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BREAKING STEREOTYPES: THE PORTRAYAL OF GAY CHARACTERS
IN *SHADOWHUNTERS* AND *BROOKLYN 99*

Florianópolis, Santa Catarina

Maio, 2021

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Este Trabalho Conclusão de Curso foi julgado adequado para obtenção do título de Bacharel e aprovado em sua forma final pelo Curso

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ABSTRACT**Breaking Stereotypes: the Portrayal of Gay Characters in *Shadowhunters* and *Brooklyn*****99****Beatriz Moriya Baptistotti****Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina****2021****Prof. Dr. George Alexandre Ayres de Menezes Mousinho**

This study aims to investigate the portrayal of the characters Raymond Holt, from the TV show *Brooklyn 99*, and Alexander Lightwood, from the TV show *Shadowhunters*, as gay characters. Although queer representation in the media has been growing more naturalized in the past years, it still maintains many stereotypes that perpetuate the view of queer as an outcast and comic relief, turning it into their only personality trait, with themes such as the AIDS epidemic and the process of coming out. However, some recent means of entertainment have been able to break from this tradition or portrayal, exhibiting queer characters as regular people, without focusing so much on their sexualities as their main characteristic. Therefore, this study observes how TV shows *Brooklyn 99* and *Shadowhunters* are either breaking stereotypes or perpetuating them, observing how the breach of expectation happens in the two television programs. Furthermore, this study analyzes how the characters' sexuality is presented to the public; how their sexuality affects their relationships with family, friends, and significant others; and how their characteristics naturalize their sexuality.

Keywords: queer representation, audiovisual, stereotypes, television

RESUMO**Breaking Stereotypes: the Portrayal of Gay Characters in *Shadowhunters* and *Brooklyn*****99****Beatriz Moriya Baptistotti****Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina****2021****Prof. Dr. George Alexandre Ayres de Menezes Mousinho**

Este estudo procura investigar a representação dos personagens Raymond Holt, da série televisiva *Brooklyn 99*, e Alexander Lightwood, da série televisiva *Shadowhunters*, como personagens gays. Apesar da representação queer na mídia ter sido mais naturalizada nos últimos anos, ela ainda mantém estereótipos que perpetuam a visão do *queer* como pária e alívio cômico, tornando estas suas únicas características, alinhados à temas como a epidemia da AIDS e o processo de assumir sua sexualidade. Entretanto, alguns meios de entretenimento têm sido capazes de quebrar esta tradição ou representação, mostrando personagens *queer* como pessoas normais sem focar exclusivamente em suas sexualidades como principal característica. Deste modo, este estudo procura analisar como séries televisivas *Brooklyn 99* e *Shadowhunters* podem quebrar estereótipos ou perpetuá-los, observando como a quebra de expectativa ocorre nos dois programas. Ademais, este estudo analisa como a sexualidade dos personagens é apresentada para o público; como suas sexualidades afetam seus relacionamentos com família, amigos e companheiros; e como suas características naturalizam suas sexualidades.

Palavras-chave: representação *queer*, audiovisual, estereótipos, televisão

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1. Introduction

Ever since queer representation began appearing in audiovisual media with a positive portrayal – usually shown through the figure of a gay cisgender male – it has focused on struggles of LGBTQ community of a given time, such as the AIDS epidemic, the process of coming out and the integration with the heterosexual community. As Sebastian Buckle points out, the 1980s were a time in which homophobia and AIDS were big discussions surrounding the gay community, and it is no surprise that these topics would be inserted in television at the time (96). However, those were discussions to ease the view of heterosexual people regarding the queer community, thus making homosexuality more accepted in society. Now, these themes have been extensively discussed in literature and television, and can be found in TV shows such as *The Real World* (1994) and *Glee* (2009-2015), and films like *An Early Frost* (1985) and *Love, Simon* (2018).

In this study, the TV shows *Brooklyn 99* (2013-present) and *Shadowhunters* (2016-2019) will be analyzed regarding their portrayal of queer characters. *Brooklyn 99*, with seven seasons by 2021 and still running, follows the story of a police precinct in Brooklyn, with main character Jake Peralta, as his old captain is now replaced by a new, more productive captain. Throughout the show, six other characters can be considered essential to the series: Amy Santiago, Rosa Diaz, Terry Jeffords, Charles Boyle, Gina Linetti, and Captain Raymond Holt. Although each of them has their particularities and many would fit in at least one minority group – e. g. Amy and Rosa are both Latina characters, Terry is a black man, Charles breaks gender stereotypes – Captain Holt was chosen for this analysis based on him being a gay man portrayed in a comedy show, which is usually a role that serves only as comic relief (Avila-Saavedra 12, Benshoff & Griffin 61). Holt, a gay police officer, is married to professor Kevin Cozner, with whom he has a dog named Cheddar. He is often portrayed as someone who barely shows any emotion, very intellectual, and with a low understanding of how to act in certain

social situations. After facing several instances of prejudice from being a black gay man, he lands in the position of Captain, a long-desired role, and throughout the show his personality is developed as he interacts with his new coworkers and develops a friendship with them.

Although Rosa is also a part of the LGBTQ community and could also be considered an object of study for this analysis, Captain Holt was chosen due to his development in the story since his character has already been through the process of accepting himself as a gay man and knows how to face the prejudice when encountering it. Additionally, for the purposes of comparing and contrasting the characters from *Brooklyn 99* and *Shadowhunters*, Raymond Holt was chosen as both he and Alec are gay cisgender males.

Shadowhunters is a drama based on the book series *The Mortal Instruments* (2007-2014), by Cassandra Clare. The show, with four seasons aired between 2016 and 2019 – season 3 being split into two seasons –, follows the characters Clary Fairchild and Jace Wayland after Clary discovers her mother was part of a group called Shadowhunters¹. Even though Clary and Jace are portrayed as the main characters, four other characters are constantly around them and are essential to the plot: Isabelle Lightwood, Simon Lewis, Alec Lightwood, and Magnus Bane. Alec is a young Shadowhunter who dedicated his life to the Clave - the Shadowhunter authority - and to following their rules. When Clary enters their lives, Alec has a problem with her lack of knowledge about their society, which leads to her constantly breaking rules and criticizing their way of living. He also struggles with Jace's affection for her and the need to interact with Downworlders, figures who are not very amicable with the Shadowhunters. As he meets Magnus and their relationship develops, his actions change and he realizes that the Clave and the rules he has always followed are not as perfect as he believed, leading him to a path of self-discovery where he understands that he has an identity outside of simply being a soldier.

¹ Also called Nephilim, the Shadowhunters are half-angel, half-human creatures who protect the world against demons. They were originally human warriors who were given angel blood by the angel Raziel himself, giving them the power to bear Runes and create angelic weapons. Source: <<https://shadowhunters.fandom.com/wiki/Shadowhunters>>. Accessed on April 7th 2021.

Both Alec and Magnus are queer characters that could be analyzed in this study, but Magnus' development as part of the LGBTQ community has already happened by the time the story happens and there is little to observe regarding his sexuality, therefore Alec was considered a better object of study; as a young adult male who did not accept himself as gay, observing his portrayal in comparison to earlier portrayals of the queer community in the media is more relevant for this analysis.

1.1. Objectives, Research Question, and Hypothesis

The TV shows *Brooklyn 99* (2013-present) and *Shadowhunters* (2016-2019) are examples of series that, although not entirely, manage to break from previously established queer patterns in some way. The characters that will be analyzed are (Captain) Raymond Holt and Alexander (Alec) Lightwood; the former is an adult, already married and with a job, while the latter is a young adult still in the closet. As Holt's sexuality is mentioned in the first episodes and, at the time, he is considered a new element in the other characters' lives, scenes from season one will be analyzed to observe how the characters react and approach his sexuality. From then, episodes from other seasons will also be analyzed to observe Holt's relationship with his husband, Kevin, who only appears at the end of season one and is developed in later seasons. In *Shadowhunters*, however, Alec has not come out to his family and friends, so his sexuality will be analyzed in the first season regarding his acceptance of his own sexuality, and in later seasons with his partner, Magnus, and his family.

Having watched both TV shows, they were chosen as the object of analysis due to personal interests; as a queer person deeply affected by representation in the media – both in literature and in audiovisual media –, this theme was something I believed would be important to analyze. Moreover, I have noticed in both TV shows – in *Shadowhunters* more than in *Brooklyn 99* – that there may be some patterns in common in the depiction of gay characters that have been

perpetrated while some of them were changed, which I intend to investigate. The hypothesis is that although both TV shows break stereotypes of sexuality, they can still perpetuate some of these stereotypes; moreover, *Brooklyn 99* could also have a more progressive approach, considering the character's age, relationship status, and serious personality.

The objective of this study is to explore the portrayal of those two gay characters and observe how their sexuality affects the way they are presented to the audience. That involves analyzing how common stereotypes of queerness affect these characters, in order to see if they are portrayed with an erasure or simply a naturalization of their sexualities, and observe how their relationships with friends, family, coworkers, and significant others are presented. This analysis, therefore, is important to discuss how minorities – especially the LGBTQ community – have concealed negative stereotypes in television that affect how this community is viewed in society, and show how essential it is to discuss these patterns seen in the portrayal of minorities in the media. Therefore, the research question that leads this study is: do the TV shows *Brooklyn 99* and *Shadowhunters* seek to break stereotypes of gay characters or do they still perpetuate them, and in what ways?

It is important to indicate that this study works with representation in mainstream media and not independent queer productions, as *Brooklyn 99* is distributed by NBC (previously by Fox) and *Shadowhunters* is distributed by Netflix. Although other sexualities are mentioned in the literature review and therefore the terms *queer* and *LGBTQ* will be present, the characters analyzed are only gay cisgender men, considering that it is one of the most common LGBTQ sexualities portrayed in the media (Avila-Saavedra 18).

1.2. Significance of the study

As a result of the aforementioned themes, television programs from the past decade have approached LGBTQ characters with a different view, more positive and naturalized – as seen

in programs such as *Orange is the New Black* (2013-2019), *Sense8* (2015-2018), and *The Good Place* (2016-2020). Nevertheless, some films and TV shows still have some classic stereotypes in them that can be easily recognized, with the film *Love, Simon* (2018) telling the story of a teenager coming out to friends and family, and the TV show *Riverdale* (2017-present) portraying the character Kevin as the “gay best friend” throughout early seasons, without many distinct characteristics. Breaking these stereotypes, especially in works that are mainly targeted at teenagers and young adults, is important in order to show that queer people can be the main characters of the stories, with a round personality that does not revolve around being gay.

Therefore, the TV shows *Brooklyn 99* and *Shadowhunters* are being analyzed in this study to observe some of the breaches in stereotypes that have been occurring, while also noticing whether the portrayal of these round characters maintain some of the clichés representing the queer community or whether this representation needs to be further developed. Furthermore, studying such characters is important in order to raise awareness of the queer misrepresentation that has happened since this community has started to be portrayed in the media and to improve the perception of LGBTQ people in the real world, affected by these representations. Thus, this study seeks to contribute to this awareness as it analyses two recent, popular series with major queer characters being naturalized.

2. Review of Literature

The review of literature in order to carry out this study will be divided in three parts, which are the characteristics of audiovisual elements and its components, the historical aspect of queer portrayal in the audiovisual media, and previous studies regarding the representation of LGBTQ characters in television.

2.1. Audiovisual Elements

To observe elements present in films and television programs it is important to analyze different aspects of audiovisual language presented to the audience. These audiovisual elements are necessary in order to observe not only how the characters act, but also how the overall portrayal in television affects them and the depiction of their sexuality to the audience. One of these elements is the so-called *mise-en-scene*, defined by Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell as “those aspects of film that overlap with the art of theater: setting, lighting, costume, and the behavior of the figures” (112). The *mise-en-scene* is used to guide the audience's attention to what the director considers most important; Thompson and Bordwell also point out how different elements can be combined in order to create a specific effect and how sound can be important to control attention (141-142). While all the features included in *mise-en-scene* will be analyzed, there will be a focus on costume and makeup in this study based on the more emphasized details in the TV show to be analyzed.

Although different audiovisual elements will carry different levels of relevance in each episode analyzed, sound will have a bigger distinction considering the two TV shows in this study, as soundtrack has a more substantial role as a rhythmic editing component in *Shadowhunters* than in *Brooklyn 99*, where the background music and nondiegetic sounds are less evident. Thompson and Bordwell recognize sound as a powerful element in audiovisual media, as it “engages a distinct sense mode” and “actively shape[s] how we perceive and interpret the image” (265).

Moreover, cinematography will also be considered for the analysis, an element which involves three main elements defined as “photographic aspects”, “framing”, and “duration of the shot” (Thompson & Bordwell 162). Aspects such as perspective and framing will have a deeper focus when observing the objects of study in this analysis. The perspective will acknowledge focal length, depth of field and focus, while framing will observe what is kept on

screen and characteristics such as angle and distance of framing. Editing will also be analyzed to see how the characters are portrayed in their relationships, described as “the coordination of one shot with the next” (Thompson & Bordwell 218). The authors also bring four dimensions of film editing, which are graphic, rhythmic, spatial, and temporal relations. Each dimension will be more or less important depending on the episodes being analyzed and the elements present in each of them.

2.2. History of Queer Portrayal on Television

Representation of queer characters on television has, for a long time, focused on expressing the differences between the LGBTQ and the heterosexual lifestyle. Larry Gross acknowledges how queer characters, more specifically gay men, were represented through the point of view of straight people, reinforcing stereotypes instead of challenging previous views (82-83). Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin also indicate how films with gay characters usually involved themes related to “[...] the ongoing AIDS crisis, drug use and abuse, coming out, and discrimination” (271-272), which were related to the queer life of the early 2000s and were targeted mostly for the heterosexual community, to explain the struggles and issues faced by homosexual people.

Another problem faced by the LGBTQ community was that Hollywood has had a controversial approach to films and TV shows with queer characters. Benshoff and Griffin note that “the Hollywood rating system also showed its bias against the film [*But I’m a Cheerleader* (2000)] when it tried to rate it NC-17, apparently due solely to its subject matter” (271), exploring how homosexual content, even if not showing explicit scenes involving sex or nudity, was considered adult content merely for depicting same-sex couples. Benshoff and Griffin also bring a quote from the screenwriter Rudnick, who says that “an onscreen gay kiss is seen as more threatening than a mad bomber, a homicidal alien, or a vengeful single woman” (272).

This has also been noted by Gross, who mentions how same-sex kisses were carefully approached, “treated with all the delicacy and attention required for high-risk medical procedures” (92).

Gross also discusses the fact that producers believed it would be enough to have gay and lesbian characters on screen without mentioning or characterizing their sexuality (87); that can also be seen when Benshoff and Griffin discuss that the presence of LGBTQ characters in American television can be seen “as more of a target market than a political movement” (268). Although it is good to see queer characters without bringing too much attention to their sexuality, the portrayal mentioned by Gross would be not of a positive view on homosexuality, but instead an erasure of their identity while appealing to the queer community by advertising an LGBTQ character. This way of approaching homosexuality in television programs is what would be called today in the community as “pink money”, where queer people or interests are used solely to attract a bigger audience or public.

However, this view was not persistent through all television. In Britain, Sebastian Buckle (2018) brings a positive perspective of queer characters in mainstream films and TV shows, discussing programs such as *Brookside* (1982-2003) and *Tales of the City* (1993-2001) which did not follow usual stereotypes of coming out or the AIDS epidemic, and they did not censor LGBTQ portrayal as American television did. On the contrary, Buckle describes how it treated “lesbianism as inherently normal” (182) and it presented “a positive image of homosexuality by refusing to trade in negative stereotypes. The characters were individuals, often flawed, but never damaged by their sexuality” (201).

Since this study will focus on American TV shows, the background of British television might not have much relevance to the analysis, but it is important to notice the differences between American and British television and how portrayals that have been developed since

the 1980s in Britain have only started appearing since the early 2000s in the United States, which will be observed in the present study.

2.3. Representation of LGBTQ characters in television

As discussed in the previous subsection, queer representation in television has focused on issues specifically related to LGBTQ struggles such as the AIDS epidemic and the difficulties of coming out. The development of that depiction created stereotypes of homosexual people that became what was considered “normal” for the heterosexual audience, who believed that was how the queer community was expected to be. When observing the presence of queer characters in television, Marina Levina et al. discuss how “he or she is usually the subject of jokes and stereotypes” (742), while Shelley Craig et al. notice that “LGBTQ Youth continue to be characterized predominantly by negative or one-dimensional portrayals in traditional offline sources of media [...]” (257).

These stereotypes are usually of the feminine gay male (Blashill and Powlishta 784), a young, white cisgender man (Avila-Saavedra 8) characterized mostly as the “gay best friend” or the secondary character. Carson Cook (2018) evidences that GLAAD, a non-governmental organization which studies the media portrayal of queer people, has noticed that “these characters are often portrayed with harmful stereotypes, and remain underrepresented” (7). However, Cook follows by indicating that “throughout the early 2000s, representation of gay characters moved away from stereotypes and toward more complex characters” (13).

Although only gay cisgender male characters will be analyzed in this study, it is important to notice that the representation of other sexualities and gender identities, such as bisexuals or transgenders, have followed a pattern of invisibility and usually being underrepresented (Cook 38). Avila-Saavedra also notices that most LGBTQ representation in television is still of white

gay males (18), and Amber Raley and Jennifer Lucas disregard bisexuality in their study because of the lack of characters in their corpus (28).

Avila-Saavedra brings many examples of queer stereotypes, focusing on the TV show *Will and Grace* (1998-2006; 2017-2020) and how the gay characters are portrayed. Characters that seem to fall outside of the feminine stereotype noticed by Aaron Blashill and Kimberly Powlishta and go against heterosexual views of normality are usually there to fulfill the role of comic relief, as Avila-Saavedra explains when discussing the character of Jack, Will's partner. Instead, the gay character portrayed to be liked is Will, who follows the idea of what a straight man would be like, and is validated by his friendship with Grace, a heterosexual woman (12). The author also explains how "the heterosexual man's masculinity is never threatened or affected by the proximity of gay men; rather, it is reinforced by servitude" (Avila-Saavedra 15), and notices that these characters are often portrayed as "frivolous, which, as much as it is funny, can be isolating" (Avila-Saavedra 16).

These stereotypes can still be seen in contemporary TV shows and films. In *Riverdale* (2017-present), the character Kevin's only role in the first seasons is to be the "gay best friend" to Betty, the main character of the series, and the film *Love, Simon* (2018) addresses the struggles of coming out and the first relationship of a young gay teenager. Therefore, it is important to consider these recent portrayals of gay characters when analyzing contemporary TV shows, in order to notice that such stereotypes are still prevailing.

3. Analysis

The analysis of the TV shows will be divided into two sections which will observe different aspects of the characters' relationships and the way their sexuality is portrayed. They will be first analyzed in relation to the portrayed society from both series and to their families and friends, followed by their relation to their significant others and to their own sexualities.

The last topic can be seen as not only their self-consciousness, but also regarding how they express their sexuality for themselves and how they believe others perceive it. Although these sections were used to categorize the analysis and facilitate understanding, it is important to notice that more than one element can be present in the episodes observed, and therefore will be highlighted as well. Similarly, different audiovisual elements will be used in the analysis of each episode, emphasizing the moments in which the character's sexuality are discussed or highlighted. These elements will guide the analysis with the use of the language of the audiovisual medium chosen, approaching film techniques to better observe these interactions and portrayals.

The scenes were chosen ranging from the first to last seasons of each TV show; therefore, episodes from seasons 1-7 in *Brooklyn 99* and 1-4 in *Shadowhunters* will be analyzed. For each section, two episodes of each show was chosen, with a total of eight episodes selected. As one episode of *Brooklyn 99* has a duration of about 20 minutes and *Shadowhunters* has an average duration of 40 minutes due to the nature of their subgenres in American television – as the former is a comedy and the latter is a fantasy drama –, more elements might be found when analyzing an episode of *Shadowhunters* that is not the main focus of the section, but could be important nonetheless.

3.1. The characters in relation to society, friends, and family

In order to observe how the society portrayed in the series views the characters, specifically their sexualities, and how they are seen by their family and friends, four episodes were chosen to be analyzed in this subsection. These are: episode 12 from season 1 of *Shadowhunters*, titled “Malec”, episode 8 of season 2 of *Shadowhunters*, with the title “Love is a Devil”; episode 16 from season 1 of *Brooklyn 99* – “The Party”, and episode 8 of season 4 of *Brooklyn 99*, named “Skyfire Cycle”.

In episode twelve of the first season, “Malec”, Alexander – Alec – is making the arrangements to marry the Shadowhunter Lydia Branwell in order to protect his family’s honor; in the Shadowhunter society, maintaining angel blood through generations is important and the family names are therefore carried through centuries. After discovering how his parents were involved in what was considering the biggest uprising among Shadowhunters by then, Alec understands that their name is stained and his family is seen as traitors in the eyes of the Clave, therefore something must be done to fix those prior mistakes. However, Alec has no feelings for Lydia, but instead is interested in the warlock Magnus Bane. Apart from being a man, Magnus is also a Downworlder – a creature with demon blood, considered inferior by the Shadowhunters.

Although the relationship between Magnus and Alec will be further developed in the subsection of significant others and themselves, their interaction is portrayed earlier in the episode when Alec visits the warlock to discuss business. Magnus, however, is more interested in discussing their own relationship. There is a slight graphic discontinuity in the representation of the characters as the camera goes from one character to the other, evidencing their differences: Magnus is very open about his sexuality and life choices, which can be seen in his clothes, his makeup, and even his background, which is colorful in the middle of a dark room (Fig. 2); Alec, on the other hand, is surrounded by black – the Shadowhunter color, evidencing his commitment to tradition, to family, to giving up who he is in order to follow the rules (Fig. 1).

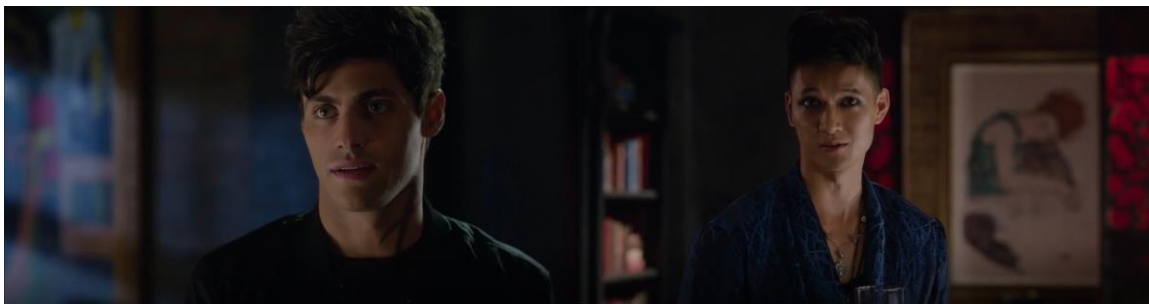


Fig. 1 and 2: Alec and Magnus, their respective costumes and backgrounds.

The roles are somewhat switched later in the episode when the wedding begins. Alec is now dressed fully in bright clothes, a light gold – the Shadowhunters color for marriage. Many important Shadowhunters are in the room, and so are his family and friends. As the ceremony starts, the entire scene begins to be guided by the soundtrack: the character Lydia enters the place as the background music changes tone, gaining strength (Fig. 3). The music is initially an extradiegetic sound, seemingly echoing as if being played in the room, since it is common to expect music at a wedding; however, it blends in the background and slowly becomes a nondiegetic sound, the song then becoming external to fiction and containing lyrics that guide the scene and relate to the situation the characters are going through. The camera shifts constantly between Alec's face, which does not show happiness but nervousness (Fig. 4), and the others in the room (Fig. 5) – his friends, unsure about his choice, and his parents and Lydia, expectant. The character can be seen clenching his jaw and tensing, the shift of the camera highlighting his reaction and contrasting it to Lydia's, who seems happy and content even though she is aware that their marriage is not real. His nervousness can be seen as coming from the situation he finds himself now: he is not marrying someone he loves, instead he is only fulfilling the expectations of the Clave – the Shadowhunter authority – and his parents.

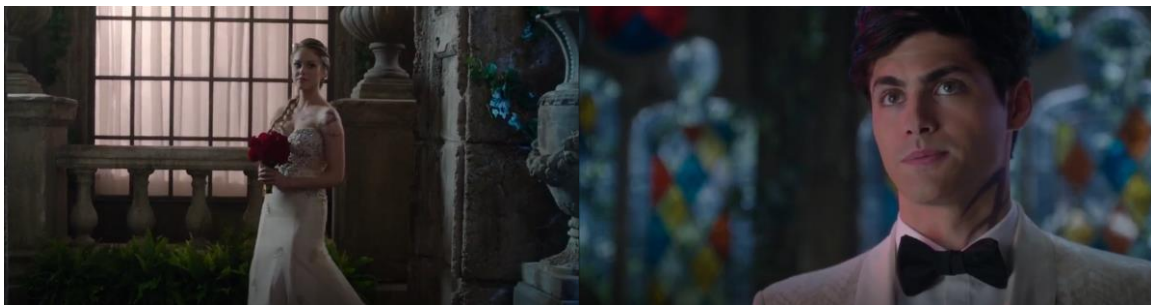


Fig. 3, 4, and 5: Alec and Lydia in their wedding ceremony.

When the song starts, the romantic lyrics seem appropriate for a wedding as they talk about love, but they do not fit the scenario as the audience is aware of the arranged marriage situation. The song goes back to instrumental only as there is the sound of a door opening (Fig. 6). All the characters look to the entrance where Magnus appears, fully in black (Fig. 7). The camera focuses on his face, determined, and then on Alec's face, surprised and with a hint of a smile. Although his sister and Jace seem happy about Magnus' presence, his mother does not; the camera zooms back to a medium long shot as she gets up to demand the warlock to leave, only to be dismissed by him. As Alec tells Lydia he cannot continue the wedding, he gets her full support in it; that leads him to make his final decision, as he turns to face Magnus, the camera now cutting Lydia from the frame. Although Lydia's previous portrayal in the show is of a woman who has given up on romance and is now determined to prove her worth to a higher authority, her actions during the episode – her admiration for his decision-making and worry about his family – show her care for Alec and her affirmation of his feelings; even if he is leaving her at the altar, her expression indicates encouragement, happiness for him. She is the one to tell him that his feelings are valid, no matter who for.



Fig. 6: Alec and Lydia on the altar. Fig. 7: Magnus appears in a close-up shot.

There is a moment when once again the background music stands out significantly, with the rhythmic editing dictating the scene as each piano note cuts to a different shot: once to the guests, once to Alec, once to Magnus, and finally back to Alec (Fig. 8 and 9), when the song

continues as he walks down the stairs and moves towards Magnus. As they stare at each other, the lyrics then can be associated to the couple as their love cannot be helped, as it sings “I can’t help but love you / even though I try not to” (*Shadowhunters* 00:33:03-00:33:14), and is reinforced when the chorus of the music starts right as Alec reaches the warlock and kisses him in front of all the guests in a medium shot (Fig. 10), with the lyrics “I can’t help but be wrong in the dark / ‘cause I’m overcome in this war of hearts” (*Shadowhunters* 00:33:25-00:33:35); this highlights the kiss, which is not only a gesture of affection but of bonding in a wedding ceremony – what was supposed to happen with Lydia instead happens with Magnus. There are long shots along with close-ups of the other characters’ reactions, with both support and disapproval coming from his friends and family. As the scene ends and the music stops, Magnus and Alec are shown in the foreground, with his mother looking displeased in the back; soon afterwards, his sister joins them with smiles, stating how proud she was about his decision. This scene is important to observe how the crowd reacts to the couple kissing: most of the guests are stunned, unsure of how to react, which is expected from the Shadowhunters and members of the Clave; Jace, Isabelle, Simon, and Clary, who can be considered at the moment as Alec’s closest friends, all have positive reactions to it, which is not surprising as these characters already knew - or had a guess - about Alec and Magnus. Alec’s family, on the other hand, seems terrified with the scene unfolding, displeased with such action.



Fig. 8 and 9: Close-up shots shift in point of view between Alec and Magnus. Fig. 10: Medium shot of Alec and Magnus' kiss.

The last scene of the episode in which the characters appear together shows a conversation between the couple as they discuss what happened (Fig. 11), being interrupted by Alec's parents. His mother is angry, and although her discontentment is much more aimed towards Magnus being a warlock, it is possible to assume that she still does not see Alec's sexuality as something positive, since as a Shadowhunter and the oldest of the family, Alec should be able to pass the lineage and name of the family by having biological children (Fig. 12). His father, on the other hand, tries to be supportive of the couple. Alec is visibly shaken, and the scene ends with a medium shot where Magnus changes the subject to a date, which seems to cheer the Shadowhunter up (Fig. 13). It is interesting to notice that before the kiss at the wedding, the characters were usually seen on opposite sides; the camera would only show one of them at a time, rarely in the same shot. After the kiss, the couple is usually seen together, even if one of them is out of focus.

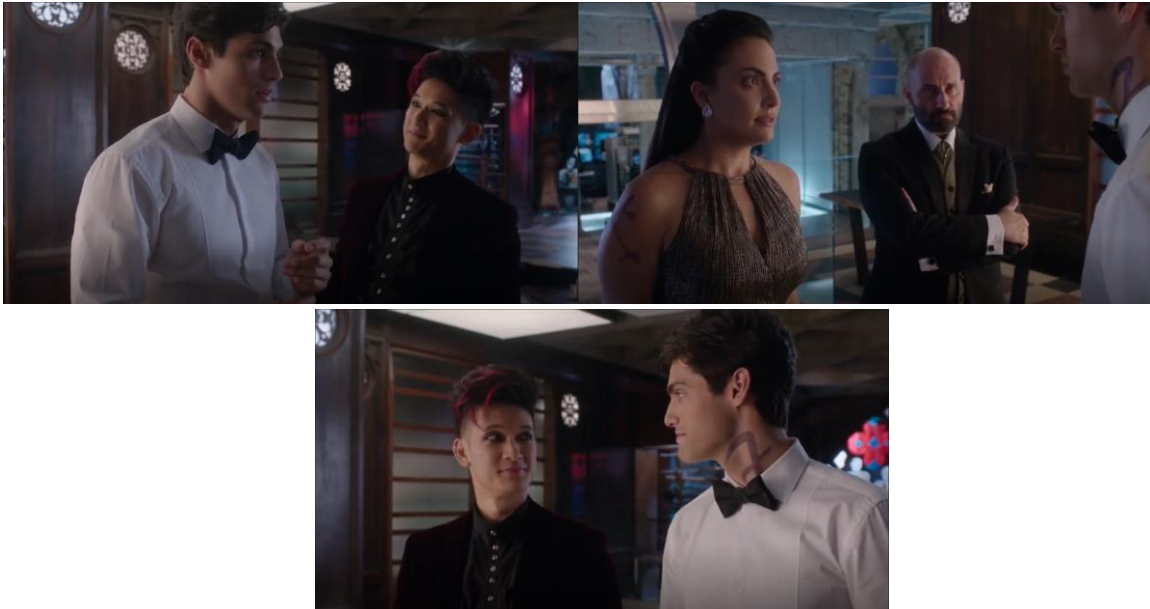


Fig. 11, 12, and 13: Reactions in a conversation between Magnus, Alec, and the latter's parents.

Later in the episode, Alec's mother Maryse states that her disapproval comes not from Magnus being a man, but from him being a Downworlder. This statement can be confirmed by the way she reacts to Isabelle's relationship with a seelie² knight, Meliorn, as previously shown in the show. Although this can be seen as a positive thing regarding Alec's sexuality, it is still an issue regarding other factors; one of those is that despite what Maryse says, Shadowhunters are supposed to carry the family name by having children, and that is something expected of Alec. Him having a male partner would not allow him that, and his parents are aware of it. Even if he could adopt a child, this child would still be raised by a Downworlder and would probably not be a Shadowhunter due to the nature of the Shadowhunter society and their prejudice against Downworlder – therefore not allowing one of them to be raised by one.

Within the theme of parties and celebrations, in episode 16 of season 1 of *Brooklyn 99*, "The Party", the precinct is invited to Captain Holt's birthday party through an e-mail sent by his husband, Kevin. As they prepare to go to the party, Terry states that they should all behave

² Seelies, also known as faeries, are half-angel, half-demon creatures of the Downworld. They cannot tell lies due to their angel blood, but they can twist the truth and manipulate it. They are extremely beautiful and marked by their pointy ears, and are often seen as tricksters. Source: <<https://shadowhunters.fandom.com/wiki/Faeries>>. Accessed on April 4th, 2021.

accordingly, seeing as the Captain always passes as someone with a more formal attitude, but as they arrive at the party they realize through his actions that Kevin did not want their presence there.

The characters' interactions with the couple begin when they arrive at the party, with the camera in a medium close-up shifting between the police squad and Holt and Kevin (Fig. 14). Although the characters' manners change around the couple, it is not because of the nature of their relationship; instead, each character seems to be trying to impress Kevin in their own way. Their outfits are fancy, although suitable for each personality, something noticeable as Thompson and Bordwell discuss how "costume is often coordinated with setting" (122), and the humorous tone is kept while never mocking the situation they are in. At this moment, the audience learns that Kevin does not like discussing work at home, and quickly dismisses Jake when he starts to talk about police cases (Fig. 15). The TV show works with constantly zooming in on the characters to give their speech more strength whenever a character is talking, reinforcing their reactions and enhancing the comic tone; in the scene, the camera rarely goes beyond a medium shot, usually focusing on one character at a time and keeping them in the foreground to reinforce their speech (Fig. 16). It is interesting to notice that usually only the most important characters to the scene are kept in the frame, and if others show up, they are usually in the background or out of focus.



Fig. 14, 15, and 16: Interaction between members of the squad, Holt, and Jake.

Throughout the episode, we observe the interactions of the group - more specifically Jake - with Holt, Kevin, and the guests. Although not much is known about any of the guests, the comedy tone from their interactions comes from how Raymond Holt is supposed to be a serious, unfunny character, and yet these people still think he is one of the funniest people they have ever met. Not for a moment during the party is their sexuality mentioned, but it is also possible to notice that little is done to show their relationship; the couple does not usually touch each other in ways other than a hand on the shoulder. It can be assumed that this lack of affection display is due to Holt's personality - and, by the little contact with the character, Kevin's personality -, but this would be important to be shown. However, the episode brings a scene where two of Kevin's coworkers ask the characters Hitchcock and Scully for how long they have been together, assuming their closeness makes them a gay couple. This foreshadows what Jake later realizes to be how Holt and Kevin were seen when they first started dating.

At the end of the episode, an interaction between Jake and Kevin portrays the reason why Kevin does not like to discuss police work. As Jake enters the room (Fig. 17), the ambience shows the difference between the two characters: Kevin's office is an organized space; he has

shelves of books and certificates on the walls, and the colors are bland, something that would not draw much attention. He wears a suit, a uniform for social situations, and his stance and clothing suggest his seriousness towards his job (Fig. 18). Jake, on the other hand, wears a leather jacket and looks out of place; although his confidence does not make him seem uncomfortable, it is possible for the audience to notice that the office is not a place where he would normally fit in. Once again, costume and setting play an important part in portraying these characters, as Jake's clothes show his aloof personality and carefreeness, while Kevin is dressed to work appropriately and formally.



Fig. 17 and 18: Conversation between Jake and Kevin in the latter's office.

There, Jake exposes his theory about why Kevin dislikes “cop talk”: due to being gay, police officers have shunned Raymond to the side, making him an outcast. The temporal relation in the scene is observed with flashbacks from previous shots as the character makes it evident for the audience how the clues were presented during the episode to indicate how, at least at some point of his work life, Holt had problems with others due to his sexuality (Fig. 19). This is confirmed by Kevin, who does not seem to enjoy Jake's actions, but still seems impressed by them. The episode ends with the characters setting up a date for Raymond and Kevin at a restaurant, trying to make up for the mess. The scene closes with a medium long shot with all of them in the frame; the rhythmic relation, although not as strong as in *Shadowhunters*, can also be seen in this final shot as Scully singing leads to the couple holding

hands - the only real representation of affection shown between them in this episode, and one of the only moments in the whole series where that happens (Fig. 20).



Fig. 19: A flashback of Holt’s past experiences in the precinct. Fig. 20: A medium long shot of Holt and Kevin holding hands as Scully sings to the occasion.

When focusing on the characters’ closer circles of the portrayed societies in both series – i.e., family members, closer friends and co-workers –, other observations can be made and discussed. In *Shadowhunters*, during the episode “Love is a Devil”, Alec’s little brother Max is about to have his Rune ceremony, a Shadowhunter ritual where the child is considered old enough to have their first rune and start their training. Alec then decides to ask Magnus to host a party for Max, to celebrate the moment and so that his family can meet his partner.

Although not much interaction is seen between the brothers throughout the show, Alec seems to care a lot for Max, who in return appears to trust his older brother. As the two characters are left alone after a fight between their mother and sister, Max confides to Alec how their parents have been fighting at home; alternating between long shots and close-ups, the camera follows both the characters as they walk through the Institute, in order to capture both Max and Alec as well as highlight their height difference. The angle, with Max constantly having to look up to Alec, also emphasizes their power position and their relationship as brothers: Alec is older, more responsible and someone Max looks up to, while the younger brother is the one who must be looked over and protected (Fig. 21 and 22). However, when Alec questions Max about the reasons for the fight and the boy states that Maryse does not like Alec’s warlock boyfriend, the camera starts alternating between close-ups of each character,

showing more of their reactions (Fig. 23). Alec then asks the brother “and you?”, which shows the audience how Max’s opinion is important for him. The boy replies with “Whatever; I don’t care”, which brings a smile to Alec’s face; this can be seen as Alec being happy by his answer, as it does not make a difference for his brother who he dates (*Shadowhunters* 00:06:36-00:06:40).

With this in mind, the character then asks Magnus to throw a party for Max, in order to prove to Maryse that there is no reason to disapprove of their relationship. The warlock ends up agreeing with it, but his expression portrays how unsure he is. He knows that Alec’s family does not accept him entirely and does not know if he can change the situation. The medium long shot along with the focal length makes the characters seem closer than they should be, which can be interpreted as their closeness in the relationship.



Fig. 21 and 22: Max and Alec talk to each other. Fig. 23: A medium long shot of Alec and Max.

That distrust can be once again seen when Maryse receives the invitation to the party; although Shadowhunters tend to appear in darker clothes and environments, the woman’s office is darker than usual, which is also evident by her black clothes; setting and costume are important to the scene as they express how their environment and rules are reflected in their

clothing and mindset (Fig. 24). The scene starts with a long shot situating the characters, and the manipulation of light is noticeable as the dim lights make it harder to focus on anything other than the two characters interacting with each other. Maryse's face and actions, as she tries to smile and reason with her son, show that she cares about him, even though she does not believe his decisions are right; Alec's face, on the other hand, shows his annoyance at the situation (Fig 25 and 26). She argues that besides the fact that the party should not be hosted by Magnus, he should not be present at the party at all, since it was a family event. While they argue, the camera zooms in on the characters, and zooms out once Maryse eventually accepts the situation in order to avoid any more altercation.



Fig. 24, 25, and 26: Dark surroundings and clothing; Alec's and Maryse's reactions during their discussion.

Later, when the party has already started, a scene depicts Magnus interacting with Max, where the warlock is giving him a present. In this moment, Max starts asking questions to Magnus about his warlock mark and demon blood, both of which are considered intrusive questions to a warlock. Magnus seems uncomfortable, as does Maryse. Considering Max's age and how he has never met the warlock before, it is possible to consider that this perception of

Magnus, and generally of Downworlders, comes from his parents' influence. Still, it expresses Maryse's dislike for Magnus and how she perceives him as someone below her and her son.

On the other hand, the relationship between the characters is much different in *Brooklyn 99*. In episode eight of the fourth season, "Skyfire Cycle", Jake and sergeant Terry Jeffords are following a case of a threatened writer, while Captain Raymond Holt is having an argument with his husband. Because of events that happened earlier in the show, the police squad had to change shifts and is working on the night shift, which had been keeping the team stressed in their own ways. As Holt's husband, Kevin, works during the day, the couple has been arguing without realizing it is because they cannot be together; their argument is illustrated in the episode as Captain Holt arrives in the precinct with a math problem, where each one has an answer and cannot come to an agreement about the right solution to the problem.

The characters first appear with a medium shot of Holt and Kevin exiting the captain's room to talk with characters Amy Santiago and Rosa Diaz (Fig. 27 and 28). It is possible to notice that none of the two women see the couple as something odd or out of place; instead, the comic tone comes from Kevin and Holt arguing over a math problem and Amy, who is seen as a 'nerd' character, being excited over it. Later, Holt returns to the precinct alone, once again describing to the two women how the argument is being a problem in his relationship. The scene also shows a temporal editing by bringing a flashback of the couple in their house arguing; an unusual scenario, but which portrays their lifestyle and represents their life as a couple like any other, without trying to differentiate them for being gay (Fig. 29).



Fig. 27 and 28: Holt and Kevin, Amy and Rosa, and their conversation. Fig. 29: Flashback of Kevin and Holt as they argue in their house.

The TV show works with zooming in on the characters constantly to give them more strength whenever a character is talking, reinforcing their reactions and enhancing the comic tone; it also brings a lot of shot/reverse-shot when the characters are talking, where there are very few scenes with all the characters on screen at the same time. After their discussion, the captain leaves, and the camera now focuses on Amy and Rosa discussing how to help Holt. The camera changes between the two women, as they exchange ideas and Rosa suggests that Kevin and Holt “just need to bone”. The comic effect comes not from the idea of the two gay men sleeping together, but by Amy’s reaction to the idea of his captain and his husband, which she usually sees as father figures, sleeping together, and Rosa’s delight in teasing her colleague. It could be argued that gay sexuality is brought to the fore and even objectified as even though Holt is a very closed character, there is in this situation a focus on his sexual life. On the other hand, it can also be argued that, although Holt is a very closed character who does not engage in the usual banter around the office, he is being treated just as like any other colleague.

A little later in the episode, Holt returns as Amy tries to trick him into solving the math problem. While the camera shifts between Holt and Amy's face, it zooms back to give space behind Amy, as Rosa enters the scene to tell the captain what she believes is the problem: "night shift is keeping you and Kevin apart. You two just need to bone." (*Brooklyn 99* 00:14:28-00:14:33).; it also zooms back to show the precinct behind Holt, which can foreshadow the sequence of events, as Holt is astonished by Rosa's statement. Sound then becomes an essential element in the scene, while so far it was working as background soundtrack; there is a change in Holt's voice, which becomes more high-pitched, and Amy grunts in distress as Rosa keeps repeating her statement (Fig. 30). The captain tries to whisper, but it eventually turns into yelling, attracting the attention of the others in the office. The scene opens in a long shot and is then followed by a comic sequence as Holt is seen apparently giving a speech to Rosa, switching between him yelling "bone!" in his office door and talking to the woman in a calm voice (Fig. 31).



Fig. 30: Amy reacting to Holt's change to a high-pitched tone of voice. Fig. 31: Holt talking from his office door in a long shot.

The comic tone is, once again, not created based on his sexuality, but instead on the fact that his character, usually very serious and with a formal speech, is yelling and making a scene while the others watch and react naturally to it. It is interesting to notice how this can be seen as a 'gay man causing a scene', a situation often used in television when portraying the gay male, in shows such as *Modern Family* (2009-2020), especially since none of the characters seem to react badly even though this is very out of character for the captain. That idea is

reinforced as, in the last scene with the three characters, Holt is back and tells the women he solved his fight with Kevin; while Amy is momentarily happy because she believes he understood the math problem, Rosa and Holt make it clear that it was actually because the couple slept together. Rosa then teases Amy by saying “your dads have sex”, and Amy reacts uncomfortably – not because of the fact that Holt and Kevin are a gay couple, but because they are, to her, father figures instead of simple coworkers or friends.

3.2. The characters in relation to their significant others and themselves

In order to see how the relationship between the characters and their significant others is presented in the shows, episode 22 of season 3 of *Shadowhunters*, “All Good Things...”, and episode 13 of season 6 of *Brooklyn 99*, “The Bimbo”, were chosen for this section. Furthermore, two episodes of each TV show, episode 4 of the first season of *Shadowhunters*, “Raising Hell”, and the first episode of season 4 of *Brooklyn 99*, “Coral Palms - Part 1”, were also chosen to observe how their sexuality is portrayed to the public, how it affects them, and in what ways it is important to them as individuals.

“All Good Things...” is the last episode of both the season and the show in *Shadowhunters*. Close to defeating the enemy and after saving Magnus and Isabelle from another dimension, Magnus and Alec start preparing for their wedding not to waste any more of their time together, scared of losing each other again. In the first scene with the couple together, the lighting is important as the scenario already portrays a positive view of the situation; living together, the space is bright, with sunlight coming from the window (Fig. 32 and 33). Even as the camera shifts between the characters, the spatial relation makes sure that one is still always in the other’s frame; the background music, although low, is calmly setting up the ambience of the scene, as the couple discusses their wedding plans. Both characters

understand that, apart from celebrating their unity, the ceremony is also a statement to all of those that oppose them being together.



Fig. 32 and 33: Magnus and Alec interacting in an environment with brighter lighting.

The wedding scene starts with a long shot, with music playing and the child warlock Madzie walking in as the flower girl (Fig. 34). Similar to the first wedding scene of the show, previously analyzed in the subsection 3.1, music plays an important part guiding this scene as well. It is once again not possible to determine whether the song is diegetic or nondiegetic, but it could be assumed to be both; it starts as a diegetic sound, part of the wedding, and fades into a nondiegetic sound as it becomes an element to help the scene. As Alec appears through the doors, the camera cuts in short close-ups to the many guests in the seats, as if showing Alec's view of the crowd, displaying their reaction to the moment; they all smile back, happy for the occasion, showing support. It is also important to notice that the one walking alongside Alec is his father, who seems proud of being there and of his son (Fig. 35), which contrasts with his shock when he first saw the Shadowhunter with Magnus. Similarly, Alec's mother is the one who enters the wedding with the warlock, showing how their relationship has grown and how she has now come to accept and love her son's boyfriend (Fig. 36).



Fig. 34: Madzie walks into the wedding ceremony as the Flower Girl. Fig. 35: Alec and his father hug each other near the altar. Fig. 36: Maryse walks in with Magnus.

As the volume of the music goes down, the camera shifts from the crowd to the couple standing together, looking at each other (Fig. 37). The setting and lighting can be seen as a mix of the two characters: although their wedding is taking place in the Institute, a setting usually dark and technological, their wedding is bright and filled with colors, showing the effect Magnus had on Alec. As they exchange their vows, they take turns speaking, completing each other's sentences; with the close-up on their faces, it is possible to see the happiness from both Magnus and Alec (Fig. 38 and 39). They finish their vows speaking together, and the reactions from the guests are once again shown. Nothing in the scene is shown as anything out of the ordinary, apart from how it breaks with Shadowhunter traditions; it is portrayed as a normal wedding, as any other would be. Their next scene together takes place after leaving the altar, where a long shot situates the characters and the high angle of the camera allows the audience to see the couple slow dancing while others watch, which suggests the consolidation of their status as a married couple and reinforces the idea that Shadowhunters and Downworlders are now united and there is no distinction between any of the species anymore. Therefore, it is

important to note that the development of this scene illustrates how their union signifies both a break from marital traditions and from segregation in their societies.

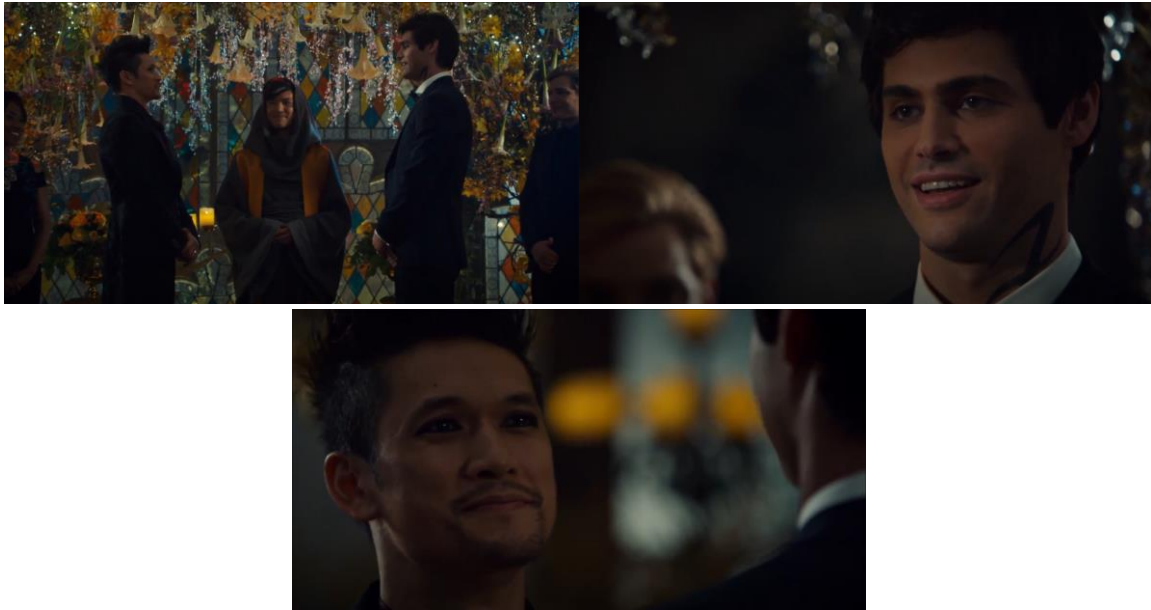


Fig. 37, 38, and 39: A medium long shot of the couple, and close-up shots of them looking at each other.

The last time the two are shown together, as a couple, is at the end of the show once a year has passed. Despite his relationship with a Downworlder, Alec is promoted to one of the highest roles in the Shadowhunter community, while living a happy married life with Magnus. The scene is very cozy, with a family-like ambience; Alec arrives home from work to his husband, who is working from home. Nothing seems to have changed between them as Alec pours a drink for both of them and they toast. There is a sense of stability created in this scene and in their relationship, something that was not found so far in the previous episodes; as the last episode of the show, the couple now does not have to worry about any outsiders, whether they are demons interfering in their daily life or relatives interfering in their romance.

Although not the focus of the subsection, the episode also allows the audience to see how others react to the wedding, showing friends and family reacting to the invitations and discussing the couple's relationship. All of them show a positive reaction, happy about the situation and having no problems about Magnus or Alec. One of the most significant

interactions shown is the one between Alec and Maryse, his mom; while previously Maryse appeared constantly in a dark background and her reactions towards Magnus seemed displeased, in this episode she is in a new environment - her newly owned bookshop - and seems much more carefree. She also appears to be happy about the wedding news, and excited to be there for her son.

In episode 13 of the sixth season of *Brooklyn 99*, “The Bimbo”, the relationship between Kevin and Raymond is highlighted, even though Kevin appears in most of the episodes where Holt’s sexuality is mentioned. In the episode, Kevin seeks Jake to solve a case in his university, since Holt constantly feels less intelligent than his husband’s colleagues. Their first scene is a moment before he meets Jake, showing Kevin and Raymond leaving the captain’s office; the camera closes up on their hands as they exchange a handshake, to which Kevin makes a comment about “PDA in the office” (Fig. 40). Afterwards, there is a cut where he is now meeting privately with Jake in a bathroom stall; the detective, although already having agreed to help, wonders why Kevin did not ask Captain Holt – his own husband – for help, and his face then turns to a crying expression (Fig. 41). Jake appears to be upset at the idea that the couple might be getting a divorce, which shows how their relationship is important for him: not only does he care about Raymond and Kevin, but he also sees them as father figures and cannot bear the idea that they might leave each other.

The captain enters the bathroom in the middle of their conversation, which makes Jake and Kevin hide as Raymond discusses with his husband going to a symphony. It is important to see their interaction because while Kevin usually seems as descriptive and detailed as Holt, as he is trying to hide from his husband, a close-up on his face shows that Kevin’s expressions seem annoyed, bothered by how Raymond is too meticulous with information. The comedy from the scene comes from the odd pair sitting together in the bathroom stall, both impatient

and in a peculiar position; it is not a place where Kevin would usually be found, much less in that kind of situation (Fig. 42).

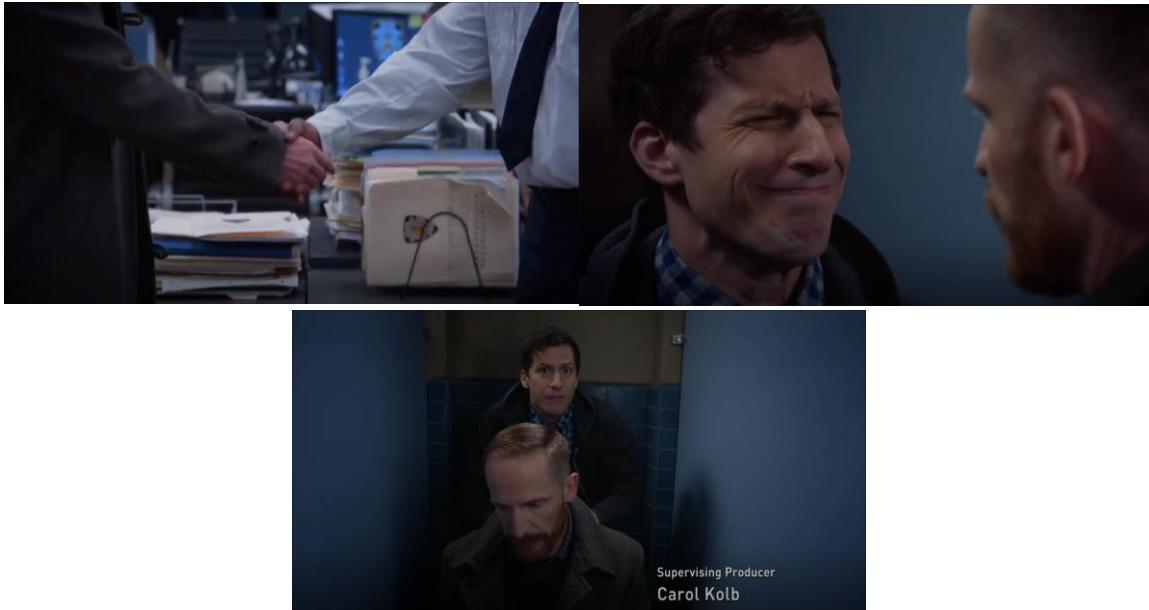


Fig. 40: Kevin and Holt shaking hands. Fig. 41: Close-up on Jake's crying expression. Fig. 42: Jake and Kevin are shown together in the bathroom stall.

Later, as Jake and Kevin meet at the university, there is a long shot where the captain shows up knowing that his husband was hiding something from him; this shows how the characters know each other, even though it is a small detail. While Raymond is usually a more unexpressive character, the scene portrays him with a lot of emotions, which illustrates how bothered he is with the situation. He once again seems to lose control of his feelings, but in this scene it is interesting to notice that it is probably because it shows the couple being a little more intimate than usual, as if portraying their daily life and how they act around each other when there are no more people around. The couple argues back and forth with Jake observing the conversation, and it is important to notice two details; the first one would be that the episode portrays the couple arguing as any other couple would do and does not try to make their relationship seem perfect. The other aspect is that their argument does not revolve around futile elements or about their relationship itself, but due to their job and how others perceive their work positions.

The setting of this episode is interesting to observe because very few parts of the episode take place in the police precinct; although it starts there, the audience is carried through the university and other scenarios around it, such as the classrooms, the offices, and even flashbacks of gatherings and meetings in different houses. This allows not only an insight in Kevin's life, which is rarely seen separated from Raymond, but also how the other characters seem out of place. Jake, with his casual outfits and bubbly personality, is noticeably outside of his own element, even though he does not seem to bother, and Holt looks uncomfortable even though the audience or any other person would not consider him so; him feeling smaller than Kevin and his university colleagues and feeling as an outcast due to their prejudice towards him and his job make Holt insecure, and this sets the character apart from his usual attitude.

The episode develops as Raymond and Jake try to solve the case, with the captain constantly feeling diminished by Kevin's job and coworkers as Kevin berates him for causing a disturbance. Finally, at the very end of the episode, all of them are reunited in the university as Holt solves the case, proving that he is not any less than the professors; when one of them still tries to make him feel inferior, Kevin interferes, causing surprise to both Raymond and Jake. His reaction seems amusing not only for the detective, but also for Kevin himself (Fig. 43 and 44). Similar to Holt and the "bone" scene in the episode "Skyfire Cycle" previously analyzed, in this episode the professor reminds his coworkers that his husband is more than "a hot piece of ass", startling his colleagues with his speech. The camera then follows him in a medium long shot as he turns to Holt, expressing his admiration for him, and the captain smiles as a close-up shows they both shake hands - previously mentioned as being a very public display of affection between them (Fig. 45 and 46).



Fig. 43 and 44: Kevin stands up for Holt before the professors at the university. Fig. 45 and 46: Kevin approaches his husband and they shake hands.

The comedy in the episode is mostly from how Holt, usually seen as a very closed and intelligent person, portrays so much disdain for himself and the university professors due to his insecurity regarding Kevin. Their relationship is also one that is supposed to bring laughter, as the characters are both very formal and overly descriptive even with each other and their ways to show affection are unusual. Still, it is important to notice that the couple never kiss throughout the show, and the most the audience gets of their relationship is handholding, something noticed in the portrayal of lesbian couples by Moritz (136) and previously noted in the literature review by Gross (92). The author observes how same-sex couples would not be shown with sexual or physical affection, even when straight couples would have much screen time where they would display these kinds of gestures.

In the episode “Raising Hell” in *Shadowhunters*, Clary discovers that her memories have been stolen by a warlock named Magnus Bane; Magnus is hidden, but the Lightwoods help Clary find him in order to get a lead to the Mortal Cup. After they find him, the warlock tells them that he fed her memories to a demon, and the only way to get them back is if each of

them give something in return - in this case, a memory of the one they love the most. In this episode, Alec still has not come out to others and is not sure of his feelings himself; his sexuality has not been revealed yet, even though Isabelle and Jace are constantly portrayed in situations where they express their sexual interests and Isabelle hints to Alec not being interested in women. This early in the show, it is possible to assume that this lack of interest in pursuing romantic relationships on Alec's part is due to his serious nature, committed to following rules and not being distracted in his mission. In the middle of the episode, after Magnus escapes from the group, an open shot shows Alec and Jace arguing about following Clary's decisions and losing sight of the warlock; as they leave the club they are in, the camera focuses on Alec and Jace in the foreground with Clary and Isabelle in the back. It is possible to see how they feel about Clary by their expressions and attitudes: Alec sees her as a hindrance, a problem for them as she does not know anything about their world. On the other hand, Jace seems to have an affection for her, which only bothers Alec more. It is possible to notice that Alec does not like Clary, but at this point in the show his dislike can be justified by her lack of knowledge and her attitudes towards him and the Shadowhunter world.

After they track down Magnus and find his hideout being attacked, Alec saves the warlock from a rogue Shadowhunter. The scenario is interesting because the darkness of their situation is usually shown through a very dark background, usually the Institute rooms or nighttime. As Magnus introduces himself in a flirty manner, the Shadowhunter seems uneasy; his smile suggests that he is happy with the interaction but does not know how to flirt back, so he excuses himself from the scene and from his discomfort (Fig. 47). Later, as Magnus calls him "pretty boy" in a medium shot and clarifies that he is not talking to Jace, but to Alec, the Shadowhunter seems happy and amused; that could also be because as expressed by Jace's assumption that Magnus is talking to him, Alec is used to being the sidekick, the shadow to the

other (Fig. 48 and 49). In this scene, not only is Magnus complimenting him, he is doing it even though Jace is also there.



Fig. 47: Alec's uneasy smile as he interacts with Magnus. Fig. 48 and 49: Magnus compliments Alec.

When they summon the demon and their memory is required as payment, each of their memories is shown, temporal editing is shown once again with flashbacks of the people they love appearing for all of them to see. As the demon takes Alec's memory and a close-up of Jace's face is displayed in the dark mass, he panics about what his *parabatai*³ might think. Although Magnus reinforces that he needs to keep calm and Isabelle tries to soothe her brother, telling him that it is nothing abnormal, he is still scared (Fig. 50). He tries to justify himself to Jace, arguing that he was deceived, and breaks the circle they were forming to trap the demon; this releases the demon in the apartment, with a long shot of the characters being thrown to the ground and Jace being caught. While Alec's attraction to Magnus in other episodes can be justified as his fear of being in love with a Downworlder, here it is possible to see that being

³ A parabatai is the name for a pair of Shadowhunters that mark themselves to fight together; they share their minds and feelings, which makes them stronger in battle. They have to go through a ceremony and cannot have any romantic relationships; having a parabatai is not mandatory. Furthermore, to have a parabatai, you must have the ceremony before turning 18 years old. Source: <<https://shadowhunters.fandom.com/wiki/Parabatai>> Accessed on April 4th 2021.

gay is also a perceived issue for him, as he is terrified about what his best friend would think about knowing Alec is in love with him. When they finally save Jace, Alec backs away from the group, observing his friend in the ground aware that he caused the commotion and nervous about the reactions that could come from it. Magnus joins him in the frame, telling him that there is nothing for him to be ashamed of, but the Shadowhunter dismisses it by saying that he does not know what Magnus is talking about (Fig. 51). His gaze never leaves Jace, even as Magnus and he are the only one in the frame. As Magnus leaves and Isabelle takes his place, Alec notices her and leaves the frame as well; it is possible to notice that he is trying to avoid discussing what happened, even with his own sister (Fig. 52). There is a graphic continuity as Magnus and Isabelle switch places, the frame barely changing apart from the two characters switching. Both Magnus and Isabelle are aware of Alec's feelings for Jace and his difficulties in accepting that he feels this way for a man, but they do not push him and allow him to reflect on that.

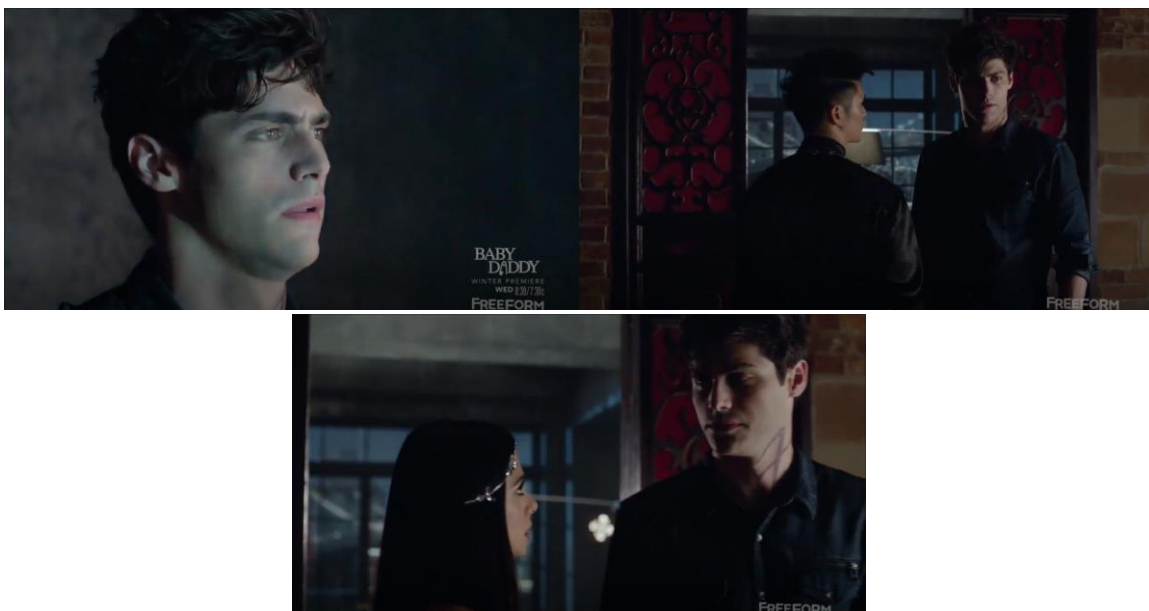


Fig. 50: Close-up shot of Alec's scared expression. Fig. 51: Magnus and Alec's exchange. Fig. 52: Alec's uneasiness near Isabelle.

In the first episode of *Brooklyn 99*'s fourth season, "Coral Palms – Part 1", Jake and Holt have been put in protective custody after the killer Jimmy Figgis has threatened to go after

both of them. As Jake takes the identity of “Larry”, Holt becomes his neighbor “Greg”: Larry does not have a job and very little is known about his identity, while Greg works at an amusement park and has a walking group with elder ladies from the neighborhood. When Holt discovers that Jake is trying to find Figgis by himself, he tries to stop the detective, but his plan fails when they are caught on camera and their cover is at risk.

The episode starts with the walking group gossiping about the neighborhood; as they are in protective custody, the scenario differs from the usual, taking place on an open street with a long shot setting the ambience. The scene starts with Holt out of the frame, leaving the audience to wonder who those women are and their importance to the scene; when he first speaks, the camera zooms out so that he is brought into the shot (Fig. 53). During the conversation, as Holt - or Greg - walks with them, the women wonder which girl would be a good match for him, to which he replies that he has not overcome the death of his wife; to maintain his image of a straight male, he describes his imaginary wife as “a strong, female woman, with nice heavy breasts”. Although being out of his character in order to become Greg, the language used shows that he still does not know some nuances of social behavior - in this case, how a straight male should talk. A bit later in the episode, he once again makes an impression of a straight man when, as one of his walking group partners wonders what her son sees in his wife, Greg says that it is “probably her breasts, which are heavier than average” (*Brooklyn 99* 00:07:13-00:07:15). He then justifies his comment by arguing that this is how straight men think, as if explaining that it is the only thing they can think about.



Fig. 53: Holt being brought into the frame with the ladies walking around the neighborhood.

Throughout the episode, we as the audience can observe how he acts as Greg and how his personality interferes with his undercover persona; he applies to a management position in his job due to his ambition to stay in leadership roles such as his position as captain, he stops Jake from acting on impulse and investigating on his own (Fig. 54), and he is stubborn once he loses the management position to Jake as the detective is trying to blackmail him. It is also possible to see that although he trusts Peralta, the situation is also stressful for him as he is in constant fear of doing something wrong and having to start a fake life again; this leads to him doubting Jake and his decisions, causing them to argue constantly.



Fig. 54: Jake and Holt argue.

Finally, at the end of the episode, Holt realizes that he does not want to stay hidden in Florida; the idea of being a manager in an amusement park for years is terrifying for him (Fig. 55). He then goes after Jake, admitting that he was wrong and that the investigation he conducted earlier in the episode was impressive. As he explains his mistake, the characters decide to work together in order to capture Figgis, and when Jake tries to call him Greg, he denies it and tells him that he is captain Holt, not Greg, accepting that his new identity is no longer necessary. Throughout the episode, there is a contrast between the setting and the characters; although most of their scenes take place in an open space, with good lighting and bright colors, their mood opposes the ambience as Holt and Jake dislike their undercover personalities and the situation they are in. Their clothing, although matching the setting, does

not match the characters; therefore, it is interesting to notice how there is a contrast between what is expected and what happens during the episode.



Fig. 55: Holt contemplates his situation in Florida, with a frustrated look.

4. Conclusion

This study has observed four episodes of *Brooklyn 99* and four episodes of *Shadowhunters*, in order to explore how the characters Raymond Holt and Alexander Lightwood were portrayed as gay men and how they maintain or break stereotypes typically used in TV shows for the queer community. When analyzing the episodes of the two TV shows, a few differences can be seen regarding their portrayal. Raymond Holt in *Brooklyn 99* has almost no stereotypes; he has already accepted his sexuality and does not have to come out to others. He is a black man, a captain, and married to another man. He is also not going through the process of coming out, he does not work as a prop for any straight character, and he has no issues regarding his sexuality; his relationship with his husband is clear and even though there are issues, these issues are not portrayed as rising from the nature of their relationship or from themes usually associated with a gay male. Instead, they are portrayed as an ordinary couple, and no one around them sees anything strange with the characters. His colleagues do not have any issue with him being queer, and although the comedic tone of the episodes are usually related to his marital problems and his interactions with his friends, these are not because of his sexuality, but because of his personality and his role as a father figure to some of the other

characters. Still, some scenes can be interpreted as a perpetuation of stereotypes, which was not expected in the beginning of this study.

On the other hand, Alec in *Shadowhunters* follows many common stereotypes as a young man who is not only coming to terms with his own sexuality, but also to the role assigned to him by the Shadowhunter society he inhabits. He is a white cisgender man, a young adult who has not yet assumed his sexuality to others, and even though he does not seem ashamed about it, he does seem to consider it a problem to his role in the Shadowhunter world. However, throughout the show, the audience can watch him grow and his portrayal is eventually as naturalized as Holt's portrayal. It is also possible to notice that although his sexuality does affect his reactions in certain aspects, most of his dilemma is placed around his boyfriend and romantic interest being from a different race in the *Shadowhunters* world, and not because of his identity as a queer character. Additionally, it is interesting to notice that although he follows a pattern of following the coming out story, this is not portrayed in a very stereotypical way and instead is involved in him finding himself and appropriate to his age.

It is important to notice that the episodes studied in the previous subsections were chosen due to the sexuality of the characters being mentioned or explored; there are episodes on both TV shows where their sexual orientation is not mentioned and does not matter to the plot, and through the analysis of the episodes it is possible to believe that there is a naturalization of their sexuality instead of an erasure. Their sexuality is not the only defining characteristic of these characters, but rather one of many that identify them. Still, it is noticeable that even though some of the stereotypes previously mentioned in this study, such as the coming out story and the comic relief, are maintained through these characters, they grow out of it during the shows and their development is much more natural. That could be because the characters are of different ages, as Holt is already an adult and Alec is still young, and their stories are vastly different. It could also come from the circumstances surrounding the

characters, such as the relationship they have with their families and friends, and the way they perceive themselves. Apart from that, the different genres of the shows can also be a reason as to what can be more explored and how these characters can be approached.

Finally, it is interesting to observe how television has changed when it comes to approaching the queer community and its characteristics, not only using them as support characters and not only focusing on their sexuality as their only trait. Furthermore, although this work is important to show how recent TV shows portray queer characters, this study only observes four episodes of each show and focuses on instances where their sexuality are present; it is also important to highlight that both TV shows have more queer characters apart from the ones analyzed in this study, which could lead to an inversion of the conclusion reached: in *Brooklyn 99*, the character Rosa is also a queer character who goes through a similar coming out process as Alec, and Magnus in *Shadowhunters* is a bisexual man who has already come to terms with his own sexuality. Furthermore, while this analysis can bring an addition to the studies concerning LGBTQ representation in the media, it would be interesting to have more studies regarding this theme, with a broader analysis involving other sexualities and more characters and TV shows.

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