teen film is made to be watched by the ideal teenager of a particular time and place” (2011, 3), the reality of viewership is far more complex. French examines youth audience studies and the ratings structure of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), revealing that industry and academic concepts of the ‘teen audience’ actually includes people aged 12 to 24 years and thus its reach goes well beyond the teen years. French notes that the relationship between teen film and its audience is “a complex one which cannot be adequately explained in empirical terms” (2006, 107). Other scholars including Doherty (2002) note that inclusion of Rebel Without a Cause (1955) and Blackboard Jungle (1955) in the teen film genre may be problematic since these teen-focused films targeted an adult audience; the same can be said of contemporary films like Kids (1995) and Precious (2009).

A number of authors have defined the teen film genre by combining a focus on teen characters and a targeting of the teen demographic; in short, teen films are about and for teens (Driscoll 2011, Tropiano 2006, French 2006, Doherty 2002, Considine 1985). This thesis adopts this approach, limiting the teen film genre to films that focus on teenage characters and target the

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5 Elissa Nelson problematises the idea that genre’s definition can be based on the target audience, stating “almost all films cater to youth so the intended audience category is too broad to be useful; moreover, the teen film itself is not necessarily intended solely for a teen audience” (2013, 15). This is certainly true; Hollywood does not target only one demographic since its films need to capture as large an audience share as possible in order to mitigate risk and maximize profitability. I assert, however, that teen films do not ‘solely’ target teenaged audience, but ‘primarily’ target this demographic.

6 Tropiano’s Rebels and Chicks (2006) includes college-aged characters as well as teenagers.
teen audience. I identify teen films as those focusing on teen characters, aged 12 to 20 years and not yet in college, consistent with the approach adopted by Shary (2014), Considine (1985), and Thomas McGee and R.J. Robertson (1982). Only films with teens in lead roles are included; films that cast adults in lead roles, with teens as secondary characters, are not considered part of the genre (for example American Beauty [1999] and 21 Jump Street [2012]).

The second aspect of my definition of the teen film genre is the targeting of a teen demographic. While some films obviously target teens, like American Pie (1999) and Easy A (2010), the target demographic of other films is less evident, for example, Napoleon Dynamite (2004) or Winter’s Bone (2010). Indeed, as Driscoll succinctly states, “[o]ne teen film may be more teen film than another” (2011, 65), a sentiment echoed by Shary (2014) and Robert Bulman (2005) who point out that the genre’s boundary is fuzzy and somewhat arbitrary; the inclusion or exclusion of any particular film is contestable. To address this ‘fuzziness,’ I have made a conscious effort to analyse each film’s thematic and narrative content, aesthetic style, and inclusion of stars with ‘teen appeal’ to determine whether or not it likely targets a teen audience. Determinations of ‘teen appeal’ consider whether the films’ stars appeared in other teen films or teen-oriented television.

For example, Catch Me If You Can (2002) is included because it starred teen icon Leonardo DiCaprio, well known for his starting role in teen blockbusters Romeo + Juliet (1996) and Titanic (1997). Similarly, But I’m a Cheerleader (2000) is included partially because Natasha Lyonne was cast as the lead; Lyonne starred in American Pie (1999) and Detroit Rock City (1999).

‘Teen appeal’ also required an appropriate MPAA rating; only teen films with PG, PG-13, or R ratings are included. G-rated films are excluded because they target families and children rather than teens; NC-17 and unrated rated films are excluded because they are generally made for adult audiences. While PG and PG-13 films are clearly made with a teen demographic in mind, R-rated films are more contentious. Indeed, R-rated films are often excluded from research about the teen film genre (for example, Behm-Morawitz and Mastro 2008, Callister et al. 2011, Robinson, Callister, and Magoffin 2009) because teen audiences are restricted from seeing these films, with theatre-goers under 17 years-of-age theoretically needing to be accompanied by an adult to purchase theatre tickets (Motion Picture Association of America and National Association of Theater Owners 2010). Kevin Sandler (2002) and Keilah Worth et al. (2008), however, suggest that despite this regulation, R-rated films are still widely viewed by teen audiences.  

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7 For the same reason, films about teens befriending animals were excluded, for example Fly Away Home [1996] and the Free Willy franchise.

8 This is particularly true of teen films released prior to 2000-2001; after this period there was a decline in production of R-rated teen films. The decrease was in part a reaction to the Columbine High School mass shooting and renewed public and media interest in youth consumption of violent media content, which led then-President Clinton to request the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Department of Justice to undertake a study into whether the film, music, and video game industries marketed violent products to youth (Federal Trade Commission 2000). The FTC’s
that the R-rating is “in theory a ‘restricted’ category, [but is] in fact a category permitting all-age consumption” (2002, 203), with “MPAA studios routinely target[ing] minors in advertising for R-rated films and us[ing] minors in focus groups for test screenings of R-rated films” (2002, 214). Worth et al. (2008) found that a large proportion of youth aged 10 to 14 years in their study had seen extremely violent R-rated films; for example, 48 percent had seen *Scream* (1996). The high levels of youth viewership of R-rated films, including many teen films, and the fact that film studios specifically target youth audiences for these films, argues for their inclusion in this research. Additionally, some of the most popular and most archetypal teen films from this period are rated R, including *American Pie* and *Scream*.9

Thus, this research aims to comprehensively examine LGBT representation in all teen films – those made *about* teens *for* teens – that were released between 1995 and 2013. This comprehensive focus on the entirety of the teen film genre is one of the ways in which this research is unique. Most of the previous scholarship examining LGBT representation in youth-focussed media has tended to concentrate on a small number of individual texts, in particular the popular teen-oriented television program *Glee* and ‘indie’ film *Boys Don’t Cry*. While the literature thus far has provided numerous interesting insights, it has tended to overlook routine representational tropes within teen-oriented media in favour of a small number of particularly conspicuous (and, admittedly, interesting) representations. In contrast, my research examines not just individual characters or characteristics, but rather what Schiappa calls the “larger representational ecology” (2008, 23): the broad range of media representations across televisual series and the media *writ large*. Schiappa warns that analysis not contextualised within this ecology risks “overestimate[ing] the significance of one particular scene or interaction” (1) or, I would argue, a single character, television program, or individual film. Thus, I identify common character representations, understood as hegemony’s provisional stabilisations, throughout the entire teen film genre and I also examine individual representational contestations that present alternative, ‘emergent’ characterisations and the possibility of expanding hegemony’s boundaries.

**Selection methods, limitations, and definitions**

In addition to examining only those films *about* teens made *for* teens, I also limit my inclusion to the most ‘popular’ teen films. Using domestic box office grosses as one of the selection criteria, I include only those teen films that are in the top 200 grossing films per year. Box office

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9 *American Pie* grossed $102 million in 1999 and was ranked as the 20th highest grossing film of that year; *Scream* grossed $103 million in 1996 and ranked 13th.
performance is the preferred selection method for academic studies undertaking textual analysis at a genre level (for example, Stern 2005a, Robinson, Callister, and Magoffin 2009, Behm-Morawitz and Mastro 2008, Callister et al. 2011). It is a reflection of a film’s financial success, popularity, and ability to attract large audiences (Stern 2005a, 2005b), and a film’s success at the box office generally predicts its success in ancillary markets, including cable television, video rentals, and DVD/Blu-ray sales (Schatz 1993). The use of box office ratings thus provides an extensive, yet manageable, list of films to screen, which are also more likely to be available through rental outlets than obscure films that fared poorly at the box office or which did not receive a theatrical release.

Despite their consistent use as a research selection criterion, there a few of limitations to this selection strategy. Box office receipts provide insight into a film’s overall audience attendance numbers, but they do not provide information on the age distribution of audiences for individual films. This problematises one aspect of the teen film genre definition (that these films target a teen audience) because without information on actual audience demographics this cannot be verified. Some films, such as Rushmore (1998), Election (1999), and The Runaways (2010), are included in my film sample but may, in fact, appeal to adult audiences as much as – or perhaps, more than – teenage audiences.

Another limitation of using box office grosses as a selection criterion is that it excludes the teen films made for the straight-to-video/DVD/Blu-ray market. These films are either not released to movie theatres or have a very limited release, reaching the majority of their audiences through VHS, DVD, Blu-ray or, increasingly, video-on-demand (VOD) digital streaming. A number of contemporary teen film franchises have successfully taken advantage of the straight-to-video model, including Universal’s Bring It On and American Pie franchises. While these straight-to-

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10 Recent comparisons have been made between the box office figures obtained from the Box Office Mojo website (www.boxofficemojo.com) and the combined DVD and Blu-ray sales (from 2006 onwards, when figures are available) obtained from the Nash Information Services, LLC. (www.the-numbers.com). While there is no definitive consistency between a film’s box office success and subsequent profitability in DVD/Blu-ray sales, the general trend is similar.

11 The film industry began using the straight-to-video distribution method for teen films in the late 1980s when the profitability of the genre was declining for theatrical releases; it proved to be particularly successful for the teen horror sub-genre in the mid-1980s to early 1990s (Shary 2005, 2014). While these films were often stigmatised for their low production quality and unknown cast members, in the early 2000s the film industry began to produce relatively high quality straight-to-video releases. These films cost much less to produce, are a lower risk than a theatre release, effectively target a niche audience, extend established franchises through sequels and prequels, and offer content more titillating than what can be shown on theatre screens (Marich 2012, Ebenkamp 2007, Marr 2007, Barnes 2008).

12 The Bring It On franchise had one theatrical release and four films released straight-to-video. The American Pie franchise included three films with theatrical release and another four on straight-to-video. American Pie Presents: Band Camp (2005) and American Pie Presents: The Naked Mile (2006), both of which were released straight to video, each sold more than one million units and were two of the top five best-selling releases in their category, which indicates strong viewership and resulted in substantial profits for the film studio (PR Newswire 2007, Barnes 2008).
video/DVD/Blu-ray films can be profitable, data on sales are currently fragmented, rendering them a poor metric for selection criteria.\textsuperscript{13}

Another selection criterion was the date of the film’s release; I only include teen films released between 1995 and 2013. This time period was chosen because, as will be explored in chapter two, the mid-1990s marked the beginning of a new cycle of teen films after the relatively dormant period during the late 1980s and early 1990s (Shary 2014, 2005, Tropiano 2006, Dixon 2000). The selection of 2013 as the final year for study was to ensure that, at the start of this research, all relevant films would be available for home viewing.

Given the culturally-specific nature of hegemony, my research only examines American teen films, however, the genre is by no means uniquely American. A number of authors have contributed to the discussion of teen films beyond the US’s borders. \textit{Youth Culture in Global Cinema} (2007) is the first book to address this topic specifically and provides comprehensive coverage on a number of themes relating to youth on screen. Bulman (2005), Lewis (1992) and Considine (1985) analyse teen films produced outside of the USA, notably from the UK. Driscoll (2011) also adds to the discussion of teen film in an international context in \textit{Teen Film: A Critical Introduction}.

This research examines all teen films in the 200 top grossing films per year produced in the USA and released between 1995 and 2013. A list of the annual 200 top grossing films was obtained from Box Office Mojo (www.boxofficemojo.com), a website that tracks box office grosses and has previously been used by researchers for compiling lists of top grossing films (for example, Callister et al. 2011, Robinson, Callister, and Magoffin 2009, Stern 2005a, 2005b). The resulting list was cross-checked against two filmographies: that listed in Driscoll’s (2011) \textit{Teen Film: A Critical Introduction} and the other more systematic and comprehensive list in Shary’s two editions of \textit{Generation Multiplex} (2002, 2014). Additionally, it was cross-checked against the Internet Movie Database’s (www.imdb.com) annual top 200 grossing films using keyword searches of terms that commonly appear in the IMDb plot synopses (‘teen,’ ‘high,’ and ‘school’); films not previously identified were added to the list to ensure that the sample was as comprehensive as possible.

After considering all of the inclusion criteria, I identified 259 films to screen. Efforts were made to screen each film by locating it at local video rental outlets (Blockbuster), through libraries, and online (Netflix, Stan, iTunes, and Sony Playstation). After excluding films that did not form part of the teen film genre, a total of 219 teen films were identified (listed in Appendix A); of these, 200 films were obtained for screening. All films in the top 50 grossing were screened, and each film

\textsuperscript{13} There is currently no adequate source of information about VHS sales or revenue from streaming services. Nash Information Services provides information about DVD sales since 2006, and Blu-ray sales since 2009, on its website (www.the-numbers.com), but nothing prior to 2006.
was screened at least once and general information was recorded (the coding template is included in Appendix B). Detailed information was recorded for films that included LGBT characters: the number of major, minor, and incidental LGBT characters; detailed information on each LGBT character (approximate age, appearance, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and sexual orientation/gender expression); and the interactions between various characters in each film. LGBT-themed language and visual jokes were also recorded. (A list of LGBT-focussed teen films that were not among the annual top 200 grossing films is included as Appendix C.)

While I focus most of my analysis on mainstream teen films (i.e. those released by major studios), the annual top 200 grossing films include a number of independent and ‘Indiewood’ films. As we shall see in chapters two and three, these independent/Indiewood productions are the ones with the most holistic and integrated LGBT representations, and have often been used as points of comparison to demonstrate what material is currently missing from mainstream teen films. Thus, the focus of this research is mainly on mainstream teen films but also engages with LGBT-inclusive independent/Indiewood films.

Following Tom Robinson’s (2009) work, major characters were defined as those “who [were] important or central to the plot, on screen for an extended amount of time, and had a significant amount of dialogue” (692-693). Further, I have also identified lead characters as those who played the largest role in the film (i.e. the narrative revolved around this character). Minor characters were in more than two scenes, spoke more than one line, and occupied a role relevant to the plot; incidental characters were actively involved in a maximum of two scenes and spoke in at least one scene;¹⁴ they were also counted if they were referenced multiple times by other characters but never appeared onscreen. Extras, present only in the background of scenes but not involved in the plot, were excluded from analyses.

This research examines ‘explicit’ LGBT representations. Explicit LGBT characters are those that self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, or are identified by others as LGBT in earnest discussion, as opposed to being labelled for a derogatory or humorous purpose. It also includes characters that demonstrate ‘insider’ knowledge about the LGBT community and those that engage in same-sex sexual activity. Characters that use same-sex sexual actions for heterosexual titillation (mostly seen in girl-girl kissing for the benefit of men) or the use of these advances to punish or discomfit straight teens were not considered LGBT characters (these phenomena are covered in chapters three and four).

¹⁴ This is slightly different than Robinson’s (2009) definition of minor and incidental characters. Robinson counted incidental characters as those in only one scene, and minor characters as those in only two scenes. I increased the number of scenes for incidental and minor characters because numerous teen films included visual jokes (most often gay panic scenes involving predatory adult gay men) that cross over two scenes, but did not otherwise impact the plot. Counting these as minor characters elevated their status in the film past what was narratively significant.
In terms of terminology, I use the term ‘gay’ in two ways: first to refer to same-sex attracted males; and second to refer to the ‘gay rights movement,’ the social movement which advocated for the rights of non-heterosexual people until the 1990s (after which I refer to it as the LGBT rights movement). The term ‘lesbian’ refers to same-sex attracted females; ‘bisexual’ refers to males or females attracted to any sex; and ‘transgender’ refers to males or females whose gender identity/expression does not match their sex assigned at birth.\textsuperscript{15} Since no characters were identified as intersex within the teen film sample, I have neither addressed this group nor adopted the longer LGBTI acronym. I reserve the term ‘queer’ to refer to queer theory or when invoking “approaches that intentionally destabilize received identities and seek to disrupt dominant ideologies and practices” (Ng 2013, 262), and thus do not use the LGBTQ acronym. The LGBT acronym is used to refer to the spectrum of non-heterosexual identities, though I occasionally use the longer LGBTQ or LGBTQI+ acronyms if they’re used in the source material. The term ‘homosexual’ is used to refer to gay men and lesbians collectively. It is important to note that this research predominantly focuses on gay and lesbian representations, reflecting the vast majority of non-heterosexual representations within the genre and, indeed, across media. The terms ‘heterosexual’ and ‘straight’ are used interchangeably to refer to characters that express or enact desire for the opposite sex; some incidental characters that express homophobic beliefs, but do not demonstrate opposite-sex desire, are understood as straight in line with a dominant reading of the films.\textsuperscript{16} Because of variation within the literature, I use the terms ‘teen,’ ‘youth,’ and ‘adolescent’ interchangeably to refer to people aged 12 to 20 years.

\textbf{Chapter overview}

This research is broadly divided into two sections: the first section (chapters one and two) outlines the historical and cultural context; the second section (chapters three and four) undertakes textual analysis of LGBT representations and heterosexual reactions to these representations in contemporary teen films.

Chapter one provides a broad cultural history of LGBT representation in mainstream film and television, beginning in Hollywood’s Pre-Code era. This chapter weaves together literature from

\textsuperscript{15} I use the term ‘transgender’ broadly for characters that either identify as transgender or characters whose sex at birth is depicted as different from their gender identity. I have excluded ‘body swap’ films where teenage boys and girls exchange bodies (for example, Hot Chick [2002] and She’s The Man [2006]), and the remake of Hairspray (2007) in which John Travolta plays Edna Turnblad. According to the film’s director, John Waters, “Edna Turnblad isn’t a drag-queen part. It has become a tradition for men to play her” (Waters 2007).

\textsuperscript{16} For example, as will be discussed in chapter four, the hillbilly Homeschooled Boys who briefly appear in Mean Girls (2004) do not express heterosexual desire but are understood, within a dominant reading, as heterosexual. While, as will be discussed in chapter two and four, young Americans are increasingly resisting gender and sexual binaries, and thus may question a heteronormative dominant reading, some scholars suggest that heterosexuality is becoming further entrenched in post-closeted contexts where homosexual identities are ascribed only to ‘out’ individuals (McCormack 2012, McCormack and Anderson 2010b, Becker 2009).
media studies, economics, and cultural studies, as well as discourses from popular and trade
press, to outline a number of factors involved in the evolution of LGBT representation in
mainstream media from the early 1900s to the 1980s. Paying particular attention to youth-
oriented media since the 1950s, I examine how teen-oriented film has intersected with LGBT
portrayals.

Chapter two focuses on LGBT representations from the 1990s to the present day. It outlines the
cultural and ideological ‘moment’ that gave rise to an exponential increase in gay and lesbian
representation within mainstream media. The chapter provides an overview of the politics and
legislation, as well as public sentiment and industrial changes within the media industry, that
shaped and responded to televisual and filmic LGBT representation of the period. The second half
of the chapter outlines LGBT representation within teen film and teen television, contrasting each
period’s youth-oriented representations with those made for adult or general audiences. It also
outlines some of my quantitative findings, examining the prevalence of LGBT-inclusive teen films

Chapter three outlines my quantitative findings LGBT characters, including their
visibility/invisibility within the genre, common tropes, and representation of sexual
identity/gender expression, ethnicity, and class. From there, I turn to textual analysis that focuses
on four themes that consistently appear in the scholarship on LGBT youth: coming out;
victimisation; sexual desire; and fixed vs. fluid identities. Drawing on a variety of literature, I
examine both the routine depictions of LGBT characters and the contestations of these tropes,
theorising about what each denotes about the hegemonic process.

Chapter four focuses on onscreen heterosexual responses to LGBT representations, including
LGBT characters, LGBT-themed language, and LGBT visual jokes. Broadly tracing reactions from
homophobic to LGBT-friendly, I examine gay panic and ‘fag discourse,’ and the linking of
homophobia to specific character types, then move to more LGBT-friendly responses that
demonstrate onscreen heterosexual acceptance of LGBT people, symbols, and space, and even
blur boundaries between LGBT and heterosexual.

The conclusion draws together LGBT representations, examined in chapter three, and onscreen
heterosexual responses, examined in chapter four, and further explores the patterns and
contradictions within the genre. I consider the many progressive representations that have
populated teen-oriented media, particularly television, and propose ways to improve
representation in the future. I end the chapter by contemplating the future of LGBT
representation in a contemporary cultural and political climate that appears to be shifting towards
conservatism.
Chapter one: a cultural history of gay and lesbian representation

In order to understand the representations of gay men and lesbians in contemporary teen film, it is important to examine the history of gay and lesbian media portrayal more broadly. Contemporary representations are not produced in isolation; rather, they are the product of a specific social, cultural, industrial, economic, and political ‘moment’ that builds on and incorporates past portrayals. This chapter lays the historical groundwork for my own analysis by outlining a cultural history of gay men and lesbians onscreen. I trace the emergence of various representations throughout time, examine what form they took, and explore what they signalled about the social context of their production. The chapter is divided into a series of chronological periods, beginning in the early 1900s and concluding in the 1980s; I trace the changes to, and uniformity across, these portrayals and theorise how they express provisional hegemonic stabilisations. For each period, I describe the general social and political climate, particularly the gay rights and anti-gay rights movements, as well as the cultural understanding of homosexuality; I outline Hollywood’s economic strategies and industrial constraints, chiefly regulation and censorship, which largely dictate what can be produced and distributed; and I contrast homosexual representations in film with those in television, a medium that has tended to ‘lead the way’ with more liberal portrayals. Because this thesis focuses on teen film, I pay particular attention to representations in youth-oriented film and television programming since the mid-1950s (the point at which the teen film genre emerged). It is important to note that, while the chapter focuses on the range of representations of gay men and lesbians during these time periods, onscreen homosexuals have most commonly been characterised by absence in Hollywood. Thus, while the chapter focuses on what has been made manifest through representations, gay and lesbian characters have mostly been invisible onscreen.

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17 While the teen film genre emerged in the mid 1950s, its antecedents can be traced to the early 1900s (Shary 2005, Driscoll 2011, Considine 1985, Scheiner 1990). Films in 1910-1930 were not made specifically for a teen demographic but did feature young characters, casting female youth as the cheerful and self-sufficient orphan girl, the wild and glamorous flapper (Scheiner 1990), and the ingénue, the embodiment of ‘youthful innocence’ (Driscoll 2011). Young onscreen males included Andy Hardy (Mickey Rooney) and the Dead End Kids. Onscreen teenagers of both sexes vacillated between clean teens and delinquents; “in the heyday of the Production Code there were delinquents and there were clean teens and very little in between” (Driscoll 2011, 20). This period provided the precursors for teen films in their “images of conflict between independence and dependence, rebellion and conformity, maturity and immaturity that shape the ways the drama of adolescence has been presented on film” (14).
Sissies and mannish women: representation before and after the Production Code

During the early 1900s, American society underwent significant cultural changes (D’Emilio and Freedman 2012). While the 1890s had been socially and sexually conservative, major economic and social changes had transformed society by the time of the First World War. Working-class women increasingly participated in paid employment and middle-class women attained post-secondary education; American life focussed more on consumption and pleasure and less on thrift and self-denial. By the 1920s, young men and women were fraternising unchaperoned, women were dressing less modestly and smoking, Hollywood sex symbols had emerged, and (heterosexual) romance and sexuality had been commodified and made visible as never before in newspaper columns, music, pulp fiction, and films (Allen 2015, D’Emilio and Freedman 2012).

Despite these increasingly liberal values, there was public concern about films’ effects on ‘vulnerable’ audiences and questions about whether Hollywood was capable of exerting adequate moral control over its content (Maltby 2012). Public concern was exacerbated by highly publicised scandals within Hollywood (Sandler 2007). The U.S. Supreme Court denied first amendment rights18 for films and officially sanctioned state regulation of the industry with its ruling in the 1915 Mutual Film Corporation v. Industrial Commission of Ohio case.19 Between 1915 and 1922, seven states passed censorship laws (Maltby 2012) and numerous municipalities created censorship boards to “review and license films that met vague and often arbitrary standards of morality and decency” (Browne 1986, 51). In response, Hollywood established a trade organisation, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA), in 1922 to self-regulate film content and manage the industry’s public relations (Maltby 2012).20 The MPPDA created an advisory list of content that was restricted or forbidden, known as the ‘Don’ts and Be Carefuls,’ with the aim of creating material that was safe and palatable for general audiences (and, of course, to guarantee profits).

Regulation influenced what could be portrayed on film, including representations of homosexuality. Vito Russo notes of this period that

18 First amendment rights guarantee, among other rights, the right to freedom of the press and free speech.
19 Mutual Film Corporation v. Industrial Commission of Ohio, 236 US 230 (1915). The ruling stated “the exhibition of moving pictures is a business, pure and simple ... not to be regarded nor intended to be regarded ... as a part of the press of the country or as organs of public opinion.”
20 It is important to note that the industry’s self-regulation was not simply a moral objective, it was also an economic imperative. Censorship ensured the economic viability of Hollywood’s product; to avoid public outcry, boycotts, and financial loss, the industry’s self-regulation of potentially controversial content ensured its dominance in the marketplace and avoided governmental interference (Sandler 2002). As Richard Maltby observes, “Hollywood was, is, and always will be a cinema censored by its markets and by the corporate powers that control those markets” (2012, 237).
while censorship laws were becoming more specific and explicit homosexuality remained a forbidden subject in every statute, it was clear that cross dressing, weakness in men and overintellectualism were sometimes direct statements about deviant sexuality. And whether expressed directly or not, the classic definition of homosexual men as frivolous, asexual sissies was firmly established during the last of the pre-Code years. (1987, 30-31)

The sissy did not originate in film, but had precedence as an instantly recognisable stock character in printed material and vaudeville theatre (Capsuto 2000, Benshoff and Griffin 2006). The sissy was characterised as effeminate, fussy, frivolous, and limp-wristed; his character personified gender reversal and connotatively portrayed homosexual men as unmanly. These embodiments of “failed masculinity” (Russo 1987, 33) played supporting roles and were generally used for humorous purposes. Steven Capsuto notes that the sissy was portrayed as “childlike, silly, impractical, impulsive, and powerless” (2000, 24) and, like other racial and religious stereotypes of the period, served to reinforce the naturalness of “a society where straight, white, middle-class Christians ruled benevolently and other people stayed gladly in the background” (23). The coding of lesbian characters similarly relied on the reversal of gender norms (Weiss 1992, Benshoff and Griffin 2006). Codified lesbian characters were depicted as ‘mannish women,’ dressed in men’s clothing and sporting short, slicked-back hair. Homosexual stereotypes relied on gender reversal rather than expression of same-sex desire and reflected the contemporary medical understanding of homosexuality as ‘gender inversion,’ which theorised that homosexuals were attracted to the same sex because they were, or wished to be, members of the opposite sex (D’Emilio and Freedman 2012, Benshoff and Griffin 2006); put simply, “homosexual men supposedly wanted to be women, and homosexual women wanted to be men” (Benshoff and Griffin 2006, 21). These onscreen representations were highly coded, yet remained visible.

This changed in the 1930s in part due to the economic hardship suffered by Hollywood during the Great Depression (Benshoff and Griffin 2006, Sandler 2007). In response to dwindling film audiences, producers incorporated increasingly titillating material in an attempt to regain audiences and profitability; this material contravened the ‘Don’ts and Be Carefuls’ and the more formal Production Code implemented in 1930, but the MPPDA lacked the means to enforce its recommendations. Salacious film content incensed some religious and civic groups. The Catholic Church created the Legion of Decency to lobby Hollywood and organise film boycotts; the public called on the federal government to regulate the industry. With profits endangered, in 1934 the MPPDA began enforcing the Production Code to address public outcry, mitigate increasing censorship, and ensure Hollywood’s economic dominance (Lewis 2000, Sandler 2007, Shurlock

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21 Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin (2006) note that some of Hollywood’s ‘mannish women’ were romantically paired off with men at the films’ conclusion, and thus these representations were perhaps as much about the era’s feminist ‘New Woman’ as about lesbians.
The Code was administered through the Production Code Administration (PCA) and only approved films could be shown in first-run theatres (Benshoff and Griffin 2006). Importantly, as noted by Richard Maltby, “[t]he Code contributed significantly to Hollywood’s avoidance of contentious subject matter … but it did so as the instrument of an agreed industry-wide policy, not as the originating source of that policy” (2012, 237). Thus, the Code reflected the nation’s moral principles – the contemporary common sense, or dominant hegemonic articulation – with an aim to produce films suitable to a general audience (including audience members deemed ‘vulnerable,’ like children and the lower classes). The Code’s implementation in 1934 changed film content dramatically, creating effects that would last for decades (Benshoff and Griffin 2006). Film content became more genteel and family-friendly; films featuring violent crooks and wanton women were replaced with respectable literary adaptations and sweet child stars like Shirley Temple. The Code curtailed depictions of sex such that even onscreen spouses needed to be shown occupying separate beds; topics like inter-racial attraction were strictly prohibited. While homosexuality was never addressed explicitly in the Code, it stated that “[s]ex perversion or any inference of it is forbidden” (quoted in Maltby 1995, 54). Thus, onscreen representations of homosexuality became even more hidden, ambiguous, and codified after the introduction of the Code than before its enactment (though these portrayals were still available to audience members willing and able to interpret them) (Gross 2001, Noriega 1990, Russo 1987). Codified gay and lesbian representations took a variety of forms. Sissy characters did not disappear but their ‘gayness’ was muted through the acquisition of wives or asexuality (Benshoff and Griffin 2006). Codified gay representations were also portrayed as ambiguously unhappy men bearing a burden they were desperate to shed, or enacting a longing for ‘normality’ (Russo 1987). Pre-Code mannish women were replaced with asexual tomboys, austere maiden aunts, or kept off-screen entirely. The Code even required Hollywood literary remakes to expunge homosexual content and replace it with other social issues, seen for example in These Three (1936), The Lost Weekend (1945), and Crossfire (1947) (Noriega 1990).

22 Sandler (2007) notes that the Studio Relations Committee administered a 1930 production code that required approval prior to a film’s release, however, without widespread industry support this code was not as effective as that adopted in 1934. After 1934, studios were required to submit scripts, wardrobes, advertising material, and the finished film to the PCA for approval prior to release (Benshoff and Griffin 2006). Because only approved films could be shown in mainstream theatres, the Code also served the economic interests of the major studios by consolidating their control of the industry.

23 The Code decreed, “[n]o picture shall be produced which will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence the sympathy of the audience shall never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin” (Shurlock 1947, 142).

24 For example, Rebecca (1940) kept the codified lesbian character off-screen for the duration of the film. Dead at the start of the film, the plot revolved around the search to uncover her unnamed dark secret.
With the advent of the Second World War, more films focussed on homosocial bonds (Benshoff and Griffin 2006). ‘Buddy’ movies focussed on close male relationships and often invoked the ‘oddball couple’ dynamic (as seen in Bob Hope and Bing Crosby’s *Road* pictures\(^2\)). Reflecting the cultural icon of Rosie the Riveter, films also portrayed strong women who banded together to accomplish traditionally male tasks (for example, *Cry Havoc* [1943] and *So Proudly We Hail!* [1943]). Films that highlighted the strength of same-sex bonds were careful never to stray into romantic territory, yet these films could still be read as rife with “queer possibilities” (Benshoff and Griffin 2006, 33).

The PCA did, occasionally, approve slightly less ambiguous homosexual representations, but only as portrayals of deviant enemies or sick antagonists (Benshoff and Griffin 2006). Examples include male Nazi soldiers who were depicted as effeminate, unmanly, and perverted and female fascists who were butch. In addition to wartime enemies, some sexually ambiguous villains were depicted as embittered and cynical murderers, cultured perverts, or *femme fatales* who plotted against men.

Thus, Hollywood’s early content was clearly influenced and restricted by regulation, the market, and cultural limits of ‘decent’ onscreen content in ‘harmless entertainment.’ During the pre-Code years, homosexual representations took the form of gender-inverted sissies and mannish women. These already oblique homosexual representations became further codified after the enactment of the Code, rendered almost invisible because of the difficulty in obtaining PCA approval. When they were available, these codified portrayals served as ideological boundary maintenance: whether they were frivolous sissy protagonists or antagonists corrupted by gender inversion, gay and lesbian representations were cast as ridiculous and ‘unnatural.’ Codified and ambiguous homosexual relationships could be “disavowed through laughter” (Benshoff and Griffin 2006, 35) or portrayed as villainous and perverted; neither invited positive identification and ultimately both served to exclude homosexuality from hegemony via invisibility, exclusion, and ridicule.

**Visible deviants and shifting masculinity: representation after the Second World War**

American society and the homosexual community underwent profound changes after the Second World War (Tropiano 2002, D’Emilio and Freedman 2012, Benshoff and Griffin 2006, Cohan 1997). Postwar America rushed to resume normal life after the war’s interruption, yet beneath the veneer of normality lurked anxieties about unseen enemies and simmering social dissatisfaction.

\(^2\) The *Road* pictures include: *Road to Singapore* (1940); *Road to Zanzibar* (1941); *Road to Morocco* (1942); *Road to Utopia* (1946); *Road to Rio* (1947); *Road to Bali* (1952); and *The Road to Hong Kong* (1962).
One of these anxieties involved the “virulent repression of homosexuality” (Cohan 1997, xiv) spurred by changing gender norms and emerging gay and lesbian visibility. Homosexual visibility increased after the war when gay men and lesbians settled in cities like New York and San Francisco (Tropiano 2002, D’Emilio and Freedman 2012). Gay bars and businesses sprang up in these cities, offering places for the community to congregate. This increased visibility triggered a backlash; gay men and lesbians were subject to raids, harassment, and imprisonment. Yet, ‘common sense’ understandings of ‘normal’ sexuality were also called into question when Dr. Alfred Kinsey published his popular and influential *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948), followed by *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953), sending “shock waves not only through the medical community, but through all of heterosexual America” (Tropiano 2002, 2). The Kinsey reports challenged contemporary beliefs about sexuality and argued that homosexual behaviour was more complex and common than previously thought (Morin 1977, Bullough 1998, Palmore 1952, D’Emilio and Freedman 2012). The reports helped shift popular understanding of homosexuality from gender inversion to object choice (being attracted to someone of the same sex) (Benshoff and Griffin 2006). This destabilised the predominant belief that homosexuals were instantly recognisable by gender-inversion (i.e. that gay men were sissies and lesbians were mannish), and provided scientific evidence that would later be used by the gay rights movement to combat pervasive homophobic stereotypes and myths (Morin 1977). Yet, in 1952, the American Psychiatric Association added homosexuality to its list of mental disorders (Tropiano 2002).

Despite the contribution of scholars like Kinsey, most of the psychiatric community considered homosexuality a form of psychopathology linked with dangerous and antisocial behaviours (Benshoff and Griffin 2006). The press perpetuated the notion that homosexuality was a form of deviance that threatened the bedrock of American society, and the public increasingly viewed gay men as child molesters. Juvenile delinquency, perceived as a social problem that was ‘spiralling out of control’ in the 1950s (Osgerby 2004), began being associated with homosexuality, amplifying the deviance of onscreen teen hoodlums (Benshoff and Griffin 2006).

It was against this backdrop that the first ‘homophile’ organisations, including the Mattachine Society and later the Daughters of Bilitis, were founded in the early- and mid-1950s (Tropiano 2002, Gross 2001, Charles 2012). These organisations were understandably secret and discrete;

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26 Scholars including Clellan Ford and Frank Beach (1951) and Evelyn Hooker (1957, 1958) followed Kinsey’s lead by demonstrating how widespread homosexual behaviour was, questioning the contemporary belief in its ‘unnaturalness,’ and arguing that it was not an “impairment in [psychological] adjustment” (Morin 1977, 631).

27 Benshoff and Griffin (2006) posit that linking homosexuality to child molestation began in the postwar period. Anthony Niedwiecki (2013-2014) explores how anti-gay campaigns since the 1970s have positioned homosexuals as predators and harmful to children to justify the restriction of LGBT rights. These campaigns equated homosexuality with pedophilia and predatory sexual behaviour, and cast gay men and lesbians as bad and unstable parents. Niedwiecki goes on to argue that LGBT rights groups have had to use courts, rather than politics, to secure same-sex marriage, which has helped to counter the idea that LGBT people are harmful to children.
they created an environment of support for members and helped to establish an emerging gay and lesbian identity. Gay and lesbian publications, like *Vice Versa* and *ONE*, began to circulate, creating the format that would continue in later publications and build a national community (Tropiano 2002, Gross 2001). For the next decade, these organisations advocated for assimilation among their members and tried to combat intolerance and discrimination through public education and positive public identity. It was during this period that gay men and lesbians increasingly started coming out of the closet, “break[ing] the silence of decades, demanding an end to laws that criminalised gay people and promoted discrimination and harassment” (Gross 2001, 23). The increased visibility of the gay and lesbian community, coupled with the Kinsey reports, amplified the ‘threat’ of homosexuality to straight America: that it was invisible and it was everywhere (Gross 2001, Benshoff and Griffin 2006).

Postwar America was riddled with anxieties about unseen enemies. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) infamously carried out ‘witch hunts’ for people suspected of having Communist ties which were often conflated with homosexuality; as Larry Gross observes “the categories were often collapsed into the commie-queer bogeyman” (2001, 21). With the conflation of communism and homosexuality, the paradox of gay and lesbian visibility became central to these anxieties. On the one hand, the visibility of homosexuality increased significantly. The emergence of gay and lesbian communities made homosexuals more identifiable to everyday Americans, bolstered by the incredibly influential Kinsey reports claiming that homosexuality was more common than previously imagined. On the other hand, homosexuals had become indistinguishable from straights. In part due to the Kinsey reports, the popular understanding of homosexuality changed from gender-inversion to object choice, meaning that homosexuals were no longer instantly recognisable sissies or mannish women. And if they were not instantly recognisable stereotypes, straight Americans could no longer tell gay men and lesbians apart from their apparently straight neighbours, friends, and family members; ‘they’ could be hidden in plain sight. In addition, the assimilationist goals of homophile organisations like the Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis hinged on homosexuals being manifestly visible yet socially integrated – able to blend seamlessly into the heterosexual community – and thus simultaneously visible and invisible.

In this period, homophobia and instability became rampant in Hollywood (Tropiano 2002, Gross 2001). HUAC’s witch-hunt in Hollywood resulted in a purge of directors, writers, and actors, and widespread paranoia (Noriega 1990), and this instability was compounded by economic uncertainty after the Second World War. A number of social and industrial factors were to blame: television became a rival for the public’s attention; urban populations migrated to the suburbs, away from theatres in city and town centres; the cost of film production increased and led to
shrinking profit margins for major studios (Sandler 2007, Schatz 1993, Doherty 2002, Betrock 1988). The *US v. Paramount* decision in 1948 prohibited the practice of block-booking and forced studios to divest themselves of their theatre chains, eliminating guaranteed exhibition and ultimately reducing the output of films from major studios. Coupled with these factors, declining adult and family audience numbers encouraged studios to look to a new target demographic for their salvation: teenagers (Betrock 1988, Doherty 2002). The film industry began to see teenagers as “the one group with the requisite income, leisure, and gregariousness to sustain a theatrical business” (Doherty 2002, 2). According to Thomas Doherty, “the teenpic … begins around 1955, a product of the decline of classical Hollywood cinema and the rise of the privileged American teenager” (2002, 12). While early teen films like *The Wild One* (1953), *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), and *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) did not specifically target a teen audience, their staggering profits alerted filmmakers to the economic potential of the teen market. Doherty asserts that

*Rock Around the Clock* became the first hugely successful film marketed to teenagers to the pointed exclusion of their elders. By showing that teenagers alone could sustain a box office hit, *Rock Around the Clock* pushed motion picture production strategy toward the teenpic. (57, emphasis in original)

It was not only the film industry that was coming to terms with this new demographic; the very concept of the ‘teenager’ was emerging as a cultural category “set apart from previous generations of American young people in numbers, affluence, and self-consciousness” (Doherty 2002, 34). The number of teenagers in the US increased dramatically in the 1950s, as did their educational attainment (Osgerby 2008, 2004). Teenagers began to see themselves as a distinct group with their own culture and consciousness, separate from their parents (Doherty 2002). This identification was informed by contemporary sociologists and psychologists, and amplified by commercial enterprises intent on selling goods and services to the lucrative teen market. The music industry embraced the profitable new sounds of rock ‘n’ roll, as did teens who saw it as a way to rebel and let loose on the dance floor; and postwar affluence gave teenagers more access to cars, increasing their sense of mobility and freedom as well as their ability to frequent drive-in movie theatres. While initially slow to take advantage of this new market, the film industry began to make ‘exploitation’ films that titillated youthful audiences with timely material previously too taboo to appear onscreen.

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29 Block-booking was an industry practice where major studios would only sell independent distributors their films in an ‘all or nothing’ package, pairing prestige ‘A’ films with less lucrative ‘B’ pictures. Block-booking was one of the “monopolistic and collusive practices … that stifled competition and inhibited fair trade” (Sandler 2007, 26).

30 *Rebel Without a Cause* and *Blackboard Jungle* both generated profits in excess of $5 million (Betrock 1988).

31 The teen population in the US rose from 10 million to 15 million people throughout the decade, eventually peaking at 20 million by 1970 (Osgerby 2008, 2004).
The profit garnered from titillating youngsters was only one of the factors that spurred Hollywood to increasingly incorporate daring material. Needing to compete with ‘racier’ overseas fare and television production, filmmakers once again began to exploit taboo subjects (Sandler 2007, Schatz 1993, Noriega 1990). Exhibitors, for their part, began to look overseas and to smaller studios for films to screen, including those not approved by the MPPDA like *Pit of Loneliness* (1951), a censored version of a French lesbian film. Many risqué films grossed so well at the box office that exhibitors were increasingly willing to bear the brunt of local censorship boards and boycotts, eroding the dominance of MPPDA-endorsed films (Sandler 2007, Lewis 2000, Schatz 1993). Changes to film regulation also increased the range of material allowed to be shown onscreen. The *Miracle* decision\(^\text{32}\) of 1952 meant that films could no longer be censored for being ‘indecent,’ ‘harmful,’ or ‘immoral’ (though they could be banned for obscenity). Revisions to the Code in 1956 permitted the ‘discreet’ presentation of, among other issues, drug use, abortion, and prostitution; further revisions in 1961 liberalised representation of ‘sexual perversion’ if treated sensitively (Sandler 2007).

These changes to the Code meant that homosexuality could now be referenced explicitly, yet throughout the postwar period Hollywood’s representation of homosexuality “generally continue[d] according to previously established stereotypes: homosexuality was silly and comedic, villainous and scary, or shameful and tragic” (Benshoff and Griffin 2006, 94). Russo notes that after the 1961 Code amendments, “[h]omosexuality had come out of the closet and into the shadows, where it would remain for the better part of two decades” (1987, 122). Even more than in previous periods, homosexuality was used to suggest corruption and depravity; it was portrayed as sinister, menacing, predatory, evil, degenerate, or just plain sad, and often resulting in suicide or murder (Gross 2001, Russo 1987, Benshoff and Griffin 2006). A representational shift accompanied this depravity: homosexual characters were no longer instantly recognisable gender ‘inverted’ stereotypes but became gender-conforming deviants who looked like ‘everyone else’ (Benshoff and Griffin 2006). This reflected and reinforced the anxiety caused by the paradox of manifest visibility of the homosexual community and invisibility through integration, playing up America’s anxiety of hidden threats lurking within its midst. As Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin note, “the appearance of traditionally gendered queer men and women [in the postwar period] suggests that the social definitions of homosexuality were again changing” (2006, 37).

Deviant lesbian and gay men were visible in numerous films; connotative lesbians were portrayed as sick prison wardens or predatory older inmates preying on the young in films like *Caged* (1950)

\(^{32}\) *Joseph Burstyn, Inc. v. Wilson*, 343 U.S. 495 (1952); the *Miracle* decision overturned 1915 *Mutual Film Corporation v. Industrial Commission of Ohio*, bringing films under the First Amendment’s provisions of free speech and free press (Sandler 2007).
and *Reform School Girl* (1957). Adult crime films like Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rope* (1948) featured ambiguously gay, but thoroughly deviant, killers; as noted by Benshoff and Griffin (2006), the film strongly linked homosexuality, criminality, and mental illness (which in turn reflected public sentiment and the position taken by much of the psychiatric community at the time).

Not only were connotative homosexuals relegated to deviant status, but explicitly gay men and lesbians were at this time condemned to onscreen death. It was a Code requirement for films with explicit homosexual characters to uphold ‘morality’ by unsympathetically depicting these characters living doomed lives that ended swiftly in death imposed by themselves or others; the films’ message was clear: “being out of the closet was dangerous to your health” (Gross 2001, 62). The portrayal of the deviant gay man who dies a grisly death is epitomised in the teen-centered *Suddenly, Last Summer* (1959). Working with the National Legion of Decency, the PCA gave special dispensation to the studio to include the gay character, Sebastian Venable (Julián Ugarte, uncredited) (Hadleigh 2001). The PCA explained its decision by stating that “since the film illustrates the horrors of such a lifestyle, it can be considered moral in theme even though it deals with sexual perversion” (quoted in Hadleigh 2001, 23). The film focuses on Catherine Holly (Elizabeth Taylor), a young woman who is institutionalised after witnessing the suspicious death of her cousin, Sebastian, while vacationing together in Europe the previous summer. Catherine’s aunt, Violet Venable (Katharine Hepburn), is overbearing and unnaturally in love with her son; she denies and attempts to suppress the ‘sordid’ truth about Sebastian and his untimely death. Ultimately, Catherine recounts how Sebastian used her as ‘bait’ to lure impoverished local boys for sex, and ended up cannibalised by a swarm of young men. Sebastian is thus cast as a “faceless terror, a horrifying presence among normal people ... hunted by his grimy victims ... he must die, finally, at the hands of the society he had exploited and outraged” (Russo 1987, 117). *Suddenly, Last Summer* typified the portrayal of homosexuality as sinister, menacing, and predatory; the very embodiment of evil endangering an attractive heterosexual female and ultimately punishable by death. Later teen-focussed films like *The Strange One* (1957) also linked violence and ‘sex perversion’ (Benshoff and Griffin 2006).

While such teen-oriented films overtly depicted homosexuality as deviant, the topic was more commonly explored through connotation. As noted by David Considine, “[g]iven the inability of Hollywood to maturely depict adult homosexuality, it is hardly any wonder that the topic was so stifled in the cinema of adolescence” (1985, 241). Teen films in the juvenile delinquency cycle

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33 Teen films of this period tended not to cover homosexuality explicitly, though they did explore other taboo topics, most commonly juvenile delinquency. Various teen film cycles of this period exploited timely and scandalous material in a series of film cycles: the juvenile delinquency cycle (*Teenage Crime Wave* [1955] and *Girls in Prison* [1956]); the scifi/horror cycle (*I Was a Teenage Werewolf* [1957]); the rock ‘n’ roll cycle (*Shake, Rattle, and Rock!* [1956]); and the hot rod cycle (*The Fast and the Furious* [1955] and *Hot Rod Girl* [1956]) (Betrock 1988, Doherty 2002).
most commonly presented veiled homosexuality as gender inversion while thematically examining
the construction of normative masculinity: what, in postwar America, it took to 'be a man.' They
suggested that homosexuality was 'caused' by familial discord: fathers who did not – or could not
– embody traditional masculinity and overbearing mothers who stifled their children. Films like
Rebel Without a Cause and Tea and Sympathy (1956) reflected the renegotiation of normative
masculinity – understood as a ‘crisis’ of masculinity – during the 1950s (Cohan 1997), narratively
questioning 'what it takes to be a man' and presenting gender non-conforming teens as codified
homosexuals.

Rebel Without a Cause focuses on confused, alienated, and troublemaking suburban teen Jim
Stark (James Dean) who forms a makeshift family with girlfriend Judy (Natalie Wood) and ‘son’
John ‘Plato’ Crawford (Sal Mineo). It is the character of Plato who is coded as homosexual
through, for example, his pink and frilly bedroom, the picture of film actor Alan Ladd hanging in
his locker, and the adoring looks he casts towards Stark. As noted by Jeffery Dennis, “[t]he
homoeroticism of Rebel is so integral to [the] plot and characters that to call it subtext is a
misnomer” (2006, 39). Neither Stark nor Plato have appropriate male role models: Stark’s hen-
pecked and be-aproned father is unable to enact normative masculinity, as is Plato’s absent
father. The film suggests that it is the lack of appropriate masculine role models that leads to crisis
for both boys; Plato’s crisis, which links his covert homosexual desire for Stark with his longing for
a family, appears insurmountable. Christopher Castiglia contends that as Plato’s homosexuality
becomes clear throughout the movie, so does his “mental instability” (1988, 32). And it is Plato’s
mental instability that directly leads to his dramatic death: being gunned down by the police.
Overall, Rebel “pleads [for] a redefinition of manhood” (Russo 1987, 110) while depicting codified
homosexuality as dangerous, unstable, sick, and ultimately deadly.

Tea and Sympathy similarly questioned hegemonic masculinity, using the transgression of gender
norms as a euphemism for homosexuality, and thus maintaining the ambiguity required for PCA
approval (Benshoff and Griffin 2006). The film focuses on 17-year-old Tom Robinson Lee (John
Kerr) who enrols in a boy’s prep school but does not fit into the macho culture embodied by the
other male students who enjoy ‘manly’ pursuits. Shy and sensitive Tom prefers classical music and
partakes of typically women’s activities, for which he is nicknamed ‘Sister Boy.’ Tom was deprived
of a father figure and this, suggests the film, is why he is unsure of how real men behave

34 Steven Cohan (1997) outlines numerous factors that gave rise to this ‘crisis’ in masculinity: the war’s disruption to
normative gender roles; anxiety around veterans’ mental stability; the Kinsey reports’ challenge to assumptions of
normal sexual practices for men and women; the economic boom that enabled more people to access formerly-luxury
goods; the equation of hegemonic masculinity with white-collar jobs, traditionally seen as feminine work; and the
valuing of conformity over individuality.

35 Removing all mention of or allusion to homosexuality was one of two significant script changes required by the PCA
when the film was remade from a Broadway play; the other was the punishing of adultery (Gerstner 1997).
(Considine 1985). Various scholars have analysed the film, many of whom explore how it deals with masculinity. David Gerstner persuasively argues that *Tea and Sympathy* “marked the site of contestation not only in the multiple changes Hollywood faced in the 1950s, but also in the wrenching changes in political gender relations in America” (1997, 14). He proposes that increased female participation in the labour force, particularly in education, coupled with the public’s growing knowledge of homosexuals expounded by the Kinsey reports, “aroused an anxiety over the very ‘manhood’ of the male heterosexual” (17). Considine (1985) also focuses on changes to masculinity, arguing that Tom’s sexual self-doubt was a result of Hollywood’s depiction of a new ‘searching’ adolescent masculinity, similarly visible in *Rebel’s* Stark. Russo views this film as a plea for tolerance “not for sexual deviation but for unfortunate heterosexuals who happen to be less than ‘masculine’” (1987, 113), that stops short of extending this tolerance to homosexuals. In contrast to Russo, Gerstner views the film as a depiction of “masculine anxiety and its attendant homophobia” (1997, 22). He contends that certain directorial choices made by Vincente Minnelli represent 1950s hegemonic masculinity as foolish and destabilise meaning: “[i]n effect, those ‘real’ men are made to look ridiculous and, indeed, hyperbolic in their masculine constructions when placed within Minnelli’s aestheticized text” (24). While this reading is persuasively argued, it may not have been received by audiences; Chon Noriega’s analysis of film critic reviews reflects that “all reviewers agreed that the effeminate student feared that he might be homosexual” (1990, 28). Despite such conflicting views, Russo (1987), Gerstner (1997), and Considine (1985) all contend that, while the film focussed on the notion of manhood rather than homosexuality, the unspoken suggestion of homosexuality was enough to drive Tom to attempt suicide after failing to ‘prove’ his heterosexuality with a local girl. Thus, the film reflected America’s unsettled negotiation of masculinity in the postwar period while still affirming the heterocentric worldview: Tom was driven to attempt suicide by the mere suggestion of homosexuality.

The negotiation of masculinity continued to be a topic of interest when a new wave of teen beach films hit the screens, beginning in 1963 (Betrock 1988). These beach party films eschewed even oblique depictions of homosexuality in favour of good times in the sun and surf. While erasing

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36 Gerstner (1997) describes the cultural anxiety around women teaching boys in schools, leading to the ‘feminisation’ of men-in-formation and a destabilisation of heteronormative masculinity.

37 Juvenile delinquency teen films were replaced by the beach party cycle, commencing with *Beach Party* (1963) (Betrock 1988). While scholars debate whether these films offered reassurance and escapism from troubling cultural circumstances (Morris 1993) or embodied the ideological contradictions of the time (Rutsky 1999), they all note that part of the films’ appeal relied on the display of young bodies scantily clad in bikinis or tight swim trunks (Morris 1993, Rutsky 1999, Doherty 2002, Andersen 2014, Dennis 2006).

38 Dennis (2006) provides a queer interpretation of this film cycle. He resists a heteronormative reading of the films and maintains that, while strong and toned male bodies are mandatory in these films, ‘girl-craziness’ is not. He posits that
homosexuality, Pablo Dominguez Andersen (2014) contends that these films served to reinvent hegemonic masculinity during a period of crisis (the same ‘crisis’ that is explored in Rebel Without a Cause and Tea and Sympathy: how male teens could ‘become men’). The cycle portrayed young men as rugged and rebellious, wholesome yet non-conforming, able to domesticate the exotic ‘other,’ and untainted by effeminacy. He asserts that “the beach party genre demonstrates both the striking resilience and the fundamental instability of youthful hegemonic white masculinity” (4, emphasis in original). While, as Andersen contends, these films questioned hegemonic masculinity, they did so without invoking homosexuality even in connotative terms. Thus, despite engaging with the crisis in masculinity, as seen in earlier juvenile delinquency teen films, teen beach films rendered homosexuality invisible yet again.

At the point when homosexuality was invisible in teen films, Noriega (1990) observes that homosexuality was depicted as a congenital medical condition in a small number of adult-oriented films. While by no means condoning homosexuality, “the medical discourse neatly sidestepped the Code’s prohibition on sympathy for homosexuals and other sinners” (32). Film critics from this period extended sympathy and tolerance, if not acceptance, towards homosexual characters because of their ‘disease.’ Their film reviews signalled a shift from moral indignation to a medical model, but as yet did not recognise homosexuality as ‘natural’ for characters in these films. As noted by Noriega, “[t]he film reviews reflected a shift in society from moral and legal definitions of homosexuality to psychiatric definitions” (34).

The depiction of homosexuality in medical terms became a trope on the small screen. While Hollywood generally depicted homosexuals as dangerous or sick, the burgeoning medium of television started to cover the ‘social problem’ of homosexuality in talk shows, network news specials, and a small number of medical dramas (Gross 2001, Tropiano 2002, Capsuto 2000). These programs posed questions presumably also posed by the audience: “What makes someone a homosexual? Can he/she be cured? Is homosexuality immoral? Should it [sodomy] be legal?” (Tropiano 2002, 3, emphasis in original). Attempting to answer questions, many programs proposed that homosexuality was ‘caused’ by homosexual seduction during youth or dysfunctional parental relationships.

One such program was ABC television’s college drama, Channing, that raised the possibility of homosexuality in the episode “The Last Testament of Buddy Crown” (1963); indeed, it was the first exploration of teenage homosexuality on television (Tropiano 2002). Like the films Rebel Without a Cause and Tea and Sympathy, this episode ostensibly examines normative masculinity.

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the “central problem of each movie is, why would a boy choose the agonies of hetero-romance over the warmth of his same-sex buddies?” (87).
and the ridicule young men suffer if they are unable to conform, though unlike the earlier films, homosexuality is explicitly named. The episode focuses on Buddy (Jim Barringer), an intelligent but athletically and socially unskilled young man who is taunted by his peers and his father; Buddy drowns while attempting to prove his manliness. After the death, Buddy’s English professor, Prof. Howe (Jason Evers) confronts Buddy’s father, Dr. Crown (David Wayne) about the father’s unreasonable expectations of masculinity:

Prof. Howe: ... standards which imposed a mandatory either/or. Either a man—
Dr. Crown: Or a homosexual, which he was.
Prof Howe: You made him think he was.
Dr. Crown: Think? Oh professor, his letters were so obvious it was embarrassing...
Prof. Howe: Buddy was different, yes. He paid for that difference every day of his life. He didn’t fit. He didn’t belong. He lacked the ability to make friends. He could survive their ridicule, their slights. It was your assessment of him, Dr. Crown, that destroyed him. You introduced a poison into his bloodstream just as surely as if you’d used a hypodermic syringe.
Dr. Crown: The poison was there. I merely gave it a name. If he died trying to prove his manhood, it was a pointless sacrifice.

While this episode rendered homosexuality explicit it certainly did not espouse tolerance. Homosexuality was named as a possibility for Buddy, but it was an abhorrent possibility – a ‘poison’ – the mere accusation of which ‘destroyed’ him and led to his death. Thus, Channing, like Rebel Without a Cause and Tea and Sympathy, similarly depicted how, explicit or rumoured, homosexuality led inexorably to an unhappy life and an early demise for young men.

Despite the often overtly anti-homosexual slant to television programs, the medium did provide the first opportunities for members of the gay and lesbian community to speak publicly for themselves (Gross 2001, Tropiano 2002). Stephen Tropiano (2002) notes that television coverage in this period likely had both positive and negative effects on the public: these shows brought homosexuality into the open, yet framed it exclusively as a social problem, exploited and sensationalised by the media.

**Big screen deviants and small screen tolerance: representation during cultural revolution**

The 1960s was a period of social and political upheaval in America; a period replete with grassroots social activism that was taken to the streets in the name of civil rights, feminism, and in protest against the Vietnam war (D’Emilio and Freedman 2012). It was in the late 1960s that a

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38 Tropiano (2002) posits that the audience’s sympathy for Buddy increased because Prof. Howe, and by extension the audience, disbelieves the accusation of homosexuality. He theorises that “[i]f it were [true], perhaps viewers … may have been less sympathetic and have even felt Dr. Crown’s attitude toward his gay son were justified” (157).
new, more radical gay rights movement emerged. In 1969, a routine police raid in Greenwich Village resulted in the Stonewall riots, “igniting the explosion of a militant gay rights movement” (Gross 2001, 40). While Stonewall is understood as sparking the gay rights movement, the movement had roots in the 1950s and 1960s. As John D’Emilio and Estelle Freedman observe, [t]he weakening of taboos against the public discussion of homosexuality, the pervasive police harassment of the era, and the persistent work of a small coterie of pre-Stonewall activists combined to make many lesbians and gay men receptive to the message of ‘gay power.’ (2012, 319)

Soon after the riots, radical gay rights groups like the Gay Liberation Front and the Gay Activists Alliance were formed (Gross 2001, 40). Radicals of the 1960s adopted ‘coming out’ as a political act; it moved from a personal acknowledgement of one’s homosexuality to oneself and the gay community to a public rejection of the negative connotations constructed by heterosexual society in favour of pride and self-acceptance (D’Emilio and Freedman 2012). By the 1970s, coming out had been embraced by non-radical gay men and lesbians and became a fundamental part of being homosexual; coming out to the heterosexual community also “defused the fear that [was] attached to popular conceptions of homosexuality, humanizing the stereotypical images that most Americans held, and making possible a permanent alteration of attitudes” (324). The gay rights movement grew and gained strength throughout the 1970s, adapting and migrating into the realms of legislation and reform. Institutional changes achieved during the 1970s included: the elimination of sodomy laws in half of the states; removal of homosexuality from the list of medical disorders by the American Psychiatric Association in 1974; lifting the ban on employment of homosexuals by the civil service; and the movement towards incorporating sexual preference into municipal, state, and federal civil rights laws.

It was during the 1970s that lesbian and gay rights activists increasingly recognised the power of the media in shaping public sentiment and the cultural and social agenda (Gross 2001). They began to target print, television, and film producers, aiming to increase the visibility of gay men and lesbians and provide more accurate media representations. They demanded not just an end to negative, stereotypical representations, but the inclusion of positive portrayals in mainstream media. Organisations like the Gay Activists Alliance and the National Gay Task Force targeted homophobic or demeaning content in programs and were able to mobilise widespread support and focus on advertising revenue in their call for national action.

This was, however, also the time in which anti-homosexual activists, mostly comprised of the ‘religious right,’ concentrated their efforts and used the mass media to spread their message. Anti-gay campaigners like Reverend Jerry Falwell raised funds through religious programming (made possible by advances in satellite technology and cable television), cultivated prestige, and
attracted national news coverage (Capsuto 2000). They attacked television networks for “overly favourable attention to gay people” (Gross 2001, 82) and threatened to mobilise their supporters in programming boycotts, which curtailed not only gay and lesbian representation but any content that was not in keeping with ‘family values’ (Capsuto 2000). Anti-gay campaigners successfully repealed state-level civil rights legislation that prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation, the most (in)famous of which was undertaken by Anita Bryant in 1977 (D’Emilio and Freedman 2012). These losses, in turn, spurred further mobilisation of the gay and lesbian community.

In the late 1960s, Hollywood faced its own upheaval: major studios, which had relied on blockbusters for their profits since the boom years a decade before, overextended themselves by concentrating on a decreasing number of expensive films that sometimes lost out financially (Schatz 1993, Lewis 2000); new studios ‘glutted’ the market with films; network television, whose film purchasing was once the fail-safe for recouping profits, had a stockpile of films to last several years and stopped purchasing; and nightly televised films reduced theatre attendance and created a more selective audience (Balio 1990). Studios were facing declining audience numbers, a change in cultural mores, competition from overseas and independent studios, and increasing freedom in onscreen expression (Sandler 2007). Major studios, looking at the success of imported films, began to innovate, leading to an ‘American film renaissance’ (Schatz 1993, Lewis 2000), which partly relied on the incorporation of timely and risqué content made possible by the replacement of the Production Code with an age-based classification system in 1968 (Sandler 2007). This new system signalled the end of Hollywood’s commitment to all-age appropriate ‘harmless entertainment’ and formalised the inclusion of material and topics that could be “politically subversive, sexually explicit, and/or graphically violent” (Schatz 1993, 15). Lurid material featured prominently in a short-lived cycle of low-cost, youth-oriented ‘rebellion’ films covering political turmoil, uprising on college campuses, drug use, and sexual liberation that included The Hooked Generation (1968), Easy Rider (1969), The Strawberry Statement (1970), and Zabriskie Point (1970) (Shary 2005, Bodrogkozy 2002).

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40 Former singer and beauty-queen Anita Bryant established the anti-gay rights coalition Save Our Children in 1977 with the aim to repeal the anti-discrimination ordinance in Dade County, Florida (Fetner 2001, 412).

41 The classifications included the following categories: G (general audiences); M (mature audiences, parental discretion advised); R (restricted, no one under 16 years of age admitted without an adult guardian); and X (no one under 16 years of age admitted) (Sandler 2007, 2002). There have been several adjustments to this rating system over time: in 1969 the age limit of the X-rating was increased to 17 years; in 1970 the M-rating was replaced by GP (becoming PG in 1972); in 1970 the age limit for the R-rating was increased to 17 years; in 1984 the PG-13-rating was added; in 1990 the X-rating was replaced by NC-17 (no one under 18 years of age admitted).

42 Most of these films focussed on college-aged characters rather than teenagers since campuses were a more relevant location ground for such rebellion than high schools (Shary 2005). Because they focused on college-aged characters rather than strictly teens, they do not belong in the teen film genre, however, they constituted the dominant youth cinema genre until the cycle’s decline in 1971. While Hollywood continued to rely on the teen demographic for
*Last Summer* (1969) and *Wild in the Streets* (1968), perhaps the only gay-inclusive youth film in this cycle (Shary 2005).

Subversive and explicit material was not limited to ‘rebellion’ films, but also seen in mainstream films like *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* (1970) and *Myra Breckinridge* (1970) that were shocking, camp, self-consciously nostalgic, and often X-rated (Benshoff and Griffin 2006). According to Benshoff and Griffin, these films “undermin[ed] the centrality of heterosexuality in favor of a more diverse queer perspective” (2006, 141) but were seen by critics as evidence of the ‘homosexualisation’ of Hollywood: “reflecting the era’s resurgent fears about a ‘pink mafia,’ [it was] the paranoid belief that queers in the entertainment industry were attempting to destroy American morals by promoting pro-homosexual themes” (144). These “queer inversions of both traditional (hetero)sexual mores and Hollywood form” (144) were reviled by critics and failed at the box office.43

The backlash against queer films may have made Hollywood leery of depicting complex homosexual characters (Benshoff and Griffin 2006). Though more than a dozen homosexual-themed films were released in the early 1970s (Russo 1987), homosexual representations largely relied on simplistic stereotypes of the ridiculous ‘swish’ effeminate gay man or the vicious villain (Benshoff and Griffin 2006, Russo 1987, Seidman 2005). Gay men continued to be “less than men” (Russo 1987, 195) and lesbians “not quite women” (195). Lesbians were depicted as sumptuous and villainous vampires who stalked the screens in graphic X-rated films (Weiss 1992)44 or as psychotic murderers, seen, for example, in *Windows* (1980) (Gross 2001); homosexual characters were “sex-obsessed or sex-defined” (Russo 1987, 187), and mired in self-hatred, as demonstrated by the lesbians in *The Killing of Sister George* (1968) and gay men in *Boys in the Band* (1970).45

Overall, the ‘homosexual problem’ was still depicted as a tragedy, a sickness, or a deviance that threatened children and the family (Seidman 2005). Onscreen homosexuality continued to lead to an early and violent demise (Gross 2001), as seen in *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (1967), *The Sergeant* (1968), *Cruising* (1980), and *Windows*. As Russo states,
[i]n spite of the dramatic and increasingly vocal visibility of gays, prompted by the gay rights movement, the film industry stuck to stereotypes ... Plays, books, magazines, even television shows, presented a steady stream of diverse characters, real and fictional, who challenged gay stereotypes even in the face of a political backlash. But not motion pictures. (1987, 185-86)

Indeed, Benshoff and Griffin propose that

[p]erhaps these aggressive and frightening images expressed the straight culture’s fears about newly activist queers marching in the streets; the films’ narratives would have soothed those anxieties by showing the destruction of queer monsters at the hands of traditionally hetersexual heroes. (2006, 145)

The tragic depiction of homosexuality was used in the only film to depict teen homosexuality during this period, *Ode to Billy Joe* (1976). Set in 1953, the film explores the young love between teens Billy Joe McAllister (Robbie Benson) and Bobbie Lee Hartley (Glynnis O’Connor). One night at a town dance, Billy gets drunk and has sex with a man; tormented by the act, he confesses to Bobbie and kills himself. While Barbara Jane Brickman optimistically posits that the film provides a “convincing critique not only of normative masculinity but also of the social forces that lead to ... [the] silencing of [Billy]’s queer voice” (2014, 134), Russo (1987), Shary (2005), and Considine (1985) see it as conforming to the tragic trope of onscreen gay males. Indeed, Considine concludes that the “filmmakers were no more able to deal with the subject [of homosexuality] than they had been a decade before” (1985, 242). Thus, despite dramatic social and cultural changes, *Ode to Billy Joe* typified the continued negative representation of homosexuality in Hollywood, showing that any contact with homosexuality resulted in self-loathing and suicide; a secret too awful to have exposed and survive.

Despite the overwhelmingly negative portrayals of homosexuality, Benshoff and Griffin (2006) propose that some films of the period did provide a less damning portrayal and offer more complex reflections on gay and lesbian characters, for example *Midnight Cowboy* (1969) and *The Detective* (1968), *Rachel, Rachel* (1968) and *The Night of the Iguana* (1964). These films suggest that it is the repression of homosexuality – rather than homosexuality itself – that leads to the mental illness and violence. This distinction was, however, often lost on film critics at the time:

[un]fortunately, because of the public’s general ignorance about matters of human sexuality, many of these films created confusion about their intended messages; many of them are easy to read as yet a new variation on the old stereotype of the crazy killer queer. (Benshoff and Griffin 2006, 137)

Despite a few arguably more progressive depictions – and indeed despite the burgeoning gay rights movement that was playing out across America – Hollywood yet again resolutely ignored homosexuality or relied on stereotypes as a “dramatic device ... to shock and sell” (Russo 1987,
This was in part due to the industry’s near economic collapse, that cast blockbusters as the industry’s financial saviour. Established in the mid-1970s, ‘New Hollywood’ was an “era of high-cost, high-tech, high-speed thrillers” (Schatz 1993, 17) that seamlessly integrated national promotion strategies, ‘saturation booking,’ the summer hit, and targeting of youth audiences (Balio 1990, Schatz 1993). The blockbuster replaced the ‘renaissance’s’ radical focus on taboo topics and experimentation with fixation on expensive, action-oriented films that grossed exceedingly well. While good for studios’ bottom lines, these films “relegat[ed] homosexuals back to the realm of connotation” (Benshoff and Griffin 2006, 149).

In contrast to Hollywood’s stereotypical treatment of gay men and lesbians, television was comparatively liberal. Throughout the decade, gay and lesbian characters were included in numerous dramas and made-for-tv-movies, including the occasional program that explored the intersection of homosexuality and youth, though very rarely were there depictions of gay and lesbian teens (Capsuto 2000, Tropiano 2002). Indeed, gay and lesbian inclusion became so commonplace that by 1972 television networks were “using homosexuality as a selling point” (Capsuto 2000, 76). One driver of change was television networks’ shift to targeting the lucrative youth audience, an audience that favoured ‘hip’ comedies, ‘gritty’ dramas, and the inclusion of controversial material (Capsuto 2000). Additionally, made-for-tv-movies, previously used to explore topical social problems, provided a good format for narratives about homosexuality (Benshoff and Griffin 2006). While the plots of homosexual-inclusive programs were “riddled with contradictions” (Tropiano 2002, 109), they did aim to educate heterosexual characters, and by extension heterosexual audiences, about homosexuality.

One lesson in this televisual ‘education’ questioned and problematised homosexual stereotypes. The “Judging Books by Covers” (1971) episode of CBS’s All in the Family was the first situational comedy (sitcom) episode dedicated to the topic of homosexuality (Tropiano 2002). It challenged stereotypical ‘gay behaviour’ by contrasting an effeminate straight character and a macho gay man, making the characters, and by extension the viewers at home, question ‘who’s gay?’ Importantly, unlike his counterparts in other programs at the time, the gay male character isn’t “ashamed, embarrassed, or troubled about being gay” (187). Such questions about identity became central to many homosexual-themed sitcom episodes that used stereotypical inaccuracies as their source of humour. As summarised by Tropiano,

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46 Saturation booking was – and continues to be – used to coax as many viewers as possible to the multiplex theatre in the first week of release (Schatz 1993, Balio 2013).

47 While Hollywood relied on the youth demographic for profits, the teen film genre was largely dormant in the late 1960s and 1970s; instead studios produced blockbusters that featured adults but appealed to youth (Balio 1990, Schatz 1993).
the issue of identity plays a central role ... typically involv[ing] someone coming out of the closet (‘the coming out episode’), someone being mistaken as gay or straight (‘the mistaken identity plot’), or a heterosexual pretending to be gay for fun or profit (‘the pretend episode’). (190)

The actual outcome of these sitcoms may have been equivocal. While they exposed the folly of stereotypes, they may have perpetuated the same homophobic beliefs they attempted to dispel; as Tropiano (2002) observes, it is hard to tell if audiences were meant to be ‘laughing with’ or ‘laughing at’ such stereotypes. Further, only single-episode characters were used to dispel stereotypes; recurring gay characters tended to conform to the sissy stereotype, with their sexuality serving as a target for jokes. As Tropiano notes, sitcoms continue to rely, even now, on these same plots and characters: “[t]hrough gay plots and gay characters – real, mistaken, and only pretending – homosexuality is treated comically, yet ... the audience is constantly being assured ‘that there’s nothing wrong with it’” (191, emphasis in original).

ABC’s made-for-tv-movie That Certain Summer (1972) similarly aimed to dispel gay stereotypes. The program was hailed as a breakthrough in the positive portrayal of homosexuality to mainstream audiences and provided one of the first substantive televisual portrayals of teens and homosexuality (Walters 2001, Tropiano 2002). The plot involves 14-year-old Nick (Scott Jacoby) visiting his divorced father, Doug (Hal Holbrook); unbeknownst to Nick, Doug lives with his lover, Gary (Martin Sheen), who has vacated the property for the duration of Nick’s stay. While Doug is unwilling to discuss his sexual orientation with his son, believing him too young to understand, Nick grows suspicious during the visit and eventually pieces it together, forcing Doug to disclose his sexuality:

Doug: Do you know what the word ‘homosexual’ means?...
Nick: I think so.
Doug: You probably heard about it in school or in the streets. Well that’s just one side: put-downs and jokes. A lot of people, most people I guess, think it’s wrong. They say it’s a sickness, that it’s something that has to be cured. I don’t know. I do know it isn’t easy. If I had a choice, it’s not something I’d pick for myself. But it’s the only way I can live ... I lied to myself for a long time, why should I lie to you? ... The hardest time I ever had was accepting it myself. Can you at least try to understand, please? Nick, I love you.

Nick, distressed by his father’s disclosure, returns home to his mother without saying goodbye, leaving Doug visibly upset. The final scene shows a sombre Doug revisiting home movies from a happier time, a time when father and son played together.

The writers of That Certain Summer aimed to create non-stereotypical characters – Doug and Gary were a ‘nice’ upper-middle-class gay couple – but the network had to tread carefully (Capsuto 2000, Tropiano 2002). Censors raised concerns about any suggestion of affection between the
couple and the use of ‘love’ to describe their emotional bond. While the line ‘we love each other’ was allowed to stay in the script, the lack of physical contact between the couple creates awkwardness in some scenes, especially the finale when Gary is unable to physically comfort his distressed partner. ABC requested the addition of anti-gay material to ‘balance’ the show and avoid being labelled ‘pro-homosexual’; while resistant, the writers eventually had Doug himself address the anti-gay beliefs still widely held by straight America. The disclosure scene was criticised by homosexual communities and critics, however, it serves as an illustration of how homosexuality was viewed in America during this period. In the end, That Certain Summer was a success. It achieved high ratings, was well received by both mainstream and gay organisations and press, and received eight Emmy award nominations that generated prestige for ABC. As noted by Capsuto, “That Certain Summer proved to television executives that the public and the critics were open to well-made, serious shows about gay people” (2000, 85). It continues to be seen by scholars like Capsuto (2000), Tropiano (2002), and Gross (2001) as a breakthrough text that portrayed a gay couple as more than a stereotype and demonstrated the possible popularity of homosexual-themed material created for a mainstream, largely heterosexual, audience.

While not central to That Certain Summer, some television programs of the period cast homophobia and homophobic violence – not homosexuality – as the problem (Tropiano 2002, Capsuto 2000). Heterosexual characters in these programs pitied and/or tolerated their (presumed) gay counterparts, a marked improvement from homophobia but still not amounting to acceptance. Tropiano outlines the dual function served by these programs:

[They] advocated tolerance by telling their presumably hetero audience ‘gay is O.K.’ (and homophobia isn’t). Yet, in response to the increased visibility of homosexuals in American society, they also aimed to educate viewers, particularly parents, who presumably needed to be reassured their child’s heterosexuality wasn’t at risk. (2002, 55)

This is illustrated by the episode “What is a Man?” (1971) of ABC’s high school drama Room 222. The episode focuses on 16-year-old artistic, shy, and dateless Howard (Frederick Herrick) who is harassed by fellow students. Howard’s mental and physical health deteriorates because of the torment of his peers, until he gains the confidence to confront them and their accusations of homosexuality. The episode exposed homophobia’s negative impact on mental health, sense of safety, and educational attainment. Capsuto argues that “What is a Man?” established the standard narrative format for programs about gay teens: “liberal characters criticise homophobia, but at the last minute it becomes unclear whether the targeted character is really gay” (2000, 74). Thus, “early shows about schoolyard homophobia sent the message that antigay harassment was a problem particularly when it mistakenly victimized ‘normal’ kids” (75). A similar format was used in an episode of ABC’s Family, entitled “We Love You, Miss Jessup” (1977), which focussed on the
deleterious effects of rumours levelled against a (heterosexual) female student for having a close teacher-student relationship with a lesbian. It was also used in CBS’s high school drama *The White Shadow*’s episode “One of the Boys” (1979) in which a student was forced to transfer schools amid rumours of his homosexuality. In contrast to postwar *Tea and Sympathy* and *Channing*, these later programs place the blame on homophobia, instead of homosexuality, for the hurt done to the young protagonists. This change highlights the iterative hegemonic inclusion of homosexuality: homophobia was, slowly, migrating from acceptable to unacceptable in mainstream society; yet homophobia is shown as a problem primarily because it could harm straight teens. The fact that these teen characters were only rumoured to be homosexual – but turned out to be maligned ‘normal’ straight kids – while ‘real’ homosexual teen characters remained invisible, demonstrates that boundaries of hegemonic inclusion had not yet extended to homosexual youth.

Television programs also provided audiences with the ‘facts’ of homosexuality, including, for example, that it was not hereditary and that an encounter in adolescence did not necessarily amount to being gay (Tropiano 2002). Single episodes generally focussed on sexual confusion and, in keeping with other public discourses of the period, often linked homosexuality to poor parental relationships. Confusion was consistently apparent in teen-focussed programming with adolescent characters uncertain if they were truly homosexual or if it was a ‘passing phase.’ This is illustrated by ABC’s law and order drama *Owen Marshall, Counselor at Law* in the episode “Words of Summer” (1972). Hailed as a breakthrough, this was the first primetime network television program that included a self-identified adult lesbian. The episode focuses on young diving champion, Ann Glover (Meredith Baxter), who is accused of molesting 15 year-old Ardis (Denise Nickerson). The prosecutor attempts to prove that Ann is a lesbian (and thus presumably guilty) by questioning her roommate, a semi-out and unashamed lesbian named Meg (Kristina Holland). Ardis ultimately reveals that she manufactured the accusation because she had a crush on Ann; Ardis is assured by her therapist that such feelings are ‘normal’ and ‘don’t mean anything,’ cementing Ardis’ status as a temporarily confused heterosexual. The episode was marketed as ‘daring,’ and was unprecedented in its representation of a self-described, unashamed, stable, politically active, young lesbian who is supported by a heterosexual friend (Capsuto 2000, Tropiano 2002). Despite these positive advances, it negatively links lesbianism with molestation, rehashes a narrative of the ‘accusation’ of homosexuality, negates the possibility of a happy and fulfilling life as a lesbian, and presents teen lesbianism as temporary.

A slightly different take on confusion is presented in an episode of NBC’s drama *The Bold Ones* (“Discovery at Fourteen” [1972]). The episode focuses on the strife of a young man, Cory Merlino (Ron Howard), who fears that he will inherit his ostracised father’s homosexuality, a fear that has
manifested in a bleeding ulcer and self-destructive behaviour (Tropiano 2002). Dr. Fallon (Jane Wyman) explains to Cory that he can ‘choose’ who he wants to be and is not “stuck with anything,” comforting words that aid Cory’s recovery. The doctor also chastises the family about their treatment of Cory’s father: “You’d think he had two heads and warts on all four eyeballs. Now we’re not going to get any place until you crawl out of your Victorian caves! These are enlightened times!” Tropiano (2002) concludes that while the episode is outwardly progressive, it presents homosexuality as a lifestyle or a personal choice and that it is only after the medical ‘explanation’ of homosexuality as non-congenital that the family reconciles.

Taken together, these programs depict teenage homosexuality as confusing and temporary. While each episode is outwardly progressive – exposing the destructive effects of homophobia – none present explicitly homosexual teens, rather depicting teen homosexuality as a ‘passing phase’ on the way to stable heterosexuality. The stability of heterosexuality is, therefore, rendered ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ – the obvious step towards mature selfhood after immature ‘dabbling’ and confusion; homosexuality, by contrast, is depicted as transient, unstable, and unnatural. Thus, these programs collectively demonstrate hegemonic inclusion of homosexuality while simultaneously re-privileging and re-normalising heterosexuality. As maintained by Dr. Fallon, these were ‘enlightened times,’ but not yet enlightened enough to show explicitly homosexual teens or to depict teen homosexuality as natural on the small screen.

In contrast to these programs, ABC’s drama Family included perhaps the only portrayal of an explicitly gay teenager who is not confused about his sexuality. The “Rites of Friendship” episode (1976) featured Zeke (Brian Byers), a friend of 17 year-old program regular, Willie Lawrence (Gary Frank). Zeke is arrested at a gay bar, thrown out of the house by his father, and stays with the Lawrence family. Most of the family is unfazed by his homosexuality, but Willie is hurt that Zeke had not confided in him earlier; in the end Willie apologises and they make amends. Variety’s reviews of the episode characterised it as handling the topic ‘effectively’ and ‘sensibly’ (quoted in Tropiano 2002, 161). Tropiano notes

[h]omosexuality is presented as a simple fact of life that doesn’t need to be qualified by a medical or psychological explanation. It’s not about understanding why someone is gay, but why someone needs the love and support of their family and friends when he/she comes out of the closet. (161)

“Rites of Friendship” thus provided a rare example of a stable gay male youth who not only knew he was gay, but continued to be gay at the end of the program.

While, as these programs have demonstrated, clear progress had been made towards tolerance in homosexual-themed programming, not all programs were liberal; some episodes fell back on old stereotypes that equated homosexuality with crime and deviance. Although the motives for the
crimes of such homosexuals moved from madness to greed or thwarted love, “there was still the implication that their criminal behavior was linked to his or her deviant sexuality” (Tropiano 2002, 61). The deviant homosexual was depicted in made-for-tv-movies Born Innocent (1974) and Cage Without a Key (1975). Both programs are set in women’s juvenile detention centres and plagued with the spectre of female prison rape and evil lesbians. While such programs ostensibly criticised the failure of incarceration to rehabilitate inmates, they in fact exploited rape and violence to titillate the audience and relied on the trope of the dangerous lesbian. Similarly dark portrayals of homosexuality featured in Dawn: Portrait of a Teenager Runaway (1976) and its sequel Alexander: the Other Side of Dawn (1977). These programs followed runaway and prostitute, Dawn (Eve Plumb), and her lover Alexander (Leigh McCloskey), who offers sexual services to both men and women. Alexander’s sexual orientation is ill-defined (he has sex with men for money or approval, but chooses to be with Dawn and he repeatedly insists that he is not gay) (Tropiano 2002). All of these portrayals associated homosexuality with an unseemly and darkly perverse world.

ABC’s episode of Marcus Welby, M.D., “The Outrage” (1974), linked homosexuality with another kind of deviance: paedophilia (Tropiano 2002, Capsuto 2000). The episode focussed on a male teenager, Ted (Sean Kelly), who had been sexually molested by his male teacher, and subsequently taken to Dr. Welby (Robert Young) for medical attention. Ted is ashamed of the incident but eventually consents to talk with a psychiatrist. During the ordeal, Ted’s shocked parents are unable to cope and too disgusted to help; Ted’s father even asks if there was something Ted could have done to avoid the attack. The teenager’s masculinity is restored at the end of the episode when, after the teacher is caught attempting to molest another child, Ted’s father says, “You acted like a man.” The episode was clearly problematic in that it equated homosexuality with molestation; gay activist groups objected to the perpetuation of the stereotype of gay men as child molesters and requested that the episode be abandoned. While the script underwent a number of rewrites to remove homosexual references, the “gay overtones” (Tropiano 2002, 20) remained. The episode prompted the National Gay Task Force and the Gay Media Action Group to coordinate a national campaign that resulted in significant financial loss for the network (Capsuto 2000) and sent “a clear message to television producers and broadcasters that negative, malicious stereotypes would no longer be tolerated” (Tropiano 2002, 21).

As illustrated by various made-for-tv-movies and “The Outrage,” the progressive narratives in television programming were not universal. Indeed, a number of narrative limitations were present even in outwardly progressive programs (Tropiano 2002, Gross 2001). Gay and lesbian characters, both adults and teens, were almost all one-episode characters; they appeared for the single gay-themed episode and then disappeared into the televisual ether. These characters all
lacked a homosexual community, existing solo in an otherwise hetero world, with gay and lesbian characters coming out to their often unsupportive heterosexual peers, an affair that was depicted as traumatic. Even supportive heterosexual characters extended pity or tolerance to gay and lesbian friends and family members, not acceptance. Homosexuality was treated as ‘confusion,’ a secret to be discovered, or an issue to be solved by the heterosexual community. Thus, while television provided more progressive homosexual inclusion than film, its narratives were still limited in a number of ways.

These media representations can be usefully understood as the manifestations of ideological negotiation resulting from the struggle for gay and lesbian rights. The unevenness of these representations, within and across media, demonstrates the activeness of this negotiation and the lack of a coherent provisional stabilisation. Media representations presented both straight America’s anxiety about homosexuality as well as its increasing acceptance and humanising of gay men and lesbians. As suggested by Benshoff and Griffin (2006), the ‘aggressive’ and ‘frightening’ homosexual depictions can be understood as manifestations of hetero America’s anxious response to the newly radicalised gay rights movement, which was soothed by the onscreen punishment and destruction of the homosexual interlopers. Depictions of deviance functioned to exclude homosexuality from hegemony, becoming the very ‘indigestible’ parts that needed to be repelled and excluded. Yet the tentatively progressive depictions – seen more commonly on television than in film during this period – demonstrated how far the homosexual rights movement had come. Partly this was due to targeted activities of gay and lesbian rights activists who aimed to influence the representation of homosexuality at the heart of hegemony’s battleground: the media. While their tactics were often successful, resulting in reduced negative portrayals, gay and lesbian representations in mainstream media faced the constraint of requiring mass appeal and thus needing to fit within the hegemonic comfort zone; they were representations of homosexuals but not for homosexuals. Thus, progressive depictions, resulting from social struggle and hegemonic negotiation, simultaneously demonstrate hegemonic inclusion, the re-privileging of heterosexuality, and the realignment of hegemony’s boundaries.

This is illustrated by a number of narrative conventions of the time, most important of which is the heterocentric nature of homosexual-inclusive programming. Sympathetic gay and lesbian narratives of the time were all filtered through a straight compatriot (i.e. the narrative revolved around a heterosexual main character who was ‘coming to terms’ with the homosexuality of a friend or family member). This heterocentrism highlights a number of boundaries of hegemonic inclusion. First, this narrative structure centralises heterosexuality and simultaneously renders homosexuality peripheral, even in narratives which ostensibly put homosexuality front and centre. In these programs, what is of central importance is how or what the straight character,
rather than gay or lesbian character, feels or thinks. Second, these narratives situate homosexuality as the *problem*; the *issue* that divides the otherwise happy and unified community. Framing homosexuality as the ‘issue’ implies that the hetero world would function more smoothly without any gay or lesbian wrinkles. Third, power is given to the straight community to bestow acceptance on the isolated homosexual, never the other way around (an impossibility since even the most progressive programs featured only a single gay or lesbian character, never a community). This empowers heterosexuality and reinforces the heteronormative hierarchy that subordinates homosexuality. All three of these conventions – heterocentrism, homosexuality as an issue, and the power of straights to accept homosexuals – demonstrate how heterosexuality was re-privileged in the homosexual-inclusive programming of the period. That accepted characters were almost all white, middle-class, gender-conforming gay men also delineates the relevant racial, class, gender, and sexual hegemonic boundaries of inclusion. These media representations make manifest hegemony’s changing borders; borders that increasingly absorbed a homosexuality that was white, male, middle-class, gender conforming, subordinate to heterosexuality, and required its approval. Yet, despite these hegemonic limits, it was unmistakeably progress.

**Representations in the return to conservatism**

A return to conservatism and ‘family values’ was signalled by the 1980 landslide election of President Reagan, who was “responsible for the renewal of time-honored, God-honest, old-fashioned, traditional American values, like patriarchy, sexism, and homophobia” (Tropiano 2002, 76). The politics of the period were marked by soaring government expenditure on the escalating Cold War and ‘war on drugs,’ decreasing taxes, reduced spending on social welfare programs, restrictions of women’s rights (including access to abortion), reduction of sex education in high schools, and the infusion of politics with religion-based morality (Torr 2000, Prince 2007). The widespread support for the Reagan administration was in part a reaction to liberal social changes like increased rates of divorce, women in the workforce, and gay and lesbian visibility (D’Emilio and Freedman 2012). This shift to conservatism and rise of the ‘Moral Majority’ threatened the accomplishments gained by social rights campaigns including the gay rights movement (Benshoff and Griffin 2006). The Reagan administration actively courted the vote of the religious right; indeed Reagan’s 1980 campaign was financially supported – and partially drafted – by anti-gay rights campaigner Reverend Jerry Falwell (Capsuto 2000). Reagan appointed federal judiciary members who supported a conservative view; and 1986 saw the Supreme Court decision
supporting the constitutionality of sodomy laws in *Bowers v. Hardwick*48 (D’Emilio and Freedman 2012).

Hollywood was impacted by the Reagan administration. ‘Reaganomics’ advocated media deregulation, leading to the integration of film, television, and other media enterprises; these mergers and acquisitions reshaped the industry (Schatz 2012b, 1997, 1993). Reagan’s free market economic policies also extended Hollywood’s global reach, with domestic top grossing blockbuster films proving popular with international audiences. At this time, the explosive growth of two technologies, the VCR and cable television, also vastly impacted Hollywood and helped to secure its profitability (Schatz 2012b, 1997, 1993, Balio 1990). While Hollywood studios initially feared economic loss and attempted to hinder the uptake of the VCR, it became an increasingly important revenue stream for the industry; by mid-decade, revenue from home video outpaced that from theatrical exhibition (Prince 2007). Meanwhile, cable television generated demand for entertainment products that utilised Hollywood’s back-catalogue, paid high fees for blockbusters, and called on Hollywood to create new series (Schatz 2012b, 1997, 1993, Balio 1990). The lifespan of a film grew to 10 years, cycling through the markets of home video and pay-per-view, cable television, network television, re-release on cable, and television syndication (Balio 1990). The creation of ancillary markets, the cultivation of overseas markets, and increasing domestic audience numbers generated record revenues after three decades of the industry’s economic decline (Schatz 2012b, 1997, 1993, Balio 1990).

For its part, Hollywood’s profitability was deeply intertwined with the “high-speed, genre-blending, male-action film [that] proved ... popular with audiences and [was] more strategically open to reiteration, licensing, and serialization” (Schatz 2012b, 8). Blockbuster hits like *Batman* (1989) were effectively leveraged into “global marketing bonanza[s] [where] licensing and merchandising revenues quickly surpassed the box-office returns” (Schatz 2012b). Yet the same year demonstrated the potential of independent film with the relative success of *sex, lies, and videotape* (1989). This bifurcation in Hollywood – with blockbusters on one side and independent films on the other – “established a dual filmmaking agenda that still prevails” (Schatz 2012b, 7).

The period saw an increase in independent film studios, some of which specialised in genre fare,49 helping to re-launch the teen film genre (Balio 1990, Perren 2012), as did the rise of multiplex theatres in shopping malls (Shary 2014, 2005). Hollywood increasingly tailored its products to teenage audiences that frequented the mall, creating “a voluminous outpouring of films directed


49 The 1980s saw the establishment of a new group of independent producers that were drawn to the industry because of the growth in pay cable television and home video and the production cutback by the major studios (Balio 1990). These independent producers specialised in low-budget films, often catering specifically to the youth market.
to and featuring teens” (Shary 2005, 55). To keep up with youth trends and avoid potential audience fatigue and associated profit loss, Hollywood increased the variety of teen film subgenres available concurrently. Whereas previous periods were dominated by individual cycles, teen films of the 1980s diversified to simultaneously include the subgenres of horror/slasher, sex comedy, science fiction, romantic melodrama, high school, and juvenile delinquency (Tropiano 2006, Shary 2014, 2005). 50 Timothy Shary notes that this range of films meant that

‘80s teens encountered a complexity of moral choices and personal options on which the multiplex movies thrived. This gave teenage audiences ... a greater sense of presence in popular media, a deeper potential to be influenced by the films they saw, and a wider range of options from which they could construct and compare their sense of self. (2014, 7)

It was during this period that Hollywood also realised that there were potential profits in homosexual-themed films. 51 Gay and lesbian characters flourished in a range of films during the 1980s; Russo (1987) identifies more than 100 mainstream and independent films released between 1981 and 1987 that included homosexual themes or characters. As noted by Benshoff and Griffin (2006), these homosexual-inclusive films reflected both the backlash to, and emergence of, gay liberation.

These Hollywood productions often repeated the same stereotypes and narrative conventions of previous periods: gay and lesbian characters were pitiable victims and predatory villains; effeminate gay men were ridiculed; lesbians were vicious vampires; homosexuality was depicted as intrinsically controversial; physical violence against gay and lesbian characters went unpunished; and homophobic slurs were almost mandatory (Russo 1987, Gross 2001, Benshoff and Griffin 2006). The ‘killer queer’ resurfaced in films like Dressed to Kill (1980), Cruising, Windows, and The Fan (1981), as well as a slew of low budget teen slasher films like Prom Night (1980) and Sleepaway Camp (1983) (Benshoff and Griffin 2006). Nevertheless, more positive depictions also emerged during this period. In part, this emergence was due to gay and lesbian protests against killer-queer characters in box office bombs Windows and Cruising; in part it was

50 The horror/slasher sub-genre was kick-started in (1978) by Halloween, and included Friday the 13th (1980) and A Nightmare on Elm Street (1984), each of which spawned their own successful franchises (Shary 2014, 2005). Sex comedies (including Animal House [1978], Porky’s [1982], Fast Times at Ridgemont High [1982], and Risky Business [1983]) were popular during the early 1980s; Shary notes that the sub-genre’s precipitous decline in 1986 coincided with growing public awareness that AIDS could be spread through heterosexual as well as homosexual contact. The science sub-genre included War Games (1983), Back to the Future (1985), and Real Genius (1985). Romantic melodramas included Sixteen Candles (1984) and Say Anything... (1989). The high school subgenre included John Hughes’ The Breakfast Club (1985) which established the stock characters – the nerd, the jock, the ‘basketcase,’ the princess, and the delinquent – that continue to be widely portrayed in teen films. Shary (2014) also delineates the juvenile delinquency subgenre, a diverse group of films ranging from harmless mischief in Ferris Bueller’s Day Off (1986) and Dirty Dancing (1987) to more serious teen rebellion in River’s Edge (1986).

51 Homosexual-themed films were often distributed by independent studios; the burgeoning popularity of VCRs meant that lower cost productions released straight-to-video for niche markets became profitable, increasing the portrayals of gay men and lesbians in film (Russo 1987).
due to the financial success of gay-positive representations in *La Cage Aux Folles* (1978) (Benshoff and Griffin 2006).

*La Cage Aux Folles* proved a surprise hit with mainstream audiences, leading to two 1980s sequels, a Tony-award winning Broadway musical, and a 1996 remake (Gross 2001). Gross (2001) and Russo (1987) suggest that the mainstream appeal of the film was due to the absence of a threat to heterosexual norms, the ability for the audience to identify with the heterosexual son (represented as the ‘normal’ character in contrast to his gay parents and his straight right-wing in-laws), and the asexual nature of the loving gay couple. The film’s popularity and financial success “encouraged Hollywood producers to undertake gay-themed projects, especially ones in which effeminate queens turned out to be just as courageous as straights” (Gross 2001, 72). It spurred a 1982 “mini-cycle of so-called gay films” (Russo 1987, 271) that included *Making Love* (1982), *Victor/Victoria* (1982), *Partners* (1982), and *Personal Best* (1982). These films demonstrated to Hollywood that gay-themed fare would not necessarily alienate mainstream audiences or spawn boycotts from the ‘Moral Majority’ (Hadleigh 2001). Yet, *Partners, Personal Best*, and *Making Love* performed poorly at the box office and heterosexual audiences greeted the onscreen gay intimacy in *Making Love* with outright hostility (Benshoff and Griffin 2006, Hadleigh 2001).

*Personal Best*, one of the only youth-focused films of the period to depict lesbians, follows the life of Chris Cahill (Mariel Hemingway), a young track and field athlete who falls in (and out of) love with competitor Tory Skinner (Patrice Donnelly), eventually settling down with male swimmer Denny Stites (Kenny Moore). While the depiction of a romantic and sexual lesbian relationship in a mainstream film was ground-breaking, other aspects were less progressive (Benshoff and Griffin 2006). Some felt that the film’s framing of the women’s bodies and the extended ‘steamy’ lesbian sex scenes imitated male heterosexual pornography, enacted the ‘male gaze,’ and pandered to heterosexual male fantasies of ‘girl-on-girl.’ Additionally, Chris’s eventual settling down with a heterosexual partner after ‘dabbling’ in lesbianism presented lesbianism as a transient, adolescent phase prior to stable heterosexuality (Benshoff and Griffin 2006, Russo 1987).

Like *Personal Best*, *Happy Birthday, Gemini* (1980) was a relatively progressive gay-inclusive youth-focused film. Considine saw it as taking “a quantum leap forward in Hollywood’s treatment of adolescent homosexuality” (1985, 242). This film focuses on 20-year-old conflicted gay man,

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52 French-Italian co-production *La Cage Aux Folles* remains one of the most successful foreign-language films to be released in the United States (as of 2017, it was the tenth highest grossing foreign-language film of all time [Box Office Mojo 2017]). The 1980 and 1985 sequels were French-Italian films. Hollywood’s 1996 remake, *The Birdcage*, achieved strong box office success, ranking as the ninth highest grossing film of the year, and encouraged Hollywood to undertake more gay-themed films (Gross 2001).
Francis (Alan Roxberg), who is supported and loved by his father whose only wish is for him ‘to be himself.’ The father does not demand that Francis be a ‘chip off the old block,’ but instead supports his son as he forges his own path. Rather than the untimely death faced by homosexual youths in earlier Hollywood films, Francis’ future appears happy and full of possibilities. Considine notes that “[t]he survival of the son and his father’s support represented a startling new attitude in Hollywood’s response to adolescent sexuality” (244), indicative of society’s changing attitudes and increasing tolerance. As noted by Shary, however, Considine’s enthusiasm “appears premature” (2014, 267) since onscreen homosexual teens appeared infrequently until the middle of the next decade.

While *Personal Best* and *Happy Birthday, Gemini* provided ground-breaking and relatively positive depictions of homosexuality on film, other teen films of the period relied on established stereotypes. First is that of the sad and lonely gay teenager doomed to a loveless existence, earlier depicted in youth-focussed films like *Tea and Sympathy* and *Ode to Billy Joe*. The teen drama *Fame* (1980) included a single gay teen, Montgomery MacNeil (Paul McCrane), in its inclusive student body at New York’s High School of Performing Arts. While Michael is part of the ‘in crowd’ and treated sympathetically he is, however, the only character without a romantic partner and is presented as “doomed to a loveless life of unhappiness” (Considine 1985, 242). Russo describes him as “the sad, frustrated, lone gay student ... who is the butt of the film’s fag jokes” (1987, 88). (Montgomery was included in the subsequent television series, running from 1982 to 1987, but he was no longer gay.) Independent horror film, *Night Warning* (1982), similarly presented homosexuality as lonely. The film focuses on a teenage boy, Billy Lynch (Jimmy McNichol), who is suspected of murder by a homophobic police detective who believes the death under investigation is the result of a homosexual love triangle. Closeted gay basketball coach, Tom Landers (Steve Eastin), is forced to resign when his sexual orientation is discovered and his lover ends up dead. While Tom is ultimately one of the few survivors, homosexuality is depicted as a reason for murder and a precursor to a lonely life. Thus, while homosexuality in 1980s youth-focussed films did not lead directly to death as it had in earlier periods, these films still did not present the possibility of a happy or fulfilling future for homosexuals.

Second is the stereotype of the ridiculous effeminate gay man, used in a small number of mainstream teen-oriented films. There were a small number of films targeting an adult, art-house audience but inclusive of youth homosexuality. While such films are outside of the teen film genre as defined by this research, they are worth mentioning for the sake of comprehensiveness. Russo (1987) discusses *Abuse* (1983), an art film that focussed on the relationship between 35-year-old film student Larry Porter (Richard Ryder) and 14-year-old Thomas Carroll (Raphael Sbarge), covering controversial topics like child abuse, power relations, and intergenerational sex. The film caused controversy in heterosexual and homosexual communities, and was rejected by numerous distribution companies and film festivals; however, Russo clearly supports the radical film’s ability to deal with such controversial content. Russo also examines
effeminate and limp-wristed Lamar Latrell (Larry B. Scott) and is “perhaps the only teen nerd movie to include a gay teenager among ‘us’ (though no one ever says the word)” (Dennis 2006, 157). While Lamar is part of the Tri-Lambda fraternity and crucial to the nerds’ victory over their popular oppressors, Dennis (2006) contends that Lamar’s peers demonstrate ‘disgust’ and ‘discomfort’ around him due to his sexual orientation. While I find this debatable – since, for example, none of the nerds demonstrate any uneasiness when Lamar dances with his male date at the house party – his sexuality and effeminate mannerisms do form the crux of many of the jokes throughout the film. It is, however, worth mentioning that Lamar is likely the only out black gay teenager before the mid-1990s in a mainstream teen film. ‘Brat Pack’ classic St Elmo’s Fire (1985)54 utilises the ‘mistaken identity’ narrative device and similarly relies on the sissy stereotype for humour. Sullen, shy, and girlfriend-free, early career journalist Kevin Dolenz (Andrew McCarthy) is presumed to be gay by many of his peers including his love interest, Jules VanPatten (Demi Moore). However, Kevin has stayed single because he is enamoured with his friend’s girlfriend. As noted by Russo, such

bogus homosexuality [allows] … real men [to] suspect intellectual poets and writers of being sissies so that we the audience may learn the lesson that real men can be sensitive without actually being queer. (1987, 257)

It turns out that the ‘real’ gay in the film is the effeminate, limp-wristed, and cowardly interior decorator who serves as a gay foil to Kevin, showing by comparison how ‘not gay’ Kevin really is (Russo 1987). Thus, Revenge of the Nerds and St Elmo’s Fire rely on the sissy stereotype for a few cheap laughs.

Third is the depiction of homosexuality as deviant or dark. For example, Reform School Girls (1986) is a dark comedy about a new cohort of girls sent to a reform school run by a sadistic warden and administrator. Lesbian overtones are apparent between the administrator, school bully, and new girls, seen in the body cavity and strip searches during the students’ induction. According to the film’s producer Jack Cummins, Reform School Girls attempted to “exploit exploitation” (Goldstein 1986), but any critique offered by the film was undercut by the focus on gratuitous and titillating female nudity, and reinvoking the deviant lesbian trope that remained ubiquitous (Russo 1987, Goldstein 1986). Equally dark is the depiction of the gay hustler. Debuting in teen-inclusive television programming a decade earlier, the hustler made its way into teen

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54 The ‘Brat Pack’ refers to a group of actors in many coming-of-age films of the 1980s, most notably those directed or written by John Hughes; the core group of actors were Emilio Estevez, Anthony Michael Hall, Rob Lowe, Andrew McCarthy, Demi Moore, Judd Nelson, Molly Ringwald, and Ally Sheedy (Gora 2010). While not strictly a teen film, St Elmo’s Fire is worthy of inclusion because it featured many of the ‘Brat Pack’ actors — Emilio Estevez, Rob Lowe, Andrew McCarthy, Demi Moore, Judd Nelson, and Ally Sheedy – and had thus likely had strong teen appeal.
movies of the 1980s. The drama *Forty Deuce* (1982) focuses on a teenage hustler and junkie who attempts to finance a heroin deal by blackmailing a john who supposedly murdered a 12 year-old runaway during sex. The thriller *Angel* (1984) focuses on a 15-year-old female student-cum-prostitute who foils a psycho-necrophiliac killer who murders prostitutes on Hollywood Boulevard. While the main character is heterosexual, members of her ‘street family’ include a transvestite named Mae (Dick Shawn) and an “alcoholic crazy lesbian landlady” (Russo 1987, 254).

While not strictly a teen film, drama *Less than Zero* (1987) focuses on 18-year-old straitlaced college freshman Clay Easton (Andrew McCarthy) who returns home to find that his high school best friend, Julian Wells (Robert Downey, Jr.), has become a homeless drug addict, forced into prostitution by his dealer to pay off debts. Julian is clearly disgusted by his same-sex sexual activities and ultimately dies. The hustler depictions in these films link homosexuality with the seedy underworld of ‘gay for pay’ prostitution and paedophilia; Russo notes that this representation “feeds the traditional vision of gays as outcasts who inhabit only the nether world of illicit sexuality” (1987, 254).

While teen films of the 1980s utilised these various characterisations, the most common depiction of homosexuality was conveyed through dialogue rather than represented by characters. Accusations of homosexuality and homophobic language were ubiquitous in teen films of this period. Harkening back to teen-focused films like *Tea and Sympathy*, verbal accusations of homosexuality were levelled against 1980s teen film characters for displaying any form of gender nonconformity. Unlike their 1950s predecessors which relied on connotation, however, these later teen films hurled accusations using hateful anti-homosexual epithets like ‘fag’ and ‘dyke.’ Homophobic slurs and ‘fag jokes’ were used in *Sixteen Candles* (1984), *The Breakfast Club* (1985), and *Some Kind of Wonderful* (1987); they were particularly rampant in comedies catering to male teenage audiences like *Meatballs* (1979), *Porky’s* (1982), *Weird Science* (1985), *Once Bitten* (1985), and *Teen Wolf* (1985) (in which being a werewolf is preferable to being gay). Russo notes that this dialogue was often spoken by the films’ protagonists, “the very characters with whom the audience is supposed to identify” (1987, 251). The ubiquity and unwaveringly negative connotations of these anti-homosexual references demonstrated to young audiences that homosexuality was objectionable – a slur that required immediate refutation or a tasteless joke intended to cause offence – and completely unacceptable. Perhaps more than any of the individual character representations, anti-homosexual language and jokes told a generation of youth that it was not ‘okay’ to be gay.

Overall, Hollywood’s inclusion of homosexual material in the early 1980s was short lived and, by the middle of the decade, homosexual representation was “either downplayed or removed altogether” (Benshoff and Griffin 2006, 189). Part of this return to invisibility was the general
conservatism in America at the time, but perhaps more important was the AIDS epidemic. As noted by Benshoff and Griffin, “[i]f Hollywood was uncomfortable with homosexuality, it was hysterical about AIDS, and most filmmakers kept their distance from the subject well into the 1990s” (2006, 189). Hollywood was not alone in avoiding AIDS; the epidemic was initially ignored by mainstream media in toto. As Gross writes, “the homophobia of the press, combined with its assumption that audiences share its biases, led it to ignore and downplay the story” (2001, 99). It wasn’t until 1983 that the popular press began covering AIDS, linking it explicitly – and almost exclusively – to the ‘promiscuous’ lifestyles of (white) gay men (Capsuto 2000). Capsuto identified a CBS News special that summed up the increasing public fear:

[f]or a very long time, heterosexuals, straight Americans, thought AIDS was somebody else’s problem – that is, if they thought about AIDS at all. AIDS is what homosexuals got. But a scary reality is starting to hit home, that the AIDS virus is out there and it’s not just gays who are catching it. (Ken Sable 1986)

The ‘them’ had become ‘us,’ and both news and entertainment media relayed information and reinforced fears. Media coverage and public opinion created two distinct groups: one was ‘innocent victims,’ women and children who had received contaminated blood transfusions, and the other was blame-worthy culprits, mostly gay men and injecting drug users who spread the disease (Gross 2001, Tropiano 2002, Benshoff and Griffin 2006). ‘Irrational myths’ and ‘homophobic fantasies’ proliferated, fuelling public hysteria and increasing fear of, and violence towards, the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community (Treichler 1987, Gross 1994).

This new and deadly epidemic went beyond a health crisis to become a political crisis, exposing virulent strains of conservatism and homophobia that threatened the political gains of the previous decade (Gross 2001, Gilder 1989, Altman 1986). Politicians and religious figures condemned gay men for their ‘sexual permissiveness,’ scapegoated them as the cause of the disease, and used it as ‘proof of God’s retribution’. Future presidential candidate and political commentator, Pat Buchanan, wrote in the New York Post,

'[t]he sexual revolution has begun to devour its children. And among the revolutionary vanguard, as Gay Rights activists, the morality rate is highest and climbing ... The poor homosexuals – they have declared war upon nature, and now nature is exacting an awful retribution. (1983, 31)

Echoing Buchanan, Reverend Jerry Falwell proverbially declared, “[w]hen you violate moral, health, and hygiene laws, you reap the whirlwind” (quoted in Gross 2001, 104). Homophobia wasn’t just limited to hateful rants, but included suggestions of quarantining or tattooing HIV positive gay men, and manifested in increased physical violence towards homosexual and bisexual

55 Media coverage of the ‘gay plague’ spiked in 1985 with Rock Hudson’s death and ultimately peaked in 1987 with over 5,000 news articles published that year alone (Bodie et al. 2004).
people (Treichler 1987, D’Emilio and Freedman 2012, Greer 1986). It also undermined the self-esteem of many gay men and lesbians, weakening the nascent gay pride movement, and “reproblematising … gay sex in the culture” (Gilder 1989, 35).

While the government was slow to react, gay men, lesbians, and their sympathetic straight counterparts began to mount a response to the epidemic (Gross 1994, 2001, Benshoff and Griffin 2006). Organisations were founded in major cities across America to provide AIDS resources and information to the community. They actively opposed the decade’s increasing homophobia, both on the streets and in the media. These groups provided indispensable information to the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community, sought better health care for people with AIDS, and “helped to lay the groundwork for future civil rights struggles” (Benshoff and Griffin 2006, 211). Yet despite the integral role of these organisations, their contributions were overlooked by mainstream media who preferred to focus on the struggles of lone individuals (Gross 1994).

AIDS was, and continues to be, devastating to gay, lesbian, and bisexual communities across America, and has led to hundreds of thousands of deaths in the LGBT community. The increase in AIDS-focussed media coverage, however, had an unexpected and arguably positive outcome: the increased visibility of the homosexual community in mainstream media (Gross 2001, Walters 2001, Tropiano 2002). While representations in AIDS coverage were by no means all positive – often resuscitating the roles of the pitiable victim and deviant villain (Gross 1994) – they allowed the media to provide information about AIDS, address homophobia, and criticise the health care system’s inability to properly care for AIDS patients (Tropiano 2002). A number of AIDS-focussed made-for-tv-movies were produced during the mid-1980s, including An Early Frost (1985) and As Is (1986). These productions catered to mainstream audiences, focussing on heterosexual reactions to white, middle-class gay men diagnosed with AIDS. Similar AIDS stories were depicted on sitcoms, and medical and law-and-order dramas, including 21 Jump Street (“A Big Disease with a Little Name” [1988]). Despite the narrative limitations, which focussed on the personal at the expense of the overtly political, these programs were educational, emotionally engaging, and generally sympathetic towards their gay characters with AIDS.

56 As of 2015, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that 311,087 AIDS-positive ‘men who have sex with men’ (MSM) have died since the beginning of the epidemic (National Center for HIV/AIDS 2015).

57 The “After It Happened” (1988) episode of Midnight Caller is perhaps the most notorious example of the villain model. The episode focussed on an HIV-positive bisexual man who intentionally exposes his male and female sexual partners to infection through unprotected sex. The production and airing of the program led to outrage within the LGBT community. For analysis of the episode and its reception, see Tropiano (2002) and Emile Netzhammer and Scott Shamp (1994).
In contrast to television, Hollywood approached AIDS with a mix of hostility and avoidance (Benshoff and Griffin 2006). Benshoff and Griffin identify a 1988 TV Guide article that captured this sentiment:

[d]enial, secrecy, dread. These are the hallmarks of homosexuality in Hollywood today. Gone are the comparative openness and liberalism of the ‘70s, and in their place is a climate of fear. (Murphy 1988, 6)

Paranoia proliferated within the industry: actresses would not work with gay actors; on-screen kissing scenes were cut; ‘marriages of convenience’ were arranged; gay and lesbian performers denied their sexual orientation (Benshoff and Griffin 2006). With the exception of a tasteless one-liner about AIDS in *Down and Out in Beverly Hills* (1986), AIDS was ignored in mainstream films until the early 1990s; and only a few independent features, like *Buddies* (1985), *Parting Glances* (1986), and *Longtime Companion* (1989), followed television’s conventions and educated viewers about the disease. While AIDS affected numerous communities (including people of colour), the range of portrayals was limited. A study undertaken by Kylo-Patrick Hart (2002) found that depictions in mainstream AIDS-focussed productions spanning the 1980s and 1990s were limited almost exclusively to white gay males, excluding lesbians and bisexuals and any hint of ethnic diversity.

While AIDS and conservatism curtailed Hollywood’s depictions of homosexuality, television of the decade was comparatively progressive. This is not to say that conservatism did not affect what was being produced for television (Capsuto 2000). As noted by then-ABC TV President, Fred Piece,

[our [1981] schedule ... reflects something important that is happening in the country right now. There’s an evolving mood based on a renewal of traditional values: home and family, courage and honesty, respect for authority and teamwork. (Quoted in Capsuto 2000, 162)

However, despite attempts from the religious right to curtail ‘controversial’ primetime material on network television, homosexual-themed content increased throughout the decade and broke new representational ground (Capsuto 2000, Tropiano 2002). Gay and lesbian portrayals began to rely less on a narrow set of stereotypes and a few recurring and regular homosexual characters joined the casts of television programs like *Dynasty*, *Soap*, and *Heartbeat* (Tropiano 2002, Walters

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58 Benshoff and Griffin (2006) provide interesting insight into ‘pseudo-AIDS’ films that addressed AIDS using metaphors of organic viruses, computer viruses, and biological contagion. They also examine horror/slasher films, like A Nightmare on Elm Street 2: Freddy’s Revenge (1985), that explicitly linked sex to death.


60 In late 1980, Reverend Falwell announced his plan to have primetime television reflect the values of the religious right (which included the removal of gay and lesbian characters), with networks who did not comply risking a boycott of his followers and a potential loss of sponsors (Capsuto 2000). Accordingly, the 1981 fall season on network television was much more conservative than those in previous years, however, 1982 saw the failure of an attempted boycott which significantly curtailed the strength of such threats.
In some instances, the characters’ sexual orientation ceased to be ‘an issue,’ and the dramatic coming out scene was replaced by casual conversation. Threatening lesbians of the 1970s were replaced by chic and stylish counterparts, even if lesbianism generally continued to be depicted as a transient phase or a lifestyle for lonely women (Tropiano 2002). Gay-themed episodes of Hill Street Blues, Hotel, and St. Elsewhere were commended by gay and lesbian critics (Becker 2006). By the late 1980s, dramas like thirtysomething and Northern Exposure “broke new ground by featuring [homosexual] characters that were treated less like outsiders and more like integral members of the show’s ensemble cast” (Tropiano 2002, 109).

While the advances were modest, there was evidence that television networks were becoming more tolerant of homosexual-related content (Becker 2006).

It was during this time period that homosexuality ceased to be considered ‘mature content’ only suitable for adult audiences, and representations of explicitly gay and lesbian teens were added to teen-oriented programs (Tropiano 2002). Prior to the mid-1980s, networks had largely played it safe with connotative homosexuality or confused teens, and adult-only representations of explicit homosexuality to avoid accusations of promoting gay lifestyles and offending viewers and advertisers. After the middle of the decade, however, television started depicting gay and lesbian teens. As noted by Tropiano,

[w]hen the homosexuality of adult characters became less of an issue, the coming out stories shifted to teenagers and young adults, first in made-for-TV movies in the mid-1980s and then teen dramas in the 1990s. (2002, 109)

In part, this inclusion stemmed from academic and public concern for gay and lesbian youth. A number of studies consistently demonstrated that suicide and dropout rates were higher among homosexual youth than those among their straight counterparts (Capsuto 2000). This research was covered on television talk shows and news programs, helping to fuel policy and advocacy for gay and lesbian youth support services and further research. By 1985, many school administrators were aware of such research and began advocating for change, resulting in, for example, the establishment of New York’s Harvey Milk School.61 In 1988, the National Education Association adopted a resolution proposing that counselling services be made available by all school districts to youth questioning their sexuality (Stewart 2015). The advisory committees of teen-targeted television programming often included school counsellors who were aware of this research, and programming content began to change (Capsuto 2000). While programming of the early 1980s continued to rely on the same narrative devices of the 1970s – focusing almost exclusively on the

61 The Harvey Milk School, co-founded by the non-profit organisation Hetrick-Martin Institute and New York City Department of Education’s Career Education Center, was designed specifically to provide safety and extra support for LGBT and questioning students (Kim 2009).
effects of homosexual rumours, confusion, or teens coming to terms with adult homosexuality – by the mid-1980s televisual teens became more explicitly aware of their homosexuality and started questioning their place in the world, figuring out how to fit in, and dealing with the reactions of friends and family. Most often presented in made-for-tv-movies, these teen narratives consistently demonstrated how anti-gay prejudice was harmful to gay or lesbian youth, often resulting in depression or suicide, and depicted how even moderate support from peers, friends, and family members was of vital importance to homosexual youth.

The identifiably homosexual teens in programming of the mid-1980s generally adhered to a single narrative convention: male teenagers who struggled to come to terms with their sexuality and its effect on family and friends (Tropiano 2002, Kielwasser and Wolf 1992). As noted by Gross, these programs featured “gay characters (always male) who contradicted as many stereotypes as possible” (2001, 83). These gay teens were mostly jocks and, the programs suggested, it was particularly difficult for them to come out to fellow athletes and coaches who were portrayed as more homophobic than their less athletically focussed counterparts (Tropiano 2002). As Gross observes, the plot of such programs typically involved a

   close friend of the juvenile lead in a ‘family’ series, invariably a successful athlete and all-round great guy, [who] comes out and everyone has to resolve their conflicting emotions in the appropriately liberal manner. (2001, 83)

The confidants – who were always straight since the programs only included a single gay character – would generally react with anger or disbelief; but by the end of the program everyone would recognise that their friend/family member needed love and compassion (Tropiano 2002, Gross 2001). That the reversal often felt too quick, and that the happy ending relied on acceptance from the straight community, is problematic; however, these programs did generally provide gay-positive messages to their teenage target audience.

One example of this formula is ABC’s Consenting Adult (1985), the first made-for-tv-movie to address adolescent homosexuality (Tropiano 2002). The program focuses on the struggle of white, suburban parents, Tess (Marlo Thomas) and Ken Lynd (Martin Sheen), to accept that their college-aged athlete/medical student son, Jeff (Barry Taub), is gay. Upon hearing the news, Tess hopes for a medical cure while Ken is hostile and avoids Jeff, dying without seeing him again. After Ken’s death, Tess realise that she wants to be part of Jeff’s life and offers reconciliation. The program conformed to many of the usual elements: the story is heterocentric, told from the perspective of the straight parents; Jeff is a gay, white, upper-middle-class, likeable star athlete; in keeping with the style of made-for-tv-movies of the period, the message was overly dramatic. The program did, however, offer some innovations. First, whereas previous gay characters had been devastated and apologetic about their homosexuality, co-producer Ray Aghayan observes that Jeff “really accepts
his homosexuality and thinks it’s terrific. There is an unguilty, positive attitude to this film” (quoted in Margulies 1985). Second, Capsuto notes that the program depicted (chaste) physicality between two men, “[t]hat Jeff has a boyfriend whom he actually touches is a breakthrough all by itself” (2000, 203, emphasis in original). Third, not only is there physical contact, but also love – Jeff tells his mother that he loves a man. As noted by actress Marlo Thomas, “[we already know] that homosexuals have sex. What we don’t accept is that they have love” (quoted in Capsuto 2000, 203). While production of Consent ing Adult was not straightforward, 62 the program received strong Nielsen ratings and generally positive reviews from critics (Capsuto 2000). Indeed, Capsuto proposes that later gay-themed projects were developed in part because of Consent ing Adult’s positive reception.

HBO’s The Truth About Alex (1986) similarly adhered to the standard formula. This made-for-tv-movie is about high school football star Brad (Scott Baio) who learns that his best friend Alex (Peter Spence) is gay. After an incident in which Alex rejects the advances of a gay adult man in a truck stop bathroom, Alex’s sexual orientation becomes common knowledge around school and he becomes the target of his peers’ homophobia. Brad’s initial reaction is shock and outrage but, after realising that Alex is still the same person he was before he came out, he stands by his friend. The Truth About Alex depicted a confident and self-assured gay teen who is secure in his identity and whose parents accept him (Capsuto 2000); it was also one of the few programs that presented a gay-straight male friendship (Tropiano 2002).

CBS Schoolbreak Special “What If I’m Gay?” (1987) also employed the standard formula. It focuses on soccer-jock Todd (Richard Joseph Paul) whose homosexuality is uncovered by his friends, causing a rift between him and his best friend, Kirk (Manfred Melcher). Encouraged by his guidance counsellor and some peers, Todd finds the confidence to confront Kirk about his homophobia, whereupon Kirk confesses that he, too, might be gay because of their youthful sexual experimentation. Todd assures him that these activities were normal and their friendship resumes. “What If I’m Gay?” touched briefly on the topic of AIDS, and broke taboos around same-sex experimentation and masturbation. In many other ways, however, the program followed the template: it was heterocentric, middle-class, and focussed on the reaction of friends and family members to Todd’s homosexuality. Additionally, while family members and friends eventually support the gay teen, his coming out is a confronting experience; a sure way to test, and maybe lose, friendships and family ties. As noted by Gross, “[a]s usual, the gay character is isolated and a happy ending means acceptance by his heterosexual family” (2001, 84). Despite adhering to a

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62 Consent ing Adult was first pitched as a film then later as a television project (Capsuto 2000). Production stalled during the late 1970s and early 1980s, but, after rejecting the project twice, ABC finally agreed to it in 1983.
narrow set of traits, the portrayal of gay teens on made-for-tv-movies of the period was novel and the films were generally well received by the audience and by advertisers.\footnote{In addition to the made-for-tv-movies examined, teen-oriented televisual dramas similarly focussed on white gender-conforming gay teens who were outwardly identical to their heterosexual counterparts, including 21 Jump Street ("Honor Bound" [1987]) and Bronx Zoo ("Crossroads" [1988]).}

While Consenting Adult, The Truth About Alex, and "What If I’m Gay?" were gay-positive (if formulaic), CBS’s Welcome Home, Bobby (1986) was less progressive. Welcome Home, Bobby stars high school student Bobby (Timothy Williams) who is arrested during a drug raid after which it becomes common knowledge that he has engaged in sexual activities with an older man. Once-popular Bobby is harassed by his peers and shunned by his father, and is ultimately unsure of his sexuality. Tropiano (2002) argues that his sexual ambiguity undermines the program’s potential to examine the mental stress Bobby undergoes from the rejection, isolation, and violence he faces. Explicit homosexuality is represented by two adult males in this program – the lecherous older man who prays on teens and the kindly and understanding teacher who is closeted at school – neither of whom present a happy, well adjusted example of gay adulthood.

Overall, gay and lesbian representations during the 1980s mirrored the American zeitgeist, reflecting the progression and regression of homosexual rights. During this renewal of conservatism, Hollywood recycled deviant homosexual stereotypes or, occasionally, presented fun, loving-but-asexual, and compassionate gay men who offered no threat to heterosexual norms. The public hysteria around AIDS, however, was largely met with onscreen silence. Partly this was because Hollywood deemed this content bad for the bottom line, so instead of addressing AIDS explicitly films relied on metaphors of contagion and carnage to express social anxiety.

Homosexuality in teen film was largely treated as an insult or a joke, however, television again offered more positive and progressive narratives. Small screen teens were, for the first time, able to be gay or lesbian rather than just confused; they could also be well-adjusted and proud rather than self-hating and perplexed. Television offered up recurring and regular gay men and lesbians who were treated like ‘one of the gang’ rather than used exclusively as a social issue of the week. Despite these improvements, the narrative conventions of heterocentrism, homosexuality-as-issue, and the power of straights to accept homosexuals remained in both film and television, as did the tendency for gay men and lesbians to return to the ‘straight and narrow’ once they’d found the right hetero-partner (Becker 2006, Walters 2001). Further, the possibility of displaying same-sex desire or physical contact was not only resolutely ignored, but actively opposed. The discomfort of straight audiences seeing gay male intimate contact was made manifest with the in-theatre reactions to Making Love (Benshoff and Griffin 2006), as well as the furore around the
“Strangers” (1989) episode of thirtysomething (Becker 2006). Ron Becker (2006) suggests that this episode became a cautionary tale for television, cooling the heating trend of increasing gay and lesbian representation in mainstream television, and forming an interesting bridge between the 1980s and 1990s. The episode included a scene with two men sharing a (presumably) post-coital cigarette and chatting amiably; the men were depicted in bed, bare-chested, but not kissing or caressing. Despite a lack of public outcry prior to the episode airing, the ABC network lost $2.5 million in advertising revenue. As noted by Becker,

[t]he controversy surrounding “Strangers” became an important reference point for trade and popular press coverage of gay-themed programming throughout the 1990s, at first serving to frame gay material as an economic suicide and later helping to measure just how much network television’s attitude toward gay material had changed. (138-140)

**Conclusion**

Gay and lesbian representation in film and television has shifted from gender-inverted sissies and mannish women present before the PCA’s Production Code, which became even more connotative after the Code’s enactment, to explicitly deviant and depraved gender-conforming gay men and lesbians who were doomed to an early demise, to a mental illness, to a physical illness, to a toleration of mostly white, middle-class, gay males and a few traditionally attractive lesbians. Homosexuality among onscreen teens matured from conative questions about hegemonic masculinity, to confusion, to a toleration of teens cautiously stepping out of the closet to the consternation of unwelcoming heterosexuals. While change occurred at a different pace for films and television, there is an unmistakable migration from homosexuality to homophobia being the ‘problem.’ The shifts have certainly not been a linear evolution, particularly with the return to conservatism in the 1980s, but the result has been a tentative liberalisation in media depictions that reflect and reinforce the changing cultural and industrial context of their production.
Chapter two: representation in the ‘gay ’90s’ and beyond

This chapter focuses on LGBT media representations since the 1990s, beginning with a contextualisation of these representations within the geographical, cultural, and political ‘moment’ that is linked to the history of LGBT representation outlined in chapter one. I discuss the political and legislative arenas, as well as public sentiment and the myth of gay wealth, and outline the divergent and contradictory responses to the increased LGBT visibility. Most of the literature details adult-focussed context; however, given the youth-oriented nature of this research, youth-relevant material is highlighted to outline what has been made visible to youth within civil society. The chapter then moves to LGBT representation in popular culture, hegemony’s ‘battleground.’ Since civil society is “simultaneously the terrain of hegemony and of opposition to hegemony” (Buttigieg 2005, 38), LGBT media representations are conceptualised as manifestations of provisional, unstable, contradictory, and dynamic hegemony, oscillating between progressive and regressive, visible and invisible. Because economic and industrial conditions affect what can be depicted, I have outlined LGBT representation in film and television separately.

Lastly, the chapter presents my findings on LGBT representation in teen-oriented television and teen film since the early 1990s. Teen-oriented television has changed significantly since the early 1990s and now ‘leads to the way’ with complex inclusive and LGBT-focussed narratives. In this chapter, I outline the changes seen in LGBT-inclusive teen television programming, from its invisibility in the early 1990s to its improved representation in the 2010s. The final section outlines my quantitative findings on LGBT-inclusive teen films, providing the foundations for the textual analysis that follows in chapters three and four.

Cultural context

The 1990s was a decade of unprecedented gay and lesbian visibility (Gross 2001, Becker 2006, Walters 2001, Tropiano 2002, Capsuto 2000). Homosexual-related content was seen in films, network and cable television, magazines, newspapers, and advertising; it was addressed in politics and legislation. Yet this increased visibility also fuelled anti-gay politics and increased violence towards members of the LGBT community. Ron Becker (2006) convincingly proposes that gay rights formed part of America’s ‘culture wars’ where conservative ‘family values’ clashed with minority groups who understandably fought for equality and visibility, destabilising the taken-for-grantedness of white, straight, middle-class, male dominance and values which did not represent or privilege all Americans equally. This ideological friction unsettled members of the dominant group – dubbed ‘Normal Americans’ by Newt Gingrich – who were no longer “able to easily
delude themselves into believing that [their] way of life was the only or even the best way” (29). Cultural and individual responses varied from attempts to recuperate power by unleashing vitriolic backlashes, to guilt and adoption of political correctness. Specific to homosexuality, this period saw a fragmentation and renegotiation of social meanings about homosexuality. Long-held beliefs about homosexuality as sinful, criminal, or resulting from mental illness, and as the ‘cause’ of AIDS, clashed with a civil rights movement that constructed the gay and lesbian community as comprised of citizens wanting to integrate and participate in all aspects of American life. This tension played out publicly across news and entertainment media, resulting in increased visibility for the homosexual community and a problematising of the ‘normalness’ of heterosexuality. As Becker states, the dramatic increase of gay and lesbian cultural visibility “would repeatedly force Straight America to think about homosexuality, heterosexuality, and the boundary between them more often and more profoundly that it ever had” (14). He suggests that there were two cultural responses from the heterosexual community:

[a] conservative backlash worked hard to re-establish heterosexual privilege by explicitly justifying and reinscribing traditional moral hierarchies that defined gays and lesbians as deviant. Meanwhile, gay-friendly liberals worked hard to accept and adapt to the new sexual politics by trying to figure out how to be straight ... without the despised homosexual Other as one’s point of reference. (32)

These two divergent responses – homophobia from conservative America and the religious right, and anti-homophobia from LGBT-friendly heterosexuals and LGBT rights organisations – have continued to play out in complicated and paradoxical ways in politics and popular culture.

The period since the early 1990s has been marked with moments of political progress for the LGBT rights movement. Bill Clinton’s 1992 political campaign actively courted the ‘gay vote,’ and his presidency oversaw the implementation of a number of measures to protect and include gay men and lesbians (Walters 2001). Clinton appointed gay men and lesbians to his staff and other governmental positions, backed the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) to prevent employer discrimination based on sexual orientation, regularly met with liaisons from the LGBT community, and publicly opposed state-level anti-LGBT initiatives. He was the first president to speak at the Human Rights Campaign’s annual fundraiser and the first to mention sexual orientation in a state of the union address. As noted by Suzanna Danuta Walters, “[t]he list of firsts goes on and on. No president was so accessible and so identified with gay issues and the gay community” (2001, 32). Gay and lesbian politicians ran for office at all governmental levels from Massachusetts to Oklahoma as both Democrats and Republicans. The Victory Fund was established in 1991 to “change the face and voice of America’s politics and achieve equality for LGBT Americans by increasing the number of openly LBGT officials at all levels” (Victory Fund).
During the 2000 election, Democrats and Republicans both advocated for same-sex domestic partnerships, though not marriage (Walters 2001). Because of such political courtship and well-organised activism, LGBT political issues entered the mainstream.

Despite these steps forward towards equality, the same period saw steps back towards invisibility. This was epitomised by Clinton’s 1994 ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ military policy which prohibited discrimination against homosexuals in the armed forces as long as their sexual orientation was not disclosed (Walters 2001). In essence, gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals were allowed into the military as long as they were invisible. Clinton also signed the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in 1996, a federal law defining “‘marriage’ [as] only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife” and “‘spouse’ [as] only ... a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife” (United States Government Printing Office). DOMA disqualified same-sex spouses from federal marriage benefits, including those relating to social security, housing, veterans’ benefits, immigration, and taxes and income.

The realm of legislation was perhaps even more tumultuous, with laws being enacted and then repealed across various states (Walters 2001). Gay rights organisations worked to increase the coverage of same-sex anti-discrimination legislation for housing, employment, and other public services; anti-gay rights organisations worked equally hard to defeat their gains and repeal existing anti-discrimination legislation. In 1992, anti-LGBT groups in Oregon and Colorado sought constitutional amendments preventing legislated protections based on sexual orientation in these States; the amendment was voted down in Oregon but passed in Colorado. The constitutionality of Colorado’s decision was debated by the courts in Romer v. Evans; ultimately the amendment was declared unconstitutional. Despite the gay-rights victory in Colorado, municipal, county, and state-level anti-LGBT initiatives were put forth in Idaho, Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Florida, Washington, and Texas, to name but a few, attesting to the wide-spread nature of the anti-LGBT movement; that 100 bills were filed in 29 states in 2017 attests to the continuing activity of the movement (Miller 2017). Fortunately, the majority of anti-LGBT initiatives have been defeated and legislation protecting the LGBT community in the realms of employment, housing, and hate crimes has increased across the country. At a national level, the ‘Don’t Ask,

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67 As of 2017, 31 states have laws addressing hate crimes based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity (Human Rights Campaign 2017). A total of 21 states prohibited employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; six additional states provided these protections only to public employees. New Hampshire and Wisconsin prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation only; five other states extended these protections only to public employees. Discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity for housing was prohibited in 23 states. (The number of states includes the District of Columbia.)
Don’t Tell’ military policy was repealed in 2011 (US Department of Defense 2011) and the ban on transgender troops ended in 2016 (Lamothe 2016). The US Supreme Court found DOMA unconstitutional in 2013. 68 By 2015, 37 states had legalized same-sex marriage, and Obergefell v. Hodges69 ruled that same-sex couples have the right to marry, a right that would henceforth be recognised by all American jurisdictions. Despite these significant advances, the majority of states still do not adequately protect LGBT communities.

This tumult in legislation played out for LGBT youth as well. The 1980 Fricke v. Lynch70 case ruled that gay high school senior Aaron Fricke had the right to attend prom with his male date. Despite the ruling, some school administrators have continued trying to stop LGBT students from attending such school functions with same-sex dates or dressing in a non-gender conforming manner (most recently seen in 2010’s McMillen v. Itawamba County School District).71 The 1996 ruling in Nabozny v. Podlesny72 required public schools to protect LGBT students from anti-gay harassment and abuse. More recently, in an effort to address bullying that violates federal anti-discrimination laws (including the harassment of LGBT students), the US Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights issued guidelines outlining various school obligations (Kimmel 2016, Jacob 2013).

Indeed, schools have enacted a variety of initiatives to try to protect LGBT students including anti-bullying policies and student alliances, however, these are not yet available to all LGBT students (Kull 2015, Kosciw et al. 2014). The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) found that, as of 2011, 70 percent of public school districts had anti-bullying policies, however, the majority of these policies did not extend protections for sexual orientation or gender expression (Kull 2015).73 As of 2013, GLSEN found that only 50 percent of LGBT students reported having access to Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA) and 18 percent reported being restricted from forming or

The American Civil Liberties Union outlined the affirmative non-discrimination and anti-LGBT bills proposed to state legislatures in 2016, noting that by the end of the year 20 states and DC had banned discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender expression (American Civil Liberties Union 2016).

68 The ruling was made in United States v. Windsor, 133 S. Ct. 2675 (2013); see https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/12pdf/12-307_6j37.pdf for the legal opinion.
71 McMillen v. Itawamba County Sch. Dist., No. 1:10 CV 061-D-D, 2010 WL 876135 at *1, (N.D. Miss. Mar. 11, 2010) was a lawsuit brought against Itawamba County Agricultural High School by lesbian student Constance McMillen when she was forbidden from attending prom dressed in a tuxedo with her girlfriend. The judge ruled in favour of McMillen. Broadly responding to such anti-LGBT attempts, the American Civil Liberties Union provides resources advising LGBT youth of their rights regarding prom (American Civil Liberties Union, Prom Resources for LGBT Students).
72 Nabozny v. Podlesny 92 F3d 446 [7th Cir. 1996].
73 Of the districts with anti-bullying policies, only 43 percent of districts enumerated protections for sexual orientation, and 14 percent for gender expression (Kull 2015).
Research indicates that school environments improve significantly for LGBT youth when supports like formal policies, supportive staff, and GSAs are implemented (Kosciw et al. 2013, Szalacha 2003, Chesir-Teran and Hughes 2009, Goodenow, Szalacha, and Westheimer 2006, McGuire et al. 2010, Heck, Flentje, and Cochran 2011). While it is encouraging that these supports are increasingly adopted, more needs to be done to ensure that anti-bullying measures are holistically implemented to effectively protect LGBT students (Kosciw et al. 2014, Kull 2015).

Public sentiment was also fragmented, with “the forces of change and the forces of backlash ... occurring simultaneously” (Walters 2001, 46 emphasis in original). Membership numbers of advocacy and rights groups like the Human Rights Campaign and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force rose substantially, as did the number and popularity of Pride events across America and internationally. Pride events were no longer attended solely by members of the LGBT community but also by some heterosexuals in a show of solidarity (McFarland Bruce 2016). Support by some heterosexuals was also reflected in significant membership increases in organisations like Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) that had “an enormous growth spurt” in the mid-1990s (PFALG). Even the Boy Scouts of America became more inclusive by extending membership to openly gay youth in 2013, ending its ban on openly gay leaders in 2015 (Boy Scouts of America 2015, Eckholm 2015), and welcoming transgender scouts in 2017 (Zezima 2017). Yet simultaneously, violent backlashes were occurring across the country, demonstrated in part by the increasing number and brutality of assaults against members of the LGBT community, rising 127 percent between 1988 and 1993 (Walters 2001). Between 1996 and 2010, victimisation based on sexual orientation was the third most common motivation for hate crimes after race and religion; it ranked second between 2011 and 2014 (Federal Bureau of Investigation). The proportion of hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation has almost doubled, from 11 percent in 1996 to 18 percent in 2015. Not only do they account for a larger proportion, but between 1996 and 2008 anti-LGBT hate crimes were more severe and were more likely to be assault.

74 GLSEN began conducting its biennial National School Climate Survey in 1999. The 2013 survey was conducted online and collected a total of 7,898 responses from students aged between 13 and 21 years from all 50 states and the District of Columbia (Kosciw et al. 2014).

75 Victimisation based on sexual orientation dropped to the fourth most common motivation for hate crimes during 2001 and 2005 (Federal Bureau of Investigation). It was ranked the third leading cause of hate crime in 2015. Hate crime statistics should be viewed with caution. Between 1995 and 2015, an average of 85 percent of law enforcement agencies reported no hate crimes in their jurisdictions (derived from Federal Bureau of Investigation).

76 There is fluctuation in both the proportion and numbers of victims of hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation, with the proportions reaching their peak in 2013 when 20 percent of hate crimes were against LGBT victims (Federal Bureau of Investigation). While the numbers and proportions fluctuated, Wen Cheng, William Ickes, and Jared Kenworthy (2013) found that the statistical measure of rates (rather than proportions) did not change between 1996 and 2008.
Indeed, the situation is likely even worse than what is presented in the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s annual hate crime statistics since many anti-LGBT hate crimes go unreported or are misclassified by law enforcement agencies (Marzullo and Libman 2009, Herek 2017). Perhaps the most notorious incident of anti-LGBT violence was the 2016 mass shooting at the Pulse gay nightclub in Orlando – then described by the LA Times as the “worst mass shooting in American history” (Al Varez 2016) – which left 49 people dead and 53 wounded.

Victimisation is not limited to adults; LGBT youth also endure consistently higher levels of discrimination, harassment, and violence than their straight peers (Ryan and Rivers 2003, Heck, Flentje, and Cochran 2011). A recent survey undertaken by the Human Rights Campaign (2012) indicated that half (51 percent) of LGBT students were verbally harassed at school and 17 percent were physically attacked; LGBT students were twice as likely to suffer these forms of victimisation as non-LGBT students. GLSEN found even higher levels of victimisation, with 74 percent of LGBT youth reporting verbal harassment, 36 percent reporting physical harassment (for example, being pushed or shoved), and 17 percent reporting physical assault (for example, being punched, kicked, or assaulted with a weapon) (Kosciw et al. 2014). While victimisation levels are unconscionably high, GLSEN reports that they have decreased in comparison to past surveys; in 2013, levels of verbal and physical harassment were at their lowest since the survey commenced in 1999, and physical assault was at its lowest level since 2007. While it is clearly good news that levels are decreasing, the continued harassment and violence experienced by LGBT students has detrimental effects, including decreased school attendance, and higher levels of substance abuse, mental health issues, and suicide (Ryan and Rivers 2003, Heck, Flentje, and Cochran 2011, Kosciw et al. 2013).

Opinion polls and results from General Social Surveys (GSS) also reflect a fragmentation in public sentiment, though overall acceptance of homosexuality is rising. Polls suggest that Americans increasingly understand homosexuality as something individuals are ‘born with’ rather than the result of family or environmental factors (Gallup 2015). Support for equal employment rights has

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77 The Growing Up LGBT in America survey received responses from 10,030 LGBT-identified youth aged 13 to 17 years across the US representing urban, suburban and rural communities, and a variety of social, cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds (Human Rights Campaign 2012).
78 Despite this, LGBT youth reported that “most [75 percent] of their peers [did] not have a problem with their LGBT identity” (Human Rights Campaign 2012, 16); nearly all (91 percent) LGBT youth were out to their close friends and most (64 percent) to their classmates.
79 Gallup polls suggest the public increasingly believes that homosexuality is something individuals ‘are born with’ (increasing from 17 percent in 1977 to 51 percent in 2015), rather than resulting from family or environmental factors (which has decreased from 56 percent in 1977 to 30 percent in 2015) (Gallup 2015).
increased, as has support for same-sex marriage (Pew Research Center 2015, Gallup 2015).\textsuperscript{80} Homosexuality is increasingly viewed as ‘morally acceptable’ and the public increasingly believe that it should be ‘accepted’ rather than ‘discouraged’ (Gallup 2015, Pew Research Center 2011).\textsuperscript{81} Results from the GSS show that a decreasing proportion of Americans think that same-sex intimacy is ‘always wrong,’ with the proportion for ‘not wrong at all’ rising substantially (Smith and Son 2013). Yet while these polls and surveys demonstrate increasing acceptance, there is a strong polarisation in attitudes about homosexuality with few people ‘sharing the middle ground’ (Smith 2011).\textsuperscript{82} This polarisation means that attitude shifts towards acceptance indicate a decrease in the proportion of people who find it unacceptable – opinions are shifting from unacceptable to acceptable, rather than from the middle ground to acceptable. While it is positive that these results consistently show increasing public acceptance of homosexuality, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that acceptance still hovers only in the 50 to 60 percent range, indicating that intolerance is still very common.

Part of the shift in public opinion is due to generational changes, with younger people considerably more tolerant than their older counterparts (Smith 2011, Smith and Son 2013). Recent surveys\textsuperscript{83} show that younger generations are not only more accepting of LGBT people, but that they identify less with the heterosexual/homosexual binary. The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation’s (GLAAD) most recent Harris Poll found that non-LGBTQ millenials more commonly identified as LGBT allies than older generations;\textsuperscript{84} in comparison to older cohorts, Millennials were more likely to identify as LGBTQ, and identify using terminology other than ‘gay,’

\textsuperscript{80} Support for equal employment rights increased from 56 percent in 1977 to 89 percent in 2008. Support for same-sex marriage also increased; Gallup indicated an increase from 27 percent in 1996 to 58 percent in 2015 (Gallup 2015); the Pew Research Center found an increase from 40 percent in 2001 to 57 percent in 2015 (Pew Research Center 2015).

\textsuperscript{81} Gallup polls indicated an increased in the proportion of Americans who think homosexuality is ‘morally acceptable’ from 40 percent in 2001 to 63 percent in 2015 (Gallup 2015). The Pew Research Center found that 58 percent of Americans polled in 2011 indicated that homosexuality should be accepted rather than discouraged (Pew Research Center 2011).

\textsuperscript{82} For example, GSS results from 2012 indicate that 43 percent of respondents felt homosexual sex was ‘always wrong’ and 41 percent felt that it was ‘not wrong at all;’ only 11 percent were in the middle (Smith and Son 2013).

\textsuperscript{83} The Harris Poll commissioned by GLAAD surveyed over 2,000 adults, including over 1,700 heterosexuals (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation 2017). The surveys conducted by YouGov (Moore 2015) and J. Walter Thompson Intelligence’s Innovation Group (2016) had 1,000 respondents; their findings may not be representative at a national level. These surveys, administered by industry research firms, may not be as rigorous as those conducted by academics, however, in the absence of peer-reviewed material, they provide insight into contemporary cultural perceptions.

\textsuperscript{84} The poll found that 63 percent of non-LGBTQ Millennials (aged 18 to 34 years) identified as allies (those who were ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ comfortable in ‘all situations’), compared with 53 percent of Generation X (aged 35 to 51 years) and 51 percent of Baby Boomers (aged 52 to 71 years) (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation 2017). Just 23 percent of non-LGBTQ Millennials identified as detached supporters (those whose comfort levels varying across situations), compared to 36 percent of Generation X and 33 percent of Baby Boomers; resisters (those who were ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ uncomfortable in ‘all situations’) comprised 14 percent of Millennials, 11 percent of Generation X, and 16 percent of Baby Boomers.
‘lesbian,’ and ‘heterosexual’ (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation 2017). These findings are similar to those from a 2015 survey undertaken by international internet research firm, YouGov, which found that, while most respondents identified as heterosexual, only 64 percent of Millennials (aged 18 to 29 years) self-identified as ‘completely’ heterosexual (compared with 78 percent of all adults polled) (Moore 2015). Employing a modified Kinsey scale, the survey found that almost one-third (29 percent) of Millennials self-identified somewhere along the continuum between ‘completely heterosexual’ and ‘completely homosexual,’ a significantly higher proportion than older cohorts. Additionally, more than half of Millennials agreed that ‘sexuality was a scale’ rather than binary. Another recent survey polled an even younger cohort of Americans. The survey, undertaken by trend forecasting agency J. Walter Thompson Intelligence, found that ‘Generation Z’ respondents (aged 13 to 20 years; the generation following the Millennials) were “far more open-minded and permissive than their older Millennial counterparts when it [came] to issues of gender and sexuality” (Tsjeng 2016). According to the survey, less than half (48 percent) of Generation Z respondents identified as ‘exclusively’ heterosexual and 35 percent self-identified as bisexual to some degree (Laughlin 2016). J. Walter Thompson Intelligence spokesperson, Shepherd Laughlin, reported that young people were unlikely to abandon their fluid attitudes with regards to gender expression and sexuality as they aged (Tsjeng 2016).

Yet, even among LGBT-friendly straights there remains a discomfort about the LGBT community. Since 2014, GLAAD has commissioned Harris Polls to gauge attitudes of straight, cisgender Americans towards the LBGT community (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation 2015a, 2016, 2017). In 2014, they found that beneath the veneer of progress towards equality and civil rights protection “lies a layer of uneasiness and discomfort” (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation 2015a, 2). Overall, they found that, despite high levels of support for marriage equality, more than one-quarter of respondents indicated that they would feel uncomfortable

85 The poll found that 20 percent of Millennials identified as LGBTQ, compared with 12 percent of Generation X, and 7 percent of Baby Boomers. In comparison to older cohorts, Millennials more commonly identified as bisexual (6 percent), asexual (4 percent), pansexual (2 percent), agender (3 percent), gender fluid (3 percent), transgender (2 percent), bigender (1 percent), or genderqueer (1 percent) (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation 2017).

86 The age-specific break-down for respondents identifying as ‘completely heterosexual’ was: 64 percent of respondents aged 18 to 29 years; 72 percent for those aged 30 to 44 years; 86 percent for those aged 45 to 64 years; and 87 percent for those 65 years and older (Moore 2015). Identifying as ‘completely homosexual’ also differed increased slightly with by age: 2 percent among respondents aged 18 to 29 years; 3 percent for those aged 30 to 44 years; 4 percent for those aged 45-64 years; and 6 percent for those 65 years and older.

87 Proportions of respondents who felt that sexuality was a scale rather than binary was, by age-group: 51 percent for those aged 18 to 29 years; 42 percent for those aged 30 to 44 years; 35 percent for those aged 45 to 64 years; and 27 percent for those aged 65 years and older (Moore 2015). Similar results were seen in YouGov’s British survey (Dahlgren 2015).

88 This survey employed a modified Kinsey scale, where 0 indicated ‘completely heterosexual’ and 6 indicated ‘completely homosexual’; ratings 1 to 5 indicated some level of bisexuality (Laughlin 2016).
seeing an LGBT co-worker’s wedding photos and around one-third indicated discomfort at seeing a same-sex couple holding hands (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation 2017). Respondents reported feeling uncomfortable finding out that a family member (43 percent), doctor (44 percent), close friend (37 percent), or co-worker (30 percent) was LGBT (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation 2015a). These results indicate that, while some members of the heterosexual community are supportive of change, there are still significant improvements required for full acceptance of the LGBT community.

The polarisation between LGBT rights advocates and anti-LGBT groups evident in politics, the courts, and public opinion was covered in the press (Gross 2001, Becker 2006). Topics like Clinton’s courting of gay voters, the ‘gays in the military’ debate, legal battles over anti-discrimination legislation and homophobic constitutional amendments, the debate surrounding same-sex marriage, and high rates of LGBT youth suicide were regularly and extensively covered in local and national newspapers and magazines. Becker (2006) notes that these and other LGBT-themed topics glossed the covers of magazines: Newsweek’s March 1990 cover noted ‘The Future of Gay America’ and The Nation’s May 1993 cover announced ‘The Gay Moment’ which was described in the accompanying article as ‘unavoidable’:

[j]It fills the media, charges politics, saturates popular and elite culture. It is the stuff of everyday conversation and public discourse … Lesbians and gay men today wake up to headlines alternately disputing their claim to equality under the law, supporting their right to family status, denying their desire, affirming their social identity. They fall asleep to TV talk shows where generals call them perverts, liberals plead for tolerance and politicians weigh their votes. (Kopkind 1993)

While LGBT coverage declined during the 2000s, overtaken by stories about ‘September 11,’ the ‘war on terror,’ conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and economic uncertainty at home and abroad, LGBT issues resurfaced in the mid-2010s. Time’s March 2013 cover proclaimed ‘Gay Marriage Already Won’ and one of its 2014 covers featured transgender activist and actor Laverne Cox, declaring ‘The Transgender Tipping Point: America’s Next Civil Rights Frontier’ (Steinmetz 2014). Time’s March 2017 issue described how America’s young people were upending gender and sexual binaries in favour of more numerous, and more fluid, identities, with a cover announcing a generation ‘Beyond He or She’ (Steinmetz 2017a).

Coverage went beyond hard news and populated lifestyle pages, celebrity magazines, and social media. Lesbian-related articles appeared in fashion magazines like Vogue, Cosmopolitan, and

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89 By year, 27 percent of respondents were uncomfortable seeing an LGBT co-workers wedding photos in 2014, dropping slightly to 26 percent in 2015 and 25 percent in 2016 (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation 2017).

90 By year, 36 percent of respondents were uncomfortable seeing a same-sex couple holding hands in 2014, dropping slightly to 29 percent for both 2015 and 2016 (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation 2017).
Glamour in the early 1990s; Vanity Fair’s August 1993 issue included a lesbian chic photo-spread of k.d. lang in a barber’s chair getting ‘shaved’ by supermodel Cindy Crawford (Gross 2001, Ciasullo 2001). The mid-2010s saw transgender celebrities Laverne Cox and Caitlyn Jenner hitting the mainstream.91 Cox was named one of Glamour’s 2014 ‘women of the year’ (Morris 2014) and made the cover of Variety, which optimistically declared ‘Hollywood Trans Formation’ (Setoodeh 2014); Jenner graced the cover of Vanity Fair after transitioning in 2015 (Le Vine 2015).92 Numerous youth-relevant celebrities publicly identified as part of the LGBTQI+ spectrum, including actor Ellen Page who came out as gay (Jang 2015b), singer Miley Cyrus who identified as pansexual (Jones 2016), and Hunger Games actor Amandla Stenberg who identified as bisexual (McCluskey 2016). Hollywood style icon, Jaden Smith (son of actor Will Smith), transected binaries when he donned a dress for his prom and broadcast it on social media (Duca 2016); he also modelled Louis Vuitton’s spring/summer 2016 women’s wear collection (Friedman 2016).93 Other straight celebrities helped to raise awareness: Harry Potter star Daniel Radcliffe won the Celebrity Straight Ally award at the 2015 LGBT British Awards (Jang 2015b), and Lady Gaga launched the Born This Way Foundation to support and empower LGBT, questioning, and straight youth (Born This Way Foundation 2016).

All of this coverage in lifestyle and celebrity magazines and social media served to increase LGBT visibility in mainstream America. It was adopted as a hip trend, used by marketers and businesses as a hook to make brands appear ‘edgy’ and ‘forward thinking’ (Friedman 2016). This commodification of gay and lesbian in the 1990s, and queer in the mid-2010s, amplifies visibility yet arguably strips it of radical or political dimensions. As noted by Rebecca Beirne,

[t]he resignification of ‘queer’ as a market sector or a marketable commodity is one that eliminates all political or oppositional meaning from the term queer, and the term becomes, as Sally Munt asserts of gayness in ... Queer as Folk, ‘formulaically rebranded as

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91 Laverne Cox won both a daytime Emmy award for her documentary, The T Word (2015), and a Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Comedy Series for her role in the hugely popular Orange is the New Black in 2016 (McNary 2016). She was included in People’s ‘100 most beautiful women’ (McDonald 2015); and made Time’s list of the ‘100 most influential people’ (Ermac 2015).

92 Jenner’s celebrity grew and her accolades continued throughout 2015: she won the Arthur Ashe Courage Award at ESPN’s ESPY (Excellence in Sports Performance Yearly) Awards; was named one of the ‘women on the year’ by Glamour which described her as a ‘trans hero;’ was named the ‘most fascinating person of 2015’ by Barbara Walters; starred in I Am Cait, a television documentary about her life; and won two GLAAD awards (the Media Award for Best Documentary Series for I Am Cait and the Outstanding TV Journalism-Newsmagazine for her interview with Diane Sawyer) (Le Vine 2015).

93 Gender fluidity even made its way into mainstream language with the American Dialect Society anointing the gender-neutral singular ‘they’ as 2015’s word of the year (Bennett 2015). Gender-neutral pronouns have also been adopted by several college campuses and social networking site Facebook (which offers 60 gender identity options for new users) (Bennett 2015, Steinmetz 2017a). This language shift did not escape the attention of young people, with around half indicating that they knew someone who used gender-neutral pronouns like ‘they’ or ‘ze’ (Laughlin 2016). Fifty-six percent of Generation Z indicated that they knew someone who used a gender-neutral pronoun; the proportion reduced to 47 percent for young Millennials (aged 21 to 27 years) and to 43 percent for older Millennials (aged 28 to 34 years).
attractive and aspirational, it has acquired cultural and symbolic capital, it has, through commodification, become respectable' (2000, 539). (2008, 8)

The commodification of homosexuality was linked to the rise of the gay and lesbian market, which came to maturity in the 1990s and was founded on the problematic myth of gay wealth – the idea that homosexuals were the ultimate consumers, an untapped lucrative market waiting to be cultivated (Gross 2001, Walters 2001, Gamson 2005). Occasionally referred to as ‘guppies’ (gay-yuppies), they were “perfect DINKS – double income, no kids – and therefore, presumably had lots of disposable income” (Gross 2001, 235). Becker persuasively argues that this idealised up-market homosexual consumer dovetailed with an emerging ethos that was socially liberal and fiscally conservative; gay and lesbian rights offered an “affordable politics of social tolerance” (2006, 110). Because gay men and lesbians were seen as economically self-sufficient but ripe with “marginal allure” (131), heterosexual support of homosexuality demonstrated the open-mindedness of educated, middle-class straights while never asking them to pay.94 Thus, gay rights provided a social movement that allowed straights to feel progressively liberal and simultaneously free from the obligation of financial assistance.

Despite the prevalence of the myth of the gay and lesbian super-consumer, this idealised notion undermines the plurality of the LGBT community. As noted by Walters,

[a]nalysts assert the desirability of the gay market as an endless fount of bourgeois white men without children, pulling in the big bucks and spending it freely. This picture is obviously incomplete: if gays really are everywhere then it means that gays are rich and poor, black and white, male and female, with children and without them. (2001, 241)

Yet the myth was, and continues to be, promoted within the advertising industry, by some parts of the LGBT community, and by the media.

**LGBT representation on television**

Televisual gay and lesbian visibility was limited at the start of the decade (Becker 2006). In part this was due to the priorities of gay activists the decade before who focussed on the AIDS epidemic rather than media representations; the epidemic also claimed the lives of some of the best leaders (Capsuto 2000). It was also because television networks were hesitant to include homosexual-related content in their programs after the thirtysomething debacle of 1989 (Becker 2006). Between 1990 and 1992, controversy plagued gay-themed episodes of Lifestories and Quantum Leap, and the perceived lack of sponsor support for such programming scuttled a

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94 Becker notes that “[b]eing socially liberal and fiscally conservative, one could synthesize multicultural discourses that celebrated diversity and neo-liberal discourses that celebrated the free market” (2006, 122). He notes that “[m]ulticulturalism ... focused on the inequity of cultural representation without drawing the connection to economic and institutional structures of power or to the unequal distribution of wealth. As such, multiculturalism made it easier for a fiscal conservatism to exist side-by-side with socially (or perhaps more accurately, culturally) liberal ideas” (123).
number of television productions. To counter the widely held belief that LGBT-themed programming was economically unviable, GLAAD launched a campaign that highlighted successful homosexual-inclusive series and organised a boycott of sponsors who had withdrawn ads from inclusive programming. While homosexual representation in the 1991 season was reduced to a single gay comedy sketch duo – *In Living Color’s* Blaine Edwards (Damon Wayans) and Antoine Merriweather (David Alan Grier) – a few recurring gay and lesbian characters ventured back onto the small screen in the 1991-1992 season, for example C.J. Lamb (Amanda Donohoe) on *L.A. Law* and Leon Carp (Martin Mull) on *Roseanne*; homosexual-themed episodes were included in *Dear John, Northern Exposure, Coach*, and *Roc*. The next season marked a turning point – partly due to the rising visibility in news media with Clinton’s election and the gays in the military debate – and by the 1993-1994 season, prime-time included 15 LGB regular or recurring characters, a substantial increase over the numbers just a few years prior.

Inclusive television in the early 1990s occasionally used the timeliness and prominence of national LGBT rights debates as topical material for a “fresh story and a dose of social relevance” (Becker 2006, 78), seen for example in *Melrose Place* and *Picket Fences*. Most fictional programming, however, shied away from civil rights debates and focussed on the stories of individual gay and lesbian characters in an a-political television world. Such depoliticised narratives “gave skittish network executives a way to exploit the cultural prominence of gays and lesbians without having to tackle contentious political questions explicitly” (78). Viable LGBT-themed narratives of the period focussed on ‘gay-bashing,’ AIDS, coming-out, same-sex weddings, lesbian pregnancies and motherhood, and mistaken identity (including *Seinfeld*’s famous ‘not that there’s anything wrong with it’ episode, “The Outing” [1993]) (Becker 2006, Beirne 2008, Tropiano 2002, Capsuto 2000).

Almost all programs, however, stayed out of the bedroom and away from kissing, activities that were deemed too provocative for network television. *Roseanne* was the first program to effectively leverage a much-hyped female-female kiss into huge ratings and financial success in “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (1994). Although female same-sex intimacy has generally been more accepted than male same-sex intimacy in mainstream media due to the ease with which it can be recuperated for a heterosexual male gaze, this episode suggested to the television industry that mainstream audiences would not necessarily object to homosexual material, that sponsors could support it, and, most importantly, that networks could profit from it. Becker proposes that this

95 No transgender characters were identified.

episode highlighted the significant industry changes that had transpired in only a few years and ushered in the belief that LGBT-inclusive content could be profitable on network television.97

The number of LGBT characters on network programming continued to increase throughout the mid- and late-1990s (Becker 2006, Beirne 2008, Tropiano 2002, Capsuto 2000). This increase was partly due to the industry shift from broadcasting to narrowcasting, spurred by competition from cable television and demands from advertisers (Becker 2006). The networks began targeting a young (18 to 49 year-old), socially liberal, urban, white, educated demographic with disposable income, what Becker calls the ‘slumpy’ (socially liberal, urban-minded professional) audience. To reach this demographic, network television aimed to make their content more ‘edgy’ and ‘hip,’ with programming moving away from family-friendly fare to adult content with more sex and violence in dramas, and more ironic humour in comedies. Network television simultaneously exploited the ‘edgy,’ ‘chic,’ and ‘hip’ nature of gay and (postfeminist) lesbian characters that appealed to affluent, educated, and liberal viewers, and skirted around issues that would cost it audience numbers, public outcry, and (most importantly) advertising revenue. As described by Becker,

> gay material’s risqué reputation made it all the more appealing, giving it just the kind of edge that the Big 3 [television networks] believed their target audience was looking for ... [G]ay material became a narrowcasting-age tool used to draw in the slumpy audience. (2006, 104)

The increase in representations was dramatic; the 1995-1996 season, described by The New York Times as “the gayest TV season in memory” (Roush 1996), featured 26 prime-time gay and lesbian characters and a substantial increase in the number of LGBT-themed episodes and references (Becker 2006). The 1996-1997 season saw the peak of inclusion, with more than 30 gay and lesbian characters in prime-time network programming. However, by 1996 once-edgy homosexual material was perhaps becoming mundane, as evidenced by the business-as-usual response to the lesbian wedding on Friends, about which the New York Times declared “[t]he biggest news about the wedding on ‘Friends’ was that it was almost not news at all” (Dunlap 1996).

Controversy about inclusive programming returned in 1997 when Ellen DeGeneres and her television persona, Ellen Morgan, simultaneously came out of the closet on ABC’s Ellen. The

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97 The episode featured a kiss between Roseanne (Roseanne Barr) and a lesbian acquaintance. The scene was conservatively shot, with the viewers only able to see Roseanne’s shocked expression and the back of the other woman’s head, and was preceded by an advisory warning to viewers (Becker 2006). “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” certainly caused controversy, but also resulted in huge ratings, generally positive feedback from the public, and only minor financial repercussions. Compared to the reaction to thirtysomething, the Roseanne episode demonstrated that gay-themed programming could be profitable. Becker notes that “the controversy did help support what would eventually become a common belief about gay-themed programming – namely that producers and/or network executives use it as a stunt. Such discourse was a far cry from the idea of gay content as ad poison that dominated just two years earlier” (155).
program was ground-breaking: it was the first to feature a lesbian as a lead character, and the first to have such a character played by an ‘actual’ lesbian (Tropiano 2002). It delighted some members of the LBGT community who celebrated at ‘Ellen coming out parties’; it also ignited the ire of the religious right who launched an anti-Ellen campaign, which included a full-page ad in Variety denouncing the program as a ‘slap in the face’ from the network. The coming out episode delivered huge ratings with over 42 million Americans tuning in. Despite threats of boycotts from the anti-Ellen campaigners, the episode attracted sponsors willing to pay double the regular rate and the episode was a financial success (Becker 2006). Ellen’s success, however, did not last long. After a backlash from Southern Baptists, accusations that the show had become too politicised, too gay, and not funny – accompanied by a substantial decrease in ratings – the show was cancelled. Ellen’s cancellation had a cooling effect on the networks. Character numbers dropped by 33 percent between the 1997-1998 and 1998-1999 seasons; the 1998-1999 season also featured the lowest number of LGBT-themed episodes since 1995.98

While inclusive programing significantly decreased in the late 1990s, it did not disappear. Perhaps the most popular inclusive program was Will & Grace which premiered in 1998 with almost no protest (in contrast to the hype and hatred engendered by Ellen) (Tropiano 2002, Gross 2001, Walters 2001). The program focuses on a middle-class, white, straight female-gay male ‘odd couple’ that was joined by flamboyantly gay Jack and spoiled socialite Karen. The long-running series was one of the few to feature a homosexual in a leading role and defied traditional effeminate gay stereotypes by characterising Will (Eric McCormack) as an uptight lawyer; in fact, Will’s mannerisms and his quasi-romantic pairing with Grace (Debra Messing) decreased Will’s ‘gayness’ to such an extent that focus groups often did not perceive Will’s homosexuality and mistook him for straight (Tropiano 2002). Jack (Sean Hayes), by contrast, was portrayed as fabulously flamboyant and comfortable with his sexuality (Tropiano 2002, Gross 2001, Walters 2001).While academic analyses of the series differ as to whether it was progressive (for example, Schiappa, Gregg, and Hewes 2006, Bonds-Raacke et al. 2007, Streitmatter 2008) or regressive (for example, Shugart 2003, Battles and Hilton-Morrow 2002, Mitchell 2006), the popularity of the program and prominence of the gay male characters increased gay visibility in the period.

In addition to Will & Grace, LGBT-inclusive material was routinely included in programs appealing to a variety of demographics, including older adults (JAG, Becker, Providence) and young men (King of the Hill, Dark Angel) (Becker 2006). Thus, while LGBT content was used in the early 1990s to make programs seem ‘edgy,’ by the end of the decade it had become a prosaic staple for a wide variety of program types and target audiences.

98 Becker (2006) bases these numbers on GLAAD’s annual TV scorecards.
The exponential increase in LGBT-inclusive television programming during the 1990s clearly increased gay and lesbian visibility for mainstream, mainly heterosexual, audiences. But, as Walters warns,

[t]o be seen ... is not necessarily to be known. Indeed, media saturation of a previously invisible group can perpetuate a new set of pernicious fictions, subduing dissent by touting visibility as the equivalence of knowledge. (2001, 12, emphasis in original)

With few exceptions, televisual portrayals of gay men and lesbians throughout the 1990s continued to be asexual, middle-class, white, and alone in an otherwise straight televisual world (Tropiano 2002, Gross 2001, Walters 2001, Beirne 2008, Ciasullo 2001). Gay and lesbian characters most often played supporting roles or were part of ensemble casts. These characters were often used to promote the personal growth of their straight counterparts; they were commonly positioned as either ‘exotic but unthreatening’ or ‘blandly the same as heterosexual characters’ (Walters 2001). Some depictions of reinforced links between the gay community and ‘good taste,’ promoted consumerism, and recuperated heteronormativity (Gamson 2005).

Homosexual content was generally heterocentric, reduced to a ‘problem to be solved’ or requiring acceptance by straights; it rarely challenged the heteronormative status quo, nor did it pursue LGBT political issues (Tropiano 2002, Walters 2001, Westerfelhaus and Lacroix 2006). Thus, while the amount of representation increased dramatically, the range of representations did not increase to nearly the same extent. As highlighted in chapter one, many of the narrative shortcomings seen in television programming of the 1970s and 1980s remained during the 1990s.

Joshua Gamson (2000) and Walters (2001) both offer reminders that visibility is tenuous, and representation is not guaranteed because of past inclusion. As Walter points out, “[o]ne year’s saturation can turn into next year’s old news, as the minority group is made ‘re-invisible’” (2001, 12). The number of gay and lesbian characters on network television did indeed drop in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Becker 2006). Becker suggests that this may be due to a re-emergence of American unity after the ‘September 11’ attacks that “enabled mainstream culture to put the politics of social difference on the back burner” (214). After network television’s two-third decline in LGBT characters between 2001-2002 and the previous season, GLAAD’s entertainment media director, Scott Seomin, similarly stated, “[t]elevision critics have suggested that the fall television schedule represents a return to ‘comfort food’ for an American public unsettled by the events of the past year” (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation 2002). Analysis of several GLAAD fall television ‘scoreboards’ and the Where are We on TV report series indicates that the number of regular and recurring LGBT characters on network television stayed low during the early and mid-2000s (Figure 1 and Figure 2) (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation 2015b, pers. comm.). It was not until the 2008-2009 season that character numbers increased on network television,
more than doubling from the previous year (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation 2008). The proportion of regular LGBT characters on scripted primetime network programs similarly increased from 1.1 percent in 2007-2008 to 2.6 percent in the following season. While there are year-to-year fluctuations, the number and proportions of regular and recurring LGBT characters on network and cable television is clearly increasing overall.

Figure 1. Number of LGBT characters, by season and character type (regular or recurring), network and cable television

![Figure 1](image)

Notes: 1. Due to differences in the source material, data was not available for all seasons.
2. Data for regular characters on network and cable television during 1996-2001 are collapsed; from the 2001-2002 season onwards they are provided separately.
3. No information was available on recurring LGBT characters on network television during the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 seasons.
4. No reliable data was available for the 2003-2004 or 2004-2005 seasons.


Figure 2. Proportion of regular LGBT characters on primetime network television, by season

![Figure 2](image)

In contrast to network television, cable channels offered more, and more complex, LGBT depictions. LGBT character numbers on cable television increased substantially in the 2005-2006 season, a full three years earlier than those on network television (Figure 1). GLAAD noted a 60 percent increase in the number of regular LGBT characters in 2007-2008 compared to the previous season; while infrequent, 2007-2008 also saw a greater inclusion of bisexual and transgender characters (Romine, Holbert, and Kane 2007). Cable channels also depicted a wider variety of LGBT characters than did network television, and provided more complex LGBT-inclusive narratives. HBO and Showtime pushed the boundaries with programs like *Six Feet Under, Queer As Folk, The L-Word*, and *Oz* that portrayed more complex LGBT character development and more explicit sexual behaviour, including nudity and same-sex intimate relationships (Fisher et al. 2007, Becker 2006, Ng 2013). These programs moved LGBT characters from supporting roles to the narrative’s centre, and tackled topics like homophobia, AIDS, and anti-gay violence (Tropiano 2002, Becker 2006). Like the network strategy of the 1990s, cable used LGBT-themed sexual content to titillate audiences and ensure their ‘edgy’ credentials with the aim of attracting liberal segments of the heterosexual audience (Fisher et al. 2007, Becker 2006). Showtime, for instance, aggressively promoted *Queer As Folk* as part of its ‘No Limits’ campaign in 1998; the program focussed exclusively on the lives of young gay men (plus one lesbian couple), and depicted amorous gay sexual contact (Tropiano 2002, Walters 2001). The program successfully targeted the LGBT niche as well as mainstream audiences, especially women aged 18-35 years, and resulted in high ratings, becoming the network’s highest-rated dramatic series in 2001. Despite mixed reviews from critics and academics, *Queer As Folk* demonstrated that sexually explicit LGBT programming could be lucrative.

The higher level of LGBT inclusion on cable television relates in part to its revenue stream. Network television depends solely on advertising revenue; as such, it is beholden to skittish advertisers who aim to attract the largest possible audience and avoid innovative programming in case audiences find it objectionable and either tune out or protest (Becker 2006). Cable, on the other hand, is party subsidised by subscriptions and offers ‘edgier’ or more inclusive programming that targets a smaller niche audience (Hughes 2013). The early 2000s saw the establishment of cable channels that specifically targeted the LGBT demographic; *Here TV* was established in 2002 and *Logo* in 2005. There was optimism among the LGBT community that these channels could potentially provide more accurate and diverse portrayals of the community, showcase speciality programs not available elsewhere, engage with LGBT-relevant current affairs, and “insure the prime time closet door will not only remain open, but permanently removed, hinges and all” (Tropiano 2002, 260). Despite the optimism, Ben Aslinger posits that *Logo’s* programming “reinscribe[d] class, race, and national hierarchies in queer cultures” (2009, 108). Eve Ng suggests
that the channel “has moved further away from serving a diverse LGBT viewership” (2013, 259) to attract a larger mainstream audience, particularly heterosexual women. This has “remarginalized queer subjects whom Logo’s earlier programming partially addressed, comprising a homonormativity predicated on discourses of consumerism, progress, and integration” (258).

**LGBT representation in Hollywood film**

Hollywood films have tended to be more conservative than network or cable television, yet the 1990s also saw a marked increase in mainstream LGBT-inclusive films (Walters 2001). Many of these films contained liberal, LGBT-positive messages and progressive representations, such as those in *As Good As It Gets* (1997) and *In & Out* (1997). However, as noted by Walters (2001), these films were created for (mostly) straight audiences, which, in order to secure profitable returns on the studios’ investments, generally reinvoked past stereotypes that mainstream audiences instantly recognised and felt comfortable with. One stereotype that profitable films employed was the exotic-but-safe and utterly desexualised “cross-dressing, straight-talking” (140) drag queen who helped heterosexual couples find love or guided them towards enlightenment, as seen in *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar* (1995) and *The Birdcage* (1996). Drag, in fact, became momentarily fashionable and highly visible in popular culture during the 1990s (Benshoff and Griffin 2006). Drag queens provided Hollywood with a hip and economically viable formula for LGBT integration onscreen; as summarised by *Newsweek*, “Hollywood has embraced cross-dressing as the safest way to pitch gayness to a mass audience. Drag queens are the cinema's favorite naughty pets, harmless if not quite housebroken” (Ansen 1996). Robert Brookey and Robert Westerfelhaus (2001) persuasively argue that *To Wong Foo’s* positive portrayal of homosexual drag ultimately served to reinforce heteronormative control of boundaries and reinforced the marginalisation of homosexuality. They state,

> through deified representation of queer experience in the popular media … the mainstream can appear to embrace them while at the same time defining queers in terms that dehumanize, marginalize, and attempt to tame. (2001, 152)

Employing hegemony, Hollywood’s use of drag can be usefully seen as evidence of the active domestication of oppositional elements; a process where the sting of drag’s critique is removed, leaving a harmless but highly visible version that is enacted for the amusement of straights. Drag, and indeed camp more generally, have been understood as forms of rebellion and a “survival strategy in times of oppression” (Richardson 2006, 159) that positioned gender as a learned performance rather than a natural extension of sex – in short, drag serves to ‘queer’ gender

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98 Drag was adopted by then-celebrity basketball player Dennis Rodman; both New York mayor Rudy Giuliani and controversial radio jockey Howard Stern were photographed in drag (Benshoff and Griffin 2006).
(Butler 1999, Sullivan 2003). However, Hollywood’s 1990s adoption of drag stripped it of any critique of heterosexism and used it to support heterosexual values like paternal love and the supremacy of heterosexual romance through heterocentric narrative structures that ranked straight courtship over gay politics (Brookey and Westerfelhaus 2001, Benshoff and Griffin 2006, Walters 2001). Hollywood’s onscreen drag queens were entirely desexualised; they, to quote Walters, were “homo but not sexual” (2001, 140, emphasis in original). In addition, as noted by Shirley Steinberg (1998), audiences may have felt comfortable with Hollywood drag queens because they were ‘real life’ straights playing drag onscreen, as exemplified by straight ‘hunks’ Wesley Snipes and Patrick Swayze. Thus, hegemonic absorption was signalled by Hollywood’s use of drag in a way that divorced it from politics – and indeed from homosexuality – by offering domesticated, light-hearted and lovable, apolitical, de-gayed representations that ultimately re-privileged heteronormativity.

Another widely utilised gay representation in film is the pairing of gay men with straight women, which proved successful in romantic comedies in both film and television. Films such as My Best Friend’s Wedding (1997), The Object of My Affection (1998), and The Next Best Thing (2000) present this type of pairing. Referring to Will & Grace, Kathleen Battles and Wendy Hilton-Morrow argue that these gay male/straight female pairings make “the topic of homosexuality more palatable to a large, mainstream television audience by situating it within safe and familiar popular culture conventions, particularly those of the situation comedy genre” (2002, 89) and ultimately reinforce heterosexism and heteronormativity. The reinforcement of heteronormativity by these romantic comedies is also explored by Helen Shugart who finds that

> ultimately, the gay male characters in the gay man/straight woman formula manifest heteronormative masculinity – that is, they are projected embodiments of that sensibility – and their sexuality is distilled as the strategy via which heterosexual male privilege is enacted and heteronormativity is renormalized. (2003, 88)

Kathryn Hummel similarly examines how ‘unruly’ women and their gay male confidants operated in these films, finding that

> the reversion to an essentialist notion of gender roles, in which the sexuality of the straight woman and that of her gay best friend is fixed, ensures that each film ends by reaffirming heteronormativity. (2017, 18)

While the analyses by Battles and Hilton-Morrow, Shugart, and Hummel are compelling, some audience research has challenged the idea that these gay-straight pairings reassert heteronormativity. Audience studies of Will & Grace demonstrate that the program may actually reduce audience prejudice towards gay men rather than reaffirm heteronormativity (Schiappa 2008, Schiappa, Gregg, and Hewes 2006, Ortiz and Harwood 2007).
Gay-themed films of the decade also focussed on AIDS (Walters 2001), such as Longtime Companion (1989), It’s My Party (1996), and Love! Valour! Compassion! (1997). These films were heart-warming and sympathetic dramas about middle-class, white gay men that kindly depicted the loving relationships of the gay male community, yet simultaneously reinforced a narrow set of representations. Philadelphia (1993) was the most profitable and influential AIDS-themed film of the 1990s, earning huge box office returns and critical acclaim. This film focuses on the plight of a gay lawyer afflicted with AIDS who is unjustly fired from his law firm and ends up being represented by a homophobic lawyer. The film was criticised for perpetuating stereotypes by desexualising homosexuality, focussing on a white, middle-class, apolitical “not too gay” (Walters 2001, 139) man, and overwriting the history of the gay rights movement by erasing all traces of a supportive gay community. Yet this film also countered the stereotypes of the “simpering villain” and “swishing object of amusement” (139) by depicting a gay man with dignity and agency. Unlike the usual portrayals of gay men with AIDS, he was not ravished by illness or a disease-spreading villain, but shown as a relatively complex character. The film was thus “able to reach and perhaps enlighten a straight audience as to the horrors of both AIDS and homophobia” (139).

Lesbian chic also made it to the big screen in the film Bound (1996). This neo-noir crime thriller focuses on lesbian lovers, Violet (Jennifer Tilly) and Corky (Gina Gershon), who plot to steal $2 million of mafia money. The writer-director Wachowski Brothers aimed to create a film that pushed genre boundaries but remained entertaining to audiences; they aimed to play with “people’s expectations, their assumptions, and the clichés of a genre, including the sexual dynamics implied by these clichés” (quoted in Benshoff and Griffin 2006, 258). Like all entertainment media utilising lesbian chic, Bound included only sexy postfeminist lesbians that appealed – and were marketed – to heterosexual men and lesbians (Benshoff and Griffin 2006). Lesbian chic, as exemplified by Bound, entirely excluded lesbians that did not fit the sexy, glamorous, and profitable mould. As noted by Susan McKenna,

> both lesbian chic and postfeminism are regulated through a traditional, yet highly sexualised, feminine appearance and behaviour that is constructed through consumer ideals, an erasure of difference, and by the oppositional positioning of unattractive and militant feminists. (2002, 290)

Examined within a hegemonic frame, lesbian chic reflected re-negotiated hegemonic borders that included only hypersexualised, glamorous, male-gaze-‘friendly’ lesbians whose sexuality was often fluid; portrayals that catered to male fantasies of girl-on-girl. Unsexy, masculine lesbian depictions remained almost entirely absent, rendered ‘indigestible’ and excluded from hegemony. Thus, while the renegotiation included explicitly out onscreen lesbians, this inclusion was only extended to a particular type of (male-friendly, heterosexualised) lesbian.
The most common filmic LGBT representation in this period remained what Walters (2001) labels ‘incidental queers,’ LGBT protagonists who are secondary characters yet included in the story, such as those portrayed in Home for the Holidays (1995), Big Daddy (1999), and The Stepford Wives (2004). Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin note that these characters allowed “Hollywood to congratulate itself for being liberal on queer issues ... ‘doing its part’ by showing queers as relatively realistic human beings” (2006, 261) yet these films continued to fall back on standard portrayals which remained focussed almost exclusively on white gay men, with very few LBT people of colour visible onscreen; gay male characters were desexualised and lacked an LGBT community (Walters 2001). The films that include incidental queers remained firmly heterocentric (Benshoff and Griffin 2006) and constructed their narratives in line with dominant Hollywood formulas, genres, and stereotypes (Benshoff 2009). Within these heterocentric narratives, incidental queers served to guide their straight counterparts towards love or personal development (Walters 2001). The gay-straight friendships depicted onscreen thus offered a “false sense of solidarity” (Benshoff and Griffin 2006, 261) by demonstrating the similarities between LGBT people and straights while simultaneously trivialising or “block[ing] from view ... the vast networks of social, political, religious, and corporate institutions (including those in Hollywood) that discriminate against queers on a daily basis” (261). Often, incidental queers served only to increase the ‘hipness’ of mainstream films while failing to meaningfully portray LGBT characters. As noted by Walters,

the emergence of the new good gay reveals to us both how far we have come (gays are no longer the easy and obvious choice for a villain) and how steadfastly double standards still prevail. (2001, 150)

While LGBT representations of the 1990s were generally limited but positive, a handful of popular and critically acclaimed films cast these characters as unstable villains (Walters 2001, Gross 2001). Basic Instinct (1992) features lesbian killers and showcases bisexuality as a precursor to heterosexual sex; JFK (1991) mysteriously links gay sadomasochistic sex to Kennedy’s assassination; and Silence of the Lambs (1991) depicts a transsexual serial killer, Buffalo Bill (Ted Levine). All of these films attracted controversy in the LGBT press, and some in the mainstream press, yet they were also recognised by the film academy with nominations and awards, and all attained financial success. In addition to these highly visible and popularised LGBT villains, Hollywood continued to write out LGBT material in film adaptations, much as it did with These Three (1936) and Crossfire (1947) during the Production Code years (Benshoff and Griffin 2006). Films like The Color Purple (1985) and Fried Green Tomatoes (1991) obfuscate and codify lesbian characters; A Beautiful Mind (2001) and Troy (2004) replaced homosexuals with heterosexuals (Benshoff and Griffin 2006); and Suicide Squad (2016) removed all trace of lead character Harley


Quinn’s (Margot Robbie) bisexual identity (Stokes, Townsend, and Deerwater 2017). Thus, while Hollywood most commonly depicted positive LGBT characters onscreen, the stereotype of the unhinged LGBT villain was by no means forgotten, and Hollywood continued to ‘forget’ LGBT content in certain film adaptations.

LGBT representations have been more progressive in independent films than those produced by major studios. A cohort of critically acclaimed LGBT indie films from the early 1990s, including *Paris is Burning* (1990), *My Own Private Idaho* (1991), and *The Living End* (1992), were “radical and popular, stylish and economically viable” (Aaron 2004, 3). Labelled New Queer Cinema by B. Ruby Rich, these films were narratively and stylistically varied but all focussed centrally on LGBT characters, gave a voice to marginalised groups, and could be characterised as “irreverent, energetic, alternatively minimalist and excessive … and full of pleasure” (Rich 2004, 16). New Queer Cinema was “a movement of defiance [which sought] to defy a homophobic cultural past … [and] cinematic convention” (Juett and Jones 2010, x). This decade saw unprecedented numbers of prestigious award nominations and wins to LGBT-inclusive films, which increased their visibility to larger and more mainstream audiences (Benshoff 2009). In fact, the success of the indie sector spurred the production of LGBT-inclusive films by the major studios. As noted by Benshoff, “[t]he rise of New Queer Cinema did not go unnoticed by Hollywood, and they briefly tried (unsuccessfully) to market a few films that explored more open parameters of sexuality” (2009, 199).

Overall, the 1990s proved to be an auspicious decade for the independent sector, with major studios launching or acquiring independent film divisions. By the middle of the decade “a new class of Hollywood studio had emerged, the conglomerate-owned indie-film division, signalling one of the most significant developments in recent industry history” (Schatz 2012b, 11). Nicknamed ‘Indiewood’ or the ‘dependent-independents,’ studios like Miramax (a subsidiary of Disney), Fox Searchlight (a subsidiary of NewsCorp), and New Line Cinema (a subsidiary of Turner Broadcasting, then-Time Warner) occupied a distinct aesthetic and commercial middle ground between the major studios and true independents. It was during this period that many popular and critically acclaimed LGBT-inclusive films were produced and/or distributed by the sector, including *The Crying Game* (1992), *Gods and Monsters* (1998), *American Beauty* (1999), *Boys Don’t Cry* (1999), *Far From Heaven* (2002), *The Hours* (2002), *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), *Notes on a Scandal* (2006), and *Milk* (2008). Benshoff summarises the duel benefit of the Indiewood sector:

> while the creation of these quasi-independent boutique subsidiaries has been decried by many critics for supposedly narrowing the playing field for ‘truly’ independent film production and distribution, the evidence suggests that this new production and marketing strategy has been successful in bringing queer concerns to wider audiences. As
‘independent’ cinema these films play at festivals where they garner good reviews and multiple awards. But as films also backed by major Hollywood studios, they can then be distributed via a platform release pattern to larger, more mainstream audiences in American multiplexes. Instead of being niche marketed to small urban LGBT audiences, the films are marketed as prestige pictures that just happen to have queer content. (2009, 200)

The balance between the major studios, Indiewood, and genuine independents was disrupted in the mid-2000s when major studios began divesting themselves of their independent subsidiaries, and the ‘truly’ independent film sector declined sharply (Schatz 2012a, 2012b). Only two out of more than 100 independent studios, Lionsgate and Summit, remained commercially viable; however, their profitable films (Summit’s Twilight series and Lionsgate’s Transporter and Hunger Games franchises 100) were thoroughly mainstream rather than art-house. The market-share for Indiewood and independent studios drastically declined despite the large number of films they released; 101 in essence, these films were no longer accessible to mainstream audiences in multiplex theatres, making it significantly less likely that they could be seen in any ancillary markets like DVD/Blu-ray, VOD, or on television. Given that many successful and widely available LGBT-inclusive films were produced and distributed by the Indiewood sector, this industry shift is likely to decrease the number of such films made available to audiences – particularly mainstream audiences – in the future. With market-share increasingly devoted to the relatively few films released by major studios, which increasingly provide a narrow set of franchisable narratives, there is a strong possibility that LGBT representation will be rendered increasingly invisible in film. As summed up by Thomas Schatz,

the fate of the top filmmaking talent in the new millennium, like that of the independent sector and the indie film movement generally, has been shaped by (and at the mercy of) the studios’ growing preoccupation with franchise filmmaking. (2012b, 16-17)

Major studios did release a number of LGBT-inclusive films during the 2000s. The list includes: 20th Century Fox’s The Family Stone (2005); Paramount’s The Talented Mister Ripley (1999), The Next Best Thing (2000), and The Hours; Sony Pictures’ release of Rent (2005), The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo (2011), and The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones (2013); Universal released Mulholland Drive (2001), Scott Pilgrim vs. The World (2010); and Warner Brother’s Alexander (2004), Kiss Kiss Bang Bang (2005), V For Vendetta (2005), and J. Edgar (2011) (Stokes et al. 2015). With the exception of Beauty and the Beast (2017), Walt Disney Pictures has a poor history of releasing LGBT-inclusive films; Disney subsidiaries Touchstone and Buena Vista Pictures have, however,

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100 The Twilight and Hunger Games series both fit within the teen film genre.
101 In 2008, independent studios released almost 400 films (compared with approximately 150 released by major studios and 80 by the Indiewood), yet accounted for only 15 percent of market-share; if the releases from Summit and Lionsgate are removed, their market-share decreases to around 5 percent (Schatz 2012a).

There is currently a dearth of literature that systematically covers LGBT representation in mainstream films beyond the late 1990s, with most of the literature focussing on television. While there has been significant scholarly work analysing individual films, there is a lack of systematic examination of LGBT representation in mainstream films, how it has changed in the last quarter-century, and what this indicates about the wider social context of production. It is important that such systematic work continue since it examines not just how individual films represent LGBT characters and themes, but their operation within the social, cultural, and industrial moment; how they serve to both reflect and reinforce specific hegemonic norms.

GLAAD, however, began providing a systematic overview of LGBT inclusion in Hollywood films as of 2012. GLAAD focuses on LGBT representation in films released from Hollywood’s major studios (20th Century Fox, Paramount Pictures, Sony Columbia, Universal Pictures, The Walt Disney Studios, and Warner Brothers); since 2013, they have also included films released by Lionsgate Entertainment, and since 2014 those released by some independent studios (Kane, Gouttebroze, Townsend, Thayer, et al. 2013, Kane et al. 2014, Stokes et al. 2015, Stokes, Bradford, and Townsend 2016, Stokes, Townsend, and Deerwater 2017). Their analyses focus on the number of LGBT-inclusive films, the number of LGBT characters, and an application of the ‘Vito Russo test’ to gauge the adequacy of the portrayals. GLAAD’s findings have shown that, while LGBT-inclusivity on network and cable television has improved since the mid-1990s, Hollywood has lagged severely behind. Examining GLAAD reports between 2012 and 2016, demonstrate that, while the

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102 The *Perks of Being a Wallflower* was released by Summit, a subsidiary of Lionsgate since 2012.

103 For insightful analysis of *I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry* employing queer theory, see Benshoff (2009).

104 GLAAD’s ‘Vito Russo test’ examines whether a film meets three criteria: the inclusion of identifiable LGBT characters; whether the LGBT characters have unique character traits (or are defined solely by their sexual orientation); whether the LGBT characters are significantly woven into the plot (or whether they are there “simply to provide colorful commentary, paint urban authenticity, or (perhaps most commonly) set up a punchline” (Kane, Gouttebroze, Townsend, Thayer, et al. 2013, 8).
numbers have remained low, there has been an consistent incremental increase in the number of major studio releases that are LGBT-inclusive (from 14 in 2012 to 23 in 2016) (Figure 3). The annual number of LGBT characters ranges between 25 and 70.\textsuperscript{105} Not only are these numbers small, but “[m]ost depictions of LGBT people in these films tend to be minor, both in terms of substance and screen-time, and occasionally still rely on outdated and even defamatory stereotypes” (Stokes et al. 2015, 1). In 2016, nearly half of the LGBT characters in mainstream were onscreen for less than one minute (Stokes, Townsend, and Deerwater 2017); other reports in the series note that characters may be onscreen for only a few seconds. Less than half of the LGBT-inclusive films passed GLAAD’s Vito Russo test, indicating a severe lack of acceptable LGBT portrayals among the paltry number of characters offered by major studios.

**Figure 3. Numbers of LGBT characters, LGBT-inclusive films, and inclusive films that pass GLAAD’s ‘Vito Russo test’ released by major studios, 2012-2016**


Between 2012 and 2017, Hollywood generally offered a limited range of LGBT portrayals. The most common depiction was of gay men. According to GLAAD, just over half (56 percent) of 2012’ s inclusive films featured a gay male, which has steadily increased to 83 percent in 2016 (Kane, Gouttebroze, Townsend, Thayer, et al. 2013, Kane et al. 2014, Stokes et al. 2015, Stokes, Bradford, and Townsend 2016, Stokes, Townsend, and Deerwater 2017) (Figure 4). The proportion of lesbian and bisexual characters has fluctuated year-to-year but remained consistently low. Transgender characters were invisible in 2012 and 2014, but present in 12 percent of inclusive films in 2013 (though the report notes that they would be better described as ‘impressions’ rather than characters); only five percent of inclusive films have included transgender characters in the last two years. LGBT characters were overwhelmingly white. Thus, the most common onscreen representation of the LGBT community continues to be of white gay men.

\textsuperscript{105} GLAAD warns that the 70 LGBT characters counted in 2016 is somewhat misleading; 14 of the 70 characters were involved in a single musical number in ‘mockumentary’ *PopStar: Never Stop Never Stopping* (2016).
Surprisingly, GLAAD found that independent studios produced fewer LGBT-inclusive films than the major studios in 2014 (Stokes et al. 2015). They found that only five of the 47 films (10.6 percent) produced by Focus Features, Fox Searchlight, Roadside Attractions, and Sony Pictures Classics were LGBT-inclusive. This increased significantly in 2015 when 22 percent (10 of 46 films released) were LGBT-inclusive, and 2016 when 17 percent (seven of 41 films) were inclusive (Stokes, Bradford, and Townsend 2016, Stokes, Townsend, and Deerwater 2017). Regardless of the number of releases, GLAAD found that representations in independent films were more progressive than those in their mainstream counterparts. Films like The Skeleton Twins (2014), The Imitation Game (2014), and Moonlight (2016) (the first film with an explicitly LGBT lead that won an Oscar for ‘best picture’) offered significant and non-stereotypical representations that were missing from mainstream films.

The limited LGBT-inclusion in mainstream Hollywood film is partially due to industrial and economic factors. The integration of media industries, which began under Reagan, underwent several rounds of mergers and acquisitions in the 1990s (Schatz 2012b, Balio 2013, Schatz 2009). The result was the consolidation of media control by a relatively small number of players, with films accounting for a fraction of the profits of conglomerate parent companies like AOL Time Warner, Viacom, NewsCorp, and Disney. The major studios came under increasing pressure to placate cost-conscious parent companies that were hungry for profits. Adding to these pressures was the downturn in profits from DVDs, increasing competition from home theatre and VOD, decreasing operating budgets due to the 2008 recession, and a move to employ studio chiefs with a background in business rather than filmmaking. Major studios have decreased the number of films they release, closed poorly-performing units, scaled back employment, and focussed on
franchisable blockbusters. Blockbusters are seen as particularly good investments by major
studios because they dependably secure large domestic and global box office returns, and can
be leveraged into merchandise, theme parks, and all manner of profitable ephemera, in addition
to revenue from ancillary markets. According to one major studio boss,

At the end of the day, Hollywood is about making money ... My hands are tied having to
come up with big franchises. I can’t make certain movies anymore, no matter how
profitable they might become. I make movies that turn into toys. (Graser 2012)

Major studios’ concentration on franchisable blockbusters is bad news for LGBT representation in
mainstream film. Action/scifi/fantasy genres – those which are most commonly blockbusters –
have, to date, generally avoided LGBT-inclusion; only 12 recent inclusive genre films have featured
LGBT characters (Stokes et al. 2015, Stokes, Bradford, and Townsend 2016, Stokes, Townsend, and
Deerwater 2017). In part, this exclusion is due to the narrative structure of the blockbuster that
favours action, computer generated special effects, and PG-13-appropriate violence rather than
color character development (Schatz 2009, Balio 2013). LGBT exclusion is also partly due to its target
demographic which courts a male pre-teen/teen or family audience; as noted by Benshoff and
Griffin, films that target (white) adolescent males are likely to present (homo)sexuality in a way
that is congruent with a “junior high locker room: curious but phobic” (2006, 261). Thus, these
films are fiercely heterosexual and portray traditionally macho male heroes and passive, swooning
damsels in distress. While LGBT-inclusion in blockbusters is entirely possible – as demonstrated by
the success of Star Trek Beyond (2016) that portrayed Lieutenant Hikaru Sulu as gay and xXx:
Return of Xander (2017) that cast genderqueer actor Ruby Rose as a queer action hero – the
current blockbuster model remains stubbornly lacking in LGBT inclusion.

The biggest reason for the avoidance of LGBT material comes down, of course, to money. Motion
pictures are the US’s second-largest net export and the majority of box office returns for
blockbusters rely on international markets (Balio 2013). Hollywood studios fear potential profit
losses on films with openly LGBT actors in international markets (Lang 2015), and LGBT-related
content is seen as potentially controversial or alienating to international audiences, particularly
audiences in China and Russia (Lang 2016). Hollywood is primarily an industry – in the business of

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106 The international box office accounts for an increasingly large share of total box office receipts, up from 66 percent ($31.6 billion) in 2010 to 72 percent ($36.4 billion) in 2014 (Motion Picture Association of America 2014).

107 GLAAD found that the comedy genre was most inclusive, with one-third to one-half of comedies inclusive of LGBT characters between 2012 and 2016 (Kane, Gouttebroze, Townsend, Thayer, et al. 2013, Kane et al. 2014, Stokes et al. 2015, Stokes, Bradford, and Townsend 2016, Stokes, Townsend, and Deerwater 2017). By contrast, the majority of releases were action/sci-fi/fantasy films, but few were LGBT-inclusive: three films in 2012 (8.8 percent), four in 2013 (9.3 percent); three films in 2014 (6.5 percent); three in 2015 (6.4 percent); and six in 2016 (14 percent).

108 While Wonder Woman (2017) lacked any explicitly LGBT characters, it included lesbian overtones. Other possible LGBT inclusions are the solar-powered lesbian alien in a film adaptation of Marvel’s The Runaways and lesbian characters Phyla-Vell and Moondragon in the Guardians of the Galaxy franchise (Kane et al. 2014).
making money as much as the business of making movies – and therefore risk-averse; with blockbusters’ budgets in excess of $100 million, studios are unlikely to include any material that risks the profitability of their venture. (Previous inclusive films were often ‘mid-budget’ ventures; these film projects are undertaken less often by major studios, which concentrate their efforts on blockbusters, and by the weakened independent and Indiewood sectors.) These fears about profitability significantly reduce the likelihood of LGBT-inclusion in mainstream blockbuster films, now the ‘bread and butter’ for major studios. GLAAD outlines the importance of LGBT inclusivity in mainstream films:

Fair and accurate representations are especially critical when considering the implications these depictions can have in other countries ... Film remains one of our country’s biggest cultural exports, and significant depictions of LGBT people in movies can have a powerful and positive effect in sparking dialogue and understanding. (Stokes et al. 2015, 2)

Despite advocacy from GLAAD and television ‘leading the way’ with relatively high levels of LGBT inclusion, the current inadequacy of LGBT representation in mainstream film is likely to continue at least until the next shake-up in the film industry.

**LGBT representation in teen television**

Writing in the early 1990s, Alfred Kielwasser and Michelle Wolf (1992, 1993) described the ‘symbolic annihilation’ of gay and lesbian youth in mainstream television programming, noting that

[a]ccording to the fictional world of television, gay and lesbian children simply do not exist ... For homosexual youth, the message – ubiquitous, consonant, cumulative – is that only heterosexual adolescents matter, only heterosexual ‘coming of age’ rituals are acceptable and communicable. (1992, 359)

Fortunately, as we explore in this section, that situation has changed significantly in the last quarter-century.

The inclusion of LGBT material in teen-oriented programming was approached cautiously at the start of the 1990s (much as it was in network television more generally). While, as explored in chapter one, overtly homosexual teens were portrayed in a few made-for-tv-movies of the 1980s, “it was considered morally, politically, and commercially dangerous for a general entertainment series [of the early 1990s] ... to delve into the realm of teenage homosexuals” (Capsuto 2000, 294). Thus, the decade started off with very few representations, and the few that did exist relied on the trope of the confused, conflicted, and unhappy gay male teenager forged in the 1970s and 1980s. Fox’s *Beverly Hills, 90210* was one of the only programs of the period to depict even potential teen homosexuality in a teenage television drama. The episode “Summer Storm” (1991) involves confused jock, Kyle Connors (David Lascher), whose sexuality is questioned when he does
not make advances on series regular Kelly Taylor (Jennie Garth). Kyle tells Kelly, “I wish I could have been attracted to you … My life would be a lot less confusing right now.” Thus, the episode shows Kyle overtly questioning his sexuality, but unwilling (or unable) to identify as gay. (Kyle reappeared later in the season in “A Competitive Edge” (1992), an episode which was similarly cautious in its oblique displacement of Kyle’s coming out with the dangers of steroid use, the lie with which he can no longer live.) Capsuto notes that the tame depiction embodied by Kyle was considered daring for the time; he states, “the fact that gay-youth portrayals had to be so circumspect – even on this series – reflects what a truly threatening, almost untouchable subject this was” (2000, 295).

LGBT youth depictions in teen-oriented programs became more common within just a few years. These early portrayals were, however, nested within narratives of despair (Capsuto 2000). Reflecting, and profiting from, the controversy caused by the Gay Male and Lesbian Youth Suicide study (Gibson 1989), entertainment programs began to depict explicit but unhappy gay and lesbian youth; Capsuto posits that “since the studies were what gave television ‘permission’ to air gay-youth stories, the only commercially acceptable plots mirrored the research’s tales of depression, isolation, and despair” (2000, 296). Within a year of the study’s release, however, homosexual youth narratives became even more numerous and the range of representations increased to include comfortable, well-adjusted gay and lesbian teens. These homosexual teens were almost all one-episode characters who appeared only briefly to come out of the closet then disappeared, as seen, for example, in Beverly Hills, 90210’s “Comic Relief” (1997), “Santa Knows” (1997), and “Family Tree” (1999).109 These episodes depicted coming out as daunting and traumatic for the onscreen incidental homosexual teens. They faced anti-gay reactions and possible rejection from friends and family, though program regulars were normally supportive, if uncomfortable, as typified in 21 Jump Street’s “A Change of Heart” (1990) and Doogie Howser, M.D.’s “Spell It ‘M-A-N’” (1993).110 By the middle of the decade, however, even coming out became less harrowing and homosexual teens were treated with kindness. In fact, reflecting the overall trend in network television, the ‘edginess’ of coming out episodes dulled and this material

109 One exception to the single-episode gay was daytime soap opera’s One Life to Live’s Billy Douglas (Ryan Phillippe). While One Life to Live was mainly geared towards adult viewers, Billy appeared during the summer when teen viewership was at its peak and provided an example of how gay-youth stories could be told in a sophisticated, credible, and ongoing way (Capsuto 2000). Billy was a program regular whose narrative was well-integrated into the program; he did not struggle with his sexuality, and was not a virgin, he was “unquestionably one of the most unapologetic and credible sustained portrayals of a gay teenager ever on American television, even if the character sometimes seemed a little too perfect and kind hearted” (298-299).

110 This depiction was exemplified by Fox’s made-for-tv-movie Doing Time on Maple Drive (1992), which focussed on college-aged, closeted gay, perfect son, Matt Carter (William McNamara), who attempts suicide rather than disappoint his overbearing parents (Capsuto 2000).
was worked into programs with entirely different focuses, as seen in Blossom’s “It Happened One Night” (1995).  

While LGBT teens were becoming more common, they remained incidental until the premiere of ABC’s My So-Called Life in 1994 (Capsuto 2000, Tropiano 2002). This program included Rickie Vasquez (Wilson Cruz), a three-dimensional, black-Latino, bisexual/gay youth who was the first gay teen series regular in a teen-oriented drama, the first gay black-Latino regular, and the first gay teen played by an openly gay actor. Despite not being a lead character – instead playing a regular supporting role – he was integral to the program and had his own narrative that revolved around issues like physical violence at school and homelessness resulting from his sexual orientation. In contrast to other depictions of the time, he was not a popular jock but instead a stylish confidante who donned eyeliner and trendy clothing. Unlike the other onscreen friends of televisual gay teens, who struggled to deal with their friends’ homosexuality, Rickie’s friends accepted his sexual orientation. While My So-Called Life was clearly a breakthrough program on a number of fronts, the ABC positioned Rickie as the program’s fairly conservative moralist, touting conservative views and celibacy; this tactic aimed to ensure that audiences were sympathetic to his character.

The number of LGBT characters in teen-oriented programming continued to increase towards the end of the 1990s, due in part to the sheer number of teen television programs which also rose substantially (Wee 2010). The increase in teen television programs, and indeed teen films (to be addressed in the next section), was due to a number of factors including: a demographic shift where the ‘echo boom’ expanded and reached teenagehood; the economic recovery after the recession of the 1980s that led to increased consumer expenditure; and the recognition and cultivation of teens as a consumer group that was made popular by market research groups, trade journals, media outlets, and advertisers. Recognising the potential profit from this youth demographic, a few television networks targeted the teen niche through individual programs and even entire channels like Time Warner’s The WB that launched in 1995 (Wee 2008, 2010). (In fact, as seen earlier in the chapter, the decision to focus on teens dovetailed with television’s overall migration from broadcasting to narrowcasting in order to better attract advertising revenue.) By the late 1990s, The WB had launched a number of teen-oriented programs including

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111 In “It Happened One Night,” Blossom (Mayim Bialik) agrees to a date set up by her father, Nick (Ted Wass), during which her date comes out of the closet. This is, however, only one of the sub-plots; the episode also includes storyline about Nick and his wife Carol embarrassingly encroaching on Blossom’s date; Blossom’s friend Six (Jenna von Oy) and Blossom’s brother Joey (Joey Lawrence) getting caught in a flash flood and sharing a hotel room; and Blossom’s ex-boyfriend, Vinnie (David Lascher), reappearing.

112 The ‘echo boom’ is the demographic bulge made up of the baby boom’s offspring (mainly Millennials).

113 Before The WB, MTV and Fox were the networks that actively targeted the youth demographic (Wee 2008, 2010).
**Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Dawson's Creek.** Valerie Wee notes that a characteristic of these teen programs was the “attitude of liberal humanism in their narratives, addressing difficult, often controversial, and significant issues that were particularly relevant to its teen and youth audience” (2008, 51). In addition, these programs had an hour-long format, numerous episodes per season, and were of a long-running nature, all of which allowed for the development of complex characters and narratives. As noted by Glyn Davis, “[t]een series ... offer great potential for the representation of teen lives and desire, including those of queer teens” (2004, 131). Thus, these programs became an ideal format for addressing LGBT issues that were timely and visible in mainstream culture.

Despite the rise in representation throughout the decade, the next regular character after Rickie did not appear until 2000 with Dawson Creek’s Jack McPhee (Kerr Smith). Unlike Rickie, a supporting regular character, Jack was a leading regular character with his own narrative woven throughout the program and his sexuality not the sum of his being (Tropiano 2002). While he conformed to the trope of gay teen established in made-for-tv-movies of the mid-1980s (middle-class, athletic, white, intelligent, and sensitive), he was not saintly (Capsuto 2000). Throughout the program, Jack came out to family and friends, participated in school, kissed, and found romance. While Ellen’s coming out enraged anti-LGBT groups and delighted some members of the LGBT community, Jack’s coming out was received with silence (Walters 2001). As noted in a news article at the time,

> [t]he response was virtual silence. No loud protests from outraged church or conservative groups. No, ‘Yep, I’m Gay!’ magazine cover. No celebrities treating it as a crusade. No ponderous essays about what it means to society. Nothing. No one could have missed it when Ellen DeGeneres and her character ‘Ellen’ came out two years ago. So it may be her most lasting legacy that on ‘Dawson’s Creek,’ a provocative gay story line in a popular teenage drama series is causing barely a ripple. (quoted in Walters 2001, 106-107)

*Buffy the Vampire Slayer* was another teen drama that offered significant teen LGBT portrayals. Willow (Alyson Hannigan), an intelligent, computer-savvy, and magical program regular, had been an integral part of the ‘slaying team’ since the first season (Tropiano 2002). While she was in a heterosexual relationship during the second and third seasons, she forms a close bond with fellow female witch, Tara Maclay (Amber Benson), and comes out in “New Moon Rising” (2000). Willow and Tara’s first onscreen kiss occurred in the following season (“The Body” [2001]). Neither Willow’s coming out nor the onscreen kiss were depicted in ‘very special episodes’ exploited for hype. In fact, *Buffy* creator Joss Whedon was intent on not making the kiss the centre of the latter episode, thereby feeding into the fad of ‘lesbian kiss episodes.’ Willow and Tara’s love is treated as natural, and their onscreen intimacy was not used as a stunt to boost ratings, but shown simply as the manifestation of love between two people. As Stephen Tropiano states,
Joss Whedon has ushered the representation of gay characters on television into the next millennium with the ‘coming out’ of Willow. Both Willow and Tara are prime examples of how gay and lesbian characters, teens as well as adults, can be fully integrated into a series without their homosexuality ever being an issue. (184)

Wee similarly notes that the depictions of homosexuality in *Buffy* and *Dawson’s Creek* were treated progressively, rather than exploited as “‘alternative’ or aberrant” (2008, 51).

The diversity and centrality of LGBT characters has continued to increase since the turn of the century. LGBT themes and characters are now seen in almost all mainstream teen programs, including *The OC, One Tree Hill, Veronica Mars, Ugly Betty, Friday Night Lights, Gossip Girl, 90210, Vampire Diaries, Pretty Little Liars, Teen Wolf, Faking It, Scream*, and *Riverdale*. (A list of LGBT characters in teen television programs since the 1980s is available in Appendix D.114) While numerous teen series now feature regular, recurring, and incidental LGBT characters, *Glee* has received the most academic attention. The program has been both praised for being progressive and empowering (for example, Montalbano 2013, Dell and Boyer 2013), and derided for being stereotypical and heteronormative (for example, Jacobs 2014, Meyer and Wood 2013). Either way, *Glee* included more than 20 LGBT characters in its six seasons, including lead gay character Kurt Hummel (Chris Colfer), gay regulars Blaine Anderson (Darren Criss) and David Karofsky (Max Adler), closeted-now-out lesbian Santana Lopez (Naya Rivera), sexually fluid Britney Piece (Heather Morris), and transgender Wade ‘Unique’ Adams (Alex Newell). The series is distinct from earlier teen television programs in the sheer number and variety of LGBT characters and narratives, and bucks the trend of situating a single LGBT character in an otherwise hetero-world (Meyer and Wood 2013).

Overall, when examining LGBT characters on teen television programs since the 1990s, a number of very significant changes become apparent. First, LGBT characters have moved from single episode or short-run characters to recurring, regular, and even lead characters (for example Clarke Griffin (Eliza Taylor) from *The 100* and Amy Raudenfeld (Rita Volk) from *Faking It*). Second, this increase has led to an expansion of narrative options. The standard heterocentric narrative of a straight character ‘dealing’ with the homosexuality of a friend or family member, so common in previous decades, is no longer the only inclusive storyline; LGBT characters have begun to tell their own, more complex stories. These narratives involve fitting in, finding love, kissing, attending prom; in short, the same trials and tribulations as heterosexual teens on television. Further, in contrast to earlier depictions, contemporary LGBT onscreen youth already know their sexual orientations.

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114 While, as noted in the introduction, no intersex characters were identified in teen films, a few are present in teen television.
identity and gender expression; those who are in the process of understanding their LGBT identity may still struggle, but much of the sting of self-loathing has disappeared.

Third, not only are LGBT characters more numerous but they are also more diverse than their predecessors. While the majority of LGBT characters are still white, portrayals of LGBT people of colour are increasing. For example, black LGBT teens include Maya St. Germain (Bianca Lawson) on *Pretty Little Liars*, Nathan Miller (Jarod Joseph) on *The 100*, and Unique Adams (Alex Newell) on *Glee*; Emily Fields (Shay Mitchell) of *Pretty Little Liars* is of Irish/Scottish, Korean, and Filipina decent. There has also been a dramatic increase in the number of bisexual, transgender, and intersex characters; characters that had previously been entirely absent and invisible on teen television. These include self-described ‘bi-curious’ Audrey (Bex Taylor-Klaus) on *Scream* and sexually fluid Maya St. Germain from *Pretty Little Liars*; transgender characters Unique Adams and Sheldon, formerly Shannon, Beiste (Dot-Marie Jones) from *Glee* and Drew Reeves (Zelda Williams) from *Dead of Summer*; and intersex characters Lauren Cooper (Bailey De Young) and Raven (played by intersex actor, Amanda Saenz) on *Faking It*. In addition, while characters on teen-oriented programs are always attractive, some characters blur or blend traditional gender attributes. This is seen with *The 100*’s Clarke who amalgamates feminine beauty with the traditionally male traits of physical strength and strong-willed leadership, and *Scream*’s Audrey who (somewhat) undermines the gender binary by pairing a sporty short-haircut and little make-up with traditionally non-feminine attire like ripped jeans and flannel shirts.

Fourth, LGBT characters are no longer alone in a hetero world, but rather form part of an LGBT community, seen on, for example, *Veronica Mars*, *Glee*, and *Faking It*. It is heartening that programs like *Pretty Little Liars* acknowledge that straight friends and family may not be able to fully understand and adequately support LGBT peers, recognising the important role that both informal queer peer support and formalised supports like GSAs can play. 115 *Faking It* illustrates the benefits of GSAs to cultivate safe spaces for schoolmates, and depicts political youth-relevant issues like same-sex dates at school dances. *Faking It*’s “Homecoming Out” (Jamie Travis 2014) even featured real-world crisis intervention and support organisation, The Trevor Project, thereby raising awareness of a ‘real-world’ organisation that supports LGBT and questioning youth (The Trevor Project 2016).

Finally, in addition to the improvements in LGBT portrayals, representations of heterosexuals have also changed. Whereas in the early and mid-1990s straight series regulars were generally shocked when their gay or lesbian friend came out, straights no longer routinely react in shocked, cruel,

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115 Jason Jacobs contemplates the limits of heterosexual families capacity to raise LGBT children, arguing that “what young queers in fact need most is other queers” (2014, 319).
and/or antagonistic ways. Now, it is routine for straight peers to understand and accept LGBT friends at once.

Yet, while there have certainly been a number of significant advances, the vast majority of depictions of LGBT youth in teen television are middle-class, and the majority continue to be of white, gender-conforming, gay male or lesbian teens. LGBT people of colour, LGBT people from working-class backgrounds, and certainly bisexual, transgender, and intersex characters are not yet adequately represented on teen television.

**LGBT representation in teen film**


> [t]he relatively dormant period of teen films from the late 1980s through to the early 1990s was not broken by a particular film or social event. Yet, in the mid-1990s, the visibility of teen films clearly increased from the previous ten years, with successful television shows providing Hollywood with new teen stars, and with a renewed comfort in the industry for handling adolescent issues. (2005, 89)

Like the increase in teen-oriented television, the increase in teen films was due in part to the coming of age of Baby Boomers’ offspring and the economic power this generation was presumed to wield (Wee 2010, Osgerby 2004). Wee (2010) posits that their economic power was borne out with the financial success of big screen teen hits *Clueless* (1995), *Scream* (1996), and *Titanic* (1997); *Titanic* became the highest grossing film ever in large part because of the teenage demographic. After the success of these films, teens were, again, seen as the key to Hollywood’s financial success: annual Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) surveys of the mid-1990s consistently found that teens accounted for a high proportion of both audience numbers and ticket sales; teens accounted for half of ‘avid’ filmgoers (those who saw three to four films per month); and teens frequently rented films. Teenage girls were seen as particularly profitable because they viewed films repeatedly and purchased ancillary products like soundtracks and licensed merchandise. The profits from early teen hits convinced Hollywood that the genre was a safe financial bet and spurred the industry into a new cycle.

The latest cycle of teen films rejuvenated many of the same sub-genres that were popularised in the 1980 cycle (Tropiano 2006, Shary 2005, 2014). Shary (2014) details the similarities in a number of sub-generic categories. He posits that the ‘school film’ sub-genre re-emerged in two cycles; the first ran from 1995 to 1999 (including *Clueless* and *10 Things I Hate About You* [1999]), and the

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second began in 2004 with Napoleon Dynamite (2004), Mean Girls (2004), and Friday Night Lights (2004), fading by the end of the decade. Another subgenre identified by Shary is that of juvenile delinquency. In contrast to earlier juvenile delinquency teen film cycles, the cycle of the mid-1990s concentrated on ‘lighter’ representations of youth deviance; Shary delineates its various permutations, including categories of ‘mischief’ (for example, Good Burger [1997] and Detroit Rock City [1999]), ‘deviant dancing’ (Save the Last Dance [2001]), and ‘tough girls’ (The Craft [1996]). Each of these categories expresses an aspect of delinquency along the spectrum of “character concerns, behaviours, and types that the film industry has employed in examining the way young people express their most tormented anxieties and enjoy their most liberatory outlets” (159). Shary notes that the juvenile delinquency sub-genre was essentially abandoned by major studios after the Columbine school shooting in 1999. The horror/slasher re-emerged with more self-reflexivity and intertextuality with Scream, followed by the Urban Legend and I Know What You Did Last Summer franchises. The youth romance sub-genre resumed its prominence but moved away from the “sexualized images of the early ’80s and concentrated further on romantic pre-sexual relationships among teens” (223). In the post-AIDS world of the late 1990s, “films about love or sex retained definite cautionary messages” (224). The sub-genre included both romantic melodramas and sex comedies, and touched on issues including virginity (American Pie [1999]), teen pregnancy (Juno [2007]), and LGBT youth (But I’m a Cheerleader [2000]).

Overall, contemporary teen films of all sub-genres began to tell a wider variety of stories from multiple perspectives, venturing beyond that of the white, middle-class American male that was so ubiquitous in teen films of the 1980s (Shary 2014, 2005, Tropiano 2006, Driscoll 2011, Kaveney 2006, Wood 2003). One of the multiple perspectives that has become included in contemporary teen films involves LGBT youth; Shary suggests that “[t]een films of the mid- to late 1990s ... began looking at sexual orientation, gender discrimination and the postmodern nature of teen films in general” (2005, 89). As outlined in chapter one, past teen film narratives involving LGBT youth have shifted throughout time, evolving from coded connotations of gender-inversion (seen in Rebel Without Cause [1955] and Tea and Sympathy [1956]), to explicit tales of self-loathing and suicide (seen in Ode to Billy Joe [1976]), to films featuring ridiculous and effeminate gay males (for example, Lamar in Revenge of the Nerds [1984]) being produced alongside teen films featuring LGBT characters who are sad and lonely (Montgomery in Fame [1980]), deviant and dangerous (as seen in Reform School Girls [1986]), or, occasionally, happy and supported (for example, Personal Best [1982] and Happy Birthday, Gemini [1980]); the most common reference to homosexuality in mainstream teen films of the 1980s was, however, through rampant homophobic language (used in Porky's [1982], Sixteen Candles [1984], The Breakfast Club [1985], and Teen Wolf [1985], to name but a few). In contrast to these earlier cycles – and as we will explore in the rest of this
thesis – contemporary teen films include more frequent, explicit, and positive depictions of LGBT characters. As Shary observes, “[t]he progress that has been made in depicting queer youth in diverse and realistic ways is perhaps the most promising development in youth cinema since the turn of the century” (2014, 278).

Contemporary LGBT-inclusive teen films have been the subject of a fairly small body of academic literature, most commonly employing a queer theory framework to analyse independent or Indiewood productions. Such work has been undertaken by Judith Halberstam (2007), Lisa Henderson (2007), and Michele Aaron (2007) on Boy’s Don’t Cry; Susan Talburt (2004) on the depiction of the LGBT teen experience by adult filmmakers in But I’m a Cheerleader; Benshoff and Griffin on the “art house hit” (2006, 230) My Own Private Idaho; and Shary (2014, 2005, 2001) on films like Totally F***ed Up (1993) and The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love (1995). Roz Kaveney (2006) and Jeffery Dennis (2006) both employ queer ‘against the grain’ readings to examine the homoerotic subtext of teen films ranging from I Was a Teenage Werewolf (1957), to the John Hughes’ oeuvre, to Bring It On (2000). While most of this scholarship has focussed on independent and Indiewood productions, Shary and Robin Wood (2003) do briefly examine more mainstream films like Election (1999), Can’t Hardly Wait (1998), Clueless, and She’s All That (1999). Thus, the majority of scholarship on LGBT representation in contemporary teen films focuses on independent/Indiewood productions and often employs a queer theory framework; as noted in the introduction, this thesis aims to fill the current gap in the literature about the routine depictions of LGBT representation in contemporary teen films, employing a framework that systematically examines the genre through a hegemonic lens.

**LGBT-inclusive teen films: quantitative findings**

This chapter has, thus far, provided contextual information and examined LGBT representation in television and film in a largely narrative form, but I would like to end by presenting my quantitative findings looking at the number of inclusive teen films by year, sub-genre, film sector, and MPAA rating. Each of these findings touch on aspects of production and distribution that may impact on the profitability, accessibility, and future development of LGBT-inclusive teen films.

After screening a total of 200 teen films, I identified a total of 42 inclusive teen films (i.e. films that included at least one explicit character), representing 21 percent of the teen films screened. This means that more than three-quarters of contemporary teen films in this study are entirely devoid of any LGBT characters. When considering only those films that included LGBT characters with a significant role and that were present in more than two scenes (i.e. major or minor characters), the number drops to 35 films (18 percent of teen films screened). Only three LGBT-inclusive films – Clueless, Scary Movie (2000), and Mean Girls – were among the top 50 grossing films (the top 50
growing films are by far the most-watched films).\textsuperscript{117} Thus, overall LGBT-inclusive teen films are relatively uncommon in the latest cycle of the genre, accounting for only a fraction of all teen films released and negligible among top grossing films.\textsuperscript{118}

\textit{LGBT-inclusive teen films: year to year}

The number and proportion of LGBT-inclusive teen films in this study fluctuated from year to year (Figure 5). Overall, the number inclusive teen films has remained low, with none released in 1996, 1997, 2001, 2003, 2006, 2007, and 2011. Representation reached its peak in 2000 when six of the ten teen films screened (60 percent) were LGBT-inclusive, plummeting to zero the following year and staying at zero until 2004. The lack of LGBT representation during the 2001-2003 period mirrors the reduction in LGBT content on television after the ‘September 11’ attacks so it is possible that this decrease in inclusive teen films was similarly due to the replacement of identity politics with ideals of American ‘unity’.\textsuperscript{119}

\textbf{Figure 5. Numbers of teen films, and numbers and proportions of LGBT-inclusive teen films, by year, 1995-2013}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure5.png}
\caption{Numbers of teen films, and numbers and proportions of LGBT-inclusive teen films, by year, 1995-2013}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure6.png}
\caption{Figure 6. Number of teen films screened and number of LGBT-inclusive films by year, 1995-2013}
\end{figure}

Notes: 1. Analysis includes the teen films that were screened (n=200).
2. LGBT-inclusive films are those featuring major, minor, or incidental characters that were identified as explicitly LGBT (n= 42).

\textsuperscript{117} The top grossing films represented less than 10 percent of all films released but accounted for 66 percent of the domestic box office receipts from 1995 to 2003; this was derived from domestic box office receipts available from Nash Information Services (1997-2015). Top grossing films tend to drive ancillary markets, like DVD sales and television distribution (Schatz 2012b), and thus attract not only the largest theatre audiences, but the largest audiences overall.

\textsuperscript{118} There were 46 teen films released between 1995 and 2013 among the annual top 50 grossing films.

\textsuperscript{119} Without yearly data on LGBT representation in film, however, it is not possible to say whether this was a trend throughout Hollywood more generally.
LGBT-inclusive teen films: subgenre

Shary’s (2014) generic categories compellingly outline a number of thematic and narrative similarities, but they do not reflect an industry standard of classification. To analyse LGBT inclusion by subgenre, I have adopted a different methodology similar to that used by Elissa Nelson (2011) in her study of the teen film genre, grouping teen films according to four established industry genres: comedy, drama, horror, and action. As noted by Nelson, these categories are well-known by film audiences and consistently used within Hollywood. Of the 42 LGBT-inclusive films, I assigned a total of 46 genre categories. LGBT inclusion was found in all teen film sub-genres: there were 31 comedies, seven dramas, six horror films, and two action films.

The sub-genre that was most commonly LGBT-inclusive in the study sample was the teen comedy subgenre, which accounted for 67 percent of inclusive teen films. Of the teen comedies that were screened, 27 percent were LGBT-inclusive. This mirrors GLAAD’s findings that comedies were consistently the most inclusive genre (they reported that 31 to 52 percent of comedies were LGBT-inclusive between 2012 and 2016) (Kane, Gouttebroze, Townsend, Thayer, et al. 2013, Kane et al. 2014, Stokes et al. 2015, Stokes, Bradford, and Townsend 2016, Stokes, Townsend, and Deerwater 2017). Of years featuring inclusive teen films, LGBT-inclusive teen comedies were released every year except 2012. Unfortunately, since 2005 the proportion of teen comedies has decreased (Figure 6); because this sub-genre has tended to be the most inclusive, this overall decrease in teen comedies is likely to have reduced LGBT inclusion within the genre. (As we examine in the next chapter, however, while teen comedy is the most inclusive sub-genre, its

120 The classification of the four industry genres was based on the classifications from the Box Office Mojo website (www.boxofficemojo.com). I collapsed a number of categories used by Box Office Mojo into my four categories:

- comedy included films categorised as: comedy, romantic comedy, fantasy comedy, sports comedy, family comedy, and family adventure
- drama included: drama, romance, romantic thriller, fantasy, fantasy drama, period drama, music drama, musical, sport drama, and crime drama
- horror included: horror, thriller, and horror thriller
- action included: action, action/crime, science fiction adventure, science fiction thriller, action adventure, and science fiction action.

A few films had two categories indicated by Box Office Mojo (for example, ‘drama/thriller,’ ‘comedy thriller,’ or ‘horror comedy’); in these instances, both categories were assigned, leading to a higher number of assigned categories (n=219) than total number of films included for analysis (n=200).

Nelson’s (2011) study included five categories (she had a separate category for ‘science fiction/fantasy’). These categories were collapsed into drama (for any fantasy-related film) and action (for science fiction-related films) because the individual label of ‘fantasy’ or ‘science fiction’ was rare; these films were generally categories of, for example, ‘science fiction action’ or ‘fantasy comedy’ and fit more appropriately into the four categories.

121 Films could be classified as more than one sub-genre in cases where they were a genre hybrid, as with Kick-Ass (2010) which is a comedy-action hybrid; hence the slightly higher number of genre categories than film total.

122 Of all 200 teen films screened, 88 were categorised as teen comedies.

123 Because of differences in methodology and definitions, these results are not directly comparable but provide an overall comparison of teen-specific and general film inclusivity by genre or sub-genre.
LGBT portrayals are not necessarily progressive; in fact, many of the LGBT characters in teen comedies rely on homophobic stereotypes.

**Figure 6. Proportion of teen films by subgenre and year, 1995-2013**

The second most LGBT-inclusive sub-genre was teen drama. A total of seven inclusive teen dramas were released between 1995 and 2013; teen dramas accounted for 15 percent of inclusive teen films. Of all teen dramas screened, only 9.6 percent included at least one LGBT character.\(^{124}\) The proportion of teen dramas that were LGBT-inclusive was again similar to GLAAD’s findings (Kane, Gouttebroze, Townsend, Thayer, et al. 2013, Kane et al. 2014, Stokes et al. 2015, Stokes, Bradford, and Townsend 2016, Stokes, Townsend, and Deerwater 2017).\(^{125}\) Teen horror films were similar to teen dramas in terms of inclusion; there were six inclusive teen horror films released, accounting for 13 percent of inclusive teen films. Of all teen horror films, 19 percent had at least one LGBT character.

Teen action films were the least LGBT-inclusive sub-genre. Only two teen action films included any LGBT characters, accounting for 9.1 percent of all teen actions. GLAAD found that LGBT character inclusion was much lower in what they called ‘genre’ films (an amalgamation of the action, science fiction, and fantasy genres), hovering between 6.4 and 14 percent (Kane, Gouttebroze, Townsend, Thayer, et al. 2013, Kane et al. 2014, Stokes et al. 2015, Stokes, Bradford, and Townsend 2016, Stokes, Townsend, and Deerwater 2017). As discussed earlier, major studios are increasingly releasing action/adventure blockbusters and shying away from production of mid-

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\(^{124}\) Of all 200 teen films screened, 73 were categorised as teen dramas.

\(^{125}\) GLAAD found that the proportion of inclusive dramas fluctuated: 4.7 percent in 2012; 18 percent in 2013 and 2014; 8.6 percent in 2015; and 7 percent in 2016 (Kane, Gouttebroze, Townsend, Thayer, et al. 2013, Kane et al. 2014, Stokes et al. 2015, Stokes, Bradford, and Townsend 2016, Stokes, Townsend, and Deerwater 2017).
level films; this move towards action films is reflected in the teen film genre which increasingly focuses on the action subgenre (indicated in Figure 6). While LGBT inclusion in this sub-genre has been poor, two teen action films with LGBT characters were released in 2010 and 2013 (*Kick-Ass* and *Kick-Ass 2*). Optimistically, this may signal an increased willingness on behalf of the studios to include LGBT characters in teen action films, but it is more likely an anomaly confined to the *Kick-Ass* franchise.

*LGBT-inclusive teen films: mainstream, Indiewood, independent*

Examining LGBT-inclusive teen films by sector reveals that independent and Indiewood studios release the most inclusive teen films and the most inclusive teen films. Indeed, independent studios released the only two teen films in the study sample that focussed centrally on LGBT narratives, *The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love* and *But I’m a Cheerleader*.126 Independent studios also released *The Runaways* (2010) and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, two teen films that, while not primarily LGBT stories, did include LGBT characters that were deeply intertwined in the films’ narratives.127 Overall, while independent studios released just 24 percent of all teen films, this sector was responsible for 36 percent of LGBT-inclusive teen films. Indiewood studios also did their part, responsible for 31 percent of inclusive releases, including *The Opposite of Sex* (1998) and *Easy A* (2010).128 (Indiewood studios released 34 percent of all teen films, with certain studios like Dimension, a division of Miramax that is itself a subsidiary of Disney, and Screen Gems, a division of Sony, specialising in teen films and other genre pictures [Perren 2012]).

While it is heartening that independent and Indiewood studios are distributing LGBT youth films, audience access to these films is often curtailed. Partly, this is due to the films’ release strategies; unlike films released by major studios, which open in a huge number of theatres to maximise audience numbers on opening weekends, films released by independent and Indiewood studios often open in a small number of theatres, with theatre counts growing slowly if there is enough positive ‘word of mouth’ and favourable critic reviews (Balio 2013).129 The relatively small number of theatres that show these films are often in urban theatres, and require audiences to seek them

126 *The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love* was released by Fine Line (considered an independent studio until its acquisition by Time Warner in 1996) and *But I’m a Cheerleader* was released by Lionsgate.

127 *The Runaways* was released by Apparition and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* was released by Lionsgate/Summit.

128 *The Opposite of Sex* was released by Sony Pictures Classics and *Easy A* was released by Screen Gems, a division of Sony.

129 This strategy can be seen in the release of *The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love*, which opened in nine theatres (no total theatre count is available); *But I’m a Cheerleader* opened in four theatres and was shown in a total 115 theatres; and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* opened in four theatres and was shown in a total of 745 theatres (Nash Information Services 1997-2015, Box Office Mojo 2017). Not all teen films distributed by independent or Indiewood studios, however, undergo this release strategy; *The Hunger Games* films, for example, were distributed by independent Lionsgate using a saturation booking distribution strategy, with each film opening in over 4,000 theaters.
out. Thus, while these films do make it to the big screen, they are often inaccessible to many audiences.

Major studios released almost half (42 percent) of all teen films in this research, but only one-third (33 percent) of inclusive teen films. Despite the lower proportion of inclusive releases, major studios did release *Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist* (2008) and *I Love You, Beth Cooper* (2009), both of which included substantive gay/bisexual characters.\(^{130}\) The vast majority of LGBT-inclusive teen films released by this sector, however, featured only LGBT characters in minor and incidental roles with minimal involvement in, and impact on, the overall narrative.

Thus, the independent and Indiewood sectors have, thus far, been essential to LGBT representation within the genre. With the decline in these sectors, it is likely that LGBT narratives, and indeed films that successfully integrate meaningful LGBT characters into straight narratives, will decrease. In the short and medium term, it appears most likely that major studios will continue to include LGBT characters in minor and incidental roles, often as objects of ridicule or as peripheral characters.

*LGBT-inclusive teen films: MPAA rating*

Overall, LGBT-inclusive teen films in the study sample received more restrictive MPAA ratings compared with non-inclusive teen films. Between 1995 and 2013, only one PG-rated teen film, *The Perfect Man* (2005), included an LGBT character: a ‘fabulous’ bartender, played by *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* star Carson Kressley, who doles out sisterly advice to two teenage girls intent on parental match-making. In comparison, 41 non-inclusive teen films were rated PG (21 percent of teen films in the sample). In this same time period, around half of inclusive teen films were rated R (n=19; 45 percent) and half were rated PG-13 (n=22; 52 percent); in comparison, only 26 percent of all teen films received the R rating, 54 percent were rated PG-13, and 21 percent were rated PG.\(^{131}\) It thus seems likely that LGBT inclusion was considered a ‘mature’ topic not suitable for younger audiences (despite the fact that family-friendly television programs like *Blossom* have included gay characters since the mid-1990s). This is anecdotally borne out by the NC-17 rating originally given to *But I’m a Cheerleader*, a sweet story about teenage romance that offers a camp satire of homophobia. Director Jaime Babbit directly attributed the NC-17 rating to the inclusion of teenage lesbian sex.\(^{132}\) However, given the secretive nature of the Classification

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\(^{130}\) *Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist* was released by Sony/Columbia and *I Love You, Beth Cooper* was released by 20\(^{th}\) Century Fox.

\(^{131}\) The numbers of teen films in each ratings category was: PG=41; PG-13=107; R=52. The total number of teen films examined was 200.

\(^{132}\) Overall, the CARA is less lenient with sexual than violent content (Sandler 2007, Nalkur, Jamieson, and Romer 2010), and appears to rate films depicting female sexual gratification more severely than those focussing on men’s gratification (Taubin 1999).
and Ratings Administration (CARA), it is difficult to say with certainty what contributes to the rating classification of any particular film (Sandler 2007, Lewis 2000).

When examining the ratings of inclusive teen films on a year-by-year basis, a significant shift away from R-ratings and towards PG-13 ratings also becomes apparent. During the 1995-2001 timeframe, 39 percent of these teen films were rated PG-13 (n=6), and 61 percent were rated R (n=12). These proportions reversed in the 2002-2013 period, with PG-13 rated films accounting for 68 percent (n=16) and R-rated films accounting for 26 percent (n=7) of inclusive teen films.

This shift reflects a larger industrial change that occurred in reaction to the Columbine High School mass shooting by teenagers in Littleton, Colorado, which renewed public and media interest in youth consumption of violent media content (Sandler 2007). After the shooting, then-President Clinton requested that the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Department of Justice examine whether the film, music, and video game industries marketed violent products to young people (Federal Trade Commission 2000). The FTC study found that, indeed, these industries did market ‘mature’ content to teenagers. With regard to the film industry, the report noted that,

[s]ignificantly, the motion picture studios ... believe that it is appropriate to target advertising for R-rated films to children under 17 and to target advertising for PG-13-rated films to children under 13, on the grounds that these ratings are merely cautionary warnings to parents. (2000, 11)\(^{133}\)

The FTC recommended better industry self-regulation, including improved labelling and the cessation of marketing violent media content to teens. The results quickly and significantly changed Hollywood’s marketing practices, which restricted advertising of R-rated films in popular teen-oriented media and increased access to information about film ratings (Federal Trade Commission 2001b, a, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2009, 2013).\(^{134}\) Between 2000 and 2012, the FTC found that exhibitors were successfully cracking down on unaccompanied teens attending R-rated films in theatres.\(^{135}\) The sale of R-rated and unrated\(^{136}\) DVDs to teenagers under 17 years of age also

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\(^{133}\) Of the 44 R-rated films included in the FTC study sample, 80 percent targeted children under the age of 17 years (Federal Trade Commission 2000). Marketing plans of 64 percent of these films “contained express statements that the films [sic] target audience included children under 17” (iii); while not expressly stated in the marketing plans of the other films, the FTC understood that these films similarly targeted a teenage audience. The FTC found that more than half of the movie theatres examined admitted teenagers into R-rated films unaccompanied by an adult and acknowledged that “unaccompanied children have various strategies to see R-rated movies when theatres refuse to sell them tickets” (iv) including ‘theatre hopping’ or having someone else buy them tickets.

\(^{134}\) While there were fluctuations noted in the follow-up reports, the FTC found that advertisements for R-rated films ceased to be run in teen-oriented magazines or in locations popular with teenagers; such advertisements were curtailed during television programs where teenagers made up more than 35 percent of the market-share but were still shown during programs with audience estimates below this threshold (Federal Trade Commission 2001b, a, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2009, 2013). Trailers for R-rated films were no longer shown before G and PG-rated films.

\(^{135}\) The ‘undercover shopper surveys’ run by the FTC found a decrease in R-rated film tickets sold to 13 to 16-year-old shoppers from 54 percent in 2000 to 52 percent 2001 (Federal Trade Commission 2001a), and to 36 percent in 2004.
Hollywood’s production patterns also changed, with a significant increase in the market-share of PG-13 rated films and a decrease for R-rated films.\(^\text{138}\)

**Figure 7. Proportion of teen films, by MPAA rating category and year, 1995-2013**

![Proportion of teen films, by MPAA rating category and year, 1995-2013](image)

Note: Analysis includes the teen films that were screened (n=200).

This shift towards lower ratings categories is evident in the teen film genre as a whole. Since 2001 the proportion of R-rated teen films has generally decreased and the proportions of PG and PG-13 rated films have increased (Figure 7). It is likely that the FTC recommendations, the increased political pressure and public outcry over media violence consumed by youth, along with Hollywood’s self-regulation, and the ‘crack down’ on ticket sales to unaccompanied teens for R-rated films, are all partly responsible for the decrease in R-rated releases and the increase in PG-13 rated material generally, and teen films in particular. All of these factors have changed the climate in Hollywood, making the R-rating financially risky, and studios are thus aiming for the safer PG-13 rating, especially when big budgets are on the line (which is increasingly the case for

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\(^{136}\) The FTC notes that “[m]any of these unrated movies contained content that, if rated with the movie, might have led to an NC-17 rating” (Federal Trade Commission 2007, ii).

\(^{137}\) There was a decrease in sales to unaccompanied 13 to 16 year-olds between 2000 and 2012 from 83 percent to 30 percent for R-rated DVD sales, and from 71 percent to 30 percent for unrated DVD sales (Federal Trade Commission 2001b, a, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2009, 2013).

\(^{138}\) Overall between 1995 and 2016, PG-13 films accounted for 47 percent of the market-share, but represented only 21 percent of the total number of films released (n=2,613) (Nash Information Services 2016b). By contrast, R-rated films accounted for only 27 percent of the market-share, but represented 36 percent of films released (n=4,456). Beginning in 2000-2001, the market-share for PG-13 rated films increased and those for R-rated films decreased, a trend that continued until 2015. This trend is particularly evident in top grossing films; between 2003 and 2014, PG-13 rated films accounted for 55 to 65 percent of films in the top twenty grossing per year (except during 2007 and 2010, when PG-13 films accounted for 50 and 45 percent, respectively) (Motion Picture Association of America 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014). Priya Nalkur et al. (2010) similarly found a decrease in the proportion of R-rated films among the top 30 grossing films annually; the decrease they noted began with the introduction of the PG-13 rating in 1984, and declined more sharply after 2000/2001. They noted an overall trend of increased release of PG-13 rated films since the mid-1980s.

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teen films like the *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, and *Hunger Games* franchises) (Siegel 2010). As noted by *American Pie* director Paul Weitz,

> [m]any things in Hollywood become self-fulfilling prophecies ... As soon as there is a whiff that a kind of film won’t make money, fewer get made and less marketing money will go towards them. (Quoted in Snyder 2005)

Given the higher ratings assigned to LGBT-inclusive teen films, this shift may decrease narratives that focus on or include LGBT characters. If inclusive teen films are seen as inherently ‘mature’ content not suitable for younger audiences, as suggested by past MPAA ratings, or seen as financially risky, LGBT characters will likely remain under-represented within the genre.

**Conclusion**

Overall, LGBT visibility has increased dramatically since the early 1990s, becoming integrated into the mainstream American zeitgeist through politics, legislation, public opinion polls, and the media. Television, particularly cable programming, has provided a variety of LGBT narratives and characters that push against previously well-established representational boundaries, expanding narrative options and normative onscreen behaviours.

Teen media was undoubtedly more LGBT-inclusive after the mid-1990s, but LGBT representations in teen film have lagged severely behind their televisual counterparts, both in terms of the numbers of characters and the roles they occupy within the narrative. Indeed, it seems likely that LGBT inclusion in teen films will remain low: the genre is producing fewer comedies, the most inclusive sub-genre, and focussing more on action/adventure blockbusters, which have tended to avoid LGBT inclusion; MPAA ratings are sliding towards younger demographics to ensure economic success while LGBT inclusive teen films tend to receive ratings for older audiences; and major film studios release fewer LGBT-inclusive teen films than the declining independent/Indiewood sectors. LGBT-inclusive teen films released by major studios tend to be more narratively peripheral than those in independent/Indiewood releases. It is, however, important to look at LGBT characters in detail to see who is included and how they are represented; this is where I turn in the next chapter, which examines the characteristics and thematic treatment of LGBT characters within the genre.
Chapter three: LGBT characters

Murray: Your man Christian is a cake boy ... He’s a disco dancing, Oscar-Wilde-reading, Streisand-ticket-holding friend of Dorothy. You know what I’m saying?
Cher: Nu-unh. No way.
Murray: He’s gay.
Cher: Not even.
Murray: Yes even.
Dion: [Comprehension dawning on her face] He does like to shop, Cher. And the boy can dress.

This is how gay teenager, Christian (Justin Walker), is described in Clueless (1995), one of the first teen films of the latest cycle. This description, which references culture, style, and consumerism, was indeed apt for some popular televisual depictions like Queer Eye for the Straight Guy’s ‘Fab 5;’ such representations reflected the commodification of the LGBT community and dovetailed with the “affordable politics of social tolerance” (Becker 2006, 110) that arose in the 1990s. Indeed, as explored in chapter two, LGBT representations within popular culture have continued to evolve since the early 1990s, breaking new representational ground while simultaneously remaining consistent in a number of aspects; such depictions form part of hegemony’s “unstable equilibria” (Gramsci 1999, 406) that ‘teeter’ from the struggle for increased LGBT rights and ‘totter’ from the forces of backlash seen during the quarter-century. Understood as hegemony’s battleground, such pop-cultural representations demonstrate the activeness of hegemonic negotiation. As noted by Graeme Turner,

[hegemony describes the attempt to produce uniformity and coherence, but it also
implies that such attempts must always, eventually and necessarily, fail. Therefore the
analysis of cultural forms and practices should involve a search for ‘contradictions, taboos,
displacements in a culture’ that might fracture the fiction of homogeneity. (2003, 181)

In this chapter, I follow Turner’s suggestion and examine how LGBT characters and narrative conventions in teen films released between 1995 and 2013 operate in complicated and sometimes contradictory ways. I explore the range of LGBT portrayals, outlining the routine tropes which represent hegemonic provisional stabilisations through their repeated representation, as well as contemplating how the contestation of these tropes demonstrates the ongoing renewal, recreation, modification, and resistance inherent in the process of hegemonic negotiation. I examine how these LGBT teen characters and certain narrative conventions can be inclusive and progressive yet also serve to re-privilege heteronormativity.

The chapter begins with a contemplation of the visibility/invisibility of LGBT characters in teen film, then moves on to an examination of the attributes of these characters. This first part of the
chapter is quantitative; I examine the prevalence of LGBT representations within the genre and the dominance of certain character types. This quantitative and empirical genre-level approach clearly demonstrates which characterisations are most commonly depicted and also highlights range of representations and the representational ‘gaps’ in the genre. From there, I turn to a thematic examination that, following the literature on LGBT youth and their media representations, explores coming out, victimisation, sexual desire, and fixed versus fluid identity. These thematic explorations allow for a more nuanced and in-depth analysis that complements the earlier quantitative work. While I discuss each theme separately, they are all intertwined and interconnected.\(^{139}\) For example, coming out and sexual fixity/fluidity are interlinked, as are notions of victimisation, innocence and sexual desire. Each of these elements reveals aspects of hegemonic negotiation, exposing the inclusion, domestication, and hegemonic limits of this genre in this particular historical/social/economic/industrial moment. Through this character and thematic examination, I explore what is permissible and what is prohibited, demonstrating the limits of LGBT hegemonic inclusion.

**Visibility of LGBT characters**

As presented in chapter two, LGBT inclusion in teen-oriented television and film has increased dramatically since the early 1990s, signalling an end to the ‘symbolic annihilation’ identified by Alfred Kielwasser and Michelle Wolf (1992, 1993). The importance of this visibility should not be underestimated. Indeed, evidence suggests that media representations of LGBT characters can influence audience self-realisation, validate identity, provide escapist respite, aid in coming out and navigating sexual identities and desires, and provide role models that are sources of pride, inspiration, and comfort; they also provide information, spur conversations, provoke reflection, and foster empathy (Meyer and Wood 2013, Bond, Hefner, and Drogos 2009, Gomillion and Giuliano 2011, Marwick, Gray, and Ananny 2014, Craig et al. 2015, Evans 2007, Bond 2015, Koch 2013, Winderman and Smith 2016, Kivel and Kleiber 2000).

Despite this increased visibility, LGBT inclusion is still relatively rare in mainstream media (Fisher et al. 2007, Stokes, Bradford, and Townsend 2016, Stokes et al. 2015, Kane et al. 2014, Kane, Gouttebroze, Townsend, and Fabian 2013, Kane, Gouttebroze, and Townsend 2014, Stokes, Bradford, and Townsend 2017, Stokes, Kane, and Townsend 2016). This is also true of the teen film genre. As covered in the last chapter, LGBT-inclusive films in this study remain relatively uncommon, with 79 percent of teen films in the study sample that were released between 1995 and 2013 entirely devoid of any LGBT portrayals. Compounding the low level of visibility is the

\(^{139}\) Thus, within the chapter, I will occasionally raise issues in one section but deal with them more fully in another where they may be better understood as part of a textual example.
small number of explicit LGBT characters: the contemporary teen films depict a total of only 87 LGBT characters. Of these 87 characters, 56 are gay males, 21 are lesbians, six are bisexual, and seven are transgender (Figure 8). More than one-third of these characters are in just five independent/Indiewood films, further reducing LGBT onscreen visibility within the genre. (A further 32 characters are classified as having ambiguous LGBT identities, detailed in Appendix E).

Figure 8. Number of LGBT characters in teen films, by sexual orientation/gender identity and year, 1995-2013

![Figure 8](image)

LGBT characters tend to play supporting rather than leading roles, reducing their visibility even further. Less than one-quarter (n=22) of the LGBT characters are ‘major’ characters (those that are important or central to the plot and onscreen for an extended period). Only eight LGB characters have lead roles: four lead characters are lesbian; two are gay, and two are bisexual. Half (n=4) of these LGBT lead characters are in teen films released by independent studios; the other half (n=4) are, in fact, straights who adopt a short-term gay or lesbian persona for the their own benefit but re-identify as straight by the end of the film (i.e. employ the narrative device of ‘the pretend,’ which will be discussed in chapter four). Thus, LGBT characters are almost always

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140 Three characters received double classifications (gay/bisexual or lesbian/bisexual), so the number of classified characters (n=90) is higher than the total number of characters (n=87). College (2008) includes one party scene at an explicitly identified gay fraternity; this scene included dozens of gay ‘extras’ (characters who present in the background but were not involved in the plot) who were not included in the count.

141 A total of 31 LGBT characters are identified in The Incredibly True Adventures of Two Girls In Love (1995), The Opposite of Sex (1998), But I’m a Cheerleader (2000), Sex Drive (2008), and The Runaways (2010).

142 As outlined in the introduction, ‘major’ characters are important/central to the plot, onscreen for an extended amount of time, and have a significant amount of dialogue (this was further divided into lead and secondary characters). ‘Minor’ characters are in more than two scenes, have multiple lines of dialogue, and are relevant to the plot. ‘Incidental’ characters speak dialogue and/or are only depicted in a maximum of two scenes, but are involved in the action of the scenes, or are referenced by other characters multiple times. ‘Extras’ are present only in the background of scenes but not involved in the plot, and are excluded from analyses.

Of the 87 individual characters: 21 are classified as incidental; 44 as minor, and 22 as major.

143 There are no transgender characters in lead roles.
shunted to the narrative margins, occupying minor or incidental roles, while straight characters take the lead. Much like on television, this “consistently privilege[s] the emotions, perspectives, and experiences of straight characters over their gay counterparts” (Becker 2006, 182). This peripheral positioning also curtails LGBT-relevant storylines. As in entertainment media *writ large* (Dow 2001, Walters 2001, Becker 2006), teen films assiduously avoid all forms of LGBT activism or political engagement.\(^{144}\) Understood hegemonically, this signals one of the limits of inclusion: LGBT characters can be part of the story so long as they are narratively subordinate to heterosexual characters and avoid political advocacy that might draw attention to systemic heterosexism and heteronormativity or present ways of countering it.

Heteronormativity is not only asserted through the marginalising of LGBT characters to minor or incidental roles; it is also consistently reasserted through narrative construction in which heterosexual romance or sexual conquest is both central and ubiquitous.\(^{145}\) Straight sexual conquest or romantic fulfilment is central to the plot of almost all teen films; when it is not central, it is an important sub-plot.\(^{146}\) Heterosexual romance/sexual conquest is central even in LGBT-inclusive films like *Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist* (2008), in which three gay friends foster the budding romance of a straight couple. In much the same way as *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*’s ‘Fab 5’ or *To Wong Foo*’s (1995) drag queens, the gay teens in *Nick* become “sexual fairy godmothers” (Avila-Saavedra 2009, 13), homosexual helpers who are rendered subordinate through servitude and who valorise the (heterosexual) romance of their friend over their own same-sex desires (desires which are contained, as we will explore later, to looks of longing or fast-paced dancing, unlike the heterosexual desires which progress to sexual contact). Further – and in contrast to the ubiquitous focus on heterosexual romantic or sexual desires – plots or subplots involving LGBT romance are included in only three teen films of the study period: *The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love* (1995), *But I’m a Cheerleader* (2000), and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (2012).\(^{147}\) These very few LGBT romance (sub)plots are all in independent films, which

\(^{144}\) As noted in the last chapter, these themes are at least cursorily raised in contemporary teen television.

\(^{145}\) A small number of teen films from the cycle have no sexual/romantic plot or sub-plot. These films often receive a PG rating, suggesting that they are for a younger teen audience. Examples include: *Masterminds* (1997), *Big Fat Liar* (2002), some of the earlier films in the *Harry Potter* franchise (2002, 2004), *Ender’s Game* (2013), and *Black Nativity* (2013).

\(^{146}\) Examples of romantic subplots include: *Center Stage* (2000) in which the lead character dreams of becoming a professional ballet dancer but becomes romantically entangled with a more senior *danseur*; *The Hunger Games* films, set in a dystopian future, in which teens fight for survival in deadly televised games. Victory is secured through a manufactured romance between two teens; *Idle Hands* (1999) where a pot-smoking slacker’s hand is possessed by the devil and intent on murderous mayhem, including his love interest.

\(^{147}\) This excludes films in which straight characters pretend to be gay or lesbian: *The Faculty* (1998), *The Rage: Carrie 2* (1999), *Sex Drive*, and *Kick-Ass* (2010) (all of which include heterosexual sub-plots involving the ‘pretending’ straight character, often facilitated by their use of ‘the pretend’ device).
limits audience access to these narratives that thus remain generally unseen by mainstream audiences, especially teen audiences.

Thus, overall LGBT visibility within the teen film genre has both increased considerably when compared to earlier cycles, and also remained low and peripheral. Employing the schema of invisibility proposed by Stephanie Fryberg and Sarah Townsend (2008), LGBT representation has moved away from absolute invisibility (a “situation of absence” (177) with no representation) towards relative invisibility (a “situation of misrepresentation” (177) where rich, positive representations are absent and only antiquated, incomplete, or incorrect representations are provided). This shift is, of course, uneven; the majority of teen films, especially those released by major studios, still exclude LGBT characters entirely. But the iterative integration of LGBT characters within the genre marks a negotiation where formerly ‘indigestible’ material has been absorbed and incorporated, and certain elements have been domesticated to become part of hegemony. These elements have been refashioned in a way that does not unsettle, much less threaten, heterosexual privilege. As noted by Fryberg and Townsend,

invisibility is not just a case of disappearance or of the lack of representation; rather, it is continually reproduced by an active ‘writing out’ of the story that both reflects and reinforces the status quo. (2008, 175)

**Characteristics of LGBT characters**

The absolute and relative invisibility schema is a useful way to look at LGBT characterisations within teen films. In this section, I will examine characteristics of LGBT representation within the genre, paying particular attention to sexual orientation/gender expression, ethnicity, and class. I examine first who is included, then move on to who is excluded, theorising what this signals about hegemony’s contemporary provisional stabilisation. (Table 1 provides information on all the LGBT characters identified.)

**Table 1. LGBT characters in teen films released 1995-2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Character details</th>
<th>Character name (actor name)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>LGBT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Major Minor Incidental</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clueless</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>x x G x x x x x</td>
<td>Christian (Justin Walker)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Lampoon’s Senior Trip</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>x L x - - - x</td>
<td>Miss Stoeger (Julie Brown)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>x L x x x x x x</td>
<td>Randall “Randy” Dean (Laurel Holloman)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Love
- x : L : x : x : x : Evelyn "Evie" Roy Jr (Nicole Ari Parker)
- x : L : x : x : x : Rebecca Dean (Kate Stafford)
- x : L : x : x : x : Vicky (Sabrina Artel)
- x : L : x : x : x : Lena (Toby Poser)
- x : L : x : x : x : Wendy (Maggie Moore)
- x : G : x : x : x : Frank (Nelson Rodriguez)

#### The Faculty
- 1998 x : x : x : x : x : 2005
- 2004 x : x : x : x : x : 2004
- 2002 x : x : x : x : x : 2008
- 2000 x : x : x : x : x : 2000
- 1999 x : x : x : x : x : 1999

#### The Opposite of Sex
- 1998 x : G : x : x : x : Bill Truitt (Martin Donovan)
- x : G/B : x : x : x : Matt Mateo (Ivan Sergei)
- x : G : x : x : x : Jason Bock (Johnny Galecki)
- x : G : x : a : x : Tom DeLury (Colin Ferguson)

#### Pecker
- 1998 x : L : x : x : x : T-Bone (Maureen Fischer)
- x : G : x : x : x : Mr. Nellbox (Alan J. Wendi)

#### Cruel Intentions
- 1999 x : G : x : x : x : Blaine Tuttle (Joshua Jackson)
- x : G : x : a : x : Greg McConnell (Eric Mabius)

#### Superstar
- 1999 x : G : x : - - - : x : Owen (Chuck Campbell)

#### The Rage: Carrie 2
- 1999 x : L : x : x : x : Rachel Lang (Emily Berg)

#### Election
- 1999 x : L : x : x : x : Tammy Metzler (Jessica Campbell)

#### Drop Dead Gorgeous
- 1999 x : G : a : - - - : x : Peter (never on screen; only referred to)

#### Outside Providence
- 1999 x : G : x : x : x : Joey (George Wendt)

#### Scary Movie
- 2000 x : T : x : x : x : Miss Mann (Jayne Trcka)
- x : G : x : x : x : Bobby Prine (Jon Abrahams)

#### Bring It On
- 2000 x : G : x : x : x : Les (Huntley Ritter)

#### Dude, Where's My Car?
- 2000 x : T : x : x : x : Tania (Teressa Tunney)
- x : T : x : a : x : Patty (Claudine Barros)

#### Almost Famous
- 2000 x : G : x : - - - : x : Ed Vallencourt (John Fedevich)

#### Center Stage
- 2000 x : G : x : a : x : Erik Jones (Shakiem Evens)

#### But I'm a Cheerleader
- 2000 x : L : x : x : x : Megan (Natasha Lyonne)
- x : L : x : x : a : x : Graham (Clea DuVall)
- x : L : x : x : x : Hillary (Melanie Lynskey)
- x : L : x : x : x : Sinead (Katharine Towne)
- x : G : x : x : x : Andre (Douglass Spain)
- x : G : x : x : x : Clayton (Kip Pardue)
- x : G : x : x : x : Dolf (Dante Basco)
- x : G : x : x : x : Joel (Joel Michaelly)
- x : G : x : x : x : Lloyd (Wesley Mann)
- x : G : x : x : x : Larry (Richard Moll)
- x : L : x : x : x : Lipstick Lesbian (Julie Delpy)
- x : G : x : x : x : Gay teen with Lloyd and Larry (unknown)

#### The New Guy
- 2002 x : T : x : - - - : x : Jose (Jai Rodriguez)

#### Igby Goes Down
- 2002 x : T : x : - - - : x : Peeka (Michael Formica Jones)

#### Mean Girls
- 2004 x : G : x : a : x : Damian (Daniel Franzese)

#### 13 Going on 30
- 2004 x : G : x : x : x : Richard Kneeland (Andy Serkis)

#### EuroTrip
- 2004 x : B : x : a : x : Christoph (Patrick Rapold)
- x : G : x : x : x : Creepy Italian Guy (Fred Armisen)

#### Saved!
- 2004 x : G : x : x : x : Dean (Chad Faust)
- x : G : x : a : x : Mitch (Kett Turton)

#### Cursed
- 2005 x : G : x : x : x : Bo (Milo Ventimiglia)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movie Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>G/B</th>
<th>L/B</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Ass</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Perfect Man</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lance (Carson Kressley)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Thom (Aaron Yoo)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dev (Rafi Gavron)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Lethario/Beefy guy (Jonathan B. Wright)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Superhero Movie</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Transgender student on bus (unknown)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex Drive</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Ian (Josh Zuckerman)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Rex (James Marsden)</td>
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<td>Rex’s boyfriend (Jeremy McGuire)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Men’s Room Predator (Allen Zwolle)</td>
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<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assless Chaps Guy (Duane Buras Jr.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jean Shorts Guy (Ethan Tobman)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dance Flick</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Jack (Brennan Hillard)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fired Up!</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Downey (Jake Sandvig)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>a</td>
<td>Brewster (Adhir Kalyan)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
<td>Angela (Hayley Marie Norman)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Bianca (Danneel Harris)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I Love You, Beth Cooper</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>G/B</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Rich Munsch (Jack T. Carpenter)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easy A</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brandon (Dan Byrd)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brandon’s boyfriend (unknown)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kick-Ass</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>“G”</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Dave Lizewski (Aaron Taylor-Johnson)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vampires Suck</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td></td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jacob’s Pack #1 (Nick Gomez)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jacob’s Pack #2 (Nedal ‘Ned’ Yousef)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jacob’s Pack #3 (Rodrigo Lloreda)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jacob’s Pack #4 (John Franklin)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Runaways</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cherie Currie (Dakota Fanning)</td>
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<td>Joan Jett (Kristen Stewart)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Tammy (Hannah Marks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sandy West (Stella Maeve)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House at the End of the Street</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ryan (Max Thieriot)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Perks of Being a Wallflower</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Patrick (Ezra Miller)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brad (Johnny Simmons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alec Lightwood (Kevin Zegers)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Magnus Bane (Godfrey Gao)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kick-Ass 2</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Insect Man (Robert Emms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Way, Way Back</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Bob, Betty’s husband (never on screen; only referred to)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. Character and actor names obtained from the Internet Movie Database (mdb.com).
2. The use of quotations around a letter (for example, “G”) indicates that it is a straight character pretending to be LGBT.
3. “-“ indicates that the information is not discernible from the film.
4. “a” indicates that the field is assumed, often based on information from onscreen peers. This most often relates to class; middle-class status was assumed if the character’s peers were shown to be middle-class, but the character is likely not well defined enough to include this information.

Examining LGBT representation at a generic level reveals a pattern: LGBT characters in teen films are generally middle-class, gay males, and overwhelmingly white and able-bodied. Examining character numbers reveals that almost two-thirds of LGBT representations (62 percent) are gay males; when looking at only the most popular (i.e. top grossing) inclusive teen films, virtually all of the LGBT representations are gay males. More than half of the LGBT characters are middle-class
(56 percent), the vast majority of LGBT characters are white (82 percent), and all are without disability (though one gay character had a mental illness).\footnote{Physical and mental disability was determined by observing characters. No LGBT characters demonstrated a limitation of physical functioning or required equipment to aid mobility. One character, Owen from Superstar, was in ‘special education’ because of his obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), which was identified through the dialogue of his classmates and his compulsion to repeat acts five times in a row; OCD is classified as a mental illness not a mental disability (American Psychiatric Association 2014).}

Turning to LGBT teens, the most consistent single representation is the white, middle- or upper-class, able-bodied, gender-conforming, conventionally attractive (often athletic), gay adolescent. Of the 48 LGBT teen characters identified, 18 conform precisely to this pattern. Examples include Christian (Clueless), Les (Huntley Ritter, Bring It On [2000]), Clayton (Kip Pardue, But I’m a Cheerleader), Bo (Milo Ventimiglia, Cursed [2005]), Dev and Lethario (Rafi Gavron, Jonathan B. Wright, Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist), Rich (Jack Carpenter, I Love You, Beth Cooper [2009]), Brandon (Dan Byrd, Easy A [2010]), Downey (Jake Sandvig, Fired Up! [2009]), and Patrick and Brad (Ezra Miller, Johnny Simmons, The Perks of Being a Wallflower). Damian (Daniel Franzese, Mean Girls [2004]) and Owen (Chuck Campbell, Superstar [1999]), both of whom lack conventional good looks, present a slight variation of this pattern. This trope, forged in the mid-1980s, has remained dominant in teen-oriented media for decades; indeed, Stephen Tropiano reflects on its ubiquity in earlier teen-oriented programming, noting that “[i]n the 1990s, it seemed every high school on television had their token gay jock” (2002, 170). The trope was created in an attempt to counter the effeminate gay stereotype, but Capsuto suggests that the “reverse cliché of the gay male athlete” (2000, 301) began to be seen as “over-done” (301) by activists of the mid-1990s.

Narratives of the ‘normal gay teenager’ valorise gender-conforming behaviour, touting it as a safe and preferable alternative to the dangers of victimisation associated with gender non-conformity (Dhaenens 2013). Gender-conforming LGB characters, dubbed ‘normal gay teens,’ offer an identity of safety, yet one that poses no danger to heterosexual privilege. Frederik Dhaenens suggests that

\[\text{[t]he revalorization of the masculine gay man and the feminine gay woman initially was a response to the essentialist and widespread assumption that gender and sexuality are inextricably linked and that gay men are per definition feminine and gay women masculine. However, notwithstanding the necessity for deconstructing and dismantling the binary and gendered approach to sexuality, it has benefited the assimilationist project that typifies homonormativity. Gay men and women acting in gender-appropriate ways are less of a threat to the heterosexual matrix since the reification of traditional gender roles supports the superiority of patriarchal masculinity.} (2013, 311)\]

The trope of the ‘normal gay teen’ demonstrates hegemonic inclusion whereby a domesticated version of gay youth is made visible and accessible to mainstream audiences, but cannot disrupt
heteronormative hegemony (Talburt, Rofes, and Rasmussen 2004, Dhaenens 2013, Marshall 2010). The trope “has the propensity to codify sexual and gender identities as stable categories with fixed meanings ... [which] often appeal to public ideas of normalcy” (Talburt, Rofes, and Rasmussen 2004, 5). Media’s overall fixation with gender-conforming, middle-class, white, able-bodied, gay males with fixed sexual identities reflects and reinforces a hegemonic provisional stabilisation embodying a single representation, embedding it into ‘common sense’ while denying the variability of the LGBT community. This relative invisibility denotes hegemonic negotiation where ‘normal gay teens’ have become hegemonically absorbed while other parts of the LGBT community remain ‘indigestible,’ undercutting the subversive potential of representing more fluid sexual and gender identities.

So who, then, is excluded, and to what extent? While the gay, white, middle-class, able-bodied representation is dominant, the genre does offer a range of representations. Almost one-quarter of the characters are lesbians, 7.7 percent transgender, and 6.7 percent bisexual (Figure 9). These lesbian and bisexual portrayals tend, however, to be concentrated in a small number of films. Half of the lesbian portrayals (11 of 21; 52 percent) appear in just two films: *The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love* and *But I’m a Cheerleader*. Similarly, half of the bisexual portrayals (n=3) are in a single film, *The Runaways* (2010).

Transgender characters, while not congregated in a small number of films, are always used as objects of ridicule or markers of degeneracy in contemporary teen films. Transgender characters are most commonly used as the punch lines of jokes to demonstrate straights’ discomfort around gender non-conforming characters. This transphobic humour is visible with Miss Mann (Jayne Trcka) in *Scary Movie* (2000); Tania (Teressa Tunney) and Patty (Claudine Barros) in *Dude, Where’s My Car?* (2000); Jose (Jai Rodriguez) in *The New Guy* (2002); and the transgender student on the school bus (uncredited) in *Superhero Movie* (2008). Transgender characters are also depicted as dangerous ‘deviants’ signalling moral decay, as seen with Peeka (Michael Formica Jones), who searches for drugs in a box of cereal in *Igby Goes Down* (2002); and Ryan (Max Thierot) in *House at the End of the Street* (2012) whose murderous deviance springs from forced gender dysphoria (discussed later in this chapter). Thus, while transgender characters are visible within the genre, they are always trivialised and marginalised through derisive humour or associations with deviance, signalling their hegemonic exclusion.
While there is a range of representations in sexual orientation and gender identity, there is much less variety in ethnicity. LGBT characters are overwhelmingly white, accounting for 82 percent of LGBT characters. Only ten ‘other’ (Asian, Latino, and Native American) LGBT characters are identified, representing 11 percent of LGBT representations. There are also only five black LGBT characters, accounting for 5.5 percent of LGBT representations.\(^{149}\) This echoes findings by the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation’s (GLAAD) and scholars like Ron Becker (2006) and Larry Gross (2001) who observe that LGBT representations in film and television are disproportionately white (Kane, Gouttebroze, Townsend, Thayer, et al. 2013, Kane et al. 2014, Stokes et al. 2015). In those few teen films featuring any LGBT characters of colour, the ethnic identity of these characters is largely ignored, reflecting Becker’s (2006) findings that intersections of ethnicity and sexuality are generally overlooked in contemporary entertainment media. In his discussion of television program *Spin City*’s Carter Heywood (Michael Boatman, an official working in City Hall), Becker observes that Carter’s ethnicity was usually less salient to his identity than sexuality: “Carter was usually gay, sometimes black, but never really both at the same time” (2006, 180). This is similarly true of the LGT characters\(^{150}\) of colour in teen films: their sexual orientation is salient in the films, but never their ethnicity, and certainly never the intersection of the two.

There is a surprising variety in terms of class. While teen films from the 1980s were predominantly focussed on middle-class, suburban teens (Bain 2003), the latest cycle of teen films is slightly more inclusive of working-class narratives. While more than half (56 percent) of LGBT characters are middle-class, just over one-third (37 percent) are working-class.\(^{151}\) Examining characters by both class and sexual orientation reveals that upper- and middle-class characters are mostly gay males, whereas working-class characters are more evenly spread across categories of sexual orientation/gender identity (Figure 10). These working-class LGBT characters are most commonly

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\(^{149}\) I assigned 89 classifications of ethnicity among LGBT characters: 73 white, five black, four Native American, four Asian, and three Latino. Ethnicity was determined by observing characters; if in doubt, I consulted their actor profiles on the Internet Movie Database website (www.imdb.com) to determine the ethnicity of the actor.

\(^{150}\) There were no bisexual characters of colour in the study sample.

\(^{151}\) I assigned 59 classifications of class among LGBT characters: 22 were working-class; 33 were middle-class; and four were upper-class. Often these designations were determined by visual elements within the films, including clothes, cars (and whether the car belonged to the teen, or was borrowed from an adult), neighbourhood, and style of house. If, for example, characters dress in un-stylish (often commented on by peers) or dirty clothes, do not have access to a car, live in the inner city or in an apartment, trailer, or run-down house, they were coded working-class. By contrast, characters who dress in trendy and clean (but not necessarily exclusively-branded) clothes, have access to a car, and/or live in a suburban neighbourhood in a detached house were coded middle-class. Characters who dress in expensive or trendy clothes, drive a luxury car, or live in an exclusive community in a very large house or mansion were coded upper-class. Following Robert Bulman (2005), who explores how teen film narratives differ by class, I have considered the type of school attended by the character (inner city/urban schools indicate working-class; suburban high schools indicate middle-class; private/elite schools indicate upper-class). In terms of adult professions, working-class characters were unemployed or worked in a trade or for an hourly wage; middle-class characters were university educated and employed in white-collar/knowledge worker professions, had a salary, and likely had money saved (notably this category included teachers); upper-class characters may or may not have been employed but lived an obviously lavish lifestyle marked by conspicuous wealth, and when these characters were employed, they were the boss or chief executive officer.
found in independent and Indiewood teen films. *The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love* and *But I’m a Cheerleader* were directed by lesbian or bisexual directors who may have been actively seeking to fill representational gaps by focussing on working-class LGBT people. Mainstream working-class LGBT representations are exceedingly rare, being limited to transgender characters Tania and Patty in *Dude, Where’s My Car?*

**Figure 10. Proportion of explicit LGBT characters in teen films, by class, 1995-2013**

Thus, teen films focus extensively (but not exclusively) on a single characterisation: the gender-conforming, white, middle-class, able-bodied gay male. Lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender characters are under-represented, as are LGBT people of colour and those that are working-class. This relative invisibility – where one part of the LGBT community is over-represented in mainstream media – solidifies a hegemonic ‘common sense’ that equates the LGBT community with only a fraction of its population. Characterisations outside of this provisional stabilisation – particularly the absolute invisibility of LGBT people with disability and some LGBT people of colour – demonstrate hegemonic resistance and exclusion through an active disavowal or ‘writing out’ of representational possibilities and the true diversity of the LGBT community. Yet, popular culture, as hegemony’s “terrain of exchange and negotiation” (Storey 2009, 10) also includes portrayals that contest this stabilisation; through teen films’ depiction of a *range* of characterisations – though small in number and often found in independent/Indiewood films – the genre “fracture[s] the fiction of homogeneity” (Turner 2003, 181). These fractures represent the activeness of hegemonic negotiation; spaces of potential change where representational homogeneity is challenged, potentially broadening out and becoming more inclusive. They contest the fixity of hegemonic dominance, showing moments of absorption, domestication, and change. While always within hegemony’s own limits, these contestations present the dynamism inherent in hegemony itself. Homogeneity – and the fractures to it – are not only present in character types but also in narrative themes, which is where we turn now.
**Coming out of the closet**

Since the late 1960s, coming out of the closet has been both a personal and a political act that acknowledges one’s LGBT status and publicly rejects the negative connotations constructed by heterosexual society in favour of pride and self-acceptance, and facilitates the building of an LGBT community (D’Emilio and Freedman 2012, Herman 2005, Altman 1971). Coming out is recognised as integral to the process of claiming LGBT identity and is seen as emancipatory, but has also been critiqued for its inability to challenge heteronormativity (Fuss 1991, Butler 1991). Judith Butler (1991) raises questions of risk regarding coming out discourses that overwrite provisional identity in favour of fixed identity and fail to fundamentally question gender binaries. Despite such critiques, coming out has become a “culturally-expected activity for every lesbian, gay man, or bisexual” (Cover 2011, 30, emphasis in original).

As noted by Didi Herman, coming out has become a “not uncommon story-line” (2005, 9) in popular culture since the 1990s. Various scholars have studied how onscreen gay and lesbian characters have come out of the closet. Bonnie Dow’s (2001) influential examination of *Ellen* found that the program’s discursive construction of coming out as liberatory erased the political in favour of the personal and relational, repressing not homosexuality but rather “the *politics* of sexuality” (135, emphasis in original). Dow notes that,

> [f]or many gays, the fiction of personal authenticity and control provides psychological comfort in a deeply homophobic culture; for sympathetic straights, this narrative facilitates blindness toward the heterosexism and homophobia in which they are complicit and from which they benefit. (135)

Herman (2005) similarly examines how meanings and effects differ with various narrative forms of coming out by contrasting *Ellen* with the British program *Bad Girls*. While she finds differences between discourses of identity and those of desire, she argues that “the effects ... are arguably similar” (22) in that they contain sexual fluidity, maintain lesbian ‘otherness,’ and present sexuality as private rather than publicly political. Samuel Chambers (2003) examines representations of the closet in *Six Feet Under* within a framework that highlights the precariousness of homosexual identity and the double-bind of the closet: that you can never be entirely in or out in a heteronormative society. Both Chambers and Rob Cover (2011) position coming out as an ongoing and complex process rather than a single event, as is often presented in mainstream media.

Coming out poses specific risks to LGBT youth. As noted by Kim Hackford-Peer (2010), Daniel Marshall (2010), Cover (2011), and Dhaenens (2013), teens are instantly positioned as victims after coming out of the closet. Yet, despite the risks of victimhood, “coming out is usually
presented as wholly positive, with an implicit indication that passing is a failure” (Cover 2011, 48). Hackford-Peer notes that the expectation for LGBT youth to be ‘out’ “allows us ... to exalt the brave queers who do come out of the closet and simultaneously diminish those who do not” (2010, 550). This creates a “moral hierarchy between the out and proud teen and the closeted teen” (Dhaenens 2013, 310), and establishes a dichotomy of the successful and healthy ‘out and proud’ LGBT youth and the failed and self-loathing ‘closet case.’

This dichotomy is well represented in contemporary teen films. In this section, I examine how ‘closeted’ and ‘out’ characters are represented within the genre and how these representations uphold the gay/straight binary and privilege homosexual identities that are rendered explicit and understood as fixed. This reveals hegemonic inclusion for out/explicit and fixed sexuality that is depicted as accepted and healthy, but excludes closeted/passing sexuality as a form of deviance. Indeed, contemporary teen films present closeted sexuality exclusively as damaging and dangerous. Closeted sexuality is primarily represented via gay male youth that are middle-class, gender-conforming, and athletic; these characters deny their own sexuality, and are frightened to come out because of the foreseen rejection of family and friends, and the loss of social standing. Greg McConnell (Eris Mabus) in Cruel Intentions (1999), Bo in Cursed, Rex (James Marsden) in Sex Drive (2008), and Brad in The Perks of Being a Wallflower are all closeted gay youth that link the closet with internalised homophobia, self-loathing, destructive behaviour, and internal conflict.152

The construction of closeted sexuality as inherently damaging, dangerous, and risky has been expounded by some scholars in psychology (for example, McAndrew and Warne 2010, Cox and Gallois 1996). In particular, mental health problems have been linked to the isolation that may occur when LGBT youth feel unable to discuss their sexuality with family members or peers (Mishna et al. 2009, Mohr and Fassinger 2003), presenting closeted homosexuality as a psychological risk for youth. Paul Gibson’s foundational work notes that

[gay and lesbian youth] may be able to ‘pass’ as ‘straight’ in their communities while facing a tremendous internal struggle to understand and accept themselves. Many gay youth choose to maintain a facade and hide their true feelings and identity, leading a double life, rather than confront situations too painful for them. They live in constant fear of being found out and recognized as gay. (1989, 112)

Gibson (1989) posits that feelings of self-loathing and internalised homophobia are associated with remaining closeted, potentially resulting in emotional and behavioural problems among LGBT youth who pass or hide their sexuality:

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152 There are no lesbians or bisexuals that are depicted as closeted. Rex is in his early twenties, and thus fairly young but no longer a teenager.
They often develop feelings of hatred or rage that can be turned against them or others. They may engage in self-destructive behaviours such as substance abuse as an unconscious expression of feelings too painful to face. (1989, 118)

Both Greg (Cruel Intentions) and Brad (The Perks of Being a Wallflower) embody this interpretation of closeted gay youth. Both characters are distressed about and attempt to deny their same-sex desires, and engage in substance use (alcohol use to the point of drunkenness) to cover up and excuse their passions. The reliance on alcohol is revealed in both films through dialogue. In Cruel Intentions, Blaine Tuttle (Joshua Jackson) discusses Greg's homosexuality, saying:

Blaine: He [Greg] used to sneak into my dorm drunk every month. We'd go at it for a while, and then as soon as he'd cum he'd start freaking out “Oh, what are you doing man? I'm not a fag. If you tell anybody I'm going to kick your ass.” God, the only reason I let him keep up the charade is because the man has a mouth like a hoover. Oouph.

Charlie's (Logan Lerman) voiceover in The Perks of Being a Wallflower similarly reveals Brad's requirement of intoxication before engaging in sexual relations with his lover, Patrick:

Charlie: When he [Brad] was a junior, Patrick started seeing Brad on the weekends in secret. I guess it was hard, too, because Brad had to get drunk every time they fooled around. Then Monday, in school, Brad would say, “Man, I was so wasted. I don’t remember a thing.” This went on for seven months. When they finally did it, Brad said he loved Patrick. Then he started to cry. No matter what Patrick did, Brad kept saying that his dad would kill him and saying that he was going to hell. Patrick was eventually able to help Brad get sober. I asked Patrick if he felt sad that he still had to keep it a secret, and he said no, because at least now Brad doesn’t have to get drunk to love him.

These scenes describe how Greg and Brad attempt to cover up their desires through intoxication.

Greg and Brad both hide their sexuality and fear being found out; they lead a ‘double life’ in which their (presumably) straight jock friends are unaware of their unspoken sexual desire. But the fear that primarily drives these onscreen teens into the closet is not the rejection by peers but rather by family, especially their fathers. In Cruel Intentions, anti-hero Sebastian Valmont (Ryan Phillippe) blackmails Greg by threatening to reveal his homosexuality. Scheming with his gay friend, Blaine, Sebastian cultivates a situation where he can barge in on Blaine and Greg’s assignation.

[Approaching the closed bedroom door, sexual moans are audible, ceasing the instant that Sebastian kicks in the door.]
Greg: Shit! [Scrambling to get partially dressed while under the covers.]
Blaine: [Effeminately] Alright, don’t get so huffy.
[Sebastian pulls back the sheet to reveal Blaine and Greg in their underwear.]
Sebastian: Well, what do we have here? [He takes photo of Greg and Blaine in bed.]
Greg: Look, Valmont. This is the first time I've ever done anything like this. [...] [Quietly] Please don’t tell anyone. This could ruin my whole career, man.

Sebastian: Your career? Greg, what about your family? I mean, could you imagine the humiliation your father’s going to feel when he finds out his pride and joy is a fudge-packer?

Greg: [Lost for words] I’ll do anything. Let’s just forget about this whole thing, okay?

Brad’s fears that his father will discover his homosexuality are similarly expressed during Charlie’s earlier voiceover monologue (“Brad kept saying that his dad would kill him and saying that he was going to hell”). Indeed, when his father eventually discovers Brad and Patrick in flagrante, Brad comes to school bearing the evidence of a severe beating at the hands of his father.\(^{153}\)

Both Greg and Brad thus clearly embody the trope of the closeted teen described by psychological researchers: unable to come to terms with their sexuality, they internalise homophobia, turn to substance use to cope, lead a double life, and are fearful of parental rejection. In addition, the films suggest that closeted homosexuality can lead to other harms including extortion (seen in Cruel Intentions when Sebastian blackmauls Greg for being gay) or endangerment of the self and others (seen in The Perks of Being a Wallflower when Brad beats up his lover as self-punishment and to mask his homosexuality).

Both Cruel Intentions and The Perks of Being a Wallflower also accentuate the damage wrought by the closet by contrasting the ‘failed closet-cases’ with their ‘out and proud’ peers, reinscribing the moral hierarchy noted by Dhaenens (2013). Out gay teens Blaine (Cruel Intentions) and Patrick (The Perks of Being a Wallflower) are portrayed as self-confident and happy. Blaine, while cast as a villain, is portrayed as self-assured, well adjusted, and happy. Patrick begins the film as fun-loving and confident (but Brad’s rejection leaves him unstable and depressed, demonstrating how the closet can be dangerous not only for the person within, but for those around him). By contrasting the ‘out and proud’ gay teen with the self-loathing closeted teen, these films reinforce the superiority of being out while negating the potential risks this brings for teens.

These depictions serve as cultural warnings about the dangers of living in the closet, and reaffirm the contemporary hegemonic ‘common sense’ that being out is liberating, superior, and healthier. They foreclose on the possibility of living a healthy, well-adjusted life within the closet, or without a fixed, explicit sexual identity that conforms to binary norms. In part, as noted by Diana Fuss, “to

\(^{153}\) The beating, and Brad’s internalised homophobia and self-hatred, are rendered even more clear when Patrick recounts Brad’s tale as an urban legend:

Patrick: There’s this one guy. Queer as a three-dollar-bill. The guy’s father doesn’t know about his son. So, he comes in the basement one night when he’s supposed to be out of town, catches his son with another boy. So he starts beating him, but not like the slap kind – like the real kind. And the boyfriend says, “Stop, you’re killing him.” But the son just yells, “Get out!” And, eventually... the boyfriend just ... did.
be out is really to be in – inside the realm of the visible, the speakable, the culturally intelligible” (1991, 4). These depictions thus play a role in maintaining and managing hegemonic heteronormativity that privileges sexual identities that are explicit, fixed, and conform to gay/straight and in/out binaries.

Closeted Brad and Greg are, however, the exception; most LGBT characters within the genre are already out, a trend that, as Suzanna Danuta Walters points out, is common in film generally:

[i]n film, coming out seems no longer much of a story to tell … In both mainstream and independent film, the story of the already-gay has trumped the tortured tale of the becoming-gay. (2001, 207)

Onscreen coming out involves a moment when the character’s presumed heterosexuality is overturned or their non-heterosexuality is confirmed for the audience. In contrast to queer scholars who recognise coming-out as a gradual and ‘blurry’ process that requires repetition (Cover 2011, Jackson Kellinger and Cover 2012, Chambers 2003), filmic representations of coming out reduce the complexity of this process to a discrete dichotomy: you’re either in or you’re out.154 It is to these scenes that I now turn.

Scenes of heterosexuals ‘outing’ LGBT peers occur in the absence or the presence of the LGBT friend. Straight ‘outings’ that entirely exclude LGBT characters occur in some of the earliest inclusive teen films of the period (Clueless and National Lampoon’s Senior Trip [1995]) as well as some of the latest (Fired Up! and Mortal Instruments: City of Bones [2013]). Other coming out scenes that visually include LGBT characters, but render them mute during the revelation of their sexual identity by a straight compatriot, are seen, for example, in Mean Girls when Janis (Lizzy Caplan) simultaneously introduces and outs Damian to Cady (Lindsay Lohan) with the quip “This is Damian. He’s almost too gay to function.”. It is also demonstrated in independent satire comedy, But I’m a Cheerleader, when Meagan’s lesbianism is introduced through the dialogue of heterosexual family and friends during her ‘intervention.’ While such outings by straights occur in a minority of teen films, they are nevertheless notable because they demonstrate a power dynamic in which heterosexuals usurp the revelatory power from the LGBT compatriot, disempowering them through an act of disclosure over which the LGBT characters should have control. These LGBT characters are stripped of agency and denied the possibility to control how to come out, and to whom.

154 Only The Incredibly True Adventures of Two Girls in Love portrays coming out as a process. In the film Randy Dean (Laurel Holloman) tells her aunts that she “came out to a girl at school today,” casting coming out as an iterative and ongoing process rather than as a one-off event.
While a few LGBT teens are ‘outed’ by heterosexual peers, most LGB characters within the genre exit the closet themselves by verbally self-identifying. This self-identification is demonstrated by, for example: Les when he happily confesses that he “speaks fag” “fluently” in *Bring It On*; most of the teens at True Directions when they accomplish their ‘rehabilitative’ first step of “admitting you’re a homosexual” (*But I’m a Cheerleader*); Jack (Brennan Hillard) who sings himself out of the closet in a parody of the song ‘Fame,’ renamed ‘Flame,’ in *Dance Flick* (2009); and Insect Man (Robert Emms) who solemnly pledges to “stand up for the defenseless” after “always being bullied for being gay” in *Kick-Ass 2* (2013). Within these films, these brief utterances are all it takes to step out of the closet; in contrast to the traumatic framing in narratives of the 1980s and 1990s, the claiming of LGBT identity in contemporary teen films is presented as easy and straightforward. The self-loathing, deviant, dangerous, sad, and suicidal LGBT representations seen in earlier teen fare, like *Ode to Billy Joe* (1976), *Reform School Girls* (1986) and *Fame* (1980), have largely been replaced by onscreen LGBT teens that are ‘out and proud,’ at ease with, and confident in, their sexual identity.

While out LGBT teens are depicted positively, onscreen same-sex attracted teenage girls refuse to self-identify as ‘lesbians.’ This is demonstrated by *Election’s* (1999) Tammy (Jessica Campbell) who actively refutes the lesbian label in one of her voiceovers:

Tammy: Its not like I’m a lesbian or anything. I’m attracted to the person. It’s just that all the people I’ve ever been attracted to happen to be girls.

Similarly, the same-sex attracted females in *But I’m a Cheerleader* make their expected (and required) declarations of “I’m a homosexual,” with Graham (Clea DuVall) going further and declaring “I like girls ... a lot”; however, she too never self-identifies as a lesbian. This writing-out of lesbians but writing-in of female same-sex attraction has a political dimension. As noted by Herman, “[t]o the extent that ‘lesbian’ has political, feminist connotations that ‘gay’ does not, the treatment of the word ... appears as part of ... [a] deliberate attempt to not be political” (2005, 21). Thus, in keeping with teen films’ thoroughly apolitical stance, it is not surprising that the term lesbian remains in the closet.

Coming out scenes for adults are occasionally treated differently than those involving teens; indeed, the swift exit from the closet in nostalgic teen films *Almost Famous* (2000) and *Outside Providence* (1999) are framed as shocking confessions. *Almost Famous* follows unassuming teen journalist William Miller (Patrick Fugit) as he writes his first *Rolling Stone* feature on the fictitious

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155 No transgender teens verbally self-identify.

156 Herman’s (2005) article focuses on the television program *Ellen*, but this phenomenon is relevant to the teen film genre.
The coming out of Stillwater’s drummer, Ed Vallencourt (John Fedevich), occurs on a small airplane during an electrical storm, a point in the film when death appears imminent. As a last act, the band members each confess their darkest secrets: sleeping with each other’s spouses, embezzlement, a hit-and-run, their true feelings about each other. Each of the characters talk over one another, voicing confessions of love, hate, jealousy, infidelity, yet it is Ed’s simple declaration, “Fuck it. I’m – I’m gay,” that halts the conversation, eliciting only looks of shock, confusion, and distaste. His coming out clearly startles his companions and, as his only line of dialogue in the film, also likely resonates for the audience. Ed looks askance at his companions after his declaration and, once the plane rights itself, looks as though he wishes he could take it back.

In a similar vein, Joey’s (George Wednt) coming out in Outside Providence is framed as a shocking disclosure. A nostalgic coming of age film, it focuses on working-class teen Timothy Dunphy (Shawn Hatosy) who is sent to a preparatory school to break his drug habit. Timothy’s father, Old Man Dunphy (Alec Baldwin), and his friends regularly play ‘men’s only’ card games and it is during one of these games that Joey comes out of the closet:

Caveech: It just don’t figure, you know? A guy like Rock Hudson, he could have any broad in the world he wanted.
Barney: Well you know what that is? It’s a sickness. It’s a mental disturbance caused by his mother.
Dunphy: It’s a sin is what it is, period.
Joey: Who gives a shit? So he’s gay, big deal.
Caveech: Big deal? What do you mean, ‘big deal’?
Joey: Why do you give a fuck anyway? Doesn’t affect you. I mean, I could see if Raquel Welch was a lezzie. But what do you give a shit about him for?
Caveech: I just do. Why, you don’t?
Joey: No, I don’t. [Stunned silence.]
Caveech: Well, if that don’t bother you, maybe you’re a femme too.
Dunphy: All right, already. Somebody pick a card.
Caveech: Wait a second. Gotta hear this now. I mean, we’re laying our cards on the thing here, right? Joey, do you or don’t you take it in the jaw? [Barney laughs.]
Dunphy: Shut the fuck up for fuck’s sake!
Caveech: What? Wait a second! Guy’s never been married. You ever seen him with a broad?
Joey: What if I was? Would that change something? You afraid I’d come on you all of a sudden, start playing grab-ass with you?
Caveech: Just answer the question, okay? Are you now, or have you ever been, a gay?
Joey: Yeah. Okay, yeah.
Dunphy: [Laughing] He’s fucking busting our balls. He means he’s gay like, different. Right?
Caveech: Is that it? I mean, ‘gay’ is that what you mean? ‘Gay’ like
[He smacks his fist against his hand in a gesture that implies sex].
[Joey looks around, uncomfortable, and taps his cards. Barney sits back uncomfortably.]
Dunphy: Oh, I can’t help you out there at all. You’re on your own.
Caveech: Get the fuck out of here! [The men throw their cards at Joey who hustles away
from the table.]
Caveech: Anyone else got any confessions?

Joey’s declaration of gay identity leads to his expulsion by his homophobic peer group, though by
the end of the film his friends have a miraculous change of heart and include Joey in the final card
game of the film. Their seeming spontaneous reversal from revulsion to tolerance feels
disingenuous, occurring too quickly and too neatly.

Both of these films present homophobic responses to adults’ disclosures of gay identity. This
homophobia is depicted as problematic and, to contemporary audiences for whom the films are
made, likely unacceptable. In short, they present homophobia – not homosexuality – as a
problem. Yet these films also couch homophobia safely in the past, establishing the present as a
vantage point from which to view such prejudiced exchanges. This transforms homophobia into
“the past tense of a bygone historical era[,] prompting many audiences to mistakenly believe
that these problems existed ‘back then’ but not ‘today’” (Chaput 2012, 37).157 This is particularly
true when compared to contemporary homophobia which is less virulent and overt than in past
homophobia with today’s comparatively enlightened social situation highlights the progress that
has been made vis-à-vis LGBT social acceptance and becomes a marker by which to measure
progress. Thus, contemporary LGBT-friendly audiences are invited to feel both outraged at the
nostalgic display of overt homophobia depicted onscreen, and also satisfied about the progress
that has been made and content about the comparatively enlightened times in which they now
live. This relegation of homophobia to a bygone era and presentation of the present as
comparatively enlightened, however, obscures contemporary homophobia and heterosexual
and forecloses ongoing political action. Thus, this nostalgic framing demarcates social progress,
but also obscures and over writes the contemporary heteronormativity, heterosexism, and
homophobia that continues across America.

157 Catherine Chaput’s (2012) chapter focuses on intersections of class, race, gender, and sexuality in nostalgic blue-
collar films, providing useful insight into how films situated in the past present ongoing cultural issues.

158 This is, of course, not to say that homophobia no longer exists nor that it has decreased uniformly across America. Indeed, as seen in the last chapter, the LGBT community still faces high levels of violence and prejudice. However, there has also been significant change; ethnographic evidence suggests that people who hold homophobic beliefs feel less able to express their prejudice publicly (Dean 2014) and, since the early 2000s, vociferous homophobia espoused by public figures like Jerry Falwell has been publicly condemned (Becker 2006). Eric Anderson and Mark McCormack succinctly suggest that in a contemporary context “homophobia has decreased ... [however] decreasing homophobia is
neither homogeneous nor universal, and heterosexism and heteronormativity remain significant social issues” (2016,
5).
While being comfortably couched in historical settings, _Almost Famous_ and _Outside Providence_ also make explicit one of the dangers of coming out of the closet: out LGBT people face the possible rejection of their friends and family. Indeed, as Hackford-Peer points out,

> discourses imply that being out, or being visible in our queerness is and should be the goal of all queer people ... [but] [q]ueer people have many good reasons for not coming out of the closet. (2010, 550)

As we will see in the next section, this is particularly true for LGBT onscreen teens.

**Victimisation**

LGBT youth have been consistently characterised as victims (Hackford-Peer 2010, Marshall 2010, Driver 2008, Cohler and Hammack 2007, Savin-Williams 2006, Talburt, Rofes, and Rasmussen 2004, Cover 2011, 2013). As noted by Marshall, “[q]ueer youth have been variously caricatured as victims of adult homosexual predators, of over-bearing mothers, of too much exposure to popular culture and of the evil metropolis itself” (2010, 66-67). Indeed, victimisation has been central to the field of LGBT youth studies since its emergence in the early 1970s (Savin-Williams 2006). Early ethnographic and psychological studies were focussed on troubled, at-risk gay youth who came to the attention of health and mental health professionals, and such studies continue to evince that LGBT youth are at increased risk of mental health problems, substance abuse, contracting sexually transmissible diseases, and suicide (Aromin 2016, Marshal et al. 2009, Morewitz 2016, Garofalo et al. 2007, Russell and Fish 2016). While not undermining the significance of these studies, Mary Louise Rasmussen (2006) expresses ambivalence about the value of the oft-repeated ‘victim trope,’ which positions LGBT youth as vulnerable and in need of help. Marshall similarly notes that the pervasiveness of this trope “undermine[s] or de-emphasize[s] queer youth agency by universalizing understandings of queer youth as a subject who needs to be saved by external ... agents” (2010, 65). The ubiquitous and consistent structuring of LGBT youth as victims within academic circles, LGBT youth advocacy groups, news coverage, and entertainment media has constructed a naturalised, common-sense understanding that intertwines and conflates the concepts of LGBT youth and victimhood (Driver 2008, Marshall 2010, Hackford-Peer 2010, Talburt, Rofes, and Rasmussen 2004). Employing Butler’s work on gender performativity, Marshall notes that,

> [q]ueer adolescence and its ‘natural’ traits of victimhood are produced, like gender, through ‘repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeals over time to produce the appearance of a naturalistic necessity’ (Butler 1999, 43-44). (2010, 67)

Bertram Cohler and Phillip Hammack (2007) examine LGBT youth victimisation within a ‘life-course approach’ that historically situates LGBT youth narratives. They propose two narratives,
the first of which is the ‘narrative of struggle and success’ that dominated academic literature and media depictions of LGBT youth during the 1980s and 1990s. This narrative depicts LGBT youth as victims of harassment and homophobia, but also highlights the triumphant resilience and empowerment of their (ultimately successful) struggle for identity formation. As they note,

[t]he primary task of the gay adolescent, in this narrative, is to overcome the inherent struggles of a spoiled identity, to transcend the inevitable internalization of heterosexism and homophobia, and to reclaim gay identity as a positive index of relational and sexual being. It is only through the process of coming out – acknowledging and accepting same-sex desire as congruent with other aspects of the self – that acceptance into gay culture occurs, and with this new cultural frame of reference, a new set of symbolic meanings, rituals, and social interactions distinct from a heterosexist normative culture. (52)

Cohler and Hammack (2007) suggest that the ‘narrative of struggle and success’ has been supplemented – though not supplanted – by the second narrative, the ‘narrative of emancipation,’ which depathologises the identity formation of same-sex attracted youth, emphasises resilience and coping strategies, and reveals the increasingly fluid and varied self-labeling of these youth who conceptualise their identity as ‘normal.’ While this narrative offers emancipatory potential, the authors warn that it is “dangerously assimilative” in that it “encourages youth with same-sex desire to dismiss their distinctiveness from the larger culture” and removes sexuality from the “primary index of identity, the anchor of the personal narrative” (54).

According to Cohler and Hammack, the emergence of this second narrative is linked to shifts in the larger culture, particularly for youth growing up in more affluent and sophisticated urban and suburban communities who, emboldened by positive internet accounts and the media, assume leadership in establishing gay-straight alliances in schools and feel empowered to live a diverse sexual lifeway outside the boundaries of conventional taxonomy. (2007, 54)

They suggest that these two narratives currently coexist because of the ideological polarisation in American society regarding LGBT acceptance, with stigma and rejection now existing alongside ‘post-gay’ acceptance (Cohler and Hammack 2007). Put in hegemonic terms, these two coexisting narratives are manifestations of hegemonic shift, where the dominant ‘common sense’ understanding of ‘gay youth as victim’ (the narrative of struggle and success), established in the 1980s and provisionally stabilising throughout the 1980s and 1990s, is under tension from a new concept of LGBT youth (narrative of emancipation) that position LGBT youth as normal, agentic, and resilient. These two narratives, which have been articulated throughout popular culture as well as academia, demonstrate the “continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable equilibria” (Gramsci 1999, 406). In this way, Cohler and Hammack’s life-course approach reflects
contemporary hegemonic negotiation, identifying narratives that reflect the active process that is broadly resulting in increased, though unequal, cultural acceptance.

In this section, I examine a number of different portrayals of victimisation within the teen film genre, highlighting the ways in which they conform to, or deviate from, the victim trope. While media has tended to present LGBT youth as victims in need of intervention, contemporary teen films complicate this trope, demonstrating ways that LGBT youth employ their own agency to overcome or undermine victimisation. However, before examining specifically LGBT victimisation, it is worth noting that all onscreen teens – homosexual and heterosexual – are regularly victimised throughout the genre. Films focussing on the plight of unpopular, ostracised, or outcast youth (or those who simply do not fit in) arise in most sub-genres and this theme is the focus of films like *D3: The Mighty Ducks* (1996), *Can’t Hardly Wait* (1998), *The New Guy, Mean Girls*, and *Never Back Down* (2008). The entirety of the teen horror genre focuses on teen victims who are tormented by peers (for example, *Scream* [1996] and *House at the End of the Street*); adults (*I Know What You Did Last Summer* [1997], *The Glass House* [2001], and *Prom Night* [2008]); or supernatural forces (*Stay Alive* [2006] and the *Final Destination* franchise). Thus, gay or straight, teens within the genre face victimisation for a variety of reasons and from a variety of sources.

Turning to onscreen LGBT teens, numerous gay and lesbian youth in teen films face no victimisation relating to their sexual identity. These include Christian (*Clueless*); Meg (Nicole de Boer, *National Lampoon’s Senior Trip*); Blaine (*Cruel Intentions*); Erik (Shakiem Evans, *Center Stage*); Dev, Thom (Aaron Yoo), and Lethario (*Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist*); and Downey, Angela, and Bianca (Hayley Marie Norman, Danneel Harris, *Fired Up!*). These characters, spanning the entirety of the research period, are each part of their respective ‘in-crowds,’ and their sexuality causes no rift or wrinkle in their social worlds. None of these characters experience or express fears about victimisation due to their sexual identity; the bullying that does occur is for other reasons. For example, Angela and Bianca are bullied by more accomplished cheer competitors, The Panthers, because of their poor cheering ability, not their budding lesbian romance; and Dev and Thom’s band, The Jerk Offs, are heckled by audience members for relying on a drum machine, but not because they are ‘a gay band.’ Thus, these teen films portray confident, integrated, and unmolested LGBT teens instead of simply reiterating the victim trope. As suggested by Cohler and Hammack’s (2007) ‘narrative of emancipation,’ these LGBT youth are

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159 Carol Clover’s (1992) foundational book, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws*, examines ‘slasher’ films from a feminist perspective, arguing that audiences identify with the “final girl” (victim and heroine) rather than the murderous antagonist.

160 While the antagonist cheer-group, The Panthers, do not bully Angela or Bianca for their same-sex attraction, the film does include one scene where sharp-tongued protagonist Poppy (Juliette Goglia) insults Angela and Bianca, calling them ‘freak shows’ and ‘lesbatron.’
depicted as ‘normal’; they embody an entitlement to equality and do not question that they deserve to fit in, find romance, or succeed. They stand in sharp relief to the ubiquitous images of LGBT youth as confused, isolated, and depressed, living with the “homophobia, verbal abuse, and violence … experience[d] as members of a stigmatized group” (Hackford-Peer 2010, 545). Unlike portrayals in earlier teen film cycles, which depicted self-loathing sad gay teens and uncertain sissy-victims, the sexual identity of contemporary teens no longer exiles them to the social margins or casts them out as suicide-prone deviants. Rather, the new breed of well-adjusted, happy gay and lesbian teens makes manifest their hegemonic inclusion, portraying their lives as liveable and free of anti-gay discrimination.

These liveable lives are often bound to the homonormative archetype of the ‘normal gay teen’ (Dhaenens 2013, Hackford-Peer 2010); however, importantly, these films do not present a single way to be a ‘normal gay teenager,’ but rather demonstrate a range of possibilities, from artistic consumer Christian, to camp(ish) socialite Blaine and fey ballet dancer Erik, to indie musicians Dev and Thom, to beer-drinking, video-game aficionado cheer-jock Downey. Yet, they are also bound by a number of homologous features that delimit the boundaries of hegemonic inclusion, boundaries that extend only to middle-class and (mostly) gender conforming lesbian and gay teens, excluding those of less affluent means or bisexual, transgender, and fluid/queer youth from a life free of victimisation. In addition to exposing these limits, depicting LGBT youth as entirely free from problems may undermine the real challenges faced by non-heterosexual youth. As noted by Walters,

the rosy picture is not only disingenuous, it can help to present a false sense … that the battle for gay rights and deep sexual freedom is somehow won or at least largely over. In other words, these … images present a world beyond both the closet and beyond serious homophobia. (2012, 929)

Counter-balancing this idealised, homophobia-free teen world are various representations of sexuality-based victimisation among LGBT teens. Portrayals of LGBT youth-as-victim have been on television and film for decades (Paceley and Flynn 2012, Padva 2008); Gilad Padva (2008) describes the graphic and brutal portrayals of LGBT victimisation in international and independent films, which have included merciless rapes and savage beatings. While routinely visible in older independent films, this type of visceral victimisation is entirely absent from all of the teen films screened. Rather, contemporary depictions of victimisation based on sexual or gender identity commonly take two forms: school-based bullying from peers and rejection by parents. Onscreen LGBT youth bullied by peers include Randy (Laurel Holloman, The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls In Love), Greg (Cruel Intentions), Tammy (Election), Owen (Chuck Campbell, Superstar), Les (Bring It On), Damian (Mean Girls), Brandon (Easy A), Patrick (The Perks of Being a Wallflower),
and the transgender student on a bus in *Superhero Movie*. These LGBT youths are verbally or physically bullied by peers, with the degree of bullying and the impact on the youth differing by film.

Lesbian and gay teens like Randy, Tammy, Owen, Les, and Brandon are on the receiving end of verbalised cruelty for their sexual identity. They are heckled and belittled by their peers who verbally assault them with epithets like “fucking dyke,” “freak,” “fruity,” and “fag.” These LGBT teens may be hurt by these remarks but they are not emotionally overwhelmed by the abuse; they are not defined by their victimisation. Some teens, like Randy, verbally rebuff their bullies, while others, like Tammy, quietly contemplate the cruelty; all, however, demonstrate resilience and self-confidence. Least bothered of all is *Bring It On*’s Les, a confident gay male cheerleader who eschews the insults levelled against him by football jocks and launches his own volley of contempt, as seen in this scene that occurs on school grounds between classes:

Toros Quarterback: Sexy Leslie and Jan Jan the Cheerleading Man.
Toros Tight End: Hey fags.
Les: [Holding Jan back as he lunges for the jocks.] Whoa, whoa, just because we won more trophies than you guys is no reason to go get all ... malignant.
Toros Tight End: Malignant this, tool [grabs his crotch]. [The group of jocks laugh and give each other high-fives.]
Jan: One of these days, man.
Les: Ah, let it go. They’ve never even won a single game. That’s gotta be kind of rough on them. [Jan walks away; Les yelling loudly so that everyone can hear.] Besides they’re dicks.

Les’ confident and unruffled manner in the face of victimisation provides a “representational challenge to essentializing characterizations of queer youth as always-already victims” (Marshall 2010, 70). Thus, while Les is taunted, he is no victim.

While Les is assertive and challenging in the face of bullying, *Easy A*’s Brandon suffers much more from the victimisation of his peers. In the film, which playfully references the *Scarlet Letter*, 17-year-old Olive Penderghast (Emma Stone) confesses a fictitious virginity-ending tryst to her best friend, Rhiannon Abernathy (Aly Michalka), which quickly morphs into a rumour and spreads around the school, launching Olive from a ‘non-entity’ to a (in)famous jezebel. Olive, who initially enjoys her new reputation, comes to the aid of numerous male peers who fail to ‘measure up’ to the required standards of high school masculinity. The first male teen in need is the openly gay Brandon, who faces daily persecution from his peers, including a bloody nose received during an off screen altercation with a male student. After Olive suggests that he try to avoid victimisation through blending in more (i.e. enacting the ‘normal gay teen’ archetype), Brandon proposes a mutually beneficial solution:
Brandon: Do you want to have sex with me or not?

Olive: Oh my God, dude. Wow. You completely missed the point of that. That’s not what I was saying at all.

Brandon: No, I know what you were saying is that I should just act straight until I can get out of this hell hole and then I can be whoever I wanna be. I get that.

Olive: And you know that I didn’t have sex with a college guy, right? I just told everybody I did. Or actually, I told one person I did. And you know how these things work. It’s like wildfire.

Brandon: So you’re saying I shouldn’t really have sex? I should just say I had sex with someone. A girl.

Olive: Yes. Yes [nodding].

Brandon: Uhmm hmmm [nodding].


Brandon: Think about it. We could help each other out. You want to maintain this floozy façade. I don’t want to get pushed into shit every day. It’s a win-win-win. [...] Just one good imaginary bonk. [...] 

Olive: Why don’t you just do what I did and make someone up?

Brandon: Who’s going to believe me? You don’t understand how hard it is, alright? [voice choking with emotion]. I’m tormented everyday ... at school it’s like I’m being suffocated. And sure, we can sit and fantasize all we want about how things are gonna be different one day but this is today and it sucks. Alright? And there’s only one way around it. You were smart enough to think of it, so please just help me. Because I can’t take another day of this. I don’t know what I’ll do [choking up].

In this scene, Brandon epitomises the gay youth victim trope. He speaks of the constant cruelty directed to him based solely on his sexual orientation, his hopes for safety are deferred to the future and unattainable in the present, and he infers the possibility of self-harm. He embodies the archetype in which “[b]eing gay is represented as a condition that will likely coincide with unhappiness, loneliness, and the feeling of being under a constant threat of verbal or physical violence” (Dhaenens 2013, 310).

Yet the film also disrupts this notion of victimisation. It is Brandon’s agency, together with Olive’s help, that upends his victimisation; he transforms himself from a helpless gay victim into a ‘man’ who is celebrated by his former tormentors. Through a quasi-public performance of heterosexual ‘sex,’ Brandon and Olive ‘prove’ Brandon’s straight masculine virility to his peers, thereby undermining rumours of his homosexuality and ending his daily torment. While overall the scene serves to reverse Brandon’s victim status, it also challenges hegemonic heteronormativity in a number of interconnected ways: contrasting the authentic self with the faked/performative self; linking dominant teen culture (particularly hegemonic teen masculinity) with foolishness and critiquing it through parody; and creating a middle space between ‘in’ and ‘out’ of the closet that is ‘knowing,’ authentic, and safe.
The pretend sex scene between Brandon and Olive is constructed as a literal performance; in the words of Olive they “put on a little show” pretending to have boisterous sex during a house party while their peers listen at the door. Thusly situated, the scene contrasts Brandon and Olive’s authentic selves (revealed in earlier scenes and the privacy of the locked bedroom) with their faked performance (acted out at the party). Their authentic selves are complex, humorous, and kind, whereas their performance is one-dimensional, sophomoric, and puerile; this creates a hierarchy where the authentic self is superior to the performative self. This faked performance entails passing both as heterosexual and a member of dominant teen culture itself. To integrate, Olive and Brandon adopt different dress styles, modify their speech, and feign drunkenness; they become ‘normal’ teens barely decipherable from the other partygoers who dress and behave synonymously. This depiction of teen culture is not flattering: it is artificial, shallow, buffoonish, and prying. Dominant teen culture is also foolish and easily duped: the party-going teens are tricked by Olive and Brandon’s performance of intoxication; they think Olive is going to, in the parlance of the film, “do one” with Brandon despite the rumours of his homosexuality; and Brandon is instantly accepted as part of the male clan after ‘sex,’ roughly embraced and high-fived by the jocks who literally drag him amongst their throng. Both of these strategies – contrasting the authentic/fake and revealing foolishness – undermine the desirability of hegemonic teen culture.

Brandon’s performance also delivers a critique of heteronormativity by parodying dominant (straight) teen masculinity. Chambers notes that,

> because heterosexuality is the norm, one has to work quite hard to deviate from it. Therefore, most actions, words, and gestures can easily be interpreted within the frame of heteronormativity. It’s easy to perform a straight identity: just don’t do anything queer.

(2003, 38)

Thus, according to this schema, Brandon could default back to a straight identity simply by ‘not doing anything queer,’ yet Brandon establishes his (outwardly) straight identity through a stylised performance of straight teen masculinity that critiques through parody. His parodic performance involves cave-man like grunts, exclamations of Budweiser’s ‘whassup?’ advertising slogan, continual references to drunkenness, and the objectification of females (demonstrated, for example, when he spanks Olive’s rear during ‘sex’ and exclaims “I’m a straight guy! Roar!,” and his instant abandonment of her post-‘sex’). Thus, he absurdly embodies attributes of dominant

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161 Indeed, the position of ‘most popular girl in school’ secured by party host, Melody Bostic (Johanna Braddy), is secured, in Olive’s words, “partly because she is pretty and has perfect hair, but mostly because her parents let her have these huge parties every time she catches them doing it in the pool” rather than through ‘authentic’ means like a winning personality or sense of humour.

162 Brandon’s parodic performance of straight male teen identity is similar to that enacted by Greg in Cruel Intentions. After the audience is made aware of Greg’s homosexuality, he is depicted in his dorm room with two (male) jock
straight teen masculinity, including behaviour (partying and getting drunk), virility, and the mastery of women. His performance exaggerates these attributes, highlighting their ridiculous and absurd nature and calling attention to the constructedness of dominant masculinity, stripping it of its presumed naturalness/normalness/desirability through “resistant irony” (Dhaenens 2013, 314).

This scene also disrupts the hegemonic heteronormative binary by presenting a path between ‘gay’ and ‘straight’ – between the ‘in’ and ‘out’ binary afforded by the closet – that leads to a place of safety. Brandon and Olive’s performance (and Brandon’s parodic adoption of dominant teen masculinity) hoodwinks his oppressors and ends his torment; put simply, Brandon succeeds in passing as straight to secure safety. This safety is both external (i.e. he is no longer assaulted by the jocks) and internal: he does not sacrifice his authentic self. In contrast to the easily-fooled (presumably) straight teens listening at the bedroom door, Brandon is very much aware of the difference between his authentic and performed/straight selves, as demonstrated during the ‘sex’ scene when he giggles at his ‘straight’ performance and earnestly thanks Olive after their climactic finale. The internal safety also safeguards Brandon from becoming a dangerous ‘closet case.’

Unlike closeted teens Greg and Brad explored in the last section, he does not suffer from failing to be ‘out and proud’: he does not internalise homophobia, turn to substance use, nor endanger himself or others. While he ‘leads a double life,’ he will not suffer from the schism of the self.

The audience is thus simultaneously aware that Brandon’s masquerade means his school life will become liveable and equally knows that he will maintain his authentic self without internalising homophobia and suffering mental duress. He will exist in a space between gay and straight, between in and out of the closet, between tropes of the ‘out and proud teen’ and the ‘self-loathing closet case’; he has created a pragmatic space beyond victimisation. In this way, the film contests the heteronormative gay-straight binary and the hierarchy of the ‘out and proud’ and closeted teens identified by Dhaenens (2013) that are understood as ‘common sense,’ crafting a new middle ground; it presents a new, emergent gay teen whose sexual identity is fluid enough to avoid the risks of being out of the closet but fixed enough to avoid the risks of being inside the closet. This emergent teen eschews the helpless gay-youth-as-victim trope in favour of agency and self-sufficiency, highlighting the risks of being out while not succumbing to them.

Victimisation comes not just from peers, but also from adults. While Marshall (2010), Susan Talburt, Eric Rofes, and Mary Louise Rasmussen (2004), and Hackford-Peer (2010) assert that adults act as the agent of salvation for LGBT youth, adults in teen films are, instead,
overwhelmingly positioned as antagonists. Indeed, teen films generally position adults as either “ineffectual figures incapable of protecting their children … or threatening figures to be avoided or destroyed” (Leitch 1992, 46) (that is, of course, when they are present; adults in the genre are often marked most conspicuously by their absence). In LGBT-inclusive teen films, adults often create problems through neglect, optimised by the teachers and parents who are either absent or unwilling to help onscreen gay youth like Owen, Damian, Les, Dean, and Patrick as they are bullied or alienated at school. Adults also actively antagonise teens (Holmund 2005), for example But I’m a Cheerleader’s homophobic camp director Mary (Cathy Moriarty) and Easy A’s Principal Gibbons (Malcolm McDowell) who is described by Brandon as a homophobe and a fascist. Indeed, adults are the instigators of perhaps the worst form of victimisation: the total rejection of LGBT youth. The possibility of this familial/parental rejection is why teens like Alec Lightwood (Kevin Zegers, The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones), Greg (Cruel Intentions), and Brad (The Perks of Being a Wallflower) stay in the closet, refusing to disclose their sexual identity publicly or, occasionally, even to themselves. This rejection is central to two independent teen films: Saved! (2004) and But I’m a Cheerleader.

Saved! is a comedy-drama about Christian Mary Cummings (Jena Malone) who has been “born again all [her] life.” When her boyfriend, Dean Withers (Chad Faust), comes out to her, she tries to save him from, to quote Mary, “this spiritually toxic affliction” through sex, ending up pregnant and ostracised by her religious friends. While Mary loses her peer group, Dean’s rejection is total: he is shunned by his peers and whisked away by his parents to Mercy House, a “Christian treatment facility” that promises to “de-gayify” him. Ultimately, Dean and his peers seek refuge at the prom after escaping Mercy House, leaving them homeless.

Satire comedy But I’m a Cheerleader similarly focuses on a ‘gay reprogramming’ facility, this time called True Directions. Wholesome Christian teen Megan (Natasha Lyonne) is baffled to find that her kindly, if somewhat backwards, parents have orchestrated an ‘intervention’ to quash her “homosexual tendencies” that include eating tofu and accessorising her room with, to quote ‘ex-gay’ camp counsellor Mike (RuPaul Charles), “sexual, even vaginal, motifs in artwork and decorating.” While True Directions promises to remake the latent lesbian into a “happy heterosexual” through its five-step program, Megan ultimately accepts her homosexuality and falls in love with Graham, another teen at the camp. Both Megan and Graham’s parents reject (or

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163 Alec, a Shadowhunter (a warrior race that is part human and part angel), is unable to declare his same-sex attraction for fear that the Clave (council of Shadowhunters) will cast him out and he will lose his ostensible family. Alex’s sister, Isabelle (Jemima West) declares that Alex’s sexuality doesn’t matter to her, “but it does to the Clave. I don’t make up the rules,” indicating that same-sex attraction defies the ‘rules’ of Shadowhunter society.

164 Dean tells Pastor Skip (Martin Donovan), “We’ve been kicked out of our houses and our schools and now we’re going to be kicked out of Mercy House. There’s nowhere left for us to go.”
threaten to reject) their daughters because of their homosexuality.\textsuperscript{165} Though the film is rife with ironic humour, Megan’s mother’s words (“We can’t allow you to live an unhealthy lifestyle under our roof. So, Megan, if that is what you choose, you’re choosing to cut us out of your life”) come as a shock to Megan.\textsuperscript{166} When she is expelled from True Directions and disowned by her parents, she stays with ‘ex-ex-gays’ Larry and Lloyd (Richard Moll and Wesley Mann).\textsuperscript{167}

Dean and Megan are both ostracised by their families, ultimately ending up homeless because of their parents’ rejection. Thus, Dean and Megan come to embody the LGBT victim trope and conform to Cohler and Hammack’s ‘narrative of struggle and success.’ But, like Brandon, their success and salvation do not come from external or adult sources but rather from their own resilience and agency. Megan has the fortitude to ‘find her own way’ and rescues Graham from the True Directions graduation ceremony (and, by extension, an unhealthy ‘double life’); Dean and his cohort escape from Mercy House to join the prom. Thus, rather than passively benefiting from adult intervention, these lesbian and gay teens use their own agency to overcome their oppression, embodying a ‘narrative of emancipation’ and fracturing the victim trope. Indeed, all these teens are unwilling to wait, to defer their present happiness for some fantasy future when ‘it gets better.’ In contrast to the helpless victim trope, these homosexual teens position equality not as something that will happen in the future, but rather as something they have a right to in the present. These characterisations “[do] not postpone agency … but rather [recognise] that [LGBT youth] have and use their agency to have an impact on their daily lives” (Hackford-Peer 2010, 551).

These films thus both reinforce the hegemonic understanding that victimisation is intrinsic to the LGBT youth experience, yet simultaneously challenge this portrayal, highlighting a shift away from helplessness towards agency and self-sufficiency. In this way, these films portray an iterative change to the ‘repeated performance’ of LGBT youth-as-victims and align with Cohler and Hammack’s ‘narrative of emancipation’. They can therefore be understood as a historically-situated hegemonic provisional stabilisation that simultaneously reasserts and contests the helpless LGBT youth victim trope. These portrayals unmoor

\textsuperscript{165} During a ‘family therapy’ session at True Directions Graham’s father, Mr. Eaton (Robert Pine), says “I’ve heard enough of this crap. And when we get back from Switzerland, you’d better have this gay thing out of your system. [...] You fuck up: no college, no car, no trust fund. I’m not sitting in any room with faggots.” With all this at stake, Graham decides to pass as straight and graduate from True Directions until, ultimately, she joins Megan out of the closet.

\textsuperscript{166} While Megan’s parents disown her for her lesbianism, the final scene of the film is of her parents at a Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) meeting. While the mother dresses incognito and shrinks down in her seat, her father proudly says, “My name is Peter, and my daughter is a homosexual.” This scene demonstrates that Megan’s parents have, at least partly, come to terms with her homosexuality and suggests they have reconciled.

\textsuperscript{167} Megan tells Larry and Lloyd: “I can’t go back. I thought you could teach me how to be a lesbian, what they wear, where they live.”
understandings of queer young people from the stereotypes through which they have been discursively constructed, making way for a more sophisticated appreciation of the diversity of queer young people’s lives and their capacity to function in agentic ways. (Marshall 2010, 70)

While most of the victimisation of LGBT youth occurs at the hands of teenage peers or adults, *Scary Movie*’s Bobby Prinze (Jon Abrahams) recalls an antiquated portrayal of a gay-youth-as-victim whose homosexuality is ‘caused’ by factors outside his control. This portrayal is best understood as part of the parody sub-genre of teen films, which “functions by taking pre-established and fairly stable semiotic structures ... and recontextualising the structure through the oscillation between similarity to and difference from the target texts” (Harries 2002, 282). While Dan Harries notes that critics have argued that parodies signal a point of total saturation for the genre, he and Amanda Ann Klein (2011) explore how parodies serve to uproot tired generic clichés and allow space for the genre to flourish. Klein proposes that *Scary Movie* launched the ‘cycle-parody cycle,’ a film cycle that “capitalize[s] on the recent success of another film cycle, lampooning its familiar characters, images, and plots” (2011, 176). *Scary Movie* thus operates as a series of sight gags that reference and lampoon well-known contemporary teen films, loosely tied together by a storyline in which a group of teens are hunted down by a masked killer dubbed ‘Ghostface.’

Part of the parody, Klein (2011) notes, relies on instantly recognisable stock characters; one such character is Bobby Prinze, a parodic reincarnation of *Scream*’s Billy Loomis (Skeet Ulrich). Bobby, boyfriend of the virginal ‘final girl’ Cindy Campbell (Anna Faris), oscillates between a caring boyfriend and a potential masked murderer. Seeking refuge from the disguised killer, Bobby, Cindy, and their friends congregate at Cindy’s house party and it is here that Cindy, previously hesitant to ‘go all the way,’ finally consents to sex. During their climax, Cindy is literally plastered to the ceiling in an eruption of ejaculate that has (one supposes) been building up within Billy throughout the course of their relationship. Moments after their intimate encounter, ‘Ghostface’ bursts through the bedroom door and stabs Bobby. But all is not what it seems. The stabbing is merely a ruse; Bobby and his friend Ray (Shawn Wayans) are ‘copycatting’ the serial killer as a cover for Cindy’s murder, though their reasons for doing this are self-reflexively uncertain:

Cindy: Why are you doing this?
Bobby: Did *Scream* have a plot?
Ray: No.
Bobby: Did *I Know What You Did Last Summer* make any sense? Don’t think so.

When Bobby does disclose a motive it’s this: lack of sex.

Bobby: How about this for a motive? Lack of sex. It can cause serious deviant behaviour.
Cindy: I thought you loved me.
Bobby: Oh, I did, baby, I did. But abstinence makes you discover new things about yourself. That’s right, Cindy. I’m gay.

‘That’s right,’ abstinence ‘made’ Bobby gay. Harking back to the 1950s, this scene presents the ‘cause’ of homosexuality and resuscitates a recognisable gay trope, albeit one that is out-dated and rarely used in contemporary popular culture. While, as noted in chapter one, 1950s ‘explanations’ of homosexuality included same-sex seduction/molestation during youth or dysfunctional family relationships, *Scary Movie* presents enforced abstinence as the ‘cause’ of Bobby’s homosexuality. In short, *Scary Movie* presents Bobby as a victim – a victim of abstinence – who ‘became’ gay in a manner synonymous with 1950s portrayals of youth ‘becoming gay’ from molestation. As such, Bobby’s gay identity becomes an *unnatural creation* resulting from a lack or deficit; he ‘becomes’ gay as a coping mechanism for his sexual suffering. That Bobby characterises himself as ‘deviant’ accentuates the unnatural, objectionable, and unwelcome nature of homosexuality within the film. By comparison, heterosexuality is portrayed as natural, normal, unproblematic, and desirable. Thus (created/unnatural/deviant) homosexuality is ideologically positioned in opposition to and below (natural/normal) heterosexuality in the heteronormative hierarchy. Yet, understood within the context of parody, the idea of homosexuality ‘resulting from’ anything (let alone abstinence) is portrayed as ludicrous and literally laughable. Parodying ‘created’ homosexuality, *Scary Movie* ‘weeds out’ this residual, clichéd narrative convention allowing “for the canon’s continued healthy growth” (Harries 2000, 122). Bobby thus embodies the tropes of the gay-youth-as-victim and homosexual-as-unnatural-creation, while simultaneously repudiating them through parody.

*Scary Movie* doubly positions this gay teen as a victim and victimiser; as both a casualty and culprit. While Bobby is the ‘victim’ of abstinence, his ‘deviance’ leads directly to his murderous behaviour. This dual victim/victimiser is also used in the teen thriller *House at the End of the Street*. In this film, teenager Elissa (Jennifer Lawrence) moves to a small town with her mother only to find that a horriﬁc double murder occurred in the house at the end of the street. Sole survivor and outcast, Ryan (Max Thieriot), continues to reside in the house alone. Romance buds between the two teens until Elissa becomes suspicious and discovers that it was Ryan who murdered his parents, a discovery that causes Ryan to kidnap her and almost murder her and her mother. The closing scene, constructed as a memory ﬂashback during Ryan’s incarceration in a psychiatric facility, depicts him at a childhood birthday party. Clothed in a dress and sporting feminine hair, his mother addresses him as Carrie-Ann (the name of his dead sister); when Ryan refuses to comply, she slaps him brutally across the face. This denouement reveals Ryan’s motive for murder, attempted murder, and kidnapping: childhood trauma from parentally enforced
gender dysphoria. Ryan’s deviance, suggests the film, resulted from his mother forcing him to adopt the female identity of his deceased sister whom he had accidentally killed. Similar to Scary Movie’s reliance on a 1950s trope, House at the End of the Street falls back the trope of the menacing and deviant ‘invert’ seen in films and television since the 1950s.

This re-invocation of the deviant ‘invert’ trope can be thought of as hegemonic negotiation that reaches back to active residual forms, those “earlier social formations and phases of the cultural process” (Williams 1977, 122), in an attempt to tame emergent alternative/oppositional forces. Just as the 1950s portrayals of the menacing and deviant ‘invert’ can be understood as a manifestation of straight America’s anxiety towards the newly visible gay community in the postwar period, and the ‘frightening’ homosexual of the 1970s was a marker for cultural anxiety resulting from the newly radicalised gay rights movement (Benshoff and Griffin 2006), the depiction of transgender deviance in House at the End of the Street signals cultural malaise about an increasingly visible transgender rights movement. The residual form of the ‘invert’ has been modified and updated, but fundamentally builds upon the ideas that non-heterosexuality is contagious and dangerous to children and that gender inversion in youth is destructive, ideas that have circulated in media portrayals for decades and have become built into the dominant culture. While these ideas have been debunked and shown to be without validity (Niedwiecki 2013-2014), they persist at an unconscious, reflexive, and residual level. As Raymond Williams puts it,

certain experiences, meanings, and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practiced on the basis of the residue … or some previous social and cultural … formation. (1977, 122)

Thus, House at the End of the Street uses residual forces that have been reincarnated, reinterpreted, and re-incorporated, and form part of the domestication of oppositional emergent forces.

Bobby and Ryan are not the only LGBT victimisers in the teen film genre. Indeed, while most LGBT portrayals in teen films are protagonists, teen film and teen television have propagated the trope of the homophobic, latently homosexual teen bully. These characterisations include Rex in Sex Drive, Bo in Cursed, and Brad in The Perks of Being a Wallflower; they also appear in teen

168 Sleepaway Camp (1983) similarly suggests that the murder-spree of teenage Angela (Felissa Rose) arises from the gender dysphoria enforced by her deranged adoptive aunt Martha (Desiree Gould), however, this earlier film also links Angela’s deviance homosexuality. The film presents two unsettling childhood flashbacks; in the first, Angela and her sibling titter while witnessing their father and his male lover caressing each other in bed. While the sensual act appears loving and affectionate, the music (a creepy music box) and style of filming (with the camera revolving around the bed) cast the act as perverse. In the second flashback, aunt Martha coerces young Peter (Frank Sorrentino) to adopt the identity of his dead sister Angela; this flashback, which occurs at the moment that Angela is unveiled as the murderer, overtly presents gender dysphoria as the cause of the brutal slayings. Thus, Angela’s deadly deviance is the result of both the exposure to homosexual passion and enforced gender dysphoria.
television with Larry Blaisdell (Larry Bagby III) in Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Dave Karofsky (Max Adler) in Glee. Paige McCullers (Lindsey Shaw) from Pretty Little Liars presents a slightly modified, lesbian version of the trope.\footnote{Wendy Peters examined LGBT representation in in teen television programs during the 2010-2011 season, and similarly found that closeted LGBT teens bully their LGBT peers, which served to “assign[] responsibility for the mobilisation of homophobia to non-straight teens” (2016, 488).} All of these characters are white, middle-class, and athletic; they bully others because they fail to acknowledge their own latent homosexuality. However, after their homosexuality is accepted and declared, they switch from foe to friend. (Brad is an exception to this rule; he does not switch because he remains in the closet.) This linking of homophobia and latent homosexuality is also included in films with no LGBT characters, for example, in the dialogue of the teen horror film, Cry_Wolf (2005), when protagonist Owen (Julian Morris) stands up to homophobic bully Randall (Jesse Janzen):

Randall: Listen, just because you’re Tom’s new butt buddy doesn’t mean you got to be his bitch.
Owen: You don’t think the angry homophobe thing is fooling anyone, do you?

This trope was used in 17 Again, when protagonist Mike (Zac Efron) stands up to bullying Stan (Hunter Parrish) in front of a group of peers:

Mike: See, according to leading psychiatrists, Stan’s a bully for one of three reasons. One: underneath all of that male bravado, there’s an insecure little girl banging on the closet door trying to get out. Two: like a caveman, Stan’s brain is underdeveloped. Therefore, Stan is unable to use self-control. And so he acts out aggressively. And the third reason: Stan has a small wiener.

Indeed, as suggested by Mike in this dialogue, empirical work within psychology has hypothesised a possible link between homophobia and latent homosexuality (Adams, Wright, and Lohr 1996, Weinstein et al. 2012). The trope of the closeted bully is frequently used in popular culture in ways that can be considered anti-homophobic; it overtly demonstrates that homophobic actions by closeted bullies are hurtful to their LGBT or straight victims. Thus, the trope positions homophobic characters/behaviours as undesirable and deviant, clearly favouring a pro-LGBT rights stance which reiterates the hegemonic inclusion of homosexuality. Yet, as much as the trope demonstrates hegemonic inclusion, it also underscores the undesirability of homosexuality. Indeed, when protagonists stand up to the bullies, they use homosexuality as an insult. For example, in Cry_Wolf and 17 Again, the films’ protagonists confront bullies by calling out the latent homosexuality of the bullies to unsettle them and ‘win’ the verbal jousting match. The protagonists’ victory is only possible if homosexuality is seen as undesirable; if there was no insult inherent in homosexuality they could not ‘win.’ Thus, this trope and its accompanying rebuttal simultaneously integrates and re-marginalises homosexuality.
In addition, the trope of the closeted bully provides a cautionary tale for teens regarding the dangers of the closet. These characters are victimisers because they are internally conflicted, unable to be true to themselves; their internal schism results in bullying others to alleviate their suffering and deflect possible suspicion. When closeted bullies like Rex (Sex Drive) and Bo (Cursed) step out of the closet, they cease their bullying behaviours and are free to act in socially acceptable and LGBT-friendly ways. This reinforces the moral hierarchy that positions out and clear-cut sexual identities as superior, foreclosing the possibility that youth may not wish to disclose or label their sexual identity, or may have an identity that doesn’t conform to the categories of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or straight. This trope reflects hegemonic boundary maintenance that accepts certain ‘out’ LGBT identities, but currently excludes those that challenge the heterosexual/homosexual binary.

Finally, while the trope of the closeted bully is largely LGBT-positive, it places responsibility for homophobic bullying onto the LGBT community. The aggression expressed by these antagonists remains intrinsically linked to homosexuality; straight bullies may abuse peers for any number of reasons such as class, social status, or appearance, but latently homosexual teens can only bully on the grounds of sexual and gender identity. This tightens the links between deviant behaviour and same-sex attraction, and transfers blame from the heterosexual majority and institutionalised heterosexism to latent homosexuals who can’t come to terms with their own sexuality, suggesting that victimisation of LGBT youth originates with the LGBT community, not with heterosexuals. Put simply, it “make[s] homosexuals responsible even for their own persecution” (Plummer 1999, 10). This ideologically uncouples victimisation from its perpetrators, letting heterosexism ‘off the hook’ by casting latent members of the LGBT community as the tormentors.

Thus, the trope of the closeted bully positions homophobia as a form of deviance, while simultaneously using homosexuality as an insult; provides a cautionary tale of being closeted, thereby reaffirming the moral hierarchy of ‘out’ LGBT people and denying the possibility of other or unspoken sexualities; and links homophobia back to the LGBT community, blaming the LGBT community for its own victimisation. The regular use of this trope within popular culture consolidates this link between homophobia and latent homosexuality, embedding it within contemporary ‘common sense,’ and demonstrating hegemonic integration of homosexuality while also reaffirming the heteronormative hierarchy.

Sexual desire

Discourses of victimisation and innocence have tended to go together (Hackford-Peer 2010, Talburt, Rofes, and Rasmussen 2004). As noted by Talburt, Rofes, and Rasmussen,
the complexity of queer youths’ subjectivity, agency, sexuality and cultural practices is flattened by a dominant framing of them in terms of danger and victimization. Queer youth agency, whether linked to sexual desire or activity, or to projects of crafting the self and relations to others, is relegated to the domain of the unthinkable. (2004, 7)

However, Hackford-Peer notes that, since LGBT youth “have made it known that they have sexuality, that they have desires” (2010, 545), the discourse of ‘innocence’ has migrated from the previous dominant discourse of ‘innocence as asexual’ to that of “not deserving of the negative outcomes they experience as a result of their queerness” (545). Similarly, Dhaenens notes that “[t]he representation of gay teens having sexual desires and/or being sexually active becomes significant as a counter-narrative to the gay teen as innocent, vulnerable, or desexualised” (2013, 314).

While important, media depictions of LGBT sexuality are still rare, especially compared to heterosexual displays of desire (Bond 2014, Morris and Sloop 2006, Bruni 1999). Charles Morris and John Sloop (2006) persuasively argue that homosexual sexuality – particularly male-male kissing – is subject to numerous forms of discipline: moral panics; being framed as ‘inappropriate’ and even dangerous for children; legislative discipline; boycotts; and physical violence. Morris and Sloop suggest that

> [a] kiss between two men ... constitutes a ‘marked’ and threatening act, a performance instantly understood as contrary to hegemonic assumptions about public behavior, and the public good, because it invites certain judgements about the men’s deviant sexual behavior and its imaged encroachments, violations and contagions, judgements that inevitably exceed the mere fact of their having a mutually affirming encounter. (2, emphasis in original)

Rebecca Beirne (2008) contends that gains in onscreen lesbian sexuality have been modest despite the lesbian-chic trends over the last two decades, noting that “on television the frequent sideling of the sexual expression of consciously lesbian characters coexists with a voyeuristic oversexualization of ‘lesbian’ kisses between narratively heterosexual women” (35). Jay Clarkson, however, maintains that “physical intimacy between men is increasingly acceptable in mainstream media as long as the men conform to the media model of acceptable gay White man” (2008, 377). Yet despite Clarkson’s assertions, most mainstream LGBT media portrayals of intimacy are curtailed because they are seen as “threatening to heterosexual audiences” (Bond 2014, 102) who view same-sex intimacy as ‘flaunting’ sexual orientation (Bruni 1999). Indeed, pandering to mostly heterosexual audiences, mainstream filmic and televisual LGBT representations have tended to be asexual (Walters 2001, Gross 2001, Tropiano 2002, Becker 2006, Capsuto 2000).
While, as we will see, most onscreen LGBT teens exhibit some form of chaste desire, asexual LGBT characters persist within the genre. Like the drag queens of the 1990s mentioned in chapter two, these characters are “homo but not sexual” (Walters 2001, 140, emphasis in original) and enact a seemingly intrinsic and profound asexuality. These depictions are generally of gay and lesbian adults, and include Miss Stoger (Nicole DeBoer, Clueless), Joey (Outside Providence), Ed Vallencourt (Almost Famous), and Richard Kneeland (Andy Serkis, 13 Going on 30 (2004)), though there are a few asexual LGBT teens like Frank (Nelson Rodriguez, The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love). Partly, their asexuality stems from their incidental status; these characters have nominal narrative involvement and thus lack the narrative capacity to express or demonstrate desire. Also, since adults are almost always rendered peripheral or antagonistic within the genre, asexual LGBT adults are rendered doubly incidental.

While some characters are, to again quote Walters, “homo but not sexual” (2001, 140, emphasis in original), other same-sex intimacy is ‘sexual but not necessarily homo.’ Media depictions of same-sex intimate encounters are more often between a homosexual and heterosexual, or indeed between two heterosexuals, than between two LGBT characters. Steven Capsuto outlines the onscreen ‘rules’ that applied throughout the 1990s:

> [a] straight woman could kiss a lesbian. Straight men could kiss each other as part of comedy routine ... But gay characters could not kiss each other unless they were murderers – and then only rarely. The viewer needed to be able to justify it as a joke or a sign of depravity – not a ‘real’ gay kiss that might involve same-sex attraction, tenderness, or love. (2000, 331)

While, as discussed in chapter two, televisual depictions of LGBT intimacy have loosened somewhat from this formula since the 1990s, the ‘rules’ have largely remained in place within the teen film genre. Most male-male encounters within the genre continue to be used for comedic purposes, as seen with the kiss of relief shared between heterosexuals Gabato (Luis Guzmán) and Hank (Dwayne Johnson) after they narrowly escape death in Journey 2: The Mysterious Island (2012), or when heterosexual teenager Rick Riker (Drake Bell) rubs the groin of the (presumably) heterosexual Bank Loan Officer (Kurt Fuller) to obtain a car loan in Superhero Movie. Male-male encounters are also, as we explore in the next chapter, depicted as predatory and punitive towards straight characters, used as a “sign of depravity” (331). (Occasionally, they are also used to blur boundaries between gay and straight, as with Jesse and Chester’s bromantic kiss in Dude, Where’s My Car?, which will also be explored in the next chapter).

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170 Other asexual characters that were coded as ‘ambiguous’ LGBT include: Vogue Stylist and Mr. Nellbox (R. Scott Williams and Alan J. Wendl, Pecker); Paul (Jonathan Sadowski, She’s the Man); Frank (Kellan Lutz, Stick It); Ben (Steven Crowley, Never Back Down); Kevin Barrett (Paul McGill, Fame); and Marc (Israel Broussard, The Bling Ring).
Female same-sex encounters, in particular, separate the 'sexual' from the 'homo.' These same-sex encounters have been fashionable in television and film since the 1990s (Frohard-Dourlent 2012, Byers 2002, Jenkins 2005, Diamond 2005) and involve traditionally attractive post-feminist ‘lesbians’ that are “young, white, and conventionally attractive” (Ciasullo 2001, 585). Various terms faux lesbians (Ladenson 2001), lipstick lesbians (Ciasullo 2001), ‘hot’ or ‘luscious’ lesbians (Jackson and Gilbertson 2009, Jenkins 2005), or heteroflexible females (Diamond 2005, Frohard-Dourlent 2012), these fabulous femmes experiment with same-sex encounters but do not relinquish, or even question, their heteronormative identities.

Televisual girl-girl teenage kisses were first visible in the 1990s with 21 Jump Street’s "A Change of Heart" (1990), 171 Picket Fences’ “Sugar and Spice” (1993), 172 and Party of Five’s “I’ll Show You Mine” (1999) and “Haunted” (1999), 173 yet these kisses all occurred either between a lesbian and a heterosexual and were portrayed as short-lived confusion, or occurred between two heterosexuals and portrayed as experimentation (Gross 2001, Walters 2001). As Gross notes, “same-sex kisses can be included with much less fan-fare and self-congratulation, if it is clear that there is nothing romantic implied” (2001, 93). This is also true of contemporary teen films: “most (if not all) the mainstream teen films that include lesbian sexuality do not portray these women as traditionally lesbian” (Jenkins 2005, 492).

Table 2. Teen films that include girl-girl encounters, 1995-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film title (year)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mean Girls (2004)</td>
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Girl-girl encounters are featured in 21 of the teen films screened (Table 2; detailed list in Appendix F). These depictions are occasionally used to mark a space as foreign or exotic, as seen in Mean Girls when innocent home-schooled Cady is confronted by the rules of ‘girl world’ as they pertain

171 This episode, the first about a teenage lesbian on commercial television (Capsuto 2000), involved a kiss between straight series regular Officer Judy Hoffs (Holly Robinson Peete) and confused and closeted Megan (Katy Boyer) who struggles to come to terms with her sexual orientation in a teen landscape devoid of positive lesbian role models and encouragement. While the kiss occurs onscreen, the lips are cut off by the camera angle, with only the upper portion of Hoffs’ face shown registering surprise. Unlike the much-touted ‘lesbian kiss’ episode of L.A. Law that came out in the same year (“He’s a Crowd” [1991]), the 21 Jump Street episode did not attract a backlash.

172 The episode includes two teenage girls who kiss each other as an experiment. CBS was concerned about actually showing the kiss, and resolved the matter by re-shooting a darkened version of the scene (Capsuto 2000). (Capsuto highlights the network’s double standards; while they shielded away from this gentle teen girl-girl kiss, they had been willing to include a fully lit kiss between two male serial rapist-killers on the same program just two months earlier.)

173 The 1999 same-sex kiss in Party of Five was used as a stunt to attract viewers during sweeps week (Tropiano 2002), a method that also proved appealing with Roseanne’s same-sex kiss in “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (1994) (Capsuto 2000, Becker 2006).
to Halloween. Attending her first high school house party dressed as a corpse bride, she is unaware that:

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Cady:  [Voiceover] In ‘girl world,’ Halloween is the one night a year when a girl can dress like a total slut and no other girls can say anything about it. The hard-core girls just wear lingerie and some form of animal ears [...] Unfortunately, no one told me about the slut rule and I showed up like this.
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Cady walks through the party in a non-sexual costume, uninitiated in ‘girl world’ and clearly at odds with her peers; she is startled by the scantily-clad female teens and stunned to see two girls kissing each other to entertain and arouse four teenage male onlookers. The party is constructed as an exotic and foreign place that requires an understanding of a new set of rules. *The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones* similarly uses female-female intimacy to mark a space as exotic. When innocent Clary (Lily Collins) first encounters ‘shadowhunter’ society, it is via the ‘Pan-demon-iium’ nightclub. Full of pierced, tattooed, and be-leathered patrons, the nightclub is unlike anything the seemingly normal teen has encountered before; the female-female dancing becomes yet another signal that the space is exotic and potentially dangerous.

Girl-girl encounters are also depicted as a way of obtaining a heterosexual skillset. Onscreen girls learn to kiss by practising on one another, ensuring that they’re adequately prepared for their first heterosexual encounter. This is most famously depicted in the girl-girl kiss shared between Cecile (Selma Blair) and Kathryn (Sarah Michelle Gellar) in *Cruel Intentions*, which was later spoofed in *Not Another Teen Movie* (2001) and referenced in *Thirteen* (2003). Reflecting on the Cecile-Kathryn kiss, Tricia Jenkins notes that the “purpose of the exchange is for Cecile to learn how to please a man, thus adding a heterosexual element to the scene and eradicating the possibility of authentic lesbian content” (2005, 499). While the dominant reading of this kiss is one shared between two heterosexuals, Cecile does, however, derive significant pleasure from the encounter and thus the lesbian overtones should not be totally dismissed.  

Most girl-girl encounters, however, are enacted solely for the benefit and pleasure of male spectators. This sensuality aims to titillate teenage male onlookers instead of arousing the female participants, such that “women’s desire for women remains subjugated to their desire for men” (Frohard-Dourlent 2012, 722). Girl-girl encounters occur mostly in male-oriented teen films. While most of these scenes show two girls simply kissing each other surrounded by excited teenage boys, some scenes are particularly lewd and misogynist, epitomised by the two topless female  

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174 Various scholars, including Sue Jackson (2009), Jenkins (2005), and Ciasullo (2001) look at how heteroflexible female portrayals may appeal to lesbian audiences. Jenkins notes, “overt displays of girl-girl sexual encounters is one of the most apparent merits that these teen films can provide a lesbian spectator” (2005, 501) yet “these movies undoubtedly promote a heterosexualized view of female homosexuality, and women looking for the radical innovating lesbian films … or even simple authentic lesbian depictions, would do better by searching elsewhere” (502).
teens who kiss passionately in a soapy hot-tub to the delight and arousal of the male onlookers encircling them in *Never Back Down*. Another example is the girl-girl eroticism that is part of the nearly-nude female smorgasbord at a college ‘frat party’ in *College* (2008) that includes topless, underwear-clad women who gyrate together and kiss in suspended cages, execute mid-air splits using ‘stripper poles,’ and subserviently pour drinks into the mouths of fraternity brothers. In such scenes,

male ogglers [sic] openly express that the spectacle they are witnessing is a fantasy of theirs. In [these scenes], the lesbian is again merely a trope for heterosexual desire, wherein the masculine is the active term. The young women, who are always conventionally lovely, thin, well dressed, and mostly white, seem to perform a carefully choreographed dance of traditional femininity. There is no sense of the ‘binary outlaw’ in these characters because … these young, lesbian-identified women never leave the space of the male gaze within the text. (Byers 2002, 69)

These ‘lesbian acts’ “lend themselves to being read by a male audience in ways that resonate with the pornographic male fantasy of observing women having sex with women” (Jackson and Gilbertson 2009, 202). These heteroflexible displays are performances designed primarily to titillate the onscreen male characters and, indeed, male audience members and are thus heterosexualised (Jenkins 2005): what matters is male heterosexual arousal not female homosexual passion. Women in these scenes become objects – accoutrements – there only for the pleasure of men, paradoxically recreating a hetero-lesbianism for the sole benefit of males and the exclusion of females. This reasserts a gendered and heteronormative hierarchy that naturalises the objectification of women and overwrites lesbian desire.

The separation of ‘sexual’ from ‘homo’ also involves gay male characters that appear to have more desire for, and access to, opposite-sex than same-sex intimacy. This is demonstrated when Damian looks longingly towards females at the dance and kisses goth best-friend Janis (*Mean Girls*); when Brewster (Adhir Kalyan) excitedly skinny dips with female cheerleaders (*Fired Up!*); Matt’s (Ivan Sergei) sexual involvement with Dede (Christina Ricci, *The Opposite of Sex*); and Dean’s insemination of Mary in *Saved!*. It is shown most overtly by Rich Munsch (*I Love You, Beth Cooper*) who engages in a threesome with, as Rich puts it, “two gorgeous ladies” before realising that he is gay/bisexual (there is no indication that this sexual experience played any part in his realisation of his homosexual identity). Thus, he is simultaneously explicitly gay, same-sex asexual, and opposite-sex amorous. These depictions can be understood as both a fracturing of fixed gay identities and as a re-centering of heterosexuality; they portray a fluid sexuality that includes a declaration of homosexual desire but an enactment of heterosexual intimacy. In most cases the only desire on display is heterosexual, “promoting a heterosexualized view of … homosexuality”
(Jenkins 2005, 502). Thus, as much as these portrayals potentially unsettle the fixity of sexual identity, they also reinscribe heteronormativity.

As noted by Susan Driver (2008), Rasmussen (2006), and Dhaenens (2013), there is a need for narratives that depict LGBT youth as fluid, political, and sexual. While depictions of same-sex desires and intimacies are much less common in contemporary teen films than those of heterosexual desire, and entail a lower intensity of lust, these desires are still there, simmering under the surface. In contrast to heterosexual, heteroflexible, and heterosexualising same-sex intimacies, which are fairly common and often ‘racy,’ onscreen intimacy involving only LGBT-identifying characters in mainstream teen films are fairly rare and often restricted to the chaste activities of flirting and dancing. Flirting is, for example, depicted between Les and another male cheerleader (Bring It On), and in the exchange of desirous glances between Dev, Thom, and Lethario and the (presumably) gay men and drag queens at what Dev describes as “Midnight Ass: the all-male ‘holigay’ revue at Camera Obscura,” a Christmas-themed gay cabaret (Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist). Flirting is closely intertwined with dancing; both present hints of desire that remain virtuous and virginal. Same-sex dancing includes romantic dancing, with hands clasped around the neck, shoulders, or hips, and fast-paced dancing with space between the partners. Meg dances romantically with an unnamed female (National Lampoon’s Senior Trip), as does Meagan with her love interest, Graham, and another woman175 during the clandestine ‘field trip’ to the Cocksucker gay bar in But I’m a Cheerleader. Christian and an unnamed male partner dance to a fast-paced song (Clueless); T-Bone (Maureen Fischer) and her female associate gyrate to a techno version of Cotton Eye Joe (Pecker); and Dev and Lethario dance together in the background at a nightclub (Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist). It is telling that slow dancing is reserved for the females while males are relegated to looks of longing and fast-paced dancing, activities which preclude any physical contact. This reflects the double standard that positions female same-sex intimacies, particularly heteroflexible intimacies, as culturally acceptable (and economically profitable), yet views male same-sex intimacy as unacceptable (Jenkins 2005, Jackson and Gilbertson 2009).

Slightly more suggestive behaviour is also depicted: kissing and caressing. While, as mentioned earlier, same-sex hetero-homo kissing made its way to teen television during the early 1990s, kissing between two homosexual teens remained unseen until 2000 when Dawson’s Creek regular Jack McPhee (Kerr Smith) planted a kiss on Ethan (Adam Kaufman) in the ‘very special episode’ “True Love” (2000). While the kiss lasted only a few seconds, it was heralded as a breakthrough, being the first kiss between two gay teenage characters on primetime television (Duca 2015,

175 The name of the character is Lipstick Lesbian (Julie Delpy).
Bonin 2001). Jack’s second, more passionate kiss, with ‘out and proud’ gay teen Tobey Barret (David Monahan) in "Promicide" (2001), was well received by GLAAD and mainstream audiences.176

While same-sex kissing has now become fairly routine in teen-oriented television, it remains rare in contemporary teen film. Indeed, onscreen kissing between LGBT teens is relegated exclusively to independent/Indiewood films: New Line Cinema’s The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love, Lionsgate’s But I’m a Cheerleader, Aparition’s The Runaways, and Summit’s The Perks of Being a Wallflower. Heterosexual kisses, by contrast, are ubiquitous throughout teen-oriented programming. As noted by Morris and Sloop, “[a] gesture at once banal and iconic, the public kiss by members of the opposite sex represents metonymically the shared cultural embrace of heteronormative values and behavior” (2006, 2). The rarity of LGBT kisses in the genre signals their hegemonic exclusion, rendered invisible and illicit; the depiction of LGBT youth kissing apparently remains too risky and risqué for mainstream teen film.

The few instances of LGBT kissing in independent/Indiewood films often involve more amorous behaviour. While Brad and Patrick only kiss each other once onscreen in Perks of Being a Wallflower, the lesbian teens in The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love and But I’m a Cheerleader engage in more sensual onscreen intimacy. The liaisons are tenderly presented, with close-ups of kissing, caressing, and nude body parts (to the extent allowed by an R-rating); these scenes are clearly a departure from the norm presented in mainstream films where LGBT desire is intimated but not depicted. These moments present a fracture where sexual desire becomes sexual activity, rendering visible that which nearly always remains invisible. Yet, while not discounting their potential and their importance, the sexual activity in these films still represents a domestication that is bound by its own limits: the activity in The Incredibly True Adventure and But I’m a Cheerleader is allowable only to women; no gay males were depicted in a similarly sensual scene.

While the visible intimacy present in Indiewood/independent films is ‘off bounds’ for mainstream teen films, a small number of inclusive films do include instances of caressing. Caressing is able to suggest intimate contact but avoids its depiction; intimacy is implied but remains unseen, innocent and unconsummated. The depiction of caressing occurs in two mainstream teen films, both times between gay male teens: the first is between Blaine and Greg (Cruel Intentions) who are ‘caught’ in bed by bad boy Sebastian who blackmalls Greg into helping him secure his

176 GLAAD spokesperson, Scott Seomin, said "a 5½ second, mouth-to-mouth kiss. We haven't seen anything like this before on network TV" (quotated in ABC News 2001). The program’s Executive Producer, Paul Stupin, indicated that neither the network nor the sponsors protested the kiss; the backlash from the episode was minor in comparison to fan support (Bonin 2001).
heterosexual romance; the second is a tender but fleeting scene involving Brandon and his unnamed boyfriend who embrace as they watch Huck Finn (Easy A). Both of these scenes suggest sexual contact but from the safe distance of insinuation, leaving the audience to imagine what is not depicted. Thus, these films are able both to present gay youth as sexual agents, but also to render their sexuality invisible, containing it and treating it as illicit, not suitable for the audience’s eyes.

Another way of tenuously presenting LGBT sexual experience is visible in Easy A. Within the film, Brandon is portrayed as sexually experienced:

Brandon: Look. It doesn’t have to be a bonk. It could be anything. It could be an imaginary butterbean, lemon squeeze, cow bell...
Olive: I don’t know what any of that means.
Brandon: Well, it’s because you’re a virgin. [...] 
Olive: What the hell is a lemon squeeze?
Brandon: It’s like a backwards melon bag.
Olive: How don’t I know any of this? [Olive falls backwards on her bed, dejected.]

This scene establishes Brandon’s sexual knowledge and his status as non-virgin. It also contrasts Olive’s virginal lack of familiarity with sexual techniques with Brandon’s mastery of sexual knowledge gained, suggests the film, through experience.

Yet, his expertise and experience are undermined during the fake sex scene at Melody Bostic’s house party. Virginal and uninformed Olive takes charge, instructing Brandon on the audible protocols of heterosexual sex while their classmates listen at the door. Brandon, previously the sexual expert, is rendered clueless, unable to enact any satisfyingly believable behaviours. He alternates between vocalising a donkey-like whinny and Lamaze-style breathing; only after Olive slaps his face does he being to make convincing, caveman-like sex noises. Olive and Brandon jump on the bed, audibly depicting intercourse that can be heard by the horde of teens waiting outside the bedroom door; during this scene all of Olive’s behaviours fool the teens outside, while Brandon makes a number of gaffs, including:

Brandon: I’m going to turn you around and take you from the back!
Olive: [Olive stops jumping, speaking low so as not to be overheard by the teens outside.] Yeah, that’s not gonna make people thing you’re straight.
Brandon: Never mind that gayness because I’m a straight guy! Roar!

Similarly:

Brandon: [Yelling] That’s what I’m talking about! Do you smell that? Do you smell it?
Olive: Ew! Ew, ew, ew! [Olive slaps Brandon on the shoulder to get him to stop talking.]
Teen outside: Did he just say it smelled? [Collective ‘ew’ from the group of teens congregated outside the bedroom door.]
Brandon: [Speaking softly] Isn’t it supposed to smell?
Olive:  [Speaking softly] I don’t know. But if it does, you’re not supposed to comment on it.
Brandon: [Yelling] It doesn’t really smell that bad.

This scene overwrites Olive’s naiveté with knowledge and Brandon’s knowledge with naiveté. In part, this can be read as Brandon’s lack of knowledge about heterosexual sex, which queers heterosexuality. Brandon’s blunders during the heterosexual encounter (”I’m going to turn you around and take you from the back!” “Isn’t it supposed to smell?”) are demonstrations that he is unaware of hetero-sexual protocols (despite their ubiquity in the world that surrounds him).

Brandon’s hetero-naivety questions the common-sense-ness of heterosexual protocols, queerly showing their constructedness. Yet, this scene also undermines Brandon’s sexual experience and expertise, reinstating his sexual innocence.

Overall, LGBT depictions within the teen film genre invite a view of LGBT youth as sexual beings, yet almost always contain these desires to flirting and dancing, curtailing the possibility of more intimate activities. Understood hegemonically, these depictions reflect a negotiated narrative of LGBT youth as sexually desirous but chastely so; these teenagers constrain sexual desires to the most wholesome and celibate amorous activities, and are unable to dabble in physical affection in the same way as their straight peers. When films do include LGBT sexual activity (always in independent/Indiewood films), they continue to be within hegemonic boundaries that emphasize lesbian-only love that is romantic and innocent. While LGBT sexuality is no longer strictly forbidden – and asexuality no longer assiduously enforced – desires adhere to puritanical sexual norms, demarcating hegemonic boundaries. Compared to straight desires, which are ubiquitous throughout the genre and even include heteroflexible encounters, LGBT sexual activity is much more curtailed and strictly policed. Thus, hegemonic negotiation has shifted to include the sexual desires of LGBT youth yet continues to contain and exclude the full range of their desires, reinforcing the heteronormative hierarchy that largely frames LGBT intimacy as private and unseeable. While LGBT youth desires may simmer, they are not allowed to boil.

(Beyond) the heterosexual/homosexual binary

Sexuality is commonly conceived of as a binary: heterosexual or homosexual. This binary has permeated medical, legal, literary and psychological discourses, and has (problematically) become lodged in public consciousness as the ‘common sense’ way – often the only way – to understand sexuality (Sedgwick 2008). As succinctly summarised by Cover, “[t]he very idea of heterosexual identity or homosexual identity is ... historical, discursively-produced but has come to appear natural and timeless” (2011, 52). Queer theorists like Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2008) and Butler (1999) have problematised the taken-for-grantedness of the binary, questioning its ‘naturalness,’
recognising it as a cultural construction that defines sexuality, and examining the ways that it limits desires and sexualities outside of the binary. As noted by Dhaenens,

[as] a consequence, non-normative gender and sexual identities, which may unsettle the privileged position of the heterosexual masculine man and the heterosexual feminine woman, are dismissed or subdued by institutions, practices, norms, and values that reify heteronormativity. (2013, 306)

Despite more than two decades of queer theory scholarship, the heterosexual/homosexual binary largely persists in the fields of social and health sciences (Cover 2011) and, indeed, as ‘common sense’ within American culture. While bisexual and, more recently, transgender categories have hit the mainstream, media representations as yet generally remain limited to gay males and, to a lesser extent, lesbians (Smith et al. 2015, Smith 2016, Kane, Gouttebroze, Townsend, Thayer, et al. 2013, Kane et al. 2014, Stokes et al. 2015).

The heterosexual/homosexual binary dominates LGBT representation in contemporary teen films: 85 percent of LGBT characters are gay or lesbian, reflecting the clear preference for identities that conform to the binary. But, as we see next, the genre also occasionally disrupts the heterosexual/homosexual binary. These complications may reflect a changing cultural landscape that is increasingly cognisant of sexual and gender diversity. This increasing awareness was made manifest in media coverage of the ‘bathroom debates’ of the mid-2010s, the increasing visibility of transgender activists and role models like Caitlin Jenner and Laverne Cox, and literal endorsements of gender transgression (for example, Jaden Smith’s modelling of Louis Vuitton’s women’s wear [Friedman 2016] and James Charles’ becoming CoverGirl’s first ‘CoverBoy’ [Cardellino 2016]). Scholars including Cohler and Hammack (2007), Ritch Savin-Williams (2006), and Driver (2008) suggest that youth are increasingly unable or unwilling to adopt fixed identities or labels. As stated by Savin-Williams,

[t]he new gay teenager is in many respects the non-gay teenager. Perhaps she considers herself to be ‘postgay,’ or he says that he’s ‘gayish.’ For these young people, being labeled as gay or even being gay matters little. They have same-sex desires and attractions but, unlike earlier generations, new gay teens have much less interest in naming those feelings or behaviors as gay. (2006, 1, emphasis in original)

This shift away from binary self-identification has been reflected in recent public opinion polls which, as we explored in chapter two, show that young people are more likely to identify along a spectrum of sexual desires than older generations (Moore 2015, Laughlin 2016, Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation 2017).

Yet visibility is not tantamount to tolerance, much less acceptance, on a cultural or ideological level (Walters 2001). Like gay and lesbian rights, the shift towards increasing gender and sexual
diversity has been marked by simultaneous acceptance and outcry. Usefully thought of as emergent forces, the increasing range of sexual and gender expression puts pressure on hegemony’s provisionally stabilised equilibria, demanding a renegotiation that is increasingly inclusive. Just as this oppositional/alternative pressure is struggling for inclusion, the currently dominant forces struggle to maintain dominance. This active process of negotiation is undertaken within popular culture and, indeed, in teen films where it played out in complicated and contradictory ways.

Perhaps most obviously, rupturing of the hetero/homo binary has been seen through bisexual characters. Indeed, Jo Eadie notes that

> the presence of a bisexual figure in film is an indicator that a cultural tension is being broached, whose contours the bisexual enables the audience to negotiate, and whose dangers the bisexual always embodies. (1997, 142)

While the term bisexual has its own complications, I use it to refer to characters who verbally self-identify as bisexual or who enact concurrent sexual attraction to both sexes. I identified six bisexual characters in contemporary teen films: Matt in The Opposite of Sex (1998); Christoph (Patrick Rapold) in EuroTrip (2004); Rich in I Love You, Beth Cooper (2009), and Joan Jett (Kristen Stewart), Cherie Curie (Dakota Fanning), and Sandy West (Stella Maeve) in The Runaways. Each of these characters makes visible the rupture to, and recuperation of, hegemony.

The moderately successful and generally well received Indiewood black comedy, The Opposite of Sex, centres on 16-year-old cunning and acid-tongued home-wrecker Dede Truitt who moves in with her gay ‘all-round nice guy’ half-brother Bill (Martin Donovan). Bill, reeling from the AIDS-related death of his long-time companion, Tom (Colin Ferguson), has taken up with handsome but vapid Matt Mateo; within a week of her arrival, Dede has seduced Matt (who begins identifying as bisexual), and convinced him that he’s fathered her child, whereafter they flee.

While Matt’s bisexuality is rendered explicitly visible through self-identification, it is dismissed and trivialised within the film in two ways. First is through the construction of Matt’s character. While Dede is presented as conniving and manipulative, Matt is dim-witted and easily duped; Matt’s new bisexual identity is intended to be understood as the outcome of Dede’s self serving manipulation of simple-minded Matt. The film suggests that Matt is ‘really’ a gay man who has been deluded into temporarily thinking that he’s bisexual; he is just too foolish to realise it. Second is through the reaction of other characters who instantly discredit Matt’s sexuality; these

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177 See Michaela Meyer (2010) for a discussion of bisexual definitions.

178 The Opposite of Sex, was released by Sony Pictures Classics and opened in only five theatres which grew to 165 theatres nationally (Box Office Mojo 2017). With domestic grosses in excess of $5 million, the film was profitable and received generally favourable reviews.
characters include Bill, Lucia (Tom’s sister played by Lisa Kudrow), and Dede, all of whom are portrayed as intelligent, an example of which is seen in this exchange:

Dede:  [Voiceover] We were going to break [the news] to [Bill] in stages. One: we’re in love. Two: surprise. We’d just gotten to number one when Lucia dropped by. Typical.
Lucia:  I knew you were trouble. This is your brother here. And you, [speaking to Matt] how could you?
Matt:  It just happened. We didn’t mean to hurt anyone.
Lucia:  You’re gay, you jerk.
Dede:  He just never met the right woman.
Lucia:  Yeah, one with a dick. [...] Matt:  For your information, I’m bisexual.
Lucia:  Puh-lease! I went to a bar mitzvah once, that doesn’t make me Jewish. Who says that bisexual shit besides gay men?

In a later scene, Bill tracks down Matt and heavily pregnant Dede, who have escaped North to Canada. During the conversation between Bill and Dede, who discuss the upcoming birth, Matt and his new boyfriend Jason (Johnny Galecki) appear, flirting and fondling each other. Dede comments, “the life cycle of the American bisexual. He’s in the last stage ... total ‘mo’,” clearly suggesting that Matt’s bisexuality is transitory and temporary, not a legitimate sexual identity but simply a stage on the way to a stable sexual identity.

Both of these strategies undermine the legitimacy of Matt’s non-binary sexuality. It is trivialised by being associated with unintelligent and easily deluded Matt and it is presented as a passing phase rather than as a legitimate sexual identity. Thus, The Opposite of Sex reinforces the validity of fixed homosexual or heterosexual identities and discredits bisexual or fluid identities, which reaffirms heteronormative hegemony.

Another bisexual character appears in EuroTrip, a male-oriented teen comedy that follows Scott Thomas (Scott Mechlowicz) as he tries to mend his broken heart by launching a European quest for his German pen pal come-love-interest. As part of the miscellaneous adventures that ensue, de facto-dude Jenny (Michelle Trachtenberg) meets a potential beau: the sophisticated, foreign, and older Christoph. After missing her opportunity in Paris, she is delighted when he resurfaces in Bratislava and is instantly entranced by his talk of sailing away with her, where they would “swim with dolphins” and “sip champagne by moonlight.” That is, until, Christoph mentions that they’ll be sailing with his wife, which raises Jenny’s ire:

Jenny: Wait. So you just go around Europe sleeping with every woman you meet?
Christoph: No, please, Jennifer. It’s not like that. I also sleep with men.

[Jenny looks taken aback.]

179 The term ‘mo’ is slang for ‘homo[sexual].’
Thus, like Matt, Christoph renders non-binary sexuality visible. Christoph is constructed as appealing: he is handsome, charming, suave, and wealthy; he is also comfortable with his sexuality. Yet, as quickly as the possibility of non-binary sexuality is raised, it is disavowed with laughter; Christoph is used within the film as a device to humorously shock. Jenny’s look of surprise, and her refusal to accept his proposal, marks it as indecent and unacceptable. Christoph, then, functions as a manifestation of oppositional elements that contest the heteronormative film text, only to be dismissed by Jenny and likely by the audience, ultimately reasserting the desirability of monogamous, heterosexual desire.

A more well-rounded bisexual character is Rich in *I Love You, Beth Cooper*, another male-oriented comedy about awkward and nerdy high school graduate, Denis Cooverman (Paul Rust), who publicly proclaims his secret love for popular and pretty Beth Cooper (Hayden Panettiere) during his valedictorian speech. The remainder of the film follows the hijinks of Beth, Denis, and their friends on graduation night. Rich is Denis’ best friend and sidekick throughout the film; Denis is convinced that Rich is gay despite Rich’s refusal and constant interest in girls, including Rich’s threesome with two of Beth’s cheer-squad. During the film’s final scene, however, Rich comes to terms with his sexuality and out of the closet; turning to Denis, he says:

Denis:  Yeah? Oh that’s great, congratulations! [Denis puts his arms around Rich’s neck and embraces him.]
Rich:  Dude … I’m not gay for you.
Denis:  Yeah, no, I know.
Rich:  You know, I could be bi.
Denis:  Bi?
Rich:  I was with two gorgeous ladies last night. That’s a lot more heterosexual than you are.

Unlike other bisexual characterisations, Rich’s disclosure of bisexuality is not instantly discredited (as with Matt) nor depicted as indecent (as with Christoph). Rather, Rich is supported by Denis who seems delighted by his friend’s disclosure. This support certainly signals a change whereby emergent forces, once invisible then derided, are becoming included in hegemony, albeit in domesticated forms. This hegemonic domestication progressively incorporates non-binary sexualities, yet fails to question or complicate heterosexual privilege and reasserts the lower position of non-heterosexuality in the heteronormative hierarchy. Indeed, as Rich and Denis walk into the house after Rich’s disclosure, their discussion is not about Rich’s desires but focuses instead on how Denis will woo Beth, an endeavour which Rich supports enthusiastically. Rich, and the bisexual desires he represents, become re-marginalised; his bisexual desires take textual
second place to Denis’s heterosexual ones. In this way, while binary sexuality has been ruptured with this representation of bisexuality, heteronormativity has been recuperated.

Queerest of all bisexual depictions are those in *The Runaways*, a semi-biographical drama about the 1970s all-girl rock’n’roll band of the same name. Throughout the film, Cherie and Joan flow in and out of intimate contact with both men and women. Cherie engages in intimacies with Joan and Scottie (Johnny Lewis; the road manager); Joan kisses Tammy (Hannah Marks), grabs a man’s groin with familiarity and kisses him, and engages in various intimacies with women throughout the rest of the film, including a stylised scene that suggests sex. Sandy, learning to masturbate with Joan’s instructions, cannot get aroused by the male pornography to which she originally turns, but almost instantly climaxes when she turns her thoughts to Farrah Fawcett. While each of the girls demonstrates desire, none proclaim an identity; they exist in a liminal space between sexual identities and without the need to fix or stabilise them. The film easily migrates from one fleeting encounter to another, never problematising this dynamism or raising the benefits of stability.

Joan similarly queers gender by subverting the expected role of women in the film’s construction of the 1970s. This subversion is demonstrated in a number of scenes: after being directed to the ladies’ section of a second hand shop, Joan boldly buys a man’s black leather outfit off his very back; while dismissively told by an older male music teacher that “girls don’t play electric guitars,” Joan takes control of a lesson by plugging in her guitar and jamming solo; and she urinates on the guitars of a (male) headlining act after they aggressively interrupt The Runaways’ sound-check. Through these actions, Joan subverts the gender hierarchy, despite men’s attempts to demarcate their privilege. She also enacts a macho femininity ripe with daring sensuality; she wears men’s leather pants that cling perfectly and dons form-fitting t-shirts, rendered all the more masculine in contrast to Cherie’s ever-more feminine attire.

While *The Runaways* presents sexual and gender fluidity, a dark undercurrent runs through the film that corrodes the progressive potential of this fluidity. The film follows Cherie’s rise to fame that is coupled with her dissent into turpitude. While Cherie begins the film as a rebellious girl from a troubled family, her stardom leads her into an unsettling world of alcohol and drug use, family estrangement, and alienation from the self. Thus, while the film never critiques fluid sexuality or promiscuity, it is never wholly endorsed because Cherie’s gradual overwhelm by the hard-rock lifestyle that accompanies this sexuality, while not undermining it entirely, acts as a counterpoint to its progressive potential.

While teen films depicted some narratives that open up the spectrum of sexual desires and complicate the gay/straight binary, non-binary sexuality is more commonly seen in teen-oriented
television. As outlined in chapter two, this is in part due to the length and longevity of these series, which provide the space to construct complex storylines (Davis 2004). These programs have begun offering visibility to non-binary sexualities that were, until very recently, invisible. Televisual teens are increasingly and explicitly identifying themselves and their peers as ‘fluid,’ ‘bisexual,’ and ‘bicurious,’ as seen with, for example, Maya St Germain (Bianca Lawson) in Pretty Little Liars who is described as ‘fluid’; Scream’s Audrey (Bex Taylor-Klaus) who self-identifies as ‘bicurious’; and Tamara’s (Jillian Rose Reed) one-episode lesbian dalliance on Awkward that is openly discussed with friends and adults with no sign of accompanying confusion or discomfiture (“Prison Breaks” [2014]).

Currently, this explicit sexual fluidity is confined to teen television, yet it is likely to eventually transition to teen film. As discussed by Valerie Wee (2010), teen media has always tended to traverse the boundaries between media forms; however, since the 1980s teen media has become increasingly intertextual and intertwined due to industry convergence, technological developments, and changes in audience expectations. Thus, Millennial teen media is “characterized by the increasing convergence of stylistic, aesthetic, and often narrative elements that extend across multiple texts” (2010, 84). With teen media “refus[ing] to respect medium-specific or textual boundaries” (84), it is likely that the fluidity presented on the small screen will eventually make its way into at least some Hollywood teen films.

**Conclusion**

Contemporary teen films’ depiction of LGBT characters generally conforms to the same hegemonically dominant ‘tendencies’ visible in mainstream media: they tend to be white, middle-class, able-bodied; they tend to be gay, or perhaps lesbian, but rarely bisexual or transgender. Their desires tend to be chaste, insinuated more than stated, and they tend to come out and declare recognisable, binary, fixed identities, with well-adjusted, happy, healthy portrayals tending to be out and proud, and deviance related to closet-cases. And yet, these tendencies are also contested within the genre. There are – though few and far between – non-white, non-middle-class characters. There are lesbians, bisexuals, and even a very few transgender characters. While culturally understood as victims, onscreen LGBT youth often face no onscreen victimisation, and those that do use their own agency to overcome adversity. LGBT sexual activities like flirting, dancing, kissing and caressing get some screen time, if only in

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180 Wee (2010) outlines how the relationship between film and television shifted from competition to collaboration after the multi-media conglomeration of the 1980s. This shift meant that both film and television needed to ‘play’ across numerous media to maximise profits and reduce risk. Media convergence was aided by technological shifts throughout the 1990s (like home theatres, surround sound, and widescreen televisions), which in turn increased audience expectations of the quality of the entertainment they consumed, and created media-literate spectators trained in tropes, conventions, and programming formula ‘twists.’
independent/Indiewood productions. Fluid or non-binary desires are presented (then quickly disavowed). These all “fracture the fiction of homogeneity” (Turner 2003, 181) embodied in cultural understandings of LGBT youth and the tropic ‘tendencies’ in LGBT representations more generally. Such fractures present moments where oppositional or alternative perspectives get portrayed, where negotiation occurs. While teen films lag behind their televisual counterparts, hegemonic negotiation is rendered visible on the big screen.

This is, of course, not to imply that these contestations serve to fundamentally question or complicate heteronormativity. Indeed, at the same time that LGBT representation has increased, heteronormativity is arguably becoming further entrenched. Within teen films, straights are almost always narratively central; heterosexual desire is normalised when LGBT desire remains largely invisible; LGBT characters are ‘helpmates’ to their straight compatriots. Thus, straight characters become an important piece of the representational puzzle. It is therefore important to look, not just at LGBT representations, but at how heterosexual characters interact with and respond to LGBT characters. This is where we turn in the final chapter, examining how heterosexual characters respond to LGBT characters, LGBT-themed language, and LGBT-relevant jokes.
Chapter four: heterosexual responses to LGBT interactions

As outlined in chapters two and three, LGBT hegemonic inclusion has increased, particularly since the 1990s. The increasing – though uneven – inclusion of LGBT people within mainstream American society has, as Ron Becker observes, “held consequences for what it mean[s] to be gay and straight” (2006, 44, emphasis added). As James Joseph Dean notes,

[h]eterosexuality itself has ... changed significantly over the last three decades [since the 1980s]. Although straight identities are still normative, and the norm of heterosexuality remains structurally dominant in every institution – from the family and mass media to religion and the government – sexuality scholars nonetheless highlight the increasing visibility and growing inclusivity, although uneven and unequal, of gays and lesbians in everyday life and across the nation’s major social institutions. (2014, 2)

This growing inclusivity has, according to Dean, helped to create a ‘post-closeted’ culture, which he defines as the “presence of openly gay and lesbian individuals and representations of them ... [which] is increasingly common in core areas of social life” (2). He argues that

[i]n post-closeted cultural contexts, straights can neither assume the invisibility of gays and lesbians, nor count on others to always assume their heterosexuality. In this context, straights also cannot assume that other straights are homophobic or intolerant of gays or lesbians. That is, gay and lesbian tolerance and acceptance are conditioned by the development and increasing growth of straights’ antihomophobic practices. (2)

Thus, in post-closeted America, heterosexuals can no longer believe that they are alone; they can no longer believe that gays and lesbians are instantly recognisable by a set of traits or behaviours; and they can no longer blithely expect to be instantly and reliably understood as straight (Dean 2014). The once ubiquitous view of gay men and lesbians as ‘deviant’ has given way, at least partially, to normalisation and integration of (some members) of the LGBT community. This has led to a matrix of anxieties and tensions that play out for heterosexuals at a cultural and individual level that Becker calls ‘straight panic’:

straight panic, when most narrowly defined, refers to the anxieties experienced by a heterosexual culture and heterosexuals unsure about the categorical and moral lines separating gay from straight, [but] straight panic can also be used to identify a broader social anxiety experienced by a once naïve mainstream confronting the politics of social identity and difference. (2006, 24-25)

Becker suggests that straight panic arose from a “shifting social landscape where categories of sexual identity were repeatedly scrutinized and traditional moral hierarchies regulating sexuality were challenged” (4); it was “fueled by a growing social acceptance of homosexuality” (15).

Straight panic resulted, broadly, in two responses from heterosexuals that were “[s]haped ... by
people’s particular locations within the social formation” (32): a conservative anti-LGBT backlash and an LGBT-friendly response from progressive straights.

The anti-LGBT backlash was vocal and visible throughout the 1990s, but became somewhat muted as overt forms of homophobia have become less culturally acceptable (Dean 2014, Becker 2006, Seidman 2002, McFarland Bruce 2016). Dean notes that “hard practices of homophobic discrimination, derision, and violence, although uneven across diverse populations and geographies, have weakened or declined” (2014, 12). Becker (2006) illustrates this shift with an anecdote about Jerry Falwell’s laying blame for the 9/11 attack on, among others, “the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians” (quoted in Goodstein 2001). While his previous verbal torrents had gone uncriticised, Falwell’s conduct was this time denounced as inappropriate and unacceptable by various detractors, including then-President George W. Bush (Becker 2006). Demonstrating that this type of vocal anti-homosexual prejudice clashed with contemporary social mores, Falwell issued a public apology for the outburst. While such ‘hard’ practices of homophobia became less culturally acceptable, ‘soft’ forms of homophobia, including conventional gender identity practices and disassociation from LGBT people, symbols, and places, continue (Dean 2014). Dean notes that, “at the micro level, straight privilege and normativity continue to operate while the avoidance of publicly blatant homophobic and heterosexist acts variably increases” (12).

While some heterosexuals enacted ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ homophobic behaviours, others developed gay-friendly responses (Dean 2014). LGBT-friendly responses reduce social distance between straights and LGBT signifiers, spaces, and people and may reassert or blur heterosexual sexual identity. Dean claims that being anti-homophobic also “trades on the prestige of being tolerant, enlightened, and empathetic” (130). Becker (2006), as outlined in chapter two, concurs, suggesting that being LGBT-friendly in the 1990s allowed straights to marry social liberalism and economic conservatism, cultivating an identity of ‘hip’ multiculturalism without sacrificing neoliberal economic beliefs that elided economic disparity. He posits that being a gay-friendly straight became a “marker of just how open-minded one was” (129) and could “save one from the un-hip suburbs of straightsville” (132).

While Becker concentrates his discussion on adults, I suggest that LGBT-friendliness also acted as a marker of generational difference – it was a way for young people to define their age-group as inclusive, ‘hip,’ and ‘edgy’ in contrast to older, less tolerant generations. In recent years, this acceptance among young people has extended beyond the gay and lesbian community to a more “open-minded and permissive” (Tsjeng 2016) worldview of sexuality and gender writ large. The acceptance of a greater range of sexual identities and gender expressions has become the new
‘edgy’ of the 2010s, adopted with particular zeal among younger cohorts (Tsjeng 2016, Moore 2015, Laughlin 2016). As outlined in chapter two, these generational differences are readily visible in public opinion polls and surveys that consistently demonstrate more tolerance and acceptance among younger cohorts. It was also commented upon by pop culture writers like Mamamia’s Jamila Rizvi,

[un]til yesterday, I’d always considered people my age [Generation Y] as leading the current charge for social enlightenment. Amongst my generation for example, there is a broad consensus that gay marriage should be law, recognition that the queer community faces challenges others don’t and that occasionally an individual might choose to identify as a gender that doesn’t match their sex. But as all generations do, the one following mine – Generation Z – are doing more than merely blurring the lines of gender and sexuality. They’re rubbing them out entirely. (Rizvi 2016)

This is similarly summed up by Out Magazine’s Les Fabian Braithwaite,

[m]y fellow millennials, we’re already a relic of the past. Gone are our days of defining the zeitgeist. Pack it up. Show’s over. Nothing to see here. Because the upcoming legendary children, as Vice so gingerly puts it, are queer as fuck. (2016)

This shift has also been identified in ethnographic work, particularly that undertaken by Eric Anderson and Mark McCormack, which evidences a generational attitude shift among straight Millennial males towards their gay peers (Anderson and McCormack 2016, McCormack and Anderson 2014, 2010a, 2010b, McCormack 2012, 2011, Anderson 2009). Their findings recognise “the importance of generation in attitudes and behaviours” (2016, 3).

Mainstream media have reflected the increasing social integration as well as the tensions and anxieties that arose from this integration. As Becker points out in his discussion of gay content in prime-time television during the 1990s,

much of the era’s gay-themed programming was as preoccupied with heterosexual anxiety and straight panic as with homosexuality. Confronted with gay characters, caught up in queer plot twists, and surrounded by references to homosexuality, many of prime time’s heterosexuals suddenly found themselves in narratives about the evils of homophobia and the hipness of homosexuals. (2006, 189-190)

He argues that network television reflected the “anxieties and ambivalences of those [socially liberal, upscale, well educated, mainly straight, white adult] viewers to whom most gay content was targeted” (190), expressing and attempting to resolve heterosexual anxiety and straight panic. This is no less true of film.

In this chapter, I focus on how heterosexual characters in contemporary teen films respond to LGBT interactions, including contact with LGBT characters, use of LGBT-themed language, and involvement in LGBT-relevant visual jokes. Understood within the contexts of post-closeted
society and straight panic, these responses reflect the hegemonic negotiation of LGBT inclusion since the mid-1990s. Applying the two broad responses suggested by Becker (2006) and Dean (2014) – homophobic and LGBT-friendly – I examine the most prevalent forms these responses take. With most of these responses involving straight males, I pay particularly close attention to intersections between masculinity and homosexuality. The chapter first considers homophobic reactions, then moves to gay friendly responses, however, before moving to textual analysis, I first briefly examine some theoretical interconnections between sexuality and gender to lay the groundwork for this analysis.

**Sexuality and gender**

Sexuality and gender are highly intertwined concepts; indeed, McCormack asserts that “at a cultural level, heterosexuality and masculinity are conflated so that masculinity is deemed synonymous with heterosexuality” (2012, 36). As noted in chapter one, this conflation is historically rooted; the medical community previously understood homosexuality as ‘gender inversion’ (D’Emilio and Freedman 2012, McCormack 2012), which films made visible through ‘mannish women’ and ‘sissies’ (Benshoff and Griffin 2006, Weiss 1992, Russo 1987). While the understanding of homosexuality and gender has changed dramatically, the links between the two remain important in conceptualising dominance and privilege.

Perhaps most influential in the study of masculinities is R.W. Connell’s (1987, 1995) theory of hegemonic masculinity. Based on Gramscian hegemony, hegemonic masculinity is not a “fixed character type” (Connell 1995, 76) but rather “the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations” (76). Connell’s formulation of hegemonic masculinity is predicated on the subordination of women and homosexual men. Gay men are “at the bottom of a gender hierarchy among men” (78) and “[g]ayness … is the repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity” (78). Despite the fluidity of the original concept, hegemonic masculinity has often been (mis)used to denote a fixed archetype of masculinity predicated on homophobia and anti-femininity (Anderson 2009).

Anderson (2009) suggests an alternative framework: inclusive masculinity theory (IMT). IMT proposes that a contemporary and more gay-friendly form of masculinity has emerged that is no longer predicated on homophobia. This temporally and culturally specific theory suggests that, in the absence of homophobia, “men’s gender came to be founded upon emotional openness, increased peer tactility, softening gender codes and close friendship based on emotional disclosure” (Anderson and McCormack 2016, 1).
Central to IMT is the concept of homohysteria or “the fear of being socially perceived as gay” (Anderson and McCormack 2016, 2). Homohysteric cultures are those with widespread awareness of homosexuality, high levels of homophobia, and which conflate a-typical gender expression and homosexuality (McCormack and Anderson 2014). In homohysteric cultures, homophobia is used to police gender since males fear being labelled gay. McCormack and Anderson (2016) contend that contemporary post-closeted America is marked by an increase in LGBT visibility and integration and a decrease in overt homophobia and homohysteria. In this setting, many young straight men: reject homophobia; include gay peers in friendship networks; are more emotionally intimate with friends; are physically tactile with other men; recognize bisexuality as a legitimate sexual orientation; embrace activities and artefacts once coded as feminine; and eschew violence and bullying. (2)

IMT theorises a “fundamental shift in the practices of masculinity” (2016, 3) but one that is both recent and unequal across American society. IMT reflects “both that homophobia has significantly decreased with positive effects and that the privileging of heterosexuality, both socially and structurally, continues to be a serious social issue” (3). Importantly, homosexual-friendly, post-closeted contexts reinscribe a logic of LGBT identifiability: “the naïve, liberal belief that gay men can be out becomes the reassuring assumption that they are out” (Becker 2009, 127, emphasis in original). In this setting “heterosexuality is more consolidated” (McCormack and Anderson 2010a, 855, emphasis in original) and the boundaries between gay and straight are strengthened even as the range of acceptable masculine behaviours are broadened.

Dean’s (2014) research provides a bridge that links these two theories – hegemonic masculinity and IMT – together. His ethnographic research examines the construction of heterosexual identities among adult black and white men and women, detailing their homophobic and anti-homophobic responses. Based on their responses, Dean theorises that the social construction of straight identities is established through boundaries of social distance, which include heterosexuals’ (dis)association from gay or lesbian symbols, individuals, and spaces. Straight identity practices form a homophobic/anti-homophobic continuum ranging from strongly aversive boundaries (i.e. homophobic), to weak boundaries, to blurred boundaries (the most anti-homophobic). This continuum provides a way to tangibly talk about straight identity formation as an active process – the “different ways black and white men and women ‘do’ their sexual-gender performances in certain recurrent contexts” (254). Dean’s research documents the nuanced way that straights manage their identity performances and examines how these individualised practices serve to bolster, negotiate, or oppose hegemonic masculinity and femininity; and it provides a framework that makes visible the fractured resistance to/shift toward IMT from hegemonic masculinity/femininity through incremental and lived changes in behaviours and
beliefs, and how these impact on homosexual inclusion. Indeed, Dean notes that the continuum “links (micro) straight masculine and feminine identity practices to the (macro) production of the social orders of sexualities and gender” (254). Thoroughly situated in the historical ‘moment’ since the 1990s, Dean’s research provides a way to understand the contradictory and fragmented hegemonic negotiation of gender and sexuality through individualised identity practices.

All of these theories can be understood within a hegemonic framework. They present the active and changing negotiation of gender and sexuality that is broadly moving from Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity (a masculinity predicated on the subordination of women and gay men) to a more inclusive masculinity (which no longer relies on the subordination of homosexuals). This shift is intertwined with the myriad social changes that have occurred since the 1990s, notably the greater integration and visibility of the LGBT community and a consumer capitalism that seeks more and more commercial niches, which is imbricated in the development of an (uneven and fragmented) post-closeted context.

Thus, drawing on aspects of these three theories – hegemonic masculinity, IMT, and Dean’s continuum – and framed within an overall context of hegemony, this chapter explores the range of homophobic and anti-homophobic responses by heterosexual characters in contemporary teen films with the aim of examining hegemonic negotiation. Specifically, I begin with the most homophobic responses: gay panic and ‘fag discourse,’ and the linking of homophobia with specific character types. I then move on to LGBT-friendly responses and blurred identity practices that reflect and reinforce hegemonic LGBT inclusion.

**Homophobic reactions**

**Gay panic**

Gay panic is one of the most consistent homophobic responses by heterosexual characters within the teen film genre. According to Becker, the term gay panic “has been variously employed to explain what happens to heterosexuals when they come face-to-face with the socially stigmatized specter of homosexuality” (2006, 17). Originating in psychiatric literature from the 1920s, Edward J. Kempf’s theory of ‘acute homosexual panic’ referred to a “panic due to the pressure of uncontrollable perverse sexual cravings” (1920, 477). According to this theory, homosexual impulses that were not fully repressed could cause latent homosexuals to react with “horror and disgust when his or her ‘perverse cravings’ threaten to overcome his or her self-image as normal” (Becker 2006, 17), resulting in feelings of helplessness and depression and symptoms including “eccentric[ity] and irritatab[ility]” (Kempf 1920, 477), fatigue and fevers. While none of Kempf’s case studies included instances where these ‘cravings’ led to violence towards others (though
some cases did include self-harm) (Comstock 1992, Kempf 1920), later theorists suggested that homosexual panic could potentially lead to violence (Glick 1959, West 1977).

Despite the uncertain association between violence and the psychiatric theory of homosexual panic, gay panic began to be used as a legal defence in 1967 (Becker 2006, Comstock 1992) and has subsequently been used in homicide and assault cases in which defendants claim that they were “victims of attempted homosexual rape” (Bagnall, Gallagher, and Goldstein 1984, 498). The defence relies on the psychological concept to explain – perhaps even excuse – the behaviour of the defendant, yet the legal application is often distorted so that the defendant’s violence arises not from latent desire but from homophobic repulsion (Becker 2006). In essence, the defence accuses the victim of making unwelcome homosexual advances on the defendant, provoking the defendant into ‘defending’ themselves through violence, sometimes with lethal outcomes. The goal of the defence is to “convince the jury that his [sic] reaction was only a reflection of this visceral societal reaction” (Mison 1992, 158). As noted by Joseph Williams, “[t]he natural consequence of this ... is that courts label the underlying act of the victim – an act that reflects his homosexuality – as offensive, provoking, and infuriating” (2015, 1147). Although the success of the gay panic defence has varied and may be losing its efficacy,

its underlying homophobic logic (i.e. that gay men are inherently predatory and that violence is a legitimate response to almost any unwanted gay sexual advance) has not necessarily lost its cultural power. (Becker 2006, 20)

The narrative device of gay panic is often used in mainstream dramatic and comedic entertainment (Stokes et al. 2015, Stokes, Bradford, and Townsend 2016), and abounds in the teen film genre, particularly in comedies targeting teenage boys (Table 3). While academically under-theorised, gay panic humour hinges on heterosexual repulsion at sexual contact with, or being propositioned by, a homosexual, particularly among males. Much like the gay panic legal defence, it relies on a homophobic view that positions gay men and lesbians as libidinous predators making unwanted advances on straights; in response, the ‘natural’ and ‘justified’ reactions by heterosexuals range from panicked to pernicious.

**Table 3. Teen films that feature gay panic humour, by panic type and LGBT category, and character details**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film title (year)</th>
<th>Panic type</th>
<th>LGBT</th>
<th>Predatory character name (actor name)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Friday</em> (1995)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>National Lampoon’s Senior Trip</em> (1995)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Don’t be a Menace to South Central While Drinking Your Juice in the Hood</em> (1996)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Dave the Crackhead (Keith Morris)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Good Burger</em> (1997)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Can’t Hardly Wait</em> (1998)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Within the teen film genre, the most intense gay panic occurs when straight teen protagonists are accosted by predatory homosexual adults, most commonly gay men; this re-invokes the long-standing, though thoroughly debunked, trope of homosexual men as predatory towards children (Niedwiecki 2013-2014). These scenarios cast adult gay men as predators who, according to the films, do not care in the slightest if the objects of their desire resist their sexual advances. Intense gay panic involving predatory adults occurs, for example, in College (2008) a film about three male teens, Kevin (Drake Bell), Carter (Andrew Caldwell), and Morris (Kevin Covais), whose visit to a college campus is more about raucous adventure than obtaining information on higher learning. During their visit, antagonistic Beta-Phi frat brother Cooper (Zach Cregger), directs them to a keg party hosted by the Lambdas, a fraternity comprised of gay college students.

Lambda frat brother: 181 [Opens the door] Hey, guys! Come on in! The kegs are full and the Jacuzzi’s hot! [He turns around to close the door, revealing pants with holes cut out for each buttock cheek.] […]

Carter: What’s up? [Looking confused.] Going on? Ladies? [The room is full of only dancing men; one man dressed as a woman blows them a kiss.]

181 The casting credit identifies this character as Assless Chaps Guy (Duane Buras Jr.).
Kevin:  [Unnerved] There’s a lot of dudes here, right?
Carter:  [Alarme] Yeah. It’s a total sausage fest. [The three teens huddle together.]
Morris:  Hey, check it out. These guys are so drunk they’re making out with each other.
[Camera focuses on two nearly naked athletic males who are kissing passionately, one atop the other. Carter’s mouth hangs open in shock and disgust.]
Kevin:  Morris, I don’t think those guys are drunk.
Lambda frat brother:  [Shouting] Who wants to play glow-in-the-dark boners now?
Carter:  [Panicking] It’s boner tag! It’s boner tag!
[The regular lights are extinguished and the teens are surrounded by fraternity brothers wearing glow-in-the-dark sheaths over their erect penises. A horrified Carter is trapped among a group of frat boys who are jabbing him with their erect, glowing penises; he throws Morris among the throng to save himself.]
[The three teens return to the Beta-Phi fraternity house.]
Cooper:  Hey, how was the party? Did you guys find any dates? [Cooper imitates the action of fellatio.]
Carter:  Yeah, real funny guys. We almost got jumped back there.

A similar scene of intense panic from unwanted adult gay sexual advances occurs in _EuroTrip_ (2004). While on their European adventure, Scott (Scott Mechlowicz), Cooper (Jacob Pitts), Jenny (Michelle Trachtenberg), and Jaime (Travis Wester) take a train to Crans Sur Mer; during the trip an Italian man, Creepy Italian Guy (Fred Armisen), joins their compartment.\(^{182}\)

Creepy Italian Guy: _Buongiorno._ [He squeezes himself between Jaime and Cooper.]
Scott:  You know, there are a lot of other empty compartments.
Creepy Italian Guy: Huh? Ah! _Si... Si._ [He settles in his seat, inching closer to Jaime.]
[The train goes through a short tunnel and the compartment is plunged into darkness; when it re-emerges, the Italian man has his hand on Jaime’s knee; Jaime squirms uncomfortably.]
Jaime:  Pardon me.
Creepy Italian Guy:  Eh? [Removes his hand.] Ohhh... _Scusi. Mi scusi._
[Jaime and Cooper smile at the man, then suddenly rush to the other side of the compartment where there is only room enough for Cooper. Jaime gingerly sits back down beside the Italian man who leans in closely and smiles at him. After the train goes through another tunnel, the Italian man is shown vigorously massaging Jaime’s shoulders.]
Jaime:  [Panicked] What the hell are you doing?
Creepy Italian Guy: _Mi scusi, mi scusi._
Jaime:  No! No, no, no!
Scott:  Uh-oh. [...] Big tunnel.
[The Italian man looks at Jaime lecherously; the train is plunged into darkness yet again.]
Jaime:  [Panicked] Who’s touching me? Scotty, is that you? Who’s touching me?! Scotty! Oh!
[When the train emerges for the final time, the Italian man relaxes, smoking a cigarette, and wearing no pants. The four teens huddle together on the other side of the compartment, avoiding all possible contact with the man.]

\(^{182}\) Character and actor names were obtained from the Internet Movie Database website (www.imbd.com).
Creepy Italian Guy: *Mi scusi.*

[The teens throw the man and his pants out of the compartment.]

Other similarly intense gay panic scenes appear in *EuroTrip* between teenage Cooper and burly adult males in Club Vandersexxx; in *College* when the male teens protagonists are propositioned by sexually ambiguous fraternity brother, Bearcat (Gary Owen); in *Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist* (2008) when Nick (Michael Cera) has a frightening night-time encounter with a homeless man (Andy Samberg); and in *Sex Drive* (2008) when teenage boy, Ian (Josh Zuckerman), is accosted in a public toilet by an adult man identified in the cast credits as Men’s Room Predator (Allen Zwolle).

These panicked responses are not restricted to advances by gay adults; a lesbian version with a female prison inmate is depicted in *Sugar & Spice* (2001). Similar transphobic panic appears in *Scary Movie* (2000)\(^\text{183}\) and also *Dude, Where’s My Car?* (2000) when, in an effort to find the aforementioned lost car, Jesse (Ashton Kutcher) and Chester (Seann William Scott) venture to an adult dancing venue, the Kitty Kat Club. At the club, attractive stripper Tania (Teressa Tunney) offers Jesse a repeat performance of her “super special slippery lap dance” and the two go into a backroom where Jesse discovers that Tania is transgender and is forcefully reminded that he stole her money.

> Jesse: So. Just how super special can a slippery lap dance be?
> Tania: [In a masculine voice; aggressively grabbing the front of Jesse’s shirt] What the hell were you thinking throwing around my money like that? That wasn’t part of the plan!
> Jesse: [Alarmeda] You’re a–
> Tania: I’m a gender challenged male!
> Jesse: What does that mean? [Tania lifts up her tiny dress to reveal a penile bulge in her ladies underpants.] Oh dude, you’re a dude! That’s... [Panicking, he wipes out his mouth with his hand, desperately trying to escape the view of Tania’s underpants that’s reflected in the mirrors that surround them.] Oh! No!

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\(^{183}\) Cindy (Anna Faris) goes to Miss Mann’s (Jayne Trcka) office where the teacher is sitting on a chair with a pair of ladies’ underpants on her face, inhaling deeply. Cindy looks surprised and knocks on the door to indicate her presence.

> Cindy: Miss Mann?
> Miss Mann: Come in dear. Have a seat. Take off your bra if you’d like.
> Cindy: [Shocked] No, thanks.
> Miss Mann: What can I do for you, Cindy?
> Cindy: I need to talk. See, I have this terrible secret. And I don’t know who to tell. [...]  
> Miss Mann: Well Cindy, we all have our little secrets. [She opens her legs and her scrotum falls out of her underpants. Cindy looks horrified. Miss Mann walks around her desk towards Cindy, scrotum dangling below the hem of her short skirt.] Sometimes we do things we’re not so proud of. Some for money, others to gain the athletic edge on the competition. Sometimes those secrets come back to haunt us. [Cindy yells in surprise when Miss Mann touches her shoulder.] Do you know what I mean?
> Cindy: Yes, I do, um, Miss Mann. Thanks for the ball– I mean, all your help. I have to go to class.
Jesse’s revulsion at this ‘deceitful’ contact with a transgender man ‘masquerading’ as a ‘real’ woman – revulsion that is manifest in his inability to even look at Tania and his panicked mouth-wiping – portrays just how panicked these ‘humorous’ responses can be. In all of the aforementioned teen films, protagonist teens panic at being touched or propositioned by LGBT adults whose attraction is framed as offensive, provoking, and infuriating.

In hegemonic terms, gay panic represents and reinforces a homophobic view of LGBT adults as inherently perverse and predatory towards heterosexual teens, echoing the misperception that “gays and lesbians were harmful to children” (Niedwiecki 2013-2014, 127) that surfaced in the 1970s and 1980s. While this has been disproven, the trope has remained ‘common sense’ for certain parts of America and continues to be articulated among anti-LGBT activists, as demonstrated by its resuscitated use during the transgender ‘bathroom debates’ (Steinmetz 2015, 2017b). Gay panic humour that characterises LGBT adults as predators taps into an association that is currently under hegemonic negotiation (remaining dominant for some and residual for others) and highly polarised (funny for some and offensive for others); using humour as a delivery mechanism serves to rearticulate this homophobic connection in a way that masks its vitriol.

Not only do gay panic scenarios serve to reassert homophobic associations; they also legitimise the panicked reactions of the teens, which range from violent (as in EuroTrip), to threatening (as in A Cinderella Story [2004]), to an attempt to flee (as seen in College, Sex Drive, and Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist). Even though gay panic is played for laughs, the reaction of the straight protagonists is never critiqued. None of the depictions of intense gay panic are presented as unjustified or overblown; rather, the panicked reactions by these youths are depicted as ‘natural’ and commensurate responses to the offensive, provoking, and unwanted homosexual advances of predatory adults. By depicting LGBT adults as predators and naturalising a panicked response to

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184 In fact, depictions of LGBT adults are almost all used in instances of gay panic; there are virtually no positive or sympathetic depictions of LGBT adults within mainstream teen films; sympathetic adult depictions are limited to Bill (Martin Donovan) and Matt (Ivan Sergei) in Indiewood teen film The Opposite of Sex (1998).

185 Threatened violence from gay panic is depicted in the PG-rated romantic comedy A Cinderella Story. This modernisation of the classic fairy tale features a scene in which protagonist Sam (Hilary Duff) flirts with her secret admirer, Austin (Chad Michael Murray), through an instant messaging computer program.

Sam: Hey Nomad, do you think we’ve ever met?
Austin: I don’t know. Our school has over 3,500 kids.
Sam: Well, that narrows it down.
Austin: [Chuckling] Well, at least I can eliminate the guys. You’re not a guy right? Because if you are, I’ll kick your butt.
Sam: [Chuckling] I am not a guy.

186 This naturalised reaction stands in contrast to televisual representations that framed nervous straight reactions as ridiculous during the 1990s (Becker 2006).
LGBT contact, gay panic humour articulates a form of homophobia that is pernicious yet somewhat disarmed through comedy.

While gay panic humour is often associated with adult LGBT predators, heterosexual adults also use same-sex advances to unnerve and intimidate teens. This is most explicitly demonstrated in *The Girl Next Door* (2004) when antagonist adult entertainment producer Kelly (Timothy Olyphant) threatens to make teenage Matthew (Emile Hirsch) perform oral sex as punishment for a financial debt.

Matthew: Look, Kelly, I'm a problem solver, all right? This is what I do. Okay? Let's just– Let's just think outside of the box here. Look, she'll get a job, I'll keep mowing lawns, and over time we'll pay it down. You know? This can work. We can do this. It'll be like a payment plan. [...] Kelly: Yeah, I don't know. If I'm gonna do this payment plan thing I need a show of good faith, you know? Something concrete.


Matthew: [Scoffs] No, I told you. She's not gonna do that anymore.

Kelly: Who said anything about her? [Matthew looks horrified.] Yeah, we're definitely outside the box now, huh? Now, you gotta ask yourself, how far are you willing to go? [Kelly undoes his belt.] How much do you really care about her? [Sound of pants unzipping. Matthew is panic-stricken. Kelly bursts out laughing.] I'm joking, man. [Matthew signs in relief.] Relax. [Laughs.] Damn, do I look gay to you?

Matthew: No, but Jesus– [Kelly starts to punch Matthew.]

This scene positions same-sex intimacy as a threat, one that is perhaps worse than the beating that Matthew subsequently receives from Kelly. A similar use of same-sex tactility to unsettle is depicted in *The Mod Squad* (1999) when drug dealing music producer, Howard (Michael Lerner), uses a waltz to test the nerve of undercover teen cop, Linc (Omar Epps). Linc, who is visibly shaken by the unorthodox behaviour, only passes the gangland test after spinning Howard across the lair's impromptu dance floor. Like in *The Girl Next Door*, this scene uses unwelcome same-sex touch as a form of intimidation.

In a similar way, forced same-sex intimacy is routinely used as a way to threaten and intimidate in a custodial setting. Indeed, there is a strong cultural association between same-sex rape and incarceration, so much so that contemporary hegemonic 'common sense' understands same-sex prison rape as an inevitable part of the prison experience (Eigenberg and Baro 2003, Turchik and Edwards 2012). Popular culture reinforces this link through its routine representations of, and references to, sexual victimisation in prisons (Eigenberg and Baro 2003, Mason 2006, Turchik and Edwards 2012). Entertainment media’s portrayal of prison rape consistently involves anal intercourse that is forced on a (generally young, white) heterosexual male by another male
inmate (rather than prison staff) as an act of power and subjugation (Eigenberg and Baro 2003, O’Sullivan 2001); this trope has variously been employed for dramatic or comedic effect (Sigler 2006, Mason 2006, Eigenberg and Baro 2003, O’Sullivan 2001, Turchik and Edwards 2012). While entertainment media depictions consistently present prison rape as ubiquitous and occurring to heterosexual males at the hands of other inmates, recent survey data presents a different story. *Sexual Victimization In Prisons And Jails Reported By Inmates 2011-12* reported low levels of sexual victimisation among inmates overall, with around 4 percent of inmates reporting victimisation (Beck et al. 2013). In contrast to the predominantly heterosexual male onscreen victims, the report found that victimisation occurred more among female than among male inmates, and significantly more among LGB inmates; further, while onscreen victimisers are generally fellow inmates, reported ‘inmate-on-inmate’ victimisation accounted for only around half of the victimisation. Thus, entertainment media’s trope and the ‘common sense’ understanding of prison rape as rampant are, perhaps not surprisingly, at odd with the situation in custodial settings.

The ubiquitous portrayal of prison rape in entertainment media is echoed in the teen film genre; indeed, given that very few prison or gaol scenes appear in the genre there are a surprising number of references to same-sex prison rape, almost all of which are for humorous purposes. Like the predatory examples discussed earlier, reference to prison rape often elicits panicked, or at least uncomfortable, responses from the heterosexual teens involved. This is epitomised by Hannah (Rachel Blanchard) in cheerleading gaol heist comedy, *Sugar & Spice*. After the teen girls successfully rob a local bank dressed as pregnant Betty Dolls, religious Hannah shares her concerns about incarceration with ringleader Diane (Marley Shelton).

Hannah: We’re dead! They showed this prison movie to my youth group on Sunday. [...] It wasn’t like the prison we saw – all these women had to shave their heads because they got lice from the filthy lives they’d lived! Oh God, I’m gonna be someone’s bald bitch! [...] My Sunday school teacher said that in prison, women shove broom sticks up your~

187 Similar findings were reported the 2008 report (Beck and Harrison 2008), however, these reports differ from older studies that described higher levels of victimisation (Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson 2000, Frost, Fagan, and Vivona 1989, Human Rights Watch 2001) and is disputed by some advocacy groups (Swift 2013).

188 The report found that among 91,177 inmates surveyed in 2011-12, 3.7 percent (3,381 inmates) reported incidents of sexual victimisation (4.0 percent of prison and 3.2 percent of gaol inmates) (Beck et al. 2013). ‘Inmate-on-inmate’ sexual victimisation was reported by 2.0 percent of prison and 1.6 percent of gaol inmates, which is lower than the 2.4 percent and 1.8 percent, respectively, that reported staff sexual misconduct. A higher proportion of female inmates reported sexual victimisation by another inmate (6.9 percent of prison and 3.6 percent of gaol inmates) than male inmates (1.7 percent of prison and 1.4 percent of gaol inmates) (proportions were fairly similar between the sexes for staff sexual misconduct). There were large differences in levels of victimisation by sexual orientation, with 12.2 percent of LGB prison and 8.5 percent of LGB gaol inmates reporting victimisation by an inmate, compared to 1.2 percent of heterosexual prison and gaol inmates.
While Hannah is panicked at the prospect of this aspect of incarceration, other teens reference prison rape more cavalierly. Such verbal invocations are made in, for example, 10 Things I Hate About You (1999) (“in a strictly non-prison movie type of way”); The New Guy (2002) (“we were in prison together” ... “mostly in the shower”); Cry_Wolf (2005) (“he doesn't know the difference between a roommate and a cellmate”); and My Soul to Take (2010) (“what men will do to you in prison is nothing compared to what demons will do to you in Hell”). Prison rape can even occur, suggests Sex Drive, during an overnight stay in a local gaol. Whether the references are panicked or cavalier, prison rape is positioned as part-and-parcel of the punishment received during incarceration and, according to Jessica Turchik and Kate Edwards, as “an acceptable consequence of breaking the law” (2012, 216). Indeed, it is the worst part of the punishment; worse even than the loss of liberty or future prospects, neither of which are ever even mentioned onscreen. In this way, same-sex sex is positioned as punitive – an act of intimidation – with the possibility of consensual same-sex contact rendered nearly impossible.

Nearly, but not entirely, impossible; though consensual contact is rare, a few films in the ‘cycle-parody cycle’ include prison rape jokes that play on the sexual pleasure provided by these liaisons. In contrast to the most common media depiction, where the victim is most commonly white, the characters involved in these jokes are all young black men, including Don’t Be a Menace to South Central While Drinking Your Juice in the Hood’s (1996) hard case from the ‘hood, Toothpick (Darrell Heath). Just released from prison after a five-year term, Toothpick expresses his wish for retribution irrespective of the possibility of going back to gaol.

Toothpick: Man, I ain’t worried about jail! Shit man, I don’t give a damn about going to jail. Nigger, take me to jail! Lock me up! Throw away the key! [Each exclamation is echoed by his friends.] I ain’t afraid to fuck somebody in his ass. [This utterance is followed by sound of a scratching turn-table and complete silence from his peers.]

Friend: This fool is tripping.

Unknown voice: You’re on your own there, brother.

Toothpick: Yo’ all. Come on man. Y’all ain’t never been in a shower with a man and you see the suds roll down the crack of his ass, and you just ... be all... [His friends look disgusted. After a pause Toothpick bursts out laughing.] I was foolin’ y’all, man. I was foolin’ y’all. It was dope. Wooo. [His friends look unconvinced.]

Similar interest in a prison-based tryst is mentioned by juvenile delinquent A-Con (Affion Crockett) in Dance Flick (2009).

A-Con: The judge says it’s either school or juvie. I’m only one crime away from going back, B, I’m excited, man. Kick ball, arts and crafts, showers. [Pauses slightly and his smile falters.]
Indeed, the possibility of same-sex prison contact inspires teenage Ray (Shawn Wayans) to suggest calling the police after he and his friends kill and unknown man in a car accident in *Scary Movie*.

Ray: No way, I ain’t going to jail.
Greg: Cindy, do you know what they do to young boys in prison? And all these sex-starved convicts just waiting for a fresh piece of meat.
Ray: Hey, you’re right Cindy. Maybe we should call the police.

All three of these scenarios demonstrate an enthusiasm for same-sex sex in a custodial setting by otherwise straight-identifying teens. While there is the possibility that their comments could destabilise the gay/straight binary, the horrified or discomfited reactions of onscreen peers and immediate disavowal by each speaker reinscribes the stigmatisation of these acts. Indeed, as noted by Becker, “[s]uch behaviour … remains stigmatized and marginal, and any admission of enjoying it draws one’s sexual identity into question” (2009, 133). The humour of these utterances comes from their incongruity with mainstream understandings of prison rape; whereas it is ‘common sense’ for prison rape to be reviled, these characters violate that pattern by expressing a desire for this same-sex contact. Thus, these utterances are positioned as humorously absurd, and the shocked and uncomfortable reactions of the speakers’ peers are portrayed as the appropriate response.

Thus, gay panic humour presents a homophobic response by straights to LGBT interaction that maintains strongly averse boundaries of social distance. It resuscitates the portrayal of LGBT adults as predatory and perverted, preying on heterosexual teens who ‘rightly’ resist their advances through justifiably violent or panicked escapes. It presents same-sex tactility as punitive – a way to bully and intimidate – inside or out of a custodial setting. It also relies on the social construction of same-sex sex, particularly gay male sex, as distasteful. By focussing largely on anal sex, gay panic humour also reifies “the demonizing link between anal rape and gay sex” (Wlodarz 2001, 78). As noted by a journalist for *The Guardian*, gay panic humour relies on “an underlying repulsion [in which the] … moral of the story [is that] gay sex is ewwww gross” (Lee 2015).

Unfortunately, while LGBT rights advance, the repulsion embodied in gay panic humour, and the panicky discomfort that it engenders, remains dominant for large parts of the heterosexual community.\(^{189}\)

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\(^{189}\) Evidence of heterosexual uneasiness with lesbian and gay sex is presented in chapter two; while public opinion polls present increasing acceptance of the homosexual community, they also demonstrate discomfort. Results from the General Social Survey in 2012 indicated that 43 percent of respondents still viewed homosexual sex as ‘always wrong’ (Smith and Son 2013). The latest Harris Poll commissioned by GLAAD found that 29 percent of heterosexual respondents were ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ uncomfortable seeing LGBT people holding hands (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation 2017). It is likely that more explicit sexual contact would engender discomfort among an even higher proportion of respondents.
While gay panic humour abounds within the genre and the majority of these depictions are overtly homophobic, a few teen films do present less homophobic responses, downgrading heterosexual reactions from panic to awkwardness or discomfort. This is visible in, for example, spoof comedy *Not Another Teen Movie* (2001) when wealthy and popular jock Jake Wyler (Chris Evans) is showered with not just female compliments, a bra, and a moistened pair of panties, but also a jockstrap when walking down the halls of John Hughes High School. While he smiles when catching the bra and sniffs the panties with relish, he merely lets the piece of intimate male sporting equipment fall to the floor with an unimpressed “Hi Arthur.” Similarly, *Mean Girls* (2004) features a scene in which protagonist Cady (Lindsay Lohan) tries to arrange for her love interest, Aaron (Jonathan Bennett), to catch his girlfriend, Regina (Rachel McAdams), cheating on him with Shane (Diego Klattenhoff). Cady lures Aaron to the auditorium’s projection theatre where, rather than finding Regina *in flagrante*, he finds Shane seemingly waiting for him wearing only his underpants. Aaron misreads the situation as an attempt to initiate a relationship; however, his reaction is not disgust or panic, but awkward disinterest. These downgraded reactions demonstrate a shift in the repertoire of straight responses, particularly in sub-genres that do not target a male teen audience. These toned-down responses reflect an iterative move away from full-blown homohysteria towards more gay-friendly ways of indicating disinterest.

**Fag discourse**

Many scholars have characterised homosexually-themed language as homophobic, noting that homophobic teasing is commonplace and often directed towards homosexual males (Plummer 1999, Plummer 2001, Bortolin 2010, Carnaghi, Maass, and Fasoli 2011, Kosciw and Diaz 2009, Smith 1989). C.J. Pascoe asserts that “[h]omophobia is indeed a central mechanism in the making of contemporary American adolescent masculinity” (2005, 330), but she critiques the narrow focus on homophobia, suggesting that it “obscures the gendered nature of sexualized insults ... [and] overlooks the powerful relationship between masculinity and this sort of insult” (330). Rather than analysing homosexually-themed language as solely homophobic, she sees it as “a discourse of sexualised identities” (332, emphasis in original), reframing the discussion to focus on the multiple meanings and regulatory power of what she calls ‘fag discourse.’

Pascoe posits that gender, as understood in Judith Butler’s concept of gender performativity, is constituted through the exclusion and repudiation of a ‘constitutive outside’ that is “inhabited by abject identities, unrecognizably and unacceptably gendered selves” (2005, 332). This repudiation “creates and reaffirms a ‘threatening specter’ (Butler 1993, 3) of failed, unrecognisable gender” (Pascoe 2005, 332). For Pascoe, “[t]he fag discourse is the interactional process through which
boys name and repudiate this abjected identity” (333). Thus, masculinity “becomes the daily interactional work of repudiating the ‘threatening specter’ of the fag” (342).

Pascoe’s fag discourse proposes a gendered homophobia that works to police and regulate masculinity, disciplining even minute transgressions through “jokes, taunts, imitations, and threats” (2013, 91). Unlike other research that sees such language as simply homophobic, Pascoe conceptualises fag discourse as relevant to both gay- and straight-identifying males: “this harassment has as much to do with the definition of masculinity as it does with fear of gay men” (91). Indeed, Pascoe notes that “[t]he fag epithet … may or may not have explicit sexual meanings, but it always has gendered meanings” (2005, 342). It is thus not exclusively used to regulate sexuality, but “instead to regulate boys’ behaviors” (McCormack 2011, 668). This “powerful disciplinary mechanism” (Pascoe 2012, 54) can be levelled at a boy for exhibiting any sort of behavior defined as unmasculine (although not necessarily behaviors aligned with femininity): being stupid or incompetent, dancing, caring too much about clothing, being too emotional, or expressing interest (sexual or platonic) in other guys. (57)

Thus, the concept of fag discourse allows for a more nuanced approach to homophobic language, one that is able to account for its operation by, and between, heterosexual-identifying adolescent males. It also provides a useful framework for looking at homophobic language within the teen film genre. Indeed, while, as explored in the last chapter, some LGBT youth are verbally victimised, most of the homophobic language within the genre is actually directed at straight male teens. Fag discourse is fairly commonplace in teen films, occurring in 52 contemporary teen films (26 percent of the films screened in this research). Various examples are detailed in Table 4 (this list is not exhaustive; a full list is available in Appendix G).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film title (year)</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
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</table>
| *Fear* (1996)    | Steve Walker (William Petersen) meets with his daughter increasingly unhinged boyfriend, David (Mark Wahlberg), to tell him to stop seeing her.  
  David: You know Steve, you’re not really a faggot. [...] I also know you ain’t keeping up, so to speak, your end of the bargain with the missus. ‘Cause if you were, she wouldn’t be all over my stick.  |
| *Apt Pupil* (1998) | Todd (Brad Renfro) is unable to engage in sex with Becky (Heather McComb) and she accuses him of being gay, saying “Maybe you just don’t like girls,” and laughs while Todd looks upset.  |
| *Can’t Hardly Wait* (1998) | Kenny Fisher (Seth Green) shows his white ‘homeboy’ friends (Branden Williams, Bobby Jacoby) the ‘love kit’ he’s put together to seduce a girl at the graduation after-party.  
  Kenny: Check this out [unzips his backpack]. Observe – the love kit.  
  Homeboy 1: [pulling a pink scented candle out of the kit and yelling loudly] Oh damn, man, our boy’s a fag, yo!  |

For dialogue to be considered part of fag discourse, it needed to exhibit a policing/regulatory function that is used for characters who “fail[ed] at the masculine task of competence, heterosexual prowess and strength or [are in] anyway revealing weakness or femininity” (Pascoe 2005, 330). It generally has “pernicious intent” (McCormack 2011) but can be used in a joking manner; it almost always involves two characters but could include someone chastising themselves. I counted both use of epithets and insinuations of homosexuality when they were used in this way.
These examples of fag discourse demonstrate that teen boys are expected to master heterosexual prowess and maintain a narrowly defined manliness; failing to do so marks them out as ‘fags,’ even if only temporarily. Teen boys who are unable to engage in heterosexual intimacy have their sexuality questioned and are required to ‘prove’ that they’re straight (as demonstrated by Fear [1996] and The Girl Next Door, above). This labelling is mostly supplied, as Pascoe suggests, by other males, but a few instances involve female teens labelling male teens as fags for failing to perform sexually (Apt Pupil [1998], above, also Friday Night Lights [2004], and I Love You, Beth Cooper [2009]). This prowess cannot, however, be overly romantic; romance and tenderness mark onscreen teen males as temporary fags (Can’t Hardly Wait [1998], American Pie [1999], The Hot Chick [2002], and Fired Up! [2009], above, but it is common throughout the genre). Teen boys also need to demonstrate manliness or risk becoming a fag; Jimmy (Jesse Eisenberg) in Cursed (2005) and Ian in Sex Drive both fail at masculinity by being neither muscular nor athletic. While Ren (Kenny Wormald) in Footloose (2011) is athletic, he enjoys the wrong kind of sport and is labelled a fag for doing gymnastics. Failing at popularity also leads to the fag moniker, as in Project X (2012) and Superbad (2007). Other behaviours, like being unadventurous (The Girl Next Door) or enjoying disco music (Detroit Rock City [1999]) can mark teen males as fags. In this way, fag

| **American Pie** (1999) | Chris ‘Oz’ Ostreicher (Chris Klein) sings ‘How Sweet It Is (To Be Loved By You)’ in the shower room after a lacrosse game/practice, to which Stifler (Seann William Scott) responds: “Oh my god, you’re gay.” |
| **The Hot Chick** (2002) | Billy (Matthew Lawrence) talks to his jock friend, Jake (Eric Christian Olsen), about his feelings for his girlfriend. |
| **The Girl Next Door** (2004) | Matthew (Emile Hirsch) tries to convince his two friends to cut class and to go to the beach with a group of popular students. |
| **Step Up** (2006) | Tyler (Channing Tatum), Mac (Damaine Radcliff), and Skinny (De'Shawn Washington) joke around after being threatened with a gun at a party; Mac calls Tyler ‘Jerry’ because of his constant fighting and Tyler calls Mac ‘Montel’ because of his use of pop psychology. Skinny pipes up asking which celebrity he would be. |
| **Fired Up!** (2009) | Dr. Rick (David Walton) reads excerpts from Nick’s (Eric Christian Olsen) stolen diary. |
| **Red Dawn** (2012) | The quarterback on the opposing team calls the Wolverine’s quarterback, Matt (Josh Peck), a “bitch” and Matt responds: “Are you hitting on me?” |
discourse demarcates a range of acceptable masculine behaviours and disciplines those that fall outside.

While Pascoe’s fag discourse applies only to males, teen girls can also be targeted for gender/sexual behaviours that fall outside of high school’s rigid boundaries. Literature on the regulation of femininity usually examines how language polices femininity through shaming promiscuity (Pascoe 2012) or sexual contact (Sutton 2012). Indeed, the relative absence of homosexually-themed language in ‘real life’ use among adolescent females is noted by Pascoe (2012, 2005), V. Paul Poteat, Laura O’Dwyer, and Ethan Merish (2012), and Crispin Thurlow (2001); Laurel A. Sutton’s (2012) study of ‘ugly names’ for women did not even include a term relating to sexual orientation. Yet despite the paucity of an equivalent fag discourse for females noted by ethnographic and linguistic studies, homophobic name-calling as a form of policing was visible among teen girls within the genre. While less frequent than among males, female characters used a female fag discourse to discipline female teens who fell outside of traditional feminine boundaries, labelling them ‘dykes’ or ‘lesbians’ (Table 5). It is, for example, demonstrated by Toros cheerleaders Courtney (Clare Kramer) and Whitney (Nicole Bilderback) in Bring It On (2000). When tough new Missy (Eliza Dushku) joins the cheer squad, catty Toro Courtney tells Missy that she “looks like über-dyke;” this insult, which visibly upsets street-wise Missy, is levelled at her because of her non-traditionally feminine appearance (baggy pants, temporary tattoos, muscular build). Missy is not alone; other teen girls are bullied with a female fag discourse for non-gender-conforming appearance. In Mean Girls, vicious popular girl Regina labels Janis (Lizzy Caplan) a lesbian because of her, as Regina puts it, “totally weird” goth appearance. Similarly, The Faculty’s (1998) mean-spirited socialite Delilah (Jordana Brewster) bullies reclusive goth Stokely (Clea DuVall), sarcastically complimenting her on her ability to accessorise “the different shades of black” in her clothing, and maliciously calling her a “violent lesbian” to alienate her from her peers.191 Indeed, both Janis and Stokely are ostracised because they are labelled as lesbians, losing all of their friends and becoming embittered towards their peers. In this way, female fag discourse police gender and reinforce the desirability of traditional, lady-like femininity; to deviate from this feminine standard risks being labelled a dyke or lesbian that, suggest these films, leads to social banishment. Female fag discourse is also occasionally used to police sexuality, as seen when Fired Up!’s Poppy (Juliette Goglia) calls Bianca (Danneel

191 Not conforming to traditionally feminine appearance can bring sexuality under suspicion, as shown in 10 Things I Hate About You. In this teen remake of Shakespeare’s Taming of the Shrew, Kat (Julia Stiles) is suspected of being a lesbian because of her comparatively unfeminine appearance, hostile manner, feminist politics, and reputation of being a “heinous bitch.” While this suspicion is not directed at Kat (it is said behind her back), and as such not used to police gender so it does not qualify as fag discourse, it is still brought to the fore when sweet protagonist Cameron (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) ensures that Kat is not, to quote the film, a “k.d. lang fan” or “habouring same-sex tendencies.”
Harris) and Angela (Hayley Marie Norman) “freak shows” and “lesbatron” for their budding same-sex romance, though the social repercussions from this ridicule is nominal.

Table 5. Examples of fag discourse directed at females in teen films, 1995-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film title (year)</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The Faculty (1998) | Sweet natured Marybeth Louise Hutchinson (Laura Harris) talks to goth Stokely (Clea DuVall) on Marybeth’s first day of school when Delilah (Jordanana Brewster) approaches the two girls.  
Delilah: Stokely, are you seducing the new students again? ... Hey, don’t you just love the way Stokely accessorizes the different shades of black in her ensemble?  
Stokely: Fuck you, gutter-slut.  
Delilah: I don’t know why you insist on being such a bad example for your people. [...] Well, I hope you’re not a violent lesbian like your new-found friend here. [Annoyed, Stokely starts to pack her bag.] |
| Superstar (1999) | Mary (Molly Shannon) walks through the school halls while various students hurl insults at her (the scene is edited to show that it occurs over multiple days).  
Mary: [voiceover] The more I kept trying to become a superstar, the less they thought I was one. In fact, they had all these other names for me.  
Mary: [voiceover] And they also called me—  
Various students [voices only]: Skid mark. Nipple hair. Lame. Loser. Did I say lesbo? |
| Girl, Interrupted (1999) | While in the hospital, Janet (Angelina Jolie), Lisa (Angelina Jolie), Susanna (Winona Ryder), and Cynthia (Jillian Armenante) break into Dr. Wick’s (Vanessa Redgrave) office and read their files.  
Janet: Lisa thinks she’s hot shit because she’s a sociopath.  
Lisa: I’m a sociopath.  
Janet: No, you’re a dyke. |
| Bring It On (2000) | The cheerleading audition attracts a series of terrible applicants, until tough-but-sexy Missy (Eliza Dushku) auditions. While she is a skilled gymnast, her non-feminine appearance upsets cheerleaders Courtney (Clare Kramer) and Whitney (Nicole Bilderback) who voice objections to her joining the squad.  
Courtney: Besides, Missy looks like an über-dyke. [She giggles.] |
| Thirteen (2003) | Evie (Nikki Reed) asks Tracy (Evan Rachel Wood) if she knows how to kiss.  
Tracy: Yes I do. Me and Noel practiced with Cruel Intentions like 50 times. [...] So you want me to prove it, lesbo? |
| Mean Girls (2004) | Regina (Rachel Mcadams) tells Cady (Lindsay Lohan) about how she embarrassed Janis (Lizzy Caplan) by spreading a rumour that Janis was a lesbian, explaining why Janis hates Regina. This accusation led to Janis being ostracized by all of her friends and ultimately leaving school.  
Regina: She’s [Janis] so pathetic. Let me tell you something about Janis Ian. We were best friends in middle school. I know, right, it’s so embarrassing. I don’t even ... whatever. So then in eighth grade I started going out with my first boyfriend, Kyle, who was totally gorgeous but then he moved to Indiana. And Janis was, like, weirdly jealous of him. Like, if I would blow her off to hang out with Kyle, she’d be like ‘Why didn’t you call me back?’ And I’d be like ‘Why are you so obsessed with me?’ So, then for my birthday party, which was an all girls pool party, I was like ‘Janis, I can’t invite you because I think you’re a lesbian.’ I mean, I couldn’t have a lesbian at my party. There would be girls there in their bathing suits. I mean, right, she was a lesbian. So then her mom called my mom and started yelling. At her. It was so retarded. And then she dropped out of school because no one would talk to her. And when she came back in the fall for high school all of her hair was cut off and she was totally weird. And now I guess she’s on crack. |
| Fired Up! (2009) | Poppy (Juliette Goglia) hands out the new cheerleading uniforms to the Tigers cheerleading squad.  
Poppy: Here you go, freak shows. New uniforms.  
Bianca: We didn’t order these.  
Poppy: No shit lesbatron. My brother did. |

Fag discourse thus presents a form of homophobia that is fairly common within the genre, but one that is not solely used to regulate sexuality. It shows how “homophobia and homophobic language are central to shaping contemporary heterosexual [gendered] identities,” (Pascoe 2013, 88) forming part of teens’ socialisation into “normatively [gendered] behaviors, practices,
attitudes, and dispositions” (88).\(^{192}\) Thus, it can be usefully understood as part of the hegemonic negotiation of gender; the process that reflects and reinforces normative gender boundaries, disciplines transgressions, and naturalises normative gendered behaviour. It is “an interactional reproduction of social inequality ... wherein young people can be seen as doing the dirty work of social reproduction, socializing each other into accepting inequality” (95). By using the ‘spectre of the fag’/’abject identity’ as its regulatory mechanism, fag discourse reinscribes the lower position of homosexuality in hegemony’s hierarchy. For fag discourse to regulate behaviour, attitudes, and dispositions, the threat of becoming a fag needs to, indeed, be a threat; the power of the moniker needs to be strong enough to influence behaviour. Yet, this power appears to be in flux and the spectre of the fag may be losing part of its cultural power. According to Anderson and McCormack’s theory of IMT, accusations of homosexuality hold little regulatory power in non-homohysteric cultures, making this threat an increasingly ineffective policing/disciplinary mechanism (Anderson and McCormack 2016, McCormack and Anderson 2014, McCormack 2011, 2012). This negotiation, as we shall see in the section on LGBT-friendliness, is also making its way to the big screen in some recent teen films.

*Homophobic language as character shorthand*

As we’ve seen, homophobia is commonly depicted in the genre through gay panic and fag discourse; these homophobic forms serve to maintain strongly averse boundaries and function as a form of gender socialisation. There is, however, an overall trend emerging regarding who uses this language within the genre. During the early part of the cycle, both protagonists and antagonists used homophobic language; however, later teen movies mostly reserve its use for antagonistic or unappealing characters. (Though, it must be said, this is equivocal; teen films targeting young males, particularly those in the ‘cycle-parody cycle’ continue to depict protagonists using homophobic language and rely on homophobic visual jokes.) In particular, homophobic language is linked to three character types: rednecks, religious fanatics, and antagonists. By looking at these characterisations of speakers, most of whom are positioned as objectionable in some way, I argue that homophobic language is positioned as equally objectionable.

*Redneck*

‘Redneck,’ ‘hillbilly,’ and ‘white trash’ are all pejorative terms denoting white, working-class or poor people living in rural areas of America’s southern states; they are stereotypically.

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\(^{192}\) In this article, Pascoe (2013) examines how fag discourse shapes and regulates boy’s behaviours only. Despite this male focus, examples from the teen film genre demonstrate how this language is used to police male and female behaviour, and as such I have modified Pascoe’s quotation to be inclusive of teenage girls.
characterised as ‘backwards,’ uneducated, anti-intellectual, anti-elite, racist, and homophobic miscreants with incestuous tendencies (Pratt 2012, Shirley 2010, Falls 2013, O'Sullivan 2016, Thomas 2016, Wray 2006). Media representations of these impoverished whites are typified by The Simpsons’ Cletus; trailer-dwelling Earl (Jason Lee) of My Name Is Earl; and 30 Rock’s countrypunk Kenneth (Jack McBrayer) (Pratt 2012). These representations are often male and signified by shabby (often mobile) homes, unkempt and unashionable self-presentation, ill-mannered and crude behaviour, and an infatuation with trucks (broken down or functioning) (Pratt 2012, Shirley 2010, Falls 2013). Overall, such representations in popular culture are “used ... to humiliate and shame, to insult and dishonor, to demean and stigmatize” (Wray 2006, 1). Thus, the redneck “is used ... as a way of indicating otherness” and “as means of establishing identity boundaries” (Thomas 2016, 1). Redneck representations are, in short, far from flattering and do not invite audience identification.

The most recent cycle of teen films includes a number of redneck characters that are overtly homophobic (Table 6). Although a few characters connote rural provenance, particularly Mean Girls’ Homeschooled Boys (Graham Kartna, Ely Henry, David Aherne), most of the characters are located in urban settings, reflecting how rednecks are no longer associated with “a strictly southern rurality” (Thomas 2016, 2). (Within the teen film genre this is likely due to the fact that most teen films are set in urban or suburban surroundings.) Teen film rednecks include Ghost World’s (2001) unfashionable, mullet-haired store patron, Doug (Dave Sheridan), who prepares for the day with cigarettes, alcohol, and beef jerky, flouting store rules and hygiene regulations by not wearing a shirt into the store. This type is also embodied by Sex Drive’s Rex (James Marsden), an aggressive and foul-mouthed twenty-something male who dresses in jogging pants and is obsessed with his classic car, a Pontiac GTO, that he lovingly calls ‘the judge.’ Idle Hand’s (1999) Randy (Jack Noseworthy) is similarly obsessed with his vehicle, this time an oversized truck. Dressed in heavy metal band t-shirts and black jeans, his redneck status is confirmed by his dated 1980s feathered hairstyle and the trailer he lives in, parked outside his parents’ suburban home. Both Rex and Randy are suburban rednecks, marked out by their bad fashion sense and anti-social behaviour rather than their poverty. Parody teen film Not Another Teen Movie presents the quintessential caricature of white poverty through Mitch (Cody McMains) and Mr. Briggs (Randy

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193 There are, of course, subtle differences between each term (see, for example, Shirley [2010]) but all three conform to this general representation pattern.

194 Shannon O’Sullivan’s (2016) analysis of reality television program Duck Dynasty presents a variation on the derogatory representation. She argues that this particular representation of redneck masculinity “reinforces the prevailing perception that white, rural, heteronormative men are ‘real men’ [and thus the program] ... promotes white, heteronormative male supremacy” (2016, 381).
Quaid) who live in squalid conditions, dress unstylishly, and drive a wrecked truck (complete with a license plate bearing the moniker ‘DIRT POOR’). Vietnam veteran Mr. Briggs is an unemployed chronic alcoholic and sexual deviant who defiles a pie (a teen-film parody staple referencing American Pie’s [1999] infamous scene). All of these redneck characters embody unappealing or objectionable traits: they’re foolish, un-educated, aggressive, boorish, physically unattractive, unfashionable; they are to be laughed at, not with. Such repeated characterisations create a cultural short-hand, a ‘common sense,’ about what a redneck is and does; and like the racism that is portrayed as a standard characteristic of rednecks (Thomas 2016, O’Sullivan 2016, Pratt 2012, Shirley 2010), homophobia is also a marker of their uncouth and vulgar behaviour. This coupling of homophobia and rednecks creates an “intolerant other” against which an ‘inclusive masculinity’ [can] accrue value” (Barrett 2013, 70).

Table 6. Homophobic rednecks in teen films, 1995-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film title (year)</th>
<th>Character (actor)</th>
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Note: Character and actor names obtained from the Internet Movie Database website (www.imdb.com).

Religious fanatic

Homophobia is also often associated with strongly held conservative Christian beliefs (Dean 2014, Burack 2008, Plugge-Foust and Strickland 2000, Lugg 1998, Calzo and Ward 2009). Homophobic worldviews have been vociferously espoused by conservative Christian enclaves such as anti-gay rights campaigner Jerry Falwell (as discussed in chapters one and two). As noted by Thomas Linneman, “[c]ontemporary popular discourse is replete with examples of Christian conservatives’ preoccupation with homosexuality” (2004, 56). Popular culture’s linking of conservative Christianity and homophobia generally casts these Christians in a hostile light; their values are characterised as out-dated and small-minded (Linneman 2004).

The linking of Christian fanaticism with homophobia is made visible through dialogue in the teen film genre (Table 7). For example, homophobic language is used by The Opposite of Sex’s Randy (William Lee Scott) who tells Dede that “A lot of guys would’ve said, ‘Shucks, she took up with that homosexual; she turned her back on righteousness’”; My Soul to Take’s Penelope (Zena Grey) warns a bullying peer, “Do not bring the wrath of Jehovah down upon you. Your sins are

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195 I use the term fanaticism to denote “wildly excessive or irrational devotion, dedication, or enthusiasm,” in line with the Collins English Dictionary (2009) definition.
already a stench in the nostrils of an angry God... What men will do to you in prison is nothing compared to what demons will do to you in Hell”; and Beautiful Creatures’ (2013) Mrs. Lincoln (Emma Thompson) zealously proclaims, “God, our creator, will condemn you to hellfire, along with terrorists, atheists, homosexuals, Democrats, liberals, socialists, Greenpeace, and all other unnatural abominations”. It is, however, perhaps best demonstrated by ‘born again’ teens Hillary Faye (Mandy Moore), Veronica (Elizabeth Thai), and Tia (Heather Matarazzo) in Saved! (2004). All of these highly religious teens express homophobic distaste: Veronica’s utters ‘ew’ when protagonist Mary (Cathy Moriarty) discusses Dean’s homosexuality; Tia tells Mary that she’s sorry for “Dean’s faggotry”; and Hillary Faye tells Mary “You’re not born a gay. You’re born again!” These homophobic teens are portrayed not only as prejudiced but also as ignorant; seen, for example, when Veronica reflects “What if you had married him? Gayness would be passed on to your children.” While the caricature is intentionally comedic, it portrays zealous Christianity as intrinsically homophobic.196 All of these religiously fanatical characters also take on traits that are unappealing; they are ignorant, naïve, mean, out-dated, or even, in the case of Mrs. Lincoln, the embodiment of evil. Thus, like rednecks, religious fanatics are consistently portrayed in ways that characterise them, and the homophobic words they speak, as undesirable.

Table 7. Homophobic religious fanatics in teen films, 1995-2013

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<thead>
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<th>Film title (year)</th>
<th>Character (actor)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Veronica (Elizabeth Thai)</td>
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<td>Tia (Heather Matarazzo)</td>
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Note: Character and actor names obtained from the Internet Movie Database website (www.imdb.com).

**Antagonist**

While rednecks and religious fanatics are not necessarily antagonists (many are incidental or minor characters and thus not substantive enough to the narrative to be considered either protagonists or antagonists), teen films also repeatedly link homophobia with antagonists (Table 8). Indeed, like racism, homophobia has become a way to signify villainy. Homophobic teen film antagonists range from bumbling (like Bring It On’s football team) to “exaggeratedly unpleasant”

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196 Transcribed dialogue is in Appendix G.

197 The homophobic Christianity espoused by Hillary Faye, Veronica, and Tia, is contrasted with moderate Christianity embodied by hip love interest Patrick (Patrick Fugit). Son of the pastor/principal, Patrick is portrayed as attractive (many of the teen girls comment on his desirability), cool (he’s a semi-professional skateboarder), worldly (he undertook missionary work in South America), and kind (his romantic interest in Mary is undeterred by her pregnancy). He is also portrayed as gay-friendly. Mary, after being ostracised for her pregnancy, shifts from a fundamental to a progressive version of Christianity. Mary and Patrick’s embodiment of moderate Christianity’s kindness and understanding, when contrasted with Hillary Faye’s hatefule and condescending religiosity, is portrayed as superior and worthy of emulation. In this way, Saved! does not condemn all Christians as homophobes, but contrasts appropriate (moderate) Christianity with its fanatic counterpart.
(Forbes 2011, 19), depicted most brutally in *Apt Pupil*’s former Nazi, Denker (Ian McKellen), who murders a male hustler after gaining his trust. Most commonly, teenage homophobic antagonists are depicted as small-minded and vindictive bullies set on making the lives of their peers miserable by using fag discourse to regulate masculinity through homophobic bullying. This is seen with bullying jocks Rick (James Van Der Beek) in *Angus* (1995); football players in *Bring It On*; Mark and Eric (Dylan Bruno, Zachery Ty Bryan) in *The Rage: Carrie 2*; and Bo and Louie (Milo Ventimiglia, Eric Ladin) in *Cursed*. It is also deployed as a form of disciplining adopted by upper-class, popular teens as seen, for example, with Delilah in *The Faculty*; Kathryn and Sebastian (Sarah Michelle Gellar, Ryan Phillippe) in *Cruel Intentions* (1999); Regina in *Mean Girls*; Hillary Faye and her friends in *Saved!*; and Tal (Jay Baruchel) in *Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist*. All of these homophobic behaviours, used by antagonists to discipline or punish, are cast as detestable and destructive.

**Table 8. Homophobic antagonists in teen films, 1995-2013**

<table>
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<th>Film title (year)</th>
<th>Character (actor)</th>
<th>Film title (year)</th>
<th>Character (actor)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girls (Katlin Tyler, Anna Padgett, Chelsea Catthouse)</td>
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<td>Louie (Eric Ladin)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ali, Wendy’s Husband (John Eisen)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Veronica (Elizabeth Thai)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tia (Heather Matarazzo)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kurt Dussander/Denker (Ian McKellen)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sebastian (Ryan Phillippe)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Eric (Zachery Ty Bryan)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Toros Tight End (David Edwards)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mr. Eaton (Robert Pine)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sugar &amp; Spice</em> (2001)</td>
<td>Lisa Janusch (Marla Sokoloff)</td>
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Note: Character and actor names obtained from the Internet Movie Database website (www.imdb.com).

At an ideological level, the linking of homophobia with antagonism asserts the cultural unacceptability of overt homophobia. In the same way that previous eras’ media portrayals of villainous gay men and lesbians reflected and reinforced a hegemonic homophobic worldview (discussed in chapter one), current vilification of homophobia reflects the marginalising or exclusion of these residual behaviours, now deemed inappropriate and cruel in an increasingly post-closeted society. These residual overtly homophobic behaviours are framed as out-dated and
obsolete, standing in sharp contrast to the LGBT-friendly behaviour of enlightened liberal straights who, as we shall see, appear hip and modern in comparison. Casting fag discourse as antagonistic behaviour, these films undermine the appropriateness of its “powerful disciplinary mechanism” (2012, 54) for gender and sexuality, at least in some contexts. In short, the linking of homophobia and villainy presents homophobia as inappropriate, evil, and to be avoided.

**LGBT-friendly reactions**

Post-closeted America, while unevenly realised, is defined by the “declin[ing] centrality of the closet” (Dean 2014, 247), creating a context where gay men and lesbians are no longer reliably invisible, the ex-nominated status of heterosexuality is disrupted, and heterosexuals can no longer assume that other straights are homophobic and intolerant (Dean 2014, Becker 2006). In post-closeted contexts, overt homophobia becomes socially unacceptable, the ‘deviant’ status of homosexuality is overturned, and gays and lesbians are increasingly included in mainstream society, giving rise to straight anxiety. Heterosexual reactions to straight anxiety could be, as we have seen, homophobic, but they can also be anti-homophobic. Anti-homophobic practices “aim to counter prejudice and discrimination against gays and lesbians [and] ... may expose, and sometimes renounce, straight status and privilege” (Dean 2014, 90). These practices take a variety of forms. LGBT-friendly straights employing these practices maintain weak boundaries of social distance to “gay spaces, symbols, and individuals” (121), distance themselves from homophobic language, counter prejudice and discrimination, and even blur heterosexual/homosexual identity boundaries. These practices are ways that progressive heterosexuals can “be straight in a culture where being gay isn’t reprehensible” (Becker 2006, 224), and occur off as well as on screen (Dean 2014, Becker 2006).

In this section I examine how anti-homophobic/LGBT-friendly practices play out onscreen within the teen film genre. Specifically, I look at depictions of ‘hip’ gay-friendly straights, and explore how they demonstrate weak boundaries of social distance with regard to LGBT signifiers, spaces, and peers. Employing Dean’s most inclusive category of blurred boundaries of social distance, I also examine how certain teen films blur the homosocial and homosexual in narratives of mistaken identity and, most recently, the ‘bromance.’

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198 Dean (2014) notes that even homophobic straights in his study felt the need to publicly hide their homophobia (though they could voice it in private among ‘like-minded’ friends and family).
**Hip straight protagonists and weak boundaries of social distance**

As noted earlier in this chapter, exhibiting an anti-homophobic or pro-LGBT straight identity can be beneficial for liberal heterosexuals in post-closeted contexts (Dean 2014, Becker 2006). It denotes that a heterosexual is ‘hip’ and ‘modern,’ ‘straight but not narrow.’ As noted by Dean,

\[\text{...being antihomophobic ... is a gender and sexual identity strategy that trades on the prestige of being tolerant, enlightened, and empathetic in order to claim a gay-friendly straight ... status in the context of lesbian and gay visibility, the cultural integration of gay people, and Americans’ liberalizing attitudes towards homosexuality. (2014, 130)}\]

In contrast to teen films of earlier cycles that had homophobic heroes (Russo 1987), contemporary teen films feature a cast of hip and enlightened heterosexual protagonists. The tolerant status for most contemporary protagonists is indicated by the fact that they do not use homophobic language or otherwise demean LGBT people. My focus for this section, however, is on teens that demonstrate active LGBT-friendliness through anti-homophobic practices.

Numerous teens throughout the genre are actively LGBT-friendly: they have LGBT friends, feel at ease in LGBT spaces, and/or contest homophobia (Table 9). In the same way that antagonist status is established through obsolete and repellent homophobic behaviour, protagonist status in these films is established through kind/tolerant/enlightened anti-homophobic behaviour.

Protagonist teens like Cher (Alicia Silverstone, *Clueless* [1995]), Torrance (Kirsten Dunst, *Bring It On*), Charlie (Sascha Radetsky, *Center Stage* [2000]), and Nick (*Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist*) demonstrate ease and comfort with gay friends who are ‘part of the gang,’ treated with the same kindness and respect as other (straight) friends. Teens like Mary (*Saved!*), Olive (*Easy A* [2010]), and Ren (*Footloose*) actively reject homophobia and counter prejudice. These behaviours, understood as anti-homophobic practices, become integral in denoting these characters as protagonists.

**Table 9. LGBT-friendly heterosexual characters in teen films, 1995-2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film title (year)</th>
<th>Character (actor)</th>
<th>Film title (year)</th>
<th>Character (actor)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Owen (Julian Morris)</td>
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<td>Claire (Emma Roberts)</td>
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<td>Norah (Kat Dennings)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Caroline (Ari Graynor)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>: Tina (Martha Plimpton)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>: Matt (Brendan Sexton III)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>: Missy (Eliza Dushku)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shawn (Nicholas D’Agosto)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>: Jan (Nathan West)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Eva (Zoë Saldana) | Cammy (Lauren London)  
| Sergei (ilia Kulik) | Treece (Lauren Storm)  
| Jody (Amanda Schull) |  

|  |  |  | Rosemary (Patricia Clarkson)  
|  |  |  | Dill (Stanley Tucci)  


| Paul (Patrick Fugit) |  |  |  

| Janis (Lizzy Caplan) | Sam (Emma Watson)  

| Cassandra (Eva Amurri) |  
| Roland (Macaulay Culkin) |  

Note: Character and actor names obtained from the Internet Movie Database website (www.imdb.com).

Not only do these behaviours denote the protagonist; they also demonstrate how ‘hip’ that protagonist actually is. As Becker points out, “[h]aving gay friends became a symbol of being cool – evidence that although you may be straight, you were definitely not narrow” (2006, 196). This is demonstrated by many heterosexual teens within the genre: Cher’s already high social credibility increases when she starts hanging out with fashionable Christian (Justin Walker, Clueless); Igby’s (Kieran Culkin) blasé urbanity is exhibited in his unfazed interactions with thoroughly queer Russell (Jared Harris, Igby Goes Down (2002)); Pecker’s (Edward Furlong) nonjudgmental curiosity extends to lesbian strippers at the Pelt Room and male strippers at the Fudge Palace gay bar (Pecker [1998]). Similarly, Chase’s (Adrian Grenier) cool rebel status is established through his class-war pranks, edgy activist friends, and his gay-friendly politics, as demonstrated in the phone message he leaves for his ex-girlfriend Dulcie (Ali Larter) in Drive Me Crazy (1999):

 **Dulcie:** [recorded message] Hey, it’s Dulcie. If you want me to get back to you, leave three ways that high school sucks.  
 **Chase:** There’s the rampant homophobia, um, no pep rallies for the debate team, which leads to the greater issues, I’m sure, of the highly fascist nature of pep rallies in general. The speeches, saluting, banners. I think you see where I’m going with this.

Protagonist hipness is also established “by juxtaposing their gay-savvy-ness to someone else’s lack of it” (Becker 2006, 196). This is seen in teen films when gay-friendly and celebrated Toros cheerleaders are contrasted with the homophobic and buffoonish football team that is unable to win even a single game (Bring It On);¹⁹⁹ Mary and Patrick’s moderate Christian kindness is

¹⁹⁹ *Bring It On* reverses the traditional high school pecking order, with the jocks portrayed as uncoordinated clowns unable to win a single game and the cheerleaders depicted as the victorious pride of the school. This is perhaps best demonstrated by the greetings they receive from the crowd before a football game: the football team is met with a scattering of unenthusiastic applause while the cheerleading squad is greeted to a standing ovation and accompaniment by the band.
contrasted against the self-serving and self-righteous ramblings of conservative Christian Hillary Faye (Saved!); and Isabella and Clary (Jemima West, Lily Collins) embody youthful sympathy contrasted against the antiquated homophobic beliefs of the Clave (The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones [2013]). Thus, anti-homophobic behaviours and beliefs are contrasted against out-dated homophobia, and presented as hip and desirable.

Overall, anti-homophobic practices establish characters’ protagonist status and portray them as desirably ‘hip,’ but looking closely at the operation of these practices presents a more nuanced continuum of behaviours demonstrating the iterative and fragmented nature of hegemonic negotiation. In other words, while it is useful to see an overall link between homophobic/antagonist and LGBT-friendly/protagonist, the onscreen operation of anti-homophobic practices highlights the uneven and fragmented nature of this shift. Dean’s concept of anti-homophobic practices looks at the ways that heterosexuals maintain weak social distance to “gay signifiers, individuals, and spaces” (91) but reassert their heterosexual status to maintain privilege; as he notes, heterosexuals in this category “viewed gays and straights as moral and social equals ... [but] maintained their straight status and privilege by consciously not blurring gay/straight identity practices” (Dean 2014, 258). Using Dean’s category of weak boundaries, it is possible to observe how onscreen straight proximity to gay signifiers, spaces, and peers reveals the fragmented nature of hegemonic negotiation.

In the onscreen teen world, gay male signifiers most commonly include drama, dancing, and cheerleading. These activities are culturally linked to homosexuality and, within the films, explicitly linked through dialogue. Though onscreen straight male teens often express dismay or discomfort at the association, some still opt to participate in these activities, bringing them close to gay signifiers and, as we explore later, gay teens themselves. The close proximity to these signifiers is most evident in Fox’s teen television comedy-musical Glee that focuses on the trials and tribulations of glee club members, but it is also seen in a number of teen films. For example, in Get Over It (2000), a teen love story loosely based on A Midsummer Night’s Dream, protagonist Berke Landers (Ben Foster) joins the school play to win back his ex-girlfriend. Similarly, Center Stage’s Charlie demonstrates weak boundaries through his involvement with ballet, but reasserts his heterosexuality after gay roommate, Erik’s (Shakiem Evens), flirtatious banter:

Charlie: Is this the right room? If it’s not, I’m staying anyways.

Dean (2014) undertook interviews with heterosexual women to understand their gender-specific anti-homophobic practices. In addition to proximity with LGBT people, he found that straight women with weak or blurred boundaries of social distance: created inclusive religious communities; visited LGBT nightclubs; embraced un-conventional gender expression; adopted a ‘fag hag’ identity where they formed strong friendships with gay males; adopted a blurred or fluid sexual identity; flirted with other women; had same-sex fantasies; engaged in same-sex intimate acts or would be open to the possibility in the future.
In this scene, Charlie reasserts his (hetero)sexual orientation but without invoking homophobia or panic.

Cheer-centric *Bring It On* and *Fired Up!* both include straight male protagonists who maintain weak boundaries through their association with cheerleading, a pursuit with gay overtones. While both films depict weak boundaries, the straight male teens in these films demonstrate different levels of comfort with homosexuality from one another, evidenced most strongly through the reassertion of heterosexuality. *Fired Up!,* released in 2009, explicitly references cheerleading’s association with homosexuality, but protagonists Nick and Shawn (Eric Christian Olsen, Nicholas D'Agosto) reassert their heterosexuality without disparaging homosexuality. In one scene, the teens decide they can meet more girls at cheer camp than football camp:

Nick: Let’s go to cheer camp, let’s be cheerleaders. [...]  
Shawn: Oh my god. Are you coming out to me? I’m so proud of you, man. And you know what, I kind of always knew. [Shawn smiles and shakes his head.]  
Nick: Will you shut up. All right, I’m too straight to be gay. I can watch a *Project Runway* marathon with Nathan Lane’s hand up my dress and still win a straight award.

In this scene, Nick and Shawn reassert their heterosexuality without resorting to the marginalisation or devaluation of homosexuality; they are unfazed by the possibility of being understood as gay. Understood within the combined frameworks of IMT, weak boundaries, and hegemony, these teens have weak boundaries of social distance to gay signifiers (male cheerleading) because of the low levels of homohysteria present in their onscreen context, decreasing the disciplinary and policing potential of homophobia, and giving them access to a wider “range of permissible behaviours” (McCormack 2012, 45). This demonstrates a shift in normative masculinity and the absorption of homosexuality into hegemony. Yet hegemonic boundaries are still present; the teens are interested in cheerleading only because it optimises their opportunity to engage in heterosexual liaisons, reasserting the primacy of heterosexuality and reinstating their heteronormative privilege.

While Nick and Shawn are unconcerned about homosexual suspicion, the straight male cheerleader, Jan (Nathan West) exhibits much more straight anxiety in *Bring It On,* a teen film that was released almost a decade earlier. This anxiety is apparent when Jan has to be physically restrained by friends after buffoonish football jocks question his heterosexuality; also when Jan tells his friends: “You’ll [female cheerleaders] be fighting off major oglers while we defend our sexuality.” Clearly uncomfortable with the ambiguity raised by his association with the gay
signifier, he sees any uncertainty around his (hetero)sexuality as a threat requiring him to ‘defend his sexuality’ through violence if necessary. Thus, while Jan willingly associates with a gay signifier (cheerleading) – and indeed with his best friend, Les, who is an ‘out and proud’ gay male – he is uncomfortable with any confusion about his heterosexuality and desperate to reassert his heterosexuality and recoup heterosexual privilege. In this way, Jan demonstrates a fragmented hegemonic negotiation where he is both anti-homophobic (willing to associate with gay signifiers and individuals) and homophobic (wanting to distance himself from ‘inferior’ homosexuality and reinforcing a hierarchy that privileges heterosexuality over homosexuality). Contrasting the heterosexual teens in these two films can be read as the manifestation of hegemonic negotiation whereby Jan is understood as being gay-friendly in a homohysteric context and Nick and Shawn are gay-friendly in a non-homohysteric context. Both films, however, portray teens with weak boundaries who “did not want to be mistaken as gay or bi, and ... subtly reinforced the hetero/homo binary division and by extension retained their straight privilege” (Dean 2014, 258).

Although a number of teen films include heterosexual teens exhibiting weak boundaries towards gay signifiers, almost none featured straights in LGBT spaces. In contrast to teen television that now commonly features gay-straight alliances (Faking It, Glee) or gay/lesbian coffee houses or bars (Faking It, Pretty Little Liars), the only LGBT space visited by unpanicked heterosexual teens is the Christmas-themed drag cabaret in Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist. Straight teens Nick and Norah appear at ease in the LGBT space; an intoxicated Caroline (Ari Graynor) appears on stage dressed as a tree amongst a group of drag performers; and Nick even nods in approval when a (presumably) gay male gives him a flirtatious wink. In contrast to College’s gay panic scene at the Lambda frat party, Nick and Norah’s teens are comfortable in a LGBT space, adding to their ‘hip’ credibility and demonstrating weak boundaries of social distance (which could be considered momentarily blurred with Nick’s unpanicked, welcoming nod to the gay wink).

While Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist demonstrates the incorporation of LGBT spaces, it stands alone within the genre, however, another form of weak boundary maintenance is much more common in mainstream teen films: LGBT-straight friendships. Onscreen gay-straight friendships between adolescent males were rare throughout the late 1980s, but became more routine in the 1990s (Tropiano 2002). Straight male protagonists like Nick (Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist), Jan (Bring It On), and Dennis (Paul Rust, I Love You, Beth Cooper) and straight females like Cher (Clueless), Janis (Mean Girls), Olive (Easy A), and Tina (Martha Plimpton, Pecker) have strong friendships with gay males. These friendships demonstrate weak boundaries of social distance to gay peers and an in-group context relatively free of homohysteria. Yet, these friendships also denote the hegemonic boundaries of homosexual/heterosexual friendships: they involve almost exclusively white, middle-class, gender-conforming gay males, with few onscreen friendships
forged between straights and lesbians, bisexuals, or transgender teens. These friendships also involve very limited tactility (only the occasional hug or slap on the back), suggesting a hesitation about physical intimacy between gay and straight teens which maintains “distinctions between homosocial and homoerotic desire” (Barrett 2013, 66). (Even heterosexual same-sex touch has tended to be sparse until, as we will see later, the rise of the bromance.)

Although many contemporary onscreen teens have strong homosexual/heterosexual friendships, this has not always been the case. As explored in chapters one and two, onscreen LGBT teens of the 1980s and 1990s often had traumatic coming out experiences because of the reaction of heterosexual friends and family. Indeed, given that most of these ‘very special’ episodes were about straights coming to terms with the sexuality of a friend, and thus narratively focussed on heterosexuality, it is worthwhile examining the shift in heterosexual responses to LGBT coming out scenes. Onscreen straight reactions changed from shock and outrage to become more supportive throughout the 1990s, such that straights could even be upset that their friend had not come out to them soon enough (as seen on Felicity’s “Love and Marriage” [1999]). Despite the increasingly positive straight reactions, Suzanna Danuta Walters noted in 2001 that

[s]till, coming out is presented as an unfortunate problem. These days, it is often depicted as less traumatic than in previous years, yet the possibility of representing the acquisition of gay identity as a positive, joyful embrace is still just wishful thinking. (2001, 206)

However, it is demonstrably not wishful thinking anymore; heterosexual teens almost always greet the coming out of their LGBT compatriots with delight in contemporary mainstream teen films. This is seen, for example, in the reaction of Bring It On’s cheerleading teens who express joy and support when Les clarifies his sexuality for new recruit Missy:

Missy: What is your sexuality?
Les: Well, Jan’s straight. While I’m … [Torrance smiles at Les] … controversial. [Les smiles.]
Missy: [Encouragingly] Are you trying to tell me you speak fag?
Les: [Smiling] Oh, fluently.

201 Lesbian teen Evie loses her straight friends when she tells them about her love for Randy (Laurel Holloman, The Incredibly True Adventures of Two Girls in Love); Tammy (Jessica Campbell) is depicted as a loner (Election [1999]); and True Directions teens have no heterosexual friends (But I’m a Cheerleader). The exceptions to this are out lesbian Meg (Nicole deBoer), who fits in well with her peer group (National Lampoon’s Senior Trip [1995]); Bianca and Angela, whose budding lesbian romance does not lead to ostracism (Fired Up!); and Rich (Jack T. Carpenter), who continues to be best friends with Dennis after coming out as gay/bisexual (I Love You, Beth Cooper).

202 Though, it should be noted, not all onscreen straights were necessarily comfortable with the disclosure. This can be seen in Beverly Hills 90210 when Steve’s (Ian Ziering) mother comes out as a lesbian (“I’m Back Because” [1998]), and in Doogie Howser M.D. when Vinnie (Max Casella) faces the prospect of a gay college roommate (“Spell it ‘M-A-N’” [1993]).

203 This is not the case for independent and Indiewood teen films like The Incredibly True Adventures of Two Girls in Love or But I’m a Cheerleader. In these films, gay and lesbian teens are ostracised or punished by their heterosexual family and friends.
There is a similar scene of enthusiastic support in *I Love You, Beth Cooper* when Rich comes out as gay/bi to best friend Denis who delightedly exclaims, “Oh, that’s great, congratulations” and gives Rich (Jack T. Carpenter) a hug. Similarly, *Fired Up!*’s Nick tells Downey (Jake Sandvig), “I’d have been totally okay with [you being gay].” All of these scenes depict positive reception by straights that welcome the news that their friends are gay. Somewhat in contrast, Jimmy in *Cursed* could not be accurately characterised as delighted but he is supportive when closeted jock Bo comes out to him.

**Jimmy:** Bo. What are you doing here?
**Bo:** I, uh, just wanted to kind of talk. About that stuff you said today. [...] I was just wondering how you knew. No one else did – just you. And I’ve been so shitty to you. And then I thought, why wouldn’t you know? It takes one to know one, right? Of course, you would know.

**Jimmy:** Know – know what? [Bo takes Jimmy’s face in his hands and tries to kiss him.]
**Whoa, Bo.** What – what are you doing?
**Bo:** I’m gay. [Jimmy chuckles nervously.] I just can’t keep it in anymore. I had to tell you. You’re the only other gay guy that I know.

**Jimmy:** Whoa, whoa, okay. Stop. No, I’m not gay – not gay. I mean, not that there’s anything wrong with it.

**Bo:** This is hard for me, okay? Don’t be like this.

**Jimmy:** Look, trust me, Bo. I’m not gay; I’m – I’m cursed.

**Bo:** I know. Sure feels like that, doesn’t it? Not being able to tell anyone, talk to anyone about it?

**Jimmy:** No, no. I’m cursed by the mark of the beast. Bo – I’m a werewolf.

**Bo:** Come on, Jimmy. You don’t have to pretend anymore – not with me.

**Jimmy:** No, no; its part of the curse. I’m appealing. I have an unnatural sexual allure. [...] Look dude, I’m happy for you. You be gay. It’s a good thing. Unfortunately, I got my own shit to take care of. So, uh, best of luck. Yay, go gay! And I’ll see ya.

In this scene, Jimmy appears less than delighted at Bo’s news. In large part, this is because Bo has done a complete turn-around, reversing from bullying tormentor to friendly confidant; Jimmy is as startled at Bo’s behavioural reversal as he is by his revelation and romantic advances. While he is initially stunned, he quickly moves to a position of support, and his exclamations of ‘I’m happy for you,’ ‘it’s a good thing,’ and ‘yay, go gay!’ put a joyful spin on the scene. In this way, Jimmy maintains weak boundaries and reasserts his heterosexuality without resorting to homophobic panic.

Understood in post-closeted context, these scenes reflect and reinforce the hegemonic absorption of a certain segment of the LGBT community (i.e. the white, middle-class, gender-conforming, gay male segment), but further marginalises less ‘digestible’ parts of the community. These close gay-straight friendships and proximity to LGBT signifiers depict weak boundaries of social distance among liberal gay-friendly straights that reassert their heterosexuality to recoup
heterosexual privilege in ways that are not overtly homophobic. But, as we see next, onscreen teens do not always reassert their heterosexuality, at least not right away, leading to mistaken identity narratives that blur the boundaries between the homosocial and the homosexual, call into question the legibility of sexual identity and demonstrate the erosion of heterosexuality’s presumptive norm.

**Blurred boundaries: mistaken identities, ‘the pretend,’ and bromance**

It isn’t only LGBT characters that come out of the closet onscreen; certain heterosexual characters need to come out of their own ‘straight closets’ and assert their sexual identity. Mistaken identity narratives question the legibility of sexual identities and contest the ex-nominated status of heterosexuality (Becker 2006, Tropiano 2002, Walters 2001). They are generally used to disrupt the ‘common sense’ conflation of gender a-typicality and homosexuality, and highlight cultural anxieties around the identifiability of gay men and lesbians. Becker suggests that this narrative trope articulates the anxieties of straight panic:

> [mistaken identity narratives] often acknowledged gay stereotypes only to insist that they were inadequate tools for determining who’s gay and who’s straight – an increasingly pressing issue at a time when unprecedented gay cultural visibility forced Straight America to realise gay people were all around them. (2006, 203)

These narratives reflect the cultural contradictions of difference and sameness between heterosexuals and homosexuals that became increasingly salient during the 1990s (Becker 2006). On the one hand, “gays and straights seemed like members of separate tribes” (201) (with their own cultural events, different legal status, and separate communities), and on the other hand there was no way to tell the two apart (no genetic differences, no reliable physical or behavioural differences, and LGBT advocates argued that gay men and lesbians wanted to be treated ‘like everyone else’ and have access to the same rights). Thus, the mistaken identities trope is an articulation of the blurred gay/straight boundaries that tapped into and reflected straight anxieties around the legibility of sexual identity. As Walters notes,

> [t]hese mistaken-identity themes, while often eventually about the reassertion of heterosexuality of the character in question, also serve another function. At times, they can point to a blurring of the lines between hetero and homo, a questioning of the surety with which we know someone’s sexuality. (2001, 98)

Mistaken identity plots were a staple of teen television in the mid- and late 1990s, with early episodes featuring straight male teens who panicked at being mistaken for gay and immediately reasserted their heterosexuality (Tropiano 2002). For example, in Beverly Hills 90210’s “Blind Spot” (1994) ‘gay-nervous’ Steve Sanders (Ian Ziering) panics at the prospect of being mistakenly

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204 See Tropiano (2002) for an overview of mistaken identity plots in television programming since the mid-1970s.
identified as gay and outs his fraternity president, eventually standing up for him among his
bullying fraternity brothers; *Party of Five’s* Bailey (Scott Wolf) is clearly uncomfortable with his
friend’s assumption that he, too, is gay (“Here and Now” [1998]); and Xander Harris (Nicholas
Brendon) in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* becomes homophobic and paranoid when closeted gay teen
Larry Blaisedale (Larry Bagby III) assumes that Xander is gay in “Phases” (1998). In all of these
episodes, straight male teens panicked when their heterosexuality was not immediately legible,
when the border between gay and straight was blurred.

In contrast, instances of mistaken identity in contemporary teen films, not central to the plot but
appearing as stand-alone jokes or secondary plot lines, generally lack the panic of earlier
depictions, with straights reasserting their heterosexuality in ways that maintained weak
boundaries of social distance and were not overtly homophobic. Examples of mistaken identity
narratives in teen films include Scott’s reassertion of heterosexuality when Cooper does not
believe that his German pen-pal is a girl (*EuroTrip*);\(^{205}\) when the daughter of body-swapped
teenage Mike (Zac Efron) reads his disinterest as a sign of homosexuality (*17 Again* [2009]);\(^{206}\) and
when Bo clarifies that he is not gay but a werewolf (*Cursed*; dialogue included in the previous
section). Likewise, Nick talks to gay male cheerleader, Downey, who is equally surprised to find
out that Nick is straight (*Fired Up!*):

Nick: Dude, why didn’t you tell me you’re gay? I’d have been totally okay with that.
Paint with all the colours of the wind, and whatnot.

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\(^{205}\) Cooper visits Scott shortly after Scott realises that German pen-pal Mieke is very attractive teenage girl, and that she’s blocked Scott’s emails.

Cooper: What’s going on?
Scott: I’m in love with my pen-pal. I’m in love with Mike.
Cooper: [Looking resigned; nearly unable to swallow the waffle he is eating] Ok. Ok. You know what? I was actually expecting this. Frankly, I’m flattered that you picked me to come out to first. And don’t worry about telling your folks, cause I think they already know.
Scott: No, you idiot. Mike is a girl.
Cooper: No, no. I get it. Yeah. He’s the girl, and you’re the girl, and sometimes you’re both the girl. Right? [Smirking.] Right? Right? That’s hot. But, you know, whatever works for you. I’m not gonna judge it.
Cooper: Wow, who’s the hot chick?
Scott: That’s Mike. I mean, Mieke.
Cooper: That’s who you’ve been writing to all this time?
Scott: Until last night, when I took your advice and told her to keep her ‘hands off my genitals.’
Cooper: Given what we know now, that seems like the exact opposite of what you want.

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\(^{206}\) Maggie (Michelle Trachtenberg), Mike’s daughter, starts to fall in love with teenage-Mark. She makes sexual advances towards him, making him uncomfortable. In order to get away, he tells her that he’s not the person she thinks he is.

Mike: Maggie, I’m not the person that you think I am. [...] I’m not like the others. I’m very different than the others. So different, in fact, that you and I can never, ever, ever, ever be together...
Maggie: Oh. My god. What are you saying? Are you confused?
Mike: I’m very confused, yes. Extremely confused.
Maggie: Oh my god. I–I–I get it now. And your hair is always perfectly coiffed, and you have highlights. [...] I mean, dude, your jeans are really tight.
Mike: I’m not gay. I’m in love, Maggie, I’m in love. I’ve been in love. I’ve been in love with the same girl since I was 17, Maggie.
Downey: [Looking confused] Wait. You’re straight?
Nick: [Laughing and looking around] Am I straight? Yes.
Downey: What about your diary? And then you asked for my [anal] beads and stuck them in your mouth—
Nick: I thought it was a bracelet.
Downey: Why would you stick a bracelet in your mouth?
Nick: I don’t know.
Downey: The closet door is made of all kinds of wood, brother... all kinds. [He slaps Nick on the buttocks.]
Nick: That is so awkward.

While Nick might characterise his exit from the straight closet as ‘awkward’ he is not hysterical about the illegibility of his heterosexuality, nor are any of the other teens that come out as straight. These heterosexual coming out scenes, while humorous, are not malicious and do not position homosexuality as an abject ‘other’ against which to define heterosexuality. This lack of anxiety over being read as gay reflects Anderson and McCormack’s shifting understanding of masculinity in non-homohysteric contexts where the “fear of the stigma of being socially perceived as gay” (2016, 2) is no longer present and thus homophobia is not used as a tool to police gender. These LGBT-friendly heterosexuals position homosexuals and heterosexuals as “moral and social equals” (Dean 2014, 258) yet “subtly reinforce[] the hetero/homo binary division and by extension [allows these straights to] retain their straight privilege” (258). These instances show how straights can “assert their heterosexuality with very little nervous homophobia” (Becker 2006, 208) while reinforcing the “common notion that it [is] difficult to read people’s sexual identities” (209).

Mistaken identity narratives do more than just question the legibility of gay and straight identities, they also reflect the erosion of heterosexuality’s presumptive norm, a central concept in post-closeted society and straight panic (Dean 2014, Becker 2006). This erosion creates a cultural context in which “straight people ha[ve] to think about being straight, and where the relationship between the centre and its margins (the normal and the abnormal) [can] no longer be taken for granted” (Becker 2006, 205). The deterioration of heterosexuality’s ex-nominated status demonstrates the hegemonic inclusion of homosexuality, raised from the realms of invisible exclusion to a position of routine domestication. In short, being LGBT has become a possibility rather than relegated to the unimaginable. This possibility is raised numerous times in the genre, even during instances of heterosexual romance, as demonstrated in Blue Crush (2002) when hard-core surfer girl Anne Marie (Kate Bosworth) supposes that the rebuff by her love interest Matt is due to him having a “wife, girlfriend, [or] boyfriend.” Instead of assuming that her crush, Matt, is heterosexual, Anne Marie is open to the idea that he might be gay or bisexual; she refuses to foreclose on the possibility that he might love someone of the same sex. Her inclusion of
‘boyfriend’ on the list of possible love interests is not said with contempt or as an attempt to discipline, but rather as a natural inclusion of another possibility. In her world, the film suggests, it is just as possible – and as natural – to have a homosexual love as a heterosexual love. This inclusion demonstrates a challenge to heterosexuality’s presumptive norm.

This deterioration of presumptive heterosexuality also necessitates the clarification of types of love and admiration expounded by youth, with adolescent male fans feeling the need to qualify their ‘love’ of male idols, emphasising the homosocial admiration, rather than sexual attraction, that has drawn them to their heroes. This occurs for comedic purposes in *Josie and the Pussycats* (2001) when a teenage male fan talks about his love for boy band Du Jour, saying: “I love them ... like brothers.” Clarification is also required in *Orange County* (2002) when teenage writer, Shaun (Colin Hanks), tells his literary idol, “I’m obsessed with you, Mr. Skinner. Not in a sexual way or a romantic way or anything like that. Just your writing.” These clarifications of types of love and admiration reflect and reinforce the erosion of heterosexuality’s ex-nominated status, where the lines between homosocial admiration and homosexual adoration could easily become blurred.

Blurred boundaries are also demonstrated in the genre by straights who flirt with gay males. As mentioned before, Nick gives a flirtatious nod to a (presumably) gay patron at the drag cabaret (*Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist*). Likewise in *Fired Up!*, Nick, oblivious to Downey’s romantic intentions, raises no objection when Downey grabs his buttocks and rubs his back, even calling Downey ‘classic’ when Downey proposes a romantic evening of star-gazing. Later, when Shawn calls Nick’s attention to Downey’s attempts at romance, Nick remains calm and contemplative, demonstrating no panic at Downey’s romantic advances. Similarly, Neil (Paul Iacono) is not defensive when it turns out that he was flirting with a male instead of a female at a nightclub in *Fame* (2009):

> Neil: You know what else was great? That girl gave me her number.
> Joy: That was a guy, Neil.
> Neil: Regardless, I was flattered.

These reactions depict a blurring of the boundary between gay and straight that does not result in anxiety or panic. Instead, these onscreen heterosexual teens are composed, occasionally even welcoming, of same-sex flirtation; they temporarily suspend their heterosexual identity and privilege.

The most blurred anti-homophobic practice is demonstrated by female teen protagonist Astrid (Alison Lohman) in the drama *White Oleander* (2002). After Astrid’s mother is imprisoned for murder, Astrid is eventually sent to a group home where she meets fellow artist and love interest,
Paul (Patrick Fugit). After sharing harrowing tales of their upbringing, Paul asks about her sexuality, to which Astrid responds ambiguously, blurring the boundaries between hetero- and homosexuality.

Paul: What’s the deal? Are you gay?
Astrid: What? [She smiles.]
Paul: I dunno. I get this funny feeling from you like you’re not interested in guys.
Astrid: You’re right, I’m not.

Astrid is comfortable leaving her sexual identity undefined even when bonding with a potential romantic partner. She, to use Dean’s example of a blurred straight identity practice, “consciously let[s] [herself] be viewed as nonheterosexual” (2014, 261). It is not until several scenes later that Astrid clarifies her sexual identity:

Astrid: I’m not gay.
Paul: [Smiling] I know that. [They kiss.]

Astrid’s blurred identity affords her a space from which she can get to know Paul that is free of romantic pressure and without ceding to the heteronormative ‘rules of engagement’ between men and women. In this space a friendship, then a romance, blossoms. This blurred identity is comfortably adopted by Astrid and comfortably accepted by Paul; neither of them rush Astrid’s adoption of an explicit sexual identity. This blurring temporarily surrenders Astrid’s heterosexual privilege, and demonstrates an increasing range of sexual identity possibilities in post-closeted contexts that contests heterosexuality’s ex-nominated status; no longer are all characters automatically considered straight nor do they feel the need to always clarify their sexual identity right away. Yet, just as heteronormativity is unsettled, it is simultaneously reinforced. Ultimately, this blurred identity practice is in the service of heterosexual bonding; the space afforded by Astrid’s undisclosed identity is where the young straight romance flourishes.

The Pretend

A variation on the mistaken identity plot is what Stephen Tropiano (2002) calls ‘the pretend.’ These narratives begin with a case of mistaken identity, but rather than reasserting their heterosexual identity,straights in these stories stay in the closet for gain, whether it be professional, financial, or romantic. Ultimately, the heterosexuals assert their (hetero)sexual identity, generally because the performance surpasses their comfort level or interferes with heterosexual romance. Four teen films feature instances where straight teens adopt a lesbian or gay identity for gain: the ‘lesbian pretend’ is portrayed in two films (teen horror films The Faculty and The Rage: Carrie 2) and two deploy the ‘gay pretend’ (male-oriented teen comedy Sex Drive and action/comedy Kick-Ass [2010]). This same narrative trope, however, functions differently when it involves temporarily adopted lesbian identities than when it involves gay identities.
Teen girls Stokely (The Faculty) and Rachel (Emily Bergl, The Rage: Carrie 2) adopt lesbian identities to distance themselves from their peers. ‘Trekkie sci-fi freak’ Stokely crafts an identity as an outsider through a tough demeanour, unfeminine goth appearance, and lesbian identity. In part, she uses this isolationist tactic to keep bullies like popular and sharp-tongued Delilah at bay, but it leads to complete social isolation, leaving Stokely self-conscious and alone. Stokely, sexually attracted to star quarterback Stan (Shawn Hatosy) and thus framed as ‘really’ a heterosexual, explicitly adopts a public lesbian identity as ‘security’ to ensure solitude, as demonstrated by this exchange between herself and angelic new student, Marybeth Louise Hutchinson (Laura Harris):

Marybeth: I didn’t know you were a lesbian. I don’t think I’ve ever met one before. Have you been out long? You know, I think it’s very impressive and evolved of you—
Stokely: I’m not a lesbian, alright?
Marybeth: Be one. Please, fly free.
Stokely: You were right about me. I don’t have any friends and I like it that way. Being a lesbian is just my security.
Marybeth: Your security against what?
Stokely: People like you.
Marybeth: Oh, complex.

In this scene, Stokely states that she pretends to be a lesbian as a means of securing social solitude and negating the possibility of friendship. Similarly, telekinetic teen Rachel Lang uses a lesbian identity to maintain social distance. While Rachel’s attire is more traditionally feminine than Stokely’s, her dark hair, dark clothing, and lower socio-economic status establish her as an outsider when compared with the bright, feminine colours and ‘chic’ style of her peers. Unlike Stokely, who keeps everyone away, Rachel uses the ‘lesbian pretend’ to avoid the unwanted sexual advances of aggressive and malicious jock Mark and, by association, ‘nice guy’ Jesse (Jason London).

Mark: Rachel, I’ll tell you what. How about I swing by when you get off work, take you out for a little cruise. Come on. I don’t bite. Unless you want me to.
Rachel: [Laughs and looks away] I don’t think so.
Mark: Why not?
Rachel: [Leaning through the photo booth window] ’Cause I’m a dyke.
Jesse: [Laughing] Oh, nice.

While Jesse and Mark’s reactions demonstrate their disbelief that Rachel is a lesbian – taking it as an insult rather than a true declaration of sexual identity – her lesbian status is reinvoked in two later scenes: first when a group of football jocks attempt to intimidate Rachel into silence,

208 In this scene Rachel prepares for her date with Jesse. She has just showered and is wrapped in a red towel when Mark, Eric, and other football players show up to scare her into being quiet about what led to her friend’s suicide (the reason being that Eric had sex with Rachel’s only friend Lisa [Mena Suvari] then dumped her). The boys bang on the doors and windows of the trailer where she lives, and prank-call her.
later when the jocks embarrass Rachel publicly, causing her telekinetic breakdown and murderous rampage. Thus, while she claims a lesbian identity only once, it is reasserted at pivotal points in the film and constitutes a part of her ‘known’ identity.

In these films, the ‘lesbian pretend,’ relying on visual markers of gender non-conformity (less or un-feminine, dark-coloured clothing; dark hair; non-traditional makeup) and requiring a homohysteric social setting, is used as a strategy to keep peers away. While it is often as a defence against bullying, it is only partially successful; bullies, while kept at a distance, still victimise these teens through verbal taunts and even physical intimidation, as demonstrated by Delilah’s insults toward Stokely (Table 5) and Mark and Eric’s scare tactics towards Rachel. It also has the negative by-product of creating social distance from rewarding heterosexual romances and is framed as self-destructive and harmful: Stokely voluntarily isolates herself but is miserable because she has no friends and delays her romantic relationship with Stan; Rachel’s social distance keeps honourably-intentioned Jesse at arm’s length. Thus, while the temporary lesbian identity is willingly adopted, its effects are framed as detrimental.

Understood as part of the hegemonic process, the ‘lesbian pretend’ presents the exclusion of oppositional/alternative sexuality and gender – a non-chic lesbianism – that is incompatible with hegemony. It is presented as detrimental for teens who suffer from the isolation they create through the identity, and impede their own (heterosexual) love lives. For inclusion to occur, this identity must be shed and an ‘appropriate’ feminine appearance, and public heterosexual identity, adopted; which is what happens to Stokely, who appears in a pastel sweater set and skirt.

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Mark: [Using a ‘Donald Duck’ voice] What’s your favourite scary movie? [Resuming his usual voice.]
Rachel? [...] Are you naked? [...] Or are you wearing a little red towel? [Rachel looks around fearfully.]
Eric: [To Mark] Its playtime. [Mark laughs.]
Rachel: Who the fuck is this?
Mark: Why don’t I come and show you, you little fuckin’ dyke?
[Eric turns off the power to her trailer.]
Rachel: What do you want? [They smash a window with a brick.] Who is this? I’m calling the police. [They pound on the walls and rattle the windows.] [Eric puts on a pair of ‘knuckle dusters’.]
Brad: What are you doing man?
Eric: I’m gonna fuck her over like she’s fucking with me.
[Brad holds him back but Eric tries to enter via the window; Rachel slams the window down on Brad’s hand with her telekinesis. Rachel calls the police, but the return of her foster parents scares the boys off.]

209 The finale occurs at Mark’s house party after the ‘big game.’ It is at this party that the popular kids exact their revenge on Rachel. To upset and humiliate her, they show her their ‘score book’ in which points are attributed to boys for each girl that they have sex with.

Mark: Rach, baby, read that. Open it up to Jesse’s page. I want you to see how many points Jesse got for you.
Monica: I think that would be about two-four-six-eight! [Clapping, as if with a cheerleading routine.] Male voice: Who do we appreciate?
Mark: More than that, more than that. Rachel remember you said that you were a dyke, so extra points for the conversion.
Brad: Oh, the conversion! Two points!
Mark: Not two. Thirty!
[The teens restrain Rachel and force her to watch a video of her sexual encounter with Jesse.]
after she begins dating Stan and, indeed, to Rachel after she starts dating Jesse (though, it must be said, this is no guarantee of safety; after her peers publicly humiliate her, Rachel’s telekinetic homicidal spree kills her classmates, her love, and almost herself). The framing of non-chic, non-male-gaze friendly lesbianism as isolating in these films presents both female gender non-conformity and female same-sex attraction as potentially damaging and a barrier for personal and romantic fulfilment.

In contrast to the non-feminine lesbian identities that lead to ostracism in *The Faculty* and *The Rage: Carrie 2*, the adoption of a hetero-friendly ‘lesbian pretend’ leads to popularity in MTV’s comedic television program *Faking It*. The program focuses on ‘wanna-be’ best friends Karma (Katie Stevens) and Amy (Rita Volk) whose popularity skyrockets after being mistaken for lesbians; Karma, who has always yearned for popularity, is quick to adopt the identity and revels in her new-found school-level celebrity. While Amy slowly realises that she is, indeed, a lesbian, Karma merely uses the pretend to woo her long-time crush Liam (Gregg Sulkin) because, to quote Karma “straight guys love lesbians; just watch any porno.” Airing more than 15 years later than the two films, this show’s inclusive lesbianism demonstrates both a hegemonic shift towards inclusion of lesbian identity (which no longer guarantees social isolation and can, in fact, lead to soaring social status) and also hegemonic stasis in terms of the type of lesbian identity that is acceptable (limited to a hetero-friendly, post-feminist, gender-conforming lesbian chic).

While the ‘lesbian pretend’ creates social distance in teen films, the short-term adoption of gay identities is used in pursuit of heterosexual romance, with teens Ian (Sex Drive) and Dave (Aaron Taylor-Johnson, *Kick-Ass*) pretending to be gay to gain access to female love interests. When Ian’s homophobic (but latently homosexual) brother, Rex (James Marsden), interrupts Ian’s sexual rendezvous, Ian adopts a gay/questioning identity to convince Rex that heterosexual coitus will put him on the ‘straight and narrow.’

Ian: That’s okay, it probably wouldn’t change all these feelings that I’ve been having lately.
Rex: What are you talking about?
Ian: I don’t know, Rex, just ... feelings. Curiosities ... [He looks over at a cut out of a fireman] ... about men.
Ian: I think you might be right. I think I might be ... might be getting gay.
Rex: Oh, goddamit. Oh, fuck.
Ian: I just haven’t had any luck with girls, Rex.
Rex: No way. No way my little brother’s taking it in the chilli ring. Alright, take the car and go bang a female woman like the Lord intended. You’ve got one hour. Ian, not up the butt.
Ian: Right.
While Ian uses the ‘gay pretend’ to access heterosexual sex, Dave uses it to cultivate a relationship with long time crush Katie Deauxma (Lyndsy Fonseca). Before Katie mistakes Dave for gay, the two teens appear to be barely on speaking terms; however, after Dave adopts a homosexual identity he becomes her ‘gay BFF,’ a position that includes regular bonding sessions, shared affection, hugs, and even the opportunity to spread self-tanning cream all over her nearly-naked body. It is through the pretend that Dave gains access to her time, her affection, and indeed her body in ways that a straight identity would not allow.

The ‘gay pretend,’ then, facilitates male access to females for heterosexual sex or romance, reflecting and reinforcing reduced homohysteria and straight anxiety. That Ian and Dave willingly adopt gay identities signals an increasing acceptance of homosexuality, contrasting significantly with earlier teen films, particularly, as noted in chapter one, those from the 1980s in which being considered gay was an insult that required immediate refutation. This reflects a cultural context where homohysteria is on the wane, where “heterosexual males are less concerned about being socially perceived as gay in settings where being gay is less stigmatized” (McCormack and Anderson 2014, 114). Thus, the ‘gay pretend’ demonstrates a weakening of the social stigma attached to homosexuality and an increasing hegemonic absorption of homosexuality into the mainstream.

While the ‘gay pretend’ demonstrates an increasing inclusion of homosexuality, it also usurps homosexuality for heterosexual ends; the adoption of gay identities by these males appropriate homosexuality for a heteronormative romantic agenda. This use of gay identity for straight objectives renders homosexuality subservient an efficient tool used to woo a girl that can be discarded when its benefit is exhausted – that reinforces the hegemonic hierarchy that places heterosexual objectives above homosexual identity. Thus, while the gay pretend indicates a hegemonic shift that decreases gay stigmatisation it also re-privileges heterosexuality.

Finally, this narrative trope reflects the separation of LGBT identity and stereotypical behaviours. Televisual ‘pretends’ of the 1990s depicted “straight characters [that] consciously perform gayness by excessively citing gay stereotypes” (Becker 2006, 206), which is not the case for its use in contemporary teen films. Gone are the limp wrists, lisps, and fabulous fashion sense; neither Dave nor Ian adopt these stereotypical mannerisms, and their behaviour remains constant whether performing gay or straight. This reflects a decreasing conflation of sexuality and gender that is congruent with recent ethnographic work on American teens (McCormack 2012, Pascoe 2012), highlighting how teens understand gay men and women as separate from their gender-inverted stereotypes.
Bromance

Becker (2014) suggests that bromance discourse demonstrates a negotiation of masculinity in post-closeted society in the second decade of the 2000s; a way to deal with the ‘double bind’ of the desirability of the homosocial and the undesirability of the homosexual. While historically this double bind could be alleviated through homophobia, the shifting cultural norms of the 1990s that afforded greater visibility and acceptance of the LGBT community and stigmatised overt homophobia required a change in discourse around masculinity and male bonding. Becker posits that the ‘mistaken identity’ plot of the 1990s presented the negotiation of “growing anxieties about the legibility of sexual identity and the pitfalls of male homosociality at a time when widespread gay visibility and the social acceptance of homosexuality were relatively new” (2014, 236). By the 2010s, however, this social integration was the “new normal” (236), leading to the development of the bromance discourse. Becker notes that,

[unlike those older [mistaken identity] narratives, however, the bromance discourse is not particularly preoccupied with the illegibility of sexual identity. Within its logic, the growing social acceptability of homosexuality and visibility of gay men no longer pose the same problems for the security of straight men’s sexual identity or the same type of pitfalls for male bonding. Instead, the bromance relies on the cultural awareness of and general positive associations connected to gay love to reframe straight masculinity and male homosocial relations. Homosexual relationships become an elucidating analogy or reference point that helps identity and, in many instances, validate the genuine affection and deep friendship that can exist between two (typically straight) men. (241)

Broadly, the bromance “has come to denote an emotionally intense bond between presumably straight males who demonstrate an openness to intimacy that they neither regard, acknowledge, avow, nor express sexually” (DeAngelis 2014, 1). These intense bromantic bonds appear, to varying degrees, in teen male comedies Superbad, Fired Up!, and Dude, Where’s My Car?.

Bromantic archetype Superbad follows slovenly Seth (Jonah Hill) and equanimous Evan (Michael Cera) as they try to bring alcohol to a house party in order to ‘score’ with the ladies of their choice. After a night of hijinks, the two teens drunkenly settle down in their sleeping bags and confront their anxieties about being separated during college, culminating in their declaration of bromantic love for one another:

Evan: I can’t believe you saved me. You saved me. I can’t believe. I owe you so— You carried me. I love you. I love you, man.
Seth: I love you. I love you. I’m not even embarrassed to say it. I just— I lo— I love you.
Evan: I’m not embarrassed. I love you. I love you. Why don’t we say that every day? Why can’t we say it more often?
Seth: I just love you. I just wanna go to the rooftops and scream: ‘I love my best friend, Evan.’
Their bromantic declarations are followed by a long embrace. As noted by John Alberti,

> [t]he comedy in this scene in part derives from producing a homophobic anxiety ... over the two young characters engaged in emotional and physical, even playful, expressions of love and intimacy ... but the appeal [is] not just for laughs but for tears as well. (2013, 169)

Thus, the bromantic emotional bonds are portrayed as both comic and sincere.

But the morning brings embarrassment, especially for Seth who appears wild-eyed upon waking and desperate to escape. The scene simulates a typical ‘morning after a one-night-stand’ scene, where both parties appear somewhat embarrassed and unsure about the previous night’s deeds. It highlights the ‘social risk’ in bromance,

> [the bromance’s] definitional energy – its frisson – lies in the social risk taken in framing straight male friendship in gay terms and thus exploits the social stigma connected to homosexuality – a stigma that may be merely residual for some but still highly dominant for others. (Becker 2014, 241)

For Seth, the stigma of homosexuality certainly appears dominant. He demonstrates discomfort about the queer events of the night before, ultimately using misogyny (“your mom’s got huge tits”) to re-establish hegemonic masculine normalcy. In this way, Superbad recuperates hegemonic masculinity to cover up a bromantic emotional transgression.

Seth’s attempts to recuperate hegemonic masculinity through homophobia and misogyny are not isolated to this one scene. Indeed, Seth uses homophobia in the form of fag discourse to discipline and intimidate his friend Fogell (Christopher Mintz-Plasse) whom he nicknames ‘Fagell,’ and engages in misogynist behaviour through incessant talk about females in derogatory terms (“I am truly jealous you got to suck on those tits when you were a baby”; “she looks like a good fucker”). By engaging in these behaviours, Seth typifies the style of adolescent masculine identity maintenance detailed in Pascoe’s study in which

> [b]oys constantly engage[] in repudiatory rituals to avoid permanently inhabiting the fag position ... composed of competitive joking though which they interactionally create[] the constitutive outside and affirm[] their positions as subjects. (2012, 65)

Seth’s misogynist talk mirrors Pascoe’s findings that

control over women’s bodies and their sexuality is, sadly, still central to definitions of masculinity, at least adolescent masculinity. By dominating girls’ bodies boys defend[] against the fag position, increase[] their social status, and forge[] bonds of solidarity with other boys. (114)

Thus, attempts to secure and accrue hegemonic masculine standing through homophobia and misogyny are seen off screen as well as on it, and Seth’s use of these behaviours are likely familiar
and appealing to certain segments of the audience who subscribe to or at least recognise these same beliefs and behaviours.

Seth and his attempts to secure and accrue his social status through homophobia and misogyny are not, however, cast as wholly desirable; Seth is, indeed, also a spectre of failed masculinity. Seth is “aggressively unattractive” (Alberti 2013, 165): overweight, unstylishly attired, immature, addicted to pornography, and unable to attract girls. He is keenly aware of his lack of sex appeal, feeling as though a girl would require intoxication to desire him, as he demonstrates when he tearfully tells his love interest, Jules (Emma Stone), that she would “never get with [him] if [she] were sober.” When the opportunity to woo her finally arrives, he again fails at manliness, passing out from excessive alcohol intake, head-butting her in the process and giving her a thoroughly unromantic black-eye. He is clearly ‘all talk’ when it comes to sex, unable to even flirt persuasively. Thus, Seth – and by extension the homophobic and misogynist behaviours he uses to attempt to secure hegemonic masculinity – are cast as somewhat repugnant and pathetic.

Seth’s short-comings are particularly evident when he is counterbalanced against lead character Evan who is comparatively kind, authentic, sexually appealing, and mature. Evan is portrayed as kind, never disparaging his friends without cause in contrast to Seth who constantly belittles Fogell. The contrast between the two teens is most striking in their respect for women. When Seth crudely critiques Evan’s love interest, Becca (Martha MacIsaac), Evan stands up for her, saying “You know what? I’m seriously getting fucking sick of you talking about her like that, if we can be honest.” It is also evident in their differing seduction techniques: Seth plies Jules with alcohol in the hopes of becoming her ‘drunken sexual mistake,’ while Evan is more interested in wooing Becca through bonding (“I’m gonna tell Becca how I feel. Maybe she’ll get with me. I’m not gonna get her drunk out of her mind”). Indeed, when Evan’s sexual opportunity arises with a very intoxicated Becca, he chivalrously declines, delaying his own gratification until it would be more emotionally fulfilling and safeguarding her self-respect. Thus, Evan, portrayed as more mature and appealing, can be understood as embodying a more progressive form of masculinity that is not necessarily predicated on one-upmanship through homophobia and misogyny. He strives for strong homosocial friendships and exhibits little discomfort at the bromantic transgressions that

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210 It is also apparent when Seth hatches a plan to obtain alcohol despite being under the legal drinking age, and tries to convince Evan to support the plan.

Seth: When you guys are shitfaced, you get with her [Becca]. This is our last party as high school people ... Just fucking come with me on this voyage and stop being a pussy for once and we can fucking fuck some girls already.

Evan: I should buy Becca alcohol?

Seth: Yeah, it’ll be pimp. That way you know she’ll be drunk. You know when girls say: ‘I was so shitfaced last night. I shouldn’t have fucked that guy.’ We could be that mistake!
causes Seth to panic; he longs for heterosexual romance based on mutual respect and caring. Thus, *Superbad* presents the coexistence of traditional hegemonic masculinity (embodied by Seth) that is played for laughs but with which at least certain segments of the audience are likely able to identify, with a more progressive masculinity (embodied by Evan) that no longer needs to rely on homophobia and misogyny as a source of masculine identity.

*Fired Up!* depicts strong emotional bonds between teen protagonists Nick and Shawn, free of the panic, homophobia, and misogyny exhibited by Seth in *Superbad*. *Fired Up!* focuses on the sexual and romantic exploits of kindly serial Casanovas Nick and Shawn at cheerleading camp. From the start, the male teens share fairly deep bromantic bonds that are demonstrably more profound than those of their football buddies who bond through moronic horseplay and practical jokes. Indeed, even Nick and Shawn notice the discrepancy: after becoming, to quote Nick, a “fully formed person with, like, sensitivity and empathy” at cheer camp, returning to traditional masculine routine is “not nearly as much fun as it was last year.” Though both Nick and Shawn are always interested in heterosexual sex, neither character attempts to accrue masculine standing by resorting to overt homophobia or misogyny.211 Thus, like Seth, the football jocks represent a traditional masculinity that is cast as foolish, whereas Nick and Shawn mirror Evan’s more progressive and enlightened masculinity.

Nick and Shawn’s bromantic bonds even extend to touching, as seen during their impromptu late night nude cheer session that culminates in one mounting the other. Such touch is portrayed as contravening homosocial boundaries – both teens are uncomfortable with the ‘bare back’ romp – but neither demonstrates the type of hysteria present in gay panic humour. In addition to this scene, touch-as-transgression is demonstrated when Shawn says to Nick “I know you don’t like man-to-man touching, but my arm is on your shoulder. Here comes my arm right now.” This joking “helps to mitigate the awkwardness of the moment that transgress[es] hegemonic gender norms” (Becker 2009, 133) but also demonstrates a closeness between the two teens that extends to tactility without resorting to homophobic recuperation. Unlike slovenly virgin Seth, lotharios Nick and Shawn are so confident in their heterosexuality that they don’t mind blurring

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211 The premise of *Fired Up!* is certainly sexist and some scenes do feature Nick and Shawn making lewd comments about women. For example, after cheer camp Nick realises,

Nick: I actually know these girls, as, like, friends. And I care. I’m becoming like a fully formed person with like sensitivity and empathy. All right, I’m a person! [He raises his arms triumphantly, then looks at the television in the kitchen that features an attractive woman in a bikini.] Look at the pooper on that one. I could rest my beer on that shit.

Shawn: And you’re back.

In this scene, Nick oscillates between being a caring male friend who respects women to a sexist womaniser, but because the focus of the scene is this oscillation, rendering the sexism overt, it complicates what would normally be a standard exchange in a teen film targeting a male audience. In all, while *Fired Up!* caters to young males, and does engage in sexism, the level of this sexism is significantly less than what is portrayed by Seth in *Superbad*, and what permeates teen films like *College* and *Project X*.
the lines a little, demonstrating much more ease with their emotional and tactile bromantic bonds.

While Nick and Shawn share a few touches, the ‘blurriest’ bromantic moment is clearly the kiss shared between Jesse and Chester in *Dude, Where’s My Car?*. In this scene, the two teens pull up next to a convertible driven by Fabio with an attractive female passenger. In a non-verbal contest of macho masculinity between the Jesse-Chester and Fabio-female dyads, they take turns revving their car engines, putting an arm across the other’s shoulder and, finally, kissing passionately. After Fabio and his female passenger break apart from the kiss, smug with their expected victory, Jesse and Chester look at each other; pausing only for a brief moment of consideration, they lean in and French kiss. After Jesse and Chester separate, Fabio and his date look revolted but the two teens show no trace of embarrassment or panic, disgust or regret – merely delight at winning the contest of machismo.

This scene received a rave review from alternative filmmaker Bruce LaBruce, who said “I was almost in tears. This one scene does more to advance the cause of homosexuality than 25 years of gay activism” (quoted in Halberstam 2011, 67). Judith Halberstam, reiterating LaBruce’s comments, writes,

> [a]rmed with the ammunition of a startlingly queer and sexy encounter between two resolutely straight dudes, LaBruce can rejoice, cry almost, at the dudes’ nonchalance, their heady indifference to the sexual codes of dudedom, their gormless plunge into manly gay sex, their knowing mimicry of not Fabio’s performed hetero make-out session but the barely submerged homosexuality of, to quote *Zoolander*, ‘really, really, really good-looking male models.’ (2011, 67)

However, neither Halberstam nor LaBruce focus on the central motivation of this scene: this kiss is not about erotic homosexual desire; it is about winning a competition to see who is more macho, more manly, more hegemonically masculine. In this way, perhaps the queerest kiss of the genre is heteronormatively recouped and stripped of its queer potential. (A similar mechanism is used in the scene when Jesse and Chester find their forgotten tattoos – the “dude” and “sweet” that is permanently inked on their backs – and get progressively more frustrated at the ensuing misunderstanding, which culminates in shirtless touching but only as traditionally masculine horseplay.) In this way, *Dude, Where’s My Car?* demonstrates the increased range of permissible masculine behaviours, but underscores that these are permissible only in service of typically masculine ends (masculine competition), and thus “negate actual queer desire” (Feil 2014, 166) if such desire was ever present.

As seen in *Superbad, Fired Up!, and Dude, Where’s My Car?*, the bromance reflects an increase in the “range of permissible behaviours” (McCormack 2012, 45) for heterosexual males. In both the
bromance and Anderson’s theory of IMT, heterosexual males are able to be “more emotionally intimate with friends” (Anderson and McCormack 2016, 2) and be “physically tactile with other men” (2), blurring the line between the homosocial and the homosexual. Emerging as it did in post-closeted contexts, the bromance discourse relies on and reinforces a cultural and social shift that enables LGBT visibility and a reduction in the social stigma attached to homosexuality (Becker 2014). At least within certain parts of American culture, the threat of the ‘threatening spectre of homosexuality’ has receded such that it no longer reliably polices and regulates masculinity. As seen in the bromance, straight males do not necessarily fear homosexual suspicion or avoid ‘suspect’ bonding and touching, nor do they rely on homophobia to reassert their heterosexuality or recoup their privilege. Thus, the bromance reflects and reinforces a hegemonic shift of gender and sexuality that blurs the boundary between the homosocial and the homosexual.

And yet, it also defines this boundary more sharply. Indeed, the “subversive potential [of the bromance] is limited” (Brook 2015, 253) for a number of reasons. First, no matter how much bonding or touching goes on, the genre’s bromantic teens are all unquestionably straight: Jesse and Chester quest after ‘hoo hoos’ (breasts) as much as the ‘continuum transfunctioner’; Seth and Evan’s party crusade is intended to end in conquest of females; and Nick and Shawn’s cheer adventure is fuelled by their unquenchable heterosexual desire. Thus, while they might queerly transgress, there is never any question that they actually desire anything more than ‘straight and narrow’ friendship. Indeed, bromances exclude actual gay male characters; “[o]nly heterosexuals can have a bromance” (Chen 2012, 248). With virtually no exceptions, televisual and filmic bromances occur between straight males only, increasing the range of straight male experiences but safeguarding them from straying into truly queer territory. Straights-only means the boundaries might blur, but they will never break. Thus, gay-friendly, liberal straights need not worry that their gay-friendly cool will ever be transgressed, or even ruffled, by unwelcome homosexual desire.

Second, bromances reinforce heteronormativity. The ‘bros’ in these films are not only straight, but also tend to be gender-conforming. ‘Bros’ like Nick and Shawn, Jesse and Chester, and even Evan can ‘play gay’ because they’re so secure in their heterosexuality. Thus,

[w]ithin the emerging dynamics of the bromance discourse, expressions of homosocial male bonding are, it seems, no longer structured by the abjection of the gay Other, but they remain firmly structured by the abjection of effeminacy. (Becker 2014, 252)

This abjection of effeminacy often stretches to abjection of females. As DeAngelis points out,

212 The ‘continuum transfunctioner’ is, as is repeated numerous times throughout the film, a “mysterious and powerful device [whose] mystery is only exceeded by its power” and is all that stands in the way of the universe’s destruction. The film ostensibly revolves around various groups of humans and aliens that search for the continuum transfunctioner to either save or destroy the universe.
women in the bromance narrative are often represented misogynistically as loving yet controlling and annoying interferences whose demands must always be ‘dealt with.’ Or disavowed, as the case may be. (2014, 12)

Females within the genre are often positioned as “objects in the bros’ institutional heteronormative still lives: necessary objects, but objects nonetheless” (Forster 2014, 207).

Women and girls in teen romances are almost all one-dimensional; beautiful but lacking any depth. Superbad’s Becca functions only as the object of Evan’s affection; even Jules, who is portrayed as intelligent and fun-loving, is present primarily as Seth’s fantasy. The women in Dude, Where’s My Car? are even more sexily insipid: from the quintet of aliens in the form of ‘hot chicks,’ to popular Christie Boner (Kristy Swanson) (her name should say it all), to the ‘breakdancing strippers,’ all of the females are there to only to be seen, desired, and occasionally groped. Even ‘the twins,’ Jesse and Chester’s long-suffering girlfriends, are often referred to in the collective and appear to have no personalities of their own; there simply to tempt the male protagonists with promises of “special treats.” Similarly, Fired Up! is premised on two male teens who have, to quote the film, “been through every girl at [their] school” and head to cheer camp to ‘hook up’ with ‘fresh meat.’ It is thus unsurprising that most of the females are treated as objects of conquest (only Carly [Sarah Roemer] and Poppy have attributes other than beauty). Thus, these bromantic teen films all position females as objects or prizes to be won. According to Peter Forster, in bromances “[p]art of the recouping of heteromasculinity of its protagonists is the position of the woman as the prize for the bro” (2014, 204).

Finally, the bromance is open to polysemic interpretation; it can be contraditorily read as a validation or a punishment of close homosocial bonds (Becker 2014). Becker warns that “[e]ven when it relies on a relatively positive view of gay love, the discourse’s structuring logic often works to exclude gay men from the privileges of hegemonic masculinity by reinscribing rigid gender norms” (2014, 241-242). In these ways, bromance films manage to blur and maintain the boundaries between the homosocial and homosexual. These films “navigat[e] the possibilities of male-male intimacy … [yet] vow to operate within the parameters of heteronormativity” (DeAngelis 2014, 15).

**Conclusion**

As seen throughout this chapter, onscreen heterosexuals respond to LGBT interactions in homophobic and LGBT-friendly ways. Homophobic responses by onscreen straights often take the form of gay panic, reinvoking a homophobic view of LGBT adults as predators whose ‘offensive, provoking, and infuriating’ advances require panicked or pernicious responses. Instances of gay panic also position same-sex contact as punitive, a form of punishment that can only result in
panicked discomfort. Another homophobic response takes the form of fag discourse, which polices normative gender practices and reinscribes hegemony's heteronormative hierarchy.

While equivocal within the genre, there is an overall trend towards increasingly LGBT-friendly reactions by straight protagonists, with homophobia increasingly reserved as a marker of undesirable personality traits associated with rednecks, religious fanatics, and antagonists. LGBT-friendly protagonists within the genre often demonstrate weak boundaries of social distance through friendships with LGBT peers, association with gay signifiers, and, very occasionally, comfort in LGBT spaces. A few heterosexual protagonists willingly blur the boundaries of their own identities, though generally in ways that benefit them romantically. While teen films courting a female audience exemplify this trend, those targeting a male audience or forming part of the parody sub-genre tend to rely on homophobic reactions like gay panic and fag discourse. However, this may be changing. The gay panic demonstrated by heterosexual protagonists in male teen comedies like EuroTrip, College, and Sex Drive is perhaps in the process of being replaced by more gay-friendly bromantic narrative devices like those on offer in Fired Up!, in which heterosexuality is reasserted without marginalising gay males. Within post-closeted contexts, onscreen homophobic reactions may thus feel increasingly incongruous to audiences. Indeed, considering the LGBT-inclusive and liberal ideals identified with ‘Generation Z,’ and the decreasing homohysteria observed by McCormack and Anderson (Anderson and McCormack 2016, McCormack and Anderson 2014, 2010a, 2010b, McCormack 2012, 2011), it is likely that more gay-inclusive forms of humour will resonate with youth audiences and be adopted within the teen film genre as long as bromances continue to be profitable.
Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to explore LGBT representations in contemporary teen films as manifestations of the hegemonic process. Embedded within a historical, cultural, and industrial ‘moment,’ and drawing on the historical and representational past, these representations illustrate hegemonic exclusion, negotiation, and domestication, and can be understood as simultaneously progressive and regressive. Routine tropes and narrative conventions demonstrate hegemonic provisional stabilisations; modification and alteration of these tropes and conventions demonstrate the lived dynamic shifts of the process of hegemonic negotiation.

As explored in chapters two and three, contemporary mainstream media routinely present LGBT portrayals of gender-conforming, white, middle-class, mostly gay men with fixed sexual identities; this representation reflects and reinforces the contemporary dominant hegemonic provisional stabilisation that is generally understood as ‘common sense’ by most of the population. Yet, the hegemonic process is always dynamic, impacted by tensions and struggles between the dominant and oppositional/alternative, and thus these provisional stabilisations are themselves “continually renewed, recreated, defended, ... modified ... resisted, limited, altered, [and] challenged” (Williams 1977, 112). Reflecting this ideological dynamism, LGBT media portrayals are always in flux, presenting spaces of contestation made manifest through increased ranges of LGBT character depiction and narrative elements. Chapters three and four examined routine LGBT characterisations and explored how moments of contestation play out onscreen in the teen film genre for both LGBT characters and onscreen heterosexuals. While most often seen in independent/Indiewood films, LGBT characters of colour and those from working-class backgrounds have been depicted; lesbian, bisexual, and even a few transgender characters have made their way onscreen; and LGBT teens use their own agency to overcome victimisation. Out teens are generally now depicted as happy and accepted; while the closet is generally presented as dangerous, there is one example of a teen living successfully in the space between the ‘in’ and the ‘out’ of the closet. Onscreen heterosexuals engage in both homophobic and LGBT-friendly responses, with an overall shift towards LGBT acceptance among straight protagonists and an increasing range of acceptable, non-homohysterical, bromantic behaviours available to onscreen (heterosexual) males.

Thus far, LGBT representation and onscreen heterosexual responses have been discussed separately in chapters three and four; in this final section I draw the two together, further exploring the complications and patterns seen within the genre. From there, I examine the representational progress that has been made in teen-oriented media since the early 1990s and
the final section of this chapter contemplates the future of LGBT representation, paying particular attention to the current political and social context which, seemingly in a matter of months, has shifted from a decades-long trend of increasing liberalisation to a period of dynamic ideological negotiation.

**Complications and patterns: LGBT representation and onscreen heterosexual responses**

Examining LGBT representation in teen films at a generic level reveals a number of complications and patterns. One of these complications is the co-existence of progressive and regressive LGBT depictions within the genre. Progressive representations of LGBT characters and onscreen inclusive straights occur in some of the earliest contemporary teen films ([Clueless](#) [1995], [Election](#) [1999]) and some of the latest ([Easy A](#) [2010], [The Perks of Being a Wallflower](#) [2012]). Yet, regressive, homophobic portrayals exist alongside these progressive depictions, seen in early teen films like [Friday](#) (1995) and later films like [College](#) (2008). Thus, the genre reflects and reinforces the uneven process of LGBT integration that has, as yet, generally resisted a single unified provisional stabilisation.

Despite this unevenness, there is a pattern: teen films targeting a female audience are more likely to be progressive (with LGBT characters occupying more central roles and depicted as happy and confident, and onscreen straights engaging in LGBT-friendly behaviour) whereas teen films targeting males are more likely to be regressive (with LGBT characters in incidental roles that rely on pejorative or stereotypical presentation and homophobic responses among heterosexual characters). This reflects and may reinforce the higher levels of homophobia among heterosexual males than those among heterosexual females ([Herek 2000](#), [Golom and Mohr 2011](#), [Dean 2014](#)), and reflect the patterns of masculine identity formation discussed in chapter four.

Another pattern is the acceptance of LGBT teens but not LGBT adults by onscreen heterosexuals within teen films. While equivocal within the genre, most out gay and lesbian teens are depicted as happy and accepted by their heterosexual peers; even in some cases of mistaken identity that result in LGBT teens flirting with onscreen straights, straight reactions are not necessarily panicked (for example, Downey [Jake Sandvig](#) flirting with Nick [Eric Christian Olsen](#) in [Fired Up!](#) [2009]). Less acceptance is, however, depicted for LGBT adults. As demonstrated by [Almost Famous](#) (2000) and [Outside Providence](#) (1999) in chapter three, LGBT adults are not guaranteed the warm welcome given to LGBT teens after they exit the closet. More commonly, LGBT adults are portrayed as predatory, making ‘offensive, provoking, and infuriating’ advances on onscreen straights that are aggressively rebuffed, as seen in the instances of gay panic discussed in chapter
four. In this way, the genre demonstrates an unevenness, where LGBT teens are accepted, but LGBT adults are less tolerable.

This complicated acceptance also extends to the type of sexual orientation or gender expression presented. While the genre generally depicts gay males as happy and accepted by their peers, lesbians encounter more hostility, as seen with, for example, Randy’s (Laurel Holloman) victimisation by peers and strangers alike (The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love [1995]), Tammy’s (Jessica Campbell) harsh romantic rejection (Election), Megan (Natasha Lyonne) being temporary disowned by her parents (But I’m a Cheerleader [2000]), and the social banishment of gender non-conforming females who are labelled, or willingly self-identify, as lesbians (Stokely [Clea DuVall] in The Faculty, and Janis [Lizzy Caplan] in Mean Girls [2004]). As explored in chapter three, bisexual characters have variously been discredited, considered indecent, and, finally, accepted. In contrast, transgender characters are not tolerated let alone accepted, and continue to be used only as objects of ridicule or markers of degeneracy, with onscreen heterosexuals reacting to them with disgust or panic, as demonstrated by Jesse’s (Ashton Kutcher) reaction to Tania’s (Teressa Tunney) advances in Dude, Where’s My Car? (2000) discussed in chapter four. Thus, the level of acceptance of non-heterosexuals depends on their type of sexual orientation and gender identity.

The unevenness of these patterns is apparent at a generic level, but can also be seen within individual films. For example, Bring It On (2000) depicts confident, out gay teen cheerleader, Les (Huntley Ritter), alongside his straight best friend, Jan (Nathan West), who anxiously threatens bullying football players with physical violence for questioning his heterosexuality. It is also seen in Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist (2008), a generally gay-positive film that includes three major gay male protagonists (including one gay teen of colour) whose status as ‘indie’ musicians contests the archetype of the ‘normal gay teenager.’ The gay teens are portrayed fairly progressively; they dance and flirt with each other and suffer no victimisation because of their sexuality. Indeed, heterosexual lead Nick (Michael Cera), demonstrates his ‘hip’ and inclusive credentials through weak boundaries of social distance that include having three gay best friends, feeling at ease in gay spaces, and even flirting briefly with a gay male, temporarily blurring his sexual identity. Thus, this film can be understood as being relatively progressive by increasing the scope of gay representation beyond typical boundaries and countering established tropes of asexual gay teens and the ‘gay youth as victim.’ Yet, the film simultaneously re-establishes heteronormativity in a number of ways. Presenting gender-conforming gay teens Dev (Rafi Gavron), Thom (Aaron Yoo), and Lethario (Jonathan B. Wright) as ‘gay fairy godmothers’ more intent on fostering straight romance than investing in their own romantic agendas reasserts the primacy of heterosexual romance and reinforces the heteronormative hierarchy. Perhaps more
troubling is the introduction of predatory Homeless Man (Andy Samberg) whose discomfiting sexual advances literally make Nick run for the safety of his friends, reasserting the trope of the predatory gay man. Put simply, on the one hand the film depicts a range of well-adjusted, happy, out gay teens who are in a mixed gay/straight peer group with supportive heterosexual friends, and on the other hand it reasserts a focus on heterosexual romance and presents gay predation. Thus, the film is contradictorily progressive and regressive, contesting some tropes and reasserting others.

Before moving on to the possible future of LGBT representation, I would like to consider two of Edward Shiappa’s (2008) proposals for academic work that engages with media representations: celebrate successful representations and offer reflections on how they could be improved. While homophobia remains visible within the teen film genre and many LGBT and heterosexual portrayals reinforce heteronormativity in one way or another, it is important to consider the progress made in LGBT representation in youth media. Reflecting on media of the early 1990s, Alfred Kielwasser and Michelle Wolf (1992, 1993) posited that LGBT youth were ‘symbolically annihilated,’ absolutely invisible in mainstream media. Since that time, LGBT teens have made their way onscreen, particularly in teen-oriented television. While the majority of LGBT characters continue to be white, gender-conforming, middle-class, and traditionally attractive, there are now a range of portrayals, incrementally more inclusive of ethnic and class diversity and sexual fluidity. LGBT characters, while generally not leads, have moved from one-episode characters in television programming of the early 1990s to series regulars; LGBT teens, while generally not politically active, occasionally engage in forms of youth activism like Gay Straight Alliances onscreen.

Overall, LGBT teens in film and television are now often ‘out and proud,’ accepted, and sexually desirous. These more progressive representations demonstrate a shift in the hegemonic ‘common sense’ around LGBT youth: they exist; they are diverse in terms of ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation/gender expression; they can live happy lives; they can employ their own agency; they have desires. As hegemony’s battleground, such media representations reflect and reinforce provisional stabilisations and also challenge hegemony’s ‘fiction of homogeneity’ by articulating struggle and contestation onscreen. Indeed, these representations count; as discussed in the introduction, evidence suggests that media representations impact on the belief and behaviours of teen audiences and, as such, progress in LGBT representation may mean changes in the lived reality of LGBT and straight youth alike.

Onscreen representations have certainly come a long way since the early 1990s but there is still considerable progress that should be made. Improvements that should be considered for future depictions would include: increasing the number of LGBT characters and their narrative centrality;
increasing the range of LGBTTIQQ2S and fluid identities that contest the binarism and fixidity of sexual identity; increasing depictions of LGBT teens of colour; depicting LGBT sexual desire as natural and in ways similar to the depictions of heterosexual desire (and, for film, not increasing the MPAA rating for such depictions); increasing the political mobilisation of LGBT characters; reduce or eliminate depictions of predatory LGBT adults still routinely used in gay panic humour; present more inclusive portrayals of masculinity that do not rely on homophobic recuperation, like those in bromantic teen films.

These suggestions for progress appear congruent with youth's permissive views of sexuality and gender identity. As examined in chapters two and four, ‘Generation Z’ is more accepting and open-minded regarding issues of gender and sexuality than older cohorts; they not only accept their LGBT and non-binary, non-fixed peers, but a significant number of them self-identify on the LGBT+ spectrum (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation 2017, Laughlin 2016, Moore 2015, Steinmetz 2017a). Issues of sexuality, gender, and being a ‘good ally’ form part of the lived experience of today’s youth, made visible by youth-relevant celebrities like Lady Gaga and Miley Cyrus (Jang 2015a, Jones 2016) and LGBT+ social media stars (Skelley 2017), and gracing the pages of youth magazines like Teen Vogue (which has examined topics ranging from the ‘fluttery feelings’ of same-sex attraction [Sicardi 2016] to rainbow underpants in honour of pride month [Matara 2017]). It is possible that given the particularly inclusive nature of this cohort, onscreen LGBT+ inclusivity will not rely only on explicitly LGBT characters; sexuality and gender identity may be narratively included by questioning, genderqueer/gender non-conforming, asexual, and fluid youth who resist any fixed identities. Indeed, some very recent teen films do, arguably, depict such forms of non-heterosexuality: The Maze Runner (2014), for instance, includes no sexual or romantic (sub)plot and can be considered asexual; Power Rangers (2017) includes (somewhat) gender non-conforming, strong and feisty females who are more skilled at combat than their male peers, one of whom questions her sexuality; and the stars of The Hunger Games films blend gender attributes, depicting beautiful, athletic, and strong-willed leader Katniss (Jennifer Lawrence) alongside her physically strong but diminutive, sweet-natured, and pacifist male partner Peeta (Josh Hutcherson). While still a minority, such films do present narratives that are not necessarily strictly heteronormative.

While teen films may tell increasingly ‘queer’ narratives, no significant progress appears to have occurred regarding the inclusion of explicitly LGBT characters within the genre since 2013, despite a context suggesting that progressive LGBT representations would not necessarily be economically

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213 Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex, queer, questioning, two-spirited.
risk in teen films.\textsuperscript{214} Between 2014 and 2017, LGBT inclusion was limited to a single mainstream teen film, \textit{The DUFF} (2015), which features an incidental gay teen character speaking a single line of dialogue in one scene. Even teen films from the independent and Indiewood sectors are lacking in LGBT representation; only Sony Pictures Classics’ \textit{The Diary of a Teenage Girl} (2015) and independent Open Road Films’ \textit{Dope} (2015) include LGBT characters. Though both of these films include major LGBT characters, they were shown in a relatively small number of theatres and were thus less accessible to audiences.\textsuperscript{215} With only three teen films featuring explicitly LGBT characters released in the last four years, LGBT representation appears to be sliding back towards invisibility. Part of the current paucity of LGBT characters within teen film may be due to the genre’s preoccupation with action-packed dystopian and horror plot-lines, sub-genres which, as outlined in chapter two, have historically tended to omit LGBT characters. Thus, despite audience appetite and the increasingly progressive depictions on almost all teen television programs, explicit LGBT characters in teen films may remain low until production of teen comedies and dramas increases again.

\textbf{Uncertain future: representation and the ‘rise of the right’}

After decades of America’s increasing acceptance of the LGBT community, discussed in chapters one and two, the warnings offered by Suzanna Danuta Walters (2001) and Joshua Gamson (2000) may be more poignant than ever: visibility is tenuous, it is not guaranteed; the trend of growing liberalisation is not certain to continue, and may well slow down or grind to a halt. With the very visible rise of the political right, minority groups of all kinds may be subject to the ‘re-invisibility’ and marginalisation cautioned by these two scholars.

The ‘rise of the far right’ is a reaction to global economic and national social conditions. A worldwide recession and precarious local economic conditions with few employment opportunities, particularly for people with lower levels of education, coupled with growing distrust in public institutions and increasing concerns about immigration, have seen right wing populism, nationalism, and xenophobia rise in the US and other countries such as France, Austria, and the UK (Sheehy 2017, Tharoor 2016). In America, Donald Trump’s election campaign espoused hostility towards immigrants and free trade; as noted by a Drake University law professor, “[f]rom day one, he made xenophobic and nationalistic policies the centerpiece of his

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{214}]\footnotesize Information on recent films was obtained from screening films, reading the GLAAD blog for information on LGBT representation in recent and upcoming films, and from GLAAD’s \textit{Studio Responsibility Index} reports for films released between 2014 and 2016 (the report for 2017 is not yet available so some films from this year may have been missed). Only films in the top 200 grossing per year were included for discussion. Three additional teen films not in the annual top 200 grossing included LGBT representation: \textit{Take Me To The River} (2015), \textit{As You Are} (2016), and \textit{King Cobra} (2016).
\item[\textsuperscript{215}]\footnotesize \textit{Dope} was shown in a total of 2,002 theatres and \textit{The Diary of a Teenage Girl} was shown in only 795 theatres (Box Office Mojo 2017).
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campaign” (Gaughan 2016). This was similarly observed by President and CEO of the Southern Poverty Law Center, Richard Cohen, who noted,

> [t]he combination of his [Trump’s] racist campaign and the attacks on political correctness told many people that the gloves are off and they could act, unfortunately, with their worst instincts. (quoted in Kaleem 2017)

After Trump’s election, anecdotal evidence suggests that some of his supporters have indeed targeted racial, religious, and sexual minority groups with verbal and physical attacks. Such behaviour has been observed by teachers who note “an alarming level of fear and anxiety among children of colour and inflaming racial and ethnic tensions in the classroom,” (Costello 2016, 4), coupled with an increase in bullying, harassment, and intimidation.216 The targeting of minority groups is perhaps most visible with the rise of the ‘alt-right,’217 a collection of ultra-conservative and racist groups that has become reenergised after years of decline (Berger 2017, BBC News 2017). The alt-right has become increasingly visible and outspoken, culminating in the protests in Charlottesville, VA218 which many Americans and journalists saw as a “blatant display of attitudes that many believed had been buried” (Astor, Caron, and Victor 2017). Trump has been pivotal to the emboldening of the alt-right, making their views “more mainstream, … encouraging their spread” (Foran 2017). Indeed, according to a recent study by social psychologist Chris Crandall, Trump’s victory has unleashed the silent prejudices already held by certain segments of the population, quickly changing social norms such that expressing these prejudices is increasingly acceptable (Crandall 2016, Vedantam 2017).219

Accompanying the emboldening of alt-right is an equivocal increase in hate crimes across the nation (Okeowo 2016). Hate crimes are criminal acts against a person or property because of the offender’s bias against the victim’s actual or perceived race, religion, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity (Herek 2017). While it is difficult to determine with any

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216 This study by the Southern Poverty Law Center relied on email subscribers and website visits, and allowed approximately 2,000 teachers to anecdotally describe the impact of the Trump election in their schools (Costello 2016).

217 The ‘alt-right’ is an umbrella term that conglomerates white supremacy, white nationalism, anti-Semitism, and anti-immigration populist movements (Kunzelman 2017, Berger 2017, Southern Poverty Law Center 2017).

218 The Charlottesville protest occurred in August 2017, and involved members of the alt-right ostensibly protesting the removal of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee; the protest turned violent and lead to the death of a counter-protester (Fortin 2017).

219 Crandall’s study had 200 Trump supporters and 200 Hillary Clinton supporters assess their own prejudices or assess the acceptability of expressing prejudicial views of groups targeted by Trump (including Muslims, Mexicans, and ‘fat people’) and groups not targeted by Trump (for example, Canadians, blind people, and film stars). A follow-up study, conducted two weeks after the initial study, found that opinions had changed and, while both Trump and Clinton supporters had lower levels of personal animus towards groups targeted by Trump, participants indicated significantly higher perceived acceptance of prejudicial speech towards these groups (Crandall 2016, Vedantam 2017).
certainty whether hate crimes have escalated since Trump’s election, due to unreliable data and lack of statistics for 2016, news media and projects like ProPublica’s Documenting Hate suggest that they have. As of February 2017, nearly 1,400 hate crimes have been perpetrated against minority groups, including members of the LGBT community (Thompson and Schwencke 2016, HateWatch Staff 2017, Blum 2017).

In addition to the equivocal increase in hate crimes, the LGBT community is also facing political and legislative battles with the Trump administration. Many of Trump’s cabinet have a history of anti-LGBT activities, including Vice President Mike Pence; head of the Health and Human Services’ Civil Rights Office, Roger Severino; and Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos (Stack 2016, Green 2017a, Anderson 2017a). The Trump administration also removed questions about LGBT status on various national surveys, potentially hampering appropriate policy development and program delivery; the removal of these questions has been seen by LGBT advocates as an act of erasure (Turner 2017, Anderson 2017b, McDonald 2017). Most recently, the Trump administration withdrew protections for LGBT students under Title IX (Erickson Hatalsky and Kasai 2017).

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220 Hate crime statistics collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) are incomplete and inaccurate because of under-reporting or improper classification by law enforcement agencies and under-reporting by victims (Herek 2017). A recent study found 60 percent of hate crimes went unreported in 2012 (Wilson 2014).

221 According to the Documenting Hate website (https://projects.propublica.org/graphics/hatecrimes), ProPublica is a not-for-profit ‘newsroom’ that undertakes investigative journalism for ‘the public good.’ Documenting Hate aims to improve the reliability of national hate crimes data by documenting hate crimes, harassment, and forms of intimidation that include bullying. To supplement FBI hate crime data, the project assembles data from law enforcement agencies, community groups, news reports, social media, etc., which are then followed up and authenticated by volunteers, including journalism students. This project involves a national coalition of almost 100 civil rights organisations, news organisations, and technology companies, such as WNYC, The Guardian, PBS Newshour, Ushahidi, Human Rights Campaign, SPLC, The Anti-Defamation League, and Google News Lab. While not academically rigorous, this project follows in the footsteps of other community reporting mechanisms (Herek 2017) and adds to the overall picture of victimisation.

222 The 1,400 hate crimes reported to Documenting Hate between November 2016 and February 2017 included: bomb threats to Jewish community centres and mosques; the distribution of flyers for white nationalist organisations; and verbal abuse (Thompson and Schwencke 2016, HateWatch Staff 2017). LGBT-relevant incidents include the assault of a gay man in Washington who was reportedly told “this is what a Trump America looks like, faggot” and one in Key West when two gay men were assaulted and told “you live in Trump country now” (Blum 2017). Nevertheless, the large number of hate crimes reported to the Documenting Hate project may reflect an increased propensity for victims to report crimes, and thus may not reflect an actual increase in the number of hate crimes committed. It also includes incidents that may not qualify for the FBI hate crimes database.

223 Vice President Mike Pence opposed same-sex marriage, voted against employment non-discrimination, and against the repeal of the ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ military policy (Stack 2016). Roger Severino was an outspoken opponent to same-sex marriage and former employee of the conservative think-tank The Heritage Foundation; his appointment to lead the Civil Rights Office potentially endangers affordable health care for the LGBT community (Green 2017a). GLAAD raised concerns about Betsy DeVos’ appointment because of her family’s funding of anti-LGBT initiatives and her opposition to same-sex marriage (Anderson 2017a).

224 Questions on LGBT status were removed (then reinstated) on the National Survey of Older Americans Act Participants (O’Hara 2017, Maril 2017), and such data will not be collected for the Annual Program Performance Report for Centers for Independent Living (The Williams Institute 2017). LGBT status will also be excluded from the next census (Green 2017b).
Somashekhar, Brown, and Balingit 2017), and Trump announced a ban on transgender people from serving in the military in any capacity, reversing an Obama-era policy (Phillip, Gibbons-Neff, and Lamothe 2017).

Taken together, these changes – the increased prominence of conservative beliefs, emboldening of discriminatory and phobic groups, an equivocal rise in hate crimes, and the many anti-LGBT actions of the Trump administration – demonstrate an iterative hegemonic shift that appears to be ‘teetering’ towards conservatism. The oppositional/alternative forces of right-wing populism are clashing with both dominant forces and the oppositional/alternative forces of the left, resulting in particularly unstable equilibria that are playing out in political, legislative, and social arenas across the country. With popular culture understood as hegemony’s battleground, it is therefore important to consider what changes are likely to occur in entertainment media content and, more specifically, the future of LGBT representation in this political and social climate. While, as discussed in chapters one and two, there has been a somewhat fragmented but increasingly liberal trend in politics and public opinion for decades, with LGBT representation migrating from invisible/connotative to fairly routine in mainstream media, the future now appears more fraught.

It appears that television networks are already making changes to attract Trump supporters (Toto 2017). President of ABC Entertainment, Channing Dungey, acknowledged that the network has overlooked white, rural, blue-collar workers, saying “in recent history we haven’t paid enough attention to some of the true realities of what life is like for everyday Americans in our dramas” (quoted in Adalian 2017). ABC is not alone; The Hollywood Reporter noted that “[s]imilar check-ins have taken place across the TV industry as executives try to better understand and appeal to a demographic to which many hadn’t paid enough attention” (Rose 2016). Echoing this sentiment, an industry insider who spoke to conservative news and entertainment outlet The Daily Caller foresees that the entertainment industry is “looking to produce more patriotic and conservative projects to appeal to Trump supporters” (Crokin 2017). Indeed, appealing to this demographic makes economic sense. While the media tend to portray Trump supporters as disaffected, uneducated, working-class, rural whites – often portrayed as the poor ‘redneck’ stereotype examined in chapter four – research suggests that they are, in fact, a fairly affluent demographic (Walley 2017, Carnes and Lupu 2017). Christine Walley observes that the overly broad definition of ‘working-class’ (i.e. people lacking an undergraduate degree) used by journalists and pollsters to define Trump supporters during the election “conflated different groups of whites with starkly different political, social, and economic histories and concerns” (2017, 231). In reality, Trump

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225 Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. § 1681. Under Title IX, federally-funded schools can be held responsible for harassment of LGBT students because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation if it interferes with the student’s rights to equal educational opportunities (Jacob 2013, Clarke 2017).
voters averaged a yearly earning of $72,000, significantly higher than the American median annual income ($56,000) (Walley 2017); as summarised by Nicholas Carnes and Noam Lupu,

[o]bservers have often used the education gap to conjure images of poor people flocking to Trump, but the truth is, many of the people without college degrees who voted for Trump were from middle- and high-income households. (Carnes and Lupu 2017).

Thus, this wealthy and sizeable but previously overlooked demographic is probably seen as a tempting and untapped market by television networks that have begun trying to attract it in order to increase advertising revenue and, ultimately, ensure their economic viability.226

In an attempt to appeal to the Trump-supporting demographic, television networks have changed programming content; as summed up in a recent TV Guide,

[t]here's been a swift slant towards conservatism at the big networks – and not only in the ‘safe and conventional’ interpretation which has translated as reboots, spin-offs and superhero shows. No, we're talking apple-pie, drive-in theater, yellow-ribbons-round-the-tree conservatism manifested in two genres: shows about the military and shows about religion. (Venable 2017)

Military programming has more than doubled since last season (Goldberg 2017a, 2017b) with network “executives clearly all th[inking] it wise to pivot and lean into the values of the people who have handed the government to Republicans” (Venable 2017). Military programs are set to air on CBS, NBC, and The CW, with Fox Network still undecided about military thriller Behind Enemy Lines (Venable 2017, Wagmeister 2017). Networks are also targeting Trump supporters through ‘heart-warming’ Christian comedies, such as ABC’s The Gospel of Kevin and CBS’s By the Book (Koblin 2017). (Indeed, films are also vying for the attention of Christian audiences who have demonstrated the economic viability of religious-based films.227) There is also a focus on America’s “heartland” (Goldberg 2017b), as seen with programs like ABC’s Red Blooded that casts country music star Reba McEntire as a Kentucky sheriff whose ‘red state outlook’ is challenged by a young FBI agent of Middle Eastern descent (Agard 2017). Overall, networks appear to be replacing the edgy and ironic fare (Rose 2016) previously used to court the ‘slumpy’ audience (Becker 2006) with optimistic and family-friendly programming (Rose 2016). It is also notable that, among the plethora of re-boots and spin-offs, Roseanne, perhaps the most well known working-class

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226 This may be particularly true now given the continual free-fall of ratings and audience numbers in recent years (Lynch 2017, Adalian and Zhen 2017). As noted by Josef Adalian and Jeni Zhen, networks may be struggling since “[r]atings declines result in fewer overall ad dollars, period” (Adalian and Zhen 2017). Networks are attempting “to convince wary buyers to devote even more of their advertising budgets to networks that continue to lose live linear viewers” (Lynch 2017). Viewer numbers may, however, be artificially low since metrics have not yet been developed for streaming services like Netflix and Hulu (Adalian and Zhen 2017).

227 The Passion of the Christ (2004) earned $370 million in domestic box office receipts, becoming the then-highest grossing R-rated film ever (Guerrasio 2017). The Christian documentary Is Genesis History? (2017) also earned $1.8 million during its one-night release in February 2017, demonstrating the public’s appetite for such productions, as well as their box office potential.
comedy, is making a comeback complete with its original cast (Dove 2017, Goldberg and O’Connell 2017). The Hollywood Reporter notes that

[n]obody interviewed ... is suggesting the TV landscape will be turned over to a slew of Roseanne rip-offs; but many do expect the working class, middle-America ethos to be better represented, particularly at the broadcast networks where Trump’s 60 million supporters are key to [the networks’] success. (Rose 2016)

These programming changes, which will offer more ‘middle-American’ and working-class narratives, will certainly add diversity to the small screen, and may include plot-lines that challenge Trump supporters more than pandering to them. Programs like Red Blooded and Roseanne have the potential to convey narratives that are socially inclusive rather than divisive. This is, indeed, the aim of chairperson and CEO of Fox Television Group, Dana Walden, who “extolled the virtues of entertaining shows that capture an audience and are also able to incorporate a politically and socially liberal message” (Smith 2017). Thus, perhaps optimistically, entertainment media may provide inclusive stories that help to break down ideological barriers and overcome the partisan divisions in America. Less optimistically, however, television networks may pander to Trump supporters through ‘all white, all straight’ programming that re-marginalises minority groups, including the LGBT community, feeding the shift towards conservatism and excluding those who do not adhere to Republican values. Or, as suggested by journalist Dylan Byers, perhaps America’s current social and political schism will also play out in popular culture: “[t]he country is polarized along cultural lines ... there is a Duck Dynasty America and a Modern Family America, and never the twain shall meet” (Byers 2017).

Although it is too early to tell if entertainment media will provide socially liberal or exclusionary narratives – or something in between – Trump supporters have attempted to exercise control over media messages through boycotts against companies that advocate for tolerance or object to Trump’s political actions. During the Superbowl, for example, some Trump supporters called for boycotts against Budweiser, Coca-Cola, 84 Lumber, Airbnb, and Kia for advertisements that promoted equality, environmentalism, and immigration; supporters even boycotted Lady Gaga’s half-time show because of her anti-Trump views (Garcia 2017). While there is currently no information as to whether any of these calls for boycotts have succeeded in exercising economic pressure on the target companies, and scholars like Monroe Friedman from Eastern Michigan University are dubious about their efficacy (Lieber 2017), they do illustrate the willingness of Trump supporters to leverage their power to silence messages of equality and minority rights.

228 There have also been calls by Trump supporters for boycotts against PepsiCo, Macy’s, Netflix, Amazon, and Oreos, to name but a few (Menegus 2016); a full list is available on the archived sub-Reddit ‘The_Donald’ (https://www.reddit.com/r/The_Donald/comments/Scvphc/official_rthe_donald_list_of_companies_to_boycott/).
It is not, however, only Trump supporters who are using boycotts to exert political will (Lieber 2017); boycotts are just one of the ways that citizens opposed to Trump are voicing their dissent.229 Indeed, a significant segment of the American population, including many media outlets, remain committed to liberal beliefs. These anti-Trump Americans have been galvanised into political action, most notably the Women’s March occurring the day after Trump’s inauguration that saw an estimated 4.1 million people across the country230 marching in solidarity to defend the rights of women, immigrants, the LGBT community, and in favour of healthcare reform, protection of reproductive rights, environmental protection, racial equality, and religious freedom (Koren 2017, Chenoweth and Pressman 2017, Waddell 2017). The March demonstrated not only a widespread commitment to inclusive liberal ideals, but a successful articulation of interests that have, as advocated by Lisa Duggan (2003) in The Twilight of Equality?, overcome the fragmentation of identity politics. Encouragingly, the activism demonstrated by the March continues, and the discussion of intersectionality has become overt (Chenoweth, Finn, and Pressman 2017).

Anti-Trump protests have also proliferated in popular culture, with Hollywood’s elite speaking out against various Trump policies that are seen as damaging. Ranging from ‘A-list’ entertainers snubbing Trump’s inauguration (Kornhaber 2017, Lawler 2017), to Meryl Streep’s carefully phrased censure at the Golden Globes (Izadi and Wang 2017), to rebukes in Oscar acceptance speeches (Gilbert 2017, Johnson 2017), to ubiquitous Trump satires as late-night fodder (Flanagan 2017, Garber 2017), the ‘glitteratti’ routinely use their public platforms to denounce Trump’s administration and policies. In particular, Hollywood celebrities have been quick to denounce Trump on policies that adversely affect the LGBT community, particularly the ban on transgender people in the military which elicited condemnation from late-night television hosts, transgender celebrities like Caitlyn Jenner and Laverne Cox, and the wider Hollywood community (Yahr 2017, Kelley 2017, Strause 2017).

Disapproval has also made its way into scripted television programs; as Beau Willimon, a screenwriter best known for Netflix original House of Cards, mentioned during the ‘Television in a Trumped Up America’ panel discussion at the ATX Television Festival, “[t]here’s a charged political consciousness happening among the screenwriters and television writers that you’re going to see percolating into almost everything you watch” (quoted in Birnbaum 2017). Indeed, trade press have offered commentary on the many ways that entertainment television has castigated the

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229 Fifty-one companies have been subject to boycotts by anti-Trump supporters who have put pressure on companies like Macy’s, Neiman Marcus, and Bloomingdales to stop selling Ivanka Trump-branded clothing and accessories and end business dealings with Donald Trump’s companies (Taylor 2017).

230 Estimates of the number of people who marched in the US range from 3.3 to 5.2 million people, and between 266,000 and 357,000 people for international marchers (Chenoweth and Pressman 2017).
President on programs like ABC’s *Scandal*, *Quantico*, and *Designated Survivor*, CBS’s *Madam Secretary*, Showtime’s *Homeland*, Comedy Central’s *Southpark*, Hulu’s *Casual*, and even The CW’s teen-oriented *Supergirl* (Toto 2017, Strause 2017, Birnbaum 2017, Saraiya 2017).

The willingness to take a political stance onscreen also exists in the filmmaking community, and may become visible in future films, particularly those in the independent and Indiewood sectors (Gleiberman 2017, Byers 2017, Chi 2017, Kaufman 2017). While these changes are likely to occur more slowly in film than on television, since films are generally in production for years prior to release (Toto 2017), a number of professionals within the independent/Indiewood sector have suggested that upcoming films will have more political content. Route One Entertainment’s Russell Levine postulates that “we’re going to be seeing more politically- and socially-conscious films in the next few years” (quoted in Kaufman 2017), while John Sloss of Cinematic Media suggests that filmmakers are going to feel a responsibility to increase their voice. I think the film industry, and certainly that end of the film industry that is most prominent at Cannes, represents the opposition. (quoted in Gleiberman 2017)

Film producer Ira Deutchman echoed these sentiments, saying “[p]eople are going to have to remain vigilant and try to create work that’s going to actually incentivize people or help people understand what’s going on in this world” (quoted in Winfrey 2016). Politically motivated independent/Indiewood films may serve to highlight the experiences of marginalised communities, including the LGBT community, and help to traverse the rift of a bifurcated nation; in the words of one film pundit, “[s]oon, perhaps – though maybe not this year – there will be one [independent film] that bridges the cultural divide” (Byers 2017).

While independent/Indiewood films may portray more political content, mainstream films are, however, less likely to change. Hollywood’s major studios, looking to mitigate risk and ensure profitability, will likely continue with the same formulas that have proved profitable domestically and internationally (Carroll 2017, Byers 2017). In the words of one Hollywood insider,

[...] you will see people stand up and use their star power to say things in front of an audience, but studios look at the bottom line ... Truly we are artists, and most people here want to create great films, great stories. But at the end of the day this is a huge money-making machine. (Quoted in Carroll 2017)

This, unfortunately, is not promising for LGBT representation in mainstream film. As discussed in chapter two, mainstream studios have increasingly focussed on action-driven blockbusters to secure profits (Schatz 2009, Balio 2013); as illustrated in various reports by the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation’s (GLAAD) and other advocacy organisations, these films have tended to exclude explicit LGBT characters (Kane et al. 2014, Kane, Gouttebroze, Townsend, Thayer, et al.
This, coupled with the decreasing market-share of the independent and Indiewood sectors (Schatz 2012a, 2009) that have generally provided the most progressive LGBT portrayals, and compounded by the potentially increasing domestic conservatism and anti-LGBT sentiment seen in important international markets like China (Lang 2016, 2015), may make risk-averse film studios even less likely to include explicit LGBT characters. It will likely continue to be the ‘small screen’ that leads the way with progressive LGBT portrayals, at least until the next media shake-up which will, hopefully, allow LGBT characters and narratives to proliferate on the silver screen.
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—— *Number of Primetime LGBT Lead and Supporting Characters Per Season*. Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, 2015b.


Jenkins, Tricia. "'Potential Lesbians at Two O'Clock': The Heterosexualization of Lesbianism in the Recent Teen Film." *Journal of Popular Culture* 38, no. 3 (2005): 491-504.


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Filmography

Beyond the Valley of the Dolls. Directed by Russ Meyer. USA: Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 1970.


Don't Be a Menace to South Central While Drinking Your Juice in the Hood. Directed by Paris Barclay. USA: Miramax Films, 1996.


Easy Rider. Directed by Dennis Hopper. USA: Columbia Pictures, 1969.


I Love You, Beth Cooper. Directed by Chris Columbus. USA, Canada: 20th Century Fox, 2009.


King Cobra. Directed by Justin Kelly. USA: IFC Midnight, 2016.


Rebecca. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock. USA: United Artists, 1940.
Rent. Directed by Chris Columbus. USA: Columbia Pictures, 2005.
Road to Singapore. Directed by Victor Schertzinger. USA: Paramount Pictures, 1940.
Road to Utopia. Directed by Hal Walker. USA: Paramount Pictures, 1946.
Say Anything... Directed by Cameron Crowe. USA: Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 1989.
So Proudly We Hail! Directed by Mark Sandrich. USA: Paramount Pictures, 1943.


**Wild One, The.** Directed by Laslo Benedek. USA: Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1953.


**xXx: Return of Xander.** Directed by D.J. Caruso. USA, Canada, China: Paramount Pictures, 2017.

List of television episodes, television series, and television movies

**Television episodes**


Television series and television movies


By the Book. Developed by Patrick Walsh. USA: CBS, 2018-. Television series.


Designated Survivor. Created by David Guggenheim. USA: ABC, 2016-. Television series.


Madam Secretary. Created by Barbara Hall. USA: CBS, 2014-. Television series.


Modern Family. Created by Steven Levitan and Christopher Lloyd. USA: ABC, 2009-. Television series.


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## Appendix A: List of teen films, 1995-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film title (year)</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>Studio</th>
<th>Yearly rank</th>
<th>MPAA rating</th>
<th>Sub-genre</th>
<th>Domestic gross</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday (1995)</td>
<td>F. Gary Gray</td>
<td>New Line</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>$27,467,564</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love</td>
<td>Maria Maggenti</td>
<td>Fine Line</td>
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<td>R</td>
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<td>Fear (1996)</td>
<td>James Foley</td>
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<td>R</td>
<td>Horror</td>
<td>$20,831,000</td>
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<td>Don't Be a Menace to South Central While Drinking Your Juice in the Hood (1996)</td>
<td>Paris Barclay</td>
<td>Miramax</td>
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<td>R</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
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<td>Titanic (1997)</td>
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<td>I Know What You Did Last Summer (1997)</td>
<td>Jim Gillespie</td>
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<td>R</td>
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<td>Good Burger (1997)</td>
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<td>Masterminds (1997)</td>
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<td>Don Roos</td>
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<td>American Pie (1999)</td>
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<td>She's All That (1999)</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>PG-13</td>
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<td>Cruel Intentions (1999)</td>
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<td>Drama</td>
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<td>10 Things I Hate About You (1999)</td>
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<td>Drop Dead Gorgeous (1999)</td>
<td>Michael Patrick Jann</td>
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<td>Teaching Mrs. Tingle (1999)</td>
<td>Kevin Williamson</td>
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<td>Detroit Rock City (1999)</td>
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<td>Idle Hands (1999)</td>
<td>Keenen Ivory Wayans</td>
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<td>Comedy/Horror</td>
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<td>Almost Famous (2000)</td>
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<td>The Virgin Suicides (2000)</td>
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<td>But I'm a Cheerleader (2000)</td>
<td>Jamie Babbit</td>
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<td>Save the Last Dance (2001)</td>
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<td>Tim Blake Nelson</td>
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<td>Ghost World (2001)</td>
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<td>Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (2002)</td>
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<td>Catch Me If You Can (2002)</td>
<td>Steven Spielberg</td>
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<td>Big Fat Liar (2002)</td>
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<td>Orange County (2002)</td>
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<td>Real Women Have Curves (2002)</td>
<td>Patricia Cardoso</td>
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<td>Comedy/Drama</td>
<td>$5,853,194</td>
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<td>Freaky Friday (2003)</td>
<td>Mark Waters</td>
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<td>Comedy</td>
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<td>The Lizzie McGuire Movie (2003)</td>
<td>Jim Fall</td>
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<td>When a Stranger Calls (2006)</td>
<td>Simon West</td>
<td>Sony/Screen Gems</td>
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<td>Aquamarine (2006)</td>
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<td>Drama/Horror</td>
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<td>Twilight (2008)</td>
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<td>Fired Up</td>
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<td>Will Gluck</td>
<td>Sony/Screen Gems</td>
<td>$17,231,291</td>
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<td>I Love You Beth Cooper</td>
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<td>Chris Columbus</td>
<td>20th Century Fox</td>
<td>$14,800,725</td>
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<td>Cirque du Freak: The Vampire's Assistant</td>
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<td>Paul Weitz</td>
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<td>Whip It</td>
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<td>Bandslam</td>
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<td>Todd Graff</td>
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<td>The Twilight Saga: Eclipse</td>
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<td>Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>David Yates</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percy Jackson &amp; The Olympians: The Lightning Thief</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Chris Columbus</td>
<td>20th Century Fox</td>
<td>$58,768,303</td>
<td>Comedy/Drama</td>
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<td>The Last Song</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Julie Anne Robinson</td>
<td>Buena Vista</td>
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<td>Easy A</td>
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<td>Will Gluck</td>
<td>Sony/Screen Gems</td>
<td>$58,401,464</td>
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<td>Kick-Ass</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Matthew Vaughn</td>
<td>Lionsgate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vampires Suck</td>
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<td>Jason Friedberg, Aaron Seltzer</td>
<td>Universal</td>
<td>$36,661,504</td>
<td>Comedy/Horror</td>
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<tr>
<td>My Soul to Take</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Wes Craven</td>
<td>20th Century Fox</td>
<td>$14,744,435</td>
<td>Drama</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winter's Bone</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Debra Granik</td>
<td>Roadside Attractions</td>
<td>$6,531,503</td>
<td>Drama</td>
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<td>It's Kind of a Funny Story</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Anna Boden, Ryan Fleck</td>
<td>Focus Features</td>
<td>$6,363,628</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Runaways</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Floria Sigismondi</td>
<td>Apparition</td>
<td>$3,573,673</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>David Yates</td>
<td>Warner Bros.</td>
<td>$381,011,219</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 1</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Bill Condon</td>
<td>Summit Entertainment</td>
<td>$281,287,133</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Super 8</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>J.J. Abrams</td>
<td>Paramount</td>
<td>$127,004,179</td>
<td>Action/Drama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Am Number Four</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>D.J. Caruso</td>
<td>Buena Vista</td>
<td>$55,100,437</td>
<td>Action/Drama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footloose</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Craig Brewer</td>
<td>Paramount</td>
<td>$51,802,742</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soul Surfer</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Sean McNamara</td>
<td>TriStar</td>
<td>$43,853,424</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abduction</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>John Singleton</td>
<td>Lionsgate</td>
<td>$28,087,155</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beastly</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Daniel Barnz</td>
<td>CBS Films</td>
<td>$27,865,571</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fright Night</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Craig Gillespie</td>
<td>Buena Vista</td>
<td>$18,302,607</td>
<td>Horror/Drama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prom</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Joe Nussbaum</td>
<td>Buena Vista</td>
<td>$10,130,219</td>
<td>Comedy/Drama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film title (year)</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>Yearly rank</td>
<td>MPAA rating</td>
<td>Sub-genre</td>
<td>Domestic gross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Basketball Diaries (1995)</td>
<td>Scott Kalvert</td>
<td>New Line</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>$2,381,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome to the Dollhouse (1996)</td>
<td>Todd Solondz</td>
<td>Sony Pictures Classics</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>$4,569,019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phat Beach (1996)</td>
<td>Doug Ellin</td>
<td>Orion</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>$1,383,553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trippin’ (1999)</td>
<td>David Raynr</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>$9,017,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light it Up (1999)</td>
<td>Craig Bolotin</td>
<td>20th Century Fox</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>$5,985,690</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List of teen films unavailable for screening, 1995-2013

- **The Hunger Games** (2012): Gary Ross, Lionsgate, 3, PG-13, Action, $408,010,692
- **Chronicle** (2012): Josh Trank, 20th Century Fox, 50, PG-13, Action, $64,575,175
- **Project X** (2012): Nima Nourizadeh, Warner Bros., 60, R, Comedy, $54,731,865
- **House at the End of the Street** (2012): Mark Tonderai, Relativity, 96, PG-13, Horror, $31,611,916
- **The Perks of Being a Wallflower** (2012): Stephen Chbosky, Lionsgate/Summit, 114, PG-13, Drama, $17,742,948
- **The Hunger Games: Catching Fire** (2013): Francis Lawrence, Lionsgate, 1, PG-13, Action, $424,668,047
- **Ender’s Game** (2013): Gavin Hood, Lionsgate/Summit, 57, PG-13, Action, $61,737,191
- **Mud** (2013): Jeff Nichols, Roadside Attractions, 105, PG-13, Drama, $21,590,086
- **Black Nativity** (2013): Kasi Lemmons, Fox Searchlight, 141, PG, Drama, $7,018,189
- **The Spectacular Now** (2013): James Ponsoldt, A24, 142, R, Comedy/Drama, $6,854,611
- **Stoker** (2013): Chan-wook Park, Fox Searchlight, 189, R, Horror, $1,714,221
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>Studio/Comedy</th>
<th>Runtime</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Genre/Subgenre</th>
<th>Gross</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girlfight (2000)</td>
<td>Karyn Kusama</td>
<td>Screen Gems</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>$1,565,852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running With Scissors (2006)</td>
<td>Ryan Murphy</td>
<td>Sony/Columbia</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Comedy/Drama</td>
<td>$7,022,827</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. Information was obtained from the Box Office Mojo website (www.boxofficemojo.com).
2. The sub-genres assigned for this research involve consolidating the classifications from the Box Office Mojo website:
   a. Teen comedies are a combination of the following Box Office Mojo classifications: comedy, romantic comedy, fantasy comedy, sports comedy, family comedy, and family adventure
   b. Teen dramas include: drama, romance, romantic thriller, fantasy, fantasy drama, period drama, music drama, musical, sport drama, and crime drama
   c. Teen horrors include: horror, thriller, and horror thriller
   d. Teen action include: action, action/crime, science fiction adventure, science fiction thriller, action adventure, and science fiction action.
3. Some films have more than one sub-genre classification.
## Appendix B: Film coding template

### Film Title

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year:</th>
<th>Film rating:</th>
<th>Format:</th>
<th>Director:</th>
<th>Duration:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Estimated gross: $
Rank: 
Released: 
Production co: 
Distribution co: 
Actors: 
Websites: 

### Generic aspects that make it a teen film

- Teen issues/youth theme [ ]
- Cast of young people [ ]
- Likely targets teen audience [ ]
- Part of a core of teen actors? [ ]
- Main character: Male/Female (name: characteristics) [ ]
- Negative/absent adult representations [ ]

Teen locations:
Intertextual references:

Subgenre: □ Comedy □ Action □ Drama/JD □ Horror □ Sports □ Musical □ Nostalgia □ Historical/literary text

### Plot

Is homosexuality part of the plot? [ ] Yes [ ] No
Plot summary:

### Language use

Overall language use: □ Derogatory □ Positive □ Explicit but neutral □ None

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description and transcription of dialogue</th>
<th>Character type</th>
<th>Teen/adult</th>
<th>Pro/Antagonist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Derogatory</td>
<td>□ Positive</td>
<td>□ Explicit but neutral</td>
<td>Rank: (5 = derogatory; 1 = positive)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Characters

Major characters LGBT? [ ] Yes [ ] No Details:
Minor/incidental characters LGBT? [ ] Yes [ ] No
Protagonist or antagonist? □ Protagonist □ Antagonist
Is the depiction a stereotype? [ ] Yes [ ] No □ Sometimes
In (s)he in a relationship? [ ] Yes [ ] No

Is relationship on screen or only discussed □ Onscreen □ Discussed
If on screen, is there any sexual content? [ ] Yes [ ] No
Is (s)he part of a gay community? [ ] Yes [ ] No
Victim trope? [ ] Yes [ ] No

### Notes:

281
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description of scene or transcription of dialogue</th>
<th>SES:</th>
<th>Ethnicity:</th>
<th>Age:</th>
<th>Appearance:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incidences of romance/lust:</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Character type</th>
<th>Teen/adult</th>
<th>Pro/Antagonist</th>
<th>LGBT/heterosexual</th>
<th>Seen/Discussed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Representations of race/ethnicity**

Protagonist:  
- Caucasian  
- African American  
- Asian  
- Latino/a  
- Other:

Antagonist:  
- Caucasian  
- African American  
- Asian  
- Latino/a  
- Other:

Notes:

**Representations of gender**

Notes on female characters:

Notes on male characters:

**Class**

Notes:
## Appendix C: List of LGBT-focused teen films not in the annual top 200 grossing, 1995-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film title (year)</th>
<th>Director</th>
<th>Studio</th>
<th>Yearly rank</th>
<th>MPAA rating</th>
<th>Sub-genre</th>
<th>Domestic gross</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Parallel Sons</em> (1995)</td>
<td>John G. Young</td>
<td>Greycat Films</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Toilers and the Wayfarers</em> (1995)</td>
<td>Keith Froelich</td>
<td>CMV Laservision</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>All Over Me</em> (1996)</td>
<td>Alex Sichel</td>
<td>Fine Line Features</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>$292,577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Johns</em> (1996)</td>
<td>Scott Silver</td>
<td>First Look</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>$50,789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Delta</em> (1997)</td>
<td>Ira Sachs</td>
<td>Strand Releasing</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>UR</td>
<td>Drama/Comedy</td>
<td>$18,134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Edge of Seventeen</em> (2000)</td>
<td>Jeff London</td>
<td>TLA Video</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Journey of Jared Price</em> (2000)</td>
<td>Dustin Lance Black</td>
<td>Alluvial Filmworks</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>UR</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Play Dead</em> (2001)</td>
<td>Jeff Jenkins</td>
<td>Here! TV</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Brother to Brother</em> (2004)</td>
<td>Rodney Evans</td>
<td>Wolfe Releasing</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>UR</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>$80,906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Crutch</em> (2004)</td>
<td>Rob Moretti</td>
<td>Illuminare Entertainment</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>UR</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>$14,189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Dorian Blues</em> (2004)</td>
<td>Tennyson Bardwell</td>
<td>TLA Releasing</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>UR</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>$72,234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Wild Tigers I Have Known</em> (2006)</td>
<td>Cam Archer</td>
<td>IFC</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>UR</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>$9,946</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. Information was obtained from the Box Office Mojo website (www.boxofficemojo.com), the Internet Movie Database and Internet Movie Database Pro websites (www.imdb.com, pro-labs.imdb.com), and Nash Information Services website (www.the-numbers.com).
2. The sub-genres assigned for this research involve consolidating the classifications from the Box Office Mojo website:
   a. teen comedies are a combination of the following Box Office Mojo classifications: comedy, romantic comedy, fantasy comedy, sports comedy, family comedy, and family adventure
   b. teen dramas include: drama, romance, romantic thriller, fantasy, fantasy drama, period drama, music drama, musical, sport drama, and crime drama
   c. teen horrors include: horror, thriller, and horror thriller
   d. teen actions include: action, action/crime, science fiction adventure, science fiction thriller, action adventure, and science fiction action.
3. When genre information was not available from the Box Office Mojo website, information from the Internet Movie Database was used.
4. Some films have more than one sub-genre classification.
5. For comprehensiveness, films without ratings (UR/unrated or n/a) or rated NC-17 have been included, as have some films without theatrical release.
6. These films were not screened as part of this study.
## Appendix D: List of LGBT characters on teen television shows

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program name</th>
<th>Network (years)</th>
<th>Character details</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>LGBTI QFA</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Season and Episode, episode title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fame</strong></td>
<td>NBC (1982-1983) Syndication (1983-1987)</td>
<td>x G x</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Lou Mackie (Dick Miller)</td>
<td>S4:E4, 10, 18, 24 S5:E3, 5, 8, 17, 19 S6:E1, 2, 4-6, 8, 9, 11-24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recurring</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Harley Poolish (Philip Tanzini)</td>
<td>S2:E13 “A Big Disease with a Little Name”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Incidental</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Evelyn Marks (Olivia Negron) (adult)</td>
<td>S4:E14 “Change of Heart”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Margaret (Kathryn Leigh Scott) (adult)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Megan (Katy Boyer)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Wonder Years</strong></td>
<td>ABC (1988-1993)</td>
<td>- - - -</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>None identified</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Doogie Howser</strong></td>
<td>ABC (1989-1994)</td>
<td>x G x</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Mark (Gil Cates, Jr.)</td>
<td>S4:E14 “Spell it M-A-N”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beverly Hills, 90210</strong></td>
<td>Fox Network (1990-2000)</td>
<td>x G/Q x</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Kyle Connors (David Lascher)</td>
<td>S2:E3, 20 S3:E10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recurring</td>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>My So-Called Life</strong></td>
<td>ABC (1994-1995)</td>
<td>x B/G x</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Enrique “Rickie” Vasquez (Wilson Cruz)</td>
<td>S1 (all 19 episodes)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recurring</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Richard Katimski (Jeff Perry) (adult)</td>
<td>S1:E12, 16, 17, 19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Party of Five</strong></td>
<td>Fox Network (1994-2000)</td>
<td>x G x</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Ross Werkman (Mitchell Anderson)</td>
<td>S1:E1, 5, 7-9, 19, 22 S2:E5, 9, 12, 22 S3:E8, 16, 24 S4:E8 S5:E21 S6:E9, 15, 19, 23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recurring</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Victor (Wilson Cruz)</td>
<td>S6:E3-8, 11, 12, 18, 19, 23</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Incidental</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Elliot (Christopher Gorham)</td>
<td>S4:E7, 8, 14, 15</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Perry Marks (Olivia d’Abo)</td>
<td>S5:E22-24</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Allison (Poppy Montgomery)</td>
<td>S2:E13 “Poor Substitutes”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Professor Conklin (John Pleshette)</td>
<td>S3:E16 “I Declare”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buffy the Vampire Slayer</strong></td>
<td>The WB (1997-2001) UPN (2001-03)</td>
<td>x L x</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Willow Rosenberg (Alyson Hannigan)</td>
<td>S1-7 (all 144 episodes)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recurring</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Tara Maclay (Amber Benson)</td>
<td>S4:E10, 12-22 S5:E1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 11-22 S6:E1-10, 13, 14, 16-20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>Role/Character</td>
<td>Episodes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niles Cooper</td>
<td>Warner S. Potter</td>
<td>S5:1-20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Jack McPhee (Kerr Smith) (lead)</td>
<td>S2-6 (113 of 128 episodes)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Tobey Barrett (David Monahan)</td>
<td>S4:E10, 12, 13, 19, 20, 22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Ethan Brody (Adam Kaufman)</td>
<td>S3:E10, 11, 18, 22, 23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Eric (Ryan Bittle)</td>
<td>S1:E6, 8, 12-14, 21, 23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>David (Greg Rikaart)</td>
<td>S1:E11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Professor Freeman (Sebastian Spence)</td>
<td>S6:E1, 3-5, 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Buddy Morgan (Joseph Gordon-Levitt)</td>
<td>S1:E11, “Eric’s Buddy”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>None identified</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Don/Debbie Jackson (Louis Mustillo) (adult)</td>
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<td>x B/L/F Ashely Davies (Mandy Musgrave) S1-3 (all 43 episodes)</td>
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<td>x L</td>
<td>Spencer Carlin (Gabrielle Christian) S1-3 (all 43 episodes)</td>
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<td><strong>Everybody Hates Chris</strong></td>
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<td>x A x Dr. Julius Raymond (Jude Ciccolella) (adult) S1:E1, 2, 4, 6</td>
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<td><strong>Ugly Betty</strong></td>
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<td>x G</td>
<td>Marc St. James (Michael Urie) S1-4 (all 85 episodes)</td>
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<td>Austin Marley (Ryan McGinnis) S4:E16-20</td>
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<td><strong>Friday Night Lights</strong></td>
<td>NBC (2006-2008)</td>
<td>x G x Coach Stan Traub (Russell DeGrazier) (adult) S4-5 (all 26 episodes)</td>
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<td>The 101 Network (2008–2011)</td>
<td>x L x Mayor Lucy Rodell (Libby Villari) (adult) S1:E1-4, 7, 9, 13, 20-22</td>
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<td>Devin Boland (Stephanie Hunt) S4:E1, 4, 5, 8</td>
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<td><strong>Gossip Girl</strong></td>
<td>The CW (2007-2012)</td>
<td>x G x Eric van der Woodsen (Connor Paolo) S1:E1-3, 5, 6, 9, 11-14, 16, 18</td>
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<td>x G x Harold Waldorf (John Shea) S1:E9, 11</td>
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<td>x G x Jonathan Whitney (Matt Doyle) S2:E7, 13, 15, 20, 25</td>
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<td>x G - - - Roman (William Abadie) (adult) S1:E11 “Roman Holiday”</td>
<td>S2:E16 “You’ve Got Yale!”</td>
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<td><strong>90210</strong></td>
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<td>x G x Theodore &quot;Teddy&quot; Montgomery (Trevor Donovan) S2:E1-9, 11-22</td>
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<td>x G x Shane (Ryan Rottman) S4:E5, 8, 9, 11</td>
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<td>x G x Ian (Kyle Riabko) S3:E3-5, 7, 9-12, 14</td>
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<td>x G x Marco Salazar (Freddie Smith) S3:E15, 18, 20-22</td>
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<td>The Secret Life of the American Teenager</td>
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<td>Alexa (Mandy Musgrave)</td>
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<td>Make It or Break It</td>
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<td>Glee</td>
<td>Fox Network (2009-2015)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Kurt Hummel (Chris Colfer)</td>
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<td>Blaine Devon Anderson (Darren Criss)</td>
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<td>Santana Diabla Lopez (Naya Rivera)</td>
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<td>Brittany Pierce (Heather Morris)</td>
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<td>Coach Sheldon Beiste (Dot-Marie Jones), previously Shannon Beiste (adult)</td>
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<td>Alistair (Finneas O'Connell)</td>
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<td><strong>Pretty Little Liars</strong></td>
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<td>Charlotte ‘Cece’ (formerly Charles) DiLaurentis (adult)</td>
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<td><strong>Awkward.</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Lucas (Eddie Ramos)</td>
<td>S5:E4 “Condition Terminal”</td>
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<td>Danny Māhealani (Keahu Kahuanui)</td>
<td>S1:E2, 3, 5, 8-11</td>
<td>S3:E2, 4-7, 9, 12, 15, 16, 19, 22-24</td>
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<td>S5:E6 “Required Reading”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lorraine Martin (Marcy Goldman) (adult)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Originals</strong></td>
<td>The CW (2014—)</td>
<td>S3:E1-5, 7-10, 12, 14</td>
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<td>Tristan de Martel (Oliver Ackland)</td>
<td>S1:E2-4, 6-19,10, 17-19, 21, 22</td>
<td>S4:E5, 6, 8, 9, 11-13</td>
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<td>S2:E1, 4, 7, 8, 10-12, 14, 18-20</td>
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<td>S3:E3, 11,15, 16, 21</td>
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<td>S4:E1, 2, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13</td>
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<td>Freya Mikaelson (Riley Voelkel)</td>
<td>S2:E6, 9, 12-22</td>
<td>S4 (all 13 episodes)</td>
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<td>S3 (all 22 episodes)</td>
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<td>Keelin (Christina Moses)</td>
<td>S4:E1, 3-7, 9, 11-13</td>
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<td><strong>The 100</strong></td>
<td>The CW (2014—)</td>
<td>Clarke Griffin (Eliza Taylor) (lead)</td>
<td>S1-4 (all 60 episodes)</td>
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<td>Commander Lexa (Alycia Debnam-Carey)</td>
<td>S2:E6-10, 12-15</td>
<td>S3:E2-7, 16</td>
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<td>Niylah (Jessica Harmon)</td>
<td>S3:E1, 2, 11</td>
<td>S4:E5, 6, 8, 9, 11-13</td>
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<td>Nathan Miller (Jarod Joseph)</td>
<td>S1:E7-9, 12, 13</td>
<td>S3:E1, 4-6, 8-13, 15, 16</td>
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<td>S4:E2-4, 8-13</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Faking It</strong></td>
<td>MTV (2014-2016)</td>
<td>Amy Raudenfeld (Rita Volk) (lead)</td>
<td>S1-3 (all 38 episodes)</td>
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<td>x “L” x</td>
<td>Karma Ashcroft (Katie Stevens) (lead;</td>
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<td>pretend)</td>
<td>S1-3 (all 38 episodes)</td>
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<td>x I x</td>
<td>Lauren Cooper (Bailey De Young)</td>
<td>S1-3 (all 38 episodes)</td>
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<td>Shane Harvey (Michael Willett)</td>
<td>S1-3 (all 38 episodes)</td>
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<td>Raven (Amanda Saenz) (intersex actor)</td>
<td>S3:E4 “Jagged Little Heart”</td>
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<td>x G x</td>
<td>Pablo (Anthony Palacios)</td>
<td>S1:E6, 8</td>
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<td>Duke Lewis Jr. (Skyler Maxon)</td>
<td>S2:E5-7, 10, 11, 13-15</td>
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<td>x L x</td>
<td>Reagan (Yvette Monreal)</td>
<td>S2:E4, 6-13, 20</td>
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<td>Sabrina (Sophia Taylor Ali)</td>
<td>S3:E6-10</td>
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<td>x B x</td>
<td>Wade (Cameron Moulène)</td>
<td>S2:E16-19</td>
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<td>Noah (Elliot Fletcher)</td>
<td>S3:E4, 7-10</td>
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<td><strong>Scream: The TV Series</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Audrey (Bex Taylor-Klaus)</td>
<td>S1-2 (23 of 24 episodes)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dead of Summer</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blair Ramos (Mark Indelicato)</td>
<td>S1 (all 10 episodes)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Riverdale</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Drew Reeves (Zelda Williams)</td>
<td>S1 (all 10 episodes)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

1. Information was obtained from screening, internet searches, and from Wendy Peter’s article (Peters, Wendy, “Bullies and Blackmail: Finding Homophobia in the Closet on Teen TV,” Sexuality & Culture 20, no. 3 (2016): 486-503).
2. Episode information, character and actor names were obtained from the Internet Movie Database website [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com) and from screening.
4. LGBTIQF: Lesbian (L); gay (G); bisexual (B); transgender (T); intersex (I); questioning (Q); fluid (F); ambiguous (A).
5. Character definitions:
   a. Regular characters: those that appear in every, or almost every, episode in a series (for at least one season).
   b. Recurring characters: those that appear in numerous episodes and impact on the plot of the series. They can be returning minor characters or be centrally engaged in the plot of episode(s). Because I have not screened every episode, if they appear in a minimum of five episodes for at least one season they are considered regular.
   c. Incidental characters: those that appear in up to four episodes per season in a minor role; they must be engaged/speak in at least one scene. (Characters with no scene engagement or speaking are considered ‘extras’ and excluded from data collection.)
6. Ethnicity was determined through information on characters, actors, or examining character photos online. Actor surnames and country of origin were considered.
7. ‘-‘ indicates that the information is not discernible from the information available.
## Appendix E: List of LGBT characters with ambiguous sexual orientation/gender expression in teen films, 1995-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Character details</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Character name (actor name)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't Be a Menace to South Central While Drinking Your Juice in the Hood</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Toothpick (Darrel Heath)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B&lt;sup&gt;present&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Dave the Crackhead (Keith Morris)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pecker</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G&lt;sup&gt;minor&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Vogue Stylist (R. Scott Williams)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>L&lt;sup&gt;incidental&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Bouncer (Sharon Niesp)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drive Me Crazy</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G&lt;sup&gt;amb&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Lester Hailbrook (Tim Caggiano)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scary Movie</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Rupert (Keram Malicki-Sanchez)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring It On</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G&lt;sup&gt;amb&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Ray Wilkins (Shawn Wayans)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dude, Where's My Car?</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G&lt;sup&gt;amb&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Tim/Guy Cheerleader (Riley Smith)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Virgin Suicides</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Mark (Andy Dick, uncredited)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But I'm a Cheerleader</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>L&lt;sup&gt;incidental&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Trip's dad (Peter Snider)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>G&lt;sup&gt;amb&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Trip's dad's boyfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Another Teen Movie</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>The Wise Janitor (Mr. T)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Get Over It</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G&lt;sup&gt;amb&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Dr. Desmond Forrest Oates (Martin Short)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar &amp; Spice</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>L&lt;sup&gt;incidental&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Inmate (check)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Igby Goes Down</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G&lt;sup&gt;amb&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Rock (Eddie Cibrian)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EuroTrip</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G&lt;sup&gt;amb&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Mike (RuPaul Charles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step Up</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G&lt;sup&gt;amb&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Gruber (Jiri Maria Sieber)</td>
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<tr>
<td>She's The Man</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G&lt;sup&gt;amb&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Skinny Carter (De'Shawn Washington)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stick It</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G&lt;sup&gt;amb&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Frank (Kellan Lutz)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hairspray</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>T&lt;sup&gt;incidental&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Edna Turnblad (John Travolta)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G&lt;sup&gt;amb&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Homeless Man (Andy Samberg)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Never Back Down</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G&lt;sup&gt;amb&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Ben (Steven Crowley)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G&lt;sup&gt;amb&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Bearcat (Gary Owen)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fame</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G&lt;sup&gt;amb&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Kevin Barrett (Paul McGill)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whip It</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G&lt;sup&gt;amb&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Atomic City Clerk #1 (Kent Cummins)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dance Flick</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>L&lt;sup&gt;incidental&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Girl's Gym Teacher (Heather McDonald)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>G&lt;sup&gt;amb&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Mr. Moody (Marlon Wayans)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Bling Ring</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>G&lt;sup&gt;amb&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Marc (Israel Broussard)</td>
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</table>

Notes: 1. "amb" indicates that LGBT status was ambiguous. Sexual orientation was rendered 'ambiguous' if the same-sex desires suggested by the character were retracted or disavowed (often because of negative reception from peers). It was also considered ambiguous if sexual desire was mildly suggested (via longing looks, licking of

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lips, suggestive dancing, stereotypical characterisation, or verbalised yearning) yet sexual orientation was not made explicit through dialogue or same-sex intimacy. Ambiguous gender expression was noted in *Hairspray*; this film features a male clearly dressed as a female, yet the character is read throughout the film as a female (i.e. the character is female not a male-to-female transgender person).

2. "het" indicates the character was coded as gay but declared their heterosexual status; there is a possibility that these characters are intended to be understood as closeted. Unlike characters enacting the 'pretend' (who willingly adopt a gay or lesbian persona for this own advantage), these characters do not self-identify as LGBT at any point.

3. "prison" indicates that the character expressed same-sex desire in a custodial setting.

4. "hustler" indicates that the character expresses a willingness to engage in same-sex sexual acts in exchange for payment.

5. "a" indicates that the field is assumed. In terms of LGBT status, it has been used to denote characters whose sexual orientation is not clear (often, these characters were camp or labeled gay by others as a joke, but whose sexuality was not rendered explicit. It has also bee used to indicate class; if middle-class status is 'assumed' it indicates that the character's peers are shown to be middle-class, but the character is likely not well defined enough to include this information.

6. "-" indicates that the information is not discernible from the film.
**Appendix F: List of same-sex intimate encounters in teen films, 1995-2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film title (year)</th>
<th>Character details</th>
<th>Intimate act</th>
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<tr>
<td>Clueless (1995)</td>
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<td>Dance</td>
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<td>Caress</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love (1995)</td>
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<td>Dance</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Lampoon's Senior Trip (1995)</td>
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<td>Dance</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don't Be a Menace to South Central While Drinking Your Juice in the Hood (1996)</td>
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<td>Dance</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Opposite of Sex (1998)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pecker (1998)</td>
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<td>Dance</td>
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<thead>
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<th>Film title (year)</th>
<th>Character details</th>
<th>Intimate act</th>
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<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Type</th>
<th>LGBTS</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Character names (actor name)</th>
<th>Intimate act</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teen</td>
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<td>Dance</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Adult</td>
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<td>Kiss</td>
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<td>Caress</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minor</td>
<td>Extra</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dance</th>
<th>Kiss</th>
<th>Caress</th>
<th>Other</th>
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</thead>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian dances with male college students at party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian flirts with a male bartender.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randy and Wendy (adult woman) kiss passionately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randy and Evie two girls kiss, caress, and make love.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meg dances with another female at a party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loc Dog receives fellatio (off screen) from a drug-addicted hustler, Dave the Crackhead, in exchange for directions to Crenshaw Avenue.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Men strip at a The Fudge Palace, a gay strip club. The dance routine includes ‘tea-bagging,’ where the dancer’s scrotum is lowered against the forehead of patrons.

**Anywhere But Here (1999)**
- **x**
- **S**
- **x**
- **Larry the Lughead (Brian Thomas); Seaford Sam the Sailorman (Billy Tolzman); Deathrow Dave (Anthony Roger); Matt the Thief (Brendan Sexton III)**
- **x**
- **Ann August (Natalie Portman); unknown**

**Cruel Intentions (1999)**
- **x**
- **S**
- **x**
- **Kathryn Merteuil (Sarah Michelle Gellar); Cecile Caldwell (Selma Blair)**
- **x**
- **Kathryn instructs Cecile on how to kiss (training for future heterosexual encounters); Cecile is aroused by her kiss with Kathryn.**

**Election (1999)**
- **x**
- **L/S**
- **x**
- **Blaine Tuttle (Joshua Jackson); Greg McConnell (Eric Mabius)**
- **x**
- **Blaine and Greg are in bed together (sexual contact is implied but not shown).**

**Girl, Interrupted (1999)**
- **x**
- **S**
- **x**
- **Susanna (Winona Ryder); Lisa (Angelina Jolie)**
- **x**
- **After escaping the mental institution, Susanna and Lisa kiss.**

**Mod Squad (1999)**
- **x**
- **x**
- **S**
- **x**
- **Linc (Omar Epps); Howard (Michael Lerner)**
- **x**
- **Howard dances with Linc to intimidate him.**

**Superstar (1999)**
- **x**
- **G/S**
- **x**
- **Owen (Chuck Campbell); Howard (Jason Bicker)**
- **x**
- **Owen kisses Howard on the cheek five times.**

- **x**
- **S**
- **x**
- **Polexia Aphrodisia (Anna Paquin); Estrella Starr (Bijou Phillips)**
- **x**
- **Polexia and Estrella kiss while having a ‘ménage à trios’ to ‘deflower’ William.**

**Bring It On (2000)**
- **x**
- **x**
- **G**
- **x**
- **Les (Huntley Ritter); Tim/Guy Cheerleader (Riley Smith)**
- **x**
- **Les flirts with Tim at a cheer competition.**

**But I’m a Cheerleader (2000)**
- **x**
- **L**
- **x**
- **Meagan (Natasha Lyonne); Graham (Clea DuVall)**
- **x**
- **Megan and Graham kiss, caress, and make love onscreen.**

- **x**
- **G**
- **x**
- **Dolf (Dante Basco); Clayton (Kip Pardue)**
- **x**
- **Dolf and Clayton are caught kissing passionately by Megan. They kiss again at graduation.**

- **x**
- **L**
- **x**
- **Megan; Lipstick Lesbian (Julie Delpy)**
- **x**
- **Megan dances with an adult female the gay bar, Cocksucker.**

- **x**
- **L**
- **x**
- **Graham; Sinead (Katharine Towne)**
- **x**
- **Graham and Sinead dance at the gay bar, Cocksucker.**

**Center Stage (2000)**
- **x**
- **-**
- **x**
- **Unknown**
- **x**
- **Adult male attending a dance class kisses both female and male class attendees on the lips.**

- **x**
- **S**
- **x**
- **Jesse Montgomery III (Ashton Kutcher); Chester Greenburg (Seann William Scott)**
- **x**
- **Jesse and Chester kiss each other in a ‘kissing competition’ with heterosexual couple.**

- **x**
- **T**
- **x**
- **Tania (Teressa Tunney); Patty (Claudine Barros)**
- **x**
- **Tania, a transgender women, kisses her boyfriend Patty (who is either a transgender man or drag king).**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movie</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Plot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scary Movie (2000)</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ray Wilkins (Shawn Wayans); unknown</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>Ray Wilkins; unknown</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>Bobby Prinze (Jon Abrahams); unknown</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ray Wilkins; Greg Phillippe (Lochlyn Munro)</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Another Teen Movie (2001)</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>Catherine Wyler (Mia Kirshner); Sadie Agatha Johnson (Beverly Polcyn)</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Guy (2002)</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>Jose (Jai Rodriguez); Dizzy (DJ Qualls)</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange County (2002)</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tanya (Carly Pope); Butch Female Janitor (Carolyn Wilson)</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirteen (2003)</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td>Evie Zamora (Nikki Reed); Melanie Freeland (Holly Hunter)</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>Evie Zamora; Tracy Freeland (Evan Rachel Wood)</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EuroTrip (2004)</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nude Beach Ladies (Edita Deveroux, Petra Tomankova)</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cooper Harris (Jacob Pitts); Hans (Vilem Holy); Gruber (Jiri Maria Sieber)</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td>Girls in Orange Juice Ad (Tereza Brettschweiderova, Tereza Brettschweiderova)</td>
<td>✗</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>Jaime (Travis Wester); Scott Thomas (Scott Mechlowicz); Creepy Italian Guy (Fred Armisen)</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Girl Next Door (2004)</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>April (Amanda Swisten); Ferrari (Sung Hi Lee)</td>
<td>✗</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>Danielle (Elisha Cuthbert); unknown</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movie</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Cast/Characters</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saved! (2004)</td>
<td></td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dean (Chad Faust); Mitch (Kett Turton)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cry_Wolf (2005)</td>
<td></td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Tucker Must Die (2006)</td>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kate (Brittany Snow); Beth (Sophia Bush)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College (2008)</td>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td>College Girls (Brandi Coleman, Jessica Heap)</td>
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<tr>
<td>College (2008)</td>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Never Back Down (2008)</td>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hot Tub Chicks (Jocelyn Binder, Deon Stein)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist (2008)</td>
<td></td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dev (Rafi Gavron); Lethario/Beefy guy (Jonathan B. Wright)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superhero Movie (2008)</td>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rick Riker (Drake Bell); Bank Loan Officer (Vincent A. Larusso)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex Drive (2008)</td>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dance Flick (2009)</td>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. Moody (Marlon Wayans); Mr. Moody’s Favorite Student (Gregory Wayans Benson Jr.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td>Megan (Shoshana Bush); Nora (Christina Murphy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fired Up! (2009)</td>
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<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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<td>L</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bianca (Danneel Harris); Angela (Hayley Marie Norman)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>G/S</td>
<td></td>
<td>Downey (Jake Sandvig); Nick Brady (Eric Christian Olsen)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easy A (2010)</td>
<td></td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brandon (Dan Byrd); unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Runaways (2010)</td>
<td></td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
<td>Joan Jett (Kristen Stewart); Tammy (Hannah Marks)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sandy West (Stella Maeve)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
<td>Joan Jett; Cherie Currie (Dakota Fanning)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
<td>Joan Jett; unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Title</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Same-Sex Partner</td>
<td>Role(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Fright Night</em> (2011)</td>
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<td>Unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Journey 2: The Mysterious Island</em> (2012)</td>
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<td>Gabato (Luis Guzmán); Hank (Dwayne Johnson)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Perks of Being a Wallflower</em> (2012)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Patrick (Ezra Miller); Brad (Johnny Simmons)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Project X</em> (2013)</td>
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<td>Unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Carrie</em> (2013)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chris Hargensen (Portia Doubleday); Tina (Zoë Belkin)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. Sexual identity of the character is expressed verbally or through physical intimacy. In line with a dominant reading, when sexual identity is unknown it is generally classified heterosexual.
2. Character and actor names were obtained from the Internet Movie Database website (www.imdb.com).
3. LGBTS: lesbian (L), gay (G), bisexual (B), transgender (T), straight (S).
4. Type of same-sex intimacy of the encounter:
   - ⚢ indicates transgender intimacy
   - ☬ indicates male same-sex intimacy
   - ☀ indicates female same-sex intimacy.
### Appendix G: LGBT-themed language and visual jokes in teen films, 1995-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film title (year)</th>
<th>Character details</th>
<th>Description and transcription of dialogue</th>
<th>Objective of dialogue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Angus (1995)</strong></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x x</td>
<td>x x</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Clueless (1995)</strong></td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Friday (1995)</strong></td>
<td>x</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Three female students tease protagonist Randy behind Randy's back.</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female student 1: Agh! Look who's over there ... Randy Dean.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female student 2: God!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female student 1: She's such a freak! Oh God, did you hear about her family? They're, like, all lesbians there.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female student 2: Just goes to show you.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female student 1: What?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female student 2: I don't know. Whatever.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| While Randy and Evie talk, an adult women drives past and yells: ‘Fucking dyke!’ | 6 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evie and her three friends talk about Evie’s new friend (and budding love interest) Randy.</th>
<th>6 7 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girl 1: Heard you’re hanging out with Randy Dean.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evie: What, are you guys the K.G.B.?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Girl 2: There is no K.G.B. any more, Evie.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Evie: All right. Whatever.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Girl 1: We’re just saying.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Girl 3: So?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evie: So what?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl 1: Were you hanging out with her or what?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evie: So what if I was?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl 3: She’s pretty much of a freak, I think.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl 1: In more ways than one.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evie: What’s that supposed to mean?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl 2: Well, she's a total pothead, number one, and she's like a total diesel dyke, number two. [The three friends laugh.]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evie: So what?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl 2: Nothing. We're just saying. I mean, I just don't get why she has to flaunt it. I mean, she could fix herself up and not try to act like a man. Maybe?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evie: You know, you guys are so small.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl 3: Oh, Evie's got a thing for the freak of the class!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evie: I do not. Get out.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl 1: Aren't you getting a little defensive, Evie?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evie: I am not getting defensive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl 2: Well, I don't think she seems like your type anyway, Evie. I mean, I don't think she even knows how to read. [The three friends laugh.]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evie: I don't even know why I hang out with you guys.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>All three girls [talking in unison]: Because we love you, Evie! We love you!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ali, the husband of Wendy (the older woman Randy dated) accosts Randy at the gas station where she works.</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ali: Come here! Come here! Come here! Come here! Listen, you little twat, you dyke, you. Stay the fuck away from my wife, or I'm gonna mess you up good!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randy: Get the fuck off me! [...] I haven't seen Wendy in weeks! There's nothing going on with us! Get the fuck off me!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali: Anywhere near here, I'll kill you!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randy: Maybe if you treated her better, she wouldn't fool around on you so much!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ali: Don't you insult me!

Evie confides in her three friends that she is in love with Randy.

Girl 1: God, Evie, if you were going to turn gay, you'd think you could at least choose someone who's pretty.
Evie: I didn't say I was gay. I said I was in love.
Girl 2: How come we didn't know about this before? I mean, you don't seem gay.
Girl 3: I think you're under some kind of spell or something.
Evie: I am not. I'm the same person that I've always been. Underneath it all, I am the same person.

Girl 2: Well, who can we tell, then?
Evie: No one. This is just between us.
Girl 1: I really can't believe this. I mean, this is totally insane. Why do we have to be the only people with this information? Well, Evie, how are we supposed to process this?
Evie: In therapy, I guess.
Girl 2: Oh, shit. Are you guys going to go to the prom together, too?
Girl 3: I think you're ruining your life, Evie. I'm sorry to say, but I really think that.
Girl 2: I think it's gross, Evie.
Girl 3: Can I tell my mom?
Evie: No! Listen, if you guys can't handle it, then you can just dump me right now and not be my friends any more. I'm telling you, though, I am the same Evie. If you can't take it, then you can just get up and leave, and we'll never have to speak again. [Two of the girls get up and leave.]

Girl 3: Um ... you know, you should see if you can get that movie on video, Evie. It was pretty good. [The third friend leaves and Evie is left alone looking sad.]

After Randy and Evie run away from home together, they contact Randy's previous girlfriend, Wendy, for money. After Wendy arrives, so does her husband who assumes that Wendy and Randy are meeting for romantic reasons.

Ali: Where is she? I told that little dyke if I caught her messing around with you again, I was gonna kill her.

Evie's mother and Randy's aunts try to convince the two teenagers to come out of the hotel room where they're hiding. Eventually Evie's three friends join the fracas.

Evelyn: Evie, Mommy's going to get you some therapy, honey. All you need is a little therapy, just a little therapy.
Evie: I'm not the one who needs therapy, Mom. [...] Evelyn: Oh, hi, ladies. Hi, ladies. How you doing? Look, we're having a little crisis on our hands. We're trying to get Evie to come out with her new friend ... Randy?
Girl 3: Randy's already out, Mrs. Roy.
The school Principal and ‘goody two shoes’ student body president Steve are in the Principal’s office.

Principal: I need a special favour from you, Steve. Something that will be our little secret. You up to it?

[Steve gets down on his knees begrudgingly in front of the principal.] What are you doing?

Steve: But I thought you—

Principal: [Looking disgusted] I don’t want that, you idiot. I need a narc on the trip to Washington.

The students take a tour of Washington that includes J. Edgar Hoover’s eternal flame. While the teacher talks about ‘this great American,’ Herbert Jones, an intelligent but anti-social black bookworm, interrupts saying: ‘He was a fascist transvestite and I hope he rots in hell.’

Dags talks to Virus, a computer nerd, on the school bus, asking his opinion of Lisa, a popular and smart female peer. Virus claims that Lisa’s a ‘head case’ and suggests that Dags court Meg instead.

Virus: If I were you, I’d go for Meg.

Dags: Meg’s gay.

Virus: Yeah but if anyone can change her, you can Dags. Yeah.

Dags: I don’t think so, Virus.

Ashtray has just moved into his father’s house; the two men are getting to know each other.

Father: Hey Tray, let me ask you a question, man.

Ashtray: What’s up.

Father: Are you still a virgin?

Ashtray: Of course. Well, there was this one dude who rubbed up against my butt one time, but I ain’t like it.

Father: Hey man, I’m talking about girls, man.

Ashtray: Oh! Girls? Come on pops, you know I be getting mine.

Dave the Crackhead, a drug-addled and unkempt hustler, asks Ashtray for money and Ashtray declines; Dave then propositions Ashtray.

Dave: I can suck your dick.

Ashtray: Ew.

Toothpick, a hard case from the ‘hood,’ sees Ashtray flirting with his ex-girlfriend. Toothpick declares his lack of concern to his peers about going back to jail for seeking retribution.

Toothpick: Man, I ain’t worried about jail! Shit man, I don’t give a damn about going to jail. Nigger, take me to jail! Lock me up! Throw away the key! [Each exclamation is echoed by his friends around the table.] I ain’t afraid to fuck somebody in his ass. [The sound of a scratching-turn table and complete silence from his peers.]

Friend: This fool is tripping.

Unknown voice: You’re on your own there, brother.

Toothpick: Yo y’all. Come on man. Y’all ain’t never been in a shower with a man and you see the suds roll down the crack of his ass, and you just … be all … [His friends look disgusted. After a pause Toothpick bursts out laughing.] I was foolin’ y’all, man. I was foolin’ y’all. It was dope. Woos. [His friends look unconvinced.]
| X | X | X | X | Loc Dog, Ashtray’s cousin from the hood, fills out a job application at a car factory. Another applicant for the job is a young upper-class white man who talks to a white woman about his education and other matters. White man: You know, I spent five years at Harvard. Loc Dog: Oh, really? I just spent six months at county. Anybody ever try to take your manhood, hmmm? Then he sees the warden coming, so he hides you. But you still got that plug in your ass. [The other two applicants leave.] | 1 |

| X | X | X | Dave the Crackhead, in a state of agitation, talks to Loc Dog. Dave: Man, can you give me directions to Crenshaw, man? Loc Dog: Fool, you better get your crusty behind away from me. Dave: I’ll suck your dick, man. Loc Dog: What you say to me? Dave: I’ll suck your dick, man. Loc Dog: [Adjusting his pants and exiting a van while Dave licks his lips] Al’ght, so what you want do, my man, is go the corner, go about three blocks down, and make a right, and you’ll be right there on Crenshaw. | 1 |

| X | X | X | Steve Walker meets with his daughter Nicole’s increasingly unhinged boyfriend, David McCall, to tell him to stop seeing her. Steven: David, I don’t want to beat around the bush. I came to tell you that you’re going to stop seeing Nicole. Now, either you’re as smart as you think you are, and you’ll just go away, or else you’re going to make things harder on yourself that they have to be. David: You know Steve, you’re not really a faggot. […] I’m serious. Seem like a pretty solid guy. You should lighten up on yourself. Steven: We’re not talking about me, we’re talking about– David: Yes we are. That’s what this whole thing’s about, Steve. Your inadequacies. Your fears. […] Listen to me. See, I’m hip to your problems … I also know you ain’t keeping up, so to speak, your end of the bargain with the missus. ’Cause if you were, she wouldn’t be all over my stick. But relax, Steve, we’re friends. We’re practically family. | 2 | 6 |

| X | X | X | Dexter tackles dim-witted Ed to stop him from telling another employee the recipe to the special sauce that is saving Good Burger. Ed: [From underneath Dexter] Look, Dexter I like you as a friend and all but… | 1 | 2 | 9 |

| X | X | Kurt Bozwell, the evil manager of Mondo Burger, tries to convince Ed to work at Mondo Burger instead of Good Burger in order to get the recipe for Ed’s sauce. When Ed arrives at work in Kurt’s car, Dexter questions him about what happened. Ed says that Kurt has offered him a job at Mondo Burger. Ed: I think he likes me. Dexter: Ed! That diphthong doesn’t like you! He just wants to use you. Ed: Oh, well. That’s not ‘natural’ [uses air quotes]. Dexter: No. He wants your sauce. Look, don’t tell him the sauce recipe, all right? | 1 | 9 |

| X | X | Todd and Becky kiss in her car; it appears that Todd was unable to engage in sex. Todd: That’s never happened before. Becky: Maybe you just don’t like me. Todd: No it’s not that at all. I really do. Becky: Maybe you just don’t like girls. [She laughs while Todd looks upset.] | 2 |
A local homeless man, Archie, offers sex in exchange for payment to evil ex-Nazi Arthur Denker.

Denker: You smell like a toilet.

Archie: Maybe I could use your shower. But first a drink. Then I will do anything you say. [...] [The two men swap stories and drink alcohol.] Maybe in the morning you could let me have $10.

Denker: Yeah, perhaps.

Archie: Maybe even $20. [...] Relax, I've done this before. [...] Let me go pee first. [Denker murders Archie.]

After graduation, school counsellor Edward French approaches Todd with his suspicions that Denker is not really Todd's grandfather (a ruse with Todd used earlier in the year). In order to keep this a secret from his parents, Todd threatens to blackmail Edward with accusations of attempted molestation.

Todd: Can I ask you something, Ed? You don't mind if I call you Ed, do you? Now that I'm out of your fucking high school. [...] Does it ever work? [...] Does it ever work, or am I the first one? 'Cause if I'm the first, I'm flattered, really, but somehow I can't believe that. Not after you fixing my grade. And giving me your home phone number? And then you come out here when my parents aren't home.

Edward: What are you talking about?

Todd: I mean, you've got some balls. Is this why your wife left you? [Edward looks confused and upset.] ... You must have really wanted to shake my hand. Or something else.

Edward: Wait a minute. What are you– Are you going to tell people I– I did something to you, Todd?

Todd: I don't want to drag you down with me, but I will. I'm better at this than you are.

Edward: Better at what? I'm trying to help you, Todd. Can't you see that?

Todd: You've helped enough.

Edward: Well, I won't just do nothing.

Todd: [Yelling] Well you're going to fucking have to! [...] [Talking calmly again.] The things I'm gonna say. They'll never go away. Not for you. Think of your job. [Todd laughs.] Think of your son ... [There is a stare-off between the two men.] So what's the story here, Ed? Do we have a deal?

Edward: You can't do this, Todd.

Todd: You have no idea what I can do. [Stare-off; Edward breaks the stare and walks away silently, looking back over his shoulder before finally leaving. Todd has won this round; Todd looks relieved and continues playing basketball.]

Kenny Fisher shows his white 'homeboy' friends the 'love kit' he's put together to seduce a girl at the graduation after-party.

Kenny: Check this out [unzips his backpack]. Observe: the love kit.
Homeboy 1: [Pulling a pink scented candle out of the kit and yelling loudly] Oh damn, man, our boy's a fag, yo!
Homeboy 2: Who's a fag?
Kenny: Yo, both y'all. This is a Fragrance of Love scented candle, bitch. Damn!

Preston Meyers is trying to call a radio show on which Barry Manilow is a guest when an exotic dancer who is dressed like an angel hangs up the phone so that she can call a cab. After Preston's initial outrage, they bond over the angel's story of unrequited love with Scott Baio.

Angel: He [Baio] got out of that car... he was so beautiful. And he looked right at me. I didn't know what to do, I mean, I couldn't say anything; I couldn't move. I never even talked to him, and he was right there. I still have that red bandanna. The thing is, you never know. Like, had I at least maybe said something. You never know. But anyway, the point is, I totally realised ... you know,
There is fate, but it only takes you so far because once you’re there, it’s up to you to make it happen. [...] Don’t you make the same mistake I did. If you really want to be with him, get back on that phone and call Barry Manilow and tell him how you feel.

Preston: No, oh no. I didn’t want him. I was–
Angel: It’s okay. I don’t think it’s weird. I mean, come on: Scott Baio. We all have our things.

### The Faculty (1998)

#### X - X - X - X

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<tr>
<th>Scene Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Popular jock, Mike Dexter, tries unsuccessfully to get back together with his ex-girlfriend Amanda Beckett at the after-graduation party. The scene is public and, after she rebuffs him, he insults her.</td>
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<td>Amanda: Why don’t you just walk away now and save yourself the embarrassment?</td>
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<td>Mike: Oh, yeah? Yeah, well, you’re the one Aman-duh, who’s gonna be embarrassed. Who’s gonna want you now?</td>
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<td>Amanda: Somebody. [Mike laughs and looks around the room full of his peers.]</td>
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<td>Amanda: Gosh, Mike, you really got me there.</td>
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<td>Female voice from the crowd: Fag! [The room erupts with derisive laughter.]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mike: Shut up! [...] I’ll kick everyone’s ass in this room!</td>
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<th>Scene Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>After the failed reconciliation with ex-girlfriend Amanda, inebriated Mike realises that he’s not as cool as he thought.</td>
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<td>Mike: I’m a loser. I broke up with the hottest girl in school. My friends all sold me out. Someone in there called me a fag.</td>
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#### X - X - X - X

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<th>Scene Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>A group of nerds devise a plan to exact revenge on Mike for his bullying: lure him behind the pool house, drug him with chloroform, and photograph him in compromising positions with one of his jock friends. However, things do not go according to plan and they accidentally accost their friend William and take the photos of William and Mike together. The nerds run away when the police arrive.</td>
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<td>X-Phile 1: It worked. All right, take off their clothes. [The two nerdy teens strip Mike and his friend to their underpants, and scatter photographs and sexual paraphernalia around them.] Get the Polaroid. Look at you, mister. I’m a big football jock. How do you like me now, buddy? Look. My flashlight. [Shine a light on Mike and William.]</td>
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<td>X-Phile 2: Oh, no. It’s William.</td>
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<td>X-Phile 1: Oh, God. Let’s get outta here.</td>
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<td>Cop: Jesus cribs! Let’s load these sickos into the wagon.</td>
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<th>Scene Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sweet natured Marybeth Louise Hutchinson talks to goth Stokely Mitchell on Marybeth’s first day of school when Delilah Profitt approaches the two girls.</td>
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<td>Delilah: Stokely, are you seducing the new students again? Hi, I’m Delilah. Happy to have you at Herington.</td>
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<td>Mary Beth: Thank you.</td>
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<td>Delilah: Hey, don’t you just love the way Stokely accessorizes the different shades of black in her ensemble?</td>
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<td>Stokely: Fuck you, gutter-slut.</td>
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<td>Delilah: I don’t know why you insist on being such a bad example for your people.</td>
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<td>Marybeth: What people?</td>
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<td>Delilah: Well, I hope you’re not a violent lesbian like your new-found friend here. [Annoyed, Stokely starts to pack her bag.]</td>
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<td>Marybeth: Uh, no. I’m not aware of any lesbianism in my lineage.</td>
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<td>Delilah: Oh, that’s too bad, Stokely. I guess you’ll just have to keep looking for Miss Right.</td>
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<td>Scene 1</td>
<td>Scene 1</td>
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<td>Stokely: Bi-polar bitch. [She pushes past Delilah and storms off.] Delilah: [To Marybeth in an 'I told you so' tone of voice] Violent.</td>
<td>Marybeth talks to Stokely in science class. Marybeth: I didn't know you were a lesbian. I don't think I've ever met one before. Have you been out long? You know, I think it's very impressive and evolved of you-- Stokely: I'm not a lesbian, alright? Marybeth: Be one. Please, fly free. Stokely: You were right about me. I don't have any friends and I like it that way. Being a lesbian is just my security. Marybeth: Your security against what? Stokely: People like you. Marybeth: Oh, complex.</td>
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*The Opposite of Sex (1998)*
Dede: It’s roughly ‘you reap what you sow’ if you’re gay. [...] 
Dede: [Telling Lucia how Bill looks like their father] Too bad he’s a fairy, right? 
Lucia: That’s not how I would put it. 
Dede: Then, too bad he’s however you would put it.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dede:</td>
<td>If you’re gay.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dede:</td>
<td>[Telling Lucia how Bill looks like their father] Too bad he’s a fairy, right?</td>
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<td>Lucia:</td>
<td>That’s not how I would put it.</td>
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<td>Dede:</td>
<td>Then, too bad he’s however you would put it.</td>
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Dede and Matt talk while hanging out by the pool.

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<tr>
<td>Dede:</td>
<td>How long have you been here?</td>
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<td>Matt:</td>
<td>A year in June.</td>
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<td>Dede:</td>
<td>So it’s kind of like, if you were normal, you’d be in love.</td>
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<td>Matt:</td>
<td>We’re normal [laughs]. In love, I don’t know. [...]</td>
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<td>Dede:</td>
<td>Have you always been a ‘mo?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matt:</td>
<td>Yeah, I guess.</td>
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<td>Dede:</td>
<td>You’ve never slept with a girl.</td>
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<td>Matt:</td>
<td>Nope, never came up. [...] It’s just not for me.</td>
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<td>Dede:</td>
<td>How would you know if you’ve never tried it?</td>
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<td>Matt:</td>
<td>I never tried Communism, but I know I wouldn’t like that. It’s the same thing. Or grits [grimaces].</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dede:</td>
<td>Have you ever slept with a black person?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matt:</td>
<td>No, I don’t think so.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dede:</td>
<td>Because you know you wouldn’t like it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matt:</td>
<td>No, I don’t know that.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dede:</td>
<td>So even though you’ve never tried either you’d have sex with a black person but not with me.</td>
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<td>Matt:</td>
<td>God, it’s like reverse discrimination. Quotas. Is it? Yeah, it’s prejudice. [Dede takes off her bathing suit top and faces Matt.]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dede:</td>
<td>Dede, look you’re really great, but I’m gay.</td>
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<td>Dede:</td>
<td>Theory.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matt:</td>
<td>Whatever. You’re my boyfriend’s sister–</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dede:</td>
<td>Half-sister. Look, I get it, okay? If I was you and I had this great setup and the guy I was with was 15 years older than me and all I had to do was blow him a couple of times a year I wouldn’t rock the boat either. You’re a homo. Fine, whatever. Like I give a shit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matt:</td>
<td>Nine – ten at the most – years older.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dede:</td>
<td>He could be your father. Basically, you’re blowing your father. That can’t feel right.</td>
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Dede seduces Matt and they have sex multiple times.

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<td>Dede:</td>
<td>[Voiceover] I know AIDS is like awful and stuff and that guy who got all those boys up to his room and ate them and froze them and then got killed in prison. Like we cared. I mean, all that is disgusting. But they do look better than straight people. And smell better. They’re cleaner, if you don’t count viruses. And there’s not all that hair in their ears and noses and stuff. So it evens out. Anyway, Matt wasn’t totally faggy. He knew what to do with it, believe me.</td>
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Dede and Matt tell Bill and Lucia that Dede is pregnant.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lucia:</td>
<td>You’re gay, you jerk!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dede:</td>
<td>He just never met the right woman.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lucia:</td>
<td>Yeah, one with a dick. [...]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matt:</td>
<td>For your information, I’m bisexual.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lucia:</td>
<td>I went to a bar mitzvah once, that doesn’t make me Jewish. Who says that bisexual shit besides gay men?</td>
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| X | X | X | Dede discloses that Matt cheated on Bill and broke his heart.  
Dede: [Voiceover] People getting dumped are always lovable, even homos. | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| X | X | X | Jason, Matt’s other boyfriend, confronts Bill, demanding to know where Matt has gone. When Bill tells him he doesn’t know, Jason threatens to make trouble for Bill, saying that Bill molested Jason when he was a student. Dede provides some background information about Jason.  
Dede: [Voiceover] After high school, he [Jason] went up to Chicago and became one of those Act Up people who think AIDS is this big conspiracy against homos. Maybe it is, who knows? All I know is it isn’t working. There seem to be more of them than ever before, you know what I mean? They’re tricky. | 5 | 6 |
| X | X | X | After Jason’s accusation that Bill molested him becomes public, reporters swarm Bill’s house. When Lucia approaches the house, an adult male voice yells: ‘Are you a lesbian?’ to which she responds: ‘No. You are all assholes.’ Before she enters the house, the same male voice yells: ‘Do you watch Ellen?’ | 11 |
| X | - | X | As Bill arrives at the school where he teaches he meets a throng of reporters.  
TV Reporter: [To the camera] I am here at Hoover High School where a sex scandal has exploded involving a high school teacher whose seeming popularity may, in fact, be the cover for predatory advances upon young male students entrusted to him by this outraged and devastated community. [The camera cuts to various students giving interviews.]  
Girl Student: This is America, and we’re Christians here. Aside from a few Jewish people who were just born that way. And I can tell you one thing Jesus Christ and his apostles were certainly not into: man-on-man action, which is how they describe it on their porno videos, which I’m proud to say Blockbuster does not carry. I work there, and it’s very family. Plus that religion John Travolta belongs to. | 3 |
| X | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| X | X | X | When Bill’s at home, a stranger (male voice) throws a rock through his window and yells: faggot! | 6 | 11 |
| X | X | X | Dede details Lucia’s life, from childhood to adulthood. Lucia’s childhood is shown as a home movie flashback of her and her siblings, including Tom in a dress, makeup, and wig that is snatched off his head by, presumably, Tom’s father.  
Dede: [Voiceover] If you ask me, it was a giveaway he liked the spanking. [The scene cuts to sister Tricia’s wedding where Tom is shown as an adult.] Tom turned out cute, didn’t he? They all do. | 5 | 11 |
| X | X | X | Bill and Lucia search for Matt in Los Angeles where he’s fled with pregnant Dede; they eventually find him, through a twist of fate, working at Mexican restaurant.  
Dede: [Voiceover] It must be inherited from our father, you know, being romantic. It’s just, when it’s a man being romantic about a woman it’s not as revolting. | 5 | 6 |
| X | X | X | Matt quits his job and comes home early, interrupting Dede’s assignation with her old boyfriend from Louisiana, Randy. Dede and Randy decide to raise the baby together, and Dede decides to leave Matt, but she tries to bully Matt into giving her the remainder of the money that they stole from Bill.  
Dede: Come on, Matt. It’s not gonna work out between us. You’re gay. I don’t mind so much, but I want my baby to have a real father.  
Matt: I told you I was gay.  
Randy: This guy’s a homo? [...] What about the AIDS? [To Dede] You haven’t been sleeping with this guy, have you? [To Matt] You’re gettin’ that stuff all over the baby. There’s an innocent child inside this girl. You son-of-a-bitch! [...] You fucking faggot! [Randy and Matt fight until Dede | 3 | 5 | 6 |
| X | X | X | Dede and Randy argue about money and Dede decides to leave him and return home. Randy: I'm just asking you to stand by your man like I'm standing next to you. A lot of guys would've said, 'Shucks, she took up with that homosexual; she turned her back on righteousness.' |
| X | X | X | Lucia and Bill talk about love and sex. Lucia: It's so fucking ironic. Do you know what my mom said when she found out Tom was gay? She said, 'it's such a lonely life.' She said that to the single straight girl. Isn't that funny? [...] It's fucking dangerous, sex. Bill: Tom didn't die because of sex. Lucia: Didn't he? P.C. crap aside, didn't sex kill Tom? If he just couldn't get enough shampoos or back rubs wouldn't he still be here today? Bill: You might as well say I killed him. Lucia: You didn't give it to him. Bill: No, but some other faggot did, isn't that what you think? Lucia: What I think is fine – chase this bimbo from Indiana to Chippewa Falls for all I care. Go ahead, throw away your reputation, your job and your students, whatever, because you want Matt. It's your right. Just don't say that it's about love, okay? |
| X | X | X | Bill returns home to controversy and resigns from his job, preferring to sit home alone. Dede: [Voiceover] Gay houses usually sell real quickly because of the recessed lighting and the good faucets. [Jason appears at Bill's house with a recording from Dede.] Dede: [Recorded message] I had to send Jason because of this whole crime thing. Matt called him one night in Chicago, and he's been like a fairy godfather, so to speak. What? He wants me to say faggot godfather. |
| X | X | X | Lucia recognizes Jason in a convenience store. The female clerk also recognizes him, saying: "Oh my god, yeah, the gay." |
| X | X | X | Bill finds Dede, Matt, and Jason in Canada. Matt and Jason are clearly a couple, flirting and wrestling together. Dede: The life cycle of the American bisexual. He's in the last stage: total 'mo. |
| X | X | X | After Bill and Matt kiss – a kiss of parting – Dede's voiceover breaks in. Dede: [Voiceover] Can I just say to all the girls out there if you're with a guy who groaned or made some crack during that little kiss, you're with what we call a 'closet case.' That's the number one tip-off. Number two is if they freak out about gays in the military. You know, if they can't discuss it without giggling about showering with guys and bending over for soap and stuff. That's not good. Real straight guys don't spend a whole lot of time thinking about wet naked men, if you ask me. |
| X | X | X | After Dede gives birth, they all return to the US. Bill gets his job back after Jason retracts his accusation of molestation. Dede: [Voiceover] Jason made a statement that he'd been paid to make his charges by the Christian Right guys on the school board – the ones against evolution and Huck Finn. Which was a total lie, but even so, they won't be back for another term. [...] Bill was cute with R.J. – that's Randy Junior. Even though it spooked me at first – him changing a boy baby and getting good peaks at
his little thing. But he says straight dads change girl babies all the time and nothing ever comes of that. Is he naive or what? [...] If there have to be gay people, at least it's nice there's enough of them to go around.

**Pecker (1998)**

**x** **x** **x** **x** Pecker visits his father, Jimmy, at his bar, The Claw Machine; Jimmy has had a slow day with very few sales.

Jimmy: It's that damned Pelt Room, Pecker. How am I supposed to compete with a stripper bar right across the street?


**Pecker sneaks over to the stripper bar, The Pelt Room, to take photos through the window.**

MC's voice: Let's have a big hand, gentlemen, for T-Bone the stripper. She's all lesbian all the time! [T-Bone comes out in her underpants and shakes and slaps her buttocks for two male patrons, who cheer.]

T-Bone: What you looking at, assholes?

MC: The nastiest girl in Baltimore. We show it all.

T-Bone: [Stripping off her bra and jiggling her breasts towards the male patrons] You liking looking at lezzies, don't you, suckers?

Patron: I love it!

MC: Full frontal lesbian nudity!

T-Bone: You think men got what women really need?

Patron: I got what you need.

MC: Bush city! [T-Bone takes off her underpants.]

T-Bone: Well you're wrong. Because this beef curtain stands alone.

**Pecker develops film with his friend, Matt.**

Matt: Wow, if it wasn't for you, Pecker-man, I'd never know this shit existed. Teabagging? Jesus. I thought I had heard of everything.

[Teabagging in the film is depicted as one man placing his scrotum onto the face of another man.]

**Tina attends Pecker's photo exhibition at the Sub Pit with three male co-workers from the Fudge Palace, the gay strip club where she works.**


Tina: Pecker, your photos are glorious.

Patron: There's nothing gay about it.

**At Pecker's New York first photography show, Tina talks to Lester and Jed, two well-known people in New York's art world; both are well dressed and speak in artistic terms about Pecker's work.**

Tina: Hi Mary. That's me [she motions to the photo they are looking at].

Lester: I beg your pardon?

Tina: I work in a gay bar in Baltimore. We call everybody Mary. [Both men look at each other, scandalised.] You got a little sugar in ya, don't ya? Sure, I can tell. A little light in the loafer. Oh, I don't mean nothing. I love fags.

Jed: I'm Jed Coleman, curator of the Whitney. This is Lester Hallbrook, of The Times. [...] 

Lester: Your brother is a very talented individual.

Tina: You got that right, Mary. [Winks and makes a clicking sound. The two men turn to each other, scandalized or put off.]
### Pecker gives a short speech after his show, thanking various people.

**Pecker:** [Looking at Tina] ... and my big sister, Tina, for helping me to understand all types of human behaviour [referencing her job].

### While Tina rides on a bus, she shows a male stranger her photo in the newspaper.

**Tina:** That’s me in the paper, you know? Are you a homosexual?

**Man:** Uh, no I’m not.

### The family are talking about Pecker’s new found fame.

**Tina:** I was on MTV! I was talking to Larry the Lughead on the phone and he saw Pecker’s picture of me right on MTV. Oh Mary, I’m a model.

### A group of art lovers show up at the Fudge Palace, excited to see teabagging, a sexual act that is considered hilarious by the new straight patrons, while the gay regulars look unhappy about the situation.

**Mr. Nellbox** [owner of the Fudge Palace]: Alright, listed up! There’s no teabagging here. And there’s no straight people allowed either.

**Crowd:** What?

**Bouncer:** Come on, all of youse. I need see some gay ID or you’re out of here.

[Inside the bar, Tina announces more dancers in their prison-themed competition; ‘Don’t Drop the Soap’ is playing in the background.]

**Tina:** [Using a microphone] Who will be Mr Rough Trade Baltimore? [Patrons applaud.] [...] Will it be Death Row Dave? Dave’s a three time loser and sentenced to the chair, but he’s still got a boner. His last request? One more hum job before they pull the switch. Here he comes! He’s Matt the Thief. He’s barely legal but he’s got the beef. The kindest face you’ll ever find, but if you own a store, he’ll shoplift you blind. [...] [Some of the crowd outside find their way in, including the parents of Death Row Dave.]

**Dave’s father:** Billy! Billy Heckman! [...] **Dave’s mother:** [Tearful] You are queer!

**Death Row Dave:** No, mom, I’m trade. The queers blow me.

**Mother:** [Covering her ears] Oh. [His father looks disgusted.]

**Dave:** I don’t blow them. I’m still straight.

### During the dance scene at Pecker’s art opening in Pecker’s Place in Baltimore, the men from the gay strip club are encouraged by Tina to take their pants off and dance on tables to the excitement of the crowds. Larry ‘teabags’ Lester, who looks thrilled and almost drunk with desire.

**T-Bone** and the Peit Room bouncer attend Pecker’s Baltimore art show. They’re dressed like a couple of tough men, wearing leather jackets, beards, rock ‘n’ roll t-shirts and bandanas. They both hit on Venetia, one of the artistic high rollers in New York.

**T-Bone:** [to Venetia] Hey gorgeous, be honest. When was the last time a straight guy asked you to dance?

[During the dance scene, T-Bone and the bouncer both strip off their fake bears and get up on a table. T-Bone strips down to revealing undies and gyrates for a crowd of men and women, include Venetia who looks thrilled. The bouncer opens her pants to reveal a pair of grey boxer briefs.]

**T-Bone:** [Straddling and ‘riding’ Jed] Ride it bitch. Ride it like a butch bottom.

**Jed:** New York was never like this!
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| 10 Things I Hate About You (1999) | | x | Michael and Cameron offer to help Patrick get a date with Kat.  
  Michael: We’re your guys.  
  Cameron: And he means that in a strictly non-prison movie type of way. |
| | | x | Bianca and Cameron talk about Bogey Lowenstein’s party. Cameron tries to get Patrick to take Kat so that Bianca will be able to attend the party.  
  Cameron: I’m working on that, but so far, you know, she’s not going for my guy. She’s not a—  
  Bianca: KD Lang fan? No. I found a picture of Jared Leto in her drawer once, so I’m pretty sure she’s not harbouring same-sex tendencies. |
| American Pie (1999) | | x | Chris ’Oz’ Ostreicher sings ’How Sweet It Is (To Be Loved By You)’ in the shower room after a lacrosse game or practice.  
  Stifler: Oh my god, you’re gay.  
  Oz: Oh come on, sing it with me. You know the words… |
| Anywhere But Here (1999) | | x | Ann and Adele drive to the town to which they’re moving. They talk about why Adele left Ted: Adele says he was running around with other women; Ann counters that she wished that were true so she could divorce him and take all his money.  
  Ann: And Ted is not a homosexual.  
  Adele: I never said that.  
  Ann: Yes you did.  
  Adele: Oh no I did not. I inferred it, but I never said it. ’Light in the loafers’ isn’t the same thing. [Adele forces Ann out of the car and drives away, leaving her on a deserted stretch of highway.] |
| Cruel Intentions (1999) | | x | Sebastian reads his sister, Kathryn, an article about virginal Annette.  
  Sebastian: She has a boyfriend named Trevor. Going out for a year. Trevor understands.  
  Kathryn: Trevor’s a fag. |
| | | x | Sebastian tells Kathryn that he’ll be writing about his latest sexual conquest in his diary.  
  Kathryn: Oh gee, your diary. Could you be more queer?  
  Sebastian: Could you be more desperate to read it? |
| | | x | Annette talks to Sebastian about her intention to wait to have sex until she’s married.  
  Annette: I just don’t think that people should experience the act of love until they are in love. And I just don’t think that people our age are mature enough to know those of emotions.  
  Sebastian: [Smirking] Are you a lesbian?  
  Annette: [In a neutral tone] No.  
  Sebastian: I didn’t mean to offend you, I just picked up on a little bit of that lesbian vibe.  
  Annette: Look, I wouldn’t expect a man of your experience to understand my beliefs. |
| | | x | Sebastian complains to his gay friend Blaine that someone wrote to Annette telling her about his unseemly reputation for seducing, then breaking up with, girls.  
  Sebastian: Unbelievable. Some fag – no offence—  
  Blaine: None taken  
  Sebastian: —wrote a letter to this chick describing my tactics. |
Sebastian thinks that it is jock Greg who has told Annette about his past. When he confers with his friend, Blaine tells him that Greg is a closeted gay male.

Sebastian: Well it make sense. McConnell hates me. I fingered this girlfriend at home coming last year.
Blaine: I don’t think that bothered him so much.
Sebastian: What do you mean?
Blaine: Well, let’s just say that Greg likes to tackle the tight ends on and off the field [makes but cupping sign with his hands].
Sebastian: Oh, you’re shitting me.
Blaine: I shit you not. He used to sneak into my dorm drunk every month. We’d go at it for awhile, and then as soon as he’d cum he’d start freaking out “Ou, what are you doing man. I’m not a fag. If you tell anybody I’m going to kick your ass.” God, the only reason I let him keep up the charade is because the man has a mouth like a hoover. Ouh.
Sebastian: [Smiling slightly] Shit. Too bad he’s in Kansas this summer.
Blaine: Not any more. Football team started practice last week. He’s back in the dorm. He already called me for a little pillow kissing session.
Sebastian: Good for you. Do you think you could arrange a little get together tonight on my behalf?
Blaine: Hmm, I do believe Spartacus is showing on TV tonight...

*Detroit Rock City (1999)*

**Detroit Rock City (1999)**

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Four adolescent males are arguing naturally.

Trip: You’re one to talk, Lex. Your mom’s a fucking dyke.
Lex: Just because she’s a female gynaecologist, that doesn’t mean she’s a lesbian. And even if she was at least my mom didn’t give birth to me while on LSD.
Trip: Shrooms!

**Detroit Rock City (1999)**

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Hawk, Lex, Trip, and Jam are in a car driving along the highway when they throw a pizza, which lands on the windshield of the car behind them. The pizza-covered car belongs to four disco fans: two macho males, Kenny and Bobby, and their girlfriends. The disco car forces the other car over to the side of the road, where Kenny and Bobby assault Hawk. Kenny gets even more aggressive when a Kiss 8-track tape starts to play.

Kenny: No, not the fag music. [He throws the 8-track tape onto the highway where it’s run over.]
Alright, fag-no. Have you learned your lesson yet, puke?

**Detroit Rock City (1999)**

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Hawk, Lex, Trip, and Jam beat up Kenny and Bobby, chaining them to the highway railings. To add insult to injury, they paint the faces of the two disco fans to look like Kiss band members.

Kenny: They put the fag make-up on you.
Bobby: They put the fag make-up on?
Kenny: The fuckin’ fag make-up’s on you. [Looking at each other.] Oh, no I got fag make up on me.

**Detroit Rock City (1999)**

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After Hawk, Lex, Trip, and Jam beat up Kenny and Bobby, one of the female disco fans, Christine, disagrees with Kenny’s aggression and leaves the car. Hawk, Lex, Trip, and Jam pick her up and offer to give her a lift. On the way, they discuss musical preference.

Christine: You don’t have to be such pigs just because I prefer Donna Summer or K.C and the Sunshine Band or the Village People over Kiss.
Hawk: The fuckin’ Village People. They’re a fag band.
Lex: They take it up the coast.

**Detroit Rock City (1999)**

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Hawk, Lex, Trip, and Jam think that Christine has stolen their car and blame Jam for suggesting picking her up initially.

Hawk: Jam, just shut your faggoty-ass mouth, okay?
**Drive Me Crazy**

*1999*  
Chase leaves a message on Dulcie's phone after she breaks up with him.  
Dulcie's message: Hey. It's Dulcie. If you want me to get back to you, leave three ways that high school sucks.  
Chase: There's the rampant homophobia, um, no pep rallies for the debate team, which leads to the greater issues, I'm sure, of the highly fascist nature of pep rallies in general. The speeches, saluting, banners. I think you see where I'm going with this. And finally, it sucks because when you break up with someone you can't escape them and it kills you to see them every day. Dulcie, call me. Tonight. I don't care what time.

---

**Drop Dead Gorgeous**

*1999*  
Lisa drops out of the beauty pageant so that her friend Amber can perform (which requires an approved costume) after Amber's costume was stolen. After the pageant, Lisa meets her father who tells her that he is disappointed that she dropped out.  
Dad: I'll tell you one thing, Peter never would have pulled a shenanigan like that.  
Lisa: Well, you know what dad? Peter's gay. Gay!  
Dad: [Looking shocked] What?

---

**Election**

*1999*  
Tammy and Lisa kiss while lying on Tammy's bed. Lisa pulls away from the kiss.  
Tammy: What?  
Lisa: I told you. I can't. It just doesn't feel right anymore.  
Tammy: But I love you. [She goes to kiss Lisa again, who pulls away and sits up on the bed.]  
Lisa: I said no. [...] [Lisa runs out of the house and Tammy chases after her.]  
Tammy: Lisa wait. Stop! [She runs to Lisa's car and knocks on her window.]  
Lisa: What?  
Tammy: Where are you going?  
Lisa: I'm not like you, okay?  
Tammy: What do you mean?  
Lisa: I'm not a dyke. And we're not in love. We were just ... experimenting. [Tammy looks crushed and begins to cry as Lisa drives away.]  
Tammy: Are you crazy?  
Lisa: These are private. These are for us.  
Tammy: So?  
Lisa: But other people can see them, too.  
Tammy: I don't care.  
Lisa: Well, I do.  
Tammy: [Voiceover] What did I do to make her change? What's wrong with me?
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| Girl, Interrupted (1999) | x | x | x | After Susanna is admitted to psychiatric hospital for attempted suicide, she becomes infatuated with charismatic sociopath Lisa. When Lisa and Susanna talk for the first time, the conversation turns to Dr. Wick, a female therapist.  
  Lisa: So, have you had your first Melvin yet?  
  Susanna: Who's that?  
  Lisa: Bald guy with a little pecker and a fat wife. Your ther-rapist, sweet pea. Unless they're giving you shocks. Or, God forbid, letting you out. Then you'll see the great, wonderful Dr. Dyke.  
  Margie: She means Dr. Wick.  
  Susanna: I've been in his office, but I haven't met him yet.  
  M.G.: He's a she. Dr. Wick's a girl.  
  Lisa: That's right, M.G. Wick's a chick. [...] Hence the nickname. |
| Idle Hands (1999) | x | x | x | While in the hospital, Janet, Lisa, Susanna, and Cynthia break into Dr. Wick's office and read their files.  
  Janet: [Reading Lisa's file] 'Highs and lows increasingly severe. Controlling relationships with patients. No appreciable response to meds. No remission observed.' That was before you tran away.  
  Lisa: We are very rare, and we are mostly men.  
  Janet: Lisa thinks she's hot shit because she's a sociopath.  
  Cynthia: I'm a sociopath.  
  Lisa: No, you're a dyke. |
| Idle Hands (1999) | x | x | x | While in the hospital, Janet, Lisa, Susanna, and Cynthia break into Dr. Wick's office and read their files.  
  Janet: [Reading Lisa's file] 'Highs and lows increasingly severe. Controlling relationships with patients. No appreciable response to meds. No remission observed.' That was before you tran away.  
  Lisa: We are very rare, and we are mostly men.  
  Janet: Lisa thinks she's hot shit because she's a sociopath.  
  Cynthia: I'm a sociopath.  
  Lisa: No, you're a dyke. |
| The Mod Squad (1999) | x | x | x | Three juvenile delinquents, Jules, Pete, and Linc are recruited as undercover police officers to infiltrate a drug ring. After drugs go missing from the evidence room and Police Captain Greer is murdered, they try to solve his murder, uncovering a crew of corrupt cops behind the crimes. While trying to solve the murder, Linc pretends to be a drug dealer and meets crooked music producer Howard.  
  Howard: Wanna dance?  
  Linc: What?  
  Howard: Come on. Dance with me. Oh, I love this song. Come on. It's just a little dance. I'm not a fag, I just like to dance. Uh, you lead; I'll be the girl. Yeah. [They two men waltz around the room. Linc looks worried.]  
  Linc: [Uncomfortable] I should get goin', man. I got some business to handle.  
  Howard: You're a classy dancer, you know that? Oh, I'm sorry. Wait a minute. I forgot. What's your name?  
  Linc: Linc.  
  Howard: Spin me, Linc. [...] I said spin me. [Linc spins Howard as they dance.] We could enter a contest. You can ride with us in the morning, okay? |
Linc paces nervously while waiting for the drug deal to occur; he goes to bathroom to unwind. Billy, a pimp/drug dealer who’s misleading uncoupl... wait for your boyfriend to come out of the toilet?

Howard: So, do we do this now, or wait for your boyfriend to come out of the toilet?

Billy: What?

Music guy: Your fella. He’s a good dancer.

---

**Outside Providence (1999)**

Mr. Dumphy and his friends play poker and chat.

Caveech: You know what they say about guys with beards, don’t you? Queers.

Barney: Queers.

Caveech: Yeah every one of them. What do you think they grow them for? They’re afraid they look too much like broads.

Tim: What about Abraham Lincoln?

Caveech: Lincoln? Queer as they come.

Joey: You got farts in your head.

---

A group of teenaged boys go to a disco club and watch the dance floor.

Mousy: They [men on the dance floor] look like a bunch of fags.

Drugs: I know. I’d be a fag too if I could get that kind of pussy.

Tommy the Wire: You just said you’d be a fag.

Drugs: Yeah. Then I could get that kind of pussy.

Tommy: No amount of babes in the world is worth being a homo for.

---

Mr. Dumphy and his friends play poker.

Barney: He’s queer you know.

Caveech: Who’s queer?


Frank: Did you go to school on the short bus? Rock Hudson is not queer.


Dunphy: He could be. He’s a good singer, that Nabors.

---

Mr. Dumphy and his friends play poker.

Caveech: It just don’t figure, you know? A guy like Rock Hudson, he could have any broad in the world he wanted.

Barney: Well you know what that is? It’s a sickness. It’s a mental disturbance caused by his mother.

Dunphy: It’s a sin is what it is, period.

Joey: Who give a shit? So he’s gay, big deal.

Caveech: Big deal? What’s he mean, ‘big deal’?

Joey: Why do you give a fuck anyway? Doesn’t affect you. I mean, I could see if Raquel Welch was a lezzie. But what do you give a shit about him for?

Caveech: I just do. Why – you don’t?

Joey: No, I don’t. [Stunned silence.]

Caveech: Well, if that don’t bother you, maybe you’re a femme too. [...] Wait a second. Gotta hear this now. I mean, we’re laying our cards on the thing here, right? Joey, do you or don’t you take it in the jaw? [Barney laughs.]

Dunphy: Shut the fuck up for fuck’s sake!

Caveech: What? Wait a second! Guy’s never been married. You ever seen him with a broad?

Joey: What if I was? Would that change something? You afraid I’d come on you all of a sudden, start
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<td>Dunphy: [To Caveech] You’re holding trump again, you cocksucker.</td>
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<td>Joey: Oh, so now it’s my fault? [They all laugh.]</td>
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### The Rage: Carrie 2 (1999)

| X | X | X | Popular jocks Mark and Jesse pull up to the photo development booth where outcast Rachel works and try to get the photos that Lisa took before her suicide. When bribing her with money ($20 then $30) doesn’t work, Mark offers to take her out for a drive as an enticement, which Rachel refuses. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Mark: Rachel, I’ll tell you what. How about I swing by when you get off work, take you out for a little cruise. Come on, I don’t bite. Unless you want me to. |
| | | | | Rachel: [laughs and looks away]: I don’t think so. |
| | | | | Mark: Why not? |
| | | | | Rachel: [Leaning through the photo booth window] Because I’m a dyke. |
| | | | | Jesse laughs: Nice one. |

<p>| X | X | X | Rachel prepares for her date with Jesse. She has just showered and is wrapped in a red towel when Mark, Eric, and other football players show up to scare her into being quite about what led to her friend’s suicide (i.e. that Eric had sex with Lisa then dumped her). The boys bang on the doors and windows of the trailer where she lives, and prank call her. |
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| | | | | Mark: [Using a ‘Daffy Duck’ voice] What’s your favourite scary movie? [Resuming his usual voice] Are you naked? [...] Or are you wearing a little red towel? [Rachel looks around fearfully.] |
| | | | | Eric: [To Mark] Its playtime. [Mark laughs.] |
| | | | | Rachel: Who the fuck is this? |
| | | | | Mark: Why don’t I come and show you, you little fuckin’ dyke? [They turn off the power to her house.] |
| | | | | Rachel: What do you want? [They smash a window with a brick.] Who is this? I’m calling the police. [They pound on the walls and rattle the windows. Eric puts on a pair of ‘knuckle dusters’.] |
| | | | | Brad: What are you doing man? |
| | | | | Eric: I’m gonna fuck her over like she’s fucking with me. [Brad holds him back but Eric tries to enter via the window; Rachel slams the window down on Brad’s hand with her telekinesis.] |
| | | | | [Rachel calls the police, but it is the return of her foster parents that the boys away.] |</p>
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<td>At Mark’s house party after the ‘big game,’ the popular kids exact their revenge on Rachel, an outsider who has become the girlfriend of the popular and likeable Jesse. To upset and humiliate her, they give her their ‘score book’ detailing the points given to boys for each girl that they have sex with. Mark: Rach, baby, read that. Open it up to Jesse’s page. I want you to see how many points Jesse got for you. Monica: I think that would be about two-four-six-eight! [Clapping, as if with a cheerleading routine.] Male voice: Who do we appreciate? Mark: More than that, more than that. Rachel remember you said that you were a dyke, so extra points for the conversion. Brad: Oh, the conversion! Two points! Mark: Not two. Thirty! [They boys restrain her and force her to watch a video of her sexual encounter with Jesse.]</td>
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<td>Zack asks Taylor why she broke up with him and she begins recounting this story. Taylor: So we’re at this club one night and Chandler gets totally plowed and starts making out with this old guy for like 20 minutes on the dance floor. Well, imagine our surprise when this old guy turns out to be Warren G.’s hairdresser. Zack: Isn’t he gay? Taylor: Whateve’. So he sets us up with passes to the spring break beach house so we go.</td>
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<td>Mary walks through the school halls while various students hurl insults at her (the scene is edited to show that it occurs over multiple days). Mary: [Voiceover] The more I kept trying to become a superstar, the less they thought I was one. In fact, they had all these other names for me. Various students: Hey, lesbo. Dogface. Panty stain. Mary: [Voiceover] And they also called me— Various students [voices on ly]: Skid mark. Nipple hair. Lame. Loser. Did I say lesbo?</td>
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<td>Helen tells Mary bout their classmate, Howard, who over-estimates his desirability. Helen: Howard thinks all the girls in school want to sleep with him. And the boys too. Howard: [To Owen] Want to quit looking at me, fruity? I don’t play butt darts, okay? I loooove the ladies.</td>
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<td>Leigh Ann and her friend Jo are driving to school; Leigh Ann asks for a contribution for the last issue of the student paper. Leigh Ann: Okay, uh, how about Miss Jo Lynn Jordan, famous film star last seen— Jo: —in rehab, popping Percodan, recently divorced from gay husband. Leigh Ann: Perfect.</td>
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<td>Jo has their teacher, Mrs. Tingle, tied up and is supervising her home imprisonment. Jo complains about boredom because Mrs. Tingle has no TV. Jo: I could be at home watching Sally Jesse, or Oprah, or Jerry. Where else can you see man has sex change to become lesbian? You think about that.</td>
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Jan and Les, two male cheerleaders, are verbally abused by a group of four football jocks at their high school.

**Toros Quarterback:** Whoa. ‘Sexy Leslie’ and ‘Jan Jan the Cheerleading Man’.

**Toros Tight End:** Hey fags.

Les: [Holding back Jan, who lunges for the jocks] Whoa, whoa, just because we won more trophies than you guys is no reason to go get all... malignant.

**Toros Tight End:** Malignant this, too. [He grabs his groin. The group of jocks laugh and give each other ‘high-fives’.]

Jan: One of these days, man.

Les: Ah, let it go. They’ve never even won a single game. That’s gotta be kind of rough on them. [Jan walks away; Les calls out to him.] Besides they’re dicks.

The cheerleading audition attracts a series of terrible applicants, until tough-but-sexy Missy auditions. While she is a skilled gymnast, her non-feminine appearance upsets some of the cheerleaders who voice objections to her joining the squad.

**Courtney:** You’re being a cheer-tator, Torrance, and a pain in my ass. We already voted. Besides, Missy looks like an über-dyke. [She giggles. Only Courtney and her friend, Whitney, look amused; all other cheerleaders look upset and stern. Missy is visibly upset and leaves the gym.]

**Torrance:** Courtney, I’m the captain. I’m pulling rank. And you can fall in line or not. If we’re going to be the best, we have to have the best. Missy’s the poo, so take a big whiff. [Courtney and Whitney look mutinous.]

The Toros cheer squad show Missy the routine they’ll be performing at a competition. Missy is sitting in the stands, observing the routine and looking both out of place and miserable. After hearing the cheer, she perks up, looks disgusted and storms off.

**Courtney:** Nice recruit, Torrance. A real captain would have seen what I saw: a big, dykie loser!

**Whitney:** I’d say that’s strike two.

[Torrance shakes her head in disbelief and annoyance at Missy’s departure.]

Torrance talks to her pesky younger brother, Justin, while he plays videogames.

**Justin:** It’s not my fault you’re in love with a big gay cheerleader who won’t return your calls.

**Torrance:** Aaron is not gay.

**Justin:** Oh, so someone just made him become a cheerleader.

**Torrance:** He’s just busy.

**Justin:** Yeah. Busy scamming on guys.

Les drive some of the cheerleaders to a football game.

**Jan:** You know, all the cheerleaders in the world wouldn’t help our football team.

**Les:** Man, it’s just wrong. Cheering for them is just plain mean.

**Jan:** Everybody comes to see you ladies anyway.

**Missy:** [Laughing] Because we’re such fine athletes.

**Jan:** Oh, live with it. You’ll be fighting off major oglers while we defend our sexuality.

**Missy:** What is your sexuality?

**Les:** Well, Jan’s straight. While I’m... [Torrance smiles at him]... controversial. [Les smiles.]

**Missy:** Are you trying to tell me you speak fag?

**Les:** Oh, fluently.

**Missy:** And Courtney and Whitney? Dyke-adelic?

**Torrance:** [Looking scandalized] No.

**Les:** Are you kidding?
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| 2    | Jan: I don't think so. See Courtney doesn’t wear anything under her spankies. [Jan has a lascivious smirk; Missy appears repulsed.]
|      | Les: That’s no excuse, Jan.
|      | Jan: I can’t help it if my digits slip occasionally.
|      | Missy: Nuh-un. Slip? Where?
|      | Les: Oh come on, Missy, don’t make him say it.
|      | Missy: Oh my god.
|      | Jan: My god too.
|      | Les: You’re a sick man, Jan.
|      | x x x Jan helps Missy stretch before cheer practice. Two football players walk by and look on enviously.
|      | Toros Quarterback: Maybe we should join the squad.
|      | [unknown]: Push. Harder.
|      | Toros Tight End: Fag!
| 5    | **But I’m a Cheerleader (2000)**
|      | x x x Mike and Megan’s parents, Nancy and Peter, and Megan’s friends participate in her lesbian ‘intervention.’
|      | Mike: My name is Mike. Your parents and your friends want to have a conversation with you, and I’m here to help facilitate that dialogue. So why don’t we start by sitting down, and making ourselves comfortable?
|      | Peter: Megan, we love you. We all love you. And lately we’ve become concerned about certain behaviours. We’re afraid you’re being influenced by a way of thinking. Unnatural ... Do you remember the woman on TV?
|      | Nancy: Honey, we think you’re a [voice dips to a whisper] lesbian. [...] Mike: I myself was once a gay. Now I’m an ex-gay, Megan. I work for a place called True Directions who help people, like yourself, to learn to understand the reasons behind homosexual tendencies, and how to heal them.
|      | Megan: What tendencies? Why would you think I’m a...
|      | Peter: And these [holding up a poster of Melissa Ethridge and a pillow with a flower on it].
|      | Mike: Sexual, even vaginal motifs in artwork and decorating. Gay iconography.
|      | Jared: You don’t even like to kiss me.
|      | Group of cheerleaders: It's true.
|      | Megan: I can’t believe this.
|      | Mike: Denial is a normal part of the healing process that we'll explore at True Directions.
|      | Megan: Healing?
|      | Peter: Poodle, it's only for a few months.
| 6    | x x x Megan arrives at True Directions and meets Mary, the camp Director.
|      | Mary: Looks like we got you just in time. What are you, about 17? [...] Almost lost her to college. It’s so much harder once they’ve been through all that liberal arts brainwashing.
Megan watches a video from True Directions that outlines the supposed ‘problems’ of the ‘homosexual lifestyle.’

Announcer: No one would have guessed what would happen to this sweet little girl. By a young age, Kelly had a promising future. Mommy’s little helper and prom queen. Kelly had hopes of being a model one day. That is, until she was recruited into the homosexual lifestyle.

Kelly: [Short hair, numerous facial piercings] She made me do things with other women. She drove me on the back of her Harley Davidson motorcycle like I was some showpiece. Even when she’s get high and push me off the back of her bike, I’d roll in the gutter, broken ribs … [crying] I just kept coming back for more. [Angry] Turn of the f–k ing camera!

Kelly’s father: [Faces in silhouette, as if in the Witness Protection Program.] We never dreamed this could happen to our little girl.

Announcer: But Kelly sought help. After just two months in True Directions’ easy five-step program, Kelly rediscovered her femininity [Image of Kelly who embodies a 1950s style of feminine attractiveness] and embraced her true self. On March 16, 1996, Kelly was married. [Joyous music plays while the happy couple kiss. The video ends with the True Directions logo and their slogan: straight is great.]

Mary introduces Megan to True Directions’ five-step program.

Mary: Why don’t we concentrate on the first step: you admitting your problem. When you see a woman, in a tight skirt, and long, beautiful legs, or perhaps she’s in the bathroom, putting lipstick over her full lips. Or maybe in the locker room, soaping her body, rubbing her breasts you don’t have any unnatural thoughts?

Megan: I don’t think it’s unnatural.

Mary: Ah-ha! You see? You don’t even think it’s wrong. Until you admit your sickness, you will wear these. You will earn the right to wear civvies once you have admitted the first step. It’s a long path to righteousness, Megan. And it’s a battlefield of temptation out there, and you’re going to have to fight.

Megan attends her first group session at True Directions. After each teen at the camp introduces themselves and ‘admits to being a homosexual,’ Megan realises that she, too, is a homosexual.

Megan: I just want to be normal.

Mary: Then you admit you’re not normal. So why don’t you admit you are a homosexual? […]

Megan: I’m a homosexual.

Mary: Congratulations, Megan. You have just taken your first step in your true direction! […] Don’t worry, Megan. It’s gonna be okay.

Megan: No.

Megan receives a phone call from her parents.

Nancy: Megan, it’s Mom and Dad. We know it’s after lights out, but we miss you so much.

Peter: We just wanted to know how our little poodle is doing.

Megan: I’m doing okay. You were right, I am a homosexual. But I’ll be regular soon.

Peter: Oh, that Mary is pretty good then, huh?

Megan: Mm-hmm, and Mike and all others. I’m already starting step two.

Peter: We’re so glad, and after all that money.

Nancy: We can’t wait to see you up there at graduation, to have you home, so we can all be together again.

Peter: Just remember we love you; we would do anything for our Megan to have a normal life.
Megan and the other teens of True Directions are in group therapy, and onto the second step of the program.

Mary: In step two we’ll begin the process of everybody rediscovering their gender identity. Now, we all know that we’re latent heterosexuals. Now, what we must do is to relearn our masculinity and our femininity. I know this might be a little confusing to some of you. Graham! [...] Do you like being a pervert?
Graham: I heard you, okay? With your masculine, feminine, blah, blah, blah. I think after advanced calc. and Chaucer I can follow this psycho-babble.
Mary: This psycho-babble, young lady, is the only healthy alternative to the gay lifestyle. Other than guzzling a bottle of tranquilizers or slashing your wrists.

The teens at True Directions and their parents meet for family counseling. Andre reports his root (changing his clothes after swimming lessons) but Graham’s father, Mr. Eaton, doesn’t enjoy the process or find it useful.

Mr. Eaton: Blowing each other after your fuckin’ bar mitzvah’s a little bit different than learning to dog paddle.
Joel’s father: That is totally uncalled for.
Mr. Eaton: Well excuse me, but we’re paying a lot of money here to get these kids fixed, not sit around and listen to stories all day. Graham, I hope you’re getting a little more out of this program than that faggot over there. [...] I’ve heard enough of this crap. And when we get back from Switzerland, you’d better have this gay thing out of your system. [...] You fuck up: no college, no car, no trust fund. I’m not sitting in any room with faggots.
Mary: Megan, it’s your turn to report out your root.
Megan: I think it might be my parents. [...] You know we’ve kinda been like this greeting card family. And then there was that one year when dad was unemployed and mom had to support us.
Peter: Wait a minute. That was only for nine months. And then I was offered a much better job at the plant.
Megan: Maybe seeing mom kind of being the dad, maybe I … maybe I got the wrong idea about the roles of men and women.
Mary: Absolutely. I can’t believe that you didn’t mention this earlier. Your father was emasculated, your mother was domineering. [...] You wanted to emulate your mother. You have no respect for men, because you don’t respect your father.

After Megan alerts Mike and Mary to Dolph and Clayton’s clandestine kissing, the two boys are punished: Clayton is confined to solitary and Dolph is expelled.

Mary: All right, Clayton, you little pervert, you’ve got one week of solitary and if I catch you again you’re out.

During the counselling session run by Mike, masculine Jan admits that she is a heterosexual.

Jan: I’m a heterosexual. [...] No, I know, I’ve never been gay.
Mike: Jan remember, you were molested. Just take a look at yourself.
Jan: Everybody thinks I’m this big dyke because I wear baggy pants, and play softball, and I’m not as pretty as other girls, but that doesn’t make me gay. I like guys. I can’t help it. I want a big fat wiener up my–
Andre: Amen, sister.
Jan: [Crying and running away] I quit.
Mike: Who in the hell is she trying to fool?
|   |   |   |   |   | Mary calls in Megan’s parents to try to find out who snuck out of camp to visit the gay bar, the Cocksucker.  
  Peter: Now, honey, your mom and I both know that you didn't have anything to do with that ... that...  
  Nancy: Field trip to the Cocksucker.  
  Peter: Field trip to the Cocksucker. [clears throat]. But ... if you had gone ...  
  Nancy: You have to know that you would be on your own.  
  Megan: What's that supposed to mean?  
  Nancy: Well you can't come home. We can't allow you to live an unhealthy lifestyle under our roof. So, Megan, if that is what you choose, you're choosing to cut us out of your life.  
  Peter: Well, great. Great. Now, what did you want to tell us?  
  Megan: Just that you don't have anything worry about. I've been missing Jared a lot, and can't wait to see him again.  
  Nancy: Oh, Megan. That's wonderful. You just keep up the good work, and we'll be back to see you graduate.  
  Peter: You'll be home before you know it. Bye-bye, sweetie. | 3 |   |
|   |   |   |   |   | Mary leaves an aggressive message on the answering machine of Larry and Lloyd, two 'ex-ex-gays' who went through True Directions before accepting their sexuality, who she knows smuggled the teens to the gay bar.  
  Mary: I know you're there. Now pick it up. Listen to me, you little invert. Okay, you want to play rough with my kids, then I can play rough with you. | 6 |   |
|   |   |   |   |   | Mary takes the teens to picket outside of Larry and Lloyd’s home for LGBT teens.  
  Mary: [Yelling through a megaphone] You have other options. Don't you want to be normal? [The teens also yell derisive comments.] | 6 |   |
|   |   |   |   |   | Mary tells the teens that all except one have graduated from True Directions.  
  Mary: Now, in order to successfully navigate the treacherous sea of temptation, one must first enter a life out of homosexuality. | 6 |   |
|   |   |   |   |   | Mary discovers that Graham and Megan had sex the night before.  
  Mary: Get out of bed! You hormonal hussy. I can’t believe you did this. You were supposed to be the role model. Now get up right now!  
  Megan: What did I do?  
  Sinead: [Scoffing] A little sleep-over with Graham.  
  Mary: You of course understand what your little adventure has cost you. You will be removed from the program and the premises at once.  
  Megan: I understand.  
  Mary: And of course your parents have made it very clear that you are just not welcome home any more. So you will be left to your own devices. [...]  
  Mary: [To Graham, who is surrounded by her parents] We've lost Megan. She just wasn't strong enough. But you still have a chance to save yourself. It's your choice. You can run off with Megan and turn into a raging bull-dyke or you can do the simulation and graduate, and lead a normal life.  
  Mr. Eaton: There is no choice. You came here to graduate, and that is exactly what you are going to do.  
  You understand me, young lady?  
  Graham’s stepmom: This is exactly why your mother left. Are you ready to lose your father? | 6 |   |
Mary directs the 'simulated sex' scene between Rock and Graham.

Mary: Action, Rock! Now lean in and kiss her. Nice, Rock. Now, feel how soft and vulnerable she is. Isn’t it wonderful? Now, Graham, let him take the lead. A little tongue ... He loves you. He wants to be with you. The way God intended. To be inside you. His love muscle thrusting. [...] Okay, now remember that sex is fun. We’re making love. There’s nothing dirty about it. Sex is beautiful when it’s between a man and a woman. [...] What is it, Joel?

Joel: What about foreplay?

Mary: Foreplay is for sissies. Real men go in, unload and pull out.

Mary introduces the graduating class of ‘heterosexuals’.

Mary: Welcome to the graduating class of True Directions. Ladies and gentlemen, may I present our happy heterosexuals. [Crowd applauds.] [...] We have all gathered on this special day, to celebrate the wonderful true directions. And praise be to our Higher Power. Will our graduates please stand again? [...] Megan, you stop it, this instant. 'Cause you will wallow in the smut of your homosexual depravity for the rest of your life.

After Megan leaves True Directions, her father, Peter, attends a ‘Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays’ meeting.

Peter: My name is Peter, and my daughter is a homosexual. [Nancy, dressed in a large hat and hiding in the crowd, slinking low in her seat.]

All: Hello, Peter.

Center Stage (2000)

Charlie finds his dorm room, already occupied by his roommate Erik.

Charlie: Is this the right room? If its not, I’m staying anyways.

Erik: No argument here, baby. [...] That’s Sergei, Jody, Eva, I’m Erik, and you’re cute.

[Unknown]: Long trip?

Charlie: From Seattle. My girlfriend dumped me for leaving her there. [Erik groans and looks out the window.]

Girls ogle the boys practice ballet when they spot Charlie.

One girl: Is he gay or straight? [Charlie looks over and waves.]

Eva: Straight.

Jesse and Chester are searching for Jesse's car with the help of their friend Nelson; Nelson drops them off and speeds away after their failed attempt to buy Chinese food.

Jesse: Come on Nelson! Just help us find my car!

Chester: [To Jesse] You know you didn’t have to go all aggro in that speaker box.

Jesse: Well, I’m not the one who called the Dalai Lama a fag.

Chester: I was just kidding’ around.

Jesse: Yeah, well Nelson didn’t appreciate it, okay?

Jesse and Chester go to the exotic dancing Kitty Kat Club with the hope of finding their car. At the club, an attractive stripper, Tania, offers Jesse a repeat performance of her "super special slippery lap dance" and the two of them go into a backroom.

Jesse: So. Just how super special can a slippery lap dance be?

Tania: [In a deeper, more masculine voice than before; aggressively grabbing the front of his shirt] What the hell were you thinking throwing around my money like that? That wasn't part of the plan!

Jesse: [Alarmed] You're a...
| X | X | X | After Jesse and Chester escape Tania and the Kitty Kat Club, they discuss their situation.  
**Jesse:** OK. Apparently we were supposed to meet her [Tania] with the suitcase [full of $200,000] and we just didn’t show up.  
**Chester:** Huh. Sounds like us. Man. How wasted were we last night?  
**Jesse:** Well, I touched Christie Bonner’s hoo-hoo [breast]; we’re on the hook for $200,000 that belongs to transsexual stripper; and my car is gone. I’d say we were pretty wasted. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| X | X | X | After Jesse and Chester escape from the nerdy space cult, they recap the events to date.  
**Jesse:** Wait a second. Let’s recap. Last night we lost my car. We accepted stolen money from transsexual stripper. And now some space nerds wants us to find something we can’t pronounce. I hate to say it, Chester, but maybe we should cut back on the shibbying [drug use]. |
| X | X | X | Jesse and Chester, now in possession of a convertible car, pull up next to another convertible, driven by Fabio with an attractive female next to him. In a non-verbal contest of macho masculinity between Jesse-Chester and Fabio-female, they take turn revving their car engines, putting an arm across the other’s shoulder and, finally, kissing passionately. Fabio and his female passenger break apart from the kiss, clearly thinking they’d won. Then Jesse and Chester look at each other; after a brief moment of consideration, they lean in and French kiss. After the kiss, Fabio and his date look revolted, but Jesse and Chester show no trace of embarrassment or panic – merely delight at winning the contest of machismo. |
| X | X | X | Jesse and Chester are caught trespassing on private property and imprisoned in an iron cage by the property owner. In the cage next door there is a wild-haired adult man named Mark who flirts with the boys, at one point rubbing his nipples and saying “I can be very nice.” |
| X | X | X | After Jesse and Chester get a lead on where their car might be located from the Department of Motor Vehicles, they spot yet more space people after the ‘continuum transfunctioner.’  
**Chester:** Hey check it out. Totally gay Nordic dudes at 3 o’clock. |
| X | X | X | Jesse and Chester finally make it to Captain Stu’s Space-O-Rama family fun center, where they are again accosted by Tania, this time accompanied by her boyfriend, Patty, a petite female-to-male transgender person or drag king dressed in a suit and sporting a painted-on moustache. When Jesse and Chester give Tania back her suitcase full of money, she kisses them both on the cheek; the kisses are met with both grimaces and beaming smiles (in Chester’s case, it is accompanied touches to the cheek as if to cherish the kiss, not wipe it off). Patty and Tania turn to each other and kiss passionately; Jesse and Chester look on wearing smiles but vocalizing uncertainty.  
**Jesse:** Are we– Are we supposed to be grossed out here?  
**Chester:** I don’t know. |
| X | X | X | Alex agrees to change airplane seats so that two popular and attractive girls can sit together; after doing this his friend Tod mouths the word ‘fag’. |

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**Final Destination** (2000)
| X | X | X | Ray and Greg are at their lockers in the high school hallway.  
Ray: Hey, yo dog. Does this shirt make me look gay? [He motions to himself, wearing a yellow singlet.]  
Greg: Nah, man.  
Ray: [Wrapping the bottom of it through the neck and striking a pose] What about now?  
Greg: Nah. |
|---|---|---|---|
| X | X | X | Greg and Ray talk about a peer, Drew, who was killed by the serial killer.  
Ray: You know what? I think I knew her. [...] She had a brother named Steve? [...] Long hair, pretty little mouth, perfect ass?  
Greg: That was her.  
Ray: Nah, I was talking about Steve. Whatever happened to him?  
Greg: Drew, who was killed by the serial killer. |
| X | X | X | Two couples, Greg and Buffy and Ray and Brenda, are making out in the backseat of a car.  
Greg: [To Buffy] I love when you play with my ass.  
Buffy: I’m not playing with your ass.  
Greg: Ray!  
Ray: Oh, my bad.  
Greg: [Angry] Come on, man! |
| X | X | X | After the teens hit a man with their car and assume he’s dead, they try to repress the memory.  
Buffy: Cindy, come on. We’ll just pretend it never happened. You know, like the time we got drunk and we went down on each other.  
After hitting a man with their car, Cindy tries to get her friends to call the police and confess.  
Ray: No way, I ain’t going to jail.  
Greg: Cindy, do you know what they do to young boys in prison? And all those sex-starved convicts just waiting for a fresh piece of meat.  
Ray: Hey, you’re right, Cindy. Maybe we should call the police. |
| X | X | X | After football practice, the players are in the shower room; Ray congratulates his teammates on their practice.  
What’s up? You gonna hit the showers or what? [Ray chases other teammates to the showers in an effeminate manner.]  
The teens are getting murdered one-by-one by masked killer ‘Ghostface.’ Cindy accuses her boyfriend, Bobby, of being the killer and he is arrested. When he goes back to school, Cindy is initially unable to face him.  
Cindy: Ray, if you see Bobby, tell him I love him.  
Ray: Okay, if I see Bobby, I’ll tell him I love him. [Cindy looks shocked.] |
| X | X | X | Cindy goes to Miss Mann’s office where Miss Mann is sitting on a chair with a pair of ladies underpants on her face, inhaling deeply. Cindy looks surprised and knocks on the door to indicate her presence.  
Cindy: Miss Mann?  
Miss Mann: Come in dear. Have a seat. Take off your bra if you’d like.  
Cindy: [Shocked] No, thanks.  
Miss Mann: What can I do for you, Cindy?  
Cindy: I need to talk. See, I have this terrible secret. And I don’t know who to tell. [...] |
Miss Mann: Well Cindy, we all have our little secrets. [She opens her legs and her scrotum falls out of her underpants, clearly visible underneath her mini skirt. Cindy looks horrified. Miss Mann walks around her desk towards Cindy, scrotum dangling below the hem of her short skirt.] Sometimes we do things we're not so proud of. Some for money, others to gain the athletic edge on the competition. Sometimes those secrets come back to haunt us. [Cindy yells in surprise when Miss Mann touches her shoulder.] Do you know what I mean?

Cindy: Yes, I do, um, Miss Mann. Thanks for the ball– I mean, all your help. I have to go to class.

Ray and Brenda are on Ray's bed with Brenda straddling him.

Ray: Ooh Brenda. Did I tell you how sexy you look in my jersey?
Brenda: I do, Ray?
Ray: Oh yes. I like it. Hey, get up. Go over there. Let me see it. [Brenda, giggling, gets off the bed and dances around while Ray encourages her; Ray asks her to put on his shorts; then the shoulder pads, then the helmet.]
Ray: Oh, so fucking sexy. Come here, girl. Bring you little sexy ass over here. Come on! Full speed. Charge. [Ray growls and mimics having sex with her.] Come on, turn around. [Ray flips her around so he's facing her from behind.] Yes Brendan! Take it, Brendan! Take it, Brendan!
Brenda: Who?
Ray: Oh, Brenda! ... Let's role play. You get me. [Ray lays face down on the bed.]

Bobby and Ray tell Cindy that they intend to murder her and her father, copycatting Ghostface.

Cindy: I thought you loved me.
Bobby: I did. But abstinence can make you discover new things about yourself. That's right, Cindy, I'm gay. And in case you haven't noticed, so is Ray.
Ray: What? I ain't gay!
Bobby: What are you talking about? You took me to that club.
Ray: So? They play good music.
Bobby: What about our trip to San Francisco, then?
Ray: I wanted to go shopping.
Bobby: But you made love to me. [He starts to cry.]
Ray: No. First of all, you sucked my—
Bobby: Whatever Ray. I don't want to talk about this now. The point is Cindy, that I'm a new man and I'm ready to leave all this behind and start a new life.

Floyd calls Ryan before Ryan's double date with Chris, Rachel and Maggie, to wish him good luck. He opens the conversation by reflecting on the talk show he's watching with his friends, Cosmo and Dunleavy.

Floyd: When a chick goes on a talk show... with her fiancé and has a deep, dark secret has it ever been anything other than, "I'm really a man"? I mean, seriously. Your fiancé invites you on TV to tell you something, she's packin' sausage.
Ryan: Come on, man. I gotta get ready.
Floyd: I know. Listen. That's why I'm calling. Be careful tonight. Pat her down before you get in the car. Just be sure. [...] Cosmo says to check for an Adam's apple, all right?
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<td><strong>Get Over It (2001)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Ghost World (2001)</strong></td>
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| **Three good friends walk down the street talking about Felix's sister, Kelly, and her involvement in the school play. Felix asks Dennis to look out for Kelly.**

Felix: See, these theatre guys, they have this reputation for being kind of--

Dennis: Gay?

Felix: See, that's what they want you to think.

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| **Doug, an adult male with a mullet haircut and no shirt, walks into the Sidewinder convenience store where Josh works.**

Doug: ‘s’up Josh. Give me two packs of cigarettes today. Working overtime – 16 hours. [He gives Josh the ‘hard-rock/hang loose’ hand sign while walking to the beer fridge.] And a nature’s nectar [he places a big bottle of beer on the counter]; wake up juice. And give me like six of these beef jerky. Hungry enough to chew the crotch out of a rag doll. [He takes a bite out of a jerky.]

[Josh’s boss, an immigrant man with an accent who has busted Josh twice in this scene for slacking off, appears.]

Sidewinder Boss: Hey, hey you. How many times I tell you? No shirt, no service. Get the hell out of my store. What do you think this is? Club Med?

Doug: No, America, dude. Learn the rules.

Sidewinder Boss: Learn the rules? You learn the rules! We Greeks invented democracy.

Doug: You also invented homos.

Sidewinder Boss: Fuck you.

Doug: You wish. You gotta buy me dinner first.
### Josie and the Pussycats (2001)

- **Rebecca and Enid go to Josh's apartment to hassle him.** When he's not in, they leave him a note saying:
  
  "Dear Josh. We came by to fuck you, but you were not home. Therefore you're gay. Signed Tiffany and Amber."

- **A male fan talks about his love for Du Jour, a boy band,** saying: "I love them – like brothers."

### Not Another Teen Movie (2001)

- **Mitch, Janey, and their father, Mr. Briggs, talk while driving to school in their aged and rusty truck.**
  - Mitch: You really need to start dating, you know that?
  - Janey: I don’t date. You know that.
  - Janey: Look, Mitch. I don’t conform to typical high school norms. I read Sylvia Plath. I listen to Bikini Kill. I eat tofu. I’m a unique rebel.
  - Mitch: Sounds more like you’re a lesbo.

- **When Jake Wyler, the most popular boy in school, walks down the hall he is showered with bras and wet ladies underpants – and a jock strap.** He doesn’t look impressed but he also doesn’t get hysterical, just lets it fall away from him saying, ‘Hi Arthur.’

- **Austin, Jake’s friend who bets him that he can’t make Janey into a prom queen,** introduces himself to Sandy Sue, a cheerleader with Tourette Syndrome.
  - Austin: So, what’s your name?
  - Sandy Sue: Oh, why I’m Sandy Sue. Limp-dick fag fucker.
  - Austin: Okay, Who told you that? Was it Alison? Because she was really bitter when we broke up.

- **Catherine, a mean teenage girl who ia a parody of Cruel Intentions’ Kathryn, kisses Sadie, an old lady who parodies both Cruel Intentions’ Cecil and Never Been Kissed’s Josie.** The kiss results in copious amount of slimy ooze connecting the lips of the two women. After kissing, Catherine says: “So, have you ever eaten pussy before?”

- **The Wise Janitor helps Jake improve his football pass before he goes back on the field for the big game.**
  - Wise Janitor: I’m the wise janitor. I impart knowledge and help overcome fears. I also replace the urinal cakes. I’m here to help you get your throw back.
  - Jake: How did you–?
  - Wise Janitor: I’ve been watching. During practice, in the hallways, in the lockers, taking a shower ... whipping boys with a wet towel. Can tell you kind of like that.
  - Jake: Hey! Let’s get back to the throw.

- **Unpopular outcast Roger sits close to a group of teens (Desi, Emily, Michael and his friend Jason) before a basketball game.** Michael has been temporarily removed from the team as a punishment for attacking Roger at a party.
  - Michael: I hope you don’t think you’re sitting there.
  - Jason: Bye. Good seeing you.
  - Roger: I had this seat with Hugo.
  - Michael: Well, Hugo’s not here, and I’m telling you to get lost.
### Save the Last Dance (2001)

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<td>Jason: Faggot. Tag along, faggot.</td>
<td>Emily: Jason!</td>
<td>Jason: Why don’t you go sit with some other friends. Oh, you don’t have any. Everybody hates you. [Jason and Michael begin flicking Roger’s ears from their seats behind him in the bleachers.]</td>
<td>Stupid tag-along. Get lost.</td>
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<td>Michael: Go ahead and keep sitting there. Maybe I won’t kick your ass again.</td>
<td>Desi: It’s okay, Roger. You can sit there. It’s fine.</td>
<td>Jason: Get out of here, Roger. It hurts, doesn’t it? [Desi and Emily watch, looking upset on Roger’s behalf.] Then get lost. [Roger leaves.]</td>
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<td>Emily: Jason!</td>
<td>Jason: Why don’t you go sit with some other friends. Oh, you don’t have any. Everybody hates you.</td>
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### English teacher, Mr. Campbell, discusses the literary importance of Truman Capote.

| Mr. Campbell: Truman Capote’s In Cold Blood represents a complete turning point in American history and literature. Do you want to take that cap off and tell us why, Mr. Ricard? | Snookie: Gay rights? The Com-pote dude who wrote it— |
| Mr. Campbell: Capote. | Snookie: Capote? [...] Sweet tooth. Straight up fag, Mr. C. [The students laugh.] Flaming. |
| Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Ricard. We can now promote you up to kindergarten. Anybody else? |

### Sugar & Spice (2001)

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<td>Lisa pushes Bruce (a friendly soft-spoken effeminate male youth) out of the way saying: “Outta my way fag. I’m up.” [Bruce is visibly upset.]</td>
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### Lisa describes the high school cheerleading team to police officers.

| Lisa: [Voiceover] Now, the squad as a whole, they’re closer than Carolina cousins. I mean, some people say they’re like lesbos or something but that’s mostly just the egg-offs in band. |

### Kansas visits her mom, Mrs. Hill, in prison in order to get tutored on how to rob a bank.

| Mrs. Hill: Hey Mink, come here. Kansas, I want you to meet someone special. | Kansas: Jesus Christ, mom. Like my life ain’t a great pile of shit already ‘cause you’re in here. Now I’ve gotta add ‘p.s. my mom’s a dyke,’ too? |
| Mrs. Hill: Shut up, you mouthy little shit. | Kansas: Don’t ‘mouthy shit’ me. I’m outta here. |
| Mrs. Hill: Hey wait. Sit down. Now I’m sorry. Mama’s a little over-amped. Didn’t get her yard time this morning. Mink ain’t my bitch, if that’s what you think. She’s a specialist ... in banks. |

### The cheerleaders wait for Kansas at the prison. While they’re waiting, a black female inmate mops the floor, including that underneath the chairs, pushing the mop handle between Diane’s legs, which are spread at the ankles, but together at the knees.

| Inmate: Thems some sweet skirts you got there. | Diane: Oh, thank you! Actually, they’re uniforms. We’re cheerleaders. |
| Inmate: Mmm hmmm. [She licks her lips suggestively.] You sure are. |

### Lisa talks about the Christmas pageant.

| Lisa: [Voiceover] I just want to say that normally I’m an excellent skater. Some jealous fag [picture of Bruce is displayed] who will remain nameless obviously sabotaged my skates. |

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332
| X | - | - | - | X | There is a television interview with a redneck about the robbery (the swear words are 'beeped-out').

Man: They were dressed like a bunch of freakin' Betty dolls, for Christ sake. They had these little faggoty little voices, and only a bunch of [beep] damn queers would shoot up a Union cap. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| X | X | X | X | X | Hannah is panicked about the possibility of going to prison.

Hannah: We're dead! They showed this prison movie to my youth group on Sunday. [...] It wasn't like the prison we saw -- all these women had to shave their heads because they got lice from the filthy lives they'd lived! Oh God, I'm gonna be someone's bald bitch! [...] My Sunday school teacher said that in prison, women shave broomsticks up your-- |
| X | X | X | X | X | Teenager Anne Marie, an excellent surfer who subsidises her love of the sport by being a hotel cleaner, and an man in his 20s, Matt, begin a relationship. Their kissing is interrupted by call for him in his hotel which he ends with 'I love you.'

Anne Marie: I guess that's why they have the no-fraternization rule.

Matt: What do you mean?

Anne Marie: Management gets a call from an irate wife, wondering why the maid is in husband's room at two in the morning.

Matt: That's not my wife.

Anne Marie: Wife, girlfriend, boyfriend.

| X | X | X | X | X | A teenage girl, Jennifer, has accidentally swapped bodies with an adult man named Clive. In this new male body, she calls her boyfriend, Billy, when he is on a ski vacation with his family.

Jennifer: [Crying] I should have made love to you when I had the chance.

Billy: [Confused by the man's voice] Father Mulcahy? [Jennifer looks alarmed and hangs up.]

| X | X | X | X | X | Jessica (in a man's body) tries to use her sexual charm on the teenage boy at the Ice Cool yogurt shop in order to get free shakes (mimicking an earlier scene where she succeeded in getting free drinks). When Jessica suggests that he give her the drinks for free, paying for them with money out of the tip jar as usual, the teenage boy reaches across the counter and wraps his hands around Jessica's neck, choking her until, unable to breath and red in the face, she pays. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| X | X | X | X | X | Jessica (in the body of a man) goes to a nightclub. She orders a series of feminine drinks ('Sex on the Beach with extra sugar on the rim," a Slippery Nipple, etc.). The macho barman looks aggressively at Jessica, clenching his teeth; unwilling to serve feminine drinks to a 'man.' Jessica, lowering her voice to deep masculine tones, revises her order, saying "Um ... better make that last one a brewski. Double brewski." [...] Later, Jessica and her friends comment on men in the club.

Jessica: Look at the buns on that guy. I'd like to get my hands on those and— [The same barman as before looks aggressively towards Jessica; Jessica looks scared and speaks in a lower tone.] I wish they were women's breasts and I'd squeeze the hell out of them. Maybe put a steak on 'em. 'Cause I'm a guy. That's what guys like me like to do. But I don't need to tell you that. [The bartender, who has been looking at Jessica aggressively while she's speaking, finally turns and walks away.] [...] [After Jessica dances on the dance floor, she returns to her friends.]

Jessica: I've gotta hit the little girl's room before I soak my panties. [As she's saying this, she notices the same barman looking disapprovingly at her. She almost chokes on her drink, and lowers the tone of her voice.] By that I mean ... my girlfriend's panties. [Swallows nervously] Which I carry with me to pee in. If I don't make it in time. To the bathroom. What? You don't pee in your girlfriend's panties? What kind of gay club is this? Hey everybody, check out this guy. Not
Jessica (in a man’s body) and her friends are at a night club. One of Jessica’s friends, Eden, is propositioned.

Long Haired Jock: Aren’t you that chick who’s having sex with that college guy?
Eden: No!

Long Haired Jock: Wanna be? [He and his friends laugh.]
Jessica: She’s not interested, okay? So why don’t you just back off?
Long Haired Jock: Okay, Grandpa. What are you, their pimp, and these are your skank hoes? [April and Lulu gasp; Jessica slaps him then, looking frightened, retreats to her friends.]

Jessica: Where we going?
[A fight ensues during which she fights by scratching; the two are encircled by a group of on-lookers.]
Jock: What’s he doing?
Jock: Some kind of Tae Queer Do.

Jessica (in the body of a man) tries to tell Billy about the body-swap when he’s in a bathroom stall.
Jessica: [Peeking over the top of the stall] Billy ... aah! We need to talk.
Billy: [Horrified, covering himself] About what?!
Jessica: I called you on your ski trip to—
Billy: That was you?!
Jessica: Yeah.
Billy: Oh, God!
Jessica: I can explain. [Billy runs out of the bathroom.] Billy, wait!

During football practice, Billy is unnerved when Jessica (in a man’s body) cheers for him from the sidelines. After practice, he and Jake go back to the locker room where Jessica is doing her duties as the janitor. Billy is uncomfortable with Jessica’s presence.

Jake: What’s the matter, man? You afraid the janitor’s gonna see your dingdong?

Billy talks to his jock friend, Jake, about his feelings for his girlfriend Jessica.
Billy: When that moment comes [sex for the first time] I want it to be perfect.
Jake: Wow. That is the gayest thing I’ve ever heard.
Billy: She’s the only girl that makes my heart beat faster and slower at the same time. When I’m not with her, I’m not living. I only exist until I can hold her in my arms again.

Jake: Gay, gay, gay.

Carol, Jessica’s mom, becomes attracted to ‘Taquito’ (Jessica’s male alter-ego who is the family’s gardener). Carol launches herself at him, over the kitchen table. Taquito is obviously not attracted to her and repels her advances.

Taquito: This would be unnatural for me in at least five different ways.
Carol: So, you like men?
Taquito: Of course I do. What do you think?

Jessica (still in the body of man) and her friend April devise a way for Jessica to take part in the cheer competition: dress as the school mascot. The routine goes perfectly until the end when Jessica is literally unmasked. Billy, who had earlier exchanged an elaborate ‘blowing kisses’ routine with Jessica in the mascot outfit, is watching and cheering from the stand. When Jessica’s mask falls off, Billy vomits into Jake’s lap.
Jessica (in a man’s body) and April go to the prom together to make April’s ex-boyfriend, Jake, jealous.

Jessica: I think this is a good spot. Jake’s got to come right by here.
April: I don’t really care about Jake anymore.
Jessica: You shouldn’t. He’s a jerk. […] [When Jake arrives, April and Jessica kiss. Jake sees the two kissing and is angered.]
Jessica: I am so lesbian right now. [Laughing] We totally nailed him. Jake is so jealous. […] [April, eyes wide with desire, leans in for another kiss.] We already got him, honey. He can’t see us anym—[She is cut off by another kiss by April who has fallen in love with Jessica. April confesses her love for Jessica who is understanding.] […]
April: I know it’s crazy, but I can’t help it. I’m in love with you, Spence. [Spence is the name Jessica has assumed for her janitor identity.]
Jessica: You gonna be okay?
April: I’m sorry.
Jessica: Don’t be. We’re not gonna let a little thing like me turning into a man and you wanting to be with me get in the way of our friendship, are we?

Jessica (in a man’s body) confronts Billy at the prom to tell him about the body-swap.

Jessica: Billy. It’s me … Jessica. It’s always been me.
Billy: Mister, you’re freaking me out.
Jessica: You know how when I touch you there, it makes your whole leg tingle? And when I touch you here… [Looks down and nods.]
Billy: [Angry] No. No. No, it can’t be.
Jessica: Do you remember after the homecoming game; after you threw the winning pas to beat Carlmont, you and I went behind the scoreboard and [Jessica whispers into Billy’s ear; Billy looks upset.] You got to believe me. Silly… Billy… nilly. Just close your eyes. You’ll know it’s me.
[Billy hesitantly closes his eyes and Jessica leans in for a kiss.]
Billy: [Pulling away sharply] Oh! Oh! I can’t! I can’t do it!
Jessica: You always said you’d love me no matter what.
Billy: [Backing away] But you’re a 30-year-old dude!
Jessica: Just on the outside! Billy!

To earn money, Clive (in Jessica’s body) has become a stripper at the Pole Cat. Jake and Billy go to the club after prom. Jake catcalls Clive (in Jessica’s body) and pays for a dance from him. When the bodies re-swap, Jake is so disgusted that a man is pole dancing in front of him that he runs away (though he doesn’t seem perturbed by the fact that a girl that he knows has just turned into a man).

Another male patrol calls out asking Clive (now returned to his own, male body) for a lap dance. Clive, realizing that his has his body back, runs of the stage and grabs money that is sitting on the tables in front of a few patrons until he is accosted by the Pole Cat bouncer who grabs him by the neck.

Pole Cat Bouncer: Can’t you read? [gestures to a neon sign.] Monday night’s gay night.

Clive, arrested for his petty crimes, escapes police custody dressed in the bra and panties that he was using while occupying Jessica’s body. He runs out on the street and stops a car, which turns out to be driven by nightclub barman who seemed to disapprove of Jessica’s effeminate behaviour while in the nightclub. Clive jumps into the backseat of his car; the bartender looks in to the back seat leeringly, locks the door, and squeals the tires while Spencer screams in the backseat.

Igby Goes Down
(2002)

Ollie and Sookie talk in a taxi.
Ollie: What does your mother do?
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<td>Geeky protagonist Dizzy Harrison talks to Tina Harrison, a very popular and attractive girl who needs help with her car alarm. Tina: Didn’t they tie you up last year and make you wear rubber breasts? Dizzy: [Touched] You remembered. That’s really sweet. [Glen, one of Dizzy’s friends, is watching the scene between Dizzy and Tina from a distance with another teen.] Glen: I imagine God having an ass like that. Did that sound gay?</td>
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<td>Prison inmates, Luther and Jose, help Dizzy transition from nerd to tough guy. Jose, a gender non-conforming male, acts as Dizzy’s stylist and hair-dresser. After the makeover, Luther takes photos of Dizzy for student ID and other forms of identification. During this scene, Jose is depicted in women’s clothing and kisses Dizzy on the cheek during the photo shoot. Dizzy looks shocked and Luther responds by saying: ‘That ain’t right.’</td>
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<td>Dizzy makes his first appearance at his new school, transported by the prison officials to make him look very tough. His friends Nora, Glen, and Kirk are at the school to witness this scene and they comment on the success of his makeover transformation. Nora: He’s got kind of a Brad Pitt thing going on. [Dizzy walks past.] Glen: I saw a little Anne Heche there too. Does that sound gay?</td>
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<td>Dizzy tells his friends that Courtney, a popular girl with a reputation of being sexually active, has invited him to a party. Glen: Diz, you have to do her. And while you’re with her, think of me. Okay, that sounded gay.</td>
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<td>After Dizzy has changed the school dynamic by making camaraderie cool, he introduces his old (nerdy) friends, Glen and Kirk, to his new (popular) friends, Courtney and Nora. Glen and Kirk introduce themselves to Courtney as ‘Hawk’ and ‘Apache,’ saying they spent time together in prison. Nora quips: “Mostly in the shower.”</td>
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<td>Shaun tells his businessman father, Bud, that he aspires to be a writer, which is not supported by his father. Bud: A writer! What could you write about? You’re not oppressed or gay. Shaun: Not all writers are gay. Bud: Well, they’re all poor.</td>
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<td>Shaun’s girlfriend, Ashley, tries to get her friend Tanya to help Shaun get into college after an administrative blunder saw him not accepted. Tanya doesn’t want to help, so Ashley resorts to blackmailing her about past trysts: the first with a young adolescent; the second with two males at her boyfriend’s wake; and the third with an adult female janitor at prom.</td>
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|   |   |   | Shaun meets his literary idol, Mr. Skinner, at Stanford.  
Shaun: I’m obsessed with you, Mr. Skinner. Not in a sexual way or a romantic way or anything like that. Just your writing. |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   |   |   | Shaun talks to two of his surfer buddies, Arlo and Chad, after his trip to Stanford.  
Chad: Hey dude, check this out. Last night, we were at this party, and little Arlo here decides to profess his undying love for me. Did I tell you he’s a fruitcake, or what?  
Arlo: Bro, that’s not true. This is the real story, dude. Chad crashed at my house, right? And I woke up in the night and he was fondling my—  
Chad: Dude, I lost my keys. I was looking for ‘em. |   |   |   |
|   | X | X | Spider-Man (2002) | X | X | X |
|   |   |   | Peter dresses up as Spider Man for the first time to win $3,000 in a wrestling match, money he intends to use to buy a car in order to impress Mary Jane. While in the cage with a wrestler named Bone Saw, Peter says: “That’s a cute outfit; did your husband get it for you?” |   |   |   |
|   |   |   | White Oleander (2002) | X | X | X |
|   |   |   | Paul starts up a conversation with Astrid at the group home she’s moved to in order to get to know her better.  
Paul: What’s the deal? Are you gay?  
Astrid: What? [She laughs a little.]  
Paul: I dunno. I get this funny feeling from you like you’re not interested in guys.  
Astrid: You’re right, I’m not. |   |   |   |
|   |   |   | Paul and Astrid have left the group home and end their day gazing at the stars and conversing deeply.  
Astrid: I’m not gay.  
Paul: [Smiling] I know that. [They kiss.] |   |   |   |
|   |   |   | Foster parent Claire and Astrid visit Clair’s mother, Ingrid, in prison.  
Claire: It must be difficult for you to work here.  
Ingrid: Oh, it is. I spend so much time fighting off sexual advances, I hardly have time to think. [Claire looks shocked.] That was a joke. [She laughs.]  
Claire: Oh. [She laughs]. |   |   |   |
|   |   |   | Kia taunts Freddy to stop or delay his killing ‘final girl’ Lori.  
Kia: So you’re the one everyone’s afraid of? Tell me something, what kinda faggot runs around in a Christmas sweater? I mean, come on, get real, you’re not even scary. And let’s talk about the butter knives; what is with the butter knives? You trying to compensate for something? Maybe coming up a bit short there between the legs, Mr. Krueger? I mean, you got these teensy weensy little things and Jason’s got this big ol’ thing. [She is murdered by Jason.] |   |   |   |
|   |   |   | Thirteen (2003) | X | X | X |
|   |   |   | Evie asks Tracy if she knows how to kiss.  
Tracy: Oh, no. Yes I do. Me and Noel practiced with Cruel Intentions like 50 times.  
Evie: Right.  
Tracy: So you want me to prove it, lesbo.  
Evie: Hell no. [They kiss forcefully.] |   |   |   |
Lucy talks to a male co-worker during a meeting at Poise, a fashion magazine.

Male: Two words: Summer. Saint Barts.
Lucy: Oh, you're not gonna go to Fire Island this summer?
Male: Are you insinuating I'm gay?
Lucy: It's a joke.

After Jenna's successful presentation of her magazine redesign, her boss, Richard, inquires about the photographer.

Richard: So who's this mystery photographer?
Jenna: Matt Flamhaff.
Richard: Is he Arthur or Martha?
Richard: No, no, is he gay?
Jenna: [Looking confused] Are you gay?

Sam and her secret admirer, Austin, are instant messaging at school.

Sam: Hey Nomad, do you think we've ever met?
Austin: I don't know. Our school has over 3,500 kids.
Sam: Well, that narrows it down.
Austin: [Chuckling] Well, at least I can eliminate the guys. You're not a guy right? Because if you are, I'll kick your butt.
Sam: [Chuckling] I am not a guy.

Scott and his friend Cooper talk about Scott's relationships with his German pen-pal, Mieke (who Scott thinks is male); Cooper infers that Mieke has homosexual ulterior motives.

Cooper: Still writing that guy? I thought that was for German class.
Scott: Yeah at first, but we're actually becoming good friends. He's a really cool guy. [Scott begins writing his email with the help of a German-English dictionary] "Dear Mieke, greetings from your American pen pal."

Cooper: Scotty, Girl Scouts have pen pals. Listen to yourself, all right? You met a 'cool guy' on the Internet. [Cooper uses air quotes] This is how these sexual predators work. Next thing you know, he's gonna want to 'arrange a meeting' where he will gas you, stuff you in the back of his van, and make a wind chime out of your genitals. Come on, let's go to Wade's. [Scott laughs.]
Scott: All right. Screw it. Let's go.

At a house party, Scott and Cooper meet up with their friends Jenny and Jaime who detail their upcoming trip to Europe.

Scott: You guys decide where you're gonna go first?
Jenny: Paris! I can't wait. Two years ago Nicky Jager's sister, Debbie, met a wealthy French guy and spent a month sailing the Mediterranean on his yacht. Isn't that the most romantic thing you've ever heard?
Cooper: Stuck on a boat with a weird French guy? That sounds a little gay.
Jenny: It's not gay. I'm a girl.
Scott: Kinda gay.
Cooper: A little gay.
When Scott gets an email from his pen pal Mieke suggesting coming to America to 'arrange a meeting,' Scott is horrified because he believes Mieke wants to have sex with him. Scott replies: "I don’t want to arrange any meetings with you, you sick German freak. So please keep your hands off my genitals and never write to me again, and don’t come to America. Goodbye."

Cooper shows up shortly after Scott realises that Mieke is very attractive teenage girl who has blocked Scott's emails.

    Cooper: What’s going on?
    Scott: I’m in love with my pen-pal. I’m in love with Mike.
    Cooper: [Looking resigned; nearly unable to swallow the waffle he is eating] Ok. Ok. You know what? I was actually expecting this. Frankly, I’m flattered that you picked me to come out to first. And don’t worry about telling your folks, cause I think they already know.
    Scott: No, you idiot. Mike is a girl.
    Cooper: No, no. I get it. Yeah. He’s the girl, and you’re the girl, and sometimes you’re both the girl.
    Cooper: Wow, who’s the hot chick?
    Scott: That’s Mike. I mean, Mieke.
    Cooper: That’s who you’ve been writing to all this time?
    Scott: Until last night, when I took your advice and told her to keep her ‘hands off my genitals.’
    Cooper: Given what we know now, that seems like the exact opposite of what you want.

Mad Maynard, leader of the Manchester United hooligans, spots a rival football fan in France and incites his hooligans to attack him.

    Mad Maynard: That wanker’s got a frog football shirt on! Let’s give this nancy a fucking good kicking! Come on, lads, he’s going off!

Scoot, Cooper, Jenny, and Jaime are on a train when an Italian man joins their compartment.

    Creepy Italian Guy: Buongiorno. [Italian man sits between Jaime and Cooper.]
    Scott: You know, there are a lot of other empty compartments.
    Creepy Italian Guy: Huh? Ah! Si ... Si.
    [The train goes through a short tunnel and the compartment is plunged into darkness; when it re-emerges, the Italian man has his hand on Jaime’s knee; Jaime is clearly uncomfortable.]
    Jaime: Pardon me.
    Creepy Italian Guy: Eh? Ohhh... Scusi. Mi scusi.
    [Jaime and Cooper rush to the other side of the compartment, but there is only room enough for Cooper. Jaime gingerly sits back down beside the Italian man who leans in closely and smiles at him. After the train goes through another tunnel, the Italian man vigorously massages Jaime’s shoulders.]
    Jaime: [Panicked] What the hell are you doing?
    Creepy Italian Guy: Mi scusi, mi scusi.
    Jaime: No! No, no, no!
    Scott: Uh-oh. [...] Big tunnel. [Italian man looks at Jaime lecherously.]
    Jaime: [Panicked] Who’s touching me? Scotty, is that you? Who’s touching me? Scotty! Oh!
    [When the train emerges for the final time, the Italian man relaxes, smoking a cigarette wearing no pants. The four teens are huddled on the other side of the compartment.]
    Creepy Italian Guy: Mi scusi.
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<th>[The teens throw the man and his pants out of the compartment.]</th>
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| Scott has a sexual dream about Mieke. Upon waking he finds himself being cuddled by the same Italian man, who rubs against him and licks the side of his face. Creepy Italian Guy: Mi scusi. [All four of the teens start screaming and panicking, desperate to get out of the carriage as it goes through another tunnel.] |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| Jaime visits a camera store where the shop girl admires his camera. She and Jaime go outside to the back alley where she gives him oral sex. While this occurs, Jaime gets mugged by a man. |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| Mugger: OK, mister, don't move. Jaime: Excuse me? Mugger: Shut the hell up! [The mugger brandishes a knife.] Jaime: Oh, brother! Please don't hurt me. [To the shop girl] Oh, no ... you're fine. That's good. You're fine. Mugger: Give me cash? You got cash? Jaime: Take it all, you dirty girl. Mugger [unnerved]: What? Your wallet! Focus! Give it to me. [Jaime takes off his travel wallet and hands it to the mugger.] Jaime: Oh! Oh, I love you! I love you! I love you! I love you! I looove you! [These declarations of love scare the mugger who runs off.] |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| Cooper goes to Club Vandersexxx, a sex club in Amsterdam's red light district. Madame Vandersexxx: Welcome to Club Vandersexxx Amsterdam's most erotic club, where your every fantasy will be fulfilled. [...] Sometimes, we find our clients are so overwhelmed with the pleasure, that they sometimes scream out 'no' when really they mean 'yes.' And this is why we have the safe word. Cooper: The 'safe word'? Madame Vandersexxx: If at any time the ecstasy gets too great, you just use the safe word. Until we hear the safe word, we will not stop. [...] We're going to start slowly, teasing you with a little light erotic foreplay. [Madame Vandersexxx rips off her clothes to reveal a tight red leather outfit; heavy metal music starts to play, and Hans and Gruber, two large white men in leather aprons, appear]. Administer the testicle clamps! Cooper: Huh? What? Hey! Safe word! [Takes out the piece of paper upon which the safe word is written, only to see numerous characters that are unfamiliar.] What is that?! That's not a word, it's a-- 'Fluggengecheimen?' [...] Ow! Ow! Ow! 'Fluggengecheimen!' Madame Vandersexxx: Did you say fluggengecheimen? Cooper: Yes! Yes! For the love of god, fluggengecheimen! Madame Vandersexxx: Are you sure? Cooper: Yes, please. Madame Vandersexxx: As you wish. [Yelling] Bring on the fluggengecheimen! [Hans appears with a machine bearing three rubber gyrating dildos, complete with laser sights which zero-in on the anal region of his Cooper's naked buttocks. Close up on Jaime screaming.] |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| When Scott and Jenny eat marijuana-laced brownies, Scott starts freaking out saying it's a 'bad batch.' Scott: I saw a gay porno once. I didn't know until halfway in. The girls never came. The girls never came! I'm freaking out! |
|---|---|---|---|---|
At the nightclub in Bratislava, Jenny meets the charming Christoph for a second time.

Christoph: My family has a yacht in the Aegean. Come with me, Jennifer. We will sail away together.

Jenny: [Entranced] Oh, my God!

Christoph: We will swim with dolphins, and sip champagne by moonlight.

Jenny: Oh, my God!

Christoph: We will spend the day sunbathing, drinking wine. My wife makes the best sangria.

Jenny: No, wait. You said you were married? You go around Europe sleeping with every woman you meet?

Christoph: No, please, Jennifer. It is not like that. I also sleep with men.

Friday Night Lights (2004)

Melissa asks Mike why he doesn’t have a girlfriend.

Melissa: Well, then why don’t you have a girlfriend?

Mike: Just don’t.

Melissa: Are you gay?

Mike: What? [He looks shocked.]

Melissa: [To Mike’s friend Ivory] Is he gay? [Ivy looks stony as always.]

Mike: I’m not gay.

Melissa: Can you prove it? [Scene cuts to Mike and Melissa getting dressed, suggesting they’ve had sex.]


Matthew tries to convince his two friends to cut class and go to the beach with a group of popular students.

Klitz: How do they just skip class every day and go to the beach?

Matthew: Because they just don’t care. [Looks enviously at the popular teens.] Let’s go with them. Seriously, let’s just do it. [...] I mean, we’re graduating. Let’s just do something. [...] Klitz, you already got into Yale. I mean, it doesn’t matter anymore. [...] Eli: The beach is for fags, man.

Matthew: The beach is for fags?

Eli: Yeah.

Matthew: You know what? You guys are fags.

A drunk male teenager approaches Matthew at a house party.

Male: Yo man. When’s Samsung getting here?

Matthew: Samnang.

Male: Yeah. I love him. Dude, I’m gonna do that little guy when he gets here. Hard.

Matthew [trying to get away from him and back to Danielle]: Cool, dude. I’m sure he’ll like that.

Kelly drags Matthew from school after Matthew convinced Danielle to leave the adult entertainment business. As they’re leave the school, three male jocks are sitting on Kelly’s car.

Kelly: It’s a cool ride, huh?

Jock: Yeah, if you’re a fag. [Kelly grabs one of the jocks and tosses him off the car.] Jesus. It’s cool, it’s cool.
### Mean Girls (2004)

| X | X | X | X | \[Kelly asks Matthew to give him oral sex as a ‘show of good faith’ of the repayment of $30,000 that Kelly lost when Danielle didn’t show up for her pornographic photo shoot.\]  
|   |   |   |   | Kelly: If I’m gonna do this payment plan thing I need a show of good faith, you know? Something concrete.  
|   |   |   |   | Matthew: Well, like what?  
|   |   |   |   | Kelly: A blowjob.  
|   |   |   |   | Matthew [scoffs]: No, I told you. She’s not gonna do that anymore.  
|   |   |   |   | Kelly: Who said anything about her? [Matthew looks horrified.] Yeah, we’re definitely outside the box now, huh? Now, you gotta ask yourself, how far are you willing to go? [Kelly undoes his belt.] How much do you really care about her? [Sound of pants unzipping. Matthew looks panicked and Kelly bursts out laughing.] I’m joking, man. [Matthew signs in relief.] Relax. [Laughs.] Damn, do I look gay to you?  
|   |   |   |   | Matthew: No, but Jesus– [Kelly starts to punch Matthew.] |

| X | X | X | X | \[During the film’s introduction, Cady talks about being home-schooled, wanting to dispel the idea that she conforms to the stereotype of home schooling (for example, being a poorly educated religious fanatic). The scene includes five brothers depicted as religious hillbillies.\]  
|   |   |   |   | Homeschooled Boy: And on the third day, God created the Remington bull action rifle. So that man could fight the dinosaurs. And the homosexuals.  
|   |   |   |   | Homeschooled Boys [together]: Amen. |

| X | X | X | X | \[Cady has not met many friends at her new school until math class on her second day when she meets Damian and Janis.\]  
|   |   |   |   | Damian: Is that your natural hair colour?  
|   |   |   |   | Cady: Yeah.  
|   |   |   |   | Damian: It’s gorgeous. [He grabs her pony tail and turns to Janis.] See this is the colour I want.  
|   |   |   |   | Janis: This is Damian. He’s almost too gay to function.  
|   |   |   |   | Cady: It’s nice to meet you. |

| X | X | X | X | \[Popular girls Regina, Gretchen, and Karen, dubbed the Plastics, discuss their “burn book,” a book in which they pair yearbook photos with nasty comments. Cady’s comment about Damian, which she did not intend to be cruel, is taken as nasty and included in the book.\]  
|   |   |   |   | Gretchen: Janis Ian – dyke.  
|   |   |   |   | Karen: Who is that? [She points to a picture of Damian.]  
|   |   |   |   | Gretchen: I think it’s that kid Damian.  
|   |   |   |   | Cady: Yeah, he’s almost too gay to function. [The plastics laugh.]  
|   |   |   |   | Regina: Ha. That’s funny. Put that in there.  
|   |   |   |   | Cady: [Thinking to herself] Oh no, maybe that was only okay when Janis said it. |
Regina tells Cady about how she embarrassed Janis by spreading a rumour that Janis was a lesbian, explaining why Janis hates Regina. This accusation led to Janis being ostracized by all of her friends and ultimately leaving school.

Regina: She's so pathetic. Let me tell you something about Janis Ian. We were best friends in middle school. I know, right, it's so embarrassing. I don't even ... whatever. So then in eighth grade I started going out with my first boyfriend, Kyle, who was totally gorgeous but then he moved to Indiana. And Janis was, like, weirdly jealous of him. Like, if I would blow her off to hang out with Kyle, she'd be like 'Why didn't you call me back.' And I'd be like 'Why are you so obsessed with me?' So, then for my birthday party, which was an all girls pool party, I was like 'Janis, I can't invite you because I think you're a lesbian.' I mean, I couldn't have a lesbian at my party. There would be girls there in their bathing suits. I mean, right, she was a lesbian. So then her mom called my mom and started yelling. At her. It was so retarded. And then she dropped out of school because no one would talk to her. And she came back in the fall for high school all of her hair was cut off and she was totally weird. And now I guess she's on crack.

Cady, Janis and Damian are trying to orchestrate a situation where Regina's boyfriend, Aaron, catches Regina cheating. They teens find out that she has a tryst with another student in the projection room every Thursday, so they try to lure Aaron into the room at the appropriate time by putting posting a notification that swim practice will be in the projection room. When Aaron tries the door, it is locked, giving Regina time to hide. Aaron enters the room to find the male student in his underpants, and misreads the situation as an attempt to seduce him. He smiles awkwardly and leaves, clearly not interested.

Regina photocopied pages from the 'burn book' and posted them over the school. Janis and Damian find their pages.

Damian: Janis Ian – dyke.
Janis: Ha ha, that's original.
Damian: Too gay to function?!?
Janis: Hey! That's only okay when I say it.

During the make up scene between all the junior girls at the school, Janis tries to make her public apology but is heckled by Regina. Janis gains the support of the girls who formerly shunned her because she was accused of being a lesbian.

Regina: Oh my god, it's your dream come true. Diving into a big pile of girls. [The girls laugh.] [...] Janis: I am so sorry, Regina. I don't know why I did it. It's probably because I've got a big lesbian crush on you. Suck on that. Ay ay ay. [She falls backwards into the crowd of cheering, chantning girls who catch her.]

The Perfect Score (2004)

When Matty is released from prison, Francesca is there waiting for him to get out; they kiss.

Matty: Anyone tell you you're a hell of a kisser?
Francesca: Yeah.
Matty: Not as good as my cell-mate, Ramon, but it's not bad.

Before the S.A.T.S, Anna tells Kyle that will not attend Brown University as she had planned.

Kyle: The boys at Brown are going to be disappointed.
Ann: Hell, the girls at Brown are going to be disappointed. [They both laugh.]
Dean tells Mary, his girlfriend, that he thinks he's gay when they're in the pool, the place where they tell each other secrets underwater.

Dean: I think I'm gay.
Mary: What?
Dean: Gay. [He points to himself.]
Mary: What? [She swims to the water's surface, but hits her head in the pool. The maintenance man dives in to rescue her. While Mary is disoriented, she has a vision: she thinks the maintenance man, with his long brown hair, is Jesus and he tells her: 'Dean needs you now. You must do all you can to help him.'][Voiceover] How could my boyfriend be gay? He's like the best Christian I know. He's an athlete who's constantly strengthening himself physically, creatively and spiritually for the Lord.

[Montage of Dean figure skating; during applause Dean says: 'Thank you, Jesus.' Why had he been stricken with such a spiritually toxic affliction?]

Mary and her friends drive to Dean's house to pick him up for school, only to find that he's been sent to Mercy House.

Mary: [Voiceover] Mercy House is a Christian treatment facility where they deal with everything from drug abuse, to alcoholism, to de-gayification, and unwed mothers.

Mary: [To her friends] I need to tell you guys something. [She tells them about Dean.]
Hillary Faye: Ugh [grimaces].
Veronica: Ew.
Roland: What? It wasn't like it was some kind of secret. He was a one-man gay pride parade.

Mary discovers that Hillary Faye is hosting a 'prayer circle' for Dean.

Tia: [Handing Mary a leaflet] Hi Mary. Sorry to hear about Dean’s faggotry. [...] Hillary Faye: It’s hard. But I think this is the only way we can actually help Dean. Don’t you agree? Come on, you’re not born a gay. You’re born again! [...] [Hillary Faye gives Patrick a flyer.] Prayer circle meeting at my house at seven o’clock. I’m conducting it for Mary’s gay boyfriend Dean.

Hillary Faye leads a prayer at the prayer circle she is hosting for Dean.

Hillary Faye: And we pray for all the perverts, Lord, but especially for Dean. Whom, at this time, just hasn’t found the right girl. We join together and beg You to rid him of his unnatural perversions. May You lead him out of darkness, Lord, and into your divine light. Amen.

Mary talks to her mother, Lillian, about Dean, asking why his parents sent him away so quickly. Her mother provides an analogy of a car – how she would handle routine maintenance, but anything that required fixing should be done by a professional.

Mary: What are you saying – you'd actually send me to a place like Mercy House?
Lillian: Mary, please don’t tell me you’re a lesbian.
Mary: Mom!
Lillian: [Relieved] Oh, should I be worried about you?
Mary and Patrick talk while they ride on his scooter.
Patrick: Listen Mary. I want you to know that I don’t think Dean’s sick or anything.
Mary: Yeah right.
Patrick: No, really. I mean, Mercy House doesn’t really exist for the people who get sent there. It exists more for the people who do the sending.

Cassandra and Mary have become friends after Cassandra discovers that Mary is pregnant and, unlike Mary's other friends, does not reject her. They discuss Mary’s reciprocated crush on Patrick, but Mary declares that she isn’t interested because he’s pastor Skip’s son and because she is pregnant.
Cassandra: I should tell Patrick to act gay around you. Maybe then he’d get a little action.

Cassandra and Mary have become friends after Cassandra discovers that Mary is pregnant and, unlike Mary’s other friends, does not reject her. They discuss Mary’s reciprocated crush on Patrick, but Mary declares that she isn’t interested because he’s pastor Skip’s son and because she is pregnant.
Cassandra: I should tell Patrick to act gay around you. Maybe then he’d get a little action.

Hillary Faye and her friends drive to the prom.

Hillary Faye: I knew Mary was hiding something. To imagine her humping that pervert makes me sick to my stomach.
Veronica: Gross.

Hillary Faye tries to get Cassandra and Mary, now expelled from school, ejected from the prom.

Hillary Faye: [Outraged; into the microphone in front of the student body] I did not have sex with a gay and try to blame Jesus.

The Perfect Man (2005)

To create a distraction, Amy puts a sight outside of the bistro offering free beer that attracts an unruly group of construction workers. Lance flirtatiously serves them at the bar; the construction workers show no discomfort at his attentions.
Lance: [To a co-worker] Look, it’s time for your break. Bye-bye, [Turning to construction workers] Hi! How are you? [...] Some sort of Village People convention in town?
Worker: We saw the sign outside and we want the free beer.
Lance: Free beer? Why would I give you... [patting down one of the workers] I’d give you free beer. You look absolutely parched.

Cry_Wolf (2005)

New student Owen sneaks out of Westlake Preparatory Academy at night to play a truth/lie game with a select group of students. Before Owen’s first game of ‘cry wolf’ Tom introduces him to the rest of the group.
Randall: Tom, who’s your new boyfriend?
Tom: You’ll have to excuse Randall here. He doesn’t know the difference between a roommate and a cellmate. Everybody, this is Owen. Owen this is everybody.

During the game, Owen supports Tom’s bid as not being the liar.
Randall: Listen, just because you’re Tom’s new butt buddy doesn’t mean you got to be his bitch.
Owen: You don’t think the angry homophobic thing is fooling anyone, do you? [Everyone laughs.]

The friends meet in the lunchroom at school and discuss their plans for the weekend.
Randall: Can I borrow your car?
Tom: Yeah man, you know, just leave the keys on the tire and don’t get any blood on the back seat.
Randall: I wouldn’t dream of it. I want this to be special, you know, like in the middle of the woods up against a tree.
Regina: You’re a pig.
Randall: You’re a dyke.
Regina: Die a violent death.
Unpopular and un-athletic Jimmy talks to popular girl Brooke at the wax museum where she works until Bo, her jock boyfriend, interrupts.

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<tr>
<th>Cursed (2005)</th>
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<th>Unpopular and un-athletic Jimmy talks to popular girl Brooke at the wax museum where she works until Bo, her jock boyfriend, interrupts.</th>
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<td>x</td>
<td>Bo: Hey I know you. From P.E.</td>
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<td>Brooke: His name’s Billy.</td>
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<td>Jimmy: Uh, it’s, uh, Jimmy.</td>
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<td>Bo: You’re the dodge ball crotch target; you should really wear a cup. [...] I’m just looking out for him. He can’t help it. Every school’s got one – the derogatory ‘it’, the geek on his way to fagtown.</td>
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<td>Jimmy: Look, I’m not gay.</td>
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<td>Bo: Bummer. You mean you’re just an ass wimp-wad for no reason?</td>
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<td>Jimmy: Yep.</td>
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<td>Bo: [To Jimmy as he leaves] I think your dog is gay too.</td>
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<th>Jimmy gives Brooke the dollar she needs for a soda; Bo shows up and harasses him.</th>
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<td>Bo: Geek juice. You, uh, trying out for the wrestling team, Jimmy? [Bo points to the poster on the soda machine.]</td>
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<td>Jimmy: Oh, no. I don’t wrestle.</td>
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<td>Bo: Oh, I’d think all that male-to-male contact would be right up your alley! [Bo’s male jock friends laugh.]</td>
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<td>Jimmy: Is, uh, is that the appeal for you? [...] Haven’t you been team captain for like two years now?</td>
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<td>Bo: [...]</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>Bo: [Turning as he walks away] Let’s get out of here before we get homo-stained.</td>
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<th>Jimmy, now aware that he’s turning into a werewolf and starting to take advantage of its perks, goes to the wrestling tryouts to talk to Brooke. Bo, the captain, tries to intervene which leads to a confrontation between the two teens.</th>
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<td>Bo: What’s going on, Brooke? You going fruit fly on me?</td>
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<td>Jimmy: Actually, we were just talking. But, if you don’t mind... shoo. [...] Oh come on, Bo. You’re really becoming transparent. How about a little identity intervention, okay? Because all this – this internalized homophobia’s just giving you away.</td>
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<td>Bo: [Pushing Jimmy into the bleacher seats] You’d better watch your ass.</td>
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<th>Louie, one of Bo’s friends, wrestles Jimmy during the try-outs for the wrestling team.</th>
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<td>Louie: Okay limp wrist, stay away from my groin. [Jimmy beats Louie, then wrestles Bo.]</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>Bo: Come on fairy, shake your dust.</td>
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<td>Jimmy: You’d like that, wouldn’t you?</td>
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<td>Bo: Come on, fag. What?</td>
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<td>Jimmy: Do you like that? Huh?</td>
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<td>Bo: Wait, no—</td>
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<td>Jimmy: [Lifting Bo above his head] You know the best part about being a fairy? You get to fly. [Slams him to the mat and wins the match.]</td>
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<p>| 2 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 2 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 8 |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Book</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aquamarine (2006)</td>
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<td>Hailey and Claire try to dissuade mermaid Aquamarine from pursuing attractive male teen Raymond, the guy they both have a crush on. Claire: No, no, no. Raymond's way too popular. You should pick someone else. I mean, all the girls are after him. Even a few boys.</td>
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<td>Final Destination 3 (2006)</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Two teens, Wendy and Kevin, who cheated death become aware that there are hints about their grisly demise in photos. When Wendy tells Kevin, he is unsure about whether he wants to know or remain ignorant. Kevin: Is it bad? I mean, is it like painful or embarrassing? I mean, there's nothing, like, up my ass or anything, right?</td>
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<td>She's The Man (2006)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Viola, pretending to be her brother Sebastian in order to attend a boy's high school and play on the boy's soccer team, she tells the coach that she can't be a 'skin' in a game of 'shirts and skins' because she's allergic to the sun. The coach responds, saying: &quot;Well, we like to accommodate here at Illyria, so I'll follow you around with a parasol, alright, nancy boy?&quot;</td>
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<td>Stay Alive (2006)</td>
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<td>A group of teens get a bootlegged version of a new video game called Stay Alive that unleashes a murdering force amongst those who played the game. Players Hutch, Abigail, October, Swink, and Phineas are all setting up to play the game on their laptops. Swink puts on his headset and a wrist brace (used for carpal tunnel). Phineas: God, that thing's gay. And it smells. [Swink scowls and finishes putting on his kit.]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Movie</td>
<td>Scene Description</td>
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| Step Up (2006)        | Tyler, Mac and Skinny joke around after having a gun pulled on them at a party (because Tyler was dancing with another guy's girlfriend). Mac is calling Tyler 'Jerry' because of his constant fighting and Tyler is calling him 'Montel' because of his use of pop psychology (suggesting that because Tyler is white he has something to prove and he overcompensates). Skinny pipes up asking which celebrity he would be.  
Swink: This thing is gay. [Rips the brace off his wrist.]  
Tyler: No man, he's like Ellen.  
Mac: Except Ellen gets more chicks. [They laugh.]  
Skinny: Hey shut up. | 2       |
|                       | Skinny, Mac and Tyler accidentally break a window while horsing around and enter a building that ends up being a ballet school. Tyler makes fun of the students' outfits in photos.  
Tyler: Look! They're all sweet with their shirts all tight like they spray-painted them on. [Gestures to pictures of males in ballet gear.]  
Skinny: Yeah, they do show off their muscles pretty nice though. [Skinny looks dreamy; awkward silence and a look of disgust from Mac.] No man, I'm just--  
Tyler: Don't touch me. [Darts away from Skinny's grasp.]  
Skinny: [Runs to Mac (his brother)] I'm just... Mac, I'm just saying... They in good shape is all.  
Mac: We need to get you a girl, fast.  
Skinny: Man, I got girls. I just don't show them to you. |         |
|                       | Miles and Tyler go to see a concert put on by Lucy and her cheating boyfriend, Colin. Miles is upset because Colin betrayed him by signing a record contract and taking full credit for their shared work.  
Miles: I got to sit up here and watch this Colin.  
Tyler: I'm sorry. Did we come here for him? I thought we came here for Lucy. Wait. Is that who you've been looking at the whole time? He's kind of hot, I guess, in that weird way.  
Miles: Shut up. | 2       |
| Stick It (2006)       | After a musical montage of prom shopping (in which Poot and Frank both willingly don dresses and makeup) Joanne demands prom details from Poot. Frank objects to her 'controlling' behavior, calling her a 'bitch.'  
Joanne: You think I'm a bitch?  
Poot: No. Yeah, kinda I do. But I don't have the problem with it that Frank does. I mean, he's gay. [Poot and Joanne both look at Frank who looks resigned. Joanne leaves.] ... What's a corsage?  
Frank: The universal sign for [whipping sound] being whipped.  
Poot: Dude, what's so wrong about being whipped? When is that a bad thing? Ever?  
Frank: Huh. Good point. | 11      |
| Georgia Rule (2007)   | Harlan finds Rachel lying by the side of the road and tries to feel Rachel's pulse through her chest when she wakes up and screams.  
Rachel: Are you one of those backcountry sodomy boys? | 3       |
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<td>Rachel and Simon arrive in the town of Hull after he picked her up by the side of the road.</td>
<td>Dudley and his gang of miscreants are beating up on kids in a local playground. Harry stands up to them and Dudley teases Harry.</td>
<td>Juno tells her friend Leah that she won’t be getting an abortion and has decided to give the baby up for adoption.</td>
<td>Seth and Evan are stopped by Jesse, a bully who tells them they cannot attend his graduation party.</td>
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<td>Rachel: Nice to know you Simon. Simon: You don’t know me kid. Rachel: I know you. Simon: You do? Rachel: I had my dress hiked and my legs up and you didn’t even look once. Not even for a second. Simon: So now you know me. Rachel: No marriage ring. What are you? 30? 40? You’re gay. [He drive off quickly.]</td>
<td>Dudley: Moaning in your sleep every night? At least I’m not afraid of my pillow. ‘Don’t kill Cedric.’ Who’s Cedric – your boyfriend?</td>
<td>Juno: I’ve been thinking. I was thinking I could have this baby and give it to someone who totally needs it. Like a woman with a bum ovary, or a couple of nice lesbian.</td>
<td>Jesse: Tell your fucking faggot friend he can’t come either. Seth: [Turning to Evan] So, Jesse wanted me to tell you you’re a fucking faggot and can’t come to his party. Evan: You really bitched out back there.</td>
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<td>Rachel is introduced to Paula, Simon’s sister.</td>
<td>Dudley and his gang of miscreants are beating up on kids in a local playground. Harry stands up to them and Dudley teases Harry.</td>
<td>Harry: So, is he [Simon] queer or what? Paula: He lost his wife and son in a car accident three years ago and it takes time.</td>
<td>Seth tells Evan about his childhood obsession with drawing ‘dicks,’ and the fall-out with his family and the school when his artistic obsession was discovered. In response, all Evan can muster is: ‘Well, I don’t– That’s really messed up. Super gay.’</td>
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<td>Rachel: So, is he [Simon] queer or what? Paula: He lost his wife and son in a car accident three years ago and it takes time.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Juno talks to Mark, one of the potential adoptive parents of Juno’s baby.</td>
<td>Seth promises Jules and her friend alcohol for Jules’ house party. He asks what alcoholic beverages he can purchase for them and Jules’ friend requests Kyle’s Killer Lemonade. Seth responds: “Kyle’s Killer Lemonade. That’s kind of gay, but I can get it for you.”</td>
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<td>Seth’s car is towed from the staff parking lot at school. Sam Fogell, a friend of Seth and Evan, is nicknamed ‘Fagell’ by Seth. When Fogell questions why Seth would have parked there, given that the parking is reserved for staff and Seth is not staff, Seth yells: “I know that, Fagell! I know that!”</td>
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<td>Evan, Seth, and Fogell arrive at the party with alcohol; Seth discovers that Fogell and Evan will be sharing a dorm room at college. The news so upsets Seth that he leaves his two friends outside to go to the party, and insults Fogell, saying: “Give me that booze, Fagell.”</td>
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<td>College (2008) Carter goes to Kevin’s house before school, while Kevin’s younger siblings eat breakfast. Carter: You know that book that Ms. Dangle makes everybody read, about the mice? Kevin: You mean Of Mice And Men? Carter: Bingo, that’s the one, yeah. So let me get this straight. These two dudes dream of buying a farm together to raise rabbits. Hmmm. (He pulls a face.) I mean, I’m no expert, but doesn’t that seem a little ... I dunno ... kind of (he looks over at Kevin’s two young sisters eating breakfast and uses a cereal box to hide his face) ... G-A-Y? Kevin: Dude, I think you’re kind of missing the point.</td>
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<td>Fletcher recounts the hijinks he got up to on his college visit to Carter, Kevin, and Morris. Fletcher: Found a tattoo on my lower back of a unicorn. Don’t remember getting that. Think I’ll just tell people it’s some sort of killer unicorn, you know, so it doesn’t seem so gay.</td>
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Morris, Carter, and Kevin are forced to take ‘body shots’ off of a hairy Beta-Phi fraternity brother named Bearcat. They drink alcohol from various parts of his naked body, including taking shots from his mouth, armpit, and foot; they suck it out of his bellybutton; they even consume alcohol that is poured over his anus. The rest of the frat boys surround them, yelling. While the three teens originally looked horrified, they drink more eagerly as they become intoxicated, and the body shots get more explicit.

The antagonistic Bearcat, Teague, and Cooper smoke marijuana and watch the ‘charity body wash’ at a nearby sorority where bikini-clad college girls scrub down male fraternity brothers.

Bearcat: We should have one of those. Then we could get all soapy and scrub each other down.

Cooper: [Disgusted] Dude, I hope that’s the weed talking.

When Morris searches for a non-alcoholic beverage, Bearcat gives him punch that is full of alcohol. Morris mistakenly thinks that they’re bonding.

Bearcat: Listen to me. If anybody – and I mean anybody – fucks with you tonight, find me. I got your front.

Morris: Don’t you mean back?

Bearcat: If that’s how you want it. You got something moving in your pants, don’t fight it.

Amy, Heather, and Kendall go to the frat party where they meet very intoxicated Carter and Kevin. They had all agreed to meet at a bar but the boys never appeared; the girls explain that they waited for two hours.

Carter: Amy, girl, you know I’d never blow you off. Especially last night, with the lesbian thing. [Amy bites Carter’s finger flirtatiously.]
Nick and Norah are alone in Nick’s car, driving around looking for a band called Where’s Fluffy who have a mystery gig that night.

Norah: So ... your friends are all gay, right?
Nick: Not all my friends.
Norah: Not all your friends, but the ones in the van are gay?
Nick: Yeah, I mean, they’re all gay. Yeah. One hundred percent, you know, gay. Gay every day, all the time.
Norah: Okay, that’s a relief.
Nick: If anyone’s gonna get raped in that van, it will be a guy.
Norah: That’s good.

Norah meets her on-again/off-again boyfriend, Tal, in a nightclub after dancing with Nick.

Tal: Oh, but you’re in that gay band. We’re Gay.
Nick: The Jerk Offs. And we’re not all gay. [...] [Nick, Dev, Thom, Lethario, and Norah are at the cabaret. Various audience members flirtatiously look at Nick and his friends; Nick even receives a flirtatious wink. Dev, Thom, and Lethario flirt back with the patrons.]

Norah and the rest of the teens search for Caroline who is very intoxicated and has gone missing. Norah finally has a short conversation with Caroline on the phone, during which Caroline mentions seeing 'an altar boy with no pants on.' Dev knows exactly where he is.

Dev: Midnight ass. The all-male 'holigay' revue at Camera Obscura. 'Deck the balls,' 'O horny night.' You guys never went to that?
Nick: It’s a Christmas show at this time of year?
Thom: Since when does a queen need an excuse to sing?
[Nick, Dev, Thom, Lethario, and Norah are at the cabaret. Various audience members flirtatiously look at Nick and his friends; Nick even receives a flirtatious wink. Dev, Thom, and Lethario flirt back with the patrons.]

While looking for Caroline, Nick scouts around a church where he meets a homeless man.

Homeless Man: What's up, friend? How you doing?
Nick: Good. I was just gonna go in...
Homeless Man: You walked right in here.
Nick: I didn’t mean to.
Homeless Man: You’re like a little canary in skinny jeans.
Nick: I was gonna go in to look for my friend.
Homeless Man: You got friends right here. Me and Switzerland are here for you, baby. Let me ask you a question. You ever hook up with a dog?
Nick: No. What? Like a ... a ... a dog, like a pet? No.
Homeless Man: Don’t. It’s not worth it. I like you so much.
Nick: I’m running away. I'm running.
Homeless Man: Run away. Run away, little canary.

Tal and his friends are at the Where’s Fluffy concert.

Tal: [To Norah] You show up here with this gaylord [Nick]. Are you trying to make a fool of me in front of my boys? [...] [Nick tries to defend Norah; Tal turns to Nick] What you blew it with your own chick [Tris] so you gotta run around town playing beard with someone else’s?
Nick: You push me again–
Tal: And what your band of merry men will bone me to death?
Lethario: That’s it! [He head butts Tal, then starts to cry.]
|   |   |   | Ian wakes up when his brother, Rex, barges into his bedroom. Rex: Ian. Wake up, faggot. The judge rolls in 20 so if you want a ride to work you’d better get your poop in a group. [...] No, now homo. [...] No, now sissy. |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|   |   |   | Rex won’t let Ian get in the car when Ian is trying to get a ride to work. After eluding Ian several times, Rex says: “Okay, seriously, quit being such a fag and get in.” |   |   |
|   |   |   | Rex and Ian are in the car on their way to work. Rex: I’m going to ask you a question and I want a straight answer: are you queer? Ian: [Confused] What? Rex: Goddammit, I knew it. Ian: I didn’t say anything. Rex: Exactly! If someone asks if you’re a pole smoker, you just deny it straight off. No pause, no farting around. Ian: Rex, I’m not gay. Rex: You’re 18 and you’ve never had a girlfriend. That’s how people wind up getting gay, you know? Ian: I don’t think that’s really how it happens. Rex: Tell me how it happens, expert. Fucking cock expert. Cock-spert. Hey, which do you like better? The shaft or the balls? Ian: Gross. I don’t know what you’re talking about. Rex: Look, every guy has got a fantasy about another guy but you gotta bury that shit way down. This is America, goddamit. [Ian confesses to Rex that there is a girl that he’s interested in. When he tells Rex that he met her online, Rex slams on the breaks.] Rex: She’s probably a guy. Some fat old dude who wants to ram you in the tail pipe. But you’d love that, wouldn’t you, because you’re a homo. [Dropping Ian off at work] Try not to come home any gayer than you are now. |   |   |
|   |   |   | After a night of drunken amusement at an Amish “Rumspringa” party, Lance and Ian wake up in the back of a truck spooning (fully clothed). They quickly move apart. |   |   |
|   |   |   | Ian urgently needs to use a public toilet. While waiting for others to vacate the stall, an adult man comes and stands beside him. The other patrons leave the stall, looking slightly chagrined. Men’s Room Predator: Well, looks like we’re up. Go on, get in there. [He pats Ian’s shoulder.] Ian, sitting on the toilet, texts his online love interest; slowly, a penis is inserted through a ‘glory hole’ between the cubicles. As this occurs, a Jaws-like theme song plays in the background. When Ian sees the penis, he panics, throwing himself against the far side of the cubicle and landing on the floor before wriggling to freedom. Ian: [Yelling, terrified] No! Oh, God! No, thank you! No, thank you! Men’s Room Predator: Hello? Little buddy? Hellowoo. [Ian stampedes out of the bathroom.] Lance: Was that you screaming in there? Ian: [Unsettled] I don’t want to talk about it. Ever. |   |   |
## Carnie's Carnival

A 'carnie' at a carnival calls to Ian and Lance, trying to get them to play his fairground game.

Carnie: Hey, there, Bilbo Faggins, there's no height requirement. Why don't you step up and win your girlfriend a prize?

Ian: We're not... She's not my girlfriend.

Carnie: What about your other girlfriend there? [Pointing at Lance.]

Lance: [Sarcastic] Nice.

## Ian and Lance in Jail

Lance and Ian are released from jail and Lance asks the police officer for his personal effects.

Lance: You guys got my stuff?

Police Officer: It's gonna be a few minutes.

Lance: Alright. I gotta put up with a lot here. I was raped last night; I'm just fucking with ya. [He laughs.] Oh man. But... one guy did get raped.

## Rex's Hotel Encounter

Rex finds Ian at a hotel and a fight ensues, rife with queer overtones including nipple-twisting and Ian being tossed on to a bed with a paper cut-out of a shirtless fireman beside him, all to the sounds of Disco Inferno.

Rex: Get your shit, queer bait, we're going home.

Ian: That's okay, it probably wouldn't change all these feelings that I've been having lately.

Rex: What are you talking about?

Ian: I don't know, Rex, just... feelings. Curiosities... [looks over at cut out of a fireman] about men.

Rex: [Horrified] Oh, shit Ian.

Ian: I think you might be right. I think I might be... might be getting gay.

Rex: Oh, goddammit. Oh, fuck.

Ian: I just haven't had any luck with girls, Rex.

Rex: No way. No way my little brother's taking it in the... chilling. Alright, take the car and go bang a female woman like the Lord intended. You've got one hour. Ian, not up the butt.

Ian: Right.

## Rex Comes Out of the Closet

Rex comes out of the closet.

Ian: [Voiceover] But that Thanksgiving, we finally found out what's been up his ass all these years. [The father becomes hysterical, overturning the turkey while the mother consoles him.]

Rex: [Crying] I'm gay, so that's it. [Rex and his partner, a black, gender non-conforming man get a juicer for Christmas.]

Ian: [Voiceover] By Christmas my dad got used to the idea. And Rex is actually a pretty great guy these days. Yeah, now he only uses the term faggot during rough sex. [Everyone laughs. Rex puts his arm around his partner for a cuddle.]"
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<th>Rick goes to the bank to try to secure a loan for a car to impress his love interest, Jill. The Bank Loan Officer declines to give him a loan. Aunt Lucille: This is a good boy. There must be something I could do. Bank Loan Officer: Ma’am, rubbing my crotch under the desk won’t change my mind. Aunt Lucille: I’m not rubbing your crotch. Rick: I really need that car.</th>
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<td>There is a montage of news stories covering the exploits of The Dragonfly. The last one is from Perez Hilton, a gossip blog, which has a picture of him with “Fag-onfly” scrawled underneath and “Dragonfly … Gay gay gay?” above the image.</td>
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<td>Rick gives Jill some flowers after an acting audition. Jill: There’s … something you’re not telling me, isn’t there? Something secret. Something locked away deep inside. Rick: It was summer camp. We had to share a shower. You trip and fall with your mouth open on one guy’s— Jill: No. I mean, in here [she touches his heart].</td>
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<td>Mr. Landers goes to Rick’s house for Thanksgiving dinner. He talks about the importance of being with family during the holidays. Landers: It’s just; Thanksgiving is for family. And Lance is the only family I have. I never married. Jill: [Offering cake while Landers’s back is turned, hanging up his coat] Fruitcake. Landers: No, just never met the right woman.</td>
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<td>Mr. Landers and Rick are having Thanksgiving dinner and awakening to the possibility that they’re arch nemeses. They begin naming each of the injuries they other person incurred in their battle to see if the other is their enemy. Rick: You have a scratch on your neck. Landers: Yes, I… met a girl on Craigslist. And you have a bruise on your neck. Rick: I… met a guy on Craigslist.</td>
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<td>Rick goes to the hospital to check on how his Aunt Lucille is doing after being attacked. Dr. Whitby tells him that his aunt is dead, but his uncle had awakened from his coma. Dr. Whitby: Now, sir, here you go. This is my bill. Uncle Albert: You did surgery on me? Dr. Whitby: Yes, sir, we confused you with one of our sex-change patients, but don’t worry, we didn’t remove your penis. We did cut your testicles off, but, well, since your wife’s dead, you won’t be needing them anyway.</td>
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<td>17 Again (2009)</td>
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<td>Mike confronts Stan about his bullying behaviour. He offers an explanation for his behaviour by suggesting three causes; the first is homosexuality. Mike: See, according to leading psychiatrists, Stan’s a bully for one of three reasons. One: underneath all of that male bravado, there’s an insecure little girl banging on the closet door trying to get out.</td>
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Maggie, Mike's daughter, starts to fall in love with teenage-Mike. She makes sexual advances towards him, making Mike uncomfortable. In order extricate himself from the situation, he tells her that he's not the person she thinks he is which leads her to believe that he is gay.

Mike: Maggie, I'm not the person that you think I am.
Maggie: Yes, you are.
Mike: No, I'm not.
Maggie: You're right, you're good. You're not like the others.
Mike: I'm not like the others. I'm very different than the others. So different, in fact, that you and I can never, ever, ever be together...
Maggie: Oh. Oh my god. What are you saying? Are you confused?
Mike: I'm very confused, yes. Extremely confused.
Maggie: Oh my god. I-- I get it now. And your hair is always perfectly coiffed, and you have highlights.
Mike: What are you talking about?
Maggie: I mean, dude, your jeans are really tight.
Mike: What are you talking about?
Maggie: I mean, dude, your jeans are really tight.
Mike: I'm not gay. I'm in love, Maggie, I'm in love. I've been in love. I've been in love with the same girl since I was 17, Maggie.

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Dance Flick (2009)

Thomas meets A-Con outside of his high school.

A-Con: The judge says its either school or juvi. I'm only one crime away from going back, B, I'm excited, man. Kick ball, arts and crafts, showers. [Pauses slightly and this smile falters.]

Mr. Moody gives his students an 'inspirational' talk about drama.

Mr. Moody: What will you do to act? What are you willing to sacrifice for your art, son? Are you willing to die for it? Are you willing to cry for it? Are you willing to lose your manhood for it? [He kisses Thomas, a student. who recoils and wipes his mouth while the class is revolted except for Jack who looks on with interest and smiles slightly.] [To Thomas] No? You, get out of my class, get out of my class! You call yourself an actor? Get out! Damn it, I gave up my manhood ... twice. Yes, it hurt. I bled. But I got five weeks' work on a non-union student film.

Tracy asks Jack to be her dance partner in a scene that parodies Hairspray.

Tracy: Hey Jack.
Jack: Hey Tracy.
Tracy: I was wondering if you had a dance partner for the senior showcase. 'Cause I was thinking we could be partners. There's this really romantic scene in Romeo and Juliette.
Jack: That's great. I've always wanted to play that part.
Tracy: Oh! You'd be a great Romeo.
Jack: I'm not talking about Romeo.
Tracy: [Laughs] You're so funny.

Thomas and Megan talk at the dance club, Club Violence. She calls him a genius and he lists things he doesn't know.

Thomas: I definitely don't know how Star Jones didn't know her husband was gay. I mean, he laughs like this [deep voiced laugh - aho00].

Nora and Megan get in a fight during gym class over Thomas (Nora publicly accuses Megan of having had sex with him). Their scrap turns into a foxy-wrestling type event, complete with small white tank tops and paddle pool, while the female gym teacher looks on throwing money at them and the rest of the girls cheering them on.
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<td><strong>Teacher:</strong></td>
<td>Break it up. What are you doing? I am not going to have two nubile, sweaty teens fighting like that and making me moist in my own gym, do you understand? If you've got a beef to settle, you're going to settle it my way, got it?</td>
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*Jack's father is the basketball coach; he is disappointed with his team.*

**Coach:** Don't you guys want to know what it feels like to be winners? To be ten men holding each other after a big victory? Standing naked in the showers, screaming at the top of your lungs ‘full flying’?

**Jack:** [Yelling emphatically] Yes! [The other players look uncomfortable.]

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<th><strong>Fame (2009)</strong></th>
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<td>The teens are taken to a karaoke club by their teacher to get experience singing in front of strangers. After a fun night out, Ms. Rowan, Joy, and Neil talk.</td>
<td>Nei: You know what else was great? That girl gave me her number.</td>
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<td>Joy: That was a guy, Neil.</td>
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<td>Neil: Regardless, I was flattered.</td>
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<th><strong>Fired Up! (2009)</strong></th>
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<td>Nick and Shawn realise that they only became football players to meet girls, and they would meet more girls at cheerleading camp than at football camp.</td>
<td>Nick: Let's go to cheer camp, let's be cheerleaders.</td>
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<td>Shawn: Cheerleaders?</td>
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<td>Nick: Yes.</td>
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<td>Shawn: Oh my god. Are you coming out to me? I'm so proud of you, man. And you know what, I kind of always knew. [Shawn smiles and shakes his head.]</td>
<td>Nick: Will you shut up. All right, I'm too straight to be gay. I can watch a Project Runway marathon with Nathan Lane's hand up my dress and still win a straight award.</td>
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<td><strong>Nick flirts with a girl after skinny-dipping in a local lagoon at cheer camp.</strong></td>
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<td>Girl: Nick, enough of that.</td>
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<td>Nick: Enough of what?</td>
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<td>Girl: Drop the game. There are 300 girls at this camp and only four straight guys. It's no mystery why you're ripping through the place. So come on...</td>
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<td><strong>Nick tries to convince Shawn to leave cheer camp after the second week, skipping the last week and the competition. Shawn has developed feelings for Carly, the head cheerleader, and wants to stay.</strong></td>
<td>Shawn: I need a little more time with Carly. There. I said it. Okay? And I know you think that's lame, but can you give me one day?</td>
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<td>Nick: That's not lame, bro. That's gay.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Shawn: Well, technically, pursing a woman you have heterosexual feelings for, that's not gay, Nick.</td>
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<td>Nick: But using a rotating inverse swing-over to do it? Yeah, that is.</td>
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<td><strong>Nick has agreed to stay at cheer camp so that Shawn has more time to court Carly.</strong></td>
<td>Shawn: I know you don't like man-to-man touching, but my arm is on your shoulder. Here comes my arm right now. [Nick shrugs off his arm.]</td>
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<td><strong>Rick has stolen Nick's diary, which is supposedly a list of his sexual conquests but is really his poetry, and read it out in front of the Tigers cheerleading team.</strong></td>
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<td>Rick: Cheer camp, day one. The sun rises in the summer sky, like Rembrandt's brush on a dogwood branch. Ha ha ha. Queeratron. [Everyone looks surprised at the diary's contents.]</td>
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Nick and Shawn have left cheer camp and are on the bus home. Nick plays with a bracelet that he got from his roommate, Downey.

Nick: It's Downey's bracelet. Yeah, I love that kid, hunh? I said it was cool, so he gave it to me. How nice is that?

Shawn: Those are his unh-unh beads, bro [referring to anal beads; Nick continues to runs them across his lips.] Downey liked you. Like 'liked you' liked you.


Shawn: Nick, come on. Think about it. [Montage of scenes from earlier in the movie, including when Downey squeezes Nick's bottom and runs his hand across his low back, under his t-shirt; showing up at the cheering nude scene; wanting to go star gazing.]

Shawn's little sister, Poppy, hands out new cheering outfits.

Poppy: Here you go, freak shows. New uniforms.

Bianca: We didn't order these.

Poppy: No shit lesbatron. My brother did.

Poppy hands out free Staples copy paper and a man in the crowd asks for 50 percent recycled paper. Poppy mocks him and throws a ream of paper at him, saying: "It's free, gay bar, just take it."

Nick sees Downey after returning to cheer camp.

Nick: Dude, why didn't you tell me you're gay? I'd have been totally okay with that. Paint with all the colours of the wind, and whatnot.

Downey: [Confused] Wait. You're straight?

Nick: [Laughing and looking around at the girls behind him] Am I straight? Yes.

Downey: What about your diary? And then you asked for my beads and stuck them in your mouth--

Nick: I thought it was a bracelet.

Downey: Why would you stick a bracelet in your mouth?

Nick: I don't know.

Downey: The closet door is made of all kinds of wood, brother... all kinds. [He slaps Nick on the behind.]

Nick: That is so awkward.

I Love You, Beth Cooper (2009)

Denis' valedictorian speech outlines all the things he wished he'd said in high school (namely that he loves Beth Cooper but also what he longed to say to the bullies and mean girls of high school). He finishes off with a message to his best friend, Rich, a film buff.

Denis: Let us not regret that we never told our own best friend: "I'm gay dude. I'm totally gay." [Rich looks confused and mouths "I'm not gay" to Denis.] Yes. Indeed, let us all... [A teacher interrupts him and he gets takes the microphone away form from Denis; Rich looks crestfallen.]

School Principal Dr. Gleason talks to Dennis after his speech, threatening to have his admission to Stanford pulled. Dennis tries to explain his inflammatory and insulting Valedictorian speech.

Denis: I just meant my thinking had been compromised. Look, Rich told me if... Dr. Gleason: Rich Munsch?

Dennis: Yeah.

Dr. Gleason: I wouldn't take heterosexual advice from Rich Munsch.

Dennis: But he was right. I mean I had to do something.
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<th>Denis talks to Beth Cooper when Rich comes up after the speech.</th>
<th>Rich: Hey. So, I'm not gay, dude. Denis: Rich. Hi. [He signals to his friend that he's talking to Beth; Rich looks surprised.] Rich: Hello, hi, hey, Hi. I didn't realize there was a line here.</th>
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<td>After the valedictorian speech, Denis and Rich walk home together.</td>
<td>Rich: So, look, I'm not gay you know, so ... yeah. Denis: Yeah, okay. I mean, it's cool if you are, too, really. Rich: Really, I'm not. No soy homo. Denis: Alright. That's awesome. Rich: What makes you think I'm gay? Denis: [Chuckling] I don't know. Everybody thinks you're gay, Rich. Rich: Well, they don't know me. You know me. What makes you think I'm gay? [Visual flashback to their pimply childhood when they're watching a sword fight on a movie.] Child Rich: Okay, I got an idea. I'm Robin Hood, you're Friar Tuck. We get you dad's camcorder and we do a shot-for-shot re-creation of their climactic sword fight ... using our boners. Ha. [Child Dennis looks unsettled. End of memory.] Denis: Nothing in particular, I guess. Rich: Is it because of drama club? Because, you know, a lot of professional actors aren't gay. More than half. Denis: Rich, it's just that all through high school and even before you never really had a girlfriend. Rich: Neither did you. Denis: I tried. [...] My point is ... I had one. Rich: You know, just so you know, making out with a girl like that, I'm not sure that's not gay. [They both laugh.]</td>
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<td>Denis and Rich talk to Denis' dad about cutting loose in the summer; his dad tells him that there are condoms in his bedside tables.</td>
<td>Denis: I think my dad wants us to have sex. Rich: With each other? Denis: No.</td>
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<td>Beth and her two friends, Cammy and Treece, attend Denis' failed party. Treece takes a package of condoms from Rich's pocket, calling them 'party balloons.'</td>
<td>Beth: So is this what you had planned for tonight? Denis: No, those are my dad’s. Cammy: Your dad’s not hiding in the closet or something? Treece: Oh, I hate that. [Blows up condom.]</td>
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<td>Kevin is beating Denis up and Rich is hiding in Denis' bedroom closet.</td>
<td>Denis: Rich! I need your help! Come out of the closet. [Rich leave the closet but jumps out the window.]</td>
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<td>Beth kisses a male convenience store clerk in exchange for him allowing her buy beer under-age, which Denis mentions when they get back to the car. Treece says she couldn't do that, at least not before she was intoxicated.</td>
<td>Rich: I could do two seconds. What? It isn't gay. It isn't gay. It isn't gay. It's not gay. It's within the three-second rule.</td>
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Rich and Denis are at a party thrown by a popular girl in school.

Rich: Do you know they call us ‘Dick Munch and the Penis’?

Denis: Yeah

Rich: No, I mean like together. Liker we’re the gay-namic duo or something.

After the party, Beth, her friends, Denis, and Rich return to the high school where the girls (and Rich) do a cheer routine for Denis. At the end of the routine, Beth looks sad, then proclaims that they should ‘hit the showers’ and the girls go running off. Rich looks excited to go after them.

Rich: They’re hitting the showers.

Denis: Yeah.

Rich: Come on

Denis: I’d love to. I just, um. I don’t think we were invited.

Rich: Um, I’m pretty sure we were.

Denis: You know, Rich. You don’t have to prove anything. [They stare at each other for a few seconds, then Rich runs after the girls.]

Rich does movie impressions for Cammy and Treece, re-enacting a scene from *True Grit* to the delight of the girls.

Rich: No it’s not – it’s not that funny.

Treece: No, it is, because you... [Treece flaps her hands camply.]


Cammy: The lady doth protest too much, me thinks.

Treece: What?

Rich: Like you know Shakespeare.

Cammy: Queen Gertrude to *Hamlet*, Act III, Scene Two, 1602, William Shakespeare or possibly Edward de Vere.

Rich: [Surprised]: Wow. Wow, yeah. [...] Cammy: If you’re not gay, why so un-chubby in the shower?

Rich: Heh heh, I– I was just being cool. It was uncool of you to notice.

Cammy: No 18 year-old boy is that cool.

Rich: I am that cool.

Treece: Nobody cares if you’re gay.

Rich: I’m not.

Treece: Nobody cares, so just be gay already!

After the end of the evening, Denis and Rich are standing outside of Denis’ parents’ house waving goodbye to the girls.

Rich: So guess what?

Denis: What?

Rich: I think I’m gay.

Denis: Yeah? Oh that’s great, congratulations! [He hugs his friend.]

Rich: Dude. I’m not gay for you.

Denis: Yeah, no, I know.

Rich: You know, I could be bi.

Denis: Bi?
Rich: I was with two gorgeous ladies last night. That's a lot more heterosexual than you are.

Olive and Brandon are cleaning the school while serving out their detentions.

Brandon: I want to be in detention!

Olive: Yeah, why are you here? Judging by the amount of blood gushing out of your nose, I thought you were in the bullring.

Brandon: You’d think, but Principal Gibbons is a homophobe, which is why I called him a fascist.

Olive: So the rumors are true.

Brandon: I don’t know what you’re talking about.

Olive: I meant about Gibbons being a fascist.

Brandon: I want to be in detention!

Olive: Yeah, why are you there? Judging by the amount of blood gushing out of your nose, I thought you were in the bullring.

Brandon: You’d think, but Principal Gibbons is a homophobe, which is why I called him a fascist.

Olive: So the rumors are true.

Brandon: I don’t know what you’re talking about.

Olive: I meant about Gibbons being a fascist.

Brandon: Well, you’re not even a real slut, you just want people to think you are. It’s pathetic.

Olive: Uh, no offence but you could probably learn something from me, Brando.

Brandon: Are you saying that I should act straight so people will like me? That’s ground-breaking. You should teach a course at the learning annex. It could be called 'The Painfully Obvious with Olive Penderghast, The Big School Slut'.

Olive: I was just suggesting that maybe these kids we call peers are on to something. Like Maryanne Bryant. Maybe that whole stuck-up Jesus freak thing is an act. You know?

Brandon: No, I think she’s just a stuck-up Jesus freak. And there are some of us who are just trying to blend into the crowd.

Olive: Well, then you’ve gotta do everything you can to blend in or decide not to care.

Brandon: I can’t decide if you’re a genius or a lunatic.

Olive: Well, don’t they sort of go hand in hand?

Olive and her best friend, Rhiannon, are talking.

Olive: You know that kid Brandon? That’s what someone told him (the rumour about her having sex with an old guy).

Rhiannon: [Cavalierly] Isn’t he a homo?

Olive: Yeah.

Brandon shows up at Olive’s house and asks her to be his girlfriend.

Brandon: Well, I mean, like, do you wanna be my girlfriend?

Olive: Uh, Brandon, just a couple of hours ago you told me you were Kinsey Six gay.

Brandon: True, but you said I should pretend to be straight so…

Olive: Yeah, I didn’t mean with me. I mean, you’re a nice guy and all, but you’re not really my type.

Brandon: Yeah, you’re not really my type either.

Olive: Yeah, I know that. I’ve got that V where you’d rather see a ‘P.’

Brandon: Do you want to have sex with me or not?

Olive: Oh my God, dude. Wow. You completely missed the point of that. That’s not what I was saying at all.

Brandon: No, I know what you were saying is that I should just act straight until I can get out of this hell hole and then I can be whoever I wanna be. I get that.

Olive: And you know that I didn’t have sex with a college guy, right? I just told everybody I did. Or actually, I told one person I did. And you know how these things work. It’s like wildfire.

Brandon: So you’re saying I shouldn’t really have sex? I should just say I had sex with someone. A girl.

Olive: Yes. Yes.
Brandon: [Nodding] Uhmm hmmm.
Olive: Oh no. No No No. [Brandon bounces up and down trying to convince Olive]
Brandon: Think about it. We could help each other out. You want to maintain this floozy façade. I don't want to get pushed into shit every day. It's a win-win-win.
Olive: How do you know that I like being thought of as a floozy?
Brandon: Because at least you're being thought of. Just one good imaginary bonk.
Olive: You are on crack, alright? And not the good kind.
Brandon: Look. It doesn't have to be a bonk. It could be anything. It could be an imaginary butterbean, lemon squeeze, cow bell...
Olive: I don't know what any of that means.
Brandon: That's because you're a virgin.
Olive: What the hell is a lemon squeeze?
Brandon: It's like a backwards melon bag.
Olive: How don't I know any of this? [...] [Brandon offers to pay Olive who refuses. She suggests that he make someone up.]
Brandon: Who's going to believe me? You don't understand how hard it is, alright? I'm tormented. And everyday at school is like I'm being suffocated [voice cracks with emotion]. And sure, we can sit and fantasize all we want about how things are gonna be different one day but this is today and it sucks. Alright? And there's only one way around it. You were smart enough to think of it, so please just help me. Because I can't take another of this. I don't know what I'll do.

Olive's mother, Rosemary, delivers a present that Brandon has given to Olive.
Rosemary: That boy from yesterday just dropped this off for you.
Olive: Well, put it in the pile of gifts from my other suitors.
Rosemary: He seems like a nice kid. He seemed a little incredibly gay.
Olive: A dyed-in-the-wool homosexual, that boy is.
Rosemary: I just want you to know that your father and I are totally supportive. We love you no matter what the sexual orientation of your opposite-sex sex partner.
Olive: We're not dating, mom.
Rosemary: And don't worry about not making us grandparents, although we were kind of hoping you'd get knocked up so we'd have a second shot at raising kids. Really do it right this time. You know, I dated a homosexual once. For a long time, actually. A long time.
Olive: Dear God, dear Lord, tell me you did not marry and have children with him.
Rosemary: Oh no, your dad is as straight as they come. A little too straight if you know what I mean, girlfriend–

Olive, responding to the rumours of her harlotry circulating at school, struggles to stitch red letter 'A's on the lingerie she begins wearing to school. Her father, Dill, enters her bedroom.
Dill: Is everything Alright? It sounds like you're having sex in here, which I know can't be true, due to the fact that you have a homosexual boyfriend.
Olive: He is not my boyfriend.
Dill: Hey, no judgment. All God's children. It's fine. I was gay once for a while. No big deal. We all do it. It's okay.

Rosemary and Olive talk about Rosemary's youthful reputation.
Rosemary: I slept with a whole bunch of people A slew, a heap, a peck. Mostly guys.
| X | X | X | Olive talks to Maryanne about her boyfriend who went was emotionally distraught when he saw the councilor.  
Olive: Okay, so why was he blubbering like a baby? Is he struggling with his sexuality?  
Maryanne: No, you rhymes-with-witch. His parents are going through a divorce. | 2 |
| X | X | X | Olive decides on a plan to improve her reputation.  
Olive: [Voiceover] And I knew there was only one person I could count on to set the story straight: Brandon. I’d helped him, and even though it would destroy his new reputation as a straight stud, I knew he’d help me.  
Female classmate: Oh my God, did you hear that Brandon ran away from home? Yeah, totally. He left his parents a note that said “I’m gay, bitches” and then he skipped town with some big, hulking black guy.  
Olive: My apologies to Mark Twain. | 7 |
| Kick-Ass (2010) | X | X | When Dave is mugged as his superhero alter-ego, Kick-Ass, he sheds his costume before reaching the hospital. Somehow his peers find out this information, and a rumour about him being gay begins circulating around the school, unbeknownst to Dave. Dave’s long time love interest, Katie, asks him for coffee.  
Dave: Katie Deauxma just offered to buy me coffee.  
Marty: Yeah, you know, I really don’t think that’s what it looks like.  
Dave: What are you talking about?  
Marty: The point is, Katie Deauxma’s all about the lame ducks.  
Dave: What’s this got to do with me?  
Marty: I’ve been trying to figure out how to tell you this. There’s a rumour going around…  
Dave: Right  
Marty: … that you…  
Dave: What  
Marty: … are gay.  
Dave: GAY? What kind of rumour is that?  
Marty: Well, you know, I mean getting mugged…  
Dave: You guys have been mugged!  
Marty: Yeah, I know, but, you know, we didn’t get beaten up and have all our clothes taken off.  
Dave: That’s not even true. The medic threw my clothes away.  
Marty: Don’t worry about it. Rumours don’t mean shit. We know the truth.  
Todd: And who knows, buddy, this might even get you laid.  
Marty: No, not if she thinks he’s gay, Todd. You fucking retard. | 9 |
| X | X | X | Dave and Katie bond at a café.  
Katie: Can I make a confession? [She holds Dave’s hands across the café table.] Ever since I was little, I’ve always wanted a friend like you. [Dave looks surprised, but is smiling.] Is it okay to say that?  
Dave: Yeah.  
Katie: I mean, that’s not homophobic, is it? [Dave looks alarmed.] I mean, I don’t think you’re all the same or anything. [Dave looks severely alarmed; he looks over at Marty and Todd who nod encouragingly to him.]  
Dave: Of course not. No.  
Katie: Thank you. | 9 |
| X | X | X | After Mindy/Hit-Girl saves Kick-Ass and slaughters the drug buys, she insults his Taser.  
Mindy/Hit Girl: Oh, dude, that is one gay looking Taser. | 0 |
Mindy/Hit Girl and Damon/Big Daddy show up at Dave’s house after a fight. Mindy/Hit Girl: You know what this? [She holds up a ball of brown stuff.] It’s all the crap that comes out your gay little Taser when you fire it. You do know the police could have traced this right back to you if they’d found it.

After Katie’s friend, Rasul, is injured, Katie and Dave bond.

Katie: I’m so glad you’re here. I look like such a mess.
Dave: You look Okay. I’m here.
Katie: Yeah I’m Okay. I hope it’s Okay to say this, but it so sucks that you’re gay.

Dave, Todd, Marty, Katie and another girl are in the comic shop café talking about Red Mist and Kick-Ass.

Marty: He’s [Red Mist] got a way better costume than Kick Ass, too.
Todd: He’s got a cape.
Marty: Yeah.
Todd: Capes rock.
Katie: Yeah, I’m kinda feeling the cape. He looks good.
Dave: What? Better than Kick-Ass?
Katie: I mean, they’re both kind of hot. I just think Red Mist has a better body. Don’t you think, Dave? [Dave looks uncomfortable and confused.]
Marty: [Smirking] Yeah, Dave, what do you think? Is he the kind of guy you’d go for, with all that leather?
Dave: No, Marty. He’s not really my type.

Dave comes into Katie’s bedroom dressed like Kick-Ass. Thinking he’s an intruder, attacks him with mace.
Dave takes off his mask when Katie is about to hit him with a baseball bat.

Dave: It’s me! It’s me! Alright? I was only trying to surprise you. I’m ...
Katie: Dave? What the fuck are you doing?
Dave: I’m sorry.
Katie: Why are you dressed as Kick-Ass?
Dave: Because I am Kick-Ass.
Katie: What are you talking about?
Dave: And I’m also not gay.
Katie: Fuck.
Dave: And I’m an idiot and a shit friend. I lied to you, I know.
Katie: Oh my god.
Dave: If it makes you feel any better I don’t think you can hate me any more right now than I hate myself. Please I’m... Look, I’m really, really sorry. I’ve never met anyone who’s as beautiful and as kind and lovely as you. You deserve better. [Dave waits for her to say it’s okay, but she doesn’t, though they’re both teary. She tells him to go out by the window so that he won’t set off the burglar alarm.]
Katie: Or... or you could just stay.
Dave: Stay? What, like when we have a sleepover? [Katie shakes her head, Dave laughs and they kiss.]
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<td>My Soul to Take</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Seven infants are born prematurely on the same day that the infamous Riverton Ripper is killed; these children are thenceforth called the 'Riverton Seven.' One of the Riverton Seven, religious Penelope, stops jock Brandon from bullying Bug and Alex. Penelope: [To Brandon] Brandon O’Neill. Do not bring the wrath of Jehovah down upon you. Your sins are already a stench in the nostrils of an angry God... What men will do to you in prison is nothing compared to what demons will do to you in Hell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Runaways</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Runaways’ manger, Kim, is unhappy with Cherie Currie’s performance during her audition, claiming it is not ‘raw’ enough. Kim: Rock ’n’ roll is a blood sport. It is a sport of men. It is for people in the dark. The death cats. The masturbators. The outcasts who have no voice, no way of saying, “Hey, I hate the fucking world. My father’s a fucking faggot. Fuck you! Fuck authority! I want an orgasm.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vampires Suck</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>As Becca walks into the school on her first day she is heckled by a number of girls who make fun of her appearance: “Where’d you get that haircut, ‘Fantastic Lesbians’?” Becca thanks Jacob for his romantic gifts of flowers and balloons. Becca: Thanks Jacob. You’re so sweet and thoughtful. Any girl would be lucky to have you. Just not me, of course. You’re like my little gay brother. [Jacob is crestfallen.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footloose</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>New student Ren, a former gymnast, is bullied by Chuck Cranston and his friends. Chuck: Well, I thought only fags were into gymnastics. Ren: I thought only assholes still use the word “fag.” [This references the 1984 original film dialogue: Chuck: I thought only pansies wore neckties. Ren: See that? I thought only assholes used the word ’pansy.’]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fright Night</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Vampire Ed and Charley fight. Ed temporarily has the upper hand, landing behind Charley and grabbing onto his neck from behind. Ed: Is this weird for you? Because I’m feeling really homo right about now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Dawn</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>The quarterback on the opposing team calls the Wolverine’s quarterback (Matt) a ‘bitch’ and he responds: “Are you hitting on me?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautiful Creatures</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mrs. Lincoln, an outraged, religious town member who is calling for Lena to be expelled from the high school, takes umbrage by being told that Lena will continue to attend the school by Mr. Ravenwood, Lena’s uncle who owns the town’s land. Mrs. Lincoln: I’m not afraid of you or your evil kind. God, our creator, will condemn you to hellfire, along...</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
with terrorists, atheists, homosexuals, Democrats, liberals, socialists, Greenpeace, and all other unnatural abominations.

**Kick-Ass 2 (2013)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>x</th>
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<th>x</th>
<th>x</th>
<th>x</th>
<th>Four men attack Dave while he is ‘fishing’ for bad guys dressed as a pimp. Mindy advises him on what to do remotely.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thug:</td>
<td>Hey queer bait, where you are going with those bags, man?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mindy:</td>
<td>Tell him you’re on your way to fuck his mother with a 12-inch strap on.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave:</td>
<td>[To thugs] I’m just taking a walk. [To Mindy] This really isn’t what I do. I usually just call the cops.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thug:</td>
<td>Who are you talking to man?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dave:</td>
<td>Uh, I’m just on a call. I was– [Dave is trapped in an alleyway.]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thug:</td>
<td>You know, service round here, it sucks man. Now give me the bags, faggot, before I make you suck my fat cock, huh? Come on.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dave:</td>
<td>[Slowly handing over the bags] Okay, okay. [A fight ensues and Dave fights back but ends up being beaten.]</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thug:</td>
<td>Ready to die, faggot?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindy:</td>
<td>You know, all that homophobia shit makes you sound super gay. [She attacks the thugs.]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Mindy goes to a slumber party hosted by the popular girls in school. One of the girls recognises her from her earlier scene in the hall with Dave (which the school took as a breakup). Mindy confesses that she has never kissed a boy. |
| Harlow: | Maybe she’s a dyke. |
| Mindy: | Maybe I’ll jam my foot up your snatch. |

| When Kick-Ass agrees to join the superhero team Justice Forever the members exchange high fives. |
| Colonel Stars and Stripes: | [Fist-bumping Kick-Ass] Alright, time for initiation. Turn around and I’ll unzip you. |
| Kick-Ass: | [Alarm] I’m sorry, what? |
| Colonel: | I’m just joking. Let’s get down to business. |

| The members of Justice Forever are exchanging ‘origin stories.’ |
| Insect man: | I’ve been bullied my whole life for being gay, so now I stand up for the defenceless. That’s why I don’t wear a mask. Too much like being back in the closet. |
| Colonel: | As long as your heart’s in the right place, we don’t care what you put in your mouth. Fist bump. Insect man: Thank you. Thank you, sir. |

**The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones (2013)**

| Isabelle, a Shadowhunter, talks to Clary about the relationship between Alex and Jace. |
| Clary: | Does Jace know how Alec feels about him? |
| Isabelle: | Is it that obvious? |
| Clary: | It’s really not that big of a deal. |
| Isabelle: | It isn’t to me either. But it is to the Clave. I don’t make the rules. |

<p>| Clary, Isabelle, Jace and Alec find warlock Magnus Bane. |
| Bane: | Well, well, well. Look-a-here. I don’t remember inviting any children of the Nephilim. |
| Jace: | Magnus Bane. We need to talk. |
| Bane: | You know I don’t like you guys. But I’ll let you stay, but only because of the hot one. |
| Jace and Isabelle: | [Simultaneously] Thank you. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Bane | [Confused] What? I meant him [pointing to Alec]. The one with the blue eyes. [Magnus and Alec smile at each other from a distance.] And because of Clary. | }

### The Way Way Back (2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alec</td>
<td>confronts Clary and asks her to leave because she’s encouraging Jace to try to save the world. Alec calls Clary “dead weight” and accuses her of being a “mundane” (rather than a Shadowhunter).</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clary</td>
<td>I’m not a mundane! And if you were half as brave as you pretend to be, you’d admit that—</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alec</td>
<td>What?</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clary</td>
<td>You’d admit that you’re in love with Jace and that’s what this is really about. [Alec shoves her against the wall.]</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alec</td>
<td>If you ever say anything like that again ... I’ll kill you. [He storms off.]</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Betty | talks ‘a mile-a-minute’ to Pam about what’s happened over the winter (including the rape of her niece and his son’s drug use). | 5 |
| Betty | Oh and Bob – that’s my ex husband – finally came out of the closet. Not a shock, let’s just say in bed his favourite view was the back of my head. [...] He’s probably sliding up our gardener right now. | 1 |

| Owen | calls to Duncan over the P.A., pretending to have sustained damage from kissing Louis’s mom. | 11 |
| Louis | I don’t have a mom. I have two dads. In your face. | 1 |

### Notes:
1. Character and actor names obtained from the Internet Movie Database website (www.imdb.com), where available.
2. Dialogue between LGBT characters has been excluded; the included language occurs either between heterosexual characters, or between heterosexual and LGBT characters.
3. This appendix only includes descriptions of same-sex intimacies used in jokes; a complete list of intimacies is available in Appendix D.
4. The determination of protagonist/antagonist refers to the character when the dialogue occurs; in some films, antagonists become protagonists, and vice versa.
5. Determinations of the dialogue objective aims to understand how dialogue functions in the film. While many exchanges between characters were, indeed, homophobic (for example, gay panic humour), it was not coded as ‘homophobic protagonist’ [5] unless the objective of the scene was to portray that protagonist as homophobic.
6. The objectives were:
   0. Gay discourse/gay=flame: Mark McCormack presents a model of homosexually-themed language use (McCormack, Mark, “Mapping the Terrain of Homosexually-Themed Language,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 58, no. 5 (2011): 664-679). In this model, he describes gay discourse as LGBT-relevant language with no pernicious intent or negative social effects, but which privileges heterosexuality. In particular, the phrase “that’s so gay” is understood as a way to voice displeasure, dissatisfaction, and frustration (and, I add, “lameness”) without homophobic intent.
   1. Gay panic: as outlined in chapter four, gay panic is the panicked or uncomfortable response by heterosexual characters to romantic advances made by LGBT characters. It also includes references to same-sex desire in a custodial setting. Gay panic positions LGBT people as predators who make unwanted advances on heterosexual people, and is most commonly used for ‘humorous’ purposes throughout the genre.
   2. Fag discourse/policing: as explored in chapter four, Pascoe’s ‘fag discourse’ is a gendered homophobia that polices and regulates gender, particularly masculinity.
   3. Redneck or religious fanatic: as explored in chapter four, LGBT-relevant language that links homophobia with rednecks/hillbillies/white trash or fundamental Christian groups.
   4. Clarify heterosexuality: dialogue that reasserts a character’s heterosexual identity.
   5. Homophobic protagonist: homophobic language that is used by a protagonist or a marker of the ‘in-crowd.’
   6. Establish antagonist/bad trait: as explored in chapter four, homophobic language used as a ‘short-hand’ to denote an antagonist or as a marker of bad character traits.
   7. Protagonist is ‘hip’ & inclusive: as explored in chapter four, dialogue that demonstrates that protagonists are ‘hip’ and LGBT-accepting and inclusive.
   9. Mistaken identity/The Pretend: as explored in chapter four, dialogue that demonstrates the narrative devices of mistaken identity or The Pretend.
   10. Bromance/ironic recuperation: as explored in chapter four, bromance discourse demonstrates intense homosocial emotional bonds between presumably heterosexual males and an openness to tactility. Mark McCormack and Eric Anderson ironic recuperation a strategy for young men to enact transgressive behaviours without threat to their heterosexual identity.

10. Other/unsure.

(a) Because so much of the dialogue in But I’m a Cheerleader is LGBT-relevant, I have necessarily been more selective about what’s transcribed for this film. I collected dialogue featuring self-identified straight characters (including ironic straights) but does not include dialogue that is only furthers the plot; it also excludes scenes where Rock sexually tempts Mike.