TWEEN, TEENS, AND SEX ON TV:
AN ANALYSIS OF SEXUAL BEHAVIORS IN ADOLESCENT PROGRAMMING

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the amount and types of sexual content in adolescent programming. Previous research focused mainly on primetime programs, while this study looked exclusively at shows produced for and consumed by an adolescent audience. Programs included those popular teen scene programs which were popular with tweens (8 to 11 years old) and young adult programs popular with teens (12 to 15 years old). It is important to look at programming specific to this demographic because it is a critical age at which young people are socialized and may be particularly vulnerable to media messages. The two theories on which this thesis were based are social cognitive theory and cultivation theory.

Findings indicated that adolescent programming as a whole does not have an excessive amount of sexual content. Young adult programs, however, had significant amount of specific sexual behaviors in the form of kissing, hugging, intimate touching, sexual suggestiveness, homosexual references, and implied heterosexual intercourse. The majority of main characters in young adult programs were sexually active as opposed to virgins, and mythical creatures such as vampires and werewolves were the most sexually active. Additionally, this research suggests that teenage sexual activity is underrepresented on teen scene programs and overrepresented on young adult programs. Results also indicated few sexual risk and responsibility messages. Finally, there was an emphasis on physical appearance in that most characters were considered very attractive and females were mainly portrayed as thin. In the context of social cognitive theory and
cultivation theory, there were some risky sexual behaviors from which young viewers could observationally learn and overall these programs provide an unrealistic representation of teenage life that gives viewers limited examples of teenage social reality.
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Adolescents in the 21st century find themselves with largely unrestricted access to multiple media platforms, undoubtedly a major part of their lives. Census data from 2011 indicates 75.6% of all households report owning a computer and 87.5% of those between 15 to 25 reported access to the internet via home computer, smartphone, or both (Census Bureau, 2013). In addition, access to multiple media platforms ensures that programs are no longer limited only to television sets. New technology such as the DVR allows programs to be recorded and viewed later, while streaming websites like Netflix or Hulu.com make favorite programs and series available for viewing anytime. With this media freedom comes exposure to all kinds of messages, including those of a sexual nature.

Numerous studies have found an abundance of sexually driven messages in media. Kunkel and associates (2007) found a substantial increase in sexual messages over a five year period (1997 to 2002), with 64% of the programs in their 2001/2002 sample having sexual content. Further, Eyal and Finnerty (2009) found that programs containing sexual intercourse featured an average of two acts per episode. Most studies, however, have focused primarily on primetime programs and not on a specific television audience. Now, as most adolescents have easy access to all forms of media, it is important to look specifically at the sexual messages present in adolescent programming.
Adolescents are often discussed in marketing as a unique demographic. De Masa (2005) notes that while young adolescents spent nearly 51 billion US dollars on themselves, they had approximately 170 billion US dollars spent on them by parents and friends, while the National Consumers League reported that teenagers spent a total of $172 billion in 2001. This puts the adolescent consumer at the center of many marketing campaigns. In fact, many brands not only market to tweens, but have created special lines of their products dedicated to them. For example, Walmart carries a beauty line for young adolescent girls called geoGirl, while Chobani yogurt has a product called Chobani Champions (Chaet, 2012). In addition, popular young adolescent networks like the Disney Channel and Nickelodeon offer special ringtones for cell phone users (de Masa, 2005). Adolescents are clearly a special group when it comes to marketing.

The definition of a tween is rather vague and varies from an age of 8-14, 8-12, or 9-12. For the purposes of this study, tweens will be considered 8-11 and teens will be considered 12-15. In fact, industry research in marketing finds that children 11 years and up no longer identify themselves as children, so moving the designation of teenager to include 12 year olds may be more in line with the way 12 year olds view themselves (Media Smarts). Further, there is some discussion about whether marketing influences children by causing them to mature faster or whether marketing is simply keeping up with a generation which matures faster. Either way, marketing tries to capitalize on the issues of self-esteem and acceptance which often come with adolescence. Marketers try to sell “cool,” too often including messages and images that may be confusing or harmful to tweens.
Treating tweens as an independent consumer market effectively removes parents from the equation, leaving tweens open to unhealthy images and messages about alcohol and tobacco use, body image, and sex (Media Smarts). Marketing often falls into the stereotypical trope of girls interested in boys and being pretty and boys interested in sports and video games. These scripts create limited and gendered roles with which adolescents may identify. The message is clear, getting tweens interested in a product is a matter of selling them a certain experience.

In fact, the experience is not always one they might immediately relate to, but rather an example of what they might one day aspire to. For instance, Disney is known to produce shows intended for the tween audience, but uses teen-aged characters to create an example for the viewer (Romano, 2004). Ideally, these shows provide a good example for tweens, but if the goal is providing an example of what the audience might be like in a few years, what happens when tweens move from Disney to more teen oriented programming? Romano notes that MTV caters to the teen audience, but is teen programming comparable to tween programming? It may be of further interest to note that one popular show among teens, Pretty Little Liars, was ranked the number one Tuesday night telecast for viewers age 12-34 (tvbythenumbers.com). With such a large viewing demographic, it is important to identify whether these shows truly cater to a teen audience. First, however, it is important to evaluate how much exposure to these shows tweens and teens actually have.

A study by the Kaiser Family Foundation (Rideout, Foeher, & Roberts, 2010), found that the typical 8 to 18 year old spends more than 53 hours a week with numerous forms of media. Additionally, the average 8 to 18 year old spends about 4 hours and 29
minutes a day watching television (Rideout, Foehrer, & Roberts, 2010). Overall, the media consumption of children is almost equal to the average work day of an adult, 7 ½ hours daily. Considering media multi-tasking, in which more than one medium is used at a time, teens pack an astounding 10 hours and 45 minutes worth of media consumption into those 7 ½ hours (Rideout, Roehr, & Roberts, 2010). Given the high level of sexual messages on television (Eyal & Finnerty, 2009; Kunkel et al., 2007) and the high level of teen media exposure, it is likely that the average teen is confronted with multiple sexual messages and depictions of sexual relationships. Consequently, it is an important step to ascertain the types of sexual messages teens are likely to see.

Sex in the media is typically depicted as risk-free (Bleakley et al., 2011; Collins, 2005; L’Engle, Brown, & Kenneavy, 2006; O’Hara, Gibbons, Gerard, Li, & Sargent, 2012). Moreover, many teens see the media as endorsing sexual behavior (L’Engle, Brown, & Kenneavy, 2006), and that it creates a perception of social pressure to be sexually active (Bleakley et al., 2011). However, most of this research has focused on primetime shows and the general audience. While teens do watch these programs there is a need to examine those programs that are specifically geared to an adolescent audience. This study will be a content analysis of popular television programs geared to teens on networks such as ABC Family and Disney. These programs will be coded for depictions of sexual activity, the consequences of sexual activity, safe-sex practices, and attitudes toward sex. Understanding the messages to which adolescents are frequently exposed in the media is the first step in understanding the potential impact those messages may have.

While different types of media may have different effects (Peter & Valkenburg, 2007; Ter Bogt et al., 2010), it is important to know the prevalence and types of sexual
messages portrayed to adolescents through mainstream television shows. Some may argue that teenagers will find sexual content and engage in sexual behaviors regardless of adult intervention, but a bigger issue is the kind of sexual messages teens see and perhaps learn through the media. Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001) and cultivation theory (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002) are instrumental in understanding how sexual messages in the media may influence adolescents.

A large body of research acknowledges the impact of sexual media content on adolescents. Collins (2005) reports that adolescent virgins participating in a longitudinal survey study, who had viewed more sexual content at the time of the first wave of data collection were more likely to report initiation of intercourse during the following year, even when controlling for other potential causes. Chandra, Martino, Collins, Elliott, Berry, Kanouse, and Miu (2008) report that frequent exposure to sexual content on television was predictive of earlier teen pregnancy.

Repeatedly, research supports the notion that more exposure to sexual content is predictive of earlier initiation of sexual intercourse in adolescents (L’Engle, Brown, & Kenneavy, 2006; O’Hara et al., 2012) and growing research suggests that greater exposure to sexualized media messages is associated with stronger ideas that women are sex objects (Peter & Valkenburg, 2007; Ward, 2002). The potential of sexual media content to influence both sexual behaviors and attitudes makes finding the content of sexual messages in adolescent media imperative. The content of sexual media messages and their potential hazards will be viewed through two primary theories: cultivation theory and social cognitive theory.
Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory focuses on how exposure to a system of messages over a period of time may influence perceptions of social reality so that these perceptions reflect images found in the fictional universe (Gerbner et al., 2002). The Cultural Indicators project, which began in 1967, was designed to study the messages and images on television (Gerbner et al., 2002). The project tracked television’s primetime and weekend-daytime dramatic content to explore the consequences of growing up and living in a culture dominated by television.

Cultivation theory focuses on the long-term exposure to a system of messages, a broader investigation of what central themes are present during primetime programming and their general impact on perceptions of social reality. The most general hypothesis of cultivation theory is that those who spend the most time “living” in the fictional television world will be more likely to further perceive the “real world” in the same terms as that of the fictional universe. Cultivation analysis seeks to uncover this broader system of messages which may be influencing perception of reality.

Cultivation analysis begins with message system analysis in which the most recurrent, stable, and overarching patterns of television content are identified (Gerbner et al., 2002). The findings from systematic analyses of messages are then used to formulate questions that reflect the lessons on which viewers base their perception of social reality (Gerbner et al., 2002). Questions about perceptions of social reality and daily television viewing are asked in surveys completed by a large sample of individuals. These surveys reveal ways in which one's perceptions of the world may have been shaped in part by the messages they see in the media.
For adolescents, who spend a great deal of time with media, the implications are clear. It is possible that the content of shows they are watching cultivates certain perceptions about their social reality. While the presence of sex in the media does not cause adolescents to engage in sexual behaviors, it may cultivate the message that most teenagers are already having sex. Adolescents already struggle with the desire to fit in, therefore the heightened perception that sex is both important and cool may lead to unhealthy sexual behaviors. Consequently, the media representation of sex as casual, risk-free, and popular, may lead to misinterpretation of the real risks involved with casual sex and may over-estimate the importance of sex in relationships. The idea that heavy exposure to television, and thereby sexual messages, may lead to an inaccurate perception of sexual behaviors in adolescents own lives.

Cultivation studies have often focused on the prevalence of violence on television which often cultivates an image of the real world as a mean and dangerous place. Additionally, given the under-representation of older individuals on television dramas, cultivation studies find that those who watch more television are more likely to hold the perception that there are fewer elderly people today than there were 20 years ago and that the elderly are in worse health (Gerbner et al., 2002).

Similarly, as the television world tends to have more male than female characters and that women are often seen in more stereotyped roles, those who watch more television tended to score higher on a sexism scale, holding more stereotyped perceptions of gender roles (Signorielli, 1989). Consequently, from the perspective of cultivation theory, images relating to sex on television, may cultivate views about sex that reflect the images seen on television.
While such high exposure to sexual messages in the media may cultivate unrealistic perceptions of the prevalence, risk, and importance of sex in the real world, it is not the only way in which adolescents may be influenced by sexual messages. Not only can media influence adolescent perception, but the messages to which adolescents are exposed may begin to teach certain behaviors through observational learning, as explained by social cognitive theory.

1.2 Social Cognitive Theory

A major concern with a high amount of exposure to sexual content in the media for young people is how such messages may lead to teens modelling those sexual behaviors. Bandura’s (2001) social cognitive theory suggests what that can be learned through direct experience may also be learned vicariously by observing the behavior of others, both in reality and through mediated sources. Social cognitive theory suggests that this observational learning occurs through four sub-functions: attentional processes, retention processes, production processes, and motivational processes. Each of these processes plays a crucial role in observational learning.

Attentional processes deal with information selectively observed and may be influenced by many factors (Bandura, 2001). One factor is the attractiveness of the behavior. Young people may pay particular attention to the sexual behaviors of their favorite characters because they are curious and have limited experience. In addition, the characters may have a certain appeal to adolescents in that they represent a more mature and popular group of teenagers.

Further, social cognitive theory states that when actions are viewed as having a positive consequence, the behavior may be modeled, while a negative consequence can
instill inhibitions about that specific behavior (Bandura, 2001). This is part of the motivational process. The lack of negative sexual consequences portrayed in the media may further instill the idea that sex has positive social consequences that may outweigh the negatives. Furthermore, adolescents may underestimate the potential negative consequences of sexual activities such as unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

Similarly, young people may begin to model the attitudes and behaviors that are presented to them on screen. If women are portrayed as passive sexual objects and men portrayed as the aggressors, young people may begin to identify with these roles. Bandura (2001) further notes that it’s not exposure to the behavior alone, but attending to the message that will influence whether the behavior is modeled. This attention to particular messages falls under the retention process. The celebrities in favorite teen shows are a prime example of the types of models that garner attention, especially when the topic is sex. The actors and actresses may represent a more “cool” or “glamorous” lifestyle to which adolescents may be particularly drawn.

As adolescents are learning the social practices of society, media provides an example from which they may learn social skills. According to social cognitive theory, it is not just specific behaviors that may be modeled, but scenarios which may act as scripts for a way of behaving. Perse (2001) discusses the danger of pervasive stereotypes in the media as a major concern because there may be an insufficient number of positive messages to counter the negative messages but the same may be true when dealing with sexual content. Producers of adolescent programming are not trying to represent the life of an average teenager, but tend toward the dramatic and emotionally fueled periods of
adolescence. In this way, young adults may feel that the behavior of the teenagers they see on television engaging in various risky behaviors is the way teenagers are supposed to behave. It may also give the impression that their friends are more sexually active than they actually are, thereby indirectly influencing teens to become sexually active. Furthermore, adolescents lack of experience and knowledge of more adult topics and themes may lead to a false understanding of the messages involved (Perse, 2001). Adolescents’ inability to correctly filter and interpret media messages about sex could lead to an inaccurate understanding of the realities of sex.

For example, a content analysis of teen dramas (Kelly, 2010) found that sexual abstinence was portrayed as an acceptable choice for females far more than it was for males. This seems to set up a script for young men that they are expected to be sexually active and abstaining from sex is an abnormal choice. It is then possible that when faced with a sexual situation, young men may choose to engage in those sexual behaviors because they believe that is the socially acceptable behavior. While young men are presented with the script that men are sex-driven and generally aggressive (Batchelor, Kitzinger, & Burtney, 2004; Ferris et al, 2007; Ward, 2002), young women have a different script from which they may learn.

Smith (2012) examined the sexual scripts for teen girls' sexual desire in popular teen films, found themes that desire is unspoken, only bad girls verbalize desire, and there are negative consequences for girls who express desire. These scripts place young women in a position in which their role is to be submissive to the desires of their male counterparts. This sexual script could be very damaging for young women's concept of sexual relationships. If the normative script for sexual relationships is one in which girls
play a submissive role, they may feel that sexual decisions are somewhat out of their control. Further, the idea that young women are not also sexual beings is sure to have some negative consequences on their sexual development.

Most young people likely do not experience quite as many sexual encounters as tend to be presented in a media environment. If those sexual encounters are rewarded more than punished and represented inaccurately, adolescents may be more inclined to engage in risky sexual behaviors and endorse the attitudes of sex represented in the media. For these reasons, it is imperative to investigate not only the extent of sexual content on television, but the extent of sexual content in programming created specifically for adolescents.

1.3 Sex on Television

Research on sex in the media is not a new topic. In fact, Kunkel and colleagues (2007) found that from 1997 to 2002 there was a substantial increase in sexual messages on television. They conducted a content analysis of 2817 randomly selected, nationally distributed programs that aired between 7am and 11pm on each day of the week from ten networks chosen for their heavy viewership. The sample included 942 programs from 1997/1998, 938 in 1999/2000, and 937 in 2001/2002.

Kunkel and colleagues (2007) defined sexual content as any depiction of sexual activity or sexually suggestive behavior and talk about sexual topics, interests, intentions, or behaviors. Furthermore, coded sexual behaviors had to be a substantial part of the scene. Physical sexual scenes and scenes depicting only talking about sex were coded separately. Coding was performed at the scene level with the exception of risk and responsibility messages which were coded at the program level.
Sexual behaviors were coded as physical flirting when the behavior was meant to be arousing, passionate kissing when it conveyed a sense of sexual intimacy, intimate touching of another in a way intended to be sexually arousing, a strong implication of sexual intercourse although the act was not explicitly shown, and a direct depiction of sexual intercourse regardless of the amount of nudity or explicitness. Coding for sexual talk included comments about the sexual interests and actions of the characters or others, comments about previous sexual intercourse, efforts to talk a sexual partner into sex, discussion of sex-related crimes, and sex advice from an expert or authority figure (Kunkel et al., 2007).

In the 2001/2002 sample, about 2 of every 3 (64%) shows had some type of sexual content, a 7% increase from the 1997/1998 sample. Further, of the shows containing sexual messages, more than 4 of every 5 (82%) included 2 or more scenes with a sexual topic or theme. Across programs with sexual content, there were 4.4 scenes involving sexual content per hour. Sexual talk was, however, the most prevalent as 61% of all programs included some talk about sex but only 32% involved sexual physical behaviors. In the entire 2001/2002 sample, 1 in 7 shows (14%) included a portrayal of sexual intercourse, with this activity strongly implied in 82% of the programs and directly depicted in 18% of the programs. The average number of sexual scenes per episode also increased significantly from 1.4 per hour in the 1997/1998 sample to 2.1 per hour in the 2001/2002 sample (Kunkel et al., 2007).

The age of characters involved in sexual content on television is also an area of concern. Kunkel and associates (2007) found that in the 2001/2002 sample, 83% of characters engaging in sexual activities were 25 or older, 14% were between 18 and 24,
and 3% were teenagers. Additionally, 61% of sexual scenes involved characters who were in an established relationship, 19% involved characters who knew each other but had no established relationship, and 7% were characters who engaged in sexual activity upon their first meeting.

An interesting finding of Kunkel and associates (2007) was that while scenes involving sexual content increased since the 1998/1999 season, the characters engaging in these activities were likely to be adults older than 25. For teens, it is possible that the freedom and youth associated with being a 20-something would make this specific age group one they might want to emulate. While one could argue that adolescents are not exposed to a large amount of sexual content directly involving their peer group, a closer look is necessary to fully determine the typical age of characters engaging in sexual behaviors in adolescent programming.

Eyal and Finnerty (2009) found that programs on major networks such as ABC, PBS, TNT, and CBS that included sexual intercourse, had an average of two acts of intercourse per episode. Similar to the findings of Kunkel and colleagues (2007), the characters engaging in these sexual acts were acquainted but unmarried and usually over the age 25. At the same time young adults were featured in 11% and teenagers were featured about 5% of the programs in which acts of sexual intercourse occurred.

In Kunkel and colleagues (1999) research for the Kaiser Family Foundation, across all scenes containing sexual content, 1 in 10 (10%) included a teenager. The majority of these scenes only featured talk about sex (83%) while 1 in 6 (17%) included physical of sexual behaviors. These findings offer further evidence that young people are not often the focus of sexual content in television. However, one study looking more
closely at programs with teenagers found that 90% contained sexual content (Aubrey, 2004). Clearly, the extent to which adolescents are involved in sexual content should be further examined.

Ward (1995) examined sexual content in primetime programs most viewed by children and adolescents, choosing the 10 most popular primetime programs for children aged 2 to 11 and the 10 most popular primetime programs for adolescents aged 12 to 17 during the 1992-1993 broadcast season. The programs that overlapped were combined for a total of 12 programs. The programs included shows such as *Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, *The Simpsons, Blossom, Roseanne, and Full House*.

Ward (1995) found that 1 in 4 interactions in the primetime diet of these young viewers contained sexually charged statements. The programs that had the highest number of sexual messages were also the programs that were among the most popular with adolescents. Additionally, the programs that were more preferred by adolescents than by children (as based on Nielson ratings) had significantly more interactions containing sexual content and a higher total number of sexual messages. This provides some evidence that adolescents may be drawn to the sexual messages they see in the media and that they might attend to them more.

Because of the dearth of information regarding adolescent specific programming, there is no basis for which to hypothesize more or less sexual content and age of the characters involved. From here on, shows referred to as teen scene will reference the 8 – 11 television sample, young adult will refer to the 12-15, and adolescent programming will refer to the sample as a whole. Therefore, the following research questions will be examined:
**RQ1:** How much sexual content is seen in adolescent programming? What types of sexual images are seen in these programs?

**RQ2:** Are sexual images in the teen scene programs similar or different from those in young adult programs?

Further, while previous findings indicate that teenagers are not often the focus of sexual content (Kunkel et al, 1999), it is possible that teenagers will be more involved in sexually explicit storylines in adolescent programming. The characters represented in adolescent programming are meant to represent teenage characters, not adults 25 and older. Therefore, the following research question will be explored:

**RQ3:** Are teenage characters the focus of sexual content in adolescent specific programming?

In addition, research by Kelly (2010) focusing on virginity loss narratives in teen dramas noted the ease with which one could identify sexually active characters and characters who remained virgins. The sample revealed that one fourth of the main characters had lost their virginity in a previous season, one third chose to lose their virginity during the season, and another third chose to remain virgins. As these shows were focusing on virginity loss narratives specifically, the emphasis on waiting may be slightly elevated. As many characters are presented as having detailed knowledge of sex and give advice to the friend considering losing their virginity, it is likely that main characters are presented as sexually experienced more often than not. Consequently:

**H1:** Main characters on young adult programs will be presented as sexually experienced more often than as a virgin.
A recent (2013) on-line survey conducted by the Center for Disease Control of high school students (N approximately 13,000) found that almost half of the students (46.8%) replied that they have been sexually active and a third (34%) said they had been sexually active in the last three months. As these programs tend to show that the major characters are often sexually active, RQ 4 ask if these programs give an accurate or inaccurate representation of sexual activity.

*RQ4: Do adolescent programs accurately reflect the sexual activity of teens?*

Coding for sexual activity will reveal the amount and nature of sexual acts presented, but in order to fully understand what scripts and messages to which adolescents may be exposed necessitates a closer look at the consequences of those actions. A discussion of risk and responsibility will reveal the extent to which sexual consequences are presented in the media.

1.4 Risk and Responsibility Messages

Messages about possible consequences of sexual interactions are often underrepresented in the media. Aside from the straightforward sexual content portrayed, messages of risk and responsibility are often coded for frequency and type. Multiple studies have noted that few instances of physical consequences, such as sexually transmitted diseases/infections and AIDS, are depicted in the media (Eyal & Finnerty, 2009; Hust, Brown, & L’Engle, 2008; Kunkel et al., 2007). In fact, in all scenes with sexual content in Kunkel and colleagues’ 2001/2002 sample, only 6% included a message of risk or responsibility. This is equivalent to 1 message of risk or responsibility for every 17 instances of sexual content.
Hust, Brown, and L’Engle (2008) found that on the rare occasions that sexual health content is featured, it is often ambiguous, inaccurate, gender stereotypical, and uses humor to undermine sexually responsible behavior. While Kunkel and associates (2007) found an overall increase in sexual messages about risk and responsibility from the 1998/1999 sample to the 2001/2002 sample, there is still a deficit between the amounts of sexual content present and how often risk and responsibility messages are included.

This may be especially distressing as many adolescents report seeking sexual content from movies, television, music, and internet pornography (Bleakley, Hennessy, & Fishbein, 2011). By actively searching for this content, adolescents expose themselves to a sexual reality quite different from the one discussed in sex education classes. Further, the effort put into seeking out sexual messages may increase the amount of attention given to the content thereby increasing the likelihood of modeling the behavior.

The reality of sex in the media is not the reality of sex in the real world. Aubrey (2004), analyzing broadcast network shows featuring adolescents between 12 and 22 during primetime, found that only 5.5% of the 676 scenes contained a physical consequence of sexual behavior, although this number jumps to 32.5% when including social and emotional factors. However, while almost a third of all scenes featured consequences, most were not negative in nature. This once again supports the notion that sex, on television, is an activity with few consequences. While social and emotional consequences are a consideration, the physical consequences of STDs, STIs, AIDS, and unplanned pregnancies still need to be addressed.
Some research suggests that the risk-free nature of sexual activity on television is exaggerated. Kelly (2010) analyzed hour long “teen dramas” that aired on ABC, CBS, NBC, UPN, FOX, and WB, specifically focusing on narratives involving virginity loss. Shows included 7th Heaven, Everwood, The O.C., Smallville, One Tree Hill, Life as We Know It, Gilmore Girls, and Joan of Arcadia. Her findings indicate that risk and responsibility themes were central to the storylines, with sex portrayed as highly risky in terms of physical, emotional, and social consequences. Regret was also a common theme when having sex too early. Teens were often portrayed as responsible by discussing their decision to have sex with many adults, who often supported their decision to have sex and condom use was explicitly noted in all but two of the scenes. The explicit approval of adults in these dramas may give teens the idea that their sexual behavior would similarly be approved.

While Kelly (2010) indicates that teen dramas may include a discussion of risk and responsibility, it is still possible the depiction of the virginity loss narrative as a theme may over-represent teen sexual behavior. The virginity loss theme may endorse the perspective that other teenagers are losing their virginity, as only 1/3 of the teenage characters during the seasons viewed chose to remain virgins. The depiction of sex in teen dramas may be elevating the importance of sex to a very high level. In addition, the nature of the virginity loss theme may represent more consequences in order because the focus is sex. However, this may not be the case when sex is presented as a normative behavior rather than the focus of the story. Shows on which sex is a common occurrence may represent the consequences quite differently.
The show *Sex and the City*, a half hour comedy/romance, ran for six seasons from 1998-2004. In the beginning, *Sex and the City* storylines primarily focused on the sexual relationships of 4 young women living in New York City. Jensen and Jensen (2007) coded 3 seasons of the show for sexual talk, sexual behavior, and message about risk or responsibility. Findings indicated that, in comparison to general television programming, this program had more sexual content and sexual talk. Specifically, there were approximately 21 incidences of sexual behavior per hour in the 1998 season, which decreased to 13 incidences per hour in 2002. Further, the show contained risk and responsibility messages, though the overall percentage of health messages was low.

While this may seem encouraging as *Sex and the City* was a show dealing mainly with adult themes, the real issue arises in the considering the age of viewers. Commonsensemedia.org, an organization dedicated to providing kids and families information and education about different media and technology, gave a suitable age rating of 15 to the *Sex and the City*. Commonsensemedia.org provides age ratings and reviews based on the most important and fundamental child development principles.

Age ratings are based on each specific title based on age-appropriateness or relevance (likelihood that kids will see it) and are further labeled as “On” (age-appropriate), “Pause” (appropriate for some, not others; know your child), “Off” (not age-appropriate), or “Not for kids” (not appropriate for kids of any age). For example, the title rating for *Sex and the City* is 15, with a “pause.” By these standards, the research team at Commonsensemedia.org has determined that the content in *Sex and the City* may be suitable for some 15 year olds, with themes and messages that could be appropriate and relevant for this age. However, parents and children, who may also offer age ratings,
reported the show to be appropriate for kids as young as 13. This indicates that parents are willing to let children as young as 13 watch such a sexually driven show.

The problem is that 13 year olds are still very early in their adolescence; and a program with such strong sexual content and low levels of risk and responsibility may send the wrong messages about sex and possible consequences. In addition, young people may be especially drawn to a show of this nature because of its representation of a glamorous life in a popular city. A frank discussion of sexual behaviors and real life consequences is important to understand the difference between the fictionalized nature of glamorous television romance and real life relationships and behaviors.

Encouragingly, Kunkel and associates (1999) found that risk and responsibility messages were doubled in sexual content involving teenagers (18%) when compared to the overall depiction of all programs (9%). This may indicate that, while risk and responsibility messages are still low, they increase when the characters involved are teenagers. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

\[ H2: \text{Risk and responsibility messages will be found at a rate of more than } 10\% \text{ of the time in young adult programming.} \]

Further, as Aubrey (2004) notes, risk and responsibility messages tend to be higher when including social and emotional consequences, although physical consequences remain low. With this in mind, the following hypothesis is proposed:

\[ H3: \text{Social and emotional consequences will be more prevalent in adolescent programming than physical consequences.} \]

The false sense of media acceptance of teen sexual activity may give the impression that losing one’s virginity is an important milestone that teens must reach to
become an adult. While it is certainly a topic on the minds of developing adolescents, it is given a level of importance that may not be representative of all the issues teenagers face. The messages teens receive about sex from the media are also tend to be contradictory and gender stereotypical. For example, Kelly's (2010) research found themes of virginity as a gift which should be “given” to the right person, and themes of virginity as loss as a rite of passage in which it is all simply part of the experience of growing up. In addition, there are many sexual double standards as to the appropriateness of sexual behavior in young men and young women.

1.5 Biological Sex Representation and Stereotypes in Media

A sexual double standard exists such that women are to be sexually passive while men are aggressive with high sexual appetites (Aubrey, 2004). Women are also typically portrayed as being interested in emotions while the men are only interested in sex (Batchelor, Kitzinger, & Burtney, 2004). Not only is this an unfair representation of sexualities, the representation of consequences for males and females is often skewed.

Aubrey (2004) found that men were more often the initiators in sexual interactions, and that a scene was more likely to end with a negative consequence when a woman initiated the interaction. This finding reinforces the idea that women should be passive and play down their sexuality while men should initiate sexual interaction.

Similar messages were found by Smith (2012) looking at popular teen movies such as 8 Mile, A Cinderella Story, American Beauty, Disturbia, and American Pie. Smith (2012) focused specifically on the representation of teen girls’ sexual desires, identifying three themes for young women’s sexual desire throughout the films: desire is unspoken, only ‘bad’ girls verbalize desire, and expressing desire has negative
consequences. Desire and attraction in teen girls was also highly heteronormative and typically represented as a response to masculine desires for sex (Smith, 2012). For the young women attending to these messages, their role as sexual beings could be diminished, creating a very unhealthy view of their sexual self.

While the underrepresentation of the sexual desire of adolescent women is problematic, the implication that expressing this sexual desire has negative consequences could be of even greater concern. Aubrey (2004) states that identification with these sexually punished female characters could make young women feel disempowered in sexual situations, leading to potentially unhealthy sexual decisions.

While Gerbner and colleagues (2002) note that television doesn’t change attitudes, it just makes them stronger, the social norms for sexual women are pretty clear. The existing attitude of femininity is that women are not sexually aggressive; therefore the punishment of sexual female characters could make this attitude even stronger in young women. Stereotypical portrayals of sexual relationships is not, however, one of the biggest problems.

The media has been generally reported to portray women and femininity in ways that are stereotypical, providing an extremely narrow set of standards for physical appearance (Ward and Harrison, 2005). In the United States, women and girls are routinely sexualized in various forms of media (American Psychological Association, 2010). This narrow view of female beauty is called the “thin ideal.” The thin ideal has been widely discussed in research on self-objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Murnen, Smolak, Mills, & Good, 2003; Harper & Tiggeman, 2008) which states that women begin to view their own body as a critical outside viewer. This critical view
of one’s body is an especially important consideration during the adolescent years. Further, Harper and Tiggeman (2008) noted that mass media is the most powerful social influence when it comes to the thin ideal.

Recent research by Gerding and Signorielli (2014) found that teen scene programs presented an image of teen girls that stressed physical appearance. Because of the commonly recognized nature of the thin ideal and the greater pressure on females to fit into a narrow definition of beauty, the following hypothesis follows:

\[ H4: \text{There will be a greater emphasis on females’ physical appearance than on males’ physical appearance in adolescent programs.} \]

Research thus far has looked at sexual content during primetime, but more research needs to address shows specifically geared to an adolescent audience. Kelly (2010) focused only on shows with a specific narrative of virginity loss, but more research needs to address sexual content typical in adolescent programming. Furthermore, many studies have focused on potential effects sexual media may have on adolescents, but too few have really analyzed the sexual messages in adolescent specific programming.
Chapter 2

METHODS

This content analysis focused on shows watched by a tween and early teen audience. In order to be included, the show must be viewed or deemed appropriate for adolescents aged 8 to 11 or 12 to 15. These ages represent a time in adolescence when sexual socialization is still occurring, therefore this age group may be more susceptible to sexual messages. Sexual content can be discussed explicitly (as in the virginity loss narrative) or implicitly (as in sexually suggestive without being directly sexual), therefore analyses will focus on multiple sexual messages in teen programming. Sexual content will be coded according to the procedures used by Kunkel and associates (2007) and Batchelor, Kitzinger, and Burtney (2004).

2.1 Sample

The 2013 Teen Choice Awards and 2013 Kids Choice Awards were utilized to find programs that had been nominated to win awards, which indicates some level of popularity among viewers. Further, the Teen Choice Awards are voted on by individuals aged 13-18 years old. In this way, these shows are likely popular with the 12 to 15 year old audience. These shows were then cross-checked with commonsensemedia.org to check age appropriateness based on researchers, parents, and kids. Parents’ age ratings were given the most consideration because parents’ ratings were indicators that they would allow their children to watch that show.
In addition, informal interviews were completed by the author to identify other programs which may be popular among this age group, asking tweens, teens, and their parents what shows they often watched. Table 2.1A lists programs popular with tween viewers while Table 2.1B lists programs popular with teen viewers. It is important to note that these groups (though separated for use in the study) are not exclusive, with some tweens watching teen shows and some teens watching tween shows. The sample was collected using the fifth episode of the most recent full season available on iTunes.

Sexual behaviors include depictions of flirtatious behaviors, passionate kissing, intimate touching, sexualized presentation of the body, implied sexual intercourse, and explicit sexual intercourse. Talk about sex was also coded and included comments about the sexual activity and interests of oneself and others, talk about sex that previously occurred, talk toward having sex, sexual innuendos and double entendres meant to be sexual in nature, and sex advice. Scenes with depictions of sexual activity were coded for explicitness. Finally, any mention of risks and responsibility was coded, including discussion of condom use and birth control, mention of sexually transmitted diseases/infections, HIV/AIDS, and unplanned pregnancy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Episode Name</th>
<th>Network</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Middle</td>
<td>Halloween IV: The Ghost Story</td>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>TV-PG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor Who</td>
<td>Journey to the Centre of the Tardis</td>
<td>BBC America</td>
<td>TV-PG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star Wars: The Clone Wars</td>
<td>Tipping Points</td>
<td>Cartoon Network</td>
<td>TV-PG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventure Time</td>
<td>Love Games/Dungeon Train</td>
<td>Cartoon Network</td>
<td>TV-PG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Luck Charlie*</td>
<td>Sister Sister</td>
<td>Disney Channel</td>
<td>TV-G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wizards of Waverly Place*</td>
<td>Alex the Puppetmaster</td>
<td>Disney Channel</td>
<td>TV-G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austin &amp; Ally</td>
<td>Viral Videos and Very Bad Dancing</td>
<td>Disney Channel</td>
<td>TV-G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Suite Life on Deck</td>
<td>The Play’ the Thing</td>
<td>Disney Channel</td>
<td>TV-G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shake it Up</td>
<td>Opposites Attract it Up</td>
<td>Disney Channel</td>
<td>TV-G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iCarly*</td>
<td>iPear Store</td>
<td>Nickelodeon</td>
<td>TV-G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorious**</td>
<td>Car, Rain, and Fire</td>
<td>Nickelodeon</td>
<td>TV-Y7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marvin Marvin</td>
<td>Burger on a Bun</td>
<td>Nickelodeon</td>
<td>TV-G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Time Rush</td>
<td>Big Time Cameo</td>
<td>Nickelodeon</td>
<td>TV-G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spongebob Squarepants**</td>
<td>Little Yellow Book/Bumper to Bumper</td>
<td>Nickelodeon</td>
<td>TV-Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam and Cat</td>
<td>#BrainCrush</td>
<td>Nickelodeon</td>
<td>TV-PG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haunted Hathaways</td>
<td>Haunted Prank</td>
<td>Nickelodeon</td>
<td>TV-G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Thundermans</td>
<td>Ditch Day</td>
<td>Nickelodeon</td>
<td>TV-G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instant Mom</td>
<td>Not a Date</td>
<td>Nickelodeon</td>
<td>TV-PG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See Dad Run</td>
<td>See Dad Send Emily Flowers</td>
<td>Nickelodeon</td>
<td>TV-PG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*) indicates show nominated for *2013 Kids Choice Award*
(**) indicated show won *2013 Kids Choice Award*
Table 2.1B Description of the Sample: Young Adult Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Episode Name</th>
<th>Network</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once Upon a Time</td>
<td>Good Form</td>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>TV-PG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburgatory*</td>
<td>Halloween</td>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>TV-PG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Family*</td>
<td>The Late Show</td>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>TV-PG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nashville*</td>
<td>Don’t Open That Door</td>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>TV-PG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenge*</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>TV-PG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretty Little Liars**</td>
<td>Gamma Zeta Die!</td>
<td>ABC Family</td>
<td>TV-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Daddy</td>
<td>Life’s a Beach</td>
<td>ABC Family</td>
<td>TV-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fosters*</td>
<td>The Morning After</td>
<td>ABC Family</td>
<td>TV-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switched at Birth*</td>
<td>Have You Really the Courage</td>
<td>ABC Family</td>
<td>TV-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two and a Half Men</td>
<td>That’s Not What They Call It In Amsterdam</td>
<td>CBS</td>
<td>TV-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vampire Diaries</td>
<td>Monster’s Ball</td>
<td>CW</td>
<td>TV-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrow</td>
<td>League of Assassins</td>
<td>CW</td>
<td>TV-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supernatural</td>
<td>Dog Dean Afternoon</td>
<td>CW</td>
<td>TV-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gossip Girl*</td>
<td>Monstrous Ball</td>
<td>CW</td>
<td>TV-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glee**</td>
<td>The End of Twerk</td>
<td>Fox</td>
<td>TV-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Girl*</td>
<td>The Box</td>
<td>Fox</td>
<td>TV-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mindy Project</td>
<td>Weiner Night</td>
<td>Fox</td>
<td>TV-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen Wolf*</td>
<td>Venomous</td>
<td>MTV</td>
<td>TV-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awkward</td>
<td>A Very Special Episode of Awkward</td>
<td>MTV</td>
<td>TV-14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*) indicates show nominated for 2013 Teen Choice Award
(***) indicated show won 2013 Teen Choice Award

2.2 Units of Analysis and the Coding Procedure

There were two units of analysis: the television program and the character. Two separate recording instruments were created and can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B. The recording instruments were created with research questions and hypotheses in mind and include variables that help answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. A detailed description of the program and character recording instrument follows.
2.2.1 The Program

The program was the first unit of analysis. Each program filled a thirty-minute or sixty-minute time slot in the network schedule. Some episodes told a complete story while others focused on storylines that carried throughout the season. The opening sequence, including reviews of the previous episode and credits were included in the analysis.

2.2.1.1 The Program Recording Instrument

The program recording instrument is found in Appendix A. First, the general viewing and recording procedure is outlined to ensure consistency in the coding procedure. The first section of the recording instrument is general program information: program and coder ID numbers, season, network, parental guidelines, format (cartoon, TV play), genre (crime, action-adventure, drama, science fiction/horror, situation comedy, comedy no situation comedy or variety skits, reality, other), program type (teen scene and young adult) and tone, cast race, major and minor themes emphasized in the programs (law enforcement, crime, family, environment, science, technology, health portrayals, mental illness, illness, physical handicap, dating/relationships, sex, fame, morality, any additional), offensive or explicit language, and adult references.

The next section recorded sexual behaviors and themes and was adapted from Kunkel and colleagues (2007) and Gerding and Signorielli (2014). This section recorded depictions of kissing, hugging, affectionate interpersonal touching, intimate interpersonal touching, implicit or explicit intercourse (heterosexual or homosexual), sexual innuendo or suggestiveness, dating or relationships and relationship conflict. Only actions conveying a sense of potential or likely sexual intimacy were recorded. Therefore, a
platonic hug or kiss between parent and child was not coded as they do not denote sexual intimacy. Further, if a couple embraced and kissed, this would be coded as two separate instances of a kiss and a hug. Instances of sexual risk and responsibility (i.e., unwanted pregnancy, STDs), sexual patience, and sexual precaution (condom use) were also coded.

Violence variables were adapted from Gerding and Signorielli (2014) to record the seriousness of violence, significance of violence, physical consequences of violence, immoral violence, and total number of violent actions. Violence had to be plausible and credible, including intentional and accidental violence, violent accidents, catastrophes, and act of nature.

For a full description of operational definitions and coding instructions, please see Appendix A.

2.2.2 The Characters

The second unit of analysis was the character. This included main or leading characters as well as characters in supporting roles who were integral to the story’s plot. Coders kept detailed notes for each character and then coded according to the recording instrument. If the character was entirely superfluous and the story could be told without them, they were not included.

2.2.2.1 The Character Recording Instrument

The character recording instrument can be found in Appendix B. The first section gathered general episode information: season, network, parental guidelines, format, genre, program type, program tone, and cast race. Next, character descriptives were recorded: sex (male/female), humanity (human, human-like animal, animal, human-like machine, machine, mythical creature such as vampire or werewolf, and other), character
race, chronological age, social age, grade in school, level of education, hair color, body weight, body attractiveness, facial attractiveness, provocative clothing, character role, character type, advice, academic intelligence, and practical intelligence.

This section coded for sexual behaviors and themes and was adapted from Gerding and Signorielli (2014), Kelly (2010), and Kunkel and colleagues (2007). If several behaviors occurred simultaneously they were coded separately, but if an action lasted for an extended period of time, it was only recorded as one behavior. Only behavior romantic in nature was recorded, therefore a platonic hug between friends was not coded. Each behavior should be recorded for all characters involved, therefore if a man and woman kiss, it was recorded on each individual character’s recording sheet.

Sexual behavior variables included: kiss, hug, affectionate interpersonal touching, intimate interpersonal touching, sexual innuendo, sexual suggestiveness, flirting, sexual orientation, implied heterosexual intercourse, implied homosexual intercourse, explicit heterosexual intercourse, explicit homosexual intercourse, sexual risks or responsibilities, dating or romantic relationships, age of partner, sexual activity status, expression of desire, conflict present, and conflict role. The majority of variables were coded zero if not present and if present, each instance was counted and reported.

Violence was also recorded as adapted from Gerding and Signorielli (2014). Variables include: violence committed by character, violence suffered by character, and the consequences of violent behavior.

For a detailed description of operational definitions and coding behavior, see the full recording instrument in Appendix B.
2.3 Coder Training

Two coders completed this content analysis: the author and an adult trained in the content analysis method needed for this project. First, the researcher and coder engaged in a detailed discussion about the contents of the recording instruments, operational definitions for each variable, and specific examples illustrating the various behaviors. Next, both the researcher and coder analyzed a pre-determined set of episodes of the same programs to be used in the study, then compared results and discussed the reasons for any discrepancies. The recording instrument was then edited to fix any issues remaining prior to the final data collection and analysis.

2.4 Reliability Analysis

The researcher independently coded the entire sample and the second coder independently completed a subset of four teen scene and three young adult programs. Inter-coder reliability was assessed using Krippendorff’s alpha. Typically, variables are considered reliable with an alpha level of .60. However, because of issues with the second coder’s data, some variables with low inter-coder reliability were still used to analyze research questions and test hypotheses. Therefore, results should be viewed with caution. Percent agreement was used to report reliability for variables with a lopsided distribution. The value of Krippendorff’s alpha ranged from 0 to 1.00. A value of 0 was found in either of two cases. When there was absolutely no agreement between the two coders (a rare occurrence) or when the element in question did not appear (a frequent finding). That is, all of the units were found in the “do not appear” category. This was the typical scenario when the value of Krippendorff’s alpha was 0. None of these variables were used in the data analysis. The findings of the reliability analysis can be found in
Table 2.2 for program variables and Table 2.3 for character variables. Unfortunately, the second coder was not very diligent in completing the actual coding and should have had additional training. Consequently, some of the variables did not reach appropriate levels of reliability.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>Alpha/Percent (%) Agreement</th>
<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>Alpha/Percent (%) Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hug</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Affectionate Touch</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
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<td>Parental Guidelines</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>Intimate Touch</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>Sexual Innuendo</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sexual Suggestiveness</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Type</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Flirting</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Tone</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Homosexuality</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cast: Race</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bisexuality</td>
<td>0**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Enforcement</td>
<td>0**</td>
<td>Homosexual References</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bisexual References</td>
<td>0**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>Implied Heterosexual Intercourse</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>0**</td>
<td>Implied Homosexual Intercourse</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Explicit Heterosexual Intercourse</td>
<td>0**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>86%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>0**</td>
<td>Sexual Risks &amp; Resp.</td>
<td>0**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Illness</td>
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<td>Sexual Patience</td>
<td>0**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Illness</td>
<td>0**</td>
<td>Sexual Precaution</td>
<td>0**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Handicap</td>
<td>0**</td>
<td>Dating/Rom relationships</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dating/Relationships</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>Total Sexual Incidents</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fame</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Total Sexual Innuendos</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Seriousness of Violence</td>
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<td>Additional</td>
<td>0**</td>
<td>Significance of Violence</td>
<td>0**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offensive Language</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>Viol. - physical cons.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Reference</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>Immoral Violence</td>
<td>0**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiss</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>Total violent actions</td>
<td>0**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table includes Krippendorff’s alpha and percent agreement.

** 0 indicates that variable did not appear
Table 2.3 Reliability for Character

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Alpha/Percent (%) Agreement</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Alpha/Percent (%) Agreement</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Practical Intelligence</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>Kiss</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Guidelines</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>Hug</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>Affectionate Touch</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
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<td>Genre</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>Intimate Touch</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Type</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>Sexual Innuendo</td>
<td>.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Tone</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sexual Suggestiveness</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cast: Race</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>Flirting</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humainty</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Implied Heterosexual Intercourse</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character Race</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>Implied Homosexual Intercourse</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronological Age</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>Explicit Heterosexual Intercourse</td>
<td>0**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Age</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Explicit Homosexual Intercourse</td>
<td>0**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade in School</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>Sexual Risk/Resp.</td>
<td>0**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>Dating/Romance</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair Color</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>Age of Partner</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body weight</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>Sexual Activity Status</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facial Attractiveness</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>Express desire</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Attractiveness</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>Conflict Present</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provocative Clothing</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>Conflict Role</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Character</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>Viol. Committed by Character</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character Type</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>Victimization</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>Consequences of Violent behavior</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Intelligence</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table includes Krippendorff’s alpha and percent agreement. ** 0 indicates that variable did not appear

2.5 Data Analysis

A variety of statistical analyses were used to answer the posed research questions and test the hypotheses. To simplify hypothesis testing for sexual content, a total sexual content scale was made using sexual content variables including kiss, hug, affectionate interpersonal touching, intimate interpersonal touching, sexual innuendo, sexual suggestiveness, flirting, implied heterosexual intercourse, implied homosexual intercourse, explicit heterosexual intercourse, explicit homosexual intercourse, and explicit homosexual intercourse. The majority of tests were independent samples t-tests to compare mean scores on total sexual content.
content, frequency of sexual content variables, and messages of sexual risk and responsibility to sample type and gender. Chi square tests for independence were used to explore the relationship between sample type and those variables relating to sex and dating; program type and sexual activity status; body attractiveness, facial attractiveness, and weight by biological sex; and messages of sexual risk and responsibility by program type. A one-way analysis of variance was used to compare character age to total sexual content and a two way analysis of variance was used to compare biological sex and program type to total sexual content and, finally, to compare social age and biological sex to total sexual content. Finally, goodness of fit chi square analyses were calculated to look at how the TV data related to data on a CDC study examining the actual sexual activity of a sample high school students.
3.1 Description of the Sample: Program

The sample consists of 39 programs that were coded from ten cable networks: Nickelodeon (28.2%), ABC (15.4%), Disney Channel (12.8%), ABC Family (10.3%), CW (10.3%), Fox (7.7%), Cartoon Network (5.1%), MTV (5.1), BBC America (2.6%), and CBS (2.6%). More than a third (35.9%) of the programs were rated TV-14, 30.8% rated TV-PG, 25.6% rated TV-G, 5.1% TV-Y7, and 2.6 % rated TV-Y. The sample included multiple genres with situation comedies representing the majority (46.2%), followed by drama (23.1%), science fiction/horror (12.8%), comedy, not situation comedies or variety skits (12.8%), and action adventure (5.1%). Program tone was considered comic 48.7% of the time, serious 35.9% of the time, while 12.8% of the programs were both comic and serious in tone. Finally, the sample was divided into two program types for further analysis: teen scene (N = 20) and young adult (N = 19). Some examples of teen scene programs, which cater to an 8 to 11 year old demographic, are *SpongeBob Squarepants, Victorious, Sam and Cat,* and *Wizards of Waverly Place.* Examples of young adult programs, which cater to a 12 to 15 year old demographic, include *Once Upon a Time, The Fosters, Switched at Birth, Teen Wolf,* and *Modern Family.*
3.2 Description of the Sample: Characters

A total of 151 characters were coded, 78 male (51.3%), 73 female (48%). There was a fairly even split of biological sex in teen scene programs with 37 males (50%) and 37 females (50%) and young adult programs with 41 males (53%) and 36 females (47%). The male-female distributions reflect the U.S. population; the Goodness of Fit Chi Square analyses were not statistically significant. In the entire sample, $\chi^2 (1, n = 151) = .33, p = .56$; for the teen scene programs, $\chi^2 (1, n = 151) = 0, p = 1.0$; and for the young adult programs, $\chi^2 (1, n = 151) = .40, p = .53$.

The race of characters for all programs (presented in Table 3.1) was predominantly White (74.3%), followed by Black (10.5%), Hispanic/Latino (7.9%), Asian (2%), and only 1 character was coded as Native American (0.7%). Table 3.1 shows character race by biological sex. For male characters, seven in ten (73.1) were White, and less than one in ten were Black (11.5%), Asian (1.3%), Native American (0%), and Hispanic/Latino (9%). For female characters, eight out of ten (76.7%) were White, and less than one in ten were Black (9.6%), Asian (2.7%), Native American (1.4%), and Hispanic/Latino (6.8%). There was no statistical difference by race for males and females, $\chi^2 (5, n = 151) = 2.43, p = .79$.

Overall, the racial distribution differed by program type (see Table 3.1). A Chi-square test for independence (with Yates Continuity Correction) revealed significant differences in racial breakdown between teen scene and young adult programs: $\chi^2 (5, n = 151) = 18.48, p < .01$. Overall, teen scene programs were more racially diverse than the young adult programs. In teen scene programming 63% of characters were White, 16.2% Black, 10.8% Hispanic/Latino, 1.4% Native American, 0% Asian, and six were cannot
code. In young adult programming, 85.7% characters were White, 5.2% Black, 5.2% Hispanic/Latino, and 3.9% Asian. There were no Native American characters or characters who could not be coded in young adult programming.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Teen Scene N = 74</th>
<th>Young Adult N = 77</th>
<th>Male N = 78</th>
<th>Female N = 73</th>
<th>All Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R%</td>
<td>C%</td>
<td>R%</td>
<td>C%</td>
<td>R%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot code</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>50.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Race by program type: $\chi^2 = 18.48$, df = 5, $p < .01$
Race by biological sex: $\chi^2 = 2.43$, df = 5, $p = .79$

Table 3.2 gives the social age of all characters, showing that a third (33.1%) of characters were late adolescents, a quarter (25.2%) were young adults, and a quarter (25.2%) were settled adults. About one in ten were early adolescents (6.6%) and tweens (3.3%) while 6.6% could not be coded. Table 3.2 also gives the social age by biological sex distributions. A Chi-square analysis found no statistically significant difference between biological sex and social age, $\chi^2 (5, n = 151) = 10.96, p = .05$. Three in ten (32.1%) male characters were young adults, two in ten were late adolescent (23.1%) or settled adults (24.4%), and less than one in ten were tween (5.1%) or early adolescent (6.4%). For female characters, four in ten (43.8%) were late adolescents, two in ten (26%) settled adults, two in ten (17.8%) young adults, and less than one in ten tweens (1.4%) or early adolescents (6.8%).
Social age was related to program type; teen scene programs had a larger number of younger (e.g. late adolescents and early adolescent) characters than young adult programs. The Chi-square analysis indicated a significant difference between sample type and social age, $\chi^2 (5, n = 151) = 20.76, p < .01$. In teen scene programs, 41.9% of characters were late adolescents (16 - 19), with 10.8% early adolescents (13 - 15) and only 4.1% tweens (8 - 12). In young adult programming, the majority were settled adults (35.1%), followed by young adults (32.5%), and late adolescents (24.7%). For the complete breakdown of social age by program type and biological sex, please see Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2. Social age by program type and biological sex**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Age</th>
<th>Teen Scene N = 74</th>
<th>Young Adult N = 77</th>
<th>Male N = 78</th>
<th>Female N = 73</th>
<th>All Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R%</td>
<td>C%</td>
<td>R%</td>
<td>C%</td>
<td>R%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot Code</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tween (8-12)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Adolescent (13-15)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Adolescent (16-19)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Adult (few or no family responsibilities)</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>65.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settled Adult (family, established career)</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>71.1</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social age by program type: $\chi^2 = 20.76$, $df = 5$, $p < .01$
Social age by biological sex: $\chi^2 (5, n = 151) = 10.96$, $p = .052$
Table 3.3 gives the breakdown of the characters by humanity with 88.7% human, 4.6% mythical creature, 2% animal, 0.7% animal, human-like, and 4% classified as other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Humanity</th>
<th>Frequency (N)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>88.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mythical creature</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal, human-like</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1: How much sexual content is seen in adolescent programming? What types of sexual images are seen in these programs?

The amount of sexual content was determined by counting the number of times each specific sexual behavior occurred in each program and then calculating the average number of occurrences for each behavior. The analysis began by examining the entire sample of adolescent programs. As some of the sexual behaviors, for both the program and the characters, achieved only minimal levels of inter-coder reliability, these results should be viewed with some caution.

Overall, while there was some sexual behavior, there was not an excessive number of these behaviors in these programs. Sexual innuendo occurred most frequently; there were, on average, a little more than two incidents of sexual innuendo in each program (M = 2.08, SD = 2.31) with a range of zero to 9 instances in a program. Flirting, affectionate touching, and kissing occurred more than once each program: flirting occurred 1.9 times per program, affectionate touch occurred 1.6 time per program, and kissing occurred 1.4 times each program. Hugging, intimate touch, sexual suggestiveness,
and homosexual references occurred infrequently: hugging occurred .41 times per program, intimate touches occurred .64 times per program, sexual suggestiveness occurred .62 times per program, and homosexual references occurred .49 times per program.

Homosexuality, bisexuality, bisexual references, implied homosexual intercourse, implied heterosexual intercourse, explicit heterosexual intercourse, and explicit homosexual intercourse appeared least often: implied heterosexual intercourse occurred only .21 times per program, with homosexuality, bisexuality, bisexual references, implied homosexual intercourse, and explicit heterosexual intercourse occurring less than one tenth of the time and explicit homosexual intercourse did not occur at all. Table 3.4 provides the mean and standard deviation of sexual content variables across all adolescent programs.
Table 3.4. Descriptives for sexual content variables for adolescent programming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean (M)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation (SD)</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Number of Cases (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kiss</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hug</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affectionate Touch</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimate Touch</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Innuendo</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Suggestiveness</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flirting</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexuality</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexuality</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexual References</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual References</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implied Heterosexual</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implied Homosexual</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit Heterosexual</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit Homosexual</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Sexual Content</td>
<td>10.10</td>
<td>10.84</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ2: Are sexual images in teen scene programs similar or different from those in young adult programs?

Sex, as a thematic element, was seen infrequently in all programs (see Table 3.5). In nine out of ten programs (89.7%) no attention was paid to sex as a theme. Sex was minor to the plot in 5.1% of the programs, and was a significant or outstanding focus in 2.6% of the programs. In comparison, dating as a theme was seen more frequently. Less than a third of the programs (30.8%) did not mention this theme, while it was significant or outstanding in one-quarter of the programs (25.6%), and was minor to the plot in almost two in ten programs (17.9%).

In teen scene program, sex as a thematic element appeared infrequently. Table 3.5 shows that none of the teen scene programs were coded as having attention paid to this theme. Sex appeared somewhat more frequently in the young adult programs. In this
case, sex was a minor theme in 10.5% of the programs and a major or significant theme in 10.6% of the programs. There was, however, no significant statistical difference between the teen scene and young adult programs ($\chi^2(3, n = 39) = 4.69, p = .20$).

The theme of dating and interpersonal relationships appeared somewhat more frequently (see Table 3.5). In the teen scene programs, dating and relationships were a significant or major part of the story in 45% of the programs; in young adult programs this theme was a significant or major part of the story in 57.9% of the programs. There was, however, no statistically significant difference in the appearance of the theme of dating and relationships in the teen scene and young adult programs ($\chi^2(3, n = 39) = 4.66, p = .20$).
Table 3.5. Sex and dating themes by program type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Variable</th>
<th>Teen Scene N = 20</th>
<th>Young Adult N = 19</th>
<th>All Programs N = 39</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R%</td>
<td>C%</td>
<td>R%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No attention paid to theme</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme is minor part of the plot</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme is significant to the plot</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme is outstanding focus of plot</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N = 39</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>48.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dating</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No attention paid to theme</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme is minor part of the plot</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme is significant to the plot</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme is outstanding focus of plot</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N = 39</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>48.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R% = Row percentages; C% = Column percentages

A total sexual content scale was calculated by adding all the occurrences of the sexual content variables including: kiss, hug, affectionate interpersonal touching, intimate interpersonal touching, sexual innuendo, sexual suggestiveness, flirting, implied heterosexual intercourse, implied homosexual intercourse, explicit heterosexual intercourse, and explicit homosexual intercourse. An independent samples t-test was then calculated to compare the total amount of sexual content between the teen scene and young adult programs. Although the teen scene programs had fewer instances of sexual
content (M = 7.55, SD = 13.6) than the young adult programs (M = 12.79, SD = 6.25),
the difference between the two program types was not statistically significant, \( t(37) = -1.54, p = .13 \).

In addition, independent samples t-tests were run to compare the frequency of
each sexual content variable (kiss, hug, affectionate touch, intimate touch, sexual
innuendo, sexual suggestiveness, flirting, homosexuality, bisexuality, homosexual
references, bisexual references, implied heterosexual intercourse, implied homosexual
intercourse, explicit heterosexual intercourse, explicit homosexual intercourse, and
dating/relationships) by program type (teen scene and young adult). Statistically
significant differences were found for kissing, \( t(19.89) = -4.13, p < .01 \); hugging, \( t(25.8) = -2.81, p < .05 \); intimate touching, \( t(20.89) = -3.36, p < .01 \); sexual suggestiveness \( t(37) = -3.59, p < .01 \); homosexual references, \( t(18.63) = -2.35, p < .05 \); and implied
heterosexual intercourse, \( t(18) = -2.65, p < .05 \). Table 3.6 shows the results of all t tests
by variable.
Table 3.6. Sexual content variable means by program type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Teen Scene N = 20</th>
<th>Young Adult N = 19</th>
<th>t-score ($t$)</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom (df)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kiss</td>
<td>.25 (.55)</td>
<td>2.52 (2.34)</td>
<td>-4.13**</td>
<td>19.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hug</td>
<td>.15 (.37)</td>
<td>.68 (.75)</td>
<td>-2.81*</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affectionate Touch</td>
<td>1.30 (1.30)</td>
<td>1.84 (1.61)</td>
<td>-1.16</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimate Touch</td>
<td>.15 (.37)</td>
<td>1.16 (1.26)</td>
<td>-3.36**</td>
<td>20.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Innuendo</td>
<td>1.65 (2.43)</td>
<td>2.53 (2.14)</td>
<td>-1.19</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Suggestiveness</td>
<td>.25 (.55)</td>
<td>1 (1.95)</td>
<td>-3.59**</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flirt</td>
<td>1.30 (1.89)</td>
<td>2.47 (1.95)</td>
<td>-1.90</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexuality</td>
<td>0.00 (0.00)</td>
<td>.21 (.54)</td>
<td>-1.71</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexuality</td>
<td>0.00 (0.00)</td>
<td>.05 (.23)</td>
<td>-1.00</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexual Reference</td>
<td>.05 (.22)</td>
<td>.95 (1.65)</td>
<td>-2.35*</td>
<td>18.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual Reference</td>
<td>0.00 (0.00)</td>
<td>.11 (.46)</td>
<td>-1.00</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implied Heterosexual</td>
<td>0.00 (0.00)</td>
<td>.42 (.69)</td>
<td>-2.65*</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercourse</td>
<td>0.00 (0.00)</td>
<td>.11 (.32)</td>
<td>-1.46</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implied Homosexual</td>
<td>0.00 (0.00)</td>
<td>.53 (.23)</td>
<td>-1.00</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercourse</td>
<td>0.00 (0.00)</td>
<td>0.00 (.00)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit Heterosexual</td>
<td>0.00 (0.00)</td>
<td>0.00 (.00)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercourse</td>
<td>0.00 (0.00)</td>
<td>1.95 (1.11)</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*indicates significance a $p < .05$, ** indicates significance at $p < .01$; standard deviation reported under means in parenthesis.

Specifically, kissing was more frequent in young adult programs (M = 2.52, SD = 2.34) than teen scene (M = .25, SD = .55). Hugging was also more frequent in young adult (M = .68, SD = .75) than teen scene (M = .15, SD = .37). In fact, young adult programs had more intimate touching (M = 1.16, SD = SD = 1.26), sexual suggestiveness (M = 1, SD = .75), homosexual references (M = .95, SD = 1.65), and implied heterosexual intercourse (M = .42, SD = .69) while teen scene programs had less intimate
touching (M = .15, SD = .37), sexual suggestiveness (M = .25, SD = .55), homosexual references (M = .05, SD = .22), and implied heterosexual intercourse (M = 0, SD = 0).

Overall, sexual content is similar in teen scene and young adult programs. However, when viewing each sexual content variable, young adult programming has more sexual content in the form of kissing, hugging, intimate interpersonal touching, sexual suggestiveness, homosexual references, and implied heterosexual intercourse than teen scene programs.

**RQ3: Are teen characters the focus of sexual content in adolescent specific programming?**

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the total number of sexual behaviors exhibited by males and females. There was no significant difference in terms of the number of behaviors for males (M = 2.06, SD = 2.4) or females (M = 2.94, SD = 6.8), $t (149) = -1.07, p = .29$.

A two-way analysis of variance found no relationship in the total number of sexual behaviors exhibited by biological sex and program type (teen scene and young adult). There was no significant interaction between biological sex and program type $F (1, 147) = .40, p = .53$, as well as no significant main effects for biological sex, $F (1, 147) = 1.22, p = .27$, or program type, $F (1, 147) = .58, p = .45$.

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to explore how character age was related to sexual behaviors. Characters were divided into groups based on social age: tween (8-12), early adolescent (13-15), late adolescent (16-19), young adult (few or no family responsibilities), and settled adult (family, established career). There was no statistically significant difference in sexual content for the five age groups: $F (5, 145) = 2.26, p > .05$. 

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A two-way analysis of variance was conducted to explore the relationship between social age and biological sex on the total number of sexual behaviors. Because Levene’s test of equality was significant, a more stringent significance level ($p < .01$) was used. A significant interaction was found between social age and biological sex, $F(5, 139) = 7.91, p < .01$. The total number of sexual behaviors was higher for females whose social age could not be coded ($M = 20.67$, $SD = 2.55$) than males whose social age could not be coded ($M = 0.86$, $SD = 1.67$). Otherwise, there were no differences in the number of sexual behaviors exhibited by social age and biological sex.

**H1**: More main characters on young adult programs (e.g. Pretty Little Liars, The Fosters, Glee, etc.) than on teen scene programs (e.g. Sam and Cat, Adventure Time, and SpongeBob Squarepants, etc.) will be presented as sexually experienced than as virgins.

The sexual activity status of main characters in teen scene programs was largely unknown with 85% of characters not coded, only 9 shown as clearly sexually active (12%), and only 2 identified as virgins (2%). On the other hand, main characters in young adult programs were found to be sexually active a majority of the time; 49 (63%) were identified as sexually active and only 1 (1%) was a virgin. A third of the time (35%), it was unclear whether or not the character was sexually active. These differences were statistically significant. A Chi-square test for independence (with Yates Continuity Correction) indicated a significant association between program (teen scene or young adult) and sexual activity status, $\chi^2(2, n = 151) = .53, p < .01, \phi = .53$. Overall, it is clear that major characters in young adult programs are often depicted as sexually active, thus supporting hypothesis 1.

**RQ4**: Do adolescent programs accurately reflect the sexual activity of teens?
Recent data from the CDC 2013 High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey (http://nccd.cdc.gov/YouthOnline/App/Results) found that almost half (46.8%) of the young people surveyed (approximately 13,000) had ever had sex and about a third (34.0%) had been sexually active in the last three months. In examining RQ4, Chi Square goodness of fit tests comparing the US high school data with the number of characters indicating they were sexually active in the sample of teen scene programs (12%) and the young adult programs (63%) found that these TV images do not accurately reflect the sexual behaviors of high school students indicated in the responses to the questions in the CDC survey. For the high school students who said they had ever had sex, the teen scene programs had fewer characters actively involved sexually than the high school sample $\chi^2 (1, n = 151) = 34.28, p < .001$ while the young adult programs had more characters actively involved sexually than the high school sample $\chi^2 (1, n = 151) = 8.1, p < .004$.

Likewise, looking at US high school teens who stated they were currently sexually active (34%), the characters in the teen scene programs were less likely to be sexually active, $\chi^2 (1, n = 151) = 14.77, p < .001$, while the characters in the young adult programs were more likely to be sexually active, $\chi^2 (1, n = 151) = 28.83, p < .001$.

**H2: Risk and responsibility messages will be found more than 10% of the time in young adult programming.**

Risk and responsibility measures appeared very infrequently in the teen scene and young adult programs. An independent samples t-test found no significant difference between teen scene risk and responsibility messages ($M = 0$, $SD = 0$) and young adult risk and responsibility messages ($M = .32$, $SD = 1.38$). The magnitude of difference in the means (mean difference = .32, 95% CI: -0.98 to 0.35) was very small (eta squared = .006).
Further analysis using a chi-square test for independence (with Yates Continuity Correction) found no significant relationship between risk and responsibility messages and program type, $\chi^2 (1, n = 151) = .17, p > .05, \phi = .17$. There were no risk and responsibility messages in teen scene programs and only 5.3% of the young adult programs had risk and responsibility messages. With such a low percentage of risk and responsibility messages, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

**H3:** Social and emotional consequences will be more prevalent than physical consequences in adolescent programming.

There was no support for hypothesis 3. Of the risk and responsibility messages present, only physical consequences (such as pregnancy or STDs) were mentioned, but only in 2.6% of the programs. Most of the programs (97%) made no mention of risk and responsibility at all. An independent samples t-test that compared the messages of sexual risk and responsibility between teen scene and young adult programs found no significant differences for messages of sexual risk and responsibility between teen scene ($M = 0$, $SD = 0$) and young adult ($M = .32$, $SD = 1.38$) programs; $t (18) = -1.00, p = .33$. The means for measures of sexual risk and responsibility, sexual precaution, and sexual patience by program type are presented in Table 3.7.

**Table 3.7.** Average number of sexual risk/responsibility, patience, and precaution measures by program type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Teen Scene</th>
<th>Young Adult</th>
<th>t-score ($t$)</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom ($df$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N = 20</td>
<td>N = 19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual risks and</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>-1.00</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsibilities</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual patience</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-1.00</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Precaution</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-1.00</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**H4- There will be greater emphasis on females’ physical appearance than on males’ physical appearance in adolescent programs.**

There is some support for H4. A series of Chi-square tests explored the relationship between body weight, body attractiveness, and facial attractiveness for biological sex and program type. A significant relationship was found for body weight and biological sex in teen scene programs: $\chi^2 (3, n = 74) = 10.72, p < .05$; young adult programs: $\chi^2 (3, n = 77) = 37.11, p < .01$; and in all programs: $\chi^2 (4, n = 151) = 43.92, p < .01$ (see Table 3.8). Once again, these results, particularly those for body and facial attractiveness, should be viewed with caution because of low levels of inter-coder reliability.

Overall, those who were categorized as thin were three times as likely to be female characters (75.7%) than male characters (24.3%). Characters who were toned/fit/average were three times as likely to be males (78.7%) than females (21.3). Overweight characters were also more likely to be male than females.

Six out of ten male characters (61.5%) were coded as toned/fit/average while only one quarter (23.1%) were thin and one in ten were slightly or very overweight. On the other hand, three-quarters of the female characters (76.7%) were thin while less than two in ten (17.8%) were fit/toned/average and only 2.7% were slightly overweight. No female characters were classified as very overweight or obese.

In teen scene programs, five in ten (48.6%) male characters were coded as toned/fit/average, three in ten (27%) as thin, and less than one in ten (13.5%) as slightly overweight. In comparison, six out of ten female characters (64.9%) were coded as thin, two in ten (24.3%) as toned/fit/average, and less than one in ten (5.4%) were slightly overweight.
overweight. There were no male or female characters coded as obese in teen scene programs.

In young adult programming, nine in ten (88.9%) female characters were coded as thin, one in ten (11.1%) coded as toned/fit/average, and zero coded as slightly overweight or obese. The male characters, on the other hand, were coded largely as toned/fit/average. Two out of ten (19.5%) were coded as thin, seven out of ten (73.2%) as toned/fit/average, and less than one in ten as slightly overweight (4.9%) or obese (2.4%). See Table 3.8 for body weight by biological sex and sample type.

Almost nine out of ten females in young adult programs are very thin compared to less than two-thirds of the females in the teen scene programs. Clearly, body weight is somewhat more extreme for the females in the young adult programs than the teen scene programs, however, Chi-square analysis found that these differences were not statistically significant, $\chi^2 (3, n = 73) = 7.05, p = .07$. Similarly, almost three-quarters of the males in the young adult programs are categorized as toned/fit/average compared to less than half of the males in the teen scene programs, however, these differences were not statistically significant, $\chi^2 (4, n = 78) = 9.33, p = .05$. 
Table 3.8. Body weight by biological sex and program type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total (N) = 151</th>
<th>Teen Scene</th>
<th>Young Adult</th>
<th>All Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N = 37</td>
<td>N = 37</td>
<td>N = 41</td>
<td>N = 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R%</td>
<td>C%</td>
<td>R%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot Code</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thin</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>70.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toned/fit/average</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly overweight</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very overweight/obese</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Body Weight: Teen Scene: $\chi^2 = 10.72$, $df = 3$, $p < .05$; Young Adult: $\chi^2 = 37.11$, $df = 3$, $p < .01$; All Programs: $\chi^2 = 43.92$, $df = 4$, $p < .01$

R% = Row percentages; C% = Column percentages

In the teen scene programs there were no significant differences for body attractiveness in terms of biological sex, $\chi^2 (3, n = 74) = 4.90, p = .18$. However, there were significant differences by biological sex in young adult programs, $\chi^2 (2, n = 77) = 7.95, p < .05$; and all programs, $\chi^2 (3, n = 151) = 9.04, p < .05$.

In the entire sample, six out of ten (60.3%) of male characters were coded as very attractive, three out of ten (26.9%) were of average attractiveness, and less than one in ten (6%) were not very attractive. On the other hand, eight out of ten (82.2%) females characters were coded very attractive, and less than one in ten as average (11%) or not very attractive (4.1%).

In young adult programs, nine out of ten (97.2%) female characters were coded as very attractive, less than one in ten (2.8%) as not very attractive, and none were classified as average. In comparison, eight out of ten (75.6%) male characters were coded as very attractive, two in ten (17.1%) as average, and less than one in ten (7.3%) as not very attractive. See Table 3.9 for the full breakdown of body attractiveness by biological sex and sample type.
Table 3.9. Body Attractiveness by biological sex and program type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total N = 151</th>
<th>Teen Scene</th>
<th></th>
<th>Young Adult</th>
<th></th>
<th>All Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male R% C%</td>
<td>Female R% C%</td>
<td>Male R% C%</td>
<td>Female R% C%</td>
<td>Male R% C%</td>
<td>Female R% C%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body Attractiveness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot Code</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very attractive</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average/typical attractiveness</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very attractive</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>75.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Body Attractiveness: Teen Scene: $\chi^2 = 4.90, df = 3, p = .18$; Young Adult: $\chi^2 = 7.95, df = 2, p < .05$; All Programs: $\chi^2 = 9.04, df = 3, p < .05$

R% = Row percentages; C% = Column percentages

Similarly, in teen scene programs there was no significant difference for facial attractiveness by biological sex, $\chi^2 (3, n = 74) = 5.67, p = .13$. There were, however, significant differences for both young adult programs, $\chi^2 (2, n = 77) = 7.75, p < .05$, and all programs, $\chi^2 (3, n = 151) = 10.08, p < .05$.

For facial attractiveness across all programs, six in ten (60.3%) males were considered very attractive, two in ten (24.4%) were coded as average, and less than one in ten (9%) were coded as not very attractive. The female characters were again coded mainly as very attractive. Eight in ten (83.6%) female characters were coded as very attractive and less than one in ten were as average (9.6%) or not very attractive (4.1%).

Once again, young adult programs had more extreme characterizations. One in ten of the male characters (9.8%) were not very attractive while only 2.8% of the females were so classified. Almost all of the female characters (97.2%) were very attractive compared to three-quarters (75.6%) of the male characters. See Table 3.10 for facial attractiveness by biological sex and program type.
Table 3.10. Facial attractiveness by biological sex and program type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facial Attractiveness</th>
<th>Total N = 151</th>
<th>Teen Scene</th>
<th>Young Adult</th>
<th>All Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male R%</td>
<td>Female R%</td>
<td>Male C%</td>
<td>Female C%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot Code</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very attractive</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average/typical attractiveness</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very attractive</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>70.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Facial Attractiveness: Teen Scene: $\chi^2 = 5.67, df = 3, p = .13$; Young Adult: $\chi^2 = 7.75, df = 2, p < .05$; All Programs: $\chi^2 = 10.08, df = 3, p < .05$

R% = Row percentages; C% = Column percentages

While it is clear that a majority of both male and female characters were coded as very attractive, a higher percentage of males were coded as average or not very attractive.

In addition, the majority of female characters were coded as thin, while male characters were more often coded as toned/fit/average. Although very few characters were coded as slightly overweight or obese, it is important that very few of these characters were female characters.
Chapter 4

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Summary

This thesis was a content analysis of adolescent programming with a focus on sexual content. The sample was divided into teen scene programs and young adult programs. Teen scene programs (SpongeBob Squarepants, Sam and Cat, Victorious, etc.) were defined as those popular with 8 to 11 year old “tweens” and were chosen based on informal interviews with this age group and the 2013 Kids Choice Awards winners and nominees. Young adult programs (Pretty Little Liars, Teen Wolf, Once Upon a Time, etc.) were defined as those popular with a 12 to 15 year old demographic (“teens”) and were chosen based on informal interviews with 12-15 year olds as well as the winners and nominees of the 2013 Teen Choice Awards.

Every individual occurrence of a sexual behavior was recorded and counted to determine the extent of sexual content in teen scene and young adult programs. Characters were coded for their involvement in sexual behaviors and whether or not they were sexually active. All programs were coded at both a program and character level.

The biological sex distribution in the sample and between program types was evenly divided between men and women. Nevertheless, there was an over-representation of White characters when compared to Black, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American characters. The characters in teen scene programs were mainly categorized as
late adolescents (16 – 19) and the characters in young adult programming were mainly categorized as settled or young adults, with only a quarter identified as late adolescents.

Romano (2004) stated that Disney programs used teen-aged characters as relevant examples for young viewers. The distribution of social age between program types found that this pattern holds true for both teen scene and young adult programs. This is important to note because young viewers of both teen scene and young adult programming are viewing characters at least a few years older than themselves. Bandura (2001) notes that attentional processes play a crucial role in observational learning as well as attending to the particular messages presented. For young viewers, the characters in their favorite shows may hold a certain appeal because they represent a more mature and popular group of teenagers, one which they may hope to emulate one day. Therefore, it is possible that younger viewers will not only attend to the messages presented, but the behaviors of those characters will be more attractive because of the characters’ social status within the show.

The findings indicate that while there was some sexual behavior, it did not occur in excessive amounts. Both implied and explicit heterosexual intercourse occurred very rarely, as did implied homosexual intercourse. Explicit homosexual intercourse did not occur at all. In fact, homosexuality and bisexuality were rarely represented. Sexual innuendo was the most frequently occurring behavior, followed by flirting, affectionate touching, and kissing. While it appears that the majority of sexual content is verbal and the physical aspects largely innocent, it is still important to consider the context of the sexual behaviors which did occur.
Sex itself was rarely a theme in either program type, but dating as a major story element was seen in almost half of the teen scene programs and more than half of the young adult programs. While sex may not have been present in the episodes, it may still be a significant factor in the relationships of the older characters presented in these programs. Further, while young adult programs had slightly more sexual content than teen scene, there was not a significant amount of these types of behaviors. Therefore, viewers of teen scene and young adult programs experience somewhat similar exposure to sexual content.

According to the theories outlined, the exposure to sexual behaviors and messages to which tween and teens are exposed may influence adolescents’ views of sexual behavior and even affects their own sexual behavior. While findings reveal a limited amount of sexual content in adolescent programming, it is important to further discuss the findings and what they specifically mean for young viewers. The following discussion will outline the specific findings and detail the ways in which they may impact young viewers, as well as provide directions for future research on this topic.

Overall, this thesis research found that sex was not a major thematic element in adolescent programming and there was not an abundance of sexual behaviors. In addition, total sexual content did not differ significantly between teen scene and young adult programs, although the specific sexual behaviors of kissing, hugging, intimate touching, sexual suggestiveness, homosexual references, and implied heterosexual intercourse were found more frequently in young adult programs. Sexual innuendo was seen most frequently overall, with about two instances per program.
In addition, the majority of young adult characters were sexually active, with the most sexual behaviors coming from mythical creatures (vampires, werewolves, etc.) whose social age was not able to be coded. When looking at sexual activity in relation to US teens sexual activity as reported by the CDC, the number of teens who had ever been sexually active or was currently sexually active was underrepresented in teen scene programs and overrepresented in young adult programs. Few instances of sexual risk and responsibility messages were coded, however, this could be due, in part, to the limited number of sexual encounters and behaviors found in these programs. Lastly, there was a strong emphasis on appearance, especially for the thinness of females. While these findings indicate that sexual behaviors in adolescent programming are few, it is necessary for future research continue to look at the scope of sexual messages on adolescent programs and further investigate their possible effect.

4.2 Findings and Implications

As there were some limitations and discrepancies in inter-coder reliability (detailed further in the Limitations section), the following results should be viewed with caution. Research questions 1 and 2 asked how much and what kinds of sexual content were in adolescent programming and the differences between teen scene and young adult programs. The analysis indicated that sexual innuendo occurred a little more than two times per program, flirting occurred nearly twice per program, and affectionate touching and kissing occurred around one and half times in each program. However, the remaining sexual behavior variables (hugging, intimate touching, sexual suggestiveness, homosexual references, homosexuality, bisexuality, bisexual references, implied homosexual intercourse, implied heterosexual intercourse, explicit homosexual
intercourse, and explicit heterosexual intercourse) appeared very infrequently. Overall, sexual content was not excessively present in adolescent programming, expect perhaps in the form of innuendo/references. This does not, however, mean that sexual content is rarely present.

While teen scene programs had fewer overall instances of sexual behaviors than young adult programs, the difference was not statistically significant. However, there were statistically significant differences for the individual sexual behaviors of kissing, hugging, intimate touching, sexual suggestiveness, homosexual references, and implied heterosexual intercourse. Each of these sexual behaviors was found more frequently in young adult programs than teen scene programs.

Research question 3 asked if teen characters are the focus of sexual content in adolescent programming and found no significant differences between sexual behaviors by biological sex or social age. A significant interaction was found, however, between social age and biological sex such that the total number of sexual behaviors was higher for females whose social age could not be coded than males who social age could not be coded. While this may seem like an odd finding, the explanation is that many characters whose age could not be determined were mythical creatures (mainly vampires), for whom age was indeterminable. These characters are often presented as “sexy” and “seductive,” therefore they may actually exhibit more sexual behaviors.

Overall, the research questions revealed that the adolescent programming sample as a whole was not overly focused on sexual behaviors. Through the lens of cultivation theory, adolescents’ perception of teenage sexual behavior may not differ too much from reality. It was previously argued that extensive amounts of teenage sexual behaviors on
television may elevate teens’ perceived importance of sex, yet there was not an abundance of these teenage sexual behaviors present on television that would do so. However, it is still possible teens engage in observational learning from their favorite shows when it comes to being in a relationship or being popular. More research is needed that focuses on messages present in adolescent programming that do not focus on sex such as ethical and moral values.

Hypothesis 1 asked whether more main characters on young adult programs than on teen scene programs would be presented as sexual experienced rather than as virgins. There was support for this hypothesis. More than half of the characters in young adult programs were sexually active compared to only one in ten (12%) characters in teen scene programs. These findings differ from the findings of Kelly (2010), who focused on virginity loss narratives and found that approximately equal numbers of characters remained virgins as chose to lose their virginity. But an important difference between Kelly (2010) and this study is that in the virginity loss narratives virginity as an option is given elevated importance. Moreover, Kelly focused only on virginity loss narratives while this thesis examined programs with many different story lines.

This study found that sex as a theme, whether focusing on virginity loss, consequences of a sexual encounter (unwanted pregnancy, STDs, social or emotional consequences), or discussion of sex, appeared extremely infrequently. In fact, only one character in young adult programming was identified as a virgin. Further, in the only young adult episode that dealt with the issue of virginity loss (*The Fosters*), two 15 year-old characters lost their virginity, but it was only a small part of the larger narrative. In
fact, the decision to have sex was not discussed between the teenagers, with friends, or with parents.

Rather, in the scene in question, the male character (Jesus) and female character (Lexi) were spending time together in her bedroom, passionately kissing on her bed. Jesus asks when her parents will be home and is informed that they will not be home for hours. At this point, Jesus requests a break, Lexi replies that he doesn’t have to stop, and the character are seen continuing to kiss while disrobing and the scene ends. Later, we see Lexi and Jesus have a brief conversation in which she is fearful she might be pregnant. Jesus finds a way to get the morning after pill and is caught by his mother (Stef). Jesus is being raised as the adopted son of a lesbian couple, Stef and Lena. Once he is caught, he is taken home where both his mothers ask for an explanation. In his attempt to explain the sexual encounter with his girlfriend Lexi, he tells them that “it just happened” (referring to the unplanned nature of sexual encounter) and requests that they allow him to give the morning after pill to Lexi. At this point, the moms are left to discuss the various repercussions Jesus’s unsafe sex could have.

Kelly (2010) found that teens were often portrayed as responsible by discussing their decision to have sex with many adults (i.e. parents and older siblings), who often gave support, and that condom use was explicitly noted in the majority of cases. However, in this episode, there was no prior discussion. The decision to have sex was based on an unplanned opportunity. Further, it was clear that no preventative measures were taken to avoid pregnancy or STDs. This finding is also relevant to hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that messages of risk and responsibility would be found in more than one in ten young adult programs. There was no support for this hypothesis.
Only one in twenty (5.3%) young adult programs had messages of risk and responsibility. In accordance with Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001), behaviors with a positive outcome may lead to modeling the behavior while behaviors with negative consequences will instill inhibitions about modeling that behavior. While there may have been few instances of sexual activity in which messages of risk and responsibility were necessary, it is important to consider how risk and responsibility messages were handled when the story line necessitated their presence.

In the above described young adult episode in which Lexi and Jesus have sex and lose their virginity to one another, they later worry about unplanned pregnancy and find a way to get the Plan B pill. However, the only time these teenage characters were seen discussing the possible consequences of their sexual encounter was the short scene in which Lexi worries she could get pregnant. The remainder of the episode focuses on Jesus’s moms’ decision to give Lexi the morning after pill; the teenagers have very little to do with the plot aside from the act of having sex. In fact, in this episode, Jesus’s parents decide that they will give Lexi the morning after pill and they will not inform her parents. However, it is unclear how soon the pill is given to Lexi, an important consideration as the longer one waits to take Plan B after sex, the less effective the pill.

Jesus’s parents also discuss how this could have happened when they felt they did everything possible to fully educate their children including open-honest discussion, no fear-based risk messages, and their prior decision to freely provide condoms. This could send the message to teenagers watching that not only will parents accept responsibility for their children’s unsafe sexual behaviors, they will freely provide condoms and be accepting of these behaviors without punishment. The episode also fails to mention any
other possibilities such as side effects of taking the morning after pill and the fact that after an extended period of time, it may not be effective.

Kelly (2010) found that messages of risk and responsibility were central to the storylines when the narrative focused on virginity loss. However, the apparent approval of teenage sexual behavior and direct parental involvement in dealing with potential risk and responsibilities may give teens the idea that their unsafe sexual behavior would be handled in much the same way. The responsibility to ensure safe practices was something their parents assumed rather than the teens taking responsibility for the possible repercussions of their sexual behavior.

According to cultivation theory (Gerbner et al., 2002), long-term exposure to the message that sexual consequences are so easily managed may influence teens’ perception of social reality. In the above described episode, Jesus’s parent not only provide the morning after pill, the teenagers face no other consequences or punishment. This may thereby lead to the perception that the teens themselves do not have to worry about sexual consequences because the adults in their lives will be willing to handle any repercussions for them.

This takes away an important component of the teenagers’ responsibility and need to think about these consequences. If teenagers are going to be portrayed as responsible enough to engage in sexual activities, they should also be portrayed as having the forethought to prevent and deal with unwanted consequences. Further, if adolescents are frequently exposed to themes of sex as a risk-free and popular activity, they may perceive sex as truly being a low-risk activity in which many of their peers are engaged, and thereby may feel more pressure to have sex themselves. It is important that teenagers
engaging in sexual activities recognize that their sexual behaviors may have unintended consequences and that their actions are their responsibility and not their parents’ responsibility.

Hypothesis 3, that social and emotional consequences will be more prevalent than physical consequences in adolescent programming, was also not supported. Of the risk and responsibility messages present, only physical consequences (such as pregnancy or STDs) were mentioned. This is surprising considering Aubrey’s (2004) finding that risk and responsibility messages tend to be higher when including social and emotional consequences. While social and emotional consequences are important, it may be more important to discuss more life-changing consequences, which tend to be physical. While there were so few messages of risk and responsibility, it may be important to note that the majority were of physical consequences.

4.3 Biological Sex Differences for Attractiveness

There was some support for hypothesis 4, that there would be a greater emphasis on females’ physical appearance than on males’ physical appearance in adolescent programs. In the instance of body weight, females were characterized as thin three-quarters of the time, while male characters were thin only one-quarter of the time. More than three-quarters of males were coded as toned/fit/average, while females were coded as such less than a quarter of the time. In fact, no female characters were coded as overweight or obese, while 4.9% of males were seen as overweight and 2.4% were seen as obese. While it may be more socially accepted for a male to be toned/fit as opposed to thin, it is important to see that for women, the emphasis is on thinness.
There was also more diversity in body attractiveness for male characters than female characters. In the entire sample, six out of ten male characters were coded as very attractive compared to eight in ten female characters. In young adult programs, nine out of ten female characters were coded as very attractive as compared to eight out of them male characters. The same is true for facial attractiveness. While a majority of all characters were coded as being very attractive, there was, overall, a higher percentage of males coded as average or not attractive. Not only does the attractiveness of these characters make them more likely to be desirable role models, it promotes unhealthy body image and over-emphasizes the importance of physical attractiveness. And the greater focus on females’ attractiveness provides for fewer options and a more confining message of what it means to be a young woman today. The results for body and facial attractiveness, however, should be viewed with caution because of poor inter-coder reliability.

The thin ideal has been discussed in numerous bodies of research that discuss self-objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Murnen, Smolak, Mills, & Good, 2003; Harper & Tiggeman, 2008). Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) describe self-objectification as viewing the physical appearance of oneself as though they were a critical outside observer. Their research has found that women exposed to magazine advertisements in which men are viewing women (known as the male gaze), experience self-objectification.

Harper and Tiggeman (2008) found that the male gaze is not necessary to induce self-objectification in women. They found that magazine advertisements featuring a thin-idealized woman induced a higher state self-objectification, weight related appearance
anxiety, negative mood, and body dissatisfaction in the women who viewed them. As young women going through puberty, the tween and teen years are times of a lot of body dissatisfaction and lowered self-esteem. With anorexia the third most common chronic illness for adolescent girls (National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders), it is important to be aware of the negative impact these thin-ideal representations may have on young girls. If short term exposure to magazine advertisements is associated with body dissatisfaction in college-aged women, it is quite possible that long term exposure to the thin-idealized presentation of females in the media will have a negative impact on young girls’ self-view. Further, it may cultivate the perception for young women that value is found in attractiveness. The representation of females as mainly attractive and thin creates a narrow view of beauty. The prevalence of eating disorders may indicate that young girls are in fact responding to the unhealthy depictions of female body weight in the media.

Young men are likely not immune from the representation that males are strong and muscular, however, this research did not code male characters in a way that would allow in depth discussion in the representation of the male physique. Most males were coded as toned/fit/average, which could mean a variety of things. Toned/fit implies a muscular and athletic build, which could induce self-objectification in males similar to females. Average, however, implies a more common body type, which may not be considered fit or toned. Future research should define these categories differently, leaving average as a separate category so the physical representation of male characters is clearer.
4.4 Effects of Sex in the Media

The American Psychological Association’s Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls (2010) detailed numerous studies that dictate the negative influence the media has on girls. The Task Force issued a call for more research to investigate the sexualization of girls in the media and the potential effects this could have on developing young women. While some might argue that media depictions are meant to be entertaining and do not depict reality, evidence of potentially negative effects is mounting.

Collins (2005) reports that adolescent virgins, who had viewed more sexual content at a baseline measure, were more likely to initiate intercourse during the following year, even when controlling for other potential causes. Chandra and colleagues (2008) report related evidence finding that frequent exposure to sexual content on television was predictive of earlier teen pregnancy.

Repeatedly, research supports the notion that a greater exposure to sexual content is predictive of earlier initiation of sexual intercourse in adolescents (L’Engle, Brown, & Kenneavy, 2006; O’Hara et al., 2012) and growing research suggests that greater exposure to sexualized media messages is associated with stronger ideas that women are sex objects (Peter & Valkenburg, 2007; Ward, 2002). The potential of sexual media content to influence both sexual behaviors and attitudes makes finding the content of sexual messages in adolescent media imperative.

Perse (2001) acknowledges that adolescents’ lack of knowledge about adult topics may lead them to misinterpret messages and develop false understandings of the messages involved. This research found some sexual content in adolescent programming, but not near the amounts found in previous research for sex in primetime television. More
research needs to be completed so a complete picture of the amounts of sex in adolescent programs can be made clear.

4.5 Limitations

This study had a few limitations. First, the sample size was small, consisting of only 39 adolescent programs. While this is an adequate size from which to make some initial conclusions, it would be beneficial for future research to increase sample size in order to make more general conclusions. Because of the limitations present in this research, results should be viewed with caution.

Further, there were some discrepancies in inter-coder reliability. In the program reliability, implied heterosexual intercourse had a Krippendorff’s alpha of .49. For the characters, the following variables did not reach an acceptable alpha level: facial attractiveness, character type, advice, practical intelligence, hug, sexual innuendo, sexual suggestiveness, flirting, sexual orientation, conflict present, and conflict role. These variables were kept in the final analysis because review of the second coder’s notes revealed incorrectly reported coding numbers based on program notes. This may have been a result of insufficient coder training. As such, more extensive coder training should be completed in the future.

Finally, this research is limited in its capability to discuss the effects of media on its viewers. Thus, while media effects results is discussed, the direct effects of the kind of sexual messages found in the sample are only speculation. Future research should continue to investigate the effects sexual message in adolescent programs have on young viewers.
4.6 Future Research

Clearly, sex is present in television programming (Bleakley et al., 2011; Collins, 2005; L’Engle, Brown, & Kenneavy, 2006; O’Hara, Gibbons, Gerard, Li, Kunkel et al., 2007; & Sargent, 2012). Further, decades of research point to the effects of media images on adolescents sexual behaviors (Bleakley, Hennessy, Fishbein, & Jordan, 2011; Chandra et al., 2008; Collins, 2005; L’Engle, Brown, & Kenneavy, 2006; O’Hara et al., 2012) and attitudes (Peter & Valkenburg, 2007; Ter Bogt, Engels, Bogers, & Kloosterman, 2010; Ward, 2002). While the vast number of previous studies use primetime programs to gather a sample, there is a dearth of research which focuses specifically on adolescent programming.

Future research should explore in greater depth the programs popular with adolescents and perhaps examine more than one episode of each program. When shows like Pretty Little Liars capture the attention of an audience aged 12-34 (tvbythenumbers.com), it is important to be aware of the dramatic elements that keep the show popular. It is possible that during the various seasons of the program, there have been episodes with inappropriate sexual content for younger viewers that were not present in the specific episode used in this sample Networks, such as ABC Family, MTV, and the CW, which are popular with a young adult (12 – 15) demographic, may have more overall adult content than parents may realize. It may also be useful for future research to explore the specific networks in depth to determine differences in sexual content and messages by network.

In addition, future research needs to look at gender differences in the expression of desire. As Aubrey (2004) notes, a sexual double standard exists wherein women
should be sexually passive while men should be the aggressors and have large sexual appetites. Not only is this an unfair representation of sexualities, the representation of consequences for each gender is often skewed.

Aubrey (2004) found that men were more often the initiators in sexual interactions, but a scene was more likely to end with a negative consequence when a woman initiated the interaction, reinforcing the notion that men are more sexually aggressive than females and it is more appropriate for men to initiate sexual behavior. For the young women attending to these messages, their role as sexual beings may be diminished, creating an unhealthy self-view. Aubrey states that identification with these sexually punished female characters could make young women feel disempowered in sexual situations, leading to potentially unhealthy sexual decisions. The existing nuances and attitudes of femininity reflect that women are not sexually aggressive, therefore the punishment of sexually active female characters could make this attitude even stronger in young women.

This research focused on sexual content as a whole, but it is important to be aware of biological sex differences in the portrayals of sexual desire, sexual behaviors, and sexual consequences. Future research should examine these shows to determine whether female characters have as much sexual agency as males, as well as examine whether the sexual consequences for females are more negative than consequences for males. This research did not find biological sex differences in sexual behaviors, but further research needs to be completed in adolescent programming to further understand this issue. In addition, the lack of diversity in characters should be further examined as there is an
over-representation of White characters, which does not capture the diversity present in the real world.

While there is some debate whether there is an exorbitant amount of sexual behaviors in adolescent programming, there is no doubt that sex on television has some impact on its viewers’ perceptions of sexual behavior and even on their own sexual behaviors. Cultivation theory (Gerbner et al., 2002) notes that increased exposure to an overarching system of messages in the media may alter one’s perception of social reality. Based on this knowledge, teens may have altered perceptions of the risks, prevalence, and importance of sex in their lives. They may also feel that their peers are more sexually active than they are in reality, which may create pressure to become sexually active.

In addition, teens’ may wish to emulate the behaviors they see their favorite characters performing. These characters are often popular and attractive, qualities adolescents may wish they would have. According to social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001) these are the kinds of messages and characters to which adolescents may attend and learn from. If their favorite characters were able to quickly and easily manage the consequences of their sexual encounter, teens may feel they will be able to as well.

It is important that research continue to look at the amount and types of sex on television so that it may be used to promote healthy behaviors and promote awareness of the possible consequences. The media is an inherent part of many young people’s lives, therefore these messages are nearly unavoidable. By continuing research about sexual content and their possible effects, educational programs may be more equipped to teach adolescents about sex. And, moreover, help adolescents better filter sexual media messages in a healthy and constructive way.
REFERENCES


Peter, J., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2007). Adolescents' exposure to a sexualized media environment and their notions of women as sex objects. Sex Roles, 56(5-6), 381-395.


Appendix A

RECORDING INSTRUMENT – PROGRAMS

UNITS OF ANALYSIS: There are two units – the Program and the Leading/Supporting Character

GENERAL VIEWING AND RECORDING PROCEDURE: During the coding process, it is likely that you will need to view the program, or select parts of it, multiple times. The following procedure is suggested for efficiency:

On the first viewing, which should be done relatively uninterrupted, it helps to take notes on scratch paper and to compile these lists:

1. List the possible major/leading and supporting characters
2. Keep a running list of possible themes
3. Keep a running list of the number of sexual occurrences including innuendo, talk about sex, implied sexual activity, and explicit sexual activity. Try to note where they occur in the program to facilitate rescreening.
4. Keep a list of consequences of sexual activities

After you have seen the entire program and complete the lists, finalize your selection of leading/major and supporting characters. Now proceed to code, beginning with Section A, the instrument for the program as a whole.
1 PROGRAM ID NUMBER

2 CODER ID NUMBER

3 DATE ORIGINALLY AIRED

4 SEASON
   1 = Season 1
   2 = Season 2
   3 = Season 3
   4 = Season 4
   5 = Season 5
   6 = Season 6
   7 = Season 7
   8 = Season 8
   9 = Season 9
   0 = Season 10 or above

5 EPISODE

6 NETWORK
   1 = Disney Channel
   2 = BBC America
   3 = Nickelodeon
   4 = ABC Family
   5 = Cartoon Network
   6 = CW
   7 = ABC
8 = FOX
9 = CBS
10 = MTV

**7 TV PARENTAL GUIDELINES**

0 = not rated
1 = TVG (general audience)
2 = TVPG (parental guidance suggested)
3 = TV14 (parents strongly cautioned)
4 = TVM (mature audiences only)
5 = TVY (all children)
6 = TVY7 (older children)
7 = TV-Y7-FV (children - fantasy violence)

**8 FORMAT**

0 = cannot code
1 = cartoon
2 = TV play
3 = other

**9 GENRE**

0 = cannot code
1 = crime
2 = action adventure
3 = drama
4 = science fiction/horror
5 = situation comedy
6 = comedy, not sitcom or variety skits
7 = reality
8 = other

10 TYPE OF PROGRAM
0 = cannot code
1 = action-adventure (Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles)
2 = teen scene (Hannah Montana)
3 = young adult (Pretty Little Liars)
4 = mature (Nashville)

11 PROGRAM TONE
0 = cannot code
1 = mostly comic, humorous
2 = mixed, both
3 = mostly serious, even if in comedy

12 CAST: RACE
0 = cannot code
1 = all white
2 = mostly white (some minorities appear)
3 = mixed
4 = mostly minority (some whites appear)
5 = all minority

13–27 THEMES AND ASPECTS OF LIFE – EMPHASIS
0 = no attention paid to theme
1 = theme is a minor part of the plot
2 = theme is significant to plot
3 = theme is an outstanding focus of plot

13 LAW ENFORCEMENT and the administration of justice; police, other agents and agencies of law, courts, trials, prisons

14 CRIME; corruption, illegality, gross (criminal) behavior

15 FAMILY, marriage, children, family relationships

16 ENVIRONMENT, global warming, recycling, environmental issues

17 SCIENCE, chemistry, medical, etc.

18 TECHNOLOGY, social networking, technology use.

19 HEALTH PORTRAYALS, includes the discussion or depiction of illness, disease, or injury. Includes discussion by those suffering or medical professionals treating it.

20 MENTAL ILLNESS, serious emotional disorder requiring therapy; cure for mental illness

NOTE: Do not consider off-hand remarks, such as “you must be crazy,” “you’re nuts,” etc. unless the statement or phrase is actually directed at a character’s mental health or statements that refer to mental health in general (such as psychotic, neurotic, etc.).

21 ILLNESS, injury (bodily wound, gunshot, broken leg, etc.) requiring therapy, treatment, medicine, or cure.

NOTE: minor illnesses or injuries do not count unless some course of treatment is prescribed, taken or considered (ice pack, bandages, aspirin).
22 PHYSICAL HANDICAP, or disability.

23 DATING/RELATIONSHIPS, dating, flirting, discussion about the like.

24 SEX, virginity loss, sexual consequences, discussion about sex

25 FAME; celebrities, becoming famous, being famous, etc.

26 MORALITY; is there a moral to the story, a lesson to be learned

27 LIST ANY ADDITIONAL MAJOR THEMES ON THE DATA SHEET

28 OFFENSIVE/EXPLICIT LANGUAGE
   0 = no offensive language
   1 = infrequent offensive language
   2 = moderate use of offensive language
   3 = frequent use of offensive language

NOTE: Look at characters reactions to see if they are offended by something someone has said. Does not necessarily have to be curse words that are offensive, but any language that seems to reasonably offend another character.

29 ADULT REFERENCES: this includes any references made to “adult” life that seem inappropriate for tween-aged children to know about. Ex: “You should have seen it, it was the brawl of the century! It was like boys gone wild!” (Reference to Girls Gone Wild, the adult film series).
   0 = no adult references made
   1 = infrequent adult references made
   2 = moderate use of adult references
   3 = frequent use of adult references

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SEXUAL BEHAVIORS AND THEMES
Adapted from: Kunkel et al., 2007; Gerding & Signorielli, 2014; Signorielli
Includes the depiction of kissing, hugging, affectionate touching, flirting, intercourse, suggestive innuendo, dating/relationships, and relationship conflict. To be considered a sexual behavior, the action should convey a sense of potential or likely sexual intimacy.

1. Several behaviors occurring simultaneously should each be recorded. (Ex: A woman embraces a man and they kiss. Record as both a hug and a kiss).

2. If a codable behavior extends over a long time, the behavior should be noted only once, even if the camera pans away or cuts to another scene and then returns to the same behavior.

3. It should be noted that certain contacts are repetitive in nature (tapping someone’s shoulder to gain that person’s attention). Such activities should be grouped and coded as a single instance.

4. Only behaviors romantic in nature should be recorded. Platonic kisses (between a parent and child, for example, unless kiss implies an incest relationship) should not be recorded.

**Kiss:** Kissing any part of another person’s body, throwing a kiss to another, with or without use of own hand, or kissing an object acting as a representative of an individual (i.e. photograph of a person or an article of clothing habitually worn by the person).

Examples:

1. Person kisses own hand and then blows the kiss in the direction of another person.

2. Man kisses cheek of his girlfriend, looks at her, and then kisses her lips. (2 kisses)

3. Man and woman press lips together. (1 kiss)

4. Woman kisses photograph of her absent husband

5. Man kisses the hand of a lady.
**Hug:** Encircling another person’s body with one’s arms and/or drawing that person toward one’s own chest region; or doing the same to some article currently representing an absent individual – (e.g., woman hugs photograph of missing husband while repeating his name). Some form of upper torso contact is necessary to the hug so such points of contact as an arm resting across a shoulder or back, a hand lying on a shoulder, neck or chest, or a face touching a chest or face should not be tallied separately if occurring within the broader context of a hug. On the other hand, certain behaviors can occur simultaneously with a hug but not necessarily be components of it (such as a kiss, or massaging the back). These behaviors should be tallied separately.

Examples:

1. Man and woman embrace each other.
2. A man picks up his bride and carries her over the threshold; the female encircles his neck with her arms. (Note: Her chest need not be completely facing his).

**Affectionate Interpersonal Touching:** This category includes other touching not codable under kissing or hugging, which demonstrates positive feelings for another person. Do not code touches under this category just because two people have affection for each other. Ask yourself if there is another function to the touch – such as a person helping an elder person across the street, a doctor touching the face of a patient as he/she looks down their throat, or a person bumping into another person – even if those two are in a relationship. If so, do not code. Touching done out of sympathy or to provide emotional support should be coded here.

Examples:

1. A couple walk along with one of each of their arms across the other’s back.
2. A man caresses a part of his wife’s body.
3. A man affectionately pinches his date’s behind.
4. A couple embrace, kiss, and caress one another’s back and arms. (Record under hug, kiss, and affectionate interpersonal touching).
5. Two people get into a flirtatious tickling match.

**Intimate Interpersonal Touching:** This category includes any touching that cannot be coded as kissing, hugging, or affectionate interpersonal touching. This can include touching another in a suggestive way or an affectionate touch that one would only do in an intimate way. Intimate touching suggests sexual desire.

Examples:
1. Grabbing partners behind while kissing or in a way that indicates desire.
2. Rubbing a partners’ thigh.
3. A woman straddling her partner.

**Sexual Innuendo:** This category includes verbal activity signaling sexual interest in another individual. This can range from comments and references to an individual’s sexual attractiveness to innuendo about sexual behavior; that is, indirect verbal allusion to sexual acts. This category also includes references to characters’ physical attractiveness, sexual innuendos, and references to sexual behavior that cannot be coded under specific categories.

Examples:
1. “She sure is sexy.”
2. “He turns me on.”
3. “He changed my tire and then expected me to be his reward.”
4. “It’s been awhile.” (when phrase seems to imply sex or a hookup)

**Sexual Suggestiveness:** This category includes non-verbal activity signaling sexual interest in another individual. This category includes all behavioral signs of attraction to another person, to the person himself/herself (flirt with self in mirror), or to a representation of a person (photograph).

Examples:
1. Tongue on lips
2. Swaying of hips
3. Head and shoulder flirtation movements sexual in nature
4. Beckoning seductively
5. Touching oneself suggestively
6. Touching partner suggestively
7. A sexy walk meant to get the attention of another character.

**Flirting:** This category includes verbal and non-verbal flirtatious behavior, that signals attraction to or interest in another individual; flirting that does not include sexual innuendo or sexual suggestiveness.
Examples:
1. Batting eyelashes, winking
2. Lip puckering
3. Head and shoulder flirtation movement not sexual in nature
4. “You are so cute!”

**Homosexuality:** Involved both implicit sex (sexual innuendoes and physical suggestiveness) and explicit sex (kissing, heavy kissing, sexual embraces and hugs, sexual caressing or touching, sexual intercourse). Do not code non-intimate touching (nonsexual greetings and chaste farewell/hello kisses).

**Bisexuality:** Involved both implicit sex (sexual innuendos and physical suggestiveness) and explicit sex (kissing, heavy kissing, sexual embraces and hugs, sexual caressing or touching, sexual intercourse) where it is obvious the character has been with both sexes. Do not code non-intimate touching (nonsexual greetings and chaste farewell/hello kisses).

**Homosexual References:** Mention of homosexuality. Are characters openly presented as homosexual/lesbian and/or having a homosexual/lesbian relationship?

**Bisexual References:** Mention of bisexuality. Are characters openly presented as bisexual or bisexualy curious.

**Implied Heterosexual Intercourse:** Portrayals of sexual intercourse between opposite sex partners. Scenes in which it is unambiguously implied that intercourse has just or will take place are to be coded in this category.

**Implied Homosexual Intercourse:** Portrayals of sexual intercourse between same sex partners. Scenes in which it is unambiguously implied that intercourse has just or will take place are to be coded in this category.

**Explicit Heterosexual Intercourse:** Portrayals of sexual intercourse between opposite sex partners. Scenes in which sex is explicitly shown are to be coded in this category. Intercourse is considered explicit if the scene shows the act of intercourse, even if
specific body parts can’t be seen.

**Explicit Homosexual Intercourse:** Portrayals of sexual intercourse between same sex partners. Scenes in which sex is explicitly shown are to be coded in this category. Intercourse is considered explicit if the scene shows the act of intercourse, even if specific body parts can’t be seen.

**Sexual Risks or Responsibilities:** Does the program include any mention or depiction of sexual risks or responsibilities? This refers to such concerns as unwanted pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases.

**Sexual Patience:** does the program address the possibility of abstaining or waiting for sex because of moral, emotional, or health-related reasons.

**Sexual Precaution:** does the program use or discuss preventative measures (e.g. condoms) to reduce the risk of STDs or unwanted pregnancy.

**Dating/Romantic Relationships:** Does the program include depictions of two people dating, or two people involved in a romantic relationship?

**Conflict Present:** Portrayals of conflict in a romantic relationship. This can be conceptualized as those social interactions of two people in a relationship who hold incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving these goals. Conflict may be overt or covert and have minimal impact of the people involved.

30 KISS

\[
0 = \text{no} \\
99 = \text{cannot code} \\
\quad = \text{if yes, number of instances}
\]

31 HUG

\[
0 = \text{no} \\
99 = \text{cannot code} \\
\quad = \text{if yes, number of instances}
\]
32 AFFECTIONATE INTERPERSONAL TOUCHING
  0 = no
  99 = cannot code
  ______ = if yes, number of instances

33 INTIMATE INTERPERSONAL TOUCHING
  0 = no
  99 = cannot code
  ______ = if yes, number of instances

34 SEXUAL INNUENDO
  0 = no
  99 = cannot code
  ______ = if yes, number of instances

35 SEXUAL SUGGESTIVENESS
  0 = no
  99 = cannot code
  ______ = if yes, number of instances

36 FLIRTING
  0 = no
  99 = cannot code
  ______ = if yes, number of instances

37 HOMOSEXUALITY
  0 = no
  1 = yes
9 = cannot code

38 BISEXUALITY

0 = no
1 = yes
9 = cannot code

39 HOMOSEXUAL REFERENCES

0 = no
9 = cannot code
_______ = if yes, number of instances

40 BISEXUAL REFERENCES

0 = no
9 = cannot code
_______ = if yes, number of instances

41 IMPLIED HETEROSEXUAL INTERCOURSE

0 = no
9 = cannot code
_______ = if yes, number of instances

42 IMPLIED HOMOSEXUAL INTERCOURSE

0 = no
9 = cannot code
_______ = if yes, number of instances
43 EXPLICIT HETEROSEXUAL INTERCOURSE
0 = no
9 = cannot code
________ = if yes, number of instances

44 EXPLICIT HOMOSEXUAL INTERCOURSE
0 = no
9 = cannot code
______ = if yes, number of instances

45 SEXUAL RISKS OR RESPONSIBILITIES
0 = no
9 = cannot code
_______ = if yes, number of instances

46 SEXUAL PATIENCE
0 = no
9 = cannot code
______ = if yes, number of instances

47 SEXUAL PRECAUTION
0 = no
9 = cannot code
______ = if yes, number of instances
48 DATING/ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

0 = no
1 = yes
99 = cannot code

_______ = number of dating or relationship situations

49 CONFLICT PRESENT – conflict in a romantic relationship
0 = no relationships
1 = no conflict
2 = yes
99 = cannot code

50 TOTAL NUMBER OF PHYSICAL SEXUAL INCIDENTS – fully describe and count every instance of physically sexual scenes. This includes any scene with kissing, hugging, intimate touching, and implicit or explicit sexual intercourse.

51 TOTAL NUMBER OF SEXUAL INNUENDOS/REFERENCES – fully describe and count every sexual instance of sexual innuendo. Sexual innuendo includes verbally expressing the desire to be sexual with another and alluding to acts of a sexual nature.

VIOLENCE
The overt expression of physical force (with or without a weapon, against self or other) compelling action against one’s will on pain of being hurt or killed, or actually hurting or killing. It must be plausible and credible; no idle threats, verbal abuse, or gestures with no credible violent consequence. May be intentional or accidental; violent accidents, catastrophes, and acts of nature are included.

52 SERIOUSNESS (or potential seriousness) OF VIOLENCE, regardless of style or format
0 = no violence
1 = strictly humorous, comical
2 = partly humorous; ambivalent
3 = mostly real, serious violence, even if in cartoon or comedy

53 SIGNIFICANCE OF VIOLENCE to the plot and main characters
0 = no violence
1 = some violence, incidental to plot
2 = violence is significant to plot, it matters considerably for story and major characters
3 = violence is the major outstanding feature or climax, highlight, or resolution of the plot

54 PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE
0 = no violence
1 = no consequences presented
2 = consequences, minimal focus
3 = consequences, moderate focus
4 = consequences, serious focus

55 IMMORAL VIOLENCE: Violence clearly and explicitly intended, within the story, to be seen as destructive, negative, evil.
0 = no violence
1 = no immoral violence
2 = some immoral violence, incidental
3 = significant immoral violence
4 = violence is totally immoral

56 NUMBER OF VIOLENT ACTIONS – fully describe and count the number of separate violent actions

NOTE: A VIOLENT ACTION is a scene of some violence confined to the same agents. Even if the scene is interrupted by a flashback, etc., as long as it continues in “real time” it is the same act. However, if new agent(s) enter the scene it becomes another act.
Appendix B

RECORDING INSTRUMENT – CHARACTERS

Analyze all characters who play leading roles representing the principal types essential to the story and those in essential supporting roles.

Write in the character's full name and/or anything that may help identify the character without a proper name.

Describe the character's occupation as precisely as possible. Avoid overly broad labels, e.g. driver, clerk.

1 PROGRAM ID NUMBER

2 CHARACTER ID NUMBER (leave blank for now)

3 CODER ID NUMBER

4 DATE ORIGINALY AIRED

5 SEASON
   1 = Season 1
   2 = Season 2
   3 = Season 3
   4 = Season 4
   5 = Season 5
   6 = Season 6
   7 = Season 7
   8 = Season 8
   9 = Season 9
0 = Season 10 or above

6 EPISODE

7 NETWORK
1 = Disney Channel
2 = BBC America
3 = Nickelodeon
4 = ABC Family
5 = Cartoon Network
6 = CW
7 = ABC
8 = FOX
9 = CBS
10 = MTV

8 TV PARENTAL GUIDELINES
0 = not rated
1 = TVG (general audience)
2 = TVPG (parental guidance suggested)
3 = TV14 (parents strongly cautioned)
4 = TVM (mature audiences only)
5 = TVY (all children)
6 = TVY7 (older children)
7 = TV-Y7-FV (children - fantasy violence)

9 FORMAT
0 = cannot code
1 = cartoon
2 = TV play
3 = other

10 GENRE
0 = cannot code
1 = crime
2 = action adventure
3 = drama
4 = science fiction/horror
5 = situation comedy
6 = comedy, not sitcom or variety skits
7 = reality
8 = other

11 PROGRAM TYPE
0 = cannot code
1 = action-adventure (Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles)
2 = teen scene (Hannah Montana)
3 = young adult (Pretty Little Liars)
4 = mature (Nashville)

12 PROGRAM TONE
0 = cannot code
1 = mostly comic, humorous
2 = mixed, both
3 = mostly serious, even if in comedy
13 CAST: RACE

0 = cannot code
1 = all white
2 = mostly white (some minorities appear)
3 = mixed
4 = mostly minority (some whites appear)
5 = all minority

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIVES

14 SEX

0 = cannot code
1 = male
2 = female

15 HUMANITY

0 = cannot code
1 = human
2 = animal, human-like
3 = animal
4 = machine, robot - human like
5 = machine, robot
6 = mythical creature (vampire, werewolf, etc.)
7 = other
16 RACE OF CHARACTER

0 = cannot code
1 = white
2 = black
3 = Asian
4 = Native American
5 = Hispanic - Latino
6 = other

17 CHRONOLOGICAL AGE (Record chronological age as known or estimated-- 01 to 98, cannot code = 99)

18 SOCIAL AGE

0 = cannot code
1 = child (birth to 7)
2 = tween (8 to 12)
3 = early adolescent (13 to 15)
4 = late adolescent (16 to 19)
5 = young adult (few or no family responsibilities; can be from late teens to mid-thirties)
6 = settled adult (family, established career)
7 = elderly, old

19 GRADE IN SCHOOL (Record as 01 – 12, 99 for cannot code/not in school)

___________ (ESTIMATE)
20 LEVEL OF EDUCATION (code highest degree)
0 = cannot code
1 = some grade school (grades k-5)
2 = some middle school (grades 6-8)
3 = some high school (grades 9-12)
4 = high school completed
5 = some college
6 = college degree

21 HAIR COLOR
0 = cannot code
1 = blonde
2 = red/auburn
3 = light brown
4 = brown
5 = black
6 = bald - balding
7 = grey
8 = other

22 BODY WEIGHT
0 = cannot code
1 = thin
2 = toned/fit/average
3 = slightly overweight
4 = very overweight – obese

23 BODY ATTRACTIVENESS: In relation to the ideal in bodily appearance. Includes but not limited to legs, butt, hips, stomach/abdomen, chest, shoulders, muscle tone and thighs.

0 = cannot code
1 = not very attractive
2 = average, typical attractiveness
3 = very attractive

24 FACIAL ATTRACTIVENESS: In relation to the ideal in facial appearance. Includes but not limited to mouth, smile, nose, cheeks, teeth, eyes, expression, ears, complexion, and makeup.

0 = cannot code
1 = not very attractive
2 = average, typical attractiveness
3 = very attractive

25 PROVOCATIVE CLOTHING (sexy, revealing, etc.)

0 = character does not appear in provocative clothing
1 = occasionally appears in somewhat provocative clothing
2 = occasionally appears in very provocative clothing
3 = frequently appears in somewhat provocative
4 = frequently appears in very provocative clothing

26 ROLE OF THE CHARACTER

0 = cannot code
1 = mostly light, comic
2 = neither light nor serious, mixed, unclear
3 = mostly serious

27 CHARACTER TYPE
0 = cannot code
1 = "good" - protagonist, hero type
2 = mixed
3 = "bad" - antagonist, villain type

28 ADVICE
0 = cannot code
1 = asks for advice
2 = gives advice
3 = both
4 = neither

29 ACADEMIC INTELLIGENCE (book smarts)
0 = cannot code
1 = below average intelligence
2 = average intelligence
3 = highly intelligent

30 PRACTICAL INTELLIGENCE (street smarts)
0 = cannot code
1 = below average intelligence
2 = average intelligence
3 = highly intelligent
SEXUAL BEHAVIORS AND THEMES

Adapted from: Kunkel et al., 2007; Gerding & Signorielli, YEAR; Kelly, 2010; Signorielli

Includes the depiction of kissing, hugging, affectionate and intimate touching, flirting, intercourse, suggestive innuendo, dating/relationships, and risks and responsibilities of sex.

1. Several behaviors occurring simultaneously should each be recorded. (Ex: A woman embraces a man and they kiss. Record as both a hug and a kiss).

2. If a codable behavior extends over a long time, the behavior should be noted only once, even if the camera pans away or cuts to another scene and then returns to the same behavior.

3. It should be noted that certain contacts are repetitive in nature (tapping someone’s shoulder to gain that person’s attention). Such activities should be grouped and coded as a single instance.

4. Only behaviors/communication romantic in nature should be recorded. Platonic kisses (between a parent and child, for example, unless kiss implies an incest relationship) should not be recorded.

5. Any act should be noted for all characters involved. So for example, if a boy kisses a girl, it should be coded on each character sheet (so long as these characters are identified as main or leading characters and are included in the coding).

**Kiss:** Kissing any part of another person’s body, throwing a kiss to another, with or without use of own hand, or kissing an object acting as a representative of an individual (i.e. photograph of a person or an article of clothing habitually worn by the person).

Examples:

1. Person kisses own hand and then blows the kiss in the direction of another person.

2. Man kisses cheek of his girlfriend, looks at her, and then kisses her lips. (2 kisses)
3. Man and woman press lips together. (1 kiss)
4. Woman kisses photograph of her absent husband.
5. Man kisses the hand of a lady.

**Hug:** Encircling another person’s body with one’s arms and/or drawing that person toward one’s own chest region; or doing the same to some article currently representing an absent individual – (e.g., woman hugs photograph of missing husband while repeating his name). Some form of upper torso contact is necessary to the hug so such points of contact as an arm resting across a shoulder or back, a hand lying on a shoulder, neck or chest, or a face touching a chest or face should not be tallied separately if occurring within the broader context of a hug. On the other hand, certain behaviors can occur simultaneously with a hug but not necessarily be components of it (such as a kiss, or massaging the back). These behaviors should be tallied separately.

Examples:

1. Man and woman embrace each other.
2. A man picks up his bride and carries her over the threshold; the female encircles his neck with her arms. (Note: Her chest need not be completely facing his).

**Affectionate Interpersonal Touching:** This category includes other touching not codable under kissing or hugging, which demonstrates positive feelings for another person. Do not code touches under this category just because two people have affection for each other. Ask yourself if there is another function to the touch – such as a person helping an elder person across the street, a doctor touching the face of a patient as he/she looks down their throat, or a person bumping into another person – even if those two are in a relationship. If so, do not code. Touching done out of sympathy or to provide emotional support should be coded here. Code for the person that touches, not for the person that is touched, unless the two individuals are touching each other.

Examples:

1. A couple walk along with one of each of their arms across the other’s back.
2. A man caresses a part of his wife’s body.
3. A man affectionately pinches his date’s behind.
4. A couple embrace, kiss, and caress one another’s back and arms. (Record under hug, kiss, and affectionate interpersonal touching).
5. Two people get into a flirtatious tickling match.
**Intimate Interpersonal Touching:** This category includes any touching that cannot be coded as kissing, hugging, or affectionate interpersonal touching. This can include touching another in a suggestive way or an affectionate touch that one would only do in an intimate way. Intimate touching suggests sexual desire.

Examples:

4. Grabbing partners behind while kissing or in a way that indicates desire.
5. Rubbing a partners’ thigh.
6. A woman straddling her partner.

**Sexual Innuendo:** This category includes verbal activity signaling sexual interest in another individual. This can range from comments and references to an individual’s sexual attractiveness to innuendo about sexual behavior; that is, indirect verbal allusion to sexual acts. This category also includes references to characters’ physical attractiveness, sexual innuendos, and references to sexual behavior that cannot be coded under specific categories.

Examples:

5. “She sure is sexy.”
6. “He turns me on.”
7. “He changed my tire and then expected me to be his reward.”
8. “It’s been awhile.” (when phrase seems to imply sex or a hookup)

**Sexual Suggestiveness:** This category includes non-verbal activity signaling sexual interest in another individual. This category includes all behavioral signs of attraction to another person, to the person himself/herself (flirt with self in mirror), or to a representation of a person (photograph).

Examples:

1. Tongue on lips
2. Swaying of hips
3. Head and shoulder flirtation movements sexual in nature
4. Beckoning seductively
5. Touching oneself suggestively
6. Touching partner suggestively
7. A sexy walk meant to get the attention of another character.

**Flirting:** This category includes verbal and non-verbal flirtatious behavior, which signals attraction to or interest in another individual; flirting that does not include sexual innuendo or sexual suggestiveness.

Examples:

1. Batting eyelashes, winking
2. Lip puckering
3. Head and shoulder flirtation movement not sexual in nature
4. “You are so cute!”

**Sexual Orientation:** What orientation the character identifies as will be coded here, whether they are straight, bisexual, or other.

**Implied Heterosexual Intercourse:** Portrayals of sexual intercourse between opposite sex partners. Such direct portrayals are unlikely to be seen on tween television programs; however, scenes in which it is unambiguously implied that intercourse has just or will take place are to be coded in this category.

**Implied Homosexual Intercourse:** Portrayals of sexual intercourse between same sex partners. Scenes in which it is unambiguously implied that intercourse has just or will take place are to be coded in this category.

**Explicit Heterosexual Intercourse:** Portrayals of sexual intercourse between opposite sex partners. Scenes in which sex is explicitly shown are to be coded in this category. Intercourse is considered explicit if the scene shows the act of intercourse, even if specific body parts can’t be seen.

**Explicit Homosexual Intercourse:** Portrayals of sexual intercourse between same sex partners. Scenes in which sex is explicitly shown are to be coded in this category. Intercourse is considered explicit if the scene shows the act of intercourse, even if specific body parts can’t be seen.

**Sexual Risks or Responsibilities:** Does the character mention or depict any sexual risks or responsibilities? This refers to such concerns as unwanted pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases, using protection, or mention or depiction of abstinence or waiting for sex.

**Dating/Romantic Relationships:** Is the character involved in any form of dating or a romantic relationship?
**Age of Partner:** What is the chronological age of the character’s partner or partners?

**Sexual Activity Status:** Is the character sexually active or are they still a virgin. Do not assume a character is sexually active based on general behavior, they must explicitly state they are or are not sexually active or reveal their sexual activity in discussion with another character.

**Expression of Desire:** Character expresses their desire to be with someone intimately or sexually. Does not include expressing a desire for one’s company, but implies that physical intimacy is desired with another person.

**Conflict Present:** Portrayal of romantic relationship conflict. This can be conceptualized as those social interactions of two people in a relationship who hold incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving these goals. Conflict may be overt or covert and have minimal impact on the people involved.

**Conflict Role:** If conflict is present, the character should be coded as either the initiator of the interaction or the respondent to the interaction. The initiator would be the first person to overtly refer to the conflict, either verbally or nonverbally. The respondent would be the partner of the initiator.

**31 KISS**

0 = no

99 = cannot code

_______ = if yes, number of instances

**32 HUG**

0 = no

99 = cannot code

_______ = if yes, number of instances

**33 AFFECTIONATE INTERPERSONAL TOUCHING**

0 = no

99 = cannot code

_______ = if yes, number of instances

**34 INITIMATE INTERPERSONAL TOUCHING**
35 SEXUAL INNUENDO
0 = no
99 = cannot code
_______ = if yes, number of instances

36 SEXUAL SUGGESTIVENESS
0 = no
99 = cannot code
_______ = if yes, number of instances

37 FLIRTING
0 = no
99 = cannot code
_______ = if yes, number of instances

38 SEXUAL ORIENTATION
1 = heterosexual
2 = bisexual
3 = homosexual/lesbian
4 = cannot code

39 IMPLIED HETEROSEXUAL INTERCOURSE
0 = no
107

9 = cannot code
______ = if yes, number of instances

40 IMPLIRED HOMOSEXUAL INTERCOURSE
0 = no
9 = cannot code
______ = if yes, number of instances

41 EXPLICIT HETEROSEXUAL INTERCOURSE
0 = no
9 = cannot code
______ = if yes, number of instances

42 EXPLICIT HOMOSEXUAL INTERCOURSE
0 = no
9 = cannot code
______ = if yes, number of instances

43 SEXUAL RISK AND RESPONSIBILITIES
0 = none
1 = talk of birth control/condom use
2 = talk about abstinence
3 = talk about physical consequences (e.g. STDs, unplanned pregnancy)
4 = talk about social/emotional consequences

44 DATING/ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP
0 = no
1 = yes, a serious relationship
2 = mixed (was, then broke up; wasn't, and then in a new relationship)
3 = multiple, casual relationships
9 = cannot code

45 AGE OF PARTNER
0 = 8-12
1 = 13-16
2 = 17-20
3 = 21-25
4 = 26 and older
9 = cannot code

46 SEXUAL ACTIVITY STATUS
1 = sexually active
2 = virgin
9 = cannot code

47 EXPRESSION OF DESIRE
0 = no
9 = cannot code
_______ = if yes, number of instances
CONFLICT PRESENT
0 = character not in a relationship
1 = no
2 = yes
9 = cannot code

CONFLICT ROLE
0 = character not in a relationship
1 = no conflict
2 = initiator
3 = respondent
4 = both
9 = cannot code

VIOLENCE
The overt expression of physical force (with or without a weapon, against self or other) compelling action against one’s will on pain of being hurt or killed, or actually hurting or killing. It must be plausible and credible; no idle threats, verbal abuse, or gestures with no credible violent consequence. May be intentional or accidental; violent accidents, catastrophes, and acts of nature are included.

VIOLENCE COMMITTED BY CHARACTER (Does the character commit any violence? Code highest degree).
0 = does not commit violence
1 = commits non-fatal violence; hurts but does not appear to kill anyone
2 = commits fatal violence; kills or appears to kill; fatal consequences indicated

VIOLENCE SUFFERED BY CHARACTER; VICTIMIZATION (Is the character subjected to any violence? Code highest degree),
0 = not subjected to violence
1 = suffers non-fatal violence; hurt but recovers or recovery indicated
2 = suffers fatal violence; dies violent death, or fatal result is indicated

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENT BEHAVIOR
0 = character does not engage in violent behavior
1 = character’s violent behavior is neither rewarded nor punished
2 = character’s violent behavior is mostly rewarded (character uses violence for reward)
3 = character’s violent behavior is mostly punished (violence gets the character in trouble)
4 = character’s violent behavior is both rewarded and punished