



# "I USED TO BE NORMAL"

A BOYBAND FANGIRL STORY



"FULL OF JOY"  
THE LOWDOWNUNDER



"A HEARTWARMING REAFFIRMATION OF THE POWER OF FANDOM"  
FILM INQUIRY

1D

TAKE THAT

BSB  
4  
EVER

the Beatles

<http://www.metromagazine.com.au>

<https://theeducationshop.com.au>

© ATOM 2018 ISBN: 978-1-76061-244-5



A STUDY GUIDE BY  
MARGUERITE O'HARA

Dara from  
Sydney

'Normal to me sounds boring. It just sounds like there are no big major choruses in that world if you're normal. And what's life without a big major chorus?'

– Dara, Take That fan



Runtime:  
96 minutes

## INTRODUCTION

*I Used to be Normal: A Boyband Fangirl Story* is a feature documentary that follows four boyband fans aged between sixteen to sixty-four from New York, San Francisco, Sydney and Melbourne. Their ages and hometowns may vary, but each of their lives has been profoundly shaped by their love of a boyband – whether it be One Direction, Take That, Backstreet Boys or The Beatles.

The film presents the often surprising and intimate coming-of-age stories of four diverse, funny, honest and insightful girls and women who have all had their lives dramatically changed by their love of a boy band. These four women must navigate the challenges of

love, sexuality, family and faith, all while coming to terms with the problems and contradictions that are part and parcel of being in love with a boyband.

The film was shot over four years in Australia and the United States, and includes animation, archival footage, and home movies shot by boyband fans from around the world.

From The Beatles to the Backstreet Boys, Take That and One Direction, *I Used to be Normal: A Boyband Fangirl Story* takes the viewer back to the fun, fantasy and feelings of their teenage years.

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# CURRICULUM RELEVANCE

*I Used to be Normal* could be used in a range of learning situations in secondary schools. In addition to being very entertaining, the film explores a number of aspects of contemporary life including:

- the factors that establish and consolidate identity;
- adolescent health, sexuality and education;
- popular culture and why it matters;
- obsession, fantasy, admiration and adoration – the psychology of fandom;
- how bands and celebrities are marketed;
- how the recordings and boxes of materials and scrapbooks kept by fans constitute invaluable historical records;
- popular music genres;
- social media;
- family relationships and dynamics.

For students in secondary schools these themes could be approached from the perspective of several subject areas including:

- English
- Music
- Psychology
- Gender studies
- Media studies

Many students from ages twelve to eighteen will strongly identify with the intense devotion to the bands depicted in the film. Students may already have their own experiences being part of an adoring fandom or fanbase. They may also be surprised at how insightful and reflective the fans in this film are. Far from the hysterical, hormonal, foolish girls sometimes portrayed in the media, fans of boybands, both individually and collectively, are able to express a range of feelings and ideas that open up the fangirl experience to a sometimes cynical world.



## THEMES

### IDENTITY

- Why and how am I who I am?
- What are some of the factors that cause growth and change in the shaping of our identity?
- Why is it important to choose and take ownership of your own connections and interests?

### RELATIONSHIPS

- What is the importance of friends, family and any other connections you feel with other people?
- What do you share through these relationships?
- How are family bonds formed and strengthened (or weakened) as we change and grow?
- How do parents, brothers and sisters or other close relatives inform our choices?

### SEXUALITY

- Is becoming infatuated by a boyband in any sense like falling in love?
- Is the boyband/fangirl dynamic a safe way of practising a boy-girl relationship, or is it something more innocent and unconnected with sex?

### GROWING UP

- While family always matters in one way or another, as we grow up our range of connections extends and we often start to look for relationships outside our immediate family amongst our peer group.

### FANS AND FANDOM

- The state of being a fan of someone or something, especially a very enthusiastic one
- Fandom refers to the fans of particular TV shows, movies, books, games, bands, celebrities, sports teams or whatever else that attracts your enthusiastic attention. It can be a private passion or part of a public position or major obsession. It just needs to be something central in your life.

### MUSIC AND POP CULTURE

- Do pop songs and movies give us useful models for how to live our lives, or are they full of unrealistic and potentially damaging ideas?
- What role can music play in improving mental health?
- Is music better enjoyed solo, or in a group?
- What is the history and value of popular music?





Elif

*I Used to be Normal: A Boyband Fangirl Story* is an Over Here Productions jointly financed by Screen Australia, Film Victoria, private investors, the filmmakers themselves, donations made to the Documentary Australia Foundation, and 552 Kickstarter supporters from around the world.

Director and Producer	Jessica Leski
Producer	Rita Walsh
Editor	Johanna Scott
Cinematographers	Jason Joseffer, Simon Koloadin, Eric LaPlante, Cesar Salmeron
Sound Designer	Simon Rosenberg
Original Music	Jed Palmer

*Fans of The Beatles  
at a concert*

## PRE-VIEWING QUESTIONS

(If you have never had a crush on a boy band, substitute sports star, musician, celebrity, skateboarder, pro-surfer, or someone you admire who does any other activity you say you 'love'.)

1. Have you ever had a crush on a boyband?
2. Are these feelings known to your friends and/or family, or is it essentially a 'secret passion'?
3. Do you particularly like one member of a pop group? Why do you think this is?
4. If you were once a boyband fan, when did your interest start to lessen and why?
5. Have you kept photos, posters and other material about your favourite group or singer?
6. List the good things that your fandom brought you. Were or are there any negatives?
7. What needs do you think boybands or sports stars can meet in a person's life?

8. At what point do you think being a devoted fan of someone can turn into a controlling and even destructive obsession? Are online gamers whose life is dominated by screens escaping from a more challenging but ultimately more authentic world? Does your interest in a pop band or activity stop you from having a balanced life? Does your passion consume you?
9. What opportunities would people who grew up before the rise of easy access to pop culture in the 1960s have had to listen to?
10. How did people show they were fans and participate in fandoms before the internet?
11. Discuss the meaning of the following terms and words and determine what you think each one means:
  - FANDOM
  - EPHEMERAL
  - POP CULTURE
  - BOYBANDS
  - OBSESSION, ADORATION, INFATUATION, MANIA, CRUSH

Which of these words have positive connotations?

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I fell in love with a boyband for the very first time at the age of 31. It was one of the most confusing, surprising and exciting experiences I'd ever had. At the time they called it 'The One Direction Infection,' and it hit me hard.

I had never liked a boyband before, despite having been a teenager at the height of the Backstreet Boys and \*NSYNC glory years in the 1990's. Growing up, I thought boybands were cheesy and that their fans were hopelessly unsophisticated. I remember thinking to myself the first time I heard a One Direction song on the radio, 'Do they think we're idiots? They just repeated the same chorus 10 times over!' But by the end of the song I was hooked, and I wanted to know everything about them. I knew I was being manipulated by catchy lyrics and a savvy marketing machine, but I was loving it. I immediately wanted to know more about this phenomenon and was eager to meet other fans. I decided to turn this obsession into my job and started researching boyband fans for this film.

I found Elif in Long Island first. The title of the film is a quote from her - I found a clip of her on YouTube, where Elif's friends had uploaded a video they had secretly recorded of her watching a DVD of a One Direction concert. The clip had gone viral and it's hard not to be affected by Elif's reactions - she laughs, she cries, at times she even looks like she's in physical and emotional pain. And there's a moment where she is suddenly self-aware and turns to her friends and cries, 'This is not good. I used to be normal'. It made me feel sad that she was ashamed for having this reaction, that she wanted to be 'normal,' which I guess means being able to hold in all your feelings. Her reaction to One Direction is so beautiful, so raw, and you can see she's overwhelmed by all these things that she's feeling for the first time. As I got to know Elif, and as she has grown up over the years we've filmed together, I saw her struggle with the pressures that being from an immigrant family had on her life and career choices, and fascinatingly, how her One Direction infatuation provided a leaping off point for so much of her journey into adulthood.

Meeting Elif, I felt compelled to make this film as a way to celebrate the first time you fall in love with something or someone, to just revel in how huge that feels, and to dispel this notion of there being a 'normal' way to react to those things.

It was important to me that the film be multi-generational. I wanted to investigate the impact our adolescence has on the development of our adult selves and discover whether the things we love as teenagers remain in our hearts or can be dismissed as 'just a stage.' While filming we were struck by the patterns and similarities between our main characters Elif, Dara, Sadia and Susan and their experiences of being a fan. All four keep memory boxes filled with the treasures of their boyband obsessions, all four have fantasies about their heroes that are both innocent and revealing, and all four felt they had a direct connection with

their favourite band member at some point. On a deeper level, there are other parallels between their lives; Susan and Elif clash with parents who don't understand or support their passions, Sadia and Dara struggle to understand why they can't let go of their teenage boyband obsessions and wonder if it hinders their search for real romantic partners, Elif and Sadia battle with the expectations of their religion and culture, and all of the women say the boybands have changed their lives in some way. These were also experiences that I could directly relate to - this is not just screaming and childish obsessions, this is something deeply meaningful to so many people in so many places, at so many stages of their lives.

From a purely cynical perspective boybands are a carefully engineered package of cute, young, mostly white, boys in coordinated outfits, singing in harmony about holding hands and broken hearts. As young men they are given more power and status than they may deserve, but their music is some of the most enduring and beloved in history, and their fans' devotion is legendary. Over the last five years of making this film, my producer Rita and I have met so many fans, both in person and online, who deserve to have their stories heard and celebrated without being mocked or judged. We hope that in Elif, Dara, Sadia and Susan, the fans will see something of themselves and feel validated in their experiences.

It is an honour for me to tell these women's stories. The film doesn't claim to represent the definitive boyband fangirl experience, Elif, Dara, Sadia and Susan are just four stories out of millions, but I nevertheless hope that fans across generations, across many musical genres, will be able to recognise parts of themselves in these women's stories. Rather than ridicule or shame these fans, as documentaries about fans often do, this film has been made and told by female voices who proudly take ownership of their own experiences. While this film may have started out as a love letter to boybands, it's actually a love letter to the girls and women who let themselves feel things deeply, who aren't afraid to sing or dance along to a song that makes them happy, or who endeavour to always stay closely in touch with their inner teenager, with all the optimism, awkwardness and dreams that that entails.

**JESSICA LESKI - DIRECTOR**



Director Jessica Leski shooting with Elif in Long Island, NY



L-R: Susan from Melbourne; Dara from Sydney



## THE FANGIRLS AND THEIR BOYBANDS

### The Fangirls

#### ELIF

- Sixteen to eighteen years old during the making of this film
- Lives on Long Island, New York, USA
- One Direction fan and high school student

#### SADIA

- Twenty-five years old
- Lives in San Francisco, California, USA
- Backstreet Boys fan and journalist

#### DARA

- Thirty-three years old
- Lives in Sydney, NSW, Australia
- Take That fan and brand strategist

#### SUSAN

- Sixty-four years old
- Lives in Melbourne, Australia
- Beatles fan and TV producer

### The Boybands

**BOYBANDS:** a pop group composed of attractive young men whose music and image are designed to appeal primarily to a young female audience. Usually four or five members.

**FANGIRLS:** an obsessive fan (usually female), especially of something from popular culture.

The band members listed here are the original members of each group. As you may know, some band members have gone on to successful solo careers, and two members of one band have died.

### ONE DIRECTION

Harry Styles, Zayn Malik, Liam Payne, Louis Tomlinson, Niall Horan

English-Irish band formed in 2010, based in London. They started out as individual singers on the British *X-Factor*. One of the judges, Simon Cowell, persuaded them to join forces in a boyband. They came third on the *X-Factor* and from these beginnings went on to become an incredibly successful boyband, with a huge fanbase, many of them teenage girls.

### BACKSTREET BOYS

Nick Carter, AJ McLean, Kevin Richardson, Brian Littrell, Howie Dorough

Band formed in 1993 in Orlando, Florida. One of the biggest pop groups of the nineties. Famous for excellent dances with some of their songs.

### THE BEATLES

Paul McCartney, John Lennon, Ringo Starr, George Harrison

English group formed in Liverpool in 1960. Probably the most successful popular music group of all time, with a longstanding international following.

### TAKE THAT

Gary Barlow, Robbie Williams, Howard Donald, Mark Owen and Jason Orange

English group formed in Manchester in 1990. Both Robbie Williams (1995) and Jason Orange (in 2014) left the group with Williams going on to a successful solo career.



## POPULAR CULTURE

What do we mean and what do definitions suggest?

Here are three definitions of popular culture. Investigate or create your own definitions and then decide which one is closest to your sense of pop culture.

- *Popular culture is based on the tastes of ordinary people rather than an educated elite.*
- *Cultural activities or commercial products reflecting, suited to or aimed at the general masses of people.*
- *Popular culture is the accumulation of cultural products such as music, art, literature, fashion, dance, film, cyberculture, television and radio that are consumed by the majority of a society's population. Popular culture has mass accessibility and appeal. The term 'popular culture' was coined in the 19th century or earlier. Traditionally, it was associated with lower classes and poor education as opposed to the 'official culture' of the upper class.*

The problem with definitions like these is that in using terms such as 'the tastes of ordinary people' or 'aimed at the general masses', they imply that music, film, television drama and detective fiction are all in some way inferior to more overtly intellectual and less popular music and films.

Keep in mind that Mozart, Shakespeare, Dickens and J.S. Bach were immensely popular in their own time and had huge followings. Popularity should never be automatically equated with 'not very good'.

The term 'pop song' was first used in 1926, in the sense of a piece of music 'having popular

appeal'. Music historians believe that many events in the history of recording in the 1920s can be seen as the birth of the modern pop music industry, including involving output across many genres including country, blues, and big band music in the USA.

At the end of World War II, innovations in mass media led to significant cultural and social changes. Scholars trace the origins of the rise of popular culture to the creation of the middle class generated by the Industrial Revolution. Later, the meaning of popular culture began to merge with that of mass culture, consumer culture, image culture, media culture and culture for mass consumption.

However, pop music as a widespread genre of popular culture did not truly become a cultural factor until after World War II. Universal education in the developed world, mass instant communication, global travel, television shows, films and reality television have all greatly increased our access to a range of music and cultural experiences. More and more of us can choose to 'binge' on streaming entertainment, accessing content that conforms ever more specifically to our own individual tastes in music and narrative.

While preceding generations often wished to develop their own forms of music and personal style, it was not always acceptable or possible until teenagers became a group of people able to create their own styles and tastes in music.

Boybands, K-pop, Heavy Metal, Rap, Disco and many other musical genres are now enjoyed all over the world by fans who promote their passions through Instagram, Facebook and other social media. YouTube offers instant access to performances, and Spotify and other streaming services make it possible to access a range of music at a relatively small cost.

## WATCHING THE DOCUMENTARY

This is a film that took several years to make, with the filmmakers shuttling back and forth between America and Australia. While there are some clips of the groups, this film is primarily concerned with individual boyband fans from different generations and backgrounds. The narrative is essentially framed and intercut with scenes of the four fangirls telling their stories about this important aspect of their lives. All the women describe how comforting listening to boyband music was when their lives were sometimes difficult and lonely.

# STUDENT ACTIVITIES

THE FIRST ACTIVITY IS TO WATCH THE FILM, LISTENING TO THE GIRLS' STORIES AND IMMERSING YOURSELF IN THEIR INTERESTS. USE TABLE 1 TO MAKE NOTES ABOUT WHAT YOU SEE AS THE MOST INTERESTING ASPECTS OF THESE GIRLS' LIVES.

The filmmakers outline the outcomes they hope to achieve in making this film.

*We hope that this documentary will change the way people talk about fangirls and will openly encourage conversation and debate in families, schools and workplaces. We'd like to see this documentary contribute to a discussion on empowerment and identity for these girls.*

*From a wider point of view, we hope that this film will allow educators, stakeholders in cultural institutions, and others to see the value in the shared experiences of fangirls worldwide, and how, by legitimizing their passions, they can become less disenfranchised and contribute more to mainstream discussion. We hope that the documentary will achieve greater recognition of the value of pop culture within school curricula, and more insightful discussions regarding the enjoyment and impact of music appreciation. Teachers we've spoken to share our frustration, in that they see how engagement levels increase when pop culture is introduced to the classroom. This isn't just screaming girls (although that's an interesting part of it) – this is a truthful and transformative way of communicating and sharing feelings.*

- As you watch this film and respond to the various questions, consider how well the filmmakers intended outcomes are achieved in this film.
- How do the girls' family experiences differ? Whose parents are most and least supportive of their daughter's love of a boyband?
- Why do you think parents are often concerned about their daughters' preoccupations with a group of boys they are unlikely to ever meet?
- What did Susan do in 1964 when The Beatles



Above: Sadia from San Francisco

Below: One Direction fan at a concert

My parents were not happy about the posters I had up {of the Backstreet Boys}. My dad tore them down... because it was such an affront to his cultural sensitivity. My parents were both born in Karachi, Pakistan. They had an arranged marriage. But my mum Rukhsana came to a concert with me; and she would ring me when a Backstreet Boys song came on the radio. – Sadia

came to Australia? What lengths have the other girls gone to in their efforts to get as close as possible to their musical idols?

- Is there any evidence in the film of any of the girls being constrained, socially or otherwise, by their consuming interest in a boy band?
- Dara acknowledges that she was in love with Take That, particularly with Gary Barlow, at a time when she was discovering her own sexuality. She said, 'I was pretty sure I was gay but I loved Boybands. Then the penny dropped and it was, I don't love Gary Barlow, I want to be Gary Barlow. I want that adoration of a million girls.' How did this realisation allow Dara to come out as a same-sex attracted individual and live a life that included boybands, but also real partners?
- How do the fangirls' eventual career trajectories reflect their teenage experiences with music and boybands?



**TABLE 1**

Their favourite band	Family attitudes to their daughter's interests	Best experiences they have had in feeling connected to their boyband	Most positive impacts on their life from this passion
<b>Elif</b> (16-18)			
<b>Sadia</b> (25)			
<b>Dara</b> (33)			
<b>Susan</b> (64)			



They're not even like human beings. Human beings can't be that perfect. First, I fell in love with Harry...but then I like all of them now. They're all my boyfriends. – Elif



### What is normal?

'Life before One Direction was social, I had friends a lot. I would talk and focus on school more...then I discovered the boys.' – Elif at sixteen

'Nobody gets me unless you're a One direction fan.' – Elif

- How did One Direction fan Elif regard the boys after she first discovered them through a cousin on Tumblr when she was sixteen?
- Fans have screamed at concerts or on sighting their pop stars for some years. The Beatles were amongst the first pop stars in the 1960s to have their fans scream for/at them – 'Here I am, I love you, look at me'. In what ways might this group behaviour be similar to the riotous behaviour of fans of soccer teams when they win or lose, or the public mourning that accompanies the death of a celebrity such as Princess Diana or Robin Williams?
- Is knowing as much as possible about a music group a form of total commitment and respect? Can 'the truth' about celebrities ever be known by those outside their lives?
- How did Sadia express her adoration of the Backstreet Boys? Did her going on a cruise where they were part of the entertainment allow her to rethink her obsessions? When is too

*Above: Elif from Long Island*

*Below: Sadia from San Francisco*

much literally too much?

- How did Dara explain her behaviour in relation to boybands?
- How did she express her feelings about Take That in 1995 when she was in Year 7?

#### Song themes:

- \* Love
- \* Fun
- \* Night Out

- \* Good Times
- \* Heartbreak
- \* Longing
- \* Loss

- How do boybands collectively exemplify someone's idea of different aspects of male types, i.e. the cute one, the serious one, the nerdy one, the sexy one, the shy one, the bad boy, etc.?
- What tend to be the main themes in the songs of many boybands?
- How are these themes designed to make their fans feel that they are being addressed directly?
- How important are the dance moves in these acts as seen in film clips, on YouTube and live concerts?

#### Song Titles:

- \* Back for Good
- \* Quit Playing Games with My Heart

- \* What Makes You Beautiful
- \* Love Me Do
- \* I Want to Hold Your Hand



The Backstreet Boys are like the five most consistent men in my life. So, they are never going to break my heart...I hope. The Backstreet Boys and other boybands are packaged in a certain way to appeal to your emotional needs, to your musical tastes, to your physical interests. They're the whole package. – Sadia



### Record Keeping

- How do the girls ensure that their curiosity about their boybands is updated, protected and kept safe to be looked at over time?
- Describe the typical contents of a memory box for boyband fans. How does this material differ from the more usual family albums?
- Magazine articles, newspapers, tickets, pamphlets and photos all provide records of musical events but they are often made of paper, and glued into scrapbooks. What other technologies and digital resources are now available to record performances?
- How have recording devices changed over the past thirty years? What equipment do you need in order to listen to or watch cassette tapes, vinyl records, CDs and videos? What is the more usual way today to listen to music? Is the hardware always readily available to access music and film from a few decades back?
- In what ways are fans important in preserving these records? Where, for

Above clockwise top left: Susan from Melbourne; Fangirl Elif from Long Island; Rita Walsh and Jessica Leski (Photo by Lester Francois)

instance, might recordings of earlier Australian singers such as Johnny O’Keefe or Slim Dusty be available to students and historians of popular music from the past? Find out what is kept in the National Library of Australia in Canberra to preserve this aspect of culture in the past.

- A recently published article in an Australian newspaper, *The Saturday Paper*, by Brodie Lancaster, a journalist and self-described ‘Directioner’ explores this notion of collecting memorabilia. She writes about a nineteenth century Australian fan of theatre and musical comedy who collected materials about her interests. Brodie Lancaster suggests that in relation to fandom ‘to pay close attention is an intense act of love’ and to collect and preserve memorabilia is respectful and of historical importance in any study of popular culture. What technologies are available today to ensure that performances are preserved for scholars?<sup>1</sup>

### Reflecting

While all four characters change over time as they grow older, none of them repudiate or dismiss their years of boyband fandom.



Fangirls at a concert



### Close Viewing (48.00–53.56)

Sadia and Susan looking back and moving on:

- What does Sadia suggest about the ‘unconditional love’ she had for the Backstreet Boys?
- How does her family and cultural background make her longing to express this love fully within her family more difficult than it may be for girls whose parents were not born in a different country?
- In what sense are boybands never going to break their fans’ hearts in any really significant way?
- Susan and the other girls acknowledge how their love of boybands has helped them when they faced challenges in their lives. What did this comfort involve?
- What is the main quality all the girls value in the songs and image of boybands?

*Clockwise top left: Director Jessica Leski with fangirls Elif and Melisa at a One Direction concert in Long Island, NY; Director Jessica Leski and Beatles fan Susan; Elif from Long Island*



### Extension Activities

#### + 1. Similar and different – individuals

Select two of the girls/women featured in this film and write an essay that compares and contrasts their experiences as a fan.

Use the viewing chart you filled out earlier (Table 1) and any other information about the women in the film and in this guide to develop your piece of writing.

Describe the following:

- Family background and upbringing
- Their particular boyband and the approximate dates when the band was active
- How they believe the band affected their life and future life choices
- Your own impressions of their capacity to reflect on and express their feelings
- Any negatives in their lives that resulted from their passion for a boyband



*One Direction fans at a concert in NY*

OR

### + 1. My band/singer/group/ sports star/celebrity

Prepare a talk or written piece that describes your own fascination/interest/admiration of a group, club or individual with a public profile in the media today. Explain or demonstrate through photos, video or recordings what it is that makes you a fan. What is really special and unique about your interest?

### + 2. Packaging

Several of the girls talk about the packaging and marketing of boybands, especially Sadia when she states:

*The Backstreet Boys are like the five most consistent men in my life. So, they are never going to break my heart...I hope. The Backstreet Boys and other boybands are packaged in a certain way to appeal to your emotional needs, to your musical tastes, to your physical interests. They're the whole package. – Sadia*

From Brian Epstein with The Beatles to Lou Pearlman with the Backstreet Boys and \*NSYNC, and, Simon Cowell with One Direction, these bands were all promoted and shaped by entrepreneurs.

Does this calculated creation of a pop cultural 'product' managed and promoted like a new brand of clothes or smartphones impact your view of the 'legitimacy' of the music that a boyband may create and promote?

### + 3. What about Girl Groups?

Do they attract the loyal fanbases of boybands? Are their fans mostly male? Here are some well-known Girl Bands and their best-known releases.

- The Bangles, *Eternal Flame*
- Go-Go's, *We Got the Beat*
- Destiny's Child, *Say My Name* and *Jumpin', Jumpin'*
- The Supremes, *Stop! In the Name of Love*
- Divine, *Lately*
- The Dixie Cups, *Chapel of Love*
- TLC, *Baby-Baby-Baby*
- The Spice Girls, *Wannabe*

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Above:  
Fans  
of The  
Beatles at  
a concert

Are there any other groups you would add to this list?

- How crucial a factor is it that boybands and their music are targeted specifically at girls?
- To what extent do looks play a role in the attractiveness of boyband members for girls? Which aspects of their looks are often mentioned by the fans?
- Can you imagine an all-girl band ever achieving the same level of popularity as One Direction? Why or why not?
- What do you think is the significance of boybands usually comprising four or five members, one or more of whom might appeal to young girls?
- Given the most popular music stars of today, do you think we will continue to see the evolution of boybands?
- 'You need to scream and yell and cry at some point in your life to get in touch with your feelings. It's a release and you feel so good.' – Susan, The Beatles fan
- In what way is an obsession with a boy band a positive outlet for people who are just starting to discover their own tastes, identities and sense of belonging?
- How are members of pop groups a crucial aspect of a fantasy life?
- When and how can an obsession become damaging to other parts of your life?
- What are some of the creative ways you can express your interest in contemporary pop culture?
- Develop a presentation that can include images and sounds that reflect your interest/obsession in a popular music group or individual. This may include collages of images and other memorabilia, sound mixes of songs, videos from YouTube, dance moves.
- The aim of this activity is to convey your fandom through the use of images and sounds rather than mostly words.

# REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

## Social Media

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/BoybandFangirl/](http://www.facebook.com/BoybandFangirl/)

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/boybandfangirl/](http://www.instagram.com/boybandfangirl/)

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/boybandfangirl/>

The MIFF (Melbourne International Film Festival) program where *I Used to be Normal* screened in August 2018:

<http://miff.com.au/program/>

[film/i-used-to-be-normal-a-boyband-fangirl-story/](http://miff.com.au/program/film/i-used-to-be-normal-a-boyband-fangirl-story/)

## Articles online

Review and analysis of *I Used to be Normal*: <https://theconversation.com/i-used-to-be-normal-tribute-to-boyband-fangirls-is-unexpectedly-affecting-101245>

## Marketing boybands

<https://www.impactbnd.com/blog/what-boy-bands-can-teach-your-business-about-effective-marketing-practices/>

## The fan as an historian

<https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/contributor/brodie-lancaster/>

An article about Lou Pearlman who is credited with manufacturing a number of boybands including the Backstreet Boys and \*NSYNC

John Seabrook, <<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/we-live-in-the-pop-culture-world-that-lou-pearlman-created/>>, August 22, 2016

An article from 2012 about the rise of One Direction  
<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2012/nov/17/one-direction-biggest-band-world/>

An article about the response to Zayn Malik leaving One Direction

<https://www.chesterchronicle.co.uk/lifestyle/women2day-the-boyband-phenomenon-8936402>

A 2016 article about the possible demise or future of the boy band phenomenon

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/apr/14/one-direction-boybands-jls-x-factor-stereo-kick>

The positives of fandom and love of boybands for young women

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/10595848/Beliebers-to-Directioners-why-hysterical-teen-girl-fans-arent-as-mad-as-you-think.html>

## Endnotes

1. <https://www.thoughtco.com/popular-culture-definition-3026453>
2. <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/contributor/brodie-lancaster/>

*I Used to be Normal: A Boyband Fangirl Story* touches briefly on themes of self-harm and depression. It is essential that viewers of the film have access to support, advice and help-seeking information to ensure they are confident and comfortable to watch the show. Many watchers of the show will not find the content distressing, as it will depend on their individual life experiences and current circumstances, but for those who are concerned information is available. If you find the themes in the show distressing and need any support, chat to a friend, your family, a trusted adult or a professional.

In an emergency, please contact 000.

These are national 24/7 crisis services:

- Lifeline: 13 11 14 [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)
- Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467 [www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au)
- beyondblue: 1300 224 636 [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

Youth Support Services:

- eheadspace: 1800 650 890 [www.eheadspace.org.au](http://www.eheadspace.org.au)
- headspace centres: [www.headspace.org.au/centres](http://www.headspace.org.au/centres)
- Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)
- ReachOut: [www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)
- SANE Australia: 1800 187 263 [www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org)



This study guide was produced by ATOM. (© ATOM 2018)

ISBN: 978-1-76061-224-5 [editor@atom.org.au](mailto:editor@atom.org.au)

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