

“Queering Masculinity: Sexual Dissidence as Anti-bullying discourse in Kimberly Peirce’s *Boys Don’t Cry*”¹

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In 1999, Kimberly Peirce’s film adaptation of Brandon-Teena’s life became a critical and commercial hit, propelling issues of transgender identities and homophobic violence into mainstream culture. More than ten years after its release, the effects of homophobia on LGBT youth have again been thrust into the spotlight following the shocking rise of suicides in this demographic. Faced with sexual bullying, harassment, and the threat of violence, many LGBT youth have lost hope that there may be a future without the constant torment of homophobic intolerance. Internet campaigns like the “It Gets Better Project”² and “The Trevor Project”³ have emerged to provide a motivational space where young LGBT people can find support and inspiration that their lives will get better—that love, happiness, and personal fulfillment can be realized within their lifetime. The spirit of these hugely popular campaigns is not only to provide inspiration to troubled teens, but also convey a subversive counter-discourse to pervasive social intolerance of gender and sexual alterity. In this regard, anti-bullying campaigns take up the subversive potential of Brandon-Teena’s legacy by positioning LGBT identities at the forefront of cultural discourse. By bringing social awareness of the day-to-day struggles of LGBT youth into mainstream culture, these campaigns continue the dissident spirit of Brandon-Teena’s courage to live beyond the hostile realities of homophobic society.

In 2010, Dan Savage, the founder of the “It Gets Better Project,” and his husband posted an internet response to the suicide of Billy Lucas, a 15-year-old high school student who was bullied for being gay.⁴ In the video, Savage encourages young LGBT individuals to not lose hope, that a future “filled with joy and family and pleasure” is possible.⁵ While Savage’s message of hope has been criticized for its lack of practical engagement with the problem,⁶ the enormous popularity of the internet project is testament to the growing awareness of LGBT bullying in popular culture. The recently released documentary *Bully*, directed by Lee Hirsch, and its social action campaign “The Bully project” is another example of the emerging discourses surrounding anti-bullying advocacy.⁷ While the spirit of these campaigns is to raise awareness, inspire hope, and advocate for social action, there remains an unaddressed issue in regards to the ideological foundations of interpersonal violence that is being overlooked. What Kimberley Peirce’s film *Boys Don’t Cry* highlights, and what I intend to address in this paper, is the urgent need to challenge the ways in which dominant culture is both complacent about and complicit in the securing of masculine dominance by violence. To ignore patriarchal ideology in its binary configurations of sex, gender, and sexuality is a fatal mistake that results in the violent deaths of young people. Rather than accepting violence as normal and natural by justifying its perpetrators as “boys being boys,” we have to understand violence as part of a continuum of homophobic intolerance that is entrenched within the dominant patriarchal socio-cultural order. As long as patriarchal masculinity remains the status quo, individuals will continue to perform their gender through predation, intimidation, and aggression; they will continue to target and punish those who are different from the norm, projecting their fears of inadequacy onto those

who are vulnerable and marginalized; they will continue to repress their emotions, and use their bodies as weapons or instruments of patriarchal power. In short, as long as masculinity is socially constructed in opposition to femininity and homosexuality, there will be some individuals who commit violence in conformity with normative gender roles.

As theorist Jonathan Dollimore affirms, “homophobia is endemic in contemporary society.”⁸ The shocking statistics detailing harassment, violence, and self-harm among LGBT teenagers confirms this view: 9 out of every 10 LGBT students have experienced harassment;⁹ more than 1/3 have reported physical violence; and 1 out of every 3 LGBT children or teenagers has attempted suicide.¹⁰ Homophobia is not just pervasive in our culture; it can be seen as engrained within dominant social norms. According to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, the ideological foundation of homophobia derives from the gender norms of hegemonic masculinity.¹¹ Specifically, the binary structure of gender within patriarchal culture preserves gender hierarchies by marginalizing queer subjectivities as unnatural, pathological, and subordinate. By relegating LGBT identities as Other, patriarchal masculinity maintains its aura of power and privilege. Homophobic suppression of those individuals who do not readily conform to gender norms is performed through a spectrum of violent actions: from verbal harassment, gay slurs, and bullying to extreme acts of assault, sexual violation, and murder. This process of marginalization and victimization of the Other is legitimized through gender ideologies and a deeply rooted psychological fear and denial of one’s own alterity. When patriarchal society engages in strategies of victim-blaming, disavowing or silencing victim testimonials, and pathologizing the Other as hysterical and deviant, this needs to

be understood as a projection of its own anxieties and a screening or veiling of its own crimes, its own inherent toxicity that poisons and corrupts our ability as a society to become more inclusive and egalitarian.

The dominant gender ideology of patriarchal masculinity is centered on the structural binary oppositions of sex and gender: specifically, male and female, masculinity and femininity, heterosexuality and homosexuality. These divisive labels are used to exclude certain groups from fully accessing the power and privileges of the hegemonic elite. Contrary to popular belief, theorists like Sedgwick, Michael S. Kimmel, and Dollimore have argued that binary oppositions such as these are not stable, reliable or coherent identities, but rather an ideological invention used to conceal the inherent instabilities and dependencies that exist between the seemingly divergent terms. In regards to hegemonic masculinity, Sedgwick, Kimmel, and Dollimore contend that male heterosexual subjectivity repudiates homosexuality as pathological, unnatural and inferior, depending on the alterity of homosexual or feminized Others to define and construct itself. To suggest a relationship of dependence, instability, and interconnectedness exists between dominant and marginal gender identities is to counter the exclusion and persecution of the Other. Recent gender theorists deconstruct and destabilize dichotomies that perpetuate homophobia and misogyny by identifying how “antithetical” Otherness in fact “inheres within.”¹² In this way, the repressive ideological norms of patriarchal structures are shown to be fragile constructs threatened by internal instabilities and contradictions. When binary oppositions are blurred and divisions of sex, sexuality and gender threaten to collapse into one another,

there are both positive and negative consequences: on the positive side, liberation from what Roland Barthes calls “the binary prison” can result in a “free play” of meaning and sensuality.¹³ however, the reverse is also true. The instability of binary terms can also provoke defensive antigay sentiments of the oppressive sexual system, by triggering fear, denial, and violent repudiation of sexual or gender alterity.

The threat posed by the destabilized binary logic of the dominant patriarchal social order is centered on what theorist Michael S. Kimmel calls the “unmasking” of masculine gender identity.¹⁴ Specifically, Kimmel describes the psychological foundations of homophobia in patriarchal society as a fear of oneself being exposed as “not [a] real man.”¹⁵ It is this fear of revelation and recognition that within oneself there can be found the trace of homosexuality and effeminacy that motivates the psychological processes of denial, repudiation, and suppression.¹⁶ Along with an overriding feeling of fear, hegemonic masculinity is characterized by its collective denial of sameness with the Other and projection of one’s undesirable qualities onto the Other: in this case, onto LGBT individuals. Thus, male subjectivities that are commonly perceived as stable and coherent are revealed to be fraught with anxieties and fears that are commonly suppressed or sublimated into homophobia and gender violence. The quintessential example of this occurs in Peirce’s film *Boys Don’t Cry*, where two young men, John and Tom, react with homophobic violence once they discover Brandon’s subversive blurring of the patriarchal binary structure.

In 2001, the film journal *Screen* featured a series of articles by authors who critically assess the film's depiction of transgender identity under the mainstream constraints of popular cinema. Whether viewed as a neo-noir crime story, a reinvented Western, a romance, a bio-pic, a docudrama, a road-movie, or a melodrama, Peirce's film adaptation of the events leading up to Brandon Teena's death has become a part of popular culture. The mainstream popularity of the film has elevated Brandon to iconic status, "the stuff of legend."¹⁷ Following the critical readings of Michelle Aaron, Judith Halberstam, Lisa Henderson, Melissa Rigney, Gary Morris, and Katherine Monk, I highlight the subversive power of Brandon's sexual dissidence as he unsettles the dominant ideologies of patriarchal culture. With focus on how the dominant social order upholds the boundaries of gender identity through homophobic violence, I situate Tom and John's violence as a punitive response to not only Brandon's gender and sexual subversion, but also their own anxiety over the queering of masculinity. In this way, I hope to draw attention to the continuum of interpersonal violence that extends from school-yard bullying to rape and murder, where it is our society's acceptance of masculine violence as "normal" or "natural" which needs to be addressed as directly responsible for the persecution of those who do not readily adhere or fit into hegemonic gender norms.

Brandon's subject-position as a female-to-male transgender individual destabilizes the norms of binary logic. Although biologically female, Brandon lives as a man and those around him also recognize Brandon as man, that is, until his secret is discovered. Brandon's appearance and behaviors conform to hegemonic masculinity; along with

John and Tom, whom he befriends, Brandon chases women, drinks beer, gets in fights, and engages in risky macho posturing, as exemplified in his participation in bumper-skiing and a barroom brawl; as Gary Morris states in his film review, these are the “rituals of men,” the actions that must be performed in order to be part of “the male world.”¹⁸ Brandon also stuffs his pants or wears a phallic substitute to mimic the presence of a penis. In these ways, Brandon readily conforms to hegemonic masculinity by adopting all the external appearances and practices of normative masculinity. In this regard, Peirce’s depiction of Brandon’s masculinity brings to light the social construction of gender identity, as well as the imposition of conformity in masculine self-fashioning. As Margo Jefferson states, Brandon “remind[s] us that every boy has to practice being a boy.” Indeed, every boy or man has to prove himself through gestures, attitudes, appearances, initiations, and actions in order to claim the power and privileges of manhood.

Brandon’s acceptance by John and Tom also conveys the importance of mutual identification among men who are alienated from dominant culture. The male characters are products of a regional culture where conformity, boredom, and privation are all part of the conditions that breed a violent and oppressive masculinity.¹⁹ John and Tom, as well as the female members of their social circle, are all identified as “wall people,” a name that Morris defines in his review as “social cast-offs...who hang out against the wall of an all-night market waiting for something to happen.”²⁰ Implicit in this identity as “wall people” is the boredom of living in a small town and the economic privation that prevents these characters from escaping their bleak environment, as well as the social

ostracism they experience from the rest of their community. Indeed, drinking and drugs seem to be the only form of escape available to these characters who are otherwise stuck in a dead-end town. Brandon, John, and Tom routinely commit crimes, most often stealing cars; John and Tom have spent time in jail for car theft. Brandon is also incarcerated for not showing up in court, as Teena Brandon, on car theft charges. This connection between criminality and masculinity can be read as a symptom of what Roger Horrocks calls “masculinity in crisis,” the pathological condition of some men’s alienation and sense of lack in relation to the power and privileges of hegemonic masculinity. Horrocks argues that the majority of men feel a sense of powerlessness, particularly economic powerlessness, which in turn, leads to feelings of inadequacy, impotence or castration.²¹ When men fear they are inadequate, they may act out in symptomatic behavior: criminal acts, alcoholism, drug addiction, and violence. Indeed, as Horrocks states, “violence [is] a means to prove [one is] a man—through actions that are culturally sanctioned or promoted as masculine.”²²

Among the men, the power dynamics of patriarchal culture are enacted through their interpersonal relationships. Specifically, it is possible to read the relationships between John, Tom and Brandon as hierarchical, involving rivalries for power. In John’s and Tom’s homosocial bond, John is conveyed as the dominant male, whereas Tom is characterized as the follower. John and Tom use intimidation and threats of violence constantly to disavow any feelings of weakness or inadequacy. They torment Brandon psychologically, perceiving him as weaker or more effeminate. John and Tom will subsequently use terms of emasculation to refer to Brandon, such as “little man” or

“little dude.” John and Tom also boss Brandon around, telling him to “clean the ashtrays” when they see Brandon helping out around Lana’s house.

Brandon’s acceptance into John and Tom’s social circle is threatened not only by the potential discovery of Brandon’s past, but also by Brandon’s succession of John as the primary man in Lana’s life. The fact that Brandon begins a romantic relationship with Lana, a young woman living in Falls City, directly contributes to the tension and rivalry between John and Brandon. John makes his proprietary claim evident to Brandon when he states, “You gotta remember, little man, this is my house.”²³ Not only does John position himself as the patriarchal figure of Lana’s family, but also conveys his dominance over Brandon by belittling his manhood. Yet, the fact that Brandon, a so-called “little man” has effectively bested John in the contest for Lana’s love also places John’s dominant patriarchal masculinity into question. The fact that Lana clearly desires Brandon only adds to John’s jealousy and possessiveness, which in turn escalates the violent and erotically-charged exchanges between the two men. While tensions exist between John and Brandon as homosocial rivals for the same girl, it is John’s questioning of Brandon’s sex and gender that instigates his overt violence. Uncovering Brandon’s past as “Teena-Brandon” through a newspaper article and then discovering a pamphlet on sexual identity crisis when snooping through Brandon’s bag, John and Tom’s hostility toward Brandon grows into violent hysteria. John and Tom are repulsed by what they imagine to be Brandon’s sexual deviance. In their homophobic reactions, there is anger and resentment that they have failed to perceive Brandon’s difference all along. Indeed, they had fully accepted Brandon as one of their own, inviting him into

their masculine fraternal bond. In regards to John and Tom's own sense of masculine gender identity, this failure to differentiate Brandon's deviance from their own normative masculinity exposes the inherent instability and interconnectedness between patriarchal binary oppositions. In this way, Brandon's queerness, that is, his subversion of the binaries that construct gender and sexuality, is equated with falseness and deception by those who accuse him of lying about his identity. In this way, the violence of John and Tom is a punitive response to not only Brandon's gender and sexual subversion, but also their own anxiety over the queering of identity.

Fuelled by homophobic rage, John and Tom confront Brandon accusing him of perversion and sickness. They go on to call Brandon a "fucking pervert," saying that he has a "sick psycho brain," that he is brainwashing Lana, and infecting her with his "sickness."²⁴ The language used within this scene highlights the normative definitions of sex and gender, from which Brandon's transgender identity is labeled abnormal, pathological, and perverse. Within the constraints of John and Tom's binary logic, there is no acceptable deviation between one's anatomy and one's gender identity. Brandon's transgender identity sparks violent hostility in John and Tom because not only does Brandon not fit into the binary structure of patriarchal gender norms, but also by destabilizing the boundaries, Brandon's identity has also put John and Tom's own masculinity under threat. In this regard, Brandon's transgressive blurring of sex, gender and sexuality is perceived as a danger that must be contained. John and Tom, as well as Lana's mother, are threatened by Brandon's influence, to such an extent that they fear that Lana will somehow be infected. As Lana's mother states, "We're just tryin' to

save you,” with the implication that her daughter needs saving from the dangers posed by Brandon’s transgressive sexuality. What is really at stake within this intense confrontation is the destabilization of dichotomous sex/gender norms and the subsequent homophobic response used to contain or suppress this perceived threat.

Throughout the film, Peirce presents a counter discourse to binary divisions of homosexuality and heterosexuality through her blurring of normalcy and deviance. Specifically, Peirce puts into question John and Tom’s seemingly stable masculine gender identities by illustrating their instability and interconnection with Brandon’s queerness. As critic Michelle Aaron argues, there is a “weirdness” or “queerness”²⁵ that is present in each man. Both John and Tom are ex-cons, a fact that implies their own prior experience of social marginalization as well as the powerlessness and victimization of imprisonment. Both men also engage in self-destructive activities: Tom engages in self-mutilation and is a pyromaniac, while John, we are informed, has “no impulse control.”²⁶ As noted by Katherine Monk, Tom’s self-mutilation is represented sympathetically to the audience, showing his sense of “pain and helplessness;”²⁷ John’s fatalism is also represented by a certain degree of pity. Indeed, there is an overall feeling of sorrow for these characters who are trapped within the constraints of the social, economic, and ideological impoverishment of Falls City.

Taking this argument one step further, Susan Muska and Greta Olafsdottir, the directors of *The Brandon Teena Story*²⁸ pose the idea that it is not Brandon who is suffering from a gender identity crisis, but rather John and Tom. As Melissa Anderson states within her

review of the films, the “heterosexual identity inhabited by people like John Lotter and Tom Nissen—an identity so fragile that, when threatened by Brandon’s ‘masquerade’ of masculinity—knows no other response than violence.”²⁹ This suggestion that John and Tom are suffering from a crisis of their own masculine gender identity reinforces the reading that what they are really disturbed by is not Brandon’s perversion, but rather the recognition of their own alterity. Instead of empathizing with Brandon as an individual who is also socially marginalized, John and Tom project their gender anxieties onto Brandon, using him as a scapegoat for their own fragile sense of masculinity. They then proceed to subject Brandon to inhumane acts of violence and cruelty, proving that it is not Brandon who is sick or disturbed, but rather John and Tom whose defensive hypermasculinity is revealed to be pathological and disturbing.

Not only are John and Tom repulsed by what they imagine to be Brandon’s sexual deviance but also, in their homophobic reactions, they are angry and resentful that they have been duped. With regard to John’s and Tom’s own gender anxiety, this failure to differentiate Brandon’s deviance from their own normative masculinity exposes the instability of and interconnectedness between these. John and Tom take up the position of guardians or protectors of patriarchal gender norms when they forcibly restrain Brandon in the bathroom, and examine his genitals. In what Judith Halberstam calls a “quasi-medical scrutiny of Brandon’s body,” John and Tom roughly examine Brandon’s anatomy and subject Brandon to “a violent mode of looking” that she identifies with “castration” and “the male gaze.”³⁰ Within this violent act of looking, John and Tom are able to reinforce their binary logic, by confirming Brandon’s biological sex as female. In

this way, they not only humiliate Brandon by stripping him of his masculinity, but also attempt to reify Brandon's gender within essentialist terms. The scene culminates with John and Tom forcing Lana to also look at Brandon's genitals; yet instead of confirming John and Tom's oppressive and violent gaze, Lana yells at them "to leave *him* alone!"³¹ Lana's use of the pronoun "him" to describe Brandon presents a counter discourse to John and Tom's oppressive sexual essentialism. In this way, we can see how Lana and Brandon's love for each other contains the potential to transcend the oppressive constraints of societal norms and binary logic.

John and Tom's violent re-inscription of femininity onto Brandon's body does not end with the public disclosure of his genitals, but rather culminates with the act of rape. As certain critics have suggested, Brandon's violation through visual scrutiny and his rape are symbolic forms of castration, whereby Brandon is violently severed from his masculine subject-position. Rachel Swan writes, "We may see this rape as the moment in which John and Tom castrate Brandon, thereby restoring his vagina as a female orifice."³² Swan's reading of the rape confirms the view that John and Tom see themselves as guarding or protecting dominant gender norms, where "the rape repositions everyone according to their 'god-given' gender."³³ Not only does the rape reinscribe Brandon as a woman, but also it enables John and Tom to "[reaffirm] themselves as men."³⁴ Melissa Rigney's reading of Brandon as "a masculine-identified woman" also draws upon the film's representation of "symbolic castration"³⁵ wherein John and Tom's rape of Brandon is an attempt to "normaliz[e] Brandon's body and...realign categories of sex and gender."³⁶ Rigney's interpretation of Brandon's rape

also reinforces the idea that John and Tom are threatened by Brandon's subversion of gender norms. Specifically, she suggests, "through...the violence done to Brandon's body" John and Tom eliminate "the threat to [their] masculinity...Brandon is no longer the 'better boyfriend' or the better man, but is instead a victim."³⁷ In this sense, the act of rape can be viewed as a means of containing a subversive threat to the established order. By constructing rape as a form of symbolic castration used to reaffirm the normative alignment of sex and gender, Peirce implicates John and Tom's rape of Brandon as an act of extreme conformity to the dominant patriarchal social order.

Rather than seeing John and Tom as unruly monsters, Peirce represents their violence as exemplary of hypermasculine conformity. The concealed endorsement of homophobia and misogyny within the dominant social order is exposed once Brandon reports his rape to police authorities; instead of defending Brandon's rights, the police officer's interrogation can be seen as yet another form of rape or castration. The police officer bullies Brandon, subjecting him to humiliating questions and further degradation. Sheriff Laux, who interviews Brandon following his rape, also dehumanizes Brandon in his mistreatment of the case. Specifically, Laux refers to Brandon as "it"³⁸ and does not protect him from John and Tom. As an example of homophobia, Laux's statement reveals the failure of the law authorities to protect Brandon's rights owing to their inexcusable intolerance of Brandon as a transgender individual. Laux's questioning of Brandon also has the effect of re-traumatizing him. Indeed, in many ways Laux's questioning seems to support John's suggestion that Brandon "brought this on [him]self," that everything that happened to Brandon was somehow his fault. Indeed,

with the exception of Lana, everyone accuses Brandon of lying to them, believing that his lies must be punished. The association of lying or deception with Brandon's performance reinforces the fear and anxiety surrounding non-normative gender and sexuality. In this regard, Peirce's representation illustrates how homophobia is a central organizing principle of contemporary hegemonic masculinity and dominant patriarchal ideology. John and Tom's homophobic response to Brandon, which leads not only to rape, but also to Brandon's eventual murder, should not be viewed outside of the dominant or normative construction of hegemonic masculinity. Rather, the violence committed by John and Tom needs to be understood as part of a continuum of homophobic intolerance that is entrenched within the dominant socio-cultural order. As Laura S. Brown argues, within dominant culture, there is an ideological precept that maintains that certain people are viewed as "less than human, less than deserving of fair treatment."³⁹ Within our culture, the threat and reality of violence is a constant presence in the lives of LGBT individuals to such a degree that homophobia can be viewed as engrained in the status quo.

The potential to transform and liberate sex and gender from patriarchal constraints is directly tied to our ability to imagine and represent a future where violence is no longer acceptable or promoted as the normal or natural condition of masculinity. Peirce's depiction of Brandon presents a potential resistance to the constraints of patriarchal binary logic by unsettling the opposition between what is dominant and normative in terms of sex and gender with what is perceived as marginal and deviant. Following from Dollimore's theory of sexual dissidence, Brandon's ability to live and dream beyond the

constraints of his society offers a potentially revolutionary space, wherein normative sexual and gender categories are liberated from their “binary prison.”⁴⁰ Even though Peirce’s film depicts Brandon’s horrific death, it is the now legendary courage and heroism of Brandon’s spirit that stands out as the central message of the film. The final scene shows Lana driving out of Falls City, interposed with Brandon’s voice, reciting the letter he had written to her. In the letter, Brandon not only expresses his enduring love, but also his unwavering belief that one day soon they will be reunited. In this way, it is the strength and courage of Brandon’s conviction that a future full of love, happiness and personal fulfillment is attainable that inspires Lana to finally escape her dead-end life in Falls City. By concluding her film with Brandon’s resilient dream of a better life and Lana’s literal escape from her constraints, Peirce encourages a positive reading of the film and of Brandon as an inspirational, rather than a tragic figure.

The lasting impact of Brandon’s story also comes from the heartfelt empathy Peirce creates through the audience’s identification with Brandon. Although not all viewers would experience this insight, the broad audience of Peirce’s film is in a position to empathize and understand Brandon’s dilemma because it involves a common struggle to be loved, accepted, and free to pursue one’s dreams without having to face social prejudices or violent, punitive consequences for being perceived as different. The audience is invited to identify with Brandon as a person, a human, rather than seeing him as John and Tom see him—as sick or perverted, a freak. In Brandon’s transgender identity, there is a potential to disrupt and challenge patriarchal norms. In this regard, Brandon’s identity reveals how John’s and Tom’s own masculinities are vulnerable,

pathological, and destructive. Beneath the pathos that we feel for Brandon and Lana—and to a lesser extent, John and Tom—as victims of a system that perpetuates a cycle of violence and violation, there is also a challenge to stop this cycle by changing or dismantling the binaries of gender and sexuality. In this regard, Brandon’s queer identity is presented as a form of personhood that needs to be not only tolerated but celebrated. As Peirce states, “I like to think that Brandon embodies something that we’re moving toward and that we will continue learning to understand, enjoy, and represent our genders and our desires, individually and collectively, in our art and in our lives.”⁴¹ The evolution of genders and desires that Peirce alludes to depends on our ability as a culture to accept and strive for diversity and nonconformity as a goal, rather than something that is ridiculed or excluded. In this effort toward progress and cultural evolution, artistic expressions of all types and internet campaigns like the “It Gets Better Project,” “The Trevor Project,” and *Bully* are leading the charge. Yet positive transformation in this direction can occur only when the boundaries of binary logic are crossed—when the divisions between self and Other are no longer barriers, but connections.

Notes

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- ¹ *Boys Don't Cry*, directed by Kimberly Peirce (20th Century Fox, 1999).
- ² Dan Savage, "It Gets Better Project" (Nov 1 2010) itgetbetter.org (accessed Feb 11 2011).
- ³ "The Trevor Project." (2010), thetrevorproject.org (accessed Feb 26 2011).
- ⁴ James Montgomery, "Dan Savage Explains Why He Started 'It Gets Better' Project." mtv.com. September 30 2010 (accessed April 17 2012).
- ⁵ James Montgomery, "Dan Savage Explains."
- ⁶ Sady Doyle. "Does 'It Gets Better' Make Life Better for Gay Teens?" *The Atlantic*. October 7 2010 (accessed April 17 2012).
- ⁷ "The Bully project" (2012), thebullyproject.com (accessed April 17 2012).
- ⁸ Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault*. (New York: Oxford UP, 1991), 33.
- ⁹ GLSEN: Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network. Sept 10 2010 (accessed Feb 11 2010) <www.glsen.org>.
- ¹⁰ "Gay Bullying," National Youth Association. Nov 7 2010. Accessed on Feb 12 2011.
- ¹¹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1990.
- ¹² Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault*. (New York: Oxford UP, 1991), 33.
- ¹³ Roland Barthes qtd. in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Epistemology of the Closet." *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, Second Edition, eds. Julie Rivkin, Michael Ryan. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 933.
- ¹⁴ Michael S. Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity." *Feminism & Masculinities*, ed. Peter F. Murphy. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004), 186.
- ¹⁵ Ibid, 189.
- ¹⁶ Jeanna Bryner, "Homophobes Gay? Study Ties Anti-Fay Outlook to Homosexuality, Authoritarian Parenting." *Huffington Post*. April 9 2012 (Accessed April 17 2012). According to recent studies published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, those individuals "who are most hostile towards gays and hold strong anti-gay views may themselves have same-sex desires, albeit undercover ones."
- ¹⁷ Julianne Pidduck, "Risk and Queer Spectatorship." *Screen* 42.2 (2001): 97.
- ¹⁸ Gary Morris, "Hell in the Heartland: *Boys Don't Cry*." *Bright Lights Film Journal* 27 (2000): 2.
- ¹⁹ Lisa Henderson, "The Class Character of *Boys Don't Cry*." *Screen* 42.3 (2001): 301.
- ²⁰ Gary Morris, "Hell in the Heartland," 2.

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- ²¹ Roger Horrocks, *Masculinity in Crisis: Myths, Fantasies, and Realities*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 31.
- ²² Roger Horrocks, *Masculinity*, 31.
- ²³ *Boys Don't Cry*, directed by Kimberly Peirce (20th Century Fox, 1999).
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Michelle Aaron. "Pass/fail," *Screen* 42.3 (2001): 96.
- ²⁶ Ibid, 96
- ²⁷ Katherine Monk. "Review: *Boy's Don't Cry*." CBC Infoculture, Yahoo! Movies, October 27, 1999 http://www.infoculture.cbc.ca/archives/filmtv/filmtv_10261999_boysdontcryreview.html.
- ²⁸ *The Brandon Teena Story*, directed by Susan Muska and Greta Ollafsdottir. (Zeitgeist Films: 1998).
- ²⁹ Melissa Anderson. "Review: *The Brandon Teena Story* and *Boys Don't Cry*." *Cineaste* 25.2 (2000): 55.
- ³⁰ Judith Halberstam. "The Transgender Gaze in *Boys Don't Cry*." *Screen* 42.3 (2001): 295.
- ³¹ *Boys Don't Cry*, directed by Kimberly Peirce (20th Century Fox, 1999).
- ³² Rachel Swan. "Review: *Boys Don't Cry*." *Film Quarterly* 54.3 (2001): 50.
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Melissa Rigney. "Brandon Goes to Hollywood: *Boys Don't Cry* and the Transgender Body in Film." *Film Criticism* 28.2 (2003-2004): 8.
- ³⁶ Ibid, 9.
- ³⁷ Ibid. 9.
- ³⁸ Stacey D'Erasmus, "Boy Interrupted." *Out Magazine* (Oct. 1999): 66.
- ³⁹ Laura S. Brown, "Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma." *American Imago* 48 (1991): 124.
- ⁴⁰ Roland Barthes qtd. in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Epistemology of the Closet." *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, Second Edition. (New York: Blackwell, 2004), 933.
- ⁴¹ Kimberly Peirce "Brandon Goes to Hollywood." *The Advocate* 22.2 (2000): 46.

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