

THE QUEERNESS OF STRAIGHT MASCULINITY: MEN'S EMOTIONAL
INTIMACIES WITH OTHER MEN IN *BOY MEETS WORLD* AND *DAWSON'S
CREEK*

by

David Powers Corwin
A Thesis
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts
Interdisciplinary Studies

Committee:

Director

Program Director

Dean, College of Humanities
and Social Sciences

Date: _____

Spring Semester 2016
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

The Queerness of Straight Masculinity:
Men's Emotional Intimacies with Men in *Boy Meets World* and *Dawson's Creek*

A Thesis submitted in Partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in
Interdisciplinary Studies at George Mason University.

By
David Powers Corwin
Bachelor of Arts
Milligan College, 2013

Director: Dr. Rachel Lewis, Assistant Professor
Women and Gender Studies Program

Spring Semester 2016
George Mason University
Fairfax VA

Dedication

To my best friend, Jordan, this project is an attempt to make sense of our friendship that seemed to differ from all of our other male peers. Thank you for your enduring support of me and for providing me with an unconditional friendship for the last seven years.

Acknowledgements

Many people both professionally and personally made contributions to my success in the completion of this thesis. First, I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Rachel Lewis, for her mentoring role in my graduate school experience from my first semester in the MAIS program. Almost every semester, I had at least one if not more courses with Rachel and she continues to mentor my scholarship and support my work by giving me constructive criticism and talking me through all my moments of discouragement I had throughout the process. I appreciate our weekly meetings throughout my thesis process and her genuine interest in my success as a student and a professional. I would also like to thank my committee member, Dr. Yevette Richards Jordan, for being an integral part of this thesis from the proposal stage. Thank you for your feedback and your support of me since before I came to Mason when you served as the graduate director for Women and Gender Studies. Your constant contact in my last semester of my undergraduate program and your positive attitude reassured me that I made the right decision in pursuing this program. You made the transition seamless for me, which was crucial for my successful completion of this program.

Next, I would like to thank Drs. Angela Hattery and Michael Malouf who served as my advisors for both of my degree programs. Dr. Hattery, thank you for your investment in me as a student, advisee, employee, and friend. Your enduring support of my goals has made this process so worthwhile. Thank you for regularly talking me through the barriers that could have caused my program to be unsuccessful and making me feel that I was capable even when I did not believe it myself. Angie and Michael also were responsible for the creation and execution of the dual degree in the MAIS in Women and Gender Studies and the MA in English with a concentration in literature. Thank you, Drs. Hattery and Malouf, for seeing the need for this program and your willingness to pilot the program with me and advising me throughout the process. More specifically, I would like to thank Dr. Malouf for his mentoring role in my graduate program, his contributions to my thesis as a committee member, and his encouragement and kind words both to me and to other faculty and staff concerning my work. Your Virginia Woolf class assured me that I wanted to continue with this program when I was in doubt during that semester and I thank you for mentoring me in the publication of my final paper for that course in the *Journal of Cultural and Religious Studies*.

The process to completion of this thesis would not have been possible without my supervisors and colleagues Nancy Xiong, Tashia Harris, Ric Chollar, and Dr. Amena

Johnson. As their graduate assistant and later Nancy's office manager, you gave me the work schedule and the space I needed to complete this project, which was crucial to my success. Thank you for your investment in me ,your mentoring roles in my development as a student affairs professional, your commitment to me as friends for and never making me feel that I am not your equal when it came to the work we do together.

Many thanks to Dr. Amal Amireh for allowing me to speak about my thesis out loud to her and put together ideas in her office even though you were not on my thesis committee and did not know me until recently. Thank you for your investment in me at the end of my program and for giving me feedback about my ideas and how I could expand this thesis into a bigger project.

Thanks to my two best friends, Jordan Kinser and Megg Rapp, who have been part of my life for the last seven years. Thank you for all of the laughs, smiles, and your willingness to listen to my struggles and successes throughout this program. Your enduring support means the world to me and I always know that I have both of you on my team even when I am not sure what team I want to be on myself.

Lastly, but certainly not least, I want to thank my mom, Marie Powers Fritts, for her unconditional love for me and her sacrifices for my educational goals throughout my whole life. Mom, you are the best mom a son could ask for and I can never thank you enough for your continued support of me in every step I make in this world. The completion of this program would not have been possible without me knowing that you were always in the background supporting me through this and every process of my life.

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	6
Methods and Chapter Outline.....	32
Chapter 1 “Boy Meets The Queer World:” Male Homosociality and Heteronormative Narrative in <i>Boy Meets World</i>	35
Chapter 2: “A Love Triangle Named Joey Potter: Homoeroticism, Heteronormativity, and Desire in <i>Dawson’s Creek</i> ”.....	51
Conclusion.....	70
Works Cited and Consulted.....	75

Abstract

THE QUEERNESS OF STRAIGHT MASCULINITY: MEN'S EMOTIONAL INTIMACIES WITH MEN IN *BOY MEETS WORLD* AND *DAWSON'S CREEK*

David Powers Corwin, M.A.

George Mason University, 2016

Thesis Director: Dr. Rachel Lewis

This thesis focuses on the dearth of scholarship within queer theory, masculinity studies, and queer television studies on the queering of straight masculinities in media.

Furthermore, the work that has been done on the queerness of straight masculinities only focuses on media post 2000 as well as media that focuses on adult characters. For example, Ron Becker is one of the only television studies scholars that focuses on the queerness of straight masculinities, but he only focuses on shows such as *Friends*, *Boston Legal*, and *Jackass* that only focus on adult characters. In this thesis, I argue that these queer representations of straight masculinity existed before 2000 in media (specifically television) and that these representations also existed in teenage sitcoms and soap operas despite these shows focus on maintaining a heteronormative narrative structure. As my point of analyses, I focus on the widely popular *Boy Meets World* and *Dawson's Creek* and how the male character's emotional intimacies with each other queer how we view

straight masculinities. In this thesis, I use the following theoretical frameworks: Eve Sedgwick's theory of the erotic triangle and male homosocial desire; Judith Roof's theory of sexuality and narrative; Robert Heasley's theory of the queerness of straight masculinities; and Michael Deangelis's theory of the bromance and its representation in film and television.

The Queerness of Straight Masculinity:
Men's Emotional Intimacies with Men in *Boy Meets World* and *Dawson's Creek*

Introduction

Masculinity studies is a relatively new field beginning in the late 1980s with the first edition of *The Journal of Men's Studies* and writings by R.W. Connell, Michael Kimmel, Tim Edwards, and Victor J. Seidler that focuses more specifically on the social sciences. The field emerged from queer studies, especially from theorists such as Judith Butler and Eve Sedgwick who wished to “queer” the sex/gender system that is set in place by systems of patriarchy. Masculinity studies began in the social sciences with the work of R.W. Connell and Michael Kimmel; however, the field has moved toward a more interdisciplinary field that includes the humanities and the natural sciences. This thesis will rely on a framework within the humanities scholarship in masculinity studies (film and media studies and queer theory) to interrogate issues around straight men's friendships and emotionally intimate relationships with other men and how these intimacies are represented in popular culture where teenagers are the target audience, specifically television.

Queer television studies is now beginning to look at the queerness of straight masculinity in a more progressive era that is more accepting of non-heteronormative

sexualities. Ron Becker uses the term ‘guy love’ to describe the queering of heterosexual masculinity based on the acceptance of queer sexualities: “Representations of queer straight masculinity could be seen throughout US television in the 2000s. ‘Guy Love and other such queer moments presents hegemonic masculinity in the process of being redefined” (121). Becker uses shows such as *Scrubs*, *Jackass*, *Boston Legal*, and *Friends* as support for his argument about the possible queerness of heterosexual masculinity in what he calls a “post-closet era” (121).

Even though straight masculinity has been interrogated in media (especially television) in the twenty first century and “queered” in a sense, these types of debates around male intimacy have taken place before shows such as *Friends*, *Jackass*, *Scrubs*, and *Boston Legal* emerged. Furthermore, these shows only look at adults and ignore the politics around men’s intimacies with other men in teenage relationships who I argue also manifest the potential queerness of straight masculinity in their friendships. Furthermore, teenagers constructions of friendships arguably inform how they will perceive these relationships as adults. For example, *Glee* continues to be a point of analysis for queer media scholars; however, the high school television genre manifested queer emotional intimacies among its straight male characters arguably since its inception. Beginning in the late 1980s, shows such as *Saved by the Bell*, *Beverley Hills 90210*, *Boy Meets World*, and *Dawson’s Creek* arguably became key parts of the cultures of many American homes, especially homes that included teens. Rebecca Freasey points out that, the 1990s, is when the genre of high school television series reached its peak, which is why programs that aired during this time are important in discussing teen representation in the

media (47). *Saved by the Bell*, *Beverley Hills 90210*, *Boys Meets World*, and *Dawson's Creek* all aired within the 1990s: (*Saved By the Bell* (1989-1993), *Beverley Hills 90210* (1990-2000) *Boy Meets World* (1993-2000), *Dawson's Creek* (1998-2003) Even though these shows developed most likely from each other, this decade was a time when teenage sitcoms and soap operas reached its prime in American popular culture. Furthermore, these television programs are still easily accessible on television channels such as MTV, Disney Channel, TBS, ABC family, and others. Twenty years has passed since the original airing of these series, but they are still mainstream media texts within popular culture.

In this thesis, I will focus on the male emotional intimacies with other men in *Boy Meets World* and *Dawson's Creek*. I will discuss how the male protagonists illustrate Sedgwick's theory of homosocial desire, men's desire to develop intimate relationships with other men, as well as Judith Roof's theory of heteronormative narrative structures in their navigation of not only their relationship dynamics in their friendships, but also their manifestations of masculinity more generally. Roof argues that "the imbrication of narrative and sexuality is a symptom of their common progenesis in a specific, already heterosexual ideology that presents a critical difficulty in even thinking about them outside of that same set of ideologies" (xxvii). Roof uses sexuality as a means to critique narrative structures that are inherently heterosexual, which makes her theory important in an analysis of heterosexual masculinities in these shows. Both shows convey a heteronormative narrative structure that pushes the male characters to live within this

structure. On the other hand, as I will argue, the shows represent male characters who queer straight masculinity despite this heteronormative narrative.

Queer and masculinity studies are just now beginning to address the queerness of straight masculinity and how men's friendships need to be broken down and analyzed under this framework. For example, Robert Heasley argues that "The queer masculinities of straight men ...lack legitimacy as a form of masculinity. Frequently, straight males perceived to be queer or who actively disrupt both heteronormativity and hegemonic masculinity are problematized" (310). Heasley's points about the lack of representation around heterosexual men who "queer" heteronormativity illustrates the need for work to be done around these issues. Furthermore, the scholarship around high school television series does not address this issue, which brings the questions: *Why Boy Meets World* and *Dawson's Creek*? Arguably, both of these shows serve as the inaugural series for looking at straight men's relationships with other men. Even though *Saved by the Bell* and *Beverly Hills 90210* are crucial in the emergence of the high school television genre, these programs focus less on the development of the relationships between the male characters and more on the development of a group of friends of both genders which is why I will not focus on this show in my analysis. In both *Boy Meets World* and *Dawson's Creek*, I argue that the male characters embody a queer form of straight masculinity through their intimate connections with each other, despite the overall heteronormative narrative structure of each show. In this thesis, I use the phrase "the queering of straight masculinity" as a way of disrupting the sex/gender system and how straight men's ability to emotionally connect with other straight men disrupts this structure. Furthermore, this

still takes place despite a heteronormative narrative structure that arguably is still inherent in narratives today. This intervention into queer masculinity studies conveys significance because these shows existed before many of the shows that the scholarship on the queering of straight masculinity and these shows continued to be played on major networks such as TBS, MTV, and ABC Family.

Literature Review

This project calls for an interdisciplinary framework because masculinity studies and more broadly queer theory has and continues to rely on an interdisciplinary structure. I will pull my theoretical framework from masculinity studies, queer theory, and film and media theory, and television studies. More specifically within masculinity studies, I will focus on scholarship on men's friendships and the small body of scholarship that has been done on the queerness of straight masculinity and how television represents these friendships in shows that target teenage audiences.

In queer theory, I will focus on Eve Sedgwick's concept of "homosocial desire," Roof's theory of sexuality and narrative, as well as Judith Butler's theoretical debates on the representation of gender and gender performativity and the deconstruction of the sex/gender system (1). Lastly, I will focus on the scholarship on each show and about men's emotional intimacies with men in film and television more generally. In this part of my analysis, I will draw heavily from Michael Deangelis's collection of essays *Reading The Bromance: Homosocial Relationships in Film and Television* which focuses on the emergence of the term "bromance" between straight identified men. Lastly, I will use scholarship in film and media and television studies that focuses specifically on *Boy Meets World* and *Dawson's Creek*.

Queer Theory and Masculinity Studies-Setting the Foundation

Queer theory emerged from feminist theory because many feminists felt that the second wave of feminism did not include their sexual and gender identities. More specifically, sexual minorities and people who identified outside of the gender binary of masculine and feminine did not feel that they could partake in the scholarship emerging about gender issues. Second wave feminists also conflated gender with white, middle class heterosexual women's issues and did not leave room for women of color to contribute to the academic scholarship and activism. Queer feminist scholar Judith Butler is considered to be one of the founders of queer theory. Her groundbreaking book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* complicates the idea of the gender binary and the sex/gender system: "The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it" (9). Furthermore, Butler is "permanently troubled by identity categories, considers them to be invariable stumbling-blocks, and understand them, even promote them, as sites of necessary trouble ("Imitation and Gender Insubordination 301). Butler also sees gender as performative, which opens the door for social critiques of masculinity as well as the need for a deviation away from the binary. Up to this point, when gender was discussed both in academic and activism, only women were the focus. She continues to grapple with her views on the breaking down of gender binaries in *Undoing Gender* (2004). In this piece, Butler brings in transgender and intersex politics and how these identities complicate feminist and queer theories: "To assume that gender always and exclusively means the matrix of the 'masculine' and 'feminine' is precisely to

miss the critical point that the production of that coherent binary is contingent...”

(*Undoing Gender* 42).

Even though queer theory began with gender identity in a theoretical context, narrative structures (media and literature) were also interrogated through a queer framework. Judith Roof’s book *Come As You Are: Sexuality and Narrative* is a key text in looking at sexuality in narrative. She argues that all narrative structures are heteronormative and constructed in a way that negates queer sexualities and the ability for narratives to subvert heteronormativity. In putting Roof in conversation with Butler, one sees that heteronormative structures create binaries for society when looking at issues of gender and sexuality. With these concepts in mind, Butler and Roof opened the door for scholarship within masculinity studies, which is the main theoretical framework for this project. Since masculinity studies focuses on the interrogation of hegemonic standards of manhood, the breaking down of the sex/gender system is at the foreground for critiquing masculinity.

Another area within queer theory that informs a discussion of masculinity and sexuality in teenage sitcoms and soap operas is scholarship on the queerness of children and how society polices children’s sexuality from birth. Katherine Bond Stockton’s book *The Queer Child: Or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* is one of the inaugural text in examining the queerness of children. She argues that “the notion of a gay child—however conceptually problematic—may be a throwback to a frightening, heightened sense of growing toward a question mark. Or growing up in haze” (3). In other words, Bond Stockton believes that any deviation from the heteronormative ideal for children

leaves adults in ambiguity about the future because children embody the cultural and human capital needed for reproduction. If children manifest any queer desire, this will disrupt the heteronormative structure of society. Another text that addresses this issue is *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children*, an edited collection by Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley. In this collection, they feature their own works as well as other queer theorists such as Sedgwick, Halberstam, Bond Stockton, Ellis Hanson, and many others. Both Bruhm and Hurley argue that “there is currently a dominant narrative about children: children are (and should stay) innocent of sexual desires and intentions. At the same time, however, children are also officially, tacitly, assumed to be heterosexual” (ix). Bruhm and Hurley’s points coincide with Bon Stockton’s because they convey the panic that happens when adults feel their children deviate from the heteronormative narrative that society produces and how that will affect the children’s social capital as well as the parents’.

Even though *Boy Meets World* and *Dawson’s Creek* both focus on teenagers and young adults, the scholarly framework on the queering of children’s sexuality sets the foundation for looking at the male protagonists contributions to maintaining Roof’s theory of the heteronormative narrative, despite their manifestations of queer straight masculinity. Since children are seen as the objects of the panic to maintain heteronormativity, it makes sense that these ideologies continue with children as they mature into teenagers and young adults, which is why a nod to this framework is beneficial for this thesis.

From queer theory, masculinity studies emerged as a field to interrogate the social constructs of masculinity and to counter the men's rights organizations that arose as a reaction to second wave feminism. According to Connell and his colleagues, "the field of gender research has mainly addressed questions about women and has mainly been developed by women. The impulse to develop gender studies has come mainly from contemporary feminism" (1). As feminism was moving into what we know as the third wave, activists wished to form a more inclusive movement to include people of color, the LGBTQ community, and masculinities. In the 1990s, masculinity or men's studies began in correlation to the third wave of feminism as well as a reaction to the formation of "men's rights" activists groups as a means of interrogating hegemonic masculine norms. According to Gardiner, "Academic masculinity studies have matured into an independent field that is influenced by queer theory, 'race' studies, and various poststructuralisms as well as by the full range of feminisms" (2). Masculinity studies cannot be separated from feminist and queer theories, but it should be studied as a branch of scholarship within gender studies and recognized as a field that does not uphold the hegemonic structure of patriarchy, but rather interrogates the privilege that men have within this system in order for everyone to advocate for gender equality. Furthermore, the field looks at the gender binary and how that affects men who cannot fit into this set of heteronormative standards around gender and sexuality .

In looking at male intimacies more specifically, Eve Sedgwick coined the term "homosocial" in her book *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. She defines homosocial as a term that "describes social bonds between persons of

the same sex; it is a neologism, obviously formed by analogy with 'homosexual' (1). Sedgwick argues that men want and need this type of bond with other men; however, hegemonic masculine standards prevent men from having emotionally intimate relationships with other men due to homophobia. Furthermore, as Traister points out theorists such as Sedgwick believe that "the construction of the heterosexual male cannot proceed independently of a concomitant construction and consideration of the homosexual male" (275). Sedgwick's theoretical framework around masculinity encourages an inclusive approach to include all types of masculinities, which will be the major focus of this thesis. Sedgwick's theoretical framework informs my reading of *Boy Meets World* and *Dawson's Creek* because in both of these shows, female characters serve as points of tension within the intimacies between the male characters. Sedgwick argues that "in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links either of the rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved: that the bonds of 'rivalry' and 'love,' differently as they are experienced, are equally powerful and in many senses equivalent" (21). In both shows, the emotional attachment between the male characters surfaces when as Sedgwick would describe an "erotic triangle" develops, involving a female character (21). Even though Sedgwick published this book before Butler, Sedgwick's theories gained more relevance within masculinity studies post-Butlerian theory. Her argument about men's friendships with other men forced the need for further scholarship around masculinity and how masculinities other than heterosexual masculinity need to be integrated into scholarly conversations.

R. W. Connell's *Masculinities* (1995) and later *The Men and the Boys* (2000) are considered among the first canonical texts of masculinity studies. Connell's training as a sociologist took masculinity studies in a different direction because the queer theorists that initiated this study were within literary studies and rhetoric (Butler and Sedgwick). Connell's book interrogated the culture of masculinity more generally rather than focusing on a theoretical and literary analysis, as Butler and Sedgwick do. Connell extends Butler's theory of gender as performative through his analysis of masculinity: "True masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men's bodies—to be inherent in a male body or to express something about a male body. Either the body drives and directs action...or the body sets limits to action" (*Masculinities* 45). Connell argues that biology is a component in discussing how gender is constructed, but culture cannot be ignored when discussing the full picture of gender. Furthermore, he says that only looking at these components separately is not possible. For example, he says "the constitution of masculinity through bodily performance means that gender is vulnerable when the performance cannot be sustained—for instance, as a result of physical disability" (*Masculinities* 54). In this scenario, Connell conveys how men's physical bodies are important in discussing masculinity; however, the cultural construction of these bodies is what creates patriarchal structures. His argument is a reaction to the idea of gender as solely being performance without any interrogation of the physical body. His argument in *Masculinities* illustrates the co-dependent relationship that physicality and culture have on each other. Even though this thesis will not draw on Connell's theoretical

framework specifically, his emphasis on bringing together of physicality and culture presents a structure for looking at homosocial bonds in these television programs.

Where Connell's work is global, Michael Kimmel's work on masculinity focuses more closely on United States culture, which is important for this project because both television programs are set in a US context. In his book, *Manhood in America*, he discusses the term "the Self-made man" which is a critical term in masculinity theory (17). He defines this term as a man who has:

success in the market, individual achievement, mobility, wealth. America expressed political autonomy... This was the manhood of the rising middle class. The flip side of this economic autonomy is anxiety, restlessness, loneliness, Manhood is no longer fixed in land or small-scale property ownership or dutiful service. Success must be earned, manhood must be proved—and proved constantly (17).

Moving forward from Connell's work on culture, physicality, and masculinity, Kimmel's argument argues that success for men cannot be received in a tangible way (land, ownership, etc.) as it has been historically. Furthermore, he argues that an acceptable level of masculinity can never be achieved because masculinity is a state that has to be reclaimed regularly and cannot be completely satisfied. For example, men cannot just be landowners and satisfy their requirements for being a man. Regularly, men must prove their masculinity through their actions and by maintaining the hegemonic ideology, Victor Siedler reiterates this concept in *Unreasonable Men: Masculinity and Social Theory*: "as men, we often have such little relationship to our self-esteem which

can feel like a neglected inner child that somehow never feels acknowledged, that we can experience ourselves as constantly striving to prove ourselves” (192). Both Siedler and Kimmel recognize the need for men to “prove” themselves as worthy in the structure of patriarchy as the perpetrators of hegemony. Kimmel argues that beginning in the 1970s, fewer and fewer positive representations of masculinity existed due to the shift in masculine culture after the Vietnam War. Since veterans struggled to find employment and maintain economic stability, Kimmel argues that masculinity was in somewhat of a crisis due to the cultural expectations of men. For example, Kimmel uses examples from *All in the Family*, *The Deer Hunter*, and *Star Trek* as ways to discuss “the growing crisis of masculinity” (191). Through these media representations, Kimmel sees the need for masculinity studies as a field and indirectly attributes its emergence from tension around the state of masculinity at this time. Kimmel’s argument provides room for looking at high school television programs because he only focuses on adult masculinity and does not interrogate representations of teenage masculinity. Even though his piece is meant to be an intervention into sociological scholarship on masculinity, he nods to media representation in his analysis. Furthermore, he only looks at adult men and how his theory of “the self-made man” affects these representations of masculinity (17).

Despite the importance of Connell and Kimmel’s works in the inauguration of the shift toward masculinity studies from queer theory, their works focus only on the hegemonic discourse of masculinity and do not allow for diversity within the term masculinity or masculinities. Furthermore, their works centers on ethnography and social science research and does not engage with scholarship in the humanities. Masculinity

studies should be and continues to be developing into an interdisciplinary field that focuses on masculinity as a spectrum and a diverse identity rather than a fixed gender expression associated exclusively with men.

As masculinity studies emerged as a field, gender theorists began to question the discourse around hegemonic masculine representations and how masculinity is a more complex identity than it has been treated by theorists. For example, Judith (who now identifies as Jack) Halberstam discusses female and lesbian expressions of masculinity and the fluidity of gender identity in her book *Female Masculinity*. She builds from Butler's theories of gender performativity and interrogates the lack of inclusion of female masculinities within masculinity studies. Halberstam asks the question, "why do we still operate in a world that assumes that people who are not male are female, and people who are not female are male?" ("An Introduction to Female Masculinities" 365). Since gender is performative, masculinity cannot be solely expressed by people who identify as men and is a concept that has more fluidity across the gender spectrum. Furthermore, Halberstam argues that the reason that female masculinity is a threat to men due to a correlation between what is positive and what is masculine and that women continue to be seen as negative in social spaces. Even though Halberstam's works pose some problems around his use of the word "transgender" to describe people who deviate from the cisgender norms, Halberstam's works pave the way for more complex studies of masculinities and encourage a more inclusive approach when it comes to the issue of gender identity ("Global Masculinities" 347). Furthermore, Halberstam's academic background is in English and American studies and he integrates cultural theory, film and

media, rhetoric, and transnational studies into masculinity studies, which suggests the interdisciplinary potential of the field.

Lastly, the lack of attention to sexuality and race in masculinity studies are other problems that were critiqued upon the field's emergence. Men who did not identify as heterosexual and white felt that the field did not integrate their identities and the diversity in experience when adding these intersections of race and sexuality into the concept of masculinity. Even though queer theorists' interventions into masculinity studies included sexuality, the focus within masculinity studies originally shifted away from queer sexualities and to heterosexuality. Historically, according to Connell, "from the point of view of hegemonic masculinity, the potential for homoerotic pleasure was expelled from the masculine and located in a deviant group, symbolically assimilated to women or to beats...heterosexuality became a required part of manliness" ("History of Masculinity" 253). Even though masculinity studies wished to deviate from hegemonic masculine norms, gay men still felt that they were being left out of the conversation. Tim Edwards, a key theorist in gay masculinity studies, points out that gay men's manifestation of masculinity:

is far more complex: The male, in possibly still identifying as masculine, but strongly undermined by stereotypes and attitudes to the contrary, desires what he perhaps still is or wants to be, which is also masculine. Or, to put it more simply, in relation to homosexuality, desire and identification become, if not the same, then certainly less distinct. (51)

The relationship between hegemonic masculinity and homosexuality created tension between scholars who wished to focus on the condition of being heterosexual in society and how heterosexual men still most often cannot live up to the social constructs of masculinity and media representations of masculinity. Gay masculinities have gained much more scholarly attention through scholars such as Rachel Adams, Ken Plummer, and many others. Furthermore, academic journals such as *The Gay and Lesbian Quarterly* (GLQ) continue to feature the works of the scholars listed above in their special editions.

In this thesis, the inclusion of queer sexualities is crucial in my analysis in order to look at the queerness of heterosexual masculinity in *Boy Meets World* and *Dawson's Creek*. Since the construct of sexuality is often what it “is not,” and how non-heteronormative sexualities deviate from hegemonic ideology, an understanding of the tension between masculinity studies scholars and queer studies scholars is important in putting these fields in conversation with each other in media content analysis. In this analysis, I will be questioning what about these characters is not heterosexual by social standards? What is queer about these male characters? How are these characters “made” masculine within the hegemonic narrative of the show despite the queer emotional intimacies that take place among the straight identified male characters? This framework in queer masculinity studies will be crucial in formulating answers to these questions.

Even though sexuality continues to gain more scholarly attention within masculinity studies, men of color still felt that they were not represented within the field

and I argue that much work still needs to be done in this area. In *White Guys: Studies in Postmodern Domination & Difference*, Fred Pfeil writes:

there is one white straight masculinity, and it is bad...but even if we grant the doubtful possibility that any group of men has the freedom and power to author a new gender script...it is by no means clear to me that there is much room within progressive culture for any version of white straight masculinity to take its place in the ensemble of other racial, sexual, and gender identities as 'simply one identity among others (ix).

Pfeil discusses the need for masculinity to be more inclusive of intersecting identities (race, sexuality, gender identity); however, he sees the systematic barriers that cause these problems and is not hopeful for resolution. Pfeil's argument is based in scholarly facts based on academic works before his piece and afterwards. For example, Michael E Messner focuses on masculinity and sports in his piece "Still A Man's World? Studying masculinity and Sport" and he concludes by saying "I hope that the underlying question of dynamic power relations between women and men, and among various groups of men, will remain foundational in studies of sport and gender" (321). Unfortunately, he never mentions race in his analysis, which weakens his interrogation of sports culture. Even though white men partake in many sports, African American men continue to dominate in sports organizations such as the National Basketball Association (NBA) (Smith 248). Sociologist Earl Smith's work on the institution of sports and racial identities within that institution has brought more attention to looking at race and masculinity. Even though this aspect of Smith's work focuses mostly on sports, his scholarship shows the racial

gaps within masculinity studies and how the field was and continues to center on white men. Sports are just one of many examples where race has not been part of the discussion on masculinity.

In this thesis, an acknowledgement of the lack of attention to race in masculinity studies correlates with this topic because all of the male characters are white due to their white privilege there are no discussions around race in their relationships. Roof's argument about the compulsory heterosexuality of narratives is also linked to white privilege and institutionalized racism because arguably whiteness is the structure for all narratives as well. In *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, Toni Morrison makes a similar argument about the whiteness of the literary canon. She writes:

It is interesting, not surprising, that the arbiters of critical power in American literature seem to take pleasure in...their ignorance of African-American texts.

What is surprising is that their refusal to read black texts—a refusal that makes no disturbance in their intellectual life—repeats itself when they reread the traditional, established works of literature worthy of their attention. (1009)

Morrison's criticisms of the American literary canon coincide with Roof's theory of sexuality and narrative because they both convey how white, heterosexual writers and narrative structures dominate the canon and leave little room for writers with marginalized identities to make contributions to the canon.

In both *Dawson's Creek* and *Boy Meets World*, there are only two characters who identify as people of color. Moreover, in both shows these characters minimal roles. Even though scholarship in race studies is not the focal point of this analysis, the lack of

attention of race in the narratives cannot be ignored when discussing representations of masculinity.

Men's Friendships-the Taboo of Masculinity Studies

Scholarship on men's friendships began in the early 1990s with scholars such as Peter Nardi, Helen M Reid, and Gary Alan Fine in the social sciences. Even though these works have been in print for nearly twenty years, men's friendships continue to be an overlooked topic within masculinity studies. Often, the assumption is that scholars have to interrogate the term "friendship" before discussing the gendering of this relationship; however, women's relationships continue to be a research topic for people within gender studies. Men's friendships are a taboo within American culture because discussion around hegemonic masculinity is always a taboo in discussing social constructs of gender. Michael Deangelis points out that these intimate relationships are more recently termed as "bromances". He defines the term as "an emotionally intense bond between presumably straight males who demonstrate an openness to intimacy that they neither regard, acknowledge, avow, nor express sexually" (1). Deangelis argues that when media represents these types of friendships that audiences question men's sexuality, which is why the term needed to be created. Deangelis's framework within media studies will be a major focus in this thesis because his definition of the "bromance" is a central theme in the relationships between Cory and Shawn and Dawson and Pacey. These men do not name these relationships themselves, nor do they engage in sexual activities with each other, but these relationships are homosocial and queer heterosexual masculinity through men's emotionally intimate attachments to each other.

In his article “Seamless Souls,” Peter Nardi points out that for men, emotionally intimate friendships parallels with homosexuality which makes most men skeptical to engage in emotionally intimate relationships with other men (1). Homophobia becomes one of the major barriers for men in their interactions with other men. Since society perpetuates the discourse of heterosexism for males, men struggle to form bonds with other men. Jammie Price points out that “expressing feelings of vulnerability and affection are outside the limits of most straight men’s friendships” (6). In most cases, men’s homophobic fears cause them to repress affection for other men and actually in most cases only reveal emotions to their female friends (Price 2). Furthermore, Seidler argues American men prefer friendships with women and do not find satisfaction in their relationships with other men (Seidler “Rejection, Vulnerability and Friendship” 18). Due to social constructs of hegemonic masculinity, men prefer these relationships because women do not always hold them to the same standard of masculinity that their male friends do. Even though women do have the capability of perpetuating this discourse, men do not see them as the gatekeepers to their sense of masculinity in the same way as other men. Furthermore, when men engage in cross-gender friendships, people often assume there is a romantic or sexual attraction to the women involved (Swain 154). This observation presents a barrier for men’s relationships with women. Scholarship on men’s friendships indicates that social barriers with other men present a stronger divide between men than sexual attraction between men and women. Reid and Fine point out there are “four barriers to intimacy among males: competition, homophobia, aversion to

vulnerability and openness and lack of role models” (138). These factors greatly shape the difficulty of men’s friendships in U.S. culture.

Competition, I would argue, is the most prevalent reason for men’s friendships posing challenges in U.S. culture. In their interviews, Reid and Fine convey that men discuss their incomes and their accomplishments in sports and other venues with each other and discuss more personal and emotional issues with women (139). These discussions convey how men rehearse their scripts for conversations with other men in order to make themselves look like the ideal “man” in their society. Even though Sedgwick would argue that men feel the need to have these bonds with each other, the social barriers that Reid and Fine mention present complications in men’s homosocial desire for one another. Seidler argues that male voices dominate social theory and that this limited representation of voices present some of the problematic competition that exists among intrapersonal relationships with other men because a man’s perspective is the only one given. He discusses how men have always claimed authority within philosophy (Hegel, Kant etc.) and that men often “silence” others (women) due to this claim of reason (*Unreasonable Men: Masculinity and Social Theory* 3). This need to claim dominance within social theory translates not only within men’s interactions with women, but more importantly men’s interactions with other men. The need to compete for the social ideal of masculinity becomes the major failure in men’s relationships with other men.

As Reid and Fine point out, homophobia within the white, heterosexual male community presents another social barrier for men engaging in friendships with other

men. Frank Leib argues that “the fear of male companionship, homophobia, is not primarily a fear of sex but a fear of love and intimacy of every kind” (2). Even though Leib believes that this type of bond between men “is psychologically healthy and biologically normal,” other scholars see homophobia as a major barrier in men’s friendships with other men (2). Any presence of femininity because of the gender binary raises a risk for men in performing hegemonic masculinity. Since manifesting emotion (especially toward other men) is deemed feminine, homophobia becomes a regular social construct that prevents men from sharing emotional intimacy (Migliaccio 228-229)

Even though this thesis is a media textual analysis, the work on men’s friendships in the social sciences provides a much needed structure for looking at the dearth of scholarship in the humanities on men’s emotional intimacies with other men within a heteronormative narrative structure. By looking at the barriers that cause men to not have these types of friendships with other men, we see the importance of looking at the representations of men’s friendships in the media. This framework in men’s friendships provides foundational texts for looking at the male emotional intimacies that exists in *Boy Meets World* and *Dawson’s Creek*.

Media Theory and Televisions Studies:

Setting the Foundation for Media Analysis

Television studies as an academic discipline needs acknowledging because this thesis will use masculinity studies as a reaction to media representation of straight masculinities. According to Robert Allen, television studies emerged around what John Corner calls “the anxiety” around its effects” (qtd on 3). Allen argues, “the nature of this

anxiety has differed from country to country, but the rapid growth of television systems after World War II and the location of the experience of television in the home provoked concerns regarding its influence on political processes, social relations, and cultural values” (3). The 1950s and 1960s marks the beginning of the field according to Allen because the easy access to television by the public increased the need to study its effect on culture more broadly. On the other hand, Raymond Williams, one of the forefathers of the field, and Edyrn Williams write that strides toward television as we know it today were beginning as early as the nineteenth century (7). Television studies is a interdisciplinary field that pulls on the humanities and often the social sciences when discussing effects on institutions and individuals. On the other hand, television studies is also an important intervention into the already interdisciplinary field of cultural studies. For example, John Fiske writes in *Television Culture*:

television is a complex cultural medium that is full of contradictory impulses which enable it, on the one hand, to make profits for, and promote the ideology of, the few, but, on the other hand, to promote an oppositional, intransigent, or, at least, *different* cultural capital for the subordinated groups that constitute the majority of our divided society.

(20)

With this perspective in mind, viewers can see what television studies offers as an academic discipline because its representation is crucial in studying conceptions of self, power and privilege, and cultural capital. Furthermore, television studies is not merely a subset of film studies. Even though in research methods some of the same processes are

used as far as careful textual analysis, television studies relies much more on cultural genre theory than film studies. Jason Mittell writes in “A Cultural Approach to Television Genre Theory” that “by first examining genres as cultural categories...we can arrive at a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of how genres work to shape our media experiences, how media work to shape our social realities, and how generic categories can then be used to ground our study of media texts (179). Mittell says that “genres are not neutral categories but are situated within larger systems of power and thus come ‘fully loaded’ with political implications (178). Television studies cannot be divorced from its relationship with systems of power and cultural capital. Furthermore, Mittell’s point illustrates the political agenda that is often associated with television programs which makes a cultural study of television a more illuminating method than focusing strictly on content analysis. Gerald Sussman writes “from working-class, ethnic and gender perspectives, American television’s portrayal’s of social conflict bear a heavy textual imprint of white male corporate sponsorship and supremacy” (8). Television programs perpetuate systems of oppression through lack of representation and misrepresentation of minority groups, which makes systems of sexism, classism, racism, and heterosexism, accessible from everyone’s living room.

Another branch of television studies is the study of television as an institution rather than simply a television program. Jonathan Gray and Amanda D. Lotz define the institution as television as:

[including] studies of the processes and entities involved in making and distributing television as well as its related technologies. Institutions include the

production studios...the networks or channels...the global conglomerates that own studies and networks..and the regulatory and governmental agencies that allocate government dollars and set rules and policies (90).

In this context, television studies cannot be separated from the political economy that creates its structure. Since television networks are at the mercy of their governments and their producers, this structure needs to be taken into consideration when looking at programs.

Within television studies just as women's studies, people of other marginalized groups began to question the invalidation of their identities in television. Just as most scholarship around gender, gender representation began with the second wave feminists around shows like *Leave it to Beaver*, *I Love Lucy*, and others that represented middle-class white families. According to Julie D'Acci, "this was soon followed by work on representations of masculinity, and on representations of non-normative sexualities...[and] identities involving race, ethnicity, class, age and sexuality" (92). Since television studies focuses heavily on representations, marginalized identities and the continuity of representation on television is critical in its study. Gender is crucial in looking at all levels of television studies such as reception, production, and other institutional levels. D'Acci writes, "gender cannot be analyzed in isolated 'images' alone, but must be seen as it is produced in all its specificity, in and through all the formal dimensions of television" (94). Furthermore, due to representation through television, stereotypes of gender, race, sexuality, class, and ability are created through the continuity of the same representations. Allison Griffith argues that in the 1970s, when gender

representation in television was at a turning point, “the problem with stereotypes... was that they misrepresented people’s ‘lived identities’ by falling back upon narrowly conceived preconceptions of racial, cultural and gendered difference, thus perpetuating pernicious myths about social, cultural, and racial groups” (94). Even though as Griffith points out that shows in the 1970s such as *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *Cagney and Lacy* both had feminist agendas, these points about stereotypes continue even into the twenty-first century (96).

Media representation of masculinities will be the major focus of this thesis and most of the scholarship within film and media studies that I will use focus on men’s representation within the media. The representation that producers cater towards is the majority of people who consume their project. For example, most high school television series involve white, heterosexual, middle class characters because the media reinforces the gender binary that Butler and Sedgwick critique. Furthermore, since these hegemonic identities are normalized by U.S. society, producers satisfy and shape the desires of the masses. These high school television programs mostly aired throughout the 1990s where men’s physical appearance began to be a focal point for media representation (Dotson 78). As Kim mentions in her article, many television programs use what she calls “the heterosexual script” in order to coerce women into sexual pleasure, which correlates with Roof’s framework around sexuality and narratives (154). The heteronormativity of narratives parallels with Kim’s ‘heterosexual script’ because this type of narrative structure dictates these behaviors in the characters that the show creates. With this

information in mind, we see how television has the capacity to inform social constructs of masculinity.

On the other hand, this thesis specifically focuses on the implications that the male friendships in *Boy Meets World* and *Dawson's Creek* have on masculinity studies, queer studies, and the queering of straight masculinities more specifically. Even though television studies provides a lens for looking at the representation of these relationships in the media, this thesis serves as an intervention into queer masculinity studies and how media representation is crucial within this academic subset of gender studies.

Looking At Previous Conversations:

Scholarship on *Boy Meets World* and *Dawson's Creek*

In my research on *Boy Meets World*, I have found that virtually no scholars have done any critical studies on the show. In *Bullies and Mean Girls in Popular Culture*, Patricia A. Opplinger mentions the show when she discusses familial bullying between Cory and his brother Eric (133). But, Opplinger only uses the show as a small sample for a much larger argument about “bully” characters in popular culture and does not provide a critical analysis of the show. Mostly news and magazine articles comprise the writing that is out there about the series, which I will include in my chapter on the show. Most recently the creators of *Boy Meets World* released a sequel series titled *Girl Meets World* in which we follow the story of Cory and Topanga's daughter, which provides a shift in the focus on male characters in *Boy Meets World*; an analysis of this show is not the central focus of this thesis.

Dawson's Creek has much more scholarship readily available in film and media studies and television studies. Most of the scholarship focuses on the female characters and the mainstreaming of gay male characters in the series. Lori Binding focuses on the intersections of race, gender, class, and sexuality in the series and the power structures that exist between the characters. In terms of race, Bindig focuses on the lack of people of color in the series. We only see one person of color, Joey's sister's boyfriend, Bodie. Bindig argues that his presence informs the working class status of the Potters, which is problematic since it is the only representation of people of color in the series (80-81). More broadly, Bindig's work on the intersecting identities of the characters illustrates the need for more work to be done on social justice topics. Despite Bindig's focus on intersecting identities, she does not hone in on the male intimacies with other men except with the character, Jack McPhee, the only openly gay character. She mostly discusses patriarchal power and how Jack's sexuality and the female characters' sexuality is or is not affected by this system of oppression. Bindig's reading of the show provides space for an intervention into the sexuality and friendships of the male characters. Furthermore, she does not provide a reading of Dawson's relationship with Pacey's sister, Gretchen, and Jack's role as a confidant for Dawson and Pacey, which will serve as focal points in my analysis of the show.

Shifting the focus of the scholarship on *Dawson's Creek*, Matt Hills focuses mostly on the fandom and the culture around *Dawson's Creek*. On the other hand, his analysis does provide insight in furthering the academic conversation on men's intimacy in the show. He argues that "although they may occasionally *behave* in irresponsible or

immature ways, their talk is always resolutely mature and responsible in its pursuit of open channels of communication and reflexive self-understanding” (58). The teenage characters in *Dawson’s Creek* are seen as much more progressive in their maturation process than the characters in *Boy Meets World* due to the intentional focus on sexuality and social issues. With the introduction of Jack McPhee, people view *Dawson’s Creek* as socially more inclusive. Since this show debuted during the turn of the twenty-first century, it does make sense that the producers would attempt to intersect other identities into the show homosexuality was becoming more accepted in the larger US culture. In order to mainstream queer issues, the producers leave out people of color and equate them with lower class people, which reflects a problematic representation of marginalized identities.

Furthermore, in looking at the queerness of straight masculinity, one must interrogate the scholarship on the only openly gay character in either series, Jack McPhee, which is one of the major foci of the critical analysis of *Dawson’s Creek*. According to Mareike Jenner, “*Dawson’s Creek* links in with a broader television discourse where homosexuality becomes increasingly ‘normalized’ in popular culture and the radical potential of a kiss between two teenage boys is significantly reduced” (132). Jack and Ethan’s kiss arguably shifts away from heteronormative narrative structures; however, as I will argue this normalization of queer sexualities does not create room for Jack as a gay man, but causes him to assimilate to heterosexual culture and does not change the overall structure of the narrative. Also, this scholarship puts Jack in isolation as a focal point of analysis and does little to put him in dialogue with the other

protagonists. Furthermore, the scholarship on queerness in the show only focuses on Jack as an openly gay character and not on the queering of Dawson and Pacey's relationship, which will be the major focus of my analysis of this show.

Methodology and Chapter Outline

My research will include the above material in a more comprehensive analysis. As mentioned in the literature review, I will incorporate masculinity studies, queer theory, and film and media studies, with a nod to television studies as the theoretical framework for my analysis. This thesis will focus on close readings of media texts, but more importantly in theoretical scholarship that provides a lens for readings these texts. Most importantly, I will rely on close readings of the male friendships in *Boy Meets World* and *Dawson's Creek* as the major research component of my thesis. In Chapter 1, I will focus on my analysis of male intimacies in *Boy Meets World*. I will choose episodes from Shawn's transition from Cory's home to Mr. Turner's home and during Cory and Topanga's wedding planning to interrogate he and Cory's intimacies and manifestations of queer masculinity. In asking questions about the shows and coding the samples I choose, I will focus on episodes where Cory and Shawn seem to interact with each other while the rest of the characters fall to the backdrop of the show and question why this happens in this moment. Why at Cory and Topanga's wedding does the ceremony focus almost entirely on the fragmentation of Shawn and Cory's relationship? What does this focus say about the queering of their representations of heterosexual masculinity? Lastly, what is the significance of the heteronormative narrative structure

despite these emotional intimacies? These questions in conjunction with their relevance to Sedgwick, Heasley, Deangelis, and Roof's theories will serve as the focal points of my analysis of Cory and Shawn's friendship in the series.

In Chapter 2, I will focus on my reading of male friendships in *Dawson's Creek*. I will choose episodes that focus on Dawson Leery and Pacey Whitter's friendship as well as the brief intersection of Jack into the erotic triangle involving Joey Potter. As in my analysis of *Boy Meets World*, I will choose episodes that focus on Dawson and Pacey's frustrations with each other in relation to their romantic attachments to Joey.

Furthermore, I use Sedgwick's theory of the erotic triangle and male homosocial desire inform Dawson and Pacey's relationship when Dawson dates Gretchen, Pacey's sister. My selection of these episodes, I will choose ones that focus on Dawson and Pacey's relationships with Joey, Dawson's relationship with Gretchen, and Jack's relationship with Joey and looks at the parallels between the representation of homosocial desire in these shows. Lastly, I will choose episodes where Jack becomes the confidant for Dawson and Pacey and how Joey and Gretchen's roles in their lives will affect their friendship with each other.

Also in in my research methods, I will use Sedgwick's theory of homosocial desire, Roof's theory of sexuality and narratives, and Deangelis's theory of the bromance as methods for understanding my readings of *Boy Meets World* and *Dawson's Creek*. When applying these theories to these media texts, I will pose the following questions: How do the male protagonists develop erotic triangles between them and the female characters? How and why are the female characters not the underlying focus of the

tension created between the male characters? Despite these manifestations of queering straight masculinities, how do these male characters maintain a heteronormative narrative? Lastly, what do these television shows say about the queering of straight masculinity before 2000 (and early 2000) in teenage sitcoms and soap operas and how does that inform media scholarship on the subject in more contemporary television? With these questions in mind, I will not only provide a new reading of these shows, but also an intervention and application into these theories that are integral to discussing the queering of straight masculinity.

Boy Meets The Queer World: Male Homosociality and Heteronormative Narrative in *Boy Meets World*

Introduction

Boy Meets World (*BMW* moving forward), produced by Michael Jacobs, aired its first episode on 1993 and ran until 2000. The show centers on the daily life of Cornelius (Cory) Matthews played by Ben Savage as he matures from a middle school boy through college. The main foci of the plot are on Cory's relationship with his parents, his brother and sister, Eric and Morgan respectively, his relationship and eventual marriage to Topanga, and his timeless friendship with Shawn Hunter. The show continues to be popular fifteen years later on networks such as ABC family, TBS, and MTV.

Furthermore, in 2013, a sequel titled *Girl Meets World* aired that focuses on Cory and Topanga's daughter, which reinvigorated the fandom around the show. Busis states that the reason for its popularity is that it "was a refreshing change of pace from the cheap laughs that dominated the rest of ABC's TGIF lineup...It never talked down to its young audience. It didn't sugarcoat the tough parts of growing up—parents losing their jobs or friends getting rejected from colleges" (1).

Despite the shift from the utopia of shows such as *Saved By The Bell*, that focused more on the archetypes of high school students (jocks, nerds, cheerleaders, class presidents), *BMW* presents a heteronormative narrative structure in a similar way to its

predecessors and does not leave room for any non-heteronormative behavior to take place at least on the surface. When I use the term heteronormative narrative, I refer to the protection of traditional heterosexual relationships and the focus on these relationships despite any queer readings that may be offered about the narrative. I am referring to when Cory marries Topanga, his middle school sweetheart, and when Shawn develops an intimate relationship with Angela in their college years. From the beginning of the show, Cory's need to find women attractive and develop romantic relationships with them as a middle school boy illustrates the heteronormativity of the plot. Even though the focus of the plot is his maturation as a teenager into an adult, this narrative of his sexuality becomes the major construction of the narrative. Judith Roof argues in *Come As You Are: Sexuality & Narrative* that all narrative structures are heteronormative and queerness as the center of the plot is virtually impossible when looking at how society constructs these narratives: "The connection between human heterosexual reproduction and capitalist reproduction provides an irresistible merger of the family and state, life and livelihood, heterosexual order and profit whose formative presence and naturalized reiterations govern the conceptions, forms, logic, and operation of narrative" (xvii). In looking at Roof's complication of the heteronormative narrative in relation to capitalism, it would be easy to use this argument as a means for interrogating all narratives, and media and literary narratives more specifically and not complicate her analysis. Roof's analysis does point out the heteronormativity of narratives, but more specifically, her argument illustrates the virtual impossibility of a queer structure of a narrative, despite any presence of queer relationships in a narrative. As I will argue, *BMW's* narrative maintains

a heteronormative structure even though Cory and Shawn convey representations of queer straight masculinities through their interactions with each other.

In *BMW*, the narrative is constructed as heteronormative because no queer romantic relationships develop within the context of the narrative, which correlates with Roof's argument about the absence of non-heteronormative sexualities. Despite this absence, the show does present male homosocial desire between Cory and Shawn's characters. In contrast to shows that precede *BMW* such as *Saved By The Bell* that showed the development of a friend group across genders, *BMW* mainly focuses on the development of this relationship rather than the development of a friend group across genders. Even though both of these characters identify as heterosexual, they present a queerness of straight masculinity a topic that is only recently being discussed in scholarship in masculinity studies. Despite their heterosexual identities, I am focusing on the queerness of their emotional attachment to each other, despite their heterosexual identities.

Despite the dearth of scholarship on the show itself, the queering of straight masculinity is discussed in relation to post 2000 teenage shows. For example, Ron Becker argues that in more contemporary television, "...we see heterosexual men sometimes cautiously, sometimes uneasily, sometimes playfully, and sometimes ironically exploring and transgressing the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity long guarded by the homosexual panic" (130). Becker uses shows such as *Friends*, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, and *Jackass* to illustrate these representations of queer straight masculinity. However, his focus on twenty first century television misrepresents the

representations of queer straight masculinity by assuming this is a new phenomenon in television. I do not negate that the representation of queer straight masculinities are more prevalent in television post 2000, but these representations existed before this time.

As I will argue, in *BMW*, Cory and Shawn develop an emotionally intimate relationship with each other despite their need and regular discussion of maintaining their heterosexual identities. Sedgwick writes that “Our own society is brutally homophobic; and the homophobia directed against both males and females is not arbitrary or gratuitous, but tightly knit into the texture of family, gender, age, class, and race relations” (3-4). Sedgwick’s argument focuses on the systematic oppression of gay men through patriarchy and how this oppression breaks male homosocial bonds that she believes most men desire. In putting Sedgwick’s theory of male homosocial desire with Roof’s analysis of the heteronormativity of narratives, one can see the need for an analysis of the queerness of straight masculinity because these relationships arguably have more constraints within patriarchy because the heteronormative model of society must be first kept by men due to their positions of power. Cory and Shawn’s relationship embodies erotic homosocial characteristics that illustrate the queerness of their relationship despite the heteronormative structure of the show’s narrative. My analysis will first focus on the relationship between Cory and Shawn involving class and economic dependency in their early high school years followed by Cory’s marriage to Topanga and Shawn abdicating his role as Cory’s “best friend.”

Being Part of the Family: The Power Dynamic in Cory and Shawn’s Relationship

In the second season of *BMW*, Shawn moves out of his mom and stepdad's house and briefly moves in with Cory and his family as a way to figure out where he can live long term. Shortly after, he moves in with their teacher, Mr. Turner, because Shawn struggles with the Matthew's family rules. Even though tension grows between Cory's family and Shawn, the end of the episode illustrates Shawn's continued dependency upon Cory. In this episode specifically, Cory and Shawn refer to each other as "stray" and "housebroken" dogs to convey their family situations:

Cory: "You know what this means don't you? I mean you're not a stray anymore."

Shawn: Yeah. So what's it like to be a housebroken dog?"

Cory: It's not so bad. I mean you get your meals regular. You get your own chew toy. And if you bring in the paper, they're so thrilled.

Shawn: "What if I hate it?"

Cory: "I'll have my mom and dad put in a doggie door for you."

Shawn: "Just leave the window open."

Cory: "You got it." (Jacobs and Kelly Season 2, Episode 23)

Despite the tension that Shawn creates in Cory's home, they still remain close friends and Shawn depends on the safety net of the Matthews's home in order to move in with Mr. Turner. From the beginning of the series, the viewer sees that Shawn has a dysfunctional home situation and is raised in a low-income family. On the other hand,

Cory lives in an upper middle class family where his father is a grocery store manager while his mother is able to work part time and manage the home. Furthermore, the Matthews live in a suburban community and directly next door to Mr. Finney, Cory and Shawn's teacher and later principal. Through their social position, the Matthews are able to extend aid to Shawn in his precarious situation. Shawn turns to Cory as a means of support when he cannot seek refuge with his family, which creates an unequal power dynamic in their relationship. In school, Shawn gains popularity as "the cool kid" while their peers still see Cory as an average, nerdy teenager; however, when it comes to necessities, Cory has the class privilege that Shawn lacks. In this context, Cory becomes the dominant figure in their relationship. Moreover, the relationship becomes more than just interactions in high school hallways, but one of dependence and more intimate attachment. This relationship now presents a level of intimacy that is not seen up to this point in the narrative.

In Michael Deangelis's book *Reading the Bromance: Homosocial Relationships in Film and Television*, he conceptualizes the term "bromance" and its representations in post 1950 film and television. He says:

Bromance facilitates intimate bondings between heterosexual men—bondings that are enabled by a newfound heteronormative comfort with a more-present-than-ever homosexuality, and that manage this comfort and this homosexuality by attempting to align both of them as closely as possible with the workings of heteronormativity even as they

simultaneously reveal the instability of heteronormativity itself as an identity or practice. (16)

Shawn's brief integration into Cory's home illustrates Deangelis's concept of bromance because despite their maintaining of their heterosexuality, they create a friendship that embodies a power dynamic and relies on dependence and provision. For example, Cory's mother buys Shawn new clothes and sews his jeans that have holes, which illustrates the necessities that the Matthews provide to Shawn. In this scene, viewers see how class and masculinity become evident in the show because Shawn relies on Cory's parents to support him when his parents vacate his life. Cory's parents serve as a surrogate for the heteronormative relationship that is created between Cory and Shawn. Even though Shawn is seen as the more "masculine" character, Cory, through his parents, now becomes the economic provider for Shawn because due to his family situation cannot provide for himself. Deangelis's point about "the heteronormative comfort" and its instability manifests itself in Shawn's dependence of Cory's family and how it does not work long term in their friendship (16). Shawn and Cory illustrate a heteronormative relationship, but also show its limitations due to their heterosexual identities and the overall heteronormative narrative structure.

Furthermore, in this part of the narrative, Cory and Shawn illustrate queer straight masculinities through this relationship dynamic. They do consistently represent the dominant form of heteronormativity in their interactions with each other. Robert Heasley discusses typologies of queer straight masculinities and how society does not have a language for these expressions (311). One of the typologies he discusses is "committed

straight queers” who in public are comfortable and intentional with queer gestures toward their male friends; however, they may not wish to experiment with sexual performance (317). Even though Cory and Shawn do not embody this type of queer straight masculinity, they engage in a relationship that transgresses male gender boundaries. Now, they are intentionally invested (or at least for a period of time) in every aspect of each other’s lives. They now live together and economically depend on Cory’s parents. Also, they still attend school together, which makes their ability to spend time apart virtually impossible.

Despite the heteronormative structure of the narrative, Cory and Shawn provide a representation of an alternative form of masculinity through Shawn’s dependence on Cory and his family. According to R.W. Connell, “to recognize more than one kind of masculinity is only the first step. We have to examine the relationships between them” (76). As mentioned previously, before this shift in living arrangements, Shawn is portrayed as embodying a more socially acceptable masculine male identity and regularly takes risks in his school behavior to maintain this type of masculinity. Even though Cory is not labeled effeminate, he is not taken seriously by his other male peers and is deemed a socially awkward boy who does not do well in his coursework. Both Cory and Shawn embody differing masculinities from each other. Although, I would argue neither subscribe solely to hegemonic norms, which challenges the heteronormative structure of the narrative.

Going back to Roof’s argument, she writes that narrative is, “already [a] heterosexual ideology that presents a critical difficulty in even thinking about them

outside that same set of ideologies” (xxvii). Cory and Shawn’s relationship pushes Roof’s argument a step further because the queering of their straight masculinities does provide a mode of analysis for queering the heteronormative narrative structure. Their relationship allows room for a queer reading because they are intimately connected in their friendship through their emotional attachments to each other, while they both maintain heterosexuality as the dominant narrative. Roof’s argument insinuates that it is virtually impossible to break away from this heteronormative narrative because this structure is so engrained in society.

On the other hand, Cory and Shawn convey a sense of masculinity that does not consistently correlate with hegemonic masculinity. Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (77). First, there are no women involved in the context of Shawn and Cory’s relationship when they are living together which transgresses the gender subordination that Connell mentions. Second, their relationship with each other does not take on one specific power structure (gender and class). Instead, due to the context, the dominant figure changes in their relationship, which queers their manifestations of masculinity. Cory and Shawn express queer straight masculinities, but in a heteronormative structure that they actively wish to maintain. This narrative provides a segue for looking at Roof’s argument because the expressions of masculinity in the show do not always coincide with the dominant

heteronormative narrative. On the other hand, the goal is still to maintain the heteronormative structure.

The Erotic Triangle of *Boy Meets World*: Where does Topanga enter the conversation?

Early in the first season, Cory meets Topanga, a middle school girl who is interested in social justice issues, specifically the environment and gender equality. Topanga's character provides another shift in the representation of young women in high school television series because she does not strive to attain the beauty standards that society imposes on her and she does not prioritize finding a boyfriend. Cory regularly makes fun of her, especially around her (at the time) radical beliefs. As they become more familiar with each other and mature, they later begin dating and marry at the end of the series. In looking at Cory and Topanga's relationship in the context of this analysis, the question must be posed: Where does Shawn's character factor in this relationship? Sedgwick argues that often male homosocial desire involves an erotic triangle of the two men and a woman that presents tension within the relationship. She uses Rene Girard's theory of erotic triangles as a platform for her analysis:

What is most interesting for our purposes in his study is its insistence that, in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved: that the bonds of 'rivalry' and 'love,' differently as they are experienced, are equally powerful and in many senses equivalent. (21)

When Cory gathers the courage to ask Topanga on a date, Shawn asks her out instead. Even though Cory ends up dating Topanga, this instance illustrates the theory of the erotic triangle and its beginning in *BMW*. Due to Cory's devotion to Shawn up to this point, he feels betrayed when his best friend who has been his coach for dating strategies hinders his success with Topanga:

Shawn: "I asked Topanga out."

Cory: " You?"

Shawn: "You said yourself she's a woman now."

Cory: "I--I can't talk to you right now."

Shawn: "Cool." (Jacobs and Kelly Season 3, Episode 1)

The frustration does not lie with Shawn's interest (or actual disinterest) in Topanga, it is the tension caused within their friendship and Topanga becomes the object of this tension. Going back to the theorization of male friendships, Deangelis writes the:

Bromance thus maintains a dual ideological function: its mythical meaning-making strategies provide a way for straight men to be intimate, and its narrative structure serves to contain and direct this intimacy in ways that ensure its accessibility to its mainstream and heterosexual target markets while also refraining from alienating viewers who do not identify as heterosexual. (13)

Deangelis's argument focuses on narrative structure as well as audience studies while Sedgwick's argument focuses solely on narrative. However, their theories inform one another because they focus on men's need to maintain a heteronormative identity while also achieving emotional intimacy with each other. Topanga's objectification in the

narrative creates a tension in the relationship due to Cory's investment in her as well as his investment in Shawn. Topanga's mere presence maintains heteronormativity because on the surface, the viewer sees the tension being solely about a competition for Topanga's affection, which secures their sexualities in the heteronormative narrative. On the other hand, the tension is not really about who will win Topanga in the end, but how Cory and Shawn will mend their relationship despite this agitation.

At the end of the episode, the viewer finds that Shawn's date with Topanga is a setup to bring Topanga and Cory together. The two friends immediately make amends and Cory begins dating Topanga. Even though the episode ends with a positive resolution for Shawn and Cory's friendship, the erotic triangle is created in this episode and becomes more intense as Cory and Topanga's relationship develops.

The theme of the erotic triangle does not leave the narrative until the end of the series. Before and during the ceremony, Cory and Shawn argue about the future of their friendship:

Shawn: "Cory, has it occurred to you even a little bit that, as far as you and me go, today is the last day that we're ever gonna be 'Cory and Shawn?' You know? 'Shawn and Cory?...Im tryin' to talk to you"

Cory: "I don't wanna talk about it now."

Shawn: "Why not?!" (Jacobs and Kelly, Season 7, Episode 7).

During the wedding, they publicly continue the conversation and cry about how Cory and Topanga's marriage will change their friendship and engage in a dramatic dialogue at the altar. Even though parts of this interaction are humorous, this scene illustrates their

intimate connection to each other and how Topanga's presence threatens their relationship. In this scene, Topanga only briefly speaks and becomes white noise in the background of the Cory and Shawn's dialogue. This expression of emotion that begins with Shawn, the character who seems to hold the dominant masculine ideal, conveys the queerness of these men's manifestations of masculinity because they openly engage in this emotional battle with each other and are not critiqued by any other characters. Cory's family and friends try to break up their fight, but they do not express any feelings of awkwardness about Shawn and Cory's emotions, which conveys Becker's points about the acceptance of this type of masculinity. Moreover, this normalization of this emotional behavior conveys Heasley's points about what queer straight masculinity is: "queering masculinity is not just gender bending. Males with long hair and multiple earrings may be playing with their presentations of being male, but it is different from the male whose attitudes and behaviors toward other males disrupt homophobia and heteronormativity" (319-320). Even though, Heasley's point sheds light on this behavior, he feels that the queering of straight masculinity disrupts heteronormativity through these queer behaviors. I agree that heteronormativity is interrogated through Cory and Shawn's relationship, hence my writing of this thesis, but the heteronormative narrative structure stays in place because Cory chooses Topanga despite his acknowledgement of how their marriage will change his relationship with Shawn.

When Cory and Topanga marry, during his best man toast, Shawn says to Cory "I am no longer your best friend" and alludes to Topanga as the person who should fill this role (Jacobs and Kelly Season 7, Episode 7), Even though the relationship between

Shawn and Cory does not seem to be over at this point, their emotional attachment to each other changes due to Cory's commitment to Topanga. Yet again, Sedgwick's theory of the erotic triangle and its effects on male homosocial desire plays out in this interaction. Even though Shawn's toast is meant to be a sentiment for Cory and Topanga's life together, it does illustrate the tension that Topanga's placement in the narrative creates between Cory and Shawn. Furthermore, the scene transfers the attention from Cory and Topanga's ceremony to Shawn's feelings, which illustrates Sedgwick's argument on the strength of the male homosocial bond as equal to the romantic attachment between the man and woman in the given scenario.

On the other hand, the heteronormative ending begs the questions: What does this say about the queerness of straight masculinity in the series? Roof's argument proves true in the ending because the narrative maintains its heteronormative structure through Cory and Topanga's marriage and Shawn essentially leaving the scene. Shawn's turning over of his emotional attachment to Cory to Topanga queers his masculinity because the relationship was much more than high school boys hanging out in study hall. It was an emotional attachment to each other that became an integral part of both Cory and Shawn's lives. This concluding remark illustrates that both Cory and Shawn's manifestations of masculinity do indeed transgress hegemonic masculine norms. On the other hand, the narrative remains heteronormative because both men maintain their heterosexual identities, which they desire to keep throughout the series. The series thus allows room for these queer representations of straight masculinity to exist as long as they do not shift from the dominant narrative structure. Even though the viewer does not

have evidence that the relationship between Cory and Shawn is over, the relationship changes as a means to maintain the heteronormative narrative structure that according to Roof continues to dominate narratives.

Conclusion

Cory and Shawn's relationship serves as a counternarrative to Ron Becker's argument about the representations of queer straight masculinity in popular teenage television. Even though these representations of masculinity may be more frequent in television today, these types of relationships existed before the turn of the century. Moreover, *BMW* presents a heteronormative narrative structure and maintains this structure despite queering the straight masculinities of Cory and Shawn. This relationship serves as a precursor for what Becker presents in his analysis of post 2000 television, but this relationship cannot divorce itself from the heteronormative narrative and can only exist as long as the dominant narrative remains heteronormative. Cory and Shawn normalize emotional attachments to each other due to the lack of response from the other characters about their confessions to each other; however, they still maintain a heteronormative narrative by continuing with a heterosexual union.

Roof, Sedgwick, and Deangelis's theories of sexuality, narrative, and male homosocial desire intertwine together to present a frame of analysis for looking at the queerness of straight masculinity and how these representations play out in media narratives. On the other hand, their theories focus on heterosexual men's interactions with other heterosexual men. What happens when an openly gay man becomes part of the equation? How does the erotic triangle function when a gay man is pulled into the mix?

Lastly, how does the queerness of straight masculinity take form in heterosexual men's interactions with gay men? In the following chapter, the analysis will focus on the interconnection of Roof's theory of sexuality and narrative, Sedgwick's theory of the integration of male homosocial and heteronormative erotic triangles, and Deangelis's theories of the bromance in film and television in a reading of *Dawson's Creek* with specific attention to the connections between Dawson, Pacey, and Jack.

A Love Triangle Named Joey Potter: Homoeroticism, Heteronormativity, and Desire in *Dawson's Creek*

Introduction

After *Boy Meets World* made its debut in 1993, other high school television series such as *Beverly Hills 90210* and *Dawson's Creek* began to air as part of this trend. *Dawson's Creek* premiered on Warner Brothers in 1998 and especially caught the public's interest by introducing the first openly gay character, Jack McPhee, to this target audience. Moreover, the character's acceptance and the mainstream acceptance of Jack's sexuality was groundbreaking in teenage soap operas. The show focuses on a small Massachusetts bay town, Capeside, and the life of teenage boy, Dawson Leery (played by James Van Der Beek), who aspires to be a film director and his group of friends: Pacey Whitter (played by Joshua Jackson), Joey Potter (played by Katie Holmes), Jen Lindley (played by Michelle Williams), and Jack McPhee (played by Kerr Smith). Much like *Boy Meets World*, *Dawson's Creek* is a coming of age narrative and follows the teenagers through high school into their college years with Joey and Pacey ending up in a long term relationship despite her unreconciled feelings for Dawson.

The show continues to be replayed on major television networks such as TBS and is widely popular in DVD box sets, which illustrates the continued interest in the narrative. In contrast to *Boy Meets World*, scholarship within youth and teen culture and

queer media studies has used this series as a focal point for looking at the progression of queer representation in teen media. Scholars such as Michaela D. E. Myer, Lori Bindig, and Marieke Jenner target sexual identity in the series as a critical point of analysis not only because of Jack's sexuality, but also the introduction of the teen soap opera genre through the series' strong focus on the sexuality of the teenage characters. For example, Jenner points out that the first kiss between Jack and Ethan (his first male love interest), "was not a life-altering event for United States television: there was no outrage from conservative Christian groups and the Parents Television Council's (PTC) against supposed indecency on network television were not widely publicized" (131). This lack of reaction to this kiss illustrates how the show normalizes queer manifestations of sexuality, which makes the show a radical media text for its time. In this case, the lack of attention and reaction to the kiss makes the text radical in nature because it did not cause controversy within conservative Christian audiences.

Bindig points out in her book *Dawson's Creek: A Critical Understanding* that this series was one of the inaugural media texts of the teen soap opera genre (13). Her argument focuses on the intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability status within the characters as well as how consumerism affects the representation of these identities in the series. Even though I am not focusing on a Marxist reading of the text, as she is, her points about sexuality being the main focus of the series provides room for an intervention into a discussion of queer representations of straight masculinity in the series. For example, most of the scholarly work focuses on Jack's queerness and does not interrogate the relationship between Dawson and Pacey. Furthermore, Jack is treated as

an isolated figure that is the only gay teen in the media at the time the series aired and his relationship to the two heterosexual identified characters is not addressed. In looking at Jack's relationship with Dawson and Pacey, one must ask: What function does Jack play in the narrative of Dawson and Pacey's relationship? Furthermore, how does Jack function as a queer character within the overarching heteronormative narrative? This chapter will continue with the analysis of the queering of straight masculinity through Sedgwick's theory of male homosocial desire, Roof's theory of sexuality, heteronormativity and narrative structures, and Deangelis's theory of the bromance in relation to Dawson, Pacey, and Jack's characters. Furthermore, I will focus on the erotic triangle that forms among Dawson, Pacey, and Joey (and temporarily Jack) and the one that develops between Dawson, Pacey, and Pacey's sister, Gretchen. This analysis will focus on how these relationships queer television representations of hegemonic masculinity.

Why Joey Potter?: Dawson and Pacey's Desire For Joey and Each Other

In the pilot episode, the show opens with Dawson and Joey watching a movie marathon in Dawson's room as they have done every weekend since elementary school. Joey also stays overnight at Dawson's house each weekend. During this episode, Joey leaves without explanation in a panic. The viewer then finds that Joey has romantic feelings for Dawson and does not want to maintain the same close-knit friendship that they had as children. The narrative builds around this coming of age storyline and Dawson and Joey begin dating. Even after their initial breakup, the show still adheres strictly to the erotic tension that exists between these two characters, even though they do

not marry at the end of the series at Cory and Topanga do. According to Clare Birchall, “Dawson and Joey’s ‘history’ is aggrandized and romanticized, not only by them, but by the other characters around them, including the adults” (180). Birchall’s analysis illustrates the central focus of Dawson and Joey and their romance throughout the series, which builds the narrative around heteronormativity. Roof’s theory of the heteronormativity of narrative structures provides context for reading this media text because the major plotline focuses on a heterosexual relationship that is not a committed relationship for most of its duration. In defense of her focus on the structure of narratives, Roof says:

...if narrative structure is an allusion that compensates for lack or provides a false mastery of what can never be mastered, these defenses exist because narrative is a structural defense against a chaotic world. And narrative’s structuralism, intimately linked to still prevalent structuralist ways of understanding it, may well be necessary to its ideological operation, to its incorporation and replication of the pretentiously ‘complete’ and ‘true’ structures of capitalism, religion, and the nuclear family. (xxxii)

Even though *Dawson’s Creek* does not focus on all of the issues Roof mentions (such as religion) in this passage, much of her point about the structuralist tendencies of narratives comes out in the setting up of the narrative for the series. Dawson and Joey remain close friends throughout the show’s duration, but their romantic relationship only lasts a few seasons. Despite their breakup, Dawson and Joey’s need to be conscious of

the other's feelings as they move to other romantic partners becomes a crucial element in the structure of the narrative which aligns with Roof's commentary on the inherent heteronormativity of narratives. Dawson and Joey need to keep the hope of a heteronormative ending alive in order to navigate their interactions with each other as well as the other characters in the series.

In my shift to Sedgwick's theory of homosocial desire and her emphasis on Girard's erotic triangle, the viewer can see how any disturbance to the heteronormative narrative of Dawson and Joey deserves a close analysis. In season 3, episode 20, Joey and Pacey decide that it is time to tell Dawson about their feelings for each other. Pacey offers to tell him: "Joey, It's not your responsibility. I'm the one that started this remember? I'm the one that got you into this situation...I gotta do this" (Williamson, *Dawson's Creek*). Pacey seems to take the chivalrous route in his relationship with Joey because he insists on confronting Dawson. During the confrontation scene, the viewer begins to see the relationship between Dawson and Pacey unfold in relation to their feelings for Joey more explicitly:

Pacey: "Hey, Look, I started this thing, ok? If you're gonna get angry at somebody, you get angry at me"

Dawson: "I don't think you're in any position to talk about what's fair. You were my best friend"

Pacey: "I still am."

Dawson: "I'm finding that a little hard to process right now"

Pacey: "It's the truth, Dawson."

Dawson: "So I guess it's safe to assume that friendship doesn't come above sex in your list of personal priorities"

...

Dawson: "You know what, Pacey? I feel sorry for you. Because when all this is over you're really gonna need your friends, and you're not gonna to have any. You are not gonna have a single one" (Williamson, *Dawson's Creek*).

In this dialogue, the conversation shifts its focus from Joey's need to apologize to Dawson to the interrogation of Dawson and Pacey's friendship. Dawson's insistence on discussing he and Pacey's relationship and Pacey's lack of friends moving forward insinuates a more critical focus on the homosocial relationship between these two men rather than their love for Joey. Even though after the conversation Joey follows Dawson into his room, Dawson gives her an ultimatum that she must pick one of them because she cannot have both. He does not focus solely on Joey's need to explain her feelings for Pacey, but how Dawson feels Pacey (and indirectly Joey) betrays him. This scene illustrates the beginning of the representation of the queering of straight masculinity in the series. Furthermore, despite this queer reading of straight masculinity, Dawson and Pacey's still work to maintain an overall heteronormative narrative, which is why Joey's placement in the narrative presents tension between them.

Deangelis argues that "bromance [is] a genre, as a flexible yet recognizable system in which the goals are both to retain intimacy and to contain or delimit the ways

in which this intimacy may be disseminated” (13-14). Deangelis’s argument focuses less on tense situations such as Dawson and Pacey’s; however, in this scene they illustrate the ability to express their feelings for each other without censorship. Joey does not speak during their argument, which also conveys the focus on the tainting of Dawson and Pacey’s relationship through Pacey’s relationship with Joey. According to Bindig, “It is the lovers’ triangle between Joey, Dawson, and Pacey that eventually becomes the backbone of the series. The battle for Joey promotes the hegemonic ideal as the males use violence and aggression to obtain their self-centered desires rather than Joey’s best interest” (26). Even though Bindig is referring to male competition for women, the evidence from this episode suggests that Dawson and Pacey are indeed self-centered in their desires. Joey is the object of their affection, but also the tension between both of them. Her physical presence in this scene illustrates the initial cause of the tension, but her intellectual absence from the conversation conveys the real issue, which is how Pacey’s relationship with Joey will affect Pacey and Dawson. They are more focused on how Joey affects their friendship rather than Joey’s reactions in the situation.

Both Dawson and Pacey do engage in a competition to win Joey’s affection. Although, the real tension that exists is the marring of Dawson and Pacey’s relationship. Joey chooses Pacey for her short-term future, but Dawson and Pacey still work to mend their relationship based on the erotic triangle. Yet again, as we see in *Boy Meets World*, the female character becomes the object rather than the subject of the competition because the real subject lies with the homosocial desire that exists among the male characters. Joey’s need to keep her friendship with Dawson and her desire for him to be

make amends with Pacey is not taken into account when Dawson and Pacey fight for their feelings for her, because they are not solely focused on Joey, but how Joey affects their friendship.

In looking again at Becker's analysis of contemporary masculinities in television, we see how these types of relationships manifests themselves in television in the twentieth first century through shows such as *Friends*, *Jackass*, and *Boston Legal*. Becker discusses the emotionally intimate relationships between straight men in what he calls a "post-closet era" and how the gradual acceptance of the LGBTQ community into mainstream society allows room for these relationships (121). Becker's discussion of these types of relationships does allow room for critique in his notion that these types of relationships are a new phenomenon as well as ignoring the heteronormative scripts of the narrative despite the queer representations of straight masculinity in the series he chooses. Dawson and Pacey's relationship illustrates this queering of straight masculinity not only before the some of the shows that Becker describes, but also the show maintains a heteronormative narrative which makes these narratives able to exist in mainstream media, despite the representations of queer straight masculinity.

According to Heasley, " these forms of masculinity represent something much more than just men who are 'nontraditional.' Rather, they suggest a masculinity and male heterosexuality that extends the reach of societal perceptions of either and one that for each of these males allows the poterntial for evolving a broadened definition" (319). Dawson and Pacey clearly have an emotionally intimate attachment to each other and illustrate Sedgwick's theory of the erotic triangle; however, they maintain a heterosexual

script, which allows them to manifest these types of intimacies in their interactions with each other. Heasley's points about the broadened definition of heterosexual masculinity shed light on Dawson and Pacey's friendship because at no point do they deviate from their identities as heterosexual men, which conveys how the queerness of straight masculinity deserves interrogation in this series.

And The Triangle is More Complex: Gretchen, Dawson, and Pacey

At the beginning of Season 4, Pacey's sister, Gretchen, returns from college without completing her degree and Dawson and she become romantically attached to each other. In episode 11, Dawson and Pacey go fishing and spend the evening together for the first time since the emergence of Pacey and Joey's relationship. They finally have healed some of the wounds from their tenuous relationship and want to rebuild the friendship. The conversation begins with Dawson expressing his feelings for Gretchen:

Dawson: "I like your sister, Pacey"

Pacey: "You like her, or you like her like her"

....

Dawson: "I'm crazy about her"

Pacey: "I mean you've had a crush on her for years. I mean that's all this is, right?... This is a whole hell of a lot to digest before breakfast, Dawson"

Dawson: "Well last spring if you had just come to me and told me you felt about Joey"

Pacey: "It would have made things a lot easier."

Dawson: "That's all I'm trying to do." (Williamson, *Dawson's Creek*).

Pacey then says that “sisters are off limits” and goes on a vendetta to make sure that Gretchen get back with her ex-boyfriend. Dawson responds by saying that he is not asking for Pacey’s “permission” to date Gretchen (Williamson, *Dawson’s Creek*). This interaction serves as a counternarrative to Pacey’s relationship with Joey because now Pacey is jealous of Gretchen’s relationship with Dawson. Moreover, this interaction also serves as the continuity of the marring of Dawson and Pacey’s friendship. In this episode, Pacey illustrates his feelings of awkwardness that his best friend is dating his sister and he feels that Dawson crosses a boundary that is more extreme than the one he crosses by dating Joey. Dawson and Gretchen do date for a short period of time, and Pacey tries to make this relationship as difficult as possible which illustrate the tension this causes in his relationship with Dawson.

According to Hills, “*Dawson’s Creek* represents its characters as if they *are* consistently rational and self-present. By contrast, actual teens (and adults, for that matter) tend to perform their identities publicly as ‘rational’ simply because this is culturally valued, while remaining aware of themselves as sometimes behaving irrationally” (58). In this instance, Dawson and Pacey seem to have a rational discussion on the lake. The conversation quickly shifts to their becoming irrational in their quests for love and how to counteract that love when it affects their attachments to each other. Furthermore, these interactions around Gretchen make her the object of the erotic triangle, but in a more complex way than Joey. Pacey does not manifest romantic feelings for Gretchen as he does for Joey ,as Gretchen is his sister, but he does feel threatened by Dawson’s feelings for his sister. Furthermore, the fact that their first friendly interaction

since Pacey and Joey begin dating focuses on Gretchen illustrates the continuity of the emotional intimacy of Dawson and Pacey. Furthermore, their conversation with each other and Pacey's later conversation with Gretchen focuses on Dawson's role in the relationship rather than Gretchen's. Pacey's response to Dawson focuses on how this will impact their relationship and the taboo of dating a friend's sister. When Pacey confronts Gretchen, she accuses him of making the situation more severe than it is:

Pacey: Who? Dawson? Nah Why should I care about Dawson? You assured me that kiss meant nothing. Even though you know it really didn't look like nothing. And I'm pretty sure he doesn't think its nothing..."

Gretchen "Dawson and I are just friends. That's it. Trust me" (Williamson, *Dawson's Creek*)

Pacey then reaches down into the car and sees a mix tape titled "Great Tunes for Gretchen from Dawson" and he quickly moves the conversation to Gretchen's ex-boyfriend, Nick (Williamson, *Dawson's Creek*). This scene illustrates Pacey's need to know the status of his sister's relationship with his best friend and implicitly how this relationship will affect him. If Dawson and Gretchen engage in a sexual relationship, this shift in roles can potentially create an uncomfortable barrier between Dawson and Pacey because Dawson now knows a member of Pacey's family in a way that he cannot. Furthermore, their emotional attachment to each other changes because Dawson's role in

Pacey's life changes. He is now more committed to Gretchen than he is to Pacey, which threatens their attachments to each other. According to Deangelis:

Bromance narratives certainly do seek to provide a secure and nonthreatening space for straight men to connect with one another in intimate relationships similar to those in which they see their female friends, partners, and fiancées so freely engaging. Curiously, however, bromances are also constructed as 'problem' narratives that sustain audience interest by thematizing the difficulties of creating and sustaining such close male-male relationships that often simultaneously construct heteronormativity and its social and cultural expectations as part of the "problem." (15)

Arguably, Dawson and Pacey's relationship can be categorized as a "bromance" narrative even though there are multiple types of relationships (romantic, family, cross-gender friendships) with the other characters in the narrative. Deangelis's points about the tension that these narratives cause when women intersect into the narrative illustrates how this tension is prevalent not only with Joey, but also with Gretchen. Even though Deangelis does not mention familial relationships, I argue that the same model can be applied to this type of relationship because of Pacey's immediate resistance to the relationship and his explanation that about a friend dating another friend's sister as a taboo in a relationship. Furthermore, Gretchen seems to take the place of Joey in the bromance narrative which illustrates Sedgwick's theory of women as objects of the tension in the erotic triangle rather than the subjects.

Where if Anywhere is the Place for Queerness in the Narrative?:

Jack Mcphee and Queer Sexuality in *Dawson's Creek*

As mentioned previously, Jack Mcphee is the first openly gay character on a series that targets a teenage audience. His role in the series continues to be interrogated by scholars such as Jenner and Bindig as mentioned previously, since it is a first in television. However, in this thesis, I will not be focusing Jack's sexuality as a stand-alone issue as critics tend to do up to this point. According to Mareike Jenner, "*Dawson's Creek* can be understood as fully developing and establishing 'the gay kid' as part of the an otherwise heteronormative group... it dissolves an us/them binary and constructs Jack clearly as part of the core group of characters" (143). Even though Jack's representation is more inclusive than some gay male characters up to this point due to his inclusion into the group, this criticism of the show does separate him from the heteronormative narrative of show rather than discussing his role in relation with the other male characters. For example, Michaela D. E. Meyer writes, "Jack goes through teenage problems like the rest of his friends. He cannot get a date; he had a crush on someone unattainable; he does not get along with his parents; he is unsure what to do with his life. To Jack, these universal themes are more important than sexuality in identity construction" (268). I do not disagree that Jack's identity needs to be looked at more complexly than just his sexuality, but his sexuality cannot be ignored in a reading of the show, especially due to the time the show aired. In this thesis, I will discuss Jack's function as a gay man in his friendships with Dawson and Pacey and furthermore his role in the erotic triangles created in this series.

When Jack enters the narrative, he moves to Capeside, with his father and his sister, Andie, who dates Pacey for a period of time. After Joey breaks up with Dawson, she begins a relationship with Jack until he comes out to everyone about his sexuality. In this instance, Jack begins an erotic triangle among him, Joey, Dawson. Dawson barely knows Jack and sees him more as competition rather than a friend as he does with Pacey, which makes this erotic triangle not as crucial in an analysis of Pacey and Dawson's friendship. On the other hand, when Pacey and Joey are secretly dating, Jack is one of the people that they turn to as a way to process their need to tell Dawson about their relationship. In Season 3, episode 21, Dawson enters a boat race in order to win Joey's affection. Pacey has also entered the race, which is why Dawson is up for the competition. Jack and Andie's father is a wealthy businessman with a boat and Dawson asks them to borrow the boat. Jack immediately says what a bad idea this is. On the other hand, because Andie is hurt by Pacey's actions, she supports Dawson. In response to Jack, Dawson says, "It's not about Pacey. It's about Joey...you gotta help me" (Williamson, *Dawson's Creek*). Even though Andie is the person who convinces Jack to help Dawson, Dawson turns to another male character, Jack, for help when he wants to win Joey's affection. More importantly, he turns to a gay character who he feels will have some sympathy for his emotional dilemma. Even though Dawson never mentions Jack's sexuality in this scene, it does not seem to be a coincidence that he turns to him for help with this issue. Jenner writes:

Visually, Jack is always integrated into the group of his heterosexual friends; in particular, apart from his relationship with Jen, he seems close

to Pacey, the character who most strongly embodies heterosexual masculinity. This might occur possibly to avoid a queering of his relationship with Dawson, who, with his affinity to openly express emotion, may be read as more effeminate. (140)

Even though Jenner's characterization of Jack's relationship with Pacey and Dawson and Pacey's manifestations of masculinity seem to be consistent throughout the narrative, his analysis of Jack's disconnect with Dawson does not prove accurate, especially when Dawson turns to Jack when his relationship is tenuous with Pacey. Jack clearly does not want to help Dawson win the boat race, but is convinced to help his friend based on coaxing from Andie and Dawson himself about his feelings for Joey and his hate for Pacey.

Jack helps maintain Roof's theory of the heteronormative narrative in this series despite his openness about his sexuality. By helping Dawson with the boat race, he becomes a catalyst in maintaining the heteronormative narrative, despite the queerness of the friendship between Dawson and Pacey. Since Dawson tries to focus on Joey, the heterosexual script is consistent and Jack aids in the efforts to maintain this narrative. Even though Jack is openly gay, his role correlates with Roof's argument about the heteronormativity of narratives and the difficulty of allowing queerness to be the major structure of these narratives. Jack's assimilation to Capeside's straight culture conveys acceptance of his sexuality identity to teenage audience, but he falls into the backdrop of the heteronormative narrative with little room for his sexuality to disrupt this narrative.

Jack continues to be part of the erotic triangles of the narrative in Dawson's relationship with Gretchen. As mentioned previously, the episode opens with Dawson's expression of his feelings for Gretchen to Pacey. However, the episode immediately switches to a conversation between Dawson and Jack:

Dawson: "Hey, did you think it was weird when Andie was dating Pacey?"

Jack: "Not Really. Why?"

Dawson: "Cause Pacey really doesn't like the idea of Gretchen and me."

Jack: "Well I mean sure. She's his sister and you're his-close friend. I really didn't know Pacey when he hooked up with Andie. But if I had to think about you and Andie, You—let's not go there." (Williamson, *Dawson's Creek*).

As he and Jack are moving furniture, Dawson finds in his dresser an old love note to Gretchen from when he was younger that he never sent. Jack says, "Maybe you should say some of that to her now... Maybe if you acted more like a kid you would be with her." (Williamson, *Dawson's Creek*). Yet again, Jack becomes Dawson's point person to discuss not only his feelings for Gretchen, but also his feelings about Pacey's reaction. Jack gives Dawson's advice about the awkwardness Pacey may have about the situation as well as how to win Gretchen's affection. In this one conversation, Jack functions as an ally to both Dawson and Pacey without hurting either character. Meyer points out that in Jack's relationship with Jen Lindley, "Jack acts as the sounding board for Jen's confusion over her own sexual past" (266). I would like to take this analysis a step further and apply

it to Jack's interaction with Dawson. Jack is seen as "the gay best friend" for Jen, which is a stereotypical (and problematic) representation of gay men, but he also serves as sounding board for Dawson. Yet again, Jack illustrates this queering of straight masculinity for Dawson because here is another instance where Jenner's argument about the effeminacy of Dawson proves flawed. Dawson is able to develop a close relationship with Jack, but the friendship is normalized because Dawson is asking for relationship advice from Jack. Jack not only helps Dawson maintain his friendship with Pacey, but more importantly, despite his own sexuality, Jack contributes to the maintenance of the heteronormative narrative structure of the series.

According to Roof the fact that, "the heteronarrative can fail or appear to fail, even temporarily, suggests the possibility of intervention at its points of failure, of making more permanently visible just how we got to that point and defining the terms, stakes, and ideologies that always return that failure point to a 'happier' wholeness" (179). Even though Roof presents this possible solution to the breaking down of the "heteronarrative," she does not present it as an easily attainable solution which we see in Jack's function in Dawson and Pacey's friendship. By helping Dawson and Pacey move past this barrier, Jack helps the overarching theme of heteronormativity succeed and does not interrogate the ideologies that contribute to this narrative. By relying on a gay man to bridge the relationship between them, Dawson and Pacey's relationship becomes and even more complex representation of the queerness of straight masculinity in television. This representations is why Jack's sexuality cannot be discussed in isolation, but must be interrogated in the broader heteronormative structure of the narrative.

Conclusion

Dawson and Pacey's relationship manifests the erotic triangle that Sedgwick theorizes about male homosocial desire and how this representation of men's friendships queers straight masculinity. On the other hand, Dawson and Pacey work to maintain the heteronormative structure that Roof argues is the structure of all narratives. Furthermore, even with the inclusion of an openly accepted gay character, Jack, both Dawson and Pacey use Jack as a means to maintain the heterosexual script. This queers their relationship in a much more complex and problematic way than we see with Cory and Shawn. In *BMW*, there are no openly queer characters so Cory and Shawn do not have the ability to use any queer characters as catalysts for maintaining the heteronormative narrative as Dawson and Pacey do. Dawson and Pacey use Jack as a way to maintain not only the heteronormative narrative, but also the queer relationship they maintain with each other as straight men.

The scholarship on *Dawson's Creek* up to this point mostly focuses on sexuality, more specifically Jack's sexuality, and the fandom around the show and does not interrogate men's friendships with other men in the narrative, which makes this analysis crucial in the scholarship of the show. Furthermore, the narrative structure of the show is not interrogated which makes an analysis of the structure of the show important in the scholarship as well. Further work on this subject could be a further interrogation of Jack's role as a gay man in his interactions with other characters. For example, Jack comes back to Capeside to teach after college and has to navigate the education profession as a gay man. Furthermore, he engages in a serious relationship with Pacey's gay brother, Doug,

the town's sheriff which makes Jack's sexuality much more political than it was in high school. Jack's maturation within his community and how that affects his relationships with heterosexual men, such as Dawson and Pacey deserves analysis as well in scholarly work on men's friendships in the series. Dawson, Pacey, and Jack take part in a progressive narrative about queer sexuality that was radical for the time the show aired; however, their interactions with each other as friends still present heteronormative frameworks, which cannot be ignored in scholarship about the series.

Conclusion

Ron Becker's work on the queering of straight masculinities in media representation serves as some of the inaugural scholarly work done on this topic and should continue to gain value in queer television studies. However, his analysis does not include television programs before 2000 and furthermore, does not include teenage sitcoms and soap operas. According to Becker, "TV's queer straight guys reveal a post-closet culture working through the fact that gender and sexual identity categories don't easily map onto the diversity of people's experiences and remind us that heteronormative alignments of sex, gender, behavior, and desire are not natural or inevitable" (136). Despite the controversy around the idea of a "post-closet era" within queer studies, Becker's points notion toward the possibility of these queer manifestations of straight masculinity not only in media representation, but social interaction more broadly. These representations exist in other television genres that predate the ones he analyzes and exists among teenage boys before they hit adulthood. Furthermore, Becker does not interrogate the overall heteronormative structure of narratives more generally, despite the presence of these queer masculinities, which I argue still exists and still dominates narratives of queer straight masculinity.

In *Boy Meets World* and *Dawson's Creek*, the male protagonists illustrate how these queer straight masculinities exist, but the narrative structure of both shows illustrate the need to maintain heteronormativity, making these friendships exist only as a catalyst for maintaining the heteronormative narrative. Roof argues that “narrative constantly reproduces the phantom of a whole, articulated system, where even the concept of a system as parts and wholes are already an effect of narrative organizing” (xv). The narratives of both shows presents a system of patriarchy and heterosexism that needs to be maintained in order to complete the narrative. In *BMW*, Cory and Topanga marry and Cory's relationship with Shawn is deemed to not exist in the same form any longer. In *Dawson's Creek*, Pacey and Joey move away and are assumed to begin a life together and the narrative ends on a positive note with Dawson's success as a filmmaker. In looking at these narrative structures, both shows illustrate how their male characters can have emotionally intimate, and arguably queer, friendships with each other as long as the narrative works toward a model of heteronormativity. In both of these shows, the male protagonists manifest emotionally intimate attachments to each other; however, their conclusion is to maintain heteronormativity and make the conclusion of their narratives follow this heteronormative framework.

Cory and Shawn's relationship follows Sedgwick's theory of the erotic triangle and its effects on male homosocial desire while also representing Deangelis's theory of the bromance by their dependency on each other. Deangelis points out that “if bromancers are close friends who are always more than ‘just friends,’ their relationships are neither sexually nor procreatively goal oriented, and in this sense they complicate the

expectations inherent in representations of heteronormative relationships in popular media culture” (3). Shawn and Cory both identify strongly as heterosexual in the series, but their friendship illustrates how these queer representations of straight masculinity existed early in the 1990s and were not questioned by the characters but arguably encouraged.

Cory’s wedding illustrates how the shift that can take place in these bromance relationships when a female is present disrupts the relationships. I argue this romantic relationship must take place in order to maintain the heteronormative narrative. Cory’s marriage to Topanga opens the door for the conclusion of the series because, despite Shawn’s resistance, Cory still maintains the heteronormative narrative. Despite the ability that Cory and Shawn have to express their emotional attachments to each other, these representations of male intimacy cannot be maintained in the broader heteronormative structure, which I argue makes these friendships become secondary to the major narrative structure of heteronormativity. Since these friendships cannot be maintained, they cease to be the major focus of the narrative.

In *Dawson’s Creek*, Dawson and Pacey’s relationship is not interrogated in any of the criticism on the show, especially around their relationships with Joey and Dawson’s relationship with Pacey’s sister, Gretchen. Jack Mcphee presents a different element to this relationship than what takes place in *BMW* because he is an openly gay character that is readily accepted by his friend group. Jack, despite his sexuality, is a catalyst for maintaining the heteronormative narrative because he aids both Dawson and Pacey in their relationship struggles. At the end of the series, Pacey and Joey reconnect and create a life together and Dawson creates a life for himself in Los Angeles with his film career.

Despite Dawson and Pacey's emotional attachments to each other, they both succeeded in maintaining the heteronormative narrative structure, which makes the show conclude on a positive note and the characters can live fulfilling lives.

Both *BMW* and *Dawson's Creek* continue to be popular among teenagers over fifteen years after the shows discontinued new episodes, which makes them equally important in discussing masculinity and men's friendships in popular culture today. A few limitations to this study was the lack of scholarship on *Boy Meets World* and the conversations that may be happening around the show, but not published. The criticism on *Dawson's Creek* refers mostly to Jack's sexuality and the nuance of his character at the time the show aired. Even though both of these limitations create room for the analysis that this thesis presents, further work still needs to be done on both of these shows and the representations of masculinity and men's friendships within these shows. Another limitation to this study is the dearth of scholarship on queer straight masculinities, especially in teenage sitcoms and soap operas. Masculinity studies needs to integrate more scholarship on teenage media and possible affects that these types of shows have on constructions of masculinity for teenagers and adolescent males. Even though this thesis does not focus on media affects because it is a theoretical textual analysis, a study of the media affects that these shows continue to have on teenage males would be beneficial for looking at masculinity in the media.

Further work on this topic could be an interrogation of how the female characters in both shows uphold the heteronormative structure that Roof argues is inherent to all narratives. Even though I argue that Topanga, Joey, and Gretchen become the objects

rather than the subjects of Cory, Shawn, Dawson, and Pacey's tenuous moments in their friendships, these characters still have a major role in maintaining this heteronormative narrative. Another topic that needs scholarly analysis is the role of the fathers and other male role models in both shows. No scholarship exists on the strained relationships between Dawson and Pacey and their fathers as well as Shawn's poor relationship with his father. Even though Cory seems to have the most stable parent situation, his relationship with his father and how that models his relationship with Shawn could provide some illuminating contributions to studying men's friendships in these narratives.

Works Cited and Consulted

Television Episodes

Boy Meets World

"Home." Dir. Michael Jacobs and April Kelly. *Boy Meets World*. Season 2. n.d. Web. 27 Mar. 2016.

"It's About Time." Dir. Michael Jacobs and April Kelly. *Boy Meets World*. Season 7. 2001.n.d. Web. 27 Mar. 2016.

"My Best Friend's Girl." Dir. Michael Jacobs and April Kelly. *Boy Meets World*. Season 3.n.d. Web. 27 Mar. 2016.

Dawson's Creek

".Come To an End." Dir. Kevin Williamson. *Dawson's Creek*. 2003. Web. 27 Mar. 2016.

"Dawson's Creek ." Dir. Kevin Williamson. *Dawson's Creek*. Season 1.1998. Web. 27 Mar. 2016.

"Show Me Love." Dir. Kevin Williamson. *Dawson's Creek*. Season 3 2000. Web. 27
Mar. 2016.

"The Longest Day." Dir. Kevin Williamson. *Dawson's Creek*. Season 3. 2000. Web. 27
Mar. 2016.

"The Tao of Dawson." Dir. Kevin Williamson. *Dawson's Creek*. Season 4. 2001. Web. 27
Mar. 2016.

Secondary Scholarship

Allen, Robert. "Frequently Asked Questions: A General Introduction to the Reader." *The
Television Studies Reader*. Ed. Robert C. Allen and Annette Hill. London:
Routledge, 2004. 1-26. Print.

Becker, Ron. "Guy Love: A queer straight masculinity for a post-closet era?" *Queer TV:
Theories, Histories, Politics*. Ed. Glyn Davis and Gary Needham. New York:
Routledge, 2009. 121-40. Print.

Bond Stockton, Katherine. *The Queer Child: Or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth
Century*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009. Print.\

Bruhm, Steven, and Natasha Hurley. "Curioser: On the Queerness of
Children." *Curioser: On the Queerness of Children*. Ed. Steven Bruhm and

Natasha Hurley. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004. ix-xxxviii.
Print.

Buis, Hillary. "What's so great about 'Boy Meets World.'" *Entertainment Weekly*.
Entertainment Weekly, 2012. Web. 17 Apr. 2016.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. 1990 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.

Butler, Judith. *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Connell, R W. "The History of Masculinity." *The Masculinity Studies Reader*. Ed.
Rachel Adams and David Savran. Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2002. 245-61.
Print.

Connell, R W. *Masculinities*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. Print.

Connell, R W., Jeff Hearn, and Michael S. Kimmel. "Introduction." *Handbook of Studies
on Men & Masculinities*. Ed. Michael S. Kimmel, Jeff Hearn, and R W. Connell.
Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2005. 1-12. Print.

D'Acci, Julie. "Gender, Representation, and Television," *Television Studies*. Ed. Toby
Miller. London: British Film Institute, 2002. 91-94. Print.

Deangelis, Michael "Introduction". *Reading the Bromance: Homosocial Relationships
in Film and Television*. Ed. Michael Deangelis. Detroit: Wayne State University
Press, 2014. 1-26. Print.

Dickinson, Kay. "'My Generation': Popular Music, Age, and Influence in Teen Drama of the 1990s." *Teen Tv: Genre, Consumption, and Identity*. Ed. Glyn Davis and Kay Dickinson. London: British Film Institute, 2004. 99-111. Print.

Doty, Alexander. *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993. Print.

Fiske, John. *Television Culture*. London: Routledge, 1987. Print.

Freasey, Rebecca. *Masculinity and Popular Television*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008. 45-55. Print.

Gardiner, Judith Kegan. "Introduction" *Masculinity Studies & Feminist Theory : New Directions*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. Pgs. 1-30.
Web. 16 Oct. 2015.

Gray, Jonathan, and Amanda D. Lotz. *Television Studies*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012.
Print.

Griffiths, Allison. "Gender and Stereotyping" *Television Studies* . Ed. Toby Miller.
London: British Film Institute, 2002. 94-97. Print.

Halberstam, Judith "Global Female Masculinities." *Sexualities* 15.3 (2012): 336-54.

SAGE. Web. 16 Oct. 2015.

Halberstam, Judith "An Introduction to Female Masculinity: Masculinity without Men"

The Masculinity Studies Reader . Ed. Rachel Adams and David Savran. Malden:
Blackwell Publishers, 2002. 355-374. Print.

Heasley, Robert. "Queer Masculinities of Straight Men: A Typology." *Men and*

Masculinities 7.3 (2005): 310-20. *Sage Publications*. Web. 14 Feb. 2016.

Hills, Matt. "*Dawson's Creek*: 'Quality Teen TV' and 'Mainstream Cult'?" *Teen TV:*

Genre, Consumption, and Identity. Ed. Glyn Davis and Kay Dickinson. London:
British Film Institute, 2004. 54-67. Print.

Jenner, Mareike. "We Need to Talk about Jack! On the Representation of Male

Homosexuality in American Teen Soaps." *Queer Youth and Media Cultures*. Ed.
Christopher Pullen. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. 131-44. Print.

Kim, Janna L., et al. "From sex to sexuality: Exposing the heterosexual script on

primetime network television." *Journal of sex research* 44.2 (2007): 145-157.

Kimmel, Michael S. *Manhood In America: a Cultural History*. 2nd ed. New York:

Oxford University Press, 2206. Print.

Leib, Frank B. *Friendly Competitions Fierce Companions: Men's Ways of Relating*.

Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1997. Print.

McCabe, Janet. "In Debate: Television Studies in the American Academy." *Critical*

Studies in Television 6.1 (2011): 99-112. *ProQuest*. Web. 13 Dec. 2015.

Messner, Michael A. "Still A Man's World? Studying Masculinities and Sport."

Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities . Ed. Michael S. Kimmel, Jeff

Hearn, and R W. Connell. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc, 2005. 313-25.

Print

Meyer, Michaela D.E. "'It's Me. I'm it': Defining Adolescent Sexual Identity through

Relational Dialectics in *Dawson's Creek*." *Communication Quarterly* 51.3 (2003):

262-76. *Communication and Mass Media Complete*. Web. 17 Apr. 2016.

Migliaccio, Todd. "Men's Friendships: Performances of Masculinity." *The Journal of*

Men's Studies 17.3 (2009): 226-41. Web. 1 Mar. 2015

Mittell, Jason. "A Cultural approach to Television Genre Theory." *The Television Studies*

Reader . Ed. Robert C. Allen and Annette Hill. London: Routledge, 2004. 171-82.

Print.

- Morrison, Toni. "Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination." *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004. 1005-16. Print.
- Nardi, Peter M. "'Seamless Souls' An Introduction to Men's Friendships." *Men's Friendships*. Ed. Peter M. Nardi. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1992. 1-14. Print.
- Opplinger, Patricia A. *Bullies and Mean Girls in Popular Culture*. Jefferson: McFarland & CO, 2013. Print.
- Pfeil, Fred. *White Guys: Studies in Postmodern Domination and Difference*. New York: Verso, 1995. Print.
- Price, Jammie. *Navigating Difference: Friendships Between Gay and Straight Men*. Binghamton: The Haworth Press, 1999. Print.
- Reid, Helen M., and Gary Alan Fine. "Self-Disclosure in Men's Friendships: Variations Associated with Intimate Relations." *Men's Friendships*. Ed. Peter M. Nardi. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1992. 132-52. Print.
- Roof, Judith. *Come As You Are: Sexuality & Narrative* New York: Columbia University

Press, 1996. Print.

Sedgwick, Eve K. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. Print.

Seidler, Victor J. "Rejection, Vulnerability, and Friendship." *Men's Friendships*. Ed. Peter M. Nardi. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1992. 15-34. Print.

Seidler, Victor J. *Unreasonable Men: Masculinity and Social Theory*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.

Smith, Earl. "Race Matters in the National Basketball Association." *Marquette Sports Law Journal* 9.2 (1999): 239-52. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 16 Oct. 2015.

Sussman, Gerald. "The Political Economy of Television (Pierre Bourdieu of Television News)." *Television Studies*. Ed. Toby Miller. London: British Film Institute, 2002. 7-11. Print.

Swain, Scott O. "Men's Friendships with Women: Intimacy, Sexual Boundaries, and the Informant Role." *Men's Friendships*. Ed. Peter M. Nardi. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1992. 153-72. Print.

Traister, Bryce. "Academic Viagra : The Rise Of American Masculinity Studies."

American Quarterly 52.2 (2000): 274-304. *JSTOR*. Web. 16 Oct. 2015.

Williams, Raymond, and Ederyn Williams. *Television : Technology And Cultural Form*.

1974. London: Taylor & Francis Routledge, 2003. *eBook* Web. 23 Jan. 2016.

Biography

David Powers Corwin is the first student to complete a dual MAIS/MA degree in Women and Gender Studies and English at GMU. In this program he focused on British women writers, masculinity studies, men's friendships, masculinity and popular culture, and contemporary women writers. He holds a bachelor's degree in English and Humanities from Milligan College in Johnson City, Tennessee, and graduated *Cum Laude*. He is now a Ph.D. student in Education with a specialization in Higher Education at George Mason University where he will focus on faculty roles in academic and student affairs collaborations, critical race theory, and students with marginalized identities. With this degree, David hopes to be a student affairs professional in an identity based resource center and occasionally teach courses in literature and women and gender studies.