The Influence of Films on LGBTQ+ Male Young Adults Romantic Expectations

Anthony Bilello

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Abstract: This paper analyzes the influence that films featuring LGBTQ+ relationships have in fostering the romantic expectations of young LGBTQ+ men aged 15-20. The films Bohemian Rhapsody (2018) and Rent (2005) were analyzed based on how LGBTQ+ relationships were characterized, finding dramatic or unrealistic representation of physical and emotional expectations in addition to expectations of conflict resolution. This data informed a survey asking LGBTQ+ and straight men about their expectations of romance, romantic partners, and themselves in a relationship. The survey displayed a strong difference in expectations, specifically in terms of physical expectations.

Keywords: LGBTQ+ romantic expectations, romantic beliefs, films, young LGBTQ+ men

Introduction

The foundation of the research conducted in this report is to determine how films may influence the romantic expectations of LGBTQ+ young adult (15-20 years old) men compared to young straight men. This is due to the lack of representation of the LGBTQ+ community in films throughout the history of cinema as researcher Nick Bamford notes (Bamford, 2016), in addition to the lack of research on how men's romantic expectations are shaped by films, as much of the pre-existing theories and research on the topic are focused primarily on women, such as the theory of "princess culture", a theory regarding the influence of films on young girls (Koontz, 2017). By combining these topics, this research aimed to determine whether films may influence romantic expectations on a group seldom researched previously.

Literature Review

Introduction

This research focused on how films influence romantic expectations in young LGBTQ+ men com-

pared to straight men. The two primary areas of focus were how romantic expectations in general are shaped by films and the relationship of the film industry to the LGBTQ+ community.

Body of Knowledge

Romantic expectations in film

Much research presently exists on how media, including movies, can impact viewers and their ideas, opinions, perceptions, and thoughts. One theory, known as the "Cultivation Theory", presented by researchers from the International Journal of Research in Psychology, explains that watching media can instill unrealistic beliefs and influence viewers' outlook on the world (Banaag et al. 2014). This theory became the basis for various studies focusing on how movies impact the viewers' ideas, such as studies conducted by Kubrak (2020), Krans (2023), and Segrin (2002) aiming to identify the theory's validity. Kubrak and Segrin did this by issuing surveys to participants, while Krans conducted a meta-analysis. (Kubrak, 2020; Krans, 2023; Segrin, 2002). Both aimed to evaluate extreme beliefs about romance coupled with film watching. The results displayed that viewers were more likely to mimic beliefs of films they watched, demonstrating the

validity of the "Cultivation Theory" (Banaag, 2014). This preliminary research is further expanded by another theory which identifies how media can influence viewers. This theory, presented by the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* and titled the theory of "princess culture", credits romance movies for girls as depicting highly fictitious relationships and makes the young viewers believe that all romantic relationships will be perfect (Koontz, 2017). Like the "Cultivation Theory" (Banaag, 2014), this theory provides another angle analyzing how films influence opinions and romantic expectations (Banaag, 2014) (Koontz, 2017). The theory is expanded upon by results of studies which examine similar film topics portraying unrealistic romance. Evidence of the theory's validity is displayed by researchers Galloway (2015), Ray (2022), and Welch (2021), as their studies aimed at researching how romance films specifically might create unrealistic expectations of romantic partners as the theory hypothesizes. Each study surveyed participants, looking at beliefs about romance and how audience opinions may be influenced by the films they consumed (Galloway, 2015; Ray, 2022; Welch, 2021). They provided evidence supporting the theory of "princess culture" by establishing a correlation between greater expectations for love and the consumption of films, with even greater emphasis on female participants as they were the majority (Koontz, 2017). These findings indicate the validity of the theory of "princess culture" displaying the link between film viewing and unrealistic expectations of romance, while also highlighting gaps in the research as most participants, as well as the focus of the theory, are women. Both ideas, backed up by research, display the influence films can have on viewers, specifically romantic beliefs. Furthermore, romantic expectations are not only influenced by films but also by gender. Relevant to this topic is research conducted by Harris (2004) and Punyanunt-Carter (2006), who conducted similar research on the role of gender alongside films in forming romantic expectations by administering surveys asking both male and female participants how romance movies influenced their romantic beliefs. Similar conclusions arose with a clear difference in expectations between genders, with men having unrealistic expectations of sex and women with unrealistic expectations of romance itself. These results reveal another way romantic expectations are influenced by films, similar to the previous theories and

studies such as the previously mentioned researchers Galloway (2015) or Welch (2021).

LGBTQ+ Representation

In addition to how films influence romantic expectations, another relevant topic of review is how films and audiences view the LGBTQ+ community. Researchers have evaluated portrayals of the LGBTQ+ community throughout cinema history, such as researcher Nick Bamford of Bournemouth University who conducted a meta-analysis of various films containing LGBTGQ+ characters. His research showed that while the quantity of LGBTQ+ portrayals have increased, the quality is lacking, with "watered-down" portrayals (Bamford, 2016). Likewise, an analysis by researcher Makkena Lambert on the history of LGBTQ+ representation in horror movies specifically contains similar results to Bamford's (2016) study, noting that the few depictions of LGBTQ+ characters were often stereotypical (Lambert, 2023). Researchers Brown (2021), Guskos (2023), and Rachmah (2019) evaluated portrayals of films featuring characters who are either explicitly LGBTQ+ or have certain "mannerisms" labeled as "queer". The results provide evidence of highly unrealistic and stereotypical depictions of the LGBTQ+ community (Brown, 2021; Guskos, 2023; Rachmah, 2019). Despite this agreement, researcher Onika Umayam disagrees. Umayam's analysis is similar to others in design; however, it indicates that LGBTQ+ representation in films is capable of representing the LGBTQ+ community more positively than the previous researchers implied (Umayam, 2024). This disagreement highlights potential gaps in the research, as the film Umayam studies, *Love Simon*, is focused on romance (Umayam, 2024), while the objects of the previous studies were films promoted to a general audience (Brown, 2021; Guskos, 2023; Rachmah, 2019; Umayam, 2024). General audiences have also been subject to research on how they view the LGBTQ+ community, such as analyses conducted by Thompson (2021) and McInroy (2017), asserting that general audiences exposed to harmful stereotypes have unrealistic beliefs of the LGBTQ+ community. Unlike the last set of studies, researchers Madžarević (2018) and McKee's (2000) findings indicate that films can promote the LGBTQ+ community positively (Madžarević, 2018; McKee, 2000). Madžarević's study on audiences revealed that they

reacted positively to the LGBTQ+ community due to the movie they were assigned to watch. McKee's study evaluated how gay men identified with LGBTQ+ characters in films and helping them accept themselves. Both McKee (2000) and Madžarević's (2018) studies help display the power films have influencing viewers in a positive way. The previous studies provide ample research on the LGBTQ+ community, the film industry, and audiences. One topic barely addressed is the community's relationship to romance and how it may be shaped by the films they watch.

Call to Research

Research on films and their relationship to expectations of romance is extensive; however, research gaps are present. Firstly, research often focuses mostly on women. For example, the theory of "princess culture" is aimed at identifying reasons behind high expectations in women only. Men are not the only group neglected by research on romantic expectations and film, and fewer sources discuss the LGBTQ+ community. In the previous studies, the LGBTQ+ population was often never addressed or surveyed. Additionally, upon collecting the previous research on films and their influence on the LGBTQ+ community and their perception, rarely did researchers discuss implications of films influencing the LGBTQ+ community's relationships with each other. Most studies and analyses focused solely on the community and their relationship/acceptance by others, which leaves much to be desired in terms of research on romantic relationships in terms of the LGBTQ+ community and films. This is where this research is relevant, by aiming to fill this gap of young gay men and how romantic expectations are shaped by the films they watch. The research question posed based on this gap is: how do movies featuring an LGBTQ+ romance plotline influence the expectations of romance in LGBTQ+ men aged 15-20?

Methods

Film Analysis

In first part of the study, I analyzed two films which both portray romantic relationships among LGBTQ+ characters, those two films being *Rent* (Columbus,

2005) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (Singer, 2018). Both films feature romantic relationships between explicitly LGBTQ+ men. In *Bohemian Rhapsody*, the protagonist is a characterized version of real-life singer Freddie Mercury, a singer known for his feminine and flamboyant mannerisms (Singer, 2018). He finds himself in various relationships throughout the course of the film; however, the two which were the focus of this analysis were his romantic involvements with Paul Prenter and Jim Hutton (Singer, 2018). The relationship with Paul Prenter is presented as a failed and unfulfilling relationship; however, his future partner Jim is presented as much more loving (Singer, 2018). Of the variety of characters in *Rent*, the characters of Tom Collins and Angel Dumott Schunard, an LGBTQ+ couple who are battling positive diagnoses of HIV/AIDS, were the focus of this analysis (Columbus, 2005). Tom Collins is presented as an intelligent and quiet gay man, and his boyfriend Angel is presented as a crossdressing feminine gay man who is outgoing and sociable (Columbus, 2005). I recorded each instance of interactions between the characters and looked particularly to see if any traits and actions aligned with each other in both movies. In addition, I analyzed the way each character is presented both in their physical appearance and their mannerisms in an effort to categorize the data as well as to outline what aspects of the characterization are heavily focused on when portraying a relationship between two people who are LGBTQ+ in film. Upon the conclusion of each individual film analysis, I compiled all of the data into categories based on what appeared to be the main focuses to portray in an LGBTQ+ character and their relationships, these categories being physical appearance, personality, and conflict/ conflict resolution, which as further explained in the results section were the main characteristics driving LGBTQ+ romantic relationships in accordance with the films' portrayal.

Survey

With the film analysis completed, I compiled the data into the distinct categories of physical appearance, personality, and conflict/conflict resolution. I also had a list of common traits and behaviors such as the common tendency for LGBTQ+ men to be presented as feminine, as with Freddie Mercury and Angel (Singer, 2018; Columbus, 2005). Both data cat-

egories influenced the questions I asked in my survey. The survey was formatted with the Romantic Beliefs Scale which was a 7-point Likert Scale allowing participants to agree or disagree with a given statement, thus intending to evaluate the extent to which these films might influence viewers. Each statement was designed to emulate the specific traits focused on by the films reviewed in the analysis, for example one statement reads "I expect my romantic partner to dress more feminine" because in both *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) and *Rent* (2005), at least one LGBTQ+ character is portrayed as dressing more feminine, and this is a major part of their romantic characterization, thus potentially influencing their romantic expectations. To answer this statement, participants must choose between numbers 1-7, 1 stating "strongly disagree", and 7 stating "strongly agree" with 2-6 offering more mixed opinions in between 1 and 7. If a participant did not wish to answer or note their opinion on a statement, they were allowed to skip it. Furthermore, the statements were all grouped into three separate categories, these being the same ones I determined earlier in the film analysis: physical appearance, personality, and conflict/conflict resolution. The survey also begins by asking questions related to demographic information, including participant and parental consent (if the participant is under the age of 18), preferred gender identity, whether or not the participant was born with their preferred gender identity, age range, sexual orientation, and current relationship status. Another demographical question I asked was "have you watched at least three films within the last 20 days?" There was also a pair of questions asking participants "what is the most important value in a romantic partner?" and the second question asks participants to rank various romantic traits such as empathy, intelligence, and physical appearance from most to least important. The survey was open to all men, not just LGBTQ+ men, allowing for any difference in romantic expectations to be compared and noted. Furthermore, another requirement for participants in this survey was to be between the ages of 15-20. I distributed the survey using various methods including advertising my survey to students in a local school's Gay Straight Alliance club; the club's members consisted of various people who fit my demographic. Furthermore, I issued my survey online in various communities such as LGBTQ+ support groups and

student groups of 15–20-year-olds. To ensure my results contained the most varied responses, utilizing online communities allowed more participants fitting my demographic to find my survey.

Data Collection

After my data was collected, I conducted a T-Test to compare the results of the LGBTQ+ participants to the straight/heterosexual participants. The T-Test was conducted using the JASP program.

Method Alignment

Romantic Beliefs Scale

The structure of the survey uses a Likert scale, specifically the "Romantic Beliefs Scale", a seven-point scale where participants select a choice representing their opinions based on a given statement. I used the scale as participants can easily agree or disagree with the statements and provided them with ample choices allowing for the most accurate answers from participants based on each statement. The "Romantic Beliefs Scale" was used in the survey by Galloway, Engstrom, and Ermers-Sommer (Galloway et al.,, 2015), asking about romantic expectations, and the use of this scale helped the researchers gather accurate answers based on statements of "high expectations", similar to the survey I conducted. Furthermore, the reason I conducted a survey is because the "Romantic Beliefs Scale" – which, as discussed, is the best way to assess romantic beliefs in participants -- is designed for a survey like Galloway's survey (Galloway et al., 2015). One question also allowed participants to rank romantic traits such as intelligence, empathy, and physical appearance from the most to least important which provides further information about each participant's romantic values in a more concise way.

Film Analyses

The statements, as well as the categories of physical, emotional, and conflict resolution expectations are based on the films I examined: 2018's *Bohemian Rhapsody* (Singer 2018) and 2005's *Rent* (Columbus, 2005). I chose these two films since both films por-

tray various LGBTQ+ characters and relationships: for example, in *Bohemian Rhapsody* the portrayal of Freddie Mercury and his relationships (Singer, 2018), and in *Rent* with various LGBTQ+ characters such as Angel and Tom (Columbus, 2005). I also chose these two films as they would have likely been viewed by my target demographic of 15–20-year-olds, since *Rent* (having been released in 2005) would have existed for many years while not being so old that young adults to avoid it, and *Bohemian Rhapsody* having released in 2018 is likely to have been viewed by young adults upon or soon after release. I examined romantic interactions between the LGBTQ+ characters to note dramatized and/or heavily focused on aspects of the characters, like the emphasis on the physical appearance of characters in both films or how conflicts are resolved. The analysis itself was conducted similarly to Rachmah's study on the 2017 film *Beauty and the Beast* in which she analyzed scenes featuring the character Le Fou to assess the extent to which his portrayal was "queer coded" and how it harms the LGBTQ+ community's representation (Rachmah, 2019). However, my study is focused more on romantic interactions found in the researched films. Rachmah's study guided my own analysis on the films since she focuses on characterization as well as how characters interact with others (Rachmah, 2019), and to assess dramatized romantic elements among LGBTQ+ characters I also needed to look at characterization above all else. I examined this to inform my survey on what categories of expectations to focus on and informing several statements such as those regarding dressing/acting feminine as both films feature crossdressing.

Data Collection

I used various measures to ensure my data was organized, including a variety of questions which serve to ensure participants are within my target demographics of LGBTQ+ men aged 15-20, including questions related to their preferred gender identity and their age. The only exception was that for those who identify as straight men, I used their data as a control group to compare their results to the LGBTQ+ participants. I used the T-Test I used to compare the responses from LGBTQ+ men the straight men to show distinct romantic expectations unique

to the LGBTQ+ men, thus displaying any heightened romantic expectations among the LGBTQ+ participants.

Participants

As mentioned previously in the literature review, there is a lack of representation of LGBTQ+ men in addition to stereotypes. My research on how films featuring romantic elements influence LGBTQ+ men and their romantic expectations is crucial in determining how being either absent or mocked in films can impact romantic expectations differently in LGBTQ+ men than straight people and women. Furthermore, the participants being 15-20 years old is important as young adults are entering society, and it is important to study their interaction with the world as they will soon be influencing society on a larger scale. I also wished to assess participants and their familiarity with films, so I asked whether they watched at least 3 films within the last twenty days. Originally, I was aiming to look at LGBTQ+ men from Nassau County, NY since it is a diverse county located in between bustling New York City and rural Suffolk County which lends to a sampling of various ideas and cultures. I thought this would lend the research to contain little cultural-based bias due to the wide variety of cultures present in Nassau County. While originally, I believed this would work well, I quickly noticed redundancy since participants who answered outside of my location answered with little difference in data.

Results

Content Analysis of Bohemian Rhapsody

The characters of note in this analysis are Freddie Mercury, Mary Austin (Freddie's first love), Paul Prenter (first male love interest), and Jim Hutton (second male love interest). The first romantic scene is between Freddie and Mary, where she encourages his experimentation with feminine clothing (Timestamp: 0:09:57-0:11:16). This scene is relevant in this analysis since while it does not feature two LGBTQ+ men in a relationship, it displays Freddie's tendency to dress in "feminine" clothing. Soon after, Freddie is introduced to his second love interest, Paul Prenter, who acts as

Queen's manager. (0:22:12-0:22:50). Paul's appearance is "masculine", wearing unrevealing outfits, short hair, and a mustache. In the next noteworthy scene, a male truck driver eyes Freddie and enters the bathroom. Freddie can be seen looking at the door and thinking, foreshadowing the truth of his sexuality (0:28:56-0:29:38). Later, Freddie plays a song as Paul proceeds to kiss him to Freddie's rejection (0:35:04-0:37:19). This scene displays the romantic feelings Paul presses onto Freddie. The next scene takes place after Mary and Freddie break up due to Freddie's sexuality. Freddie holds a party where he dons a flamboyant outfit and flirts with other men including Paul (1:00:00-1:03:11). After the party, Freddie meets Jim Hutton, his caterer. Freddie touches him inappropriately for which he apologizes, and they kiss after flirtation (1:03:11-1:05:47). After an unrelated drama, Freddie is alone with Paul who withholds calls from Freddie's friends on the grounds that he is "too busy with work" (1:27:58-1:33:34). After Freddie confronts Paul, he threatens to release stories of Freddie's exploits to blackmail him (1:33:47-1:36:06). The final noteworthy scene is Freddie's reconnection with Jim Hutton, where, while they hold hands, he meets his family (1:50:17-1:52:45).

Content Analysis of Rent:

This analysis is based on romantic interactions between Tom Collins and Angel Dumott Schunard: two gay men with AIDS. The first scene of this relationship sees Angel treat Collins after he gets mugged, bonding over both having AIDS (0:14:19-0:15:31). Next, Angel performs the song "Today 4 You" for Collins and his friends, all while wearing "feminine" clothing like a wig, leggings, and high heels, which is a running character trait (0:27:07-0:29:45). Next, Collins and Angel attends an AIDS support group; Angel is still dressed "feminine" while Collins is dressed in "ordinary clothes" (0:38:54-0:41:45). Soon after, Angel and Tom have a duet, "I'll Cover You", where they act intimate by hugging, holding hands, and kissing (0:58:50-1:01:20). Many of their further interactions take place during unrelated scenes such as them hugging during Maureen's protest (1:02:55-1:10:14), kissing during "Viva La Vie Boheme" (1:16:37-1:16:40), and dressing as James Bond and Pussy Galore for New Years (1:26:19-1:29:10). The next scenes are shown during

the song "Without You", where Angel is held by Collins on the train and in the hospital (1:43:14-1:45:25). Angel then succumbs to AIDS by the end. The final noteworthy scene after Angel's funeral has Collin's friends sing that they want a "taste of what Angel had" referring to Angel and Collins' love (1:50:58-1:53:28).

Analysis

Content Analysis

Upon the conclusion of the content analysis, several key factors of LGBTQ+ romances emerged, those being how they are represented physically, emotionally, and through conflict. Starting with physical traits, both films heavily emphasize on the appearance of the men. In each relationship there was always one man presented as dressing "feminine" (i.e. Freddie Mercury and Angel), and one dressing traditionally "masculine" (i.e. Paul, Jim, or Collins). The fact that both films address this fact exemplifies how films characterize male LGBTQ+ relationships which may influence how viewers expect a relationship between queer men to behave physically. Furthermore, the emotional traits displayed by each film align similarly with the physical traits. For characters who dress more "feminine", they are coupled with extroverted and outgoing personalities such as Freddie and Angel who often do not care what others think, while characters like Jim and Paul are much more reserved and introverted, as they don't talk nearly as often. The only outlier is Collins, who also contributes to conversations and is not interested in what others think of them. Finally, conflict/conflict resolution is also shown to be important to the relationships, although the presentation is different. In *Bohemian Rhapsody,* conflict is internal such as with Jim being offended by Freddie grabbing him without consent (1:03:11-1:05:47), or Paul keeping information from Freddie (1:27:15-1:33:34). In *Rent,* conflict is external as Angel and Collins must grapple with AIDS and Angel's slow death throughout the film. Overall, the three categories of physical, emotional, and conflict resolution expectation served as the main ways romance between LGBTQ+ men were depicted which informed the next half of my research.

Survey

First, I collected 110 responses from participants, though 30 were discarded due to not fitting the age or gender requirement. The remaining responses were inputted into the statistical analysis software JASP, which assisted with analyzing my data through a series of four T-Tests, three based on my three Likert Scales on "physical expectations", "emotional expectations", and "expectations of conflict resolution", in addition to a fourth test on the question asking participants to rank six given traits of a partner from most to least important to them.

Physical Expectations

Results for the physical expectations portion of the survey can be referred to in Figure 1 seen below.

The results suggest that statements based on the results of the content analysis regarding physical traits and expectations of romantic partners are different between LGBTQ+ and straight men in terms of clothing-based expectations. All four significant statements revolve around how the participants believed to be expected to dress by their partner or how they expect their partner to dress. Specifically, LGBTQ+ men are more expected to dress feminine while ex-

Figure 1: A T-Test was used to compare physical romantic expectations in the LGBTQ+ participants and straight participants. The LGBTQ+ group (M=2.892, SD=1.595) performed significantly lower than the straight participants (M=5.297, SD=1.331) in Statement 1. The LGBTQ+ group (M=4.390, SD=1.759) performed significantly higher than the straight participants (M=2.459, SD=1.325) in Statement 2. The LGBTQ+ group (M=2.838, SD=1.708) performed significantly higher than the straight participants (M=1.441, SD=0.927) in Statement 3. The LGBTQ+ group (M=3.383, SD=1.573) performed significantly lower than the straight group (M=4.886, SD=1.728) in Statement 4. The other two statements were not significant in terms of differences between how LGBTQ+ participants and straight participants responded.

pecting their partners to dress masculine, while the opposite is true for straight men. While the specifics are different, physical expectations overall are not the most important trait to both groups as the final two statements' p-values were high.

Emotional Expectations

Results for the emotional expectations portion of the survey can be seen in Figure 2 seen below.

The results suggest that emotional expectations based on the findings of the content analysis are not nearly as significant on average compared to physical expectations, since only one of the statements is sig-

nificant. LGBTQ+ participants did not agree with the statement that a romantic partner should change their personality to better fit the participant's taste as much as the straight participants did; however, the small difference means suggest that neither group agreed with that statement immensely.

Expectations of Conflict Resolution

Results for the expectations of conflict resolution portion of the survey can be seen in Figure 3 seen below.

These results show that statements based on expectations of conflict resolution are the most consistent

Figure 2: A T-Test was used to compare emotional expectations for relationships in the LGBTQ+ group and the straight group. For the first two statements there were no significant differences between LGBTQ+ and straight responses. The third statement saw the LGBTQ+ group (M=1.786, SD=1.116) perform significantly lower than the straight participants (M=2.444, SD=1.443). The final three statements did not yield any significant results.

Independent Samples T-Test ▼

Independent Samples T-Test

	W	df	p
If after a conflict I say sorry, that should be the end of the problem.	728.000		0.946
I value truth and honesty, even if it hurts me.	822.000		0.346
If those around do not accept my partner, that will create conflict between my partner and I.	749.500		0.883
If something bad happens to me, I expect my partner to be completely by my side through it all.	732.000		0.979
If my needs are not met by my partner, I have the right to leave the relationship.	753.000		0.854
To truly resolve a conflict, compromises must be made between me and my partner.	792.000		0.539
Communication is the most important factor in solving conflicts for me.	886.000		0.084

Note. Mann-Whitney U test.

Descriptives ▼

Group Descriptives

	Group	N	Mean	SD	SE	Coefficient of variation
If after a conflict I say sorry, that should be the end of the problem.	LGBTQ+	42	3.524	1.489	0.227	0.417
	Straight	35	3.571	1.650	0.279	0.462
I value truth and honesty, even if it hurts me.	LGBTQ+	42	6.214	0.871	0.134	0.140
	Straight	35	6.000	0.970	0.164	0.162
If those around do not accept my partner, that will create conflict between my partner and I.	LGBTQ+	42	3.048	1.724	0.266	0.566
	Straight	35	2.914	1.541	0.260	0.529
If something bad happens to me, I expect my partner to be completely by my side through it all.	LGBTQ+	42	5.095	1.322	0.204	0.259
	Straight	35	5.086	1.422	0.240	0.280
If my needs are not met by my partner, I have the right to leave the relationship.	LGBTQ+	42	5.429	1.434	0.221	0.264
	Straight	35	5.343	1.552	0.262	0.290
To truly resolve a conflict, compromises must be made between me and my partner.	LGBTQ+	42	6.167	0.762	0.118	0.124
	Straight	35	5.743	1.578	0.267	0.275
Communication is the most important factor in solving conflicts for me.	LGBTQ+	42	6.571	0.630	0.097	0.096
	Straight	35	6.114	1.157	0.196	0.189

Figure 3: A T-Test was used to compare expectations of conflict resolution between LGBTQ+ respondents and straight respondents. The first six statements did not yield any significant differences in responses between LGBTQ+ and straight participants. The final statement was slightly significant as LGBTQ+ participants (M=6.571, SD=0.630) performed somewhat significantly higher than straight participants (M=6.114, SD=1.157).

comparisons of both groups and their answers. This is because the results show no significant data. The only statement close to significance is that communication is the most important factor in solving conflicts, although the p-value being .084 renders only slight significance. Since there were no outright significant results, conflict resolution expectations seem to be consistent for the most part between LGBTQ+ and straight men.

Ranking of Traits

Results for the rankings of romantic traits in partners portion of the survey can be seen in Figure 4 seen below.

The results of the ranking of romantic traits for partners from most to least important showed no significance between LGBTQ+ and straight partici-

pants. These results suggest no significant difference in basic romantic expectations between both groups. One interesting note, this question is the only one that I did not base on my content analysis, so it suggests that when not based on films, romantic expectations remain the same; however, when film traits are added inherent differences appear.

Survey Analysis

The survey results, which are based on the traits exhibited by the characters in the content analysis, provided insight into differences between how traits shown in films can influence the LGBTQ+ male community compared to straight men. The survey displayed that questions relating to how participants expect their partners and themselves to dress in terms

Independent Samples T-Test ▼

Independent Samples T-Test

	W	df	p
Trust	578.500		0.114
Respect	737.500		0.869
Empathy	592.000		0.173
Communication	763.500		0.661
Physical	833.500		0.228
Intelligence	774.500		0.576

Note. Mann-Whitney U test.

Descriptives

Group Descriptives

	Group	N	Mean	SD	SE	Coefficient of variation
Trust	LGBTQ+	39	1.872	1.341	0.215	0.717
	Straight	37	2.243	1.278	0.210	0.570
Respect	LGBTQ+	39	3.333	1.364	0.218	0.409
	Straight	37	3.243	1.362	0.224	0.420
Empathy	LGBTQ+	39	3.359	1.630	0.261	0.485
	Straight	37	3.892	1.760	0.289	0.452
Communication	LGBTQ+	39	3.308	1.559	0.250	0.471
	Straight	37	3.162	1.642	0.270	0.519
Physical	LGBTQ+	39	4.795	1.436	0.230	0.299
	Straight	37	4.378	1.622	0.267	0.370
Intelligence	LGBTQ+	39	4.333	1.383	0.221	0.319
	Straight	37	4.027	1.756	0.289	0.436

Figure 4: A T-Test was used to compare the average rankings of six traits of a romantic partner in between LGBTQ+ participants and straight participants. The results for all six average rankings had no significant differences between either group of respondents.

of dressing "masculine" and "feminine" displayed the most significant differences. These results display the unique differences among both sets of participants. Furthermore, the fact that these statements were based on the exaggerated displays of the physical appearances of film characters in the content analysis seemed to confirm my initial hypothesis that films featuring romance between LGBTQ+ men would influence the romantic expectations of LGBTQ+ men. While physical expectations were largely significant, the expectations of emotion and conflict resolution had less significant responses. This shows that while there was some significance in responses, overall, physical expectations saw the most significant results. Furthermore, the survey results display that there were no differences between the ways straight and LGBTQ+ participants rank different romantic traits, which supports my hypothesis since as mentioned

earlier the ranking question was not informed by the results of the content analysis. The fact that no differences were seen there shows that when character traits from films are taken out of the equation, there are no significant results.

Limitations

The biggest limitation of my research is what can be reasonably evaluated through the survey as opposed to an interview. The interview conducted by Koontz where she evaluated romantic expectations in women based on princess movies saw her finding detailed results regarding these women and their specific expectations. Since my research did not find specific and personalized results like Koontz's interview, the conclusions on romantic expectations in LGBTQ+

men may be limited. For example, one statement in my survey which reads "my romantic partner exhibits traits I recognize in movies" yielded non-significant results; however, without details like what traits or what movies, only so much could be reasonably concluded.

Implications

The results displaying heightened physical expectations for LGBTQ+ men contain broader implications for the film industry. Film companies and producers should be encouraged to contain fewer stereotypical physical depictions of LGBTQ+ men, and the expectations of viewers would likely become much more realistic since the highest difference in regard to viewer expectations comes from physical expectations and apparel. Furthermore, this could benefit LGBTQ+ actors. If companies heed this advice, LGBTQ+ actors would be allowed to dress how they want rather than conforming to any preconceived expectations of how LGBTQ+ people should dress. Finally, this research implies that the LGBTQ+ male viewers of films would benefit from being aware of the influence that films featuring gay male relationships can play on their romantic expectations, which would go a long way in benefitting the lives and relationships of young LGBTQ+ men.

Conclusion

The results of the research conducted on LGBTQ+ men and how films influence their romantic expectations showing a relation to some higher expectations provide similar insight on how films influence their viewers, specifically highlighting higher physical expectations. The results displaying these greater physical expectations are most similar to the findings of researchers such as Galloway (2015), Ray, (2022) and Welch (2021) as they all displayed the fact that films can influence the opinions of viewers. However, this research studied various film tropes relating to how LGBTQ+ people are characterized, and how this may influence LGBTQ+ men compared to straight men. By doing this, the conclusions add further insight for the LGBTQ+ male community and their relationship

to films. The results suggest extremely characterized physical traits common in films featuring LGBTQ+ characters have some influence on how members of this community view romantic relationships compared to their straight counterparts.

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