

# Celebrities - as Advocates and Activists

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## Ian McKellen

- Advocate for L.G.B.T.Q.I.A.+ rights
- Using his celebrity status to shine light on human rights abuses
- Coming out in Context of Section 28, 1988
- Tackling masculinity standards of the time and the acting industry
- Since 1988: Active in a variety of pro L.G.B.T.Q.+ organisations (McKellen, Webpage)
  - Co-founder „Stonewall“
  - visiting schools to tackle homophobic bullying
  - GLAAD Media Awards
  - FFLAG
  - Gay & Lesbian Friend Helpline Gloucestershire
  - The Albert Kennedy Trust
  - UK Lesbian & Gay Immigration Group
  - Writings to the press, at events or to the parliament

*“Half of Hollywood is gay, yet in movies gay men don't exist.”*  
(McKellen, Shoard)

## 1) Topics of Analysis

1. The Concept of *Celantrophy*
2. Heterosexuality dominating Homosexuality (film industry)
3. Celebrities and Social Media
4. Ian McKellen's self-representation as an L.G.B.T.Q+ activist on
  - on Instagram
  - his Webpage
  - Interviews

## Context and Pictures



*„No young person should have to choose between a safe space and who they are.“*  
(McKellen, Instagram)

## 2) Findings

### Celebrities and *Celantrophy*

- Celebrities are widely idolized and “offer parables for the life of others” (Rojek 3)
- They have higher privileges than non-celebrities (Rojek 7): can make up for this inequality through activism -> McKellen
  - *Celantrophy* = “Migration of celebrities from entertainment into charity investment and humanitarian work” (Rojek 9)

### Film Industry and Homosexuality

- Conservative hyper-masculinities dominate movies (Kellner 147)
- Major male biopics now start to critique hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy and renegotiate masculinity; however, still often homophobic and politically incorrect (Kellner 169)
- More gay sensibility through gay-themed movies (Kellner 171): McKellen as James Whale
  - Art imitates life: activists (as McKellen) demonstrate → News → Documentaries → Movies

## 2) Findings

### Social Media

- Digital explosion of mass communication systems (Instagram) made direct connection to celebrities possible (Giles 3)
- Instagram = “tremendous cultural influence” (Mundy and Harry 100)
- Private/easy access to sexual diversity (Mundy and Harry 96)
- “Access to social media relatively democratic and diverse” (Mundy and Harry 105)
- Contemporary celebrities no longer entirely dependent on traditional media (Giles)
  - McKellen: embraces new way to communicate with (younger, more diverse) audience
    - Having role models makes coming out easier (Mundy and Harry 102)

### Self-representation

- Webpage:
  - created and written by McKellen; presents pictures, organisations, writings on important causes and his own story (acting, coming out)
- Instagram:
  - created and edited by McKellen; shows pictures of his life and movies; shows pictures relating to activism (pride parade, aids awareness, etc.) → rainbow flag very often visible
- Interviews:
  - often gives interview regarding the topic of L.G.B.T.Q.+ rights/is presented in a positive manner (BBC America); stands up for his opinion e.g. against Hollywood (Shoard)

## 3) Conclusion

- McKellen uses his celebrity status to fight for L.G.B.T.Q.+ rights
- He uses his Instagram Account (pictures), his Webpage (pictures and writings) and interviews to present himself as an activist and to shine light on causes he is active in
- By outing himself and being an activist, he challenges masculinity standards in the industry and becomes a role model for his audience

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