

#DONTBURYTHEGAYS: SPECTATORS' RESPONSES TO QUEER WOMEN
REPRESENTATION ON TELEVISION

AS
36
2018
HMSX
.C66

A Thesis submitted to the faculty of
San Francisco State University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree

Master of Arts

In

Human Sexuality Studies

by

Marina Coop

San Francisco, California

May 2018

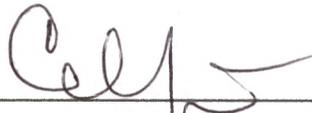
Copyright by
Marina Coop
2018

CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read #DontBuryTheGays: Spectators' Responses to Queer Women Representation on Television by Marina Coop, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Master of Arts in Sexuality Studies at San Francisco State University.



Clare Sears, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Sexuality Studies



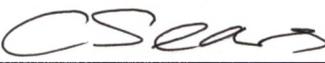
Celine Parreñas Shimizu, Ph.D.
Professor of Cinema

#DONTBURYTHEGAYS: SPECTATORS' RESPONSES TO QUEER WOMEN
REPRESENTATION ON TELEVISION

Marina Coop
San Francisco, California
2018

In the wake of the #BuryYourGays trend, this thesis explores the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality as part of the spectator experience. In this thesis, I analyze tweets about queer women characters on television, including *Black Mirror*, *One Day At A Time*, and *Sense8*, and more. Assuming to find tweets invoking queer-antagonism or negativity, my research found that spectators took to Twitter to share their positive interpretations of queer characters in these shows. Spectators clearly formed an emotional connection to queer characters, their stories, and to the actors who portray them, tweeting their feelings of love, excitement, appreciation, empowerment, positivity, anger, and even sadness. Spectators also responded to queer characters by tweeting about fanfiction, shipping (desiring characters to be in a *relationship*), being fans/stans, politics, futurity, representation, personal narratives.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.



Chair, Thesis Committee

5/23/18
Date

PREFACE AND/OR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank my thesis committee and mentors, Clare Sears and Celine Parreñas Shimizu, for their wise advice, support, and dedication. Secondly, I am thankful for my mom, stepfather, and my sister, Jenna, because without their support, I would not have had this opportunity to complete my master's degree. This thesis would not have been possible without the exceptional experience I had in this program alongside my amazing cohort. I am also thankful for the knowledgeable Sexuality Studies and Sociology faculty. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my best friends, Kirsha and Rosti, for always supporting my education and lending an ear and helping hand.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Appendices.....	vii
Introduction	1
Audiences	5
Representation	7
Social Media and Community Building	11
Method.....	15
Materials	15
Procedure	17
Results	18
Emotional Connection	18
Shareable Content and Graphics.....	20
Representation	23
Community and Story Building.....	25
Discussion.....	28
Endnotes	35
Reference	37
Tweets.....	37
References	40
Appendices	46

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix	Page
1. Appendix A.....	46

“We need to think more about the relationship between the queer struggle for a bearable life and aspirational hopes for a good life. Maybe the point is that it is hard to struggle without aspirations and aspirations are hard to have without giving them some form. We could remember that the Latin root of the word aspiration means ‘to breathe.’ I think the struggle for a bearable life is the struggle for queers to have space to breathe. Having space to breathe, or being able to breathe freely, as Mari Ruti describes, is an aspiration. With breath comes imagination. With breath comes possibility. If queer politics is about freedom, it might simply mean the freedom to breathe.”

~ Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*

For the past year, social media has been taken by storm with the *Bury Your Gays* trope, also known as Dead Lesbian Syndrome. The online backlash resulted after many lesbian, gay, and bisexual characters were killed in popular television shows. Poussey Washington from *Orange is the New Black* (2018), Mayfair from *Blindspot* (2018), Denise of *The Walking Dead* (2016), Danielle Cormack from *Wentworth* (2017), and Camilla and Mimi Whiteman from *Empire* (2016) were just some of the queer female characters that died in 2016. Mr. Kaplan of *The Blacklist* (2018), Eleanor Guthrie from *Black Sails* (2018), and Barbara Kean of *Gotham* (2018) were more women to have died on television in 2017. This trope assumes that queer characters do not get a happy ending in their plotlines, which often conclude with their sudden and, often violent, deaths. The death of Lexa, a powerful leader in *The 100* (2016) was the inspiration and tipping point

behind *Bury Your Gays* on Twitter. Shortly after consummating her relationship with Clark Griffin, another leading woman, Lexa was struck by a stray bullet intended for Clarke and died in her lover's arms.

Bury Your Gays may have taken social media by storm in 2016, but queer characters, especially queer women, have been meeting their untimely (and undue) deaths for decades. As part of the first lesbian couple to appear on a successful cult favorite series, Tara Maclay of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (2003) was suddenly killed at the end of the sixth season. Tara was a powerful lesbian who was killed, just after sex, by a stray bullet that was meant for someone else and suddenly died in the arms of her girlfriend, Willow. This particular death was especially impactful on myself because I grew up watching *Buffy* throughout my childhood and early adolescence. According to Autostraddle, there have been 195 (and counting) queer women who have died on television shows since the 1970s in which they were a regular or recurring character, not including police procedurals or medical dramas (Riese, 2016).

To many, it may not seem consequential that lesbian and bisexual characters are killed off in television shows, but for fans, especially LGBTQIA+ fans, the reality is that their identities and relationships make them targets for bullying, depression, and threats (Elipe, de la Oliva Muñoz, & Del Rey, 2018; Hall, 2018; Olsen, Vivolo-Kantor, Kann, & Milligan, 2017). Emotional attachment to narratives or storylines on television have the potential to influence opinions (Oatley, 2002; Green and Brock, 2000; Oliver et al. 2012). If Twitter users expressed their outrage over the death of their beloved queer characters,

they may do the same to share their feelings for the characters who are still alive.

Thinking about the death trope has inspired me to research the emotional attachment to queer representation for spectators. Evolving from a project that planned to critique the quality of representations of queer woman characters, I took to Twitter to learn how spectators react and respond to queer women characters on television.

The popularity of #BuryYourGays was the inspiration for this thesis, but I do not assume that the majority of queer women characters on television are subjected to the Dead Lesbian trope. A critical reasoning for my project is based on the research conducted by GLAAD, which tracks the number of LGBTQIA+ characters across broadcast, cable, and streaming television shows each year, including looking at representations of race (such as Black, Latinx, and Asian-pacific), gender (such as transgender and non-binary), and disability (GLAAD, 2016; GLAAD, 2017). These are some of their findings relating to queer women characters in their report, *Where We Are On TV*, for the last two seasons: Lesbian representation increased from 17% in 2016-2017 to 24% in 2017-2018 on broadcast television shows. Cable also saw an increase from 20% two years ago to 27% in the latest airing cycle. Streaming, on the other hand, saw a decrease from 43% to 36% of LGBTQ characters being lesbian. For bisexual women characters, broadcast shows saw a decrease (23% to 19%), cable included fewer bi characters out of their LGBTQIA+ characters (25% to 22%), and streaming noticed an increase from 20% to 30%. Sadly, representations of transwomen are few and far between with 4% to 1% on broadcast, 1% to 2% on cable, and 11% to 7% on streaming

from the previous year to the current season. However, the 2017-2018 show lineup actually included more LGBTQIA+ characters across all platforms than shows from 2016-2017, which means that the decrease in prevalence of queer women characters can be accounted for an increase in queer men and trans characters. While it is noteworthy that there is movement in the quantity of queer women characters on television, what is more significant is the quality of those representations.

Queer presence is growing ever-rapidly on social media and the “shipping” of characters, which refers to the fan-endorsed wishful or actual relationships between characters on screen, whether they are queer or not, is a popular trend. Going hand-in-hand with shipping characters is writing fanfiction about the characters and fictional worlds people care about. Fans are able to reimagine a fictional source, such as a comic or television show, and participate in the expansion of that fictional universe by writing about it. For example, two female characters in a television show such as *Once Upon A Time* (2018) can be rewritten as lesbian or bisexual characters to fulfill a spectator’s fantasy. Fanfiction can also allow spectators to rewrite an undesirable ending into a happier one (Collier, Lumadue, & Wooten, 2009). Shipping and fanfiction are usually shared with others online via social media, allowing for spectators to find commonalities and build communities.

Building on these studies of social media and community building, I address sexuality and recognize the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality as part of the spectator experience. From the superhero show to the dystopian drama, the tender

moments and disputes of queer couples or the ordinary day-to-day activities of queer women are available onscreen for spectators to see. Spectators who identify as queer, women, and/or as people of color may be able to negotiate what a scene portrays and what a character means to them with the help of their identities.

Audiences

Contemporary television audiences consume and interpret messages that are created by media producers and writers. These producers and writers are more or less advertisers. Not only do media creators continually invent new stories to attract audiences, they also aim to affect audience members' emotions, thoughts, and beliefs (Wicks, 2000, p. xiii). The construction of media is at the mercy of media organizations, which have the authority to dictate which messages are broadcast, the promise of profit as their decider (p. 6). Media creators must identify an audience, or a set of people with similar profiles and demographics to build content for. In addition, creators have the power to filter messages via their content, which has the potential to influence an audience's system of beliefs (p. xiv). Wicks argues that audience members should develop the skills necessary to interpret the messages surrounding them, critically analyzing how the messages inform their previously held attitudes and beliefs and understandings of their realities (p. 8).

Audience members are not empty vessels for advertisers to imprint their medias on them. Instead, spectators bring individual perspectives to how they process content,

how media messages affect them, and what medias they seek out. Media is intended to make people think, to engage with new cultural, social, economic, and political messages. This process may reinforce attitudes, or it may alter them (p. xiv). In productions of lived experiences, audiences are witness to representations of themselves, and possibly representations of peoples they do not see in their everyday lives. Furthermore, media is a tool of education, as well as entertainment, and creates new possibilities of engagement with one another as a community (p. xv).

Corey (2017) teaches us about cultivation theory, which states that, “media presents values and norms to society; society then adapts and imparts these values and norms to individual groups who gain their own sense of identity from the values spread through the shared entertainment media” (p. 194). In the circuitry of communication, the production and reception of a message on television, or “moments” from this process, are related, but are not the same (Hall, Hobson, Lowe, & Willis, 2003, p. 119). Regardless of the meaning assigned to a message, television storyline or even a character, it is up to the audience members to decide for themselves how those messages affect them, how they want to interact with them, and if they might want to engage with their communities.

How do representations of queer women affect spectators? This project examines the ways that spectators communicate their experiences consuming television media, critiquing and negotiating the representation they see. The primary focus of the study is not media content, or the representation itself, but rather the value of that representation

as expressed through Twitter. As such, this study aims to discover what television representation means for spectators in their everyday lives and communities.

Representation

When considering media images, audience members may assume or read meanings that differ from those intended by producers or writers (Hall, 2013, p. 17). In earlier representations of queer bodies, for example, spectators relied on “reading” queerness in coded behaviors and body language onscreen. In past decades of the 1930s to 1960s, the Production Code regulated how queerness was portrayed in Hollywood. This did not mean that queer visibility in cinema was absent at this time, but that spectators had to rely on “reading” queerness in film and television with “inside knowledge” of gender inversion being related to homosexuality (Eaklor, 2012, p. 156).

After the Code was replaced with a rating system by the Motion Picture Association of America, whispers of the Code filtered into the decades that followed, dictating the roles that gay characters would play—villain or victim. However, sexual deviancy meant that characters received less sympathy, or would meet an untimely death, especially lesbians (p. 156). A lesbian was not limited to being butch on screen, as the “lipstick lesbian” or “luscious lesbian,” as feminine and sexy, emerged as another kind of representation, but for a male lens that “allow[ed] the privileged, white lesbian to be visible” (p. 158). Along the luscious/butch dichotomy, lesbian couples tend to fall into a feminine/masculine pairing in order to be read as a true couple (p. 159). Female sexuality

or attraction to another woman is usually undermined by the harmful stereotype that a woman can be fixed or set straight, because all she needs is a man or a good...phallus (p. 161-62).

Today, queer audiences not only have more media and more representation to choose from, but networks, movies, and television also increasingly cater to the queer community (Bronski, 2008, p. 23). Queer films have not only greatly changed over the years, especially in the last decade, but also changed how queer audiences perceive representation (p. 23, 26). Discourses on representation of queer characters tend to focus on labels of “good” or “bad,” rather than delving into the nuances of queer identity on screen. Audiences could mistake the inclusion of queer characters as meeting a quota, or creating a secondary plot device to further the story of the main characters.

Previous studies have found that television consumption by LGB viewers facilitated learning and allowed access to tools for coping, role models, self-acceptance, and “coming out” (Kivel and Kleiber, 2000; Gomillion & Giuliano, 2011). In a study conducted by Winderman and Smith (2016), participants who positively accepted their LGB identity, those who sought acceptance, and people with increased internalized homonegativity were all likely to seek LGB-inclusive media in order to learn (p. 836). The research suggests that like media consumption habits for minority groups such as people of color, “LGB individuals may too be drawn to media content where they can see and recognize aspects of themselves and their own lived experiences” (p. 836). The researchers conclude that therapists and clinicians could direct clients who struggle with

their sexualities to programming with positive queer representations (p. 838). The present research explores how spectators respond to characters who share similar queer identities.

In her research, Driver (2007) aims to give voice to queer female youth on the popular media without inscribing binary views of gender and sexuality on their experiences. Her use of queer—a verb, not a noun—as “performative,” consciously incorporates intersecting identities of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, geography, and age without neglecting queer as a singular identity (p. 3). The people Driver spoke to were assigned female at birth, but fall outside of gender and sexual binaries, embodying masculinities and femininities, defying labels, while also being attracted to other girls. She learned that queer girls are ambivalent towards queer representation in popular media—not letting media define their gender and sexual identities, but allowing positive representations to become “guilty pleasures” for them (p. 6). However, Driver notes that media portrayals of girls who have romantic interactions with other girls, a kiss, look or even crush, do not open the possibilities of a queer coming-of-age, but rather only reinforce a heterosexual trajectory (p. 7). Queerness in its digestible form in entertainment media features conventionally beautiful, able-bodied, thin, white, middle-class, sexy, femme women, but the lesser known forms such as, “sexy fat femmes, poor dykes, queers of color, androgynous girl-boys, and butch and trans youth” are not seen in positive lights (p. 9). These “other” body types have been seen in sex worker roles, as perpetrators, as weird kids and outsiders looking in.

Representations of queerness, or the presumption of queerness, arise when characters, gay or straight, fail to conform to heteronormative values assigned for genders and sexualities. In his study on viewers reactions to gay representations on television, Dhaenen (2012) analyzes how participants “read gay representation”, and “notions of queer resistance” (p. 59). In the study, participants talked about the gender characteristics and stereotypes of gay characters, noting common gay stereotypes along the genders, such as the butch lesbian and the effeminate gay man (p. 61). While many of the participants agreed that the gay representation in fiction television shows was “realistic,” few did note that, “nuanced representations of lesbian, bisexual and transgender characters were missed” (p. 62).

As audiences engage with the images and meanings of queer representation, new questions about the actors and producers of queer media emerge. Are the producers queer? Can a show about queer bodies be written and directed by non-queer persons effectively? Will a queer show be legible to a broad audience if its on a mainstream network? Reviewing today’s available shows featuring queer characters, queer spectators may wonder if queerness is just a box for networks to “check off,” appearing progressive and open-minded, but in actuality profiting from queer-baiting marketing strategies. Given the limited variety of queer-produced media (outside of a paywall), queer audiences must find queerness in mainstream media. However, everyday expressions of queerness are not always reproduced in popular culture, and as Bronki notes, queer bodies may find themselves tokenized and exploited by the predominantly straight

entertainment industry that fails to capture the diversity of the queer community (Bronski et al., 2006, p. 118). When addressing the functions and necessity of queer representation, one must not neglect the practice of commodification of the queer body.

Media producers recognize that queer characters will attract queer viewers, but representations of queers of color, queer bodies with disabilities, and queer migrants are not at the same quality or quantity as white queer representations.

Social Media and Community Building

To explore spectators' responses to representations of queer woman characters in entertainment media, I took to the social media website, Twitter. What does analyzing spectators' tweets offer to established research on social media participation? Social media has not been available as long as television, but research has recently explored the value of social media as sites for community building, shared identity, social activism, collective action, and feminism (Brown, Ray, Summers, & Fraistat, 2017; Towns, 2016; Foster, 2015; Khoja-Moolji, 2015).

Social media provides users with the tools to build communities based on shared experiences, similar interests, promotional messaging, story creation, and news/article/photo/video sharing. Papadopoulos et al. (2012) note that social media community can be brought together by a common element, such as "a topic, a real-world person, a place, an event, an activity or a cause" (p. 521). The authors further explain that social media communities may be "implicit" or "explicit." Explicit communities, such as

Facebook, are formed “based on human consent” and are a product of human action. Implicit communities are not created by human intention, and “‘wait’ to be discovered” (p. 151).

The uses of social media are infinite—creating new possibilities, forms of communication, and means of community building. Users of social media do not passively engage in consumerism, but actively participate in site building (Sergeant & Tagg, 2014, p. 3). Social media allows for the construction of a community without factors that usually facilitate a community in the real world, such as geographical location, shared language or similar cultural background (p. 10). In online spaces, an interest in a topic can lead to an “ambient affiliation,” in which engagement does not require the same commitment, as these spaces are more “transitory” (p. 12).

The promise of community building on social media platforms allows for activists to find one another and build momentum for online and offline social movements. Fatima Zahrae Chrifi Alaoui (2016) writes about the Arab Spring, a defining historical revolution led by women in Egypt whose influence was felt across the Middle East and North Africa, in which Twitter became a rallying point and site of resistance. She uses the term “reverberations” to describe female cyberactivists’ participation online and their movements offline, “transgressing the boundary between cyberspace and physical space...demonstrating the importance of digital media for articulating multiple, conflicting identities and remaking the self” (p. 36-37). Social media websites usually use profiles, permitting users to develop identities they wish to project. In the creation of an

online persona, there is the question of “authenticity,” as it justifies an “anchor for communication” (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014, p. 7). This communication acts as a “sort of contractual transaction,” sharing information and disclosing personal details, based on the assumption of authenticity (p. 7).

Technology, and social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr “provide unique spaces for marginalized populations, such as women, people of color, to articulate and transmit oppressed ideas and identities” (Chrifi Alaoui, 2016, p. 39). Queer networks arise when subjects discover their pleasures, heartbreaks, commonalities, and solidarity via social media technologies. Yet, as the world changes around us, and the internet becomes more accessible, social media platforms such as Twitter create new possibilities for queer subjects to find their communities and establish queer networks.

Twitter, like a bar or arena, allows for audience members to mark themselves not just as spectators, but also fans, amidst other fans and form communities. I argue that when spectators use Twitter to communicate their feelings about queer characters, they find common ground and find community. Media researchers have noticed the impact of social media spaces as highly trafficked by spectators during live airing of television episodes or movies with the help of hashtags, a “unifying textual marker” that allows spectators to join a conversation and be seen by other fans (Highfield, Harrington, & Bruns, 2013). Further promotion of these hashtags comes from the actors, who announce in advance to their followers that they will be live tweeting during the broadcast of their

own show, allowing for the space to discuss the character, plot points or to answer questions from spectators. Spectators or fans of a particular television show do not always tweet during live broadcasts, but their contributions to the Twitter communities are still helpful in understanding audiencing.

Actors' official pages can be compared to brand pages, allowing spectators closer access and communication with their idols. However, actors do not always run their official pages, as publicists may be the real wizard behind the screen. That is why Twitter was chosen for this project, as Twitter appears most likely to be the social media platform where actors operate their own profiles and posts. Given Twitter's verification protocols, consumers can be confident that the accounts that they tweet to, or tag posts in, are the official accounts belonging to actors and popular stars.

Studying a public sphere of social media posts about spectators' thoughts on television, movies, and other entertainment, is like researching an audience "in the wild" according to Barbour (2016, p. 179-180). I agree with Barbour that Twitter—as a community for a television audience that both acknowledges the actors and characters—has not been fully studied by academia. She argues that “we” as spectators maintain both character and actor, with their separate behaviors, personality traits, and histories, in our minds with the help of two screens as we participate in social media alongside giving our attention to the television. This interaction of multiple media forms incites new research in what Herbig, Herrmann, and Tyma (2015) call polymedian. This term facilitates the discourse that addresses, “the intersection of media convergence,

content creation, gatekeeping, narrowcasting, online identity, social networks, etc.” (p. xx).

Lacalle and Simelio’s (2017) study of fans of Spanish television shows is similar to this project, noting the varied responses and content of social media posts about television. Their research notes that television fandom (fan community) has changed as spectators use the internet to enrich their viewing experiences (p. 449-50). The shared topic—television shows—has cultivated an online “community of fans,” which not only includes viewers who create “contents or redefine the narrative interpretation,” but also the people who participate in online forums or social media groups devoted to shows (p. 450-51). The researchers found that participants engaged online communities and social media posts as a way to convey their feelings about the programming they consumed due to their attachments to the storylines (p. 458). While the current project focuses on primarily U.S. programming using only microblogging posts from Twitter, it builds on Lacalle and Simelio’s research on women and Spanish programming, to explore spectators’ deep emotional attachments to queer characters and stories.

Method

Materials

The study analyzed 310 microblogging posts chosen from 14 Twitter handles. These handles were dedicated to actors and show accounts from a selection of twelve shows that featured an LGBTQIA+ woman character, main or returning, during the last two season

cycles, from 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. Some of the shows were chosen from GLAAD's "Where Are We on TV" annual report for the last two years, which presented data on scripted series programming that featured LGBTQIA+ characters, as well as data on gender, disability, and race/ethnicity. Other LGBTQ-inclusive shows were found using queer-friendly websites such as Autostraddle and GLAAD. Autostraddle's article series, "Boob(s On Your) Tube," which recaps episodes involving queer women, and "The GLAAD Wrap," and GLAAD's "Must-See LGBTQ TV," which report LGBTQ highlights from entertainment media, were particularly helpful in creating this list. Further research was used to compile a list of other television shows with queer women characters, as well as identify the names of those characters and the actors who played them. The shows came from broadcast, cable, and streaming networks. Using the list of shows compiled from multiple sources, a second list of those shows' official Twitter accounts was obtained, followed by a list of the Twitter accounts for the actors.

The study used a coding sheet (see Appendix A) to analyze the tweets for their content in four areas: representation, emotional connection, community and story building, and shareable content and graphics. Each tweet was coded for content that related to the four areas. The coding sheet also recorded information pertaining to the actors' names, the characters they played, the show they appeared on, and further notes or descriptions.

The assumption of this research is that community building is foundational for LGBTQIA+ relationships, networking, and social capital. This project examines how

spectators respond to queer women's representations in mainstream television. What do representations of queer women characters mean for spectators? What does an analysis of spectators' tweets offer to established research on social media participation? I choose to focus on Twitter in order to learn about how spectators think and feel about queer representation because I was inspired by spectators' call for increased representation in entertainment media, as seen by Twitter trends #BuryYourGays and #RepresentationMatters. Overall, this research explores the community building activities of fans on Twitter, between one another, with the actors and creators of the shows they consume, and with the storylines of queer women characters in entertainment media television.

Procedure

This project used theoretical sampling to select the tweets most likely to contribute to this research. Specifically, the analysis focused on tweets that were retweets by or responses to verified Twitter accounts that belonged to television shows and to actors who portray queer women characters on those shows chosen for this project. This research analyzed the content of each tweet in the areas of community building practices, emotional connectivity, representativeness, and inclusion of graphics. This research did not collect personal information, such as the profiles' names, pictures or gender. However, it did address queerness in spectators' posts when spectators revealed their sexuality or discussed queerness when they tweeted about a queer character on television.

Results

The 310 tweets analyzed generated 23 codes that were sorted into four main areas: emotional connection, shareable content and graphics, representation, and community and story building. Some tweets had content that fit in multiple areas, such as including written content as well as a picture or emoji. The tweets came from twelve shows, *American Horror Story* (FX), *Black Lightning* (CW), *Black Mirror* (Netflix), *The Bold Type* (Freeform), *Grey's Anatomy* (ABC), *The Handmaid's Tale* (Hulu Original), *DC's Legends of Tomorrow* (CW), *Madam Secretary* (CBS), *One Day at a Time* (Netflix), *Orphan Black* (BBC America), *Riverdale* (CW), and *Sense8* (Netflix). Approximately 26 tweets from each show were included in the analysis. While this research limited its scope to shows that included queer women characters for only the last two cycles (from 2016 to current programming), the tweets selected all ranged from February 2017 to March 2018.

Emotional Connection

Adoration, affirmation, excitement, empowering, appreciation, anger, and anguish

Reply to Sara Ramirez (Kat Sandoval, *Madam Secretary*) - 18 March 2018 - 07:52

This is going to be amazing. Thank you for speaking your truth, and for helping others in doing the same. You are so strong and so brave. I am insanely proud of you!! #BestIdoIEver #YouGotThis 💜👏¹

The majority of the tweets analyzed in this study focused on spectators' emotional responses to queer characters. Often, tweeters would include more than one emotion, with emotional responses noted 364 times. Replies to actors' official twitter posts were overwhelmingly positive. Messages related to expressing love, favoritism or adoration were coded under adoration (N=77; 25%). Tweeters would mention love in many ways, from expressing that the actor is loved for their work and talent, the character is adored or simply, "I love you," without directing the feelings onto either figure specifically. Tweets that used positive language such as encouragement and confidence building were coded as affirmations (N=86; 28%). Examples of affirmations ranged from, "you're incredible" or "you are amazing" to "you're such a strong, well-spoken LGBT advocate and leader." Content that conveyed thanks to the actor or show were filed under appreciation (N=83; 27%). Spectators would often thank both the actor and character separately, revealing their ability to recognize the difference between reality and fiction. However, some tweets would simply say 'thank you' without noting if the message was directed towards the actor themselves or their character. Messages to actors about their characters or shows were generally positive, but occasionally spectators revealed disappointment, anger, sadness and other negative emotions, usually due to the ending of a series or the development of characters' storylines.

Reply to Samira Wiley (Moirra, *The Handmaid's Tale*) - 14 June 2017 - 21:47

I cried my GD eyes out at the end with you and Luke. Fuck, man.

Emotionally overwhelmed with this last episode. ²

Although 29 (9%) tweets were coded for anguish only five (2%) included angry content. Disgust, or queer-antagonism, was not found in any of the tweets analyzed. If tweets included randomized lettering or words that could be mistaken as onomatopoeic for real-life “mutterings” of sounds, it was assumed that the tweeters meant to share their feelings without using proper language or grammar, such as attempting to spell out sighs or exalations. These tweets were read as excitement (N=60; 19%), as were the use of of exclamation marks or common internet abbreviations or acronyms. ‘Wig’ (related to the phrase ‘weave snatched,’ meaning one is so excited their wig has blown off), ‘living for this,’ expletives or simply stating ‘I’m excited’ were assumed to be statements of excitement. Tweeters would also mention personal feelings of empowerment, or talk about the show or character empowering the LGBTQIA+ community in general (N=24; 8%). Education or learning was read to be a form of empowerment.

Reply to *Black Mirror* - 18 September 2017 - 04:45

Congrats guys! I hope it’s also rewarding to know how much Yorkie & Kelly touched and uplifted LGBTQ fans around the world. Thank you. ❤️³

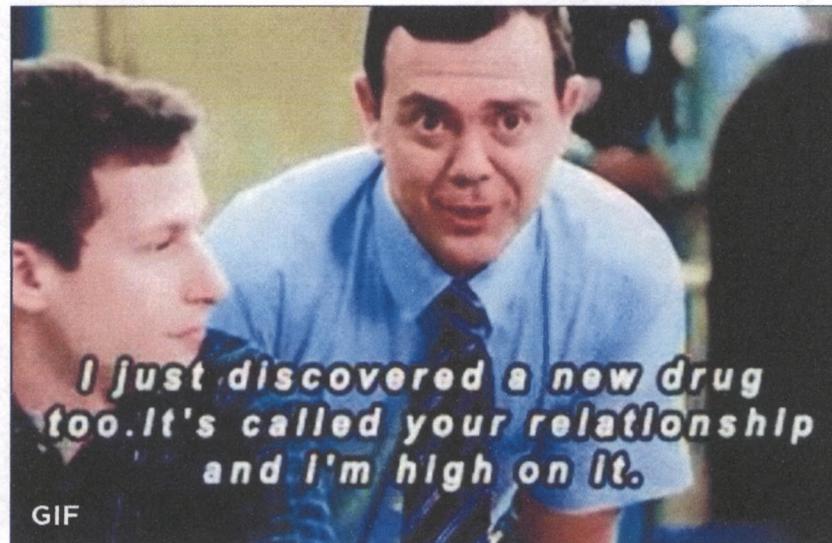
Shareable Content and Graphics

Hashtags, mentions, emojis, pictures, and GIFs

Reply to *Orphan Black* - 05 June 2017 - 09:39

Beautiful. And just in time for #Pride 🏳️🌈 Vive La Cophine! Vive l’amour! And merci @tatianamaslany & @EvelynBrochu

#LoveConquersAll⁴



As previously stated, Twitter as a social media platform is built upon the actions of tagging others and including hashtags as a means of entering specific conversations. Twitter users also used graphics, such as emojis, emoticons, pictures, and GIFs to add new meanings to their posts. Four out of every ten tweets, (N=125, 40%) included at least one emoji or emoticon and 11% (N=34) of tweets were accompanied with a GIF or picture. Common emojis were heart emojis and crying face emojis. Heart emojis typically accompanied emotional expressions of adoration, appreciation or affirmations, while crying face emojis were associated with anguish tweets. Tweeters included other kinds of emojis, from hand gestures, rainbows, stars, and faces. Pictures and GIFs were creative choices on the part of the tweeter to enhance their messages, and included graphics belonging to the show addressed or other media sources. Spectators chose graphics such as Kermit the frog holding a pride flag, a cat wearing sunglasses, Spongebob Squarepants

holding a bouquet of hearts, photos of people holding marriage equality protest signs, and Tyler Perry as Madea.

Reply to Aisha Dee (Kat Edison, *The Bold Type*) - 13 February 2018 - 17:04

Can't wait!!! 🥰 #TheBoldType #Kadena ❤️⁵

Just 23 tweets (7%) mentioned someone's twitter handle, however, some users did 'tag' the very person they were already replying to (Twitter does not count a user's Twitter name as part of its character limit in replies). While this project did not rely on hashtags to find tweets relating to the interested content, 14% (N=43) of tweets analyzed did include a hashtag, usually the name of a television show or the abbreviated 'couple name' of the characters in the show. Hashtags pinpointed conversations that tweeters wanted to be a part of, including queer conversations such as #loveislove, #LGBTQ, and #LoveConquersAll. This area was fulfilled 225 times.

Reply to Sarah Paulson (Ally Mayfair-Richards, *American Horror Story*) - 12 September 2017 - 19:43

I LOVE YOU⁶



Representation

Representation, personal narrative, identification

Reply to Isabella Gomez (Elena Alvarez, *One Day at a Time*) - 16 Mar 2018 -
13:39

This is so amazing!!! Representation makes such a huge and lasting
impact on mental health, especially in young people. THANK YOU! ❤️

An inspiration for this project, the popularity of the trending conversation that
#RepresentationMatters, meant that the research was first and foremost challenged to find
content that spoke to the representation of queer women characters in scripted television.
Thirteen percent (N=40) of tweets mentioned representation (again overwhelmingly

positive). These included the wording ‘representation,’ as well as ‘looks like me,’ and ‘see myself in this character/show.’ Spectators wrote these words not only of queer representation, but of Latinx and black representation as well. One tweeter mentioned Nafessa Williams’s natural hair as a particular influential representation of a black woman.

Reply to Nafessa Williams (Anissa Pierce, *Black Lightning*) - 03 March 2018 - 06:40

@NafessaWilliams thank you for playing this amazing woman #Thunder this season and representing all individuals who are lesbians as the first black LGBTQ superhero plus the @TheCW and @MarioTorch would be so proud can't wait for next season

Closely related were personal narrative (4%; N=11) and identification (1%; N=4), or disclosure of one’s individual sexuality. Mentions of understanding or journey to understand one’s own gender and/or sexuality were counted as personal narrative, whereas reveals of one’s specific gender identity and/or sexuality (e.g. “I’m bi” or “us trans girls”) were considered as identification. This area was met 55 times..

Reply to Jessica Capshaw (Arizona Robbins, *Grey’s Anatomy*) - 08 March 2018 - 11:05

Arizona played an integral role in my journey of self-acceptance. She was the first out and proud lesbian I ever saw on television, and that representation impacted my life in more ways than I can count. I found bravery through her. Thank you. ❤️🏳️‍🌈

Community and Story Building

LGBT, recap, call to action, chosen family, fanfic, stan, shipping, futurity, political

The purpose of comments on Twitter, either replies or retweets, is to engage in conversation. While the majority of tweets were directed at the actors directly, Twitter users would often reply to each other, expanding the conversation from just themselves and the actor to multiple people. Very rarely would the actors themselves respond to the replies to their original posts. Representation was more than just expressing how similar a character was to an individual spectator. It also concerned the larger LGBTQIA+ community. The most common form of story building involved the ‘shipping’ of two characters regardless of whether either of them was written as queer (N=82; 27%). The term, ‘shipping,’ communicates to others a spectator’s personal interest or hope for two characters to become a couple, or for them to be in a *relationship*. Other references to shipping include mentions of a couple being one’s OTP, or one’s ‘One True Pair,’ and ‘endgame.’ Stanning and being a ‘stan,’ or identifying oneself as a fan, almost obsessively (in reference to Eminem’s song, “Stan”), also allowed for community building (N=8; 3%). Fans, or stans, are routinely seen on Twitter as mobilizing together in defense or support of their idols, especially during emotionally significant times (e.g. Beyonce’s “bey-hive” rallied around her choice to announce her pregnancy last year via Instagram photo).

Reply to Madelaine Petsch (Cheryl Blossom, *Riverdale*) - 14 March 2018 - 17:44
toni and cheryl are my otp^o

Political tweets could easily be identified as those that invoked ‘Trump’s America’ or today’s political climate. References to pride, a pride parade, the rainbow flag (including pictures or GIFs), and the term ‘woke’ were also coded as political (N=14; 5%). A particular tweet attached a photo of a young girl at a rally holding a pride flag and a sign that read, “I ❤️ MY MOMS LET THEM MARRY.” While the show did not directly address the politics of same-sex marriage, it did point to a queer-antagonistic plotline involving conversion therapy specifically meant to keep the young women apart, not unlike anti-marriage equality tactics. If a tweet revealed a desire for an alternative plot/story, it was considered Fanfic (N=21; 7%), also known as Fanfiction, or fan-written stories using the characters and universes established in published media, such as television, books or movies. Fanfiction allows spectators to reimagine new plotlines for beloved characters, writing a new story with a more desirable ending. Fanfic websites, such as fanfiction.net or archiveofourown.com provide spectators spaces to not only submit their stories, but also read stories from other spectators. While the character limit on Twitter prevents spectators from writing more detailed and longer stories, fanfic on Twitter still allows spectators to find one another and possibly share links to their writings on another site.

Reply to Caity Lotz (Sara Lance, *DC’s Legends of Tomorrow*) - 28 March 2018 - 08:36

I think a rivalry between sara and Cassandra could be a great plot, they are both really strong female characters and have some similirities [SIC], plus

cass could be blackbat or orphan to play with some of her other alter egos.¹¹

Occasionally, a spectator used twitter to retell or recap the events from an episode (N=19; 6%). Eight percent of tweets (N=25) were coded for futurity, which could mean hope for the future of the series or even the futurity of the LGBTQIA+ community. The use of LGBT, its other incarnations (e.g. LGBTQ, LGBTQI, etc.) or mentions of individual communities (e.g. lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender) and their variations of spellings (e.g. lesbos, bi, trans) accounted for 14% (N=43) of tweets.

Sometimes, spectators would refer to the families on television (as a traditional family unit or band of friends with whom they have formed familial ties) as unit they themselves would like to be a part of (e.g. ‘my family’) or as being part of the queer community/family. These ‘chosen families’ accounted for only 2%, or five tweets. Similarly as infrequent were calls to action, such as demanding a show be renewed or the ‘formation’ of community members (N=9; 3%). Tweets regarding community and story building totaled 226 mentions.

Reply to Freema Agyeman (Amanita, *Sense8*) - 02 June 2017 - 12:23

THIS ISNT [SIC] RIGHT bring #sense8 back! We need this show in our current political climate now more than ever #RenewSense8¹²

Discussion

This content analysis of tweets revealed that spectators took to twitter to write about their emotional connections to television characters, actors, shows, and storylines. Spectators desired to find nuanced, positive, authentic representations of queer women, and they were excited and appreciative to see those representations in television shows across broadcast, cable, and streaming networks. This research was inspired by the viral hashtag #BuryYourGays, and I assumed that negativity would be present in tweets regarding representation. However, I was pleasantly surprised to find that this was not the case. In fact, tweeters were overwhelming positive in their replies to the official shows' and actors' accounts. Spectators would often express their feelings of love for a character or actor, usually in a friendly, fan-forward manner, but occasionally would reveal their crush on an actor/character. This emotional connection to queer characters was not always an indication of the tweeter's personal sexuality, but rather a declaration of their support of an idol.

This research aligns with Green and Brock's (2000) theory of transportation, which holds that consumers of media are drawn into narratives, feeling intense emotions, and experiencing the real-world fall away to the background. Transportation requires a suspension of belief in reality, while emotional connections to a character or story have an "enhanced" effect on the viewer's attitudes and opinions. In the present study, spectators noted that characters looked like them or that they feel seen for the first time.

Although this research found that tweeters primarily expressed positive emotions such as adoration, appreciation, excitement, and affirmation, it also revealed that spectators sometimes took to Twitter to share their negative feelings, such as anger and sadness. However, these emotions were not triggered by the character per se, but rather because the actor was exiting the show (even if the character did not die) or because the show was not renewed for another season. Spectators noted how important shows like *Sense8* and *Orphan Black*, two shows that ended in 2018, were for queer representation. One emotion that was not found among the tweets analyzed was disgust, or queer-antagonism. In their research, Gillig and Murphy (2016) found that when introduced to a depiction of a same-sex relationship, straight, cisgender consumers who felt feelings of disgust held negative attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ people. It is noteworthy that I did not observe this emotion, because I had expected to find negative attitudes toward queer characters. Previous research has shown the effect that bullying on social media can have on queer youth, so I assumed that spectators who held queer-antagonistic views would share those feelings on social media (Elipe, de la Oliva Muñoz, & Del Rey, 2018). One limitation of this study was the small number of tweets analyzed, so future research that focuses on social media posts could potentially find more diverse messages, including negative content. In light of #RepresentationMatters and #BuryYourGays, it is inspirational to see that spectators are sharing their personal feelings towards queer characters and to realize the potential influence that representations of queer characters have for viewers and the queer community.

While this research did not collect personal information about tweeters, the content of some tweets did reveal individual sexuality and gender identity. In one tweet to Jessica Capshaw (Arizona Robbins, *Grey's Anatomy*), the spectator notes that Arizona was the first lesbian she had seen on television “consistently” who had also “represented her.”¹³ This comment on consistency is important, because many lesbian or bisexual women characters have died in their respective shows to further the storyline of a more central, straight character, as previously discussed. Jessica Capshaw has portrayed Arizona for ten years on *Grey's Anatomy*, and her character is finally at the end of her story arc (the actor is exiting the show at the end of the 2018 season). While not a victim of the dead lesbian trope, her character has been through a traumatic experience, in which a near-death experience resulted in an amputated leg. Arizona was not only a queer woman with a disability, but also a mother coparenting with her divorced wife. The spectator who made this comment might have identified with Arizona for her sexuality, disability, status as a parent or even for her personality. For ten years, Arizona has been an established character on a successful mainstream television show, meaning that a leading lesbian character has been consistently on screen for millions of viewers every week.

Using hashtags for social movements or calls for action (“hashtag activism”) is a great way to mobilize people online and in the material world, and sometimes, it is useful in bringing attention to a struggling show in need of renewal. Some spectators used this tactic after Netflix canceled *Sense8* after two seasons. After the streaming service

apologized to fans for the cancellation, fans rallied on Twitter to #BringBackSense8 or #RenewSense8. As one spectator put it, *Sense8* was, “the ONE show that represented so so so many of us [LGBTQ].” After online protest and petitions, Netflix announced that *Sense8* would be returning for a final movie, giving spectators an ending to their favorite inclusive show.

Out of all of the shows that featured a queer woman character in the last two years, none featured an asexual woman. GLAAD’s Where Are We On TV report, for 2015-16, established that at least one show included an asexual woman character, Valentina 'Voodoo' Dunacci (Kelly O'Sullivan, *Sirens*), during that year. However this show was not included in my project since it did not air in the last two years. The virtual absence of asexual woman characters points to the limitation of queer representation on television. Not all queer women fall along the heterosexual-homosexual continuum (including bisexual), but those who identify as asexual, aromantic, polyamorous, and/or kinky, have little representation on television. Spectators who may identify as asexual or struggle with their sexual identity may not have the representation of non-bisexual or non-lesbian queer women characters. Winderman and Smith (2016) had concluded that therapists could suggest television with queer representation for clients who question their sexuality, but this may not be an easy task if there is little to no representation for asexuality, a sexuality already stigmatized as belonging to bodies that are not considered sexual.

In this study, Twitter users celebrated representations of Black and Latinx characters, but the tweets included in my analysis did not mention Asian-Pacific Islander or Middle Eastern representations. That is not for a lack of representation, as two of the shows in this study included Asian-Pacific Islander and Middle Eastern characters. For example, Grace Choi (Chantal Thuy) is the bisexual partner of Anissa Pierce (Nafessa Williams) in *Black Lightning*, but I could not find tweets commenting on their relationship. Similarly, in *The Bold Type*, Kat Edison's (Aisha Dee) relationship explicitly explores Adina El Amin's (Nikohl Boosheri) experiences as a Muslim lesbian immigrant living in the U.S., yet I did not see tweeters discussing the relationship. In the real world, it is completely plausible for two powerful women of color to form a relationship, but this type of relationship is not often seen on screen. Twitter users' limited discussion of these relationships may be due to the limited tweets analyzed, and future social media research could possibly focus on how spectators respond to interracial queer relationships.

As Barbour (2016) teaches us, spectators are able to hold both the real world and the fictional world in their minds. Social media research has delved in consumers dividing their time between the screen in their hands and devoting their attention to the narratives on television, while also recognizing the difference between the real world and the fictional (Herbig, Herrmann, & Tyma, 2015; Barbour, 2016). I believe that spectators are able to hold these two realities at the same time because they are acutely aware of their lived experiences as being similar to the characters they see onscreen. They can use

those narratives to understand their own sexuality and gender identities, while also thinking about the future of queer communities. When spectators “see” themselves on screen, they are not only validated in their identities, but also aware of the impact representation has on how queerness is treated in the real world.

Blog-style and news sharing websites, such as Autostraddle and BuzzFeed, have published articles such as, “Why On-Screen Representation Actually Matters” (Huffington Post, 2017), “The Overwhelming Whiteness of Queer Women on Teen TV” (Vice, 2018), “Nova, Nola, and Annalise: Queer Black Women and the Arc of Representation” (Bitch Media, 2018), and ““Riverdale’s’ Asexual Erasure Can Be Harmful” (Teen Vogue, 2017). These articles give spectators accessible media that can be used for to read, learn, and share conversations about representation. Spectators are able to enter the discourse on representation while acknowledging their own personal connections to queerness in entertainment media. Academia and experts have addressed how representations of queerness have progressed over the decades, but research on spectators using social media to address representation is newer and not well explored (Hall, Hobson, Lowe, & Willis, 2003; Schooler, 2015; Bronski, 2008; Barbour, 2016).

Inclusive programming, produced by queer people of color, is my ultimate goal for representation. Lena Waithe, who won an Emmy and a GLAAD Media Award for writing the “Thanksgiving” episode in *Master of None*, illustrates one possible desirable future for queer writing and representation, Waithe wrote the episode about a coming-out storyline based on her own experience, giving spectators a realistic, relatable

representation of queerness in front of and behind the camera. This research has shown that spectators experience emotional connections with queer characters and find community with their shared interests. When the producers or creators of queer characters are diverse, it allows for inclusive programming that is appreciated and empowering for spectators who finally have characters to relate to.

Endnotes

1. Sara Ramirez plays Kat Sandoval, the policy advisor to the U.S. Secretary of State in *Madam Secretary*.
2. *The Handmaid's Tale* explores the futuristic dystopian nation Gilead in which women are enslaved to carry the children of high-ranking men in society.
3. *Black Mirror* is an anthology series, in which the third season includes an episode titled, San Junipero, where elderly and dying individuals may choose to upload their minds to a digital heaven following death.
4. *Orphan Black* is a series that features clones (played by Tatiana Maslany), one of which is in a relationship with Dr. Delphine Cormier (Évelyne Brochu).
5. *The Bold Type* involves a romantic story arc featuring a black social media director exploring her sexuality with a lesbian Muslim photographer.
6. The current season of *American Horror Story* (titled Cult) follows Ally Mayfair-Richards (Sarah Paulson), along with her wife, as they unravel in the aftermath of Trump's election as President.
7. The Alvarez family, including gay teen Elena, is a Cuban American family living in Los Angeles as they navigate race, sexuality, and nationality in the rebooted *One Day at A Time*.
8. Anissa Pierce (Thunder) is a black, lesbian activist and educator with superpowers, along with her sister and father in *Black Lightning*.

9. *Grey's Anatomy*, created by Shonda Rhimes, is about doctors at Grey-Sloan Memorial Hospital, where Arizona Robbins works.
10. *Riverdale*, a modern take on the Archie Comics, explores the drama of a small town, including the blossoming relationship between queen bee Cheryl and southside serpent Toni Topaz.
11. *DC's Legends of Tomorrow* follows the misadventures of the crew of a time-traveling ship known as the waverider, captained by bisexual Sara Lance (White Canary).
12. *Sense8*, created by the Wachowski sisters, features multiple strong LGBTQ characters and storylines all around the world, including the relationship between Amanita and Nomi.
13. Jessica Capshaw as (Arizona Robbins, *Grey's Anatomy*) announced via Twitter that is leaving the show at the conclusion of the fourteenth season.

Tweets

ALeeStevens. (2018, Mar 18). This is going to be amazing. Thank you for speaking your truth, and for helping others in doing the same. You are so strong and so brave. I am insanely proud of you!! #BestIdoIEver #YouGotThis ❤️👊 [Tweet]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/ALeeStevens/status/975384544965689344?s=19>

camilxlyciaa. (2017, Sep 12). I LOVE YOU [Photo attached]. [Tweet]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/camilxlyciaa/status/907796913503666176?s=19>

ChristineGee2. (2018, Mar 28). I think a rivalry between sara and Cassandra could be a great plot, they are both really strong female characters and have some similarities, plus cass could be blackbat or orphan to play with some of her other alter egos. [Tweet]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/ChristineGee2/status/979019503244787713?s=19>

cosmikgoats. (2017, June 2). THIS ISNT RIGHT bring #sense8 back! We need this show in our current political climate now more than ever #RenewSense8 [Tweet]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/cosmikgoats/status/870722599227191297?s=19>

gapeachy7. (2017, Sep 18). Congrats guys! I hope it's also rewarding to know how much Yorkie & Kelly touched and uplifted LGBTQ fans around the world. Thank you. ❤️ [Tweet]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/gapeachy7/status/909740103148490753?s=19>

Geekspiralling. (2017, June 5). Beautiful. And just in time for #Pride 🏳️🌈 Vive La Cophine! Vive l'amour! And merci @tatianamaslany & @EvelynBrochu #LoveConquersAll [GIF Attached]. [Tweet].

helenluu333. (2018, Feb 13). Can't wait!!! 😍 #TheBoldType #Kadena ❤️ [Tweet].

Retrieved from

<https://twitter.com/helenluu333/status/963579612486819840?s=19>

hihuddle. (2018, Mar 16). This is so amazing!!! Representation makes such a huge and lasting impact on mental health, especially in young people. THANK YOU! ❤️ [Tweet]. Retrieved from

<https://twitter.com/hihuddle/status/974746939190403072?s=19>

k50cullen. (2018, Mar 3). @NafessaWilliams thank you for playing this amazing woman #Thunder this season and representing all individuals who are lesbians as the first black LGBTQ superhero plus the @TheCW and @MarioTorch would be so proud can't wait for next season [Tweet]. Retrieved from

<https://twitter.com/k50cullen/status/969945680461615104?s=19>

sadiesbeece. (2018, Mar 14). toni and cheryl are my otp [Tweet]. Retrieved from

<https://twitter.com/sadiesolsen/status/974083921246932992?s=19>

tabicusmaximus. (2017, Jun 14). I cried my GD eyes out at the end with you and Luke.

Fuck, man. Emotionally overwhelmed with this last episode. [Tweet]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/tabicusmaximus/status/875213174647148544?s=19>

TiAdoro914. (2018, Mar 8). I am crying. Arizona was the first lesbian I saw on TV consistently who I connected with, who represented me & who I desperately loved. My heart is broken . Thank you Jessica for giving us Arizona & for loving our community.   [Tweet].

xokatic. (2018, Mar 8). Arizona played an integral role in my journey of self-acceptance. She was the first out and proud lesbian I ever saw on television, and that representation impacted my life in more ways than I can count. I found bravery through her. Thank you.   [Tweet].

References

- Ahmed, S. (2010). *The promise of happiness*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Barbour, K. (2016). Public audiencing: Using Twitter to study audience engagement with characters and actors. In M. Griffiths & K. Barbour (Eds.), *Making publics, making places* (pp. 179-192). Adelaide, South Australia: University of Adelaide Press.
- Boboltz, S., & Yam, K. (2017, February 24). Why On-Screen Representation Actually Matters. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/why-on-screen-representation-matters_us_58aeae96e4b01406012fe49d
- Bronski, M. (2008). From The Celluloid Closet to Brokeback Mountain: The Changing Nature of Queer Film Criticism. *Cinéaste*, 33(2), 22-26.
- Bronski, M., Ginsberg, T., Grundmann, R., Keeling, K., Moriel, L., Nair, Y., & Thompson, K. M. (2006). Queer film and media pedagogy. *GLQ: A Journal Of Lesbian & Gay Studies*, 12(1), 117-134.
- Brown, M., Ray, R., Summers, E., & Fraistat, N. (2017). #SayHerName: a case study of intersectional social media activism. *Ethnic & Racial Studies*, 40(11), 1831-1846. doi:10.1080/01419870.2017.1334934
- Chrifti Alaoui, Fatima. (2016). "Redefining Arab Feminism through the #RevolutionaryBody: From the Streets to the Tweets." In S. Brown Givens and K.

Edwards Tassie (Eds.), *Women of Color and Social Media Multitasking: Blogs, Timelines, Feeds, and Community*, 35-67.

Collier, N. R., Lumadue, C. A., & Wooten, H. R. (2009). Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Xena: Warrior Princess: Reception of the Texts by a Sample of Lesbian Fans and Web Site Users. *Journal Of Homosexuality*, 56(5), 575-609.
doi:10.1080/00918360903005253

Corey, S. (2017). All Bi Myself: Analyzing Television's Presentation of Female Bisexuality. *Journal Of Bisexuality*, 17(2), 190-205.
doi:10.1080/15299716.2017.1305940

Dhaenen, F. (2012). Reading gays on the small screen. *Javnost-The Public*, 19(4), 57-112.

Driver, S. (2007). *Queer girls and popular culture: Reading, resisting, and creating media*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Eaklor, V. (2012). The Kids Are All Right But the Lesbians Aren't: The Illusion of Progress in Popular Film. *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques*, 38(3), 153-170.

Elipe, P., de la Oliva Muñoz, M., & Del Rey, R. (2018). Homophobic Bullying and Cyberbullying: Study of a Silenced Problem. *Journal Of Homosexuality*, 65(5), 672-686. doi:10.1080/00918369.2017.1333809

Everett, A. (2015). Scandalicious. *Black Scholar*, 45(1), 34-43.
doi:10.1080/00064246.2014.997602

- Foster, M. D. (2015). Tweeting about sexism: The well-being benefits of a social media collective action. *British Journal Of Social Psychology*, 54(4), 629-647.
doi:10.1111/bjso.12101
- Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79(5), 701–721.
doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.79.5.701.
- Gillig, T. K., & Murphy, S. T. (2016). Fostering support for LGBTQ youth?: The effects of a gay adolescent media portrayal on young viewers. *International Journal of Communication*, 10, 3823–3850.
- GLAAD. (2015). *Where We Are On TV '15 - '16* (Rep.).
- GLAAD. (2016). *Where We Are On TV '16 - '17* (Rep.).
- GLAAD. (2017). *Where We Are On TV '17 - '18* (Rep.).
- Gomillion, S. C., & Giuliano, T. A. (2011). The influence of media role models on gay, lesbian, and bisexual identity. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 58, 330–354.
doi:10.1080/00918369.2011.546729.
- Gutowitz, J. (2018, January 12). The Overwhelming Whiteness of Queer Women on Teen TV. *Vice*. Retrieved from https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/ne49yk/the-overwhelming-whiteness-of-queer-women-on-teen-tv
- Hall, W. J. (2018). Psychosocial Risk and Protective Factors for Depression Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Queer Youth: A Systematic Review. *Journal Of Homosexuality*, 65(3), 263-316. doi:10.1080/00918369.2017.1317467

- Hall, S. (2013). "The work of representation" in *Representation*. Milton Keynes: Open Univ, 1-47.
- Hall, S., Hobson, D., Lowe, A., & Willis, P. (Eds.). (2003). *Culture, media, language: working papers in cultural studies, 1972-79*. Routledge.
- Herbig, A., Herrmann, A. F., & Tyma, A. (2015). Introduction: The beginnings: #WeNeedAWord. In A. Herbig, A. F. Herrmann, & A. W. Tyma (Eds.), *Beyond new media: Discourse and critique in a polymediated age* (pp. ix–xxiv). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Highfield, T., Harrington, S., & Bruns, A. (2013). Twitter as a technology for audiencing and fandom: The# Eurovision phenomenon. *Information, Communication & Society, 16*(3), 315-339.
- Khoja-Moolji, S. (2015). Becoming an "Intimate Publics": Exploring the Affective Intensities of Hashtag Feminism. *Feminist Media Studies, 15*(2), 347-350.
doi:10.1080/14680777.2015.1008747
- Kivel, B. D., & Kleiber, D. A. (2000). Leisure in the identity formation of lesbian/gay youth: Personal, but not social. *Leisure Sciences, 22*, 215–232.
- Lacalle, C., & Simelio, N. (2017). Television fiction and online communities: an analysis of comments on social networks and forums made by female viewers. *Critical Studies In Media Communication, 34*(5), 449-463.
doi:10.1080/15295036.2017.1358820

- McDonald, J. (2018, January 3). When It Comes to Queer Black Women, TV is Still Stuck On Stereotypes. *Bitch Media*. Retrieved from <https://www.bitchmedia.org/article/nova-nola-annalise-queer-black-women-onscreen>
- Oatley, K. (2002). *Emotions and the story worlds of fiction. Narrative impact: Social and cognitive foundations* (pp. 39–69). Mahwah, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates.
- Oliver, M. B., Dillard, J. P., Bae, K., & Tamul, D. J. (2012). The effect of narrative news format on empathy for stigmatized groups. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 89(2), 205–224.
- Olsen, E. O., Vivolo-Kantor, A. M., Kann, L., & Milligan, C. N. (2017). Trends in School-Related Victimization of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youths-- Massachusetts, 1995-2015. *American Journal Of Public Health*, 107(7), 1116-1118. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2017.303761
- Papadopoulos, S., Kompatsiaris, Y., Vakali, A., & Spyridonos, P. (2012). Community detection in social media. *Data Mining and Knowledge Discovery*, 24(3), 515-554.
- Revanche, J. (2017, June 30). 'Riverdale's' Asexual Erasure Can Be More Harmful Than You Think. *Teen Vogue*. Retrieved from <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/riverdales-aseexual-erasure-can-be-harmful>

- Riese. (2016, March 11). All 195 Dead Lesbian and Bisexual Characters On TV, And How They Died. *Autostraddle*. Retrieved from <https://www.autostraddle.com/all-65-dead-lesbian-and-bisexual-characters-on-tv-and-how-they-died-312315/>
- Sergeant, P., & Tagg, C. (Eds.). (2014). *The language of social media: Identity and community on the internet*. Springer.
- Schooler, D. (2015). The Woman Next to Me: Pairing Powerful and Objectifying Representations of Women. *Analyses Of Social Issues & Public Policy*, 15(1), 198-212. doi:10.1111/asap.12070
- Towns, A. R. (2016). Geographies of Pain: #SayHerName and the Fear of Black Women's Mobility. *Women's Studies In Communication*, 39(2), 122-126. doi:10.1080/07491409.2016.1176807
- Wicks, R. H. (2000). *Understanding audiences: Learning to use the media constructively*. Routledge.
- Winderman, K., & Smith, N. (2016). Sexual Minority Identity, Viewing Motivations, and Viewing Frequency of LGB-Inclusive Television Among LGB Viewers. *Sexuality & Culture*, 20(4), 824-840. doi:10.1007/s12119-016-9361-2

Appendix A

Coding Sheet

Tweet #

Categories	Codes	Yes?
Representation	Representation	
	Personal Narrative	
	Identification	
Community Building	Fanfic	
	LGBT	
	Political	
	Recap	
	Stan	
	Chosen Family	
	Call to Action	
	Shipping	
	Futurity	
	Emotional Connection	Adoration
Appreciation		
Affirmation		
Anger		
Anguish		
Excitement		
Empowering		
Shareable Content & Graphics	Mentions/Tag (@)	
	Hashtag (#)	
	Emoji	
	GIF/Picture	

Actor:

Character:

Show Title:

Description: