The History of Gender Representations in Teen Television

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Abstract

This research examines the history of gender representations in television programs designed for adolescents to discover how these portrayals have developed and changed over time in order to determine the perceived messages about stereotypical gender norms and roles for adolescents. These messages are important to decode as adolescent males and females can learn gender roles and behaviors from the teen programming that they watch on television. The study investigated the most popular teen television programs from each of the last three decades including *Beverly Hills 90210*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Smallville*, *One Tree Hill*, *Pretty Little Liars* and *Teen Wolf*. The first part of the study completed was a textual analysis of the episodes. Secondly, a content analysis was performed on all of the examples from the episodes. The codes used for this study include Language, Sex Roles, Emotionality, and Traditional Roles. Although the majority of gender messages present were normative in that they reinforced gender roles and stereotypes, the findings also suggest that gender representations are becoming less normative as the genre continues to grow and develop.

Introduction

Every day people all around the world are bombarded with messages from various

forms of media. Television is one medium in particular that has become an integral part

of the lives of people around the world. The early development of the medium was

started in the 1920s, but has grown into an American staple within the last century (Jost,

1994). A statistical analysis completed in 2012 found that 104,841,846 households or

88.83% of American households own at least one television set (Conquest Statistical

Datasets). This study also found that 53,447,374 households or 45.28% of American

households watch prime time television during the week, from Monday to Sunday

(Conquest Statistical Datasets, 2012). This data demonstrates the need to examine the

messages that are being portrayed on television, as the medium is so popular among

Americans.

Although it may only be thought of as an entertainment medium, television can be

used for a variety of different reasons such as an "escape" from reality, companionship,

or just out of habit (Rubin, 1983). Alan Rubin completed a study and found that

participants exhibited two main viewing patterns in their motivations to watch television

(1983). Although the first type of user focused on television as an entertainment medium,

the second type of user was a participant that used television for information seeking

(Rubin, 1983). The second type of viewers are "obviously not trying to escape from an

information environment, but rather, are using television – and specific genres of

informational programming – in order to learn about people, places and events and to

instrumentally use this information in interpersonal interaction…" (Rubin, 1983, p. 50).

Not only can viewers learn from television, but they actively use this information in their

everyday lives. What if, however, a television user is not seeking information; can he or

she still be affected by the messages that are being portrayed?

One model of television research describes a process in which the creation of

programming is not a reproduction but an intentional construction of a world and reality

(Wren-Lewis, 1983). Wren-Lewis (1983) describes the encoding/decoding model of

television programming as "…a product of a specific set of signifying practices

(encoding) whose meanings are ultimately fixed by a second set of signifying practices

(decoding)" (p. 179). This is a two-step model in which both the creation of the television

show and how the viewer interprets those messages have equal weight (Wren-Lewis,

1983). Recent research (Jesnse, Bernat, Wilson & Goonewardene, 2011; Taylor &

Setters, 2011) supports the idea that television messages can be used to create meaning as

well as shape attitudes and behaviors. One study found that small effects of television

viewing on a person's attitudes and behaviors "can still be meaningful, especially if they

occur in key-decision making situations. But the present study identified a somewhat larger effect that may happen with some frequency" (Jensen, Bernat, Wilson, & Goonewardene, 2011, p.523). The researchers explain that the more a person is exposed to media that he or she derives meaning from, the more likely the media will have an effect on the person's views and or behaviors (Jensen, Bernat, Wilson & Goonewardene, 2011).

Adolescents in particular, consume a great amount of television programming. The Kaiser Family Foundation Study in January 2010 found that 8- to 18-year-olds had spent an average of four and a half hours of viewing television in a typical day (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). If the average adolescent spends more than four hours a day viewing television, what affect does this have on the individual's development?

Scripts, like those used in television and film, allow people to understand the cues and appropriate responses to certain scenes or situations. An adolescent's formation of gender roles and scripts may be influenced by television portrayals. According to researcher Lionel C. Howard, gender scripts are created from the messages that adolescents receive from different sources such as peers and adults about "appropriate and inappropriate gender behaviors and characteristics" (2012, p.105). Howard also claims that gender scripts are informed by an adolescent's "socio-cultural milieu" and the scripts foster "stereotypical notions and ideals" (2012, p.105). Therefore these scripts give adolescents an idea of what they should and should not do according to their gender.

Researchers Laramie Taylor and Tiffany Setters (2011) describe how past studies have shown that presentations of traditional gender stereotypes or presentations that go

against these stereotypes can affect the beliefs of the viewers. They state that "one type of cognition influenced by exposure to stereotypical media content is gender role expectations (GRE), or those behaviors and attitudes expected of or held as a standard for members of a particular gender" (Taylor & Setters, 2011, p.36). As adolescents watch television programs they develop gender role expectations which can shape their views of gender for the rest of their lives.

Therefore, it is important to research the portrayals of gender to determine what messages about femininity and masculinity are being displayed. The problem addressed in this study deals with how these gender stereotypes, specifically on teen television shows, may be affecting the attitudes and behaviors of adolescents. This study examines the history of these representations to determine how they have developed over time and reflected as well as reinforced the gender norms and roles of those times.

There have been many studies that indicate television's affect upon adolescents' views, but these studies do not focus on teen programming. For example, the researchers L. Monique Ward and Kimberly Friedman found in their study that "more frequent viewing of talk show and of 'sexy' prime-time programs, and viewing TV more intently for companionship, were each associated with greater endorsement of sexual stereotypes" (2006, p.133). The researchers focused on prime-time shows and other talk shows that are not specifically aimed at adolescents. However, they also found that "laboratory exposure to specific stereotypical content lead to greater acceptance of gender and sexual stereotypes" (Ward & Friedman, 2006, p.133). This particular conclusion indicates the need for further research into how teen programming with specific stereotypical content

could affect the views and behaviors of adolescents. It is important to focus on this genre

of television as it has a target audience of adolescents and therefore is constructed for the

teenagers of our society.

The teen television shows *Beverley Hills 90210*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*,

Smallville, *One Tree Hill*, *Pretty Little Liars* and *Teen Wolf* were used to identify gender

stereotypes present within the shows in order to determine how the portrayals of gender

have changed over time and the effect that they may have on the attitudes and behaviors

of adolescents. These shows were chosen as they were the most popular teen television

shows of their decades. The more popular a show is, the more likely it will be viewed by

a larger audience and act as a model to a larger population of adolescents.

Background to the Problem

Professor and author of *Television and American Culture*, Jason Mittell, describes

how gender stereotypes have been a part of television since the creation of the medium

(2010). He states, "Television emerged in the postwar era of suburbanization, the baby

boom, and a return to more traditional gender roles of female domesticity…" (Mittell,

2010, p.412). These stereotypes reflect the cultural context of the country at the time of

television's creation, when the solitary role of women was to take care of their children

and the home. Researcher Andrea Press (2009) describes how the depictions of women

on television reflected this idea and also how they developed over time as the culture of

American society developed. She states, "Early television confined women to the home

and the family setting. The increase in working women in the 1960s and 1970s was

reflected in television's images of women working and living nontraditional family lives"

(Press, 2009, p.139). As the role of women in society was developing, the depiction of women was reflected as well.

These working women, however, were still stereotyped in the kinds of work that they pursued and their roles within the families. The article *Television and Sex Roles 30 Years Hence: A Retrospective and Current Look From a Cultural Indicators Perspective* states:

> Women in prime time TV were outnumbered by men by a ratio of 3-1, and they were often typecast in roles that were 'typically female.' They were more likely to be young, attractive, married, and portrayed in the context of the home. When they were shown in occupations they were more likely to be shown in typically female roles, such as nurses, secretaries and so on. (Shanahan, Signorielli, & Morgan, 2008, p. 4)

As the 1960s and 1970s developed more women were enrolled in college and were more serious about their future in terms of career. The percent of female high school graduates who enrolled in college in 1960 was 37.9%. By 1979 the percentage rose to 48.4% (American College Testing Program, 1987). Another way that this is evident is the increase of the average age of a woman at the time of her wedding; women were marrying at a later age because they were more focused on accomplishing their own personal goals. Researcher Claudia Goldin states, "As women married later, they could 'make a name' for themselves before having to choose to change their name" (2006, p.11). Women were able to have more opportunities to focus on their own goals and strive for their own achievements rather than focusing on their husbands and children.

She also describes how this movement pushed into the 1980s when women ultimately

gave equal priority to their career and familial aspirations (Goldin, 2006). Again this shift

in society was reflected in television, as depicted in the 1980s sitcoms that featured

women as successful businesspeople but also as loving mothers such as the show *Who's

The Boss?,* which featured a working mother who hired a man to be her nanny and

housekeeper (Press, 2009). This is important to note as the 1990s brought backlash to the

idea of career aspirations in women.

      Andrea Press describes how television programming in the 1990s weakened "the

ideals of liberal feminism... Women's roles in the workplace, increasingly shown, were

undercut by a sense of nostalgic yearning for the love and family life that they were seen

to have displaced" (2009, p.139). In her article, Press explains how programs in the late

1990s such as *Ally McBeal* and *Sex and the City* featured female protagonists who were

successful in their careers but felt that their lives were incomplete because they were not

fulfilling the "woman's role" of being a wife and a mother (2009). Most of the plotlines

on these shows revolved around trying to find the perfect guy to fall in love with and

settle down into the traditional familial role.

      Researcher Rebecca Collins proposed a new trend in the stereotypes of women on

television. She states:

      Women are often sexualized – typically by showing them in scanty or

      provocative clothing. Women are also subordinated in various ways,

      as indicated by their facial expressions, body positions, and other

factors. Finally, they are shown in traditionally feminine (i.e.

stereotyped) roles (2011, p.290)

These are some of the gender portrayals present in modern television programs

that have developed over time and depict a stereotypical frame of gender. By analyzing

the history of adolescent television shows, the gender messages within these programs

can be decoded and examined in relation to the gender roles and norms for adolescents. If

adolescents' attitudes and beliefs about gender can be shaped by these messages, it is

important to analyze these messages and decode their meanings.

Research Question

This research examines the history of gender representations in television

programs designed for adolescents to discover how these portrayals have developed and

changed over time in order to determine the perceived messages about stereotypical

gender norms and roles for adolescents.

Rationale

Television is a medium that has historically portrayed men and women according

to gender stereotypes, particularly in relation to the ideology of patriarchy, in which men

possess societal power (Mittell, 2010). These stereotypes may be reinforced for audiences

through long-term viewing of TV and consequently may become integrated into their

own views of society. Adolescents, more specifically, watch multiple hours of television

every day, and these depictions of the world become a central part of their lives. One

study, by Teresa Quiroz Velasco, found that Peruvian teenagers saw the television as an

important way to learn about different cultures around the world and how those cultures

relate to their own (Velasco, 2011). Teenagers seem to understand television programming as a reflection of society and the way that you are required to act within this society. Television programming can be used as a reference or a guide to determine how one should think or act.

Researcher Gordon Berry found that television socializes children with "attractive models, crafted language, and dynamic storytelling features about people, places, and cultural groups that help shape the worldview of young people" (2003, p.362). This suggests how the construction of television itself becomes an influential medium in the life of adolescents. For example, the process in which a specific culture is framed within a television program shapes the messages that can be decoded from that program about that culture. Berry (2003) explains how everything within a television program is intentionally designed, but this is not always apparent to the audience. One example of this intentionality discussed in the research are the representations of people on television; every aspect of a character is planned very carefully and is therefore constructed with certain purposes in mind (Berry, 2003). Researcher Gordon Berry (2003) describes how the appearance of certain demographics or lack thereof can affect the audience's perception. He states, "Those who are made visible through television become worthy of attention and concern; those whom television ignore remain invisible" (Berry, 2003, p.364). This shows the importance that television as a medium has upon the youth of our society.

A research study was conducted that found that stereotypical depictions of women have led to a higher likelihood of strengthening these ideals within the viewer. The

research conducted by Ward and Friedman found that "after viewing clips featuring women as sexual objects, participants were more likely to endorse this notion and to express more stereotypical attitudes about gender roles than were students exposed to nonsexual content" (Ward & Friedman, 2006, p.150).

Another study researched the effects of television viewing on adolescents' understandings and scripts of romantic relationships (Eggermont, 2004). Researcher Steven Eggermont found that "…television viewing was found to be related to an especially private and personal inclination as one's expectations of a romantic partner" (2004, p.262). The ideals of a romantic partner were shaped by the gender portrayals of romance on the television programs that the adolescents watched (Eggermont, 2004). These studies portray that the gender stereotypes on television programming may have a direct effect on the adolescents who watch these programs (Ward & Friedman, 2006; Eggermont, 2004). Thus, teenagers seem to be using television as a model and they are growing up thinking that these stereotypes and gender norms are true. It is extremely important to look at gender representations in teen television as they can have an effect on the adolescent audience's attitudes and behaviors.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of a research study provides the lens through which the data is looked at (W. Stanwood, personal communication, September 28, 2012). The framework used in this study is the Social Cognitive Theory by Albert Bandura. In this theory, Bandura (1977) addresses how people model their own behaviors around what they perceive other people doing. Personality psychologists, Howard Friedman and

Miriam Schustack define Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory as a process in which

"people can learn simply by watching others perform a behavior – learning without

performing the behavior themselves and without being directly rewarded or punished for

the behavior" (Friedman & Schustack, 2012, p.236). This theory can be applied to this

study as television can be viewed as a model for behavior. Adolescents watch television

daily and learn from the attitudes and behaviors that they view on the screen.

Review of the Literature

The review of the literature is structured to give a greater background on the

various subjects connecting to the topic for the current study. This literature review will

focus on the discussion of social cognitive theory, that is, how television can shape

gender identity and roles, the effects of gender scripts upon both males and females, and

the effects of sexual scripts on television.

Cultural researchers are finding a connection between adolescents' television

watching and their attitudes and behaviors (Bogt, Engels, Bogers & Kloosterman, 2010;

L'engle, Brown & Kenneavy, 2006; Martino, Collins, Kanouse, Elliott & Berry, 2005;

Morgan, 1982; Ward & Friedman, 2006; Wilburn, 2011). Many of these studies use the

social cognitive theory as the framework for their research. Albert Bandura (1977)

created this theory, also called the social learning theory, to analyze human thought and

behavior. He describes how most human behavior is learned from others; he states,

"Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from

observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later

occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action" (Bandura, 1977, p. 22). A

person learns many behaviors and actions just from watching other people complete those behaviors and actions. This basic idea can also be applied to media.

Bandura understood the power of mass media and theorized that people may model the behavior that they witness through these media (1977). He explains that visual media can be very influential through the process of modeling, just as it is in real life (Bandura, 1977). He states, "In the view of the efficacy of, and extensive public exposure to, televised modeling, the mass media play an influential role in shaping behavior and social attitudes" (Bandura, 1977, p. 39). Just as a real life, role models would affect a person's attitudes and behaviors, the presentation of a television character can mirror the same effect. Bandura (1994) explains that behaviors and attitudes are learned through a method called observational learning via four sub-functions: attentional, representational, behavioral production and motivational processes. This sequence progresses with what is selectively observed and extracted from the model, the retention of that information, the symbolic conceptions are then translated into applicable courses of action and finally the behavior is more likely to be exhibited if it results in valued outcomes (Bandura, 1994). These processes of observational learning, through applying social cognitive theory, are used by various researchers to examine socialization in a broad manner as well as specifically how television can model attitudes and behaviors to audiences (Addis, Mansfield, & Sydek, 2010; Howard, 2012).

In the article, "Is 'Masculinity' a Problem?: Framing the Effects of Gendered Social Learning in Men" authors Addis, Mansfield and Sydek (2010) examine the effects of gendered social learning in men. The article examines the instruments used to measure

masculinity in research as well as the socializing agents present in the life of boys (Addis, Mansfield & Sydek, 2010). The authors argue that social learning is flexible and context-dependent. Consequently, boys learn how to behave in specific settings to gain certain outcomes (Addis, Mansfield & Sydek, 2010). The researchers state, "Over time, what emerge[s] are relatively differentiated or discriminated repertoires of activity that are highly sensitive to context" (Addis, Mansfield & Sydek, 2010, p.80). The authors discuss how these gendered scripts are socialized through their environments such as friends and family, but the boys may also be learning these behaviors through the media.

Howard (2012) conducted a qualitative study in which he researched African American adolescent males' responses to gender scripts. He discovered four different responses to the gender messages including "adapting or modifying their presentations of self, internalizing ascribed gender scripts, resisting, and remaining conflicted about an appropriate response" (Howard, 2012, p.97). These responses show that the adolescents are active in the process of socialization but also that gendered messages can influence the attitudes and behaviors of teens. In concluding the article, Howard concludes that boys are challenged to make sense of these gender messages for their identity while also negotiating responses to either adopt or resist prominent masculine images and ideals (2012).

Recent literature has illustrated the effects that gender scripts have on both adolescent girls as well as boys (Bouchey, 2007; Friedlander, Connolly, Pepler & Craig, 2013). Researcher Heather Bouchey (2007) examined the effects of perceived romantic competence on psychosocial wellbeing for older adolescents. Perceived romantic

competence measures how well the adolescent feels he or she is romantically appealing

to others (Bouchey, 2007). Bouchey (2007) found that the more adolescents believed they

were attractive to others, the better they felt about themselves including feelings of

acceptance and less anxiety in the social domain. Perceived romantic competence is

closely tied to how well an individual can perform romantic gender scripts as they outline

the appropriate behaviors and responses in a romantic setting. This study illustrates that

an adolescent's relationship ability, therefore the ability to live up to the gender scripts of

romantic relationships, has an effect on their self-worth.

        Researchers Friedlander, Connolly, Pepler & Craig (2013) conducted a study that

investigated the correlation between aggressive media exposure and teen dating violence.

The findings indicated that over the course of three years "aggressive media" increases

the occurrence of dating violence and is mediated by adolescents' attitudes about

violence (Friedlander, Connolly, Pepler & Craig, 2013). Adolescents may be viewing

these acts of aggression on television and developing a script about how to handle certain

romantic situations. The authors state that "Conflicts, jealousy, and disappointment,

which are often the triggers for dating violence, are most difficult for youths to regulate

and media images may become particularly salient" (Friedlander, Connolly, Pepler &

Craig, 2013, p.10). When adolescents cannot regulate an emotion or behavior, they may

turn to what they have seen modeled to them. This includes the messages from media

such as television. The authors also assert that media portrayals of aggression involve two

people: the perpetrator and the victim (Friedlander, Connolly, Pepler & Craig, 2013). Not

only are adolescents being exposed to images of aggression but also victimization, which

may create a gender script about violence. The formation of such gender scripts can influence the attitudes and behaviors about violence which is extremely important to examine as, "between 15-40% of adolescents have perpetrated dating violence and 10-15% report being victimized" (Friedlander, Connolly, Pepler & Craig, 2013, p.2)

The literature has shown an increase in the connection between adolescents' television watching and its effects on the attitudes and behaviors of those adolescents (Arquette & Horton, 2000; Garcia-Munoz & Fedele, 2011; Bogt, Engels, Bogers & Kloosterman, 2010; L'engle, Brown & Kenneavy, 2006). Arquette and Horton (2000) investigated the influence of television on gender identity. The authors assert that the television images that adolescents consume both reinforce and reproduce gender identities (Arquette & Horton, 2000). Some of the repeated portrayals typecast men as authoritative and active while females are shy and subordinate (Arquette & Horton, 2000). The authors discuss the idea that the media reflects society but also defines what is normal in our culture (Arquette & Horton, 2000). If the audience believes television programs to be reflective of the general public, then they will likely believe that the messages being portrayed are the norm of society and try to live up to those standards. However, the authors also present the idea of media being a "gatekeeper," which states that the people behind the programming decide what messages are portrayed and what is left out (Arquette & Horton, 2000). It is important to remember that programming is an intentional process where every line uttered, costume worn and prop used is chosen for specific reasons and conveys specific messages to the audience.

In a research study from 2008, authors Rocio Rivadeneyra and Melanie Lebo surveyed two hundred and fifteen high school students to investigate "the relationship between television use and gender role attitudes and behavior in dating situations" (p.291). The researchers found a connection between traditional gender role attitudes in dating and watching "romantic" television programming (Rivadeneyra & Lebo, 2008). The authors argue that adolescents may be particularly vulnerable to televisual messages as teenagers spend a large amount of time consuming media, their analytical thinking skills are not fully developed and inexperience with these topics may make them more susceptible to the influence of these images (Rivadeneyra & Lebo, 2008). The authors suggest that next to the actual dating experiences, adolescents also "may be learning from television programs that dating is a gendered process with prescribed roles for males and females" (Rivadeneyra & Lebo, 2008). The authors also state that this finding correlates with "…an attitude connected with greater sexual risk for young women" (Rivadenyra & Lebo, 2008, p.291). This study reveals the impact that television gender scripts can have on its adolescent audience.

Another line of research investigates the gender messages present within specific television series (Garcia-Munoz & Fedele, 2011; Klumas & Marchant, 1994; Simonetti, 1994). Authors Garcia-Munoz and Fedele (2011) investigated the representation of male and female characters in teen television series by performing a content analysis on the television show *Dawson's Creek*. They found that traditional gender stereotypes were prevalent among the portrayals on the program (Garcia-Munoz & Fedele, 2011). One example of this stereotypical depiction is the body types of the characters "…all the thin

characters are female, whereas all the muscular, well-built and fat characters are men"

(Garcia-Munoz & Fedele, 2011, p.220). This not only reinforces the stereotype that men

are large and powerful whereas women are small and weak, but it also creates an

unrealistic representation about "normal" body size for women. The researchers assert

that the gender roles depicted on these programs contribute to the construction and

maintenance of gender stereotypes as well as the formation of gender identity in

adolescents (Garcia-Munoz & Fedele, 2011).

   In the article "Images of Men in Popular Sitcoms" the authors explore the male

gender roles present in television (Klumas & Marchant, 1994). The authors define a

gender role in terms of the rights, duties, obligations, attitudes and expected behaviors

that are socially attached to a gender (Klumas & Marchant, 1994). Consequently, gender

roles act as guidelines for the socially accepted behavior of men and women. The

researchers performed a content analysis on seven sitcoms from the 1990s and found that

the images reflect confusion about changing gender roles (Klumas & Marchant, 1994).

The plot lines were often constructed around what it means to be a man or a woman

(Klumas & Marchant, 1994). One theme that emerged was the idea of a backlash against

the alteration of traditional gender roles (Klumas & Marchant, 1994). This included a

finding that women were often the "butt" of the jokes which indicates their lower status

in society (Klumas & Marchant, 1994). Although this article examines adult male and

female portrayals, these images reinforce traditional gender roles and may still influence

the identity formation of adolescents.

Simonetti performed a content analysis examining the relationship between popular teen programs and culture as presented in the United States and Canada (1994). She found that the two most popular teen programs reflected the ideology of their respective countries (Simonetti, 1994). The American program *Beverly Hills 90210* reflected the pursuit of dreams, persistence, individualism, hegemony, and materialism while the Canadian show *Degrassi Junior High* portrayed themes of caution, tolerance, collectivism, multiculturalism, and egalitarianism (Simonetti, 1994). This study supports the idea that television can be a reflection of society. The media may reinforce those ideals for its viewers. However, television cannot provide a perfect mirror to society as programs are intentionally created by a medium with a specific point of view. This is related to the idea of gatekeeping, in which "gatekeepers" are able to determine which messages are allowed to be portrayed and which are prohibited.

An example of media gatekeeping is depicted in the article when Simonetti describes how an American network distributed the Canadian television program *Degrassi Junior High* (1994). The ending of one episode was changed, as it dealt with the topic of abortion (Simonetti, 1994). In the original Canadian episode, a pregnant character walks through a crowd of rowdy pro-life protestors to get to an abortion clinic, whereas the American telecast cuts the scene to only depict the girl walking (Simonetti, 1994). By changing the content, the American television company edited the message that was being communicated regarding an abortion. Consequently, this suggests that the company wanted to convey a different message to its adolescent audience. Thus, the example illustrates the amount of power that is given to the gatekeepers to allow certain

messages to be broadcasted while others are eliminated. Instead of letting the audience

see a variety of messages to which they could actively engage, the images are limited.

Therefore, the audience negotiation is restricted as well.

Researchers Elke Van Damme and Sofie Van Bauwel performed a qualitative

thematic textual analysis on the teen television drama *One Tree Hill* (2010). The authors

argue that media content is influential in teenagers' formation of self-representation (Van

Damme & Van Bauwel, 2010). This occurs through the repetitive "commodified

meanings" and information about norms and values being portrayed through the

characters (Van Damme & Van Bauwel, 2010). The authors found overall portrayals of

dominant ideals such as heteronormativity and traditional gender representations (Van

Damme & Van Bauwel, 2010). The authors also cited the depiction of a liberal stance on

female sexuality (Van Damme & Van Bauwel, 2010). Although the portrayal of women's

sexuality may be an empowering look at the sexual agency of females, it may also be

viewed in a more trivializing manner as women may be seen as sexual objects for the

pleasure of men.

Many studies have discovered a relationship between sexual, gendered scripts on

television and the attitudes and behaviors of adolescents (Kim et al., 2007; Martino,

Collins, Kanouse, Elliot & Berry, 2005; L'engle, Brown & Kenneavy, 2006; Van

Damme, 2010). Kim et al. completed a study in 2007 that investigated the "heterosexual

script" on primetime television most frequently viewed by adolescents. They found that

the representations of gender were depicted in ways that "sustain power inequalities

between men and women" (Kim et al., 2007, p.145). These images were illustrating men

as "actively and aggressively pursuing sex" and, less often but still at a high rate, of women "willingly objectifying themselves and being judged by their sexual conduct" (Kim et al., 2007, p.145). This study supports the idea that television's messages are gendered and can influence the scripts of adolescents.

Researcher Elke Van Damme (2010) studied the relationship between gender and sexuality in popular American teen television series. She found that several stereotypical gender scripts were prevalent as well as a few instances of more positive portrayals (Van Damme, 2010). The show *One Tree Hill* depicted more traditional sexual scripts with males being portrayed as active heroes that used physical force and hardly exhibited emotion while the females are presented as passive, emotional and concerned about their appearance (Van Damme, 2010). The show *Gossip Girl* exemplified a more equivalent representation of males and females by portraying both genders as sneaky, able to cause drama, as well as an equal amount of objectification of genders (Van Damme, 2010). Although *Gossip Girl* represented both genders in a more egalitarian manner, these depictions of teenagers are hardly great models for adolescents to be learning from.

In a longitudinal study from 1982, researcher Michel Morgan found that television viewing had an impact on the adolescent participants (1982). The study examined the relationship between television watching and sex role stereotypes (Morgan, 1982). The researcher found that the adolescents who were most impacted were those who were otherwise not exposed to the traditional sex role stereotypes shown (Morgan, 1982). This study depicted the social cognitive theory as it shows how adolescents can model the attitudes that they see on screen.

Another study used the social cognitive theory to research the relationship between television watching and adolescents' behavior (Martino, Collins, Kanouse, Elliot & Berry, 2005). The researchers found that the watching of sexual content on television mediated the adolescents' attitudes about sex and their sexual behaviors (Martino, Collins, Kanouse, Elliot & Berry, 2005). One finding showed that "Across all racial and ethnic groups, viewing sexual content on TV was associated with less negative expectations about the potential consequences of having intercourse (e.g., social acceptance/rejection, STD infection, and pregnancy)" (Martino, Collins, Kanouse, Elliot & Berry, 2005, p.921). The researchers state that television programs rarely portray instances of the possible negative aftermath of sex (Martino, Collins, Kanouse, Elliot & Berry, 2005).

Two major studies conducted in 2006 investigated the connection between television watching and the sexual attitudes and behaviors of adolescents. The first study researched how the mass media provides a context for the sexual behaviors of adolescents (L'engle, Brown & Kenneavy, 2006). The researchers found that adolescents who watched more sexual content on television and who believed that this content was support for teenage sexual behavior were more likely to be involved in those activities (L'engle, Brown & Kenneavy, 2006). The main theme that arose in this study shows that what adolescents perceive on television can have an impact on their actions.

Researchers L.M. Ward and Kimberly Friedman also found a correlation between frequent television viewing and sexual stereotypes of the adolescent participants (2006). They found that the stronger the identification with the characters on television, the

greater levels of sexual experience that the teenagers reported (Ward & Friedman, 2006). This finding correlates greatly to the social cognitive theory as adolescents identify with and use the characters on television as role models and are consequently influenced by their attitudes and behaviors (Ward & Friedman, 2006).

A research study performed in 2010 found that adolescents' preferences for media, such as television programs, were associated with gender stereotypes and their sexual attitudes (Bogt, Engels, Bogers & Kloosterman, 2010). The findings show that the programs that teenagers are seeking out and choosing to watch are the programs that effect their attitudes and behaviors (Bogt, Engels, Bogers & Kloosterman, 2010). In this way, adolescents are seeking out media to reinforce their attitudes and beliefs about gender and sexual behaviors (Bogt, Engels, Bogers & Kloosterman, 2010).

The literature on this topic demonstrates the connection between adolescents' television viewing and the effects that it has on their attitudes and behaviors. The current study researched how teen programming can affect its audience, particularly in concern to gender roles and norms. There have been a few studies that look at how teen television programs use gender stereotyping, (Garcia-Munoz & Fedele, 2011; Simonetti, 1994; Van Damme, 2010) however the current study will perform a deeper textual analysis and look at how teen television shows over time have used gender stereotypes and possibly countered them as well.

Methodology

This research study utilizes both primary research and secondary sources. All of the secondary research was based on high quality sources such as peer-reviewed articles.

The primary sources included episodes of the televisions series *Beverly Hills 90210*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Smallville*, *One Tree Hill*, *Pretty Little Liars* and *Teen Wolf*. Secondary sources were found through the Barnett College libraries website, cross-search database, communication and social science database, and the gender watch database. Keywords used for the databases included televis*, adolescen*, teen*, behavior, gender, stereotype*, gender roles, teen television, women, teen programming, attitudes, TV, femininity, masculinity, norms, sex stereotype*, social learning, script, emotionality, language, and sex roles.

Teen television has become a recent phenomenon for both audiences and researchers. As the genre is contemporary, the research related to the history of teen television is limited. For example, the conception of the genre does not have a clear start date. One researcher identifies the 1990s as the flourishing of such programs as it correlated with the evolution in television programming (Baughman, 2001). Baughman (2001) discusses the growth of cable channels during this time and the new practice of 'narrow-casting' or programming to specific niche audiences. One of the niche audiences that became very popular for this practice was the adolescent demographic (Baughman, 2001). Teen audiences were appealing to advertisers as "…younger viewers were thought to be more likely to try new brands and services [and] product makers in the 1990s were prepared to pay more – sometimes significantly more – to co-sponsor a TV program with the 'right' demographics" (Baughman, 2001, p. 15582). As advertisers' sights were set on the teen audience, more adolescent targeted programming was created. From the limited

research, it seems as if the genre of teen television was established in the 1990s. Therefore, this study will focus on the teen series from the 1990s to the present.

This research study was designed to examine the gender messages present within the genre of teen television. The study investigated the most popular teen television programs from each of the last three decades. The research focused on what gender messages were being portrayed and how they changed over time. The six teen television shows were selected based upon the longevity of each series. Two television series were selected for each decade. These programs had a large enough audience to be continuously picked up by their networks. Also, the longer that a series aired on television corresponds to the greater possibility of being watched by a larger audience of adolescents.

The two programs selected to represent the 1990s teen television shows were *Beverly Hills 90210* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* which aired ten and seven seasons respectively ("Beverley Hills 90210", 2014; "Buffy the Vampire Slayer", 2014). The 2000s decade were represented by *Smallville* and *One Tree Hill* with ten and nine seasons respectively ("Smallville", 2014; "One Tree Hill", 2014). The two programs chosen to represent the beginning of the 2010s decade were *Pretty Little Liars* and *Teen Wolf* which are airing their fifth and fourth seasons this year ("Pretty Little Liars", 2014; "Teen Wolf", 2014).

Episodes from each of the series included in the study were chosen by using an online random number generator with each number corresponding to an episode. The study examines the first season of each series as it is most likely the closest to the original vision that the creators and show runners had in mind. As a series develops, the writers

and producers have to develop and sometimes divulge from the show's original concept. By limiting the samples to the first season, it is as close to the original conception of the series as possible.

The study analyzed episodes of the television series *Beverly Hills 90210*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Smallville*, *One Tree Hill*, *Pretty Little Liars* and *Teen Wolf* to determine the gender representations present on these programs. The first part of the study completed was a textual analysis of the episodes. Secondly, a content analysis was performed on all of the examples from the episodes. The researcher used codes to determine the number of times a theme was displayed and then analyzed these instances and determined the messages and meanings that arose. Each episode was watched and analyzed six times, once for each code and twice for overall themes. The codes used for this study include L=Language, SR= Sex Roles, E= Emotionality and TR= Traditional Roles. The codes were chosen as they each represent a gender stereotype that may be present within the text.

The Language code describes the gender stereotype that men use and are represented though active language while women use and are represented though passive language. This gender stereotype was examined by researchers Burkette and Warhol, who found that the participants in their study would use different types of language to describe men and women (2009). They concluded that gender stereotypes have become adopted into language and show the gender roles present in society (Burkette & Warhol, 2009). This code was included in the present study as it depicts how language can be used to reflect and or reject gender stereotypes.

The Sex Roles code describes the gender stereotype of sex roles that women are represented as sexualized objects and men are the initiators of relationships and sex. Researcher Rebecca Collins (2011) found that these stereotypes are present across many media and may have an effect on the attitudes and beliefs of women and men. The sex role code was used to determine if the televisions shows illustrated the gender stereotype of sex roles.

The Emotionality code describes the gender stereotype that depicts women as being emotional, while men do not express emotion. Psychological researcher Leslie Brody (1997) studied the connection between gender and emotions and found that gender stereotypes were very "misleading." She found that while men and women do not experience emotion differently, they express emotion differently in different cultures (Brody, 1997). This may indicate that gender roles and stereotypes act as a self-fulfilling prophecy. People express the emotion they feel in the way that they believe they are supposed to; according to the gender stereotypes in that society. The Emotionality code was used to discover if the television shows depicted the emotionality gender stereotype.

The Traditional Roles code describes the gender stereotype that depicts men as "breadwinners" and driven to success while women are depicted as caretakers. Researchers James Shanahan, Nancy Signorielli and Michael Morgan examined the traditional sex roles depicted in television over a period of thirty years (2008). They found a trend that depicted women at home as caretakers but, overtime, this depiction was shifting as more women were shown as having traditionally male jobs and roles (Shanahan, Signorielli & Morgan, 2008). The Traditional Roles code was used to

examine the television shows to determine if the programs demonstrated the traditional

role gender stereotype. Although the study used specific codes to analyze the text, the

study was performed with an emergent design and was open to other themes that were

not signified before the study.

Findings

The results of this study are shown in the following charts representing the

content analysis of the samples used in the research. The numbers correspond to how

many instances of each coded gender representation was found in the selected episode of

each series. The textual analysis of the research is illustrated in the following examples

for each code. The teen television series *Beverly Hills 09210* and *Buffy the Vampire*

Slayer were selected to represent the 1990s. *Smallville* and *One Tree Hill* illustrate teen

television series from the 2000s. The teen television series *Pretty Little Liars* and *Teen*

Wolf were selected to exemplify what has been produced in the 2010s.

Beverley Hills 90210

Beverley Hills 90210 was the first series selected to represent the 1990s. This

television series follows a group of wealthy teenagers who live in California

(Sighvatsson, 1991). The show deals with the trials and tribulations that come with

adolescence (Sighvatsson, 1991). In the selected episode, the character Brandon is

'discovered' for his acting ability, gains celebrity within his school and attracts the

attention of the lead actress Lydia Leeks (Sighvatsson, 1991). The other main plot line in

this episode concerns Brandon's sister covering his wait staff job at the local diner

(Sighvatsson, 1991). She struggles at first, but once she takes on the persona of a waitressing character she thrives in the position (Sighvatsson, 1991).

The results indicated that within the language code there were fourteen occurrences of the female stereotype (passive language). In an example, Lydia asks Brandon "Would you do me a favor? ...Why don't you ask me if I'd like to go watch [a game] sometime, alright?" (Sighvatsson, 1991). The study found there were nineteen instances of the portrayal of the male stereotype (active language). For example, a male character named Kirk states "Don't make me use this. I'll do it. I swear I'll do it" (Sighvatsson, 1991). The results depict eleven instances of the portrayal of a female defying the stereotype (portraying active language). For example, Brenda asserts, "This is so unfair. I mean I am the one with all the talent. I am the one who used to dance around the living room singing show-tunes" (Sighvatsson, 1991). The study yielded five instances of a male defying the stereotype (portraying passive language). An example of this is shown when Brandon states to Lydia "So I guess this is it huh?" (Sighvatsson, 1991).

For the Sex Roles code, the results indicated that there were twelve instances of the female stereotype (sexual objectification). The first example of this code appears in the theme song of the show in which there is a shot that pans down the body of a woman in a bikini without showing her face (Sighvatsson, 1991). The study found four instances of the male stereotype (initiating relationships or sex). For example, Brandon tells Lydia "I've been told I know how to kiss" (Sighvatsson, 1991). The results indicate eleven

instances of a portrayal of a female defying the stereotype (portraying initiating a

relationship or sex). For example, Lydia asks Brandon "You wanna dance?" as she

reaches for his hand (Sighvatsson, 1991). The study shows two instances of a male

defying the stereotype (portraying sexual objectification). For example, Lydia tells

Brandon "And you've got a good look" (Sighvatsson, 1991).

In the Emotionality code, the results indicated that there were fifteen instances of

the depiction of the female stereotype (expressing emotions). For example Brenda

exclaims, "He has all the luck. It is so sickening. And hell the producers love him; they're

writing new scenes for him!" (Sighvatsson, 1991). The study found four instances of the

male stereotype (not expressing emotions). For example, after someone asks Brandon if

he is okay, he responds by saying "Yeah. Yeah. Hey. What's it take to get a piece of pie

around here anyway?" (Sighvatsson, 1991). The results indicated two instances of a

female defying the stereotype (portraying not expressing emotions). For example, when

talking about his encounter with Lydia, Brandon states, "So here I totally ragged on her

show and she didn't even hold it against me. In fact she was really cool about it"

(Sighvatsson, 1991). The results indicated eight instances of a male defying the

stereotype (portraying expressing emotions). For example, Brandon tells his sister, "Fine,

just let Mom and Dad embarrass me" (Sighvatsson, 1991).

In the Traditional Roles code, the results indicated that there were nine instances

of the representation of the female stereotype (taking care of others). In an example of

this code, the family is shown eating dessert, while the mother is at the sink cleaning the

dishes. The study found five instances of the representation of the male stereotype (being the "breadwinners" or financial providers). For example, one of Brandon's guy friends states, "He's not doing anything for free, when he should be sponging from the *Inquirer*" (Sighvatsson, 1991). The results indicated zero instances of the representation of characters who defied these gender stereotypes.

Codes:	Female Stereotype	Male Stereotype	Against Female Stereotype	Against Male Stereotype
Language	14	19	11	5
Sex Roles	12	4	11	2
Emotionality	15	4	2	8
Traditional Roles	9	5	0	0

Buffy the Vampire Slayer

Buffy the Vampire Slayer was the second series selected to represent the 1990s. This teen television show depicts a teenage girl who has become the 'chosen one' to defend the world against supernatural beings that are trying to take over the world (Davies, 1997). The selected episode was the second of the first season and depicts the cast of characters trying to adjust to the idea that vampires roam their town and Buffy is 'the slayer' (Davies, 1997). A classmate was kidnapped by the vampires as Buffy, Xander, Willow and Giles formulate a few plans to save him (Davies, 1997).

The results indicated that within the Language code there were nineteen instances of the portrayal of the female stereotype (passive language). For example, Willow states,

"Umm this may be the dumb question, but should we call the police?" (Davies, 1997). The study found twenty-four instances of the portrayal of the male stereotype (active language). For example, the Master states, "My ascension is almost at hand. Pray that when it comes, I'm in a better mood" (Davies, 1997). The results indicated twenty-one instances of the portrayal of a female defying the stereotype (portraying active language). For example, Buffy asserts to Xander "I'm the slayer and you're not" (Davies, 1997). The study found nine instances of the portrayal of a male defying the stereotype (portraying passive language). For example, Xander asks "So, what's the plan? We saddle up, right?" (Davies, 1997).

For the Sex Roles code, the results indicated that there were eight instances of the female stereotype (sexual objectification). For example, one of the 'cool' girls from school, Cordelia, is shown in a sexualized outfit, a very short skirt and cut off shirt while shown dancing alone (Davies, 1997). The study found five instances of the male stereotype (initiating relationships or sex). For example, one vampire strokes Cordelia's face and states "This one's mine" (Davies, 1997). The results indicated three instances of the portrayal of a female defying the stereotype (portraying initiating relationships or sex). For example, Buffy states to Angel, "Ok, look, if you're gonna be popping up with this cryptic wise-man act on a regular basis, can you at least tell me your name?" (Davies, 1997). The study found no instances of the portrayal of a male defying the stereotype (portraying sexual objectification).

In the Emotionality code, the results indicated that there were eight instances of the depiction of the female stereotype (expressing emotions). For example, Buffy's mother tells her, "I know, if you don't go out, it'll be the end of the world. Everything is life or death when you're a 16-year-old girl" (Davies, 1997). The study found two instances of the depiction of the male stereotype (not expressing emotions). For example, Giles reasons with Xander, "Listen to me, Jesse is dead. You have to remember that when you see him, you're not looking at your friend. You're looking at the thing that killed him" (Davies, 1997). The results indicated no instances of the portrayal of a female defying the stereotype (portraying not expressing emotions). The study found eight instances of the depiction of a male character defying the stereotype (portraying expressing emotions). For example, Xander states "This is just too much. I mean, yesterday, my life is like 'uh oh. Pop quiz.' Today it's rain of toads" (Davies, 1997).

In the Traditional Roles code, the results indicated that there were seven instances of the representation of the female stereotype (taking care of others). For example, Willow states, "Buffy I'm not anxious to go into a dark place full of monsters, but I do want to help. I need to" (Davies, 1997). The study found one instance of the representation of the male stereotype (being the "breadwinners" or financial providers). This instance occurs when Cordelia tells her friends, "But senior boys, they have mystery. They have, what's the word I'm searching for? Cars" (Davies, 1997). The results indicated zero instances of the portrayal of a female defying the stereotype (being the "breadwinners' or financial providers). The results indicated two instances of the

portrayal of a male defying the stereotype (portraying taking care of others). For example, Xander states "I couldn't just sit home and do nothing" (Davies, 1997).

Codes:	Female Stereotype	Male Stereotype	Against Female Stereotype	Against Male Stereotype
Language	19	24	21	9
Sex Roles	8	5	3	0
Emotionality	8	2	0	8
Traditional Roles	7	1	0	2

Smallville

Smallville was the first series selected to represent the 2000s. This television series depicts the teenage years of Clark Kent, who later becomes Superman (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002). In the selected episode, Clark battles a young man named Tyler, who gains the power of killing a person through touch (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002). Tyler uses his power to perform euthanasia on the sick and elderly of the town after losing his mother to cancer (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002). This episode also features the struggles of parental relationships through the characters of Clark, Lex and Whitney (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002).

The results indicated that within the Language code there were four instances of the portrayal of the female stereotype (passive language). For example, Clark's mother Martha asks "Clark…I thought you enjoyed fishing?" (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002). The study found forty-one instances of the portrayal of the male stereotype (active

language). For example, Lex states "All I'm saying, Dominic, is try and remember who I was raised by. I try to deny it, but I'm still my father's son. Tread carefully" (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002). The results indicated twenty-two instances of the portrayal of a female defying the stereotype (portraying active language). For example, Martha asserts to Clark, "I'm not gonna play referee. You two need to work this out" (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002). The study found fourteen instances of the portrayal of a male defying the stereotype (portraying passive language). For example, Clark asks his mother "He's avoiding me isn't he?" (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002).

For the Sex Roles code, the results indicated that there were zero instances of the female stereotype (sexual objectification). The study found six instances of the male stereotype (initiating relationships or sex). For example, Lana tells Clark, "Whitney phoned. He wants to get together later and talk" (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002). The results indicated three instances of the portrayal of a female defying the stereotype (portraying initiating relationships or sex). For example, at the end of the episode, Lana kisses Clark on the cheek. The study found no instances of the portrayal of a male defying the stereotype (portraying sexual objectification).

In the Emotionality code, the results indicated that there were three instances of the depiction of the female stereotype (expressing emotions). For example, Lana is shown crying after hanging up the phone (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002). She explains to Clark, "That was… that was Whitney's mom. His dad just had another heart attack" (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002). The study found six instances of the depiction of the

male stereotype (not expressing emotions). For example, Lex tells Clark "All my dad taught me was don't get caught. Don't cause a scandal. That's not love that's public relations" (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002). The results indicated zero instances of the portrayal of a female defying the stereotype (portraying not expressing emotions). The study found twelve instances of the portrayal of a male defying the stereotype (portraying expressing emotions). For example, Clark exclaims to his father, "Stop treating me like a kid! I'm not seven years old anymore. I'm not casting lines on the paddock. I don't even like fishing. The only reason I do it is because it makes you happy!" (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002).

In the Traditional Roles code, the results indicated that there were seven instances of the representation of the female stereotype (taking care of others). For example, Lana states, "Clark, I heard what happened at Mobile Meals. Is your mom all right?" (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002). The study found seven instances of the representation of the male stereotype (being the "breadwinners" or financial providers). For example, Clark, talking about Lex, states "When your father owns the team, it's easier to pull strings" (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002). The results indicated two instances of the portrayal of a female defying the stereotype (portraying being the "breadwinners" or financial providers). For example Lana is the only adolescent who is depicted having a job or making an income (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002). The study found nine instances of the portrayal of a male defying the stereotype (portraying taking care of others). For example, Tyler states, "I can end your pain…I can make it all go away" (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002).

Codes:	Female Stereotype	Male Stereotype	Against Female Stereotype	Against Male Stereotype
Language	4	41	22	14
Sex Roles	0	6	3	0
Emotionality	3	6	0	12
Traditional Roles	7	7	2	9

One Tree Hill

One Tree Hill was the second series selected to represent the 2000s. This teen

television series depicts the lives of a group of teenagers who live in a small town in

North Carolina (Tollin, 2004). The selected episode focuses on parental and romantic

relationships (Tollin, 2004). The character Nathan struggles to deal with his parents'

separation and fighting (Tollin, 2004). Peyton's father, Larry, learns that she grapples

with his career that keeps him away from home for long periods of time (Tollin, 2004).

Also both Haley and Brooke are depicted as trying to live up to the needs of their

boyfriends (Tollin, 2004).

The results indicated that within the Language code there were seventeen

instances of the portrayal of the female stereotype (passive language). For example,

Haley asks Nathan "Am I hallucinating? Did I just see you talk to Lucas?" (Tollin, 2004).

The study found forty-four instances of the portrayal of the male stereotype (active

language). For example, Nathan says to Lucas, "I'm done. Just thought you should be the

first to know" (Tollin, 2004). The results indicated thirty-nine instances of the portrayal

of a female defying the stereotype (portraying active language). For example, Haley

states "You know, I make my own choices and I choose to be with you" (Tollin, 2004).

The study found 21 instances of the portrayal of a male defying the stereotype (portraying

passive language). For example, Larry states, "Just promise to keep talking to me, okay?"

(Tollin, 2004).

For the Sex Roles code, the results indicated that there were nine instances of the

female stereotype (sexual objectification). For example, Dan looks a waitress up and

down and assures her that she hit the bull's eye in service (Tollin, 2004). The study found

eight instances of the male stereotype (initiating relationships or sex). For example,

Nathan tells Haley, "Besides, I'm sure we can find a lot better things to do with our time,

right?" and then he kisses her (Tollin, 2004). The results indicated seven instances of the

portrayal of a female defying the stereotype (portraying initiating relationships of sex).

For example, Brooke tells Lucas "All work and no Brooke make Luke a boring boy" and

then she kisses him (Tollin, 2004). The study found no instances of the portrayal of a

male defying the stereotype (portraying sexual objectification).

In the Emotionality code, the results indicated that there were ten instances of the

depiction of the female stereotype (expressing emotions). For example, Brooke says to

Lucas, "I'm sorry. It's just that you're the first really great guy that I've ever dated. And

that really scares me because…I never gave a rat's ass before. Okay. But I do now"

(Tollin, 2004). The study found five instances of the depiction of the male stereotype (not

expressing emotions). For example, when speaking about Nathan, Peyton states, "I could

never find the words to get through that big wall that he puts up" (Tollin, 2004). The results indicated three instances of the portrayal of a female defying the stereotype (portraying not expressing emotions). For example, Lucas advises Peyton by saying "You got to stop pretending that everything's okay" (Tollin, 2004). The study found twenty-one instances of the portrayal of a male defying the stereotype (portraying expressing emotion). For example, Nathan tells Haley "I like you. And I like the fact that somebody like you sees something in me" (Tollin, 2004).

In the Traditional Roles code, the results indicated that there were five instances of the representation of the female stereotype (taking care of others). For example, Peyton tells Jake that he will babysit his daughter during basketball practice. The study found four instances of the representation of the male stereotype (being the "breadwinners" or financial providers). For example, Larry says to his daughter, "It's a lot of money sweetie…way more than I make now. We could be good to go for a while – maybe even afford that art school you talk about" (Tollin, 2004). The results indicated five instances of the portrayal of a female defying the stereotype (portraying being the "breadwinners" or financial providers). For example Dan argues with his wife Deb, "Up until recently your job always came first" (Tollin, 2004). The study found twelve instances of the portrayal of a male defying the stereotype (portraying taking care of others). For example, Jake speaks about his infant daughter, "I think about watching her grow up. I couldn't imagine not being there" (Tollin, 2004).

Codes:	Female Stereotype	Male Stereotype	Against Female Stereotype	Against Male Stereotype
Language	17	44	39	21
Sex Roles	9	8	5	0
Emotionality	10	5	3	21
Traditional Roles	5	4	5	12

Pretty Little Liars

Pretty Little Liars was the first series selected to represent the 2010s. This television series depicts the friendship of four girls as they try to solve the murder of a friend and discover the identity of the mysterious 'A' who blackmails them (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). The chosen episode depicts four storylines related to each of the four girls (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). The first plot line focuses on Spencer becoming a person of interest in the murder investigation of Allison (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). The second depicts Hanna learning that her boyfriend Caleb was paid by an enemy to spy on her (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). The third storyline illustrates Aria's parents dating after being separated (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). The fourth plot point is centered on Emily's crush, Paige, coming to terms with her homosexuality (Cochran-Neilan, 2011).

The results indicated that within the Language code there were twenty-eight instances of the portrayal of the female stereotype (passive language). For example, Aria asks her parents, "So – You guys, you're – you're getting back together?" (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). The study found sixteen instances of the portrayal of the male stereotype

(active language). For example, Toby tells Spencer, "Detectives. Trust me, I know every stock sedan in town. They used to rotate in front of my house" (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). The results indicated thirty-nine instances of the portrayal of a female defying the stereotype (portraying active language). For example, Paige says to Emily, "I said yes. It's not really a date. We're going with a bunch of other people. No big" (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). The study found nine instances of the portrayal of a male defying the stereotype (portraying passive language). For example, Aria's father states, "Yeah but what about those parents that worry? And what if something happened to her? How would you feel?" (Cochran-Neilan, 2011).

For the Sex Roles code, the results indicated that there were four instances of the female stereotype (sexual objectification). For example, Spencer is shown wearing a short skirt and knee stockings while staying home from school (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). The study found seven instances of the male stereotype (initiating relationships or sex). For example, Paige recounts her date with Sean by reporting, "He took me home and kissed me goodnight" (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). The results indicated seven instances of a female defying the stereotype (portraying initiating relationships or sex). For example, a text message from Aria to her boyfriend reads, "Thinking of your eyes. How I want to be looking into them right now. This second. XO Aria" (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). The study found no instances of the portrayal of a male defying the stereotype (portraying sexual objectification).

In the Emotionality code, the results indicated that there were thirty-four instances of the depiction of the female stereotype (expressing emotions). For example, Spencer states, "My mom said they did it just to shake me up" (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). The study found one instance of the depiction of the male stereotype (not expressing emotions). In this instance Sean states, "I like her, she's fun but I don't want anything complicated right now" (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). The results found two instances of the portrayal of a female defying the stereotype (portraying not expressing emotions). For example, Toby tells Spencer, "So they'll know you know they're out there…and that you're not afraid of them" (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). The study found six instances of the portrayal of a male defying the stereotype (portraying expressing emotions). For example, Mike exclaims to Aria, "What did you do to mom and dad?!" (Cochran-Neilan, 2011).

In the Traditional Roles code, the results indicated that there were eight instances of the representation of the female stereotype (taking care of others). For example, Spencer tells the other girls, "It's my mom, she wants me to come home. Walk me out?" (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). The study found four instances of the representation of the male stereotype (being the "breadwinners" or financial providers). For example, Caleb explains to Hanna, "She offered me cash to make myself available to you and listen. I thought it was just some generic bitchiness with all the pretty girls. Why shouldn't I make a couple bucks?" (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). The results indicated four instances of the portrayal of a female defying the stereotype (portraying being the "breadwinners" or financial providers). For example, Hanna's mother states, "Fried eggs, burned butter – the kitchen hasn't smelled like this in a long time" (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). The study found

six instances of the portrayal of a male defying the stereotype (portraying taking care of others). For example, Aria's father is the one who is making breakfast in the morning and clearing dinner plates at night (Cochran-Neilan, 2011).

Codes:	Female Stereotype	Male Stereotype	Against Female Stereotype	Against Male Stereotype
Language	28	16	39	9
Sex Roles	4	7	7	0
Emotionality	34	1	2	6
Traditional Roles	8	4	4	6

Teen Wolf

Teen Wolf was the second series selected to represent the 2010s. This television series depicts a teenage boy who has become a werewolf (Genier, 2011). The selected episode focuses on Scott's ongoing battle with the 'alpha' werewolf named Peter (Genier, 2011). Another storyline depicts one of Scott's teammates, Jackson, in his pursuit of gaining Scott's werewolf abilities (Genier, 2011). Also, Scott's love interest, Allison, learns about her family's mission of werewolf hunting (Genier, 2011).

The results indicated that within the Language code there were ten instances of the portrayal of the female stereotype (passive language). For example, Scott's mother asks, "What's wrong? Is it…Is it my hair, makeup?" (Genier, 2011). The study found thirty-eight instances of the portrayal of the male stereotype (active language). For example, Scott states, "If they're holding me back from becoming a psychotic nut job like

you…I'm okay with that" (Genier, 2011). The results indicated fourteen instances of the portrayal of a female defying the stereotype (portraying active language). For example, Allison states, "And then I found glass on her car like her window had been smashed in. I've been overhearing some really strange conversations. I think some of it has to do with Derek" (Genier, 2011). The study found twenty-three instances of the portrayal of a male defying the stereotype (portraying passive language). For example, Scott asks Derek, "You're on his side? Are you forgetting the part where he killed your sister?" (Genier, 2011).

For the Sex Roles code, the results indicated that there were six instances of the female stereotype (sexual objectification). For example, Jackson taunts Scott by saying, "And also think about all the things you're able to do to get her out of some tight little dress by the end of the night" (Genier, 2011). The study found ten instances of the male stereotype (initiating relationships or sex). For example, Peter talking to Scott's mother states, "I was just noticing that you have the most incredible skin. It's flawless. Do you mind?" as he moves to caress her face (Genier, 2011). The results indicated four instances of the portrayal of a female defying the stereotype (portraying initiating relationships or sex). For example, Allison mocks Lydia by saying, "It's not like I could take him into the coach's office during lacrosse practice to make out with him or anything" (Genier, 2011). The study found four instances of the portrayal of a male defying the stereotype (portraying sexual objectification). For example, at the end of the episode Allison's aunt shows her Derek as a werewolf and states, "Isn't he beautiful" (Genier, 2011).

In the Emotionality code, the results indicated that there were seven instances of the depiction of the female stereotype (expressing emotions). For example, Scott's mother states, "…and I really hate myself for skipping the gym last week" (Genier, 2011). The study found three instances of the depiction of the male stereotype (not expressing emotions). For example, in conversation with Derek, Jackson asserts, "I'm not scared of you. Come on. I'm not afraid" (Genier, 2011). The results indicated no instances of the portrayal of a female defying the stereotype (portraying not expressing emotion). The study found twenty-two instances of the portrayal of a male defying the stereotype (portraying expressing emotions). For example, Scott exclaims to Jackson, "Yes, you stupid freaking idiot. You almost gave away everything right there!" (Genier, 2011).

In the Traditional Roles code, the results indicated that there were three instances of the representation of the female stereotype (taking care of others). For example, Allison's aunt states, "You know these extra skills are something you could be teaching your daughter" (Genier, 2011). The study found four instances of the representation of the male stereotype (being the "breadwinners" or financial providers). For example, Stiles tells his father, "Dad, come one. You work really hard, right? You deserve it" (Genier, 2011). The results indicated one instance of the portrayal of a female defying the stereotype (portraying being the "breadwinners" or financial providers). For example, Scott's mother is a single parent who is depicted as working at the local hospital (Genier, 2011). The study found six instances of the portrayal of a male defying the stereotype

(portraying taking care of others). For example, at the end of the episode a man picks up

and saves Scott after being shot in the side of the chest (Genier, 2011).

Codes:	Female Stereotype	Male Stereotype	Against Female Stereotype	Against Male Stereotype
Language	10	38	14	23
Sex Roles	6	10	4	4
Emotionality	7	3	0	22
Traditional Roles	3	4	1	6

Discussion

1990s

Beverley Hills 90210 and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* both portray a normative

stance on gender as the female and male stereotypes outweigh the examples of defiance

against the stereotypes. Neither show depicts any instances in which there are more

examples of characters acting against a stereotype rather than fulfilling the stereotype

itself.

Beverley Hills 90210 portrays no examples of characters who defy the Traditional

Roles code. In the episode, the mother is portrayed as the caretaker who cooked and

cleaned within the household. There is no mention of the mother having a job or any

other responsibilities. However, the father is depicted as being a businessman who

appears to take home a big enough paycheck to care for all of the family's financial

needs. This portrayal of the mother and father is normative and stereotypical according to

the Traditional Roles code. The code describes the gender stereotype that depicts men as

"breadwinners" and driven to success while women are depicted as caretakers.

Researchers James Shanahan, Nancy Signorielli and Michael Morgan examined the

traditional sex roles depicted in television over a period of thirty years and found a trend

that depicted women at home as caretakers (2008). It illustrates the idea that a woman is

reliant upon a man to fulfill her financial needs.

This idea also appears in the portrayals of the siblings of Brenda and Brandon as

the male was the one who attained a part-time job. In the episode, Brandon needs his

sister to cover his job for a few days and she is shown as overwhelmed and defeated at

the workplace. She needs to change her persona in order to successfully work at the

diner. This portrayal could indicate to viewers that girls need to fit into a particular role in

order to work. Brenda could not succeed in her own persona, but needed to create a

character with more masculine qualities, in order to build the skills and confidence to

succeed in the diner. Through observational learning and modeling, adolescents may

learn from this depiction that the appropriate male role is to make money and the female

role is to be a caretaker. This reinforces the gender norm surrounding the traditional

vocational roles of men and women.

This episode of *Beverley Hills 90210* centered on the making of a teen television

show (Sighvatsson, 1991). The character of Brandon is recruited to act on a teen

television program and the audience is able to witness what the making of teen

programming may look like (Sighvatsson, 1991). The audience is also able to watch how

fame can change a person and the reactions of people around that person. Brandon is

depicted as being followed by packs of girls that are now only interested in him because

of his fame (Sighvatsson, 1991). This message may show the audience that girls can be

superficial as fame and fortune are attractive to them. Also when Brenda becomes mad at

the way that Brandon has changed because of his new found fame, he proclaims that she

is only jealous of his success (Sighvatsson, 1991). This depiction portrays girls as not

able to have reasoned reactions, but to be overcome by emotions. Brenda could not have

possibly used logic and reason to come to the conclusion that Brandon had changed, but

that her emotions overwhelmed her and she needed to lash out. This gender message may

support the gender norm that females are emotional and males should not exhibit

emotion. Adolescents may learn that it is appropriate to restrict your emotions as a male

and to over-exhibit your emotions as a female.

The show also depicts a theme of female competition, mainly between Brenda

and the teen television star Lydia Leeks. When Lydia comes to the house to pick up

Brandon for their date, she compares Brenda's small acting experience with her own

national success (Sighvatsson, 1991). Lydia brags about the awards and magazine covers

that she received when she was only twelve years old (Sighvatsson, 1991). Brenda

responds "Well, I can't top that now can I?" (Sighvatsson, 1991). Instead of friendly and

polite, Brenda and Lydia are portrayed as catty and unkind. This also occurs between

Lydia and another female actress named Mackenzie. After having an argument with

Mackenzie in front of Brandon, Lydia gossips to Brandon that the only reason she "has a

career is because her uncle is this really big producer" (Sighvatsson, 1991). By gossiping

to Brandon, Lydia has undermined Mackenzie's success. The show depicts female

competition by presenting girls as emotional and manipulative. Girls, it seems, cannot be

supportive or empower one another, but undermine and devalue each other. The depiction of this gender norm may teach adolescents that it is appropriate behavior for girls to be in competition with one another. This gender norm leaves out the opportunity for girls to support one another and develop deep and meaningful relationships. Overall, the codes for the show illustrate the reinforcing of gender roles of males as breadwinners, women as emotional, and the appropriateness of female competition.

In *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the premise of the show both reinforces and defies gender normativity. Buffy has been chosen by fate to become "the slayer," who is responsible for the protection of the world from vampires and other supernatural beings (Davies, 1997). In one light, this job can be seen as a caretaking role as she is responsible for the well-being of others. The slayer, however, can also be seen as a protector, who must use force to assert her power over other beings. Within this role, Buffy has become an expert on fighting and strategy. In the episode, she assigns tasks to the others and leads the charge against the demons that the group fights. In this way, Buffy is depicted as the leader and the most powerful person on the show.

The episode also portrays the complicated tensions and backlash that come along with this depiction. Xander, one of Buffy's closest male friends, has a hard time adjusting to the idea of Buffy as the slayer. He cannot deal with the idea of being weak, and unable to help when Buffy is off fighting the "bad guys". After asserting that Xander needs to stay home while Buffy fights, Xander responds, "I'm inadequate. That's fine. I'm less than a man" (Davies, 1997). He understands the gender roles that men are to be the strong protectors and leave the women behind to be the caretakers. This backlash portrays that

the behavior of Buffy is unique. Xander initially is upset and confused by the defiance of gender norms, but is eventually able to adapt to the idea. By portraying the backlash, the gender roles are acknowledged and then reworked to create a new gender norm. Adolescents may learn that society's ideal is for the man to take on the role of protector, but that exceptional females may be able to take on this role. It may introduce adolescents to the idea that women can use their strength to be protectors, but also reinforce that this case is not normal.

The defiance of the character of Buffy is juxtaposed to the character of Cordelia. Cordelia is depicted as a materialistic, catty and sexualized girl that only cares about popularity and boys. Cordelia acts as a foil to Buffy, to not only help enact the problem but also to further emphasize Buffy's gender defiance. At the end of the episode Cordelia is being threatened by a vampire and Buffy's strength is what saves her. This illustrates that a girl who defies gender restrictions may be able to overcome the danger, whereas the girl who follows gender norms may be oppressed by them. Adolescents who identify with the character of Buffy may learn to recognize and defy the gender roles and norms that are in place. The teens who identify with Cordelia, however, may learn to reinforce these roles and behave in a manner that coincides with these gender norms.

Although *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* has many themes that defy gender normativity, the codes depict that this particular episode reinforces gender stereotypes.

2000s

Together, *Smallville* and *One Tree Hill* depict three instances in which the number of examples against the stereotype outnumbered the examples of the female and male stereotypes. In both programs, the instances of defiance against the stereotype of emotionality are higher than the stereotype. The episode of *One Tree Hill* also portrays more instances of defiance against the stereotype of Traditional Roles than depictions of the stereotype. The majority of the portrayals, however, were depictions of gender stereotypes.

For the show *Smallville*, the best example of defiance against gender norms is in the code of Emotionality. This episode is centered on parental relationships between fathers and sons as well as the hardships of serious illness. These plot points allow for boys and men to express the emotions that accompany these issues. The character of Tyler develops a monstrous power to kill a person with touch after he experiences the tough loss of his mother (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002). Throughout the episode, Tyler is depicted as a very emotional person with puffy red eyes and a reactive personality. Tyler even cries on more than one occasion within the episode. This portrayal depicts that a male can have emotions and can be overwhelmed by them. However, Tyler is also seen as the villain and the outcast in the episode. His emotions get the better of him and that creates the problem and drama within the episode. In order to be an emotional man, there has to be something wrong with Tyler. This reinforces the gender role that men should not exhibit emotion. This gender message may teach adolescents that it is only

appropriate for females to express their emotions. Adolescent males may learn that they feel these emotions but need to bottle them up.

Smallville is the only show in the study that has no instances of the female stereotype in the Sex Roles code. This indicates that there are no examples in which a female is sexualized or depicted as a sexual object. This may be because the show is depicted as wholesome and family oriented. This also may be because this episode focuses heavily on the relationships between males. This gender message may teach adolescent females that they do not need to be sexualized to be valued by society.

The portrayal of father-son relationships was the focus of the episode (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002). The relationship between Lex Luthor and his father Lionel is depicted as a competition rather than a close parental bond. Their relationship is juxtaposed to the relationship between Clark and his father. Clark argues with his father throughout the episode as he tries to assert his independence (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002). Lex witnesses Clark's struggle and tries to use his own experiences with his father Lionel, to help Clark patch up his relationship with his father (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002). Lex explains to Clark that Lionel never showed him love or support, but raised him to be independent and ready for financial competition (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002). Lex's father was able to provide him financial support, but Lex did not fulfilled by this single form of caretaking. Lex also mentions that his mother died when he was a child which means that he did not have any person providing him with caretaking.

On the other hand, Clark's mother plays a crucial role in the relationship between Clark and his father. She acts as a mediator who tries to help Clark understand why his

father is behaving in the way that he does. The juxtaposition of these two families

reinforces the idea that a woman takes on the caretaking roles. Without that support, Lex

feels unfulfilled and burdened by his father. This depicts the effects that gender norms

and roles may have on individuals. Adolescents may learn that both mothers and fathers

need to fulfill more than just one role of caregiver or breadwinner.

     Another theme within the episode was the conflict between strength and

weakness. The relationship between Whitney and his father is portrayed as strained

because of the illness that his father is battling. Whitney cannot deal with the fact that his

father, who he always thought of as strong, is portrayed as weak while in the hospital

recovering from a heart attack. This theme depicts the gendered idea that men are

supposed to be strong and have no weaknesses. When Whitney is faced with the opposite,

he cannot even visit his father in the hospital (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002). He would

rather preserve the memory of his dad as strong, than spend time with his weakened

father in real time (Egan, Green & Hargrove, 2002). After being counseled by Clark,

Whitney is finally able to accept this new version of his father (Egan, Green & Hargrove,

2002). The portrayal of this struggle both reinforces and undermines the gendered idea of

strength. While Whitney learns that he cares for his father, even when he is in a

weakened state, this is an uncomfortable adjustment for him (Egan, Green & Hargrove,

2002). The episode begins with the gender norm that depicts being weak as inappropriate

for males. Although the episode still leaves this norm as ideal, the message at the end of

the show is to accept one's weaknesses as a part of human existence. Overall this episode

presents many examples of male stereotypes and characters who defy them.

One Tree Hill also features many male relationships in its episode (Tollin, 2004). The men of the show are depicted as either in competition with or mentoring one another. For example, Dan and his brother Keith are shown fighting throughout the episode and in competition with one another (Tollin, 2004). The back and forth between these two brothers portrays the idea that there is an alpha male, or one male who is in complete control. Dan and Keith both fight to maintain their levels of power and control (Tollin, 2004). However, both characters also are depicted as mentors to the character Nathan (Tollin, 2004). Within the mentoring relationships in the episode, males are able to talk through their issues and give advice to one another (Tollin, 2004). This depicts a more relational view of males, being financial providers or physical protectors. This portrays a message that males can be helpful to one another rather than just in competition. The two sides of male relationships that are depicted in this episode represent two different gender roles. In the first, men are in competition with one another for control and power. The second, men are able to rely upon one another for advice and support. These two portrayals illustrate that this teen television show has complex characters that are multidimensional and capable of different kinds of relationships. For an adolescent watching this program, they see many different attitudes, behaviors and relationships being modeled. This multifaceted portrayal would be able to model a bigger variety of roles for adolescents to identify with and learn from.

Another theme within the episode portrayed girls desiring to change themselves for boys in order to win their affections. Both the characters Brooke and Haley feel that they need to change who they are and their behaviors for the boys that they like. In the

end, both boys express that they do not want Brooke or Haley to change. This theme

portrays the message that girls value a relationship with a male over their own interests

and independence. Although in the end, the girls are appreciated for their differences, it is

a male that accepts these qualities and allows them to continue being who they are. This

portrays a message that girls need the permission of boys to be an independent person

with individual interests and behaviors. This message also promotes a gender norm of

girls as being defined by their relationships with others rather than as individuals.

Adolescent girls may learn that the opinion of their male counterparts is more important

to them than their own voices and beliefs.

Another interesting finding within the episode occurred when examining the

relationship between the female characters. The study found that within the four instances

of female-to-female conversations, all discussions were framed around boys. Although

the show seems to support the idea of female friendship and support, the central bond

between the girls is their relationships with boys. In one case, Brooke disregards her close

friendship with Peyton, viewing her as competition for her boyfriend. Brooke undermines

their friendship because she is worried that Lucas may have more romantic interest in her

friend. These portrayals reinforce the idea that women are in competition with one

another for the affection of men. Instead of being supportive with one another, women

are more concerned with their appeal to the opposite gender. This also depicts women as

only being valuable in their relationships with men. This message supports the gender

norm that it is appropriate for women to compete for men. Adolescents may learn from

the depiction on screen that a woman's value is contingent upon their romantic appeal to men. Overall, this episode portrays a majority of instances of gender normativity.

2010s

Pretty Little Liars portrays more normative gender messages whereas *Teen Wolf* has two instances in which the examples against the female and male stereotypes outnumber the examples of the stereotype.

Although *Pretty Little Liars* illustrates thirty more gender stereotypes than deviances, the themes of the show portray less normative messages. For example, the mothers depicted on the show are portrayed as professionals, who can financially support themselves while also are available to support their children. In one instance, Hanna's mother is a single parent who is the sole financial breadwinner for her family (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). By being able to be fiscally autonomous, these women are also able to be independent. Another example of this theme is the fact that during their separation, Aria's mother is the one who moves out of the family house (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). She is able to use her earnings to support herself and rent an apartment. This also means that Byron, Aria's father, has to take over the caretaking responsibilities such as cooking and cleaning. This role reversal goes against gender norms that define men as the breadwinner and women as the caretaker. Adolescents may learn that society assigns these gender roles, but individuals can chose to defy them.

Pretty Little Liars centers on the friendship of the four main characters. Female friendship and support is the basis of the show as the girls work together to try to figure out the murder mystery (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). This portrayal goes against the norm of

female competition. The girls are not competing for the affection or attention of a male but are empowering one another. A further example of this is the fact that the girls discuss a variety of topics such as school, family, and the murder case. Unlike *One Tree Hill,* where the female characters only talk to one another about boys, the girls in *Pretty Little Liars* are able to develop deeper relationships with one another. This message supports the gender role of female friendship and empowerment.

Pretty Little Liars is also unique in the portrayal of two homosexual characters. Emily, who is one of the main characters, is depicted as homosexual (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). In this episode, Emily helps another girl come to terms with her sexuality (Cochran-Neilan, 2011). This is the first example that defies the heteronormativity present within teen television programs. By depicting a more diversified cast of characters, the gender messages and roles are more diversified as well. By depicting homosexuality as an alternative gender norm, it presents it as an acceptable option for adolescents. These messages may help normalize homosexuality to the adolescent audience.

The show *Teen Wolf* depicts both examples of characters who defy stereotypes, as well as themes that reinforce gender normativity. For example, the show depicts twenty-two instances of males who defy the gender stereotype of emotionality. However, within these examples anger is the most prevalent emotion expressed. This correlates to the theme of male competition and aggression. Throughout the episode, boys and men are depicted as fighting with one another verbally and physically (Genier, 2011). There is one instance in which Scott and Jackson argue with one another for the majority of the

scene (Genier, 2011). The boys get more and more relied up and begin shoving each

other (Genier, 2011). The use of intimidation and anger depicts males as aggressive and

uncontrollable and reinforces the gender role that men need to be strong. Adolescent

males may learn that in order to fit into the dominant masculinity, they need to be

physically strong and muscular as well as aggressive and tough.

   The show also includes depictions of violence. Violence is a way to act

aggressively which reinforces gender norms. There are also a few female characters who

are portrayed using violence. For example, Allison is shown shooting a bow and arrow

and using a Taser gun (Genier, 2011). On one hand this depiction is breaking gender

norms as a female is depicted as using force and aggression. However, the females in the

show are also depicted as the victims of violence. Therefore, the women have to learn to

protect themselves as they were victimized in the past. If the females are being reactive to

violence, it is not as strong of a defiance to gender norms. This message promotes a

gender role of men as aggressors and women as victims. Adolescent girls may understand

this modeled behavior as women being innately helpless victims that need to learn to

fight back.

   Finally, *Teen Wolf* has the highest number of examples of the portrayal of a male

who defy the stereotype of sex roles. Males are portrayed as sexual objects four times in

the selected episode. In one instance, Scott is shown in the men's locker room after a

game in only a towel (Genier, 2011). This sexualized viewing of Scott defies the

stereotype as it is normative for a female to be objectified in this manner. This portrayal

also illustrates Scott's power through his muscular body. On the other hand, there are still

more examples of a female being sexually objectified. The idea that both genders are

sexualized may suggest that there is both a male gaze and a female gaze. It also may

suggest that the creators of the show are trying to interest a female audience. Overall, the

codes of the show *Teen Wolf* depict a majority of gender normative messages.

The Development of Gender Representations

   The representation of gender has developed through the history of teen television.

The findings of this study suggest that teen television was more gender normative in the

early years of the genre. Both television series selected from the 1990s had no instances

in which the number of examples against a stereotype outweighed the number of

depictions of the stereotype itself. Over time, there were more examples of characters

who defied these stereotypes and acted outside of gender norms. All of the series selected

from the 2000s and the 2010s had at least one code where the number of examples

against a stereotype outweighed the number of depictions of the stereotype itself.

Overall, there were six instances in which the characters defied the stereotype more than

followed it. Therefore, one-fourth or 25% of the depictions of gender were against the

gender norms and stereotypes. Adolescent viewers are being exposed to many gender

normative messages within teen television, but there is also a representation of characters

who do not follow these guidelines. A diversified view of gender is important for teen

television as it may model attitudes and behaviors for the adolescents who watch it.

   The stereotype that the most characters defied was emotionality. Three of the six

times where the examples against the stereotype outweighed the stereotype were of the

Emotionality code. The majority of these instances was against the male stereotype and portrayed males expressing emotions. The reverse of this stereotype may model to adolescents that men experience emotions and it is healthy for males to express these emotions and not hide them from others. The stereotype that was defied the second most often was the Traditional Roles code. This finding was represented in the first emergent theme.

One theme that changed over time within teen television was the role of mothers and fathers. In earlier television series, the parents are only shown in relation to the children. They would question their behavior and eat with them at dinner but not have any scenes without the children present. In later series, the parents became characters in their own right with interweaving storylines and character development. Also the vocational paths of mothers changed. In the 1990s show *Beverley Hills 90210,* the mother seems to be a stay at home mom with no income. By the 2000s, mothers have their own business such as Karen's Diner in *One Tree Hill*. In the 2010s there are multiple maternal figures who are financially and physically independent from males in the show *Pretty Little Liars*. This development allows for a greater number of gender roles and representations to be depicted.

Another theme that emerged through the study was a teen television subgenre centered on supernatural and science fiction storylines. Three out of the six television series had a supernatural/Sci-Fi element in the premise of the show including *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Smallville* and *Teen Wolf*. These shows may be attractive to teenagers because the subgenre adds more drama and suspense to a normal adolescent lifestyle. The

supernatural/Sci-Fi subgenre allows for the characters to act in ways outside of normal human behavior. Characters and storylines are able to defy real life restrictions, including gender norms. For example, the character of Buffy Summers is chosen as 'the Slayer' and therefore has super strength. In reality, women are generally thought of as physically weaker than men. By having Buffy placed in a supernatural environment, the audience can normalize Buffy's strength within the television show.

Another emergent theme illustrated the shift from a focus on female competition to female friendship. In *Beverley Hills 90210*, from the 1990s and *One Tree Hill*, from the 2000s, there is a significant emphasis on female competition. The girls compete for fame in *Beverley Hills 90210* and the affection of males in *One Tree Hill*. However, in the 2010s series *Pretty Little Liars,* the show emphasizes the mutual support and empowerment in female friendship. The show is centered on the friendship of the four main female characters and how they work together. This shift depicts a healthier relationship between females and can model this behavior to adolescent girls. Overall, the findings suggest that gender representations are becoming less normative as the genre grows and develops.

Conclusion

This research study was designed to examine the gender messages present throughout the history of teen television. These messages are important to decode as adolescent males and females can learn gender roles and behaviors from the teen programming that they watch on television. These roles may also be important in creating gender scripts, which outline appropriate gendered behaviors in specific situations.

Through social learning theory, these adolescents may use these examples of gender scripts and adopt them into their own lives. Overall, the majority of gender messages present were normative in that they reinforced gender roles and stereotypes.

There are some limitations to the textual analysis method used in this study. One of the limitations of using a qualitative research method is that the study is dependent upon the reading of the text by the researcher. Also, the study used only one episode from each of the six teen television shows and future research should look at other television shows in the teen programming market. The limits of time and money restricted the use of more teen television shows. Also only looking at one episode from each series is limiting as one episode may not encompass all of the series' themes and messages. This research method did not look directly at the effects of gender stereotypes on adolescents but depicted the implications that these stereotypes may have. In future scholarship, researchers should study the direct link between gender stereotypes portrayed on teen television and the attitudes and behaviors developed by adolescents. Future research should also look at how characters who defy gender stereotypes are portrayed and what consequences they face when they do.

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