“Queer strange, or queer gay?” – A diachronic mixed-method perspective on linguistic representations of queerness in scripted North American television shows

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Abstract

Due to the carefully planned, practiced, and edited nature of scripted television shows, their use of language can be assumed to be purposeful and self-aware to a very high degree (Marshall and Werndly 2002, 78). As such, "TV dialogue" (in the sense of Bednarek 2018, 7) can be assumed to allow us to understand "how language used in television texts connects to a world outside the text" (Marshall and Werndly 2002, 94). With this presumed "culture–media dialectic, where TV dialogue both constructs and reflects cultures and their ideologies" (Bednarek 2018, 3), the question arises of if and how real-life sociopolitical changes may be mirrored in TV dialogue. Meanwhile, the influence that behaviours witnessed on TV may have on the behaviours and opinions of a viewer has long been documented (e.g., Bandura 1977). Moreover, recent studies have found indications that this may be especially true with regards to the representation of marginalized groups on television, both in terms of self-image, as well as in terms of their perception by the general public (e.g., Pugh 2018, Battles and Hilton-Morrow 2002).

Accordingly, this thesis project investigates linguistic representations of the queer community in scripted North American television shows in the *TV Corpus* (Davies 2021) from a diachronic perspective and using a mixed-method approach in two stages. Both stages feature elements of qualitative and quantitative analysis, so as to "provide a systematic analytical framework and empirical data for talking about the expression of ideology through dialogue in episodic television" (Bednarek 2015, 227). This project thus aims to account for some of the great complexity inherent to the phenomenon of queer "representation" (in the sense of Hall 1997, 1) in TV language.

Stage 1 is comprised of a large-scale diachronic analysis of selected current terms for queer identities in the *TV Corpus* via quantitative frequency measures, collocates, and extensive manual annotation for semantic meaning that "applies a rather deductive methodology in selecting specific words which are relevant for analysis, but also offers concordance lines as a basis for further (qualitative) interpretation" (Wodak and Meyer 2009, 30). Taking into account the interplay between alternative meanings of the selected terms and whether they are, for instance, "regularly used in contexts of good news or bad news or judgement"

(Tognini-Bonelli 2001, 111), this stage offers a bird's eye view on how certain terms for queer identities are used in scripted TV dialogue across time.

Stage 2, on the other hand, is focused on a more fine-grained comparison of the linguistic behaviours and the construction (e.g., Bednarek 2010) of prominent queer and non-queer characters. For this stage, a total of 60 episode transcripts from six shows contained in the *TV Corpus* were extracted and annotated with speaker information using the *UAM CorpusTool* (O'Donnell 2008). Said episodes were then examined further using both quantitative measures and a qualitative analysis aiming to understand "the conditions of the speakers' [or characters'] experience as located within structures of power" (Leap 2015, 661). As such, these analyses take complementary perspectives in an in-depth comparison of the language use and power conditions of queer and non-queer characters both within the same show, as well as across shows, TV genres, and different times of production.

Taken together, the two stages thus aim to provide insight into the complex interplay between scripted TV dialogue, its ways of representing selected queer identities in general (Stage 1), individual queer characters and their power conditions in particular (Stage 2), and real-world sociopolitical change. As such, this thesis also argues for an understanding of queer representation that is more nuanced than a binary distinction of "represented" vs. "not represented", as such a more simplistic view cannot account for the whole range of ways in which the queer community may be represented on TV, as has also been noted by Baker (2005, 225).

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This project would not have been possible without the support and enthusiasm of so many people, prime among them Stella Neumann, who gave me the chance to pursue it and was endlessly patient and supportive as my methodology section grew more and more extensive. Thank you of course also to Professor Niehr for his fantastic feedback and willingness to take on the project, our entire team for helping me talk through my analyses and offering plot synopses of shows I hadn't seen, and my student annotators who helped me figure out who was speaking in scenes where all the characters were turning their backs. So much of this project was informed also by the discussions I had with Amanda Potts, so a huge thanks to her and the team at Cardiff University for welcoming me into their school.

Of course, my endless gratitude to my parents not just for their support in this process, but also for teaching me to love obscure 90s TV, encyclopaedias, and the priceless gift of community. Conventional wisdom says that it takes a village to raise a child, and while that is likely very true, it also takes a variety of villages to get a grad student through their thesis in one piece: As such, thank you so much to the villages that raised me and keep me: The older and the newer; the just-down-the-hall, the just-down-the-street, the further but no less dear. To quote the eminent *Golden Girls*: "Thank you for being a friend!"

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1. "Hello, gay now"[1] -linguistic representations of queerness in scripted North American TV shows

Throughout the near century that scripted television has been produced and broadcast in North America, the medium and art form has undergone a series of metamorphoses, some of which may be attributable to changes arising from within the industry, such as production practices, broadcasting channels, or the rise of streaming and on-demand services (Section 2.1.1). Others may be more closely linked to changing artistic and TV genre conventions (Section 2.1.1.2), or, relevantly for the purposes of this particular project, to real-world sociopolitical developments as they are commonly seen as in conversation with such developments (Section 2.1.2).

Scripted TV, both as an art-form and as a commercial product (Bednarek 2010, 223), is an inherently highly complex, multi-modal phenomenon and cultural artefact that might be studied from a wide range of perspectives: Approaches to scripted TV may thus choose to target narrative features and genre conventions (e.g., Allrath et al. 2005, 1; Diffrient and Chung 2012, 286), linguistic character construction and dynamics (e.g., Bubel 2005, 1; Reichelt 2018, 6), aspects of visual storytelling (e.g., Butler 2018; Thompson 2003), soundtrack or score design (e.g., Spencer 2014; Plasketes 2015), or production practices (e.g., Bednarek 2019a, Chalaby 2016, 4), to name but a few. This particular project concerns itself primarily with "TV dialogue" (Bednarek 2018, 7; Section 2.3), in order to contribute to the rich patchwork that is the study of TV programming and its use of language. Due to the carefully planned, practiced, and edited nature of scripted television shows, their use of language can be assumed to be purposeful and self-aware to a very high degree (Marshall and Werndly 2002, 78). Accordingly, this language use can be assumed to allow us to understand "how language used in television texts connects to a world outside the text" (Marshall and Werndly 2002, 94; Section 2.1.2).

With this presumed "culture–media dialectic, where TV dialogue both constructs and reflects cultures and their ideologies" (Bednarek 2018, 3), the question arises of if and how real-life sociopolitical changes may be mirrored in TV dialogue. Meanwhile, the influence that behaviours witnessed on TV may have on the behaviours and opinions of a viewer has been

[1] Willow in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Episode "Triangle"

long documented (e.g., Bandura 1977). Moreover, recent studies have found indications that this may be especially true with regards to the representation of marginalized groups on television, both in terms of self-image, as well as in terms of their perception by the general public (e.g., Pugh 2018, Battles and Hilton-Morrow 2002; Section 2.1.2.2).

One such marginalized group that could be argued to have undergone extensive changes in their public perception (as well as, arguably, their very visibility) is the queer (in the sense of Brontsema 2004, 12) community: In the early years of scripted TV programming in North America, queer identities were generally excluded from public discussion, and their portrayal in scripted programming was largely prohibited (e.g., Nurik 2018, 530). Throughout the second half of the 20th century, as the political treatment of the queer community started to shift in response to queer rights movements and broader societal changes (e.g., Weiss 2018, 109), portrayals and discussions of the queer community and queer characters were increasingly possible on scripted TV. The first main cast queer characters on major North American network shows started appearing in the 1990s (Ullman 2018, 366), as was also documented by initiatives such as GLAAD (GLAAD 2024) to increase their visibility. As such, the overall public narrative and impression appears to be that the queer community has gone from invisible to visible on scripted North American TV (Gross 2001, xvi).

However, this perception of queer representation as a binary set of options (i.e. represented vs. not represented) does not and cannot account for the whole breadth and variety of queer characters and ways in which the queer community may be represented on TV, as has also been noted by Baker (2005, 225). In fact, representations of the queer community may instead benefit from being understood and discussed as complex phenomena in their own right, not least of all due to the inherent ambiguity of many such representations. Even something as seemingly straightforward as a queer identity label may be used in a variety of different ways and for a variety of different purposes within scripted TV dialogue:

"he'll be as old and as **queer** as I am." [2]
"**Queer** strange , or **queer** gay?"
"Oh , a touch of both ." (Supplement B2, "queer", hits 703 - 705) [3]

As can be seen from this example, the TV dialogue here invokes two alternative meanings of the term *queer*: By drawing on such alternative meanings of common terms for queer identities, creative teams may utilize such terms for a variety of purposes beyond asserting someone's queer identity. In the example above, which was drawn from an episode of the long-running Comedy cartoon *The Simpsons* (*The Simpsons* 1989-), one such likely additional purpose may have been a humorous effect via subversion of expectations, as it has been described in the *Encyclopedia of Humor Studies* ("AESTHETICS" 2014, 14). Other shows and contexts may instead also invoke such terms as a slur (in the sense of e.g., Anderson and Lepore 2013, 1-3), as an instance of disparagement humour ("PREJUDICE, HUMOR AND" 2014, 594) or not in reference to the queer community at all, but rather with only an alternative meaning in mind (Section 2.2.3).

A similar argument may also be made about the portrayal of queer characters in a show: On the one hand, lists of queer characters such as the aforementioned one compiled by GLAAD may increase such characters' visibility and make them more readily accessible for people who wish to find them. On the other, they once again impose a binary perspective on representation and thus cannot fully account for the complex phenomena of character identity construction (e.g., Bednarek 2023, 9; Section 2.3.2) and the cultural or fictional realism of the fictional world of the show (e.g., Marshall and Werndly 2002, 85; Section 2.1.1.1).

[2] Within this project, all examples are drawn either from the data extracted from the *TV Corpus* (Stage 1; Section 3.3), or from the manual annotation of TV show episodes using the episode transcripts included in the *TV Corpus* and the actual episode, the episode text identified by viewing, or the transcribed relevant features of episodic plot and dialogue (Stage 2; Section 3.4). These materials are included as online supplements, and are typically referenced as either "Supplement #, [queried term|name of the datasheet], hit #" (for Stage 1 data), or "Supplement #, [name of the show], [Season#Episode#], [character name (if applicable)]" (for Stage 2 data). All public online supplements may be accessed via the link provided on the final page of this document.

[3] To ease the readability of examples drawn from the *TV Corpus*, extraneous blank spaces were removed in the text, and, if appropriate, the concordance line was shortened to a convenient unit of meaning (e.g., the nearest clause, phrase, etc.). Examples that rely on the negotiation of meaning between interactants were split into turn segments. The unedited versions of all examples can be found in the corresponding supplements. Within cited concordance lines, the query hit is **bolded** for emphasis.

Accordingly, this thesis project investigates linguistic representations of the queer community in scripted North American television shows contained in the *TV Corpus* (Section 3.2; Davies 2021) from a diachronic perspective and using a mixed-method approach in two stages. Both stages feature elements of qualitative and quantitative analysis, so as to "provide a systematic analytical framework and empirical data for talking about the expression of ideology through dialogue in episodic television" (Bednarek 2015, 227), and to account for some of the complexity inherent to the phenomenon of queer "representation" (following the understanding of e.g., Hall 1997, 1) in TV language.

Stage 1 is comprised of a large-scale diachronic analysis of selected current terms of queer in-group identity in the *TV Corpus.* A term of queer in-group identity, in this context, is understood as a term that either is or has been used by members of the queer community to describe their own identity and experiences, as is discussed in Section 2.2.3. This analysis focuses on quantitative frequency measures, collocates, and extensive manual annotation for semantic meaning that "applies a rather deductive methodology in selecting specific words which are relevant for analysis, but also offers concordance lines as a basis for further (qualitative) interpretation" (Wodak and Meyer 2009, 30). Taking into account the interplay between alternative meanings of the selected terms, and whether they are, for instance, "regularly used in contexts of good news or bad news or judgement" (Tognini-Bonelli 2001, 111), this stage offers a bird's eye view on how certain terms for queer identities are used in scripted TV dialogue across time, while trying to account for alternative meanings and common contexts of use.

Stage 2 is focused on a more fine-grained comparison of the linguistic behaviours and construction (e.g., Bednarek 2010) of prominent queer and non-queer characters. For the purposes of this project, a "queer" or "textually queer" character is understood as one who either has textually come out or been outed as queer within the show's dialogue (e.g., by directly stating their queer identity, voicing a wish for a queer relationship, etc.), or who has been unambiguously portrayed as queer via their actions in the show (e.g., pursuing a queer romantic or sexual relationship, transitioning during the show, etc.) For this stage, a total of 60 episode transcripts from six shows contained in the *TV Corpus* were extracted and

annotated with speaker information using the *UAM CorpusTool* (O'Donnell 2008). Said episodes were examined further in a qualitative analysis to "engage, not obscure the conditions of the speakers' [or characters'] experience as located within structures of power" (Leap 2015, 661). These complementary perspectives were then used to facilitate an in-depth discussion of character prominence, characterization and character arcs, as well as the role of queerness within the wider world of the show. In doing so, a broader and more complex comparison of the role(s) of queer and non-queer characters both within the same show, as well as across shows, TV genres, and different times of production could be conducted.

Taken together, the two stages thus aim to provide insight into the interplay between scripted TV dialogue, its patterns of representing selected queer identities in general (**Stage 1**), individual queer characters and their story worlds in particular (**Stage 2**), and real-world sociopolitical change.

2. Core terms and concepts

As the phenomenon under investigation in this project is by necessity positioned at the intersection between different areas of research, the theoretical foundations must similarly be drawn from a variety of fields: To adequately contextualize any findings obtained in this project, some foundational concepts and formats relating to the production and broadcast practices of scripted North American TV series must be established (see e.g., Trottier 2010 for a discussion focused on writing and production aspects, or Allen and Hill 2004 for a general introduction to the field of television studies; Sections 2.1 and 2.1.1).

From within the field of television studies (e.g., Allen and Hill 2004), only some core terms necessary for the discussion of scripted TV programming are described in detail (Section 2.1.1.1): The primary focus here is placed on changing practices of the medium since its inception, such as an outline of the most relevant TV genres (in the sense of Marshall and Werndly 2002, or Akass and McCabe 2007; Section 2.1.1.2), while also providing a brief account of the changing constraints of content moderation (see e.g., Nurik 2018 for an in-depth discussion of censorship in North American televisual media; Section 2.1.1.3). Relatedly, the interplay between scripted broadcast TV and real-world social change must be considered, discussing both the effects of the aforementioned production practices on scripted TV, but also the reverse effects of contents shown on TV on the viewers (e.g., Bandura 1977 for some foundational concepts, Alexander et al. 2015 for a discussion of marginalization and marginalized group representation(s); Sections 2.1.2, 2.1.2.1, and 2.1.2.2).

While an exhaustive survey of the history of the queer rights movements in North America would far exceed the scope of this project, a brief outline of some major milestones in the sociopolitical treatment and public perception of the queer community can be found in Section 2.2 (see e.g., Bronski 2011 for a general overview of such historical contexts, or Stein 2018 for a critical perspective on more recent developments of the twenty-first century). This section is preceded by a brief outline of some issues associated with the study of queer history or queer identities (as discussed in e.g., Gauntlett 2008; Section 2.2). In addition to the broader historical perspectives briefly outlined in Section 2.2.1, the very interconnectedness of such historical developments and queer representation in the media must be considered

(e.g., Ullman 2018; Section 2.2.2). To adequately account for the inherent fluidity and necessarily limited perspective of an analysis of current terms of queer in-group identity, working definitions of the investigated terms need to be established. For this section (as for the ones discussing TV production practices), community resources are drawn upon as a primary point of reference (e.g., the LGBTQIA+ Wiki (LGBTQIA+ Wiki n.d.)), as these provide frequently updated insights into the changing uses of certain terms (Section 2.2.3). It is worth noting that said definitions cannot be considered absolute or universal, as the exact delineation of and identification with such categories is a highly changeable, not to mention subjective and personal matter.

Lastly, the very object of investigation, namely TV dialogue, must be discussed (e.g., Bednarek 2018, 7; Section 2.3), focusing especially on research in this area that has employed methods similar to those utilized in this project: To this purpose, a brief outline of corpus approaches to TV dialogue is provided, contrasting approaches that focus on TV language as a distinct form of language use which may show distinctive patterns (e.g., McIntyre 2015; Section 2.3.1), with those that examine the role of TV language in character construction (e.g., Bednarek 2011; Section 2.3.2.). To provide a complementary perspective, discourse analysis (in the sense of e.g., Fairclough 1992, 8) approaches are described briefly in Section 2.3.3, most of which tend to focus on smaller-scale analyses of individual TV shows and their characters (e.g., McKinley 1997, Mandala 2011).

As this project uses an approach that combines elements of both corpus linguistics and discourse analysis, a selection of related mixed-method approaches to the study of television language and programming are drawn upon, giving special attention to the methodologies utilized therein (e.g., Wodak and Meyer 2016; Section 2.3.4). As such, the choice to make use of corpus frequency measures, collocation analyses, as well as elements of corpus-assisted discourse analysis will be explained in light of previous research done in these areas. As this great variety of theoretical foundations by necessity can only be presented briefly, each section includes references to publications that offer more in-depth discussions of the respective topics.

2.1. North American TV broadcasts and their (spoken and unspoken) rules

When discussing North American television, one essential foundation to establish is an understanding of the spread and relevance of television throughout North America (and beyond) over the course of the 20th and 21st century. While this project focuses on North American television programming, a broader global perspective on TV formats and international adaptations may be found, for instance, in Oren and Shahaf (2013). Similarly, the project's own focus on the analysis of episodes of TV shows as a finished product may be meaningfully complemented by more production and industry oriented discussions: Such additional perspectives are offered, for instance, by Trottier (2010), who provides detailed guidelines for TV industry professionals, especially screenwriters, or by Bednarek (2019a), who discusses screenwriter interviews about practical industry experiences with creating TV dialogue.

2.1.1. Episodic television: Conventions, range, and relevance from the 20th century until today

Episodic television as an art form has now been established for most of a century, though it must be acknowledged that the constraints of such programming have changed in many ways during that time. Already in 1948, the Television Writers Guild attempted a classification of different types of writing that its members might do for varying forms of TV programming, many of which ultimately evolved into the types of programming we are familiar with today. They, for instance, already introduced a distinction between programs that they described as "'episodic series,' which featured the same title and identifying characters each week and also had narrative closure at the end of each episode; and […]a 'serial,' in which usually the same set of characters carried on a continuing narrative from episode to episode" (Kraszewski 2006, 5). TV as a form of mass broadcast media quickly gained popularity in the U.S. and beyond, with some television programs attaining immense popularity and being viewed by many millions of viewers: As can be seen from *Figure 1*, the number of households (HH) with access to a television increased rapidly throughout the 1950s, achieving over 90percent household penetration by 1960, with at least one television set per home.

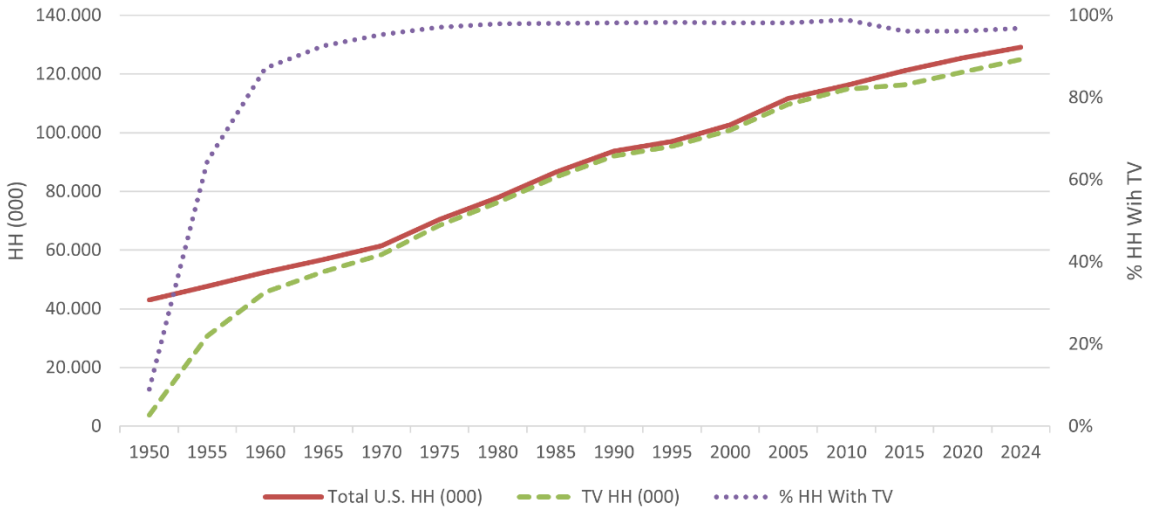


Figure 1 U.S. national television penetration trends (TV by the Numbers 2007),(Television Bureau of Advertising (TVB) 2022)

This expansion in popularity was by no means unique to the United States, reflecting a broader global trend (Sparks 2007, 153-5). The ways in which viewers may access and engage with TV programming can also be said to have undergone a series of changes, as new technologies gained popularity: So, for instance, is the advent of streaming services described as having altered viewer engagement as it makes “binge-watching” possible (Steiner and Xu 2020, 4). This ready availability of TV programming via the internet may also contribute to popular programming reaching even wider, more international audiences (e.g., Straubhaar et al. 2019). It must be pointed out that, in spite of this widespread popularity of TV programming as a medium, “television studies remains tethered to its historical U.S./U.K. legacy. Despite television’s global reach, the radical transformations of its associated technologies and industries, and the variety in programming and audiences, mainstream television studies holds fast to its origins—both of medium and discipline” (Oren and Shalaf 2013, 1). As such, any discussion of North American television practices necessarily requires a careful definition of the investigated terms, so as to achieve an appropriately transparent approach to the categorization and analysis of the medium considering these sociopolitically conditioned production practices.

2.1.1.1. Selected core concepts of scripted TV storytelling

As this project focuses on the analysis of scripted TV shows, several essential concepts and terms warrant attention: To facilitate a more meaningful analysis and discussion of TV formats, brief explanations of essential screenwriting terminology within the North American TV industry must be provided. These definitions have been selected based on the assumption that scripted TV can be seen as a narrative medium that tells a story (following Thompson 2003, 18-9), and thus can be understood and analysed as such. In the industry, any of these terms are commonly understood and utilized in slightly different ways, such that the explanations outlined below should be understood as working definitions for the purposes of this project (see e.g., Bignell and Woods 2022 for a comprehensive general introduction to these and other common terms used by the field of television studies; Pearson and Simpson 2005 for a rather more critical perspective).

Given the assumption that a scripted TV show will tell some sort of story, it must be noted that the show confronts the audience with a kind of "media logic" (Iedema 2001, 187), i.e. the logic governing the fictional world in which a given show takes place. Along similar lines, Marshall and Werndly (2002) distinguish between "cultural" and "fictional realism" (85). Depending on the genre and specific show in question, this realism may be (largely) similar to one's own culturally based understanding of reality (cultural realism) or very dissimilar to one's own experience (fictional realism). Regardless of how similar or dissimilar a show's reality appears to be, the viewer is typically expected to engage with the world portrayed in the show via "suspension of disbelief", as "it is used to describe our acceptance in art of the most fantastic worlds whose premises, actions, or outcomes we would question or reject in reality" (Tomko 2015, 1). A more in-depth discussion of the role of suspension of disbelief in engaging with television can also be found in Bucaria (2008). The audience watching a TV show is thus expected to assume that there is an underlying logic to the realism of the TV show, even if this logic does not correspond to their own understanding of real-world causality:

In a Fantasy show, for instance, such suspension of disbelief might involve accepting the existence of magical elements as part of the show's fictional world. As viewers are assumed to understand that their real world may operate by different rules than the world of the show (in the sense of fictional realism), worlds that are distinctly different from our own may be

created: “This allows […] the freedom to transgress the boundaries of cultural realism and construct a world that is inhabited with supernatural creatures” (Marshall and Werndly 2002, 85). While this example draws on a world that may contain supernatural creatures, similar assumptions also apply to less markedly fantastical worlds, as our own expectations about a specific genre or “genre repertoire” (Jeffres et al. 2022, 11) are likely to impact our understanding of such fictional realities. In a sitcom, for example, these presumptions might also involve accepting excessively convoluted misunderstandings between characters as a typical feature of the genre (e.g., Messerli 2016, 80). As such, engaging with a show’s fictional world constitutes a necessary requirement for gaining a meaningful understanding of a show and the world it is set in.

Another key distinction to be drawn in the analysis of TV programming and the fictional worlds it portrays is the distinction between diegetic and extradiegetic (or non-diegetic) elements (e.g., Ryan and Lenos 2020, 270). A diegetic element in this context is defined as an occurrence situated inside the show’s constructed world, such as character dialogue, action, or music played by characters in a scene, whereas extradiegetic elements are elements that are added to the episode from outside the world of the show: An example of this might be a studio recorded laugh track added to a Comedy show in post-production (as discussed in e.g., Messerli 2016, 79).

Following Trottier (2010), a plot can be defined as “the important events in a character’s story. […] Plot grows from character because everything starts with a character that has a goal. Since the goal is opposed, the character takes action”. As a term, “plot” is often used synonymously with “story” or “structure”, and can typically be categorized into main and sub-plots depending on their prominence in the story (Trottier 2010, PLOT). These can be further differentiated into so-called “plot-driven” or “goal driven stories” that centre a character’s pursuit of some sort of actionable goal, and “character-driven stories” that foreground character dynamics and relationships (Trottier 2010, PLOT). Furthermore, it is worth noting that plots of all types can occur both as episodic plots, but also as larger plots that span entire arcs or seasons on serials. A comprehensive overview of different plot types may be found in Borowiecki (2024).

The concept of plot cannot be meaningfully examined without also talking about the fictional characters experiencing them. While these characters are created by the creative team and

portrayed by actors, it is still commonly assumed their characterization will (and should) be stable to some degree: "'[C]haracter identities'– that is, the identities of characters in fictional genres" (Bednarek 2010, 97) can be discussed and assessed in ways that are distinct from yet analogous to the ways in which we often attempt to understand real people's characters, as fictional characters supposedly are "partly modelled on the reader's conception of people" (Rimmon-Kenan 2002, 33). Conversely, fictional characters may not only be analyzed and understood within the context of the fictional world of the story, but also as constructs created by the creative team to serve a particular function in the story. (Culpeper 2001, 10–11)

Within a show's plot, there may be different ways in which information is conveyed, some of them more direct and unambiguous than others. One frequently utilized distinction here is that between text and subtext: "Subtext is what's under the text. It's what's between the lines, the emotional content of the words, what's really meant. […] The text is the visible part. The subtext is below. The text implies the subtext lying below" (Trottier 2010, GREAT DIALOGUE IS LIKE RICE KRISPIES). In this sense, an episode's "text" involves any kind of action, emotion, or intention that is directly expressed by the characters, though one must account for the fact that their statements may not always reflect the truth (e.g., Nünning 2015, 11-3). The "subtext", conversely, can be described as content that is included in the episode only through allusion. This is of particular relevance for this present research, as Gauntlett (2008) notes that "[s]ome of the most interesting treatments of sexual minorities have been done by allusion" (94). However, due to the nature of subtext as an interpretive phenomenon, it is difficult to quantify, as it relies on ambiguity and possible alternative meanings to be interpreted by the audience (as exemplified in e.g., Bronski 1984, 66). A more in-depth discussion of the phenomenon of subtext generally can be found in Monaco (2009), an outline of the phenomenon of queer subtext in televisual narratives specifically can be found in Russo (1981).

In light of these differences, the specific understanding of polysemy common to TV studies and the TV industry must be addressed, "which means that a text has potentially many meanings" (Marshall and Werndly 2002, 55). As such, those sections of this project that focus on linguistic representations as a quantifiable phenomenon will concern themselves primarily with episode text, rather than subtext. By contrast, those sections that do also involve more

qualitative evaluations of scripted TV show episodes draw on the TV industry understanding of the concept of connotation in scripted TV: “Connotation is about how words or images or sounds have particular meanings and associations within our own culture. It is through connotation that we convey cultural attitudes, beliefs and values” (Marshall and Werndly 2002, 30). Thus, a distinction between elements that are directly (textually) addressed and elements that are potentially invoked via use of connotations must be established in order to preserve analytical clarity.

Lastly, the concept of intertextuality in popular culture must be addressed, as “[t]elevision systems have always engaged in textual exchanges in the forms of influences, counter-programming, explicit business arrangements and informal circulation” (Oren and Shalaf 2013, 3). This understanding is also in line with Kristeva’s concept of intertextuality as described by e.g., Raj (2015). For a more in-depth perspective on intertextuality and genre, see Duff (2002). As such, one show’s text may reference another as a type of convenient shorthand to highlight and contrast (other) pop-cultural phenomena.

2.1.1.2. Television genres and formats

One foundational distinction in the theoretical examination of scripted television programming is that between television genres and formats. A television format, in the sense of Moran and Malbon (2006) is “a set of invariable elements in a serial program out of which the variable elements of individual episodes are produced” (20). As such, this term refers to a highly specific phenomenon, such as an individual TV show, or a TV show franchise (e.g., Oren and Shalaf 2013, 2-3). A TV genre, by contrast, can be understood as a broader category that groups together texts that “have, or seem to have, characteristics in common. […] Genres are therefore groups of texts which share conventions” (Marshall and Werndly 2002, 39). It must be acknowledged that the both the overarching concept of gerne as well as the specific delineation of genre boundaries are contested (cf. Akass and McCabe 2007 for an in-depth discussion), and must crucially be understood as a type of classification that is “made not born” (Feuer 1992, 114). This perspective emphasizes the necessity of understanding TV genres as construed by the TV industry to serve the interests of both the audience and the industry itself (Akass and Cabe 2007, 286-7).

In light of the bottom-up creation of TV genre categories (Kraszewski 2006, 20), as well as the predominantly post hoc categorization of shows as being part of such categories (Feuer 1992, 114), it is worth noting that such genre categorizations have been arrived at using different methods: Berber Sardinha and Veirano Pinto (2021), for instance, used linguistic features to group and classify television programs, while the IMDb tagging system (IMDb n.d.-b) could instead be considered an example of a TV industry typical genre classification based on industry convention. For the purposes of this project, the genre descriptions offered by Marshall and Werndly (2002) will be drawn upon, as these categories are intentionally kept rather broad and also allow for the introduction of so-called "hybrid" genres to account for new and emerging types of shows: "Traditionally, the texts in television schedules fall into broad generic categories which guide programme makers and viewers. Main generic categories are drama, comedy, light entertainment, arts, documentary, news and current affairs" (Marshall and Werndly 2002, 44).

Due to the focus of this project, the emphasis here will be placed mainly on the first two of these categories, as both Drama and Comedy formats most commonly tend to make use of "scripted characters or what I would like to call 'character identities'– that is, the identities of characters in fictional genres" (Bednarek 2010, 97). These scripted (fictional) characters and their construction and language use have been described as notably distinct of other forms of scripted TV language, such as they tend to occur, for instance, in documentary programs in the sense of Marshall and Werndly (2002, 44).

The broad category of Drama can be understood to include sub-categories such as literary dramas, detective dramas, and domestic dramas. A literary drama in this sense would be, for instance, a TV adaptation of a literary novel, or also a (stage) play. This type of drama is said to be particularly prestigious and treated as "authored in the same way that novels are authored" (Marshall and Werndly 2002, 44). In the data considered for this project, this type of Drama might be considered a comparatively rare phenomenon, as many (if not most) of the programming included in the *TV Corpus* appears to correspond more closely to the aforementioned categories of the "episodic series" or the "serial" (Kraszewski 2006, 5). By contrast, detective and police dramas, which typically focus on "defining […] social deviance and the processes of law enforcement" (Marshall and Werndly 2002, 44) appear to make up a greater part of the *TV Corpus*. The category of the domestic drama and soap opera can be

said to “centre on the home, the community, the workplace and, in particular, […] interpersonal relationships such as those between lovers, family members or groups of friends” (Marshall and Werndly 2002, 44). Strikingly, these categories of Drama do not cover the entire extent of possible Drama formats shown on North American TV, and should not be understood as mutually exclusive: A TV show like *Elementary (2012-2018)*, a modern adaptation of Arthur Conan Doyle’s *Sherlock Holmes* stories, could arguably be classified under all three subgenres depending on which aspects of the format one chooses to emphasize (*Elementary* 2012-2018). As such, shows understood as one or multiple subgenres of Drama might share certain features, while still exhibiting notable differences in their specific genre configurations.

The TV genre of Comedy can likewise be said to comprise a variety of different subgenres, such as, for instance, standup comedy, sketch-focused shows, and situation comedies (Marshall and Werndly 2002, 45). In keeping with the previously established focus on “scripted characters” (Bednarek 2010, 97), this present study directs its primary attention to the latter category: “Sitcoms could be classified as half-hour comic dramas but are not usually described as dramas because, conventionally, television drama is not seen as a primarily comic form” (Marshall and Werndly 2002, 45). As such, the actual topics and story elements portrayed in Drama and Comedy genres might often be similar if not identical: *Brooklyn 99* (2013-2021), for instance, could be considered both a sitcom and a police procedural (*Brooklyn Nine-Nine* 2013–2021). Accordingly, the main differences between the two broader genre categories seem to be the narrative’s focus on either serious or comical aspects of a situation, as well as the typical length of an episode: In case of a Drama, episode lengths of 40 minutes or more are most common, whereas Comedy formats frequently have shorter 20-30 minute episodes (e.g., Savorelli 2010, 35).

Thirdly, the framework introduced by Marshall and Werndly (2002) also allows for so-called "[H]ybrid" genres that combine elements of multiple genres in new and inventive ways, using *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (one of the shows under investigation in the Stage 2 analysis) as an example:

> *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* hybridises two popular US television genres of the teen high school soap and horror. In *Buffy*, the central protagonist is a teenage girl who also happens to be a demon-slayer. She and her friends worry about the usual rites of passage of high school like dating, school grades and oppressive adult authority. They also have the responsibility of keeping the town's population of supernatural creatures under control. In this text, the friends' school, Sunnydale High, is quite literally a 'hellmouth' and the anxieties of adolescence are embodied as monsters and demons which have to be fought and defeated. (Marshall and Werndly 2002, 47-48)

This kind of hybridization of genres is also frequently a means through which new genres become popularized, as successful shows and formats can commonly lead to increased popularity of the (sub)genres they are classified as: In this context, the success of one show in a certain (sub)genre is frequently interpreted as an indicator of prospective success for others (Akass and McCabe 2007, 286-7). Such Hybrid genres are then often categorized as all of the genres drawn upon in this process of hybridization in databases such as IMDb, or also in the TV Corpus itself (IMDb n.d.-a). Accordingly, any discussion of TV genres in this project approaches such instances as belonging simultaneously to all indicated categories, rather than isolating them within a narrower classification, an approach that will be further elaborated on in Section 3.

2.1.1.3. Negotiating contents: From the production code to "Standards and Practices" departments

Just as TV genres are often assumed to provide an (implicit) guidance for both the audience and the studio teams in terms of the contents that are to be expected (Akass and McCabe 2007, 287), more explicitly formulated rules about what can and cannot be shown on scripted TV have also been common in the history of the medium: One notable example of such a (comparatively direct) measure to guide the US-American movie and TV industries in their work was the Hayes code (as described by Black 1994, 1-2), but it was by no means the only censorship measure of its kind.

> The Production Code was notable for, among other things, the sometimes remarkable ways it attempted to regulate discourse in American film without baldly stating that certain textual elements were absolutely forbidden. Thus, expressions such as "should be avoided" and "should not suggest" were common. There are, however, several broad categories of representation on which the Code did not equivocate in the slightest. Clause six of section two on "Sex" states that "sex perversion or any inference to it is forbidden." (Lugowski 1999, 9)

Accordingly, it must be acknowledged that, during times when the Production Code and similar censorship measures were in effect, any portrayal or representation of queer identities or characters was either explicitly forbidden, or at least heavily regulated. Historically, many topics of public debate were thus largely excluded from being portrayed on broadcast television due to such measures, oftentimes resulting in more subtle and figurative portayals of these topics, for instance in the form of subtext (see e.g., Trottier 2010, GREAT DIALOGUE IS LIKE RICE KRISPIES; Section 2.1.1.1). These constraints must be taken into account when attempting to apply modern indicators of queerness to older televisual narratives (Allrath and Gymnich 2005). Also, it appears likely that such measures have had lasting effects beyond their period of enforcement, influencing writers and producers in their creative choices even to this day (Nurik 2018, 14).

Relatedly, TV writers and producers today are still regulated in their portrayal of certain issues in a number of ways: Firstly, any choices of what to portray on scripted TV are always necessarily "the product of complex, usually collective processes" (Alvarez-Pereyre 2011, 49), that frequently involve so-called "Standards and Practices" departments besides the actual creative team. These departments are typically staffed by employees of the production companies involved in the creation of a TV show, and are tasked with ensuring that the final product is in line with the expectations of both the production company itself but also the assumed intended audience's expectations (Jeffres, Atkin, and Neuendorf 2022). In contrast to the earlier measures of content management relying on a (presumed) culturally-based consensus across production companies, the individual shows' contents are now moderated in accordance with a more individual, brand-specific identity that is being constructed (Proulx and Shepatin 2012), while still ensuring an often similar effect: In an effort to appeal to both viewers and industry stakeholders, the portrayals of contentious topics are often tightly controlled.

2.1.2. Scripted TV and society: Intersections and effects

Where the previous discussion considered episodic television and its common practices, this section examines the interaction and intersection between scripted TV and the outside world. As such, it first focuses on how "television series are at the same time a creative achievement […], a commercial product and an ideological positioning" (Bednarek 2010, 223). In this sense, it necessarily links back to the previously introduced means of negotiating contents, but, more specifically, it also examines the documented effects that episodic television can have on the audience's behaviour and opinions (e.g., Bandura 1977, 39).

2.1.2.1. What goes into making a TV show?

As has been established, a range of interests are at play in the production of a TV show up until it is distributed on broadcast TV or on a streaming platform. This section will briefly outline three main areas of interests that can be said to contribute to the final product, namely ideological, financial, and artistic considerations. All three of these are highly complex considerations to be made by a TV show's creative and marketing teams, and as such beyond the scope of this thesis. A more in-depth discussion of such can be found in Alvarez-Pereyre (2011), Bednarek (2015), or Trottier (2010).

Firstly, the notion of ideological considerations as one of the driving forces of TV creation has already come into play in the discussion of historical and current constraints on showrunners (Section 2.1.1.3). Most North American TV shows are nowadays produced by one or more of a (limited) number of production companies, many of whom are contractually or legally associated with a specific TV broadcaster (e.g AMC (AMC Networks n.d)), or a particular online streaming platform (e.g., Netflix (Netflix n.d)). As these legal entities tend to have a high level of commitment to creating a specific image for their brand (c.f. Disney's mission statement (The Walt Disney Company n.d.)) they will commonly regulate the portrayals of any contents that could be perceived as controversial (as also discussed in Section 2.1.1.3). This is, of course, motivated by the desire to appeal to their (assumed) target audiences, which may vary from production company to production company, but also from genre to genre: "Genre, in fact, guides industrial procedures – how it organizes itself, how it appeals to viewers and how commercial stations deliver audiences to advertisers." (Akass and McCabe 2007, 287) As

such, constraints can be assumed to often be placed on the creative teams creating a show by the company they are employed by, in an effort to appeal to a specific target audience.

This type of consideration necessarily is closely tied also to the financial constraints placed on the production of TV shows in several different ways: As financial success is (one of) the primary goal(s) of such content creation (e.g., Dettmar and Tomkowiak 2022, 4), a show that is well-received by the audience is oftentimes more likely to receive continued funding (i.e. get renewed for further seasons). Success, in this sense, is typically judged by metrics such as the number of viewers, star ratings, and reviews from viewers, but also by other less direct measures of engagement such as the amount of attention generated by a show on social media (Proulx and Shepatin 2012, "Twitter Gets More Attention"). At the same time, the financial commitment necessitated by the creation of a show varies strongly depending on a variety of factors: A show that is shot using a small number of sets and characters, without elaborate practical or visual effects, may be produced at a much lower expense than a show that necessitates a great variety of shooting locations, a large cast of characters, and a great number of effects (CBC News 2022). By contrast, more abstract considerations about the current TV industry's trends and particularly successful shows and genres are also oftentimes taken into consideration when making financial choices about the renewal, production, or budget of a given TV show: Frequently, the unexpected success of a particular show will lead to an increase in the number of similar programs produced, following the stages of "innovation, imitation and saturation" (Curtin 1995, 248) in an attempt to recreate unusual successes.

Lastly, it must be acknowledged that aside from these practical considerations of the production process, a TV show episode is, of course, also (if not primarily) a work of art that is put together by the creative team. Notably, in contrast to many other artforms, an episode of scripted TV does not have an author in the same way that, for instance, a novel might have an author: While the episode's script may have been written by a single (or a team of) screenwriter(s), the actors, set and costume designers, director(s), producers, camera operators, sound technicians, etc. are all also involved in the creative processes of the episode. Similarly, the various members of the post-production teams (editors, VFX artists, etc.) affect the final product presented to the audience in crucial ways (Patterson et al. 2025, Abstract). In this way, the various influences of the creative team must come together to

contribute to the overall work of art, though they may also end up working at cross-purposes, if different contributors in this process aim for different goals, leading to a "clash of agendas […] that warrant[s] further investigation" (Roberts 2010, 777).

2.1.2.2. What comes out of a TV show?

The previous sections have repeatedly alluded to the TV industry's idea of a "viewer" or "target audience" who is the intended primary recipient of the TV shows produced. However, in spite of the remarkable efforts expended on part of the production companies, there is no way to guarantee what, exactly, a given viewer might take away from an episode of television they have been shown (Section 2.1.1.1, "polysemy"). Nevertheless, a range of general tendencies in terms of viewer reactions have been observed, a comprehensive review of which can be found in Żerebecki et al. 2021.

Most relevantly for the purposes of this project, frequent exposure to a certain concept via mainstream TV programming is often said to be likely to have a marked impact on the perception of said concept on part of the viewer (e.g., Bandura 1977, 39). While this notion may be applied to any kind of content portrayed on TV, it has repeatedly been observed to have particular relevance for the public perception of minority groups: In such cases, both the group's own public self-image, as well as the broader attitudes held by those outside the group might be shaped by such portrayals (as illustrated by e.g., Pugh 2018, 196; Mastro et al. 2008, 19).

Notably, this effect has been described as both familiarizing (and thus acclimatizing) the audience to previously unknown or uncomfortable ideas, but also, potentially, as serving to reinforce preexisting stereotypes (e.g., Chung 2007, 105). While not every viewer is likely to be equally receptive to this type of (intentional or unintentional) influence, scripted TV nevertheless "shows us situations and relationships from other people's points of view […]. This could hardly fail to affect our own way of conducting ourselves, and our expectations of other people's behaviour." (Gauntlett 2008, 2-3) At the same time, it has also been noted that a given viewer's own perspective (and personal identity or experience) is likely to influence their understanding of a given television text and the kinds of stereotypes that are reinforced or challenged therein (Marshall and Werndly 2002, 58).

This is in keeping with the efforts to tailor the produced programming to a show's (presumed) audience as it was discussed in the previous sections, since "the proliferation of cable and pay-TV has been structured around branding and marketing to niche audiences interested in generic types" (Akass and McCabe 2007, 288). As such, the planning for and adherence to highly specific genre conventions on part of major production companies could arguably also be seen as part of an attempt to make sure that a given show is (primarily) viewed by an audience familiar with said genre conventions: This may, on the one hand, reduce the risk (but also the opportunity) of confronting a viewer with a concept or convention they are unfamiliar with, thus potentially lessening the reach and impact of a given show on a wider audience's perspectives as discussed above. However, on the other hand, one might also argue that, within the confines of specific genre conventions, showrunners might be given a greater degree of freedom to explore and discuss controversial contents in ways that may not be comprehensible to all viewers. (cf. Casey et al. 2002, 59-60)

Strikingly, this kind of phenomenon can be observed both for broader sociocultural phenomena like the perception of minority groups, but also as a possible driving force in making new lexical items popular and contributing to language change (Stuart-Smith et al. 2013, 530-1). There are various instances in which the first recorded use of a particular linguistic construction can be traced back to a specific TV show and its language use, or wherein the specific usage of a term can be said to have been made popular by a certain TV show:

So, for instance, was the concept and term of the "bro code" introduced and made popular by the 2000s sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* (*How I Met Your Mother* 2005-2014), and the concept and term has since become sufficiently popularizes to now be represented in some online dictionaries (e.g., ("Bro Code" 2024)). Similarly, especially with regards to highly popular TV shows, there have been recorded cases where an expression describing a specific event or character in a show became popular as a more general expression outside the show: As such, specific iconic characters and TV show contents may "construct and incorporate features about personalities, actors and issues from other television genres" (Marshall and Werndly 2002, 47), and thus give rise to new or changed ways of using certain terms in more general language use.

2.2. Queer art and sociopolitical change: A historical perspective

A further perspective that contributes to a more well-rounded understanding of the phenomena under investigation in this project is the history of the queer rights movement(s) in North America and beyond. This section is by necessity linked closely to the previously discussed history of television, but where that section focused primarily on the constraints placed on broadcast television over time, this section instead discusses the history of queer art in North America. Accordingly, it outlines in broad strokes some of the most notable sociopolitical realities people belonging to or advocating for the queer community faced at different historical moments. As a full discussion of these realities and historical developments would far exceed the scope (and aims) of this present project, see Bronski (2011), Romesburg (2018), or Murphy and Bjorngaard (2018) for a more in-depth discussion of the histories of the queer rights movements.

In approaching the topic of queer identities and queer advocacy in North America, it must, once again, be acknowledged that any understanding of and advocacy for marginalized queer identities cannot be accomplished in a vacuum:

> Identities, of course, are complex constructions, and gender is only one part of an individual's sense of self. Ethnicity is obviously an important aspect of identity, and like gender may be felt to be more or less central to self-identity by each individual, or might be *made* significant by external social circumstances (such as a racist regime or community). Other much discussed axes of identity include class, age, disability and sexuality. In addition, a range of other factors may contribute to a sense of identity, such as education, urban or rural residency, cultural background, access to transportation and communications, criminal record, persecution or refugee status.
> (Gauntlett 2008, 16)

As Gauntlett (2008) describes, a person's identity is necessarily multifaceted, and depending on the individual and their personal circumstances and experiences, different aspects of their identity may be of varying degrees of importance to them. Consequently, the following outline of the changing circumstances of queer art and advocacy in North America should be understood as representing only one such axis of marginalized identities, and is grounded in an understanding of personal identity as inherently intersectional (Littauer 2018, 77; Weiss 2018, 107). While the focus in this project is not on analysing and evaluating "external social circumstances" as such, changes to such circumstances as they are described, for instance, by Bronski (2011), may be considered in order to position the project's results within their appropriate historical and sociopolitical contexts.

As researchers such as Baker (2005) or Hobson (2018, 200) point out, it can be challenging to account for the multiplicity and historical variability of concepts of queerness in North American history: Depending on the societal conceptualizations of gender and sexuality at a given point in time in a given community, a wide variety of lived experiences might be described as "queer" in the sense that one is deviating from one's community's norms (following e.g., Romesburg 2018, 5). Consequently, it must be acknowledged that what might reasonably be described as (in our current terms) "queer" by one community's norms was, conversely, considered unremarkable and normative behaviour by another's (Bronski 2011, 19-20). For the purposes of this project, normativity is understood in the sense of Koop 2024 as "the societal judgement of what is generally considered to be acceptable" (4).

This understanding of non-normative genders and sexualities as changeable concepts dependent on sociocultural context also means that even trying to meaningfully distinguish "between those who embrace a gay identity and those who have gay sex" is a task beyond the scope of this analysis (Hobson 2018, 211). To the contrary, the term *queer* will here be used as a convenient and maximally inclusive "umbrella term for all those sexually and gender-diverse people, activities, relations, categorizations, and identities that fall outside the norms of either their time and place or ours" (Romesburg 2018, 4). To adequately account for the inherent ambiguity of such terms, working definitions for all terms of queer in-group identities under investigation in this study are included in Section 2.2.3, though they do not claim comprehensiveness beyond the scope and purposes of this present project.

2.2.1. Historical milestones and major political movements

Notably, many older notions of non-normativity conceptualized queerness not as a facet of an individual's personal identity (as is more typically consistent with most modern understandings of queerness). Instead, it was seen rather as a facet of so-called "homosocial" relationships, or as a set of activities that a person might or might not take part in, some of which do still overlap with our modern understanding of queerness (see e.g., Bronski 2011, 50 for a discussion on homosocial relationships and their possible intersections with queerness). With the notion of the "homosexual" as a person who is attracted to people of

their own sex or gender first recorded in the late 1860s (Herzer 1986, 1; Janssen 2021, 4), a shift in perspective increasingly saw queerness conceptualized as a facet of personal identity. In fact, Bronski (2011) argues that the inherent tension between such shifting notions of queerness in their increasing public visibility and discursive complexity on the one hand, and the rise of capitalism and the social purity movements of the nineteenth century on the other hand had far-reaching consequences for both policy making and public perception of the queer community (Bronski 2011, 14-17).

In the early decades of broadcast television, the contents portrayed therein were clearly and oftentimes explicitly regulated as was discussed in Section 2.1.1.3. During this period, sodomy laws and similar measures prohibiting gender nonconformity and expression of queer attraction were still in place in the wake of the nineteenth century (Ritchie and Whitlock 2018, 301; Bronski 2011, 17). Especially in the post-Second World War climate, as broadcast television as a medium was gaining popularity, "American culture idealized the white, patriarchal, heterosexual, middle-class family. Institutions of every kind rendered this exclusionary ideal into a punishing social, political, and economic imperative" (Littauer 2018, 67). In keeping also with the widespread fears and ideological climate of the Cold War era, the 1940s-1960s saw the queer community commonly being framed as a so-called "security threat", as any deviation from the aforementioned ideals was construed as a danger to North American social order (Ritchie and Whitlock 2018, 304). Interestingly, this proved to have the effect of rallying a diverse range of queer individuals to advocate for their "community and national belonging" (Littauer 2018, 67).

By the late 1960s, these tensions escalated, arguably culminating in the Stonewall rebellion in 1969, in which a police raid of a queer bar was resisted and turned into a symbol of public defiance (Strub 2018, 82). This air of defiance was highly prevalent in the 1970s, with many queer organizations and communities trying to reach out beyond their national borders as well (Hobson 2018, 206). However, while these efforts at community building and advocacy were being made, it must be noted that this frequently was "[l]ess a coherent ideology or unified political formation than a structure of feeling marked by pride, visibility, affirmation, defiance, and boldness" (Strub 2018, 82). These efforts often also were rather exclusionary towards different identities under the queer umbrella (Strub 2018, 89; Hutchins 2018, 253).

Spurred on by both Ronald Reagan's presidency in the U.S. and the onset of the AIDS epidemic, the 1980s saw a significant wave of conservative backlash against the queer community (e.g., Brier 2018, 95): While a number of U.S. states had begun the process of repealing their sodomy laws in the 1970s, this combination of factors led to a renewed emphasis on "lewd conduct" statues that disproportionately targeted members of the queer community (Ritchie and Whitlock 2018, 309). In the backlash against the contemporary discussions of the AIDS epidemic, too, "the limits of the US welfare state, the prevalence of racism and its effects on health, and the homophobia that undergirded a wholesale abandonment of people with AIDS" (Brier 2018, 95) were exposed, bringing into sharper relief the intersectionality inherent to queer advocacy. At the same time, however, advances in reproductive medicine directed mainstream media attention towards members of the queer community as "gay and lesbian families with children", a notion which had previously been beyond the imagination of the wider North American public, and which was quickly picked up in popular media for its novelty (Rivers 2018, 276).

In the wake of these developments and fuelled by the coalition politics common in the 1990s (Hutchins 2018, 253), the political treatment of members of the queer community shifted from explicit criminalization towards less overt forms of discrimination, though the results especially for otherwise marginalized queer people saw little improvement (Ritchie and Whitlock 2018, 310). One striking example of this can be found in the decades-long prevalence of so-called "don't ask, don't tell" policies for new immigrants to the United States and U.S. military personnel: As long as these individuals did not make their queer identities public, the still remaining regulations that could lead to deportation or discharge were not actively enforced (Stein 2018, 326).

In the changing neoliberal political climate of the 2000s in the wake of 9/11 (Weiss 2018, 107), the focus of queer advocacy groups continued to move away from a more generalized "defiance" of the established norms governing North American societies as it was described by Strub (2018, 82), and rather towards the pursuit of formal legal equality (e.g., Ritchie and Whitlock 2018, 308). As the political goals of the time emphasized privatization of the public sector, "consumer citizenship, […] corporate welfare and urban redevelopment, LGBT sexual politics increasingly pitted 'deserving' gay and lesbian people against 'undeserving' others" (Weiss 2018, 107). In this climate, Weiss explains, members of the queer community in

different socioeconomic circumstances may be seen seen as opposing forces: Here, the "same-sex married […] consumer-citizen […] gentrifier" is understood and portrayed as the ideal, while those queer people who are economically weaker and less embedded in normative family structures are perceived as undeserving and "dangerous" (Weiss 2018, 107). Duggan (2002) similarly observes that this "does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising […] a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption" (179). This "homonormativity" (Duggan 2002, 179) is argued to have been a driving force in queer advocacy during the past decades. Indeed, this is reflected in the types of milestones that have received public and media attention, such as the legalization of gay marriage in the U.S. in 2015, strengthened rights for queer parents in terms of adoption and family law, as well as a rise in pop-cultural visibility (Weiss 2018, 109; Vider 2018, 352).

In discussing recent sociopolitical developments concerning the queer community, it must be noted that there is some debate on the extent of the perceived 'progress' toward queer liberation and equality, which is often presented as the dominant narrative of recent history. Stein (2018) offers a comprehensive synthesis of these arguments, pointing out that "there is compelling evidence of deep, profound, and ongoing limitations on LGBT freedom and equality" (Stein 2018, 320). In light of the previously discussed shifts in queer advocacy "away from a broader resistance to state violence" (Ritchie and Whitlock 2018, 308), it appears pertinent to consider the ways in which this trend toward homonormativity may have an adverse effect on at least some members of the community, and the ways in which these tensions might be represented on scripted television.

2.2.2. From Subtext to Text: Queer characters on broadcast TV over time

As discussed in the previous section, the ways in which the social and political treatment of members of the queer community changed over time can reasonably be described as non-linear, reflecting shifting boundaries of what was considered acceptable or unacceptable within queer lived experience at various points in history (Bronski 2011, 19-20). Accordingly, there have been numerous ways in which the queer community has been represented in works of art generally and on scripted TV in particular depending on the cultural politics of their time (Dhoest and Simons 2011, 262). However, just as, for instance, Bronski (2011)

argued that “queer history” (as it is also described by Ullman 2018, 368) can be traced far beyond the emergence of queer rights movements and the conceptualization of queerness as a facet of personal identity (Bronski 2011, 16), similar claims are also made about the prevalence and significance of portrayals of queerness in popular culture:

> The soul of US queer history resides, in some ways, within in a popular culture that, curiously, provided a residence for queer individuals, knowledges, and possibilities long before they existed in the “real” world at large, even as it constrained the terms upon which they might be represented or consumed. (Ullman 2018, 368)

As such, Ullman (2018) argues that artists (which, in case of scripted television, could be taken to refer anyone from the creative team) have chosen and pushed for various ways of including aspects of queerness in the works they were producing. However, depending on the constraints of the medium at the time (Section 2.1.1.3), they employed vastly different methods for this purpose: Due to censorship measures (Nurik 2018, 530) and various laws regulating expressions of queer experiences (Ritchie and Whitlock 2018, 301), early decades of TV programming typically did not portray any characters as unambiguously and textually queer.

As an alternative, creative teams frequently made use of queer coding (Bronski 2011, 182, 195), for instance via a camp “self-presentational style that exaggerates and mocks dominant values and aesthetics” closely associated with both stage performance and, through this, with queerness (Ullman 2018, 361). Notably, this kind of camp, ambiguously queer portrayal was commonly utilized as a source of humour or reference to stage production (Vider 2018, 348), and to imply a measure of fluidity between gender binaries (e.g., Littauer 2018, 74). Another common method used in such early representations was the use of subtext as it was described in Section 2.1.1.1 to imply queerness (e.g., “Uncle Arthur” from Bewitched (Ullman 2018, 365)). Often, this method also relied on humorous misattribution, such as double entendre, as a comedic element. (Warren and McGraw 2015, 53) A more in-depth discussion of different strategies of indicating queerness in early TV programming can be found in Davis and Needham 2009.

While the reach and cultural impact of these early forms of queer representation should not be discounted, it must be noted that analysing them systematically is a notoriously challenging task: The very ambiguity and creative form of expression that made them feasible

means of indicating queerness during a time when such representations were systematically regulated and largely prohibited means that they are hard to trace. As such, this research project will focus on such phenomena only in qualitative, rather than quantitative analyses.

More explicit portrayals of queerness on scripted TV were rather quick to follow in the wake of the increased public visibility the queer community attained in by the late 60s/early 70s (Strub 2018, 83-4): Where queerness previously appeared to have been reserved for (episodic) villains or antagonists, in the 70s "the first openly gay characters with which the audience were expected to sympathize began to appear" (Ullman 2018, 365). Most of these characters were episodic (i.e. only occurred in single or small numbers of episodes), with only a small number of them being recurring across entire seasons of shows. Exceptions to this rule can, for instance, be found in the Comedy "Soap" (*Soap* 1977-1981), or the soap-opera "Dynasty" (*Dynasty* 1981-1989). As Ullman (2018) points out, the aforementioned episodic characters can be found in a wide range of TV genres (Ullman 2018, 365), though their roles in the story can commonly be described as supportive, arguably akin to the stereotype of "the familiar 'gay best friend' character, wise and sensitive, who can help to guide the main character towards happiness" (Gauntlett 2008, 93).

Besides the stereotype of the gay best friend and the camp stage performer, a variety of other stereotypes about queer identities also became popular, not all of them benign: "The rise of the LGBT rights movement in the 1970s and 1980s was accompanied by a marked increase in gay psychopathic characters in mainstream film [and TV]. Visibility has its discontents" (Ullman 2018, 363). As such, queer villains and antagonists became common, and, depending on the context, certain genres might even be argued to use ambiguous sexuality or camp as an indicator of a character's immorality (Littauer 2018, 73; Gross 2001, 254). Relatedly, the notion that a member of the queer community might be recognisable on sight gained traction, further strengthening the preexisting stereotypes of "the mannish lesbian and the effeminate homosexual man" (Bronski 2011, 114), as well as that of the "greedy", hypersexualized, unfaithful bisexual (e.g., Gross 2001, 64).

Besides the establishment of such stereotypes, scripted TV can also be argued to have raised the public awareness and acceptance of new social and familial roles available to queer people, such as the comparatively novel idea of a person in a same-sex relationship as a

parent (Rivers 2018, 276). As such, the public perception of what a queer person might be like was arguably both broadened and narrowed in certain ways at the same time.

In the 1990s, the first shows with major queer characters appeared on scripted TV: frequently mentioned in this context are the sitcoms *Ellen* (*Ellen* 1994-1998) and *Will & Grace* (*Will & Grace* 1998-2020-a) as some of the earliest U.S. TV shows to have queer main cast characters. While *Ellen* was the first North American broadcast TV show to have a main character come out as queer, it was cancelled the following year in the wake of severe conservative backlash (Becker 2006, 106). *Will & Grace*, by contrast, is notable as it ran for a total of 11 seasons, even though it focuses "on the deep friendship between a well-off white gay man and a heterosexual white woman, [which] was a particularly welcomed vision of gay male life after the pathology and hardship that haunted gay male television representations during 15 years of the AIDS epidemic" (Ullman 2018, 366). The critical and commercial success of *Will & Grace* (Gauntlett 2008, 91) thus can be argued to have paved the way for a variety of other scripted TV programming in the following years as queer characters started appearing in greater numbers also in non-Comedy genres (Becker 2006, 3). Notably, much of this programming still remained focused on "primarily white, and usually male, protagonists" (Ullman 2018, 366). Beyond the success of these first shows, the increase in the number of queer characters portrayed on TV in general, and the trends in their construction in particular can also be linked to "growing research on the supposed size and affluence of the gay market—white gay men in particular" (Vider 2018, 352). Accordingly, the shift in ideological and financial considerations aligned to facilitate an increase in the number of queer characters portrayed on scripted mainstream TV, who "are emphasising the importance of culture alongside more heavy-handed ways of changing society through legislation and regulation" (Gauntlett 2008, 160).

Besides the portrayal of queer characters on TV, the ways in which the topic of queerness could be discussed also changed: While the Production Code prohibited explicit discussions of queerness even in the abstract (Littauer 2018, 73), the gradual abolishing of such restrictions and the greater public visibility of the queer community corresponded with more candid discussions and depictions of queerness on TV (Strub 2018, 83-4): As such, characters might now mention their own or another character's queerness, as "coming out stories" frequently appear to be crucial to queer characters' arcs on scripted TV (Sender 2012, 219).

Consequently, it is worth examining what kinds of terms for queer identities are used, and in which contexts these terms occur.

2.2.3. Queer identities and terms of in-group membership as a changing landscape

To elaborate on the developments outlined previously, this section discusses marginalized group identities, with particular attention to queer identities and terms for queer in-group identities. Once again, these concepts need be considered as part of a constantly evolving landscape to account for the fact that different terminologies might have different implications and meanings across temporal, social, and individual contexts: The term *queer* itself is, in fact, a relevant example of this phenomenon. For some of its history, it was typically used as a "slur" (in the sense of Anderson and Lepore 2013, 1-3), but it has since (arguably) been reclaimed by the queer community, where it is currently often used as an umbrella term that is, as previously mentioned, inclusive of many different identities (e.g., Brontsema 2004, 12). Due to this, the present project does not aim to draw strict distinctions between terms used as slurs, reclaimed slurs, and community-chosen labels.

As there is a wide range of terms of in-group identity commonly used by members of the queer community to describe their experiences, this research focuses on a select number of the most widely recognized. Some of these can be considered examples of what is commonly referred to as an "umbrella term" (Romesburg 2018, 4) that appears to be inclusive of multiple different kinds of gender identities and sexualities. Among the commonly known terms of identity focused on in this project, *LGBT*, *queer*, and, to a lesser degree, *gay* might be considered as such. In contrast, their logical counterparts are so-called "microlabels", which refer to terms for queer identities that aim to be highly specific in order to describe a specific group's experience as accurately as possible, but in ways that are commonly perceived as overlapping also with broader umbrella term categories ("Microlabel" 2024). Notably, these types of identity labels are not mutually exclusive: The same person might choose to label themself as "cis asexual demiromantic" (i.e. a person who identifies as the gender they were assigned at birth, does not experience sexual attraction, and only experiences romantic attraction in specific circumstances (LGBTQIA+ Wiki n.d.) in one

context, while more generally describing themself as “queer” in another. In such cases, the label that a person chooses to describe their identity may be informed by a variety of factors, such as the level of personal information they wish to disclose, or their assumptions about a conversational partner’s knowledge about lesser-known queer identities (“Queer” 2024). However, some members of the queer community may also be more comfortable using the same label in all contexts (University of California, Davis n.d.). For practical reasons, microlables were excluded from the quantitative analysis in this project, which is discussed in more detail in Section 2.2.3.

Starting with the aforementioned umbrella terms, ***queer*** itself is among the most widely used both in public advocacy and in academic discourse: “[O]riginally meaning ‘odd’ or ‘quaint,’ [the word] acquired the meaning of ‘bad’ and ‘worthless’ in the early eighteenth century” (Bronski 2011, 15). Throughout the twentieth century, it was commonly used as a derogatory label for members of the queer community, though the term arguably has undergone a process of linguistic reclamation (Brontsema 2004, 14) and is now used widely as an umbrella term both by and for members of the queer community (Bronski 2011, 15). However, not all members of the community perceive this reclamation to have been sufficient, and especially queer people from older generations are sometimes disinclined to use the term for themselves (University of California, Davis n.d.).

Strikingly, *queer* has continued to be used as an adjective with its older meaning of “odd” even after it started being used as a slur, frequently leading to ambiguities in the use of the term as they were discussed in Section 1. In spite or perhaps because of these challenges, “[q]ueer has been seized upon as a label because of its ambiguity and flexibility against normativity” (Hutchins 2018, 257). Furthermore, it has been argued that *queer* as a term is particularly suitable for intersectional analyses of “institutional, social, cultural, and political operations of power” (Romesburg 2018, 4; see also Shah 2018 for an intersectional perspective on queerness and racism), as it foregrounds these categories’ dependence on societal construction and convention.

LGBT, along with extended forms such as *LGBTQIA+* (University of California, Davis n.d.) "is an acronym in which each of the letters represents a category of non-normative gender or sexual identity" (Koop 2024, 4). Arising in the late twentieth century as an umbrella term, the slow expansion of the acronym (from L/G, via LGB, to LGBT) to include different aspects of personal identities was driven by the need to help build stronger communities for advocacy (Hutchins 2018, 253). It must be pointed out, however, that this type of coalition building was frequently challenged by the different advocacy groups involved (Section 2.2.1), making the acronym slow to gain traction and frequently challenged over the inclusion of various identity labels (e.g., Hobson 2018, 221). Likely due to its origins in political activism and organizing, variants of the *LGBT* acronym are frequently utilized in legal and policy contexts, as it is comparatively widely accepted by both the community itself and the wider public (Bronski 2011, 15).

The case of the term ***gay*** is particularly noteworthy, both for its multiple meanings within the queer community and for its frequent use as an umbrella term despite this specificity: One common definition of the term describes it as a "sexual and affectional orientation toward people of the same gender" (University of California, Davis n.d.), according to which it might be used as an umbrella term by people of any gender to express their experience with romantic or sexual attraction. Instances of such use can also be found in common terms for queer rights issues, such as the debate surrounding "gay marriage" (as seen in in e.g., Polikoff 2008's titular juxtaposition of "gay" vs. "straight" marriage). Arguably it is less inclusive as an umbrella term than, for instance, *queer*, seeing as it is commonly used by members of the queer community to indicate exclusive attraction to their own gender(University of California, Davis n.d.).

Similarly to *queer*, the term *gay* also has an alternative older meaning and a history of being used as a slur: Its earlier sense of "happy" or "cheerful" ("Gay" 2024) later became associated with the queer community, possibly via the term's close association with camp aesthetics (Littauer 2018, 74). Upon gaining this association, the term was then frequently used derogatively "as a synonym for dumb or lame or stupid" (Postic and Prough 2014, 1).

In contrast to *gay*, ***lesbian*** is associated primarily with women who are attracted to people of the same gender. However, there are also people of other gender identities who identify as lesbians (University of California, Davis n.d.), indicating that this term's usage primarily by women attracted to other women is conventional, but by no means exclusive. In contrast to the previously discussed terms of in-group identity, *lesbian* does not carry a commonly intended alternative meaning: As the term is derived from a reference to the ancient Greek poet *Sappho of Lesbos* (Aldrich and Wotherspoon 2020, 108), the only alternative meaning associated with *lesbian* besides queer identity is geographic. Interestingly, *lesbian* is less frequently cited as having been used as a slur compared to *queer* or *gay* (Worthen 2020, 27; in detail: Worthen 2023). Notably, there have been ongoing discussions within the queer community about whether the term more commonly refers to someone who is exclusively attracted to women, or someone who is attracted to women but potentially people of other genders as well ("Lesbian" 2024).

Similarly contested has been the term ***bisexual***, as "[p]eople loving more than one gender are often claimed by a monosexual paradigm that assumes the focus of their attraction as either heterosexual or homosexual, rather than as multiple" (Hutchins 2018, 250). In simple terms, bisexuality can thus be defined as romantic or sexual attraction to people of more than one gender or regardless of gender. The term sometimes is used interchangeably with the less commonly known label *pansexual* (University of California, Davis n.d.). Individuals identifying as bisexual may therefore be perceived as being in heterosexual relationships, a perception that some within the queer community criticize as aligning with heteronormative values. This frequently results in bisexuals facing prejudice not only from homophobic individuals or systems outside the community, but also from members of the queer community itself (see Vonlanthen and Roy-Charland 2024 for a comprehensive review on "biphobia"). Likely at least partly due to these biases, as well as the persistent oversexualization of bisexual individuals described by e.g., Hutchins (2018), discussions about the queer community tend towards the use of broader umbrella terms in lieu of discussions about bisexuality itself (Hutchins 2018, 257).

Transgender is frequently used as a term for individuals whose "internal knowledge of gender is different from conventional or cultural expectations based on the sex that person was assigned at birth" (University of California, Davis n.d.). As can likely be inferred from this definition, *transgender*, along with the clipped form *trans*, frequently serves as something of an umbrella term for a variety of gender identities, and is commonly used by transmasculine and transfeminine people, but also, in some cases, by individuals with non-binary gender identities ("Transgender" 2024). Relatedly, it must be pointed out that there is a rather wide variety of terms for identities that could be argued to fall under the trans umbrella currently in use within the community, many of which also use the root *trans-* to indicate their association with this community: Examples of such terms might be *transsexual*, *trans-man*/*trans-woman*, but also the older, nowadays less commonly used *transvestite* (University of California, Davis n.d.). It must be noted that at least some of these terms (especially *transsexual* and *transvestite* as more "body-focused terms" (Vicente 2021, 429)) also have a history of being used as slurs, though some members of the queer community continue to use them as self-descriptors. The inclusion of trans identities within broader umbrella terms and queer advocacy has historically been contested and uncertain (Strub 2018, 89), though the increasing importance of intersectional advocacy during the 1980s and 1990s proved such community building to be essential (Hutchins 2018, 253).

Of course, there is a wide range of additional terms that might also be discussed: *Homosexual*, for instance, might be described as "a sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of the same gender" (University of California, Davis n.d.), but was not chosen to be the focus of this research, as it has become less commonly used within the community as it is at times regarded as outdated and needlessly pathologizing (University of California, Davis n.d.). Given that this project aims to trace the development of contemporary, commonly recognized terminology as used in scripted North American television, certain terms were excluded from analysis. These include terms that are rarely used in current discourse, those that are highly contested or primarily recognized as slurs (e.g., *faggot* (Bronski 2011, 15)), and those that are less well-known among the general public (e.g., *asexual* ("Asexual" 2024)). Instead, the analysis focuses on terms that are widely used today, broadly recognized, and employed in neutral or positive ways both within and beyond the queer community.

2.3.TV Dialogue and character construction: Complementary perspectives

As this project aims to investigate a phenomenon perched at the intersection of different areas of research, the previous two sections focused on some core concepts related to scripted TV programming and its history on the one (Section 2.1), and queer in-group identities on the other hand (Section 2.2). This present section zooms in on the specific object of this project's analyses, namely scripted TV dialogue (e.g., Bednarek 2018, 7) and the various ways in which academic research is trying to make sense of it. Before attempting to analyse and discuss such phenomena that are perched at the intersection of linguistic expression and social categorization, one must acknowledge that "[t]here is no neat fit between sociological and linguistic categories" (Van Leeuwen 2008, 24). As such, it is likely that one sociological category might be realized in a vast array of different linguistic expressions, and that, at the same time, any given linguistic realization might have a number of different (potential) meanings.

When discussing the concept of language produced for a TV show, a range of conceptual frameworks can be identified: Marshall and Werndly (2002), for instance, discuss this phenomenon as "represented talk" (Marshall and Werndly 2002, 77), thus placing special emphasis on the written-to-be-spoken-ness of TV dialogue. In the related field of film studies, the term "filmspeak" (Alvarez-Pereyre 2011, 51) has been proposed to describe analogous linguistic practices in cinema, thus highlighting the language used on screen as deliberate and distinct. While each of these terms and their foci address relevant aspects of scripted TV language use, the choice was made to utilize the notion of "TV dialogue" in the sense of Bednarek (2018) for the purposes of this project. The term TV dialogue, in this sense, is understood

> as shorthand for all character or narrator speech, whether this speech is by one speaker (monologues, asides, voice-over narration, etc.), between two speakers (dyadic interactions), or between several speakers (multiparty interactions). As such, dialogue is differentiated from screen directions, which may refer to elements such as location and time, angle, special effects, transition, sounds, setting, clothing, name/age, mental state, actions, pauses, and voice source. (Bednarek 2018, 7)

This definition's explicit inclusion of non or partially diegetic voice-over narration (e.g., "previously on" summaries), as well as its explicit exclusion of screen directions render the term well suited for the purposes of this present project. The phenomenon of *TV dialogue*,

thus defined, has been examined from a variety of perspectives. Some of the most prominent and most relevant to this project approaches are outlined in Sections 2.3.1 to 2.3.4 below.

2.3.1. Features of television language in corpus research

The first, and arguably most prominent perspective on the analysis of scripted TV dialogue in this project is that of a corpus study: While, as discussed previously, there is a wealth of research looking at non-dialogue features of scripted television (e.g., Diffrient and Chung 2012, 286; Thompson 2003), the focus here is be placed on such studies that discuss phenomena aligning with the definition of TV dialogue outlined above. For the purposes of this project, a corpus linguistics approach is understood as a type of method rather than a specific area of inquiry (following e.g., McEnery and Wilson 2001, 1). This type of method focuses on instances of language use that are as "natural and realistic" as possible (Meyer 2002, 57), and which have been collected systematically, as it is commonly assumed "that a corpus constitutes a standard reference for the language variety it represents" (Lüdeling and Kytö 2008, v). Of course, it must be acknowledged that, while these are goals of corpus construction generally agreed upon by the corpus research community, there may be various reasons why a given corpus may not fully meet these goals. The size and scope of a given corpus may also vary greatly (Aijmer and Altenberg 2013, 10).

Another distinction worth mentioning is the common practice of distinguishing between corpus approaches that are more corpus driven, and those that are rather more corpus based: A corpus based approach can be described as "a methodology that avails itself of the corpus mainly to expound, test or exemplify theories" (Tognini-Bonelli 2001, 65). A corpus-driven approach, on the other hand, tends to start not from a point of complex linguistic theory, but rather derives its analytical categories from the data inductively, identifying "recurrent patterns and frequency distributions […] expected to form the basic evidence for linguistic categories; the absence of a pattern is considered potentially meaningful"(Tognini-Bonelli 2001, 84). In this project, the chosen approach aligns more closely with a corpus-driven approach to the study of TV dialogue, starting from a rather broadly defined set of categories in order to capture as comprehensive a snapshot as possible of an inherently highly complex

phenomenon. A more general overview of corpus linguistic approaches can be found, for instance, in Tognini-Bonelli (2001), O'Keeffe and McCarthy (2010), or Richardson (2010).

Corpus studies focusing on TV language and scripted TV programming commonly are concerned with the task of unravelling TV language's complex position between scriptedness and spoken-ness. (e.g., McIntyre 2015, 434) Due to the fact that TV language is pre-written to be spoken by actors playing characters (Bednarek 2015, 223), researchers generally assume it to show features associated with both spoken and written language use: Quaglio (2009), for instance, has compared features of so-called "natural conversation" with dialogue occurring in the sitcom *Friends*, finding that it "shares the core linguistic features that characterize interactive registers, such as face-to-face conversation" (71). However, at the same time, notable differences from so-called "natural conversation" were also identified, such as the relative scarcity of interruptions and overlaps (Quaglio 2009, 148). Along similar lines, Toolan (2011) discusses the overlap of narratively compelling yet purposefully opaque dialogue in *The Wire*. Bednarek (2011) investigates similarities in ranked frequency lists between the TV dialogue in *Gilmore Girls* and various other corpora, finding striking similarities between the show's dialogue and other TV dialogue, but also spoken American English (72). Mittmann (2006) focuses on lexico-pragmatic characteristics of dubbed vs. original dialogue in a variety of different popular TV shows.

While, of course, these and other similar studies may each vary in the precise details of their findings, the general consensus reached seems to be that there is, indeed, a striking overlap between (casual) spoken (North American) English and the dialogue produced in scripted (North American) TV shows. At the same time, however, there still appear to be a variety of differences between the two, many of which are likely attributable to the conventions of TV storytelling and its genres, as they were also discussed in Section 2.1.1.1. Notably, the corpus utilized for this project is explicitly described as a "great resource to look at **very informal language** -- at least as well as with corpora of actual spoken English" (English-Corpora.org n.d.-a), emphasis in original), which seems to indicate that the compilers shared this estimation of (scripted) TV language as closely resembling casual spoken language use.

One striking shared characteristic of the previously mentioned corpus studies of TV language appears to be that they most commonly make use of individual or small numbers of shows as a point of comparison to other, larger datasets. (e.g., Quaglio 2009, Bednarek 2011) By contrast, studies dedicated to more large-scale datasets and corpora containing television language seem to be comparatively rare still: Bednarek (2018), for instance, explores *The Sydney Corpus of Television Dialogue* using corpus techniques such as "frequency information, corpus comparison, keyness analysis, collocation, concordances, and distribution analysis" (Bednarek 2018, 240). Meanwhile, Berber Sardinha and Veirano Pinto (2017) conducted a large-scale comparison between different TV registers and "more than twenty other non-television registers" (Berber Sardinha and Veirano Pinto 2017, 108), among others. As was mentioned before, this project will utilize the North American component of the *TV Corpus* (Davies 2021, 17), and, as such, will also be working with a comparatively large-scale corpus for its Stage 1 analyses.

A number of claims have been made also about linguistic differences between TV genres, with, for instance, Berber Sardinha and Veirano Pinto (2017, 2021), or Bednarek (2011, 2012, 2018), all pointing to TV genre specific features of language use: While Berber Sardinha and Veirano Pinto (2021) point to complex register differences between drama, sitcom, and soap opera programming, Bednarek (2018) describes rather specific differences in, for instance, level of formality (with sitcoms typically the least formal, and shows that focus on more hierarchical settings such as workplaces more formal (30, 185)), and specialized vocabulary (which was found more frequently in "legal, medical, crime, mystery, fantasy, sci-fi, and related genres" (185)). Other studies (e.g., Valdeón 2011) focus on features of scripted TV dialogue that reach beyond the scope of this present research, and thus will not be discussed further.

It must be noted that the majority of these approaches that have been discussed so far, regardless of whether they focused on a larger or a smaller scope of TV programming, seem to primarily have been interested in TV dialogue with a goal of something akin to register description and distinction (in the sense of Berber Sardinha and Veirano Pinto 2017). While such studies inarguably contribute significantly to our understanding of televisual dialogue as a distinct form of language use which adheres to its own conventions (e.g., Alvarez-Pereyre 2011, 51), the focus in this particular project diverges from such approaches while still

drawing on their established consensus: Rather than a more general register description of TV dialogue, the Stage 1 goal will be instead to map the occurrence of specific lexical items relating to queerness. In this sense, the current undertaking is more similar to the work done by, for instance, Bednarek (2008, 2012 and 2019b) that focuses on the emotion and swear words in scripted television from a corpus perspective. In doing so, this research aims at the intersections between TV language and real-world sociopolitical attitudes as they were discussed in Section 2.2.1.

2.3.2. Constructing character identities via TV dialogue

As a complementary perspective to the previously described studies on television language, a number of scholars also employ corpus (adjacent) methods to make sense of the smaller-scale phenomenon of character construction and identity. Following the assumption that audiences make sense of fictional characters in ways comparable to how they also interpret the behaviours of real people (Rimmon-Kenan 2002, 33), such studies typically aim to understand the role of TV dialogue in the construction of such a character: Bednarek (2011), for instance, investigates "how televisual characters are construed through language, in particular the extent to which a televisual character's dialogue changes in the context of a particular series [*Gilmore Girls*]" (Bednarek 2011, 185). Csomay and Young (2021) conduct a diachronic keyword analysis of gendered language use in *Star Trek*, while Reichelt (2018) analyses a corpus of six selected TV shows to identify "how characterization in fictional television series is achieved through linguistic variation and change" (Reichelt 2018, 7), among others.

Central findings emerging from these and similar studies suggest, firstly, that it is indeed possible to attain a deeper understanding of a fictional character on a TV show by analysing their use of language (e.g., Bednarek 2011, 202-4; Van Zyl and Botha 2016, 7). Secondly, it is claimed that these characters tend to be consistent across episodes and seasons, while still allowing for changes to their characters and said character's relationships (e.g., Bubel 2005, 36, 54). Thirdly, some of these characters' language behaviours can be (partially) explained by reference to their role in the story and any stereotypes their construction may draw on (Van Zyl and Botha 2016, 7; Reichelt and Durham 2017, 30).

Notably, these studies typically also choose to focus on only one or a small number of individual TV shows as their object of investigation, which may be partially attributable to the fact that larger corpora dedicated to TV language have only fairly recently become available: Examples of such corpora include the *TV Corpus* (Davies 2021, Section 3.2), or the *Sydney Corpus of Television Dialogue* (Bednarek 2020), both completed in the late 2010s. Another likely reason for this focus on individual shows and smaller datasets may also be found in the fact that many of the utilized methods of analysis are extremely time consuming and work intensive (e.g., Kuebler and Zinsmeister 2015, 22), thus making it less feasible for researchers to extend their analyses to larger corpora. The contrasting example of a study which has taken steps toward the automatization of analyses of "dramatic character types based on sequences of dialogs extracted from action movie scripts" (Skowron et al. 2016, 970) might be of great benefit if one were to attempt such analyses on a much larger scale. However, said study's focus on "character types" makes such an approach unfeasible for this present project. Instead, the choice was made to combine elements of automatic large-scale analysis and manual small-scale analysis to produce a more nuanced understanding of the construction and portrayal of (queer) character identity.

2.3.3. Investigating power relations via TV dialogue

Another complementary perspective to consider here is the construction and portrayal of power relations in the world of a TV show. To incorporate this dimension, this thesis draws on the notion of discourse and the field of discourse analysis (in the sense of e.g., Schiffrin 1993, 5, 17-9). It must be acknowledged that, within the field of discourse analysis, the concept of discourse itself has been defined and thus engaged with in a variety of different ways: While some scholars tend towards a very broad conceptualization that might be applied to nearly any (language) feature beyond the sentence level (e.g., Stubbs 1983, 1), this project aligns itself more closely with Fairclough (1992) in understanding discourse as inherently rooted in the sociopolitical contexts of use, as "[d]iscourse is shaped by relations of power, and invested with ideologies" (Fairclough 1992, 8). In this sense, a discourse analysis can broadly be understood as an approach that attempts to uncover how relations of power are realized and made visible in a given (field of) discourse, by "identifying and defining social,

economic and historical power relations between dominant and subordinate groups" (Henry and Tator 2002, 42).

Given the complex production and reception processes involved in television as they were discussed in Sections 2.1.2.1 and 2.1.2.2, it appears eminently viable to examine representations of the queer community in scripted TV dialogue from a discourse analysis perspective: One of the commonly held goals of so-called queer linguistics is to "explore[…] the processes through which messages about sexuality come to be associated – or gain an appearance of association with particular forms of discursive practice." (Leap 2015, 663). As such, the fields of discourse analysis and queer-focused language studies appear to be closely interconnected.

Notably, a theoretical debate occasionally arises in the discussion of discourse analysis approaches to queer-focused research about the exact nature of said link: Specifically, scholars have questioned whether these approaches should be considered more closely associated with critical discourse analysis for focusing on a "social wrong" (e.g., Fairclough 2013, 13; Leap 2015, 662), or as "not a traditional CDA study that aims to highlight how a powerful text producer unfairly treats a less powerful group" (Baker and McEnery 2015, 5). As a detailed evaluation of these divergent theoretical positions is beyond the scope of this project, the analyses performed herein will draw upon notions introduced by the proponents of both perspectives (see also Van Dijk 1995, 17-18 for a discussion of the scope and aims of CDA).

Studies that focus on the analysis of social issues and categorizations in North American TV programming have been increasingly common in recent years, employing a wide range of methodological and analytical approaches: McKinley (1997) applies discourse analysis methods on qualitative interviews about viewer reactions to the TV show *Beverly Hills*, finding that "viewers created a discursive community with characters, they blended fictional and cultural narratives with their own self-narratives, pleasurably succumbing to the beautiful characters, intriguing plot twists, and wealthy, carefree lifestyles" (McKinley 1997, 239). A similarly qualitative, though methodologically distinct, approach is found in Kocić et al. (2014)'s conversation analysis of alleged gender differences in the TV show *Coupling* (Kocić et al. 2014, 63-4). Mandala (2011), meanwhile, focuses on the character construction of an individual character from *Star Trek: Voyager* "by viewing all episodes from seasons four, five,

and six, and then identifying scenes with [the character] Seven from early, late, and mid-way through the 78-episode span for transcription and in-depth qualitative analysis" (Mandala 2011, 208).

This variety in approaches to the analysis of discourse features underscores the breadth of qualitative methods used within the field. An example of a more quantitative approach can be found in Sink and Mastro (2017), who conduct a quantitative content analysis of depictions of gender on TV. Their study notably also integrates additional qualitative measures to inform the interpretation of their quantitative data (Sink and Mastro 2017, 22).

For the purposes of the present thesis, this vast range of different methods used to gain a better understanding of discourse and its ways of realizing power dynamics on TV (e.g., Bignell and Woods 2022, 191, 220) serves as an important methodological foundation for the project's Stage 2 analyses: Drawing on the examples set by the studies discussed above, this thesis combines elements of qualitative and quantitative discourse analysis of TV dialogue in order to achieve a more well-rounded understanding of how the queer community is positioned within the fictional worlds of different TV shows.

2.3.4. Mixed-method approaches to queer in-group identities in TV dialogue

As has been pointed out previously, corpus approaches and discourse analysis approaches to scripted TV programming have been combined fruitfully by an increasing number of researchers (as discussed in e.g., Bednarek 2015; O´Keeffe 2012). Indeed, some even argue that corpus linguistics and discourse analysis necessarily share a "common ground" (Mahlberg 2014, 214). Such an integrated perspective offers several advantages for the present project, providing a richer basis for the interpretation of findings obtained from a corpus (e.g., Nartey and Mwinlaaru 2019, 4), but also offering "'checks and balances' by opening a window on values and attitudes present throughout a discourse community rather than held only by individual researchers" (Wodak and Meyer 2016, 138). As such, both "sides" of the analysis might be strengthened by this combination of approaches. Such approaches, which are sometimes described as "corpus informed" (Bednarek 2023, title) or "corpus assisted" (Baker

and McEnery 2015, 12; Bednarek 2015, 63), draw on a variety of methods of analysis, only a small selection of which can be addressed in this project.

In one such approach, the researcher typically starts their analysis by looking for a quantifiable phenomenon in a corpus, for instance via keyword analyses (Baker 2013, 112), frequency lists (Baron et al. 2009, ch. 2), or the extraction of concordance lines to be analysed further (Baker and McEnery 2015, 10). In these instances, the data extracted from the corpus would then be treated as quantifiable corpus measures in a first step, but then also discussed and analysed in ways that might arguably be considered part of a discourse analysis:

> Concordance analyses can be particularly subjective, and underline the fact that much corpus-based discourse analysis is actually qualitative in nature. […] Ultimately, rather than viewing corpus linguistics as problematically biased, it is more helpful to accept that there is no such thing as unbiased human research (and that such a goal may not necessarily be attractive in any case), but instead aim for wider transparency about methodological decisions
> (Baker and McEnery 2015, 9)

In such analyses, mainly quantitative, typically automatically extracted corpus measures are interpreted and enriched with the help of more qualitative discourse analysis methods (Mahlberg 2014, 216). The benefit of starting from such a perspective into a corpus-informed discourse analysis lies in its potential to mitigate the impact of (un)conscious biases on part of the researcher (Baker and McEnery 2015, 8).

Conversely, researchers may also choose to begin with an extensive qualitative discourse analysis then to be supplemented with quantifiable corpus measures that the data has been coded for: In this type of analysis, the broad scope of the qualitative analysis might reveal diverse patterns in the language use and treatment of power relations, which can then be meaningfully linked to quantifiable coded features within the analyzed corpus (e.g., Fisher et al. 2007, 5). As such, the added value in this second scenario would be in providing indirect information about the prevalence of diffuse, hard to quantify phenomena (cf. e.g., Reichelt and Durham 2017's discussion of "in-group identities").

Examples of such corpus-informed approaches to discourse can be found in Bednarek (2023)'s "case study approach" to social identity construction (Bednarek 2023, 24), in which she applies a variety of corpus measures such as, for instance, frequency information (30), distribution (32), but also collocation and concordance analysis (35) to character dialogue data. Along similar lines, Reichelt and Durham (2017) investigate adjective intensification as

an indicator of in-group language in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, coding for character, but also for selected character identity variables (Reichelt and Durham 2017, 13). As this present thesis project is similarly concerned with the investigation of a complex phenomenon closely related to social categorization, and as such, subject to the difficulties this might bring with it (Van Leeuwen 2008, 24), methods of corpus informed discourse analysis are likewise utilized to understand representations of the queer community as outlined in Section 3.

3. Research design in two stages

As is evident from the discussion in Sections 2.1 to 2.3, there are various and highly complex ways in which the queer community might be represented on scripted North American television. Seeing as investigating all of them would far exceed the scope of any single project, the choice was made to focus on two specific ways in which the queer community is commonly said to be represented on scripted TV using a mixed-method approach in two stages. The design of these stages is guided by a total of six research questions defined in Section 3.1. In keeping with what was discussed in Section 2, both stages are designed to feature elements of qualitative and quantitative analysis, following, for instance, Bednarek (2015, 227).

Stage 1 is based on a large-scale extraction of common current terms of queer in-group identity from the *TV Corpus*' (Section 3.2) scripted North American component (Section 3.3), following the example of Bednarek (2008, 2012, 2019a). This data extraction (Sections 3.3.1 to 3.3.1.4) is followed by an extensive concordance-line analysis (Section 3.3.2), which forms the basis for quantitative (diachronic) comparisons across terms, also including a comparison to the frequencies of other related terms, their ranks on corpus word-lists, and a *Peaks and Troughs* analysis (Sections 3.3.3 to 3.3.4). To understand not just historical trends but also common contexts of use, collocation analyses for all chosen terms were performed, as well as Usage Fluctuation Analyses for those terms where their overall frequencies made such a method viable (Section 3.3.5.).

Stage 2, by contrast, is based on extensive manual annotation of 60 scripted TV show episodes included in the *TV Corpus* (Section 3.4 to 3.4.1.6), following an approach similar to that taken by Mandala (2011) and Reichelt (2018). These episodes were annotated with the help of the episode subtitle text extracted from the *TV Corpus* on the one, and the corresponding audiovisual recordings obtained from international DVD editions on the other hand. For a quantitative comparison of character prominence (Section 3.4.2.3), the extracted episode texts were annotated with speaker information (Section 3.4.2 to 3.4.2.2), while a more qualitative analysis annotated the ways in which queerness was constructed and negotiated in the fictional realities of these episodes (Section 3.4.3). These elements were then combined in an overall comparison within and across TV genres, so as to examine similarities and

differences in the representation of queerness in main cast queer character arcs and their respective fictional realities.

These two stages can thus be understood to provide complementary perspectives on the wide overall field of "representations of sexual minorities" (e.g., Gauntlett 2008, 15; Section 2.2.2): Where the first stage offers a broad survey of the ways in which certain terms for the queer community are used in a large-scale corpus (the *TV Corpus*; Section 3.2) of scripted TV language, the second stage provides an in-depth analysis and discussion of the character arcs and fictional worlds of selected shows portraying major queer characters. Together, these stages aim to capture both the linguistic patterns that characterize broader trends and the narrative contexts through which queerness is constructed and represented in scripted North American TV.

3.1. Research Questions

To guide the aforementioned two stages of analysis, a total of six research questions were formulated. Research Question I (**RQ I** in the following), Research Question II (**RQ II**), and Research Question III (**RQ III**) are addressed in Stage 1 of the project, whereas Research Question IV (**RQ IV**), Research Question V (**RQ V**), and Research Question VI (**RQ VI**) are the focus of Stage 2.

I. How did the frequencies of use of widely known current terms of queer in-group membership used in scripted North American TV dialogue develop over time?

II. What contexts are widely known current terms of queer in-group membership most commonly used in, and how have these contexts changed over time?

III. How might these patterns of use of terms of queer in-group identity be linked to the sociopolitical realities and industry conventions outside of TV programming?

IV. Is there a difference between the prominence and basic frequency measures of queer main cast character and non-queer main cast character dialogue in long-running (5 or more seasons) North American TV shows?

V. Are there differences between TV genres with regards to the ways in which queerness and queer main cast characters are constructed within the world of the show?

VI. How prominent is queerness in the fictional world of these shows, and in the character arcs of queer main cast characters?

Taken together, the two stages aim to provide insight into the interplay between scripted TV dialogue, its ways of representing selected queer identities in general (Stage 1), individual queer characters and their fictional realities in particular (Stage 2), and broader processes of sociopolitical change.

3.2. The *TV Corpus* and its relevant features

The corpus chosen for this thesis project is the *TV Corpus*, compiled and offered by English Corpora LLC (Davies 2021). The version of the corpus used for this project was purchased by the English Linguistics department at RWTH Aachen University and accessed via CQP and *CQPweb*. The *TV Corpus* is comprised of a total of 325 million words from 75,804 texts. A "text", in this context, is understood to be the subtitle transcript of a single episode of television. These episodes typically feature English language programming, though some shows do also contain other languages as part of the subtitles (as can be seen e.g., in Supplement B2, "bi", hit 252022; or, more generally, from Supplement B2, column "Language").

While the corpus does include shows from various English-speaking countries, the country or countries in which a show was produced is included as metadata and can thus be filtered as needed. Also, it should be noted that the largest part of the corpus by wordcount is comprised of U.S. and Canadian television (also US/CAN from here on), with a total of 356,781,639 words. The corpus also offers information on the time of production and broadcast: Included as part of the corpus are episodes that aired since 1950, the most recent ones being from 2017 (English-Corpora.org n.d.-c).

Decade	Words	Texts	Words Scripted	Texts Scripted
1950s	2,213,712	535	2,213,712	535
1960s	7,438,109	1914	7,426,870	1912
1970s	6,265,055	1332	6,241,113	1329
1980s	13,248,431	2904	13,095,347	2874
1990s	29,694,823	7426	29,368,612	7354
2000s	78,744,141	16753	75,763,150	16225
2010-2017	156,151,134	32293	140,266,984	29931

Table 1 Overview of the US/CAN Component per decade

As can be seen from *Table 1*, the word count and number of episodes contained in the US/CAN component of the corpus is significantly lower in the earlier decades than in the later ones,

with 2,213,712 words in the 1950s, almost six times that word count in the 1980s, and a total of 156,151,134 words between 2010 and 2017. One likely reason for this discrepancy lies in the fact that the *TV Corpus* was compiled of texts included in the OpenSubtitles collection, an online source for episode transcripts and subtitles (OpenSubtitles n.d), where users have the option to upload subtitles for any show and episode they choose to transcribe. As this is a resource that came into use only in the twenty-first century, many users likely chose to provide subtitles for more recent shows. Secondly, the overall number of TV shows produced has increased over time (Porter 2023). Also, it must be noted that the recordings of many older shows unfortunately were lost over time, thus making their being featured in an online subtitles database less likely (Library of Congress 1996).

Furthermore, the corpus is extensively annotated (i.e. „tagged“) for TV genre (hereafter also referred to as “genre tags”, to be found as column “Genre” in the tables contained in Supplement B2). While the *TV Corpus* itself contains both scripted and unscripted genres, the inclusion of these tags makes it possible to limit the results to only consider scripted TV genres. A more detailed description of this step of the analysis can be found in Sections 3.3.1.2 and 3.3.1.3. Overall, the *TV Corpus* appears to be well suited to the purposes of this project, due to its diachronic perspective, overall high word-count, and link to every included episode’s IMDb page, thus facilitating the retrieval of additional information about episodes and shows unfamiliar to the corpus user.

However, there are some challenges to be accounted for when working with the *TV Corpus*: Firstly, while the *TV Corpus* is extensively annotated with relevant episode metadata, this metadata does not in all cases remain intact after extraction from the corpus. As such, all datasets extracted for Stage 1 of this project were checked and, if necessary, repaired manually upon being exported for annotation and analysis. For instance, it proved necessary to replace all instances of a double quotation mark (“”) being used in the results with two single quotation marks (‘’), as, under certain circumstances, the double quotation marks are treated as a separator symbol by Microsoft Excel (365, edition 2023), thus disrupting the column structure of the list of hits.

Secondly, it must be mentioned that in each distributed version of the *TV Corpus* short stretches of text are removed from the subtitles included therein as a copyrighting measure (CorpusData.org n.d.)). Accordingly, the replicability of any analyses conducted is limited in so far as the exact frequencies identified would be likely to vary slightly if the analyses were re-run on another purchased version of the *TV Corpus*. However, as the removed stretches of text were extracted at random as a fingerprinting measure, their absence should be unlikely to have a significant negative impact on the scope and findings of this project. In keeping with the recommendations on the use of the corpus provided by the creators (CorpusData.org n.d.)), the choice was made to disregard these missing segments in all analyses that draw directly on the *TV Corpus*.

Finally, as the episode subtitles (or transcripts) have been compiled from a user-built online resource, the level of accuracy and detail in the episode transcripts varies considerably: While some users attempt a more or less verbatim transcription of an episode's dialogue, others choose to focus more on conveying the general meaning of what was being said rather than on the exact words, or even seem to disregard orthographic conventions entirely. Similarly, there is a lot of variation in how non-character speech is transcribed: Some users include many sound descriptions and other non-character speech features (e.g., "(Alarmhonking)", Supplement B2, "bi", hit 103306), while others opt to not include such features in their transcript at all. In order to mitigate the effects of this, the corpus was compiled always using "the 'highest ranked' transcript file in terms of accuracy (from the ratings at OpenSubtitles)" if more than one transcript was available (English-Corpora.org. n.d.-b).

3.3. Research design: Stage 1

Stage 1 is comprised of a large-scale diachronic analysis of selected current terms for queer identities and their immediate linguistic contexts in the *TV Corpus*, aiming to address **RQI**, **RQII**, and **RQIII**. Since the use of terms for queer in-group identities is an easily recognizable and often unambiguous way in which the queer community might be referred to, it appears fruitful to examine when and how current terms gained popularity in scripted North American TV programming, and which contexts they are most typically used in.

Here, the choice was made to focus only on a small number of current terms for two principal reasons: Firstly, focusing on a small but widely known number of terms helps to narrow the scope of the project to make manual annotation of the results feasible. As was discussed in Section 2.2.3, many terms of queer in-group identity have alternative (often historical) meanings that cannot be adequately distinguished from one another without considering the actual occurrences of the term in their respective contexts (e.g., Wodak and Meyer 2009, 30). Also, several of the terms considered here are commonly abbreviated via clipping, or occur in orthographically atypical spellings due to the corpus makeup (Section 3.2), which this study tries to account for as much as possible. Rather than looking at a large number of terms of in-group identity without being able to address these factors, a smaller number of terms is thus examined in greater detail and while trying to account for the specific features of the dataset.

Another reason for choosing to look at terms that are currently in use within the queer community is based on the assumption that one is likely to find more instances of said terms being used in ways that unambiguously do refer to the queer community. As was discussed in Section 2.1.1.3, scripted North American TV was subject to explicit censorship measures for much of the twentieth century (e.g., Nurik 2018, 530), and, as such, any kind of portrayal of the queer community that did occur under these conditions was typically subtextual or deliberately ambiguous, affording the production team some degree of plausible deniability. Therefore, one could argue that it is less likely that then-common terms that (more or less) unambiguously referred to the queer community would be used in scripted TV dialogue. While it would be worthwhile to analyse the ways in which recently produced shows that are nevertheless set during this time of explicit censorship discuss such topics, this could only be accomplished if information about each show's setting were available as corpus metadata, and would also add another level of complexity to the discussion.

Additionally, it must be pointed out that current terms for queer in-group identities are likely to be much more widely known than those more commonly used in the mid-twentieth century: At that time, people familiar with terms used by the community to describe their own experience often were members of the community themselves, while the general public was typically only aware of terms used to pathologize, criminalize, or generally disparage the community (as discussed in Section 2.2). While current terms for queer in-group identities are still sometimes used as "slurs" (Anderson and Lepore 2013, 1-3), the terms under investigation here are nevertheless widely known and commonly used as labels by members of the queer community, and are typically considered to have undergone a process of linguistic reclamation (e.g., Brontsema 2004, 14).

Based on these considerations, six of the most commonly known and widely used contemporary terms for queer in-group identities are investigated in the Stage 1 analysis. These terms, their common meanings, histories, and common variants are discussed in Section 2.2.3. For each of these terms, a *CQPWeb* query was developed (e.g., Schopper and Wiertz 2017) aiming to capture the widest possible range of relevant hits (Section 3.3.1). These hits were then manually filtered and annotated for relevance in terms of hits actually referring to the queer community (Section 3.3.2), in keeping with the approach described by Wodak and Meyer (2009, 30). This set of relevant hits was then used as the basis for the analysis of quantitative frequency measures across decades, TV genres, and collocates (Sections 3.3.3, 3.3.4, and 3.3.5, respectively). In addition, this data was used to inform a rather more qualitative discussion of the interplay between alternative meanings of the selected terms and their typical contexts of use (following e.g., Tognini-Bonelli 2001, 111).

Ultimately, Stage 1 thus aims to provide a bird's eye view on how certain terms for queer identities are used in scripted TV dialogue across time. It is concerned with the ways in which the queer community and common identity labels are spoken about on scripted TV, and offers a large-scale perspective that includes language use both by members of the queer community, and by those speaking about the queer community without themselves being part of it.

3.3.1. Extracting and pruning the data

For Stage 1, a series of keywords commonly used to identify members of the queer community were queried for within the *TV Corpus*, and a full overview of all queried terms provided in *Table 2*. For each of the six queried terms, the full list of hits with their concordance lines and metadata was exported from *CQPweb* and manually prepared for further analysis in Microsoft Excel.

Manually pruning the extracted datasets was chosen as the most suitable method for this step as it proved convenient to account for inconsistencies with combined multi-tag strings making an automatic inclusion or exclusion of the hits based on metadata more complex: For example, one hit for *gay**, might be tagged with "USA_Canada"(e.g., Supplement B2, "gay", hit 35), whereas another hit might be tagged for the same countries but in a different order (e.g., "Canada_USA", Supplement B2, "gay", hit 7918). Similarly, in many cases more than one genre was tagged, such as "Animation_Action_Comedy" (e.g., Supplement B2, "gay", hit 598) or "Adventure_Comedy_Crime" (e.g., Supplement B2, "gay", hit 1805). Furthermore, due to the great wealth of metadata types, the decision was made to explore these results via manual annotation to ensure the inclusion of all relevant combinations of tags. As such, the list of structural tags deemed relevant was developed by examining all approximately 20,000 exported hits for one term of queer in-group identity (*gay**)*,* thus following a bottom-up approach in keeping with that of e.g., Van Leeuwen (2008).

In the following, each of the different steps taken to explore, limit, and determine the relevance of hits in the datasets will be explained, starting from the queries run and the criteria for inclusion or exclusion of specific tags and tokens within the final datasets (accounting for phenomena such as morphological variation, assigned tags, frequency thresholds, but also the reasoning behind specific judgements about an item's relevance). After this first round of manual annotation was performed on the datasets extracted from the corpus, a refined list of relevant hits was utilized for a twofold analysis: Firstly, the refined frequencies of use of each queried item and their identified variants (e.g., spelling variations) were compared across decades, TV genres, and the frequencies of related terms also drawn from the corpus. Secondly, this refined list of relevant hits was used to inform the interpretation of identified collocates for each of the terms to gain a clearer picture of the ways in which a certain term of queer in-group identity is used. The full datasets for each of

these steps were stored in a Coscine repository (see Section 8), where limited access may be granted upon request.

3.3.1.1. Extracting the data: *CQPWeb* queries

To query for each of the chosen terms of queer in-group membership, a search string was developed working with the CLAWS7 tagset (Lancaster University n.d.-d). A full list of all formulated queries is included in *Table 2*, however, as their construction was kept identical except for the relevant term of in-group identify, this chapter will explain only one exemplary query and the subsequent annotation of the exported results in detail. For this purpose, the term *gay* was chosen, as it proved to be a term with a great absolute number of different hits within the *TV Corpus*, and therefore was chosen as the first one to be annotated. All other terms and their annotations will only be mentioned in cases where the steps necessary for this analysis diverged from those used for the extracted hits for the term *gay*. The queries used to identify relevant instances of statements of in-group membership were constructed as follows:

[word="lesbian.*"%c]	[word="trans.*"%c]
[word="gay.*"%c]	[word="LGBT.*"%c]
[word="bi.*"%c]	[word="queer.*"%c]

Table 2 Queries run to extract selected terms of queer in-group identity

The above query for the term *gay* identifies any instance of a token beginning with “gay” within the specified dataset in the *TV Corpus*, regardless of capitalization (here, “%c” was used to remove the query’s case sensitivity). Notably, this search string also identifies words/tokens that begin with “gay” and have any number of additional letters following, due to the use of the wildcard (*).

As the *TV Corpus* currently has no lemma tagging, searching for [word="gay"%c] (without use of a wildcard) would not have uncovered instances of the queried term that are, for instance, inflected forms (Schmid 2016, 87), such as *gays*, *gayer*, or *gayness*[4] (Supplement B2, "gay", hits 186, 702, 39), or examples of other types of morphological variation. These instances are considered to be relevant to the current research, as a) their meaning often can be confidently assumed to frequently relate to queer identities, and b) they could be argued to have the same root (in the sense of Schmid 2016).

It should be noted that, in case of the search terms *bisexual* and *transgender*, the choice was made to search not only for the full term (as was done for *gay*, *lesbian*, and *queer*), but rather to formulate the search string in a way that would also include the frequently used clippings of these terms (*bi* and *trans*, respectively), even though this would necessarily lead to a vast number of non-relevant hits. Consequently, the manual concordance line annotation for these terms proved to be particularly challenging due to the volume of data that had been extracted from the corpus. This prevalence of false hits also informed the choice of variants to include in the peaks-and-troughs and collocation analyses. In case of the acronym, *LGBT*, the choice was made to utilize a wildcard in the query still, as there are different variations of the acronym in use today (Section 2.2.3).

3.3.1.2. Pruning the data: Criteria for inclusion and exclusion of country tags

In light of this variety in the datasets, the hits for one of the queried terms, *gay**, were used to determine specific criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of hits assigned specific tags. These criteria proved necessary to ensure both transparency in the analysis and the equitable treatment of results across the queried terms.

The first criterion, necessitated by the focus and scope of this work, is that only those hits that are tagged for one or more North American countries (i.e. Canada or the USA) were to be considered. Relevantly, this includes hits where one or both of these countries was listed as one of several countries involved in a show's production, and regardless of the order in

[4] In the following text, the terms (e.g., *gay**) with their wildcards will always refer to all (relevant) variants/tokens identified by these queries. If, instead, the intention is to only refer to a single variant, the wildcard will be elided and the exact token in question will be specified instead (e.g., *gay*, *gayness*).

which they are listed, as this present study has no practical way of identifying which part(s) of a production are attributable to which of the collaborating partners or international companies. As such, tag combinations such as e.g., “Canada_UK”, “UK_Canada”, and “Canada_USA” were all included, whereas ones such as “UK_Germany_France”, “Italy”, or “N/A” were all excluded from the extracted datasets.

3.3.1.3. Pruning the data: Criteria for the exclusion of specific TV genre tags

Secondly, and rather more complexly, a list of criteria also proved necessary for the extensive TV genre tags included for each episode and show in the corpus. The concept of television genres and scriptedness has already been discussed in some of detail in Section 2, and, as such, this understanding was utilized to develop these criteria. In accordance with the principles discussed in said section, only shows from TV genres are included for which the following assumptions can be made with a reasonable degree of confidence:

a) The language used in the show is primarily scripted, and is presented as such in keeping with TV genre conventions.
b) The TV dialogue in these genres is typically uttered by actors portraying fictional characters.

To determine which genre tags should be excluded, the tags for all exported hits for the queried term *gay** tagged for “USA” or “Canada” as at least one of the countries of production were considered. It is, of course, possible that there might be further tags that are less than suitable to the purposes of this study, but in light of a) the extremely wide variety of strings of tags present in the corpus, and b) the large number of exported hits considered here, this approach was chosen as a compromise to keep the workload manageable. In total, five different TV genre tags were identified that do not appear to be indicative of shows that commonly meet the two assumptions outlined above: Documentary, Reality-TV, Game-Show, Talk Show, and News.

Documentary

While the Documentary genre oftentimes does feature scripted language, the focus herein usually is not placed on character interaction and TV dialogue in the sense of Bednarek (2018, 7), with actors performing as fictional characters. Frequently, documentaries will more

prominently feature scripted language use by narrators who do not themselves appear to be involved in the show, or a presenter who only sometimes has any deeper knowledge of and involvement with the subject matter presented (e.g., Nichols 2017, 96, 108). In these cases, the first assumption would be met, as the language use is indicated to be scripted. However, any sections of a documentary that do not feature scripted language produced by a narrator or presenter might or might not be scripted: In case of an expert interview, it is likely that the topics discussed would be agreed upon before filming commenced, but in the case of a documentary following e.g., a team doing an ornithological survey, it is likely that much of the speech produced is, in fact, semi-spontaneous. As an additional complicating factor, in many cases one might claim that the "character" being portrayed is either some version of the self, such as might be the case in a Reality-TV adjacent Documentary formats, making it very difficult to accurately assess the level of "scriptedness" (Creeber 2015, 162). In light of these considerations, it must be concluded that neither assumption is likely to be met fully, as the language cannot be said to be produced primarily by actors portraying fictional characters.

Reality-TV

In keeping with what was discussed about documentaries, in case of Reality-TV, too, the exact level of scriptedness is often unclear. It is likely (and in fact commonly understood practice) that reality-TV often makes use of scripts or prompts for specific interactions, or records several takes of the same "natural interaction" (Creeber 2015, 168). However, there is still a very prevalent pretence of unscriptedness within the show itself. This is especially true for game shows, such as "RuPaul's Drag Race" or "America's Next Top Model", but also for formats such as "The Real L Word", which allegedly portray the "everyday lives" of the featured persons. As such, the first assumption is not met, since any extant level of scriptedness is not communicated to the audience, and can therefore only be guessed at. The previously mentioned issue with determining what, exactly, constitutes a "fictional character" applies here, too, and as such the second assumption is not conclusively met either.

Game-Show

There has proven to be a strong overlap between the tags “Reality-TV” and “Game-Show”, where, in the surveyed exported dataset for *gay**, there was only one instance out of a total of 135, in which the “Game-Show” tag was not used together with the Reality-TV tag. Accordingly, the “Game-Show” tag was also excluded, since it can, arguably, be considered a closely related genre or even a “hybrid genre” (Creeber 2015, 161) of Reality-TV that shares many (if not most) of the genre’s defining features. Following what was discussed for the Reality-TV genre, neither of the assumptions mentioned earlier can confidently be assumed to have been met by these shows.

Talk Show

In keeping with the basic premise of a Talk Show (Timberg and Erler 2002), there is once again a consistent claim of unscriptedness. While there may be scripted elements, such as, for instance, pre-written jokes or lists of questions shared with guests before the show, the exact degree of scriptedness is once again impossible to ascertain without closely examining each show in question (cf. Creeber 2015, 205).

News

As has already been discussed with regards to the other excluded TV genre tags, the typical genre conventions of a News show (such as, for instance, an anchored news broadcast or weather report), do not lend themselves well to the analysis of scripted TV dialogue in the sense of character speech. While much of the language used in such formats is indeed scripted (and commonly then produced by a host or presenter with the help of cue cards or a teleprompter) (Montgomery and Shen 2017, 3-5), it nevertheless is not used to “create a stable televisual character” (in the sense of Bednarek 2011, 202-4). One could therefore argue that the assumption of scriptedness is, indeed, met in this TV genre. The second assumption, by contrast, cannot be said to be supported.

Based on this list of TV genre tags unlikely to be relevant for the research interest at hand, the datasets exported from *CQPweb* were pruned.

3.3.1.4. Pruning the data: Frequency thresholds and graphological variation

Following the data pruning based on structural metadata, several other steps towards limiting the extracted datasets were also implemented to further limit the amount of variation among the hits and to prepare the refined list for further analysis. The list of exported hits and concordance lines that did have the relevant country and TV genre tags was further streamlined with the help of Microsoft Excel. Firstly, the dataset was reduced so that each specific token found as the result of the respective *CQPweb* queries would appear only once and the absolute frequency of its occurrence within the dataset would be counted. In the case of the data extracted for *gay**, for example, a total of 214 different tokens were found with this search string. This reduced list was then sorted by frequency, and any specific tokens/variants that occurred less than five times in total were excluded from further analysis (e.g., "gay/lesbian" (Supplement B2, "gay", hit 87), which occurred only once in the extracted dataset).

It became apparent from this first survey of the results that, due to the composition of the corpus (as it was described in Section 3.2), numerous instances exist where individual episode transcripts use spellings in their transcriptions that are different from the majority of the hits. One example of this can be found in the phrase "**gay** marriage" (e.g., Supplement B2, "gay", hit 810), which in four instances was transcribed as "**gay-marriage**" (e.g., hit 16419). For the specific purposes of this study, only those graphological realizations that occurred at least five times were considered, since the tokens occurring less than five times each made up a comparatively small percentage of the extracted datasets. Due to the amount of variation especially among the hits for *bi** and *trans**, this frequency cutoff proved necessary to keep the manual annotation of concordance lines feasible, following the example set by Bednarek (2011, 194). These lower-frequency tokens were analysed separately in a side project presented at the *CL2023*, where they were examined for different word-formation strategies (Rosenow 2023).

3.3.2. Pruning the data: Manual annotation of the datasets

The remaining list of hit tokens that occurred five or more times within the relevant corpus section was then examined for relevance via extensive manual analysis of the exported concordance lines, following e.g., Wodak and Meyer (2009, 30). As discussed in Section 2.2.2.1., most of the chosen terms of queer in-group identity have alternative meanings that cannot be distinguished from their meaning relating to the queer community without taking into account the context in which they are uttered. Accordingly, this manual analysis consisted of a large-scale case-by-case analysis of whether each individual hit could be considered a genuine instance of the queer in-group meaning, or whether an alternative meaning (or issue with the dataset) was the more suitable interpretation. Following Baker and McEnery (2015, 9), it should be noted that such an analysis must necessarily be understood as at least partially qualitative as it relies on the annotator's own individual judgements. In line with their recommendation to ensure transparency in such an analysis, all materials involved in the annotation were stored in a Coscine repository (Section 8), with relevant samples made publicly available in Supplement B2. The general guidelines informing positive relevance judgements are listed below with examples of cases in which they were deemed applicable. Finally, while it was not feasible to have another annotator examining all of the extracted hits' concordance lines due to their great number, peer opinions were elicited on a case-by-case basis for individual hits that proved particularly challenging to classify using the abovementioned guidelines.

As the choice was made to also include the commonly used clippings *bi* and *trans* in the analysis, a large number of hits was found for these two queries, seeing as both of these clippings are also frequently occurring syllables (and sometimes morphemes) in the English language: To account for this high degree of variety in the data, the manual analysis always started with 100 concordance lines for each token identified by the query, and was only continued if at least one of these 100 hits was found to be relevant for the purposes of this study. In case of *big* (Supplement B2, "bi", hit 22), for instance, 0 of the 100 analysed concordance lines proved to be relevant, and as such all remaining hits for this specific token were indicated as "N/X". By contrast, *bi*, as in "A bi-polar, bipolar, **bi** polar bear" (Supplement B2, "bi", hit 288922), was judged to be relevant in 58 of the first 100 concordance lines, and as such the analysis was expanded to include all approximately 300 hits featuring this exact

token. To ensure transparency and consistency in this extensive manual analysis, the different categories used to denote relevance judgements are defined and explained below in more detail.

Category "Y"

The category "Y" (for "yes") indicates that a specific hit was found to most likely be using a term of queer in-group identity in the sense of that queer in-group identity.

> "no one wanted to date me and why I spent **Gay** Pride alone. Fortunately, I wound up working here" (Supplement B2, "gay", hit 337)

This hit was annotated as "Y" as the concordance line appears to indicate a meaning related to the queer community based on its mention of a commonly known community-related cultural event popular in North America. It must be noted that, due to the sheer amount of variation in the concordance lines, no comprehensive set of criteria that could unambiguously account for every single concordance line could be created. Nevertheless, some basic guiding principles were utilized to inform positive relevance judgements. These guidelines were formulated bottom-up based on a first survey of the exported concordance lines for *gay**, and were kept intentionally flexible so as to capture the broadest possible range of relevant instances of use of the queried terms in reference to the queer community:

a) **Does the concordance line address or invoke alternative meanings directly, for instance by creating a contrast between the queer community related and the non-queer community related meaning?**
   "Perhaps because he's gay and you ordered an ''**LGBT**'' sandwich?"
   "Yeah ''lettuce, guacamole, bacon" (Supplement B2, "LGBT", hit 124)

b) **Does the concordance line mention policies or stereotypes associated with the queer community?**
   "Oh, I'm afraid I'm feeling a bit **queer**."
   "Don't ask. Don't tell."[5] (Supplement B2, "queer", hit 1047)

[5] Likely in reference to the U.S. Armed Forces' long-standing policy towards queer people in their employment, see also Stein 2018.

c) **Does the concordance line mention other queer identities or queer community events?**

"Robert left a substantial donation to establish a gay and **lesbian** centre?" (Supplement B2, "lesbian", hit 7)

d) **Does the concordance line match the context of a person a) stating an interactant's queer identity, b) asking about someone else's identity, or c) attributing a queer identity to some third party?**

"going to fight for equality for everyone, Including **bisexuals**, like myself" (Supplement B2, "bi", hit 177003)

"Are you two **lesbians**?" (Supplement B2, "lesbian", hit 1137)

"Has he ever had a problem with **LGBTQ** students ?"

(Supplement B2, "LGBT", hit 164)

e) **Does the concordance line match the context of a person stating that a) they do not identity as a member of the queer community or b) someone else is not part of the queer community?**

"I'm not **gay**." (Supplement B2, "gay", hit 79)

"She is definitely not a **lesbian**." (Supplement B2, "lesbian", hit 309)

f) **Does a specific variant/token not typically relate to any meaning besides the queer community?**

"I think that **transgender** kid was brave as hell."

(Supplement B2, "trans", hit 18437)

g) **Does the concordance line make use of the term of queer in-group identity in what appears to be a marked stylistic choice, e.g., as an instance of a) disparagement humour or b) humorous misattribution?**

"Hey, it's big **gay** al!" (Supplement B2, "gay", hit 1285)

"I mean, you do **lesbian** better than any lesbian I know!

(Supplement B2, "lesbian, hit 724)"

h) **Does the context of the concordance line appear less meaningful or unsuitable with an alternative meaning of the term of queer in-group identity?**[6]

"Sir? Listen to me. You 're a baby **trans**. You'll get used to it."

(Supplement B2, "trans", hit 17215)

It must be emphasized that a positive relevance judgement in this analysis does not depend on the meaning relating to the queer community being either respectful or appropriate. As Section 2.2.3 pointed out, many terms relating to the queer community are also commonly used in a derogatory manner (e.g., Anderson and Lepore 2013, 1-3), and it would go beyond the scope of this research to try and identify which instance of language use is intended (or commonly understood) as which. Consequently, also hits like "[y]ou are so gay now! Stupid dwarf! Totally **gay**, 100%." (Supplement B2, "gay", hit 10) would be considered relevant (in spite of their seemingly derogatory use of the term), as the meaning evoked here appears likely be related to the queer community based on guidelines g), h), as well as (arguably) b) and d).

Instances of use in which there appears to be a misunderstanding within the dialogue about whether a meaning related to the queer community is intended or not were thus also annotated as "Y", such as, for instance, in case of the aforementioned "Oh, I'm afraid I'm feeling a bit **queer**." – "Don't ask. Don't tell." (Supplement B2, "queer", hit 1047) While it is not possible to unambiguously determine from the context whether the first character speaking here is, in fact, using the term *queer* in the sense of referring to the queer community, or is rather trying to convey the term's alternative meaning of "odd" or "unusual", the second speaker draws on the U.S. military's official policy towards members of the queer community in their reply (Britton and Williams 1995, 14-15).

[6] The last two criteria defined here are necessarily subjective, but proved essential to account for some of the contexts of use identified in the analysis. For instances of use in which alternative meanings (i.e. a meaning related to the queer community as well as a meaning not related to the queer community) seemed similarly plausible, the category "U" was utilized instead.

Category "N"

By contrast "make the Yuletide **gay**" (Supplement B2, "gay", hit 8845), being a line from a popular Christmas carol, can be seen as an example of a hit with a likely alternative meaning, and as such be assigned to the category "N" (for "not relevant"). Here, the term *gay* can more likely be understood to convey the alternative (and, it must be pointed out, older) meaning of "happy" or "cheerful" (Section 2.2.3).

Aside from such cases where alternative (common) meanings of the terms were deemed to be the more likely interpretation and the guidelines for positive relevance judgements did not seem to apply, there were also some instances where the concordance line analysis revealed that a term was used with an atypical meaning that would not commonly be associated with the term: "...and from my observations, it seems they're **bisexual**, reproducing at will." (Supplement B2, "bi", hit 371333) In this instance, the character appears to be speculating about the reproductive abilities of a certain (fictional alien) species, and thus uses the term *bisexual* in a sense that refers to a member of said species literally having two biological sexes. While this is not a very common alternative meaning of the term, it can nevertheless be concluded with a high degree of certainty that this term is not being used in reference to a queer in-group identity, and can thus be annotated as "N".

Category "U"

Of course, it must be acknowledged that not every hit could be assigned to one of the two main categories with a sufficiently high degree of certainty. One example of such a case could be: "Now then, here we have a **gay** young fellow. Heh-heh. John, how are you" (Supplement B2, "gay", hit 637). Here, it is not possible to determine whether the use of *gay* is more likely indicating the "young fellow" in question as being a member of the queer community, or rather as being in a cheerful mood, as none of the guidelines outlined above seem entirely applicable. In such cases, the additional category of "U" (for "unclear") was chosen instead.

Category "X"

Additionally, there are some instances where an analysis of the concordance line of a hit proved impossible, for instance in cases where the dialogue was in another language than English, e.g., "All right . Bisspater, alligator. **Bis** spater." (Supplement B2, "bi", hit 321630), where the characters switch to German mid-conversation. Similar issues also arose in some instances where the episode transcript was corrupted, such as was the case for

“, Don't be a Fra ? d oF **trans** ? t ? ons. '” (Supplement B2, “trans”, hit 19304). In these instances, the hit was categorized as “X”, to mark it as not viable for analysis.

Following these criteria, all six exported datasets were manually annotated for most likely semantic meaning of each hit and its relevance. It must be noted that there is, of course, a chance that individual hits may have been interpreted differently by another annotator, but due to the scope of the manual work needed for this step it proved not feasible to collect multiple annotators’ work. To mitigate this issue, the abovementioned guidelines tried to strike a balance between being broad enough to capture as many of the relevant uses of terms of queer in-group identity within the corpus as possible, while still being specific enough to meaningfully direct the analysis. [7]

3.3.3. Analysis of frequency measures

Based on these qualitatively annotated datasets, a variety of comparative quantitative analyses were performed to better understand how each of the chosen terms for queer in-group identity, their different realizations in the dataset, and their collocations were represented in the corpus over time. The first of said comparisons to be drawn here is a comparison by term and time of production. As such, for each queried term, the relative frequency of relevant hits per million words in the corpus was determined for each year and decade of scripted TV programming. This analysis adopts two different perspectives on the queried terms: In a first step, the relative frequency of all relevant query hits and tokens found for each term was aggregated to give a general overview of when and to what degree the respective queer in-group identity came into focus on scripted North American TV, and to allow for a straightforward comparison of temporal prominence across terms.

As a second step, however, this analysis takes into account different variants of the query item as determined by the list of relevant hits. It distinguishes between the most frequent tokens/variants of each of the queried terms to gain a better understanding of how variably and creatively the respective terms of queer in-group identity appear to have been used in scripted TV programming. To complement this analysis, the frequencies observed here were

[7]Thank you especially also to Dr. Amanda Potts who provided crucial input and feedback on developing these guidelines and categories!

compared to the frequencies of other terms related to sexuality or gender identity within the corpus, in an approach similar to that taken by Bednarek (2011).

Secondly, a similar analysis was performed looking not at the full decade of production as its point of comparison, but rather at the TV genres per half-decade for the terms of queer in-group identity that were found to have the highest overall frequencies. As there are frequently multiple genre tags associated with a hit, this analysis considers each (investigated) genre tag to be associated with a given hit: While this may lead to a single hit showing up as a datapoint for multiple genres, this perspective should still allow for a meaningful comparison between genres across time.

3.3.4. *Peaks and Troughs* analysis

As Brezina (2018) points out, "an analysis that does not engage with the diachronic data in a way that ensures transparency and accountability as well as comparability across time is meaningless" (Brezina 2018, 224). Accordingly, the diachronic comparison in Stage 1 of this project employs statistical measures recommended in current research so as to appropriately address the specific requirements of diachronic data analysis: To this end, the project follows advice given in current literature on modern statistical methods, where

> [t]he measures are used for three purposes: integrating the results of empirical research studies in meta-analyses, supplementing the information provided by null hypothesis significance tests, and determining whether research results are practically significant. (Kirk 2003, 83)

The emphasis in this study is placed less on traditional reject-non-reject null-hypothesis significance testing, but rather on methods and signifiers proposed for "The New Statistics", where "[t]he key idea is meta-analytic thinking" (Cumming 2014, 27). While linear regression uses straight lines and polynomial regression employs S-shaped or wave-like graphs to approximate a trend in the data, "peaks and troughs" (as proposed in Gabrielatos et al. 2012) use a non-linear regression model "with a linear predictor involving a sum of smooth functions of covariates" (Wood 2017, 161) resulting in a smoothed "curve to the data, which better reflects the rising and falling tendency […] of diachronic development of discourse" (Brezina 2018, 242). This smoothed curve is said to be typical for "many lexical and discourse changes [which] fluctuate as peaks and troughs" in contrast to "phonological and grammatical changes [which] often follow an S-shape curve" (Brezina 2018, 223).

The fit or smoothness of a *Peaks and Troughs* curve is controlled by a smoothness parameter (parameter k in the mgvc (Mixed GAM Computation Vehicle with Automatic Smoothness Estimation) R-package (Wood 2023)) which "has a major effect on the analysis. If too small, the model doesn't fit the data (shown as almost a straight line […]). If too large, the model is 'overfitted'"(Brezina, n. d.-b, 1). Following the example of Brezina 's *Lancaster Stats Tools* (Brezina, n. d.-a) the *Peaks and Troughs* smoothness parameter was set to k = 15 for this study as a compromise between overfitting and underfitting:

The innate characteristics of the *Peaks and Troughs* method help "to identify statistically significant outliers – points of departure from the general trend" (Brezina 2018, 242). These outliers can then be associated with characteristic events triggering them, a process Gabrielatos et al. (2012) describe for the peaks as "perhaps fairly impressionistic, but feasible" (7). For the troughs, though, Gabrielatos et al. (2012) warn this process is "much less straightforward" (7).

As a *Peaks and Troughs* analysis produces a non-linear regression curve, it can therefore be said to indicate the turning points at which a trend is reversed: Especially when looking at a complex phenomenon such as queer representation, it seems prudent to acknowledge that any kind of diachronic change is unlikely to be linear. Due to the various factors at play in the production of a TV show (Section 2.1.2.1), the demands and genre expectations of different TV genres (Section 2.1.1.2), as well as the changing landscape of queer terms of in-group membership and representation, "points of departure from the general trend" (Brezina 2018, 242) appear to be particularly worthy of examination and discussion.

3.3.5. Collocation analysis and *Usage Fluctuation Analysis*

As a last component of Stage 1, collocation analyses of selected high-frequency variants of the investigated terms of queer in-group identity were conducted. Here, the choice was made to investigate all the chosen base terms of queer in-group identity that met two criteria:

a) They occur frequently enough to make a collocation analysis feasible.

b) They had at least 75 percent relevant hits in the concordance line analysis.

Due to these restrictions, the clippings *bi* and *trans* were excluded from this kind of analysis, seeing as only a smaller percentage of the extracted hits proved to be relevant in their case. For each of the remaining terms, a collocation analysis in *CQPweb* with a window span of three words to the left and right of the node was run on the scripted US/CAN subcorpus. The respective queries for these variants can be seen in *Table 3*.

[word="lesbian"%c]	[word="gay"%c]	[word="bisexual"%c]
[word="transgender"%c]	[word="queer"%c]	[word="LGBT"%c]

Table 3 Queries run to identify collocates

The ten collocates with the highest *Log Ratio (filtered)* values were then compared and grouped according to their semantic similarity in a bottom-up approach similar to that taken by Van Leeuwen (2008). Generally, it can be said that in such collocation analyses "[i]f the log likelihood for your result is greater than 6.63, the probability of the result - i.e. the difference between the two corpora - happening by chance is less than 1%" (Lancaster University n.d.-b). These results were then also examined qualitatively to account for "what kinds of social issues a particular lexical item is bound up in, and what attitudes are commonly associated with it. Importantly, collocational patterns are not merely instantiated in text, but also cling to the lexical items themselves" (Mautner 2015, 128).

Additionally, the data extracted for *gay* and *lesbian* was further analysed by applying the *Usage Fluctuation Analysis* (UFA) online implementation provided by Brezina's *Lancaster Stats Tools* (Lancaster University n.d.-a). Brezina characterizes these main features of the UFA tool:

- Perform Usage fluctuation analysis on corpus historical data.
- Automatically compare collocation use across time.
- Categorise collocates as consistent, initiating, terminating and transient.
- Visualize usage divergence trough a 'peaks and troughs' graph. (Lancaster University n.d.-c)

In the words of (McEnery, Brezina, and Baker 2022),

> UFA is an attempt to overcome the problems of the existing automatic and manual methods for dealing with shifts in historical discourse and word usage. Instead of offering a fully automated system, the method combines statistical sophistication with manual (qualitative) analysis. The goal of the method is to automatically identify places where usage change occurs which may deserve the attention of an analyst. (418)

The UFA tool thus produces a "a graph showing the convergence, or divergence, between collocates within sliding windows moving through time" (McEnery, Brezina, and Baker 2022, 418), where "similarity [is] being displayed as peaks (UP) and dissimilarity as troughs (DOWN)" and provides lists of "collocates categorised as consistent, initiating, terminating and transient" (19). Furthermore, McEnery, Brezina, and Baker name the following core statistical components of the UFA technique:

- "a relative minimum collocation frequency" to identify "relevant collocates" (422)
- "a sliding window through the data" (e.g., of 10 years) for a "collocation analysis for each period inside the sliding window" (422)
- Gwet's AC1 (Real Statistics Using Excel n.d.) as a measurement of inter-rater reliability providing "an agreement statistic that computes absolute agreement and subtracts from it chance agreement" (423) to "establish whether the collocates for two consecutive stages of the sliding window agree or disagree" (424)
- a generalized additive model (GAM) employing non-parametric regression using smooth functions "to trace the points where major usage shifts take place" (424).

Accordingly, this project utilizes UFA to gain a better understanding of how collocates of the highest frequency variants converge or diverge over time, and of the points in time when they do so. Additionally, the clear distinction between consistent and transient collocates should allow for a more in-depth discussion of changing contexts of use over time.

3.4. Research design: Stage 2

By contrast, Stage 2 is focused on a more fine-grained comparison of character prominence and construction (following similar lines as e.g., Bednarek 2010) of prominent queer and non-queer characters, based on **RQIV**, **RQV**, and **RQVI**. For this stage, a total of 60 episode transcripts from six shows included in the *TV Corpus* were extracted and annotated with speaker information using custom-built annotation schemes in the *UAM CorpusTool* (O'Donnell 2008). To complement this primarily quantitative perspective on the prominence of such characters, a more qualitative analysis of the role of queerness in each of the annotated episodes and its significance in the fictional world of the show was conducted.

As discussed in Section 2.1.2.2, it is commonly assumed that the construction and portrayal of individual characters belonging to a specific minority group may have an impact on said group's perception by the show's audience, especially in cases where the group in question is represented only rarely on scripted TV (see also Alexander et al. 2015): Since a particular show (and a given main cast queer character) might be the first in-depth experience some viewers might have of an openly queer individual, it appears promising to examine just how such openly queer characters are constructed in different genres, in order to better understand how viewer's experience of these characters might be shaped. Not only is this comparison drawn between main cast queer characters from different shows, but also between textually queer and textually non-queer characters from the same shows. Seeing as there are reported differences between the expectations and conventions associated with a certain genre (e.g., Bednarek 2018), this approach appears necessary to account for the impact of a specific show's (and genre's) style of dialogue and character construction (as described by e.g., Bednarek 2010, 2011).

To ensure that both stages of this project are based on one consistent dataset, the choice was made to only consider shows that are included in the *TV Corpus*. As the corpus only contains episodes with production and broadcast dates between 1950 and 2017, it must be acknowledged that any more recent developments could not be studied here, and that this project cannot make any claims about developments beyond 2017. However, this timespan saw substantial changes to the sociopolitical treatment of the queer community (Section 2.2.1), and the ways in which it could be portrayed on scripted TV (Section 2.2.2), and should therefore provide a broad perspective on the phenomenon under investigation. In addition

to the basic requirement of being represented in the corpus, a variety of other criteria were defined for the selection of shows for Stage 2 to maintain the comparability of the analysed datasets.

Firstly, from the shows contained in the corpus, the choice was made to only consider shows that ran for a minimum of five seasons to facilitate a diachronic comparison of TV dialogue within the same show. Relatedly, it must be pointed out again that, under current production practices, a show running for several seasons can typically be assumed to be indicative of commercial success and of being generally well received by the audience. While cancellation does not necessarily indicate the opposite, i.e. that a show would only be cancelled due to a lack of commercial success and audience reception, it is still reasonable to interpret the repeated renewal of a show for more seasons as a sign that it is engaging people's interest (in keeping with the practices outlined in Section 2.1.2.1). Seeing as one of the main objectives of this stage of the analysis is to investigate "prominent" queer characters and their fictional realities, it appears appropriate to only consider shows that have (had) a certain level of popularity and acclaim.

A second criterion in selecting these shows was the presence of at least one main cast queer character during at least five seasons. A pilot study for this stage of the analysis determined that more rarely occurring characters do not lend themselves very well to an in-depth analysis of their language behaviours using this methodology, as the largest parts of the episode dialogue tended to be spoken by only main or recurring characters. Additionally, the focus here is placed on queer characters that have a certain amount of prominence in their shows, and thus looking at shows where they are part of the regular cast and appear in most (if not all) episodes appears to be the more suitable choice. It must be noted that this selection of data may bias the results in the sense that long-running, commercially successful shows with main cast queer characters may be expected to bear some similarities in their portrayal and construction of queerness. However, this limitation was ultimately deemed acceptable in light of the relative scarcity of the data: As part of this stage is dedicated to a detailed qualitative analysis of the role of queerness in the individual episodes and seasons of the show, an analysis of shows that contain no (or only episodic) queer characters would not be fruitful.

From each of the six shows thus selected, two episodes were chosen from each of the first five seasons that feature a major queer character, regardless of whether this queer character

is textually 'out' yet or not. The selected episodes were required to have a similar IMDb rating at the time of selection (7.5-8.7 stars)[8] in order to ensure their comparability. As the average IMDb ratings of the shows and seasons proved to be variable, allowing for a certain range in ratings proved necessary. The resulting pool of possible episodes to be annotated from each season under investigation was further limited according to which episodes were actually included in the *TV Corpus*, and, if more than two episodes per season met the criteria, selected at random.

These episode transcripts were then annotated with speaker information using the original audiovisual material and a customized character speech annotation scheme, which is discussed in Section 3.4.2.1. Examples of these annotations can be found in Supplement C1. As this annotation process proved to be intensely time consuming, the manual annotation for some of the shows was assisted by six master's program students at our department who were recruited via their program's research experience module. The call for volunteers can be found in Supplement C3. The volunteers were subsequently verbally instructed in the use of the *UAM CorpusTool*, the use of the annotation schemes, and the pre-defined strategies for handling unclear cases as they are discussed in Section 3.4.2.2[9]. Furthermore, they were encouraged to make use of the comment function and to point out any unclear or challenging choices. After all volunteer-annotated episodes had been collected and unclear cases resolved, the annotated episode transcripts were merged into a single *UAM CorpusTool* project. Finally, spot checks for plausibility of the provided annotations were performed, and the full annotation of any episodes showing inconsistencies checked for plausibility and reasonable accuracy in full.

The thus annotated transcripts were then examined further using basic frequency measures automatically extracted by the *UAM CorpusTool* (e.g., number of segments, segment length in orthographic words, etc.). Here, these basic frequency measures are taken as an indicator of relative character prominence in the episode dialogue, following the assumptions of Bednarek (2018) according to which TV dialogue can "construct characters" and their "role

[8] As IMDb ratings are updated continuously via user feedback, it is possible that some of the episodes' ratings may have changed since they were selected for annotation in 2023.

[9] Thank you to my team of student annotators: Sonja Bettermann, Susanne Borsch, Anna Eskova, Laura Jansen, Justine Lenz, and Nazlıcan Pedük!

[…] in the narrative" (47). These measures are then interpreted and enriched with the aforementioned detailed qualitative analysis of the role of queerness in the fictional world of the respective shows. In doing so, this stage hopes to address a research gap pointed out by Bednarek (2018):

> There is a need to tease apart the effects of storylines, characters, and genre, including narrative functions of dialogue such as characterisation and plot development. The latter in particular has been ignored in corpus linguistic research on television narratives and also takes a back seat in sociolinguistic studies. (Bednarek 2018, 177)

3.4.1. Chosen shows

Based on the criteria outlined in the previous section, six shows were chosen for this second stage of the project. While there has been significant scholarly interest in some of them, especially with regards to their portrayal of the queer community (e.g., Cavalcante 2015, 458-9), much of this previous research has been focused on queer representation in terms of alignment or misalignment with heteronormative stereotypes (e.g., Pugh 2018). As the analyses performed in this stage integrate both quantitative and qualitative perspectives on said shows' queer characters, a brief outline of the chosen shows' premise, relevant queer characters, and reception is provided in the following, along with some notes on relevant previous research. The respective plot synopses are based primarily on each show's IMDb entry.

Show	Format	Runtime	Genre[10]
Dawson's Creek	~45 min	1998-2003	Drama
Glee	~45 min	2009-2015	Drama
Buffy the Vampire Slayer	~45 min	1997-2003	Fantasy
Lost Girl	~45 min	2010-2016	Fantasy
Will & Grace	~25 min	1998-2006 2017-2019	Comedy
Modern Family	~25 min	2009-20	Comedy

Table 4 Chosen shows and their relevant features

[10]The TV genre listed in this table is, of course, not in all cases the (only) one attached to the show's entry on IMDb, but rather chosen to highlight the intended point of comparison between the shows.

As can be seen from *Table 4*, the shows from the *TV Corpus* selected for Stage 2 are comprised of three genres each represented by two productions from different periods of broadcast. The three TV genres considered here were Drama, Fantasy (a Hybrid genre in the sense of Marshall and Werndly 2002, 44), and Comedy. A more in-depth discussion of the typical features of these genres can be found in Section 2.1.1.2. Three of these shows ran for five or more seasons starting in the late 1990s, while the other three premiered between 2008 and 2010 and ran well into the 2010s.

3.4.1.1. Dawson's Creek

IMDb summarizes the premise of *Dawson's Creek* as: „Two childhood best friends, Dawson and Joey, go through different stages of adolescence together. Their friendship is later tested when they both start a relationship with different people" (*Dawson's Creek* 1998-2003). It is tagged as "Drama" and "Romance", and ran for six seasons, with a total of 128 episodes being produced. On IMDb, the show has been rated by 44,000 users with an average rating of 6.8 out of 10 stars as of December 2023. While airing in the 90s, the show was widely popular with North American audiences, though its popularity declined over the later seasons, as some viewers felt that the show had run its course with the main characters' moving away from the town. (Donahue 2017)

Season	Episode Title	Stars	Episode Title	Stars
2	**14** To Be or Not to Be…	8.3	**15** …That Is the Question	8.4
3	**12** Weekend in the Country	8.1	**22** The Anti-Prom	8.2
4	**07** You Had Me at Goodbye	8.2	**14** A Winter's Tale	8.1
5	**04** The Long Goodbye	8.3	**10** Appetite for Destruction	7.6
6	**21** Goodbye, Yellow Brick Road	7.4	**22** Joey Potter And Capeside Redemption	8.7

Table 5 List of chosen Dawson's Creek *episodes with their IMDb ratings*

As is indicated in the synopsis, the show follows the lives of a group of friends who live in a small town in Massachusetts, focusing especially on their interpersonal (and often romantic) relationships within and beyond their group. Starting from the second season, the character

of Jack McPhee joins the group of teenaged friends, first as a recurring character and later joining the regular cast from Season 3 onward. Jack is a fellow high-school student and friend of the other main characters and ultimately comes out as gay in Season 2. (*Dawson's Creek* 1999) For this reason, here the choice was made to exclude the first season from the annotation, and rather focus on Seasons 2 to 6 (see *Table 5*).

In academic research, the show has been noted for showing the first gay male kiss in primetime TV programming (e.g., Gauntlett 2008, 88), as well as for causing controversy with its (allegedly) casual portrayal of teenage sexuality (Webber 2019, 50-1). Within the fictional world of the show, researchers have highlighted the tendency of the characters to "externalise and analyse every experience […] repression itself is repressed" (Birchall 2004, NOSTALGIA, POLITICS AND SUBJECTIVITY). As such, the show appears to lend itself particularly well to a discussion of the role of queerness in the fictional world of the story. Notably, Jack's character arc focusing on his sexuality has been described as being closely tied to his constant renegotiations of his friendship with Jen (another of the main cast characters) (Meyer 2003, 264-70)

3.4.1.2. *Glee*

According to the show's IMDb synopsis, *Glee* is about how "[a] group of ambitious misfits try to escape the harsh realities of high school by joining a glee club [show choir] headed by a passionate Spanish teacher" (*Glee* 2009-2015). It is tagged as "Comedy", "Drama", and "Music". For the purposes of this research, it will be compared primarily to (an)other Drama show(s), seeing as the average episode length on this show is more typical of Drama TV formats rather than comedic genre conventions (Section 2.1.1.2).

It's classification as a "Music" show, too, raises interesting implications – as most episodes feature characters singing songs as part of their character speech, a choice had to be made for how to treat this phenomenon during the character speech annotation. It was ultimately decided to treat text sung by a character the same as regular spoken dialogue produced by the character, seeing as, from a viewer's perspective, the same character is still producing language. In fact, Hunting and McQueen (2014) argue that the "mash up aesthetic" (289) that combines elements of musical, music video, and Drama programming is to be considered a

defining feature of the show, and can be said to facilitate the portrayal of progressive ideologies. Similarly, *Glee* has been described as drawing heavily on the previously discussed assumed connection between camp and queer aesthetic (Sarkissian 2014, 154), in ways that at times challenge queer stereotypes while also making use of them. In an analysis of politeness features in character interactions of teaching staff with minority vs. non-minority students, Lira and Ferreira (2022) have also noted that there appears to be a notable discrepancy in the level of politeness with which these characters of (presumed) authority treat students who appear to be part of a marginalized group (205).

The show ran for 121 episodes over six seasons, and has an overall IMDb rating of 6.8 out of 10 stars as rated by 154,000 users. The episodes from Seasons 1 to 5 selected for this project can be found in *Table 6*. During its original run, the show had a wide following and was frequently praised for its portrayal of queer characters (Dhaenens 2013, 3), though especially in the later seasons many reviews also highlighted certain aspects of said characters' portrayal that fans were vocally dissatisfied with. (Stein 2019, 86-89)

Season	Episode Title	Stars	Episode Title	Stars
1	**04** Preggers	8.3	**18** Laryngitis	7.9
2	**08** Furt	8.7	**20** Prom Queen	8.4
3	**11** Michael	8.4	**18** Choke	8.1
4	**04** The Break-Up	8.7	**06** Glease	7.9
5	**01** Love, Love, Love	7.8	**11** City of Angels	8.2

Table 6 List of chosen Glee *episodes with their IMDb ratings*

The show follows a high-school music club, and (in later seasons) also individual former members as they move on from their high school days. As such, it has an unusually large cast of main and recurring characters, several of whom come out as members of the queer community over the course of the series (Dhaenens 2013, 4-6).

Accordingly, this show offers a great opportunity to also compare the linguistic behaviour of major queer characters from within the same show, as was also described by Sarkassian (2014):

> [*Glee*] resists traditional LGBT stereotypes by providing multiple perspectives through long-form serialized story arcs on how sexual identity, the closet, love, homophobia and institutional support (or lack thereof) are systemic issues that often drive the central narratives of the show. (Sarkissian 2014, 155)

3.4.1.3. Buffy the Vampire Slayer

This show follows the titular character Buffy "[a] young woman, destined to slay vampires, demons and other infernal creatures, [as she] deals with her life fighting evil, with the help of her friends" (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer* 1997–2003). It is tagged for "Action", "Drama", and "Fantasy", with the focus in this comparison being placed primarily on the aspect of fantasy elements present in this story. It ran for seven seasons with a total of 145 episodes. The show was widely popular during its original run, and has received general acclaim for its subversion of horror-staple stereotypes (Owen 1999, 26), as well as its writing more generally (e.g., Mangan 2017). Indeed, the overall IMDb rating is notably higher than that of the shows discussed previously at 8.3 out of 10 stars as rated by approximately 157,000 users. The selected episodes from Seasons 1 to 5 are listen in *Table 7*.

Season	Episode Title	Stars	Episode Title	Stars
1	**10** Nightmares	8.0	**12** Prophecy Girl	8.7
2	**03** School Hard	8.7	**13** Surprise	8.5
3	**06** Band Candy	8.6	**19** Choices	8.1
4	**04** Fear Itself	8.4	**19** New Moon Rising	8.2
5	**05** Family	8.1	**19** Tough Love	8.1

Table 7 List of chosen Buffy the Vampire Slayer *episodes with their IMDb ratings*

One of the group of friends supporting the titular character in her "fight against evil" is Willow Rosenberg who comes out as a lesbian in Season 4. Interestingly, Willow's queerness is first brought up via parallelism to her being a witch, with frequent references to this conflation being made throughout the show (Wilson 2005, 155). Additionally, the show has been noted

for its “queer melodramatics” (Keegan 2016, 9), which some scholars consider to be a counterpoint to the more conventional family and social structures portrayed in some of the other shows considered here:

> Buffy defies the late-twentieth-century American visual politics through which queerness was rendered compatible with bourgeois heterosexual values and consumer capitalism, perhaps best typified by the contemporary situation comedy *Will and Grace* (1998–2006, NBC) and highly evident in more recent televisual texts such as *Glee* (2009–15, Fox), *Modern Family* (2009–, ABC) and *The New Normal* (2012–13, NBC). In contrast to those programmes, which portray their LGBT subjects as being isolated in static straight worlds, *Buffy* illustrates the power of queerness to reject assimilation and to insist on the reality and accessibility of alternative social formations. (Keegan 2016, 11)

Battis (2005), too, emphasizes the importance of Buffy’s so-called chosen “queer family” (12) not only within the world of the show, but also as the core relationship around which the show is constructed (14). As such, a comparison with the other shows discussed here also in terms of their performed and perpetuated power structures appears promising.

3.4.1.4. *Lost Girl*

The plot of *Lost Girl* follows Bo, a supernatural creature known as a “succubus”, who has the power to absorb life-energy via sexual contact or kissing. Throughout the show, Bo and her group of friend and allies investigate magical crimes and dangers: “When a succubus finds it difficult to adapt with her unusual traits in spite of being born in a human family, she sets off on a journey to find out the truth of her origin” (*Lost Girl* 2010–2016-a). Similar to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the show is tagged as “Action”, “Drama”, and “Fantasy”, and can thus be assumed to be highly suitable for a comparison within these similar genres, as *Lost Girl*, too has been described as drawing on fairy tale and mythical elements (Jorgensen and Teverson 2021, 87). The show ran for five seasons with a total of 77 episodes, and attracted a strong following during its original run. Many user reviews explicitly praise the show for its portrayal of female (queer) sexuality *(Lost Girl* 2010–2016-b). The overall IMDb rating is at 7.6 out of 10 stars, with approximately 33,000 users having rated it as of December 2023. The selected episodes from all five seasons of the show can be found in *Table 8*.

Season	Episode Title	Stars	Episode Title	Stars
1	**08** Vexed	8.0	**13** Blood Lines	7.8
2	**09** Original Skin	8.3	**21** Into the Dark	7.8
3	**03** Confaegion	8.1	**06** The Kenzi Scale	8.1
4	**08** Groundhog Fae	8.0	**13** Dark Horse	7.8
5	**13** Family Portrait	7.9	**16** Rise	8.0

Table 8 List of chosen Lost Girl *episodes with their IMDb ratings*

The show's main character, Bo Dennis, is portrayed as a queer woman, and during some of the show's seasons involved in an on-again off-again queer relationship with Lauren Lewis, another main cast character. Notably, as a succubus, Bo's magical powers are intrinsically linked to her sexuality, thereby once again creating a (perceived) link between magic and queerness (Rodríguez 2017, 44). While Bo "demonstrates many nonmonogamous behaviours without reproach or slut-shaming", it must be noted that the show cannot be considered "unilaterally sex-positive or progressive" (Jorgensen and Teverson 2021, 87)

In case of *Lost Girl*, some issues arose with the episode tagging of the corpus. For this reason, it proved necessary to exchange an incorrectly tagged episode for another one that had been tagged correctly: The transcript tagged as Season 2 Episode 22 was in fact a transcript of a pre-show live event with cast and crew that was broadcast before the actual episode first aired. As the neighbouring episode 21 "Into the Dark" also met the requirements set for episode selection, it was chosen and annotated instead.

3.4.1.5. *Will & Grace*

IMDb describes Will and Grace as: „Gay lawyer Will and straight interior designer Grace share a New York City apartment. Their best friends are gleeful and proud gay Jack and charismatic, filthy-rich, amoral socialite Karen" (*Will & Grace* 1998-2020-a). In contrast to the four shows discussed previously, this show adheres to the Comedy genre typical format of approximately 20 minutes in length, rather than the around 40-minute episodes typical of Drama series. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that this show is the only show selected for Stage 2 that makes use of a laugh track (Section 2.1.1.1). On IMDb, it is tagged for "Comedy" and

"Romance", and has an overall rating of 7.4 out of 10 stars as voted by 59,000 users (*Will & Grace* 1998-2020-b). It ran for a total of 246 episodes over 11 seasons. Of these 11 seasons, the first eight were produced consecutively (first airing from 1998 to 2006), the ninth to eleventh of these, however, were produced and broadcast over a decade later from 2017 to 2020. The episodes selected for the annotation from the first five seasons are listed in *Table 9*.

The show has received much praise for being a major network show with a queer titular character and is thus often commended for helping to "normalize" queer experiences to a wide audience through characters offering "a refreshing challenge to 'normal' conceptions of masculinity [… and …] femininity" (Schiappa, Gregg, and Hewes 2006, 28). Conversely, there has also been some criticism aimed at the show's ways of portraying queer experiences, as the show "can be read as reinforcing heterosexism and, thus, can be seen as heteronormative." (Battles and Hilton-Morrow 2002, 87).

Season	Episode Title	Stars	Episode Title	Stars
1	**16** Yours, Mine, or Ours	7.9	**18** Grace, Replaced	7.8
2	**04** Whose Mom Is It, Anyways	8.0	**07** Homo for the Holidays	8.5
3	**06** Love Plus One	8.1	**23** Last of the Really Odd Lovers	7.9
4	**01** The Third Wheel Gets the Grace	8.0	**24** Hocus Focus	7.9
5	**02** Bacon and Eggs	8.3	**22** May Divorce Be with You	8.0

Table 9 List of chosen Will & Grace *episodes with their IMDb ratings*

As can be seen from the IMDb summary above, the main cast features two queer characters, with a variety of queer love interests among the recurring characters as well. Due to the show's very premise, queer identities and experiences are at the very core of many episodes' plots, and as such should offer a suitable point of comparison.

Similar to the tagging issues described for *Lost Girl*, here, too, were several instances where episode titles were tagged incorrectly. The episodes in question were: "Sons and Lovers", "Fagel Attraction", "May Divorce be With You". The transcript tagged as "Sons and Lovers" actually matched the dialogue for the episode "Last of the Really Odd Lovers" (one episode

earlier, IMDb rating of 7.9), which was annotated instead, as it also met all of the required criteria. Due to technical constraints, the transcript in the *UAM CorpusTool* project retains the incorrect title "Sons and Lovers". "Fagel Attraction" was exchanged for "Focus Pocus", a neighbouring episode also from Season 4 with an IMDb rating of 7.9. In the corpus, the episode transcript for "May Divorce Be with You" was tagged as the episode "A Buncha White Chicks Sittin' Around Talkin'", but was identified via comparison of character dialogue. *Table 9* above lists the final selection of episodes annotated for this project.

3.4.1.6. *Modern Family*

The last of the shows selected for Stage 2 is the sitcom *Modern Family*. Like *Will & Grace*, it, too has the sitcom-typical average episode length of approximately 20 minutes. The plot synopsis on IMDb describes it as: "Three different but related families face trials and tribulations in their own uniquely comedic ways" (*Modern Family* 2009-2020-a). It is tagged for "Comedy", "Drama", and "Romance", and has an overall rating of 8.5 out of 10 stars as voted by 469,000 users. The series ran for 11 seasons with a total of 250 episodes, which, in contrast to *Will & Grace*, were produced and aired annually throughout its entire run. The annotated episodes from the first five of these seasons are listed in *Table 10*. The show was widely popular during its original broadcast, and frequently praised for its balancing of comedic and serious elements (*Modern Family* 2009-2020-b).

Season	Episode Title	Stars	Episode Title	Stars
1	**09** Fizbo	8.6	**13** Fifteen Percent	8.0
2	**02** The Kiss	8.0	**18** Boys' Night	8.2
3	**07** Treehouse	8.1	**24** Baby on Board	8.6
4	**11** New Year's Eve	8.0	**17** Best Men	8.0
5	**01** Suddenly, Last Summer	8.1	**22** Message Received	8.2

Table 10 List of chosen Modern Family *episodes with their IMDb ratings*

Of the three related families mentioned in the synopsis, all of whom typically appear in each episode, one is formed of a gay couple and their (as of Season 1) newly adopted child. Many of the plots involving these characters focus on their queerness, especially on their perception

as a queer family unit, as well as the ways in which they relate to their parents and other relations (Cavalcante 2015, 465-7). The show has been both acclaimed and criticized for its portrayal of queer characters, with some reviewers perceiving said portrayal to be 'relatable' in its chaos (*Modern Family* 2009-2020-b), while others felt that the show relied too much on preexisting stereotypes in their character construction (Pugh 2017, 171-3).

3.4.2. Speaker annotation in the *UAM CorpusTool*

After these six shows had been selected, the respective episode transcripts were extracted from *CQPWeb* and prepared for speaker annotation to be carried out using the *UAM CorpusTool* and the episodes' audiovisual recordings obtained from international DVD editions. The *UAM CorpusTool* was developed by Mick O'Donnell as a freely available text annotation tool. While it has been under development for over fifteen years now, and has gone through multiple versions, the basic functions have remained stable. Most crucially for this project, it can be used to create custom-built annotation schemes for any kind of segmentation which may then be added to text files contained within the project (O'Donnell 2008, 1-2). Accordingly, the *UAM CorpusTool* appears particularly well suited to the kind of annotation necessitated by Stage 2 of this research project, namely annotating episode subtitle text files for speaker information, identifying which segments of TV dialogue were produced by which characters.

For this annotation process, customized annotation schemes were designed for each of the shows, though the overall structure was maintained to ensure the comparability of categories across shows. As was already mentioned, the composition of the corpus led to instances where the speaker annotation was less straightforward. For those cases, clear rules had to be formulated to ensure that all transcripts were treated consistently (Section 3.4.2.2).

This project's use of layers differs slightly from what was described by O'Donnell (2008) in that not every text file in this larger thesis project was annotated with identical annotation schemes, but rather only those files which were episode transcripts from the same show. As the intention here was to annotate the extracted episode texts with information about which character produces which segments of dialogue, the annotation schemes for the six shows had to be show-specific to be meaningful. However, all six annotation schemes (or, in the

terms of the *UAM CorpusTool*, "layers"), were structured into the same broad categories (e.g., main cast character, recurring character, non-character speech) as they are explained below to maintain comparability across shows.

One issue that must be addressed here is the fact that in the most recent stable version of the tool, version 6.2j (February, 2023), the option to annotate multi-line segments has been removed, while the documentation of this version is not available in its entirety yet. Seeing as the annotation to be performed frequently required having segments extended across line breaks the choice was made to complete the manual annotation in the previous stable version of the tool, version 3.3x (August, 2021). As "[p]rojects from version 3.3 are fully compatible with version 6" (O'Donnell n.d), the files were moved from version 3.3 to version 6.2j after the annotation process had been completed and all project files had been merged.

3.4.2.1. Annotation scheme design

The annotation schemes for this stage of the analysis were developed based on a pilot study's findings presented at the *31st ESFLC* (Rosenow 2022). Aside from serving to demonstrate the viability of this kind of speaker annotation, two main methodological conclusions could be drawn based on this study: Firstly, that the three-way distinction into a) major characters, b) recurring characters, and c) episodic characters proved useful in the annotation. Secondly, that there is too much variation in the transcription of non-character speech features to make it viable for detailed analysis.

In *Figure 2*, the overall structure of the developed annotation schemes is summarized, with each of the major categories to be chosen from discussed briefly below. While the specific sub-categories chosen for each show cannot be discussed in detail, clarifying examples are included for all major categories. The complete annotation schemes for each of the six shows, along with selected screenshots and explanations of annotated files can be found in Supplement C1.

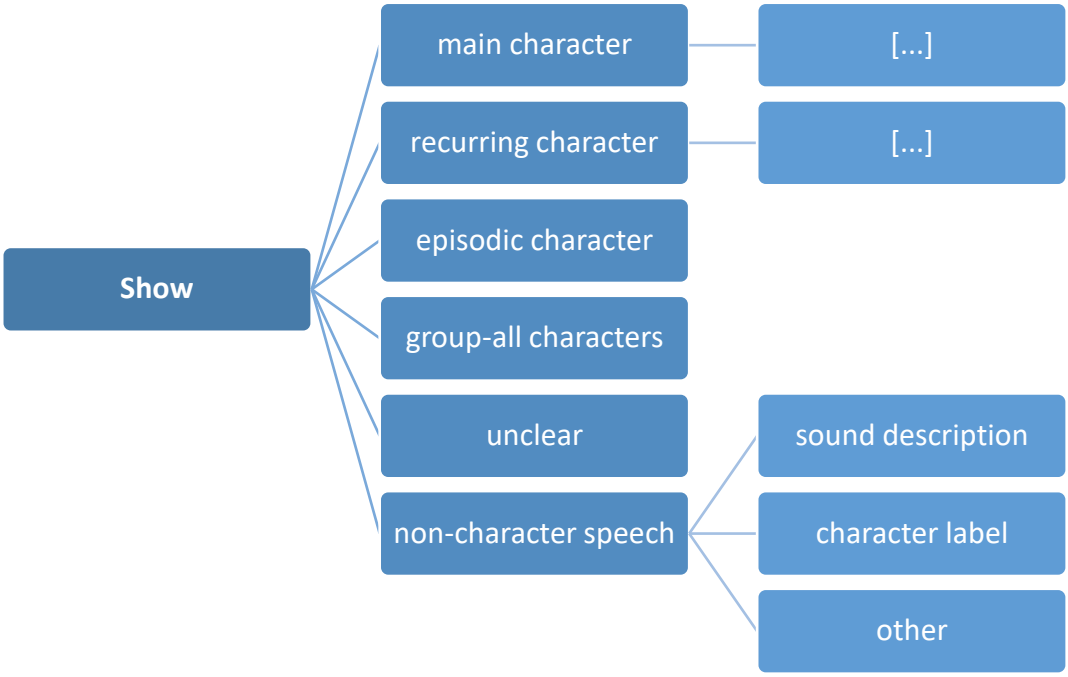


Figure 2 Overall structure of the speaker annotation schemes in the UAM CorpusTool

Show

The "show" category represents the highest level category for each of the six show-specific annotation schemes. It was used to specify which show was currently being analysed to minimize the risk of applying an incorrect annotation scheme.

Main character

The "main character" category was chosen for any segment that was identified as having been spoken by one of the respective show's main cast characters. A main cast character, in this sense, was understood as being a character who appears in the title sequence or is listed as starring in the end credits. For each of the selected shows, the main characters to be considered here were determined with the help of the show's IMDb entry. In case of *Will & Grace*, for instance, Will, Grace, Jack, and Karen would be classified as main characters. It is worth mentioning at this stage that the number of characters relevant for this category was highly variable: Where *Will & Grace* featured only four main characters, *Glee* was found to have more than 20. As such, it is likely that the main characters in one show will be more consistently prominent in each episode, whereas in the other there may be more variation in the characters' prominence across episodes. Furthermore, some of the shows have more seasons than can be analysed for this project, not all of which tend to have a consistent main cast (as was discussed in Section 3.4.1.1 with regards to Jack from *Dawson's Creek*). Relatedly,

some main characters may not be present in all of the episodes annotated here: In case of the character "Joe" from *Modern Family*, who is credited as a main character but is only present in the annotated episodes as an infant (and as such does not produce character dialogue), it was even found that an (apparent) main cast character had no speech contributions at all.

Recurring character

The category of the "recurring character" was assigned to any segment of dialogue spoken by one of a show's recurring non-main cast characters. For the purposes of this research, a recurring character was defined as a character who appears in at least five episodes of a given show. The complete lists of these characters were again developed with the help of the "Full cast and crew" IMDb pages (e.g., *Will & Grace* 1998-2020-b). As only ten episodes per show were annotated, it is very likely that some of each show's recurring characters will not actually appear in any of the selected episodes.

Episodic character

In contrast to the two character categories discussed previously, the "episodic character" tag does not have any show-specific sub-categories. As was found in the pilot study, the dialogue contributions of episodic characters typically are too small to be analysed quantitatively in a meaningful way, and their high number across seasons make such an annotation unfeasible. Accordingly, any character who appeared in less than five episodes was generally tagged as episodic.

Group-all characters

The "group-all characters" category also is a category without subordinate tags. It was used for any part of the dialogue that could be attributed to more than one character at the same time, such as, for instance, characters singing as a group (as frequently happened in case of *Glee*, especially), or characters speaking as a group (e.g., in case of exclamations like "surprise!").

Unclear

The category "unclear" was to be chosen whenever the speaker of a dialogue segment could not be identified. This was often the case when multiple characters were speaking at the same time (e.g., group arguments, indistinct background chatter), or in scenes with insufficient lighting to identify the speaking character (e.g., fight scenes in dark hallways).

Non-character speech

This category was used to annotate any elements contained in the episode transcripts that could not be attributed to character speech. While the annotation scheme used in the pilot study originally distinguished many different non-speech phenomena, only three of these sub-categories were utilized for Stage 2. As also noted in Section 3.2, a quantitative analysis of these tags is unlikely to prove fruitful, as the annotated episode subtitle texts did not consistently make use of such elements.

The first of the three remaining sub-categories of non-character speech is the tag "**sound description**". This was utilized for any instance of a transcript describing a character's voice quality (e.g., "whispers", or "mocking"), or describing a diegetic sound within the show (e.g., "phone ringing" or "soft pop song plays"). The category "**character label**" was chosen when an off-screen speaker was identified in the subtitles, as is commonly done for phone conversations, or scenes where only one interactant is in frame (e.g., "Buffy:", or "Phil:"). The last category, "**other"**, was chosen to capture any non-character speech element that could not be attributed to either of the other categories. Common examples of this category include introductory "previously on […]" voice-over narration, or navigational system announcements in a car.

3.4.2.2. Challenges of the segmentation and annotation

The annotation schemes described above were applied to each of the episode transcripts chosen for Stage 2. In order to carry out this speaker annotation reliably, additional guidelines for dealing with challenging cases proved necessary to adequately address several dataset-specific challenges. Firstly, as was already outlined in Section 3.2, random short chunks of text have been removed from each of the transcripts contained in the *TV Corpus* as a copyright measure, which may impact the character speech annotation: As average and maximum turn

length are among the measures of character prominence considered here, it proved necessary to define just what is considered one character speech contribution (and, consequently, one annotated segment) for the purposes of this analysis. Towards this goal, the following criteria were defined to deal with missing sections of text:

- If a section of text is missing from the episode transcript, and a different character is speaking when the transcript picks up again, it counts as a new segment.
- If a section of text is missing from the episode transcript, and the same character is still speaking when the transcript picks up again, it counts as part of the same segment.
- If a section of text is missing from the episode transcript, and the same character is speaking when the transcript picks up again, but a different character made a contribution to the dialogue during the missing section in the corresponding audiovisual recording, it counts as a new segment.
- As there frequently are longer pauses in scripted TV dialogue (due to action sequences, to allow for reaction shots, to leave time for the addition of a laugh track, etc.), a turn or segment is considered ongoing even if a character falls silent during their contribution. As such, a new segment in this annotation only begins if:
    a) A new character speaks
    b) A non-character speech element is transcribed (as these cannot be accounted for otherwise), or
    c) The scene changes, using a skip in either time or location. If the camera follows the conversation (for instance from one room into another) without discontinuity in time or location, the segment will be considered ongoing.

Additionally, there were some unexpected challenges due to the contents of the analysed shows: Especially in case of the Fantasy shows, there were instances where it was not entirely straightforward to attribute character speech due to e.g., characters switching bodies (see Supplement C2, *Lost Girl*, S02E09 for more context). For practical reasons, the choice was made to annotate these segments as the character an actor is typically credited as. As this approach may in fact miss out on some nuances of character speech, this limitation of the

annotation process will be taken into account when discussing the results for the episodes in question.

3.4.2.3. Quantitative comparison of character prominence

Based on the quantitative annotation for speaker as it was described above, several different types of comparisons were drawn: Firstly, a comparison of basic frequency measures automatically summarized by and exported from the *UAM CorpusTool* was used to investigate possible differences in the patterns of contributions between queer and non-queer main cast characters within a show. The most central measures considered here were total number of segments, segment length in orthographic words (average, minimum, and maximum), as well as average word length.

These measures were compiled for each main cast character from each of the shows, as well as for the groups of recurring and episodic characters per show. While recurring characters were annotated individually as per the annotation scheme outlined above, their contributions proved overall too scarce to provide a meaningful point of comparison. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that for the majority of the shows annotated here, no recurring queer characters were found within the annotated episodes, thus making this a less viable point of comparison. Of these exported measures, the highest and lowest values per main cast per show were highlighted and discussed in light of the character's role in the story and their characterization.

Secondly, matrix plots were employed to illustrate main character prominence (in terms of their number of speech contributions) per episode: This visualization was drawn upon to provide a point of comparison of character prominence across the annotated episodes and seasons, and was discussed mainly in light of the qualitative annotation of the role of queerness in these respective episodes and seasons (Section 3.4.3).

Thirdly, all 60 episode transcripts were queried for the terms of queer in-group identity as they were discussed in Stage 1 to also get an impression of how frequently such terms of queer in-group identity were utilized in these specific shows, and to thus also reflect on the kinds of queer representation that the different stages of the analysis may or may not identify.

3.4.3. Qualitative analysis of queerness in the chosen episodes

In addition to the quantitative measures of character prominence discussed above, this stage also incorporates elements of discourse analysis to better understand the role of queerness in the fictional worlds of the respective shows. As pointed out by Ullman (2018, 366-7), the fact of a character's queerness may have varying levels of importance within the narrative of the show they exist in, depending both on how this fictional world is constructed, but presumably also on how it is framed for the audience with the help of genre conventions and artistic choices.

To analyse this from a more detailed, qualitative perspective, each of the 60 audiovisual recordings of the episodes obtained from international DVD editions was reviewed again and summarized with regards to the role that queerness plays in each of them. To determine the role of queerness in the episode (but also in the larger character and plot arcs), discussions and implications about queerness within the character dialogue, within the portrayed actions of the characters, but also within the episodic arcs were noted in detail. While this annotation cannot claim to have caught every single reference to queerness within these episodes, the ambition was to identify as many as possible. The full notes in narrative form can be found in Supplement C2 to ensure maximum transparency in keeping with the recommendations made by Baker and McEnery (2015, 9).

From these extensive notes, a summary was attempted for the main body of the text that addresses the most striking features identified for each of the shows, both in terms of their queer character arcs and their roles in the story, but also in terms of how queerness is discussed and constructed in these fictional worlds more generally. Notably, only the annotated episodes of the six shows will be considered here: As only these were annotated in detail, no claims can be made about the wider context of the show. While the focus of this annotation is undeniably qualitative, recurring features were nevertheless pointed out as such to highlight their pervasiveness in the show. As mentioned in the previous section, this qualitative analysis is complemented by the matrix plots of character contributions per episode to facilitate a more well-rounded comparison.

Based on the results found for each of the shows, Section 5.2 presents a comparison of shared and show-specific ways of construing and portraying queerness in their story worlds: This comparison is first drawn between shows of the same genre and considering the requirements and expectations of said genre: It discusses the interplay between genre expectations and the way that these are utilized (or broken) in each genre's portrayal of prominent queer characters and their fictional worlds (Section 5.2.2)

However, a second step here draws a comparison across all annotated shows, structured along the different dimensions of the fictional or cultural realism of the show that were found to commonly feature queerness as a driving force of plot or character arcs (Section 5.2.3). Finally, this discussion also considers the relationship between the investigated shows and their production contexts to account for real-world influences on and implications of the portrayed queer characters and arcs.

4. Results

This project's methodology is divided into two stages for the sake of clarity, and this distinction is maintained throughout this section. While the two stages and their results no doubt are interconnected, it is still worth considering them individually first, before moving on to a discussion of these features in combination in Section 5.

4.1.Results: Stage 1

For Stage 1, the frequencies of the queried terms in the *TV Corpus*, are a first point of comparison, addressing both the accuracy and scope of the chosen queries, as well as the pruned datasets obtained via manual annotation (Section 4.1.1). Seeing as the constructed queries intentionally allowed for variation in the obtained results (even in the pruned datasets), the amount and kind of variation must be addressed (Section 4.1.2). The frequencies of these pruned datasets are then considered both in terms of their diachronic distribution (Section 4.1.3), their ranks on a corpus word list (Section 4.1.4), as well as in a comparison to other related terms (Section 4.1.5). For the diachronic comparison, a *Peaks and Troughs* analysis (as described in Section 3.3.4) is utilized to highlight "points of departure from the general trend" (Gabrielatos and Marchi 2012, 242) for each of the most frequently found variants of the investigated terms of queer in-group identity (Section 4.1.6). For the comparison across genres, heatmaps are drawn upon as a way of visualizing the distribution of relevant hits across TV genres and half-decades (Section 4.1.7)..

Additionally, a *Usage Fluctuation Analysis* for the two most frequent variants of queried terms in the dataset, *gay* and *lesbian,* identifies collocates for these two terms at different points in time (Section 4.1.8.2). For all relevant realizations of the terms, including ones that occurred less frequently, an overall collocation analysis in *CQPweb* is used (Section 4.1.8.1), as this proved feasible without having to rely on specific frequencies per year.

4.1.1. Relevance of extracted datasets and their implications

As was outlined in Section 3.3.2, extensive manual annotation of the data extracted from the *TV Corpus* proved necessary due to the high degree of variation in the results arising from the intentionally broad queries aiming to catch as many relevant tokens as possible. The different tokens identified by each of the queries will in the following also be referred to as "variants" of the terms to simplify the description of the findings. For two of the terms (namely *bi** and *trans**), the decision was made to also include their clipped forms in the query, leading to a high percentage of non-relevant hits (Section 3.3.2), but the results for the other terms, too, showed different degrees of variation in the extracted datasets.

	Lesbian*	***Gay****	***Bi****	***Trans****	***Queer****	***LGBT****
N	0.06%	1.89%	0.07%	0.62%	7.26%	1.08%
Y	98.91%	92.23%	0.13%	1.51%	78.11%	89.25%
U	0.09%	1.10%	<0.01%	0.04%	8.95%	0%
X	0%	0.03%	<0.01%	0.03%	0.12%	0%
N/X	0.93%	4.75%	99.78%	97.58%	5.56%	9.68%
Total	3000+	18000+	405,000+	43,000+	800+	<100

Table 11 Percentage of extracted relevant hits according to manual annotation

Table 11 summarizes the percentages of hits for each of the six queries run that were classified as each of the categories introduced in Section 3.3.2. The bottom row, "Total" provides a rounded estimate of how many hits were surveyed for each of the queries. In comparing these totals, it becomes apparent that the difference in the absolute number of exported hits is notable. The query and term with the least number of exported hits is *LGBT** with less than a hundred hits in total, while *trans** and *bi** were identified around 43,000 and 405,000 times, respectively. Unsurprisingly, these two queries are also the ones with the lowest percentage of relevant hits, with 0.13 percent for *bi**, and 1.51 percent for *trans**. The highest number of relevant hits was found for *lesbian**, which, interestingly, is the only multi-syllable non-acronym token searched for. The query for *queer** had less than 80 percent relevant hits, a noticeably lower percentage than that found for the other non-clipping terms,

with 8.95 percent of these attributable to hits categorized as “U”. This category was assigned to hits that could not with a reasonable degree of certainty be classified as using the queried token in reference to the queer community or not. Strikingly, the percentage of hits classified as such from all other queried terms were markedly lower, with 1.10 percent of the hits for *gay** classified as “U” being the next highest value.

It should be reiterated that any tokens found by the queries that occurred less than five times were excluded from this analysis, and that any token that occurred more than 100 times was limited to a randomly selected 100 concordance lines for the first sweep of analysis, and only tokens found to have at least one relevant hit within those 100 were analysed further. As such, there is a chance that some relevant hits within the datasets may have not been identified as such, but within the scope of this analysis it proved not feasible to also address these highly specific cases. Relatedly, it is worth noting again that these results were obtained via manual annotation of nuances of semantic meaning, a task which can be assumed to be at least somewhat subjective (e.g., Baker and McEnery 2015, 9). To ensure transparency in this analysis, the general guidelines utilized in these relevance judgements can be found in Section 3.3.2, and examples of annotated concordance lines and relevance judgements are included in Supplement B2.

Furthermore, the category “U” for hits where the concordance line proved ambiguous in its likely nuance of meaning was utilized in any instance where alternative meanings appeared about equally plausible, and the comparatively high number of such cases identified for the term *queer** does appear to justify this strategy: As discussed in Section 2.2.3, the alternative (non-queer community related) meaning of the term relates to “oddness”, which was found to have a notable overlap in possible contexts of use with a (possibly derogatory or at least playfully ambiguous) use as a term of queer in-group identity.

4.1.2. Variation within the relevant hits

Within the pruned datasets, different tokens/variants of the terms were found among the results for each of the six queries run. The extent of this variation, however, differed considerably across queries. *Figure 3* illustrates the variety in relevant tokens identified per queried term, taking into consideration the prevalence of each identified relevant variant.

Figure 3 Ratio of different relevant variants obtained by the queries

At least one example of a relevant hit and concordance line for each of these identified variants can be found in the tables in Supplement B2. The least amount of variation was found for the term *LGBT**, where only *LGBT* and *LGBTQ* occurred more five or more times in the exported dataset prior to pruning (e.g., Supplement B2, "LGBT", hits 77 and 175, respectively). For *queer** and *lesbian**, too, only a few different tokens were found five or more times, with all of the tokens being either the assumed base form of the queried term or instances of grammatical derivation in the sense of Schmid (2016, 191ff; e.g., *lesbians* (Supplement B2, "lesbian", hit 359), *queers* (Supplement B2, "queer", hit 622)). More diverse variants were identified for *bi**, the majority of these (beyond the clipping itself) still being instances of grammatical variation, though some could also be classified as blends, such as *bi-curious* (Supplement B2, "bi", hit 21944), or even instances of wordplay wherein tokens with a graphological or aural similarity to a term of queer in-group identity were used to invoke a meaning related to the queer community instead, such as:

> "you to tell Mo that his mama is lesbianic? **Bionic**? What? I can't understand you."
> (Supplement B2, "bi*", hit 573654)

For *trans**, a variety of different tokens was found, these being different terms for identity labels commonly assumed to fall under the trans umbrella (e.g., *transgender*, *transsexual* (Supplement B2, "trans", hits 6557 and 15864, respectively; see also Section 2.2.3), or grammatical derivates and graphological variations of these. The greatest amount of variety in tokens was found for *gay**, with more than 20 different tokens occurring five or more times prior to pruning of the data. Of these, the most frequently occurring variants are once again the term itself and its grammatical derivates, though there are also a number of blends (e.g., *Gaybraham* (Supplement B2, "gay", hit 1688), *gaydar* (Supplement B2, "gay", hit 7959), *gay-cist* (Supplement B2, "gay", hit 8946)), compounds (e.g., *gay-married* (Supplement B2, "gay", hit 22230), *gaylord* (Supplement B2, "gay", hit 4158)), and orthographic variations of the base term (e.g., *Gay-Straight* (Supplement B2, "gay", hit 21184)).

For four of the queries, there is one specific token that accounts for the vast majority of relevant hits. These tokens are *lesbian* (74.94 percent), *gay* (93.49 percent), *queer* (84.52 percent), and *LGBT* (72.29 percent), respectively. In case of *bi** and *trans**, however, there is no single token that has the same level of prominence: The most frequently occurring token for *bi** is *bisexual*, which makes up 50.38 percent of all relevant hits for this query, followed

by the clipping *bi* that makes up another 32.2 percent. For *trans**, the three most frequently occurring tokens are *transvestite* (26.07 percent), *transgender* (23.93 percent), and the clipping *trans* (21.17 percent).

Interestingly, while *gay** and *lesbian** are the two queries with the greatest number of hits overall, they differ substantially in terms of variety of tokens found. As discussed previously, a great variety of tokens was found for *gay**, while only four different relevant tokens were found for *lesbian**. While the limited amount in variation for *queer** and *LGBT** can at least in part be explained by the overall lower absolute number of relevant hits, (around 650 and less than 100, respectively), for *lesbian**, with a total of more than 3000 relevant hits, this appears to be a less convincing explanation.

4.1.3. Overview of pruned frequencies per decade

All frequencies discussed in this and the following chapters will always be based on the pruned datasets unless specified otherwise. As such, any hits for e.g., *gay** found to be unlikely to have been used in reference to the term's queer community related meaning were excluded from the discussion.

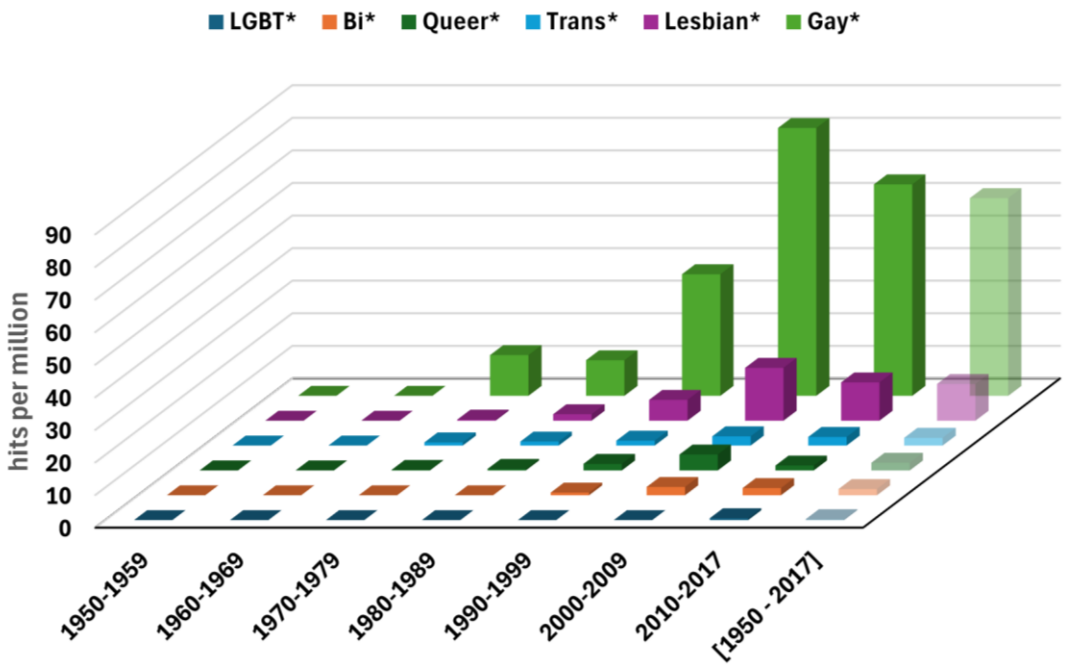
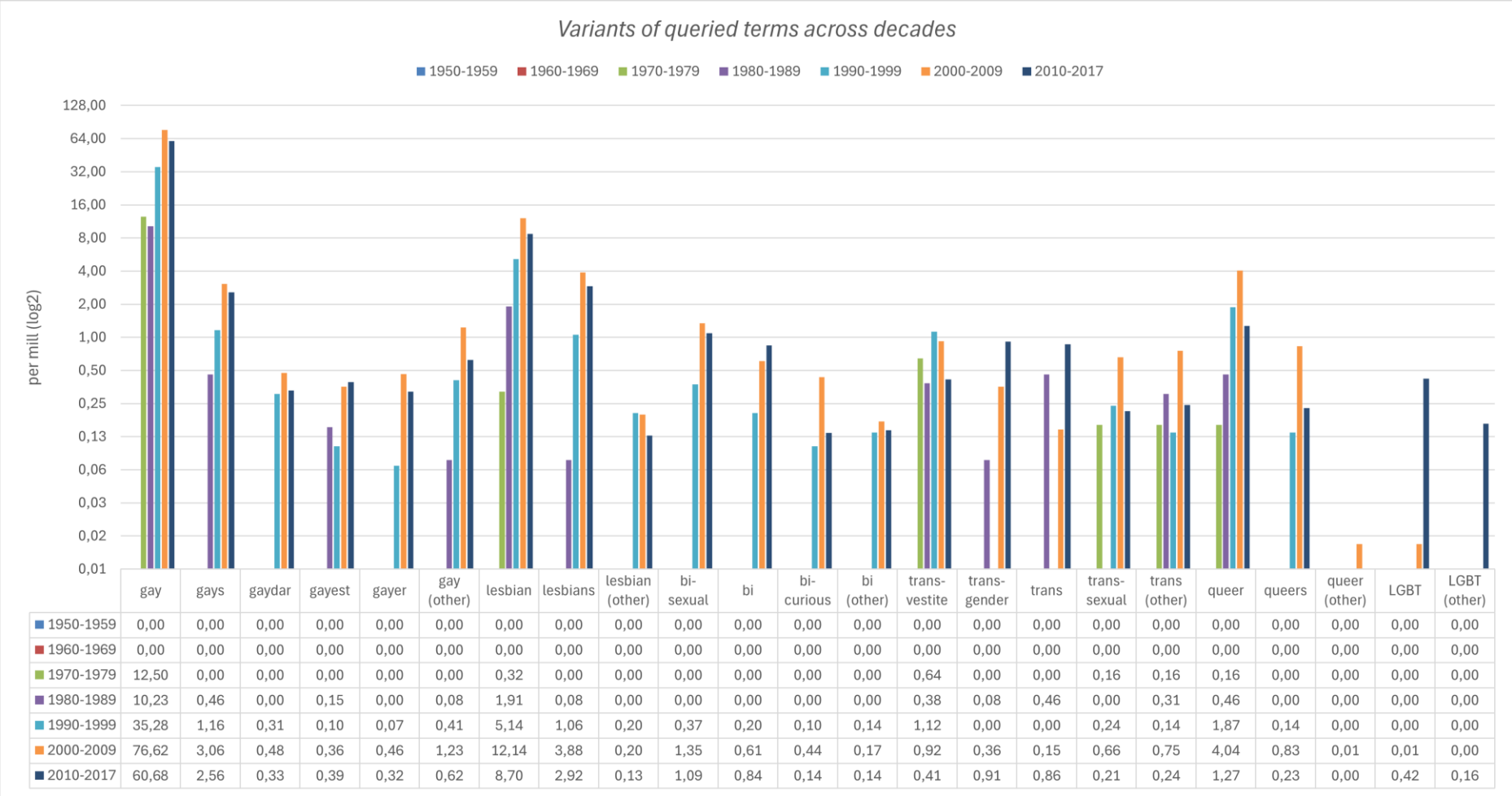


Figure 4 Frequency per million by decade in the pruned datasets

As can be seen from *Figure 4*, none of the hits found for any of the queries run from the 1950s and 1960s proved to relevant. Across all decades, the most frequently occurring term was *gay**, with an overall frequency of 60.68 hits per million words. The next most frequently occurring term, *lesbian**, was found with an overall frequency of only 11.27 per million. The rest of the queried terms occurred even less frequently, with *bi*, trans**, and *queer** at comparable frequencies (1.92, 2.38, and 2.35 hits per million words, respectively), and *LGBT** at 0.30 relevant hits per million words.

The earliest relevant hits were found in the 1970s for *trans** with 0.96 hits per million words, *lesbian** (0.32 hits per million words), and *gay** (12.5 hits per million words). The rest of the terms entered the corpus even later, with *queer** first appearing in the 1980s, *bi** in the 1990s, and *LGBT** only in the late 2000s and 2010s. Noticeably, the highest relative frequencies by decade for all queried terms except *LGBT** could be found in the 2000s, where (in order of frequency) *gay** had an average relative frequency of 82.20 hits per million words, *lesbian** a frequency of 16.22 hits per million words, followed by *queer** (4.88 hits per million words), *trans** (2.84 hits per million words), *bi** (2.56 hits per million words), and finally *LGBT** with 0.01 hits per million words. Accordingly, all queried terms except for *LGBT** showed a decrease in average relative frequency of use from the 2000s to the 2010s. In case of *gay**, a similar decrease could also be observed from the 1970s (12.5 hits per million words) to the 1980s (10.92 hits per million words).

As discussed previously, different variants of the queried terms of queer in-group identity were found by the queries. To better understand how these are distributed across the decades contained in the corpus, a more detailed breakdown of relative frequencies across decades for the more high-frequency tokens is introduced as an intermediary step. In *Figure 5*, the high frequency variants of each term are visualized separately, with low-frequency tokens summarized under the category "[term] (other)".



	gay	gays	gaydar	gayest	gayer	gay (other)	lesbian	lesbians	lesbian (other)	bi-sexual	bi	bi-curious	bi (other)	trans-vestite	trans-gender	trans	trans-sexual	trans (other)	queer	queers	queer (other)	LGBT	LGBT (other)
1950-1959	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
1960-1969	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
1970-1979	12,50	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,32	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,64	0,00	0,00	0,16	0,16	0,16	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
1980-1989	10,23	0,46	0,00	0,15	0,00	0,08	1,91	0,08	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,38	0,08	0,46	0,00	0,31	0,46	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
1990-1999	35,28	1,16	0,31	0,10	0,07	0,41	5,14	1,06	0,20	0,37	0,20	0,10	0,14	1,12	0,00	0,00	0,24	0,14	1,87	0,14	0,00	0,00	0,00
2000-2009	76,62	3,06	0,48	0,36	0,46	1,23	12,14	3,88	0,20	1,35	0,61	0,44	0,17	0,92	0,36	0,15	0,66	0,75	4,04	0,83	0,01	0,01	0,00
2010-2017	60,68	2,56	0,33	0,39	0,32	0,62	8,70	2,92	0,13	1,09	0,84	0,14	0,14	0,41	0,91	0,86	0,21	0,24	1,27	0,23	0,00	0,42	0,16

Figure 5 Variants of queried terms across decades (log2)[11]

[11] Log_2 visualisation provides a symmetrical and interpretable representation of frequency change (Hardie 2014; Gabrielatos and Marchi 2012; Brezina 2018).

Across all decades in which hits for ***lesbian**** were found, the vast majority of these hits can be attributed to the base form *lesbian*, with the plural form *lesbians* making up most of the remaining hits: in the 1970s, where the earliest hits for *lesbian** were identified, only the base form was found. From the 1980s onwards, varying frequencies of the plural form were identified, with other variations of the term coming into use only in the 1990s, and at a markedly lower frequency (e.g., *lesbianism*, *lesbianic*). Notably, *lesbians* in the plural is one of the variants with the highest frequencies across several decades, even though it only makes up for about a quarter of the overall hits for *lesbian**.*

As was already discussed, ***gay**** showed much more variation in the relevant tokens found. The largest percentage of these (across all decades from the 1970s onwards) can once again be attributed to the base form *gay*. From the 1980s onwards, *gays* can also be found at comparatively high frequencies. Strikingly, these frequencies for *gays* are fairly similar (less than 1 hit per million words difference) to those for *lesbians*, and also appear to follow a similar pattern of first increasing rapidly in frequency of use from the 1980s to the 1990s and 2000s, only to decrease in frequency of use in the 2010s. However, as *gay* in its base form is so much more frequent across all decades starting from the 1970s than all other terms of queer in-group identity found by the queries, the plural form contributes a comparatively much lower percentage of hits to the overall frequency for *gay*.* Other variants of *gay** can be identified in different decades, with *gayest* first appearing in the 1980s, *gaydar* and *gayer* in the 1990s, and varying frequencies of other realizations from the 1980s onwards (e.g., *gay-ass*, *gayness*, *Gaybraham*). As such, one could claim that, for *gay**, the variety in relevant tokens appears indicative of comparatively great creativity in the ways the term is used, also especially in the way blending and compounding are used as word-formation strategies.

Bi*, identified as a relevant hit from the 1990s onwards, shows a rather different pattern of use: Here, there is no clear base form to be found that makes up the majority of the hits in any of the decades. Starting from the 1990s, different realizations of the term can be found: the (presumed) base form *bisexual*, its clipping *bi*, as well as the compound and blend *bi-curious*, along with other less frequently occurring forms (e.g., *bisexuals, Figure 3*). In the 2000s and 2010s, both *bisexual* and *bi* were found at higher frequencies than the other realizations. Here, the base form *bisexual* showed the biggest increase in frequency of use from the previous decade, followed by the variants *bi*, as well as *bi-curious*. The other less

frequently occurring forms, by contrast, were found to remain stable in their frequency of use. From the 2000s to the 2010s, the frequency of use of *bisexual* and *bi* converged, with *bisexual* decreasing and *bi* increasing in frequency. The frequency of *bi-curious*, too, shows a decrease here, becoming more similar to that of the other less common variants of *bi**. Accordingly, it appears that while all the variants that make up a high percentage of the hits for *bi** can be found in all decades containing relevant hits for the term, their relative prominence shifts over time.

Similar patterns can be found for ***trans****: The early hits from the 1970s can mostly be attributed to the variants *transvestite* and, to a lesser degree, *transsexual*, as well as other less frequently occurring variants. In the 1980s, *transvestite* is used less frequently, and first occurrences of (in order of frequency) the clipping *trans* and *transgender* can be found. No hits for *transsexual* were found in this decade. In the 1990s, *transvestite* noticeably increases in frequency of use, and low frequencies of both *transsexual* and other *trans** variants can be identified. Considering the 2000s, there are still comparatively high but decreasing frequencies of *transvestite* to be found, as well as increasing frequencies of *transsexual* and other variants of *trans**. *Transgender* and *trans*, both of which had not been among the relevant hits during the previous decade, once again come into use at low frequencies. In the 2010s, *transgender* and *trans* have become the most common variants of *trans**, both increasing in frequency while *transvestite*, *transsexual*, and other variants of *trans** further decrease in frequency of use. Thus, it seems that different terms for identities under the trans umbrella were popular in scripted TV dialogue at different times contained in the dataset.

For ***queer****, the majority of the relevant hits found can again be attributed to just one variant. In the 1980s and 1990s, the slowly increasing frequency of use of this term can be entirely attributed to *queer* in its base form, and, while there is a low frequency of hits for the plural *queers* in the 1990s, the most frequent variant continues to be *queer*. In the 2000s, where *queer* reaches one of the highest frequencies of any single variant per decade across the entire dataset (excepting *lesbian* and *gay*), the use of *queers* also becomes more frequent, and some instances of other variants of *queer** can be found as well. The frequencies of *queer* and *queers* both noticeably decrease again in the 2010s, while other variants disappear from use entirely. In this, it shows a distribution of variants comparable to that of *gay** or *lesbian**, though at a much lower overall frequency.

LGBT*, finally, was only found in two decades and at the lowest frequency of all the queried terms. Starting with only *LGBT* itself in the 2000s, the 2010s see an increase in frequency of use of this variant and a low frequency of use of other variants of *LGBT**. This pattern appears to be rather similar to those observed in the early decades of use of *lesbian**, though there is no data available yet to determine whether it will develop more like *lesbian**, where one variant remains most popular across time, or rather like *trans** or *bi**, where different variants gain popularity at different points in time.

4.1.4. Comparison to relevant corpus word list

In order to better contextualize these results, a word list of the utilized segment of the *TV Corpus* was compiled in the *CQPweb* interface. In this word list, other terms with a conventional meaning relating to sexuality or personal identity were identified, and their rankings and overall frequencies compared to those of the terms investigated here. In *Table 12*, all tokens that found to be relevant hits by the queries run for this project are shown in bold (e.g., *queer*, *transsexual*). Other terms related to sexuality or personal identity that are typically only used to refer to the queer community (or to identify someone as not being part of the queer community), can be found in regular type (e.g., *heterosexual*, *pansexual*). Additionally, several tokens that are sometimes used to speak about sexuality or identity in reference to the queer community (e.g., *identity*, *porn*), or that have an alternative meaning unrelated to sexuality or identity (e.g., *straight*) are included in italics.

Of these related terms, the most highly ranked was *sex* (rank 523), followed by *straight* (rank 729), and *gay* (rank 1002). For all three, it must be acknowledged that they do not necessarily only refer to the queer community (in case of *sex*), or even to sexuality or personal identity in general (in case of *straight*, *gay*). As such, *gay* (in its base form) which made up the vast majority of the hits found for *gay**, appears to be a frequently occurring item in the corpus overall. As more than 92 percent of the identified hits for *gay** were deemed to be relevant, it appears reasonable to assume that *gay* with a meaning relating to the queer community is amongst the most frequently occurring tokens referring to sexuality and personal identity.

Token	Rank on Wordlist (overall)	Token	Rank on Wordlist (overall)
Sex	*523*	*Sexuality*	*11687*
Straight	*729*	Heterosexual	17610
Gay	**1002**	**Bisexual**	**18581**
Identity	*2639*	**Transvestite**	**24302**
Porn	*3408*	**Transgender**	**25500**
Lesbian	**4570**	**Transsexual**	**34621**
Gender	*8337*	**LGBT**	**41958**
Homosexual	10322	Pansexual	73071
Queer	**10668**		

Table 12 Relevant items from the overall wordlist and their respective rankings

Both *identity* (rank 2639) and *porn* (rank 3408) are found to be more frequent overall than *lesbian* in its base form (rank 4570). Here, too, it is worth considering the alternative meanings of these terms: neither *identity* nor *porn* necessarily always refer to the queer community, though the term *porn* at least typically has a meaning relating to sexuality. As such, it might be a good candidate for a more detailed comparison of frequencies across time. Along similar lines, both *gender* (rank 8337) and *sexuality* (rank 11687) itself typically have meanings closely associated with personal identity.

The next most frequent term of queer in-group identity found in the extracted datasets was *queer**, and its uninflected form *queer* was found at rank 10668 of the overall word list. Noticeably, *queer** was the query with the highest number of hits that could not be classified with an acceptably high degree of certainty as either referring to the queer community, or as having an alternative meaning (Section 3.3.2, category "U"), such that this ranking on the word list must be considered with some caution: while *queer* in its base form did make up the majority of the extracted hits, only 78.11 percent of these hits were deemed relevant.

The tokens *homosexual* (rank 10322) and *heterosexual* (rank 17610) both have a conventional meaning usually relating to personal (sexual) identities, and thus also appear to be suitable candidates for a more in-depth comparison of frequencies across time. Due to the overall

scope and goal of this study, neither of these terms was chosen as the focus of Stage 1, but they should nevertheless allow for a meaningful comparison of frequencies with the queried terms.

As *bi** has the lowest percentage of relevant hits found in the extracted dataset (0.13 percent), only those variants that proved to make up for a large portion of the hits are considered in the word list. Of the identified relevant hits for *bi**, only *bisexual* was found among the top 20000 most frequently occurring words in the corpus (rank 18581), though it made up only about half of the identified relevant hits for *bi**.

Of the various relevant hits identified for *trans**, two were found to be ranked similarly in the word list, with *transvestite* at rank 24302, and *transgender* at rank 25500. *Transsexual* is ranked lower on the word list, at 34621, while the clipping *trans* was not considered as a ranked item due to its frequent use with alternative meanings not relating to the queer community (e.g., "**trans** am"(Supplement B2, "trans", hit 868)). Due to the fact that these different tokens all make up for up to a quarter of the overall relevant hits for *trans**, and due to their somewhat similar rankings on the word list, these different variants are discussed separately when possible.

The lowest ranked of the queried terms was *LGBT*, which was found on rank 41958 of the wordlist. This was also the term that came into use in the corpus the latest and with the overall lowest relative frequencies. However, this term still ranked higher up on the wordlist than, for instance, *pansexual*, an (arguably) less commonly known term of queer in-group identity (as it was discussed in Section 2.2.3). This term was found on rank 73071 of the overall corpus word list. As this (and other) less commonly known terms for queer in-group identities appear to occur only comparatively rarely in the *TV Corpus*, this study's focus on more widely known and umbrella identities appears to have been justified.

4.1.5. Comparison to select other terms per year

Based on the comparison in the previous chapter, both *gender* and *porn* were identified as suitable candidates for a more in-depth comparison of word list ranks across time, as they typically convey a meaning related to personal identity (in case of *gender*) or sexuality (in case of *porn*). The term *sex* itself was excluded from the visual comparison, as its comparatively

high frequency in the corpus would have made the other terms in the chart more difficult to visualize. Conversely, both *heterosexual* and *homosexual* were included, as these terms could be assumed with a high degree of certainty to consistently denote meanings related to the queer community. Of course, it must be acknowledged that these terms are commonly at least perceptually treated as antonyms, with *homosexual* as a term typically indicating attraction to one's own gender (e.g., Bronski 2011, 113), while *heterosexual* tends to be used to specify that someone experiences sexual attraction only to their opposite gender.

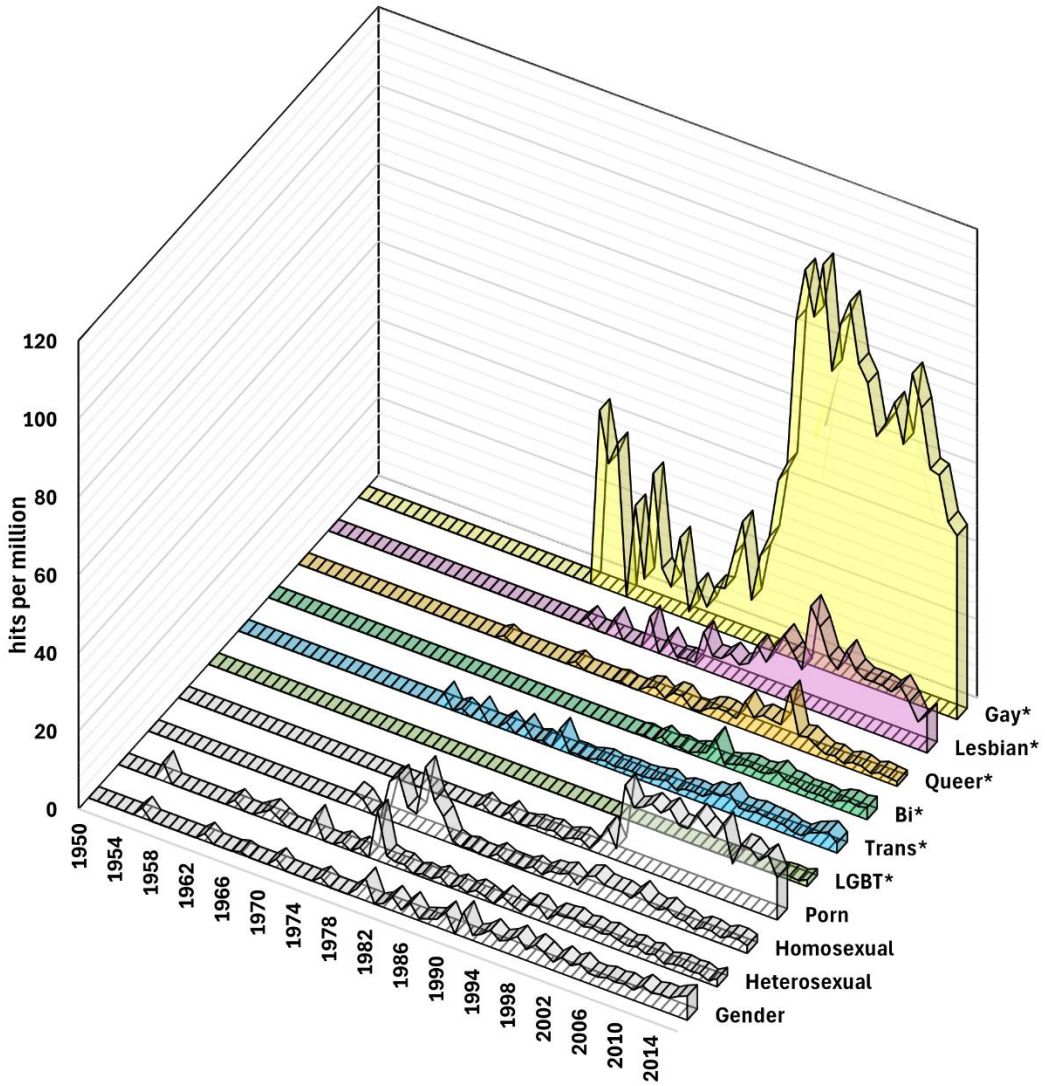


Figure 6 Comparison to frequencies of selected related terms (1950-2017)

As can be seen from *Figure 6*, none of the terms chosen for comparison occur with a high relative frequency in the **1950s and 1960s**, just as is the case for the queried terms of queer in-group identity. Individual years show low frequencies of use of the terms *gender* (2.62 hits per million words in 1956, 1.94 hits per million words in 1963) and *heterosexual* (4.89 hits per

million words in 1955, 1.94 hits per million words in 1963) being used, though these appear to be isolated instances from individual shows and episodes. It is worth noting again that the corpus contains only few episodes from these early years so that individual episodes may have a comparatively large impact on the frequency.

In the early **1970s**, the first use of *homosexual* in the corpus was identified, interestingly in the same year as the first hits for *queer** and *trans** (1973). Notably, all the relevant hits for all three terms in that year can be attributed to the sitcom *M*A*S*H*, though they do occur in different episodes. Throughout that decade, all relevant hits for all of the queried terms can be attributed to just five shows: Besides *M*A*S*H*, a high number of relevant hits (especially for *gay**) were found in *Soap*, with further additional hits from *Kojak*, *Three's Company*, and *Dallas*. In 1977, the first occurrence and a first peak in the frequency of use of *gay** can mostly be attributed to the show *Soap*, with a frequency of use of 45.34 hits per million words that was not reached again until the late 1990s. During this and the following year, there is also a first peak in the usage of *homosexual*, The overall highest frequency of use of *heterosexual* was found in 1979, once again exclusively in *Soap*. Also in 1979, the first relevant hits for *lesbian** were found (at a frequency of 2.57 hits per million words).

Unlike *gay**, which was found in every year but one (1980) after its first relevant use in the corpus, *lesbian**, *trans** and *queer** occur only in isolated years during the 1970s and 1980s: *Lesbian*,* for instance, is found only in 1979, 1982, and 1986. This is particularly striking as both *trans** and *queer** account for the earliest relevant hits found in the corpus for any of the queried terms of queer in-group identity, but appear to have been much slower to gain popularity as terms beyond individual shows: *Trans** was found during the 1970s only in 1973, 1975, and 1977, and *queer** only in four years during the 1970s and 1980s (1973, 1979, 1986, and 1989).

In the early **1980s**, first hits for *porn* were identified in individual years (1984, 1987, 1989), with a peak in frequency of 2.18 hits per million words in 1987, at about a tenth of its overall maximum frequency. Interestingly, the year right after (1988) is the last year contained in the corpus for which there were no hits found for *porn* at all. *Homosexual* peaks in its frequency

of use in 1981 (17.16 hits per million words), only to appear to fall almost entirely out of use by the middle of the decade (0 hits per million words in 1985, 1987, 1988). *Heterosexual*, too, is used much less frequently (2.19 hits per million words in 1980, less than 2 hits per million words for the rest of the decade), while the term *gender* continues to be used at low but mildly fluctuating frequencies with the decade's highest frequency of 5.72 hits per million words in 1981.

Additionally, there appears to be strong fluctuation in the use of the term *gay**, with peaks in frequency in 1981, 1983, and 1986. In spite of the previously mentioned sporadic occurrence of *trans** during this decade, this term's highest frequency in a year can be found in 1986, where it reaches 5.54 hits per million words. Due to the strong fluctuation that this term appears to be experiencing in the 1980s, the per-decade average value is nevertheless higher in later decades. Accordingly, it must also be noted that all occurrences of *trans** that year can be attributed to just one episode each from two shows (namely *ALF* and *Miami Vice*), once again highlighting the high impact individual (often queer-issue-focused) episodes may have on these frequencies. Starting in the late 1980s, *lesbian**, *gay**, *trans** and *queer** could be found in each of the remaining years contained in the corpus though at varying frequencies.

In the **1990s**, the term *gender* continues to be used at varying but generally low frequencies: In fact, 1991 is the last year contained in the corpus in which there were no hits found for gender, with both the decade's and overall highest frequency for *gender* (6.47 hits per million words) found just the year after. For the rest of the decade, the frequencies stay somewhere between these two extremes. *Homosexual* and *heterosexual* appear to once again increase slightly in their frequencies of use, though they remain much less frequent than at their peaks in earlier decades: the lowest frequency for *homosexual* in that decade can be found in 1992 with 0.54 hits per million words, the highest in 1999 with 4.48 hits per million words. *Heterosexual* was found to have 0 hits in 1992, and a decadic maximum of 3.54 hits per million words in 1997. *Porn*, too, begins to be used more frequently in the late 1990s, with less than 2 hits per million words before 1995, which is followed by a noticeable jump in frequency from 1999 to 2000.

*Bi** is first found in 1992 (with a frequency of 0.54 hits per million words), and is apparent in every year from 1994 onwards, though the frequency stays below 2 hits per million words for the rest of the decade. The frequency of *lesbian** experiences some fluctuations from year to year, though the overall trend appears to be an increase in frequency across the decade, also going from less than 2 hits per million words in 1990 and 1991 to 8.02 hits per million words in 1999. *Gay**, too, increases strongly in frequency across this decade, going from 11.18 hits per million words in 1990 to 87.07 hits per million words in 1999. By comparison, the frequency of occurrence of *trans** remains fairly steady across the decade, with values for most years somewhere between 1 and 2 hits per million words, the only exceptions being a minor peak in frequency in 1998 (2.43 hits per million words), and a minor dip in frequency in 1999 (0.94 hits per million words). While *queer** was found as a relevant hit across all years of the 1990s, its frequency of use increases only slightly, and remains below 3 hits per million words for the entire decade.

In the **2000s**, the frequency of use of *gender* continues along the same lines as were described for the 1990s: while there are fluctuations from year to year, all years were found to have the term *gender* at frequencies between 2 and 5 hits per million words. Conversely, *porn* was found to occur at strikingly higher frequencies than in the previous decade: after the previously mentioned jump in frequency from 1999 (3.07 hits per million words) to 2000 (20.13 hits per million words), the frequencies for the remaining years of the decade ranged between a low of 14.93 hits per million in 2007 and a peak of 19.38 hits per million in 2008. *Homosexual*, too, occurred at slightly increased frequencies in the 2000s, ranging between 2.38 hits per million words in 2009, and 5.56 hits per million words in 2005. *Heterosexual,* by contrast, increased only slightly in its frequency of use, with a peak of 3.8 hits per million words in 2001. Strikingly, these frequencies of use still do not reach the terms' highest yearly frequencies of use in the seventies.

In 2008, the first use of *LGBT** was identified in the dataset, with a frequency of 0.11 hits per million words, and this term does not appear in any of the other years that decade. Notably, four of the queried terms of queer in-group identity reach their overall highest relative frequencies of use per year in this decade: *Lesbian** was found to occur with a frequency of 26.59 hits per million words in 2004, while *gay** reached as many as 103.91 hits per million

words in 2002. The maximum frequencies for *bi** and *queer** were found to be strikingly lower with 6.55 hits per million words in 2000, and 14.14 hits per million words in 2005, respectively. It must be noted that for both of these terms, the identified maximum frequency is at least twice the decade average, once again highlighting the amount of variation visible from year to year. While the highest yearly frequency for *trans** is to be found in 1986, this term's highest decade average can nevertheless be found in the 2000s.

From **2010 to 2017**, the frequency of use of the term *gender* increased slightly on average, though the range of the values for individual years remained comparable to that of the previous decade. The average frequency of use of *porn* decreases slightly, from 16.93 hits per million words in the 2000s to 14.69 hits per million words in the 2010s. Especially striking in this regard is the decrease in frequency of use from 2011 (19.67 hits per million words) to 2012 (10.23 hits per million words). The frequencies for both *homosexual* and *heterosexual*, too, decrease in frequency of use from the previous decade, with yearly frequencies for both terms once again well below 3 hits per million words.

The average frequency of use of *lesbian**, too, is lower for the 2010s than it is for the 2000s. Not only was the overall highest frequency of use of this term identified in the 2000s, but a decrease in the frequency of use of this term throughout the 2010s becomes visible when looking at the frequencies for individual years: Starting from over 13 hits per million words in 2010, the last two years contained in the corpus (2016-2017) show frequencies of use of *lesbian** of less than 10 hits per million words. Similar developments can also be observed for *gay**, going from a minor peak in frequency in 2012 (84.49 hits per million words) to a frequency of 47.1 hits per million words in 2017. While the individual yearly frequencies for *bi** and *trans** are quite similar in range to those identified for the 2000s, the average frequencies of occurrence across this decade are still lower than that from the previous decade. For *queer**, too, such a decrease in frequency of use is to be found, as none of the frequencies per million for any of the years after 2008 exceed 2 hits per million words, strikingly lower than the frequencies observed for the early 2000s.

Overall, it appears that other terms related to sexuality or personal identity appear to fluctuate in frequency in ways that are similar to those found for the investigated terms of queer in-group identity: While hardly in evidence in the early years contained in the corpus, some terms show comparatively high frequencies of use in certain years of the 1970s, likely due to both individual episodes of contained in the dataset that focus on queer issues and the first recurring sympathetic queer characters as they were described by e.g., Ullman (2018, 365). While in later decades the impact of individual episodes can be assumed to have been smaller, the frequencies of use of the investigated terms often fluctuated quite strongly year to year still, which might be seen at least partly as an artefact of the investigated language and the heterogeneity of the TV programming that is contained in the *TV Corpus*.

Following an observation made by Bednarek (2018, 159), "communication of the narrative, including anchorage of the characters as well as establishment of social character traits and relationships between characters" are all to be considered possible factors informing the prominence of specific lexical items in a given program and genre. Accordingly, a more detailed diachronic comparison across genre is presented in Section 4.1.7.

Finally, it must be noted that for *gay**, *lesbian**, *bi**, and *queer**, as well as for *heterosexual*, *homosexual*, and *porn*, noticeable decreases in their frequencies are visible in the 2010s. By contrast, *trans**, *LGBT**, and *gender* do not show this same pattern of decrease. One possible explanation of this might be an overall trend towards avoiding mentions of sex and sexuality in scripted TV programming, while discussions of gender and gender identities appear to be less affected by this development.

4.1.6. *Peaks and troughs* analysis

To gain a more accurate understanding of the changes in frequency for these different terms of queer in-group identity, *Peaks and Troughs* analyses were conducted. As described in Section 3.3.4, these analyses were run with the help of Brezina's *Lancaster Stats Tools* (Brezina, n.d.-a). For the sake of comparability, the following identical graphical parameters were applied to all analyses: non-log, Data fit: 15 (= default value in the tool's R-Code). In the following, the frequencies of each of the queried terms are discussed across all variants. In light of the results discussed in Section 4.1.2, however, high frequency variants of *trans** are

also considered separately to account for the observed differences in popularity of said variants at different points in time contained in the dataset. As many features of the terms' frequencies over time have already been discussed, this section focuses only on notable extremes in these graphs, or on instances where the *Peaks and Troughs* analysis revealed patterns diverging from the previously discussed relative frequencies.

Due to the similarities in the development of their respective frequencies over time, as well as the fact that these were by far the most commonly occurring terms in the datasets, the *Peaks and Troughs* analyses for ***gay**** **and** ***lesbian**** are discussed together. While these figures are presented in direct comparison, it must be acknowledged that they employ different scales on the y axis: The graph for *lesbian** displays frequencies of up to 30 hits per million words, whereas the graph for *gay** extends to 110 hits per million words.

As discussed previously, both of the terms considered here first came into use in the dataset in the late 1970s, though their frequency of use developed in strikingly different ways, as is also evident from *Figure 7*: For *lesbian**, the *Peaks and Troughs* analysis reveals a more gradual increase in frequency after the term's first appearance that continues to become a steeper increase in the 1990s. By contrast, the frequency of use of *gay** increases much more steeply to start, and first peaks around 1979 and 1980 at around 25 hits per million words. After this first peak, the frequency of use declines for the rest of the decade. After this point in time, both terms again appear to increase in frequency throughout the 1990s, though the increase is considerably steeper for *gay** than it is for *lesbian**. Both terms then reach their highest frequency in the early 2000s, lesbian at a frequency of approximately 17 hits per million words, *gay** at a frequency of around 90 hits per million words. Datapoints for individual years around these extrema appear to be well beyond the confidence interval.

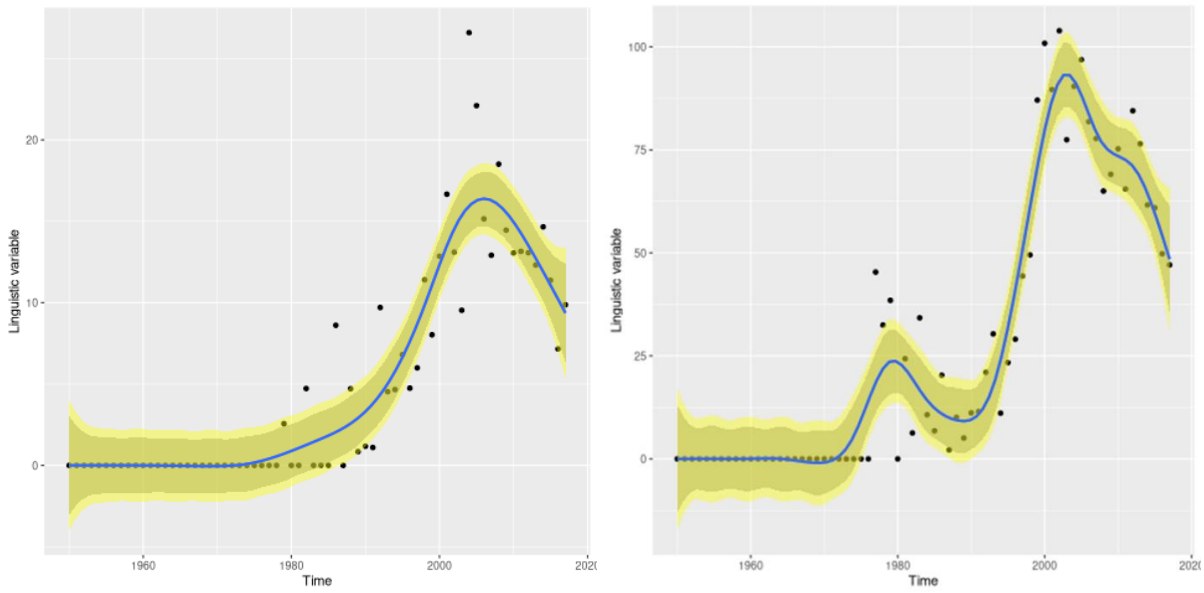


Figure 7 Peaks and Troughs *analysis for* lesbian* *(left) and* gay* *(right)*

After this point, both terms' frequencies can be seen to decrease during the remaining years contained in the dataset, though they once again do so at different rates: According to the *Peaks and Troughs* plot, the rate of decrease in frequency for *lesbian** closely mirrors the rate at which it increased previously. For *gay**, there are two periods during which the decrease is very steep (a reduction of approximately 20 hits per million words in less than ten years), with a brief plateau around 2010 during which the decrease was less rapid. In the final years covered in the corpus, this trend appears to continue still, with a marked decrease of at least 30 percent compared to the respective highest peaks in frequency of use for the terms.

As was previously established, both ***bi**** **and** ***trans**** are different from the previously discussed terms in that there is no one variant of the queried term that makes up for most of the hits. Overall, the frequencies of these two terms are strikingly lower than those for either *gay** or *lesbian**, and the difference in respective maximum frequency once again resulted in different scales displayed on the y-axes in *Figure 8*, though this difference is less marked in this instance: For *bi**, the y-axis goes up to 7 hits per million words, for *trans**, the y-axis ends at 6 hits per million words.

The plot for *bi** first shows an increase in frequency in the late 1980s, and continues to rise at a rather steady rate during the early 2000s. After this point, the rate of increase of frequency seems to become less steep, and to mostly plateau in the late 2000s at around 2.2

hits per million words. In the final years contained in the corpus, the rate of increase appears to become steeper again.

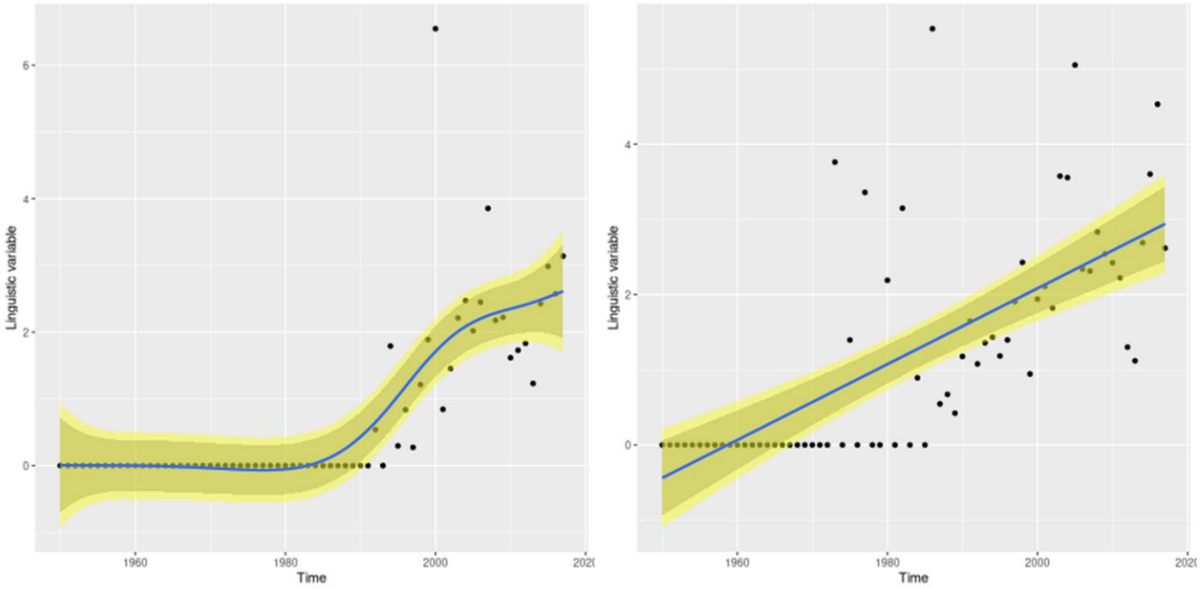


Figure 8 Peaks and Troughs *analysis for* bi* *(left) and* trans* *(right)*

By contrast, the graph for *trans** must be considered less informative, due to massive scattering of data beyond the 1970s with values between zero and four words per million. Consequently no meaningful *Peaks and Troughs* curve, but rather a less signifying increasing linear trend is regressed here with many of the data points outside its confidence interval. Accordingly, the four most commonly occurring realizations of *trans** in the dataset as they were discussed in Section 4.1.2 are analysed and discussed separately.

Both ***transvestite*** **and** ***transsexual*** were among the earliest hits found for *trans** in the 1970s, but appear less frequently in the later decades contained in the corpus. As these terms both were included in the dataset the previous *Peaks and Troughs* analysis for *trans** was based on, their individual maximum frequencies are even lower still, as can be seen from *Figure 9*. Accordingly, the y-axis for these figures shows as maximum of 4 hits per million words for *transvestite* and 2 hits per million words for *transsexual*. Notably, the confidence intervals are wider here, and more of the individual datapoints lie beyond the plotted area.

For *transvestite*, the first non-zero datapoint is, incidentally, also the one with the highest relative frequency. Due to this skew, the plotted curve predicts an increase in the frequency of use starting from around 1960, even though the first year for which relevant hits were found was 1973. The plotted curve peaks around the mid-1990s, after which it slowly decreases at a rate similar to the previous rate of increase. Strikingly, the data appears to be less scattered in this latter part of the graph.

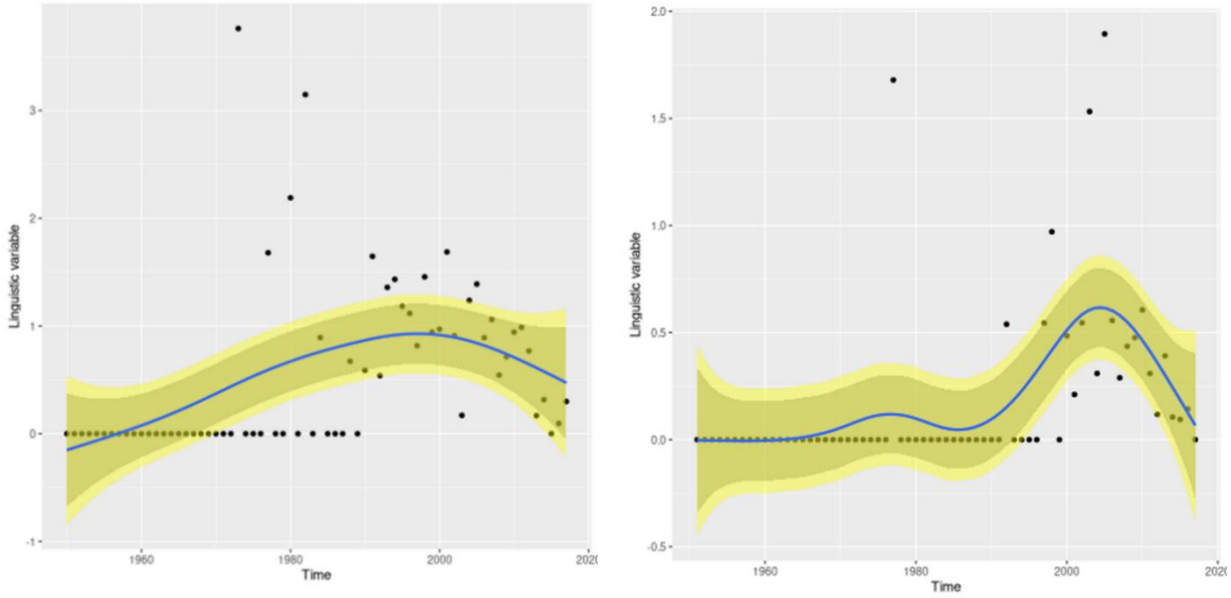


Figure 9 Peaks and Troughs *analysis for* transvestite *(left) and* transsexual *(right)*

In case of *transsexual*, the datapoints are widely scattered up to the early 2000s, after which point a more consistent downward trend can be observed. Here, a first minor peak in frequency can be observed in the late 70s, with a plotted frequency of around 0.1 hits per million words. As discussed previously, these early hits for *trans** can be attributed to only a small number of shows and episodes. After this early peak, no further hits for this variant were found in the 1980s. After this point, the frequency increases rapidly for over a decade until it peaks at around 0.6 hits per million words in the early 2000s. After this peak, the plotted frequency curve appears to dip at a similar rate to the previous rate of increase. In the last years contained in the corpus, the plotted frequency curve dips close to the x-axis, as no hits for transsexual were found in the last year contained in the corpus at all.

Transgender* and *trans were first found in the corpus later than *transvestite* and *transsexual*, as well as other, less commonly occurring variants of *trans**. For both of these later terms, some first instances of use can be found in individual years in the 1980s, but neither of them occurs with any consistency across years until the 2000s. In *Figure 10*, the y-axes go up to 2.2 hits per million words for *transgender*, 4 hits per million words for the clipping *trans*.

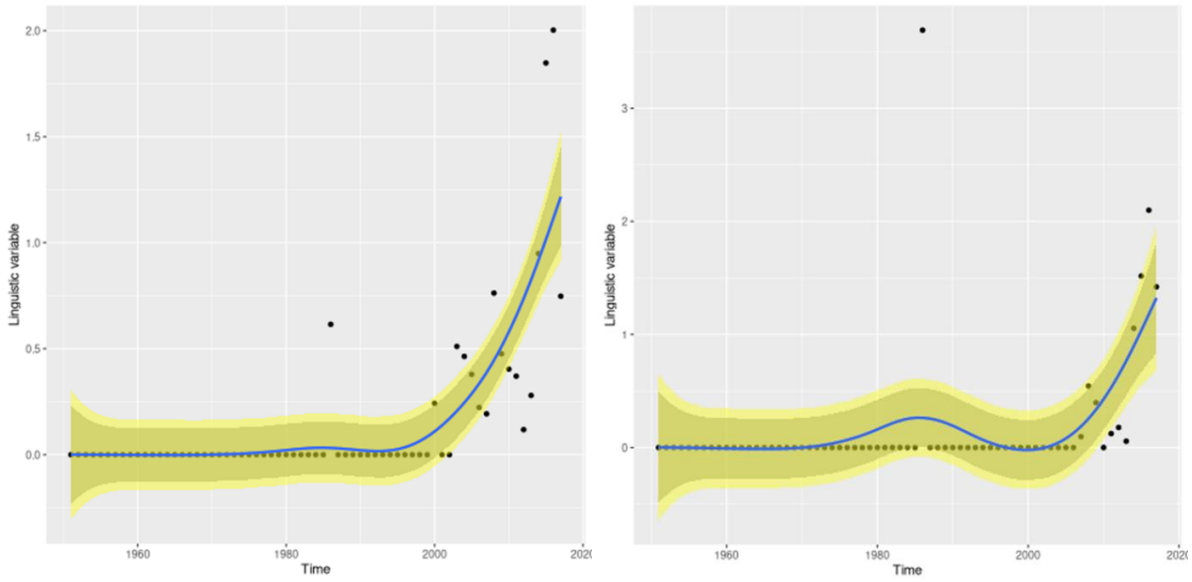


Figure 10 Peaks and Troughs *analysis for* transgender *(left) and* trans *(right)*

In the *Peaks and Troughs* analysis curves for *transgender* and *trans*, first outliers in frequency can be found in the mid-1980s, due to the aforementioned instances of use of these terms in individual years. Based on a check of the concordance lines, these few hits can once again be attributed to only a few shows, similar to the results discussed for *trans** generally in the 1970s. For *transgender*, a steep increase in frequency of use in the 2000s and 2010s can be observed, reaching a frequency of around 1.2 hits per million words in the last year contained in the corpus, with the upwards trend appearing to continue still.

A comparison of the *Peaks and Troughs* analyses for ***queer**** **and *LGBT****, finally, reveals striking differences in the usage of these two umbrella terms. Once again, the y-axes of the graphs in *Figure 11* use different scales: For *queer**, the scale goes up to 20 hits per million words, as individual years contained in the corpus were found to have comparatively very high frequencies of use of *queer**. The scale for *LGBT**, by contrast, goes up to around 1.8 hits per million words, lower than the graph for *queer** by a factor of more than 10.

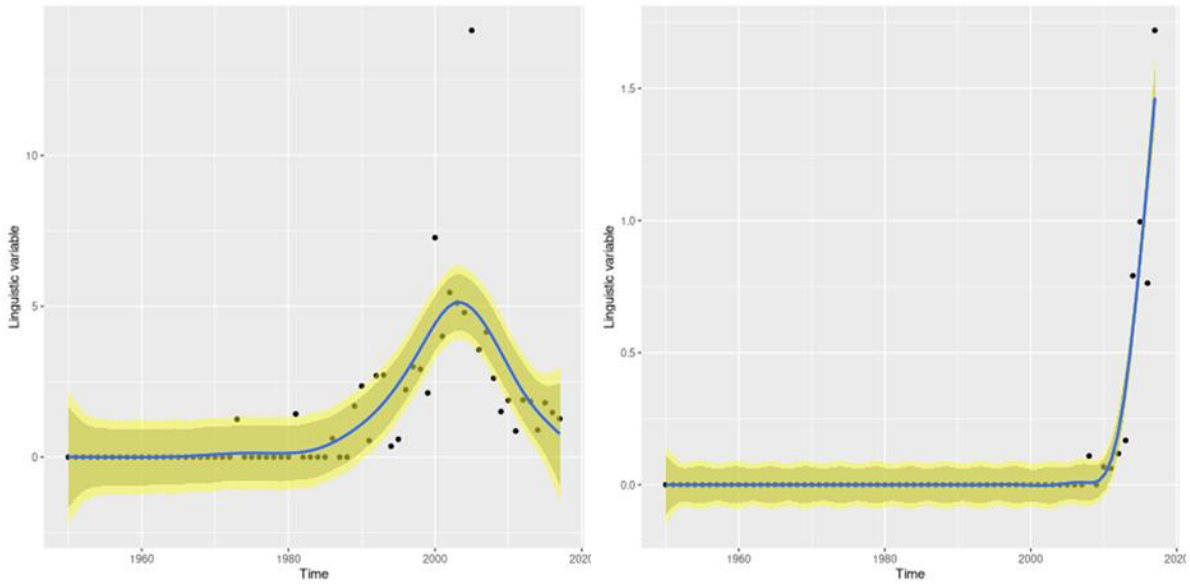


Figure 11 Peaks and Troughs *analysis for* queer* *(left) and* LGBT* *(right)*

The plot for *queer** shows a first increase in frequency of use starting from the 1970s. Until the mid-1980s, this increase appears incremental, before becoming more marked until the plot reaches its peak at around 5 hits per million words in the mid-2000s. Around this peak, there are several years with frequencies outside the confidence interval. After the peak, the frequency of use appears to decline at a similar rate as it previously increased.

For *LGBT**, by contrast, no instances of use were detected until the late 2000s, after which point the term sees a sudden and rapid increase in frequency. In the final year contained in the corpus, this trend appears to continue still.

As such, the use of *queer** follows a pattern similar to those of *gay** or *transsexual*, where the term's popularity appears to peak in an earlier decade contained in the corpus, and decreases afterwards. *LGBT**, on the other hand, is the latest of the queried terms to appear in the corpus, and shows an increasing trend without observable decline even towards the end of the years contained in the corpus, similar to what was observed for *transgender* or the clipping *trans*.

4.1.7. Diachronic comparison across TV genres: *gay** and *lesbian**

Up until this point, the results discussed covered all the genres present in the corpus: However, it is also worth considering how specific conventions unique to certain genres (Sections 2.1.1.2, 2.3.1) may have an influence on the prevalence of terms of queer in-group identity in said genres. Accordingly, a heatmap indicating the frequency of use of terms of queer in-group identity was created for different genres. Due to the overall scarcity of hits for many of the queried terms, just *gay** and *lesbian** were chosen for this type of analysis. For similar reasons, the choice was made to group the findings not by year but rather by half-decade, moving in 5-year groupings from 1950 to 2014, with the final three years (2015 to 2017) in the corpus treated as the last such unit of analysis.

In order to account for the different sizes of the yearly segments of the corpus, the hits were once again normalized in relation to the size of the subcorpus (containing only texts tagged as a particular genre, only from the particular half-decade). As such, the results should be comparable, regardless of whether, for instance, the 2000s had more texts tagged as "Comedy" than the 1990s. As there is a great variety of genre tags included in the *TV Corpus*, the choice was made to focus on six of the most commonly occurring ones. Due to the genre-tagging system used for the *TV Corpus*, it must be acknowledged that individual hits may be counted towards multiple genres here: If an episode is tagged as "Action_Drama_Fantasy" (Supplement B2, "lesbian", hit 110), the hit will count towards the value for that half decade in all three genres. To maintain consistency, the word count of the relevant half-decade genre subsets was calculated along similar lines, with an episode's word count contributing to the overall word count of as many subsets as it is tagged for. This way of treating the data was chosen to compare relative values from within the corpus.

Time / Genre	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Drama	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	2	4	14	14	9	7
Comedy	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	5	8	16	20	19	22	18
Crime	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	5	6	5	4	3
Romance	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	7	14	58	47	27	20
Mystery	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2	5	5	3
Fantasy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	7	10	2	0	1

Figure 12 Heatmap of hits for lesbian* *per half decade and genre (hits per million in relevant subcorpus)*

The heat map in *Figure 12* illustrates the relative number of relevant hits per million words for *lesbian** in each of the subcorpora described above. The earliest relevant hits found in the corpus can thus be attributed to the genres Comedy and Romance. By the 1990s, all genres have seen at least low frequencies of the term *lesbian** being used, though there are some subsets that do not contain any hits at all (e.g., "Fantasy", 2010-2014). Overall, the highest frequencies of use can be found in the Romance genre in the 2000s. The second highest overall frequencies can be found in the Comedy genre. Strikingly, the distribution of hits across half-decades differs markedly between these two genres: In the Romance genre, the frequencies in the 2000s are approximately twice as high as those found for the 2010s, whereas the Comedy genre maintains comparable frequencies of use of *lesbian** across both decades. In episodes tagged as "Drama", the frequency of use is generally lower still, though a clear peak remains visible in the 2000s. For the Crime and Mystery genres, the frequencies are generally more similar across time, albeit with some minor fluctuations. The Fantasy genre, finally, stands out in that it is the only genre considered here in which no hits were found in the 2010s – a sharp decline following the comparatively higher values in the 1995 and 2000 subsets.

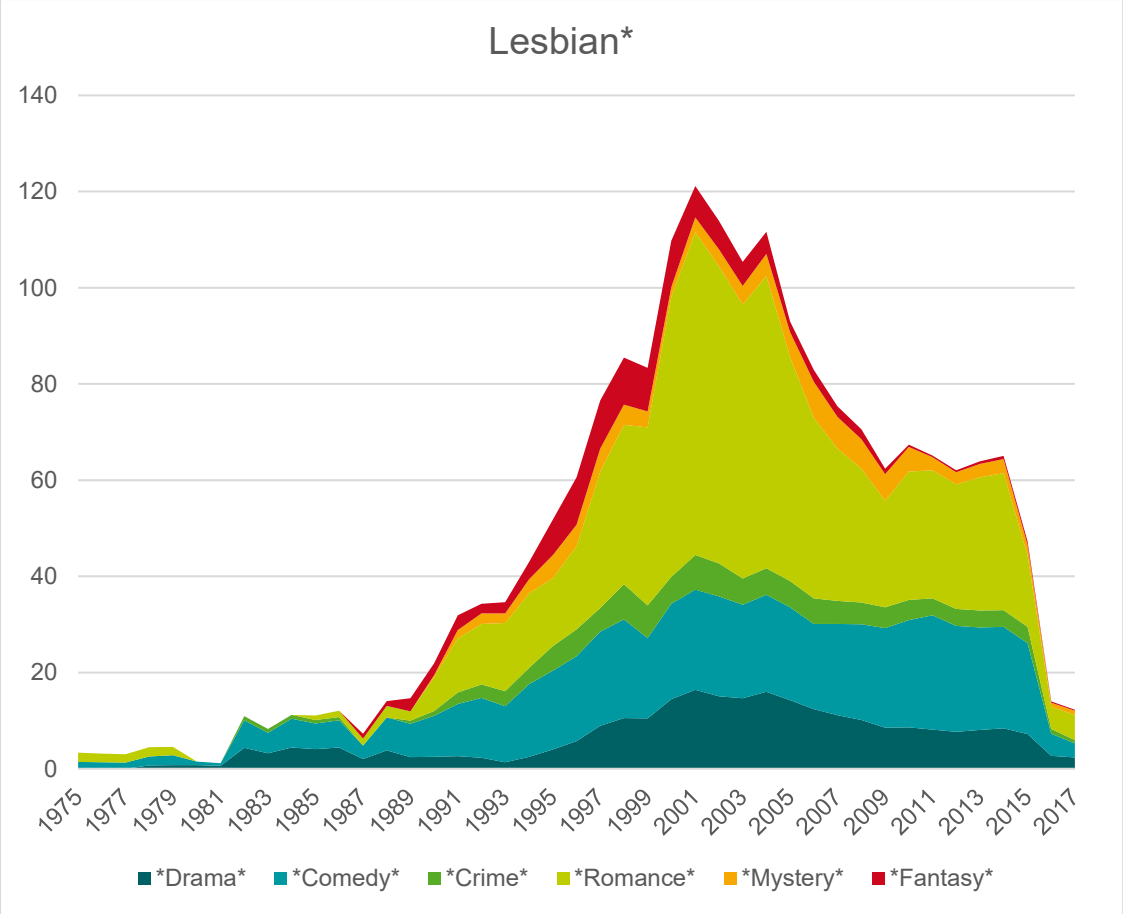


Figure 13 Hits for lesbian* *per by year and genre (hits per million in relevant subcorpus)*

Turning to *Figure 13* to provide a more detailed overview of the changes from year to year, striking similarities and differences in the frequencies of use of *lesbian** can be observed for the different genres. For the purposes of this visualization, only the years from 1975 onwards are considered, as no relevant hits for *lesbian** were found before this point. In the earlier years visible in this graph, there are two brief periods in which the frequency of use of *lesbian** appears to decrease in all examined genres: From 1979 to 1981, and between 1985 and 1987. While these changes in frequency are minor, and, as previously established, are not visible in the overall *Peaks and Troughs* analysis for *lesbian**, each of them does mark a turning point in the distribution of hits across genres: After the first such decrease the first hits for *lesbian** in the Crime genre can be found, whereas the second marks the beginning of a steeper increase in use in the Comedy, Romance, and Fantasy genres.

Generally, it can be observed that for the genres in which the term is used more frequently, the frequency of use fluctuates markedly from year to year: The Romance genre, for instance, shows an increase in the frequency of use of over 40 hits per million words over the span of

just two years (1999 to 2001). Similarly, there is a steep decline in frequency of use across all genres around 2015.

Time / *Genre*	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Drama	0	0	0	0	0	0	22	12	17	36	66	49	41	39
Comedy	0	0	0	0	0	55	20	12	19	86	144	127	128	98
Crime	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	15	47	48	28	22	22
Romance	0	0	0	0	0	71	40	20	29	107	252	124	131	97
Mystery	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	18	48	23	35	29	25
Fantasy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	25	34	12	6	9

Figure 14 Heatmap of hits for gay* *per half decade and genre (hits per million in relevant subcorpus)*

Along similar lines, *Figure 14* illustrates the frequency of use of *gay** per million words in the different genres. In keeping with the frequency measures discussed previously, the frequencies of use found here were generally markedly higher than the ones found for *lesbian**, though they do appear to follow similar patterns in many respects: For *gay**, as for *lesbian**, the earliest hits can be attributed to the Romance and Comedy genres in the late 1970s. The highest frequencies for any subset can again be found (in descending order of frequency) in the Romance genre in the 2000s, the Comedy genre and, more distantly, followed by the Drama genre in the 2000s and 2010. The frequencies found in the Crime genre, (fourth highest frequencies per genre for *gay**), are comparable to those found in the Romance genre for *lesbian** (the highest frequencies for this term). The frequencies in the Mystery genre are slightly lower still, and the Fantasy genre shows the lowest frequencies in almost all half-decades analysed here.

In contrast to the findings for *lesbian**, a decline of more than 30 hits per million words from the late 1970s to the early 1980s for both the Romance and the Comedy genre is notable. At the same time, first hits for the Drama and Crime genres can be found. This trend continues into the late 1980s, with still lower frequencies for Romance and Comedy, and first hits in the

Mystery genre. Overall, the genre with the fewest uses of *gay** is Fantasy, with the sole exception of the Mystery genre in the early 2000s, where frequencies are even lower.

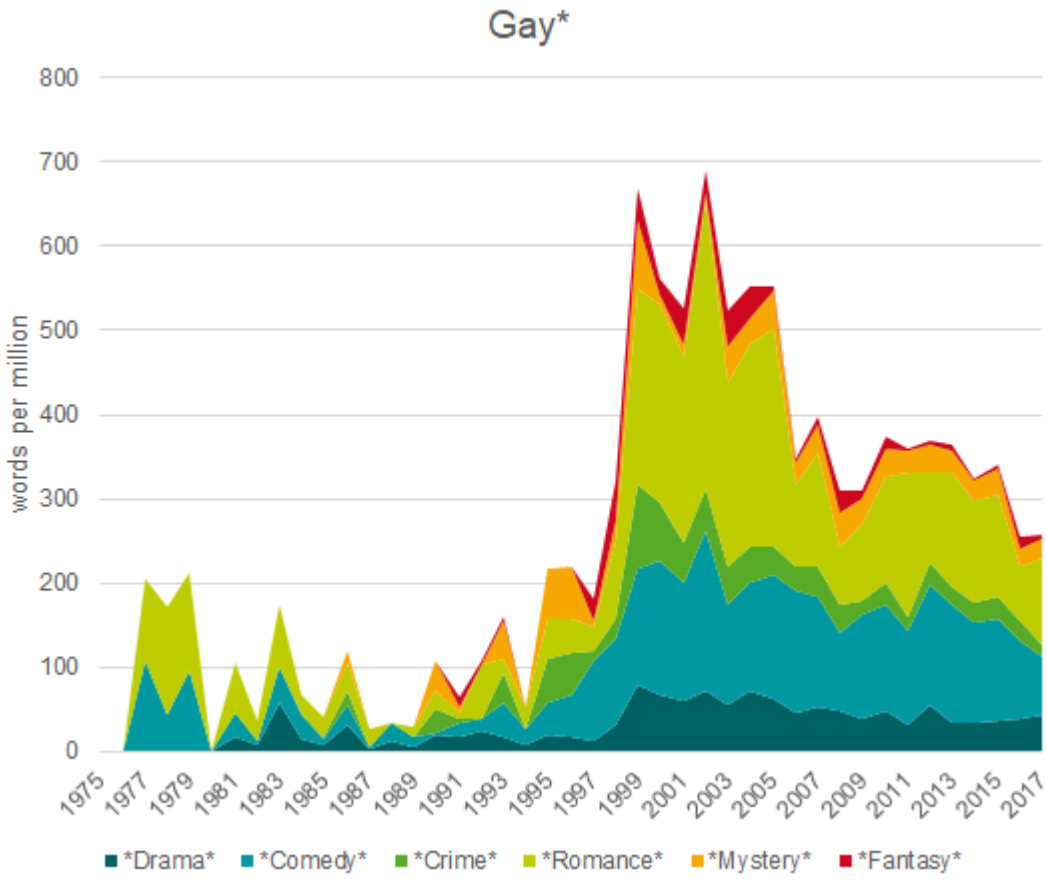


Figure 15 Hits for gay per by year and genre (hits per million in relevant subcorpus)*

Turning to the stacked area chart for *gay** from 1975 onwards in *Figure 15*, there is a greater amount of variation visible from year to year than there was for *lesbian**, in spite of the similar patterns visible in the heat map. For *lesbian**, the changes from year to year were mostly gradual, and often remained similar for several years. By contrast, a great number of minor peaks in frequency can be observed for *gay**: Starting from the 1970s, there are minor peaks in frequency for the Comedy and Romance genres in 1977, 1979, and 1981, each followed by a steep drop in frequency to the following year. More consistent usage of the term within all genres becomes visible from the mid-1990s onwards, though the individual years' frequencies still continue to fluctuate strongly. Strikingly, in some of these years the fluctuations appear to occur in the same direction across multiple genres, an effect that might partially be explained by the method used to compile these frequency measures. If, for instance, episodes

of a show tagged as “Comedy” and “Romance” make mention of the term *gay**, these usages would be counted towards the frequencies for both genres in the graph above.

In the early 2000s, a steep increase and multiple minor peaks in frequency of use for individual years can be found, most prominently in the Comedy and Romance genres, with the other genres appearing to follow a similar trend to a lesser degree. As was also observed for *lesbian**, a notable decline in frequency can be observed in the Comedy genre in the late 2000s, though here the decrease is even steeper. Towards the end of the years contained in the corpus, a decrease in frequency of use is visible across all genres, though this is much less marked than it was for *lesbian**, and also less consistent across individual years.

As can be seen from these results, different TV genres appear to make use of these terms of queer in-group identity to varying degrees. The highest frequencies for both examined terms can be found in the Romance genre, though this is also one of the genres where we see the strongest fluctuations in frequency form year to year. Additionally, the Comedy genre, too, appears to have majorly contributed to the notable peak in frequency of use of both terms in the 2000s, though in this case the decrease in frequency towards the 2010s is less notable. For both terms, the lowest overall frequencies can be attributed to the Fantasy and Mystery genres, though here, too some peaks in frequency are visible in individual years.

4.1.8. Collocation analyses

To provide a more well-rounded picture of the contexts in which terms of queer in-group identity are most frequently used, and to complement the frequency measures discussed above, collocation analyses were conducted. Due to the previously discussed differences in frequency across terms, two different methods for analysing collocates were drawn upon here: Firstly, the *CQPweb*-internal collocation analysis was used to identify overall collocates of a core, high-frequency variant per investigated term – this approach was chosen to account for the sometimes extremely low frequency values of some terms, which would render a diachronic analysis per year or even per decade less informative. For the two most frequently occurring variants, a *Usage Fluctuation Analysis* was then performed with the help of Brezina's *Lancaster Stats Tools* (Brezina, n.d.-a) to trace changes in their collocational contexts over time.

4.1.8.1. Collocations per term: common topics and concepts

The CQP-internal collocation analysis identified several collocates for each investigated core, high-frequency variant in the relevant subcorpus. Importantly, this tool does not readily allow for a distinction between instances of use of the queried terms that have been categorized as relevant hits and those that have not. Consequently, the results of this analysis also include non-relevant hits (e.g., likely alternative meanings), and are therefore interpreted in light of the contextual insights gained from the manual concordance line analysis. Furthermore, only those high-frequency variants of the queried terms that were found to have a high percentage of relevant hits were considered, and of these one frequently used variant of each term was selected to limit the scope of this comparison.

Table 13 contains up to ten of the strongest (per *Log Ratio (filtered)*-value, s.b.) collocates per term as they were identified by *CQPweb*. For each term the minimal Log likelihood (LL) of all collocates listed is shown at the top of the table. The LL values of these collocates being (much) greater than 6.63 are interpreted correspondingly as a collocation p-value of $p<0.01$ following Lancaster University's BNCWeb pages: "If the log likelihood for your result is greater than 6.63, the probability of the result - i.e. the difference between the two corpora - happening by chance is less than 1%." (Lancaster University n.d.-b). As a combined measure

of meaningful strength (*Log Ratio* as an indicator of effect size) filtered by statistical significance (Log Likelihood or chi-square), the *Log Ratio (filtered)* value is shown in the table below each collocate. The threshold for inclusion was set at a minimum *Log Ratio (filtered)* value of 3.

Lesbian LL>=17.7	**Gay** LL>=19.8	**Bisexual** LL>=14.8	**Transgender** LL>=14.2	**Queer** LL>=15.8	**LGBT** LL>=13.2
Bisexual 8.73	**Enola** 11.69	**Lesbian** 8.75	**Male** 7.32	**Faggot** 9.53	**community** 8.70
feminist 8.69	**BASHERS** 10.07	**Gay** 6.79	**Against** 4.94	**Queer** 8.99	**center** 8.54
middle-aged 8.33	**Paree** 10.68	**daughter** 4.35	**People** 3.80	**Folk** 8.89	**club** 7.86
Lesbian 8.16	**basher** 10.59	**Or** 3.32		**bait** 7.29	**home** 5.06
lesbians 7.03	**Ga** 9.97			**eye** 6.92	**an** 4.00
homo 6.98	**apparel** 8.93			**Channel** 6.71	
Gay 6.96	**closeted** 8.81			**5** 4.96	
moms 6.86	**openly** 8.62			**Beer** 4.92	
lover 6.75	**Yuletide** 8.60			**Gay** 4.76	
porn 6.32	**Bashing** 8.56			**Guy** 4.92	

Table 13 Collocates for the queried terms Log ratio (filtered)

For *lesbian*, the strongest collocates were found to relate to (other) queer identities or personal attributes: Both *bisexual* and *lesbian(s)* itself were among the common terms for queer in-group identities investigated in this project, while the sixth ranked collocate *homo* is commonly used as both a slur and also as a casual term of in-group identity. *Feminist* and *middle-aged*, by contrast, could both be considered (personal) attributes that collocate with *lesbian*. It should be pointed out that the conventional meaning of these attributes aligns with common preconceptions about and stereotypical portrayals of lesbians on scripted TV (e.g., Bronski 2011, 114).

In case of *gay*, too, some of the collocates could arguably be considered personal attributes: both *closteted* and *openly*, which are likely to frequently be used in as a premodifier (e.g.,

"openly gay"), offer information not only about a person's sexuality, but also about their own attitude towards said sexuality. Other highly ranked collocates for *gay* include *bashers*, *basher*, and *bashing*, which could reasonably be classified as sources of danger to the queer community. Additionally, several of the stronger collocates for *gay* were identified as recurring false hits for the purpose of this study: "**Gay** Paree" "Enola **Gay**", "**gay** apparel", and "Yuletide **gay**" have conventional meanings not related to the queer community and were thus deemed as not relevant in keeping with the anecdotal observations made during the manual annotation for relevance (see Section 5.1.4 and Supplement B2, "gay", hits 11700, 8146, 19984, and 13504 for examples).

For *bisexual*, just three collocates were identified that were not function words. Once again, two of these relate to other queer identities, with *lesbian* and *gay* being the two strongest collocates found. Notably, *bisexual* itself was among the top collocates of only one of these terms, namely *lesbian*. The third collocate found for *bisexual* was *daughter*, referring to an interpersonal relationship between a parent and their child. This seems notable, as this is only one of two familial relationship terms found among all the top collocates (*moms* being the other as a collocate of *lesbian*), and both of these terms are typically applied to girls and women. Meanwhile, no comparable terms that are typically used for men or that are gender neutral appear among the top collocates.

Only three collocates above the cutoff threshold were identified for *transgender*, one of which is the preposition *against*. Due to the conventional meaning of this preposition ("II. Expressing motion or action in opposition to someone or something" („Against" 2024), it is worth considering this meaning of "opposition" as a possible example of a collocate relating to a danger to the queer community. The other collocates, *people* and *male*, could be used to reference a person's gender identity or to facilitate discussion about trans identities at large.

Of the collocates found for *queer*, the term *faggot*, while sometimes used as a term of queer in-group identity by members of the queer community, it is much more commonly used as a slur ("Faggot" 2024). In this sense, its use may be considered comparable to the history of use of *queer* as it has been described in Section 2.2.3. Conversely, *Folk, eye*, and *channel* frequently occur in the names of popular and long-running television formats: "Queer as Folk" (*Queer as Folk* 2000-2005), "Queer Eye" (*Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* (original title, later *Queer Eye*) 2003-2007), while "channel" may likely be in reference to "TV channel", either in

the general sense or in reference to a specific one. A sample of examined concordance lines for *queer* appears to anecdotally support this interpretation.

For *LGBT*, finally, four collocates with a *Log Ratio (filtered)* value of 3 or higher that are not function words were found, all four of which refer to concepts closely linked to community life and activities (*community*, *center*, *club*, and *home*). This is notable as *LGBT*, being the most recent of the investigated terms to come into use and the only acronym, is also the only one of the investigated terms that does not have a history of being used as a slur.

4.1.8.2. *Usage Fluctuation Analysis* of *gay* and *lesbian*

For the two term variants with the highest frequencies of use, a Usage Fluctuation Analysis (UFA) was conducted to provide a diachronic comparison of collocations from 1990 to 2017. As outlined in Section 3.3.5, this analysis employed Brezina's *Lancaster Stats Tools* (Brezina, n. d.-a) with an absolute cutoff of 10 percent. To facilitate the interpretation of the results, both a plot and a heat map are presented: Here, the plot will serve to illustrate the strength of collocations across the dataset, whereas the heatmap offers a comparative overview of the consistent and transient collocates found for the two terms across these years.

As can be seen from *Figure 16*, the strength of collocation for ***lesbian*** was found to have been strongest in the early 1990s (at approximately 0.93), after which point it first decreased in strength until it reached a low around 0.78 in the early 2000s. Starting in the late 2000s, a slight increase in the strength of the association can be observed, which continues as a trend for the remaining years contained in the corpus. It does not, however, reach the same level that it had in the early 1990s, but rather remains under 0.85.

The *Usage Fluctuation Analysis* identified eight unique collocates. Only one of these collocates was classified as consistent, namely *gay*, which was identified as a collocate from 1992 to 2016. Additionally, seven transient collocates were identified: *bar* (2000-2010, 39.3 percent), *become* (1998-1998, 3.6 percent), *center* (1994-2007, 46.4 percent), *community* (2003-2012, 35.7 percent), *lesbian* (2001-2010, 35.7 percent), *lover* (2003-2014, 42.9 percent), and *middle-aged* (2006-2011, 21.4 percent).

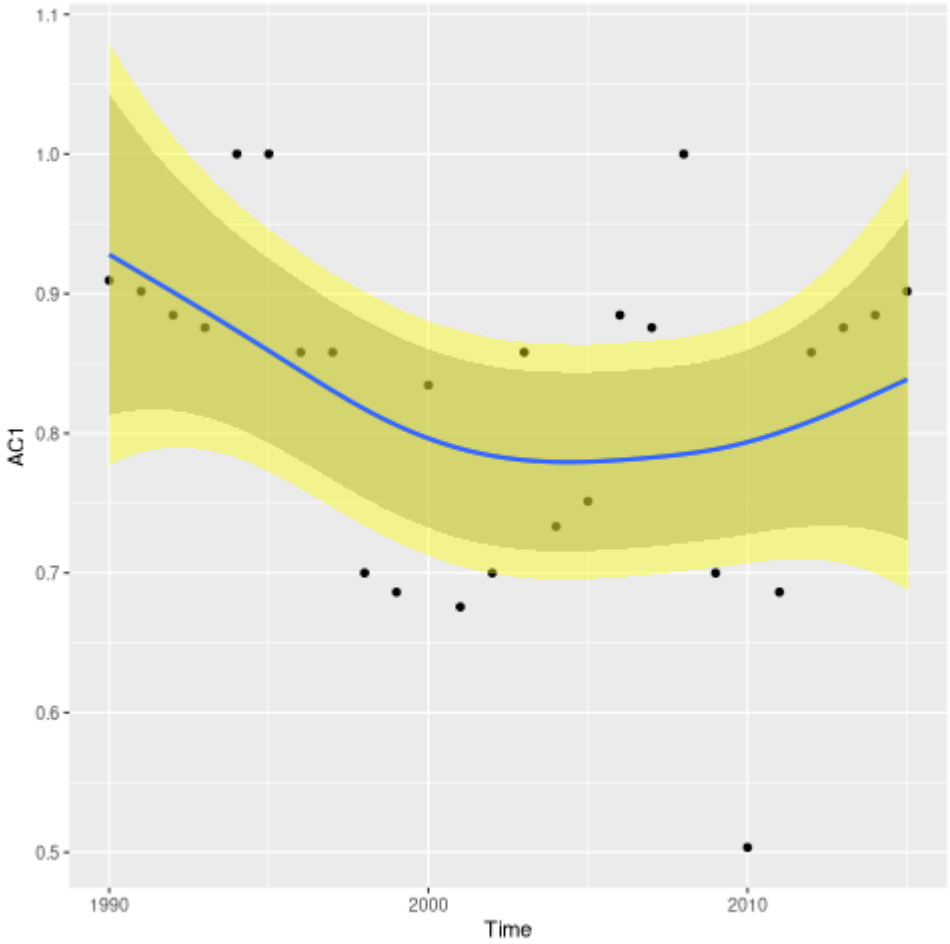


Figure 16 Usage Fluctuation Analysis *for* lesbian *(absolute cutoff 10 percent)*

Turning to the heat map of the consistent and transient collocates for *lesbian* in *Figure 17*, *gay* can be identified as the only consistent collocate, first appearing in 1992 and last appearing in 2016. One likely reason for the lack of collocates identified for the first two as well as the final years analysed here are the overall lower frequencies of use of *lesbian* in these years. As mentioned in Section 4.1.7, the final year contained in the corpus saw a sharp dip in the frequency of use of *lesbian* across genres. Besides *gay*, *center* is the earliest collocate identified by this analysis, and remains a collocate for well over a decade. Notably, it is also the earliest collocate to fall out of use again (with the exception of *become*, which was identified as a collocate in one single year only) in the mid-2000s. Starting from the early 2000s, several new collocates were found, such as (in order of appearance) *bar*, *lesbian*, *lover*, and *community*. This appears to be a reflection of the dip in collocational strength observed in *Figure 16* in the early to mid-2000s. Here, it appears likely that the new variety in collocates corresponds to an overall increase in frequency of use of the term (as it was described in

Section 4.1.3). The last new transient collocate identified in the analysis was *middle-aged*, though this appears to fall out of use as a collocate earlier than some of the more long-running collocates, such as for instance, *lover*.

UFA "lesbian"	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
gay			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
center					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓										
lover														✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
bar											✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
lesbian												✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							
community														✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
middle-aged																	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
become									✓																			

Figure 17 Collocates identified by the Usage Fluctuation Analysis *for* lesbian *per year*

Comparing these findings to those of the *CQPweb* internal, non-diachronic collocation analysis, several similarities and differences are apparent: In this analysis, the collocate with the highest overall *Log Ratio (filtered)* value, *bisexual* does not appear at all, though other terms for queer in-group identities are still to be found. Of these, *lesbian* was identified as a collocate by both analyses, while *gay*, the only consistent collocate identified by the *Usage Fluctuation Analysis*, appears somewhat less prominently in the overall collocation analysis. Several terms related to community life and activities are evident among the transient collocates identified by the UFA only, such as, *centre*, *bar*, or *community* itself. Other collocates like *lover*, or *middle-aged* were identified as collocates in both analyses, however.

The plot for ***gay*** in *Figure 18*, by contrast, shows a strikingly different development of the collocational strength from the 1990s to 2017. Here, the collocational strength for the early 1990s is between 0.85 and 0.9, with minor fluctuations in both directions, culminating in a rather steeper increase in the latter half of the decade. The curve reaches its highest point around 1998, at around 0.95. After this, the collocational strength decreases rapidly, reaching a low of approximately 0.59 by 2002. This minimum is immediately followed by an increase in collocational strength almost as marked as the previous decrease, reaching a value almost equal to the one before the previous decline by the middle of that decade. Once again, this

high point is followed by a decrease in collocational strength, though the decrease this time is more gradual, with a value of around 0.75 found for the last year contained in the corpus.

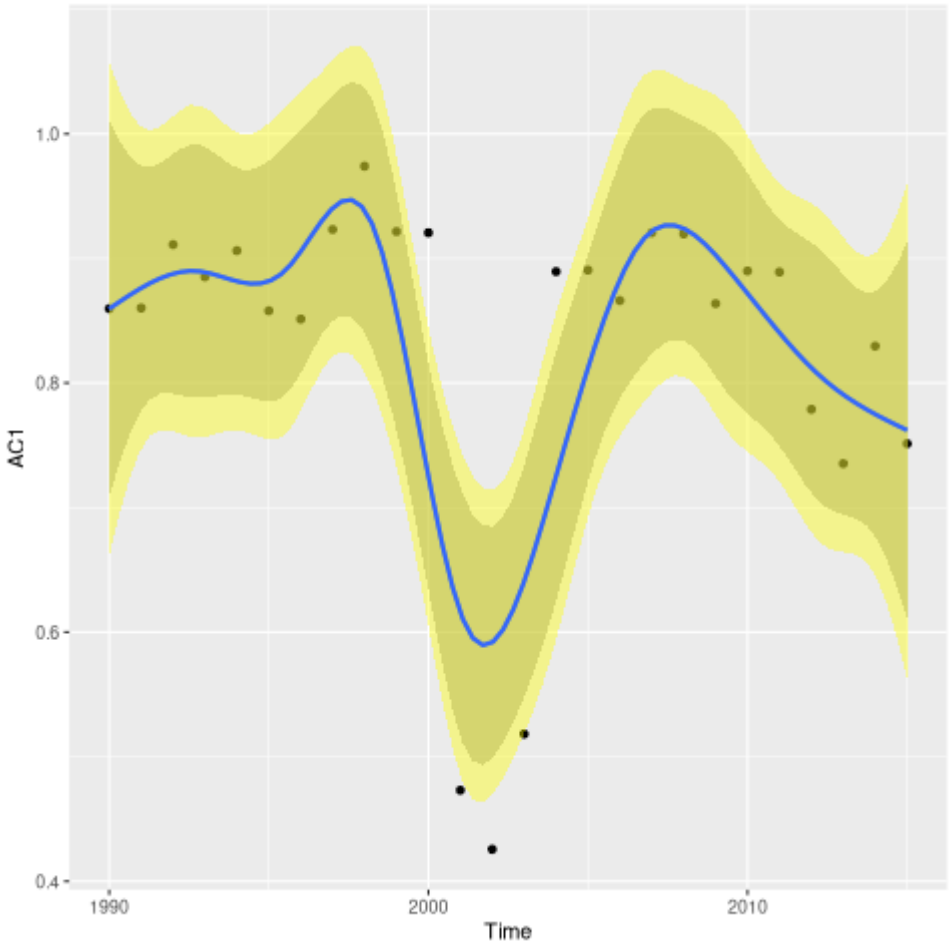


Figure 18 Usage Fluctuation Analysis *for* gay *(absolute cutoff 10 percent)*

While the previously discussed *Usage Fluctuation Analysis* for *lesbian* found a total of eight collocates (one consistent, seven transient), the *Usage Fluctuation Analysis* for *gay* identified as many as 48 unique collocates across 28 periods. Of these, 11 are classified as consistent and 37 as transient. The consistent collocates are *bar* (1991-2016), *community* (1991-2017), *gay* (1990-2016), *lesbian* (1992-2016), *marriage* (1996-2017), *men* (1992-2017), *parade* (1992-2013), *porn* (1993-2016), *pride* (1992-2016), *rights* (1991-2016), and *straight* (1992-2013). A complete list of both the consistent and the transient collocates can be found in the heatmap in *Figure 19*.

Of these collocates, there are again several terms related to queer identities, such as *gay*, *lesbian*, and *straight* (among the consistent collocates), or *bi* (among the transient ones). Terms related to community life and activities, too, can be identified among the collocates,

such as *bar*, *parade*, or *weddings*. These might, in fact, account for the largest number of collocates (both consistent and transient) identified for *gay*. With *apparel*, there is another example of a likely false hit – this collocate was most commonly found in the datasets as part of the phrase "don our **gay** apparel", which is a line from a popular Christmas song (e.g., Supplement B2, "gay" hit 8146), where *gay* can be assumed to have a meaning related to being "cheerful" or "festive" rather than "queer". Additionally, a number of collocates relating to personal attributes (e.g., *openly*, *closeted*, *secretly*) and interpersonal relationships (e.g., *couples*, *lover*, *dads*) were identified here.

Some terms relating to gender identity and gendered social roles were found as transient collocates for *gay*, which had not been as common for *lesbian*. As such, it is worth considering that the term *gay* more frequently collocates with terms specifying that it is, in a specific instance, being applied to a person of a specific gender or with a specific social role (e.g., *men*, *dads*, or *male*). One possible reason for this could be that there is, arguably, an assumption inherent in the term that a "lesbian" will in most cases likely be a woman, while *gay* more commonly appears to also be used as an umbrella term, as was discussed in Section 2.2.3. Similarly to the findings for the overall collocation analysis, here, too, a number of collocates for *gay* were identified that refer to slurs or dangers to the community (e.g., *bashing*, *ban*, *basher*, or, arguably, *closeted* (often referring to a queer person choosing not to share information about their queer identity with others, frequently for fear of negative consequences to themselves)). *Openly*, by contrast, can be found as a transient collocate from 1998 onwards, thus appearing as a collocate earlier than *closeted*.

Several of the false hits among the top collocates with the highest *Log Ratio (filtered)* values (e.g., *Paree* and *Enola)* were not found as collocates in this *Usage Fluctuation Analysis* from 1990 to 2017. As such, it appears likely that they were used more heavily in the earlier decades, and a check of a sample of hits for these terms appears to align with this interpretation.

Turning to further differences between the collocates for *gay* and *lesbian*, it must be pointed out that for *gay*, a number of collocates with a meaning closely related to sex was found (e.g., *porn*, *sex*), which was not the case for *lesbian*. Among the transient collocates for *gay*, there are also a number of proper names, such as *Al*, *Brad*, or *Anne*. This suggests that certain character names are produced together with the term *gay* unusually frequently, as is the case

for “Big **Gay** Al’s Big Gay Boat Ride” (Supplement B2, “gay”, hit 6678), which could be seen as an example of disparagement humour, or excessive specificity for comedic effect.

Lastly, one of the most notable features of both *Figure 18* and *Figure 19* is the fact that in the years around 2003, there is an decrease in collocational strength that coincides with a great number of transient collocates appearing for only a single year. Many of these seem to draw on similar concepts as previously discussed collocates. There are, however, also some that appear to be rather unique in their likely meaning: *gene* appears notably different here, as does *fish*, and (arguably) *jokes*.

Looking at concordance lines featuring these isolated collocates, it becomes evident that some can be attributed to the influence of one single show or even episode: “**gay** fish”, for instance, occurs almost exclusively within one specific episode of South Park (episode “Fishsticks”; e.g., Supplement B2, “gay”, hit 20431). In this sense, the prevalence of “**gay** jokes” (Supplement B2, “gay”, hit 2680) can serve as an explanation of the observed phenomenon as much as it may be a collocate in its own right: Generally, it appears that within these years in the early 2000s, a great variety of collocates are to be found, lessening the collocational strength. On the one hand, this very much coincides with the overall peak in frequency of use of *gay** in these years. However, as some of these collocates draw on very different semantic meanings than the ones previously discussed, these rather appear to make use of *gay* (and arguably likely also its variants) as a premodifier for the sake of disparagement humour. Seeing as *gay* had the highest frequency of all queried terms of queer in-group identity, and a (much less marked) dip in collocational strength could be observed for *lesbian* around the same time as well, it appears reasonable to assume that similar phenomena might have affected the use of other terms of queer in-group identity as well, if to a lesser degree.

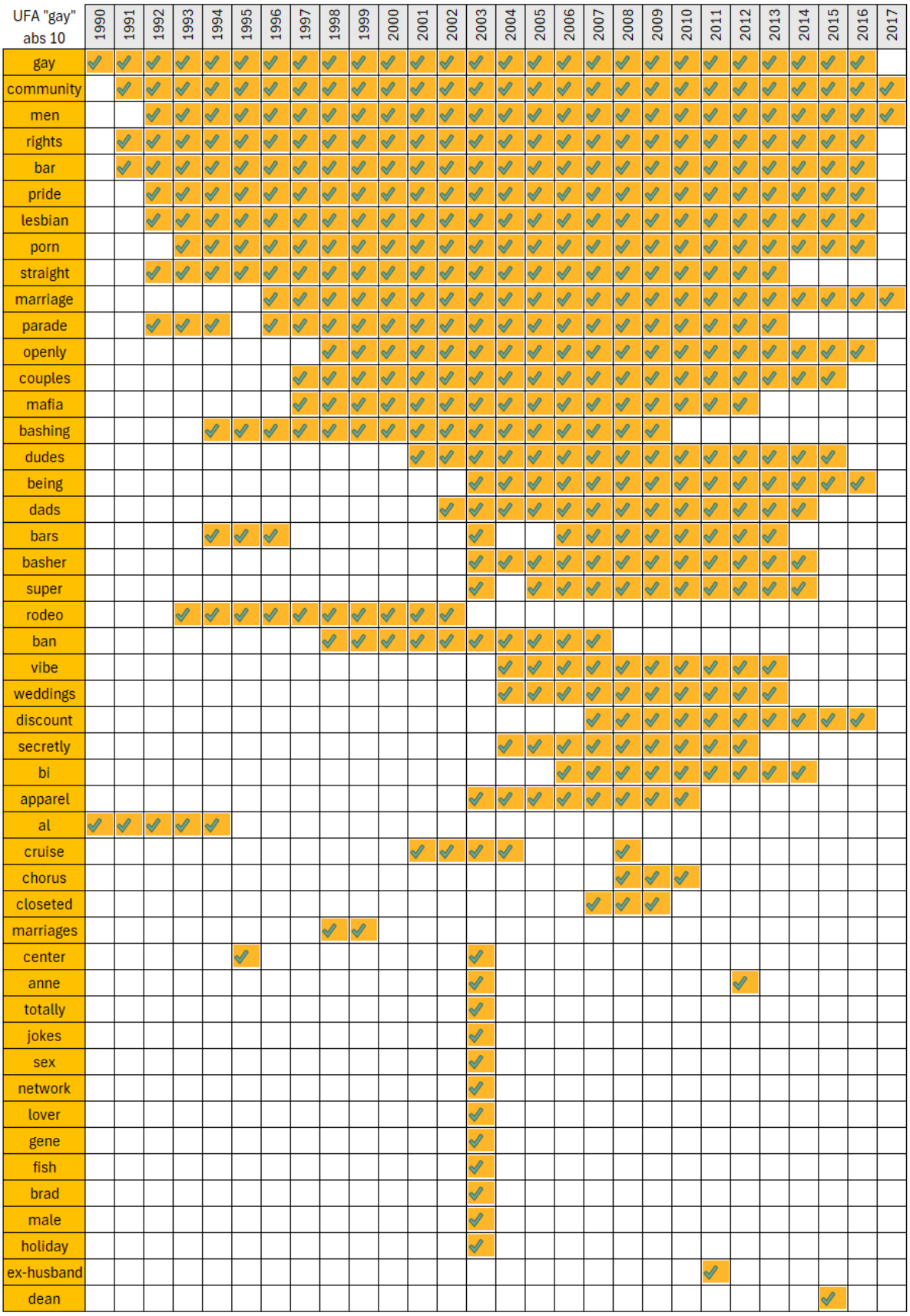


Figure 19 Collocates identified by the Usage Fluctuation Analysis *for* gay *per year*

4.2. Results: Stage 2

For Stage 2, the results of the quantitative speaker annotation and the qualitative analysis of queerness in the fictional or cultural realism of the shows are outlined and considered together. Towards this goal, both basic overall frequency measures per character and number of contributions to an episode's dialogue are considered as indicators of character prominence. Beyond character prominence, the role and prominence of queerness in the world of the show is outlined briefly episode by episode for each of the shows under investigation (Sections 4.2.1 to 4.2.6). Here, the discussion also draws on the respective main cast queer characters' prominence, arcs, and reported lived experience as a queer person in a particular system of power (following e.g., Leap 2015, 676). These summaries are based on the extensive qualitative annotation available in Supplement C2, where these observations are described in much greater detail. For the sake of readability, direct quotes from the show's dialogue are always cited directly as ([character], [S#E#]), whereas more general descriptions point to the S#E# as it is listed in the supplement. Additionally, the annotated episode subtitle texts were also queried for the Stage 1 terms of queer in-group identity (Section 4.2.7).

4.2.1. Queerness in *Dawson's Creek*

As was discussed in Section 3.4.1.1, the Drama show *Dawson's Creek* focuses on a group of friends living in a U.S. small town as they go through their adolescence and young adulthood. Within the show, one of the main group of friends, Jack, comes out as gay. This puts him into conflict with his father and, to a lesser degree, his sister. In addition to Jack, a (small) number of episodic or recurring queer characters appear in some episodes, though none of them have a similar level of prominence. As Jack is only introduced in Season 2, the episodes chosen for speaker annotation in the *UAM CorpusTool* were selected from Seasons 2 to 6.

Queerness and character prominence in the annotated episodes

The results of the annotation of episodes in the *UAM CorpusTool* in *Table 14* show that Jack is similar to the other main cast characters in terms of his minimum, maximum, and average turn lengths. The total number of segments produced by Jack is similar to that produced by his best friend Jen (around 300), though both of them were found to produce noticeably

fewer segments in the annotated episodes than the characters involved in the group's love triangle and (arguably) core relationship(s): the titular character Dawson, his best friend Pacey, and both of their on again off again romantic interest and friend Joey, all of whom produce more than 400 segments. Andie (Jack's sister) and Audrey (Joey's college roommate) both appear only in some of the annotated episodes, leading to their having a lower number of segments of dialogue in total, though those segments that they do have appear to be similar in length on average. Gale, Mitch, Grams, and Bessie, all of whom are adult family members of the main group of teenagers, have lower numbers of annotated segments in the episodes still: they, too, do not appear in all of the annotated episodes, and it is further worth noting that Bessie and Gale (Joey's sister and Dawson's mother, respectively) have the lowest number of segments of all the main characters, as well as the shortest average and maximum segment length. By contrast, the number of segments produced by recurring and episodic characters are lower in total than those produced by any of the main group of friends, even though they are similar in terms of average segment length.

The average segment length is rather similar for all teenaged characters (12 to 14), with the exception of Pacey and Andie, whose average segment length is slightly higher but still under 16. For the adults, the range is somewhat wider, with Gale at 9.57 and Grams at 14.88. Here, it appears likely that the low average segment lengths for Gale and Bessie are related to their low number of overall segments, both of which appear to indicate that these characters have a smaller, arguably more supporting role in the narrative focusing on the group of teenagers.

The maximum segment length, too, appears to support this distinction, with most of the adult characters having lower values here. The younger group varies in this respect, with Audrey (who only joins the show in Season 5) having the shortest maximum segment length at 85 words, and Andie the longest at 354. While in Audrey's case this might once again be related to the respective character's prominence in the story, it appears to also be indicative of their characterization: The values for Andie, Pacey, and Joey are comparatively higher, which seems to align with their characterization as eloquent and argumentative, while Dawson (the titular character) has the second lowest value of any teenager at 90, likely due to his comparatively more taciturn characterization. The maximum segment length for both Jack and Jen is identical at 133 words, which seems striking as the episodic storylines as well as the overarching plot of the show often place Jen and Jack together as one another's closest

relationship, as was also discussed by Meyer (2003, 272). Only small numbers of unclear and group segments were identified.

Character/ category	Number of segments	Tokens in segments	Words in segments	Average word length	Average segment length	Min. segment length	Max. segment length
Dawson	496	8011	6482	3.79	13.07	1	90
Joey	**541**	**8991**	**7457**	3.82	13.78	1	195
Jen	302	4653	3789	3.83	12.55	1	133
Pacey	440	8524	7026	3.82	**15.97**	1	226
Gale	76	882	727	3.84	**9.57**	1	60
Mitch	81	1349	1107	3.87	13.67	2	71
Grams	88	1575	1309	3.85	14.88	2	109
Bessie	**35**	**449**	**381**	**3.90**	10.89	2	**39**
Jack	320	5241	4178	3.75	13.06	1	133
Andie	181	3457	2844	**3.73**	15.71	1	**354**
Audrey	90	1392	1118	3.81	12.42	2	85
episodic	262	4428	3562	3.91	13.6	2	113
group-all	11	142	93	3.76	8.45	2	36
recurring	220	3577	2895	3.94	13.16	1	80
main	2650	44524	36418	3.81	13.74	1	354
unclear	19	125	91	3.67	4.79	1	28

Table 14 Selected quantitative measures reported by the UAM CorpusTool for Dawson's Creek

Jack is introduced in Season 2 and briefly dates a girl from the group, Joey, though they break up in S02E15 after he comes out as gay first to his family and then to her. Him and Joey remain on good terms. In the narrative, Jack's queerness is a topic of discussion very soon after his appearance in the story with a double episode focusing on his coming to terms with his identity (S02E14 to S02E15). In these episodes, the matrix plot in *Figure 20* shows a large percentage of the dialogue contributed by episodic characters, with Jack as the most frequently contributing character in episode S02E15 where he comes out to his family and friends. One possible explanation for the prominence of episodic characters in these early episodes is that, as the main group of friends appears to be largely sympathetic to Jack's struggle, episodic characters are drawn on as a source of conflict for Jack's arc.

In Seasons 3 and 4, Jack is more prominent in those episodes that focus on some aspect of his queerness (his right to go to a school dance with another boy in S03E22, and his worries about navigating both romantic and platonic relationships in S04E14), while he contributes more rarely to the other episodes. His date for the school dance in S03E22, a recurring character

(Ethan, S03E22), contributes only rarely and does not appear in any of the other annotated episodes.

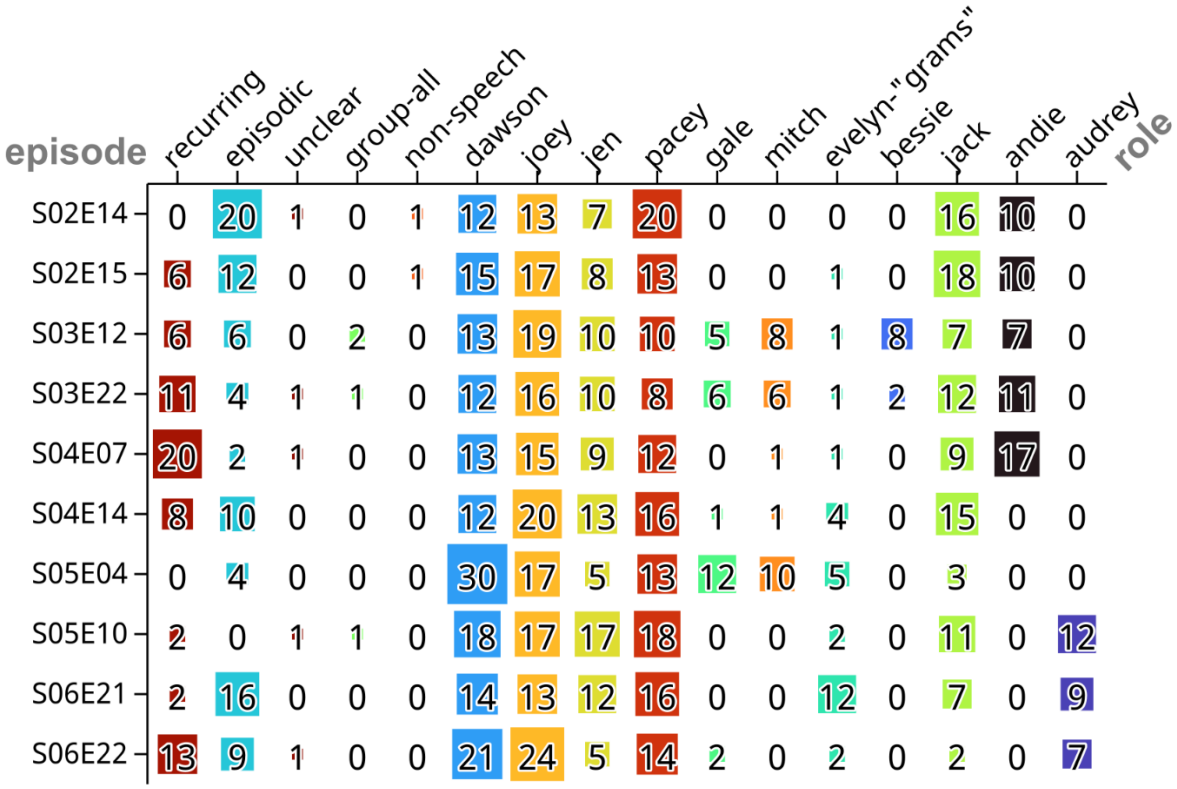


Figure 20 Matrix plot of characters' dialogue contributions per episode in Dawson's Creek

The annotated episodes from Seasons 5 and 6 see Jack contributing even more rarely to the dialogue, and tend not to focus on Jack's queerness in detail, though it is sometimes casually acknowledged by both himself and the rest of the main group of friends. In the episodes from these seasons where he is more prominent, the focus is usually on his relationship with his platonic best friend Jen and her family, whom he has lived with at several points during the show.

Besides his date from Season 3, other recurring queer characters appear only rarely in the annotated episodes, though some discussion in S05E10 indicates that Jack did have a long-term relationship with another man at some point during the episodes which were not annotated. Additionally, it is occasionally implied that Pacey's older brother, Doug, may in fact be queer, though this is not actually confirmed within the annotated episodes. An episodic queer character appears in S06E23 and casually attempts to flirt with Jack, and this episode also features several other characters light-heartedly joking and speculating about

people's sexualities. In contrast to the highly tense situation Jack faced in S02, this might possibly be interpreted as a sign of increasing comfort with the concept of queerness, as Jack, too, shows increasing ease with such jokes as the show goes on.

The role of queerness in the story world

Throughout all annotated episodes, Jack's queerness is frequently discussed as a source of conflict: Starting with his coming out in Season 2, Jack consistently reports feeling isolated from his environment due to his sexuality, and, even after coming to terms with his identity, repeatedly mentions how he doesn't want his "entire life […] to be a fight." (Jack, S03E22) While the other main cast characters appear to be supportive of Jack's sexuality, he appears to initially be uncomfortable discussing such topics, and also rejects the idea of a romantic relationship with another gay student because he thinks him to be too "obvious" (Jack, S04E14) in his queerness. From this, one might reasonably conclude Jack to be struggling with internalized homophobia, especially in the earlier seasons.

While Jack is estranged from his birth father, he develops a close familial relationship with his female best friend Jen's family, living with them at various points during the story, and choosing to move to another city to stay with them in the final annotated episodes. (S06E21, E22) Jack's relationship with Jen is of great importance to both of them, with Jack jokingly describing himself as "technically" Jen's boyfriend in S06E21. However, this closeness appears to initially be a source of discomfort to Jack, who mentions being afraid that he's "never gonna find a guy that I love as much as I love you [Jen]" (Jack, S04E14). Interestingly, during a time of estrangement between the two in a later season, Jack describes their changed relationship as "not the Will & Grace land it once was" (S05E10), thereby using the close platonic relationship central to that show as a contrasting example for their own conflicts.

As Jack is the only main cast queer character in the annotated episodes, most mentions and discussions of queerness in the show's text and plot directly relate to his character arc and experiences. Only rarely do other characters draw on concepts related to queerness in situations that are not focused on Jack, though in some instances other characters' sexualities are also (typically light-heartedly) speculated about (e.g., Pacey's comments towards his brother in S06E22). Overall, queerness appears to be an element in the world of the show that is rarely drawn upon and typically far from most characters' experience, which arguably

might contribute to Jack's aforementioned feelings of isolation. Jack's character is introduced later to the main cast of the show, and while many of the episodes in which he plays a central role do focus on some aspect of his experience growing up queer, his queerness is framed primarily as a source of discomfort and conflict for him. As such, it appears reasonable to conclude that in the fictional small-town U.S.-American world of the show, queerness is initially framed as something uncommon and likely to place an individual in conflict with their broader environment, though this alienation appears to become less marked as the series progresses.

4.2.2. Queerness in *Glee*

Glee, which focuses on the experiences of a show choir at a high school, as well as those of previous members as they try to establish their careers in show business, features several queer characters within the main cast. Said main cast is uncommonly large and varies from season to season, and as such a great variety of prominence of the individual characters can be observed across episodes. Both Kurt and his (oftentimes) love interest Blaine are revealed to be queer shortly after their introduction, while others (Brittany, Santana) are shown to be queer later on in their arcs in spite of being part of the main cast from the first season onwards. Furthermore, some main cast queer characters, such as the gay transmasculine Coach Beiste ("Sheldon" in the table and figure below), or the transfeminine student Unique (who is first introduced as a male student with a female stage persona in late Season 3 before she transitions), are introduced only later in the story.

Queerness and character prominence in the annotated episodes

As can be seen from the frequency measures obtained from the *UAM CorpusTool* visualized in *Table 15*, the various main cast characters have vastly different levels of prominence throughout the annotated episodes. For convenience, the first column in the table below has been colour coded according to the character's role in the story world: Students who are part of the choir within the first three seasons are highlighted in orange(e.g., Kurt), students who join the club later (typically in Seasons 4 and 5, after much of the original cast graduates) are highlighted in yellow (e.g., Jake), adults (most of whom are school staff or parents) are highlighted in blue (e.g., Terri), and the category totals are indicated in green (e.g., Main). As

can be seen from *Figure 21*, the prominence of individual characters in the main cast does not only vary from season to season (with some of the characters leaving the school and town that the show is set in), but also from episode to episode, depending on which of the characters are focused on in an episode's plot. The characters with the highest number of segments produced in the annotated episodes are Rachel (6651 words in 301 segments) and Kurt (5651 words in 282 segments; also the character with the longest maximum segment length at 387 words). Both are prominent characters in all seasons of the show, with episodic plots following their lives and experiences even after they have left school. Slightly less prominent is Finn with 259 segments, as he passes away early in the fifth season, and consequently only appears in some flashbacks for the rest of the show. All other student characters have fewer contributions to the dialogue by a wide margin, the next most frequent contributor being Kurt's main love interest Blaine (177 segments), who also is not present in all the annotated episodes.

None of the younger students (yellow, introduced in late Season 3 or early Season 4) have more than 53 segments annotated per person. Among the adult characters, Sue (the cheerleading coach and temporary principal) and Will (the teacher leading the club for much of the series) are the most prominent: In Will's case, this can likely be explained by his close connection to and handling of the school club at the core of the show. In Sue's case, her prominence is likely connected to her character's role as the club's primary antagonist for much of the show. Sue's character strikingly also has the highest average word length, which appears to be in line with her characterization as opinionated and prone to elaborate insults and speeches (e.g., her confrontation with her mother in S02E08). The lowest number of segments were contributed by Sheldon (13) and Unique (13). In Sheldon's case, this can be explained by the character only appearing in one of the annotated episodes with a speaking role, and the sub-plot in question focusing on Sheldon's experiences as a victim of domestic violence, who is at first reluctant to address the topic at school. Unique, who has the shortest average segment length of any main character (7.92 words, whereas all other characters have values higher than 10) along with the lowest number of segments and shortest maximum segment length, appears in all four episodes from Seasons 4 and 5 that were annotated, but most commonly as part of crowd scenes. Those scenes that do focus on her experiences in

particular still mostly have other people (such as her parents or her classmates) discussing her life (and identity), while she herself tends to contribute to the dialogue only rarely.

Character / category	Number of segments	Tokens in segments	Words in segments	Average word length	Average segment length	Min. segment length	Max. segment length
Quinn	71	1355	1062	3.66	14.96	2	100
Kurt	282	5651	4299	3.79	15.24	1	**387**
Terri	16	208	166	3.66	10.38	2	41
Sue	136	4051	3346	**4.13**	24.60	2	121
Emma	15	242	186	3.80	12.40	2	33
Artie	113	1903	1365	3.77	12.08	2	120
Rachel	**301**	**6651**	**5188**	3.68	17.24	2	185
Finn	259	4908	3758	3.69	14.51	2	298
Will	167	3171	2605	3.80	15.60	2	151
Mercedes	110	1983	1454	3.70	13.22	2	105
Puck	101	2470	1827	3.81	18.09	2	209
Tina	59	880	696	3.77	11.80	2	74
Brittany	55	855	688	3.80	12.51	2	66
Burt	99	2400	1943	3.69	19.63	2	154
Santana	143	3046	2312	3.86	16.17	2	282
Blaine	177	3497	2649	3.68	14.97	2	322
Mike	19	261	203	3.61	10.68	5	40
Sam	86	1607	1224	3.81	14.23	2	98
Jake	39	514	400	3.77	10.26	2	70
Marley	48	619	491	3.60	10.23	2	73
Ryder	53	849	650	4.06	12.26	3	64
Unique	**13**	**140**	**103**	4.05	**7.92**	3	**30**
Kitty	53	1390	1125	4.07	21.23	4	86
Sheldon	**13**	382	319	**3.59**	**24.54**	**7**	108
Main	2439	49169	38160	3.79	15.65	1.00	387
Episodic	146	2914	2308	3.83	15.81	2.00	80
Recurring	299	5621	4434	3.94	14.83	2.00	133
Group-all	306	6417	4000	3.61	13.07	2.00	171
Unclear	27	127	77	3.47	2.85	1.00	10

Table 15 Selected quantitative measures reported by the UAM CorpusTool for Glee

In contrast to the results discussed for *Dawson's Creek*, *Glee* has a large number of segments annotated as "group-all", which can be explained by the show's focus on a show choir: Multiple times per episode, the characters will break out into song (either on a stage or, as is typical of the musical genre, in an everyday situation which then morphs into a

choreographed performance). Recurring and episodic characters in this show once again make up a comparatively small number of segments of dialogue compared to the main characters, and a small number of unclear segments was identified, many of these being very brief and typically occurring in large group scenes with the choir where a person off-screen voiced their agreement or disagreement.

In the early annotated episodes, the queer character who is indicated to have the highest number of dialogue contributions is Kurt, who, interestingly, is also the only queer character to come out this early on in the story. With S01E04 focusing on Kurt's unsuccessful efforts to be perceived as heterosexual at school, followed by his coming out to his father, and S01E18 focused on Kurt's relationship with his father, from whom he feels alienated as they have few interests in common, Kurt is a highly prominent contributor to the dialogue in these first episodes. In fact, S01E18 is the only episode of the ones annotated in which Kurt is the most frequently contributing character. As S02E08 focuses on Burt's (Kurt's father's) wedding, as well as Kurt's ongoing struggles with bullying at school, there is once again a similar pattern to be observed: Kurt's sexuality is framed mainly in relation to how it affects the ways he is perceived by his family and classmates. In these early episodes, Santana and Brittany, neither of whom is openly queer at this point, serve mainly as comic relief characters: Santana herself says that "everyone knows that [her] job here is to look hot", while Brittany is characterized as naïve and somewhat cartoonishly unintelligent. Both of them contribute to the dialogue only rarely, and appear to be focused on less strongly in the episodes' plots.

S02E20 is the first of the annotated episodes to portray characters other than Kurt as queer, though he remains prominently featured: It focuses on the prom held at their school, and it is revealed that two other characters are pretending to date to hide their queer sexualities (Santana and Dave, who was bullying Kurt in S02E08). As such, neither of them is openly queer at this point, and both of their lengthy discussions with other characters (Kurt and Brittany, respectively) reveal that they are intentionally trying to keep their queerness a secret. Their prominence in these discussions contributes to the higher percentage of segments visible in the matrix plot. Additionally, this episode also prominently features Blaine, who has joined the main cast this season as Kurt's main romantic interest for much of the show.

Both Season 3 episodes only incidentally focus on characters' queerness, though they do both draw on the recurring theme of the glee club being marginalized for their interests or

socioeconomic circumstances. In these episodes, the prominence of the main cast queer characters fluctuates more strongly, a trend which continues in Seasons 4 and 5: In S04E04 the focus is on the romantic relationships of the main cast, and ends with the breakup of all three main cast student relationships (in descending order of number of contributions: Rachel and Finn, Kurt and Blaine, Santana and Brittany). This focus also becomes evident in the matrix plot, in which the partners from each of these relationships are very similar to one another in terms of their number of contributed terms, while there still appear to be differences in each couple's prominence in the story overall.

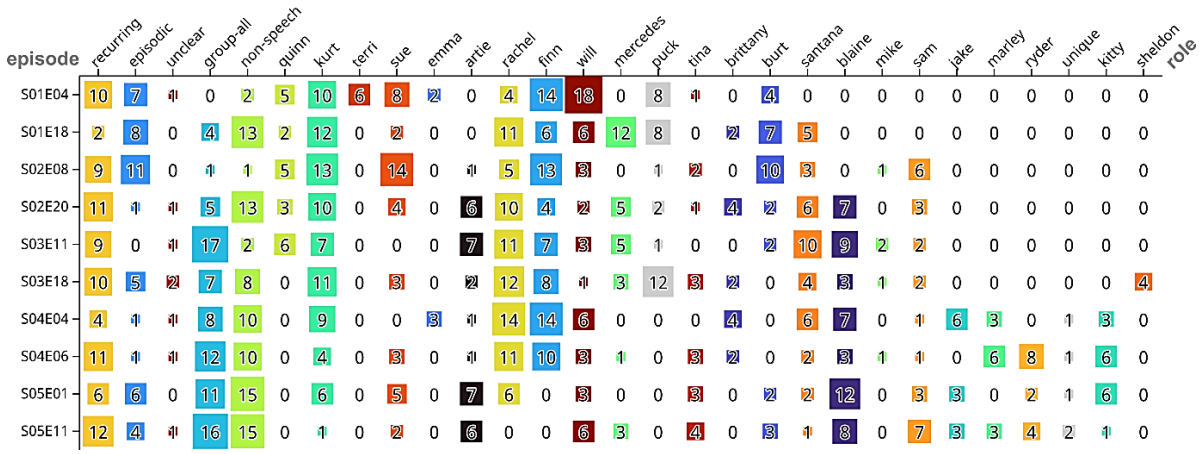


Figure 21 Matrix plot of characters' dialogue contributions per episode in *Glee*

In S04E06, Unique's parents are concerned over her getting harassed at school for socially transitioning, however, her transfeminine identity is not discussed in these terms. Even though Unique is at the core of one of the sub-plots of the episode, she has hardly any prominence in the episode's dialogue, with only two segments contributed by her. S05E01 has Blaine as the most frequently contributing character, given that he is spending the episode planning an elaborate proposal to Kurt. Strikingly, Kurt is less prominent, as he is uninvolved in these proceedings until the very end of the episode, with the other main cast queer characters less prominent still. Queerness is not in focus in S05E11, and has the highest percentage of segments contributed by a group or a recurring character. This is also the only one of the annotated episodes in which Rachel and Kurt (overall the characters with the highest number of segments) contribute the least, as they each appear only briefly.

Overall, it appears that the different main cast queer characters on *Glee* have strongly varying prominence from episode to episode, which can in part be explained by the large number of

main cast characters, not all of whom are the focus of a sub-plot in every episode. Nevertheless, some of them are more frequently in focus than others (e.g., Kurt vs. Brittany), likely owing to their respective roles in the story. The characters who joined the cast late appear to generally be less prominent in the dialogue than their original-cast counterparts, though this may in part also be an artefact of the smaller number of annotated episodes in which they appear. Textually queer recurring and episodic characters appear to once again be rare, though it seems that the show may have some in other episodes which were not annotated here, commonly as a main character's love interest. It must, however, be acknowledged that the show frequently draws upon the presumed connection between performance, camp, and ambiguous perceived queerness (as it was described by e.g., Ullman (2018, 361)), so that many of the recurring and episodic stage performer characters might be read as queer coded (in the sense of Bronski 2011, 182, 195).

The role of queerness in the story world

In the annotated episodes of *Glee*, queerness is frequently discussed and negotiated both explicitly and implicitly: For many of the main cast queer characters, their queerness is initially a source of discomfort and alienation from their environment (e.g., Kurt's conflicts with his father in Season 1, Santana's desperation to be perceived as straight in S02E20), though they typically appear to become more comfortable with their identity and are accepted by their close social groups as the show progresses. However, it must be noted that the U.S.-American small-town high school at which much of the show is set does not necessarily become more accepting of queerness as a whole, as some of the main characters (e.g., Sue) and many of the episodic student characters remain openly queerphobic throughout the plot.

Especially the later seasons seem to frequently draw on similar plot points for multiple main cast romance storylines (e.g., the multiple breakups in S04E04), which suggests a similar treatment of queer and straight romantic relationships in the show. Likely in part due to the increasingly great number of main cast characters, especially the later seasons also have some main cast queer characters who only rarely contribute actively even to episodic plots focusing on their experiences and their queerness (e.g., Unique in S04E06). Similarly, in keeping with the varying prominence of characters in the episodes discussed here, not all of the main cast queer characters are developed through the episodic plots to the same degree: For instance, much more detail about Kurt's experiences and struggles with his sexuality is presented in

these episodes than about Brittany's, even though both of them are credited as main cast characters.

Aside from the storylines explicitly focusing on the sexual and gender identities of the various queer main cast characters, it must also be acknowledged that the show's framing of the titular "Glee" club (a show choir) frequently draws on notions of marginalization due to the perceived queerness and camp of their musical performances (e.g., S01E04, S03E11), while the club simultaneously also serves to create a community for the students involved. As such, many of the main cast characters regardless of their actual personal identity are frequently exposed to queerphobic language and social pressures to conform to more heteronormative expectations. Relatedly, many of the show's characters occasionally make use of jokes and comments that draw on the concept of queerness as a source of comedy, for instance in the form of disparagement humour and stereotyping (e.g., Sue about Kurt in S02E08).

4.2.3. Queerness in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

In contrast to the shows discussed so far, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer's* most prominent queer character, Willow, only comes out as queer after being featured on the show for more than three seasons. Her girlfriend in Seasons 4 and 5, Tara, is revealed to be queer rather soon after her introduction in the narrative when her and Willow start dating. As such, the earlier seasons do not discuss any of the main characters' queerness explicitly. However, in keeping with the show's very premise based on the subversion of commonly assumed (gender) roles portrayed in U.S. American horror movies (Owen 1999, 25) heteronormative gender roles are still addressed at times. Additionally, it should be pointed out that such gender roles and queerness are a recurring topic in the quips that the show's characters tend to use (see e.g., Xander in S01E10).

Queerness and character prominence in the annotated episodes

According to the measures provided by the *UAM CorpusTool* visualized in *Table 16*, the character with the greatest number of dialogue segments produced by a very wide margin is the titular character Buffy herself. Accordingly, she is also the character with the greatest number of tokens and words contained in her segments. The next most frequent contributor to the dialogue across seasons is Willow, one of Buffy's best friends and the series' most

prominent queer character, followed by Giles (the school librarian and "watcher" (i.e. magical advisor)), and Xander (their other best friend from high school). No other annotated character contributes more than 130 segments in the ten annotated episodes, indicating that these four characters appear to be the most consistently prominent. As they do form the core of their supernatural threat-fighting team, this appears to be in line with their roles in the story.

The character with the fewest segments (and the shortest average word length) is Dawn, Buffy's younger sister who is only introduced to the story in Season 5. Her small number of contributions to the dialogue can likely be explained by a combination of two factors: Firstly, as she joins the show in Season 5, she is only present as a main character in two of the annotated episodes, but secondly she is also significantly younger than the rest of the main characters. These older main cast characters often relate to Dawn as caregivers, leading to her being only incidentally involved in the supernatural storylines. The other main characters, whose number of contributions ranges between 57 (Anya) and 122 (Oz) all are either love interests and/or antagonists of members of the main group. The fact that these characters are only present in a limited number of the episodes and their roles in the narrative might thus account for their overall lower prominence in the annotated data.

Notably, Willow's two main love interests throughout the first five seasons (Oz and Tara) are very similar with regards to the number of their contributions, even though Oz is present in more of the annotated episodes than Tara is. Conversely, Tara is the main character with the shortest maximum segment length, which is in line with her characterization as somewhat shy compared to the more exuberant members of the group. On average, the segments produced by the main characters appear to be shorter for *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* than they were for either *Dawson's Creek* or *Glee*. In contrast to the shows discussed previously, a greater percentage of the dialogue appears to be contributed by recurring characters, with said characters (as a group) having a longer average segment length than any of the main characters. One reason for this finding is likely the comparatively smaller number of main characters compared to *Glee*, and the roles of the recurring characters in the narrative (e.g., Buffy's mother Joyce who is a frequently recurring character in Seasons 1 to 4 , but who is never listed as a main character in the credits). Furthermore, with the show's plot focused on the group's fight against supernatural threats, there are a number of recurring character antagonists who pose a threat for a single season or arc before the group manages to defeat

them (e.g., “the Master” in S01). The numbers of unclear and group segments are once again much lower than they were for *Glee*, with the ones that do occur mostly attributable to sparsely lit fight scenes.

Character/ category	Number of segments	Tokens in segments	Words in segments	Average word length	Average segment length	Min. segment length	Max. segment length
Buffy	**832**	**10198**	**7958**	3.73	9.56	2	80
Willow	456	5817	4546	3.74	9.97	2	**123**
Xander	298	4446	3448	3.86	11.57	2	71
Giles	338	4278	3406	3.95	10.08	2	69
Dawn	**38**	**448**	**349**	**3.46**	9.18	2	98
Spike	106	1836	1451	3.70	**13.69**	2	62
Angel	114	1054	814	3.64	**7.14**	2	65
Riley	61	766	612	3.74	10.03	2	**38**
Cordelia	68	990	802	3.88	11.79	2	63
Oz	122	1325	1027	3.88	8.42	2	69
Anya	57	638	495	**4.01**	8.68	2	59
Tara	121	1391	1076	3.63	8.89	2	49
unclear	14	61	38	4.32	2.71	2	9
recurring	470	7547	6021	3.86	**12.81**	2	263
main	2611	33187	25984	3.78	9.95	2	123
group-all	6	57	46	3.43	7.67	2	30
episodic	321	4890	3919	3.86	12.21	2	90

Table 16 Selected quantitative measures reported by the UAM CorpusTool for Buffy the Vampire Slayer

The early seasons of the show do not yet have any openly queer characters, though the show’s characters, and Xander in particular, make frequent use of jokes that draw on concepts of queerness as a source of comedy. Additionally, many of these jokes serve to link the magical or supernatural elements in the show with the notion of queerness. In S01E10, for instance, Xander is concerned over his attraction to a vampire version of Buffy, describing it as “bent”, a term which is also often used as a (commonly derogatory) slang for *queer* (“Bent” 2024). Willow first experiences an unreciprocated romantic interest in Xander, and then later enters a committed relationship with Oz, before ultimately coming out as queer. Throughout these early seasons, it appears that Willow’s prominence in the dialogue increases, as, starting in Season 2, the prominence of dialogue contributions given by Willow and Xander (as Buffy’s closest friends) appears to change: Whereas both episodes from Season 1 have more segments contributed by Xander, Season 2 and onwards more frequently

see Willow contributing a higher number of segments, as can be seen from *Figure 22*. Likely relatedly, Willow's role in the group changes from the group's tech-support in Season 3 as she begins to learn how to use magic.

By late Season 4, Willow has secretly entered into a relationship with Tara, a fellow college student and witch. In S04E19, the only of the annotated episodes in which Willow has the greatest number of segments contributed of any character, her and Tara's relationship is revealed to Buffy and Willow's ex-boyfriend Oz. Notably, this episode once again draws parallels between Buffy learning of Willow's queerness and another character (Riley, Buffy's current boyfriend) learning about Willow's previous relationship with Oz (a werewolf), making the supposed connection between magical elements and queerness explicit in the characters' ensuing discussions (S04E19).

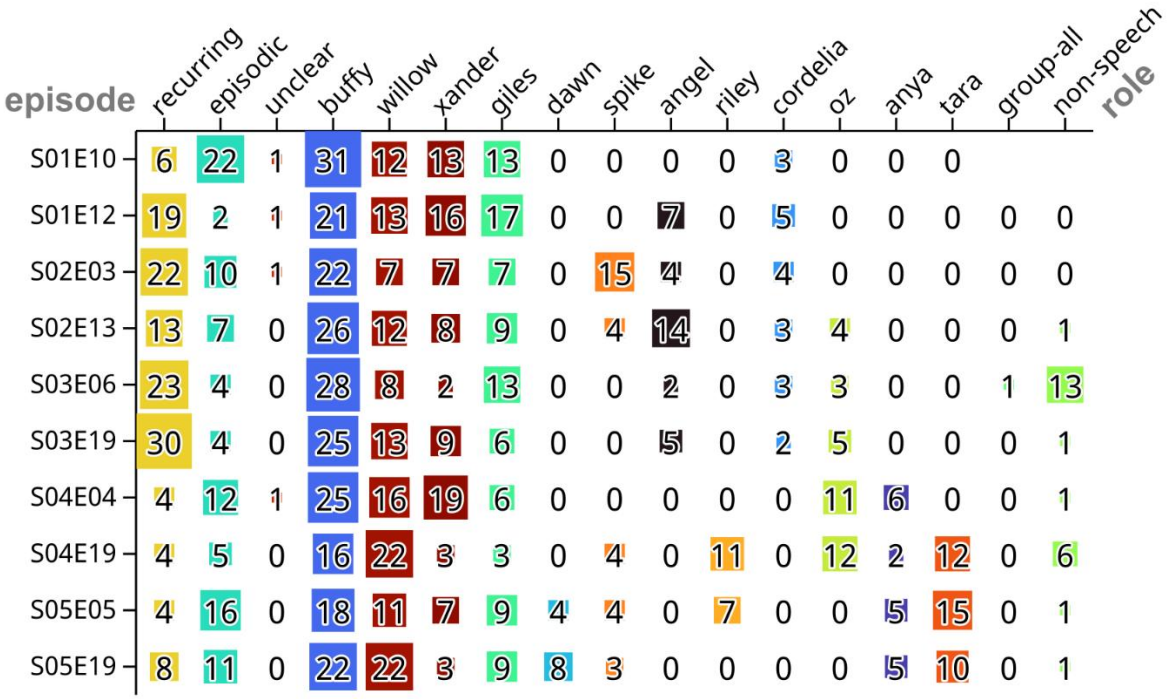


Figure 22 Matrix plot of characters' dialogue contributions per episode in Buffy the Vampire Slayer

Both annotated Season 5 episodes feature Willow and Tara quite prominently: S05E05 focuses on a conflict with Tara's biological family, who are using an (alleged) supernatural evil in Tara's ancestry to get her to conform to their strictly patriarchal and isolationist community. Notably, this incident also prompts the rest of the group to strengthen their understanding of themselves as a "family" (Buffy, S05E05), in direct contrast and opposition to the (biological) family and normative structure embodied by Tara's visiting birth family.

S05E19, on the other hand, places Willow and Tara in conflict over their different perceptions of Willow's queerness and their relationship, before Tara gets kidnapped by the season's magical antagonist. Accordingly, while Tara contributes more frequently to the first of these episodes, Willow contributes more frequently to the second, in keeping with the episodes' plot and focus. Recurring and episodic textually queer characters do not appear in any of the annotated episodes, though some do appear in other episodes beyond the scope of this analysis.

The role of queerness in the story world

In the annotated episodes, queerness is only rarely addressed directly until the fourth season when Willow begins a queer relationship with Tara. In contrast to the shows discussed previously, Willow does not report any feelings of isolation related to her queerness, but still keeps her new relationship secret from her friends for a time.

While Willow is one of the most central characters of the show from Season 1 onwards, her role in the supernatural threat fighting group changes from tech support to magic user throughout Seasons 3 and 4, in which context she then also meets her later love interest Tara. Several of the annotated episodes thus draw a link between the supernatural elements in the show and queerness, such as Xander's framing of his attraction to a vampire as "bent" (S01E10), or the disapproval of Tara's family about her "lifestyle" (Episodic, S05E05). Additionally, the show's overall premise based on the subversion of commonly assumed gender roles in the horror genre also aligns with an interpretation of the magical elements as a deviation from the larger, more heteropatriarchal society the characters live in. This becomes particularly evident in the show's strong and recurring emphasis on friendship and chosen family over more normative family dynamics (e.g., S05E05), also described by Battis (2005, 12).

In the fictional world of the story, queerness is thus more frequently implied through parallels to magical storylines than discussed explicitly, likely in part also because of the show's main focus being more on the action and fantasy elements, as indicated by the IMDb tagging discussed in Section 3.4.1.3. Nevertheless, many of the characters still draw on the notion of queerness for the purpose of quips and jokes, often reinforcing the parallel drawn between

magic and queerness (e.g., Xander and Buffy's discussion of Willow and Tara's "Wiccan lifestyle" (Xander, S05E05)).

Overall, this gives rise to the impression of a fictional world in which the (hidden) magical community that the main characters are a part of perceives and conceptualizes queerness as largely unremarkable, quite possibly in contrast to the mainstream society's perceptions (as illustrated by Tara's family in S05E05, or Tara and Willow's argument about Tara's perception of Willow's queerness as just a "college thing" (Willow, S05E19)).

4.2.4. Queerness in *Lost Girl*

Lost Girl, which focuses on the magical adventures of the queer (titular) protagonist Bo, is particularly striking in that the stated intention of the showrunners for the show was to create a world in which queerness is normalized and not worthy of note (Watercooler Journal 2015). As such, many of the characters are in some way queer, though the most prominent queer characters are Bo and her love interest Lauren. Additionally, Bo's sexuality is also a force in the narrative in that she gains the power to magically heal herself (and kill others) via kissing and sexual contact, though, over the course of the story, she does also learn to use her powers to also heal others instead.

Queerness and character prominence in the annotated episodes

Similar to the findings for *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the character with the most annotated segments by a wide margin is the show's fae[12] protagonist Bo with 969 segments in total (see *Table 17*). Accordingly, she is also the character producing the highest number of tokens and words in her segments. The character with the next highest number of segments is Bo's human best friend Kenzi (one of the few characters who specify that they are not queer within the show), and she is also the character with the longest annotated segment of all the characters. This is in line with both her characterization within the show as outspoken, and her role as the protagonist's closest confidante. Slightly lower, yet relatively comparable are the numbers of segments annotated for Bo's two main romantic interests in the show, namely the werewolf Dyson (404 segments) and the human doctor Lauren (378 segments). In contrast

[12] In the world of the show, "fae" is an umbrella term used for various magical and supernatural creatures.

to the shows previously discussed, *Lost Girl* has a comparatively small number of main cast characters. As such, the number of segments contributed by recurring characters is much higher than in the other shows, and, with 760 segments in total, recurring characters collectively produce more dialogue than any single main cast character except Bo.

Some of these recurring characters are, in fact, as prominent in their contributions to the dialogue as certain main characters: The Valkyrie Tamsin, for instance, contributes 245 segments with an average segment length of 10.07 in the annotated episodes, despite being classified as a recurring character based on the information available on the series' DVD and the show's IMDb page. As such, her contributions are similar in extent to those of the fae bar-owner Trick, and noticeably more extensive than those by Dyson's best friend Hale, who is credited as a main character in spite of his not appearing in every one of the annotated episodes. The number of segments produced by episodic characters is once again similar to that found for *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, likely once again due to the frequent episodic plots focusing on supernatural creatures and conflicts. A small number of segments are classified as unclear, and a slightly higher number as group-all.

Character/ category	Number of segments	Tokens in segments	Words in segments	Average word length	Average segment length	Min. segment length	Max. segment length
Bo	**969**	**12940**	**10334**	3.71	10.66	2	98
Dyson	404	4439	3476	**3.68**	**8.60**	2	66
Kenzi	476	6112	4794	3.80	10.07	2	**151**
Lauren	378	4734	3769	3.85	9.97	2	113
Trick	256	3433	2793	**3.98**	10.91	2	67
Hale	**96**	**1356**	**1072**	3.90	**11.17**	2	**62**
episodic	302	4039	3203	3.91	10.61	2	56
group-all	17	66	39	5.36	2.29	1	15
main	2579	33014	26238	3.78	10.17	2	151
recurring	**760**	11167	9002	3.82	11.84	2	143
unclear	7	227	188	3.74	26.86	2	112

Table 17 Selected quantitative measures reported by the UAM CorpusTool for Lost Girl

Season 1 focuses on Bo trying to learn more about her mother and her own origins, as well as the vaguely defined relationships Bo has with both Dyson and Lauren. The matrix plot in *Figure 23* consistently shows Bo to be the most frequently contributing character in these early episodes, in line with her overall much higher number of contributions across all

episodes. Strikingly, Lauren and Dyson have an almost identical number of contributed segments in S01E08, as Bo tries to negotiate her ambiguously romantic but certainly friendly relationship with both characters. Other episodes (such as S01E13) in which her relationship with one of these characters is closer than with the other see a different distribution of segments per episode.

As Bo is broken up with her main romantic interests in both annotated Season 2 episodes, the number of their contributions varies here: In S02E21, Lauren and Dyson even explicitly commiserate over the similar (uncertain) state of their romantic prospects, both with regards to Bo and to their respective other partners. In S03, Bo and Lauren are once again a couple, though only one of the episodes has Lauren contributing more frequently to the dialogue than Dyson does: Interestingly, this episode (S03E03) does not focus on Bo and Lauren's relationship, but rather on that between Lauren and Kenzi, as they are in conflict because of their respective roles in Bo's life while Bo is under the influence of a magical threat. This is the only episode among the ones annotated in which another main character (Kenzi) contributes more frequently to the dialogue than Bo does. Notably, the other episode (S03E06) has Kenzi and Bo in conflict, while Lauren is comparatively only peripherally involved in the episode's plot.

By Season 4, the previously rather antagonistic relationship between Lauren and Dyson has settled, with both of them united in their care for and concern over Bo and approaching something of a tentative friendship (see both S04E08 and S04E13). While Bo remains the single character contributing most frequently to the dialogue, S04E08 actually has the recurring character Tamsin as the character with the second highest number of contributions (at 44 segments), which puts her at a similar level of prominence in the dialogue as Dyson or Hale (41 segments each), even though both of them are credited as main characters. This trend appears to hold true for many of these later episodes, wherein recurring characters (such as Tamsin, Vex, or the season antagonists) consistently contribute to the dialogue at a similar level of prominence as some of the main cast characters.

In S05E13, Bo and Lauren are not on good terms, though, interestingly, Lauren is still the most prominent main character in the dialogue after Bo. Season 5 focuses on Bo's recurring conflict with her biological parents, and as such repeatedly has various characters debating the concept of "family". In both annotated episodes, Bo and Lauren are the main cast characters

contributing most frequently, with recurring characters also highly prominent. It must be noted that multiple main cast characters have died during Seasons 4 and 5, which explains their absence from these episodes. Of these, only Kenzi is revived during Season 5 and thus reappears in the last annotated episode. By the end of S05E16, the series finale, in which Bo ultimately chooses her friends over her biological family, Lauren and Bo are again a couple. However, Lauren and Dyson also have the understanding that he will support the longer-lived Bo once Lauren (one of the few human characters with a limited lifespan) has died. The group (and especially Kenzi) also takes responsibility for the recently deceased Tamsin's child, to prevent her from "grow[ing] up a lost girl" (Bo).

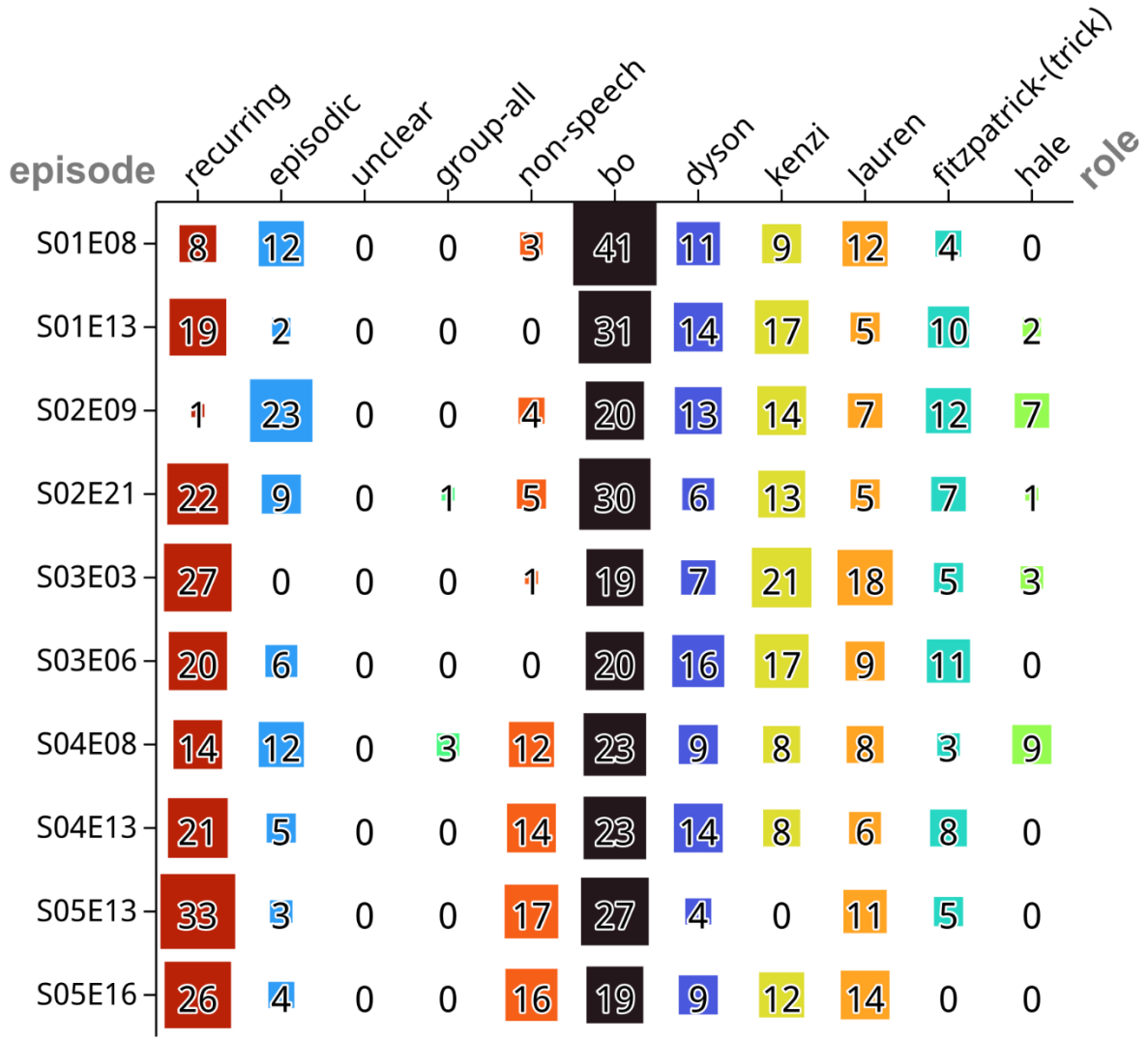


Figure 23 Matrix plot of characters' dialogue contributions per episode in Lost Girl

Throughout the annotated episodes, recurring and episodic characters make up a significant number of contributions to the dialogue, many of them in relation to the episodic "monster

of the week" (e.g., Rudy and McDonald 2016) mysteries. Overall, Bo is in most cases the character with the highest number of contributions, followed by either her love interests (Dyson, Lauren) or her best friend (Kenzi), depending on the focus of the episode. The other main cast characters (Trick, Hale) are typically less prominent in the dialogue as they take on roles less central to the episodes' plots. Certain recurring characters, such as Tamsin (who has an unrequited romantic interest in Bo, while also sometimes casually sleeping with her), have a similarly (or even more) prominent role.

The role of queerness in the story world

As previously mentioned, the stated intention of the showrunners in constructing the fictional world of *Lost Girl* was to present queerness as something unremarkable. In several respects, this appears to be reflected in the annotated episodes: The protagonist's two main love interests are frequently positioned in comparable circumstances in their romantic arcs (both with regards to Bo and to other people), and go from highly antagonistic in Season 1 to friendly by Season 5. As such, Bo's romance with a man goes through similar trials as her relationship with a woman. Additionally, many of the characters in the show exhibit same-gender attraction and gender nonconformity, though none of these are discussed using common terms of queer in-group identity. As such, it appears reasonable to assume that these behaviours are sufficiently normalized in the world of the show as to require no comment. Many of the characters in the show also employ humour and quips that draw on concepts related to sexuality, though oftentimes in non-sexual contexts (e.g., the discussion about "Bo's box" in S04E08), which could also be seen as a sign that (queer) sexuality is an acceptable topic in casual conversation to the characters themselves.

Interestingly, Bo's most consistently positive relationship is with her platonic human best friend Kenzi, one of the few characters who explicitly mention not being romantically or sexually interested in either Bo specifically or women more generally (e.g., S01E13). In fact, Kenzi is repeatedly referred to as "Bo's heart" (Kenzi, S04E13), which further emphasizes her paramount importance to Bo.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that, in the fantastic world of the story, Bo's (queer) sexuality does pose a very real physical risk to her potential partners: As a magical creature with the power to drain other characters' life force and to control others' behaviour

by touching them, there appear to be striking parallels to real-world stereotypes and prejudices surrounding queer sexuality (e.g., Raley and Lucas 2006, 31-2). As such, one could argue that this show, too, draws a parallel between magic(al powers) and real-world discussions about queerness, especially since much of the show focuses on a secret society of magical beings existing hidden from humans. Throughout the episodes, Bo (as well as other characters) repeatedly use their sexuality as a means to trick others, which once again aligns with the notion of sexuality as a potential (magical) threat (e.g., Lauren in S01E08, Bo in S02E21, Bo's father in S05E13).

4.2.5. Queerness in *Will & Grace*

As a sitcom, *Will & Grace* has shorter episodes than the shows discussed previously. However, likely due to the characteristically quick and informal dialogues (Section 2.3.1), as well as the lower number of main characters, the number of segments annotated per character is not as different from the shows in the Drama format (of around 40 minutes) as might otherwise be expected. A further feature that should be mentioned that distinguishes it from the other shows is the use of a laugh track, which none of the other annotated shows use consistently.

Queerness and character prominence in the annotated episodes

As the show focuses mainly on the lives and unusually close platonic relationship between the two titular characters Will and Grace, these characters are also the ones with the highest numbers of annotated segments (see *Table 18*): The overall highest number here can be found for Grace, who, correspondingly, also has the highest number of words and tokens in her segments, as well as the greatest maximum segment length. Will, whose overall number of segments annotated is slightly lower, also has a shorter average segment length, and a shorter maximum segment length. This is in line with his characterization, which he himself describes as "uptight and moody" (S05E22).

Notably, both Will and Grace are generally characterized as (comparatively) more serious and settled in comparison with the other two main cast characters, Karen and Jack, both of whom tend towards pranks and spontaneity. While both Karen and Jack contribute fewer segments to the dialogue overall, their turns are on average longer than those contributed by Will and Grace, even though Jack also has the shortest maximum segment length of all main

characters. As the cast of main characters for this show is the smallest of all annotated shows, the number of contributions made by episodic and recurring characters are comparatively prominent. In fact, the longest segment annotated for this show was produced by an episodic character. There is a very small number of segments annotated as "unclear", and a similarly low number of ones annotated as "group-all", though this might also be affected by the chosen style of subtitling in some of the episode transcripts: Here, several instances where identical simultaneous dialogue was produced by multiple characters (most commonly Will and Grace), was transcribed twice and thus could be counted for each of the characters separately.

Character/ category	Number of segments	Tokens in segments	Words in segments	Average word length	Average segment length	Min. segment length	Max. segment length
Will	462	6090	4812	**3.81**	**10.42**	1	93
Grace	**488**	**6525**	**5140**	**3.63**	10.53	1	**114**
Karen	**185**	3515	**2771**	3.77	**14.98**	**2**	103
Jack	310	5317	4186	3.75	13.50	1	**83**
episodic	258	3821	3070	3.64	11.90	1	**137**
main	1445	21447	16909	3.73	11.70	1	114
recurring	229	3035	2314	3.69	10.10	1	87
unclear	4	14	11	3.73	2.75	2	8
group-all	10	105	83	3.61	8.30	2	35

Table 18 Selected quantitative measures reported by the UAM CorpusTool for Will & Grace

In the early annotated seasons, the annotated episodes often focus on Will and Grace negotiating their (platonic) relationship with each other versus their romantic relationships with other people: In S01E16, they are brought into conflict over competing for the romantic interest of their new neighbour, S01E18 focuses on Grace's jealousy when Will makes another (female) friend, while S02E04 has Grace's mother arranging a date for Will instead of her daughter, which Grace perceives as a betrayal. In these episodes, Will and Grace are typically the characters with the highest numbers of segments produced (see *Figure 24*). Jack and Karen, as the other main cast characters, thus appear to be less prominent in the dialogue. Indeed, they most commonly contribute to the episode's storyline by providing (dubious) advice or joking commentary to Will and Grace, which is in line with their characterization as the more unserious of the main characters. S02E07, however, deviates from this pattern, as here Jack is the character contributing most frequently to the dialogue, likely due to the fact

that this episode focuses on his coming out to his mother with the support (and mockery) of his friends.

The annotated episodes from Season 3 show a slightly different pattern, as here Will and Grace's episodic sub-plots more rarely interact with each other: In S03E06, Grace is propositioned by a former boyfriend and his new girlfriend, and is struggling with whether she wants to accept their invitation, while Will is trying to help Jack pick up another man. Due to this focus, the episode has episodic characters contributing more frequently than any of the individual main characters, and the number of segments produced by Will is comparable to that produced by Jack, as they spend much of the episode together. Similarly, S03E23 focuses on Will and Grace's respective new romantic relationships that they are each trying to keep secret, a fact which causes them to avoid interacting for much of the episode.

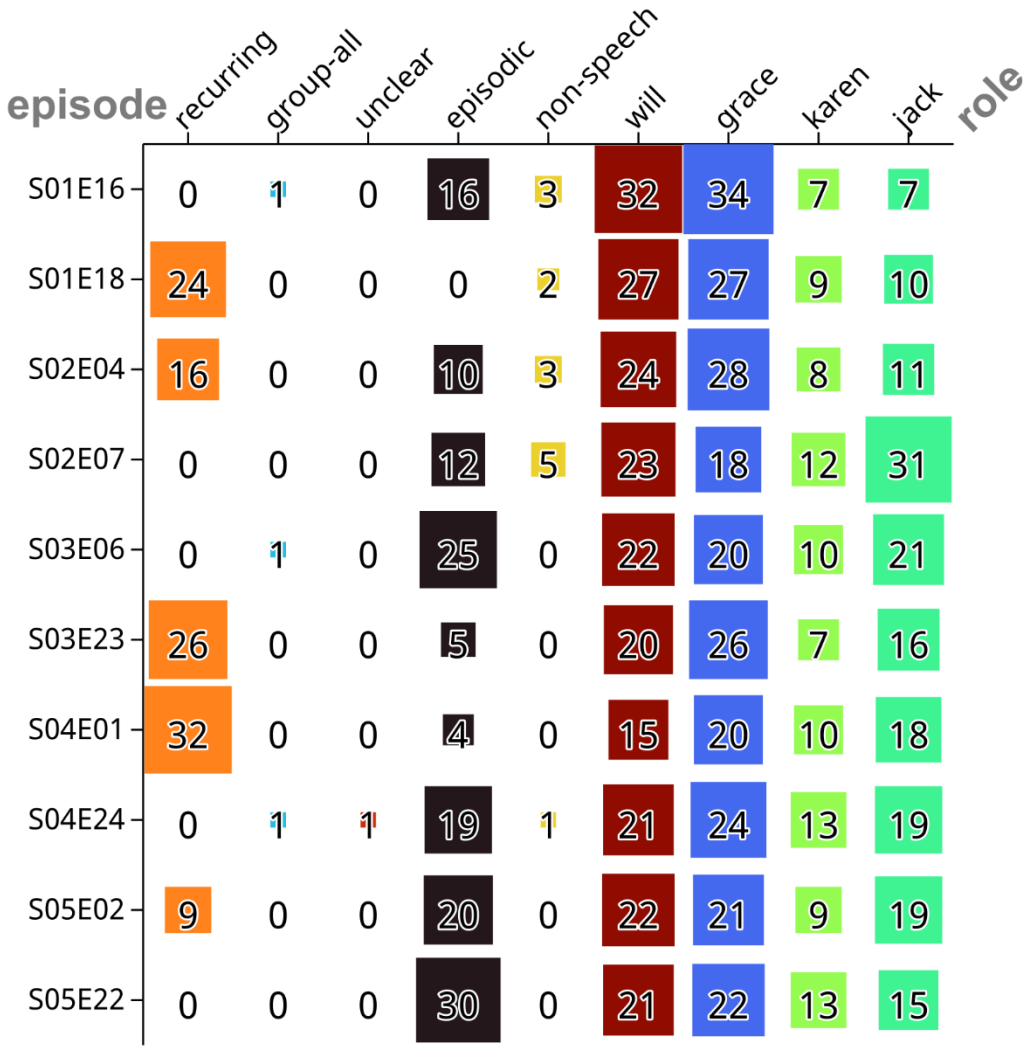


Figure 24 Matrix plot of characters' dialogue contributions per episode in Will & Grace

Both Season 4 episodes again focus more strongly on the relationship between Will and Grace: S04E01 has Grace's new boyfriend trying to compete for her attention against Will, while S04E24 has them at a "family" (Will, S04E01) photoshoot that Will invites Grace to. In contrast to earlier episodes, Jack (and, to a lesser degree, Karen) appear to be more prominent in their own sub-plots as they contribute more frequently: This may indeed correspond to an increased seriousness of their characters' episodic storylines, as, for instance, Jack is attempting to connect with his recently discovered biological son in S04E01. At the beginning of S05E02, Will and Grace are trying to have a child together as friends. As such, their relationship with one another is undeniably strong and continues to be highly defining for their lives, though interestingly, their episodic sub-plots in both annotated Season 5 episodes focus rather on their relationship with other characters: For Grace, her episodic plots focus on a potential romantic relationship with a new acquaintance in S05E02, and on her friendship with Jack in S05E22. For Will, these episodes have the friendships with Jack and Karen, respectively, leading him into difficult situations.

Throughout all seasons, the main characters appear to be consistently contributing the majority of the dialogue segments. Episodic queer characters do appear in some of the episodes as romantic interests of both Will and Jack's, though none of the annotated episodes have any recurring queer characters. Based on the IMDb synopses of other episodes and seasons of the show, however, it appears that such characters do exist in the show beyond the scope of the annotated episodes.

The role of queerness in the story world

The analysed episodes all frequently draw on the notion of queerness as a source of humour and episodic conflict. As such quips are commonly made by all main cast characters, several recurring sources of humour via deviation from expected dialogue patterns (as described in the *Encyclopedia of Humor Studies* ("AESTHETICS" 2014, 14)) quips draw on other pop-cultural phenomena while assigning a quality of queerness to them. Examples of this can be found, for instance, in Will's description of Jack as "Homo-Wan Kenobi" (S01E16, drawing on the name of a *Star Wars* character who frequently takes on a mentor role), or his description of a melodramatic conflict as being like "Gays of Our Lives" (S02E07, a play upon "Days of Our Lives", a popular soap opera at the time of production). Secondly, all main cast characters tend to use incongruously gendered terms or names for the others to highlight instances of

perceived deviation from expected gender roles. So, for instance, does Karen repeatedly refer to Will by the typically feminine names “Wilma” (S02E07, S03E07, S05E02), “Nelly” (S05E22), and “Mary” (S05E22), Will describes Jack as a “woman on the verge” (S02E07), while Jack in turn once characterizes Grace as “another man” in competition for his “lover”’s attention (S05E22). Also, all characters make occasional use of double entendre to draw connections between sexual topics and non-sexual situations (e.g., “how much wood would a woodchuck chuck” Will, S02E04). Lastly, the characters draw on common prejudices about queerness and apply them to perceptually non-queer characters and relationships, such as Jack telling Will: “I told you, you live with a hetero long enough, you’re going to catch it.” (S01E16).

Beyond these kinds of comments, queerness is also drawn upon as a source of episodic conflict, as many of the episodic sub-plots focus on either an aspect of a character’s sexuality directly, or on the negotiation of the roles of Will and Grace’s respective romantic relationships and their strong platonic bond with one another. Relatedly, much of the episodes’ dialogue appears to indicate that each of the main characters have strongly held expectations about gendered behaviours as well as heteronormative and queer modes of behaviour, though they appear to react to these in markedly different ways: Jack is frequently seen to purposefully adhere to common stereotypes about gay men, in a way that the other main characters respond to with both admiration for his confidence (e.g., Will in S02E07), but also (friendly) mockery for his camp attitude (e.g., Karen in S02E07). By contrast, Will, who is also a gay man, is much more reserved and repeatedly objects to being perceived as “so queer” or feminine (e.g., in S04E01). In this dichotomy, not only queerness itself but also other’s perceptions of queerness are a frequently recurring source of episodic conflict.

4.2.6. Queerness in *Modern Family*

As the second Comedy genre show under analysis, *Modern Family* also adheres to the shorter episode length of approximately 20 minutes compared to the longer 40-minute Drama format. In contrast to *Will & Grace*, however, it does not make use of a laugh track. One distinctive narrative feature to be noted is the frequent use of Reality-TV-style interviews with the characters in which they reflect on the plot as it unfolds, either by themselves or together with another character. These segments mimic the appearance of post hoc interview segments, as any thoughts shared by the characters during them are unknown to the other

characters as the episode moves forward, even if another character is also present. Compared to the small main cast of *Will & Grace*, *Modern Family* has a much larger number of main characters, who might be grouped either according to nuclear family structures, or by age group. In *Table 19*, the nuclear family units are listed together, with characters who are adults (and parents) at the beginning of the show highlighted in orange (e.g., Phil), whereas the younger (child) characters are indicated in yellow (e.g., Haley).

Queerness and character prominence in the annotated episodes

Generally, it can be observed that the adult characters produce more segments of dialogue compared to the younger characters, with the adults ranging from a total of 398 segments (Claire) to 261 segments (Gloria), while the number of segments contributed by the younger characters ranges from 199 (Haley) to 29 (Lily). For these younger characters, this distribution appears to be related to the character's age, with Haley (who is a teenager in Season 1) contributing most frequently, while Lily appears as an infant in S01, and thus only begins to speak in later seasons.

Character/ category	Number of segments	Tokens in segments	Words in segments	Average word length	Average segment length	Min. segment length	Max. segment length
Phil	377	5245	4015	3.78	10.65	2	92
Claire	**398**	5083	3936	**3.79**	9.89	2	103
Haley	199	2354	1829	3.66	9.19	1	50
Alex	104	1162	894	3.63	8.60	2	90
Luke	134	1430	1088	3.57	8.12	2	34
Jay	346	5159	4040	3.70	**11.68**	2	100
Gloria	261	3543	2760	3.73	10.57	2	69
Manny	128	1572	1219	3.76	9.52	2	69
Mitchell	381	**5536**	**4230**	3.70	11.10	2	**109**
Cameron	343	5176	3997	3.74	11.65	2	81
Lily	**29**	**167**	**123**	**3.37**	**4.24**	2	**12**
episodic	304	3264	2503	3.71	8.23	2	55
group-all	21	121	74	3.74	3.52	2	15
main	2733	36808	28426	3.72	10.40	1	109
recurring	103	1692	1293	3.67	12.55	2	70
unclear	15	41	22	3.55	1.47	2	5

Table 19 Selected quantitative measures reported by the UAM CorpusTool for Modern Family

Among the adult characters, Claire and Mitchell have the highest numbers of segments produced, while Mitchell also has the highest numbers of tokens and words in segments. They form a crucial link within the larger family structure as the adult children of Jay's, while also being parents and romantic partners to their respective nuclear family units. Strikingly, Mitchell, one of the two main cast queer characters, is also the character with the greatest maximum segment length, which is in keeping with his characterization as both confrontational and easily embarrassed. In this way, he is frequently described as being similar to his father Jay, the character with the greatest average segment length of any main character.

Claire and Mitchell's partners (Phil and Cameron, respectively), are rather similar with regards to most of the lexical measures described here: However, a shorter average segment length was found for Phil, while Cameron's contributions appear to be slightly more rare yet longer. This similarity is notable as, within the show, Mitchell and Claire reflect on how their partners are rather similar in character to one another (going so far as to affectionately describe them as their "clowns" in S01E09), while they understand themselves to be rather more serious and settled, and thus more similar to their father.

Among the episodes annotated, only some focus more explicitly on Mitchell and Cameron's queerness: S01E09, for instance, focuses on a birthday party the family is throwing for Luke (the youngest of Phil and Claire's children), while S01E13 focuses on the ongoing issue of Jay's discomfort with his son Mitchell's sexuality. Correspondingly, the first episode has Phil and Claire (Luke's parents) as the most frequently contributing characters, whereas for S01E13 it is Jay and Mitchell (see *Figure 25*).

Notably, both Season 2 episodes negotiate Jay's relationships with his children, with S02E02 focusing on the family's attitudes towards physical affection, while S02E18 has Jay joining Mitchell and Cameron for a dinner out with their "gay friends" (Mitchell). Both episodes discuss Mitch's feelings of alienation towards his father, but ultimately seem to help them become closer as they gain a better understanding of the other. While the inciting incident for the episode's conflict in S02E02 is an argument between Mitchell and Cameron, neither of them is very prominent in the episode's dialogue. S02E18, on the other hand, has Mitchell contributing much more frequently, while Cameron remains less prominent. S03, by contrast,

has Cameron as one of the characters with the highest number of contributions in both episodes, as one of them follows an ill-conceived bet that causes him to flirt with a woman at a bar (even though, as a gay man in a monogamous relationship, he has no romantic interest in her), while the other focuses on Mitchell and Cameron's unsuccessful attempts to adopt a second child. As Mitchell is closely involved in both storylines (as both Cameron's partner and co-parent), he is also a frequently contributing character.

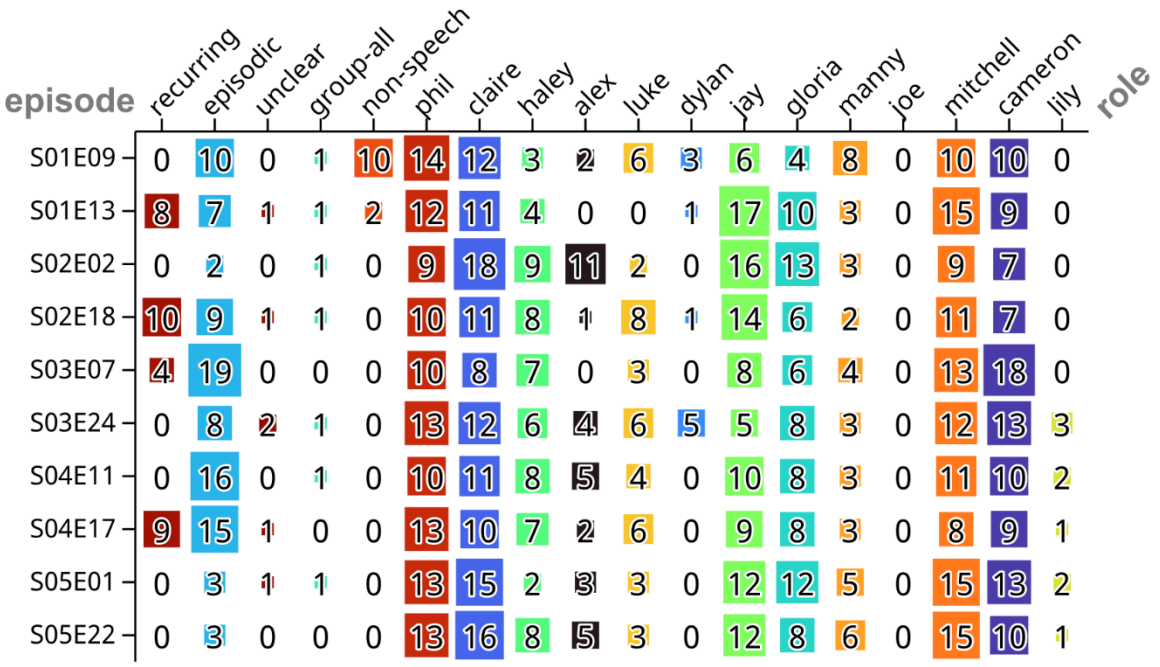


Figure 25 Matrix plot of characters' dialogue contributions per episode in Modern Family

Both of their episodic sub-plots in the annotated Season 4 episodes have Mitchell and Cameron negotiating their experiences with aging and growing more settled in their nuclear family structure: While in S04E11 they try to have a night out because they are "sick of feeling old" (Mitchell), S04E17 rather has them as the more settled best men at the wedding of their "best girlfriend from back in [their] party days" (Cameron). As these sub-plots are only one of several parallel-yet-intersecting episodic plots, varying levels of prominence in the matrix plot can be observed across these episodes. Finally, the episodes annotated from Season 5 both deal with Mitchell and Cameron's decision to get married in the wake of gay marriage being legalized in California, with S05E01 focusing on their elaborate plans for proposals, and S05E22 reawakening the conflict between Jay and Mitchell as they are planning the wedding. Interestingly, both episodes have Claire as (one of) the most frequently contributing characters, with Mitchell at an identical number of annotated segments in E22. As siblings

who perceive themselves to be quite similar in character, Mitchell and Claire are frequently confidantes, especially when they are faced with emotionally charged conflicts or decisions.

As was the case for the other shows with a high number of main cast characters, the annotated episodes of *Modern Family* tend to have rather more variety in who the most frequently contributing characters are. However, there are still some general tendencies to be observed in keeping with the results shown in *Table 19*: In contrast to *Glee*, however, most main cast characters appear in all annotated episodes, and contribute at least some segments to the dialogue. The only exceptions to this rule are, once again, Lily and Joe, both of whom are too young to be capable of speech for at least some of the seasons of the show. In comparison to *Will & Grace*, smaller amounts of the dialogue segments are produced by episodic and recurring characters, likely due to the overall already high number of main cast characters whose relationships with one another are most commonly the focus of the episodic (sub-)plots. However, there are a number of queer characters among these episodic and recurring characters, typically ones who appear as Mitchell and Cameron's queer friends, many of whom are portrayed as more camp than the main cast queer characters.

The role of queerness in the story world

While all of the annotated episodes do discuss and portray some aspect of Mitchell and Cameron's relationship, this oftentimes is less about their queerness in and of itself, but rather about their social roles as part of their family unit: Some of the episodes (e.g., S05E01) do focus specifically on their relationship with one another, but discuss this relationship mostly in terms of others' perceptions of it. Most prominently, these others are Mitchell's father Jay and his sister Claire, both of whom are repeatedly characterized as similar to Mitchell in terms of temperament. Notably, while Claire tends to emphasize these similarities between her and Mitchell, as well as between their respective chosen partners, Jay tends to perceive rather more strongly the differences between himself and his gay son. As such, the sometimes fraught relationship between Jay and Mitchell is a recurring source of episodic and character arc creating tension. In contrast to the findings discussed for *Will & Grace*, both main cast queer characters on this show repeatedly explicitly reject or make fun of queer stereotypes and older terms used by the queer community: They do, for instance, decisively object to the term "lover" being used for their relationship (S02E02), as well as to instances

of humorous incongruity via excessive specificity (e.g., Claire's asking about "gay wedding bells", which Mitchell corrects to "just wedding bells" in S05E01).

Consequently, both Mitchell and Cameron appear to perceive themselves as occupying somewhat atypical roles in all their social groups: Mitchell's family in general and his father Jay in particular seem to regard them as unconventional and non-normative in their lifestyle choices due to their queer relationship. However, Mitchell and Cameron themselves repeatedly emphasize that they feel very settled into their suburban nuclear family structure, where they have "been spending a lot of time with a lot of straight people lately" (Mitchell, S02E18), and thus feel somewhat alienated from other queer people and communities of their acquaintance. As such, one additional source of tension in their episodic plots is frequently derived from this dichotomy of perspectives.

Lastly, it must be pointed out that their very queerness does, occasionally, also directly cause (episodic) conflicts to arise and confronts them with obstacles: Aside from the recurring issue of Jay "wrestl[ing] with homophobia" (Mitchell, S03E07), Mitchell and Cameron also express strong frustration with the difficult process of trying to adopt a child as queer parents in S03E24, and their inability to get married in S04E17. As such, their queerness is repeatedly shown to be an obstacle for them to overcome in their chosen lifestyle as a suburban nuclear family, while their very desire for this lifestyle also appears to cause them to feel alienated from their queer friends and community.

4.2.7. Terms of queer in-group identity in Stage 2 TV shows

Besides the results of the quantitative speaker annotation and qualitative analysis of the role of queerness in the chosen episodes, one additional measure to consider in the interplay between the findings of the Stage 1 and Stage 2 is how the episodes considered for Stage 2 make use of the terms of queer in-group identity as they were discussed in Stage 1. To this end, the selected episode texts from the *TV Corpus* were queried for the relevant core terms of queer in-group identity, with the resulting frequencies visualized in the heatmap in *Figure 26*.

	Fantasy										*Drama*										*Comedy*									
	Buffy the Vampire Slayer										**Dawson's Creek**										**Will & Grace**									
1990s	S1A	S1B	S2A	S2B	S3A	S3B	S4A	S4B	S5A	S5B	S2A	S2B	S3A	S3B	S4A	S4B	S5A	S5B	S6A	S6B	S1A	S1B	S2A	S2B	S3A	S3B	S4A	S4B	S5A	S5B
Lesbian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0
Gay	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	16	0	3	0	3	0	1	1	1	8	3	2	12	3	0	2	5	3	1
Bi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
*Trans**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Queer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
LGBT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Lost Girl										**Glee**										**Modern Family**									
2000s	S1A	S1B	S2A	S2B	S3A	S3B	S4A	S4B	S5A	S5B	S1A	S1B	S2A	S2B	S3A	S3B	S4A	S4B	S5A	S5B	S1A	S1B	S2A	S2B	S3A	S3B	S4A	S4B	S5A	S5B
Lesbian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gay	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	5	0	4	0	0	0	0	5	1	1	14	1	7	14	1	1	0	3	3
Bi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
*Trans**	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Queer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LGBT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Figure 26 Heatmap of Stage 1 terms in annotated Stage 2 episodes

As can be seen from this heatmap, the two annotated Drama shows make use of terms of queer in-group identity in specific episodes which were noted in both Stage 2 analyses as centring certain queer characters both in dialogue contributions and in the episodic plot (e.g., both Season 2 episodes of *Dawson's Creek* focusing on Jack's coming out; Kurt's coming out in S01E04 of *Glee*). Notably, the term most frequently identified within these transcripts was *gay*, with *lesbian* a distant second. To a degree, this may be explained by the fact that in both shows, the queer characters most prominent in the dialogue were found to be gay cis men (cf. *Figure 20* and *Figure 21*, respectively). However, it must be acknowledged that *Glee* at least had multiple other queer main cast characters whose experiences do not seem to be as commonly discussed using terms of queer in-group identity: For instance, Unique's episodic sub-plot in S04E06 that directly focuses on her experience as an (ambiguously) out trans woman has none of the characters using any common terms of queer in-group identity. Instead, she is referred to in ways which could be generously described as ignorant, if not

blatantly transphobic (e.g., “ladyboy” (Kitty)). Taken together with Unique’s small number of dialogue segments that episode, this seems to frame her gender identity as something for her environment to discuss, rather than something she wants to discuss herself.

Both Fantasy shows investigated here are notable in that the rarely (if ever) use any terms of queer in-group identity: As such the impression formed via the qualitative Stage 2 analysis that these shows both rarely discuss queerness directly seems to be strengthened. For this finding, several reasons seem likely to contribute. Firstly, the connection drawn between magical elements and queerness within the fictional realities of both shows seems to lend itself particularly well to discussing queerness more indirectly (e.g., in Buffy and Willow vs. Buffy and Riley’s conversations in S04E19). Secondly, the setting of both shows within (secret) magical communities that appear to be less concerned with heteronormative social structures than the fictional realities created in the non-Fantasy shows (which seem to aim more for cultural than fictional realism (in the sense of Marshall and Werndly 2002, 85).

The two Comedy shows, finally, both make use of *gay* in most of the annotated episodes, though not always to the same degree: Once again, it appears to be the case that those episodes that focus specifically on aspects of queer experience make use of this term most frequently (e.g., Jack’s coming out in S02E07; Mitchell’s conflict with his father in S01E13). For *Will & Grace*, two instances of use of *queer* were identified, while both shows also made use of the term *lesbian* in individual episodes. Once again, it must be noted that the most prominent queer characters for both of these shows were gay cis men, which likely explains the comparatively frequent use of *gay**.

None of the extracted episode transcripts for any of the six shows were found to make use of *bi/bisexual*, *trans**, or *LGBT.* The two instances of use of *queer* in *Will & Grace*, meanwhile, were identified within the qualitative annotation as potentially derogatory.

5. Discussion

Based on the wealth of both qualitative and quantitative data gathered in Stages 1 and 2 of this project, this section integrates the results outlined in Section 491. While the overall structure of this section aligns rather closely with the 2 Stage structure for the sake of clarity and ease of understanding, any aspect of the discussion may draw on the results of any analysis which appears to be relevant, both within and across project stages. Relatedly, it must be noted that some of the findings and their likely explanations are referred to in multiple of these discussion sections, due in part to the complexity and interconnectedness of the phenomenon under investigation as it was pointed out in Sections 1 and 2, but also as a deliberate methodological choice. In doing so, this section aims for a more nuanced interpretation of the gathered data, following the example of Wodak and Meyer (2016, 138).

5.1. Discussion: Stage 1

For the Stage 1 analyses, the scripted North American component of the *TV Corpus* (Davies 2021) was queried for common current terms of queer in-group identity as they were defined in Section 2.2.3 to get a bird's eye view on these terms' use on scripted television over time and across genres. Relevantly, the queries formulated for this purpose made use of optional wildcard elements to capture a wider range of relevant tokens, which in this project have also been referred to as "variants" of these terms of queer in-group identity. Due to this flexibility of the queries on the one hand, and the alternative meanings commonly in use for several of the investigated terms on the other, these queries also identified a range of hits that were deemed not relevant in a large-scale annotation of extracted concordance lines based on the general guidelines described in Section 3.3.2. While this type of annotation must necessarily rely on a researcher's own subjective judgements, this project "aim[s] for wider transparency about methodological decisions" (Baker and McEnery 2015, 9), according to which principle the following sections commonly draw on notable examples from the annotated concordance lines to in order to ensure, if not the intersubjective reliability of the annotation, then at least a fairly high degree of intersubjective plausibility.

In light of the great variety of different yet related analyses of the Stage 1 data described in Section 4.1, this discussion is segmented into what could arguably be described as four main

dimensions of the analyses: Firstly, the degree of variation visible in the extracted relevant hits for each of the investigated terms of queer in-group identity must be considered (Section 5.1.1), followed by a synthesis of the diachronic points of comparison described for Stage 1 (Section 5.1.2). Due to the low frequencies found for all investigated terms of queer in-group identity except *gay** and *lesbian**, the genre specific comparison (Section 4.1.7) focuses on these two terms, while still considering historical and genre specific features that might be assumed to be applicable to the use of other terms of queer in-group identity as well. Within the constraints of this current research project, such observations can only be based on possible similarities in the developments of use of certain terms as they were discussed in Sections 4.1.5 and 4.1.6. Finally, collocation analyses are drawn on to extrapolate common contexts of use of the various terms of identity (Section 5.1.4), again focusing on the highest-frequency variants of the two most common terms of queer in-group identity (*gay* and *lesbian*). This focus was chosen to provide a diachronic perspective that the other investigated terms cannot meaningfully contribute to due to their overall scarcity within the annotated datasets. To contextualize and explain the findings for each of these perspectives, historical contexts, genre conventions, as well as examples identified during both stages of the analysis are drawn upon as required.

5.1.1. Alternative meanings and creative word-formation in TV dialogue

In the data extracted from the *TV Corpus* for the Stage 1 analysis, the greatest number of different relevant hits was found for *gay**. This relative wealth of identified variants of the term might be partially explained by a combination of several different factors: Firstly, it must be acknowledged that *gay** was, in fact, the most frequently identified term of in-group identity by a wide margin, as was explained in Section 4.1.3. As such, the creative use of *gay** and this wide variety of identified relevant tokens might be partially attributed to this greater frequency in different ways:

Firstly, the overall higher frequency of use may have made instances of what this project calls “creative” uses of the term more visible (e.g., in case of blends such as *Gaybraham* (Supplement B2, “gay”, hit 22207). As was discussed in Section 3.3.1.4, variants that occurred less than five times could not be considered for practical reasons. At the same time, this

overall higher frequency across time and genre (Sections 4.1.3 and 4.1.7, respectively) may also make it more likely for individual creative variants to become more well-known and conventionalized into use beyond the individual episode or show. This appears to be especially true for the use of *gay-* as a first syllable in blends with other concepts, typically ones that are similar in their spelling or pronunciation, such as is the case for *gay-dar* and *radar*, or *gay-cist* and *racist* (e.g., Supplement B2, "gay", hits 2790, 8946). It must be pointed out that the overall frequencies of use of most of these blends still tend to be fairly low, and attributable to only one or a small number of episodes: *Gaybraham*, for instance, was found in a total of just four episodes (Supplement B2, "gay", hits 1688, 2190, 21024, 21025, 22207).

As one of the higher frequency examples of this phenomenon, the term *gaydar* appears to be worth discussing in more detail: It was identified a total 91 times with this exact spelling within the dataset, in a wide array of different episodes, shows, and genres, and could thus be argued to have become conventionalized. Indeed, the term may be found in established online dictionaries (e.g., "Gaydar" 2024). Another argument in favour of interpreting this term as comparatively conventionalized is the fact that the concept of a *gaydar* may also be invoked in the absence of the term itself. An example of this was identified in the qualitative Stage 2 annotation of *Will & Grace*: When Jack is asked how he knows that a potential romantic interest of his is queer, he asserts that "he beeped" (Supplement C2, *Will & Grace*, S03E06). In this scene, Jack, who is, in another episode, described by Will as having "the most finely tuned gay-dar in the tri-state area" (Supplement C2, *Will & Grace*, S01E16), not only voices confidence in his ability to recognize another queer man on sight, but also uses a description that invokes actual radar technology to describe this supposed ability. As such, the concept of the "gaydar" appears to be sufficiently well-established within both the fictional world of the story and the context of production to make such an implicit invoking of the term comprehensible not only to Will, but likely also to (parts of) the audience. It is worth noting that this particular example of such a higher-frequency blend does draw on the preconception that members of the queer community might be immediately identified based on their looks or behaviour, as it was described by Cox et al. (2016, 157). In consequence, this might also be seen as reinforcing certain stereotypes about the appearance and behaviour of queer people, which has been noted as a common feature in the portrayal of gay men in *Will & Grace* (e.g., Chung 2007, 101).

Strikingly, a number of compounds found among the hits for *gay**, such as *gay-bashing* or *gay-married* (e.g., Supplement B2, "gay", hits 275, 218), were anecdotally observed during the manual annotation of hits to occasionally be used as umbrella terms for other queer identities as well. As such, it appears that the term *gay-married* may also at times be used within the dataset to refer to e.g., a marriage between two lesbians, which is in line with common definitions of the term *gay* as they were outlined in Section 2.2.3. As such, it appears likely that such uses of the term *gay** as an umbrella term might also contribute to the term's comparative popularity within the dataset.

However, while the overall high frequency of use of *gay** as a term of queer in-group identity might offer a partial explanation for the great variety in identified hits, it must be noted that the investigated term with the second highest number of relevant hits, *lesbian**, was found to have been realized in only a small number of relevant variants (Section 4.1.2). One possible explanation for this could be that *lesbian** was the only non-acronym term queried for that consisted of more than one syllable, thus arguably making it less convenient for compounding or blending. This is also in line with the finding that both *bi** and *trans** could be identified in a greater variety of relevant realizations of the respective term of queer in-group identity, in spite of their comparatively lower frequencies and high percentages of non-relevant hits (Section 4.1.1). One possible reason for this could once again be the fact that *bi* and *trans* themselves are clippings, arguably making them more convenient for compounding or blending than multi-syllable in-group identity terms.

Strikingly, the word-formation processes visible in some of these more creative uses of these clippings might be described as something akin to a "two-way derivation": Initially, the prefixes *bi* and *trans* (commonly used in the English language with a meaning of "twice" ("Bi" 2024), and "across" ("Trans" 2024)), respectively, appear to have been added to terms relating to sexuality or gender to refer to specific queer identities. Based on the results described in Section 4.1.2, however, it appears that some of the variants found in the datasets likely were the result of a strong semantic association between these affixes and the respective queer identities they commonly refer to. As such they may be used in a compound, affix, or blend with another morpheme that does not, itself, have a conventionalized meaning

related to gender or sexuality but still be understood as having a meaning relating to the queer community. One example of this phenomenon can be found in the term *bi-curious* (e.g., Supplement B2, “bi”, hit 2159). Notably, this token occurs frequently enough that it appears reasonable to assume a certain degree of conventionalization in line with what was discussed for *gaydar* as well, and indeed this blend is once again listed in established online dictionaries (e.g., (“Bi-curious” 2024)).

In case of the identified relevant hits for *trans**, it must be noted that the three most frequent variants were identified as various terms for trans umbrella identities as they were outlined in Section 2.2.3, and that no one realization of the term contributed more than 30 percent of the relevant hits (c.f. *Figure 3*). In this way, the variety in identified variants of the term can be likened to that found for *bi**, where both *bi* and *bisexual* each contributed less than 30 percent of the hits.

Most (if not all) of the investigated terms of queer in-group identity have a history of being used as a slur, which might arguably be reflected in the extracted datasets as well (e.g., “I knew you were a fucking **gay-ass** liberal” (Supplement B2, “gay”, hit 15349)). While this observation could not be quantified in this dataset due to the practical constraints of the project, previous research on the topic suggests that such uses are likely to be highly prevalent for several of the terms for queer identities investigated here, *trans**, *gay**, but also *queer** prominent among them (for a comprehensive overview, see Worthen 2023). As such, the variety in identified relevant tokens for *trans** (and, to a lesser degree, for *bi**) might also be linked to the histories of these identities and their struggle for recognition as part of the queer community: Not only have individuals whose experiences, in current terms, might be described as falling under the *trans** or *bi** umbrellas long struggled to be recognized as part of the queer community and deserving of queer advocacy, but they were also frequently in conflict about which terms of in-group identity were preferrable and applicable to whom (e.g., Hutchins 2018, 250-3; Section 2.2.3).

For *queer**, only two additional relevant variants (*queers* and *queerest*) were identified, one of which could be identified as the plural noun, the other as a superlative adjective. Strikingly, this lack of variability cannot be explained along the same lines as that of *lesbian** and *LGBT**,

seeing as *queer** only consists of a single syllable, thus making it easier to produce in spoken language and (arguably) also to blend, compound, or affix (as was discussed previously for e.g., *gay** and *lesbian**). One alternative explanation might be found in the comparatively recent reclamation of the term (as it is discussed in e.g., Brontsema 2004, 12, 14), which makes older uses of the term more likely to be instances of use that could be classified as slurs. This interpretation aligns with the finding that the strongest identified collocate for queer was another slur for the queer community (i.e. *faggot*; *Table 13*). Accordingly, creative word-formations that appear to carry rather neutral to positive connotations (such as the previously discussed variants *gaydar or bi-curious*) might be less likely to occur for *queer**. Additionally, the lower frequency of use and the term's fairly recent reclamation might together indicate hesitancy on part of the television industry to use a potentially contentious term creatively, in keeping with what has been described as "least objectionable programming" (e.g., Adams et al. 1983, 10). Accordingly, this hesitancy might then be put into stark contrast with the treatment that the terms *gay** and *trans** have received on scripted TV.

Of all the queried terms, *LGBT** had both the lowest frequency overall and the least number of relevant variants found. Possible reasons for this might be the comparative newness of the term (Section 2.2.3), but also the probably greater difficulty of producing it in spoken language. In this sense, it might be compared to the findings for *lesbian**, seeing as the term's typically multi-syllabic form was also drawn on as a possible explanation for the small number of variants found in spite of a comparatively high number of identified relevant hits.

Overall, it appears that a combination of several factors is likely to influence the degree of creativity and variation evident in how terms of queer in-group identity are used on scripted television. While additional factors are both possible and likely, the findings of this study suggest that creativity and variability in the use of terms of queer in-group identity on scripted television are influenced by at least the following interrelated dimensions:

a) **Frequency of use**, with higher-frequency terms more likely to develop creative or contextually novel variants.

b) **Degree of conventionalization**, the extent to which specific variants (e.g., blends or compounds) have become familiar or established beyond the individual instance of use.

c) **Function as an umbrella term**, whether a term is used inclusively to refer to multiple queer identities (beyond its original referent).

d) **Morphological adaptability**, the relative ease of pronunciation, affixation, or blending afforded by the term's phonological and morphological structure.

e) **Sociopolitical history**, ongoing or historical debates within the queer community regarding the political or identity-related connotations of the term.

f) **Perceived institutional acceptability**, perceptions of a term's appropriateness or marketability within the television industry and its standards of broadcast language.

g) **Chronology of adoption**, the relative recency with which a term has been embraced as a self-descriptor by members of the queer community.

5.1.2. Terms of queer in-group identity across time

Turning to the diachronic comparison of the respective terms of queer in-group identity, the first and most obvious observation is that changes in the frequency of use do appear to take place for all of the investigated terms, and that these changes do in some respects appear to coincide with sociopolitical developments in the aims of and terminology used by queer activism: Considering the data in its chronological order, it is striking that these current terms of queer in-group identity could in no instance be identified as being used in reference to the queer community during the **1950s and 1960s**. Those (comparatively few) instances in which e.g., *gay** or *queer** were identified within the dataset were found to at least equally likely be in reference to the terms' alternate meanings during the concordance line analysis (e.g., Supplement B2, "queer", hit 1235).

Of course, it must be acknowledged that this lack of relevant findings may in part be due to the fact that not all of the investigated terms of queer in-group identity were already in use

with their current typical meanings as they were described in Section 2.2.3: Quite to the contrary, both the results of the concordance line annotation and the histories of the terms as they were outlined by e.g., Bronski (2011, 15) suggest that several of them were then still more commonly in use with their alternative meanings (e.g., *queer*), or had not come into use yet (e.g., *LGBT*). However, a comparison to other terms relating to sex and sexuality reveals a similar pattern also for terms that were already well-established at the time: One striking example of this can be found in the term *homosexual*, which was first recorded as a term to describe the queer community in the 1860s (Janssen 2021, 1-2). Notably, this is also a rare example of a term for the queer community that does not have an alternative meaning associated with it. As such, most, if not all, of the identified instances of use are likely to be associated with a meaning relating to the queer community. Based on the fact that this term, too, does not appear in the *TV Corpus* up until the 1970s, and then is ranked similarly on the wordlist as *queer*, it appears reasonable to conclude that changing terminologies might not be the only reason for the queried terms' absence from the 1950s and 1960s data (see also *Figure 6*). Accordingly, it is worth noting that same-gender intimacy was still widely criminalized under "sex perversion" laws (e.g., Lugowski 1999, 9) during this period, and that, consequently, the constraints of the production code and similar censorship measures severely limited the creative choices of production teams (Nurik 2018, 530).

As such, the absence of current terms of queer in-group identity on scripted television of that period is likely also linked to the severe consequences more overt portrayals of queerness may have had on the creative teams and their shows: Explicit portrayals of queerness might likely have led to the episode in question not being broadcast, the show in question being cancelled, or even potential industry bans for some members of a production team. This interpretation is also supported anecdotally by later interviews and reports given by creative teams active at the time: Gene Roddenberry, for instance, creator and showrunner of the original *Star Trek* (*Star Trek* 1966-1969), one of the biggest-budget shows of its time, is reported to have actively decided against including textually queer (episodic) characters and plotlines for fear of the show's cancellation (Daily Star Trek News 2019). This aligns also with the overall state of queer art at the time as it was described by e.g., Littauer (2018), according to which the portrayal of queerness at the time was relegated more to forms of expression that allowed for ambiguity also via "cultural subversion" (79).

In the **1970s**, the first relevant hits could be identified in the wake of the stonewall riots and concurrent to legislative changes in the United States to decriminalize queer identities and relationships (Strub 2018, 82). Here, the highest frequency can be observed for *gay*, and, in contrast to later decades, no other variants of this term appear. Many of the identified hits can be attributed to only a small number of TV shows contained in the corpus, which were also highlighted by Ullman (2018, 365) as shows containing some of the earliest episodic or recurring gay characters on TV.

Comparatively lower frequencies of *lesbian* and *queer* can be observed, with *trans** being the only of the queried terms to appear as more than one variant (*Figure 5*). The most frequently occurring variant here is *transvestite,* with *transsexual* and other variants occurring more rarely. This variety in terminology corresponds to the uncertain status of trans people even within queer advocacy groups at the time, as "[e]arly trans groups had overcome enormous odds" (Strub 2018, 89). This uncertainty might be drawn on to explain this comparative variety of labels in use from two different perspectives: On the one hand, the different terms for trans umbrella identities can be (and have been) argued to highlight different aspects of lived queer experience (e.g., Vicente 2021, 429) which may in turn be reflective of the trans community's various debates surrounding their inclusion in queer advocacy as discussed in Section 2.2.1. Conversely, one could also argue that this uncertain status may have made trans identities appear an easy and acceptable target for jokes or comments about gender nonconformity, as has been described as prevalent also in more recent programming by Rood et al. (2017, 12). Such contexts of use can be at least anecdotally linked to examples seen in the concordance line annotation:

> "Charge Three states you have a noncom who is a **transvestite**."
> "I don't pry into a man's religion" (Supplement B2, "trans", hit 8854)

Here, a misunderstanding between two characters arises over the meaning of the term *transvestite*, likely intended for comedic effect. In light of such uses (not all as seemingly innocuous as this one), the reportedly frequent use of these terms as slurs or sources of (disparagement) humour may also have made trans individuals disinclined to continue using these terms for themselves. Interestingly, the bi community's similarly uncertain status within

queer advocacy appears to have had a rather different effect, with many people attracted to more than one gender choosing to use e.g., *gay* and *lesbian* as umbrella terms to describe their same-gender attraction (e.g., Strub 2018, 85).

The fluctuations in frequency observed during the **1980s** might likewise be linked to sociopolitical upheavals in the United States and beyond, in keeping with what has been described by Brier (2018, 95) or Hutchins (2018, 253). While the frequencies of all queried terms identified in the 80s show variability throughout this decade, this fluctuation is particularly pronounced for *gay**, with the *Peaks and Troughs* analysis (Section 3.3.4) indicating a marked decrease in frequency of use throughout this decade following an initial peak in frequency. This trend may be linked to the effect of both conservative backlash and the undeniable impact of the AIDS crisis on all spheres of North American popular culture (e.g., Ullman 2018, 366). Relatedly, as "AIDS provided an additional pretext for criminalization" (Ritchie and Whitlock 2018, 308) of the queer community, pop-cultural portrayals of such on scripted TV are likely to have echoed these shifting public attitudes, thus contributing to the decrease in use of *gay** as a term of queer in-group identity. Furthermore, it is worth noting that it is plausible that similar effects might have influenced some of the other terms of queer in-group identity as well, but less visibly so due to the overall lower frequencies of these terms.

At the same time, a greater number of different variants of the queried terms were identified for this decade (*Figure 5*), most of them again various terms for trans identities and variants of *gay** in the form of either a plural noun (e.g., *gays*) or superlative adjective (e.g., *gayest*). As such, it does appear reasonable to conclude that, while the overall frequency of use of *gay** decreases during the decade, the creativity of those uses that do occur appears to increase.

By the **1990s**, relevant hits for all queried terms of queer in-group identity excepting *LGBT** could be identified. Quite striking in this context is the steep increase in the use of *bi**, also as, in contrast to *lesbian**, *gay** and *queer**, a number of different variants of this term were found for *bi** in this first decade of its use within the corpus (*Figure 5*). This observation, in

combination with the reported decades-long conflicts surrounding the inclusion of bisexuals in queer advocacy (Strub 2018, 89), suggests that the absence of the term *bi** from the previous decades of the corpus might be indicative of a (conscious or unconscious) "erasure of bisexuality" (e.g de Barros 2020, 105) on scripted TV programming until such terminologies had already become well-established. Along similar lines, it also appears worth noting that one of the identified variants for this decade, *bi-curious*, is commonly utilized to describe individuals who are still questioning their own romantic or sexual orientation. This observation might be linked to common pop-cultural stereotypes surrounding bisexual people as they were discussed in Section 2.2.3: For instance, one common preconception about bisexuality positions it as something of an "intermediary" step, with those who identify as bisexual supposedly eventually coming to the conclusion that they are either entirely hetero- or homosexual (e.g., Monaghan 2016, 3).

In line with the increasing use of the queried terms as blends, the first use of the term *gaydar* was identified for this decade. As was discussed previously, the use of this and similar blends can be considered an example of creative language use on part of the TV shows' creative teams, while also potentially reinforcing certain preconceptions about the queer community (Section 4.1.2). As such, the use of the investigated terms of queer in-group identity might be described as becoming more varied while still drawing on established stereotypes about the queer community.

During the **2000s**, the *Peaks and Troughs* analyses show peaks in the frequencies of use for *lesbian**, *gay**, *queer**, and *transsexual*. Conversely, the frequency of use of *transvestite* appears to begin decreasing after peaking in the late 1990s, while both *trans* and *transgender* are continuing to increase in their frequency of use throughout the decade (Section 4.1.6). This shift in the comparative prominence of terms relating to trans umbrella identities might be argued to mirror trends in preferred terms within the queer community itself (e.g., LGBTQIA Resource Center (University of California, Davis n.d.)): Such a shift in the use of these terms that might be brought about in part by generational changes within the community and changed preferences of use of newer over older terms. However, one additional possible reason behind these changes might also be the use of terms as a slur (Rood et al. 2017, 12), as was also discussed with regards to the hits for *trans** identified in the 1970s.

In light of these circumstances, another likely explanation might be in a shift away from the use of terms that might increasingly be perceived as controversial by TV audiences following the shift towards a more neoliberal political climate and an increasing understanding of queer people as "consumer-citizens" (Weiss 2018, 107): As such, this trend away from the use of potentially controversial terms could be construed as an increasing hesitancy on part of the TV industry to use older *trans** identity labels as slurs or punchlines in their programming, where previous decades did not appear to have the same scruples (e.g., the aforementioned use of the term *transvestite* for comedic effect in the 1970s). Relatedly, those terms for trans identities that have been found to increase in frequency throughout this decade seem to have less of a history of being used as a slur on scripted TV, thus likely making their use in scripted TV programming less charged. In this way, these more recently emerging terms could be said to bear similarity to the first relevant hits for *LGBT**, which, as a fairly recently created acronym, also appears to be used only rarely in contexts that make use of the term as a slur. The findings of the collocation analysis for *transgender* and *LGBT* (*Table 13*)seem to support this interpretation, as the top collocates identified for either more commonly relate to aspects of personal identity (in case *transgender*) or community life and activities (in case of *LGBT*). The only exception to this could be seen in the third strongest collocate for *transgender,* namely *against*.

By contrast, it must be noted that the extremely high frequency of use of *gay** in this decade may be attributable at least in part to instances of use that, if not a slur in the strictest sense, might still be considered a device for humorous effect such as disparagement humour. As such, certain identity labels that may be perceived as strongly associated with their use as a slur can be seen to be decreasing in frequency of use, but it appears that this trend is not (yet) observable for all the investigated terms.

In the last decade to have been included in the *TV Corpus*, the **2010s**, the observable patterns have once again shifted markedly. Following their peaks in the *Peaks and Troughs* analysis in the 2000s (Section 3.3.4), the frequencies of use of *gay**, *lesbian**, *queer**, *transvestite* and *transsexual* appear to decrease further. By contrast, a continued increasing trend can be observed for *bi**, *transgender*, *trans*, and *LGBT*.*

Following the arguments already made about the 2000s with respect to *transvestite* and *transsexual*, it might thus be posited that the perceived acceptability of derogatory uses of these terms may be decreasing: As could be seen from the concordance line annotation, a relatively small number of 2000s shows that were, at the time, widely known for their "gay jokes" (Section 4.1.8.2) was in fact the source of a comparatively large proportion of these hits. The Comedy cartoon *South Park*, for instance, accounts for around 220 relevant hits for *gay** in the 2000s alone. (See e.g., the discussion of the collocate "gay fish" in Section 4.1.8.2). As such shows either ended or began to move away from the use of queer in-group identity labels for purposes of disparagement humour or humorous misattribution, it stands to reason that the overall frequency of use of these terms might also decrease.

However, while this may account for some degree of the changes frequency of use identified for these terms, it is likely that another factor may have an equal, if not greater impact here: As Weiss (2018, 107) observed, both U.S. politics and queer activism during the 2000s and 2010s has moved away from the primary goal of deconstructing power structures, and more towards championing the rights of primarily those members of the queer community who are interested in a "depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption" (Duggan 2020, 179). Considering the benchmarks of queer liberation aimed for in this approach to queer advocacy, it appears to be consistent with an attempt to make queerness less visible in a public sphere, and, if it is to be visible, to desexualize it in keeping with the ongoing overall trend "guided by the imperatives of broad based commercial capitalism, […] and an unwillingness to challenge what might be termed assimilationist images or values" (Ullman 2018, 366). Notably, this project also considered other terms (perceptually) related to sex and sexuality in its analysis (e.g., *homosexual*, *porn*; Section 4.1.5), and found similar patterns for these terms regardless of whether they had a conventional meaning primarily related to the queer community (e.g., *homosexual*) or not (e.g., *porn*). As such, this observed trend towards more implicit discussions of sex and sexuality appears to reach beyond portrayals of the queer community.

Overall, it can be said that changing patterns in the frequency of use of the investigated terms of queer in-group identity appear to frequently coincide with a variety of real-world sociopolitical factors, such as:

a) **Milestone events and policy shifts** in the political treatment of the queer community

b) **Preferred terminology** used by the queer community changed over time

c) **Queer theory and advocacy** shifting in focus to new or additional issues they wish to address

d) S**tereotypes and preconceived notions** associated with specific queer identity labels becoming more widely known or established

e) **Use as slurs** or comedic elements changes in perceived acceptability

Of course, it is likely that a number of other factors may also influence a creative team when choosing to make use of a term of queer in-group identity. While many such factors are necessarily beyond the scope of this project as they are not traceable neither in a large-scale corpus nor by looking only at the final product (see e.g., Bednarek 2018 for an example of how to analyse production practices of TV programming), one such factor worth discussing here in more detail is the likely effect of TV genre.

5.1.3. Terms of queer in-group identity across TV genres

While only the two most frequently occurring terms of queer in-group identity could be meaningfully investigated in terms of their distribution across TV genres, these observations may still be linked to the larger discussion of also the other terms' prominence over time: Firstly, both *gay** and *lesbian** most frequently were found to be used in shows tagged "Romance" (Section 4.1.7). Meanwhile, three of the six shows annotated during Stage 2 of this project were tagged as "Romance" on IMDb (*Dawson's Creek*, *Will & Grace*, *Modern Family*), which seems to correspond to a strong focus on interpersonal (often romantic) relationships in the episodic plots and character arcs as they were discussed in Section 4.2. As such, romance focused shows can be assumed to be mainly concerned with characters' personal lives and to tend towards character-driven stories (in the sense of Trottier 2010,

PLOT). Consequently, it stands to reason that the topical focus and likely associated plot types of the Romance genre would facilitate discussions about characters' personal identities more frequently than some other genres, especially given the relevance of said identities on characters' (potential) availability to form romantic or sexual relationships.

Many storytelling conventions common to the genre may be considered somewhat unrealistic in terms of cultural realism (Marshall and Werndly 2002, 87), such as, for instance, severe misunderstandings between the characters that might be argued to only persist due to the constraints of a fictional world operating by the rules of fictional realism that they take place in. This tendency towards highly exaggerated character conflicts, then, may make the Romance genre particularly suitable for portraying potentially contentious characters and character relationships to draw on as a source of conflict. It must be noted that the Romance genre is by no means the only TV genre that makes use of fictional realism to exaggerate its conflicts, though its topical focus makes it likely for such exaggeration to draw on the interpersonal relationships of the characters to an unusual degree: In case of *Dawson's Creek*, for instance, Birchall (2004, NOSTALGIA, POLITICS AND SUBJECTIVITY) has reported on the characters' tendency to "externalise and analyse every experience", which may be seen as one possible method of highlighting (if not exaggerating) interpersonal conflict.

Similarly, shows tagged as "Comedy" were also found to frequently utilize *gay**, and, to a lesser extent, *lesbian** in their dialogue (Section 4.1.7). In part, this might also be linked back to the previous discussion of the Romance genre and its apparent tendency to utilize exaggerated interpersonal misunderstandings and tensions to create narrative conflict: As can be seen from the shows chosen for Stage 2 tagged as "romance" on IMDb, both Drama and Comedy genre shows may be tagged as such. Accordingly, romantic comedies may be assumed to use similar strategies in their character and plot construction to exaggerate interpersonal conflict. One striking example of such an exaggerated conflict in a Comedy show could be seen in S01E16 of *Will & Grace*, which has the two titular characters competing over the (presumed) affections of their new neighbour in increasingly dramatic ways (Supplement C2, Will & Grace, S01E16).

However, a number of other possible reasons for high frequencies of use within the Comedy genre might be pointed out, too: Firstly, it appears likely that comedic dialogue may be particularly suitable to maintaining ambiguity and "playing" with alternative meanings: As was discussed in Section 2.2.2, many of the earliest ways of representing queer identities on scripted TV were intentionally ambiguous, so as to maintain plausible deniability (Gauntlett 2008, 94). In this sense, the Comedy genre has the unique advantage that audiences will (as one of the genre conventions) expect character utterances to be unserious or joking more commonly than in other TV genres.

As such, a character being described as queer is less likely to be taken as a genuine assertion about their identity by the audience, and may instead be more likely to be interpreted as a joke. Consequently, frequent mentions of queer in-group identities in Comedy programs may have made it possible to discuss such topics in a less controversial way, but it must be noted that this tendency likely also reinforces the (arguably queerphobic) idea of queerness as inherently comical. This polysemy has been highlighted as a core feature of the queer identity construction in *Will & Grace*, too, where "the polysemic nature of joking allows audiences to either laugh with Jack or at Jack" (Battles and Hilton-Morrow 2002, 98).

Examples of a rather more direct and unambiguous use of queer in-group identity labels for comedic effect can be seen in instances of disparagement humour via excessive and repeated specification: In cases of such, someone or something is (often repeatedly) described using a label of queer in-group identity to overemphasize the connection between the label and the labelled person or thing. Within the datasets, many such examples could be found, prominent among them "Big Gay Al", a recurring character on *South Park*, who is addressed or described with this 'name' six times in one episode (e.g., Supplement B2, "gay", hit 6678; see also discussion of personal names as collocates in Section 4.1.8.2). As mentioned in Section 4.2.6, one of the Stage 2 analyses revealed an instance where the main cast queer characters of a show explicitly rejected the use of such unnecessarily specific language: In S05E01 of *Modern Family*, a non-queer character questions one of the main cast queer characters about whether they should expect "gay wedding bells" (Supplement C2, *Modern Family*, S05E01, Claire), which the queer character corrects to "just wedding bells" (Supplement C2, *Modern Family*, S05E01, Mitchell), thereby highlighting the fact that this type of excessive specificity may be perceived as unpleasant (if not offensive) by some.

Additionally, as was briefly outlined in Section 2.2.2, there were a number of fairly popular Comedy genre series in the 1970s and 1980s with individual (textually or subtextually) queer characters, who could be seen as having created early precedent for featuring queer characters. While, on the one hand, the surprising success of these shows and characters may likely at least in part be attributed to the features of Comedy formats outlined above, it in turn also appears reasonable to assume that the overall success of these first shows in turn gave rise to further, similar portrayals, as is described by e.g., Ullman (2018, 365).

In fact, this particular line of argument could even go so far as to claim that the success of these early shows not only emboldened production companies and their creative teams to include more queer characters in other shows, but may also be traced in broader public discourses surrounding queer rights in the U.S.: One frequently cited example notes that in 2012 then-Vice President Joe Biden credited the great success of the sitcom *Will & Grace* with altering the public perception of and opinion about queer rights. While this arguably may have been an overstatement, "he had a point about the power of mainstream culture to help ease the way" (Ullman 2018, 366).

To expand upon this discussion of genre conventions and common features that may be drawn on to explain the varying prevalence of terms of queer in-group identity, considering changes to these practices of use over time may prove fruitful. As can be seen from *Figure 15*, the first peak in frequency for *gay** can be mostly attributed to shows tagged as "Romance" and "Comedy", which may be argued to align with the previously discussed conventions of these genres that may have made the use of such queer identity labels more acceptable to a wider audience (e.g., Battles and Hilton-Morrow 2002, 98).

At the same time, it is worth noting that the timing of this first peak in frequency of use coincides with the increasing visibility of and advocacy for the queer community during the 1970s as it was discussed in Section 2.2.2, just as the subsequent decrease in frequency of use of *gay** during the 1980s overlaps with a political era marked by severe conservative backlash against the queer community and the AIDS crisis (Strub 2018, 82). Consequently, one possible explanation of this dip in frequency could be the TV industry's disinclination to continue to portray queer identities in comparatively light-hearted programming (such as

Romance or Comedy shows) when the public discussion and perception of the queer community was focused on very serious concerns.

The highest frequencies for *gay** in all genres (except Mystery) could be found in the early 2000s, whereas the highest frequencies for *lesbian** were identified in the early 2000s in Romance, and in the 2010s in Comedy (Section 4.1.7). For *gay**, this peak in frequency might be linked to the overall extremely high number of mentions of the term, in keeping with what was discussed in Section 4.1.2 with regards to the variety in the extracted relevant hits: As such, scripted TV programming in the 2000s can be described as tending towards the use of *gay** also "as a synonym for dumb or lame or stupid" (Postic and Prough 2014, 1) across various TV genres.

As the in-group identity term *lesbian** has not been described as being used as a general-purpose negative adjective the way *gay** has, the high frequencies of use found in the 2000s and 2010s may here instead be attributable to genre-specific features contributing to a more frequent use of identity terms (e.g., Bednarek 2018, 185). Quite strikingly, however, the frequencies of *lesbian** in all investigated genres decrease sharply in the last couple of years contained in the *TV Corpus*. For this, two possible explanations ought be considered: On the one hand, similar dips have also been observed for other terms of queer in-group identity, as well as for select terms related to sexuality, as was discussed in Section 4.1.5. Accordingly, this decrease in the frequency of use of *lesbian** in all genres may be following that same overall trend. However, as this decrease in frequency is especially marked and sudden, another explanation to consider might be changing genre conventions: Savorelli (2010, 23), for instance, has observed a trend away from sitcom formats that use fixed sound stages for filming (often domestic or private settings, such as were commonly seen in some of the most popular sitcoms of the 90s and 2000s, e.g., *Friends* (*Friends* 1994-2004), or *Will & Grace* (*Will & Grace* 1998-2020-a)). As many successful newer shows are more flexible in their shot composition and choice of shooting location, such as *The Office* (*The Office* 2005-2013), such historically genre-defining practical constraints have largely dissolved, opening up (both literal and metaphorical) new spaces for the characters and plots to explore: In removing the genre-typical limitation to just "one social sphere alone" (Mills 2009, 22) sitcom characters may interact in more changeable and dynamic settings, thus also allowing characters to have

discussions related to various spheres of their life, some of which may be more conducive to discussions of personal identity than others.

Overall, it appears that genre conventions and expectations can have a notable impact on the frequency of use of (at least) these two terms of queer in-group identity. However, these genre conventions and practices of use do not appear to be static, and as such may change over time in response to sociopolitical impetus, commercial success, and critical acclaim of newly emerging formats and genres.

5.1.4. Collocation: "LGBT centers" and "queer faggots"

The collocation analysis run for six frequent variants of the six investigated of queer in-group identities terms (*lesbian*, *gay*, *bisexual*, *transgender*, *queer*, *LGBT*; see *Table 13*) revealed several recurring fields from which collocates were drawn: Most strikingly, several of the terms were found to collocate strongly with other terms for queer in-group identities, such as *lesbian* (in case of *bisexual*, *lesbian*), or *bisexual* (*lesbian*, *gay*). One possible explanation for this might be the frequent co-occurrence of these terms in queer advocacy or community oriented contexts, which seem to tend towards using the full identity terms rather than the *LGBT** acronym:

> "The Lesbian **Gay** Bisexual Trans Questioning Allied community."
> (Supplement B2, "gay", hit 14108).

Notably, such terms were not among the strongest collocates for either the most frequent of the terms (*gay*) nor the least frequent (*LGBT, transgender*). In case of *transgender*, which, as one of the commonly used identity labels for trans umbrella identities, would otherwise seem likely to be part of enumerations such as the one above, the absence of top collocates that are other identity terms may be explained by the variety of terms in use for trans identities: In such an enumeration, the clipped form *trans* might be used instead (e.g., Supplement B2, "trans", hit 36856).

In case of *gay*, by contrast, its overall higher frequency of use within the corpus may result in other contexts outweighing this type of use. In fact, one might argue that the identified collocates in this first collocation analysis for *gay* highlight contexts of use that are either focused on dangers to the community (e.g., *basher*, *bashing*), or make use of alternative

meanings of the term (e.g., “Enola **Gay**”, the aircraft that dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima (Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum 2020). As was discussed previously, the acronym *LGBT* has only fairly recently come into use, and is not commonly found in contexts that do not involve the queer community. Relatedly, this term of queer in-group identity is not typically described as being used as a slur, which may account for all four top collocates of the term relating to community life and activities in some way (*community*, *center*, *club*, *home*; *Table 13*), which appears to be indicative of the term’s use primarily in community building or advocacy contexts.

With regards to the *Usage Fluctuation Analysis* performed for the two most frequently occurring terms (*gay* and *lesbian*), diachronic variation in the transient collocates associated with both terms could be observed (Section 4.1.8.2). The one consistent and several of the transient collocates for *lesbian* were found to also be terms for the queer community (e.g., *gay*, *lesbian*). Other transient collocates appear to be more closely relating to community life and activities in general (e.g., *community*, *center*, *bar*). Notably, the *Usage Fluctuation Analysis*, too, identified *middle-aged* as a collocate of *lesbian* during the 2000s, just as the overall collocation analysis for *lesbian* (*Table 13*) had revealed. This finding in particular appears to indicate that certain personal features that are consistent with queer stereotypes as they were outlined for instance by Bronski (2011, 114) are overrepresented in the context of *lesbian* in the *TV Corpus*.

While the overall number of transient collocates identified for *gay* was very high, a smaller number of consistent collocates could also be identified: Some consistent collocates show similarities to the transient collocates identified for *lesbian*, with others rather seeming indicative of the term’s use as an umbrella term (e.g., *rights*). The transient collocates for *gay*, on the other hand, vary strongly, with some of them appearing in individual years of the corpus only (e.g., *fish*).

One of the most interesting patterns to be observed in the *Usage Fluctuation Analysis* is the apparent weakening of collocational strength for both terms during the 2000s: While this phenomenon can be traced for both of the investigated terms, it appears to be much more

sharply pronounced in case of *gay* (*Figure 18*). For an explanation of this finding, the heatmap of transient collocates for *gay* may be drawn on, as it illustrates a number of transient collocates that were only identified for individual years during this time period (*Figure 19*).

This collocational pattern may in turn be linked to two observations already made in earlier sections: Firstly, the queer in-group identity term *gay* was found to have been used with an overall high frequency during the 2000s, for instance for purposes of disparagement humour or for the sake of excessive specificity, which appeared to have led to the term being mentioned more frequently in a wider variety of contexts. Secondly and consequently, this particular type of (over)use of the term as a source of comedy may explain the transient collocates that could only be identified for individual years: The collocate *fish*, for instance, was realized in the phrase "gay fish" 19 times within a single episode of South Park (episode "Fishsticks", e.g., Supplement B2, "gay", hit 20431). Similarly, the *Usage Fluctuation Analysis* for these years also identified a number of transient collocates that appear to be the personal names of individual, likely queer characters (e.g., *Brad*). In both of these cases, the frequent co-occurrence of a personal name or a non-human, non-sentient entity with the notion of queerness does appear to be a very marked choice on part of the creative team.

Relatedly, it must be acknowledged that the frequent use of *gay* not as a term for the queer community specifically, but rather as a more general-purpose negative adjective (as it has been described by Postic and Prough 2014, 1) during this period may also have had an impact on these collocates: As the collocation analysis could not meaningfully differentiate between such uses of the term *gay,* the collocations for gay were likely also strikingly weaker in the 2000s because of this alternative of use of the term. Such uses can at least anecdotally be linked to the transient collocates identified in the *Usage Fluctuation Analysis*. This interpretation may also be supported by the observation that this weakening of collocational strength in the early 2000s was observed much less strongly for *lesbian*: While *lesbian* also has some history of being used as a slur, the term appears to have been used less frequently in contexts as seemingly unrelated to the queer community, going by the transient collocates identified in the *Usage Fluctuation Analysis* (Section 4.1.8.2).

Overall, several trends within the identified collocates can be observed. Collocates commonly appear to vary depending on

a) the degree to which a term is associated with **alternative meanings**
b) the degree to which a term has a **history of being used as a slur**
c) the **sociocultural stereotypes** most commonly associated with a given term of queer in-group identity.

For the most frequent terms and variants (*lesbian* and *gay*), diachronic shifts could be observed in their collocates which may be linked to changes in how each identity is conceptualized on TV. In this sense, these findings are in alignment with factors of influence that have been pointed out with regards to the general frequencies of use in the *TV Corpus* and in different genres, such as:

a) The popularity of both terms in the Comedy genre and the appearance of proper names as collocates implying frequent use for **comedic effect**.
b) The perceived acceptability of using these terms in contexts apparently not related to sexuality or personal identity as a (often) **negatively connoted adjective**.
c) The degree to which they are used as **umbrella terms** in queer advocacy.

5.2. Discussion: Stage 2

For the Stage 2 analysis, 10 episodes each from six TV shows were annotated in two different ways: Firstly, a speaker annotation was performed to attain a quantifiable measure of the individual characters' prominence in the show's TV dialogue, taking into consideration measures such as their average and maximum segment length, total number of words annotated, as well as their number of segments contributed per episode. Secondly, a qualitative analysis using the chosen episodes was performed, highlighting any portrayals of queerness and aiming to capture its role and importance within the constraints of the fictional or cultural realism of the world of the show.

For the sake of clarity and conciseness, the discussion of Stage 2 is structured into three sections, the first of which will highlight similarities across all of the annotated shows in terms of their queer characters' prominence (Section 5.2.1), while also trying to account for possible reasons that such similarities were found. In this sense, this section also ties into a more general reflection on advantages and limitations of the chosen shows and methods. The second section, accordingly, discusses similarities and differences between the role and importance of queerness in the respective fictional realities within the three TV genres investigated here (Section 5.2.2 to 5.2.2.3). In a third step, a synthesis of recurring patterns in the construal and portrayal of queer identities within these six fictional worlds beyond TV genre boundaries can be found in Section 5.2.3, also drawing on the results obtained in Stage 1 for their explanatory power beyond the scope of the episodes analysed here.

5.2.1. Character prominence in TV dialogue and plot

According to *UAM CorpusTool* statistics, basic frequency measures appear to be similar for major queer and non-queer character (types) within shows, with main cast queer characters contributing to a similar degree to the episode dialogue as non-queer characters who could be claimed to have a similar role in the narrative. Although these patterns of prominence vary from show to show and across genres, all six series display a broadly comparable internal structure of prominence among their characters.

In *Dawson's Creek*, for instance, the main cast queer character Jack's basic frequency measures as identified using the *UAM CorpusTool* were found to be most similar to those of

his closest (straight) friend Jen (*Table 14*). Arguably, this might be explained by the role that these characters share in the narrative: Both Jack and Jen are part of the main group of friends and initially serve as romantic interests for one of the characters from the show's central love triangle (Dawson-Joey-Pacey, Section 4.2.1), though their prominence varies from episode to episode, in contrast to (for instance) the titular character of Dawson (*Figure 20*).

Similarly, in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, striking similarities between the contributions made by Willow's two main romantic interests during the analysed episodes can be observed, with her boyfriend Oz and her girlfriend Tara showing similar levels of prominence during their respective relationships with Willow. (*Figure 22*). Willow herself, meanwhile, is notably more prominent in the show's dialogue than either of her romantic partners, as she herself is one of the main cast characters from Season 1 onwards. In this sense, these quantitative measures seem to support a tentative distinction between 'protagonists' and their love interests (as can also be seen for e.g., Buffy vs. Spike or Xander vs. Anya).

Generally, the results seem to indicate that shows with a bigger cast of main characters tend to show more variation in characters' prominence from episode to episode: Where in case of, for instance, *Will & Grace* (with only four main cast characters) all four characters are at least somewhat prominent in the dialogue of every episode, the much greater number of main cast characters in *Glee* (24 across the annotated seasons, *Figure 21*) contributes to strongly fluctuating levels of prominence for many (if not all) of them from episode to episode.

Additionally, it is worth noting that most of the analysed shows only had small numbers of recurring queer characters in the annotated episodes: Neither *Will & Grace*, nor *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* had any recurring queer characters within the episodes annotated, and only *Lost Girl* was found to have multiple (e.g., Tamsin, Vex; Section 4.2.4). However, this finding is closely tied to the chosen classification of main and recurring characters, and as such must be taken with caution:

While the lists of main cast characters were derived from the cast lists available on the shows' IMDb pages, the requirement to appear in at least five episodes to be considered a recurring queer character was chosen for practical reasons (as outlined in Section 3.4.2). As such, queer characters who appear in less than five episodes were classified as "episodic", regardless of

their (hypothetical) prominence in a single or small number of episodes. This choice was based on the scarcity of dialogue contributions made by such characters as it was observed in the aforementioned Stage 2 pilot study, and the associated difficulty of analysing these contributions meaningfully from a quantitative perspective. The contributions and role in the narrative occupied by such characters in the analysed episodes was still considered in the qualitative analysis, and is accordingly discussed in more detail with regards to the role and importance of queerness in the fictional realities of the shows.

At the same time, the considerable variability in character prominence from episode to episode in the shows with a bigger number of main cast characters might also be seen as a confounding influence on this type of analysis: Where for some shows a character classified as main cast was found to be one who contributes in a major capacity to the plot and dialogue of every episode (as seems to be the case for e.g., *Will & Grace*), others appear to have followed a different approach in their categorization. Such an alternative approach would then consider any character who appears to belong to a certain group a main cast character, regardless of their actual prominence in the plot (e.g., *Glee*, where most recurring and speaking members of the school choir are credited as main characters). Depending on the choices made here in the crediting of main and recurring characters on part of the showrunners and the IMDb content moderators, different numbers of such characters might be observed in the annotated episodes per show.

In spite of these caveats with which such a finding must be taken, it nevertheless appears to be a striking choice on part of so many of the creative teams that these long-running shows with main cast queer characters only so rarely feature non-main cast queer characters who were present in the story for more than five episodes. One possible explanation that might be drawn upon here is the fact that recurring queer characters seem to be more frequently included in a show when certain roles are available within the narrative (e.g., that of a potential romantic interest for one of the main cast queer characters, or that of a “gay best friend” (Gauntlett 2002, 93)). In this sense, this finding might even be aligned with the observation that queer characters first tended to appear in certain roles in scripted televisual programming, some of which could be described as much less sympathetic or benign (e.g., Ullman 2018, 363).

Finally and consequently, it must also be acknowledged that these findings may likely show such similarities in the prominence of queer main cast characters in the annotated episode dialogue across shows due to the shows chosen for the analysis: As the primary goal in this stage of the project was to investigate the role of queerness and queer characters in TV shows of different genres and decades, only shows that do actually portray such identities were considered. While the six shows were selected for their comparability, it must be emphasized that the overall number of shows suitable for such a comparison contained in the North American component of the *TV Corpus* was limited. As such, the findings obtained for these shows are more appropriately to be considered examples of notable (e.g., Dhaenens 2013; Schiappa, Gregg, and Hewes 2006) and commercially successful portrayals of queer in-group identities in scripted TV shows, rather than as representative of industry-wide defaults.

By focusing on long-running shows that do have main cast queer characters, it is therefore to be expected that these shows' portrayal and discussion of queerness is likely to be substantially different from other shows that do not regularly feature such characters, or only feature them "in minor roles, or as stereotypical gays played for laughs" (Gauntlett 2008, 89). This may be true especially for the three earlier shows investigated here, all of which have been cited as influential examples of queer TV programming in various ways (e.g., Gauntlett 2008, 88; 90; Ullman 2018, 366).

5.2.2. The role of queerness in the story worlds of different genres

Beyond the similarities in the dialogic prominence and narrative roles of queer and non-queer characters in the analysed shows as they were described above, the role and importance of queerness itself within the story world itself must also be considered: As was discussed in Section 2.1.1.1, the plot of scripted TV shows may be driven more externally (goal-driven) or more internally (character-driven). Accordingly, this next section attempts a synthesis between the qualitative observations made about the importance and narrative driving force of queerness as a general power within the fictional world of the TV shows and a as more personal motivating factor in the arcs of individual queer characters.

5.2.2.1. Queerness in the story worlds of Drama programming

As was outlined in Section 4.2.1, both the introduction and overall character arc of Jack, the sole main cast queer character in *Dawson's Creek*, is closely tied to his sexuality as a gay man. His character appears to be more prominent in those episodes in which a (sub-)plot focuses on topics related to his queerness (e.g., S02E14-S02E15), and less prominent in those where queerness is not discussed explicitly (e.g., S05E04). Notably, most of the conflicts and obstacles he faces as a character in the annotated episodes can be directly linked to his queerness: Not only does he struggle to accept his own sexuality, he also experiences homophobia at school and at home (e.g., his father's reaction to his coming out in S02E15; a classmate's refusal to sell him and his date prom tickets in S03E22).

The story world of *Dawson's Creek*, which appears to aim for a kind of cultural realism in line with small-town East Coast life around the time of production, thus gives rise to the impression of a world in which queerness can be considered a controversial topic, as well as a source of potential danger and alienation for queer individuals in this setting. However, it must be noted that the attitudes and reactions of much of the main cast to Jack's struggle with his own sexuality are largely sympathetic and supportive (e.g., Joey's compassionate reaction to Jack's coming out in S02E15; Dawson's planning of an "Anti-Prom" that Jack may attend with a date in S03E22). Accordingly, it seems that, while the wider society and structures in which the characters live tend to view queerness more negatively, many of the characters in Jack's immediate social environment rather model a more accepting set of attitudes.

Besides these external influences on Jack's experience as a queer man, he himself repeatedly frames his sexuality as a source of isolation and alienation from his social environment: Beyond his fears surrounding his coming out in S02E14, both his internal conflict about his close platonic friendship with his female best friend Jen (e.g., S04E14) and his vehement (arguably homophobic) rejection of people and things he perceives as "very gay" (Jack, S04E14) appear to indicate that he is struggling to reconcile his own queerness with his assumptions about his social roles and relationships. As the annotated episodes from later seasons appear to focus less on queerness as a driving force in the plot and character arcs, one might conclude that the larger community of the fictional world that the story is set in may have become more tolerant and less antagonistic towards queerness. Arguably, Jack

himself, no longer being a teenager, also seems to have learned to reconcile his social roles with his queerness, thus overcoming at least some of his internalized homophobia and settling into his close platonic relationships with other characters (Meyer 2003, 269-73).

By contrast, *Glee*, which was discussed in more detail in Section 4.2.2, has a higher number of main cast queer characters, though their actual prominence in the plot is highly variable (*Figure 21*), just as is also the case for non-queer characters. While some of these characters come out as queer very shortly after their introduction (e.g., Kurt, Blaine, Unique), others are only textually indicated to be queer after having been on the show for a number of episodes (e.g., Santana, Brittany, Coach Beiste). Notably, for most (if not all) of them, their queer identity is presented as a source of struggle, as they report feeling alienated from or unsafe in their social environment, which they perceive to be intensely and structurally queerphobic (e.g., Kurt in S01E04, S02E20; Santana in S02E20).

However, the show's focus on the titular "Glee" club positions this choir as a source of (alleged) community and support for individuals who are perceived as nonconforming in some way by the larger (school) community (Section 4.2.2). Strikingly, both queer and non-queer members of this choir appear to perceive themselves as being marginalized within the larger social setting for their membership in this club. As the club is dedicated to stage performance, it can be described as a community requiring a "self-presentational style that exaggerates and mocks dominant values and aesthetics, [as] 'camp' is deeply associated with gay men both in terms of community code as well as that of stage performance" (Ullman 2018, 361). As this secondary (sometimes subtextual) layer of implied queerness is integrated into the premise of the show, many of the plot and character arcs that do not appear to be directly linked to characters' queerness could nevertheless be argued to draw on the notion of queerness via this association of stage performance and camp.

In contrast to Jack on *Dawson's Creek*, the queer main cast characters here more rarely appear to perceive their queerness as a source of internal conflict, though they do describe feeling alienated from their larger social groups (e.g., Kurt in S01E18). This alienation, however, is described rather as an external phenomenon due to their perceived alignment with camp stereotypes such as that of "the effeminate homosexual man" (Bronski 2011, 114)

and their environment's reactions to this. Furthermore, the personal importance that main cast queer characters assign to meeting commonly assumed (hetero)normative milestones of adolescence and adulthood is repeatedly emphasized (e.g Kurt's desire to attend prom in S02E20, Blaine's wish to get married in S05E01).

Overall, it can be said that in the story worlds of both *Dawson's Creek* and *Glee* focus on groups of (mostly) teenagers as they go through their everyday (if genre-typically conflict-ridden) lives. The character arcs for all teenaged main cast characters can thus be said to primarily focus on their struggles with growing up. Relatedly, both shows place specific emphasis on (individual) main cast queer characters during their coming out and subsequent conflicts with their environments about their queer identities, which is also in keeping with the finding that terms of queer in-group identity could only be identified within individual episodes of Dramas. Notably, the Drama genre was the only one of the investigated genres in which the number of main cast queer characters is higher in more recently produced show: Whereas Jack was the only main cast queer character in *Dawson's Creek*, there are multiple such characters on *Glee*.

In both shows, queer characters are faced with systemic queerphobia as a source of external, plot-driving conflict: the fictional world portrayed alleges to be fairly similar to actual small-town U.S. life at the times of production, though in both cases certain concessions to conventions of the Drama TV genre and its need for (exaggerated) conflict may be argued to have had an impact on the development(s) of certain plot or character arcs. Consequently, the queerphobia and the role of queerness in the world of the story might resemble the experiences of real-life queer communities in such real-world settings at the time, if one accounts for the assumed impact of genre conventions and expectations.

In terms of character-internal conflicts, Jack's own internalized homophobia and struggle with his own queer identity on *Dawson's Creek* seems to have a more lasting hold on him than it does on the queer characters on *Glee*. Where Jack first denies his queer identity (both to himself and to others), and repeatedly rejects being associated with queer stereotypes, the queer main cast characters on *Glee* instead embrace camp and performance art as expressions of their own queer identities and their shared (camp) community. Notably, later

seasons show both Jack and his social environment becoming more comfortable with his queer identity, such that his overcoming of these preconceived notions may be considered part of his overall character arc. By contrast, the characters on *Glee* are more consistent in their conceptualization of their queer identities as linked to camp and stage performance, which may also be an artefact of the show's close association with the musical genre (Sarkissian 2014, 154).

Along similar lines, Jack, as the only queer character within the main friend group of *Dawson's Creek*, repeatedly emphasizes feeling isolated and excluded from his environment, while the *Glee* club's members instead emphasize their collective self-image as aligned with the camp identity shared within the club and the larger performing arts community. However, the queer characters in both shows do still mention feelings of alienation from their larger (heteronormative) social groups and their assumptions. As such, the discussion of queerness in *Dawson's Creek* could be described as being focused largely on an individual's struggle for belonging, whereas that in *Glee* seems rather more concerned with camp and shared queer identity.

The question of the exact social roles that such queer characters are expected (and expect themselves) to occupy within their larger communities is one that is repeatedly negotiated in both shows, though they do appear to come to different conclusions: *Dawson's Creek* describes Jack's struggle to reconcile his preconceived notions about the social roles he should strive for in relation to his friends and family with his actual lived experience of which relationships are important to him (Meyer 2003, 273-4), while many of the more prominent queer characters on *Glee* highly prioritize meeting certain heteronormative societal milestones regardless of their queer identities:

> Kurt and Blaine's romantic relationship, for instance, is constantly set up in relation to Rachel and Finn, the leading heterosexual couple on the show, and thus through montage, split-screen and mise-en-scène, read as inseparable from a heteronormative interpretation of romance and desire. (Sarkissian 2014, 154)

Generally, queerness in the story worlds of (teen) Drama TV shows from the 1990s and 2000s thus appears to be a major driving force in the plot and character arcs of major queer characters, provided that the show at large is constructing a fictional world that aims for a close resemblance to real-life sociocultural circumstances of the time and place of production, thus committing to a kind of cultural realism (in the sense of Marshall and Werndly 2002, 85).

In spite of this cultural realism, it appears likely that these conflicts may often be exaggerated in accordance with the genre's conventions, but will usually ultimately be resolved amiably in adherence to the same: "The resolution of both practical and personal emergencies in these dramas is desired and expected by their audiences. These themes are part of the conventional pleasures of the genre" (Marshall and Werndly 2002, 51). Similarly, both shows analysed here tend to show generally positive reactions to and attitudes towards the queer characters by much of the non-queer main cast, with more negative reactions typically reserved for non-major or antagonistic characters (e.g., Jack's father on *Dawson's Creek* or Sue Sylvester on *Glee*). From this, one may conclude that the overall portrayal of queer characters is likely intended to be sympathetic and to offer an example of a person's coming out as queer that may be encouraging to queer individuals. At the same time, these portrayals may also serve to illustrate acceptable vs. unacceptable reactions for any non-queer or closeted viewers who may encounter such a coming out in their own social environment, in keeping with the principles outlined in Section 2.1.2.2.

Depending on the topical focus of the show and the specific characterizations of the queer characters, the degree of internal conflict over their queer identity, but also the personal milestones and social relationships a queer character strives for may vary. Similarly variable is the in-show portrayal and judgement of queer stereotypes, both on part of the characters themselves but also on part of the larger world of the story: As with the previously discussed Stage 1 findings, here, too, the shifting focus of queer advocacy and public perception of queer identities may construe them as either in conflict with or striving for adherence to common normative family and social structures (Weiss 2018, 109).

5.2.2.2. Queerness in the story worlds of Fantasy programming

As the first of the two Fantasy/Hybrid genre shows considered in this project, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* focuses on a group of friends and their ongoing conflicts with supernatural threats to their community (Section 4.2.3). Within the main cast of characters, Willow is the most prominent queer character, though her later love interest Tara also joins the group of friends at the core of the show in Season 4. Quite in contrast to the Drama shows discussed previously, only a small part of Willow's overall character arc is defined by her coming to terms with her queer identity: As part of the group of supernatural-threat-fighting teenagers and young adults, Willow's primary role and task throughout the first three seasons is to provide tech support and research, whereas in the later seasons she learns to work magic to support the group (e.g., Supplement C2, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, S03E19). Willow's queerness and romantic relationships are only rarely directly focused on in the annotated episodes, and while she does textually come out to one of her best friends (Buffy), and voices momentary concern over her reaction (Supplement C2, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, S04E19), this is much less prominently discussed in-show than it was for either of the dramas. Accordingly, this might be interpreted as a sign that, while queerness cannot be considered fully normalized within the world of the show (as can be seen e.g., from Xander's seeming early season queerphobia as it was discussed in Section 4.2.3), it seems to generally be perceived as a less prominent source of inter- and intrapersonal conflict.

However, it is worth noting that, in the world of the show, and especially in Willow's own character arc, there are recurring parallels drawn between the presence of magical elements and queerness (e.g., Tara's discussion with her father in S05E05, but also Xander's comments about his attraction to a "monstrous" Buffy in S01E10). The fictional world of the show, which portrays a (fictional) small California town during the 1990s, has wider human society being typically unaware of the magical elements existing within their world, such that Buffy and her friends repeatedly have to navigate living a sort of double life. In this way, the show appears to oscillate between something more akin to cultural or fictional realism. This phenomenon becomes more pronounced as the show progresses, with the later seasons showing the group of friends living together and referring to one another as part of a family unit (e.g., Buffy in S05E05). Battis (2005, 12) similarly describes the main group's social unit as a "queer family", a dynamic which in turn becomes a source of tension with the wider non-magical community

they live in. As such, a lack of conformity to social roles and conventions could again be seen as perceptually queer by the standards of their wider fictional world, in a way that might, arguably, be likened to the link between camp performance and queerness drawn on in *Glee*.

As was discussed in Section 4.2.4, *Lost Girl*, too, has two main cast queer characters, namely Bo (the protagonist) and her on-again-off-again love interest Lauren. Somewhat similarly to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Lost Girl* also focuses on often magical conflicts within a hidden supernatural society and said society's relationship with the human world. Here, both the protagonist Bo, a succubus with the power to drain people's life-force via kissing or sexual contact and her human love interest Lauren could be classified as main cast queer characters. In keeping with the showrunners' stated intention to create a story world in which sexuality was to be a non-issue (Watercooler Journal 2015), the sexuality of many of the show's characters is kept deliberately ambiguous, and while romantic or sexual relationships between various characters are a frequent topic of discussion, the question of said relationships' queerness is hardly ever raised (Supplement C2, Lost Girl, all episodes). At the same time, however, Bo's queerness and lived sexuality might still be described as a plot-driving force in the world of the show, as the magical abilities tied to her (queer) sexuality pose a very real physical threat to her human sexual partners at least in the early seasons of the show, keeping her from (in her terms) "a normal human life" (Supplement C2, Lost Girl, S01E08, Bo). Bo's magical powers are thus repeatedly discussed and framed in ways that are somewhat reminiscent of common anti-queer sentiments and portrayals of queer identities on scripted TV focused on "pathology and hardship" in the wake of the AIDS crisis (Ullman 2018, 366). Taken together, the story world of *Lost Girl* might thus be described as one in which the characters do not appear to feel threatened by queerphobia, but in which characters' sexuality may still be framed as a (real or perceived) threat to their potential sexual partners.

Relatedly, much of the show's plot focuses on the dealings and experiences of a secret magical society that lives among humans, while remaining hidden from them. This secret society is rigidly structured and expects every individual magical being to choose to align themselves with one of the two main powers. Bo's arc throughout the show, in which she refuses to commit fully to either of those powers or to renounce her human-world upbringing, thus

causes a constant source of tension between her and those magical powers. Similarly to the previously discussed role of magic in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Bo's (internal and external) conflict over her role in (either human or magical) society may again be interpreted as somewhat analogous to common fears surrounding a person's queer identity. This appears to be especially relevant, as, within the show, Bo is repeatedly stereotyped based on her magical power as a succubus in ways that are strongly reminiscent of bi-phobic and hypersexualized assumptions about bisexual individuals' alleged promiscuity (e.g., Hutchins 2018, 257).

Overall, it can be said that both *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Lost Girl* utilize the magical elements present in their story worlds to draw parallels to aspects of real-life queer experience: In *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the human world is highly relevant to the development of the plot and characters, as it places external demands upon them (e.g., Buffy's university classes in S05E19). As such, the supernatural is hidden from view and serves to alienate Buffy and her friends from their wider human environment, which in turn serves to strengthen and intensify their bonds within their magical in-group. Consequently, a kind of dichotomy is created with the human, non-magical, and generally (hetero-)normative world on the one, and the supernatural, magical, and (variably) queer world on the other (Battis 2005, 12; Rodríguez 2017, 43).

By contrast, the human world is largely absent from the plot in *Lost Girl*, with only individual humans who operate as part of magical "fae" society being featured regularly (e.g., Kenzi and Lauren). As such, the parallels drawn here differ somewhat in their scope and focus, with the secret, magical, and frequently queer world of the show being concerned with specific subdivisions and allegiances within this magical in-group. Here, the tension thus arises more from Bo's ambiguous status and position within said magical society: "She discovers who and what she is, and is told to join one of two tribes, either the Light or the Dark. She refuses and chooses the side of humanity instead" (*Lost Girl* 2010). Combined with the stereotypes applied to her based on her magical ability, this appears to bear a striking similarity to long-standing debates within queer communities about their perceptions of bisexuality and other identities that resist easy classification (e.g., Hutchins 2018, 250).

Notably, both shows emphasize the importance of chosen family bonds over biologically or structurally determined family ties (e.g., Buffy about Tara in S05E05, Bo about Kenzi in S03E06). While not unique to the queer community, this particular focus on chosen relationships over normatively conventionalized ones further emphasizes these main character groups' remove from mainstream normative North American social structures (e.g., Battis 2005, 12).

Quite in contrast to the findings discussed for either of the two chosen dramas, neither Fantasy show placed a strong emphasis on coming out narratives and characters' struggles with internalized homophobia in their main cast queer character arcs. While in case of Willow's coming out such aspects are mentioned at least briefly (e.g., in her coming out to Buffy in S04E19, her argument with Tara about her previous relationship with a man in S05E19), Bo's struggles with her sexuality are focused more on their effect on her magical ability and the threat it (apparently) poses. This contrast may be tied back to the different degrees to which the wider (potentially heteronormative) human world appears to impact the characters' lives and experiences.

More broadly, queerness appears to be represented in a variety of ways in Fantasy/Hybrid genre shows of the 1990s and 2000s, some of them apparently unique to the genre: While some aspects of the portrayal of queer character and their position in the fictional world of their shows may be described as similar to those observed for the dramas (e.g., coming out storylines, struggles with stereotypes or prejudices), others make use of the magical elements central to the plot to draw (implicit or explicit) parallels between these elements and queerness. This additional dimension of queerness present in the world of the story may also be drawn upon to explain the (relative) absence of current terms of queer in-group identity from the annotated episodes: As the primary focus of the plot draws on a secret magical community that operates (partially) on fictional (genre) realism, the discussion of queer identities may be less relevant to the arcs of the main cast queer characters and episodic plots.

5.2.2.3. Queerness in the story worlds of Comedy programming

In *Will & Grace* (Section 4.2.5), the show with the smallest number of main cast characters from all that were analysed in this project, two of the four main cast characters are gay cisgender men (Will, Jack), while the other two are two straight cis women (Grace, Karen). Of these four, Will and Grace have a very close platonic relationship with one another, which is repeatedly perceived as a threat by their respective romantic partners (e.g., episode S04E01). Relatedly, episodic plots often focus on negotiating the roles of their various relationships (romantic and platonic), in the context of which they frequently debate normative assumptions about the social roles of a romantic partner or a friend. By contrast, Jack and Karen are both characterized as rather flamboyant and mischievous figures, tending towards camp, with their episodic plots frequently focusing on various schemes (e.g., Jack and Karen's magic show in S04E24, Jack's stalking of a celebrity in S05E02). However, some of the episodic plots involving Jack do focus on his experience as a camp, vocally queer man (e.g., coming out to his mother in S02E07, trying to befriend his biological son in S04E01). As such, the fictionalized New York setting in which the characters live, as well as the queer characters' episodic arcs, are only occasionally focused on dealing with more explicit queerphobia (such as was frequently the case for the dramas, Section 5.2.2.1), but rather on the negotiation of social roles and role expectations. This is likely also in part due to the constraints of the Comedy genre with its typical "emphasis on characters' interpersonal relationships rather than the characters' connections to the larger social world" (Battles and Hilton-Morrow 2002, 101).

At the same time, only few recurring queer characters are credited on the show, none of whom appeared in the annotated episodes (Supplement C1, Annotation Scheme, "Will & Grace",). In contrast to the multiple longer-term romantic partners of Grace's who appear in these episodes, both Will and Jack's relationships seem most commonly to be either short-term, or off-screen and only discussed in the abstract, thus arguably reproducing a stereotype of gay male sexuality as "obsessed with beauty and fashion; idolis[ing] young, handsome and masculine men; enjoy[ing] sunbathing, bar scenes, dance and attention" (Chung 2007, 101).

Similarly, all main cast characters occasionally do make use of (arguably) queerphobic or at least highly stereotyping jokes about queerness, as was outlined in Section 4.2.5. In doing so, they show awareness of these stereotypes, which could be seen as either highlighting the

ridiculousness of such stereotypes, or as reinforcing them (Chung 2007, 101). Accordingly, the fictional world of the show at large might thus be at least somewhat queerphobic, while the main cast characters themselves appear to only occasionally be concerned with the threats this might pose to them, and rely on stereotypes to conceptualize both their own and others' queerness.

Modern Family, by contrast, has a larger number of main cast characters, two of whom are married cis gay men in the process of adopting a baby (as of episode 1). The show focuses on family relations, specifically on three nuclear families (each with two parents) who are part of a larger family unit connected via Mitchell and Claire as the adult children of Jay (Section 4.2.6). Episodic plots focusing on Mitchell and his partner Cameron (re)negotiate their queerness and their family and wider social circle' conceptualization of it, especially with regards to their roles as queer parents (e.g., their struggle with adopting a child in S03E24). One of the recurring interpersonal conflicts of the show is Mitchell's fraught relationship with his father due to Joe's lack of understanding of his son's queerness (e.g., his discomfort with introducing his son's partner to his friends in S01E13). At the same time, Mitchell and Cameron describe themselves as settled down (e.g., episode S04E17), especially in comparison to some of their more stereotypically camp queer friends (e.g., Pepper, S02E18). As such, the show's story world construes stereotypes about queerness as an obstacle to navigate: The queer characters are shown to struggle with finding a compromise between their own (and others') understanding of their queer in-group identity and their wish to be recognized as a nuclear family unit.

Likely due to this conflict, the queer main cast characters themselves exhibit a variable relationship with camp forms of presentation and queer stereotypes: While they emphatically reject certain preconceived notions and stereotypical expressions associated with queerness (e.g., the term "lovers" in S02E02), they do emphasize the importance of queer community and friendship (e.g., Mitch in S02E18). As such, they seem to be largely content with their queerness as it pertains to their personal identity, self-image, and romantic relationship, but rather seem to be conflicted about their relationship's perception by others, particularly (in the context of the show) their other extended family members.

For both shows, the tension arising in the story world from the apparent conflict between reported common stereotypes about queerness on the one, and normative social and family structures on the other hand is utilized as a frequent source of episodic plot and humour. Drawing on stereotypes and miscommunications as a source of both has been described as an exceedingly common practice within the Comedy genre generally, but also within sitcom specifically (e.g., Pugh 2018, 161). As such, the constraints and conventions of the TV genre could be drawn upon as one plausible explanation for the prominence of queer stereotypes in these shows.

However, the two shows do differ with regards to the specific focus of the stereotypes and relationships that are drawn on as a source of conflict: In *Will & Grace*, the primary focus appears to be placed on negotiating the roles of romantic vs. platonic (or, arguably, normative vs. non-normative) relationships in the (queer and non-queer) main characters' lives (e.g., Jack's struggle to establish a relationship with his son in S04E01, Karen's developing argumentative friendship with her maid Rosario in that same episode, Will and Grace's plan to have a child together as friends in S05E02). By contrast, the queer main cast characters in *Modern Family*, who live in a monogamous romantic partnership, are rather focused on negotiating their roles as partners and parents as part of their larger social structure (e.g., S05E01). This shift from a more general questioning of normative social structures in favour of advocating for equitable treatment of perceptually queer partnerships and nuclear family units appears to reflect broader trends within queer advocacy as they have been observed by Weiss (2018, 109).

At the same time, both shows can be said to also draw on queerness and queer stereotypes on a smaller scale by utilizing them as a source of humour. In many cases, such jokes might be attributed to the shows' adherence to the conventions of the Comedy genre as they were outlined in the *Encyclopedia of Humor Studies* ("SITCOMS" 2014, 695-6): For instance, sexual topics and related double meanings are commonly utilized in Comedy TV shows, as are misunderstandings based on such double meanings. Similarly, stereotypical assumptions about character behaviour that are then not met are also a common tool utilized to create humour in Comedy programming via the subversion of expectations. Of course, such genre conventions are by no means applied only to queer characters, but they appear to have been

drawn upon in the arcs of the queer characters in the fictional realities of both shows to a high degree. Arguably relatedly, high frequencies of use of the Stage 1 terms of queer in-group identity could be identified for the annotated episodes of both shows (Section 4.2.7). Based on these observations, such terms may likely be frequently utilized in the negotiation and discussion of the notion of queerness and queer stereotypes in the world of the show.

One striking difference between the two shows in the aforementioned use of queer stereotypes to create humour in the TV dialogue can be seen in the queer characters' reactions to such jokes: In *Will & Grace*, the queer main cast characters themselves tend to use such jokes and stereotypes to conceptualize their own queer identity (e.g., Jack volunteering himself as Nathan's "best girl" in S04E01). The queer main cast characters in *Modern Family*, by contrast, tend to try and avoid reproducing queer stereotypes, or distance themselves from these stereotypes in their reference to them (e.g., Cameron's "yes, I went there" after reproducing a slogan associated with queer liberation in S02E02). This finding also aligns with the previously discussed differences in these characters' arcs and ambitions in their respective fictional realities: Whereas *Will & Grace* is more concerned with renegotiating social roles, *Modern Family* is more focused on perceived conformity to such (Pugh 2018, 180).

Overall, it can be observed that the arcs of queer main cast characters in Comedy shows of the 1990s and 2000s are frequently centred around (characters') perceptions of queerness and queer stereotypes, likely at least partly due to the conventions of the Comedy genre, which lend themselves particularly well to such a portrayal (e.g., Battles and Hilton-Morrow 2002, 101). The specific norms and goals these characters struggle with or pursue may be variable, and can be seen as reflecting the changing aims of queer advocacy (Weiss 2018, 107-9).

5.2.3. Axes of queerness in the story worlds of scripted TV shows

Turning to a comparison based on the time of production of the various shows, one first observation to be made is that the 1990s shows appear to be more consistent in the prominence of their main cast episode to episode: As two of the later shows have very large main casts (*Glee* and, to a lesser degree, *Modern Family*), the individual episodes annotated for these shows were found to have a high degree of variability in character prominence. This observation did not hold true in case of the Fantasy/Hybrid genre shows, however, as both *Lost Girl* and the 1990s Fantasy show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* show similar patterns with regards to character prominence in the dialogue.

However, in spite of this variation in prominence of main cast characters in the Drama and Comedy shows, both shows with high numbers of main cast characters could be argued to have a subset of characters who are more consistently prominent in the episodes' dialogue than others (e.g., Kurt and Rachel in case of *Glee*, the family's adults in case of *Modern Family*). In the shows with a smaller, more consistently prominent main cast, similar patterns could still be observed to a degree: Here, the titular characters (and their closest friends) were often be found to be more consistently prominent in the episode dialogue than the other main cast characters. This effect appears to not be dependent on a character's queerness or non-queerness, as all investigated shows except for *Dawson's Creek* have both queer and non-queer main cast characters within this more prominent group. It is likely that *Dawson's Creek* is the exception in this case as its single main cast queer character, Jack, was introduced to the main group later in Season 2 and is only peripherally involved in the romantic entanglements their group of friends goes through (Section 4.2.1).

Quite strikingly, however, it must be acknowledged that the majority of the main cast queer characters included in these shows are "primarily white, and usually male, protagonists" (Ullman 2018, 366). The only transfeminine main cast character of colour found in these shows, Unique, was also one of the main cast queer characters with the smallest number of dialogue contributions. While this particular finding may arguably be attributed to her characterization and role in the story, it nevertheless also is a striking example of a broader structural trend in television programming: Frequently, production companies appear to privilege portrayals of queerness that bear close resemblance to an assumed middle class white heterosexual (male) character "default", which the industry thus seems to deem more

"safe for broadcast television" (Battles and Hilton-Morrow 2002, 101). In keeping with the shift in queer advocacy towards a primary focus on queer family rights as discussed by Ng (2013; 2023) or Weiss (2018, 109), it appears that TV portrayals of queer characters, too, more frequently tend towards characters who are not otherwise part of marginalized groups and who are interested in being part of normative social structures. As such, this trend in the construction of main cast queer characters could be argued to be an example also of a larger sociopolitical trend of continued inequality, which has been described as having "shifted from overt criminalization to more subtle forms, often having the same effect for marginalized members of LGBTQ communities" (Ritchie and Whitlock 2019, 310).

Relatedly, one similarly recurring pattern in the **character constellations** throughout these shows was that many of the investigated main cast queer characters had one (or more) of the non-queer main cast characters as their closest friend and confidante (e.g., Jack and Jen; Willow, Buffy, and Xander; Will and Grace; Bo and Kenzi). This observation could be explained in several different ways: Firstly, it is worth noting that the stereotype of the "gay best friend" (Gauntlett 2008, 93) is well established and thus easily drawn upon as a character dynamic to provide support for non-queer protagonists on scripted TV. However, as several of these shows have prominent titular characters who are queer themselves (e.g., Will, Bo), this does not appear be fully applicable as an explanation.

Notably, scripted TV programming has a long history of construing romantic relationships as more significant than platonic ones in keeping with heteronormative values (Pugh 2018, 4). One could, accordingly, interpret this strong focus on close platonic relationships between main cast (queer and non-queer) characters as a way of emphasizing the great importance of non-romantic chosen relationships in direct contrast to this established pattern of amatonormativity. At the same time, however, it is still worth noting that this type of character constellation frequently causes the queer main cast character(s) to get emotionally involved in ongoing (romantic) conflicts that do not directly involve them (e.g., Will and Grace's concern over who the other dates), thus placing the plot's focus on romance without having to commit to portraying a queer romantic relationship too closely (Dow 1996; Becker 2006, 183).

This type of character constellation appears to be less prominent in both *Glee* and *Modern Family*, which may be explained by the shows' respective topical focus: Where the other shows have a stronger focus on a specific group of friends and their experiences, *Glee*'s plot largely focuses on a school setting and the North American performing arts scene, while *Modern Family* is concerned primarily with nuclear families and their extended family dynamics. This finding again aligns with the previously mentioned shift towards advocacy for legal equality (Weiss 2018, 107), as these two shows were also the only of the annotated ones which had main cast queer characters wishing to get married within the set of annotated episodes (Blaine in S05E01 on *Glee*, and both Cameron and Mitchell in S04E17, S05E01, S05E22 on *Modern Family*). This observation may, however, also be tied to the very real difficulty of achieving a legally married state as a queer person in the late 1990s in North America, which would make this a largely non-achievable character goal for a show characterized by cultural realism to set. However, it should be noted that other shows, such as, for instance, the TV show *Northern Exposure (Northern Exposure* 1990–1995*)* had an episode focusing on a marriage ceremony between two queer recurring characters in 1994 (*Northern Exposure* 1994).

As was already discussed in the previous sections, the importance and role of queerness in the various story worlds is highly variable: The first such level of variation can be found in the degree **of structural/cultural importance** the respective queer characters appear to place on their queerness. Notably, this criterion may also be applied to non-queer characters, in answering the question how important it appears to be for those to not be perceived as queer. This can be understood as a continuum, ranging from fictional realities in which queerness is seen as an unremarkable facet of character identity, to fictional realities in which queerness is seen as defining for a character's livelihood and prospects. In terms of the six shows annotated here, only *Lost Girl*, set almost entirely within a fictional magical society hidden from humans, never makes mention of being perceived as queer as a possible source of danger or conflict in any of the ten annotated episodes. Notably, however, *Lost Girl* could also be considered the show in which a character's sexuality has the strongest plot-driving force: As Bo has the ability to (eventually) kill or heal people with the help of her magical powers, her choice to kiss or sleep with other characters can be said to have a strong and

immediate effect on the story world in which she lives. Accordingly, the inhabitants of her magical society are clearly aware of and conflicted about this (e.g., The Morrigan and Bo's interaction in S02E2).

By contrast, the teenaged queer characters on *Dawson's Creek* and *Glee* repeatedly voice their impression that their queerness is negatively impacting how they are treated by their wider social environments (e.g., Jack's complaint that he doesn't want his "entire life […] to be a fight. Why does something that is normal for someone else have to be so political for [him]?"in S03E22, or Kurt's fear for his safety in response to bullying at school in S02E08).

To a degree, the perceived importance of queerness may also be tied to genre constraints, as e.g., Comedy formats tend to discuss even tragic events in more light-hearted terms than a Drama might (e.g., Marshall and Werndly 2002, 104). However, character attributes and the degree of cultural or fictional realism likely also play a role here, for instance with respect to the age and status of the queer character in question: While the main cast queer characters in both *Will & Grace* and *Modern Family* occasionally describe feeling alienated and treated differently by their environment due to their queerness, they are all adults with fairly well-established support networks, which may make them feel more confident and less threatened by potential social disapproval. And indeed, Jack's son Elliot mentions not wanting to dress more camp for fear of being perceived as queer and "killed" at school (Supplement C2, Will & Grace, S04E01). While this is played as a joke in the context of the conversation, it might still be seen as an indication that the story world of *Will & Grace* is not actually less structurally queerphobic than those in the dramas, and that this difference may instead be a result of the characters' social standing and support networks.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer could be argued to occupy a somewhat intermediate position on this scale, as both Willow and Tara behave in ways that are informed by the human world's likely attitudes towards their queerness. However, with the primary plot arcs focus on magical threats and an effective support network already at a level of remove from wider human society (in ways that might be considered analogous to queer experiences, as discussed in Sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4), they seem to be less focused on the perception of their relationship or queerness beyond their immediate group of friends. Also, it must be noted that some of the characters (especially Xander in the early seasons) tend towards quips that appear to

intentionally (and unnecessarily) distance themselves from the notion of queerness, which may be indicative of a fear of being perceived as queer by their environment.

A second dimension of the role of queerness in the story worlds that arose from the episode annotation was the story world and its characters' degree of **alignment with preexisting queer stereotypes**: Of all the analysed shows, *Will & Grace* appears to make the most consistent use of preexisting queer stereotypes, which are at least occasionally reproduced by every one of the main cast characters (queer and non-queer), such as that of the "effeminate homosexual man" (e.g., Bronski 2011, 114). Notably, this apparent blurring of gender stereotypes is not, in fact, applied to the queer characters only, but also to non-queer characters (e.g., Grace) in their relation to the queer characters (e.g., describing Grace with typically masculine terms in S05E22). However, the characters not only reproduce queer stereotypes, but also repeatedly turn common anti-queer sentiments on their head by applying them to non-queer identities instead, such as the idea that one may "catch" another person's sexuality through close association with them, which could be considered a frequent anti-queer talking point especially in the late twentieth century (e.g., Buck et al. 2013, 941).

To a lesser degree, such a reproduction of queer stereotypes may also be identified in the annotated episodes of *Glee*, where queerness is commonly expressed via camp performance, to the degree that an association with the camp performance arts environment of the Glee club is perceived as an indicator of queerness (e.g., Supplement C2, Glee, S01E04). Furthermore, several of the queer characters indicate in their dialogue that they have an awareness of such stereotypes, though they vary in how far they want to align (or be perceived as aligning) themselves with these stereotypes (e.g., Kurt's vs. Santana's comments about queerness in S02E20).

Both *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Lost Girl* occupy a somewhat ambiguous position on this scale, as their recurring framing of magical community and ability as queer creates a kind of additional dimension of queerness to be considered: In the direct portrayal of queerness in *Lost Girl*, queer stereotypes are hardly addressed at all. At the same time, however, Bo's magical powers are frequently discussed in ways that closely resemble hypersexualizing bi-phobic stereotypes (e.g., Hutchins 2018, 257). By contrast, queer stereotypes are directly

discussed in the annotated episodes from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* only in a small number of conversations (e.g., the argument between Tara and Willow about Willow's past relationships with men in S05E19). As such, one might conclude that such stereotypes are part of the fictional world of the show, but remain largely unaddressed by the characters. While not specifically a stereotype, the idea of a magical community (especially witchcraft) as an alternative (queer) "lifestyle" is invoked repeatedly (e.g., Xander in S05E05), which could also be seen as an indication of certain preconceived notions about these communities in contrast to a (hypothetical) heteronormative default.

The shows with the strongest and most explicit disavowal of queer stereotypes on part of the main cast queer characters appear to be *Dawson's Creek* and *Modern Family*: In both of these shows, the main cast queer characters repeatedly explicitly distance themselves from stereotypes about their identities as gay men (e.g., Jack in S04E14, Mitchell in S05E01), while also highlighting the irony in their (occasional) use of catchphrases and slogans common to the queer community. Strikingly, this does not, however, appear to prevent the characters from choosing to embrace certain (stereotypical) behaviours associated with the queer community in such community settings (e.g., Jack in S05E10, Mitchell and Cameron in S02E18). This in turn creates a perceived contrast between their willingness to be perceived as obviously stereotypically queer in queer vs. non-queer environments, which might arguably be tied back to the previously discussed structural importance of queerness. Both shows seemingly aim to create fictional worlds that bear close resemblance to small-town or suburban U.S. communities at the time of their production, and could thus be considered an example of cultural realism, though they are notably the product of different genres and different times of production. As such, one possible reason for their similarity in this respect might arise from the fact that the main cast queer characters from both of these shows would likely all have been teenagers and young adults in the U.S. in the late 1990s or early 2000s, based on the setting of the respective show.

Finally, it appears worth considering to what degree the main cast queer characters from the different shows indicate their degree of **alignment with common sociocultural norms and milestones**: As was noted previously, the queer main cast characters in both *Modern Family* and *Glee* repeatedly mention wishing to meet traditional heteronormative milestones, such

as, for instance, getting married. From this, as well as from their respective perception of their queerness as an obstacle to achieving these ambitions, one might conclude that within the story worlds of these shows the most prominent queer characters often strongly desire to participate in such milestones.

Jack on *Dawson's Creek*, meanwhile, repeatedly mentions that he believes common normative milestones and experiences to be irrelevant or unavailable for him during the earlier seasons (e.g., S03E22, S04E14), though he does appear to become more contented with this outlook in the later seasons (e.g., S06E21). *Will & Grace*, too, portrays its main cast characters (both queer and not) as occasionally conflicted about their personal desire for normative family structures and milestones: While Jack from *Will & Grace* indicates little desire to be part of a nuclear family, he does wish to have a good relationship with his son, and appears conflicted about his role as a parent (S04E01). Both Will and Grace begin (and end) a series of committed (apparently typically monogamous) relationships throughout the annotated episodes, while their own close if platonic relationship is a recurring point of tension both with their respective partners but also with their wider social circle (e.g., S03E23).

By contrast, none of the characters from *Lost Girl* or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* indicate a particular interest in such milestones, which may in part be attributable to the shows' focus on supernatural elements and secret magical societies. However, it must also be acknowledged that both shows do instead place a stronger emphasis on the role of non-nuclear chosen family structures (e.g., Buffy in S05E05, Bo in S04E13).

In all of the story worlds, queerness thus appears to have been represented in a variety of ways that do go beyond the use of queer in-group terminology as it was investigated in Stage 1. The different TV shows and genres episodes analysed here were found to have utilized such terms of queer in-group identity differently, in ways that may be connected to the findings discussed above: The highest frequency of use of queer terms of in-group identity was identified in the analysed episodes of Comedy shows (*Figure 26*), which may be explained by the topical focus of many of the main cast queer character arcs and plots focusing on their own and their environments' preconceived notions about queerness. Beyond this, the

analysed Comedy shows were also found to commonly make use of terms of queer in-group terminology in reference to stereotypes about the queer community, which the main cast queer characters may either embrace or reject depending on their personal experiences or situation.

The analysed Drama shows, by contrast, were found to make use of terms of queer in-group identity mainly in isolated episodes, frequently ones that had a specific plot focus on either the coming out or the experience of queerness of a specific queer main cast character (e.g., Jack in S02E14, S02E15; Kurt in S01E04). Here, however, it must again be noted that not all main cast queer characters in *Glee* were found to have the same level of prominence in the episodes (*Figure 21*), which may partially explain the difference in prominence of the different terms: Kurt, for instance, is one of the most prominent characters across the annotated episodes and identifies as gay, making it likely that his experiences as a gay man will be discussed using this term. However, it is notable that, while *Glee*'s S04E06 has a sub-plot about Unique's difficulties with being accepted as a transfeminine person at school, no such term of in-group identity is used in the episode, and her identity is discussed rather in terms of "dressing" in a certain way (Supplement C2, Glee, S04E06). As such, there seem to be differences in the ways that different queer identities are talked about within the show. Due to the makeup of the *TV Corpus* on the one and the constraints of this study on the other hand, *Glee* proved the only of the shows annotated for Stage 2 to have main cast characters whose experiences seem to fall under the trans umbrella, thus making a direct comparison not feasible.

The two Fantasy/Hybrid genre shows considered here most rarely made use of the investigated terms of queer in-group identity: In case of *Lost Girl*, this presumably can be explained by the creative team's aforementioned stated intention to create a story world in which queerness is not considered an issue worthy of debate. In case of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, it was rather found that queerness was typically alluded to in more indirect ways, often also via parallels drawn between magical elements and queerness, as they were discussed in Section 5.2.2.2.

Overall, it can be said that queerness may be realized in long-running scripted TV shows in a variety of ways, including but not limited to the use of terms of queer in-group identity, in keeping with what was described by Gauntlett (2008, 94). However, there seem to be certain patterns to be observed: The shows from each of the genres examined here were found to have certain features in common, while still showing a degree of variability both within and beyond the genre that may be explained both by show internal factors (e.g., closeness of the fictional world of the story world to ours, thematic focus of the plot, number of main cast characters) but also by external factors such as shifts in real-world politics and queer activism such as the ones described by Weiss (2018, 107).

On this basis, this project has formulated three axes on which the role of queerness in a fictional story world may be traced more comprehensively, in ways that also go beyond more conveniently quantifiable phenomena like the use of terms of queer in-group identity:

a) The relative structural or **cultural importance** of queerness in the fictional world

b) The characters' degree of alignment with preexisting **queer stereotypes**

c) The characters' degree of alignment with **sociocultural norms** and milestones

6. Concluding remarks

This present thesis project has taken a diachronic mixed-method perspective on linguistic representations of queerness in scripted North American television shows. The phenomenon colloquially referred to as "queer representation" is a highly complex and multifaceted one, far beyond the scope of any single project to assess comprehensively, as "modern media has a more complex view of gender and sexuality than ever before" (Gauntlett 2002, 98). In order to contribute to the understanding of some dimensions of this phenomenon, this project's two stage methodology has combined elements of large-scale corpus analysis with in-depth analyses and discussions of individual select TV show episodes, guided by the approaches of, among others, Bednarek (2023), Baker and McEnery (2015), and Reichelt and Durham (2017).

Stage 1 of this project aimed at a large-scale diachronic assessment of the ways in which common current terms of queer in-group identity have been used on scripted North American TV was structured around an automatic extraction of hits, concordance lines, and collocates from the relevant segment of the *TV Corpus* followed by a qualitative evaluation thereof via extensive concordance line annotation. The quantitative and qualitative data obtained in these steps was then analysed with regards to the creativity and variability of a given term's usage, diachronic changes in these usages (for which purpose *Peaks and Troughs* analyses were also utilized), and common contexts of use. For those terms with the highest frequencies across time (*gay** and *lesbian**), the terms' distribution across common TV genres, and contexts of use was compared across time, the latter via usage fluctuation analyses of the most common variants (*gay* and *lesbian*). Possible limitations of this approach could be seen in the necessary subjectivity of the relevance judgements, as well as in the strongly varying number of words contained within the *TV Corpus* from the earlier to the later decades contained therein.

To expand on this perspective, analyses comparable to those performed for Stage 1 might be extended to include other terms of queer in-group identity. Additionally, the subjectivity inherent in such a concordance line analysis might be minimized with the help of inter-annotator procedures, which arguably could even allow for a meaningful identification of derogatory vs. non-derogatory instances of use of queer terms.

These various avenues of analysis pursued in Stage 1 were guided by research questions **RQ I**, **RQ II**, and **RQ III** as they were defined in Section 3.1. To consolidate the great wealth of quantitative and qualitative data gained in the project stages, this section attempts to outline answers to these questions as concisely as possible, while acknowledging that, due to the very richness of the data and the complexity of the phenomenon, these answers are unlikely to capture the fullest picture possible of the use of common current terms of queer in-group identity in North American Scripted television shows:

RQ I *How did the frequencies of use of widely known current terms of queer in-group membership used in scripted North American TV dialogue develop over time?*

Current terms of queer in-group identity were first identified in the 1970s with a likely meaning relating to the queer community, in an era of increasingly public queer advocacy, decriminalization (Strub 2018, 82), and first sympathetic queer characters on mainstream TV (Ullman 2018, 365). Of these earliest terms identified, some gained high visibility and were found at high frequencies throughout the decades contained in the corpus (e.g., *gay**, *lesbian**), while others remained more rarely used or fell out of frequent use by the 2010s (e.g., *queer**, *transvestite*, *transsexual*). By contrast, some terms were first identified with a meaning related to the queer community in later decades (e.g., *trans*/*transgender* (1980s), *bi*/*bisexual* (1990s), or *LGBT** (2000s)). The amount of variation and linguistic creativity visible in the results varies from term to term, likely depending on a variety of linguistic as well as sociopolitical factors. The two most frequently occurring queried-for terms (*lesbian** and *gay**) were found to have frequently been used in shows tagged as "Romance", "Comedy", and, to a lesser degree "Drama", a pattern which may likely be explained by the genre conventions of these types of TV programming. The frequencies of use of several of the investigated terms were found to decrease towards the end of the years contained in the corpus, likely due to changes in the media landscape and consideration of changing queer identity politics (Weiss 2018, 107). Similar patterns could also be identified for other terms relating to sexuality, in keeping with broader cultural trends informed by North American "social purity movements" (Bronski 2011, 17) and what has been described as the TV industry's tendency towards "least objectionable programming" (Adams et al. 1983, 10).

RQ II *What contexts are widely known current terms of queer in-group membership most commonly used in, and how have these contexts changed over time?*

Collocates for the investigated terms of queer in-group identity were found to frequently relate to other queer identities, queer community life and activities, but also queer stereotypes (Bronski 2011, 114) and dangers to the community. For both *gay* and *lesbian*, a decrease in collocational strength was identified in the early 2000s, which both corresponds to these terms' highest peak in frequency of use in and an era of both high public visibility and increasing acceptance of queer individuals (Weiss 2018, 109; Vider 2018, 352), but also likely frequent use of queer identity terms also as slurs and comedic devices (Postic and Prough 2014, 1).

RQ III *How might these patterns of use of terms of queer in-group identity be linked to the sociopolitical realities and industry conventions of TV programming?*

Some degree of the variation in the patterns of use of terms of queer in-group identity is likely due to sociopolitical factors such as milestone events and notably non-linear policy changes in the political treatment of the queer community (as discussed in Stein 2018), as well as changes in the preferred terminology used by the queer community and shifts in the conceptualizations of queerness at the basis of queer advocacy (Weiss 2018, 109). In terms of the TV industry, changes in the perceived acceptability of using certain terms as a slur or derogatory term for comedic effect, as well as the rise of queer stereotypes and preconceived notions surrounding queer identity labels (e.g., Chung 2007, 101) should be considered as likely to impact the frequency and contexts of use of common current terms of queer in-group identity.

To complement this bird's eye perspective on queer representation via use of queer identity labels, a more in-depth analysis of individual TV shows and prominent queer characters was utilized in Stage 2. Here, a total of 60 episodes from six TV shows were selected from within the corpus: These shows had been produced between the late 1990s and the mid-2010s, had at least one main cast queer character each, and could be seen as representing three different genres (Drama, Fantasy, Comedy). These episodes were annotated both quantitatively for speaker and qualitatively for the role and impact of queerness in the fictional world of the story and for the main cast queer character arcs. Possible limitations of this stage could be a selection bias in looking only at the role of queerness and prominence of queer characters in shows that do actually contain main cast queer characters over a run of at least five seasons, as well as the challenges of annotating the episode transcripts with speaker information due to their varying levels of accuracy and detail.

Extending the scope of the Stage 2 analysis to include further TV shows or additional perspectives on the qualitative annotation of queerness in the fictional worlds would greatly enhance the scope and generalizability of these findings, especially with regards to discussing even newer and more diverse shows that were not included in the *TV Corpus*. The design of this stage of the analysis was guided by research questions **RQ IV**, **RQ V**, and **RQ VI**:

RQ IV *Is there a difference between the dialogue prominence and basic frequency measures of queer main cast characters and non-queer main cast characters in long-running (5 or more seasons) North American TV shows?*

For each of the six shows investigated here, basic frequency measures and levels of prominence in the dialogue were found to be similar for main cast queer and non-queer character (types) within shows, regardless of TV genre. However, differences in prominence could instead be observed based on a character's role in the plot (e.g., protagonist vs. love interest).This pattern, too, proved to be in evidence both for queer and for non-queer main cast characters. While these main cast queer characters were found to be similarly prominent as their non-queer counterparts, there were comparatively small numbers of recurring queer characters in the annotated episodes. Notably, the majority of these main cast queer characters were found to be white, cis gay men, while only one single main cast trans character of colour could be identified whose prominence in the dialogue was much less

pronounced. As such, an intersectional understanding and analysis of portrayals of queerness appears to be greatly needed (Shah 2018).

RQ V *Are there differences between TV genres with regards to the ways in which queerness and queer main cast characters are constructed within the world of the show?*

When comparing the shows from the three genres considered here, some degree of genre-related variation could be identified, due to, for instance, different topical foci and genre constraints calling for specific types of (interpersonal) conflict (Marshall and Werndly 2002, 87; Messerli 2016, 80): The Drama shows were thus both found to construct episodic plots and characters arcs around the queerness and coming out of the main cast queer characters, though they varied in how far queerness appeared to be an internal vs. an external source of conflict for the main cast queer characters. Additionally, the characters from both shows report feelings of isolation and alienation due to their queerness, though they ultimately arrive at different strategies for overcoming these feelings. The Fantasy shows were found to rarely discuss queerness explicitly, while still utilizing magical elements in ways that draw a parallel to the experience of queerness (Rodríguez 2017, 44). The Comedy shows both utilize characters' queerness and (lack of) adherence to normative family structures as a frequent source of humour and episodic conflict, though there are differences in how far the main cast queer characters embrace or reject the stereotypical conceptualizations and normative assumptions of their social environments (Duggan 2002, 179).

RQ VI *How prominent is queerness in the fictional world of these shows, and in the character arcs of queer main cast characters?*

The prominence of queerness within these examined fictional worlds varied strongly between shows, though the qualitative analysis gave rise to three axes along which the prominence and importance of queerness within the fictional world of the show may be traced: Firstly, the structural/cultural importance that characters place on their queerness and on being perceived as queer, as this may indicate a fictional world of the show anywhere between one in which being perceived as queer is a realistic threat to the characters, and one in which queerness is completely unremarkable. Secondly, the degree to which characters align or

disalign themselves with preexisting queer stereotypes in the story world, which may indicate the characters' experiences and level of comfort with the queer community and their own queer identity. Thirdly, the degree to which queer characters align themselves with or reject common sociocultural norms and milestones, as it may indicate the personal importance queer characters place on real-world heteronormative values and structures, and, as such (arguably) their alignment with neoliberal attitudes (Weiss 2018, 107). The ways in which a story world may construct queerness within the cultural or fictional realism of a show can thus reasonably be described as multilayered and variable, rather than a simple matter of "having" or "not having" queerness (Gauntlett 2002, 16).

Overall, this project has demonstrated the considerable complexity of the ways in which the queer community is represented on scripted North American television. Diachronic and genre-based differences in these portrayals can be traced back to an interwoven net of sociopolitical considerations, industry conventions, and evolving conceptualizations of queer identities. As such, the topic offers a fascinating glimpse into a phenomenon perched at the intersection of linguistics, social sciences, and media studies, offering valuable insight into how cultural discourses surrounding queerness are negotiated and reimagined through televisual storytelling.

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8. List of online supplements

As this thesis project utilizes datasets compiled by a third party, only a small excerpt of the annotated data can be made publicly available as a supplement. These exemplary materials from each step of the analysis are intended to illustrate the annotation procedures performed and to allow for more transparency in the analysis. A list of materials included as part of these **online supplements** can be found below, and can always be accessed via this

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In the interest of academic accountability and comparability, a **Coscine repository** with additional materials relating to each of the analyses exemplified here was created. Limited access to these materials can be granted upon request via

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Contents – COSCINE REPOSITORY

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