

Yearbook 2017

Beyond the Stereotypes?

Images of Boys and Girls, and their Consequences

Dafna Lemish & Maya Götz (eds)

The International Clearinghouse on
CHILDREN, YOUTH & MEDIA
at NORDICOM, University of Gothenburg

The International Clearinghouse on CHILDREN, YOUTH & MEDIA

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In 1997, the Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research (Nordicom), University of Gothenburg, Sweden, began establishment of the International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media. The overall point of departure for the Clearinghouse's efforts with respect to children, youth and media is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The aim of the Clearinghouse is to increase awareness and knowledge about children, youth and media, thereby providing a basis for relevant policy-making, contributing to a constructive public debate, and enhancing children's and young people's media literacy and media competence. Moreover, it is hoped that the Clearinghouse's work will stimulate further research on children, youth and media.

The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media informs various groups of users – researchers, policy-makers, media professionals, voluntary organisations, teachers, students and interested individuals – about

- research on children, young people and media, with special attention to media violence,
- research and practices regarding media education and children's/young people's participation in the media, and
- measures, activities and research concerning children's and young people's media environment.

Fundamental to the work of the Clearinghouse is the creation of a global *network*. The Clearinghouse publishes a *yearbook* and *reports*. Several *bibliographies* and a worldwide *register of organisations* concerned with children and media have been compiled. This and other information is available on the Clearinghouse's *web site*:

www.nordicom.gu.se/clearinghouse

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THE CLEARINGHOUSE IS LOCATED AT NORDICOM

Nordicom is an organ of co-operation between the Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The overriding goal and purpose is to make the media and communication efforts undertaken in the Nordic countries known, both throughout and far beyond our part of the world.

Nordicom uses a variety of channels – newsletters, journals, books, databases – to reach researchers, students, decisionmakers, media practitioners, journalists, teachers and interested members of the general public.

Nordicom works to establish and strengthen links between the Nordic research community and colleagues in all parts of the world, both by means of unilateral flows and by linking individual researchers, research groups and institutions.

Nordicom also documents media trends in the Nordic countries. The joint Nordic information addresses users in Europe and further afield. The production of comparative media statistics forms the core of this service.

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Preface

It is with great pleasure this volume, entitled *Beyond the stereotypes? Images of boys and girls, and their consequences*, is presented as Yearbook 2017 from the International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media, at Nordicom.

We are deeply grateful to the editors of this book, Dafna Lemish and Maya Götz, as well as to all the contributors who have made this publication possible. It is our hope that the collection of articles will make interesting reading all around the world, stimulate new research and debate as well as give new ideas regarding the portrayal of gender in media content viewed, shared and influencing children and youth.

In the work of the Clearinghouse, the global dimension is a core principle, both with respect to the content we publish and distribute and to the contributors who produce it. *Beyond the stereotypes?* is well representing this principle presenting contributions, examples and authors from many corners of the world.

All books published by the Clearinghouse aim to shed light on different aspects concerning children, youth and media, spread current information and knowledge and hopefully stimulate further research. Various groups of users are targeted; researchers, policy-makers, media professionals, voluntary organizations, teachers, students and interested individuals. It is our hope that this Yearbook will interest and provide new insights on gender representations in media to a broad range of readers.

Göteborg in November, 2017

Catharina Bucht
Information coordinator

Ingela Wadbring
Director

Beyond the Stereotypes?

Introduction

Dafna Lemish and Maya Götz

The initiation of this edited volume was motivated by efforts by many dedicated scholars, practitioners, and activists worldwide to rectify gender inequalities portrayed in the media consumed by children. While grateful that such initiatives are taking place, we continue to realize that making progress in this process is painfully slow.

There are two foundational assumptions shared by the volume's authors and editors underlying these state of affairs: First, we recognize that relationships children and youth have with media around gender related issues are intriguing but also complicated. Indeed, extant research in psychology, media studies, and feminist and cultural studies offer a host of possible explanations for the dynamic relationships between media representations, personal identity, and social reality. Second, based on evidence gathered in the significant body of scholarly research on representation of gender in the media, it is clear that the media have the potential to contribute to the perpetuation of gender inequity by continuing to present a stereotyped and segregated world for boys and girls.

This noted, we know much less about how media representations actually influence the construction of gender identities, particularly among children and youth from non-westernized societies. This is especially important given that, as noted above, there are many efforts by producers, worldwide, to advance media interventions that create counter-stereotypes and gender-fluid representations that can enrich children's understanding of not only what it means to be a boy and a girl today, but also what it could mean in a world in which gender equality thrives.

Admittedly, we also know very little about the effectiveness of alternative media texts, both at the micro-level in terms of the development of young viewers' gender identity as well as at the macro-level in stimulating change in a world dominated by an historical and structural gender inequity. Thus, much more research is required to provide evidence to assess the impacts of such alternative approaches, which in turn

could help develop proposals for improving the effectiveness of these interventions as well as media policies that advance gender equity.

Given this background, the goals of our collection are, first, to present examples of interventions from around the world that attempt to break gender barriers; and second, to explore the influence and consequences of exposure to gender representations – both traditional as well as counter-traditional – on children and youth. This book is structured by these two goals.

Accordingly, the book's 21 chapters were written by authors from a variety of countries around the world, who in presenting their research also reference studies and/or media from Australia, Bangladesh, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Israel, Norway, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, New Zealand, UK, and US. These chapters explore a variety of domains: First, gender related topics include beauty, gender identity construction, gendered self-presentation, health, meaning making, production norms, romantic love, stereotypes and counter-stereotypes. Second, they explore different media and genres – television (reality TV, drama, animation, documentary, advertisements, music videos), web and social networking sites, selfies, books, and stories – across a range of ages spanning from babies to adolescents. Third, the authors use a host of research methodologies: interviews, focus groups, ethnography, analyses (content, discourse, drawings), survey, story-telling. Fourth, the work presented here is ground in diverse scholarly traditions: media studies, cultural studies, feminist studies, developmental psychology, health studies, as well as in professional experience in the industry. We also encouraged the authors to incorporate perspectives from the field of production as well as to include children's voices. Finally, it is important to note that the authors enable us, as a scholarly community, to extend ourselves beyond the male and female gender dichotomy to include hybrid and fluid identities, such as transgender and a-gender.

Overall, we hope that the breath and diversities of the book will make for fascinating reading as well as stimulate reflection, discussion, and, ultimately, contribute to advancing change so very necessary.

We begin by re-creating, in brief fashion, a common ground of understanding of the core issues at play here, assumed by all of the authors of this book: First, there exist gender inequalities and segregation in media for children and youth worldwide; and second, there are significant implications of these inequalities for the wellbeing of our children and our societies at large.

The “What?”: Gender inequalities in media for children

The body of research documenting the gender inequalities in media for children globally is comprehensive and systematic (see, for example, these recent reviews: Baker & Raney, 2007; England, Descartes, & Collier-Meek, 2011; Götz & Lemish, 2012; Hentges & Case,

2013; Lemish, 2010; Smith, Pieper, Granados, & Choueiti, 2010; Velding, 2014). The main themes of this body of research for our concerns in this volume are quite clear. First, multiple studies demonstrate the dominance of male characters (most common finding is one female to two males) and that this disproportion is even more striking in animated non-human characters (animals, objects, “aliens”). This suggests that the more the animators have creative freedom – the more they default into male dominance, instead of the opposite!

Second, female characters in children’s media are hypersexualized, from a young age, including exaggerated busts, wasp-like waistlines, long legs, flowing hair, long eyelashes, and red lips. Similarly, they “perform” their femininity by wearing revealing clothing in pink-purple-pastel colors, decorating themselves with “girly” accessories, and moving about in flirtatious poses. They often reveal themselves to be overly emotional, dependent, focused on their appearances and on the pursuit of romantic love, and engaged in a “bitchy” competition with other female characters to attract the attention of their male pursuits. They have no interest or aptitude for STEM professions (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), but instead invest in development of their domestic skills and interests. In many narratives, they are rescued by males, followers of their lead, and serve as adoring bystanders and caregivers. When girl characters are presented as strong and able, they are expected to also be perfect: beautiful, smart, successful, high achievers, and have supernatural or very unique talents. There seems to be no room for girl role models who own imperfections and are allowed to fail or just be mediocre in several aspects of their lives without threatening their self-esteem. The most common exception to these stereotypes is the redhead girl, who is “allowed” to break gender norms and thus serves as the other “other” (Lemish, Floegel, & Lentz, forthcoming).

Male characters in children’s media also fall into a restrictive model of hyper-masculinity, although it is expressed in a wider array of possibilities: occasionally in muscular chests and arms at other times with the mastery of technology, science, and weaponry. They appear as rational, brave, active, resourceful, and often as leaders. They have a tendency to resolve conflicts by aggressive use of physical force, for which they are often rewarded by the admiration of others. They do not exhibit emotion or vulnerability but rather strength and resolve. When male characters break these stereotypes, they fall into the “funny loser” type of male, the relaxed, easy going character, who does not care much about success and accomplishments and does not need to measure up to perfection of appearance, action, or character.

Accumulatively, the essence of these differences has been captured in the expression: while male characters “do” (focus on action), female characters “appear” (focus on passive being for others to look at). Overall, then, even including the dynamic of the more recent gendered characters, we can add that girls are allowed to act as long as they are perfect and beautiful; and boys are allowed to fail as long as they are perceived as being “cool”.

Third, production elements – such as music, sound effects, choice of colors, camera editing, use of camera filters – support segregation of girls’ screen world from that of

boys'. Such segregation is reinforced by clear gender divisions in the choice of toys, games, clothing, accessories, and activities offered to girls and boys in many stores, daycare centers, schools, and by their families at home from birth.

Admittedly, there are multiple nuances to these generalizations in the appearances and personalities of media characters, even in the most popular characters such as Disney princesses, action super heroes, and teen-soap protagonists. Indeed, over the years there have been plenty of striking exceptions to the stereotypical norms depicting boys and girls who deviate from traditional expectations and offer a vision of equality. So, there are multiple images of clever and brave girls, as well as of considerate and sensitive boys. Yet, most of these examples come from non-commercial private and public television productions and independent media producers (for examples from around the world, see Lemish, 2010; Reinhard & Olson, 2017). Thus, given that these productions have a smaller viewing audience, the overwhelming majority of screen content traveling the world remains segregated, highly stereotypical, and restrictive (e.g., Götz & Lemish, 2012).

“So What?": The implications of gender inequalities in media for children

So what? Why should these images concern us so deeply? Because there is also plenty of research to suggest that the gendered ideology depicted in media for children cultivates a differential worldview, with serious implications for children's wellbeing and potential for healthy development (see integrated reviews: APA, 2007; Dill-Shackleford, Ramasubramanian, Behm-Morawitz, Scharrer, Burgess, & Lemish, D., 2017; Ward & Aubrey, 2017). Among the key findings: Accumulated exposure to stereotypical gender portrayals and clear gender segregation, worldwide, have been found to be correlated: (a) with preferences for “gender appropriate” media content, toys, games, and activities; (b) to traditional perceptions of gender roles, occupations, and personality traits; as well as (c) to attitudes towards expectations and aspirations for future trajectories of life. Further, the impact of sexualization of girls has contributed to development of unhealthy and unrealistic attitudes about female sexuality and the role of sex in intimate relationships. Thus, the thin beauty model was found in research studies to play a significant role in girls' low body image and self-confidence, as well as more specifically contribute to eating disorders. Finally, in this overview of key findings, the common narratives of heterosexual romance and the “damsel in distress” continue to offer a limited array of aspirations and possibilities for a happy and fulfilling life.

While most of the research has focused on the implications of media content on the development of girls, there is much reason to believe that boys are just as vulnerable to its impact and the restrictive models of masculinity it offers them (Lemish, 2010). For example, for boys, the over-emphasis on violence, action, sports, and risk-taking

as defining masculinity, as well as the sanctioning of any forms of behavior deviating from normative heterosexuality, limit their own healthy development and impose on many of them roles and expectations that work against their inner self and wellbeing.

But, not all research focuses on children as passive victims of media content. Studies ground in humanistic psychology as well as feminist and cultural studies have pursued questions related to children's active role in making meaning out of their media experiences in ways that serve their needs, creativity, and life experiences. These processes may include resisting traditional conventions of femininity and masculinity, interpreting them in creative ways, and experimenting with alternative forms of representations (see for example Götz, 2014; Mazzarella, 2010; Mazzarella & Pecora, 1999). While we are happy to celebrate these expressions of personal empowerment and inner strength, we also remember that children's inner worlds may be nevertheless constrained by their cultural milieu, including the media offerings available to them (Götz, Lemish, Aidman, & Moon, 2005).

Overall then, media play an important role in the construction of gendered identities of both girls and boys (Götz, 2014; Mazzarella, 2013). Thus, what they offer them – the characters, narratives, settings, possibilities – requires our careful scrutiny, if we are to actively work towards gender equality and healthy child development.

“So Now What?": The contributions of this book

As stated earlier, this book seeks to broaden the debate over gender representations and to showcase innovations in gender portrayals, as well as the challenges involved in breaking stereotypes. Thus, in the first part of the book, we document interventions from around the world that attempt to break gender barriers. From there, we move in the second section to explore the influence and consequences of exposure to gender representations – both traditional as well as counter-traditional – on children and youth.

Interventions

The first part of the book focuses on the content of media for children, and presents various creative innovations and conscious interventions that challenge conventional stereotypes and proactively attempt to bring about change in children's media content.

Dafna Lemish employs conceptual frameworks and criteria of gender equity to analyze four innovative case studies in media gender presentations. The four television programs she analyzes were finalists for the 2016 PRIX JEUNESSE Gender Prize.

Katy Day analyses a script disruption in a US book entitled *First Test* which features a girl who refuses to accept gender expectations. Day hypothesizes that offering such literary characters and narratives to young readers can contribute to their real-life choices and experiences.

Nancy A. Jennings explores transgender experiences as depicted in the US teen drama *The Fosters*. In doing so, Jennings suggests that television drama provides a safe space to experiment with sexuality and gender constructs for cisgender and transgender characters.

Lindsay Watson introduces new developments in the presentation of female lead characters in animation from a production perspective in the United Kingdom, pointing out pros and cons while introducing major new initiatives.

Anna Potter shares conscious producer efforts to include non-traditional gender representations in the re-booting of *Thunderbirds Are Go*, an action animation.

Alexandra Sousa and Srividya Ramasubramanian discuss the importance of media literacy and alternative on-line community-based initiatives for minority youth, in efforts to counter existing stereotypes of Latina girls in popular culture in the US.

Tamara Amoroso Gonçalves, Mariana Hanssen Bellei Nunes de Siqueira, and Letícia Ueda Vella examine a media change initiative advanced by a media advocacy organization in their debate with Brazilian authorities, with their particular focus on sexist advertising to children.

We conclude this section with an article by Nelly Elias, Idit Sulkin, and Dafna Lemish, who present their analysis of stereotypical gender representations on the international *BabyTV* channel that targets the audience of babies and toddlers. Their contribution documents the absence of an intervention, when it could have so obviously taken place.

Accumulatively, articles in this first section, critique traditional gender stereotypes and present a variety of role-reversal models. Some of them go further by analyzing examples that challenge our binary understanding of gender as comprised of femininity and masculinity, and introduce readers to alternative conceptualizations of gender, including transgender, gender fluidity, and even a utopian framework of an a-gendered character. We are also reminded about the complex ways in which gender intersects with other inequalities, such as race, ethnicity, and class, which are impossible to untangle in efforts to provide children with aspirational social realities.

However, we also note how few and far between are these efforts. Admittedly, we did not devote much attention in this collection of articles to the roles books can play as a change agent. Yet, literary initiatives have been leading the way in presenting children with strong, capable, and independent female characters. *Feminist baby* (Brantz, 2017) for the very young; *The paper bag princess* (Munsch, 1981), *My name is not Isabella: Just how big can a little girl dream* (Fosberry, 2008), and *She persisted: 13 American women who changed the world* (Clinton, 2017) for preschoolers; or *Good night stories for rebel girls* (Favilli & Cavallo, 2017) for elementary school children, are just a few of the many books available today that break gender stereotypes and serve to empower girls and to demonstrate to both girls and boys that they can – and deserve – to be equals. There is a lot that screen culture can learn from following such examples as well.

Consequences

The second section contains a collection of articles that shift from discussion of media gendered content to actual consequences of exposure to that content for the real, lived experiences of children around the world.

The first four articles focus on stereotypical representations of beauty and sexuality:

Kara Chan, Maggie Fung, and Tabitha Thomas explore how boys and girls in Hong Kong perceive physical beauty and its stereotypical association with personality traits, relationships, happiness, and materialism.

Maya Götz and Ana Eckhardt Rodriguez explore how German teenagers misinterpret and idealize the highly sexualized representations of women in music videos.

Carmen Llovet, Mónica Díaz-Bustamante and Kavita Karan analyze comments on Instagram pictures of a beautiful girl-model that confirm the negative effects of sexualization of children.

Johanna M.F. van Oosten investigates reciprocal relationships between adolescents' television diets and their endorsement of hypergender orientations in the Netherlands.

The next three articles discuss young audiences' reflections on stereotypes:

Ruchi Jaggi reflects on children's views of the highly gender-stereotypic content they consume on the dominant television fare that does not represent children's lived experiences in India.

Monica Barbovski, Tatiana Jereissati, and Graziela Castello share their study of how Brazilian teenagers reproduce and/or contest the hyper-sexualized and heteronormative discourses they consume regularly.

Ardis Storm-Mathisen analyzes influences of gender representations in media essays written by teenagers as they project into their future as adults, within an intersectional reality of Batswana.

The two articles that follow focus on pre-teen and teens' performance of gender while maintaining a degree of self-awareness:

Shiri Reznik explores the "perfect" love stories written by Israeli girls that reveal the possible influences of media on gender roles and romantic narratives embedded within them.

Michael Forsman describes how teens in Sweden use selfies for gendered self-representation in social networking with peers, reinforcing assumptions about stereotypes.

The next two articles illustrate children's own understanding of the direct impact that gender stereotypes have on their lives:

Maya Götz and Caroline Mendel give voice to German girls being treated for eating disorders. Their stories reveal the effects idealized beauty models and weight loss television programs have on their wellbeing.

Linda Charmaraman, Amanda Richer, Brianna Ruffin, Budnampet Ramanudom, and Katie Madsen present analyses of adolescents' attitudes toward gender and sexual orientation stereotypes in media in the United States.

Our concluding articles demonstrate the power of media to introduce children to new ideas about gender that challenge their taken for granted perceptions:

Sara L. Beck, Rebecca Hains, and Colleen Russo Johnson examine how children in the US reacted to exposure to an innovative Canadian children's series that presented an a-gendered character and their thinking about gender.

Finally, we bring the book to an end with a contribution from Aanchal Sharma and Manisha Pathak Shelat who take a broader look at theories explaining how media images cultivate gendered beliefs and attitudes among children with a view to effecting positive change.

Altogether, this research collection presents solid evidence that 'what' children view on their screens matters: They internalize stereotypes and learn to perform the gender- "appropriate" behaviors and appearances to which they have been regularly exposed. In some cases, the devastating effects are clear – such as the prevalence of eating disorders. In other areas, the effects may be subtler and less dramatic.

While our contributors unveil young people's ability to be critical of some aspects of the representations they consume, we clarified that being critical does not necessarily result in their developing resilience or resistance to them. Put simply, while we study and respect the processes of meaning-making in which children and young people are engaged when they consume media, we are also acutely aware that it is crucial to provide children with rich and inspiring material with which to make meaning. Thus, we celebrate the many forms of critique, interventions, and possibly resistance authors shared regarding representations of gender in children's media taking place around the world. We also believe they have demonstrated the value of offering children healthy alternatives to the common stereotypes to which they are exposed daily. Indeed, several of the media texts discussed in this volume offer a promising horizon, as they demonstrate what happens when the industry understands the value of early socialization to gender equity, is willing to take risks, and invests in the healthy development of children's identities.

When we embarked on the journey involved in advancing this book, we entitled it, optimistically: "Beyond the Stereotypes," hoping to document significant positive change. Along the way, we found that young people, just like adults, are far from being "beyond" media stereotypes of gender; rather, they seem quite often to be trapped in them. Yet, with time, guidance, and experience, we also found that they are able to reflect on the stereotypes or even to critically oppose them.

More deeply, we also recognize that the structural gender inequalities these stereotypes represent are so deeply rooted that they make any form of resistance a hugely complicated task. The contributors and editors of this book hope that we are able to push the envelope a bit farther in these efforts by extending the limits of the conversation about boys, girls, and their images as we continue to question: how shall we get "beyond the stereotypes?"

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I. Interventions

Innovations in Gender Representation in Children's Television

The PRIX JEUNESSE 2016 Gender Prize Competition

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This study explored innovations in gender representations in children's television that depart from the mainstream of conservative formulas and stereotypes of gender. The four finalists of the PRIX JEUNESSE 2016 *Gender Prize* programs are critically analyzed for their innovative presentation of gender as well as reflected upon during discussion groups of television professionals. *Tasmina: The Horse Girl* from Bangladesh challenges traditional gender roles; *How Ky Turned into Niels* from The Netherlands shares the life of a transgender pre-adolescent boy; *Annedroids: Paling Around* from Canada role models a technological girl and presents a non-gendered character; and *Truth Lies – Feminine* from Argentina reflects on gender fluidity. While each of the programs takes a different approach to gender equality, taken together, the four finalists are groundbreaking and important milestones in efforts to advance children's television as among the leading socializers for gender equity.

What is the potential of television to offer children different perspectives on gender representations and to problematize existing ones? Can television provide children with aspirational role models that break gender roles and stereotypes? And if so, where can we find such television programs for our children? The PRIX JEUNESSE *International Festival* is one of the best occasions for viewing innovations in gender representations in children's television. Since its initiation in 1964 by its founders¹, this bi-annual festival brings together hundreds of industry producers and creative artists from around the world who showcase the best of quality television for children, compete for prizes, share experiences and ideas, and expand their knowledge and understanding of how television can better serve the wellbeing of children worldwide (Lemish, 2010, pp. 22-23).

Throughout its history the PRIX JEUNESSE has screened programs that challenge traditional gender stereotypes as well as sexual identities, such as the following creative and thought-provoking examples discussed by Lemish (2010): *Boxing Beauty* (Israeli Broadcasting Authority), a documentary feature about a talented and ambitious

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girl-boxer; *Fatma* (Nile Thematic Channels, Egypt), the story of a village girl who insists on going to school despite all manner of difficulty; *Hurray! Cool Daddy* (Educational Broadcasting System, Korea) portrayal of fun and games for young children and their fathers; *Peppa Pig* (Astley Baker Davis and El Entertainment, UK) story of a young pig, her family and friends; *Danny's Parade* (NPS, The Netherlands) documentary about a gay boy's activism in organizing a gay and lesbian youth float in Amsterdam's annual Gay Canal Parade; *Sexteens* (Fundacion Huesped, Argentina) exposé about HIV and teen sexuality; *Girls* (NPB/IKON, The Netherlands) exploration of teenage boys' pre-occupation with girls and sex; and *Burka Avenger* (Unicorn Black, Pakistan) featuring a female superpower who fights to protect girls' rights for education.

Consistent with its evolving interest in advancing gender equity, the PRIX JEUNESSE initiated its *Gender Prize* in 2014 in order to highlight programs that push the proverbial envelope in their treatments of gender-related issues. Entries for this prize are screened by an international jury comprised of industry professionals and academics with expertise in gender equity. This chapter examines the four finalists chosen by the festival jury to be candidates for the 2016 prize. The following broad analysis of these programs focuses on the narrative, characters, and gender concepts embedded in them, rather than the production qualities of storyline execution. The foundations for this analysis lie in my 2010 research study in which I interviewed 135 producers of quality television for children from 65 countries (Lemish, 2010). The analysis was also informed by the following sources²:

- a) Background information on the programs provided by their creators, as published in the festival catalogue;
- b) Thematic analysis of the discussions conducted by jury members through email exchanges after they completed the voting process;
- c) Thematic analysis of transcripts from ten discussion groups composed of participants who met during the six days of the festival;
- d) Thematic analysis of transcripts of comments made by one youth group regarding one of the finalists for the gender prize.

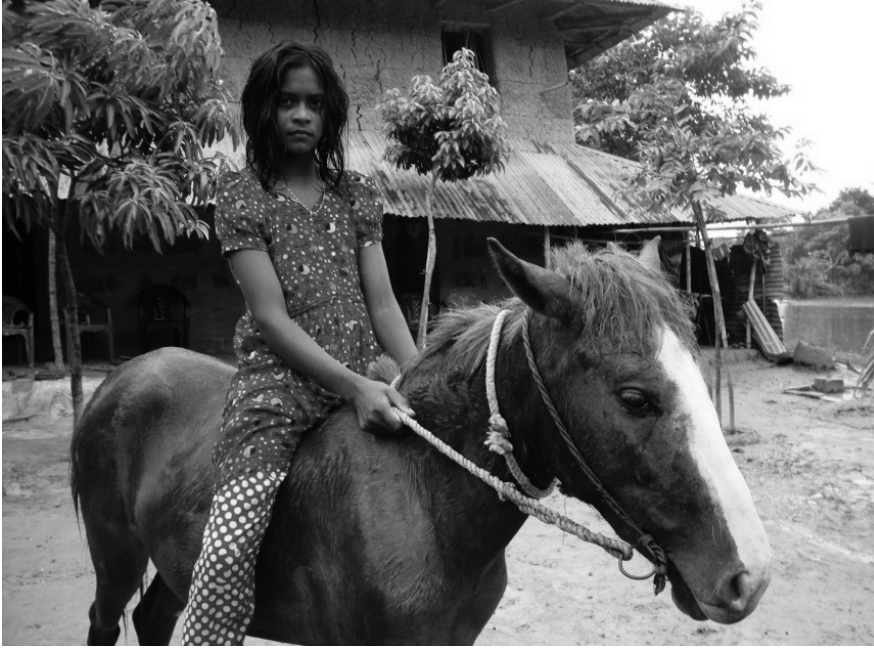
The four 2016 finalists

Challenging traditional society

Tasmina: The Horse Girl (Asshwarohi Tasmina), Bangladesh,

Target age: 11-15³

Tasmina, an 11-year-old girl from a remote village in Northern Bangladesh, is known as 'Horse Girl' in her neighborhood. At a time when sixty percent of the girls in her culture are married off before their 15th birthday, Tasmina aspires



Tasmina – The Horse Girl © AV Cue

to ride horses and to compete in horse racing at least for another five years. In this rural society, outdoor games are not allowed for the 'grown up' women and horseracing is unthinkable. [...] Her father bought a small horse for her. But this tiny little horse can't cope with the big racing horses and she can't race fairly with her elder male competitors. Now she dreams of buying a big horse of her own. But who will give her the huge amount of money she needs?

An 11-year-old girl who rides horses and joins horse races is unthinkable for a 'grown-up' girl in rural Bangladesh. When she goes to school without covering her head and demands her name be announced as a competitor instead of the owner's name, she ignores the norms of the male dominated society. She is confident to achieve her goals and becomes a source of inspiration for many young girls. (PRIX JEUNESSE Catalogue, 2016, p. 26)

By all measures, Tasmina is a brave teenager with a strong personality who is acting contrary to traditional societal expectations and pushing gender boundaries. Viewers seemed to find it easy to identify with and admire, as we see demonstrated in the following quotes from PRIX JEUNESSE discussion groups: "Tasmina the horse girl is a great character [of a] strong willed person. She's fighting against cultural oppression" (UK, male); "A theme we're seeing is female empowerment. [...] I really liked seeing her race against the men and pointing out the gender differences. She doesn't love her limitations but is willing to push past them" (Canada, female). "[...] it is a story of

affirmation. She is fighting [...] [and has] a strong identity. A very good girl for other children to see" (Spain, female).

More specifically, Tasmina is acknowledged to be an empowering role model, particularly when there is family support: "To show how girls, even in a very male-dominant environment, can make their own way (especially when her father supports her).... [It is] wonderful [that] can show them how to 'make their own space'" (Germany, female).

It is interesting that members of the Youth Jury, who reside in a rural mid-west area of the United States and screened the programs and shared their views with a PJ coordinator in their hometown, noted that Tasmina's ambition to participate in a masculine activity came with a "price": While appreciating Tasmina's independence, they were quite critical of what they perceived to be her aggressive treatment of the horse. "She was about to kill that horse! When she was riding that horse, she's like, 'if I had a knife I would have killed that horse!' She was in a really bad mood"; "[...] she had that whip thing and she was like, beating the crap out of it. And I was like, okay, everybody else was just hitting theirs every so often and she kept beating it"; "she comes off harsh"; "she's really aggressive." She's nice but she looks like she could seriously hurt you"; "her voice was so annoying to me. She sounded like she was angry all the time"; "she had an attitude." As commonly found in previous research, behavior that is perceived to be appropriate for males is framed as "aggressive" when taken on by females in the same roles, thus potentially continuing to perpetuate the differential expectations from both genders (Lemish & Tidhar, 1999).

Transgender

How Ky Turned into Niels (Hoe Ky Niels werd), The Netherlands

Target Age: 9-14⁴

Messing with fireworks, ring and run and a lot of football practice. This makes Ky really happy, but she has also been unhappy for years because she has a girl's body. Last summer Ky finally managed to tell her parents she wants to become a boy. And she would like to have a different name: Niels. Together with her friend Sterre, who used to be called Tibor and therefore has a boy's body, they tell their new secondary school class that they are transgender children. It is the beginning of a new life as Niels. *How Ky turned into Niels* is about the search to find out who you are and the right to be yourself, about boys and girls stuff, hormones and more of those confusing things. (PRIX JEUNESSE Catalogue, 2016, p. 15).

How Ky turned into Niels deals openly and authentically with a topic – gender dysphoria – that is a public taboo in television programming for children in the vast majority of the world (with few exceptions in northern European countries). The show creates emotional power by allowing the child to speak in front of peers with another dysphoric child. In doing so, the program recognizes, legitimizes and normalizes transgender lives.



How Ky Turned into Niels © IKONdocs

Niels explains in the class presentation that “gender dysphoria means that you don’t feel comfortable in your body. Some people call it ‘being born in the wrong body.’” They use rigid gender stereotypes to explain how it feels to “imagine you’re a girl, and your parents make you wear boys’ clothes... cut your hair nice and short... and sign you up for football when you’d rather go shopping. [...] Your parents give you a Nerf gun when you were hoping for those sick heels (giggling of empathy in the classroom).” In speaking this way, Niels is presented doing stereotypical boy things – playing football, muscle building, wearing boys’ cloths and short hair, moving about in a masculine fashion, and enjoying loud music, adventures, and pranks played on neighbors and girls.

Participants in the PRIX JEUNESSE discussion groups were attracted to the emotional quality of the program and the ability of Niels to talk about his feelings: “The big point for me was that the boy was crying and emotional [...]” (Libya, female). While a few participants were critical of the fact that Niels was put on the spot in class to answer difficult questions, others appreciated the authenticity of the presentation: “The thing I paid attention to most was who was explaining what was happening. It wasn’t an expert. It was the boy by himself. It works well. The moment that he explains himself without the scientific words shows who the boy is” (Ecuador, female). Clearly the program chose to highlight the social context as understanding and supportive, as one participant said: “The thing that struck me was that everyone was so cool and accepting about it. I was amazed that no one was saying that it was weird. The parents were SO supportive. Most parents would be a little more wary about the situation. Maybe that is real but it struck me that all of the people around him were so supportive” (Denmark, female).

Overall, the documentary offered Niels, and vicariously for viewers, an empowering experience via the program. As the director of the program Els van Driel stated: “[...] for Niels, it was very important to tell his story. He never regretted being the subject of this film. Actually, he is very proud and has received nothing but positive responses”

(2016, p. 32). Yet, as we discuss below, the program reconfirmed the binary gendered structure of society: you are either a boy or a girl; and in cases of gender dysphoria, you strive to correct the incongruity between your body and your identity by aligning them: A clear girl identity in a girl's anatomy and a clear boy identity in a boy's anatomy.

Technology and gender

Annedroids: Paling Around, Canada

Target Age: 6-11⁵

Annedroids takes what kids have come to expect from gender roles on TV, yanks out the circuitry, and reworks it entirely. The series features titular character Anne, an unapologetic science whiz with a particular knack for robotics and computer programming. Working opposite her are newly arrived Nick, an earnest and kind hearted kid and bombastic Shania who's also no slouch in the engineering bay herself. Furthering the theme of blurred gender rigidity is Pal, whom Anne designed to be neither male nor female and who incorporates characteristics of all three kids through mimicry. But this fresh take on gender roles is only one of many motivations behind *Annedroids*. Beyond its inherent agenda of pushing STEM based educational content, it also aims to show the fun side of being smart, particularly in the sciences." (PRIX JEUNESSE Catalogue, 2016, p. 70)



Annedroids © Sinking Ship Entertainment

Annedroids' dual agenda is clearly visible: to promote enthusiasm over engagement with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), and also to promote gender equity by dismantling the traditional exclusive association of masculinity with science and rationality. It presents characters that offer different ways of being a girl and a boy, and a possibility of unity of purpose, collaboration, and friendship of gender and racial diversity that is based neither on difference nor on romance and sexual attraction. Comments from the PRIX JEUNESSE discussion groups reaffirmed that these messages were clear and well received: "Yeah, I really liked it. There was only one token boy and all the others were girls doing science. And the junk yard was great [...]" (UK, female). "And, I think one of the reasons it appeals is because there are characters for all different kinds of children to connect to, which is a difficult thing to do" (US, male).

In addition, we should note that many of the comments focused on the price to be paid for role reversal, when girls are placed in traditionally masculine roles, framing it as hyperactive acting. Such comments were a-plenty: "[...] the two girls were hyperactive" (Canada, female). "super overacting [...] it was too much. Too fast, noisy, loud" (Colombia, female). "The art is great, it is very well made, but there was too much overacting. I wanted to help the little kids to do better so it didn't work with me" (Ecuador, female). "So much overacting. I am sort of getting tired of it" (Sweden, female). "For me it was very bothering, the acting, like posing" (Spain, female).

An exchange in one of the discussion groups spelled it out quite clearly: "I would totally disagree that it turns gender roles upside down. It tries to make up for stereotypes by putting all stereotypes in another extreme" (Germany, female).

Moderator: "Is she likable for you?"

"No, because I couldn't relate to her at all. She was over the top in everything that she was doing. Maybe the talking is not something I could get used to. Very sitcom [like] talking" (Germany, female).

"But the tone is not correct. It is just not there" (Colombia, male).

Such comments resonate with the argument that qualities that are perceived as positive in male characters (e.g., activity, leadership, self-confidence) are perceived negatively in females (e.g., activity becomes hyper-active; leadership and self-confidence are perceived as aggressiveness).

A unique feature of *Annedroids* is the character of Pal, a genderless android character, as explained by the program's director: "My goal with Pal was to introduce a clean-slate-character – one who would be able to reflect on life through a completely innocent filter. [...] Pal being a genderless character throughout the four seasons provides a great and natural way to explore gender and related stereotypes. [...] Pal ultimately decides to be Pal – choosing not to present as either male or female. Pal just wants to be itself – unique and beautiful" (Johnson, 2016, p. 51). In the particular episode submitted for the competition, the role of Pal was not particularly salient to the jurors as well as the discussion groups and very

few comments actually related to this innovative idea. “I like that it wasn’t a boy or a girl (Colombia, female). “It is really gender neutral” (The Netherlands, Female).

Pal, in the episode screened at PJ, is involved in the issue of gendered clothing. At first, his choices are quite masculine: he first puts on a red cowboy hat and later on he wears a grey sweatshirt with a hood.⁶ In the mall, s/he chooses male pants and a female dress, and ends up wearing the dress. However, the way the dress hangs on him/her, s/he is exposed as an android, rather than a human, thus the social challenge presented by its asexual and non-gendered nature is somewhat limited when judged by this episode alone.

Gender fluidity

Truth Lies – Feminine (Mentira la verdad- Lo femenino), Argentina

Target Age: 14-20⁷

“What supports our ideas? Is there only one way of thinking about reality or the state of things? With philosophical discourse as an ally, the show reflects on history, beauty, love, happiness, identity, what supports our value judgments, and the reasons that have made some facts more visible than others.

The gender perspective is a particular approach which identifies women’s unequal and subordinate position in relation to men’s questioning what, beyond all changes and transformations, is still described as ‘natural’. Our material intends to raise an issue as regards what is given as ‘natural’, understanding that there is not a watertight and predetermined division, but that the feminine and the masculine are shaped in the changing social dynamics.” (PRIX JEUNESSE Catalogue, 2016, p. 22)

Truth Lies is a mixed genre program that employs a dramatic confrontation between a transgender daughter in transition to be a man and her/his father. The “father” character, a well-known host of the show who is always involved in the story in everyday situations, is confronted in this episode with an unexpected situation: His attractive and beloved daughter wants to become a man. The narrative consists of short theoretical interventions about gender and feminist theory. For example, the father explains the constructed nature of gender as distinguished from biology, and traces some of the main issues at the heart of feminist thought regarding the nature of phallogocentric cultures, the history of the subordination of women, and the struggle for equality. In doing so, the program asks: “Are there just two possibilities?” “When we talk about sexual identity can we set aside binary thinking?” “[It seems that] any contradiction, ambiguity or mixture is discarded [...] either you are a male or you are a female;” “There is no third option, and, if there is, it is monstrous and therefore, it may be cured, fixed, condemned, exorcized.”

In its response, the program proposes multiple gendered options, with the father stating to the camera: “The opposite of male is not female – but ‘not male’ and the category of not male widely exceeds what we understand by female and it poses a whole series of possible combinations, hybridizations, mixtures. Breaking away of the



Truth Lies – Feminine © Encuentro

binary logic means going beyond trans-sexuality towards the world of transgender. [...] Everything is possible because all natural determinants are broken. And, as Beatriz Preciado⁸ states, counter-sexuality is not the creation of a new nature but rather the end of nature as an order. [...] Nowadays there are multiple categories indicating a slow transformation of the species: transvestites, transsexuals, but also intersex, cyborgs, natural, undetermined gender.”

Interestingly, discussion of this program was very limited, indeed it was hardly touched upon in any of the discussion groups. Left to speculate, we might surmise that participants may have been uncomfortable even talking about the program; or that the experiment, as both genre as well as content, was perceived by some as being too complicated to follow and age inappropriate. The few participants who did comment cited a disconnect between the gender fluidity idea at the core of the program and the actual production, resulting in theoretical ‘overload’. One participant recognized the innovative nature of the program: “It is experimental [...] this is new with the philosophical exposition, the language of philosophy, the language of psychology [...] this is pushing the edge of what we want to understand about gender dualism in western thought” (US, female).

Among the jurors of the program, all gender-experts, there was much appreciation for the ambitious concept of the program: “*Truth Lies* [...] goes so much deeper – because it challenges the gender dichotomy all together and raises very meaningful questions about the way we understand gender – so theoretically it is much more daring and thought provoking (US, female). “It shows how gender and identity is socially constructed and open our minds beyond the binary” (Brazil, female juror). “It broadens our understand-

ing of sexual representation beyond quite traditional frameworks” (UK, female juror). Others on the jury agreed with the discussion group that the execution of the concept was not effective for teens and probably more appropriate for university age students.

Discussion

As can be ascertained from the analysis above, the four programs were presented here in what I consider to be their degree of innovativeness. While the documentaries *Tasmina: The Horse Girl* and *How Ky Turned into Niels* feature two very brave young people, the perspective employed in presenting them is, fundamentally, an affirmation of a binary gender order: In the first film, an independent girl goes against her traditional society’s norms and expectations to seek her personal dreams and aspirations. The illustrations selected present Tasmina’s struggle via role reversal: She wants to do what boys are allowed to do – ride horses and compete for awards; earn money via talent and skills; have the freedom to postpone marriage. She is presented as assertive, rebellious, and even somewhat aggressive – as boys are expected to be.

The role reversal approach demonstrated in *Tasmina* promotes the possibility that roles traditionally associated with one gender will be portrayed by the other one: For example, boys aspire to be ballet dancers, pre-school teachers, or home-makers, while girls want to be boxers, engineers, or combat officers. While boys are portrayed reflecting on their inner world and exhibit emotions, girls express themselves assertively and with self-confidence. This approach suggests that professions, roles, duties, and talents are not gender specific and can be assigned to either boys or girls. It also offers opportunities for different narratives when girls are not limited to relationships ground in talk and romance, and storylines about boys are free from the expectation that their relationships are only created in action and physical interactions.

Ky, in the second film, is also presented as reaffirming binary gender types – a female and a male. Ky feels like a boy trapped in a girl’s body and wants to become a holistic boy. He wants to look, dress, play, and be acknowledged as a boy. He rejects his female body and with it the possibility of a male identity in a female body. He wants to align them so his male identity will live in a male body. Thus, his gender dysphoria experience suggests a clear distinction between two forms of identity.

It seems that in both programs, the gendered constructed dimension of identity can only live in peace with itself if matched by the only option of the “right” physical body that goes along with it. So despite brave attempts at breaking taboos and presenting a transgender young person, both programs retain the conventional understanding of gender as binary: You are either one gender (or you want to be one gender) or the other.

Annedroids, on the other hand, steps beyond the binary. On one hand, Anne represents a successful form of role reversal – a girl who is a science whiz who is not a marginalized “geek”. She is happy, social, and liked by her friends. She embraces both

girlhood as well as science and technology, demonstrating that the two can go together seamlessly and be naturally accepted by society-at-large. Thus Anne is a prototype of a person who rejects the rigidity of a position that sees qualities inherit in the meaning of boyhood and girlhood. The creation of PAL, a non-gendered android, on the other hand, introduces a unique, thought-provoking idea to children: a focus on a shared humanity that is not stereotypically gendered. Anne creates PAL as neither male nor female, letting this being deliberate which of the two to choose across many episodes of the series, and at the end, to decide not to force itself into either. This concept resonates with *The Story of X* (Gould, 1982) that introduced to children a character called Baby X, whose parents participate in an imaginary social experiment of raising a child without publicizing his/her sex. Baby X grows up dressed in unisex clothes, plays with toys and games traditionally associated with both genders, and is treated in a non-gendered way. PAL, like Baby X, calls our attention to the distinction between sex and gender. Here the sexual organs with which one is born do not necessarily determine one's identity; rather gender is the social construction of expectations, norms, and behaviors that we assign to these sexual organs that socialize human beings into one gender or another. Or, to use Simone de Beauvoir's highly cited definition: "One is not born a woman, but becomes one" and adapt it to men as well (de Beauvoir, 1949). The two main characters of *Annedroids* – Anne and PAL – offer gender alternatives: Anne is an example of gender blurring, where gender differences are so blurred that characters can be described as androgynous in many ways, and PAL as a character is non-gendered.

Truth Lies – Feminine, confronts young viewers with the theoretical argument that gender is not only constructed but can be fluid. This is a much more complicated and provocative. Rather than blurring the two genders, like Anne, or erasing all forms of gender, as PAL does, it playfully suggests endless multiple versions of gender, once we reject nature as the determinant of identity. It allows us to imagine a very different way of looking at humanity. In so doing, the program draws on Judith Butler's theory (1990) that seeks to undermine gender binaries based on sexual differences between males and females and challenge the clear and well distinguished heterosexual and homosexual identities. Butler also views gender as a form of performance, rather than a concrete reality, involving acting out according to specific cultural expectations and norms. In the closing words of the program: "Some people understand this tension in an upsetting way. Others understand it as the opening to make the human being a freer place."

Finally, it is very important to also examine these four programs in their cultural contexts, in general, as well as to understand and appreciate the producers' innovative presentations. *Tasmina's* role reversal approach is highly daring in Bangladesh, where girls her age are deprived of education and a voice. Ky's voice would probably be met with strict taboo in the rest of the world except on children's television in the Netherlands and the Nordic countries (Lemish, 2010). *Annedroids* responds to efforts in the Western world to encourage women to engage in STEM professions. *Truth Lies*

– *Feminine* was produced in a country with a machismo culture, where domestic and sexual violence are prevalent, and positive male role models that advocate for gender equality are highly sought after. As such, all four programs are groundbreaking and important milestones in efforts to advance children's television as among the leading socializers for gender equity.

Notes

1. Free State of Bavaria, the City of Munich and Bayerischer Rundfunk (BR). Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF), as well as the Bayerische Landeszentrale für neue Medien (BLM)
2. Special thanks to the PJ staff for providing me with these resources.
3. Director: *Faridur Rahman*; Producer: Begum Mahbuba Khatun. Original Language: Bengali; Duration: 18 min; First Telecast: 11/1/2016, 17:20. Telecaster: ATN News Lts, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Producing Organization: AV Cue Dhaka, Bangladesh.
4. Director: Els van Driel; Producer: Anouk Donker. Original Language: Netherlands; Duration: 20 min; First Telecast: 26/10/2014, 11:30 Telecaster and Producing Organization, IKONdocs; Hilversum, Netherlands
5. Director: J.J. Johnson; Executive Producers: Blair Powers, J.J. Johnson, and Christin Simms, Producer: Matthew J.R. Bishop. Original Language: English; Duration: 22 min. First Telecast: 23/09/2015, 18:30; Season 3, Episode No. 3 out of 13. Telecaster: TVO, KIKI, Toronto Canada. Producing Organization: Sinking Ship Entertainment, Toronto Canada.
6. In North American culture this is highly associated with young black males and has become a symbol of "Black Lives Matter" movement, given the victimization of young black males in "hoodies".
7. Director: Pablo Destito; Producer Mulata films para Encuentro; Original Language: Spanish. Duration: 29 min; First Telecast: 22/10/2014, 23:0; Episode No. 7 out of 13. Telecaster and Producing Organization: Encuentro, Buenos Aires, Argentina.
8. Beatriz Preciado a contemporary philosopher and writer focusing on gender, body, sexuality, and identity. Born originally as Paul Preciado in Spain, she is currently a university professor in Paris.

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Disruption – Not Always a Bad Thing

A Look at Scripts in Tamora Pierce's First Test

Katy Day

While disruption can often be portrayed in a negative light, script disruption is a powerful cognitive tool when it comes to combating gendered stereotypes. Script disruption has been shown to engage the brain, which makes readers more aware of what they are reading – and therefore they are more likely to remember it. Here I analyze Tamora Pierce's fantasy novel *First Test*, as it closely focalizes one female character who refuses to be hemmed in by what is expected of her gender. I hypothesize that books that depict empowered female characters, who are portrayed as such through disrupting scripts, offer implied adolescent readers' real-life coping strategies that they can transmute from page to reality.

Girl

What does that word mean? Sugar and spice and everything nice? The color pink? Someone emotional and submissive? While these descriptors may make you scoff, you would still probably not be surprised that this is the kind of answer given by girls in a 2009 survey. When Rachel Simmons, co-founder of the organization *Girls Leadership*, asked adolescent girls what they thought it meant to be a good girl, they came up with this list: quiet, perfect, sheltered, a follower, polite, generous, kind, respectful, flirtatious, average, a people pleaser, has no opinion on things, listens, speaks well, follows the rules, and does not get mad (2009, p. 2). These kinds of behaviors are inculcated in girls from an early age, and these attitudes stem from a multitude of sources: parents, teachers, television, movies, etc. They are processed by children and adolescents' still-developing brains and taken in as what it means to be a girl. It can become their blueprint for how to think and how to behave. It can become their stereotype.

Stereotypes are not bad, in and of themselves. They are shortcuts for the brain that make it more efficient, and the brain is always trying to be efficient. Neuroscientists have shown two phases of major restructuring in the brain during a human's lifetime: a year or so after birth, and during puberty. At birth, humans have millions of synaptic connections; in what is believed to be an effort to make the brain more efficient, these synapses are pared down in the first years of life – the brain discovers which connections are not used and cuts them off (Blakemore and Choudhury, 2006, p. 207). The social brain, or the parts of the brain involved in understanding others, and how to behave around others, undergoes “structural development, including synaptic reorganization, during adolescence” (Blakemore, 2008, p. 267). It seems that it is trying to make itself more efficient, so certain connections are abandoned. Sarah-Jayne Blakemore and Suparna Choudhury state that “certain social cognitive skills might be much more difficult to incorporate into brain networks once they are established after puberty” (2006, p. 307). These certain skills may include the ability to see beyond the stereotypes.

What is a stereotype?

Stereotype is not actually the word I want to use. The word that is more accurate for this discussion is script. Scripts are a cognitive tool which are defined by pre-existing knowledge, which is naturally different and unique to every individual on the planet. But although it is based on an individual's personal knowledge, it is a sociocultural product. Peter Stockwell explains that the cognitive idea of a script is a mental protocol that is learned by humans to navigate social situations (2002, p. 77). He defines it as a conceptual structure drawn from memory to assist in understanding (2002, p. 77). A common example is dining in a restaurant. There is a script that tells us to look for various indicators to assess whether or not we wait for a hostess or we seat ourselves. If there is someone to seat us, we prepare an answer to the question, “How many?” We know to wait for menus, and that after a certain amount of time if they are not received, we know to look for a waiter.

When seen in this light, scripts seem like a fundamental aspect of social functionality. Prior knowledge of similar situations cuts down on the minutiae we need to pay attention to, as we already know how to react – efficiency in action. But this idea becomes complicated when combined with expected gender performativity and what people expect of different genders. Judith Butler states that gender is “real only to the extent that it is performed” (1990, p. 278). There are masculine behaviors and feminine behaviors that are associated with gender, and it is these actions that, when repeated, result in a gendered identity being solidified. But these repeated performances lead to a stereotypical idea of what gender is, harkening back to the idea that being a girl means only one prescribed thing. Butler was attempting to get people to understand that identifying with one gender does not limit how a person can behave. Roberta Seelinger Triles elucidates,

saying that “cultural narratives enscript cognitive conceptualizations, entailing them in ways that prevent people from considering alternative cultural narratives” (2014, p. 96). Scripts can become unconscious stereotyping that limits not only what one thinks others are capable of, but can also limit what an individual thinks she can accomplish. Adolescent literature is an especially important milieu for script disruption because “so many scripts are based on stereotypical knowledge” (Trites, 2014, p. 49) – including gender stereotypes. Adolescents often internalize scripts and do not necessarily think about or question them if nothing forces them to, or something shows them that they *can* be questioned. The script must be interrupted.

What is script disruption?

A literary example of a script is when we see an old crone hand a young girl an apple. We expect that the girl will take a bite of it and fall ill because the apple is poisoned. We then expect the old crone to be revealed as the evil stepmother and for a handsome prince to save the girl. But if something a reader is not expecting occurs, it is more likely that the reader will begin to pay closer attention to the events of the story. If the young girl takes the poisoned apple and tricks the old crone into eating it, the script is turned on its head. This deviance from the norm is called script disruption. In narratives, when scripts are disrupted, readers are more likely to realize that something *different* is happening.

In this chapter, I analyze the character of Kel in *First Test*, the first book of Tamora Pierce’s quartet *Protector of the Small* (1999-2002). Aimed at adolescent readers, this quartet was the third Pierce wrote that is set in the realm of Tortall. While not a blockbuster hit in terms of popularity, Pierce’s Tortall books have a large and avid following, with readers commenting on how strongly these texts affected them (cf. Goodreads Tortall universe series). Kel starts the series as a ten-year-old who is the first girl to openly train as a knight of Tortall for the last century. She faces significant challenges from people who think that she is not capable of doing so, simply because she is female. What is important is how Kel deals with these gender-challenges: does she ignore them? Behave in a reactionary way? Become the type of person she thinks a female knight should be, as opposed to being herself? The most important aspect to examine will be how Kel does not let her behavior be dictated to her by the expectations of males. It is this portrayal of Kel’s behavior that is potentially most illuminating to implied readers, since it is a subtle script disruption that simultaneously suggests to readers that girls do not have to hem in their actions or expectations because of other people. I look for evidence of disruption of the traditional girl script and through that the showing of what I call the kick ass girl (who is not afraid to be girly or boyish and thinks you’re wrong for thinking in binary terms like that anyway) script. I briefly define these terms below before exploring them in my chosen texts.

The traditional girl script

I start with John Stephens' schematic idea of femininity, which are adjectives that describe the traditional girl – what she is like, how she behaves, who she *is*. The following are some of the words he uses to define traditional perceptions of femininity: non-violent, emotional, submissive, obedient/pleasing, caring, vulnerable, powerless, dependent, passive, intuitive (1996, p. 18-19). What is troubling is that Stephens' idea of femininity is not simply a definition bandied about in academic writing – several books and articles in the mainstream have been written on the idea that our culture thinks of girls in a very specific, subordinate way, as described earlier (cf. Simmons, 2009; Wardy, 2014). It is evident that many contemporary girls, when it comes to what the media is marketing to them, are being pushed towards traditional ideas of femininity. Not only that, but girls like this can think less of themselves, less of their gender, and that being a girl means certain things are not for them, whether that be a career as a scientist or speaking up against sexist treatment (APA, 2008).

Texts that show females behaving and thinking in ways other than what is represented by the traditional girl script can be enlightening to those who think their future is prescribed. Trites (2014) notes that scripts in adolescent literature are important because so few adolescents are aware of certain cultural phenomena, since they have been internalized and normalized in their cognition. Much as all scripts are simultaneously personal and societal, how one reacts to these scripts depends on one's life experience – or their reading experience. Readers with an awareness of gender scripts – even if a subconscious knowledge – are potentially more enabled to identify what society pushes as limiting, and to pursue their goals despite gender roles. Readers were found to create 'future memories' based on fiction they read – that is, they considered how they would behave in certain situations in the future, and found that they were influenced by fictive characters' behaviors (Heath & Wolf, 2012). Finding characters that adhere to the traditional girl script, or that are affected by it and react against it, can relate the fictive story to the real world – and show other ways in which to think and act. That is part of the reason why adolescent literature that disrupts gendered scripts can be so powerful.

The kick ass girl script

While I want to steer away from descriptive terms, the kick ass girl script is what I would call the ideal girl, because she has learned (or is learning) to act in accordance with her beliefs, desires and goals. She is not a model; she is herself. She does not conform to that which is expected of the traditional girl script, though that is not to say she cannot behave in that manner. Instead, she is aware (even if un-self-consciously) of gender scripts and ignores them and does not let them restrict her. She recognizes external representations of gender, and makes conscious decisions about how she wants to present herself, but for her *own reasons*. That is the important difference between

the kick-ass girl script and the traditional girl script. This particular script is fairly new in its validity *as a script* – a plethora of new publications with this kind of character have promoted the kick ass girl script (cf. *Daughter of Smoke and Bone* and *Graceling* to start with). This script describes a person who is fully herself, and makes decisions for herself. Her actions and behavior cannot be predicted by her gender, or the idea that she is purposefully *not* conforming to gender scripts. She is aware of gendered scripts of the traditional girl, but she strikes her own path, either manipulating the scripts to her benefit or bypassing them altogether.

What makes the kick ass girl script stand out is that it is empowering. When using the term empowerment, I mean a development of representation of a character from lack of agency/limited agency to a range of increased or full agency. I link this concept to Trites' concept of agency, wherein she states that a text works as a feminist children's novel if the protagonist is more aware at the end of the book of her ability to make her own choices and to assert her personality (1997, p. 6). I look at agency in terms of script disruption, because within the existing traditional girl script, female agency is limited. Through the disruption of that script, another is created: the kick ass girl script. The important difference between these two scripts is the first is predictable, while the second is less so. The unpredictability of the kick ass girl script comes in that it is attuned to each character who embodies it, and while a specific character may become predictable, it is impossible to quantify it as a whole – the definition of the kick ass girl script is that each girl makes decisions according to her own beliefs and desires. This unpredictability and evidence of varied choice could lead to the kick ass girl script being more cognitively engaging for readers.

Primary analysis: Keladry of Mindelan

In the following sections, I look at how Kel is depicted as performing – both when trying to be female and when trying to be not-female – and how she thinks about gender. I look to see if her actions oppose the ideas that certain kinds of gendered expressions are false while others are true, and I will identify them by her rejection of gender scripts.

Traditional girl?

There are very strict societal codes that govern the medieval fantasy realm of Tortall, especially when it comes to its aristocratic class. It is easy to associate it with what we know of medieval societies, because there are knights and princes, people riding horses and living in castles. It also has medieval ideas about women. At the age of ten, Kel decides she wants to train to become a knight, becoming the first girl to openly do so in over a century. Her depicted struggles, development, and behavior all work in conjunction with gendered scripts – sometimes conforming and sometimes disrupting.

Although legally girls can train now as knights, some of the same ideas about girls exist in characters' minds in Tortall as they do in our world: Lord Wyldon, the knight in charge of training the pages and squires, says, "Girls are fragile, more emotional, easier to frighten. They are not as strong in their arms and shoulders as men. They tire easily. This girl would get any warriors who serve with her killed on some dark night" (Pierce, 1999, p. 4). This description spells out precisely what the traditional girl script entails. Girls are weak and unskilled, and will never be as good as the boys. The norm of Tortall is for noble girls to go to convent schools and learn how to run their husbands' households. Right from the beginning of the book, the fictional world is set up to depict a world that promotes the traditional girl script as the *right* way for girls to behave.

That is, until Kel is introduced to readers. She "had no interest whatever in ladylike arts, and even less interest in the skills needed to attract a husband or manage a castle" (Pierce, 1999, p. 12). In saying this, Kel disrupts the traditional girl script, both within and without the story world. Kel has *chosen* to go down this path, an indication of her agency (Trites, 1997) – something she has in spite of the prevalent worldviews around her. She has not been coerced or frightened or manipulated in any obvious way. In fact, it is shown that "it had taken a great deal of persuasion for Kel to convince her mother that her quest for knighthood did not mean she wanted to settle for second best, knowing she would never marry" (Pierce, 1999, p. 12). It is difficult even for someone who supports Kel's desires to understand that they are her *true* desires – the script is so inculcated in the fabric of their world. Kel's choice to train as a knight disrupts the traditional girl script. She has shown that her desires do not dovetail with that of society at large, and that does not make them any less worthy or desirable. She rejects the traditional girl script, which both alerts readers that something *different* is happening and needs attention, and it is also something that readers may want to do in their own lives. It is almost as if Kel is a fictional role-model for real-life readers.

Even after Kel has successfully completed her first year, overcoming every challenge thrown at her and proving herself to be the most talented of all the pages, she must still deal with people who think she will switch to a scriptically-gendered life. Lord Wyldon tells her, "Soon your body will change. The things that you will want from life as a maiden will change...What if you fall in love? What if you come to grief, or cause others to do so, because your thoughts are on your heart and not combat?" (Pierce, 1999, p. 225). Despite the proof of Kel's skill and personal satisfaction, and her vehement protests that she wants no other life than this, she is questioned because she is a girl. She has disrupted the traditional girl script time and time again, but others expect the overarching script to be more powerful than her own desires. Statements like Lord Wyldon's convey the message that girls cannot know their own minds, and therefore cannot have control over their choices, which contradicts the idea that girls can have agency. And once again, Kel disrupts that script, for she refuses to give up her training, proving that she is more powerful than society's idea of what she *should* be.

Kick ass girl

As Kel disrupts the traditional girl script, she begins performing the kick ass girl script. But as this script is one of unpredictability, it serves as its own kind of disruption. As whenever anyone does something out of the norm, Kel is heavy scrutinized by those who do not understand her actions. This scrutiny begins before she even begins her training, since it is decided that she will undergo a probationary year before she will be admitted as a true page. She notes the unfairness of it when compared to the boys, as she is “supposed to be treated the same” (Pierce, 1999, p. 8), and no boy has ever been made to be a probationer. Instead, aware of the gender-biased attitudes and unfair probation foisted upon her, Kel makes the choice to be true to herself. The palace will not allow girls to be treated fairly, but she goes anyway, proving that any girl up to the challenge of training as a knight can do so openly, no matter what provisions are put up to blockade her. Kel is shown as being more aware of the social injustice of Tortall, and thus being more aware of the potential role she could play in proving that girls can be knights – and, on a larger scale, that girls should not be barred from anything because of their gender.

Early in the novel, Kel decides that she is going to wear dresses to dinner while she is training at the palace. This choice is different than what she originally prepared to do – that is, eat dinner while wearing trousers, and trying to call as little attention possible to the fact that she is a girl. If she had done this, she would almost be adhering to the traditional girl script, since she would be doing something *solely* to seem like she is not a traditional girl. Fortunately (though it is an unfortunate welcome to her new life), when Kel is taken to her rooms in the palace for the first time, she finds that someone has taken the time to trash it, ruining bedclothes, upturning furniture, and dumping her packs on the floor. Writing on the wall reads, “No Girls! Go Home! You Won’t Last!” (p. 31). Kel’s depicted thought process at seeing this mess is elucidating, for the reader is permitted to see how even Kel thought of herself almost as a type of boy. The text reads, “She’d thought that if she was to train as a boy, she ought to dress like one” (p. 32). Her plan had been to avoid any undue notice that performing outwardly as the traditional girl would have garnered (though it is obvious from the treatment her room received that it does not matter to the others how she dresses), and in that avoidance of attention she had hoped to present as a boy. Having read the words on her wall, however, indicates to her that it makes no difference what she looks like, how she behaves, or even how skilled she is at fighting; the people who did that to her room only care that she has the wrong genitalia.

After processing the damage that has been done, she makes the choice to *not* dress like a boy: “She was a girl; she had nothing to be ashamed of, and they had better learn that first thing. The best way to remind them was to dress at least part of the time as a girl” (p. 32). Kel is depicted as understanding gender performativity, and her change of stance from being a girl who will dress as a boy to being a girl who will dress as a girl

is not due to her wanting to embody the traditional girl script. Rather, she shows that she understands that a dress is a prop of the traditional girl script, and she manipulates it to her purpose. She warps the script to her own use. By showing her own awareness, it is possible that she will encourage readers to consider the gender related scripts that they encounter.

Why this is important

There is tangible evidence that readers *do* engage with fiction, and their brains are improved by it (Blackford, 2004; Fong, Mullin, & Mar, 2015; Heath & Wolf, 2012; Mar & Oatley, 2008). Knowing that this engagement happens, it is important to examine what books like *First Test* and characters like Kel accomplish when it comes to ideas such as gender norms and themes of empowerment, and what that could potentially mean for readers.

Reading adolescent feminist fantasy fiction alone will not empower readers; much more is involved than that. To further elucidate upon what I mean when I say empowerment, I look to Albert Bandura (1997), a sociocognitive psychologist who studies self-efficacy. He states that the term empowerment is misused by political groups and hype, which makes people think that it is a quantifiable thing that is bestowed upon people like a gift. Instead he defines it as that which is gained through developing a personal efficacy that *enables* people to make use of opportunities and break through environmental and social constraints. He says that most important is the idea of enablement, and that is what enhances agency. Vital for this process is “equipping people with a firm belief that they can produced valued effects...and providing them with the means to do so” (1997, p. 477). Books like *First Test* are part of an enabling process, something that can be achieved through the cognitive and affective challenges posed to readers through processes such as script disruption.

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Teen Drama and Gender in the US

Two Moms, a Transgender Teen, and One Family on The Fosters

Nancy A. Jennings

Concepts of gender are socially constructed through a variety of influences, including the media. This chapter explores transgender experiences as depicted in Freeform's tv-drama *The Fosters* through both a textual analysis of the program with a particular focus on the 10 episodes in which Cole, a transgender teen, appears and an analysis of audience reviews of the program from youth and parents obtained online from Common Sense Media. Results suggest that the narrative can contribute to the construction of transgender identity and tell the stories of every day relationships experienced by transgender teens. Moreover, the audience response suggests that parents expressed more conflicted reactions to the show than kids, indicating more concerns about sexual content than youth. The youth viewers do comment that sex is a part of *The Fosters* but seem to indicate that lessons about acceptance, tolerance, love, and diversity outweigh the concerns about sexual content.

For most children, gender reflects societal expectations, and they find themselves comfortable with the label of girl or boy given to them based on their sex. For others, this label brings great discomfort. These children identify as transgender and experience a disconnect between their biological self and the set of gender norms expected of them. The term *transgender* “typically serves as an umbrella term for a range of identities that refuse the link between biological sex and a set of socially acceptable gender norms” (Hilton-Morrow & Battles, 2015, p. 12). Transgender individuals are often classified as male-to-female (MTF) or female-to-male (FTM) (Garofalo et al., 2006) and often experience persistent discomfort and distress. The transgender community developed the term *cisgender* to refer to individuals whose biological sex aligns with their expressed gender (Hilton-Morrow & Battles, 2015). Since media is a part of the social construction of gender, it is important to consider the implications of transgender media representations, particularly in media targeted at youth, and how these portrayals are received.

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Representation of transgender characters

Concepts of gender are socially constructed through a variety of influences, and the media often serve “as instrumental sites for regulating the boundaries of gender and sexual identities” (Moscowitz, 2010, p. 26). The visibility of identity within the media and the manner in which it is portrayed become key factors in shaping and constructing those boundaries. In the 1990s, US television media “experienced a surge in queer visibility on television that focused primarily on well-adjusted adults as our friends” (Sarkissian, 2014, p. 145). Queer teens started appearing in the mid-2000s, primarily within teen soaps (Jenner, 2014). The term “queer” has been used by younger activists who “see their identities as tied less to the sex-gender of the person to whom they are attracted and more tied to a racial rethinking of gender and sex relations” (Hilton-Morrow & Battles, 2015, p. 13). The teen soap uses similar narrative techniques of the soap including on-going narratives and cliffhangers but has “a thematic emphasis ... on identity construction, often in relation to issues of sexuality” (Jenner, 2014, p. 135). While the mid-2000s mark the rise of queer teens, the early 2010s denote an appearance and subsequent rise of transgender characters on television in the US. Until then, the only transgender youth that appeared on television in the US were on the news or reality television in individual segments – not as recurring characters in a scripted program (Kelso, 2015). Of the 271 regular and recurring LGBT characters on scripted broadcast, cable, and streaming programming in 2014-2015, only seven (2.6%) are counted as transgender (GLAAD, 2015). Of these 7 characters, 4 appeared in streaming programming, 3 on cable, and none on broadcast television. Moreover, on cable and broadcast television, transgender characters are more likely to be teens appearing in teen soaps. In the past 5 years, transgender teens have appeared first as Adam on TeenNick’s *Degrassi* (2010-2013), then Unique on FOX’s *Glee* (2012-2015), and finally on 2 shows on Freeform – Cole on *The Fosters* (2014-2015) and Charlotte on *Pretty Little Liars* (2015).

Beyond the limited number of transgender characters visible on television, how transgender lives are depicted on television is equally important. Concerns have arisen that representations of transgender individuals have been negative (GLAAD, 2015; Sandercook, 2015). In an analysis of 102 episodes with nonrecurring transgender narratives, GLAAD reports that the majority (54%) contained negative often defamatory representations of transgender characters, and only 12% were considered outstanding (Kane, 2012). Negative representations were found on every major broadcast network and seven cable networks suggesting a widespread pattern. Among these negative representations, GLAAD found that 40% of the time, transgender characters were cast as the victim, and were cast as villains or killers in 21% of the narratives (Kane, 2012). In addition, anti-transgender slurs, language and dialogue was found in at least 61% of the narratives. The 2013-2014 episodes marked an improvement in the type of portrayals of transgender characters compared to the previous 10 years with only one episode in which a transgender character was a victim and no episodes in which a transgender

character was a villain (Townsend, 2014). Moreover, only one transgender character was portrayed as a sex worker compared to the previous years in which the most common occupation for transgender characters was sex worker. While the 2013-2014 episodes contained less anti-transgender slurs and language (39%), popular or sympathetic characters often used problematic language (Townsend, 2014). It is in 2014 that Cole, a FTM teenager, makes his first appearance in Freeform's teen soap, *The Fosters*.

The Fosters

Created by Brad Bredeweg and Peter Paige, *The Fosters*, a Freeform (formerly ABC-Family) teen drama series, launched in 2013 "about a multi-ethnic family mix of foster and biological kids being raised by two moms" (About the Fosters, n.d.). This series focuses on the fictional family, parented by Stef Adams Foster (Teri Polo) and Lena Adams Foster (Sherri Saum), as they work through many different and often difficult issues of teen life. The family initially consists of 15-year-old adopted twins Mariana (Cierra Ramirez) and Jesus (Jake Austin/Noah Centineo), and 16-year-old Brandon (David Lambert), Stef's biological son from a previous marriage, until Lena, a vice principal of a local charter school, brings home two foster children, 16-year-old Callie Jacob (Maia Mitchell) and her 12-year-old brother Jude Jacob (Hayden Bryerly). Callie and Jude have both been in the foster system for some time which has hardened Callie and made her very protective of her brother, Jude. Ranked at TV's #1 telecast in Teens and Female Teens in 2013 (TV News Desk, 2013), the show has steadily decreased in viewership, but still ranks 4th among Freeform's 10 current/latest season's shows in 2016, reaching over 890,000 viewers (TV Series Finale, 2016). *The Fosters* has won the Teen Choice Award for Choice TV Breakout Show in 2013, the GLAAD Media Award for outstanding drama series (2014) and the Television Critics Association (TCA) Award for Outstanding Achievement in Youth Programming in 2014 and 2015 (The Fosters – Awards, n.d.).

Common Sense Media rates *The Fosters* as "very good" (4/5 stars) and age-appropriate for viewers aged 14 years and older (Slaton, n.d.). Slaton's review suggests that *The Fosters* contains several positive messages about family relationships, diversity, and helping others while providing positive parental role models and depictions of a blended family. Furthermore, Slaton adds that "*The Fosters* makes its points without saying a word. The viewers can see for themselves that Stef and Lena are in an interracial lesbian relationship and have adopted kids of other ethnicities; they don't need to say it. Instead, they concentrate on the realistic problems that might befall such a family."

Cole is introduced in season one's "House and Home" episode at the first group session held to introduce Callie, a main character of the series, to her new housemates at a group home for girls where Cole and Callie have been placed. During this session, the counselor asks each housemate to introduce themselves. Cole, dressed in short-sleeved blue flannel shirt with arms crossed, introduced himself, "My name is Cole. I'm 15. I've

been here 3 weeks. I hate it.” When asked to describe why he is in the foster care system, he replies, “Stealing and prostitution.” In a later scene, when antagonized by another girl who refers to him as a girl and calls him the name on his birth certificate, Nicole, Cole responds by proclaiming that his name is Cole and “I’m a transgender male.” Another girl comes to Cole’s defense saying, “It’s not Cole’s fault he was born in the wrong body.” As such, it is clear that some of the girls are accepting of Cole and others are not, yet also that his status is openly discussed and clearly known by those living in the group home. In another group session in the same episode, Cole expresses that he belongs in an LGBT group home, and the counselor remarks that she is doing her best to relocate him into one. Later in the same episode, Callie accidentally walks into the bathroom where Cole is changing clothes. He has his shirt off and is binding his chest with a constrictive wrap. This interruption results in a fight in which Cole initially pushes Callie, yelling at her to “get out” to which Callie shoves him back, sending Cole into the shower door and shattering it with the force of her push. Within just a few short scenes, Cole’s identity is established, challenged, self-proclaimed, and observed as a FTM transgender teen.

Cole continues to appear in 10 episodes throughout the series. Not only does he transition in his appearance across episodes, but he also transitions from a place of anger and hostility to openness and acceptance, even organizing an LGBT prom. Similar to Unique of *Glee* and Adam from *Degrassi*, Cole is in need of “new and safer places to express their self-determined genders” (Sandercock, 2015, p. 441). When we first meet Cole, he is placed in a group home for girls based on his biological sex. Later, it is revealed that he is rejected by his biological parents who refuse to take him back into their home. Eventually, Cole is placed in an LGBT group home where he gets the medical and psychological care for a healthy gender transition. His voice has deepened, he has had a mastectomy, and he is on proper steroid doses for his transition from female to male. Moreover, his demeanor has changed completely since he was first introduced. The once angry, fierce, and volatile teen has become at peace with himself and offers guidance to Callie’s younger brother, Jude, who is struggling to admit his gay identity. In a conversation with Jude, Cole advises:

I understand not wanting to have to check a box or whatever. But there’s power in labels, too, you know. When I was at Girls United (the girls group home), most of the girls refused to call me “he.” And my label is what got me through. My label got me into an LGBT home where I can just be...you know...me. I’m not saying that labels are for everyone, but sometimes they can...I don’t know... make us feel not so alone (“More than Words”).

His whole situation had changed. He has finally found a safe place of acceptance, both internally and externally. He is in a better place, a safer place, a happier place.

Dating and the trans/romance on *The Fosters*

During adolescence, a complex set of physical and psychosocial changes occur including the physical changes of puberty, and the development of intimate relationships with peers. Romance and dating provide opportunities for teens to learn and test their own sexual desires and pleasures. However, Stryker (2006) submits that the transgender experience problematizes this, particularly for teens, when the “sexual object choice... loses coherence to the precise extent that the ‘sex’ of the ‘object’ is called into question, particularly in relation to the object’s ‘gender’” (p.7). Abbott (2013) posits that the “trans/romance” narrative is often altered in film narratives due to concerns that “the audience will read the trans character’s gender identity as inauthentic and the romance as transgressive” (p. 32). Yet teen soaps offer a safe space to experiment with sexual identity and relationships since the teens themselves are challenging these notions as well. Indeed, Abbott (2013) suggests that the small screen may be where more sensitive trans/romance narratives can be found. Such is the case of Cole. He is involved in two different relationships with two different girls and these relationships/romances depict very distinct notions of sex and love.

To reveal Cole’s first relationship on screen, Callie walks in on Cole and Devonee, a girl at the group home, sitting on his bed and embraced in a kiss. It is quite clear that Callie has interrupted an intimate moment, and both Cole and Devonee jump up from the bed. Later, Callie and Kiara, another girl from the group home, discuss Cole’s relationship with Devonee. Callie says, “Seems like Cole is kinda into her.” To which Kiara replies, “He’s into her in more ways than one, you know what I mean?” This establishes that Cole and Devonee are having sex at the home. With this revelation, Callie asks Kiara if Devonee is gay to which Kiara replies that Devonee is “gay for the stay, more like it,” suggesting that Devonee’s current choice may not reflect her regular sexual pursuits. Callie then begins to question Devonee’s sexual orientation saying, “But I guess since Cole identifies as a boy, that means Devonee is...” to which Kiara interrupts, saying, “Don’t ask me!” Immediately, the boundaries of hetero and homo sexual orientations are challenged based on the biological sex and gender identification of both partners. It seems uncertain how the girls interpret this relationship. Is it homosexual or heterosexual? Normal or transgressive? When Callie confronts Cole about his relationship with Devonee, Callie claims that Devonee is not gay to which Cole replies, “Neither am I!” So despite Callie’s previous acceptance of Cole’s declared identity, she still refers to this relationship as homosexual based on biological sex. Callie immediately apologizes and corrects herself. Cole then replies, “That’s why I have to get out of this place, because no one here treats me like a man.” However, Devonee and Cole have a fight and Devonee calls into question Cole’s intentions saying, “You are never going to be a boy. You’re never gonna be nothing but a freak.” With this, Devonee ends their relationship, claiming that she was simply using Cole until she could reunite with her current boyfriend outside of the group home. Heartbroken and with tears in his eyes, Cole asks, “Will anyone

ever love me? ... Will anyone ever love a freak?" Callie reassures Cole that he is "not a freak. You just know who you are. And you have the courage to go through with what you have to to make yourself the person you want to be. That's more than a lot of us can say." As such, Callie is reaffirming Cole's identity and choices; however, the question of relationships is left unanswered.

Interestingly, the second time a trans/romance is depicted, Callie is the object of Cole's affection. Cole has organized an LGBT prom and proclaimed that he is going by himself to the dance. Callie insists that he can't go alone and offers to be his date. While Callie sees this relationship as a friendship, Cole is hoping for more. At the prom during a slow dance, Cole leans in and kisses Callie as the lyrics of the song can be heard "caught up in the moment." She stops him, and he leaves her on the dance floor with the music playing and lyrics heard "If I can make you smile, then the world is spinning." She is not smiling and he is gone, but their world is truly spinning. Later, Cole confronts Callie saying, "Just say it, you won't date me because you don't see me as a guy." Callie replies, "I have always treated you like a guy... I won't date you because I see you as a friend! ... I don't need another boyfriend. I need a friend." At this point, Cole is no longer living in the group home and has been successfully transitioning. His physical appearance has more masculine characteristics and he is in a safer, less volatile place. While he is quick to jump to the conclusion that Callie's rejection is based on his transgender identity, he is convinced otherwise, believing in her declaration of her acceptance of his identity and recognizing her need for friendship at a time when she is struggling herself. She goes on to praise him for his work, both in terms of personal growth and for his efforts to work on the behalf of others to create a safe space for expression of sexual identity and sexual orientation among youth.

Audience reception of *The Fosters*

Interestingly, despite the number of negative portrayals of transgender identity and sexual orientation, research suggests that media both online and offline provides lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth a means to buffer discriminatory experiences in 4 ways: 1) coping through escapism, 2) feeling stronger, 3) fighting back, and 4) finding and fostering community (Craig, McInroy, McCready, & Alaggia, 2015). In particular, offline media such as television and film provided an escape from stressors in their daily lives and the "heteronormative... world that we live in" (Craig et al., 2015, p. 262), and provides a means to feel stronger by witnessing the resilience of characters experiencing the same daily discrimination they face.

Beyond television ratings, one way to explore viewer reception and reactions to *The Fosters* is through reviews of the series. Common Sense Media provides an opportunity for Parents/Adults and Youth to submit electronic reviews of media content. In the case of *The Fosters*, at the time of this writing, there were 84 total reviews from viewers

including 33 Parent reviews, 10 Kid reviews (ages 11-12 years), and 41 Teen reviews (ages 13-17 years). Reviewers rate the show on a star scale of 1-5 (5 being high) and can provide written reviews as well. Overall, parents rated *The Fosters* as 4 stars, and Youth rated the show as 5 stars. Interestingly, of all 84 reviews, there was only one specific use of the word “transgender” made by a Parent reviewer, and this reviewer simply indicated there was a presence of a transgender character in an episode without any commentary about the character. This particular reviewer rated the show as 4 stars with commentary indicating that *The Fosters* is “A relatable and accepting show.” Overall, “sex” was mentioned 29 times in the almost half (48.5%) of the Parent Reviews and 30 times in 37.3% of the Youth reviews. Parents who rated the show low (1 or 2 stars) and also mentioned “sex” in their review expressed concerns about teens having unprotected intercourse in the show and too much “sex talk” in the show. One parent writes, “It’s uncomfortable. It’s inappropriate. ... No matter the sexual preference, multiple scenes in this episode make me trust ABC Family no more.” However, other parents embrace the diversity and representation in the show. One parent writes, “It is rare for a show to play, in such a creative way, modern topics that push the envelope, yet present it in a package with great sentiment and love. ... Multi cultural family and homosexuality are shown, and it is done very well.” The youth, however, overwhelmingly liked the show. Only one Kid reviewer (12-years-old) gave it 1 star and indicated there was “sex a lot and had images not appropriate for kids.” A 14-year-old reviewer writes, “It has little violence and very tame language, but the sex is heavy. The moms are good role models, but even they kiss a little too passionately for comfort sometimes.” A 15-year-old remarks, “If a kid can understand a loving heterosexual relationship they can understand two mums who love each other.” Finally, a 14-year-old makes an observation about media portrayals, and writes, “There are so few shows that feature gay or lesbian couples, adoption, or interracial families, and *The Fosters* hits every mark.” The youth viewers do comment that sex is a part of *The Fosters* but seem to indicate that lessons about acceptance, tolerance, love, and diversity outweigh the concerns about sexual content. In fact, one teen disagrees with the Parents reviews commenting, “this show is in no way a negative influence like many of these so-called “parents” state.”

Conclusion

Many factors contribute to the social construction of gender and identity for contemporary youth. Teens and tweens face changes during adolescence that bring sexual identity and sexual orientation to the forefront of their consciousness. Media and peers help shape these concepts and therefore, it is particularly important to examine how sexuality is portrayed and received in television shows, particularly those directed to a teen audience such as teen soap operas. *The Fosters* examines heterosexual and homosexual relationships through cisgender and transgender characters. Through depictions of the

trans/romance, questions of identity and sexual orientation arise. However, *The Fosters* treats this sensitively resulting in an authentic representation of adolescent relationships and challenges, in particular with reference to the transgender experience. Cole's identity is reaffirmed through different trans/romance situations, primarily through the main protagonist, Callie. As such, *The Fosters* lives up to Abbott's (2013) prediction of being able to treat trans/romance in a more sophisticated manner. Teen soap operas have a particular advantage in this case since there is already much doubt, curiosity, questioning, and unknowns experienced by teens, making teen soaps a comfortable place to have uncomfortable discussions. Future research should explore more directly how teens are receiving these messages and what impact they have on teen understanding of sexuality. In the meantime, producers can explore how shows like *The Fosters* have incorporated transgender characters into storylines beyond just the narrative of their transition and victims or villains and open the opportunities for a wider discussion of diversity and acceptance though the small screen.

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Creating New Animated TV Series for Girls Aged 6-12 in Britain

Lindsay Watson

This article focuses on the development and marketing of animated female lead characters on television for an audience of girls aged 6-12 in Britain. Using strategic marketing theory it asks the questions: “What do girls want (to see on screen)?” “How do they get it?” and “How do we (the animation industry) sell it?” The paper reviews 87 starring female lead characters worldwide and finds that most are: 2D in design, feature characters with American accents, have a cast of either group or independent characters and are of either a ‘dramatic’ or ‘dramatic/comedic’ genre. The article concludes that the types of television shows girls are watching could be improved to better meet their needs. It encourages content creators to be brave and test new ideas and offers practical tips to executives, producers and commissioners on development and positioning of new animated television series that will engage their audiences.

Personal Preface

As an animation producer, academic, and campaigner for indie animation and women’s rights I decided in 2013 that I wanted to answer the question: Why aren’t there more animated female characters on British children’s TV? That year also happened to be the year I launched Animated Women UK – since then a lot has changed!

The 1980s was a great time for empowered animated female leads in TV series as merchandisers recognised audience buying power (Perea, 2014). This didn’t translate to the big screen as from 1995 to 2012 most of Pixar’s films featured male leads. It was not until 2011 that a woman solo directed an animated film (Gardam, 2013).

This trend changed in the mid-2010s with the onset of self-sufficient princesses leading Disney’s features. These new films passed the “Bechdel Test” (Bechdel, 2013) and the first animated feature with a non-princess female lead, *Inside Out* (2015), was released.

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Women's groups internationally have united to raise awareness, educating the public and industry about how deep rooted sexism in children's animation is. American organisations such as the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media have created campaigns like *See Jane* (www.seejane.org). Other groups like Women in Animation (America, Ireland, Italy), Animated Women UK, Les femmes s'animent (France), Women Drawn Together (Toronto/Vancouver, Canada) and Women and Animation Australia (aka WANDAA) exist to facilitate change their territories.

Has anything really changed? In 2015 the British Film Institute and Women in Film & TV (UK) hosted Geena Davis in London. An audience question was: Why do I not see any animated female lead characters on (British) children's television? The answer is simple: the BFI does not fund development of original animated British TV series; British broadcasters provide investment to few original animated series, so for British producers it is difficult to create female characters. Instead Britain relies on acquisition of foreign content, which typically contain less female leads (Davis, 2015).

I believe that girls aged 6-9 are still being discriminated against. Despite representing the majority share of the market in publishing, social gaming, and feature films, they are being denied access to one of the most artistic, innovative forms of art and expression – animation.

Why is this important? Well, if an animated TV series is created specifically for boys it encourages development of their ego by inadvertently saying "We care about you; we want you, (not girls) to have fun!". By only providing girls aged 6-9 with live-action young adult content, the adult community sends a silent message that we expect girls to behave in a more grown-up way; they are not entitled to have fun or be silly like boys are.

It is extremely important that content creators realise the effect they have on children in this way. I want to challenge executives and commissioners who argue that "girls don't buy enough toys to make creating an animated series commercial viable" to continue reading; do your homework, be brave – let those assumptions go! Girls can make you money *and* be entertained watching an animated series.

I want to provide girls with awesome and amazing characters they relate to; that make them feel good about themselves, highlighting their importance to society. I want to send girls the message that they are welcome into the world of animation, rather than cast aside.

Introduction

Animated content for girls is an under-served market (Hughes, 2014). Some believe the girls' market is difficult to access due to competition from traditionally boy-skewed licensing and merchandising models and girls' movement towards live-action at an earlier age (Davis 2013, Wood 2014). Alternatively, there has been a global movement of brands increasing their share of the female market, as films with strong female characters make twice as much profit as those without (Vocativ, 2013).

This trend towards developing appropriate content for women and girls continues (Mintel, 2014; Silverstein 2009), with Disney's *Frozen* (2013) having touched the hearts and minds of a newly formed global audience (Law, 2014). Little public information is published about what animated TV series girls aged 6-12 actually want to watch.

So, what does an animation producer need to consider when launching a new animated TV series for girls aged 6-12? I used Proctor's (2014) segmentation, targeting, and positioning technique to begin to answer this question.

Strategic marketing

What do girls want? (Market segmentation)

Proctor suggests dividing what appears most important to my audience into measurable segments. After reviewing a number of surveys, academic studies, and compilations of girls' views themselves, a number of themes became identifiable as being highly important to this segment: power, expression, confidence, acceptance, empowerment, communication, and uniqueness were all significant for girls aged 6-12.

Topics of interest to girls included: bullying, puberty, relationships, and 'real-life' issues. They also appeared to have specific lifestyle interests in: nature shows, math, science, reading, making money, and 'being artistic'. In terms of how girls play, it is important that they relate to the characters they see on the screen (Wieners, 2011). 'Princess play' is strongly marketed at girls, but further research is required to identify alternatives to this option (Cook & Main, 2008).

CEO of PlayScience Alison Bryant says: "Girls are looking for properties that show them respect and take them seriously (while not being too serious – in fact, humor is key!). They don't want to be pigeon-holed – they love gender neutral, smart programs with strong leads." (A. Bryant, personal communication, 18 October, 2016)

How do they get it? (Market targeting)

Most girls aged 6-12 access animated series through the family television, mobile device, or through parents' purchases. Broadcast channels provide most of this content, which is either acquired or developed in-house.

Disney and Mattel are some of the world's biggest providers of animated TV content for girls (Lisanti, 2015). Many major European content producers have announced they are seeking to create new animated TV brands for girls (Wood, 2014). Cartoon Network and Teletoon claim to be 'girl inclusive' (Kidscreen, 2013).

The UK market operates through nationalised and private networks, with public service broadcasters aiming to appeal to all, but the girls' 6+ animation market is sorely under-served by national channels, as American networks capitalize on the opportunity. For example, specialist girl-skewing freeview channel POP (owned by CBS/Lionsgate)

features nine TV shows with animated female leads (www.popfun.co.uk); SVOD Disney Channel has two (www.disneychannel.disney.co.uk/shows). They are both ahead of CITV, Sky Kids and national broadcaster CBBC, all of which according to their websites currently have no shows featuring animated female leads (mixed gender casts were not counted). In the UK 81 animated TV series for 6+ feature male leads, compared to just 87 shows with female leads internationally. In May 2016 CBBC and BBC Worldwide joined to commission development of *Mystery Soup* an animated comedy featuring three 13-year-old female leads (BBC, 2016).

Girls can also access content via other paid or free VOD platforms; it was found that many girls obtain content through libraries, illegal download websites, social media and friends.

Specialist websites like *A Mighty Girl* offer procured content with female leads (www.amightygirl.com).

How do we sell it? (Market positioning)

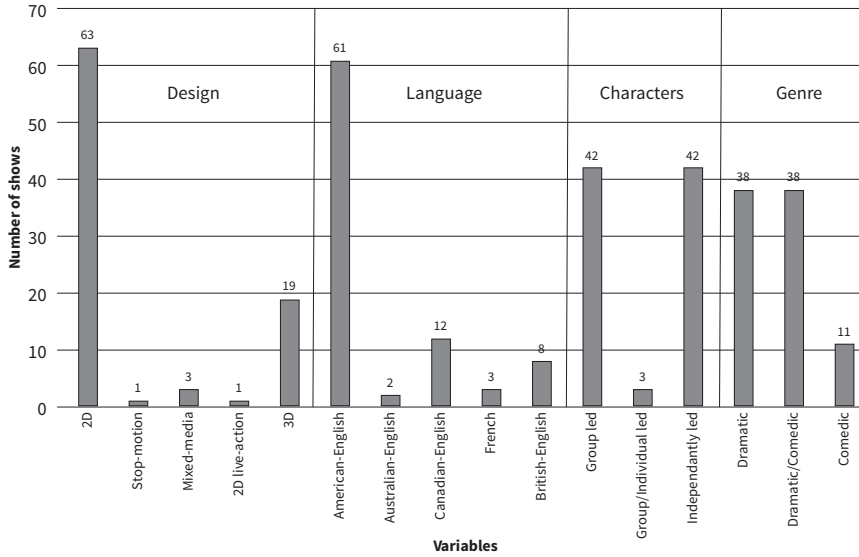
The last part of this marking process is to position a new show against those already produced. It was difficult to find evidence of girls wanting to see more animated TV brands other than personal testimonials on YouTube and news accounts (Mintel, 2014; The Huffington Post, 2013).

Since 2013 there has been a lot of coverage of what adult women feel girls should be watching; they should have access to articulate, visible, relatable female animated leads (as I have seen reported through my Animated Women UK Facebook feed), but there recommendations are only anecdotal until the girls themselves are better represented. Unfortunately, some sexist male TV executives don't want them watching animation at all (Pantozzi, 2013).

In order to get a fuller picture of what animated series already exist for this market I completed a comprehensive review of the 87 animated TV shows featuring female lead characters I could currently find on air. The list is not conclusive; it does not cover all shows globally; instead it provides a snapshot of the type of content available. I compiled Google searches, IMDB, and YouTube along with broadcast websites to create it. Free TV was focused on English-speaking territories. I divided shows into four main variables: design, language, characters, and genre.

What I found was that they were animated using mostly 2D design. Regarding language (accent) American-English was dominant. The genres were split between dramatic or dramatic-comedy, with a few comedy extras. The female lead characters were either a group (e.g., *Monster High*, *My Little Pony*) or individual-led (e.g., *Dora and Friends*). Having two female leads (e.g., a buddy comedy – a common format featuring male leads) was unheard of. Mixed gender casts appeared to be created more recently, and I've noticed that the 'girl and a thing/animal' genre is very popular in pre-school (e.g., *Sarah & Duck*, 2013).

Figure 1. List of animated TV series featuring female lead characters for girls Age 6-12 worldwide (English)



As part of Proctor's process I also considered complimentary markets, such as publishing, mobile phones, fashion, advertising, and music. If I were to take into consideration campaigns in the toy market specifically, such as the *Let Toys Be Toys*, or the YouTube *Girls* advertisement by GoldieBlox (Tasha, 2014) it would appear that while a selection of animated TV shows exist featuring female lead characters, a new show would want to appeal to the empowerment of girls; to get involved in things they are interested in, rather than promoting negative stereotypes of girls simply being interested in princess play or gossip.

Creating a new product comes with higher financial risks compared to investing in an evergreen brand or reinventing a classic. To combat these problems, Hooley suggests supporting innovation by staying close to customers, keeping internal communication open; being aware of what resources are available to solve the problem (2012).

So, knowing what the market and its audience want, how does a producer approach a studio, artists, or writers to create a new animated TV show for girls aged 6-12?

Creative development

Below I outline what information currently exists that I could identify specifically relating to animated TV series with female leads.

Visual design

What is important to girls aged 6-12 about what their female lead animated characters look like? Götz & Lemish provide an invaluable resource including a review of series from 24 countries and letters from children to producers (2012). More specifically, girls prefer watching shows featuring characters with ‘normal’ (i.e., average human) waist-lines (Götz, 2008). According to the BFI, the design and animation should incorporate natural human movement (Ipsos Mori, 2001). According to an independent study done by Buzzfeed on Disney female lead characters: most are under aged 20, Caucasian, with both or one parents deceased, are born royal, have blue eyes, wear dresses, and are employed as princesses (Zwiebel, 2014); more diversity here could be key.

Visual references are becoming easier to come by; when I first searched for “girls’ animation” on Google it returned pornographic material. Then I searched for “animated girls’ TV show”, which brought up mildly better results. Finally “character design for girls” brought up the best results. Overall it was difficult to find characters that represented the diverse human population, realistic body shapes (including head, eyes, waist etc.), or those wearing much clothing. According to Chapman the sexist opinions of marketers and executives have trickled down through directors and designers to limit the female form (Gardham, 2015).

I decided to search for educational examples instead where you could learn how to draw a female character from scratch. Sadly, I was overwhelmed by hypersexualised examples. Many blogs and men’s magazines featured “hot” and “sexy” lists of animated female characters; some under age (Murphy, 2015; Wilding, 2012). One design instructor says: “If you can design a pretty girl you’ll never go hungry” (Bancroft, 2016). His comments were not unique; a ‘Top 40 character’s design tips’ article featuring mostly male designers included the advice “...everybody will like a sexy, fun girl, but most will be offended by too much sexuality. Think sexy, not sex.” (Creative Bloq, 2013).

A few non-sexualised examples were discovered, including: Wikihow¹, Jon Burgerman², and Smashing Magazine³.

Viguet’s guide on “how to draw realistic Disney princesses”⁴ provided practical tips. Female facial design comparison article⁵ also helped.

The search term “design a cartoon characters for girls” brought up additional examples:

- The *Cartoon Characters – Anger Woman – Graphics Collection*⁶ was inspiring
- The social network Pinterest had a plethora of body types, facial designs, styles and genres; I have started a *Female Character Design* page to keep track of the ones I like (www.pinterest.com)
- Some of the least sexualised designs came from the publishing industry; graphic novels and games have a growing number of female-led properties suitable for this age group

- Animation studios and production companies have many shows in development, but most are not public knowledge
- There are plenty of designers and illustrators creating wonderful concept characters (see end note for examples)⁷

Writing (concept, character, dialogue)

Concept

Wood (2014) reveals what TV executives believe girls aged 6-12 value in the creation of top-quality animated content;

- Hasbro – Relevant, upbeat, positive, funny, feisty, kickass characters with great writing and story
- Studio 100 – Captivating, modern, cool, social shows containing friendship, mystery, romance, adventure, communication, and interaction
- M4E – Adventure, excitement, comedy, emotion, heart, authenticity, good story and clear design
- Cake Entertainment – Well rounded, charismatic and compelling characters with a positive outlook with social interactions based in the real world
- Mondo – Copy how girls live their lives

Additionally, Mattel claim that Barbie “...will continue to help girls discover that anything is possible”, Monster High encourages girls to “Be Yourself. Be Unique. Be a Monster.” and Ever After High targets the “trendista” and “...inspires girls to be courageous, confident” (Mattel, p. T9, 2015). Ironical, as Barbie was originally designed as a sex doll for Nazi German soldiers to prevent the spread of STD’s during WWII (Mail Online, 2011).

Linda Palmer from Runaway Productions thinks girls want to see “...emotion (make me feel something), reassurance (make me trust you) and authenticity (show me you mean it)” (Chahal, 2014). According to Faust (2010), “Cartoons for girls don’t have to be a puddle of smooshy, cutesy-wootsy, goody-two-shoeness. Girls like stories with real conflict; girls are smart enough to understand complex plots; girls aren’t as easily frightened as everyone seems to think. Girls are complex human beings, and they can be brave, strong, kind and independent—but they can also be uncertain, awkward, silly, arrogant or stubborn. They shouldn’t have to succumb to pressure to be perfect.”

While it is clear what marketers think is appropriate for girls, academics also have views; role models for girls are key figures currently overlooked in this market (Kraemer, 2000). Others want to create opportunities for girls to enjoy engaging in as much play as boys (Jensen, Fisher & de Castel, 2011).

Character

When constructing female characters consider a variety of archetypes. Ellis (2015) identifies nine specific to girls including The Amazon, The Father's Daughter, The Nurturer and The Spunky Kid. Female archetypes are further detailed by Estes (2008) who focuses on the 'wild woman' and categorised within animation by Davis as 'good girls and wicked witches' (2007).

Award-winning scriptwriter Murrell (personal communication, 20 April, 2016) counters unconscious bias at development stage with an approach she calls 'dress testing'; "I get offered a lot of shows where the creatives have made key characters male without even knowing they're doing it," she says. "Dress-testing makes those choices explicit. It questions every role: not just their gender, but their appearance, behavior, and beliefs too. This isn't just box ticking; it enriches characterisation, broadens audience appeal, and improves the show's chance of commercial success."

When all else fails there's always printed art books featuring female artists (Bove, 2014) or the Female Character Flowchart⁸.

Dialogue

Fought & Eisenhauer (2016) analysed all the dialogue from the Disney princess franchise, finding that in modern princess films the female leads often spoke less than 50% of the time, even in the case of *Frozen* (2013), where the two leads are female! It is important we see more female-to-female dialogue as well as seeing characters who are relatable and funny. Geek Dads cites a list of *12 Comics for a 7-Year-Old Girl*, with its own built-in Bechdel test (<http://geekdad.com/2015/02/12-comics-7-year-old-girl/>).

Conclusions and suggestions

So, what does the animation industry need to consider when launching a new animated TV series for girls aged 6-12? Here are my suggestions:

- Be specific about your target market; classifying all girls with the same wants, needs and behaviors may alienate some of them (Hooley, 2012)
- Challenge stereotypes; "...girls prefer brands that...don't necessarily match up to stereotypes that currently exist in marketing" (Chahal, 2015, p.1)
- Seek out new archetypes
- Employ and publically promote teams of high caliber, vocal female leaders
- Commission public research to give girls a voice; ask them what they would like to see
- Utilize the references below

Girls have a lot to say, so it is about time we listened to them; incorporate their updated values, stories, and designs into commercial animated series.

In conclusion, the girls 6-12 animation market needs to be redefined and better provided for. Let us shift the dialogue from 'what girls *should* watch' to what they actually *want* to watch; combine experts' views to develop their ideas in ways that will benefit them. For example, executives can be more aware of gender bias in their construction of the female animated form to create less sexualised imagery of both boys and girls; merchandise can be more creatively imagined to appeal less to out-dated sexist stereotypes (Lemish, 2013). For those seeking inspiration, Lemish's "Eight Working Principles for Change" provides a "conceptual framework for producing better gender portrayals on television for children around the world"; a check list that for time-pressed executives has the potential to produce easily achievable results (p.124, 2010). As children's gender stereotypes are already ingrained at a young age it will become the responsibility of the adults to create content encouraging a positive self-image, even if girls themselves are not yet sure what this might be (Bates, 2015).

It is time to be brave, let go of your preconceptions and start testing new ideas! As the girls of the future begin creating their own content, the biggest risk is not engaging; TV companies will miss out. It is time to start innovating new solutions particular to girls' content in animated series.

Notes

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Thunderbirds Are Go

Re-booting Female Characters in Action Adventure Animation

Anna Potter

This article explores the ways in which children's television producers are making conscious efforts to include non-traditional gender representations in their shows. The aim of the research was to analyze and explain the complex creative processes that can increase the cultural visibility of diverse female characters in action animation made for school-age children. *Thunderbirds Are Go*, the 2015 re-boot of the 1960s cult classic *Thunderbirds* is used here as a case study; the producers of the new series were determined to challenge *Thunderbirds*' gender stereotypes, while retaining the lead characters of the original. Using approaches grounded in production culture, media studies and political economy, this research draws on extended interviews with *Thunderbirds Are Go* executive producer Estelle Hughes. It reveals that despite successful efforts to achieve a more balanced representation of female characters in children's action animation, commercial forces still exert enormous influence over how these shows are produced, distributed and experienced by their audiences.

This article details the efforts of an established producer of children's television to redress gender imbalance in an animated series, the 2015 re-boot of the Gerry and Sylvia Anderson cult classic *Thunderbirds* (1965-66). Drawing on extended interviews with one of *Thunderbirds Are Go*'s executive producers Estelle Hughes, it examines how individuals can effect change in production norms in children's television, working within established economic and industrial parameters. Hughes' efforts to redress gender imbalance in *Thunderbirds Are Go* focused on increasing female visibility through the inclusion of diverse female characters, minimising stereotypical female behaviour and appearance, and reflecting on and adapting creative processes to improve female representation throughout the production process. Drawing on cultural studies, production culture and political economy frameworks, this article analyses the intersection between cultural, creative and economic influences in a contemporary children's television production.

Thunderbirds Are Go, an animated series aimed at 6-12 year olds is a co-production between UK-based ITV Studios and New Zealand's Pukeko Pictures (which is connected to Peter Jackson's Weta Studios in Wellington). It is set in a futuristic world and features the exploits of the altruistic Tracy Brothers, whose International Rescue operation is based on a secret island in the Pacific Ocean. Given television's socialising role in children's lives (where it remains their most popular form of media), the re-working of *Thunderbirds* offered considerable scope for subverting stereotypical gender representations; the producers' influence amplified by contemporary digital production norms that rely on the exploitation of intellectual property across multiple platforms and products (Caldwell, 2004; Doyle, 2015).

Thunderbirds Are Go was always intended for distribution on broadcast, subscription and Over the Top (OTT) television services in global television markets. Its additional interlinked multi-platform content includes program apps, games, an interactive website and a YouTube channel. It is therefore a multi-faceted children's property with high cultural visibility. Consumer products associated with the series' brand encompass 75 global licensees with revenues providing important streams of production funding. A toy range is supplemented by DVDs, games, story and sticker books, a magazine, clothing, confectionary, party goods and posters.

After a high profile launch at the international children's television market MipCom Junior in Cannes in late 2014, *Thunderbirds Are Go* had its television premier in 2015, in the UK on free-to-air commercial channel ITV, to a consolidated audience of almost 3m viewers and generally favourable critical reception. The re-boot went on to sell to over forty countries and is particularly popular in Japan. With two 26 half-hour episode series in production, a third series was announced in April 2016, along with a US distribution deal on subscription video on demand (SVOD) service Amazon Prime, where it premiered in 2016. Children's television is one of Amazon's biggest growth areas; the company uses its Prime Entertainment offerings to attract audiences to its main retail site (Landau, 2016).

Part of the retro appeal of the original *Thunderbirds* lies in the ways in which it reflects 1960s social norms, despite being set in 2065, with science fictional narrative structures. These norms include a utopian view of technology, a transnational, yet Western-centric sensibility and a fear of China's rising power, symbolised by the Oriental appearance of the series' villain The Hood (Bignall, 2011). In contrast, in contemporary animation, Asian Americans are frequently portrayed as academic high achievers with an aptitude for business and technology, rather than series' baddies (Schlote, 2012). *Thunderbirds* also features five white men as the lead characters, around whom most of the death-defying action revolves. Other characters including scientists, pilots, geologists and security personnel are uniformly portrayed as males.

The representation of the series' female characters is also dated, although their passive and domesticated behaviour is still frequently ascribed to girls in contemporary animation (Götz, Hoffman, Dobler, Scherr, Bulla, & Schreiner 2008; Götz & Lemish

2012). Thus secret agent Lady Penelope Creighton-Ward is an ultra-glamorous socialite and model who is chauffeured everywhere in a pink Rolls Royce, while Grandma Tracy spends most of her time performing domestic chores for the brothers. Tin Tin, daughter of Jeff Tracy's manservant Kyrano and described by creator Sylvia Anderson as a 'decorative sidekick' has various secretarial and assistant roles. She is also portrayed as Alan Tracy's love interest. As executive producer, Hughes was aware that female representation was a less palatable element of the original's retro charm; she and the team of writers she led were committed from the outset to creating a more balanced and diverse set of female characters.

The re-booted *Thunderbirds Are Go* has some key differences from the 1965 original. In acknowledgement of the faster pace of contemporary children's television, the new episodes are 22 rather than 44 minutes long. (The original *Thunderbirds* was produced for the US market, which at the time required shows for one-hour time slots with space for advertising). The Supermarionation puppetry has also been replaced by a combination of computer-generated imagery (CGI) animation and live action model sets. And although the five Tracy brothers have been retained, they no longer unwind with a scotch and cigarette after a successful mission. (The original series can no longer be played in children's viewing times in the UK, due to its portrayal of characters smoking). Production of the re-boot was divided between Pukeko Studios in New Zealand, where the live action sets and props were built, Los Angeles, where scripts were largely written, Taiwan where much of the CGI animation occurred and the UK, where casting and most of the post-production was done. These dispersed production practices are typical of contemporary screen industries, as companies seek out the least expensive, most skilled creative labour force and, where possible, favourable government location inducements (Curtin & Sanson, 2016). They also allow production to occur virtually 24 hours a day, which represents an important cost saving measure.

Re-creating female characters in *Thunderbirds Are Go*

In her role as executive producer Hughes was determined to challenge the gender stereotypes with which the original *Thunderbirds* is imbued, while also managing the demands of producing high quality children's television across several locations and time zones. Although individual producers' views of the most pressing issues associated with gender equality are inevitably socially and culturally constructed (Lemish, 2010), for Hughes the lack of visibility of female characters in animation is an important issue, as are the stereotypical behaviours attributed to female characters when present. As Hughes explains, "it's about seeing more female characters on screen and seeing them doing jobs that are still being given to male characters – such as pilots, mechanics, drivers and crime fighters" (E. Hughes personal communication, May 11, 2016).¹

Given that globally 68 per cent on average of main onscreen characters in children's television are male, with male characters generally portrayed outside or at work while female characters most often appear in either homes or schools (Götz et. al., 2008), Hughes' concerns are well founded. Her first priority was the reworking of key female characters from the original, particularly Tin Tin who, she says, had not really stood the test of time. Her second was to ensure that the new characters required for each episode (who tend to need rescuing, given the series' plotlines) were, as often as possible, females who subverted stereotypes by being written as characters including engineers, geologists, scientists and miners. Indeed Hughes describes her starting point when talking about the writing of a new episode as 'why can't that character be female?'

This commitment to 'numerical equality' (Lemish, 2010) also makes commercial sense. Girls tend to move away from action adventure animation at around 8 or 9 years; thus Hughes was aware that creating compelling female characters who would engage girls in the new series would broaden its audience appeal. Nonetheless, the creative team felt that replacing one of the Tracy brothers with a female character would not work:

When you look at those five characters in the puppet series and their relationship to their specific five vehicles it's a brilliantly created, worked-out series where those five characters and vehicles really complement each other and create a perfect whole. So that was the reason we retained the five male leads – creatively they worked. And they'd spawned an amazing series and brand that didn't need fixing. (E. Hughes, personal communication, May 11, 2016)

The writers were fortunate however that Tin Tin, who for copyright reasons is renamed Kayo in *Thunderbirds Are Go*, provided an excellent opportunity for redevelopment. According to Hughes:

What we wanted to do was create a 100% new and fully-rounded modern girl character whose personality could be newly made, rather than fit into pre-existing sibling parameters. That meant she could disagree with the boys and have an independent streak – the brothers are almost always in agreement. By making Kayo the sixth member of international rescue rather than gender flipping one of the five brothers she is able to be much more independent, proactive and nuanced. We see her struggle with family secrets and personal identity, all of which ensures that our female character has depth, emotion, strength, vulnerability, courage and ambition. (personal communication, June 25, 2016)

Kayo is now head of security for International Rescue, a capable and feisty young woman who wants to be proactive, by going out and preventing crimes and thereby reducing the need for rescues. Her methods, which include breaking longstanding International Rescue rules, cause her and Scott Tracy to clash repeatedly. Kayo, who is deliberately dressed in a plain, combat trousers and T-shirt uniform, with her hair pulled back in

a ponytail, is also a non-combative martial arts expert whose superior skills mean she trains the Tracy brothers in physical and self-defence:

We've got episodes where she's training the boys – she's far more military in that way. She's a really good character who has proven immensely popular with boys and girls. Kayo is where we absolutely know 100% that you can have strong, female, physical action characters and boys will still completely relate to them. (E. Hughes, personal communication, June 25, 2016)

Kayo has her own vehicle, Thunderbird Shadow, designed by Japanese visual artist Shoji Kawamori, whose credits include the *Transformers* toy designs. Her vehicle, however, is for stealth missions rather than rescues, which means that due to the rescue-focused storylines she is less visible in the series than the Tracy brothers. The creative decision was made because:

We knew there was no point making her the 6th rescuer, because the original series had so brilliantly covered every possible form of rescue vehicle or rescue pod. That's why Kayo's role is security and her vehicle is not a rescue vehicle, it's a stealth vehicle. The downside is that she can't feature in as many episodes as the others because every episode is dominated by rescue. Fitting a large cast of characters and vehicle into 22 minutes has been the biggest challenge of the series and the rescue action has to be the priority. That's the only reason Kayo wasn't in as many of the early episodes as we all wanted. (E. Hughes, personal communication, June 25, 2016)

Although Lady Penelope and her iconic pink Rolls Royce provided less opportunity for character redevelopment as she is such an established and highly visible presence in the original, the writers made some modifications for the re-boot. Thus less emphasis is placed on her hereditary wealth and modelling career. Lady Penelope is portrayed instead as a business woman managing her own investments, who is also much more physically active. For example, she is seen scuba diving, and is good at solving problems. As Hughes puts it, "She doesn't need rescuing ever, she is definitely a rescuer". (E. Hughes, personal communication, June 25, 2016).

Reducing the portrayal of gender stereotypical behaviour in Grandma Tracy, however, proved more difficult. Hughes explains that the character had to stay, because in the absence of the boys' parents it is important to have a female matriarch. But she does not feel she and the rest of the creative team managed to get it quite right and avoid sexist stereotypes in the earlier episodes:

Because she is the matriarch and domestic head of the family, we wanted those scenes every now and again that show they are a family of kids together and those tend to be set around mealtimes. In the 22 minute episode, you need some of those quieter domestic scenes, the full on action pace is exhausting for the

viewers. And children recognise those scenes from their own families, complete with family banter. They're the hard scenes really, to not let Grandma become stereotypical. And in some of the early episodes I think we made too much of the bad cooking gags. We've really pulled back from those as the series has gone on. And in later episodes we learn about her history as a pilot. (E. Hughes, personal communication, June 25, 2016)

Non-traditional female roles

The introduction of new characters that need rescuing provided another means of including females in non-traditional roles. While *The Hood* is responsible for a large number of the dangerous situations in which characters find themselves, technological failure is another useful plot mechanism. Thus many of those being saved from disaster in the *Thunderbirds Are Go* storylines are operating, designing and testing equipment. This work necessarily entails high numbers of associated mechanics, miners, machinery operators, engineers, scientists and pilots, providing producers with ample opportunities to incorporate female characters into these non-traditional roles:

The great thing about the writing team though is that the people needing rescuing are never weak, their situation has arisen because of a credible set of circumstances or events that caused something to go wrong. They're nearly always bright, competent, capable, impressive professional people, so that still makes it worthwhile and valuable to make those characters female. (E. Hughes, personal communication, June 25, 2016)

The creative team was aware, however, of the risk of constantly portraying female characters as damsels in distress being rescued by males:

The rescue storylines gave us a great opportunity to make female characters have these non-traditional roles. The downside is that you can't week in, week out show women needing to be rescued by largely men. Although Kayo is an equal and extremely important part of International Rescue, she is not rescue, she is security and her vehicle isn't a rescue vehicle. So it's still nearly always one of the boys that is rescuing someone, and we really have to work to balance it. (E. Hughes, personal communication, June 25, 2016)

ITV Studios were also supportive of *Thunderbirds Are Go*'s efforts to create strong female characters, while recognising the marketing benefits of having famous actors involved in the series production. Lady Penelope, for example, is voiced by Rosamund Pike, who was nominated for an Oscar for the movie *Gone Girl* during production. The series also had sufficient resources to cast high profile guest actors such as Jenna Coleman, from *Dr Who* and Emilia Clarke, from *Game of Thrones* in series two. In addition to

the publicity this kind of casting generates, media coverage surrounding famous actors' involvement provides additional opportunities to distribute non-stereotypical images and increase female characters' visibility. In this case, Emelia Clarke's character was as an oil rig worker while Jenna Coleman's worked as a geologist.

Once episodes had been written to increase female visibility and subvert gender stereotypes, various technical aspects of the animation processes had to be managed to ensure that the characters' on screen behaviours were consistent with the creative team's intentions. For example, in animation production, all characters have walk cycles, which is the looping animation seen when they are walking; they also have particular gestures and stances. Although children's television is a feminised profession, its technological and professional roles remain male dominated, especially animation, with only 10 per cent of the animation guild's membership being female (Lemish, 2010). Hughes realised early in production that the walking cycles required alteration:

Walk cycles definitely needed some work with the animators. Female characters' default walk is a lot more sashaying, so we redid that, with all the female characters. And with default positions, when Kayo or one of the female characters is angry we sometimes found that at the first animation pass they are standing with their hands on their hips. We very quickly made a rule: "No hands on hips for female characters – don't treat the female characters any differently to the males in terms of poses". (E. Hughes, personal communication June 30, 2016)

Once a female character has been created in CGI, the model can be re-used, meaning an automatic economic incentive for greater female visibility, because producers do not have sufficient resources to build new models every single time. The gender neutral clothing and hairstyles designed for the re-boot also facilitate this process:

The easiest way to re-use a model is to change the colour of their costumes or their hair. For example, a background lab technician could be re-used as a plane passenger. Because we have so many female characters as secondary characters and we rarely put anyone in a dress or skirt and we purposely avoid delicate clothing or distinctive accessories (because they're background characters), we can make subtle changes and re-use the model. You can play around with their hairstyles and their hair colours too. We have got so many hairstyles that are interchangeable between men and women characters, which is down to the fact that we're avoiding girly buns and bobs. (E. Hughes, personal communication June 30, 2016)

Despite her commitment to onscreen diversity, Hughes accepts that when producing animation, the integrity of the storylines must be any producer's priority. Particular stories or episodes will require particular characters, which will entail individual judgement calls. But as she says, when making those judgement calls regarding the inclusion of female characters in children's television, "you absolutely have a duty to work through the 'why not?'" (E. Hughes, personal communication June 30, 2016).

Commercial considerations

Although the re-boot is considerably more balanced in its representation of female characters and their appearance and behaviour, commercial forces still exert enormous sway over the ways in which children's television is produced, distributed and experienced by its audience. Consumer products remain a crucial component of the funding of much contemporary children's television, with their success vital to the sustainability of popular series such as *Care Bears*, *GI Joe*, *Peppa Pig*, *Spongebob Squarepants* and *In the Night Garden* (Pecora, 1998; Banet-Weiser, 2007; Lemish 2007; Steemers, 2010). Historically however, children's television merchandise has been highly gendered including in the ways in which it is marketed, particularly for school aged children (Lemish, 2010). To some extent *Thunderbirds Are Go* was able to subvert that norm, through the toys created by UK manufacturer Vivid and the global licensees associated with the brand. These include Lady Penelope's iconic pink Rolls Royce and a Kayo toy and vehicle. But while Kayo and Lady Penelope are popular characters, the series is rating more highly with boys than girls and, as Hughes concedes:

At retail it has been difficult for a show to embrace girls and boys in the same way that, say, "Peppa Pig" has for the pre-school audience. Toy shelves tend to be very gendered and it's very difficult to make that jump from something very boy action oriented to something less so in toyshops. (personal communication, June 30, 2016)

Giles Ridge, ITV Studios Executive Producer and SVP Content and Brand Development Consumer Products, confirms:

That's the thing with merchandising and licensing, you need to know right up-front whereabouts in the shop they will see it. It's undeniably a boys viewed show and the product is in the boys' aisle, although that's not to say that girls won't buy it. Girls will watch boys' stuff and girls will buy boys' products, but it doesn't work the other way around (personal communication, June 21, 2016).

While Hughes had sufficient creative autonomy and status as executive producer to influence the content of the series, she had no involvement with the exploitation of the brand extensions. The belief that children prefer gendered television programs and associated merchandise (Lemish, 2010) appears still to prevail among many producers, distributors and marketing teams and to exert considerable influence in retail and marketing sectors.

Any re-boot of a cult classic is an ambitious undertaking. Nonetheless, *Thunderbirds Are Go* has been a commercial success and received positive reviews from UK television critics. One described it as "surprisingly enjoyable" and "impressively scripted" (O'Donovan 2015) while *The Guardian's* review concluded "this will do nicely" (Jeffries 2015). The success of the re-booted children's series represents an integral element of

ITV Studios highly successful business strategy of monetising the IP it owns, which has seen the company become the biggest producer of non-scripted content in the US (Chalaby, 2012). The iconic *Thunderbirds* brand remains popular with parents and their children in increasingly globalised markets for children's television and their associated consumer products.

Conclusion

The ways in which *Thunderbirds Are Go* presents more balanced gender representations to the child audience reminds us of the importance and influence of the producer in children's television. Those in the screen production sector working to erode gender stereotypes in contemporary children's television require power, status and creative autonomy to be able to effect change, which are by no means a given. Hughes is aware that her position as executive producer with decades of experience gave her sufficient authority in creative decision-making processes to exert a strong influence over the series' gender representations. She remains mindful of the privileged position she occupies in the production hierarchy and that her efforts are particularly important, because few of the women working in contemporary screen production choose to work in animation action adventure for older children. And, as the case of *Thunderbirds Are Go* illustrates, balanced gender representations are more likely to be seen on the screen when the creative labour force in the animation industry becomes less gendered itself.

Note

1. My conversations with Hughes occurred face-to-face over several weeks as we met to discuss her professional practice as a children's television producer and career in children's broadcasting

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Challenging Gender and Racial Stereotypes in Online Spaces

Alternative Storytelling among Latino/a Youth in the U.S.

Alexandra Sousa & Srividya Ramasubramanian

Media play an important role in perpetuating racial and gender stereotypes that harm the self-esteem and self-concept of marginalized youth, especially for Latino/a youth in the US context. However, this article illustrates that through a participatory media and media literacy approach, media can also become part of the solution. The main aim of this article is to document *Latinitas*, the first digital magazine in the United States created by and for young Latinas that challenges stereotypes through participatory digital storytelling. Explored through an interview with one of *Latinitas*' co-founders and press coverage about the organization, this case study sheds light on the importance of alternative community-based initiatives for minority youth to redefine their identities in their own terms. The findings shed light on how to design alternative youth media programs, negotiate funding, build relationships with the surrounding community, and adapt to the changing media landscape. Such initiatives point to the importance of media literacy programs and participatory storytelling initiatives aimed at redefining youth identity and empowering youth voices.

Existing research informs us that media play an important role in the formation and sustenance of gender stereotypes (Mazzarella, 2013), which are also culturally constructed in ways that intersect with other markers of identity and difference, such as race/ethnicity and socio-economic status (Rivera & Valdivia, 2013). One group in the United States that is particularly affected by this phenomenon, and in predominately negative ways, is young Latina women (Molina-Guzman & Valdivia, 2004; Valdivia, 2010). Because of this, it is important to document interventions that focus on how Latina youth can use media to challenge cultural and gender stereotypes and tell their unique stories through participatory digital storytelling. One important community-oriented media initiative is *Latinitas*, the first digital magazine in the United States that is designed for and produced by young Latinas. This case study illustrates the role of community-ori-

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ented media initiatives in empowering marginalized youth to go beyond stereotypes to redefine their identities in their own terms, especially in online spaces.

Images of Latino/a youth in popular media

Although Latinos and Latinas are making important strides in media, education, art, and business in the United States, they are a group that still faces a significant amount of discrimination in the United States (Feagin & Cobas, 2014), in no small part due to limited media representations. As the Latinidad population in the United States continues to grow, it becomes harder to ignore their absence and false representation in media. At the root of the ambiguity surrounding this group is the label “Latino/a.” Valdivia (2010) notes that this terminology is a “US-created category...and most often linked to populations of Latin American origin living in the United States” (p. 6). And although Latinos/as are a complex and diverse group of people, with unique cultures, cuisines, music, and dialects, the media typically homogenizes this group and their depictions/representations (Valdivia, 2010; Molina-Guzman & Valdivia, 2004; Molina-Guzman, 2010; Rivera & Valdivia, 2010). Latinos/as are also typically reduced to the label “brown,” although their shades of skin tone are as diverse as their array of cultural characteristics (Valdivia, 2010). This reflects the tendency to look at and analyze Latino/a bodies as “hybrids,” challenging the White-Black binary. Guzman and Valdivia (2004) note, “While remaining at the margins of representations of whiteness, they also exist outside the marginalizing borders of blackness” (p. 214). This ambiguity and state of “brownness” is less threatening to White audiences and deemed important by media producers, in order for stories involving Latino/as to be consumed by a broader audience (Pinon, 2011; Valdivia, 2004). Valdivia (2009) adds that this leaves young Latinas to make “identification and identity formations across race and ethnicity, composing hybrid subjectivities out of a hybrid media diet” (p. 76).

The constantly growing Latinidad population also makes addressing children’s programs a necessity, as representations of young Latinas are especially limited. Although there are scarce shows created for these audiences, *Dora the Explorer* plays an exceptional role on television because her character addresses many criticisms of common Latina stereotypes and combats prescribed gender norms (Ryan, 2010; Guidotti-Hernandez, 2007). She identifies strongly with her Spanish heritage, but does so in a way that does not make her an “Other.” She is also very relatable and draws a diverse audience. Dora’s character “signifie[s] gender equity, empathy, and solidarity across individual differences, demonstrating the potential nature of decoding Latinidad as a liberating social force, with feminist underpinnings” (Guidotti-Hernandez, 2007, p. 214). However, although Dora is most often praised for her novelty, she is not free from criticism. She’s often critiqued for the ambiguity surrounding her “Latin-ness” and her arguably “whitewashed” portrayals (Guidotti-Hernandez, 2007). Although the character is not perfect and falls

victim to ambiguity, Dora's character is taking a step in the right direction and can serve as an example for improvement.

Media depictions also often counteract traditional gender roles and values within Latino culture. The culture promotes subservient women, who value marriage and family, while men are characterized as being "macho" and the dominant providers for the family (Lopez et al., 2013). Instead, the media represents Latinos as having limited intelligence, inarticulate speech, laziness, and verbal aggression" (Mastro et al., 2008, p. 2). They are also branded as the over-sexualized "Latin lover." Rivadeneyra (2006) also notes that the news tends to frame Latinos as "a social problem, focusing on crime stories and the negative effect of immigration" (p. 394). Luckily, Latinos are now seen in more major roles. However, because consumers in dominant racial groups get much of their information about Latinas from the media, stereotypical depictions of Latinos also become more harmful if these characters are more visible (Mastro et al., 2008). Mastro & Behm-Morawitz (2005) add that television is "a site of cultural politics where reliance on stereotypes exists, reinforcing the dominant ideology about race rather than challenging it" (p. 124).

Depictions of Latina women have changed very little since they first appeared on the screen (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005; Molina-Guzman, 2010), which has been shown to influence audience's real-life perceptions of Latinas (Mastro et al., 2007). When Latinas turn to the media to help them negotiate their identity, they find representations that are often stereotypical and negative, as well as ambiguous (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005; Mastro et al., 2007; Valdivia, 2004). Latina characters are also typically constructed around their bodies, and overly sexualized and exoticized (Merskin, 2007; Guzman & Valdivia, 2004). They also "function as a sign, a stand-in for objects and concepts ranging from nation to beauty to sexuality" (Guzman & Valdivia, 2004, p. 206). The body becomes a symbol of the Latina, reflected with tight and form-fitting clothing, typically bright and accentuating of curves. Esposito (2009) adds, "Media representations of the Latina body thus form a symbolic battleground upon which the ambivalent place of Latinos and Latinas in U.S. society act out" (p. 526). Valdivia (2009) adds that increased media representations does not necessarily open up the opportunity for more equal or accurate representations. Therefore, focusing on girls and young women in this context is much needed.

Latino/a children and young adults are negatively impacted by stereotypical media representations. Because adolescence is an important time for identity development, exposure to negative media effects may be most detrimental for this age group (Rivadeneyra, Ward, & Gordon, 2007). Media portrayals have been shown to negatively impact psychosocial functioning, self-esteem, and academic outcomes (Rivadeneyra, 2006). The media have also been linked to negative body image. Young Latinos/as are in a particularly interesting position. Many are first or second-generation Americans who not only have to negotiate their identity within American culture, but also within their own families (Schooler & Daniels, 2014). As Schooler & Daniels (2014) explain, "Due

in part to complex histories of colonization and immigration, Latino/as inhabit both real and metaphorical 'borderlands,' bridging multiple cultures, races, traditions, and communities" (p. 13). Latino/a youth have much to negotiate in today's mediated world.

Beyond the stereotypes: Participatory media practices and media literacy education

In this interesting scenario, media content is not only the problem, but is also the solution. Digital media formats and community-based initiatives are putting media in the hands of the underrepresented, in order to respond to mainstream depictions of minorities and to create more positive representations. Participatory communication seeks to "empower people to have greater control over decisions that affect them and, in this way, to foster social equity and democratic practices" (Morris, 2003, p. 226). Morris (2003) adds that it is not necessarily what is produced that matters the most, but the process of creation. This is also at the heart of media literacy, which teaches audiences how to analyze current media and produce their own. Youth are able to combine their love of popular culture and engaging in real-world issues, giving them a means to "change the world" (Jenkins, Sherstova, Gamber-Thompson, Kligler-Vilenchik, & Zimmerman, 2016). Participatory media also offer youth a common ground where they can share their story, regardless of their unique historical, cultural, economic or social backgrounds (Fisherkeller, 2013). However, as Fisherkeller (1999) notes, media educators not only have to focus on how media images impact young audiences, but also how these images interact with their real-life experiences with racism, sexism, and power.

Children are often the most neglected groups in society and affected the worst by poverty, violence, famine, and abuse, especially those from low-income families or socially marginalized groups based on race or socioeconomic status. Educational interventions focused on the development of gender-media literacy for teens promote the stories of children who would otherwise be voiceless in society or whose stories are typically told by those in power. It gives children a form of expression and helps them navigate their place in the world. Fisherkeller (2013) notes that there are still gaps for certain groups in terms of access to digital outlets, which opens up opportunities for organizations and non-profits to step in and help give marginalized groups a platform.

Latinitas: Redefining what it means to be young and Latina in the U.S.

Latinitas is helping to combat these same barriers to young Latinas and is putting empowerment back into their hands through participatory media. Founded in 2002, this Texas-based non-profit organization is helping young Latinas thrive through the creative

use of media and gives young Latinas an outlet to explore culture, racism, stereotypes, history, fashion, beauty, art, and poetry (Latinitas, 2013). *Latinitas* began as a class project in college for the organization's co-founders Laura Donnelly and Alicia Rascon. While New York-based Donnelly describes herself as a "sliver" Latina, Rascon was born in Mexico and grew up in El Paso, TX. However, what both of their upbringings revealed and their work with *Latinitas* reminds them of daily is that Latinas are often voiceless, in their personal lives and in the media. As Donnelly explains, media portrayals are "intensely stereotypical and hurtful... You would think that by now [Latinitas] would be obsolete, but it's a pain that we're not" (L. Donnelly, personal communication, September 2, 2016). Latinas are still seen as an "other," although they are a significant population within the United States. Although *Latinitas* has been able to build relationships with cultural and Latino/a-oriented organizations in their area, this perceived "otherness" has kept many corporations and groups from offering funding and other resources.

Media-based youth initiatives take many forms and *Latinitas* provides a solid example of how to design such programs, negotiate funding, build relationships with the surrounding community, and adapt to the changing media landscape. The organization is designed as an afterschool program and currently serves 2,500 girls in Austin, Texas and 1,000 girls in El Paso, Texas. Prior to their current locations, the founders utilized free space around town, including libraries, while their organization was getting off the ground. There is also a summer camp, as well as periodic conferences and workshops that allow their resources to be available to Latinas all year long.

Latinitas's main platform, the digital magazine, is broken up into two publications, one for teens over 13 years old and one for girls under 13. Both versions are broken up into six sections, which cover topics such as beauty/fashion, education, media representation, art/poetry and health. Writers also cover "hot topics" and political issues, as well as highlight the work of inspiring Latinas within their communities. Along with the digital magazine, *Latinitas* also has several social media outlets, including a real-time forum where young women aged 13-25 have the opportunity to discuss issues that are affecting them right now. They have over 4,000 followers on Facebook, over 6,000 on Twitter, and have hundreds of "views" on their YouTube channel. Because of media's flexible nature, *Latinitas* has had to continually update their workshops, in order to train the young women in the latest technologies. They have even bridged into more "intense" technology, including robotics, coding, and game and app creation.

Sustaining a community-oriented youth media initiative: Challenges and opportunities

Organizations like *Latinitas* that are geared towards helping minority youth not only have to consider how to promote themselves and their work to mainstream audiences, but must also balance the cultural traditions of the families that the children belong to.

Ofentimes, when young Latinas join, it is the first time they are told they can strive for more. Donnelly described a story of a young member who dreamed of going to college, but her grandfather would rip up every acceptance letter because a young Latina going to college broke the cultural norm. Eventually, she was able to negotiate her education with her family, no doubt given empowerment through her involvement with *Latinitas*. Leaders at *Latinitas* also have to deal with parents who are unable to give their children the proper support, because of work schedules or lack of education. Additionally, Donnelly was quick to point out that schools are not providing the supplemental support to young adults and children in these groups either.

The turmoil surrounding the 2016 Presidential election and the increased focus on immigration and illegal immigrants has reinvigorated fear in many young Latinos/as and their families. As Donnelly reveals, “I don’t think the average American knows how intensely persecuted they feel” (L. Donnelly, personal communication, September 2, 2016). Luckily, the platform provided by *Latinitas* gives young women the space to negotiate these feelings. Donnelly adds, “Letting them react to it, giving them a place to express anxiety about it [is] really...there’s transformation.” She also emphasized the countless times she’s seen media give young women confidence to tell their own story. As she explained, “There’s a persona to an immigrant child that often makes them feel like they have to make themselves invisible and they often lack platforms to allow them to come out of their shell. This is where *Latinitas* steps in.”

Although *Latinitas* is a non-profit organization, the founders have to market themselves “like a mainstream business.” Much of this requires face-to-face meetings with funders, businesses, and other non-profits. As Donnelly notes, it’s important to work with other organizations “to build unity and share resources” (L. Donnelly, personal communication, September 2, 2016). Creating a collective with fellow organizations and the community is a powerful tool. *Latinitas* must also maintain a media presence of their own, so the surrounding community can be kept up-to-date with their activities. And while burgeoning activists may be overwhelmed with the notion of starting a media-based initiative, Donnelly clarifies, “When you create a startup, you think you have to know everything and I learned valuable lessons that I didn’t need to know everything” (L. Donnelly, personal communication, September 2, 2016).

Latinitas has been recognized by news outlets such as *The Austin Chronicle*, *El Paso Times*, *The Austin American Statesmen* and *NBC Latino*. Founder Laura Donnelly says the organization has helped over 20,000 thus far, and has been in over 112 schools, libraries and community centers (Badgen, 2015). This year, *Latinitas* was one of only 13 organizations nationwide to be awarded a \$25,000 from Google, money the organization intends to put towards expanding its youth-oriented programs (Gallaga, 2016). However, although such recognition is important and illustrates the impact *Latinitas* has had on the community, it is the impact they have on the young women who go through their program that should be highlighted. This organization is an example to illustrate how a media initiative can highlight the minority condition,

youth empowerment, and the relationship between education programs and the surrounding community.

Despite what we can learn from how *Latinitas* operates, nothing remains more important than the impact of those young Latinas it supports. As founder Donnelly explains, “The immense confidence they get is super powerful” (L. Donnelly, personal communication, September 2, 2016). Young Latinas are able to address heavy-duty subjects, including sexual harassment, family issues, bullying, and immigrant abuse. Donnelly adds, “They have an opportunity to shed light on alternate perspectives or a positive portrayal or a REAL portrayal” (L. Donnelly, personal communication, September 2, 2016). As one *Latinitas* blogger describes:

In a blog you are sharing *your* perspective but that doesn’t mean that your sentiments are exclusive. I acknowledge that everyone has a unique story that is all their own, but I also believe that our personal stories can reach out to create communities. Simply stated, I am saying that blogs can allow us to be a part of the larger Latina familia: a familia that laughs, cries, and succeeds *together*. Personally speaking, as an avid reader of blogs written by Latinas, I have been able to find a place online where I feel welcomed but also challenged to expand my perspective.

Media-based initiatives designed for children and young adults, like *Latinitas*, is one of the rare opportunities for minority youth to tell their story. Another young member who participated in a *Latinitas* camp reflected:

It inspired me to put my life in perspective and reminded me to take one day at a time in order to reach your goals. It was inspiring to hear how we are all going through the same worries and stress, and that we are not alone in this.

The young women at *Latinitas* have published pieces on “breaking stereotypes,” the impacts of Supreme Court ruling on Latinos, “what feminism means to me,” “street harassment,” and ways of getting involved in the community. *Latinitas* is a place where girls and young women negotiate their role within their own communities, as well as the world, and learn how to have a voice within it.

Conclusion

Media are responsible for perpetuating dangerous racial and gender stereotypes that harm the self-esteem and self-concept of marginalized youth. However, they are also empowering tools that can give marginalized girls and boys a voice and an outlet to challenge stereotypical mainstream media representations. Although *Latinitas* is an incredibly important exemplar of how media can be used positively, this is only one of many other such initiatives. Alternative community-based media initiatives are worth

our attention, as they are making a significant impact on children and young adults. Such initiatives point to the importance of media literacy programs and participatory storytelling initiatives in redefining youth identity and empowering youth voices.

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Advertising to Children and Gender Stereotypes in Brazil

Reflecting a Broader “Macho” Culture

Tamara Amoroso Gonçalves, Mariana Hanssen Bellei Nunes de
Siqueira & Letícia Ueda Vella

Brazil is a society structured by patriarchy (Teles, 1993, Zapater, Venturini, Godinho, 2013), sexism (Goncalves & Lapa, 2008, Tiburi, 2014), classism and racism (Carneiro, 2017, 2012, Diniz, 2015). In this article, we investigate how advertising to children reflects these values, focusing on learned gender social roles. We argue that advertising to children in Brazil stimulates very limited social roles for boys and girls, reinforcing traditional stereotypes about men and women, affecting negatively children's social and personal development. We use a feminist approach, combined with studies of consumerism in contemporary societies, to analyze two cases of advertising contested by Alana Institute, a non-profit organization that discusses regulation on advertising to children in Brazil. The cases chosen reflect the gender difference in advertising directed to boys and girls and signal that marketing to children reflect broader gender stereotypes of Brazilian society.

Over the last 10 years, debates about regulating advertising to children have gained importance in Brazil (Fontenelle, 2016), although not always taking a gender perspective into consideration. Brazilian law protects children's fundamental rights, and consumer law presents a specific regulation on both subjects: discriminatory advertising and advertising to children. Debates about consumer law interpretation on the latter have become widespread since the 2000s and are now a part of the national agenda (Fontenelle, 2016) with 14 bill proposals being discussed in Congress, many class action being decided by Brazilian courts, and fines being imposed by the governmental bodies responsible for enforcing Brazilian consumer law¹.

If the debate about advertising to children is new in Brazil, the convergence of gender and advertising to children is even more recent. Feminist groups have been discussing sexist advertising (Gasparetto, 2014) but, when it comes to advertising to children, discussions are broader and not always sensitive to the eventual gendered effects of commercial messages. In a society permeated by sexism and structured by patriarchal values,

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these tend to be reflected by mass media, with advertisements normalizing particular social constructions (Almeida, 2002). This happens on commercial messages directed both to adults and children, but children do not understand or perceive advertising the same way adults do. They are experiencing a particular process of biological and psychological development that prevents them from filtering advertising messages the same way adults do. Therefore, advertising to children ends up playing an important role in the socialization process (Levin & Kilbourne, 2009), reinforcing and reifying traditional gender social stereotypes, such as fragility for girls and aggressiveness for boys. These are very limited notions of femininity and masculinity and organize, from early on, a universe dichotomized by gender stereotypes.

Our research investigates how discussions about sexist advertising to children have been presented to Brazilian courts, motivated by advocacy and litigation actions developed by the Alana Institute, a leading organization in the field of protecting children against commercial messages (Fontenelle, 2016). The analysis will be guided by a feminist approach, and we hope to contribute to this international debate by bringing insights from a Latin-American feminist perspective.

Complex intersections:

Advertising to children and gender stereotypes in Brazil

Historically and worldwide, advertising has played a central role in consumer societies (Lipovetsky, 2007). This is not different in Brazil, where investments in advertising are substantial, reaching R\$ 121 billion (G1, 2015) in 2014 (around US\$400 billion).

More than just contributing to an increase in sales, advertising has been profoundly changing the cultural environment and affecting identity building through branding processes from a very early age (Klein, 2000). In Brazil, children are intensively exposed to TV: an average of 5h35 daily (IBOPE, 2015). Around 77 per cent of children and teenagers (9 to 17 years old) use the internet regularly, both at home and via mobile phones. Teens in Brazil are also heavy users of social media platforms, and eight out of ten have their own online profile, and six out of ten access social media every day (KIDS, 2014). As a result, along with nuclear families and schools, media has an increasing role in children's socialization process, one that cannot be underestimated: children are born in a highly marketized world, growing up in a heavily technological environment, permeated by marketing interests (Mayo & Naim, 2009).

Not surprisingly, the children's market is the leader in licensed products in Brazil (Mercado, 2016a) (Mercado, 2016b), growing around 14per cent a year (G1, 2013). Consequently, children are a sensitive target for marketing strategies, since they account for both a present and a future market (Schor, 2009, Linn, 2006).

Considering that children's identity building is highly affected by what they see and experience, children extensively exposed to media are also affected by commercial mes-

sages in a more intense way (Kasser, 2002; Masquetti, 2008). Transnational companies are increasingly present in intimate relationships through advertising (Klein, 2000), affecting children's cultural values more than elementary school (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2011) and taking part in the diffusion of materialistic values, gender stereotypes and social distinctions (Kasser, 2002, p. 9).

This process is not gender neutral, and has at least two aspects: the commercial aspect, focused on the gender segmentation of products; and a symbolic aspect, related to the diffusion of gender stereotypes through advertising. Both reinforce and reflect social and cultural perceptions about gender as if they were natural.

Gender segmentation of products is not a child-exclusive process, and is aggravated by the age compression phenomena (Orbach, 2009). This segmentation creates products that are not interchangeable, increasing consumption. Likewise, instead of having an all-family product, there are particular products marked by a supposed gender division, which represents an increase in consumption, especially if gender and age are combined. Beyond the relevant economic impact, this process helps shape a social construct of what is acceptable and proper for boys and girls, and men and women. It is important to stress that these divisions are not based on the qualities of the product or its suitability regarding eventual biological differences, but mostly reflect and reinforce social and historical constructions of gender identities.

The emergence of theories that challenge "natural" female or male behaviour is part of a bigger political project led by feminist groups, aiming to expose that such perceptions are social constructions (Gonçalves, 2013, Ann, 2008, Hesse-Biber, 2015, Vosko, 2002) culturally and historically localized (Cossman & Fudge 2002, Gonçalves, 2013). In capitalist societies, gender inequality is related to the construction of social roles for men and women regarding aspects related to human reproduction and production of goods (Silva, 2000, Vosko, 2002). From the 1950s on, a very specific conception of men as breadwinners and women as housekeepers was shaped (Fraser, 2013), along with the development of consumer society in North America. This process had the help of advertising, showing an aspirational model of a mother that stays at home and a father that provides for the household (Sweet, 2014, Fraser, 2013, p. 35). Therefore, the world of consumption is highly feminized (de Almeida, 2007), with messages focusing on how to improve domestic work or personal appearance. This tendency is reflected in advertising to children.

Regulations on advertising to Children in Brazil

The Brazilian Constitution ensures economic freedom as a major principle ruling economic regulation. However, article 170, iv, of the Constitution² imposes a limit on this freedom: consumer rights, which are considered a fundamental right and defined by a federal law³, known as the Consumer Code (Consumer Code, 1980) (Tepedino, 2006).

If advertising is to be considered an expression of economic activity, it should respect consumer rights as established by the Consumer Code⁴.

The Consumer Code offers an encompassing regulation on consumer relations in Brazil, including advertising. Articles 36 and 37 are the most relevant for the proposed discussion, and are located within a section that establishes a broad and principle-oriented framework for advertising. Because it provides a more principle-oriented regulation, there is room for multiple interpretations about what is legal or illegal regarding advertising. Besides general principles (veracity and identification of advertising messages as such), article 37 sets two boundaries regarding illegal advertising: false or misleading advertising (§1), and abusive advertising (§2):

Art. 37. Any misleading or abusive advertising campaigns are prohibited.
 § 2. *An advertisement of any discriminatory nature or that incites violence, explores fear or superstition or takes advantage of a child's lack of judgment or experience, (...)*

While the first paragraph about misleading advertising can be considered as more objective, when it comes to the second one, the definition allows the accommodation of the interpreter's values about what can be considered *discriminatory* or *having the ability to promote violence*. It is also not clear what "*takes advantage of a child's lack of judgment or experience*" means.

We argue that an advertisement that is explicitly directed to children and that promotes stereotyped gender representations could be considered as violating twice the Consumer Code under article 37, §2°. Brazil ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and together with the Brazilian Constitution and Law 8.069/90 (Child and Adolescent Statute), they constitute a comprehensive protection for children's human rights, including regarding media influence⁵. The Child and Adolescent Statute is a federal law that provides comprehensive regulation on children's and teenager's rights, specifying the general provisions of Constitutional article 227. The Statute and the UN Convention are not explicit about advertising, but a combined reading of legal provisions in both fields favours the interpretation that advertising to children is forbidden according to Brazilian law (Gonçalves, 2014; Gonçalves, 2011). In addition, the National Council on Children's Rights⁶ recently passed a Resolution⁷ in which important boundaries were established on the subject.

Brazil also ratified human rights treaties that impose the obligation to fight sexism and gender discrimination – UN Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women. Human Rights treaties have constitutional status in Brazil (Piovesan, 2013) and must be considered when interpreting consumer law regulations on advertising. Particularly regarding Law 11.340/06, known as the "Maria da Penha Law (CEJIL, 2011)", it establishes (article. 8) that the Brazilian State is responsible for actively promoting a non-stereotyped image of women within the media, as a way to prevent violence against women in the long term (SPM, 2006).

Two examples of sexist advertising to children in Brazil

To ground our argument, we will present advertisements that reveal market strategies of segmentation by gender that also exemplify the symbolic message that is being broadcasted, suggesting how boys and girls should look, act and choose their preferences. The ads described below were contested by the Alana Institute in Brazil, a Brazilian non-governmental organization responsible for the Children and Consumerism Project, which is focused in promoting discussions about advertising to children and its impact on Brazilian society (Fontenelle, 2016).

Between 2008 and 2012, *Mattel do Brasil Ltda.*, a company specialized in toys, promoted advertisements for two leading products: Barbie and Hot Wheels. They promoted the dolls “*Barbie Ultra Glam*” (Mattel, 2010a), “*Barbie IDesign Kit Estilista*” (Mattel, 2010b), “*Barbie Salão de Beleza*” and “Barbie 1-2-3 Style” (Mattel, 2010c) and cars from the “Hot Wheels” collection.

The commercials promoting Barbie products showed different girls and various Barbie dolls in settings with a prevalence of the color pink, claiming that “Fashion is Pink!” and making it explicit that wearing pink makes you a fashion star. They are focused on fashion, and stimulated girls to take care of their appearance by imposing specific beauty standards. The advertisements promoted the Barbie beauty salon, the designer kit and other Barbie products, which, together with the color pink, can make you a fashion designer. At the end, the kids are also encouraged to visit the company’s website, where they can connect to games that have the same aesthetics and themes, and promote the brand more broadly.

The Alana Institute considered that the ads promoted excessive concern about physical appearance, consumerism and children’s engagement with topics related to the adult world, and presented a claim against Mattel before the São Paulo’s Procon Foundation.⁸ In the claim, the Alana Institute argued that the ads were directed to children, something forbidden by the Consumer Code according to Alana’s point of view and explored gender stereotypes (Instituto Alana, 2010). In response, Procon/Sp imposed a R\$ 534,613.33 fine (approximately U\$ 160.000) on the company for disrespecting consumer law provisions under article 37, § 2º.

Dissatisfied with the decision, Mattel took the case to the courts. The São Paulo state court favoured the company, dismissing Mattel of the obligation to pay the fine. Adopting a typical neoliberal argument (Beck, 2007) the decision invoked the role of families and schools as primary caregivers and responsible for socializing children, stating that advertising does not play a role in the socialization process, and if it does, it is the parents’ responsibility to deal with it. As a consequence, the court concluded that there was no violation of children’s rights or consumer law in this case.

The marketing for the “Hot Wheels” products (Instituto Alana, 2012), was heavily promoted through the website <http://br.hotwheels.com>, which contains games, television commercials and pictures of the advertised toys. Hot Wheels’ website makes an evident

association between a hegemonic idea of masculinity and violence, violent conflict resolution and aggressiveness. Considering that this marketing campaign on the whole promoted consumerism, aggression and adoption of violent habits, the Alana Institute denounced the case to Londrina's Procon. This municipal Procon sent the case to the National Consumer Bureau (Senacon), which started an administrative proceeding after concluding that the campaign might violate consumer law. Senacon also recommended to all members of the National Consumer System (state and federal public prosecutor's offices; Procons; public defenders etc.) to investigate the matter. As a consequence, the Rio de Janeiro Prosecutor's Office also started an investigation on the case in March 2016.

Challenges in discussing gender and advertising to children in Brazil

A brief comparison between the two TV campaigns, launched by same toy company, makes explicit the gendered dimensions of advertising to children in Brazil by exploring market segmentation between products for "boys" and "girls" based on supposed gender "differences."

Gender asymmetries that characterize the construction of gender roles are linked both to symbolic (De Lauretis, 1987, p. 05) and social-economic inequality (Fraser, 2013, Vosko, 2002, Cossman & Fudge, 2002). Advertising has a fundamental social role in reproducing these asymmetries, reinforcing them through a semiotic apparatus (De Lauretis, 1987, p. 05). As a patriarchal society, the social representations of the feminine, domestic and family universes are convergent in Brazil. This association is clearly reconstructed and re-elaborated by the media, including advertising (Almeida, 2002).

In this process, the impoverishment of public spaces and the promotion of materialistic values as replacements for cultural values is remarkable (Klein, 2000, pp. 291-292, Nations, 2014): "Advertising often sells a great deal more than products. It sells values, images, and concepts of love and sexuality, romance, success, and perhaps most important, normalcy. To a great extent, it tells us who we are and who we should be." (Kilbourne, 2001, p. 74). If we live immersed in advertising messages (Linn, 2006), we are being affected by them.

When it comes to young girls, very limited perceptions about femininity seem to be in place. This negatively affects the development of feminine identities from early on (Levin & Kilbourne, 2009). With gender being relational, (Scott, 1990) this also impacts the building of boy's identities. These hegemonic gender representations, widespread by the media in multiple ways (cultural and commercial content) contributes not only to maintain but also to reproduce social inequalities, shaping an environment that prevents social change.

In this way, gender achievements are hidden and society remains static and culturally imprisoned by mythical standards that make everything seem natural. As a result, some

behaviours become naturally masculine (strength, decision, rationality, and freedom) and others become feminine (submission, indecision, fragility, dependency, and emotionality) (Silva, 2000).

Advertising to children reproduces such social stereotypes, but in a more pervasive way because children are in a peculiar stage of development and, therefore, more vulnerable to these influences. As De Lauretis showed us, “gender representation is its construction” (De Lauretis, 1987, p. 02). In this process, the reinforcement of gender stereotypes through advertising influences the future preferences of children (Linn, 2006) and consolidates stereotypical roles for boys and girls in their imagination, shaping preferences and behaviours, and also preventing children from engaging in more libertarian behaviours.

However evident, this gender difference in the ads was not reflected in specific discussions on this topic by the state court, Senacon and Rio de Janeiro Prosecutor’s Office. Accordingly, these authorities seem to work in a context of gender blindness, focusing the discussion on a broader issue: advertising to children, and consequently ignoring the specific gender dimension. Even though the cases resulted in some favorable decisions – In Hot Wheels’ case, Senacon generically stated that the campaign could violate consumer law and the Rio de Janeiro Prosecutor’s Office started an investigation based on the fact that the campaign incites violence.

In the Barbie case, São Paulo’s Procon Foundation only said that article 37, paragraph 2 of the Consumer Code was violated because the ads took advantage of a child’s lack of judgment or experience. Later, the São Paulo state court annulled the fine imposed by São Paulo’s Procon Foundation, stating that, “No discrimination of any nature or incitation to violence was verified” (Mattel v. Procon, 2014). Thus, the court reinforced the neoliberal discourse by placing responsibility primarily on families and individuals (parents). The frequent argument in Brazilian courts that this subject is exclusively a parent’s responsibility must be challenged, in particular because the Brazilian legal framework states otherwise: the Constitution determines that all social actors, including families, State, educators and the market, share the responsibility of ensuring children’s rights.

Although some cases resulted in fines imposed on the companies, none of the decisions explicitly acknowledged or discussed the reinforcement of gender stereotypes in the controversial campaigns: this subject was not among the reasons for considering the campaigns discriminatory and therefore illegal.

Analyzing these cases shows that a deeper gender discussion on advertising to children is urgent in Brazil. Likewise, more than just acknowledging the illegality of directing advertisement to children, it is important to discuss its gender dimensions as a way to promote freer and more emancipatory gender relations.

Notes

1. Article 105 of the Consumer Code determines who should be part of the National Consumer Defense System (SNDC): “federal, state, municipal, federal district agencies; as well as private consumer defense entities.”; Currently, the following institutions take part in the SNDC: the Department of Consumer Protection and Defense (Departamento de Proteção e Defesa do Consumidor - DPDC), the National Secretary of the Consumer (Secretaria Nacional do Consumidor, Senacon), state and municipal PROCONs (administrative bodies to protect consumer rights), state and federal public prosecutor offices, public legal defense offices, consumer police offices, Special Small Claims Courts, non-profit organizations, and, more recently, an approximation to the regulatory agencies has been made (Bessa, L. & Faia de Moura, W. J., 2014, Kelsen, 1999).
2. article 5, XXXII, 1988, Brazilian Constitution.
3. law 8.078/90.
4. While Lucia Ancona Lopez, Leonardo Roscoe Bessa e Walter José Faia de Moura defend that advertising is covered by the Constitutional protection of freedom of expression, João Lopes Guimarães Junior and Marcelo Gomes Sodré argue otherwise, understanding that consumer protection limit the freedom to advertise, particular when analyzing advertising addressed to children. See: Lucia Ancona Lopez de Magalhães Dias, *supra*; Leonardo Roscoe Bessa & Walter José Faia de Moura, *supra*; Guimarães Junior, J. L. (2016). Sodré, M. G. (2016).
5. article 17 and 31, UN Convention and articles. 76, 146 and 245, Law 8.069/90
6. Brazil has national councils, formed by an egalitarian composition of government and civil society representatives. Usually, National Councils are thematic and guide public policies. The one for Children's rights is just one of them.
7. Resolution n. 163 of the National Council on Children's Rights, 2014.
8. PROCONs are administrative bodies that work to enforce consumer law on the administrative level. They can repress violations to the consumer code through different legal instruments. In Brazil consumer protection was pushed by governmental bodies even before legal consumer protections were established. Likewise, the first state office (PROCON) to promote consumer protection was created in 1976 by São Paulo state, before the approval of a unified law that would regulate consumer relations, which happened just in 1990. The example was followed by other states and from 1976 to 1985 almost all of them created similar institutions. Thus, consumer protection in Brazil started to be discussed and implemented before a specific consumer law was passed, largely pushed by PROCONs. In part, also, this is related to the economic context: the high inflation and economic crisis and an attempt to control prices and protect consumers from this situation. The Consumer Code, in 1990, incorporated PROCONs as members of the National Consumer System it established, together with other institutions, like the Specialized Public Prosecutor's Office, for example (Sodré, 2007).

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Gender Segregation on BabyTV

Old-time Stereotypes for the Very Young

Nelly Elias, Idit Sulkin & Dafna Lemish

The systematic inequality of gender representations in television programming for pre-school and older children throughout the world has been well documented. Very little is known, however, about the nature of gender representations in television programs aimed at children in infancy and toddlerhood. This study aims to fill this gap using the case of *BabyTV*, which is the first television channel in the world directed at infants and toddlers. The qualitative analysis of 39 channel's programs has yielded results that are in line with previous research demonstrating the dominance of male characters in programming that targets older children, as well as gender stereotyping along traditional lines. It seems that the freedom afforded this channel by virtue of featuring animated characters is counterproductive: rather than using animals or objects to present gender equality, the creators default to male characters as the norm, and to stereotypical depictions and behaviors of female characters.

The systematic inequality of gender representations in television programming for children throughout the world has been well documented (Götz & Lemish, 2012; Lemish, 2010). Specifically, white male characters dominate children's screens. Gendered stereotypes are prevalent: Males are typically central to the narrative and are presented as leaders; rational, assertive, and active, they are most of all framed as "doers". Females, by contrast, are typically passive, emotional, and dependent; focused on their appearance and on relationships, they are sexualized from a very young age. Such research, however, has investigated programs targeting children from preschool to early adolescence, when gender identity is already well developed and the gender segregation manifested in earliest childhood is clearly evident in all realms of life. Very little is known, however, about the nature of gender representations in television programs aimed at children in infancy and toddlerhood, a time of life when gender differences are supposedly of less relevance to everyday functioning and pressure to conform to gender norms is less salient. Yet,

Elias, Nelly, Sulkin, Idit & Lemish, Dafna (2017). Gender segregation on BabyTV. Old-time Stereotypes for the Very Young p. 95-104 in Dafna Lemish & Maya Götz (eds.) *Beyond the Stereotypes? Images of Boys and Girls, and their Consequences*. Göteborg: Nordicom.

the first two years of life are crucial to the development of a gender identity. This study aims to investigate the gendered nature of the television offerings for this age group.

Development of gender awareness

The ability to perceive distinctions between male and female attributes is a critical component of gender identity-formation. But when does gender stereotyping begin? Research has shown that infants can distinguish between female and male voices at six months, and can discriminate between faces of men and women starting from seven to nine months of age (Bussay & Bandura, 1999; Halim & Ruble, 2010). Moreover, when visual displays are presented on videotape, infants may discern intermodal associations between sex and voices as early as six months of age. Hair length, clothing style and voice pitch are distinguishing features for such discriminations (Leinbach & Fagot, 1993; Poulin-Dubois, Serbin, Kenyon, & Derbyshire, 1994). These findings demonstrate that perceptual discrimination of males and females is based on minimal cues, and occurs already during infancy.

Toward the end of the first year of life, infants also begin to demonstrate the early foundations for developing associations between faces of women and men, and gender-related objects, such as a hammer or scarf (Levy & Haaf, 1994). The finding that infants are able to differentially associate stereotypic objects with the sexes suggests that they are developing the capacity to attend to traditional behavior of men and women, and may in certain circumstances make associations with these social constructs of sex differences.

Infants' knowledge of attributes associated with gender categories increases substantially during the second year. Research on intermodal knowledge has demonstrated that by 18 months of age, children start to associate verbal gender labels (e.g., woman, man) with the categories of faces representing different genders (Poulin-Dubois, Serbin, & Derbyshire, 1998). Likewise, there is evidence that at this age children form masculine metaphorical associations, linking fir trees, bears, and the color blue with males; feminine metaphorical associations were not found to be significant (Eichstedt, Serbin, Poulin-Dubois, & Sen, 2002). Young children, then, develop gender categories and networks of gender-associated attributes well before they can verbalize such knowledge.

Furthermore, by their second birthday children begin to demonstrate awareness of concrete gender stereotypes (Quinn, Kuhn, Slater, & Pascalis, 2006). For example, two-year-olds perform remarkably well in sorting pictures of feminine and masculine toys, articles of clothing, tools, and appliances in terms of their typical gender relatedness (Thompson, 1975, in Bussay & Bandura, 1999); and at around 26 months they become aware of gender differences associated with adults (e.g., physical appearance, roles, and abstract characteristics, such as softness) (Ruble & Martin, 1998).

Children's gender-linked information is formed, first and foremost, by observing models provided by their immediate environment, e.g., parents and other caregivers

(Fagot & Leinbach, 1995). In addition, the mass media offer pervasive modeling of gendered roles and conduct (Anderson, Huston, Schmitt, Linebarger, & Wright, 2001; Bussay & Bandura, 1999; Halim & Ruble, 2011). The role of media in the construction of gender schemas and identities is particularly important in light of the fact that media characters demonstrate forms of femininity and masculinity to children, and offer them a host of models for identification and imitation. Research examining the impact of media on the construction of gender roles in older children, for example, has found a relationship between viewing television at a young age and holding stereotypical views regarding various roles occupied by men and women, and gendered attitudes about women and men (Gunter, 1995). While many of these studies were correlational in nature, or presented short-term results under experimental conditions, they nevertheless reinforce what we know about children's tendency to learn from television content (Signorielli, 2012). Similarly, reception studies of both girls and boys suggest that television content is processed by children in their meaning-making efforts to construct their own gender identity and sense of self, as well as their developing sexual orientation (Lemish, 2015).

In view of the importance of media influence on children's gender identity construction, it is surprising that no attention to date has been given to understanding the prevailing gender images and stereotypes in television shows that target infants and toddlers. This article aims to fill that gap, using the case of *BabyTV*, which is the first television channel in the world directed at infants and toddlers. Launched in 2003 in Israel, *BabyTV* gained international attention, as for the first time infants became a specifically targeted TV audience (Carvajal, 2008; Fuenzalida, 2011; Krieger, 2012). In 2007, *News Corp's Fox International Channels* acquired a major stake in *BabyTV*, placing it alongside *Fox Crime*, *FX*, *National Geographic* and other worldwide distributed channels. Today *BabyTV* is distributed in more than 100 countries, broadcasting 24/7 in 18 languages. According to the channel's official website, *BabyTV* is "built around nine developmental themes (first concepts, nature and animals, music and art, imagination and creativity, building friendships, songs and rhymes, guessing games, activities and bedtime), which cover all early learning skills and developmental milestones for toddlers" (<https://www.babytv.com/corporate-brand-activities.aspx>). In the main, *BabyTV* shows feature 2D and 3D animation, puppets, and material figures (e.g., clay puppets or cork). Live action, by contrast, is only infrequently featured.

Methodology

For the sample composition, we first developed a list of all shows (45 in total) broadcast during June 2016 on the *BabyTV* channel in Israel. Then we verified which of these shows are available online both in Hebrew and in English, to confirm the shows' international relevance. This selection process yielded a sample consisting of 39 shows available worldwide. Most of the shows in the sample were animated (19 were 2D animation and 13

were 3D animation), four shows featured puppets; two shows featured material figures and one show featured live action. In three shows puppets and animated characters were the main characters, with children and adults appearing as background actors. One randomly selected episode of each show was analyzed, in an attempt to examine the main gender representation of all characters taking part in the episode. Altogether 184 characters were analyzed.

The first step of the analysis aimed to classify the characters according to their gender (i.e., female, male and no clear gender identification) and according to the characters' main identifying form (i.e., humans, bugs and animals, objects such as fruits, geometrical figures and numbers, and anthropomorphous unidentified creatures that we call "aliens"). In addition, we analysed the narrator's voice by classifying it as female or male. The second step entailed a thematic analysis of the shows, using qualitative procedures according to the following categories: (1) characters' appearance, such as body features, style of dress and accessories; (2) their role in the script, such as who is responsible for the storyline development and who is a leader; (3) "traditional" versus "alternative" gender roles and activities, such as cleaning or taking care of others versus building or driving a vehicle; and (4) the main features of the characters' behavior, such as fearfulness, timidity and immaturity versus assertiveness, boldness and maturity that could be interpreted as "stereotypical" or "alternative" depending on the character's gender.

Findings

Quantitative representation of female and male characters

As Table 1 suggests, among 184 characters analyzed, males outnumbered females by more than 100% (107 vs. 46). The gender representation of human characters was the most balanced of the categories, whereas gender representation of imaginary anthropomorphous characters ("aliens", animals/bugs and objects) was extremely imbalanced. This finding suggests that the more freedom of choice the animators have to determine gender, the less egalitarian they become and the stronger their preference for defaulting to male characters, as was found in programming for older children in previous research (Götz & Lemish, 2012). Likewise, we found a strong dominance of male voices in the category of narrators (8 versus 3), which is rather unexpected in light of systematic evidence suggesting that babies and toddlers have a stronger preference for female voices (Nakata & Trehub, 2004; Standley & Madsen, 1990).

Table 1. Characters' classification according to gender and main category

Category Type	Female	Male	No clear gender identification	Total
"Aliens"	1	9	2	12
Narrators	3	8	-	11
Humans	20	34	-	54
Animals and bugs	13	38	20	71
Objects	9	18	9	36
Total	46	107	31	184

Characters' appearance

Within the category "characters' appearance" we analyzed characters' hairstyle and facial features, use of "stereotypical" colors (pink, purple and blue) versus "neutral" colors, outfit and accessories. At first glance, it seems that *BabyTV* makes a deliberate attempt to de-emphasize, and sometimes even to erase, characters' gender characteristics. Thus, about two-thirds of the shows avoid "gendered" colors, featuring, instead, green, orange and yellow. Furthermore, a majority of shows (28 out of 39) feature non-human characters (such as bugs, animals, objects and "aliens"), where gender characteristics are supposed to be less prominent. When the shows feature humans, their body shapes do not indicate any gender characteristics, since by and large they have the body structure typical of babies and toddlers.

Yet, careful examination of the female characters reveals certain stereotypical features intended to emphasize femininity, such as "gendered" hairstyle (ponytail holder and/or bow tie hair ribbon), enlarged eyelashes, and an intensive use of pink and purple for the characters' clothing, hair and body color. This is especially evident in shows that feature non-human characters, such as geometrical shapes, numbers, bugs, animals or objects. In these shows, female characters are easily identified by their long eyelashes, enlarged eyes and highlighted lips, "girly" hair accessories, and pink and purple coloration. For example, in *Mitch Match*, which features four puzzle pieces, the sole female puzzle piece is pink. *Kenny and Gurie*, with two almost identical kangaroos, features a female kangaroo in pink. Moreover, in *Pim and Pimba*, of two penguins, Pimpa (the female penguin) wears a red bow tie hair ribbon, and Billy, the older bear sister in *Billy and Bam Bam*, has pink fur and a red bow tie hair ribbon.

As against such female color-gendering, the use of "gendered" colors and accessories for male characters was much less frequent. Although blue is still the ultimate color symbol of masculinity, we found a heavy use of "neutral" colors, such as yellow, green or brown, for the male characters' body and clothing. Moreover, pink was sometimes used in this context, marking a shift in male representation (e.g., Tickles-Tickles, the pink "alien" in *Cuddlies* and Tuli, a pink snail from *Tuli* show). This change, however, is

not fully realized, since both of these characters are extremely gentle, and could thus be perceived as “feminine”. In terms of facial features, most male characters had a “sweet” or “cute” “baby-face”, which can be explained by the very young age of the target audience of *BabyTV*. In other words, since it is socially acceptable for a baby boy to be “sweet” (but much less so for an older boy), the male characters of *BabyTV* feature big eyes and chubby cheeks. No male character, however, had the type of eyelashes that seem to serve as the ultimate marker of femininity.

Finally, in the few cases that diverged from stereotypical female appearance, there was kind of “amendment” (compensation) of the character’s other features, which could be interpreted as an attempt to present a more “balanced” gender appearance. For example, Lily, a young girl from *Lily and Pepper*, has tangled hair and wears eyeglasses and overalls. At the same time, the entire set, as well as most of Lily’s clothes and her bird friend’s (Pepper) accessories, are colored in shades of pink and purple, leaving her femininity unquestionable. Similarly, although Miss Kettle (a female kettle in *Baby Chef*) is “neutrally” colored (orange and green), her lips are enormously full and her cheeks are extremely red – which overemphasizes the character’s femininity, while depicting her in a somewhat grotesque light.

Characters’ behavior and role

Within this category we tried to identify behaviors that can be seen as stereotypical, such as expressions of hesitation, fear or shyness for female characters versus leadership and assertiveness for male characters. Similarly, we analyzed “traditional” gender roles and hobbies, such as cleaning or taking care of others versus building or driving a vehicle. The same characteristics used for portraying an opposite gender would be seen as alternative and even progressive representation. In addition, we examined the character’s role, pointing to her/his dominance versus marginality and initiative-taking, versus being led by others.

Here too gender stereotypes were affirmed rather than refuted. Thus, for example, in *Mitch Match*, when three male puzzle pieces jump fearlessly into the water, the female puzzle piece remains fearfully outside. Her friends create a ladder and a boat to help her, to no avail: she remains hesitant. Thus, the female puzzle piece not only presents stereotypical behavior, she also plays out the traditional script of “damsel in distress” who waits for her male savior. Interestingly, only in those shows that are predominantly masculine are the male characters permitted to express fear or timidity. For example, in *Bath Tubbies*, which features three male animals (elephant, frog, and chick), the chick (representing in all narratives a vulnerable baby) is fearful of water, a fear that his male friends help him to overcome. We found no instance, however, of a fearful male character who receives help from a brave female friend.

Regarding roles, we found that male characters more often play leading roles than do female characters: he (but not she) usually shows the way, offers solutions, or provides

instructions. Thus, for example, in *Baby Chef*, the male chef gives orders to his voiceless, obedient female assistant, Miss Kettle. Similarly, in *Tiny Beats*, featuring four bugs (only one of which is female), the (red) female bug almost always follows the (blue) male bug, who is invariably the first to try out a new toy or drive a vehicle. In the few cases that the former tries something new first, such initiative is depicted as happenstance (she bumps into the item).

This pattern is especially striking in those shows where gender characteristics are erased for most characters, but not for the “leader”, who is clearly male. For example, in *Egg Birds*, which features a group of colored eggs with no gender indications, the team leader has a typical male haircut (black short hair resembling a punk hair style or a rooster’s crest), whereas the rest of the eggs are hairless (and also genderless). Similarly, in *Mice Builders*, where a team of seemingly genderless mice (only in the last frame of the episode is it possible to see that some of them have ponytails) are playing a guessing game, the delivery mouse, who brings the object to be guessed by the team, is definitely male, since he is the only mouse who wears blue overalls and a blue postman-style cap. Moreover, when characters did not have a clear gender identification, a male character would play the role of an “anchor” for recognizing one gender at least. For example, in *Popiz*, featuring two “aliens”, Pop (an assertive, sometimes-angry red creature with a low voice) is clearly male, whereas the gender of the gentle, blue Piz is debatable. Likewise, in *Pitch and Potch* (another show from the “aliens” category featuring two shapeless creatures of yellow and brown), much larger Potch is easily recognized as male by his low voice, whereas smaller Pitch remains “genderless”.

Dominant male characters are presented as the same age as (or even younger than) other characters; hence it is precisely the “leadership qualities” of such figures that make them leaders. Thus, for example, in *Charlie and the Numbers*, Charlie is a young boy who visits a place populated by numbers. The numbers appear to be older than Charlie (indicated by their adult voices and clothing), but he solves their problems through recourse to his outstanding cognitive abilities and creativity. In stark contrast, in a show which is apparently parallel in design (*Zoe Wants To Be*) featuring a young girl as a main character – Zoe is drawn into new adventures by animals whom she meets, her role is limited to playing with them by imitating their behavior.

Furthermore, in the three shows that feature a dominant female character who displays better skills and stronger abilities than other characters, the character is older, hence fitting the stereotypical pattern of a female caregiver, such as an older sister, babysitter, mother, or kindergarten teacher. Thus, for example, in *Billy and Bam Bam*, featuring Billy (a large pink female bear) and Bam Bam (a much smaller blue bear), Billy appears to play the role of responsible, patient big sister of reckless and impulsive Bam Bam. The latter’s younger age is underscored not only by his smaller size, but also by his limited language fluency. Thus, it is clear that he is “just a baby”, justifying Billy’s dominance.

In four shows only did we find a balanced representation of male and female characters in terms of behavior and role. All of these shows feature two characters (male and

female), which play a similar role and display similar behaviors within the show. Thus, for example, in *Nico and Bianca*, two characters with a slight resemblance to dogs (he is brown and wears a baseball cap while she is purple and wears a bow tie hair ribbon) take turns painting a picture and the other character tries to recreate the picture using playdough as a medium. Similarly, in *Kenny and Gurie*, the two nearly identical kangaroos, distinguished only by color (he is brown and she is pink), play a guessing game; the kangaroos take turns creating an object and guessing its identity. Here too, we did not find any stereotypical behaviors or a dominance of one character over another.

Compared with balanced representation, alternative gender representation was even rarer, with only one salient example found in *Cuddlies*, featuring four “aliens” living in a commune. Red Yam Yam (the biggest male in the group, who speaks in a very low male voice) cooks and cares for his childish friends. The pink male, Tickles-Tickles, is gentle and even “feminine”. It ought to be noted that, like the pattern of alternative representation of physical appearance that was identified with respect to male characters only, here too the rare examples of alternative gender roles and personal characteristics were found only in relation to male characters, those part of a predominantly masculine team. As such, this shift in gender roles hardly taps into the potential of progressive gender representation.

Conclusions

Our analysis of gender representations on *BabyTV* has yielded results that are in line with previous research demonstrating the dominance of male characters in programming that targets older children worldwide, as well as gender stereotyping along traditional lines (Götz & Lemish, 2012). It seems that the freedom afforded these shows by virtue of featuring animated characters is counterproductive: rather than using animals, objects or “aliens” to present gender equality, the creators default to male characters as the norm, and to stereotypical depictions and behaviors of female characters.

This is particularly surprising given the age bracket of the target audience, well before clear gender segregation and peer pressure take their effect. It is hard to explain why a program for babies and toddlers would not present equal numbers of males and females, or why leadership roles would only be assigned to male characters. One possible explanation is that the show’s creators have in mind stereotypical gender perceptions that are appealing or intimidating in the eyes of parents. Considering the evidence in the literature that parents perceived “feminine” toys and activities as more gender stereotypical than “masculine” ones, which contributes to their greater acceptance of cross-gender conduct by girls than by boys (Campenni, 1999), it is plausible that the program’s creators aim to make their “product” more appealing for the parents of boys in order to preserve an important segment of their audience. As a result, even in programs designed for infants and toddlers, the rehashed industry argument that “girls will watch

boy characters and narratives but boys will not watch girl characters and narratives” (Lemish, 2010) applies, although this argument is not necessarily evidence-based, and screen choices are not made by young viewers.

The dominance of male voice-over is a further case in point. Despite the documented preference of infants for a female voice, it is a male voice that they usually hear in such a role. Arguably, this could be interpreted as a progressive choice, namely, to balance the predominance of female caregivers during the early stages of development. However, if this was true, we could expect a balanced representation of female and male narrators. Hence, we suggest that this finding reflects the producers’ assumption that parents of young children would prefer the “authoritative” male voice that would supposedly provide the children with a credible interpretation of objective reality, echoing research on preference for narrators and voice-over in adult programming (Lemish & Tidhar, 1999).

This interpretation accords well with previous studies done on the children’s media industry, which is dominated by male norms, and the resulting gender discrimination from birth that passes as neutral and normal (Lemish, 2010). Apparently, this hegemonic culture work is so entrenched and assumed that it carries over to the production world for the youngest of audiences. This observation stands regardless of the gender composition of the media professionals: Women, just as men, internalize the industry’s norms and produce programming that matches those expectations. Even when well-intentioned professionals develop gender sensitivity and wish to make changes, they are often confused about how to do so in a way that will not alienate their audiences and result in financial loss. Hence, they continue to rehearse the formulas that seem to be working well (*ibid*).

Simple changes, such as having the same number of male and female characters of all kinds, presenting smart girls who don’t wear pink and do lead others, or boys with eyelashes who receive help from girls, could be easily implemented, with very little social and commercial “risk”. Currently, only androgynous creatures escape stereotypical representation, and even then, a clearly straight-male character is presented alongside, to reinforce traditional masculinity. Older female characters, those that can be perceived as a big sister or caregiver, are also sometimes presented in a less gender-stereotypical manner. Hence, we are witnessing here a real missed opportunity to socialize young viewers to gender equity and to a non-stereotypical world-view in regards to appearance, behavior, and gendered role segregation at a pivotal point in gender-perception development. The world presented to them on the screen is one of male dominance and beautified femininity across all fields – human, animal, object, and even “alien”. Crucially, while *BabyTV* originates in Israel, its content is distributed to more than 100 countries around the world, making the trends we identified a global concern.

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II. Consequences

Perception of Physical Beauty among Boys and Girls in Hong Kong

Kara Chan, Maggie Fung, and Tabitha Thomas

Beauty is an important currency in how we see ourselves and others. Hong Kong is flooded with commercial messages on physical attractiveness. How do children respond to the beauty culture so prevalent in our society? This study aims at (1) examining the cultural concepts of beauty, and (2) how children perceive the relationship between physical attractiveness, personality and friendship. We asked 114 children aged 9 to 12 to draw and verbalize a girl or a boy who was described as good-looking, and a girl or a boy described as not so good-looking. Results indicated that most of the interviewees associated “being not so good-looking” with ugliness. Physical beauty was associated with personality, social relations, happiness, and materialism. Results show a strong stereotype of “beauty-is-good”. Further studies are needed to identify source of the stereotypes and how these perceptions may affect children’s choices in their daily lives.

Many girls and women live unhappy lives because they are not satisfied with their body. Dove, a US based company for health and beauty goods, did an experiment by asking an FBI trained forensic artist to draw two sketches of the same woman, one from her self-description, and one according to a stranger. The sketches showed that participants often underestimate their own physical beauty. This video advocating “you are more beautiful than you think” has been viewed nearly 180 million times since its release (Dove, 2016).

Physical appearance and beauty are powerful agents in our society, and influence how we see ourselves and others, as well as our everyday discourse and decisions (Griffin & Langlois, 2006). The media are full of beautiful people with beauty standard so high that it is almost unreachable. Children and adolescents are particularly susceptible to media influences. Studies found that exposure to idealized body images in television commercials were associated with appearance comparison among adolescent boys and girls, and increased body dissatisfaction among adolescent girls (Hargreaves & Tigger-

Chan, Kara, Fung, Maggie, and Thomas, Tabitha (2017). Perception of Physical Beauty among Boys and Girls in Hong Kong p. 107-118 in Dafna Lemish & Maya Götz (eds.) *Beyond the Stereotypes? Images of Boys and Girls, and their Consequences*. Göteborg: Nordicom.

mann, 2004). The concerns may have emerged from media messages that emphasize desirable traits associated with thinness (Tiggermann & Pickering, 1996).

A qualitative study of tween girls and adolescent girls in Hong Kong about what girls or women should or should not be found that both tween girls and adolescent girls put much emphasis on physical appearance (Chan, 2014). Tweens refer to children around 10 to 12 years old who are not yet teens but who have interests different than younger children. Tween girls perceived that girls or women should be good-looking and presentable, and should not wear sexy clothes.

Hong Kong is a good venue to study perceptions about physical beauty because of three reasons. First, there is a strong market force shaping the construction of beauty. Cosmetic and skincare was the top fourth advertising category in 2015 (admanGo, 2016). Secondly, unlike western beauty cultures that often revolve around thinness and height, Chinese beauty culture endorses thinness as well as fairness in skin color (Fung, 2006). Thirdly, very few empirical studies investigated the perception of beauty among young children. To encourage children and youth to think critically about the ideal male and female beauty images prevalent in the media, we need to understand how they perceive persons with or without physical beauty.

Literature review

Cultural construction of beauty and “beauty-is-good” stereotype

Beauty is a construct that varies with culture and time (Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2005). Consumers are constantly acquiring information, products or services that will help them to attain the perceived beauty quality. Marketers position their products in the market embodied with the contemporary ideals of beauty in order to capitalize and fulfill consumers’ need and desire for physical beauty (Bloch & Richins, 1992).

The term beauty has been conceptualized as unidimensional and multidimensional in different cultural perspectives (Englis & Solomon, 1997). The definition of beauty and attractiveness has been consistently projected by the production of media messages through various media channels (Downs & Harrison, 1985). Empirical studies found that attractive people were better liked and assumed to be more sociable, exciting and independent, friendlier and smarter (Brigham, 1980; Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972). On the other hand, less attractive people were assumed to be deviant and stigmatized (Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991). Dion, Berscheid, and Walster (1972) called it the “beauty-is-good” stereotype.

Media production process and the emphasis on physical attractiveness

How is the concept of beauty being constructed? Mass media and popular culture play a significant role in the social construction of physical beauty (Englis & Solomon, 1997).

A survey of 1,027 women aged between 18 and 64 found that their conception of beauty was shaped by “women in the public domain” and social media (Katz, 2015). Marketers, advertising creatives, fashion and beauty editors, designers, sales managers, and photographers play crucial roles in the encoding process of the symbolic and aesthetic imagery of fashion and beauty (Tse, 2014). According to Downs and Harrison’s (1985) content analysis study of network television commercials in the US, one out of every 3.8 commercials contains messages related to physical attractiveness. Systematically, the icons of beauty cast in various mass media act as role models for and are mirrored by individual consumers. Consumers later apply this culturally constructed information to form their own idealized self-image (Morry & Staska, 2001). Furthermore, the stereotypical perception of physical attractiveness applied to both adults and children (Dion et al., 1972).

Particularly, the tween segment is considered by marketers to be powerful influencers of their parents’ consumption (Siegel, Coffey, & Livingston, 2004). Their consumption and responses to marketing communication were motivated differently in cultures of individualism and collectivism (Andersen, Tufte, Rasmussen, & Chan, 2008). A study using drawings and interviews found that girls who owned makeup were perceived to be more attractive, happy, and popular than girls who did not own makeup (Thyne, Robertson, Thomas, & Ingram, 2016). The findings illustrated that tweens were enculturated into contemporary beauty ideals. The construction of beauty images propagated in mass media affect consumers’ global perceptions of their own facial attractiveness and their emotional energy spent on the physical body (Myers & Biocca, 1992; Richins, 1991). Chan (2014) found that tween girls were able to identify individuals and the institutions behind the creation of female images in the media. Consciously, the informants believed that the construction of female images was made for product promotion. Besides, they commented that the female images portrayed in the media were too sexy and passive. They reported that their ideal female images would be active, healthy, and without heavy make-up.

Objectives and method

This study attempts to achieve the following research objectives

1. to examine the cultural concepts of beauty among Chinese children in Hong Kong;
2. to investigate their perceptions of personality, social relations, and material possessions of a person described as good-looking and a person described as not-so-good looking.

This study employed an interpretivist approach (Neuman, 2003) using a qualitative methodology. The study required the participants to draw pictures, followed by a face-to-face interview about the pictures. The method was appropriate for this study

because children are used to expressing their attitudes and feelings through drawings. The drawings also proved to be a useful way for interviewees to describe the drawings in detail and elaborate what was happening (Belk, Fischer, & Kozinets, 2013). The method was inspired by Chan's (2006) work and has been used to collect data from India (Thomas, Robertson, & Thyne, 2015). Altogether 114 undergraduate students taking the classes "Children as consumers" and "Consumer behaviors" participated in the data collection. They were trained to understand the objectives of this study and the procedure to conduct the interviews. The study was conducted in Cantonese (the main Chinese dialect spoken in Hong Kong) in November 2014 at the participants' homes, at the interviewers' homes, or at public places such as libraries and playgrounds.

A convenience sampling method was adopted. Altogether 114 children, including 60 girls and 54 boys, aged between 9 and 12 participated in the study. They were recruited through personal networks. Informed consent was obtained from their parents or guardians before the interview.

Each child was supplied with a piece of plain white A3 paper (size: 11.7 inches in height and 16.5 inches in width). Each piece of paper had two blank boxes of equal size. On top of each box was a statement. On the left the statement was "This is a good-looking girl (or boy)"; on the right it was "This is a not-so-good looking girl (or boy)".

The children were asked to draw what comes to their mind when they read each of the two statements. The instructions were: "I would like you to draw a girl (or a boy) who is good-looking in the box on the left, and a girl (or a boy) who is not-so-good looking in the box on the right. It doesn't matter if the child you draw looks like a real person, but it is important that the child fits the description I just mentioned. There is no right or wrong drawing, and your drawing will not be graded. Do you understand?" After they finished the drawings, the interviewers conducted follow-up face-to-face interviews with them. Interviewers were randomly assigned to recruit a boy or a girl interviewee. In other words, interviewees did not necessarily draw people of the same sex. Six questions were asked:

1. Can you describe each girl or boy you have drawn in five words?
2. How many friends does each girl or boy have?
3. Are these two children happy?
4. What clothes and accessories does each girl or boy own?
5. Which girl or boy is popular?
6. Which girl or boy would you want to be?

The drawing took from 5 to 25 minutes. The interviews took from 6 to 18 minutes.

The interviewers audio recorded the interviews and later transcribed them into Chinese. One of the authors coded the drawings and answers to each questions onto Excel worksheets. Prominent visual components of objects and facial expressions of the human characters for both pictures were identified and coded after examining all the

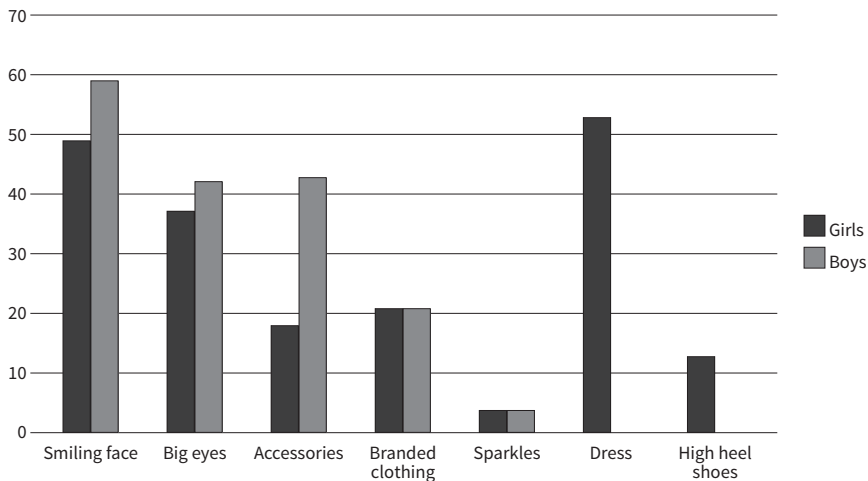
drawings. The other author read the codes. Disagreements were identified and resolved through discussion. Transcripts of the interviews were analyzed question by question across interviews by one of the authors. Major themes were identified by one of the authors and verified by another author. These themes became the focus of this article.

Results

The drawings

The frequencies of seven prominent visual components identified from the drawings of girls described as pretty and boys described as good-looking are shown in Figure 1. A girl or boy described as good looking was distinguished physically by having big eyes. They were smiling and were surrounded with sparkles, suggesting charm and radiance.

Figure 1. Frequencies of visual elements of a good-looking person by sex of participants (N=114)



They were also distinguished by their outfit, including branded clothing, accessories, and jewelry. The good-looking girl drew by interviewees often wore dresses and high heel shoes. Figure 2 and Figure 3 show typical drawings of girls and boys, respectively.

The frequencies of six prominent visual components identified from the drawings of girls and boys described as not so good-looking are shown in Figure 4. A girl or boy described as not so good-looking was distinguished physically by being fat. They had skin defects such as acnes, blemishes, and scars. They had bad teeth. Their faces were sad. They wore clothes with patches, indicating that they were poor. The not-so-good looking girl drew by interviewees were less likely to wear a dress than the good-looking girl drew by interviewees.

Figure 2. A drawing of a good-looking girl and a not-so-good looking girl

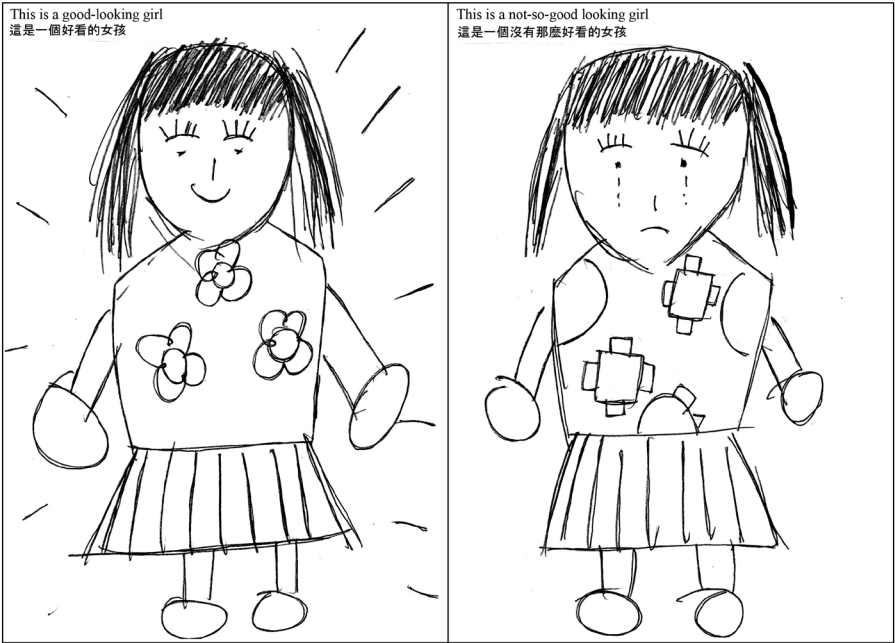


Figure 3. A drawing of a good-looking boy and a not-so-good looking boy

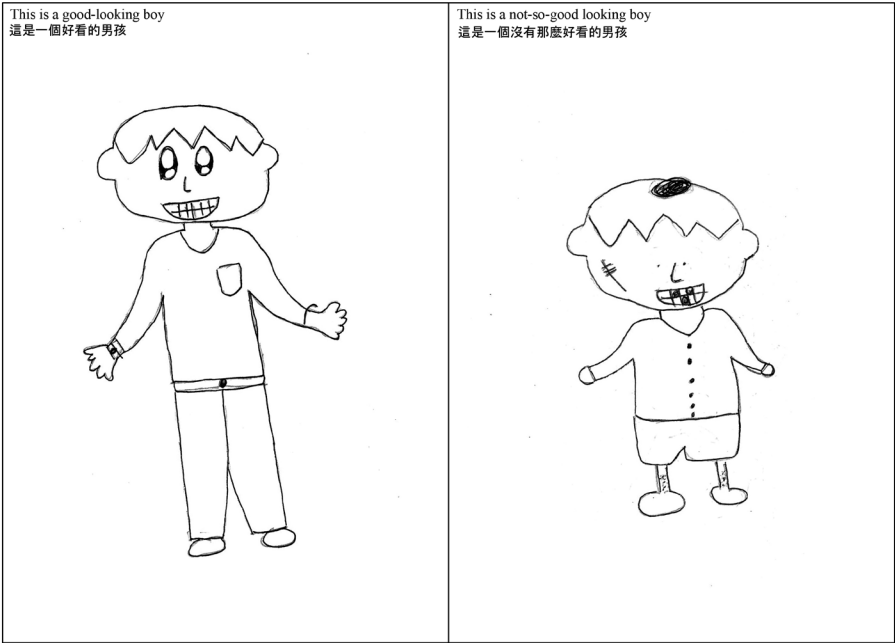
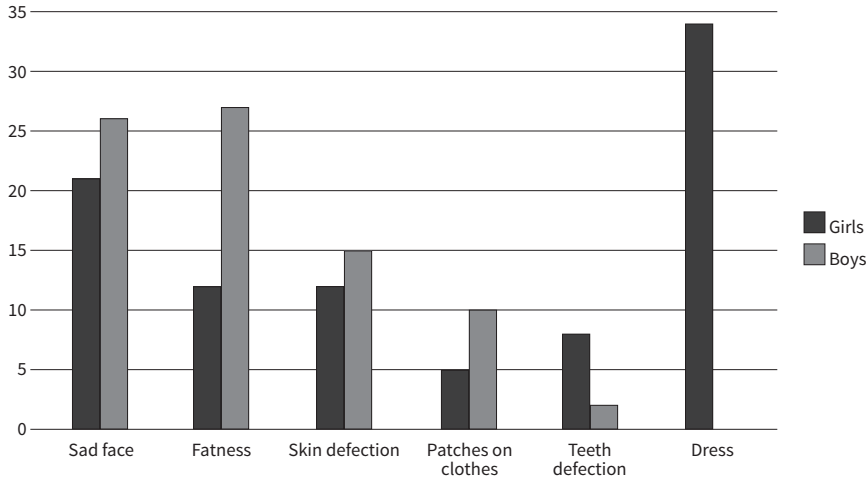


Figure 4. Frequencies of visual elements of a not-so-good looking person by sex of participants (N=114)



The interviews

An analysis of the interview transcripts generated six major themes as follows.

Theme 1: Beauty was associated with positive qualities.

Most participants perceived a good-looking person to be friendly and polite, and a not so good-looking person to be mean and impolite. The words/phrases most frequently used to describe the qualities of a good-looking child included friendly/polite (53 times), cheerful (33), elegant (24), smart (16), sporty (15), and nice (15). On the other hand, the words/phrases most frequently used to describe a not so good-looking child included mean/impolite (40 times), bad-tempered (24), stupid (10), and cowardly (8). A 9-year old boy said,

The good looking boy is handsome and tidy.... His clothes are clean. He is nice to others. The not so good-looking one is impolite, always act like a boss, and gossip about others. Nobody likes him. He also teases the classmates all the time.

Theme 2: Beauty was associated with popularity.

The participants perceived a good-looking person as having more friends than a not so good-looking person. In response to the question “How many friends does each girl or boy have?” 40 per cent of the participants thought that a good-looking child would have 6 to 10 friends. Another 25 per cent thought they would have more than 20 friends. Altogether 28 per cent thought they would have many, or hundreds of friends. On the other hand, 79 per cent of the participants thought that the not so good-looking child

would have fewer than five friends. Another 13 per cent thought they would have very few friends or even no friend. The word/phrase most frequently used to describe the social relations of a good-looking child was lovable (28 times), while that used to describe the social relations of a not so good-looking child was lonely (24 times). Ninety-three per cent of the participants perceived a good-looking child to be popular (93 per cent). Only 7 per cent thought that a not so good-looking child would be popular. For instance, an 11 year old boy described the social relations of the people he drew as follows.

I'd say the handsome boy has a lot of friends because he's probably very ... polite and nice. And he's probably very good to his friends and other people. Probably he also ... he also washes his hands regularly. He's very clean so people like to be close to him. Well, I think he has a lot of friends. ... I think the not so good-looking boy's got very few friends. He's also very dirty...um...very (shows disgust) ugly ... and not so nice.

Theme 3: Beauty was associated with happiness.

A majority (95 per cent) of the participants perceived a good-looking child to be happy. On the other hand, only 39 per cent of the participants perceived a not so good-looking child to be happy, and 61 per cent perceived a not so good-looking child to be unhappy. A 10-year old girl said,

Maybe the prettier one is happier, since she has many friends willing to play with her.

Theme 4: Beauty was associated with materialism.

The participants perceived a good-looking child to have expensive, trendy, and branded clothes, and a not so good-looking child to have dull, ugly, and ordinary clothes. In terms of accessories and possessions, a good-looking child was perceived to have expensive watches, necklaces, hair pins, earrings, bracelets, leather belts, smartphones, Barbie dolls and electronic toys. A not so good-looking child was perceived to have broken glasses, old watches, ordinary accessories or t-shirts. A 12-year old girl said,

The good-looking one will own many pretty dresses, branded dresses and pants, everything on her should be branded. However, the average-looking one should not wear branded clothing, since other children will tease her. They should wear t-shirt and jeans.

Theme 5: Not so good-looking was associated with ugliness and dirtiness.

A boy or a girl described as “not so good-looking” was often perceived as ugly or dirty. The words/phrases most frequently used to describe the appearance of a not so good-looking child included ugly (60 times), dirty/messy (49), fat (35), short (20), having small eyes (18), and having little hair (18). On the other hand, the words/phrases most

frequently used to describe a good-looking child included pretty (33 times), handsome (30), clean/tidy (27), tall (25), having long hair (23), and having big eyes (20). A 10 year-old boy said,

I feel that the good looking one is handsome and tall, good hearted, clean and pay respect to others. The not so good-looking one is messy, and his clothes are dirty. His heart is ugly too... and ... and also he is unhappy.

Theme 6: The participants wished to be good-looking.

Altogether 102 out of 114 participants reported that they would like to be the good-looking child that they drew. A majority of participants commented that they want to be the good-looking child because he or she was kind and he or she had many friends. Only nine participants reported that they would like to be the not-so-good looking child. These children reported that being not-so-good looking will avoid the trouble of having too many boyfriends, or taking too much time in dress-up. The remaining three participants were happy to be either one. A nine-year old girl provided a typical response:

I wish to be the good-looking one. I think everybody wants to be pretty like a princess. I want to live in a castle, have a lot of beautiful clothes, many friends... Then I can invite all my friends to come to my castle, dance together, and be very happy.

Discussion

This study demonstrated that children hold strong stereotypes about a child's appearance. Those who are good-looking were perceived differently from those who are not so good-looking. The most striking result is the strong association between looks and social relations. A good-looking child was perceived to be friendly, cheerful, and popular. On the other hand, a not so good-looking child was perceived to be mean, lonely, and unpopular. Because of the strong association of physical beauty and having many friends, nearly all participants reported that they would like to be good-looking. In Chan's (2006) study, a child with a lot of toys was perceived to be happy, but was also perceived to be wasteful and showy by some older participants. In the current study, the participants did not report a single negative attribute of a good-looking child. The idealization of good-looking people is remarkable.

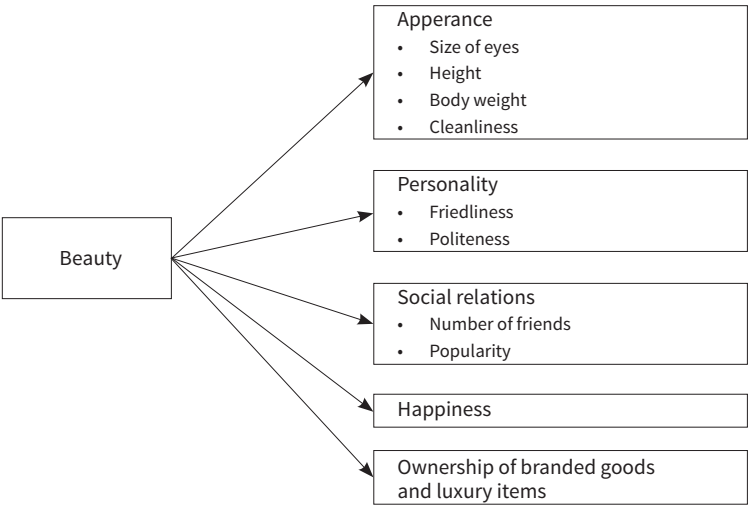
The current study found that participants shared many similarities in their perception of beauty. Having big eyes was associated with beauty. Being fat, having skin defects and teeth defects were associated with ugliness. We did not find a strong association between thinness and beauty. Perhaps children of this age do not care about thinness as much as adult females do. Part of the reason is due to the coding process. It is easier to identify fatness than thinness from the drawings. Among the words/phrases used to

describe a good-looking child, thinness was seldom brought up. The result was consistent with a previous study among tween girls and adolescent girls (Chan, 2014). Tween girls often associated beauty with presentable clothes and good manner. Adolescent girls considered the thin female images in the media as ridiculous and unbelievable. Instead, they preferred females who showed natural beauty, not too thin, and without heavy make-up (Chan, 2014).

The drawings and the interviews showed that there was a strong link between beauty and materialism. The result was similar to that found in Thomas, Rebertson, and Thyne’s (2015) study. These findings aligned with Richins (1994) in the perceptions of an individual based on the possessions they own.

Based on the themes revealed in the study, we propose in Figure 5 a conceptual framework related to physical beauty. The model can be put to test using quantitative surveys. It is expected that quantitative data will provide a measure of the link between the concept of physical beauty and the concepts of social relations, happiness, and specific personality attributes.

Figure 5. Conceptual framework related to physical beauty revealed in this study



To conclude, the current study provides empirical evidence that children ages 9 to 12 had strong stereotypical “beauty-is-good” perceptions about persons described as good-looking or not-so-good looking. Further study is needed to identify sources of socialization, and how such perceptions will influence their processing of images with ideal beauty prevalent in the media.

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I Just Want to Look Good for You

Stereotypes in Music Videos and How to Overcome the Self-Evident Sexism in Germany

Maya Götz & Ana Eckhardt Rodriguez

For decades, music videos have been a key element of the daily social lives of youth. In a series of studies the gender representations in the top 100 music videos in the USA and Germany were analysed and the use of music videos was surveyed among n=748 representatively selected adolescents in Germany. A qualitative study revealed the extent to which girls and boys recognise the sexualisation in the videos and if this was really needed to fulfil what they are looking for. The results confirm that music videos often show highly sexualised representations of women. 13- to 19-year-olds, of whom 80 per cent watch music videos at least once a week, idealise the artists' representations as self-determined statements, see artists as role models and often misinterpret the sexualisation as a symbol of strength. Here, media literacy is needed and a media pedagogical unit was tested.

*Gonna wear that dress you like, skin-tight
Do my hair up real, real nice
And syncopate my skin to your heart beating
'Cause I just wanna look good for you, good for you,*

Selena Gomez sings “I just wanna look good for you” and portrays herself in the video as a “melancholy victim” (Lemish, 2003) who is suffering horribly because “he” left her even though she had always given him everything. With this, Gomez not only reveals details about her relationship with Justin Bieber to the world in a highly dramatic fashion, she also gives girls and boys orientation for roles and gender relations in a modern relationship. For decades, music videos have been a key element of the daily social lives of youth (Altrogge, 2000). They can influence preconceptions and attitudes, e.g. about sexuality and gender roles (Kistler & Lee, 2009, Aubrey, Hopper & Mbure, 2011).

In the last century the primary medium of distribution for these videos was music channels on TV, then computers, and nowadays it is mobile phones (Trend Tracking,

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2016). Music videos are thus often a part of the youth's daily lives and yet evade public notice and critical viewing beyond the youth culture that uses them. It is therefore even more important to look more closely at stereotypes used in gender representation and their meaning for youth. What are the current, typical ways men and women are portrayed in popular music videos? What quantitative and qualitative tendencies can be shown and what does this mean for the youth? And not least: Is it even possible to teach adolescents more competences in dealing with the gender constructions offered in the videos?

This is where the series of studies by the International Central Institute for Youth and Educational Television (IZI) and the MaLisa Foundation pick up and first analyse the top 100 music videos in the US and Germany in 2015. In a quantitative survey at a representative level (n=748), girls and boys aged between 13 and 19 were asked (among other things) about their use and interpretation of music videos and to what extent the artists are meaningful to them. An exploratory qualitative study pursued if adolescents perceive the hypersexualisation and if they would use it themselves planning their own music video. Whether a unit on media literacy can sensitise them was then tested in school classes.

Step 1: The media analysis

*Yes I do the cooking,
Yes I do the cleaning,
Plus I keep the na-na real sweet for your eating
Yes you be the boss and yes I be respecting,
Whatever that you tell me cause it's game you be spitting,*

is what Nicki Minaj sings in her underclothes in *Hey Mama* while wearing a transparent bodysuit. She is in a futuristic desert world with intertextual references to the film *Mad Max*,¹ and there are images of a spectacle with acrobatic dancers and various women wearing very few clothes in provocative poses. It is an eroticised scene that, as science fiction, references the future and thereby calls up an almost slave-like relationship between men and women that she accepts with enthusiasm and fervour. Is this music video, which reached number 36 in the US charts in 2015, a sexist exception, an individual case, or is it indeed a prototype for the market?

Content analytical studies reveal that especially women are hypersexualised and reduced to their outward appearance (summary in Rich, 1998). Music videos represent especially women conforming to the dominant ideal of beauty and highly sexualise their bodies (Arnett, 2002, Jhally, 2007, Aubrey & Frisby, 2012). Women show much more sexuality than men, touch themselves erotically more, dance lasciviously and erotically, and give sultry looks. Their clothing is much less frequently neutral, while this is normal

for men (Wallis, 2010). Female singers stage themselves in two-thirds of the videos in the typical dimensions of self-objectification: “Body exposure, gaze, dance, and dress”, in particular in the pop or hip-hop genres (Frisby & Aubrey, 2012).

To get an overview of the current status of gender representations in music videos, the 100 most successful songs of the 2015 charts in Germany² and the USA³ were studied, whereby a sample of 168 resulted because of overlaps in the German and US charts (32 songs). They were analysed with a quantitative content analysis (Berger, 2016) with a code book of 63 variables in video and lyrics by five independent, trained coders.⁴

Table 1. Main results of the media analysis: Women are more strongly sexualised than men, in the US more frequently than in Germany

	Women	Men
There are twice as many men as women (singers).	32%	58%
The songs are more often sung from the men's than from the women's perspective.	26%	52%
Women sing more often about love.	57%	39%
Women wear sexualising clothes more frequently than men.	56%	21%
Women move erotically in around every third video, men almost never.	37%	3%
Women touch themselves in an erotic-sexual way; they do this more often than men.	27%	6%
Men show “dominance” and derogatory gestures more frequently.	12%	20%
Women are shown without their head in half of the videos, men clearly less often.	53%	32%
Women's buttocks are shown in every fourth video.	22%	8%
There is a focus on women's breast in almost every third video, men's stomach muscles are shown less often.	29%	16%
	US	Germany
In the US women wear sexualised clothes more often than in Germany.	67%	49%
In the US they sing more often about sex...	28%	19%
... and it is shown in the videos more frequently than in Germany.	48%	31%
Women make more erotic gestures in the US.	52%	51%
Women touch themselves in an erotic-sexual way more frequently in the US.	39%	20%
The US music videos more often have a focus on the female breast.	34%	22%

The analysis reveals clearly: Men dominate the charts. They are the main artists twice as often and half of the music videos are clearly told from the male perspective while only 29 per cent are told from the female perspective. In every other video, the women are extremely thin and wear clothing that sexualises them. With men, this occurs much less frequently. The gender-specific staging is even clearer when it comes to gestures. For example in almost one third of the music videos, women touch themselves in erotically sexual ways while men do this very rarely. The different staging of men and women is

clearest, however, when it comes to the camera perspectives. In half of the videos the women are shown headless for example and in almost every third video, a focus is on the female chest is shown. A corresponding sexualisation or eroticising representation of the male buttocks is relatively rare.

In a comparison of the top 100 music videos in the US and Germany, it can be seen how much this is especially a phenomenon of the US music culture. In the US, the women are represented much more often in clearly sexualised clothes than in Germany, women move erotically and lasciviously in more than half of all videos in the US and in 3 of every 10 videos in the US, a close up of the women's breasts is shown; in Germany this appears in only 2 of every 10 videos.

In the US, the successful music videos are thus once again more sexualised and objectified than in Germany. Sheila Whiteley speaks of a "continuing fixation on the sexualised body" in the music industry that leads to "reflecting and constructing a persuasive pornification of contemporary youth culture" (Whiteley, 2015, 29). Even songs which lyrics are erotic and sexual to only a limited degree are staged very sexually in the music videos.

Step 2: How youth use and assess music videos

Only a few reception studies have looked at the extent to which this enters into the internal attitudes and images or strengthens certain preconceptions among youth. However, these clearly show: Watching music videos with sexual content can strengthen the attitude in male students (by enhancing or priming) that women are sex objects (Kistler & Lee, 2009), increase the acceptance of rape myths (Aubrey, Hopper & Mbure, 2011, Kistler & Lee, 2009, Oosten et al., 2015), and strengthen preconceptions that women use sex in a targeted way for their own purposes (Aubrey, Hopper & Mbure, 2011).

To get the current overview of the importance of music videos for youth, their assessment of the development process and the gender representation as well as a self-assessment as to whether the stars become role models and ideal images, 748 girls and boys aged between 13 and 19 from a representative sample⁶ were interviewed.

The results showed: the majority of the youth in Germany regularly watch (at least once a week) music videos, 13- to 14-year-olds more frequently than the older ones (17- to 19-year-olds). Among them there was a core group of heavy users who used music videos at least once a day continually throughout their adolescence. Especially among 13- to 15-year-olds, many were heavy users.

Almost 6 out of every 10 girls listed pop as their favourite genre, four out of 10 boys said hip-hop/rap. When asked the question "When you have a choice, do you first listen to a new song without the music video or do you watch the music video right away?" over half of the youth said that they prefer to listen to a new song together with the music video for the first time, among the 13- to 15-year-olds it was six out of every ten.

YouTube is by far the source used most frequently to listen to music and watch music videos. For adolescents, and especially for those in the younger group, music videos are a format used extremely often.

In response to the question whether they think men or women sing more frequently in music videos, half of the adolescents assume there is equal participation. One third believe that more women can be seen as singers than men. Most of the adolescents believe the relationship is equal or that women are dominant. Only the minority suspect the actual gender ratio; in fact, media analyses show that only one third of the artists are women. That means that most adolescents clearly have false perceptions when it comes to the number of women and men as stars in music videos.

The majority of the youth agreed with the statement “The singers have a great deal of say in how their music videos are designed”, and they believe: “With music videos, you can really get to know the singers”; the 13- to 14-year-olds agreed with this statement particularly often. The majority of adolescents also assume that music videos are the singers’ self-determined illustration of what they want to say with the song. In actuality, it can be assumed that in particular the female artists who have a spot in the top 100 of the charts are part of a professionally organised staging in which they are “personal brands” and made into “cultural objects” depending on the needs and role (Lieb, 2013) and only have a limited amount of say in how they are presented to the market, especially in music videos. Adolescents appeared to be unaware of this information about the music market and the organised processes of producing a music video.

Based on the high usage and idealisation of the videos as self-determined statements, the artists become role models. Over half of the 748 surveyed want to be like the singers in the videos, 75 per cent of the girls want to look like them, and 74 per cent of the boys want to have a girlfriend who looks like the female artists. These tendencies are strongest in the younger adolescents group/cluster and lower educated youth. For example, 86 per cent of the 13- to 14-year-old girls want to look like the female singers in the videos. Especially here, the female singers are clearly role models for appearance – and as the media analysis has shown, this appearance is almost always hypersexualised.

Based on their media analysis, Cynthia Frisby and Jennifer Aubrey believe that viewers could assume that confident self-staging as a sex object could be a form of self-determination that the artists choose voluntarily, and that self-sexualisation is the path to success (Frisby & Aubrey, 2012). The survey of adolescence in Germany unfortunately confirms this for a large percentage of adolescents. Three-quarters believe it is normal for “singers to present themselves as sexy in music videos”. Boys agreed more frequently than girls with the statement “I think female singers in music videos are strong when they present themselves as very sexy”. With age and education level this assessment decreases, but for the majority it can still be concluded that they confuse the sexualisation of female singers in music videos with strength.

It is interesting here to compare heavy users with those who watch no music videos because the majority of the latter do not find it normal or a sign of strength to “present

yourself as sexy”. This leads to the conjecture that constantly seeing the objectification of singers and their hypersexualisation leads to this being perceived as normal and self-determined. We therefore wanted to know more exactly the extent to which hypersexualisation is explicitly perceived and evaluated and whether it is really needed for what adolescence find important in music videos. In an exploratory study, we looked at these questions using creative qualitative methods.

Table 2. Usage of music videos and assessment

Usage of music videos	
The majority of the adolescents in Germany use music videos regularly...	80%
...younger ones (ages 13-14) more often	86%
...than older ones (ages 17-19)	76%
Four out of ten watch music videos at least on a daily basis	24%
Girls prefer the genre Pop...	58%
...and boys very often refer to Hip Hop	4 out of 10
Over half of the adolescents prefer listening to a new song while watching the music video at the same time	55%
Younger ones (ages 13-14) name Youtube as the most used source for music videos	6 out of 10
Assessing music videos	
Adolescents assume a gender balance regarding the singers...	50%
... one third guessed that there are more women than men singing	31%
...the clear majority think that there is a gender balance or even a dominance of women	80%
...only the minority guess the right gender ratio (less women than men)	20%
The majority of the adolescents believe that singers have a lot of self-determination regarding the illustration of their music video	73%
Over half of the adolescents are convinced that one can get to know the singers very well through their music videos...	69%
...particularly the younger ones think so (ages 13-14)	77%
Artists of music videos are idealised...	
...the majority of the girls want to look like the singers	75%
...particularly younger girls (ages 13-14)	86%
...the majority of the boys would like to have a girlfriend that looks like the female artists in the videos	74%
Adolescents think it is normal that singers are portrayed very sexy in music videos	78% boys 72% girls
They think it makes the (women) singers strong, when they present themselves in a sexy way...	67%
...boys do so more often	71%
...than girls	64%

Step 3: Do youth recognise and want hypersexualisation?

*Take me down into your paradise
Don't be scared 'cause I'm your body type
Just something that we wanna try
'Cause you and I,*

is what Demi Lovato sings in her song *Cool for the Summer*, which made it to the top 20 of the year's charts in many countries in 2015. Accompanied by other women, she is portrayed in this music video as extremely “seductive, sassy and smoking hot [...] a new chapter of her career”, as Christina Garibaldi of MTV commented on the video (Garibaldi, 2015). The video therefore marks the next step in the sense of the “life circle model for female popular music stars” from a “good girl” to a “temptress” (Lieb, 2013, 90).

Do adolescents recognise how stereotyped, hierarchical and hypersexualised women are portrayed here? In a qualitative exploratory study, we asked 67 pupils aged between 12 and 17 this question in a school context.⁷ They designed a storyboard, including for the text of *Cool for the Summer*, and interpreted screenshots as to their messages. Finally, they once again drew a picture of what a female singer looks like in a music video and stated what they thought was the results of the media analysis of music videos was.

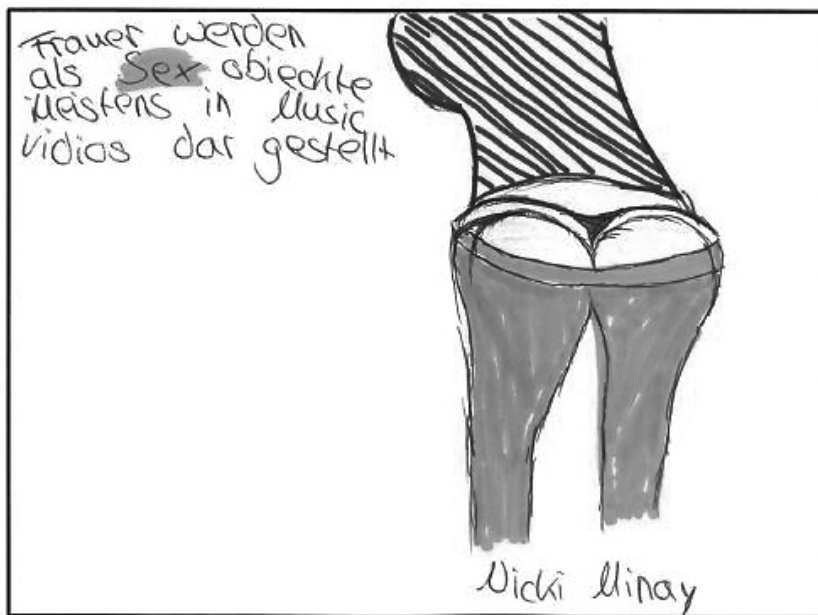
What does a typical female singer in a music video look?

Whether they recognise the hypersexualisation in the video itself became somewhat clearer in the last part of the study in which the adolescents were asked to draw a typical singer in a music video. In a little more than half of the pictures drawn by adolescents, no sexualisation could be seen. Female singers were portrayed with a microphone in normal clothes. In 47 per cent of all drawings, however, there was a clear sexualisation. Some therefore explicitly drew female singers as sexualised, typically with long hair, high heels and very little clothing. The boy informants drew sexualised women more frequently (59 per cent) than the girls (41 per cent) and mostly had a positive undertone when describing what was typical about a female singer in a music video such as “Tons of make-up, figure-hugging clothes, pretty hair” (boy, 17 years old) or “Not a lot of clothes, good curves, otherwise thin” (boy, 16 years old). In most of the cases of the girls who drew their singer in a more sexualised way, it remains without comments how they feel about it. However, there are also exceptions like one 15-year-old who described what she thinks is typical: “Women are mostly portrayed as sex objects in music videos.” In her picture she drew a woman without a head, that is, the typical carving up of the female body. The woman seems to be bending over and stretching her buttocks out to the viewer, allowing the viewer to see her thong panties. At the edge of the picture there is a reference to the singer Nicki Minaj (see picture 1), who is known for her revealing and sexual performances (as cited above). This is an indication that at least half of the

adolescents see, consciously or unconsciously the sexualisation, e.g. with clothes and camera perspectives, as typical.

Illustration 1. “Women are portrayed in music videos as sex objects” (girl, 15 years old)

12. Wie sieht eine Sängerin in einem Musikvideo aus? Bitte male eine Sängerin.



How would adolescents design their own music video?

We looked exploratively at whether this is something that adolescents think is key to the ideal music video by giving the youth a creative task. They were to design and draw a storyboard for the lyrics to one of two songs. The lyrics were picked so that there was a highly sexualised video (Demi Lovato – *Cool for the Summer*), and in the other song about love and relationship, in which sexuality was not the focus (James Bay – *Hold Back the River*). Our research question: Do the storyboards to the lyrics show tendencies toward sexualisation?

Some of the adolescents came up with very creative ideas in which love and relationships often were the focus. In the interpretation of *Cool for the Summer*, often pictures of couples and sequences from a relationship were shown. There was flirting and the initiation of a relationship; one 16-years-old girl, for example, came up with a story in which two people have a romantic (heterosexual) date, with “physical contact” involved before they drive to their “summer paradise” together.

A 14-year-old boy wants to tell a story of how people are partying at a bar. One of the girls starts to walk away, bored and a little sad. A boy speaks to her cheerfully and buys her a drink. In the final scene, the boy and girl are lying on a hammock between two palm trees: “He shows her his paradise.” In this case it is a male-dominated fantasy in which erotic moments probably play a role. But the woman is not given the tempting, encouraging role or that of the initiator as in the video. Instead, the man is successful at “attracting” her and can then also get her to smile again. No sexualisation of the women can be seen. In the stories for *Hold Back the River* there was also no sex or physical contact shown but dramatic stories of break-ups, lost love, etc. And again, no sexualisation of the women is drawn. These are indications that the adolescents are primarily focused on the content of the lyrics and the relationship that builds up hopefully or takes tragic turns. The results can be interpreted to mean that the pervasive hypersexualisation of women in professional music videos is not strongly necessary for what adolescence are actually looking for in the videos.

The question from a pedagogic perspective is now: How can awareness be raised so that the adolescents who internalise the stereotypes offered in music videos at least recognise the gender hierarchy and self-sexualisation of women when they see it?

4th Step: a lesson unit on media

*And then she'd say, "It's okay
I got lost on the way
But I'm a supergirl
And supergirls don't cry"*

(Anna Naklab feat. Alle Farben & YOUNOTUS: Supergirl)

In the course of the study it became clear: It is our responsibility not to view adolescents only as people who can inform us but to also give them a chance to see through the existing stereotype. After the qualitative interviews we therefore carried out lessons on media literacy that we optimised after each round.

One of the goals was to not talk about stereotypes, hypersexualisation or gender relations directly. The didactic path we chose attempts to make pupils aware of the symbolic nature of non-verbal communication and its implicit meaning. After a brief introduction into semiology, pupils are made aware of the different genders' typical (self-) representation in a humorous way. We started by analysing their own physical experiences with non-verbal communication while sitting, standing and with facial expressions. How does it feel to have feet planted firmly on the ground, sitting with legs open vs. twisted, lascivious posture, with legs crossed at the knees? What are we used to call masculine and feminine when it comes to different gestures and facial expressions? An informational sheet with corresponding pictures illustrates this and reinforces the

knowledge and opens the link to the music industry. With a partner, the pupils then interpret some still pictures from music videos as to their symbolic meaning and then get into groups to become researchers. Using a respective analytical questionnaire, they analysed music videos as to how the men and women are portrayed, who shows dominant or vulnerable gestures, whose buttocks, stomach or chest are all we see, etc. As expected, the pupils' findings were very similar to our media analysis of the most successful video clips from 2015. With their own independent research, they discovered the gendered tendencies, and some pupils were able to at least begin to articulate this in the closing class room discussion. After the media literacy unit, at least some of the adolescents could interpret the still pictures from the music videos much more precisely in regard to their symbolic meaning, and around one-third was able to recognise the gender hierarchy in the song *Cheerleader*, for example. It is at least a first step to foster media literacy in the field of gender representation.

Summary of the key findings

Music videos often portray women as highly sexualised and subordinate to men and make them de-individualised, sexualised objects, especially with the clothes they wear and the camera perspectives in which the female body is shown only in parts. Men and heterosexual love from a male angle are dominant. Behind this there is a clear hierarchy and clichés of gender relations that run absolutely counter to equality or equal rights of men and women. Unfortunately, this also confirms a tendency in 2015 toward the objectification and devaluation of women's bodies that is otherwise no longer tolerated to this extent in other media. In this area, there is an urgent need for action in training those who create media and a starting point for a broader public discussion and political action.

Some adolescents perceive the sexualised portrayal of women's bodies, and some boys even connoted this positively while some girls view it extremely critically. When explicitly asked, adolescents, especially those who are younger or visit a lower-level school, even believe it is "normal" for women to sexualise themselves in music videos. They confuse sexualisation with strength and power and interpret it as such. Thereby they follow the patterns of interpretation set up in the music videos – without having the chance of questioning this in relation to the reality of gender equality and the variety of doing gender. They have an idealised picture of music videos as an artist's self-determined expression that the adolescents can then take as a role model for their ideal self and how women should look. This self-sexualisation and the idea of seducing a man as a woman's power (and more or less the only power she has) is not only a step back in equality, it limits the development of the adolescents' identities in diverse ways and in some cases might lead to boys' misguided assumptions as well as to girls' self-sexualisation. Especially the majority of 13- to 15-year-olds are not only regular users of music videos, they use the gendered

staging to re-form their ideals and could therefore be identified as a particularly at-risk group for being influenced by the hypersexualisation in music videos.

Here there is an urgent need for media literacy. One possible starting point would be sensitisation in the area of symbolic interpretation of pictures and non-verbal language, whereby pupils as active researchers can understand how women and men are portrayed. This could at least provide the basis for recognising the extreme stereotypes that are shown by the music industry in music videos and thus make them aware of this. Of course, that can only be a first step that can be complemented by lessons e.g. on the topic of the music industry and on heterosexual and homosexual attractiveness and searching for a partner. That could be an important step toward encouraging adolescents to go “beyond stereotypes” but would certainly have to be supported by an enlightened, gender-sensitised media industry.

Notes

1. Original from 1979, current: 2015 *Mad Max – Fury Roads*
2. determined by media control (<http://www.charts.de/musik-charts/jahres>)
3. determined by the Billboard Charts music charts, set by Nielsen Music (<http://www.billboard.com/charts/year-end/2015/hot-100-songs>)
4. Interdecoder reliability, measured according to Holsti's coefficient using more than 10% of the sample, 79%.
5. If the lyrics are about sexuality, then in half of the songs (47%) the word love (or similar words) are not mentioned. If sexuality is the focus of the video, love is often not mentioned (63%).
6. Carried out by Iconkids & Youth in September 2016. Quotas were used for the sample according to age, gender and migrant background of the youth interviewed, what school they had attended or completed, distribution across federal state and size of their cities (150 BIK sample points) as well as their mother's marital status. The representativeness of the youth interviewed corresponds to a probability sample of the same size, the confidence interval at a 90% significance level for an unfavorable case was $n = 748 \pm 4.24\%$.
7. $N=37$ 12- to 14-year-olds and $n=30$ 15- to 17-year-olds took part, 43% were girls and 57% were boys. The lessons took place in art or German classes and were carried out at various schools in Bavaria in July 2016.

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Are Girls Sexualized on Social Networking Sites?

An Analysis of Comments on Instagram of Kristina Pimenova

Carmen Llovet, Mónica Díaz-Bustamante & Kavita Karan

Scholarly literature has focused on sexualization of girls through fashion and advertising that has resulted in stereotypes, low self-esteem, poor body image and vulnerability. New Media and social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat among others have become a platform for girls to post their photographs and call for comments on their beauty, clothes and presentation. This article through a content analysis discusses people's comments on a few Instagram pictures of a young 10-year-old model Kristina Pimenova, described as the most beautiful girl in the world. Results over a period of one year found that most of the remarks emphasize a sexual meaning, physical attractiveness, love and intimacy. Besides, the highly commented categories raise low self-esteem and jealousy among kids and confirm the negative effects of sexualization of children. A few also mention the dangers of the exposure to these social networking sites, such as intrusion of privacy and pedophiles.

Women's exposure to sexualized gender stereotypes and childlike images in consumer culture starts early and leads to normalization of such images (American Psychological Association [APA], 2007; Bae, 2012; Gunter, 2014; Kenway & Bullen, 2008; Lemish, 2010; Livingstone, 2008; Nussbaum, 2007; Velding, 2014). Fashion advertising in lifestyle magazines like *Girl's life* (U.S.), *Vogue kids* (Spain), *Telva kids* (Spain) and *Hola kids* (Spain) have portrayed young girls as models, positioning them in sexualized poses and scenarios to sell products (Merskin, 2004; Llovet, Díaz-Bustamante & Patiño, 2016; Velding, 2014). As "magazines can be studied as canvases upon which local lifestyles and values are printed" (Frith & Karan, 2014, p. 151), one of the main complaints in the public imagery of sexualized young girls is the premature sexuality, abuse and vulnerability that come when "boundaries between childhood and adulthood are breaking down" (Livingstone, 2008, p. 38). This chapter aims to explore the representation of Kristina Pimenova, a 10 year-old Russian girl through her pictures posted on Instagram. The

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girl baptized by media as the world's most beautiful girl has more than one and a half million followers on Instagram. Pimenova is now a top model and is being sourced out by modeling agencies like LA models and NY models. Her profile on Instagram is run by her mother. Some of the Instagram pictures belong to campaigns for luxury fashion brands - such as Armani, Fendi and Cavalli and their catalogues, while others are personal pictures taken by Pimenova's mother who defends her actions from critics for posting Pimenova's photographs wearing little clothing and posing as an adult by saying that the poses are natural and that those who see sex in the pictures are pedophiles (Turner, 2014).

Children on social media: Trends and concerns about sexualization

Oppliger (2008, p. 7) explains that "fashion trends are one of the major ways where females express their sexuality" and this is being done particularly through SNS. *Snapchat*, *FaceTime*, *Vine*, *Instagram*, *Facebook*, *Tumblr*, *Twitter* and *You Tube*, all of which have become easier platforms for young girls to attract attention. Although the 1998 law in U.S. called Child Online Privacy Protection Act requires users to be 13-year-olds to open an account (Consumers reports, 2014), "5.6 million children under the age of 13 use Facebook." Other data shows that 83 per cent of the 11 to 15-year-olds whose internet usage was monitored on a social media site had registered with a false age (Sweeney, 2013). Exposure to sexualized imagery of girls within this context could create misinformation on gender roles and impact the children's self-image and self-esteem, which may remain with them throughout adulthood (Llovet, Díaz-Bustamante & Patiño, 2016; Merskin, 2004).

According to the study from Pew Research Center, 92 per cent of teens in the U.S. report going online daily and 24 per cent "almost constantly" (Lenhart, 2015) and 8 to 10-year-olds are exposed to five and a half hours of media use each day" (Jones, 2014, p. 21). The excessive use of SNSs implicates what some have called an addiction to the new technologies that may be particularly problematic to young people and difficult to treat with total abstinence, but rather through controlled use of the applications, educational interventions and parental mediation (Griffiths, 2013, Xie and Karan, 2016). Besides, to navigate and experiment with SNS may perhaps lead to sleep deprivation, cyber bullying, privacy issues or sexting (O'Keeffe, Clarke-Pearson, & Counsel on communications and media, 2011).

From the nineteenth century, the history of fashion shows that women have been required to show off some of their features - extensive cleavage, slender waist, curves, curls, heels, and tight dresses to be considered feminine, and feminine fashions were related to vulnerability of self-perception. The context for sexualization has remained in the late 20th century and has been described as "a sexualized way in which women and girls were treated by the media and by consumer commodity markets" (Gunter, 2014, p. 13). Today the girls relate to the suggestion, "show off your body" with being sexy instead of being feminine or being feminine in a very limited way (Velding, 2014).

Moreover, television programs as *Mini-me: Kid who have it all* showed “little girls who long for adult fashions” (Livingstone, 2008, p. 49).

Our interest in this model Pimenova was founded on the influence that celebrities have on the trends that children follow. Jones (2014, p. 4) stated that SNS of many celebrities induce kids the possibility to socialize with their private networks, and get the reward of “instant gratification” with the likes, comments, followers, friends and others for the videos, provocative poses and pictures posted. “For many tweens, socializing means watching and being watched, judging and being judged” (Jones, 2014, p. 24). Bissonnette (2007) concludes that these constant images in the media show how the public space has been sexualized, which has made girls think that it is normal, natural, and even necessary.

We examined how SNS are raising concerns about the sexualization of young people, who are now heavy users of these networks. We conducted an exploratory content analysis of 840 commentaries expressed by people on 24 of her images on her Instagram profile in 2015, the year before she became a professional model. Second, we explored the extent to which the children’s commentaries confirm the effects of such images on health, and well-being of the society as described by the *Task force on sexualization of children* (APA, 2007, pp. 18-34).

Research objectives

Given, this background the current study posited several research questions to inform this research.

1. To what extent are the comments on Pimenova’s Instagram images focused on sexualization, physical attractiveness and beauty as identified in the literature?
2. Do the images of Pimenova project and reinforce the more adult-like appearance?
3. Do the comments suggest the effects of sexualization on low self-esteem of girls described by APA (2007)?
4. What are the additional possible negative effects of the high exposure to physical attractiveness and beauty?

Method

A content analysis of the comments was carried out on the Instagram pictures and the related comments in English and Spanish of Pimenova’s profile during the year 2015. The coding was done by two of the three researchers. A sample of comments were taken and the two researchers worked together to establish an inter coder reliability for the

coding. Later, two researchers familiar with both languages coded the entire sample. Efforts were made to try to code each comment under one category, but if there was a possibility of the same comment being in two or more categories, they were also classified in the other categories. The months selected were January, April, August and November. The six most commented images for each month were selected after a review of twelve images and 383 comments. Comments were provided in various languages and some were expressed through visual icons e.g. 'like', 'love' or 'smile.'

The most commented English and Spanish language comments were selected given the bilingual nature of the researchers. From the review, we found that 25-35 was the average number of posts on each image. A limit was set on 35 most commented posts for each image after an analysis of twelve images and the average usable comments ranged from 30-40. A total of 24 images were selected with 840 comments.

Categories and operational definitions

The review of the first 383 comments (corresponding to 12 images) helped us to create eight categories to analyze the 840 comments on Pimenova's profile. The selection of the categories is also based on the literature review as well as the following reasons. First, we wanted to research how the types of posts on SNS lead girls to being sought by companies for modeling, film careers or other purposes. The second reason was to study the comments related to sexualization and the possible consequences of sexualization of children. For example, the seductive poses that Pimenova creates showing herself may promote her own exploitation. Third, we considered that her profile could possibly send out wrong signals to children and parents who would follow girls like her, giving much importance to the physical looks and relating them to the real success. The fourth reason relates to finding out if the comments related to expressions of inferiority complex, poor self-esteem and self-image of children are because of such exposure. Finally, we have considered the deep concern of SNS as a platform where privacy is compromised for such exposure.

The following eight categories guided the analysis.

1. Sexual appearance or behavior: References made to female body parts and shapes culturally associated with adult sexuality. For example, a mention of eyes, lips, breasts, curves, legs, bottom (Bragg, Buckingham, Russell, & Willet, 2011), suggestive clothes, heavy make-up, adult hairstyle, sexual poses.
2. Absence of a child's perspective: This refers to the natural look or behavior that would be more related to the child's age (Kenway & Bullen, p.179). The emphasis was on a surprising and unbelievable appearance of her young age, clothes typical for adults. Dark colors, poses, behaviors that look like an adult, lack of the naturalness and spontaneity typical of children.

3. Physical attractiveness: a) Love/admiration: comments on how beautiful she is, how much they love her, etc. b) Envy/jealously/ low self-esteem/low self-image: comments on how much her images led to comparison with others. For example; prettier than me, I feel like a potato, why is she so pretty, I wish I were you. c) Extreme behavior: I hate her/myself looking at her. For example; I feel like dying, I can't stand; I want a daughter like her. d) Dislike: For example, I don't think she is beautiful; I like others more than her.
4. Comparison to a celebrity: Famous, similarity to popular actresses in her looks and figure.
5. Stimulus to danger: Comments expressing lost childhood, (shock, creepy), and exposure leading to attracting older boys, and the use of images for pedophilia and pornography, child abuse, parents making money (exploiting) or pleasure from the child.
6. Similarity with dolls and angels: Comments comparing to unusual persons, goddesses, angels, princesses, flawless complexion, fake eyes (contacts) or fake hair (dyed), retouched by Photoshop. For example, her look is similar to a Barbie, looks like an angel.
7. Success: Focus on the number of likes & followers, boys that want to date her, comments that predict a lucky future. For example, the prettiest in the world, she is lucky to have everything, the best.
8. Others: This category included those comments less frequent that could not be in other seven categories already described. They included interesting and unusual comments that can be very significant to the data.

Results

Among the comments, the highest percentage (67 per cent) was for the comments on physical attractiveness - love, envy and extreme behavior followed by absence of child's perspective (22 per cent) where people commented on her unbelievable appearance wearing clothes and poses typical for an adult. This was followed by references to dolls and perfect appearance (12 per cent), and the other categories that were less than 10 percent included; 7 per cent on sexual appeal or behavior and 7 per cent on commenting on her success. Some of the comments that related to sexual appeal were: "You are very hot," "cool ass <3," "If she was older I would have a crush on her," "Sensuality....," "hunk," Does she even need makeup?"; "I love your eyes and your hair," "How are you so fit, like you look so pretty and sexy," "Perfect girl.. :) *.* but how perfect in bed? *.*".(see Table 1)

Table 1. Comments' categories

Categories	%
Physical Attraction- love, envy/rejection/extreme behavior	67
Absence of a child's perspective	22
Doll/Barbie/perfection/Fake	12
Sexual attractiveness	7
Success	7
Comparison to celebrities	6
Stimulus to danger	3

Note: Multiple categories possible

The category Physical attractiveness and love was subdivided into different comments, from love, to envy, extreme reactions and dislike (see Table 2). Hence, among the 562 comments (67 per cent) the most frequent remarks are those that reflected love and admiration (36 per cent) and these included: "I have never seen a girl prettier than u," "She is the meaning of beauty," "Such a nice face," "You are really pretty and an awesome model," "Oh my baby you are so much," "What a sweet girl." The 133 comments (16 per cent) that related to envy or low self- esteem included: "This -is nuts, a ten-year-old is 10000000X more gorgeous then me," "I'm here looking like a potato," "This is so unfair," "she's like 10 and she makes me feel insecure," "I am done," "You are very pretty I want to be like you."

Table 2. Comments on physical attraction

Category Love/Rejection	%
Love, attractiveness	36
Envy and low self esteem	16
Extreme reactions	8
Dislike	7
NA	33

For the third category, classified as "extreme reactions" (8 per cent), some of the examples include: "If I had her alone," "I'm crying, my self-esteem level dropped so much," "I hate this girl," "I fucking hate both this girl and that dumb ass bitch Maddie Ziegler" and "Lets walk to hell." In relation to the comments that related to dislike (7 per cent), "You look ugly," "she is not pretty," "no, she's not, she's the most beautiful girl in the world!!!!," "really, she's the ugly one," "My goodness! Rental of advertising space on this forehead!" "Creepy," "Disgusting," "Her smiling and showing her teeth will look way better than a straight face."

There was also a significant result (22 per cent), in the category "absence of a child's perspective" and included comments like: "She is just 10 and she dyed her hair," "she

doesn't have to act mature at her age, she needs a normal life, she is still a child." I will get over it when I want to, I am saying she is trying to act like a teenager when she is only 9", "Those aren't appropriate clothes for a 9 year old," "she is ten!!," "You are just a child wtf?," "And she's only nine," "A little girl with iPhone 6... Omg that generation," "She is just 10 years old. I guess I need plastic surgery: P"

The other categories gathered fewer comments although the type of statements do not reflect the number and content like the previous ones. The category "doll like" and "fake unreal looks" (12 per cent) was represented by a variety of remarks that were collected from references to dolls to opinions about the fake photographs. Some of the comments were: "Are you even real???", "she looks like a Barbie," "Is she real? Too much," "she's unreal," "It's weird, her hair looks brown in some photos and blonde in some," "Beautiful Barbie, angelic," "straight alien," "ooo dolly face," "Living doll...", "she is so flawless," "She has natural big blue eyes but in most of her pictures they edited with Photoshop to make them look better." The category of comments on Pimenova's success (7 per cent), included statements like; "She could get so many guys," "Lucky omg! Cool." "Good luck to your one million followers," "This girl has everything in life," "the most beautiful girl," "you're beautiful and when you're an adult, one lucky handsome man is lucky to have you as his wife," "she's a model and makes money so she worked for that (buy an Iphone 6)."

Finally, the category of stimulus to danger had 26 comments (2per cent) and included comments like "Omg! And why are u stalking an account 31 weeks ago," "have you guys seen her? I swear if only she's 18, I would have serious gay crush on her but I can wait," "I just can't look at her as a little girl, with all that make up and grown up hair is just uugh, if I was her mum, I just can't, I am sorry I don't like little girls modeling I think it is dangerous for all crazy predators in the world," "Poor kids! So much pressure at such a young age!" "I'm obsessed," She is 9, she should wear longer shorts," "If you'd like I could say who I got the photos from and tag you. I would just love to use your photos for my account," and "why are kids skipping the awkward ugly stages? Do your time."

The other comments mentioned focused on aspects such as her being self-centered, her origin as Russian, rich; blessings, comparison and wishes they had a daughter like her, humor in the comparison with her beauty with remarks, that included: "white woman," "black woman," "I'm pretty sure I am gay because of her," "that's just stupid loving a 10-year-old when you are older."

Discussion

Sexualization of children in the media has drawn much literature in feminist, advertising, visual and psychological studies. The literature and documentaries produced on this topic demonstrate the impact of such exposure on children's self-image, self-esteem and health among other problems (Bissonnette, 2007; Massie, 2001; Macmillan, 2007; Palmer, Hogan & Legerrier, 2012; Roberts, 2014). In addition, while some authors con-

sider that these images will make self-centered and narcissistic people, others think that it helps them to deal with adolescence. The more recent report *One in three: Internet Governance and Children's rights* (Livingstone, Carr, & Byrne, 2015, p. 3) points out that one of the risks for children online is that "they can be particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse, which includes not only violent behavior, but also any sexual activity with children below the age of sexual consent." In expanding the use of new media, we extended our study into the visual context of SNS that have become the focus of media attention as used by young and old alike. We studied the possible risks of visual exposure through pictures posted and the comments of a famous child celebrity, Kristina Pimenova. Though the role of SNS in the context of visual media like Instagram is still emerging as explicated in this exploratory study, it is important to measure the social development of this sex-saturated exposure and instant-gratification of kids in the age of social media.

Here, we can affirm that in the 21st century the new media technologies of internet and SNS are providing a scenario for sexual self-promotion of girls. It was evident from the results of this study on the comments posted on the pictures of 10-year-old Russian girl, Pimenova. It correlates with Merskin's (2004) concern about the acceptability of the Lolita role in fashion advertising, where she expressed that these sexualized portrayals of girls with the ideology to fetishize innocence and vulnerability are leading to physical and emotional violence. Merskin concludes that the inappropriate sexual context of these representations of pre-pubescent postures, make up, clothing and look communicates availability and willingness. This context also "has the potential to contribute to the ongoing and increasing problem of child sexual abuse" (Merskin, 2004, p.127) and internet facilitates the circulation of pornography. "Even looking at a picture of a child has become, at times, a suspect activity" (Livingstone, 2008, p. 38).

The most prominent cluster in this study - 'love or attractiveness' based on Pimenova's physical appearance also tends to imply a sexual meaning as a way of objectification of women. The majority of comments were in praise of her beauty; their obsession with beauty, love and admiration, the feelings that show contrasts with how people idealize her or are envious of her beauty. The portrayal of some styles for adults like physical attractiveness, love and intimacy could correspond with most of the characteristics attributed to the beauty myth (Bragg et al., 2011) and "the desired female look as mostly young, thin and attractive" (Lemish, 2010, p. 55). Velding (2014) researching the role of tween girls' femininity in the fashion magazine, *Girls' Life*, also found that sometimes their appearance and feminine beauty ideals make them look older than their age.

The comments also highlight the absence of a child's perspective where Pimenova was portrayed in adult roles. A more "adult-like appearance" and the "grown-up behaviors" are exposed as a social problem (Gunter, 2014, p. 13). Regarding the type of clothing in making tweens look sexually mature, we agree with the explanation of Bragg et al. (2011, pp. 280-282), "the role of commercial market and sexual imagery is also complex as the transition from child to adult is becoming more ambiguous." As an example, they

mention, “many clothing items aimed at young people are exact copies of fashion aimed at adults” (Bragg et al. 2011, p. 283). This posits a question.. Should a kid look like an adult, or can an adult wear a childlike look?

Finally, in relation to the APA (2007) effects of sexualization of children, a significant sample of comments expressed low self-esteem, dislike or even criticize Pimenova’s images as inappropriate for her age. These remarks are voluntary expressions, true sentiments, and yield a real picture of people’s feelings, attitudes and self-disclosures. Most of these include their sense of openness in comparing themselves, lack of motivation to compete, self-denial and self-pity. This study only looked at the images of one young very beautiful girl, it would be interesting to research and compare the comments on images of other young girls to assess the differences in the comments.

This exploratory study despite its limitations of a small sample examined the impact of sexualization of young girls through the images and the responses of people on the images. The spontaneous and natural responses to the beautiful pictures of Pimenova posted on Instagram, brought in interesting comments. The responses clearly advocate the mixed responses to aspects of physical attractions including admiration, envy and low self-esteem, along with anger on the pictures showing the ten-year-old in adult clothes, hair and looks thereby depriving the kids of their childhood. Therefore, children’s and adults statements on these SNS platforms frequently reveal stress, low self-esteem and competitiveness, which are to be noted, and alert young girls, as there is no limit to the access to information particularly on the SNS, that have become avenues for circulating the good, the bad and the ugly.

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Macho Boys and Sexy Babes on TV

How Watching Different Types of Television Content is Related to Dutch Adolescents' Hypergender Orientations

Johanna M.F. van Oosten

Media effect theories and social cognitive theories of gender development posit that young people use the media to learn how to behave according to their gender. This study aimed to investigate reciprocal relationships between adolescents' television diets and their endorsement of hypergender orientations (i.e., hypermasculinity and hyperfemininity). Based on data from a short-term longitudinal survey among 1,007 Dutch adolescents (13-17 years old), this study showed that different television genres were related to hypergender orientations in different ways. The most notable finding was the relevance of *reality TV docu-soaps* for both adolescent girls' and boys' hypergender orientations. In addition, more frequent exposure to *romantic comedy movies* predicted an increased endorsement of hyperfeminine gender roles among girls, whereas more frequent exposure to *situational comedies* was associated with lower levels of girls' hyperfemininity. These findings could be used in media literacy interventions targeting the influence of specific types of television exposure on adolescents' stereotypical gender role notions.

From a young age, children learn what it means to be male or female and what the appropriate behaviors are for one's gender through messages from their social environment (Bem, 1981; Halim & Ruble, 2010). Recently, it has been observed that gender identities may become increasingly stereotypical during adolescence. For instance, girls learn that women need to be sexy and sexually available to men and that femininity is all about being physically attractive in order to gain attention from men (e.g., Tolman, 2002). Such behaviors are suggestive of a hyperfeminine gender role (Murnen & Byrne, 1991). Boys, in turn, are taught a hypermasculine gender role characterized by dominance and aggression (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984).

It has also been argued that the media reinforce earlier socialization of hypergender orientations (Mosher & Tomkins, 1988). Given that gender stereotypes are common in the media, and in particular in prime-time television (Wright, 2009), it seems likely that

the development of adolescents' stereotypical gender roles is influenced by television exposure. However, no study to date has investigated the association between television exposure and adolescents' hypermasculinity and hyperfemininity specifically. This addition to the literature is important, as these hypergendered constructs have been shown to predict adolescents' exposure to violent pornography (Vandenbosch, 2015), and emerging adults' acceptance of sexual coercion and exploitation in relationships (Hamburger, Hogben, McGowan, & Dawson, 1996). In addition, hyperfemininity has been associated with self-sexualizing behaviors among women (e.g., Nowatzki & Morry, 2009).

Content analyses have shown that stereotypical gender roles, such as male dominance and aggression and female subordination or sexualization, are frequently portrayed in media genres that are popular among adolescents, such as situational comedies (or *sitcoms*) (Birthisel & Martin, 2013; Montemurro, 2003), music videos (Wallis, 2011), soap operas, and romantic drama television series (Garcia-Munoz & Fedele, 2011; van Damme, 2010). The same holds for non-scripted – or at least less scripted – versions of such television content, namely reality TV (Ferris, Smith, Greenberg, & Smith, 2007; Graves & Kwan, 2012).

Given the amount of gender stereotypical content on television, it can be expected that adolescents' exposure to such content is related to their hypergender orientations. Two theories have dominantly been used to explain the influence of the media on gender roles. First, *cultivation theory* posits that frequent exposure to certain images and ideas in the media cultivate similar beliefs about the real world in viewers (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994). Second, *social cognitive theory* (Bandura, 1986) posits that gender-typed behavior and attitudes, including gender stereotypical notions, result from observing and imitating others, including television characters. Against this backdrop, there has been a substantial body of knowledge linking children's and adolescents' notions of gender roles to their media use, in particular their television exposure (e.g., Morgan, 1982; Ter Bogt et al., 2010; Ward, 2002; Ward & Friedman, 2006; Zurbriggen & Morgan, 2006).

Within this research field, scholars have increasingly focused on the relationship between gender roles and *specific* television genres that adolescents prefer (e.g., Behm-Morawitz & Mastro, 2008; Ter Bogt et al., 2010). More importantly, research has shown that adolescents' preference for specific television genres seems to be related to their gender role notions in *different* ways. For instance, Rivadeneyra and Lebo (2008) showed that exposure to romantic reality TV was associated with increased stereotypical gender role attitudes, whereas exposure to non-romantic drama series was related to holding *less* stereotypical gender role attitudes. This is in line with research on cultivation effects, which often differentiates between television genres because specific messages in particular may have a specific cultivation effect on viewers' attitudes (Shrum, 1999). Against this backdrop, the present study will focus on the following research question (RQ1): How do different types of television programs predict adolescents' endorsement of hypergender orientations?

Moreover, social cognitive theories of gender development (Bussey & Bandura, 1999) and gender schema theory (Bem, 1981) posit that children and adolescents are not passive recipients of external gender socialization, but actively seek out information to learn about appropriate gendered behavior, which further reinforces their gender role orientations (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Halim & Ruble, 2010). It can thus be expected that adolescents' gender role orientations predispose them to select certain types of media content, which is also in line with selective exposure research (Zillmann & Bryant, 1985). However, most studies on the relationship between television content and gender role notions are cross-sectional (e.g., Rivadeneyra & Lebo, 2008; Ter Bogt et al., 2010; Zurbriggen & Morgan, 2006), with the exception of a few longitudinal (Morgan, 1982) and experimental (Ward, 2002) studies. As a result, little is known about how hypergender orientations may predispose adolescents to seek out certain media content, in addition to how they are influenced by such content. The second research question therefore reads (RQ2): Does adolescents' endorsement of hypergender orientations predict their exposure to different types of television programs?

Finally, previous research has shown that boys and girls differ in their preferences for, and susceptibility to influences of, certain television content (e.g., Rivadeneyra & Lebo, 2008; Ter Bogt et al., 2010; Tolman, Kim, Schooler, & Sorsoli, 2007). The present study therefore investigated the associations between exposure to different television programs and adolescents' hypergender orientations for boys and girls separately.

Findings from a longitudinal survey study

Over a thousand ($N = 1,007$) Dutch adolescents (13-17 years old) participated in a two-wave panel survey with a two month time interval, in which they were asked – among other things – about their television exposure and endorsement of hypergender orientations (for more information about the sample and survey measures, please see the Appendix).

Based on the data of this survey, the relationships between exposure to different types of television content (i.e., sitcoms, romantic drama series, soap operas, reality TV docu-soaps, reality TV dating shows, music videos, romantic comedy movies and romantic drama movies) and adolescents' hypergender orientations were investigated (a more elaborate description of the analyses and results can be found in the Appendix).

In response to RQ1, the results of the analysis showed that only exposure to reality TV docu-soaps increased hypergender orientations for boys. Among adolescent girls, more frequent exposure to both reality TV docu-soaps and romantic comedy movies predicted a greater hyperfeminine gender role orientation two months later. In contrast, frequent exposure to sitcoms predicted lower levels of hyperfemininity. In response to RQ2, boys' hypermasculinity predicted their exposure to reality TV docu-soaps, reality TV dating shows, and music videos. Girls' hyperfemininity predicted more frequent exposure to romantic drama TV series and reality TV dating shows.

Implications for research on television exposure and hypergender orientations

The present study showed that cultivation effects (Gerbner et al., 1994; Shrum, 1999) and social cognitive influences (Bandura, 1986; Bussey & Bandura, 1999), on adolescents' hypergender orientations differ depending on television genre. Reality TV docu-soaps were the most consistent type of television genre to predict hypergender orientations, with an influence among both boys and girls. Reality TV docu-soaps generally portray young people's behavior in everyday "real life" situations. This may make a cultivation effect, where media portrayals are seen as portraying real life, more likely. Such an explanation is in line with previous research that showed that young male viewers of reality dating shows, who find such content realistic, were more likely to hold the negative stereotypes that are frequently portrayed in such shows (Ferris et al., 2007).

The only other type of media content to positively predict hypergender orientations among girls was the romantic comedy movie genre. This suggests that many storylines in such films are promoting the idea that girls need to be sexy in order to attract men and to use their physical appearance to manipulate men, and are thus reinforcing hyperfeminine stereotypes. That this media genre does not reinforce hypermasculinity in boys suggests that aggressive and dominant male behavior is not so prevalent in this type of media content. It has even been argued that contemporary romantic comedy movies are searching for new constructions of masculinity that could counter hypermasculine stereotypes in other media genres (i.e., the 'bromance', Alberti, 2013). As of yet, not much research has focused on the role of romantic comedy movies in adolescents' gender role development. The present findings thus call for more research, and in particular content analyses, on movie content in general and romantic comedies in particular.

In contrast to romantic comedy *movies*, more frequent exposure to *sitcoms* was actually related to lower levels of girls' hyperfeminine notions. This finding seems to be in contrast with previous research that showed that heterosexual scripts and gender stereotypes are frequently portrayed in sitcoms (Birthisel & Martin, 2013; Montemurro, 2003; Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999; Ward & Friedman, 2006). At the same time, it has been argued that sitcoms show female characters who resist or reject stereotypical gender stereotypes by relying on their intelligence and assertiveness in romantic and sexual relationships rather than their sexiness (Kim et al., 2007), which may explain the present finding. More research is needed in how portrayals of gender roles may be changing in certain media genres such as sitcoms, and how this influences gender orientations of teen audiences.

In line with selective exposure theory (Zillmann & Bryant, 1985), boys' hypermasculinity increased their exposure to reality TV docu-soaps and dating shows, as well as music videos. The latter seems to be in line with previous research that showed that music videos are a highly appealing media genre for boys (Zhang, Miller, & Harrison, 2008). Given that music videos often portray male artists and are made from a male per-

spective (Andsager & Roe, 2003), they may form a particularly relevant type of content for adolescent boys to turn to when they want to learn about gendered behavior (Zhang et al., 2008). The present study extends such findings by showing that music videos seem to appeal in particular to more hypermasculine boys. The present study suggests that the same may hold for reality TV docu-soaps, which are often targeted towards male audiences (e.g., Chrisler, Bacher, Bangali, Campagna, & McKeigue, 2012). At the same time, prime-time TV programs are said to be more appealing to girls compared to boys (Zhang et al., 2008), which seems to be in line with the present finding that a greater hypergender orientation predicted more frequent exposure to romantic drama series only among girls.

Both hypergender boys and girls were more likely to watch reality TV dating shows. This is in line with previous research showing that adolescents often turn to television content to learn about dating and relationships and that reality TV dating shows may be a particularly relevant type of content in this respect (Rivadeneyra & Lebo, 2008). This may be even more the case for hypergendered teens, given the stereotypical gender role content in reality TV dating shows (Rivadeneyra & Lebo, 2008).

In sum, the present study has extended previous research on the associations between television content and gender roles, by showing how adolescents' endorsement of hypergender roles motivate their exposure to specific television genres, and how specific television genres may reinforce but also potentially counteract such hypergender orientations over time. As such, these findings can be used in future media literacy interventions by suggesting which type of media content needs to be targeted most (i.e., reality TV), and which type of media content – such as sitcoms – can potentially be beneficial when trying to counter stereotypical gender role notions among teens.

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Appendix

Method and results

Sample

The sample was randomly drawn from an existing panel of the Dutch research agency Veldkamp that is representative of the Dutch population. Informed consent was asked from the parents of the adolescents before the adolescents were contacted, as well as from the adolescents themselves. Of those contacted by Veldkamp to participate, a total of 1,236 adolescents participated at wave 1, fielded in April 2015 (response rate 68 per cent) and 1,007 adolescents participated at wave 2, fielded in June 2015 (response rate 82 per cent). The mean age of the respondents was 15 years and 52 per cent of the respondents were male.

Survey measures

Hypergender orientation. We used a shorter version (because of space constraints in the survey) of the measure of hypergender orientation that was previously used in research among adolescents (e.g., Vandenbosch, 2015). This measure was originally based on the Hyper Femininity Scale of Murnen and Byrne (1991) and the Hyper Masculinity Index of Mosher and Sirkin (1984). Boys and girls rated four items that referred to their gender on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (= *totally disagree*) to 7 (= *totally agree*). Examples of included items for girls are “I like it when boys hunt for girls” and “You can get boys to do what you want by acting sexy.” Examples of included items for boys are: “When you insult me, you better be prepared,” and “I fight to win.” Principal component analysis supported a one-dimensional scale structure (eigenvalue = 2.67; explained variance = 66.83%; $\alpha = .83$ in wave 1; eigenvalue = 2.79; explained variance = 69.83%; $\alpha = .85$ in wave 2). The variable “hypergender orientation” was obtained by averaging all items. Boys and girls did not differ in the scores for hypergender orientation in wave 1 ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.40$ for boys; $M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.41$ for girls) or in wave 2 ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.41$ for boys; $M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.37$ for girls), Wilks’ Lambda = .999, $F(2, 1004) = .637$, $p = .529$.

Television content. In order to measure exposure to the different types of television content, we asked adolescents about their frequency of watching the following types of TV shows. The examples were also shown to the respondents as examples of the particular TV genre:

Sitcoms	e.g. The Big Bang Theory, How I Met Your Mother, New Girl, The Nanny
Romantic drama series	e.g. Gossip Girl, Grey's Anatomy, Divorce (Dutch),
Soap operas	e.g. Goede Tijden Slechte Tijden (Dutch), Spangas (Dutch), The Bold and the Beautiful
Reality TV docu-soaps	e.g. Project Runway, Kardashians, Geordie Shore
Reality TV dating shows	e.g. the Bachelor, Boer zoekt vrouw (Dutch)
Music videos	
Romantic comedy movies	e.g. Friends with Benefits, That Awkward Moment
Romantic drama movies	e.g. Titanic, The Great Gatsby

Respondents were asked to indicate how often, in the past two months, they had watched these types of TV programs on television, computer or smartphone. Means and standard deviations of adolescents' exposure to each type of television genre for both boys and girls in both waves are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of exposure to different TV genres, for boys and girls

	Wave 1		Wave 2	
	Boys <i>M (SD)</i>	Girls <i>M (SD)</i>	Boys <i>M (SD)</i>	Girls <i>M (SD)</i>
Sitcoms	2.41 (1.99)	2.45 (1.95)	2.49 (2.05)	2.43 (1.92)
Romantic drama series	1.42 (1.07)	2.75 (1.87)	1.37 (0.96)	2.62 (1.72)
Soap operas	1.91 (1.72)	3.60 (2.46)	1.89 (1.68)	3.56 (2.45)
Reality TV docu-soaps	1.72 (1.45)	2.49 (1.89)	1.80 (1.49)	2.44 (1.82)
Reality TV dating shows	1.53 (1.09)	2.27 (1.60)	1.43 (0.99)	2.06 (1.45)
Music videos	4.65 (2.27)	5.08 (2.00)	4.74 (2.16)	5.01 (1.98)
Romantic drama movies	1.52 (1.03)	2.58 (1.51)	1.60 (1.15)	2.61 (1.59)
Romantic comedy movies	1.99 (1.58)	3.11 (1.69)	2.00 (1.50)	3.20 (1.73)

Note: The response categories were 1 (never), 2 (once a month), 3 (1 or 2 times a month), 4 (once a week), 5 (1 or 2 times a week), 6 (3 or 4 times a week), and 7 (almost every day or every day).

Results

The relationships between adolescents' television exposure and their hypergender orientations were tested with structural equation modeling (in AMOS 21), using autoregressive models that included levels of all the variables at both wave 1 and 2 (Cole & Maxwell, 2003). Exposure to the different types of television content were modelled as manifest items in the model. Adolescents' hypergender orientation was modelled as a latent construct, with the items measuring this construct modelled as manifest indicators of the latent construct. The fit of the model was good, χ^2 (336, $N = 1,007$) = 609.347, $p < .001$, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .028 (90% confidence interval: .025/.032). To account for the violation of the normality assumption in our variables, we used the bootstrap method in addition to the parametric tests. We estimated 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (95 per cent BCI) of the standardized estimates on the basis of 1,000 bootstrapping samples ($N = 1,007$ each). When the 95 per cent BCI does not include zero, the effect can be assumed to differ significantly from zero, and thus refers to a statistically significant relationship. Regression coefficients and the 95 per cent BCIs of the tested relationships for boys and girls separately can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Regression coefficients of the tested relationships for boys and girls

Dependent variable: Hypergender orientation (wave 2)									
		Boys			Girls				
		B	SE	p	95% BCI	B	SE	p	95% BCI
Predictors (wave 1):									
Sitcoms		.015	.027	.576	-.049/.092	-.089	.023	.000	-.213/-.080
Romantic drama series		-.041	.061	.497	-.125/.068	.037	.026	.143	-.023/.131
Soap operas		-.004	.032	.907	-.088/.071	-.010	.018	.561	-.099/.059
Reality TV docu-soaps		.097	.041	.017	.009/.205	.065	.025	.010	.019/.178
Reality TV dating shows		.033	.054	.534	-.049/.110	-.022	.029	.451	-.105/.042
Music videos		.001	.023	.943	-.062/.084	-.011	.022	.630	-.086/.058
Romantic comedy movies		.039	.040	.332	-.101/.163	.079	.035	.026	.019/.213
Romantic drama movies		-.093	.068	.176	-.191/.051	-.035	.038	.359	-.141/.059
Predictor: Hypergender orientation (wave 1)									
		Boys			Girls				
		B	SE	p	95% BCI	B	SE	p	95% BCI
Dependent variables (wave 2):									
Sitcoms		-.050	.054	.351	-.115/.046	.072	.059	.226	-.029/.116
Romantic drama series		.025	.030	.393	-.053/.132	.160	.057	.005	.030/.186
Soap operas		.008	.039	.829	-.065/.077	.012	.065	.859	-.063/.068
Reality TV docu-soaps		.126	.041	.002	.045/.217	.139	.064	.029	-.005/.179
Reality TV dating shows		.075	.029	.011	.030/.213	.131	.052	.012	.019/.205
Music videos		.187	.064	.004	.040/.210	.103	.068	.131	-.017/.146
Romantic comedy movies		.058	.047	.212	-.047/.159	.101	.062	.104	-.025/.158
Romantic drama movies		.057	.036	.112	-.035/.187	.081	.055	.138	-.016/.155

Note. Regression coefficients in bold font are significant in both the parametric tests and with the bootstrap method.

Children's Perceptions of Gender Images in Indian Television Cartoons

Ruchi Jaggi

India is the second largest television market in the world after China and the kids' genre has a high viewership share. However, there is severe dearth of active discussion on the ideology of television content for children. The objective of this study was to mainstream the discussion on the role of television cartoons in perpetuating gender stereotypes in the Indian context. 51 children between 4 to 14 years of age were interviewed on topics including their television viewing habits, description of gender roles portrayed in television cartoons, their attitudes towards gender roles in general among other themes. The responses strongly suggest that children consume highly gender-stereotypic content and that it gets reflected in their perceptions of media content as well as articulations of the world around them. The heterogeneity of the Indian socio-cultural context does not get represented in the dominant media discourse.

Children's television in India

According to the KPMG-FICCI Indian Media & Entertainment Industry Report 2015, India is the second largest television market in the world after China with 168 million television households (p. 6). The same report states that the kids' genre has a viewership share of 7 per cent (p. 22). The number of children's television channels had increased from 10 in 2008 to 22 in 2014 (Jaggi, 2015). Animation is a big draw and the Ernst & Young Report states that the animation genre accounted for 85 per cent of TV Viewership Ratings in 2011 (Box office India, 2012). However, there is severe dearth of active discussion on the ideology of television content for children. Academic spaces in India have been either disinterested or found the topic too trivial for engagement. The author is forced to make this statement as there is almost negligible scholarly attention given

Jaggi, Ruchi (2017). Children's Perceptions of Gender Images in Indian Television Cartoons p. 153-162 in Dafna Lemish & Maya Götz (eds.) *Beyond the Stereotypes? Images of Boys and Girls, and their Consequences*. Göteborg: Nordicom.

to this area vis-à-vis the mammoth academic literature available from other countries. Additionally, the Indian television industry apparently is disinterested in engaging in any discussion on this issue. The industry professionals are fascinated by the marketing opportunities provided by this platform. The empowerment of the child audience is more about appreciating her as a consumer than as an active participant who engages with the meanings of this content. Unfortunately, gender does not even figure in any discussions on this subject in the Indian context. In a country, where the sex ratio is 940 females to every 1000 males (Census, 2011), and the reasons for this skewed sex ratio have deep-rooted ideological premise; media's responsibility to mainstream more egalitarian gender images becomes even more critical.

Theoretical and methodological considerations

James & James (2008) state that childhood exists in a social space that is defined by law, politics, religion, culture, social class, gender, ethnicity among other social structures. The fact that a gender and feminist based research study that evaluates the relationship of children with television cartoons was almost missing in the world's youngest nation's academic repository is extremely worrisome. When children live with this content as transmedia from morning to evening, the repercussions of gender portrayals are immense. However, when there is dialogue and discussion, the subject gets mainstreamed. The objective of this study was to mainstream the discussion on the role of television cartoons in perpetuating gender stereotypes in the Indian context.

Why is television still relevant? Lemish (2007) states that despite a huge penetration of the internet and other media technologies; television still dominates the lives of children (p. 5). In her work titled 'Children and Television – A Global Perspective', Lemish (2007) argues that children are active consumers of television who react to, think, feel, create meanings and bring a variety of predispositions, abilities, desires and experiences to television (p. 3). Hence, according to her, it is as important to understand "what do children do with television" as it is to understand "how does television influence children?" (p. 3). Lemish (2007) also states that the theoretical and ideological shift in studying children as research *with* children rather than research *on* children has led to the adoption of a variety of methodologies besides surveys and experiments that include interviews, participant observation and task-based methods like children's drawings and written accounts (p. 7 & 16). This study uses interviews as the primary technique to investigate children's perceptions of gender images on television cartoons.

Drawing from Lemish (2007), the qualitative research inquiry of this study is based on phenomenology. The reception study with children has used the interview technique in combination with detailed conversations, observations and analysis of respondents' personal anecdotes, which Lester (1999) refers to as personal texts. The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in the concept of social construction of reality

(Berger and Luckman, 1967). This is an interpretative study that explores the idea of understanding rather than the idea of effect.

This study was preceded by a content analysis study (Jaggi, 2016) which examined top animation content according to television ratings data. The ratings data surveyed children between 4 to 14 years of age as its target audience. Therefore this study also considered the same age group as the population to conduct interviews. All the children interviewed for this study were from the city of Pune (metropolitan; IT, automobile & educational hub) in the state of Maharashtra in India. Using the principle of saturation (Mason, 2010), a total of 51 children were interviewed between January 2015 and March 2016. The study ensured that equal number of girls and boys participated in the research study (25 girls and 26 boys) and that children from all age brackets were represented in the sample.

Tobin (2000) states that if a research concerns commonly discussed subjects (like media content), group interviews are more effective than individual interviews. Except for six child respondents, all the other child respondents were interviewed in groups. A total of six individual and seven in-depth group interviews were conducted where group size ranged from four to ten. Even in group interviews, each child respondent was asked every question from the interview guide. The child respondents were asked questions on their television viewing habits, description of gender roles portrayed in television cartoons, their attitudes towards gender roles in general, parental intervention and their family structures among other themes. All the interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed. Thematic analysis of interviews was done to summarize and evaluate the responses.

Analysis of children's responses

The child respondents' average television viewing time ranged from one to three hours on daily basis and increased during vacations. Most of them stated that they used their parents' smartphones and tablets, but television was something that they wanted to go back to when they were bored or needed comfort or wanted to avoid studies. Lemish (2007) refers to television as the 'default' medium which children turn to when they are bored, lonely or even when they just want to get some entertainment (p. 5). Interestingly, some children also said that television helped them explore new things. Another response that emerged was that television gave them content to talk about with friends – the concept of conversational currency articulated by Silverstone (1989).

While most children state that their parents rarely co-view television with them, most of them mention that mothers participate more than fathers. However, this intervention is restricted to controlling the duration of children's television viewing rather than content. If the findings of surveys conducted by media research agencies are referred, the head of Ormax (Indian media research agency) states that 18% of children's television

viewing in India comes from animation content and the rest 82% from general entertainment like television serials, movies and reality shows. We assume that since most Indian homes are still single television households, parents' authority on controlling content gets focused on exclusive children's content like cartoon programming as the rest of the content is viewed by the entire family.

Polarization in preferences

There were certain differences in the choice of favorite shows between boy and girl respondents. While *Power Rangers* was a favourite of most boy respondents, only one girl respondent out of a total of 25 stated that she liked it. Even for an action-packed show like *Pokémon*, which was mentioned as a favorite by most boys, only three girl respondents expressed positive association. None of the boy respondents out of 26 in the sample mentioned *Barbie* as a favourite. A clear polarization of choices in terms of gender was observed. On probing why, for example, the boys showed aversion to *Barbie*, responses like "Yuck", "it's so girly", "I hate Barbie and Tinkerbell" were recorded.

The child respondents in the sample used words like – adventurous, imaginative, funny, interesting, do new things, use gadgets – to explain why they liked particular cartoon shows or characters. The young boys used several words/phrases to rationalize their choice. For example, 10-year old Yajan (male) stated, "I love the fighting in Power Rangers SPD. Even the graphics are very nice". Another 10-year old male respondent, Kartik, while explaining his fascination for *Power Rangers* said, "I love the wars. They rescue the earth and people". In fact, when asked whether they prefer talk or action, all the boy respondents said action and most girl respondents said talk. While four girls said that they liked *Pokémon*, three of them said that they found the story interesting. Only one of the girls said that she liked the fighting scenes. Gender thus emerged as a significant factor that decided the choice and reasons for children's programming preferences.

These findings are in alignment with research findings from other countries, a specific case in point being Lemish & Götz's (2012) study conducted across 24 countries which illustrated how gender stereotypes are constructed and pushed to children. The content analysis study done by the same author (Jaggi, 2016) found that the ratio of male and female characters on Indian television cartoon shows is 3:1 (approximately). This finding is in concurrence with the findings of many research studies from the Western context that concluded that male characters outnumbered female characters in children's television programming (Browne, 1998; Götz, Hoffman & Brosius, 2008; Hust & Brown, 2008; Leaper et al, 2002; Smith & Cook, 2008; Thompson & Zerbinos, 1995).

Gender characteristics

When the child respondents were asked to comment on the number of male and female characters in television cartoon programming, all of them across all age groups stated

that there were more boys than girls. The author observed that the children did not feel any discomfort with this imbalanced ratio. The responses came so naturally and casually indicating a thorough mainstreaming and normalizing of this disparity.

When the children were asked to identify the characteristics of male and female cartoon characters on television, the following responses emerged (Table 1):

Table 1. Gender characteristics in cartoons

Male cartoon characters	Female cartoon characters
Physically strong	Caring and affectionate
Sporty and athletic	Boring
Very good in studies	Beautiful
Express anger and fight	Take long to dress up, have a variety of dresses, wear make-up
Brave	Some are strong but always second to boy characters
Funny	Worried about their looks
Crack jokes	Try to impress boys
Professional	Domestic
Brag and bully	Help the main character
Independent	Well-behaved
Very few dependent on others	Need help
Do not cry (only one male cartoon character was identified with crying by all respondents)	Cry and express disappointment
Earn Money	Take care of the house and children

Female respondents described female characters as sensitive, caring, well-behaved, cute and beautiful, helpful, need to be rescued, boring and not funny, and also as getting angry with boys. The male respondents described the female cartoon characters as boring and prone to crying. Most male respondents in the sample were observed to be struggling to find adjectives for female characters. However when it came to describing male cartoon characters, the male respondents used words like funny, strong, intelligent, powerful, problem solvers and aggressive. The girl respondents described the male cartoon characters as strong, intelligent, saviors, fighters, powerful, funny and problem solvers.

While male cartoon characters enjoyed immense popularity among the young respondents (both boys and girls), the female cartoon characters seemed to enthrall only female respondents. The aversion and disinterest expressed by boys while describing female characters indicates the severe lacunae of content that has failed to mainstream and popularize female cartoon characters. What clearly emerged was a prejudice that girls' stories were less important than boys' stories, especially for the young male audience.

However, when the children were asked to describe the behaviour-related attributes of girls and boys in real life, conflicting discourses emerged. The following characteristics were described by the respondents (Table 2):

Table 2. Gender characteristics in real life

Masculine Characteristics	Feminine Characteristics
Strong	Beautiful , like to put make-up
Funny	Talkative
Not very emotional	Cry a lot
Professionals, earn money	Obedient and well-behaved
Good in sports and academics	Studious
Like to sing and dance	Like to sing and dance
Boys ride bikes	Girls don't ride bikes

If this list is compared to the one used to describe male and female cartoon characters, there seems to be a direct impact. Research has demonstrated that higher exposure to stereotyped content on television cartoons leads to stereotyped perceptions of gender roles in real life (Lemish, 2010). This assumption also found resonance in some of the children’s responses. For instance, eight-year-old Prakahar (boy) said, “Girls always have long hair as girls with short hair do not look beautiful and that boys shouldn’t cry because they are powerful. 12-year-old Rati (girl) stated, “Girls know how to look after children. Boys can have all the fun, but girls have to be in limits. They can have fun but not like boys. They can only do it at home or at a secretive place, not in open like boys”. Another common phrase that was repeated by many child respondents was ‘boys don’t cry’. Younger respondents, four to five-year-old especially, gave a yes in unison when asked if boys could ride bikes, but when asked if girls could also ride bikes shouted no in unison again. Children seemed to remember gender-related information from television cartoons and used a lot of masculine pronouns while talking. There were also certain responses which started with ‘should’ when the children in the sample discussed gender-specific behaviours. Nine-year-old male respondent Siddhant said, “There is a very sensitive boy in my school. He is very fat, and also has muscular strength. But he hardly uses it and cries a lot. He should use his power and beat others”. When a ten-year-old male respondent Satwik said, “How will boys run fast if they wear skirts”, or a ten-year-old female respondent Rashi said, “There is no Spiderwoman as girls are scared of insects”, the line between gender portrayals in the media content they were exposed to and their gender schema to understand the real world around them seemed to blur.

However, there were several ambivalent viewpoints that emerged as responses to the same questions. When a 10-year young male respondent Sohom said, “I have seen that girls can do many things in real life. It’s the directors and producers who think that boys can do more than girls”, the discourse got more nuanced. What Sohom articulated

was mentioned by several child respondents, especially when they were probed on the differences that they cited in real-life gender behaviours vis-à-vis the gender representations in cartoon shows. On similar lines, a 13-year-old male respondent for the study, Abhir stated that he had often been teased by his own classmates for having a girl-like voice but he did not care about it as it did not change who he was as person. Abhir also resisted questions on social expectations of gender and said, "Just because my face looks like a boy I don't have to be strong. I think I am weaker than half of the girls in my class. That doesn't make me a girl". However when the researcher probed him on whether he liked to watch cartoon programming like *Barbie*, he said, "I was forced to watch Barbie films with my sister. I was horrified. My favourite cartoon is 'The Lion King' as it isn't about plastic people, complaining about their life and wanting a boyfriend. People say that if you watch Barbie, then you are a girl. If you watch Power Rangers, then you are a boy. It's stuck in our minds probably. It's not true, it's discrimination". This statement from the young respondent sums up the conflict that young child audiences deal with. Children acknowledge both gender equality and gender differences. While both boys and girls prefer specific kinds of programming, they express disappointment with linear and restricted portrayals of gender. They indicated that the story is of greater consequence than the sex of the character. Since girls' stories, in particular, follow very one-dimensional plots, most male respondents expressed aversion to them. For example, nine-year-old Siddhant says, "I have never watched a Barbie film. My full brain and heart says that. Even if I have nothing else to watch, I won't watch it".

Acceptance of gender-roles among children

Television's role in children's everyday life is complex. It is an important socializing agent but this relationship is mediated by family, peers and schools. In terms of the roles that both parents should assume, the responses were usually based on the respondents' personal experiences. In case of children with working mothers, there was a greater openness in terms of distribution of household chores. These respondents were very clear about the distinction between what mothers and fathers did on cartoon shows as compared to what they did in real lives. However, in case of children with stay-at-home mothers, there was a clear alignment to statements like 'moms should stay at home and dads should go to work' or 'moms should cook' or 'dads earn more money than moms'.

Peer influence emerged as another significant factor. During group interviews, the child respondents seemed to be changing certain responses depending on the reaction of their group. In one situation where all the six respondents were boys, when 10-year-old Sohom said, "Sometimes I like to watch Barbie movies", there was a *boo* from the entire group. This forced him to change his response from "sometimes" to "rarely" and then "only when I was little". Non-conformity to expectations of gender roles is an expression of the individual agency of the child. But in the Indian society, where peer groups are highly gendered, the expression of this non-conformity may be a difficult path to tread

for children. As children negotiate with meanings, it is important to understand that they reconfigure their meaning-making process with what Hall (1980) refers to as 'most accepted knowledge' or 'taken for granted notions'. Children modified their responses on the basis of what made them popular and acceptable among peers, and gendered behaviour scored very high on this approval matrix.

When the author proposed the idea of gender-role swapping of their favourite cartoon characters, the female respondents expressed greater acceptability than males. Most boys stated that they would never watch their favorite cartoon show again if it became a girl. While some female respondents expressed excitement about the idea, others were resistant. When probed further, responses like 'girls are not funny', 'girls are not adventurous' and 'boys will look like transgenders if they become girls' were articulated. While sex-category swapping of cartoon characters was met with huge resistance, responses were more ambivalent when it came to discuss the same situation in real life. 10-year-old Kartik, a male respondent stated, "I will feel yucky when I think that my friend will put lipstick; I will hit him. Boys should never behave like girls". However 13-year-old male respondent Abhir gave a completely opposite response, "If my best friend decided to dress up like a girl, I will say wait up bro, I am coming!" 12-year-old Rati, a female respondent, said, "It will be fun if girls can be like boys. But if a boy wears a princess' dress or high-heeled shoes, it doesn't happen. But girls can wear anything". The deeper the author interrogated the child respondents on this question, more prejudices emerged. Homophobic references were common. In case there were more accommodative responses, on further probing it emerged that age, parental intervention and being part of less-gendered peer groups mitigated polarized ideas on gender roles to some extent. So while with age the knowledge about gender stereotypes deepened, the idea of adherence to stereotypes appeared to be more flexible. Girls seemed to be more open to viewing more male characters and even experimenting with the idea of gender swapping, especially of girls to boys. However the boys interviewed as part of the sample seemed less open to the idea of gender swapping of either cartoon characters or real people, especially males becoming females. This perspective also featured in terms of choice of cartoon programming. The girls interviewed in this study had no qualms in naming television cartoons with male characters as their favourite. However, most boy respondents said that they had never watched a cartoon programme with female characters and some went to the extent of saying that it was impossible for boys to do so. 11-year-old Rhea summed up this dichotomy by saying, "If I tell my friends that I watch cartoons that have boys in them, they will say I am cool. But if I a boy would say that he watches girls' cartoons, his friends would call him gay".

There were clear differences in the responses when they spelled out their professional ambitions. The following is the list of professions stated by the 26 male respondents – soldier, army officer, police officer, WWE wrestler, doctor. The following is the list of professions stated by the 25 female respondents – doctor, engineer, teacher, artist, radio jockey, dancer, athlete, and in one case, police officer. However, what was interesting

to observe was that not more than four children in the entire sample could even reconcile with the image of a male nurse (the others hadn't even heard of one), a finding coinciding with an earlier research study done by Wright et al (1995) in the American context. There was a direct relationship between these responses and children's recall of professional status of their favourite television characters. Additionally, the professional standing of the respondents' parents was an influential factor. Younger children were more emphatic in their responses about mothers staying at home and cooking, and fathers going to office and earning money. In cases, where the child respondents discussed their mothers' professions, they opined that mothers earned less money than fathers.

Conclusion

The preceding section summarizes how children negotiate with the construction of their gender identity with television content. The responses strongly suggest that children consume highly gender-stereotypic content and that it gets reflected in their perceptions of media content as well as articulations of the world around them. Indian society is varied and complex. The heterogeneity of the Indian socio-cultural context does not get represented in the dominant media discourse, which is mostly lop-sided and standardized. When this standardization gets extended to media content for children, its repercussions can be detrimental and irreversible. Since 60% of content of children's television in India is imported, it is not surprising that these findings resonate with the findings from research studies conducted in other parts of the world. The problem is that even the 40% indigenous content does not offer any alternative possibilities to the young viewers as masculine mythological themes drive it. In the Indian context, where peer groups are highly gendered, children's agency to accept non-traditional gender behaviours gets snubbed very often. Hence the need for gender-neutral and non-stereotypical television content is even more crucial. Despite the presence of an equal number of women professionals in the media industry, transformation of television content is not even a talking point in the Indian television fraternity. However, there are some optimistic revelations. Children question media representations and subtly accuse the media of manipulation. There are some non-stereotypical images perpetuated by the media, but they are so few and secondary that they do not garner enough attention. Alternative platforms like digitization, critical media literacy and a regulatory framework could be some possible ways to initiate the process of transformation of gender portrayals on children's television in India. But it has to begin with an acknowledgement of the disparity. While collaborative engagement between the media industry and academia could be one way forward; it is important that Indian researchers collaborate with their global counterparts to strengthen the discourse on this crucial subject. This is the least we could do for creating plural and diverse social spaces for our children.

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Representations of Gender on Social Media among Brazilian Young People

Between Reinforcing and Challenging the Stereotypes

Monica Barbovschi, Tatiana Jereissati & Graziela Castello

In this article we explore young Brazilians' reinforcement of gender-stereotypical and gender non-conforming expressions on social media, to see how Brazilian teenagers reproduce or contest the hyper-sexualized, heteronormative discourses around femininity and masculinity. Three models inspired the theoretical frameworks, namely the Butlerian discursive subjectivity and performativity, Karen Barad's model of posthuman materialism and the concept of intra-action of non-human agents, and Sonia Livingstone's concept of social media literacy. The sample consists of 12 focus groups (60 respondents, 11 to 17 years old) conducted in metropolitan area of São Paulo in September 2016. Overall, our study showed a reinforcement of the heterosexual matrix, with some notable exceptions of contestation from both boys and girls. Our article offers a contribution to the research on young people and social media in South America through taking into account both local contexts and dominant discourses around gender and sexuality.

Literature review

The polarized discourses over the hyper-sexualization of young people and the critique of the 'sexualization thesis' as a part of the moral panic that infringes on young people's rights for sexual expression and agency have been noted by previous research (Bray, 2008; Ringrose, 2011). Moreover, in the "postfeminist moral panic" (Ringrose, 2013), extreme incidences of youth sexual images 'gone wrong' have been dramatized in mass media to the point of conflating sexting with cyberbullying. Media and digital media have also been characterised as spaces with increasing pressures over visual displays as compulsory 'disciplinary technology of sexy' (Gill, 2008) and normalised hyper-sexualized discourses and imagery (Ringrose, 2011) around femininity and masculinity. Part of these regulating technologies, especially those focused on femininity and female bodies,

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the practices of body shaming and slut shaming have been on the rise as “culturally specific formations” (Dobson, 2014; Ringrose & Renold, 2012), mediated by mass media and more recently, by social media, with their economy of posting, tagging, sharing and monitoring of content (Ringrose, Harvey, Gill, & Livingstone, 2013).

Social media as ‘networked publics’ (boyd, 2008) has been widely embraced by young people for purposes of communication and connection to peers, as well as for continuous negotiation of constructing and presenting images of gendered self as part of teen sexual identities. However, as Livingstone and Mason (2015) note, girls face the challenge of having to express hyper-feminine sexualised roles, stemming from internalising stereotypical, body-objectified self-concepts promoted by media, while keeping the image of “proper” feminine behaviour. Conversely, young boys are pressured into projecting images of emotionless, aggressive, and toxic masculinity (Holloway, 2015) in their expressions on social media. Previous research has focused on social media use for gendered and sexual interactions in adolescents’ comments on Facebook (De Ridder & Van Bauwel, 2013) and on their performative sexualized femininity and masculinity across social networking sites (Ringrose & Barajas, 2011; Ringrose & Harvey, 2015b).

The practices of seeking validation on social media are also carefully monitored and judged, with those seen as less “attention seeking” being considered more highly valued conquests (Ringrose & Harvey, 2015a). Also, the relationship status of a girl plays a significant role in what displays are deemed more acceptable, as girls already in a relationship are seen as more “respectable” than single ones (Ringrose & Harvey, 2015a) and thus can get away with sexy self-displays. When it comes to displays of masculinity, these same rules do not apply, reinstating “the sexual double standards around feminine sexual activity and respectability and masculine prowess via the circulation and relative reward and/or judgements of social media images” (Ringrose & Harvey, 2015a, p. 221). On the contrary, boys are rewarded for bodily displays of tough masculinity (Manago, 2013).

In this article, we are interested in how young people aged 11 to 17 present themselves on social media and reinforce or challenge dominant representations and discourses about gender (e.g., the cult of the body in general, and objectification of female bodies in particular). We focus on issues around gendered representations to see how Brazilian teenagers reproduce or contest the hyper-sexualized, heteronormative discourses around femininity and masculinity (e.g., “girls have to be pretty” for the male gaze; “boys have to be strong and powerful” and not pass as weak or gay) and discuss how the dominant cult of the body and objectification discourses are re-produced in young people’s discussion about their self-presentation on social media, choice of picture, reflections on audiences and hetero-perceptions (ideas about the other gender).

We draw on three theoretical frameworks in order to discuss young Brazilian’s presentation on social media and their performative reinforcement (or contestation) of heterosexualised gender norms, namely the Butlerian discursive subjectivity and performativity; Karen Barad’s model of posthuman materialism and the concept of in-

tra-action of non-human agents; and Sonia Livingstone's concept of social media literacy. From Judith Butler (1993) we retain the idea that gender is not a pre-existing fact, but rather something enacted and expressed through "stylised acts" of the body that are socially and culturally bound. Through the continuous reproduction of these acts, the illusion of a fixed, coherent identity emerges while gender norms are discursively (re) enforced through concealment and naturalisation. From Karen Barad (2003, 2007) via Ringrose and Rawling's (2015) discussion of anti-bullying policies, we acknowledge the importance of "spacetime-matterings" (space, objects, time), such as hair, make-up, sexy poses, "label" clothes, use of Snapchat filters to hide unflattering details (e.g. pimples), as "more-than-human relationalities" (Ringrose & Rawling, 2015) of equal standing alongside discourses, in constructing and curating one's image on social media. Together with the concept of technological affordances (Hutchby, 2001), i.e., the structural features of a medium, the material objects interact with norms of reputation and status in the discursive performance of identities on social media. And finally, from Sonia Livingstone's work (2014), we acknowledge the process through which social media sites (or social network sites, SNSs) encode social interactions as text, which makes relevant the concept of social media literacy, which includes the "tasks of decoding, evaluating and creating communication in relation to media qua representation (text, image, platform, device, etc.) and qua social interaction (relationships, networks, privacy, anonymity, etc.), since these are integrated in the very nature and use of SNSs" (Livingstone, 2014, p. 285). Livingstone's argument for classifying young people's social media literacy according to their developmental stage (with differences noted between children 9 to 11, 12 to 13 and 14 to 16 years old) was taken into consideration when analysing the self-presentation practices of young Brazilians (although our age grouping was more tight, as informed by recommendations from our pilot study).

Description of project, sampling and methodology

In the context of achieving gender equality as one of the sustainable goals for 2030, understanding how ICTs and social media help reduce (or not) the gender gap for young people is an important undertaking. The qualitative project on ICT and gender for young people (2016) undertaken by the Regional Center for Studies on the Development of the Information Society (Cetic.br)¹ in São Paulo, Brazil, aims to explore practices of access, uses and activities of young people online, as well as ways of self-expression and presentation on social media, socialisation of privacy in the context of learning about consent and boundaries, and technology-mediated violence (including sexual violence). The project is interested in how dominant social representations and discourses around gender are reproduced or challenged in the uses of ICT and new media among young Brazilians. Following a pilot phase, the fieldwork² (conducted in metropolitan area of São Paulo in September 2016) consisted in 12 single-sex focus groups conducted in Portuguese with

young people aged 11-12, 13-14, 15-17, with additional sampling for socio economic level (SEL), the criteria adopted in this case were the Brazilian Classification Criteria³ that classify households according to consumer goods (avoiding the non-responses related to income). The variables racial-ethnic composition (following the official Brazilian distribution) and type of school (public versus private) were also included in the sample definition. Information about religion was also collected, but not as a sampling variable. Each group had 5 participants (a total of 60 respondents), with an average duration of 120 minutes, and was conducted by a professional moderator (same sex as the group). All the focus groups took place in a one way mirror lab, with all discussions recorded and transcribed. A thematic analysis was conducted and relevant quotes were translated by the second and third authors with attention to children's expressions and use of language.

Curating one's profile

The enormous pressures of conforming to beauty standards under the gaze of others on social media was reported by girls in all age groups. Many expressed concern with how they want to present themselves in the pictures they display on social media, some stating that anything less than *tudo perfeito* (everything perfect) is simply unacceptable:

I am a perfectionist and I want things to be exactly in their place, because they'll make fun of you for anything (girls, 11-12, class AB).

The boys confirm that girls go to extreme lengths to become well-known and receive a lot of recognition:

They [girls] enjoy making photo collages to get more 'likes' and then she thinks she owns the classroom. There are some girls in the classroom that get a lot of 'likes' on the Internet and they feel powerful (boys, 13-14, class C);

They take 200 photos and post one! (boys, 15-17, class C).

However, although to lesser degree than girls, boys are also self-conscious about their appearance on social media, for example about showing dental braces (boys, 15-17, class AB), being unphotogenic (boys, 15-17, class C) or having dirty hair (boys, 11-12, class C) in pictures.

As Jessica Ringrose remarks in her analyses of data collected with teenagers in UK, girls face the problem of having to make complex choices about how they will construct a sexual digital identity, with contradictory worries about how to be desirable but not 'too' slutty (Ringrose, 2011, p. 106). This double standard of the heterosexual matrix holds true for Brazilian girls too, as here is a thin line between looking sexy and looking slutty. The girls in our research were confronted with this heteronormative requirement in all age groups, although they were reinforcing the slut-shaming discourse in their discussion about the Other girls:

They take a photo posing in the shape of the letter S, they bend everything (girls, 11-12, class C); There're many girls on Facebook who overexpose themselves. There're girls who use way too short shorts and that, effectively, offer themselves. She can even be ugly, but she has millions of likes, because the boys are interested in this vulgarity; Because when there's free food, it draws a waiting line (girls, 15-17, class C, referring to the construction of "cheap girls").

Here the material elements of "overexposure", and sexually suggestive poses come into play for creating the unacceptable Slut. Therefore, the girls are described as using subterfuges in order to get away with sexy-potentially-slutty pictures, such as pretending to show their beautiful hair, as noticed by some boys in our research:

He said that there are a lot of girls who post pictures of their hair, they post about their hair, but what they really want is to show their butt (boys, 15-17, class AB). Boys are also aware of the double standard surrounding sexual prowess for boys and girls: Because if somebody takes a picture of me kissing a girl, I am a player, but if it were a girl kissing a boy, everybody would look at her in a strange way⁴ (boys, 15-17, class AB).

The social development of younger age groups in our study (11-12, 13-14) present them with the challenges of establishing a valued identity and with forging peer connections, which might explain their excessive preoccupation with obtaining peer validation and confirmation (in the form of "Likes" and followers on social media platform), whereas the older group 15-17 might have already reached a more stable identity and make more confident choices about their interactions and relationships).

The middle group of girls (13-14) is also the one that defies the prescriptions of "normality" and exhibits outwardly norm-breaking behaviour; in the quotes below the material elements of short skirt, short shorts, breasts popping out, provocative posture is completed with the joint, the bottle, red eyes and appearance of inebriation to compose an undesirable character, at the outskirts of the acceptable feminine:

Some people must show that they are wearing short shorts, a tiny shirt, boobs hanging out, they sit, take a cigarette, a joint in one hand and a beer in the other. Stop, thats unnecessary [...] I have friends that by 7 A.M. are taking photos, have red eyes, a hangover, are high and include the time in the photo, going to school (girls, 13-14, class AB).

Unlike the girls in Ringrose and Renold's research (2012), where girls explicitly embrace norm-challenging behaviours and expressions, here those still belong to the unacceptable Other. Conversely, in the case of boys, the same norms do not apply, as they do not report pressures but actually validation for their rule-breaking behaviour and exposing it on social media:

Do you know that picture in which you look drunk, but you don't want to delete it because it has more than 1000 likes? (boys, 11-12, class AB).

However, for the oldest group of girls we noticed, in accordance with Sonia Livingstone's remarks, a "growing autonomy from conformist peer norms" (Livingstone 2014, p. 300), which is reflected in their increased reflexivity around gender constructions and stereotypes:

The time has passed when one could say 'this is for girls and this is for boys'. Especially the need for a woman having to refrain from saying something [...] I think this time has not yet passed, but we are almost there (girls, 15-17, class AB).

Some of them declare their relief to have a break from the tyranny of impossible (and illusory) beauty ideals when the perfectly curated images on Facebook profiles are tarnished with some unflattering photos, such as the ones posted by parents oblivious to the teen social media netiquette or by resurfacing of old pictures by means of Likes and comments:

These [ugly photos] are the funniest, and a thing we know, as my friends say, is that many people on the Internet look like gods or goddesses and once you see them personally, they are nothing like that. So, it's a good thing to have these tags, because people can see that we aren't just goddesses (girls, 15-17, class AB).

Awareness about multiple audiences

By far the biggest preoccupation for young girls in our study when it comes to their audience was the heterosexual gaze, but reportedly, this works differently for girls and boys. For boys, making visible your relationship status as "taken" will promptly result in a decline of "Likes" and diminishing of status as "desirable" or "attractive". But SNS affordances further complicate matters: the sexist standard of female decency, where being "respectable" means not show too much availability, is discursively reconstructed by girls when they talk about the friends they feel are allowed to be seen next to in pictures:

I have many male friends, and then I go out with 3 of them and there's only me as a girl then people go around saying 'just broke up with her boyfriend and she's going off with 3'. My boyfriend knows they're just my friends, but sometimes people perceive it through different eyes (girls, 15-17, class AB).

Awareness about audience is brought to attention when young people talk about what are the best hours and days for posting pictures in order to receive the maximum number of "Likes":

Because if I go with a friend to the party on Friday (and post a picture), I will have less Likes because fewer will see it (boys, 15-17, class AB) (n.a. as compared to Sunday evening when everyone is at home with nothing to do).

However, many described being preoccupied with being under parental scrutiny when it comes to displays adults might find unacceptable (this was solely mentioned in the case of girls). Boys too are preoccupied with them being visible to adults, but solely because of annoying comments from peers: *I already deleted comments because of my family, because there are photos where people comment a lot of stuff* (boys, 13-14, class AB) or because of intrusiveness and lack of privacy (e.g., boys using specific social networks simply because they are not used by their parents – boys, 15-17, class AB). Other times, ideologically incompatible social circles will result in self-censorship on social media: *I have friends who are 'funkeiros' and I have friends from the church. I can't post a photo at the funk party, because my evangelical friends won't like it, and I can't post a photo at the church, because the other friends won't like it* (girls, 11-12, class C).

In these cases of young people agonising over feeling restricted by the gazes of others, the concept of social media literacy and their (lack of) awareness about the option of restricting the content available to different publics is relevant, and here the oldest group displays the necessary skills: [I block my mom and dad] *Because they'll say 'what about those clothes you were wearing out of home yesterday?'* (girls, 15-17, class AB).

Heteroperceptions: “Just like girls care about boobs, boys care about six-pack abs”

In general, girls' impressions about boys is that they care far less about how they come across and are perceived on social media: *Boys post their photos carelessly; They don't care for a background, to have something cuter; The girl is more detail-oriented and the boy just won't mind* (girls, 11-12, class AB), although some notice that boys too take efforts in ensuring they look their best:

I can't say they don't care because some really don't, but most of them wear a cap, a large t-shirt, Nike or Adidas [shoes], fluorescent braces, “funkeiro pants⁵” (girls, 11-12, class C). It depends, there're some boys nowadays who take more time preparing for the photo than a girl. He must have the right clothes, the right cap, the right sun glasses, the right pose (girls, 13-14, class C).

Here material elements come into play in creating acceptable displays of boys on social media – the right kind of clothes, shoes, glasses and pose.

Nonetheless, the all-encompassing power of stereotypical beauty standards is felt in the words of our respondents, with boys being under the pressure of displaying the sanctioned heteronormative, tough masculinity through human (strong bodies) and non-human inter-acting elements (i.e., practising sports, going to the gym): *almost all of them care about six-pack abs photos, keep posting that they go to the gym, trying to look strong* (girls, 15-17, class C), posing with their mates (girls, 15-17, class C), whereas girls have to adhere to (sometimes impossible) norms of sexiness:

When you're in high school, at least at my school, if you wanna date a boy you must have something to attract him. At my school, the boys only date the girls with big boobs and a big ass, if you're skinny as I am, they put you away (girls, 15-17, class C).

Boys, however, tend to be judgmental about girls' desire to be famous ("*famosinhas*"), they judge the ones that expose their bodies in order to get Likes, reinforcing the sexism of girls under pressure to be sexy but not too much. Finally, boys report that it is girls mostly who send nasty comments to each other, calling one another "bitch" or "slut" in comments to pictures (boys, 15-17, class AB).

Reinforcing the stereotypes?

The cult of the body and objectification of female bodies in particular were widely present in our respondents' words, with the youngest group in the study already showing preoccupation with conforming to beauty ideals and heteronormative prescriptions of feminine and masculine (e.g., the shunning of "slutty" girls), although these were reinforced throughout all age groups. Achieving the impossible standard of being sexy but not too slutty for girls was apparent in careful negotiations and intra-actions of human and non-human elements, such as body poses, skirts, relationship status, displays next to young people of other sex and transgressive behaviours (the latter when constructing the unacceptable Other girls). Being pretty for boys under the heterosexual gaze was felt as a pressure by most girls in our study. Boys too confirmed and reinforced these powerful dynamics. In addition, as previous research noted (Manago, 2013), boys were rewarded for bodily displays of tough masculinity (e.g., going to the gym, toned body and six-pack abs, posing with other male friends, doing sports). However, as some girls noticed, there was some preoccupation with choosing the "right" self-displays on social media for boys, in contradiction with the discourse of the "careless boys" not bothered with girl-like preoccupation over appearance.

The construction of norm-breaking category of gay as pejorative has been used as powerful discursive tool for policing masculinity, as previous research noted (Lahelma, 2002; Ringrose & Rawling, 2015). The same mechanism is found in homophobic (and racial prejudice) discourses sometimes reproduced by young people in our study:

Some enemies from my school, who call me 'steel sponge'. A boy said that my hair looks like a 'steel sponge' and I said, it's better to have a 'steel sponge hair' than to have a gay haircut⁶ (boys, 11-12, class AB). However, this non-normative category is constructed differently in girls' discourses about the "cute gays": They're kind of sissy, super cute, they're not like those boys that come commenting (girls, 13-14, class AB).

We did not, at this point, engage in a vast discussion of class and race, as these issues deserve a more in-depth consideration given their utmost relevance for the Brazilian society and culture. We did notice that class differences in our study were constructed in how young people from different backgrounds cared about material elements as signifiers of status: *I am ashamed of a photo from 2 years ago that showed a dirty wall from home, my dad hadn't cleaned it yet. Once I took a picture where my nephew's slippers had been thrown in the corner of the photo* (boys, 11-12, class C). In another example, boys discussing some girls' posing for pictures with clothes from expensive stores (boys, 15-17, class C) indicates the idea of wanting to transcend limiting material conditions (than their socioeconomic background normally allows).

Conclusions

Overall, our study showed a powerful reinforcement and reconstruction of the heterosexual matrix, although some pushes towards changes were apparent, such as girls revolting against the pressure of having to appear perfect all the time, of needing to have specific body types in order to be considered attractive and suitable matches. In other instances, girls were expressing positive opinions of "cute guys, kinda gay" who show nicer behaviours on social media as opposed to the brute, aggressive types of "other guys" (i.e., the tough masculine ones). Similar contradictions within the continuous representation of heterosexuality were noted by Ridder and Van Bowel (2013) in their analyses of young people commenting each other's pictures on social media as a gendered practice. With SNSs becoming important stages for negotiations of gender and sexualities, the continuous endeavour of analysing young people's practices related to self-expression online is necessary for shedding light on how gender norms and stereotypes are reinforced or transgressed. And finally, our article aims to contribute to amplifying the focus on Latin American countries and their specific processes related to young people embracing mobile technologies and social media, taking into account both local contexts and dominant discourses around gender and sexuality.

Notes

1. The project developed in partnership with the Latin American School of Social Sciences (FLASCO) in Buenos Aires. In Brazil, the project was carried out in collaboration with Brazilian Center for Analysis and Planning (CEBRAP). The Regional Center for Studies on the Development of the Information Society (Cetic.br) is a department of the Brazilian Network Information Center, NIC.br. Cetic.br is responsible for the production of studies on the use of and access to ICT in Brazil. More information available at www.cetic.br.
2. The fieldwork was conducted by the Brazilian Research Institute Ibope Inteligência.
3. For more information on the Brazilian Economic Classification Criteria, see www.abep.org/Servicos/Download.aspx?id=11

4. “Pegar” literally means “to catch” and “pegador” is used to describe a person that hooks up with many people, commonly used to refer to ladies’ men. The expression also connotes the objectification of those that are “caught” by the “pegador”.
5. Funkeiro/funkeira (Brazilian Portuguese) is the person who enjoys funk music
6. “Bombril” refers to a Brazilian brand of steel sponge used for cleaning. This expression is pejoratively used to refer to afro hair.

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Gender Representations and Identity Constructions Among Youth in Botswana

Exploring the Influence of Media

Ardis Storm-Mathisen

Departing from a non-media centric and non-gender-centric perspective this chapter explores the role of media in the cultivation of gender identities among contemporary youth in Botswana. Drawing on data from a recent multi-methodological fieldwork I concentrate on essays written by village teenagers on the topic “My life 20 years from now”. The aim is to discuss the extent to which the representational resources used by the teenagers – within this genre of identity construction and in light of the wider fieldwork – can be traced to media or other sources. I find that Botswana teenagers make use of a diverse mix of gender-fluid, counter-stereotype and gender traditional representations and engage with identity constructions far beyond gender stereotypes. Many of these constructions can be directly linked to gender representations available in schools, families, and the local communities, yet less to media. This is partly due to low media access, and partly that media representations impact indirectly through other significant actors in their environments using media-inspired representations.

Botswana is an interesting place when it comes to gender, social change and the role of media. This former British protectorate has since independence in 1966 transformed itself from a predominantly patriarchal society and one of the poorest countries in the world, to a middle income country with the highest human development index score in sub-Saharan Africa and one of the most gender equal, democratic and media-developed countries on the continent (ITU, 2016; SADC, 2015). A move beyond traditional gender representations has definitely taken place in several arenas, yet it has many faces and patriarchal logics do persist on the level of everyday life in many spaces. The role of media to the various motions and present realities is ambiguous and one of complex interrelations. In this article, drawing on data from a recent fieldwork in Botswana and concentrating on examples from essays written by village teenagers on the topic “My life 20 years from now”, I depict images that are common to boys

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and girls in this setting and suggest to the influence of gender representations in media to these. Below, after a brief sketch of some of the changes in gender and media that has taken place in the Botswana context, these essays are presented as a case to depict how contemporary young Batswana use gender representations to construct their identities and to discuss the extent to which these gender representations may be linked to media sources.

The changing landscape of gender representations and media in Botswana

By statistical measures, one of the clearest changes to the landscape of gender representation in Botswana has happened within education and the labour market. Whereas the enrolment rate in primary education around independence was less than 20 percent and primarily boys, it is today 98 percent and gender parity is achieved to the extent that females now outperform males in all levels of schooling and outnumber them in tertiary education (SADC, 2015). Another change has taken place within employment and economic independence. In the 60's most people lived in rural areas, survived on subsistence farming (women's work) and cattle herding (men's work). Today 75 per cent of women and 83 per cent of men are formally employed and many of them live in cities and towns (Statistics Botswana, 2016). The work force in Botswana has been, and still is, highly mobile. This affects family life and organisation. Around half of the households in Botswana today are female headed (single) and many children stay with relatives in the villages for primary schooling while their parents pursue work or education elsewhere. Yet, traditional gender roles and expectations from the Tswana culture – “where women were jural minors, subject to the representation of their senior male kin” (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001, p. 270) – are still part of the collective memory, enacted in customary law (Griffiths, 1997) and takes various expressions on the level of everyday life. For instance, although women are represented in decision-making positions (in politics, government administrations, media and businesses), men still dominate the public (SADC, 2015) and women still take on more responsibility in care for children and the sick (many are affected by HIV/AIDS). Gender-based harassment and violence are rising problems (Gender Affairs Department, 2014), and it has been claimed that gender representations in village settings are more traditional and less diverse than in the capital (Giddings & Hovorka, 2010).

Whereas state initiated agendas and investments in education, poverty eradication and infrastructure – supported by the constitution,¹ stable governance, international agencies (UN, World Bank etc.) and increased income after the finding of large mineral deposits in the late 60's – beyond doubt have been decisive factors to the changes and diversifications of gender representations that has taken place in Botswana, the role played by media to these developments is less obvious.

Media have, since independence, been used as a tool to “inform and educate the Nation” (Vision 2016) and has as such also contributed to the dissemination of the more diverse gender representations in this agenda. The wider reach and diversity of media are nevertheless quite a recent situation. Until the mid-1980’s Botswana media consisted primarily of a state owned radio station and newspaper. Public TV broadcast started up in 2000. The media market has been liberated since and today both state and privately owned national newspapers, radio stations, TV channels and mobile operators provide a wide variety of media services side-by side, also online. However, and despite a steady increase in public access, this wide array of media tools and services are still not available to all (Statistics Botswana, 2016). Botswana remains one of the world’s most unequal countries with high levels of poverty and unemployment – especially among the young the many female headed households and those who live in villages (World Bank, 2015). Although most people today may have access to simple cell-phones and a majority also to radio and TV, use of media (hence also direct influence by media) is limited for many due to high costs and infrastructural problems. High media use – especially of internet – is still primarily an opportunity for the minority of the population (less than 30 per cent) with higher education and/or income, and where we find more men than women (Storm-Mathisen, forthcoming; see also Deen-Swararray, Gilwald & Morell, 2012; Statistics Botswana, 2015). For young people the common trajectory is that they gain access to their first simple mobile phone, to the internet and a broader media landscape as they move away from home to follow up on secondary and/or tertiary education or work.

Recent studies suggest that gender stereotype representations (e.g., sexual domination and control by men over women) perpetuate in the liberated Botswana media market (SADC, 2015), although ideals for practices of subversive behaviours and re-articulations (Rapoo, 2013) – for instance in educational radio and TV-programs (Odirile, 2016) – are also present. There is however scarce knowledge of how prevailing gender representations in the present media landscape are used, understood and influence constructions of gender identities in Botswana. Given the broader changes to the gender representations and the uneven patterns of media consumption, variations and complex interrelations between them are likely. Therefore, to understand the potential impact of gender representations in media to the cultivation of gender identities requires not only looking at media and media consumption, but also looking into the settings where gendered identifications happen and where representational resources from media are interpreted and used together with representations from other sources.

“My life 20 years from now” – essays written by young teenage Batswana

My claims in this chapter are based on data from a 6-months long fieldwork (October 2015 to April 2016) in Botswana, undertaken as part of a project that investigated the

links between development and the new media revolution in various African contexts.² Fieldwork was conducted in two sites: the capital of Gaborone (pop. 200,000) and a rural village (pop. 9,000) situated at the edge of the Khalahari desert where we lived and took part of everyday life. Data was gathered through a wide fan of methods in both settings; participant observation, interviews, digital ethnography, surveys, a collection of photo-video diaries and written essays in addition to study of available secondary sources. The approach was at the outset non-media centric (Morley, 2009) seeking to grasp the concerns of people and how media (as things, medium and content) were used to these ends. To move beyond the sex/gender binary (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015) and avoid making pre-judgmental claims, the approach was also non-gender-centric (Storm-Mathisen, 2015) with an investigation aimed to understand in what ways and to what ends gender representations were used – and by whom.

The discussion below draws on insights from the whole fieldwork, including interviews (with parents, children and teachers), home and school observations and the survey we conducted from door to door in the village (Storm-Mathisen, forthcoming), but will concentrate on providing examples from the essays written by teenage pupils who lived in the village. In all 96 essays – on the topic “My life 20 years from now: what I do, where I live and what I did to get there” – were collected from pupils age 11-16 on the highest levels at the primary school and secondary school in this setting. The collection of the essays was organized, in collaboration with the school, as a competition. Participation was voluntary, but pupils could use school-time to write and the best essay on each school won a tablet. Space prohibits me from providing detail or substantiate the representativity of this material further, except to say that the essays serve: (i) as an exemplary case of the diversity in gender representations and media exposure that we could observe within and across other settings in our fieldwork and (ii) as a case of how available gender representations, be they from media or other sources, become significant as they are used to construct and perform identities (Butler, 1990).

Gender representations in young teenage identity constructions

In considering the gender representations at play in the 96 essays written by the village teenagers on “My life 20 years from now: what I do, where I live and what I did to get there” three features were particularly striking:

Firstly, there were no clear differences in how self-identified boys and girls in these village schools envisioned their future education and occupation. All hoped to complete education beyond secondary school and be independent in terms of income (e.g., “if you are educated life is good”). Both boys and girls saw themselves in occupations such as doctor, business owner, nurse, engineer, teacher, police officer, community worker and soldier (the only gender specific choices of occupation were voiced by two girls who wanted to become respectively an internationally signed singer “like Rhianna” (F11)

and Miss World (F1). Dreams regarding consumption (being the owners of cars and houses) or to have children and be responsible for own family, parents, community and nation were also similar for girls and boys. That no self-identified female envisioned themselves to be only “mother”, “housewife” or “farmer” points to a clear move away from the traditional representation of women being financially dependent on men. This, combined with the pattern that most pupils represented their future education and occupation in gender neutral terms and that 37 per cent of the pupils did not use any gender representations in their writing,³ suggests that gender identity is of little significance to what these Botswana pupils claim they are able to accomplish.⁴

Secondly, the few pupils who did make use of traditional gender representations (i.e., women: do farming, men: own cattle) mentioned it either as something that characterized activities of their parents’ generation or as activities they themselves would engage with *after* they had obtained education and (modern) occupation – a sequential model (Mojula, 2014) much advocated by schools and government. For instance, a boy who wanted to become a social worker to help disadvantaged people and community leaders adds: “Our customs state that at 36 years a young man should get married because family is very important. It is also a norm for every Mokgalagadi man to have cattle so I would like to have my own cattle post as it would give me the deserved dignity in our community. I will have a herd boy at the cattle post thus creating a form of employment” (M15). Similarly a girl who wrote she would first become a nurse, then buy herself a car and a house added: “As a woman I will also have lands, I will be a farmer and grow crops and rear livestock as well. I will look after my things and God will help me so that life goes on. I will look after my children and advise them to learn at school because education is key to success. I will sometimes go to the lands when I have offs or on leave, to look after my crops when it is time for growing. I will cooperate in society because I am a woman” (F82). This suggests traditional gendered representations are valued, yet transformed in the future vision of these teenagers through the idea that education leads to an economic independence that will enable them to hire labour and allow for some later engagement with traditional activities as well.

Finally, there were some girls who attended to concerns with relations to future husbands drawing on negative representations of uneducated men today. One girl for instance, who wanted to become a teacher writes: “I will be married to a man that is educated, because if I marry a man that is not educated he will want me to buy food and take my money” (F75). Another girl who wanted to become a doctor writes “I do not marry in Botswana but in America because in Botswana people kill their wife. In America people do not kill their wife” (F78). Our wider fieldwork (Helle-Valle, 2016), as well as other studies (McIlwaine & Datta, 2004), indicate that counter-traditional gender representations and identities have been embraced more wholeheartedly by females than males, which can lead to complex negotiations of gender relations further on in adulthood.

The influence of media to evolving gender identities

So what may be the role of prevailing gender representations in media to the gender representations used and the gender identities expressed by the young in these essays?

At first glance influence from prevailing gender representations in media appear to be of little importance to the rather varied gender identity constructions expressed by the teenage pupils (that is, their use of overwhelmingly gender-neutral representations with respect to education and occupation, the occasional adding of traditional gender representations to that of independence and the female concern with potential challenges with respect to future relations to Batswana men). Direct reference was rather made to influence from non-media sources in their everyday environment. They referred to the school curriculum and the national Vision 2016 (the latter some even cited: “an educated, informed, prosperous, productive and innovative nation” (?06)). They also referred to role models in their environment: their teachers (e.g., “my teacher she has helped me shape my life”), parents and particularly mothers (i.e., “I am a girl born in a remote area, but moved here (to the village) since my mother got a job as a police officer” or “My role model is my mother, because she is the one who encourages me to learn so hard at school” (?24), kin (referring to advice from uncles, older siblings), community and church (they often cite words from the bible). This pattern – common for girls, boys as well as those whose gender could not be identified – is not so strange given the rather gender equal labour market, the many female headed households and the strong gender equality rhetoric’s and ideals in the formal institutions these pupils are parts of in their everyday life (i.e., the school curriculum and various programmes and initiatives of local government and NGO’s). A high majority of the village pupils do not have direct contact with media on a regular basis. Only half of the village pupils live in households where there was a radio or a TV available (and the commonly watched programs were prophetic church broadcasting and public news), only a handful of them have access to personal media (1 per cent under 15 years has a mobile phone, 17 per cent have a household computer). None of the schools had working TV’s or computers (but computers and internet were available at the village library and for pay at an internet café).

Yet, it would be wrong to conclude that media have no influence on the identity constructions of these young. Firstly, there were representations in use that could be directly traced to sources in mass media or new media. In two of the 96 essays the gender specific dreams of future occupations had media as source (the girl who wanted to become a singer like Rhianna and the girl who wanted to become a beauty pageant like Miss World) and were construction made by pupils who were among the very few who had access to their own mobile phone (and occasionally surfed the internet). Several pupils also cite or use gender-neutral wordings that can be traced back to media, and particularly TV (i.e., sayings from a prophetic minister in South Africa, reference to educational TV or citing of international heroes). Secondly, and more dominantly, many pupils express dreams and ideas of future that may have come their way partially

through media, but perhaps more indirectly. For instance gender neutral dreams of consumption – like getting a big houses, eating modern food and driving fancy cars, gaining better access to media technologies (i.e., to have their own TV or mobile phone, to be able to surf on the internet, to become knowledgeable enough to develop internet services as business etc.) – or the representation used by some girls that husbands in America are different from those in Botswana. Although these representations are similar to content we know are available through media, the source of the representations used by the pupils could not easily be directly linked to specific media content. It was rather through the performances and word-by mouth of other villagers – who had better access and more direct media-use than these pupils (schoolteachers, friends and older peers, family members etc.) – that elements from media gained influence and became woven into the local discourses (i.e., of what signified success and failure or what men and women could do or not do).

Similar to what has been said about the essays, other parts of the fieldwork in Botswana also suggest to a great deal of variance and tensions in present gender representations and identity construction and the direct role of media is often difficult to extract. As many people in Botswana still not are very active with media, much cultivation of gender representations is inspired by the everyday settings. As such it appears still to be the mothers and fathers, teachers and headmasters, peers, nurses, chiefs and others around, who – through their individual accomplishments – represent and inspire possible routes for the young to move beyond traditional gender stereotypes. However, as the identity constructions of these role models in turn draw on gender representations available to them – which may to a larger extent include those in the media – it contributes to the connecting and weaving together of representations from schools, families, local environments, ‘old’ and ‘new’ media in new constellations. Through the continuous repetitions of such complex entanglements in identifications in the everyday gender representations in media take part in the cultivating of the new identity constructions.

Gender, change, media

There are limits to what essays written by pupils can tell us about the unfolding changes in the gender landscape in Botswana and the relative impact of gender representations in media to these processes. The writing of an essay in a competition at school about the future constitutes a specific genre quite different to many other practices of contemporary everyday life (i.e., it is less dialogical and more engaging with ‘old’ media technology to a formal audience in comparison to being with friends or family watching TV or posting on Facebook). Nevertheless, the essays do provide valuable insight into the gendered aspects of identity constructions among contemporary young Botswana and the relative role of media to these identity constructions of young Botswana today. Firstly, the essays show that both gender-fluid and counter stereotype as well as gender traditional

representations are put to use by young Batswana in their constructions of their future selves. Moreover, the young combine these to envision trajectories different from those of their parents' generation and in ways that suggest a clear move beyond stereotypes. Secondly, gender representations in media cannot easily be isolated as a singular factor that influences directly. Although media clearly have been important for the spreading of more varied gender representations to broader audiences and in providing platforms for expressions and negotiations of these in Botswana, large variations in media access produce a diverse landscape of influence with many indirect relations. The educational system – a setting decisive for the production of modern subjects (Mojula, 2014) and where there is gender equality in enrolment and intensions (although the latter it is not always reflected in practice, see Dunne 2007, Mosime, Ntshwarang & Mookodi, 2012) – families and the local environments remain to be influential production sites for gender identities. Thirdly, as these identity constructions discussed took place in the village – a setting where media use is rather low and stereotypical gender representations are claimed to persist – the essays provide a telling example of the variations in the representational landscape, the complex ways through which media influence as actors combine and cultivate gender representations from a mix of sources and the varied and moving gender identity constructions that we find among Batswana today. In all, I hope to have shown some aspects of the richness, variety and unpredictability of gender and media in its intersectional reality and factor in Africa's changing face.

Notes

1. The Botswana constitution guarantees equality before the law and prohibits discrimination based on sex or gender (SADC, 2015).
2. See: www.mediafrica.no
3. There is no gender distinguishing pronouns in Setswana, and first names are often used interchangeably.
4. A majority of the pupils who did state something about gender were female. Although this could suggest gender is more of concern to girls than boys, this is hard to verify and argue for as it is also possible that there was equal male and female representation among those who did not gender identify and a higher proportion of males among those who did not write an essay.

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“HerStory”

Challenging Gender Stereotypes in Israeli Girls’ Perfect Love Stories

Shiri Reznik

This study explores the love stories written by 77 Israeli girls, aged 11-12 years old, in order to examine the possible influence of the media on their romantic narratives and the gender roles embedded within them. The girls were asked to write their own perfect love story and then participated in focus groups during which they explained the stories they wrote. The stories have been analyzed with the method of discourse analysis. Although many girls chose to express their imaginary romantic world by using popular media characters, plot lines and idioms, others offered a new and even revolutionary perspective on what a perfect love story can be, and especially the gender roles it can depict. Stories about female protagonists who make the first romantic move, perform sisterhood as an act of resistance, or prefer to be an assertive non-stereotypical princess, are analyzed in light of the girls’ socioeconomic backgrounds and role models.

If you had to imagine the perfect love story what would it be? This study aims to find out how tween Israeli girls perceive the concept of romantic love, what are their expectations regarding gender roles in the romantic sphere, and how do they imagine an ideal love story when given the opportunity to write their own romantic narrative.

Another goal of the current study is to examine the possible influence of the media on girls’ romantic perceptions and dreams, since numerous studies have found that mediated representations of love are meaningful sources of identification, social learning, and internalization of romantic narratives and behaviors among children, teens and adults as well (Bachen & Illouz, 1996; Hefner & Wilson, 2013). This influence is especially relevant in the case of young girls who are the main target audience of the romantic genre (Lemish, Liebes, & Seidmann, 2001).

Media and romance

Awareness to the role media play in the construction of romantic perceptions led to several studies that tried to identify what kind of messages are being transferred through romantic texts from a variety of genres, such as fairy tales (Rowe, 1979) and Disney movies (Stover, 2013). A central theme that has emerged from these content analyses was the oppressive gender roles portrayed in many romantic relationships. In these mediated love stories women's subordination is presented as romantically desirable and rewarding, and love is a mythical force without which there is no real purpose to the heroine's life. Men, by contrast, are depicted as leaders, heroic warriors, and the brave rescuers of helpless "damsels in distress". Furthermore, female friendships, which can be an alternative and empowering net of support, are also often left aside in favor of heterosexual romance (Rich, 1980).

At the same time, other researchers have found that young girls are capable of interpreting romantic stories in a variety of ways, engage actively in negotiations with them, and extract messages that correspond to their individual subjective perceptions, as well as interpretative communities (Aidman, 1999; Reznik & Lemish, 2011).

Hence, if girls can interpret romantic representations in different ways and produce opposing and critical readings, can they also construct new narratives of romance which will not conform to the hegemonic discourse? Can they become active media makers whose independent creation will portray more equal gender roles? Previous studies suggest that the answer to this question is complex: some researchers found that girls can resist mainstream media and create revolutionary and empowering gender representations in the form of feminist zines and films (Ferris, 2001; Kearney, 2006). However, Banet-Weiser (2011) found that when uploading films to YouTube teen girls tend to present themselves in sexual and self objectifying ways, reinforcing oppressive gender roles.

When focusing more specifically on the creation of romantic narratives the findings suggest that girls and boys tend to duplicate the subject positions and romantic repertoires offered by popular culture. For example, the Greek teens who wrote love stories focusing on stereotypical repertoires like "Cinderella and the prince" and "the assertive boy and permissive girl" (Deliyianni-Kouimtzi and Lentza, 2008), or the Norwegian 12 years old boys and girls, who wrote love stories which depicted male brave heroes, and female protagonists who were willing to forgive every behavior and sacrifice different aspects of their lives in order to maintain the romantic relationship (Haldar, 2013).

While these two studies did not focus on the young writers' socioeconomic backgrounds, the current research takes this aspect into consideration as it was found to have influence on the development of romantic beliefs, and the ability to criticize and even reject the popular romantic discourse offered by the media (Aidman, 1999; Reznik & Lemish, 2011). Have the Israeli girls duplicated the mediated romantic conventions and stereotypical gender roles like their Greek and Norwegian counterparts, or have

they created alternative narratives of romance? The answer to this intriguing question is further explored.

The study's methodology

The data gathering for this study¹ included 77 love stories written in 2008 by Israeli tween girls ages 11 to 12. Among them, 39 came from well-to-do, non-religious backgrounds and lived in the center of Israel; the remaining 38 tweens had lower-class, religiously traditional backgrounds and lived in the northern periphery of Israel. The research subjects were recruited through their schools, and participation followed parents' completion of consent forms, as well as detailed questionnaires describing their family's background. The analyses revealed that these two groups, who differed by socioeconomic status (SES) and geographical location, held distinctly different views about romantic love and gender roles, hence they are referred to as high and low SES groups (HSES and LSES) in the presentation of findings below.

The two groups of girls received an envelope from their teachers with two blank pages and a form that included the following instruction: “If you were to imagine the perfect love story- what would it be? Write the story on the pages attached. The story could be anything you can think of and it will be read only by the researcher.” The teachers directed the girls to submit the forms within one week of receiving them and ensured these forms will be read only by the researcher.

The love stories have been analyzed with the method of discourse analysis, focusing on the gender roles and subject positions embedded within them. This form of analysis examines the available resources that people draw on in order to create a text. These resources are known as “*interpretative repertoires*”, which are “clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech often assembled around metaphors. They are resources for making evaluation, constructing factual versions, and performing particular actions” (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Thus, through repetitive readings of the stories the main plotlines, motives, romantic myths and gender roles were identified.

The discourse analysis of the girls' love stories also incorporated a focused search for “*media traces*” (Götz, Lemish, Aidman, & Moon, 2005), which refer to the use of media in order to articulate and express meaningful actions, thoughts and experiences. Media traces include the explicit and implicit indicators that point to the specific media text through which the girls chose to express their romantic world. For example, mentioning the name of a media text in the story, or adopting key characters and plot lines that appear in it.

In addition to writing love stories the girls of this study further participated in focus groups, where they have been asked about their romantic beliefs and expectations, as well as the sources of inspiration for writing their own love stories. These interviews were conducted in 19 focus groups composed of close friends, and were recorded and

transcribed verbatim. Multi-stage grounded analyses of the transcripts followed common qualitative procedures (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Quotes incorporated in the following pages were translated into English by the author with great sensitivity in order to maintain the personal flavor of each young writer, while facilitating accessibility for the English reader.

Challenging gender stereotypes in the romantic sphere

While reading through the girls' love stories it became clear that the media's influence on their romantic imagination was powerful and significant. "Media traces" were easily identified in many love stories, when the girls chose to express their imaginary romantic world by using popular media idioms ("Once upon a time", "And they lived happily ever after"), media characters (using names of reality television stars, or describing a love interest as resembling the American actor Zac Efron), and media plot lines (a couple meeting by re-enacting the story from the movie "*High School Musical*").

However, some of the stories the girls wrote offered a new and sometimes even revolutionary perspective on what a perfect love story can be, and especially the gender roles it can depict. While some girls chose to follow the well known gender roles of the "damsel in distress" waiting to be discovered and saved by the male brave protagonist, others wrote stories that did not conform to the norm and even deliberately disrupted the hegemonic romantic discourse.

Overall, 24 stories out of the 77 written for this study (almost a third) were classified as "gender challenging", since they portrayed a non stereotypical female protagonist who dares to make the first romantic move and fight for her love, or one who is willing to give up her romantic relationship with a boy in order to maintain the relationship with her female best friend. The gender challenging stories were divided into three main themes which will further be explained and discussed: "making the first move", "alternative princesses" and "sisterhood as an act of resistance".

Making the first move

The stories suggest that traditional romantic gender roles, where the masculine side initiates the relationship while the feminine side passively awaits his courtship, are still present in the romantic consciousness of most tween girls in this research. Consequently, many female protagonists chose to only implicitly hint their romantic interest, using various courting techniques like waving their hair, exchanging flirtatious looks, or by nurturing their appearance in order to attract the attention of the boy they like.

Yet, another kind of heroines also emerged while reading the girls' love stories, when some of the young writers vividly described girls who were assertive and bold enough

to show straight forward romantic initiative. An example of such a female protagonist can be seen in the following quote, taken from a story written by a girl from the LSES group, describing a dialogue between the heroine and her best friend and later another with the boy she's in love with:

Naama: Well, I think Noam is a really cute, good looking boy, right? Maya: So? Naama: It's really difficult for me to say it, but... I love him. Maya: So now what? Naama: He doesn't even notice me! Maya: So, tell him, this way he'll at least be aware of it. Naama: Maybe, we'll see...

When Passover evening arrived Naama called him and said: Noam, can I have a minute? Noam: Hurry up! I haven't got all day! Naama: I love you. Noam: Ha ha ha... Naama: I'm not kidding. Noam: What?? Naama: What you just heard- I love you! Noam: Really? I love you too...

The female protagonist bravely confesses her love and doesn't withdraw even when facing a short tempered boy who finally comes around and cooperates with her. This straight forward approach appeared in another story written in the LSES group, when the heroine does not give up and finally wins the heart of the boy she fancies:

Yarden did everything in order to get Noam: she sent him letters, called him everyday- but he didn't pay her any attention whatsoever. Until one day she went to school and very seriously told him: Noam, I've been keeping this in my heart for a long time now, and... Noam: Well, what did you want to tell me? Yarden: I wanted to tell you that I love you and I want us to be girlfriend and boyfriend. Do you agree? Noam was completely shocked! He finally said: I'll get back to you at the next recess, sweetie... Noam said it very enthusiastically and smiled, and from his “sweetie” I already knew it's going to be a Yes...

It is worthwhile noticing that the assertive and norm-braking female protagonists like those mentioned above were more common in stories written by the *lower* SES group, which included girls who came from less educated families with stronger religious beliefs. Such protagonists were found in a third of the stories written by this group, compared to one fifth of the stories written by girls from the HSES group.

A possible explanation for this surprising finding can be based on the conclusions of the clinical psychologist Mary Pipher, who in her book “*Reviving Ophelia: Saving the selves of adolescent girls*” claims that girls from low cultural and socio-economic background tend to show more resilience, courage and initiative than other, more privileged girls their age (Pipher, 1994). Therefore, it is possible to assume that the rough living conditions of girls from the LSES group can be the basis for their tendency to imagine active and determined heroines, who can change their lives by themselves and do not have to wait passively for a better fate to come, depending on some exterior factor which can not necessarily be trusted.

Indeed, as one of the LSES girls bluntly said: “I think girls don’t have to sit and wait for the messiah to come, because he won’t. They should ask the boy they like out and stop being so shy!”. This girl further explained that she has understood that things in her life do not always come easy, therefore one should not wait for things to happen by themselves, but get up and do something about it.

Alternative princesses

When one thinks of a perfect love story the well known repertoire of the beautiful princess saved by her prince charming and then living happily ever after may come to mind. However, both the LSES and the HSES girls chose to negotiate with the character of the stereotypical princess, and designed new and alternative princesses who disrupt the hegemonic discourse and the normative power relations between men and women. Such rebellious princess, for example, was described in a story called “fighting for love” written by a girl from the HSES group:

Once upon a time there was a kingdom located in a small village and there lived 3 princesses: Mika, Adi and Natalie. Natalie was special. She was a warrior who never waited to be saved. Like every other girl she dreamt of her own love story. One day she went for a walk in the forest and as she was walking by the lovely blooming flowers she suddenly saw a mysterious young man. When he passed near her she felt a strange feeling and quickly ran away. The next day she met him again, walked towards him and asked him: Did you feel it too? And he replied: Yes, where are my good manners? My name is Yaniv and what’s yours? She answered: Natalie, nice to meet you. They began chatting and didn’t notice that hours have passed...

As the story unfolds the couple falls in love and discovers that their families come from rival kingdoms, nevertheless the two refuse to fight each other and convince their families to end the war between the kingdoms and celebrate the young couple’s marriage. After writing this unusual story this HSES girl was interviewed about her sources of inspiration and explained that:

I think it’s all because of these fairy tales where children see that the boys always save the girls and they understand it from there... that’s why I relate to things I personally find to be true. I like to watch TV shows like “*Naruto*” (a Japanese manga series- S.R.). Shows about wars where the girls save the boys. Some girls find these shows frightening, but I’m not scared.

It is interesting to see how girls who wrote gender challenging stories also actively look for powerful female role models in the media, and select the contents they are exposed to depending on the gender roles they portray.

Another example of an alternative princess, who makes the first romantic move and disobey her parents, can be found in the following story written by a girl from the LSES group, who describes an adventurous princess who would have preferred to be less privileged:

Once upon a time there was a princess named Matilda, but she didn't like being a princess. She would have preferred being one of the simple people and not a princess! No one could influence her with his words or actions- she wasn't willing to compromise... One day she escaped the palace dressed as a servant. She was strolling around when suddenly a boy caught her eye. She ran after him but he didn't pay her any attention. The princess was disappointed and hurt but she didn't give up. She followed the boy and discovered he's poor and working in the circus trying to take care of his family. She loved this boy and wouldn't give up- first she tried talking to him but he was too busy, later she went to his house but he wasn't there, then she tried visiting his house again and this time luckily he was there. She told him she was princess Matilda and that she's fallen in love with him. He couldn't believe it...

The story happily ends with Matilda's luxurious wedding after she convinced her reluctant parents that this is all for the best, and that the young lovers can overcome their different backgrounds and find common ground.

Sisterhood as an act of resistance

Another salient theme which emerged from the girls' love stories was the presence of different dramatic obstacles which the couple had to overcome in order to fulfill their love. One of the common obstacles was the “Romantic triangle”, in which the heroine is forced to compete with her female best friend for the love of the same boy. This complex situation leads to a difficult conflict of loyalty, as the heroine has to understand her priorities and decide who comes first- heterosexual romance or sisterhood, or maybe there is a strategy to combine both?

While in stories written by the LSES group the male side was favored at the expense of the female friendship (which was often presented as fickle and full of intrigue), it is fascinating to see that the HSES girls chose to resolve these same triangles by preferring sisterhood over the romantic heterosexual relationship. One example of this preference can be seen in the following story:

Mom, I need you to help me! Roni and Omer were a couple, but he broke up with her because he loves me. I said I'd be his girlfriend since I love him too, but then I told Roni about it and she yelled “What??” and ran away. I don't know what to do now. Dana's mother: maybe you hurt her feelings since not long ago

she was his girlfriend and maybe she still loves him? Dana: Wow, I guess you're right. Poor Roni, what have I done? And we're best friends!

Later in Roni's house: Oh, Roni I'm really-really sorry. I don't know what I was thinking. I will make it up to you- I promise. I'm going to break up with him tomorrow! Roni was silent for a while and then finally said: oh well, how can I not forgive you? I yelled- Yes!! Great, so you're coming to the mall with me? You are my BFF! (Best friend forever). Yes BFF, I'm coming...

Preferring your best friend over a romantic relationship is depicted in another story written by a girl from the HSES group, called "friendship is the best":

Yoav and I became a couple and I think my best friend Maya was sad. I asked her what happened and she answered she's sorry she can't be happy for me, but she really loves Yoav. I thought about it a lot and decided to do something about it. I wrote Yoav a note saying: I'm so sorry but I want us to break up. I love you but my friendship with Maya comes first! When he saw the note he was sad but I knew I did the right thing. Maya understood how much I love her and told me: Way to go! Only now I've realized what a wonderful caring friend you are. We'll be together through thick and thin and nobody can separate us anymore! (Especially not boys!)

Since that day Maya and I are loyal to each other like we've never been before. And what about the boys? Each one of us found her own!

Here we can see how the two friends prefer to stay loyal to each other, and will not let heterosexual romance come between them. As they realize their priorities they renew their vows, not unlike the well known wedding ceremony, declaring that they will stay together through thick and thin. Unlike the previous example, in this story sisterhood can go together with having romantic relationships with boys, when each of the female friends finds her own beloved.

The tendency of the HSES girls to prefer sisterhood over romantic relationships with boys is in congruence with the findings of Walton, Weatherall and Jackson (2002) who analyzed stories about conflict written by American girls aged 9-12. The American girls described romantic triangles similar to those mentioned by the Israeli girls of the current study, and like them they also chose to resolve this conflict by favoring the female side of the triangle.

According to Walton, Weatherall and Jackson (2002) these girls' perspective has a revolutionary potential, since it can disrupt the hegemonic oppressive discourse about femininity as well as romance. The discourse the girls have created in their stories functions as an empowering alternative to stereotypes like "women are not to be trusted", or the myth that female friendship can not last since women always compete against each other for the romantic attention of men. Breaking this myth and replacing it with

an emphasis on sisterhood can encourage young girls to develop a confident and more powerful identity, without limiting themselves to the narrow subject positions the dominant discourse has to offer.

Conclusion

Given the unequal representation of girls and women in the media in general, and in children’s media in particular, where girls are outnumbered and stereotypically portrayed (Götz & Herche, 2012), it is inspiring to see how when given the opportunity young girls can create their own independent romantic narratives, and break traditional gender stereotypes.

Whether it is the princess who is also a brave fighter, or other female protagonists who initiate the romantic relationship, or even choose to give it up all together while preferring to be committed to their female best friend- the young writers of the current study showed agency, creativity and their ability to improvise and reject the common romantic gender roles constructed by the media.

One of the surprising findings of this study was that the girls from the *lower* SES group were the ones who showed more initiative in the romantic sphere, in the stories they wrote as well as in their own lives. This active behavior occurred despite the fact they come from a more conservative background than girls from the HSES group, as well as from families in which parents emphasize religious values of modesty and respect, which do not necessarily encourage a rebellious nature or undermining existing boundaries of gender stereotypes.

On the other hand, it is interesting to see that despite the reluctance of most girls from the HSES group to initiate their own romantic relationships, they were not without power in the romantic sphere, but found other path of action through which to establish the position of a powerful, self-aware and active agent. This path included avoiding heterosexual romantic relations and setting an alternative for the establishment of a strong feminine identity, which can be acquired through strong female bonds with close friends.

In the spirit of Virginia Woolf’s iconic book “*A room of one’s own*” (1929), where she suggested female students to rewrite history and discover the story of all the unknown women who were excluded from the pages of history since their story was considered insignificant, the girls of the current study rewrote the narrative of romance and thus found their own story and their own voice. They have articulated “*HerStory*”, a term coined by Robin Morgan (1970), referring to the revolutionary act of writing history from a feminist perspective. Accordingly, the girls created a narrative which is not limited by the patriarchal gender norms, but one who allows them to express their genuine selves and their individual beliefs. Their stories offer empowering female role models who can influence their own behavior, as well as other girls’ perceptions and ambitions, because “if she can see it- or better yet write it by herself- she can be it”.

Notes

1. The current study of love stories is based on the author's Ph.D. dissertation, entitled: "What's love got to do with it: The role media play in the construction of the romantic love concept among girls from the periphery and center of Israel", written at Tel Aviv University under the supervision of Prof. Dafna Lemish.

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Duckface/Stoneface

Selfie Stereotypes and Selfie Literacy in Gendered Media Practices in Sweden

Michael Forsman

This article describes how Swedish teens use selfies for gendered self-representation in online peer-to-peer communication. The aim of the article is to critically question and add on to the extensive tradition of studies of large scale mass mediated stereotypes, by looking at how gender selfie stereotypes are produced and performed in social media through the interaction and participation of school children. The article combines constructionist perspectives on representation and gender with social semiotics. Based on empirical data from focus group interviews with student from grade 7 in four Stockholm schools (N=41) the article show that the way the selfie genre is played out and negotiated among teens is marked by gender stereotypes. These stereotypes are used to confirm a dualistic separation of sexes, the subordination of women, and a heteronormative order for sexuality, but also used for “stereotype vitalization” where prevailing gender norms are renegotiated, jested and mocked.

To take, share and comment on selfies (images of oneself, taken by oneself, to be shared on social media) has become a common practice among both celebrities and the public at large. The impact of the selfie format is manifested in the millions of *selfies* (myself in my picture) and *wefies* (me with others in my picture) that continuously are posted on social media web sites such as Instagram.

Some studies suggest that the selfie genre is driven by attention seeking behavior and social conformity, with visual inspiration and individual ideals taken from celebrity culture, commercials and different forms of popular culture (Lobinger & Brantner, 2015; Siibak, 2009, 2013). There has also been some moral indignation and cultural critique directed towards the selfie phenomenon, which has been described as a sign of an individualistic and narcissistic lifestyle and branding, and as a reflection of a consumerist and neoliberal order (e.g., Giroux, 2015). Others have argued that the selfie genre even might have political potential if used for civic or artistic purposes, and there are

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examples of how selfies can be used in alternative and more artistic ways (Kuntsman, 2017), but this article focuses on the more general – mainstream, if you like – use of selfies among teenagers.

From a social psychological perspective, stereotypes can be described as a basic human cognitive and linguistic function, or as “pictures in our head” based on simplification and categorization that help us to handle a myriad of impressions and the ungraspable complexity of social life (Lippman, [1922] 2007; Perkins, 1989). The concept “media stereotype” in turn refers both to static characters in fiction and drama, with a limited set of characteristics, and to recurrent plot structures and aesthetical formulas (e.g., Cawelti, 1976; Dyer, 1993; Schweinitz, 2011).

Studies of stereotypes as textual codes in systems of representation (like genre stereotypes) or as a narrative force have been essential to mass communication research and critical media studies for a long time; Barker (1989) even speaks of “a small industry in its own right” (p. 86). According to this tradition, media stereotypes are linked to commercial standardization, hegemonic culture and negative media effects in combination with lack of artistic originality, critical awareness, and political and aesthetical progression. It is no wonder that the term stereotype almost always is used abusively (Dyer, 1993).

Traditionally, discussions about media stereotypes have concentrated on the technologies and cultural forms of what Marshall (2010) calls “representational media” (i.e. mass media output governed by large-scale commercial organizations and the logic of one-way communication). In this article, I want instead to use selfies to investigate the function and potential of stereotypes in what Marshall calls “presentational media”, where the textual content is performed, that is, produced and exhibited by individuals through the participatory media (boyd, 2014; Jenkins, 2006).

Stereotypes, gender and power are essential not only in relation to media audiences but also to “the tethered self” (Turkle, 2013), who is constantly connected and engaged in personalized networks (Raine & Wellman, 2012). Still, there is a lack of research on the dynamics of gender stereotypes in the circulation of genres like selfies on social media. I approach this void by using data from my study (Forsman, 2014): *Duckface/Stoneface: Social media, gaming and visual communication among boys and girls in grades 4 and 7* (title translated from the Swedish). The title *Duckface/Stoneface* refers to two gender stereotypical poses that I learned about during focus group interviews with students in grade 7 (aged 13-14 years). Duckface is a pose where you show great awareness of the camera. This pose is mainly associated with girls. Stoneface is a pose more associated with boys, which is about looking cool and unaffected by the presence of the camera.

Methodology and perspectives on gender

The report *Duckface/Stoneface* (Forsman, 2014) was the result of a research assignment from the Swedish Media Council in 2013. The Council wanted a qualitative,

gender oriented report on how boys and girls respectively use social media, games and images online to complement their semiannual statistics on children's media use, which over time has shown strongly gender stereotypical results for how 11–16 year olds use online media. Simply put: boys go into gaming, girls are on social media. The questions to answer were, how can this be understood, and how do the children themselves relate to this?

My study was conducted in the spring of 2013 in four Stockholm schools of different socioeconomic context with the aid of two former students from the Department of Media and Communication Studies at Södertörn University. An essential part of the method was focus group interviews. According to Livingstone & Lunt (1993), focus groups are a good method to trigger conversations about sensitive topics and shared group norms, since the participants can support each other in self-disclosure. Our interview questions concerned habits, use, practices and opinions related to the social media, gaming and visual communication. At the start the study was not especially focused on selfies or gender stereotypes in social media; this came to the fore during the focus group interviews with the grade 7 students. The material used in this article is taken from eleven such interviews (N=41), eight with girls (N=28) and three with boys (N=13).

Most of the interviews were done between or after classes in empty group rooms, comprised 3 to 5 students, and lasted about 60 minutes. All interviews were recorded, to later be transcribed and analyzed thematically. The recruitment to and practical administration of the interviews was done with the help of schoolteachers, with written permission obtained from parents for their child to participate. All interviews were done in accordance with the ethical guidelines given by The Swedish Research Council (VR), which means that the children were informed that their names would be anonymized, that the information in the room was confidential, and that they could leave the interview at any time they wanted.

In line with what Hennessy & Heary ([2005]2011) suggest for focus group interviews with children, we used some “stimulating material” (a sample of selfies, some candy) as well as handed out small “assignments” (like list your favorites) in order to keep the participants interested. We also followed Barbour's (2007) advice to use gender homogenous groups when working with younger children and teenagers, all the time well aware that the interview situation also is a space for gender performance, with pressure to say “the right thing”.

I assumed a constructionist approach based on Butler's (1990) performative theories on gender. This means that embodied selves are not seen as preceding the cultural conventions for how to signify bodies. Or as Butler puts it, “identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (p. 25). R.W. Connell's (2002) perspective on children as agents and as active in their appropriation of the dominant heteronormative order was also an important input to my approach, as well as Connell's emphasis on the importance of homosocial peer group control in this process.

Children's manner of using the media can be regarded as a way to actively adopt and confirm (or challenge) the terrain of the prevailing gender order; a structure based on the dichotomization of masculine and feminine, and the subordination of women. This unjust order is something that every new generation have to explore, and change. It can also be seen as a (play)ground for explorative, and undermining activities.

Although the data from my focus group interviews expose some stereotypical patterns, the material can be read against the grain as a form for deconstruction of the prevailing gender order; and here we can turn to Cawelti's (1976, p. 12) concept of "stereotype vitalization", which according to Seiter (1986) alludes to the fact that "uniqueness and individuality can be added onto and performed by the usage of stereotypes" (p. 23).

One stereotype that came up and that influenced the title for the report was "duckface". According to the *Urban Dictionary*, a Duckface is the face you make if you push your lips together in a combination of a pout and a pucker to give the impression that you have more prominent cheekbones and fuller lips. There are many variations of the duckface, and a myriad of online suggestions for "how to take the ultimate selfie". One can also find directives for the "best duckface" in Kim Kardashian's (2015) biography *Selfish*, a book a book entirely based on Kardashian's selfies and wefies.

Binary visuals

The visual and social norms for the encoding of gender in what Lüders, Prøitz & Rasmussen (2010) refer to as "self-publishing genres" (selfies is one example of this) coincides with what many studies of mass media and different popular culture genres previously have shown: males are represented as active and self-important, while women and girls are more defined by their looks and their relation to the "male gaze" (Mulvey, 1989).

This pattern has saturated the general mass media output and directs much imagery on social media. Whereas "He" often depicts himself as somewhat distant and engaged in something else than merely posing for his own camera, "She" selfies are more likely to be centered around what Mulvey (1989) in her seminal work on film and gender structuration calls "to-be-looked-at-ness".

As Table 1 below shows, similar patterns could be registered in my study.

Table 1 is a compilation and thus a simplification. Of course there were data that went against this kind of gender dualistic exposition; still, the model sums up some of the main results, and it can be read in different ways. One can see this table as an illustration of how gender stereotypes prevail and oppress young children and teenagers, and how guilt and self-blame consistently is stitched to (media) practices that are associated with girls. Another reading of it 1 is that it reveals what we can call "selfie literacy", meaning the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create selfies in relation, for example, to dominating representational codes for performing gender, although not necessarily in a critical and unveiling way.

Table 1. Boy selfies and girl selfies

Boys' images	Girls' images
• Avoid selfies • If you post selfies, look cool • Smooth faces are bad • Mirror selfies are good (for showing your 'six pack') • Too much styling gel can make you look gay • Stoneface is good • Don't do duckface • Be natural = look as if you really don't bother	• Take as many pictures as you like in search of the right one • It's ok to upload many images • Show that you are aware of the camera • Use Instagram filters to improve your images • Look pretty and cheerful • A moderate exposure of skin and cleavage is ok, but not too much • If you do a duckface, be moderate • Be natural = don't use too much make up

Notable is that it is considered desirable among both girls and boys to “act natural”, but that this pose visually is constructed in diametrically different ways. “He” comes across as natural through poses, positions, activities and places that makes him look nonchalant, like “I don't really bother”. Whereas “She” obtains a “natural look” by using filters and by not wearing *too much* make up.

Among the boys that took part in the focus group interviews it was generally important to distance themselves from the selfie phenomenon. Like these two boys do, in focus group F2 consisting of five boys (5B).

D: I almost never upload selfies.

Z: Neither do I. I just check out others'. F2:5B

In interview F5 three boys participated, and here the interviewer (I) learns that if as a 13-year-old boy you post a selfie it is better if your picture appears as depictive and “functional” rather than as smooth and posed. This can also be related to some of the statements that the boys made about selfies as “tiresome” and “unnecessary”, with the indication that selfies are “a girly thing”.

F: I know a girl who posts two or three pictures every day on Instagram. That is kind of tiresome. Every time you scroll down there is a new image of her. By now she has probably posted 500. At least.

L: And a lot of this imagery covers poses from, what should I say, the same sector.

I: This is not something you do?

F: No way!

A: If we post. It's just natural. F5:3B

Interestingly enough, similar forms of negative evaluation and encumbering came up when some of the girls described their media practices using words like “unnecessary” or “addictive”; especially when talking about “other girls”.

Generally, the girls were much more elaborated and willing to describe their “selfie literacy” and the generic distinctions and production values behind their imagery. One example of this was “the twisted selfie” where you look like you’re leaning your head, which helps to make you look “pretty”. Here we learned that there are two main techniques for creating this kind of selfie: either you hold the smartphone camera lopsided or you use an Instagram filter.

- R: I can´t stand straight. I must be twisted [laughter].
- C: It’s more delicate.
- R: Otherwise you look stiff like what’s his name, Hitler. F23:3G

Impression management

Selfies are part of a strategic and communicative mediation and branding of the self that can be related to what boyd (2008), referring to Goffman ([1959]1990) calls “impression management”, which means that my imagery not only represents “the real me”, but also my ideal ego in combination with how I think others regard me, and how I would like them to perceive me.

There is a strong awareness of both one’s actual audience (close friends) and one’s “imagined audience” (other followers) (Oolo & Siibak, 2013), and there is a strong surveillance among peers and in one’s individualized network that guides what is considered as socially acceptable or not in selfies. The limitations of what is socially acceptable for selfies among young users of social media is illustrated in Table 2, which is a list over some of the semiotic and social directives that Siibak (2009, 2013) has found among young Estonians.

Table 2. Norms for socially acceptable selfies

- Make sure your pictures resemble professional imagery and visual standards associated with celebrities - Make sure your pictures harmonize with the stylistic norms of your online network - Only post what you think will make others find you attractive - Only post selfies that make you look good, preferably better than others - Make sure your images connote an interesting and groovy life
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Similar findings have been made by Albury (2015) and Lobinger & Brantner (2015) in studies that also reveal the importance of appearing as an authentic and profiled

personality, but always without “being too much”. During our focus group interviews it became clear that girls were almost painfully and ostensibly aware of these regulations.

A: When girls post pictures where they are, like, half naked it will turn into the worst biggest thing ever. But when guys post themselves in just their underpants, no one says anything.

R: That’s true. For example, if I see a girl that, like, posted a picture of herself in just underpants and a bra then it’s like, what a bitch! Then when a guy posts the same thing, that is somehow better. F23:3G

Obviously “girl-selfies” and “boy-selfies” are audited and estimated according to different value scales, as in this example, where the three boys in F5:3B comment on some selfies with girls that we brought to the interview. Their comments are made almost in sport commentary manner.

A: Some duckface there it seems.

L: And a lot of makeup.

F: Mm, there are some poses that are really popular among girls.

A: Like when they turn around and take a selfie in the mirror so they both can show their face *and* flash their ass [demonstrates the pose]. F5:3B

In all the interviews there was talk about duckface. It seemed to be a given possibility and part of their repertoire of selfie poses to most of the girls, while none of the boys admitted to even having tried to pull a duckface. Generally, duckface was used as a pejorative term for a stereotype especially tied to girls that were judged as “too extreme”.

Duckface also came up in affiliation with another stereotype, namely “*fjortis*”. This in Swedish teenage lingo alludes to a person aged about fourteen, but is mainly used as a degrading remark about someone who is trying to look older than they actually are by wearing (a lot of) makeup together with clothes and props that signal partying, consumption, and attitudes and behavior associated with people above their actual age group. Some years ago, there was a something that could be described as a “*fjortis* subculture”. This was based on exaggeration, superficiality, hedonism and consumption. Since then the use value of the term seems to have diminished (although there still are Facebook groups like *We who hate Fjortisar* or *R.I.P Fjortis*). Even so this stereotype came up in our interviews.

Here *fjortis* was used as a negative term and almost solely in connection with girls regarded as too exhibitionistic or “too sexual”.

I: Do you still say *fjortis*?

A: No, now it’s “*orre*”*

N: It’s a word for those looking for a lot of attention

I: *Aha, and what does an orre do then?*

N: Like rolling themselves in the snow in their underwear...to get likes on Facebook F19:G3

* Orre originates from the turkish word *orospu* and means vulgar, bitch, slut.

Stereotype vitalization

A stereotype fixates and separates what in real life is something much more fluid (like gender); or as Dyer (1993) puts it: "stereotypes do not only, in concert with social types, map out the boundaries of acceptable and legitimate behavior, they also insist on boundaries exactly at those points where in reality there are none" (p. 16). Probably, the selfie format and different gender poses can be regarded as one area that children and adolescents use to orient themselves by constructing dualism, difference and change.

Often stereotypes are associated with a dumbing down process driven by standardized and repetitive generic formulas, and popular mythologies and ideological patterns that distort, simplify and misrepresent gender, class, race, age, etc. This conserving effect of media stereotypes has been thoroughly discussed (Hall, 1997; Ross & Lester, 2011). Still, uniqueness, individuality, humor and reflexivity can be added onto some stereotypes, and this "stereotype vitalization" (Cawelti 1976, p. 11) opens up to new forms of projections.

Several examples of what could be called "stereotype vitalization" came up during our interviews, especially with the girls. One was the difference made between serious and unserious selfies. We learned that when you take a "serious selfie" your ambition is to look natural. As we saw in Table 1, "natural" is constructed by not wearing too much make up and not doing any duckface, whereas the "unserious selfie" more often is taken together with a friend, for example during a selfie session where you almost laugh your brains out together. For girls to look "silly" or "ugly" can be a way to mock and undermine the visual order of how to look "pretty", according to structuration principles that can be understood through the concept of "the male gaze".

There seems to be empowering and deconstructing potential also in relation to the maybe strongest selfie stereotype of them all, the Duckface. Often this pose and its visual codification is associated with stupidity, but a duckface can also be used to signify friendliness. This is an important aspect of all selfie stereotypes, that the imagery should not only be read as visual representations, but should also be related to different media practices (Couldry, 2012) such as posting, sharing, commenting, etc., and to the fact that the visual meaning changes depending on when, how, by who and to whom the image is shared and commented on within ones individualized network (cf. Kress, 2010).

Selfies are often compared to self-portraits, but the question is whether this analogy is accurate. A self-portrait is a single image meant to be self-sufficient and something more permanent. Selfies are snapshots taken at "an arm lengths distance" with crude and depictive rather than artistic or innovative imagery (Frosh, 2015). The selfie is ephemeral, replaceable, easily discarded and made for instant circulation (Hess, 2015).

According to Retterberg (2014) this genre should not even be discussed in terms of single images, being much more based on quantities and cumulative social logics. Even the word selfie (a diminutive) indicates something provisional and ongoing (Rutledge, 2013). This is just a version of me, for the time being. Thus, selfies should be seen as part of an ongoing identity process (Drotner, 2008) where I am "writing myself into being" through my online activities (Sundén, 2003).

Discussion

Many of the norms that came up in my study reflect the principles of a gender system based on a dualistic separation of the sexes, the subordination of women, and a heteronormative order of sexuality. This system is prevailing and reenacted, but is not fixed. Rather, it could be described as a moving equilibrium. Thus, selfies and other online personal media genres used for self-presentation can be regarded as a terrain where children are audited and commented on by their peers as they together explore how to "do gender". In this process some dominating gender stereotypes will be confirmed, while others are renegotiated, jested or mocked.

Within the context of media education and media literacy work media stereotypes often are regarded as something evil that children should be vaccinated against, and as something that society ultimately can be liberated from. It is not unlikely that this is something of an illusion. It might be more fruitful to regard selfie stereotypes as a semiotic material and social practice that can be used as a starting point for reflection concerning systematic gender inequalities in media pedagogical work, where it is important not to condemn what children do in their daily media practices and online life. For it surely is better as a pedagogue to be perceptive of the children's skills, terminology and meaning formations.

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“Stop Propagating it is ‘Normal’ to Look Like Models”

TV Programs and Their Role in the Context of Eating Disorders in Germany

Maya Götz & Caroline Mendel

Eating disorders are one of the most common psychosomatic illnesses among girls and young women in western industrial countries. This study aims at giving a voice to girls currently receiving therapy for an eating disorder. Our informants were n=95 girls between 11 and 18 years of age. They filled out questionnaires with open and standardized questions regarding the role of TV shows in the context of the participants' eating disorders. There was one program mentioned, unprompted, above all others: *Germany's Next Topmodel (GNTM)*. It fosters unrealistic standards and body dissatisfaction when the girls started to compare every detail of their body with the candidates' bodies. They adopt the implicit logic of the format and disconnect from their own perceptions, feelings and needs in order to succeed. If this happens at a time of identity crisis and among girls with corresponding psychological dispositions it can lead to an eating disorder.

Nora is 13, almost 14 years old. When she was 11, she couldn't hide it anymore: she was anorexic. The deeper reasons for the serious psychosomatic disorder are extremely complex. Predispositions are very likely to play a key role, it has to do in many cases with a performance-oriented family and with herself because she fits into the typical pattern of the self: “ambitious, shy, perfectionist”. From Nora's perspective, however, it was mostly the ideal of beauty that drove her illness in its formative stages: “Beauty is when you glow. When people see you and think: ‘Wow, I want to look like that’, ‘She's perfect’, ‘She doesn't have an extra gram anywhere on her body.’” Those are ideas she got from the media, as in the show *Germany's Next Topmodel* “You see how you're supposed to look [...] thin, tall, pretty, natural, long legs, etc. If you don't look like that, you're not pretty, or at least not pretty enough to put yourself on display too much.” She has watched *Germany's Next Topmodel* “as often as possible” since she was 9, first mostly because she wanted to be “cool” and wanted to be able to talk to the other girls at school on Friday mornings. When she describes what she particularly enjoyed about it, she

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says it was “to gossip about it and laugh about the candidates’ emotional breakdowns”. She completely rejects moderator Heidi Klum. Together with this distanced reception, however, she often compared herself with the candidates, especially during “photo shootings on the beach, working out at the gym, and situations in which they ate”. Nora is certain that *Germany’s Next Topmodel* can make an eating disorder worse. She finds it very important to say, though, that: “The boys/girls first have to fit into the pattern of eating disorders, that is, e.g. ambitious, shy, perfectionist. The media shows them what is good, pretty, and cool.” Since she started watching *Germany’s Next Topmodel*, she has had the dream of becoming a model, and every extra gram would work against this goal. At the same time, she knows that she is too young and “not pretty enough” to become a model. Unfortunately, she doesn’t think of the fact that the one-dimensional norms of beauty and the logic of the show and the fashion business – which she can discuss clearly and concisely – aren’t good for her. For three years she has been in treatment, has been in hospital numerous times and now lives in a living community for girls with eating disorders. Without constant supervision, she wouldn’t have a chance of finding her way out of the illness.

Eating disorder and significance of media content

Eating disorders are one of the most common psychosomatic illnesses among girls and young women in western industrial countries. One third of the adolescent girls in Germany can be called “at risk”. At least two in 100 girls have developed a serious eating disorder such as anorexia, bulimia or binge eating and another two per cent per cent have developed other forms of eating disorders (Swanson et al., 2011). The reasons behind the respective illness are always complex and are often a combination of individual and biological risk factors, pushed and triggered by problems in family (Costin, 2007). But there is often also the so called socio-cultural factor for eating disorder, like the dominant beauty image widespread by the media, that is communicated and pushed for example by the peer group. In the research there is barely any doubt that media exposure influences young people’s body image and predicts eating pathologies concurrently and over time (Harrison, 2013). Bell and Dittmar for example have shown in experimental studies that the exposure to pictures of thin model bodies, the satisfaction with the own body spontaneous decline in some girls (e.g. Bell & Dittmar, 2011). Dissatisfaction with one’s own body is, in turn, a proven risk factor for the onset of eating disorders (The McKnight Investigators, 2003). Regular viewers of *Germany’s Next Topmodel* who are underweight have a five times higher risk to think of themselves at least sometimes as “too fat” than the ones not watching the reality TV show (Götz & Mendel, 2015). Nevertheless the significance of media in identity development or in a psychosomatic disorder is not a simple stimulus-response mechanism. Media reception is always an active appropriation, a process of making meaning and integrating selected parts of the media text into identity work, communication, structuring everyday life etc. (Lemish, 2015). So far, there are

only a few qualitative studies of women with an eating disorder which explore in detail the significance of television in the context of their illness. Baumann for example has shown that television is integral to the onset and development of the eating disorder. Particularly at the onset of the illness, young women often feel inferior when confronted with the media ideal of beauty as one of thinness; they feel helpless and imprisoned by the images. Then, in the course of the disorder, they also effectively gather tips on how to manipulate their weight. When something is reported about their illness, they use it as a means of escape or as a source of information and comparison. During the phase of actively overcoming the eating disorder, increased significance is placed upon exposing media stereotypes and dissociating oneself from the beauty ideal of being underweight, from “diet terrorism” and contradictory advertising messages (Baumann, 2009¹). An interview study by Märschel² reveals: television consumption engenders, among other things, motives specific to eating disorders. Programs provide motivation, recognition and justification for one’s own actions, but they are also a source of information for tips and guidance on optimizing eating disorder behavior. Television is used as a substitute or complement to therapy, sometimes creating a space in which, at least temporarily, individuals do not have to think about the issue of “eating” (Märschel, 2007). So far, there are no studies that specifically explore the significance of particular television formats in the context of eating disorder and, in addition, facilitate a quantitative evaluation via a broader sample. This is where our study comes in. It aims at giving a voice to the ones currently receiving therapy for an eating disorder and living in clinics or group residential care for eating disorders – like Nora – to explain from their view the meaning of TV series in the development of their own illness.

Method

The study was conducted in collaboration with the Federal Association for Eating Disorders in Germany (BFE) and the contact to the informants was established via members of the Federal Association, mostly the therapists with consent of the institution of treatment.³ The participants, living at that time mainly in hospitals or assisted shared flats, filled out a questionnaire with opened and standardized questions and handed it in to the therapist who gave it to us anonymously. The questions focused on beauty ideals (the participants’ own ideals and the perception of those spread by the media⁴), the participants’ media use at the beginning and during the development of their own eating pathologies,⁵ the role of shows like *Germany’s Next Topmodel* in this context as the highest rated girls’ teen show in Germany. Beyond that the participants were asked to formulate tips and wishes directed towards the media industry from their perspective.⁶

We got answers from 241 informants, mainly girls and young women (96 per cent), with additional 10 young men. Some of the participants of the study are under 16 years old (12 per cent) – the youngest informant is 11 years; almost half are between 16 and 21 years old. The majority of those taking part in the study have been diagnosed with

anorexia (85 per cent); further illnesses are bulimia and eating disorders involving binge eating, sometimes also in combination with one another. In most of the cases the eating disorder got diagnosed between the ages of 12 and 15; for another fifth between 16 and 17 years of age. For this article we will concentrate on the qualitative statements of the under 18-year old girls (n=95) who are looking at their own illness diagnosed in average two-three years ago.

The significance of particular TV programs in the development of eating disorders

In response to our general and open question if there was any TV show that particularly influenced their eating disorder, four fifth (80 per cent) of our informants 18 years and younger (71 per cent in the whole sample) confirmed. This is a hint that TV series do not always play an important role in the development of an eating disorder with girls living in Germany, but often do. And if there was one program mentioned by the adolescence, unprompted, it was above all others: *Germany's Next Topmodel* (48 per cent⁷). Following far behind (6 per cent and lower) were beauty and weight-loss docu-soaps (*Extrem Schön! (Extreme Makeover)*, *Extrem Schwer! (Obese)*) and cooking shows.

We asked the informants to describe in which way this program has influenced their own illness and then typified the answers. In the following we will first present the statements on the programs less frequently mentioned.

Beauty docusoaps to feel better for a short time

In the makeover show *Extreme Makeover* a person is followed as they go through the process of plastic surgery. All the details are shown that the people believe need to be changed, from bad teeth to sagging stomachs and breasts. The doctors who participate talk about the nearly unlimited possibilities for aesthetic operations and the status of treatment. At the end, the person's family and friends are there when the person sees themselves for the first time in a mirror after the operation.

Watching the show gave several of the young women with eating disorders a good feeling because they could look down on the protagonists ("Look Downwards Principle"). At least for a moment, this increases their own feeling of self-worth: "[...] how is it possible to look sooooo awful? After that, everything seems better" (Johanna, 18 years old, anorexia). The show also increases the focus on the apparent flaws and problems zones, however, and intensifies the girls' feeling that their bodies can and must be continually optimised.

Weight-loss docusoaps as a role model for losing weight in a very short period of time

In docusoaps such as *Obese* and *The Biggest Loser*, people are followed through a process of losing weight that is in part set up as a competition. For some, this strengthens the logic that drove them to their illness because “these people have success by losing weight and become more popular” (Lilith, 17 years old, anorexia). That was “an ‘incentive’ to see that they also have to work hard, and I can’t allow myself to look that way” (Melanie, 17 years old, anorexia). Several of those interviewed felt more under pressure after watching the show: “Because you can see how people lose weight there: by working out. Then you get a guilty conscience and want to lose weight that way, too” (16 years old, anorexia and bulimia)

Cooking shows to fill up by watching

Cooking shows were also part of the illness; in these shows the candidates watch and evaluate other participants as they prepare and serve dinner. This type of cooking show can take on a completely unique function in the course of the illness, “because you had a lot to do with food and saw all the good things they were eating that you had forbidden yourself” (Angela, 16 years old, anorexia and bulimia). In part, the show took on the function of “filling up’ by watching. Things that I would really like to eat but am absolutely not allowed to because then I would get even fatter” (Melanie, 17 years old, anorexia).

The show gets the attention of people with eating disorders with their typical “obsession with the topic of food”, offers them imaginary “replacement food”, and thus stabilizes their unhealthy actions in a unique way. Nora, who we met at the beginning, also watched cooking shows daily and with enthusiasm: “because there is a lot of food was shown, how you cook, and then I thought of the idea of cooking for other people. Then I could ‘stuff’ others with calories and make what I would have liked to eat. Besides that, I could ‘fill up by watching’ the show” (Nora, 13 years old, anorexia)

Germany’s Next Topmodel

Beauty and losing weight being linked through the media to *Good Times, Bad Times*, cooking shows and docusoaps are individual cases, but they give important information about the possible role of television shows in the context of eating disorders. However, quantitatively another show is named much more often: *Germany’s Next Topmodel* (GNTM).

In response to the open question of whether there is a program that reflects society’s ideal of beauty, 92 per cent of the 18 and younger (83 per cent of the whole sample)

mentioned, unprompted (!), *GNTM*. Most of the adolescents (88 per cent) watch the program; many have been watching it for more than 5 years, and one third of them since primary school. It is the format that has most frequently influenced their illness “very heavily”, and the majority (86 per cent) of our adolescent informants agreed with the statement that *GNTM* can intensify eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia.

What makes the *Next Topmodel* format attractive?

The success of the *Next Topmodel* format is based on the fact that it is attractive to many female fans (Götz, 2014): *GNTM* focuses on young women and their development more than any other program – independent of romantic relationships, in fact. The program offers a variety of types with whom to identify, setting them challenges in a highly appealing setting for the age group, and in attractive locations. The element of competition and rating within the program creates thrill and, simultaneously, the opportunity to join in the guessing, to rate the contestants, and to “bitch” about them within the peer group and the family. Because the contestants in the program have to go far beyond their comfort zones, the young viewers, too, are forced to ask themselves how they would have behaved in this situation. These are forms of identity work which previous studies have regarded with strong suspicion, arguing that this kind of identity development is beset with pitfalls. This is because the contestants and viewers respectively seem to have absolute agency over their actions and the ability to create themselves through self-knowledge, self-exploration and self-modelling. They seem to personalize the “can do” girl (Harris, 2004). The object they are creating here is their own body. The orientation, however, is not towards individuality or happiness, and neither are these the measure of value; instead, the focus is on the neoliberal values of market success. Young women become “entrepreneurs of the self” (McRobbie, 2009), perpetually focused on the underweight body and its presentation, as well as on conforming to the values of others and a authority of fashion and beauty (McRobbie, 2008) and the interests of a broadcaster and its front woman Heidi Klum. The analysis of the qualitative data reveal a typical path of appropriations of the *Next Topmodel* format that accompanies the way into the eating disorder.

GNTM sets unrealistic standards

The program places appearances at the core of success and recognition. This means the program exclusively presents young women who are physical exceptions: they are at least 1.76m (5 ft 9) tall and, at most, a size 8. The show presents “masses of pretty, perfect girls all in one go, all of them willing to do anything to be beautiful” (Jessica, 17 years, anorexia). This distorts the view of reality and the variety of shapes and sizes

the human body can take in reality. This gives rise to “the feeling that there are so many great, thin, disciplined girls who achieve something by this and, above all, look great!” (Jessica, 17 years, anorexia). Appearance – in terms of absolute exceptions – is equated with success and happiness, thereby becoming the norm. A logic develops whereby “anyone who does not look at least as good as this is ugly, inadequate and fat! This leads to severe inferiority complexes” (Cassandra, 18 years, anorexia).

The desire to look like that, too

A particular feature in the descriptions of the significance of *GNTM* in the context of their own eating disorder is the desire “to look like that, too” (Anna, 17 years, on her own anorexic phase). “Then you want to look just like these girls, and at the same time you are also somehow annoyed with yourself for not having this will power” (Anna2, 17 years, bulimia). The unquestioned norms and the many physical exceptions give our informants the impression that it is their fault if they do not achieve what is apparently normal: “You really want to look like that, like the models, so you lose weight and end up ill” (Yvonne, 16 years, anorexia).

Comparing and conforming

Viewers begin to compare themselves to the candidates, particularly when the contestants are wearing revealing clothing. The “more revealing the clothes are, and, if the pictures are sexy, the more the proportions are emphasized” (Diana, 16 years, anorexia), the more many of our informants feel compelled to compare themselves to the candidates. This comparison is, then, to a certain extent, clearly focused on individual body parts such as a “flat tummy. When the program contestants stand in front of the mirror and say that here and there they are too fat, the young women in front of the television look more closely at their own bodies and find even more inadequacies. Because the women are all extremely skinny, I often compare myself to them. That’s also how my illness began.” (Juliane, 14 years, anorexia) This leads to a logic in particular among high-achieving girls who are willing to conform and can muster up a lot of energy for optimizing themselves to the point of perfectionism – i.e., typical characteristics of people at risk of eating disorders. A typical description of this process written by Lia:

“Many of the girls who take part in *Germany’s Next Topmodel* are just so thin (actually, not all of them, but certainly some), without doing a lot of sport or being overly concerned with their diet. That’s when I started asking, ‘why am I not like that?’ I soon realized that this question would not get me any further, so I started (not only for that reason!) to lose weight and to do a lot of sport. I had/have a deep-seated idea that everything will be easier if I am thin. Every aspect of my life. Which is true, to a certain

extent. I must say, I didn't become anorexic because of *GNTM*, but it did play a role, nonetheless. And nowadays I deliberately DON'T watch it anymore! Because it would really provoke the anorexia again" (Lia, 18 years, anorexia)

Where *GNTM* often strengthens the pathogenic logic of eating disorders

The program enacts its particular power on girls and women predisposed to eating disorders at a deeper level. To summarize the typical meaning of the German version of the *Next Topmodel* format it is important to be aware: A TV show cannot be the main reason for a pathological eating disorder, this will always be multifactorial with complex backgrounds and is mainly based in deeper identity crises (Costin, 2007). Even the ideal of beauty aspired to is rarely at the heart of the eating disorder. Instead, it is about profound crises and uncertainties, experiences or circumstances, which the individual seems to be unable to overcome. Often the eating disorder is a way to maintain the sense of agency despite the person's powerlessness over external events, by shifting one's own perception from the inner worlds to the external spheres of body and food. Manipulating their weight helps them to feel less worthless and, to a certain extent, restores their sense of agency and control; if not with regard to the outside world, then at least with regard to themselves.

If the girls and young women experiencing this kind of crisis encounter the program *GNTM*, they not only accept its values and unachievable standards but also feel inferior and develop a strong desire to conform to this apparent norm. That includes the central subtext of the *GNTM*: "the fight to fit in" (Banet-Weiser, 2004). Success and recognition in the *Next Topmodel* format are connected with unconditional conformity. Every demand, every casting, every challenge, every requirement to "allow their body to be designed by others" must be taken up with enthusiasm, and they must give their all "for the client", i.e. presenter Heidi Klum. To be a part of the system awareness of one's own sensations, such as tiredness, hunger or feeling cold is not allowed, emotions such as shame, disgust, anger or fear have to be suppressed and disconnected from one's own behavior. Disrupting the system, or even criticizing it, leads to inevitable elimination from the show – unless it happens to add to the program's appeal.

The program and psychosomatic eating disorders therefore have a very similar basic logic, and not just at a superficial level of beauty idols. The objective is to subordinate one's actual perceptions, feelings and needs in order to perfectly conform to the demands and norms of others. If this implicit paradigm of the program becomes a guiding principle, it can result in illness in those experiencing an identity crisis, and in those with corresponding psychological dispositions such as the will to achieve and conform or a tendency towards perfectionism. It is therefore not surprising that among the 95 informants of this study age 18 years and younger 32 patients in this study acknowledge

that the program *Germany's Next Topmodel* has had a “very strong influence” on their illness, and a further 28 said it has had “some influence”.⁸ Using the symbolic material (text) of the media it has offered them guiding principles for their identity work. Particularly if the young women have certain personality profiles and find the concept of being “entrepreneurs of the **self**” (McRobbie, 2009) appealing, self-optimization of their own body and behavior can lead to a serious psychosomatic disorder.

GNTM, too, should have a minimum BMI, more variety and greater sensitivity

We gave our informants the opportunity to set out the ramifications for the media industry themselves. Overall, they demand a broader spectrum of physicality and natural-looking people in the media whose images are not photo-shopped. There were also repeated calls for “more health education about eating disorders; no demonization of people who have one” (Regine, 16 years, anorexia). In addition to documentary forms, fictional narrative forms would certainly have something to offer here. The particular challenge here will always lie in striking the balance between providing insight without giving people ideas on how to deal with their own problems in a pathological way.

The suggestions regarding the program *GNTM* range from shutting down, “Stop producing the show top models, and start to live in a normal way and to eat more than just a chewing gum” (Sarina, 17 years, bulimia), to the request for the contestants to be treated more humanely and not criticized for every little error. From the perspective of reception research, the main issue is the need for more sensitivity when criticizing the contestants’ bodies. More appreciation of individuality and defiance (including towards Heidi Klum) would be a sign of quality. Moreover, specific contextualization for the viewers would be helpful, for this would convey the fact that the contestants are physical exceptions, and that the required mechanisms of conformity and repression are show-specific and business-specific, not necessarily good for their health. It would, in addition, be thematically appropriate to incorporate education about the issue of anorexia; this would show that the producers were acting responsibly, precisely because the program is being watched by many girls who are at a sensitive age.

One of our informants calls for a targeted promotion of media literacy, an approach which, from a media pedagogy perspective, should be supported. It would be an opportunity to use programs such as *GNTM* for media literacy units in which learners grapple with body images in the media or acquire an understanding of the stage-managed nature of talent shows through critical media analyses.

The most important thing for our informants with an eating disorder is, however: “Stop propagating the idea that it is ‘normal’ to look like models and anyone who weighs more than this does not conform to the social norms; it should be the other way round.” (Eva, 18 years, anorexia). This gives rise to the concrete demand for a minimum BMI

(for models and actresses) and for “size zero to be taken off the market!” (Katrin, 17 years, anorexia), for idealizing obvious underweight bodies means glorifying illness.

Notes

1. 2003/2004 interview study with 45 women with eating disorders.
2. Interview study with 14 women with anorexia.
3. The study took place between November 2014 and February 2015.
4. For example: “In your opinion, what shapes this concept of beauty of the media?” and “What does beauty mean to you?”
5. For example: “Please describe (if you wish in detail) which show in particular has influenced you in which way?”
6. For example: “If you could communicate something to the media industry and if you could even formulate wishes to it, what would that be?”
7. 39per cent in the whole sample
8. Among the whole sample of n=241 70 patients said “very strong influence” and 72 said “some influence”.

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Escaping from Worries or Facing Reality

A Survey Study of Adolescent Attitudes about Sexist and Homophobic Stereotypes in Mainstream US Media

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We examined the influences of being exposed to gender and sexual orientation stereotypes in the media on US-based adolescents aged 12-18. Departing from wishful identification theory, our study allows adolescents to report how TV characters resemble them, rather than whom they emulate, coming from a place of agency. We recruited 639 participants (85% female, 82% heterosexual) to take an online survey. Our findings demonstrated that girls and sexual minorities were less likely to see their gender and sexual orientation reflected in favorite TV characters. Girls and sexual minorities felt more personally affected by stereotypes about women and girls and were more likely to believe that sexism and homophobia needed to be addressed in the media. Across all groups, those who tend to escape their worries through watching television reported feeling more upset at TV content and being more personally affected by negative stereotypes centered on women, girls, and sexual minorities.

Adolescents consume media for coping and identity formation as much as for entertainment (Arnett, 2005). Television is the most common medium consumed by adolescents (Callejo, 2013), thus it is critical to understand how a televised world that disproportionately favors male and heterosexual characters affects developing identities and gender roles in adolescents (APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls, 2007; Signorielli, 2001; Strasburger, 2012). Despite the potentially disenfranchising aspect of mainstream media images, Jackson and Vares (2013) found that media did not have a wholly negative effect on their young girl (aged 10-12) participants in New Zealand; girls interact with media in complex ways, both positive and negative. These young viewers question the reality media portray, often doubting how attainable the images are or expressing awareness of its fabricated, idealized reality. Regardless of how attainable the reality, viewers still used media images to shape their ideal image on themselves. While Jackson and Vares focus on pre-teens, our study broadens the age range to include 12-18

year olds; with this age group, we can see how responses to media portrayals affect social identity formation (particularly gender and sexuality), and how individuals interact with media images before they transition into young adulthood.

Gender stereotypes

The theory of *wishful identification* is the desire to be like or behave in a similar fashion to TV characters one identifies with (von Feilitzen & Linne, 1975), and is used to analyze how popular media representation directly affects the audience and influences which traits they deem desirable and undesirable. Previous studies have demonstrated that television viewers more readily identify with characters of the same sex (e.g., Reeves & Miler, 1978; Williams, LaRose, & Frost, 1981). Additionally, some studies have noted that male characters are more often selected as role models by girls compared to boys selecting female role models (e.g., Albert, 1957; Reeves & Miller, 1978), which is somewhat understandable due to the history of far more exciting roles played by males than females. This argument held decades later, despite the expansion in the TV offerings for children, when Hoffner (1996) found that less than half of young female study participants identified with female characters, while almost all young male participants identified with male characters, a finding attributed to more diverse representations of males. Young girls who wanted to be like favorite female characters were primarily motivated by physical attractiveness. Boys, on the other hand, identified with male TV characters who exemplified physical strength and high activity levels. Prior research has demonstrated that although girls viewed female TV characters as intelligent (even more intelligent than the male characters), they realize that strong successful female characters on TV can also be ridiculed for their competence or ambition (e.g., Hoffner, 1996; Signorielli, 1993).

Adolescents' desire to emulate their favorite characters causes them to focus on their own perceived deficiencies (Anderson et al., 2001). Physical attractiveness is an almost universal characteristic of individuals represented across major types of television programming (Anderson et al., 2001). Even ostensibly progressive media often reinforce dominant cultural ideas of sexuality and femininity (Carpenter, 2001). Prior studies on media effects of gender-role stereotypes have focused on how the viewing of particular genres, such as video games and sports shows (Ward, Hansbrough, & Walker, 2005), talk shows and situation comedies (Rivadeneyra & Ward, 2005), or rap videos (Bryant, 2008), have been strongly associated with endorsing more gender-role stereotypes and attitudes.

Groesz and colleagues (2002) conducted a meta-analysis of 25 experiments on the effect of the thinness ideal in the media on women's body image. They found that women who are exposed to media depictions of the thin ideal have lower body satisfaction, and the effect is *stronger in teenagers younger than 19*. Nanu, Tăut, and Băban (2013) surveyed 250 girls and 226 boys ages 15-20 to study how appearance esteem and weight

esteem differ by age and gender. They found that consumption of media messages can often lead adolescent girls to internalize the “ideal body image” of thinness. The higher girls’ BMIs, the lower their appearance and weight esteem. Younger girls are more likely to internalize the body ideal portrayed by the media, signaling a need to further understand girls’ perceptions about media portrayals and gender identity.

Sexual orientation stereotypes

Media can be a major tool of socialization for LGBTQ teens who are often marginalized. If these youth lack LGBTQ role models during their coming out process, they may seek media role models to guide their identity formation (Padva, 2007; Raley & Lucas, 2006). While media representations of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals have improved in recent years, inclusiveness remains a serious problem in terms of the quantity and diversity of representation. According to GLAAD (2016) projections, 4.8 percent of regularly appearing characters on scripted broadcast television series in the 2016–2017 season were LGBTQ. This is a 0.8 percent increase from last year’s 4 percent, which was a 0.10 percent increase from 2014’s percentage (GLAAD, 2015). On both broadcast and cable networks, more than half of all LGBTQ characters are male, though on streaming television only thirty percent of LGBTQ characters are male. Most bisexual characters on broadcast and cable networks, in addition to streaming online television, are female, and male bisexual characters are heavily underrepresented. At the same time, most trans characters are female, leaving trans men severely underrepresented. This lack of diversity and/or invisibility could have a significant impact on LGBTQ teens who are looking for role models.

Bond (2015) notes that most studies examining the role of media in the lives of sexual minority youth have primarily asked adults to reflect back on their adolescence (e.g., Houseman, 2010; Kama, 2002). For instance, Kama’s (2002) 45 gay adult male interviewees reflected on how media’s representations of gay men were crucial in shaping gay identity, especially for those outside of the gay community. While many of the participants agreed that the existence of LGBTQ characters in mainstream media is important, even more so are the *kinds* of images that get represented. Freymiller (2010) interviewed 22 adults to gain a better understanding of their thoughts on the representation of gay people in the media. She reports that many participants felt that existing media lacked a representation of the gay *community*; while shows may have had one or two gay characters, these characters did not interact with the gay community at large and could not form a gay community because there were so few of them. Participants also noted that these television characters did not engage in activism. However, participants believed that subscription-based media offered more diverse and three-dimensional representations of gayness, though viewers must pay to access this content. Participants recognized that gay characters were very isolated from the “straight” world.

Examining the contribution of *individual characteristics* that shape media choices and behaviors, we highlight the *Media Practice Model* (Brown, 2000) which explains that users actively select and interact with media based on who they are and who they want to be. A 2015 study (Craig, McInroy, McCreedy, & Alaggia, 2015) found that LGBTQ youth often use offline and online media to cultivate resilience. LGBTQ youth often use media to escape from their problems, feel “strong,” cultivate a community, and resist. Some LGBTQ youth deliberately seek out diverse LGBTQ televised content in order to insulate themselves from potentially negative content about LGBTQ people or invisibility within mainstream media. In addition, they often will “rewrite” negative storylines about LGBTQ people on personal blogs or other sites to resist stereotypical representations, or use social media to comment on homophobia in the media. They tend to use television as a launching pad to create dialogue about social issues and a sense of community, for instance, by talking about a television show in person with friends or other peers (Craig et al., 2015). This shows that LGBTQ youth often feel frustrated with media representations of LGBTQ communities, even turning to other forms of media to critique, or in some cases, alter it. Although the research was conducted with young adults aged 18-22, it has implications for younger LGBTQ teens who may not have the cultural capital to subvert mainstream media in ways that older emerging adults can tap into.

The *Uses and Gratifications Theory* (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974) posits that in order to understand the impact of a medium, one must consider the users’ motives, such as using television as pure entertainment as opposed to escapism from stressful realities. The current study allows teen participants to report how TV characters resemble them, rather than whom they emulate or wish they could be themselves. This research question differs from prior studies in that we ask adolescents to assess whether their favorite TV show characters match their gender and sexual orientation identities (rather than asking if they map onto favorite TV show characters). Our approach starts from a place of agency: TV shows can and should represent who teens are, rather than teens finding fault within themselves for implicit TV messages showing what they are lacking. Prior studies often correlate high media consumption with higher levels of stereotypical gender and sexual beliefs (Ward, 2002; Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999). Our assumption is that adolescents are not only exposed to media stereotypes and are inevitably shaped by them but we must also understand their attitudes toward such media stereotypes and how it affects them. Our participants were asked about how strongly they think media should change for the better, in terms of sexist and homophobic stereotypes. In addition, we examined which types of television viewers (e.g., adolescents who escape from worries through TV vs. those who do not) are most prone to reacting negatively to these stereotypes.

Methods

Participants and procedures

The Media & Identity Project (Chan & Charmaraman, 2014; Charmaraman, 2016; Charmaraman & Chan, 2013; Charmaraman & Richer, 2014; Charmaraman, Chan, Price, & Richer, 2015) is a mixed-method study of over 2300 individuals in Wave 1 recruited in 2013. It included (a) a purposive online survey that targeted hard-to-reach adolescents and emerging adults across 47 U.S. states and 26 countries; and (b) 60-120 minute follow-up in-depth interviews with 44 participants from the larger survey. The survey contained items regarding beliefs and attitudes about televised media, social media networking, and civic engagement through media. We recruited the sample from schools and community organizations through electronic and traditional recruitment methods (e.g., flyering), and repeated efforts one week later. Before starting, participants read and electronically signed study disclosures and informed consent, a process approved by Wellesley College's Institutional Review Board. Duplicate surveys were identified by tracking IP addresses with multiple entries in a short period of time and were discarded, as were incomplete submissions.

For our analytical sample, our focus was on the experiences of U.S. residents who are exposed to U.S. mainstream media (therefore we removed people living outside of the U.S. ($n=103$)). In order to have enough power to understand gender differences, we needed to remove transgender participants ($n=37$) to focus on the dichotomous categories of male and female. In addition, we removed participants with any missing data on the psychological health items, gender, or sexual orientation ($n=329$), and restricted the age of participants to 12-18 giving us a final analysis sample of 639. The

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

	N	Min	Max	Mor%	SD
Female	639	0	1	85%	
Heterosexual	639	0	1	82%	
Escape from worries	639	0	1	40%	
Mother's Education	637	1	5	3.66	1.28
Age	639	12	18	17.08	1.36
Time spent watching TV	618	0	4	1.29	1.36
Favorite TV show (gender)	513	1	4	2.51	0.83
Favorite TV show (sexual orientation)	486	1	4	3.14	0.96
Upset while watching TV	277	1	4	2.68	0.90
Frustrated while watching TV	279	1	4	2.88	0.87
Affected personally: women and girls	280	1	4	3.06	0.89
Affected personally: sexual minorities	279	1	4	2.89	0.97
Sexism should be addressed in the media	538	0	1	30%	
Homophobia should be addressed in the media	538	0	1	42%	

sample was mostly female (85%) and heterosexual (82%). The average age was 17.08 and the average participant level of mother's education was between "some college" and "finished college." Forty percent of the sample reported using TV to escape from their worries. (See Table 1).

Measures

Media escape. Media escape was measured using a single item about participants' desire to escape their worries through media ("I escape from my worries by watching TV"). This item was originally measured using a four-point scale (1=Not at all like me and 4=A lot like me); however, to assess group differences, we dichotomized this item where 0=not escaping worries and 1=escaping worries through media.

Gender and sexual orientation. Participants were asked to report their gender by selecting male, female, or transgender; however, transgender respondents were removed from the analysis due to small ($n=37$) sample size. Respondents indicated whether they would define their sexual orientation as heterosexual or not heterosexual.

Covariates. Participants self-reported their age and their mother's highest level of education (ranging from 1=Some high school or less to 5=School beyond college).

Time spent watching TV. Participants were asked how much time they spent watching TV between 6pm and midnight; responses ranged from 0=No time to 4=3 or more hours.

Demographic similarities of TV show characters. Demographic similarities of TV show characters were measured using two items asking participants to rate how similar their favorite TV show characters were to themselves in terms of gender and sexual orientation. Responses ranged from 1=not at all to 4=almost all of them.

Negative Responses to TV media. Participants were asked to indicate how often they became upset at what they were watching on TV or frustrated at stereotypes while watching TV on a 4-point scale ranging from 1=never to 4=often.

Affected by stereotypes while watching TV. Items about the degree to which respondents felt affected by stereotypes presented on TV were included. Specifically, we were interested in items related to stereotypes about women and girls and sexual minorities. Participants were asked to report how often they were affected by each of these categories of TV stereotypes on a 1 (never) to 4 (often) scale.

Beliefs about sexism and homophobia in the media. We asked whether participants' endorsed that the media needs to raise awareness of the negative societal impacts of sexism and homophobia.

Data analysis

For this study, we used generalized linear regression models to estimate means of gender, sexual orientation, and psychological health on TV- and media-related outcomes. For each TV and media outcome, we compared males to females, sexual minorities to heterosexuals, and not using TV to escape worries and to using TV to escape worries. Participant's age and mother's education were entered as covariates for all models. Wald tests show whether there were significant differences between groups (e.g. gender, sexual orientation or escaping worries through media) on outcome variables (e.g. time spent watching TV).

Results

Gender

Analyses showed many differences between males and females for our TV and media outcomes. Boys reported watching more TV than females. Girls felt their favorite TV show characters were less similar to them than boys. Girls felt more personally affected by stereotypes about women and girls. Lastly, girls reported more often than boys that sexism and homophobia needed to be addressed in the media.

Sexual orientation

Sexual minorities were compared to heterosexual participants. Results show sexual minorities feel more similar to their favorite TV characters in terms of gender, but less similar in sexual orientation when compared to reports from heterosexuals. Sexual minorities reported more often becoming frustrated with stereotypes while watching TV. Sexual minorities compared to heterosexuals reported being more personally affected by stereotypes about women and girls and sexual minorities. Lastly, sexual minorities reported more often than heterosexuals that both sexism and homophobia need to be addressed in the media.

Escaping worries through TV

Results show adolescents who escape their worries through watching TV reported spending more time watching TV, and felt their favorite TV show characters were more similar to them in their sexual orientation. Participants who escaped their worries through TV also reported feeling upset more often with what they are watching on TV and being more personally affected by negative TV stereotypes centered on women, girls, and sexual minorities. Lastly, people who escape their worries through TV also reported that sexism needed to be addressed in the media.

Table 2. Linear regression models of gender, sexual orientation, and psychological health nn televised media (adolescent sample=639)

Likelihood Ratio Chi-square (df=5)	How much time did you spend watching TV yesterday? (N=618)				Are the main characters of your favorite show similar to you in terms of gender? (N=513)				Are the main characters of your favorite show similar to you in terms of sexual orientation? (N=486)				While watching TV- Feel upset at what you are watching on TV (N=277)				While watching TV- Feel frustrated at the stereotypes that you see on TV/movies (N=279)			
	B	SE	Wald (df=1)		B	SE	Wald (df=1)		B	SE	Wald (df=1)		B	SE	Wald (df=1)		B	SE	Wald (df=1)	
Intercept	1.83	0.09	96.11 ***		2.44	0.06	26.16 ***		3.46	0.06	162.63 ***		2.92	0.08	23.94 ***		2.93	0.08	11.11 *	
Male (vs female)	0.47	0.14	10.28 ***		0.31	0.11	7.84 **		-0.06	0.11	0.29		-0.23	0.16	2.03		-0.20	0.16	1.51	
Sexual minority (vs heterosexual)	-0.09	0.13	0.45		0.31	0.09	11.09 **		-1.33	0.10	183.15 ***		0.30	0.15	3.81		0.43	0.15	7.95 **	
Not escaping worries (vs escaping worries)	-0.97	0.10	87.19 ***		-0.04	0.07	0.33 -		0.17	0.07	5.24 *		-0.47	0.10	20.53 ***		-0.15	0.10	2.22	
Age	-0.11	0.04	7.47 **		-0.06	0.03	4.65 *		0.04	0.03	2.09		-0.01	0.04	0.03		0.03	0.04	0.69	
Mom education	-0.03	0.04	0.40		-0.03	0.03	1.23		0.02	0.03	0.37		0.02	0.04	0.18		0.02	0.04	0.23	
Predicted values	Mean	SE			Mean	SE			Mean	SE			Mean	SE			Mean	SE		
Male	1.76	0.14			2.88	0.11			2.65	0.11			2.60	0.16			2.87	0.16		
Female	1.30	0.07			2.57	0.05			2.71	0.05			2.83	0.08			3.07	0.08		
Sexual minority	1.48	0.13			2.88	0.10			2.02	0.10			2.87	0.15			3.18	0.15		
Heterosexual	1.57	0.08			2.57	0.06			3.35	0.06			2.57	0.08			2.75	0.08		
Not escaping worries	1.04	0.09			2.70	0.07			2.60	0.07			2.48	0.11			2.89	0.11		
Escaping worries	2.01	0.11			2.75	0.08			2.77	0.08			2.95	0.11			3.04	0.11		

* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001
Note: The overall model fit statistics were significant for each TV- and media-related outcome. Likelihood ratio chi-squares ranged from 11.11 to 162.63 (df=5), and were all significant (p-values range from <.05 to <.001). Only means with significant Wald tests are presented here.

Table 3. Linear regression models of gender, sexual orientation, and psychological health on televised media (adolescent sample=639)

Likelihood Ratio Chi-square (df=5)	Affected you personally while watching TV or movies- women and girls (N=280)				Affected you personally while watching TV or movies- gay/lesbian/bisexual people (N=279)				Which should be addressed in the media? - Sexism (N=538)				Which should be addressed in the media? - Homophobia (N=538)			
	B	SE	Wald (df=1)		B	SE	Wald (df=1)		B	SE	Wald (df=1)		B	SE	Wald (df=1)	
Intercept	3.26	0.08			2.97	0.09			-0.78	0.15			-0.57	0.15		
Male (vs female)	-0.71	0.15	22.31 ***		-0.31	0.17	3.43		-0.73	0.35	4.31 *		-0.82	0.31	6.80 **	
Sexual minority (vs heterosexual)	0.44	0.15	8.86 **		0.61	0.16	14.10 ***		0.91	0.23	15.35 ***		1.37	0.24	32.93 ***	
Not escaping worries (vs escaping worries)	-0.28	0.10	7.92 **		-0.22	0.11	3.96 *		-0.40	0.20	4.17 *		0.08	0.19	0.19	
Age	0.10	0.03	8.17 **		0.05	0.04	1.48		0.15	0.08	3.41		0.02	0.07	0.07	
Mom education	0.07	0.04	3.48		0.10	0.04	5.63 *		0.14	0.08	3.18		0.14	0.07	3.34	
Predicted values	Mean	SE		Mean	SE		Percent		Percent				Percent			
Male	2.62	0.15		2.84	0.17		22%		34%							
Female	3.32	0.08		3.15	0.08		37%		54%							
Sexual minority	3.19	0.15		3.30	0.16		40%		61%							
Heterosexual	2.75	0.08		2.69	0.09		21%		28%							
Not escaping worries	2.83	0.10		2.89	0.11		25%		45%							
Escaping worries	3.11	0.11		3.11	0.12		34%		43%							

* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Discussion

The findings of the current study suggest that our adolescent participants, particularly girls and sexual minorities, are concerned with the negative impact of sexist and homophobic stereotypes in mainstream media. Questions still remain about whether these participants want better representations of themselves in order to internalize more healthy ideals or whether that they want to limit the cultivation of negative stereotypes within broader audiences (Gerbner et al., 2002) who are both in the in-group (e.g., girls and sexual minorities) and out-group (e.g., boys and heterosexuals).

Bond (2015) demonstrated that sexual minority youth who are more committed to their sexual minority identities tend to have more positive well-being when exposed to both mainstream and gay/lesbian-oriented media. They argued that any exposure to gay and lesbian-oriented images validates the existence of sexual minorities in real life, therefore is preferable to no images at all. Adolescents in our study who use televised media to escape from their worries tended to be more emotionally reactive to what they watched, including negative stereotypes of women, girls, and sexual minorities. Self-discrepancy theory argues that a difference between a person's ideal self and their actual self can lead to significant emotional distress (Higgins, Klein, & Strauman, 1985). Since frequency and amount of exposure can have a negative impact on self-discrepancy, it is possible that exposure to stereotypical media can have a negative impact on adolescents. In our study, we found that sexual minority adolescents who use television to escape from their worries also tend to gravitate toward television characters who are also sexual minorities, suggesting that the potential harm from negative depictions can hit too close to home.

Scharrer (2012) argues that the field of media psychology should investigate the complexity of individuals' responses to media, for instance how media use patterns shape one's response to media representations of gender and sexuality. In the current study, we found that adolescents with a pattern of escaping from their stressful lives by watching televised media were particularly vulnerable to negative media portrayals, particularly of disenfranchised groups such as sexual minorities. Investigating factors that shape how television portrayals can impact self-perceptions can be useful in the development of media messages intended to produce attitude and behavior change (Hoffner, 1996).

Collins (2011) argues that there is a major gap in the literature on the audience effects of inequitable representation of gender and other minority identities. McDermott and Greenberg (1984) found increases in self-esteem when people of color saw themselves in the media. Future direction would be to understand how girls and sexual minorities might be psychologically affected (e.g., self-esteem) by seeing more diverse images of themselves represented in mainstream media.

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“PAL can Just be Themselves”

Children in the US Respond to *Annedroids* Genderless TV Character

Sara L. Beck, Rebecca Hains & Colleen Russo Johnson

The innovative Canadian children's program *Annedroids* introduces viewers to “PAL,” a human-like android, whom a child scientist named Anne programmed to choose its own gender. Viewers witness PAL's explorations of what girlhood or boyhood would mean, culminating in PAL's series-finale decision to eschew a binary gender identity and “just be me.” While some research has examined counter-stereotypical characters' influence on children's thinking, the impact of characters actively constructing gender identities is unknown. To address this gap, we showed twenty-one children (ages 8 to 10) in the US selected *Annedroids* segments highlighting PAL's gender exploration. We identified themes in their reactions to PAL's characterization and tracked their reactions to PAL's decision, measuring the flexibility of their attitudes about gender before and after viewing. We found that children who believed PAL should choose a gender (as opposed to those comfortable with PAL remaining ungendered) showed increased flexibility in thinking about gender after viewing the selected clips.

“You can just be who you are.” – Etta, age 10

“You don't really have to be one way or another because other people think you should be that way or because you were born that way.” – Elizabeth, age 9

“Everyone has a decision, and everyone is different.” – Alexandra, age 8

“If everyone tried to be the same, it would be pretty boring.” – Connor, age 9

Nine-year old Camille watches the screen intently as PAL, a genderless, human-like android from a children's television show, declares: “I do not want to be a boy or a girl. I just want to be me.”

Camille's eyes narrow. She appears to be concentrating.

Breaking the silence, a researcher asks Camille: “What do you think of PAL's decision?”

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After a moment of contemplation, Camille says, “I like it.” She pauses, then adds: “Because he can do girl things *and* boy things.”

PAL is a central character from an innovative, multi Emmy-nominated children’s program called *Annedroids* (2013-2017), produced in Canada and available in every country around the world (it streams on Amazon Prime in the US). Created by J. J. Johnson of *Sinking Ship Entertainment*, the television series combines live action and CGI (computer-generated imagery) to depict real people – such as 12-year-old child-scientist Anne – interacting with a range of CGI-animated android characters, which are Anne’s creations. As Anne explains, her androids differ from robots in that they have artificial intelligence and can make their own decisions.

Anne’s most advanced android is the silver-hued, humanoid PAL – the subject of this chapter. PAL is roughly child-sized and has large, friendly eyes in a gentle, expressive face. Upon creation by Anne, PAL has no hair or any attire that would mark PAL as gendered. Furthermore, PAL’s childlike voice is digitally processed in such a way that it sounds robotic and of indeterminate gender.

Annedroids initially depicts Anne as being somewhat reclusive due to her upbringing in a closed-off junkyard by her single-parent, socially-anxious father. As a result, Anne keeps her androids’ existence secret from everyone except her father, until a boy named Nick moves to her neighborhood. When Nick and another neighborhood child named Shania befriend Anne, she shares her secret inventions and includes them in her experiments – some of which drive the series storyline. In the process, children in the viewing audience learn about science, experimentation, and other pro-social themes, such as friendship and trust.

One of Anne’s major experiments involves PAL’s programming. Anne programs PAL to be neither a girl or a boy, so that PAL can eventually choose a gender for itself. Therefore, viewers are able to witness PAL’s journey of exploring what identifying as either gender would mean. These explorations culminate in PAL’s series-finale decision to “just be me,” an option not discussed in the series prior to this moment, making it a dramatic surprise.

Annedroids creator J.J. Johnson created this series-long story arc with intentionality. In an interview with this article’s authors, Johnson explained: “I don’t believe kids are that judgmental. I think that’s a trait they unfortunately learn from adults. Our goal with this series has always been to nurture the power of acceptance: acceptance of one’s family, one’s friends, and ultimately one’s self” (March 30, 2017).

As scholars interested in children’s media culture and gender, we wondered: How would child viewers react to PAL’s decision to remain ungendered, which is unprecedented on children’s television?

Literature review

While engaging with media content, children internalize lessons about identity and socially appropriate behavior (Ter Bogt, Engels, Bogers, & Kloosterman, 2010). For example, prosocial media – featuring voluntary behaviors meant to benefit another person (Mares & Woodard, 2005) – positively affect children’s social interactions, while aggressive media content has negative effects (Wilson, 2008).

Viewers are not passive dupes of media messages, however. Various studies of adolescent audiences suggest viewers actively negotiate and make meaning from media (Maltby, Giles, Barber & McCutcheon, 2005), compare themselves to on-screen characters, and consider storylines’ values, attitudes, and behaviors (Giles & Maltby, 2004; Larson, 1995). Preadolescent children (Hains, 2012) and adults engage in such behavior as well (North, Sheridan, Maltby, & Gillett, 2007). Unfortunately, prosocial children’s content is less common than aggressive content (Wilson, 2008) – but children do remember prosocial programs’ lessons, and studies indicate children can articulate these lessons after viewing (Jordan, 2003).

Children and gender

The subject of children, gender construction, and gender conformity has a lengthy history. In the 1970s, Slaby and Frey conducted a now-classic study regarding children’s understandings of gender identities. They found that at about age 7 – but usually no earlier – children understand sex is biological and stable, comprehending that people remain male or female despite superficial changes in appearance (Slaby & Frey, 1975). Until then, children tend to regard gender stereotypes as hard-and-fast rules and may fear unwittingly changing genders by deviating from those rules (Halim, Ruble, Tamis-LeMonda, Zosuls, Lurye, & Greulich, 2014).

During this stage, boys and girls typically play only with children of their own sex, reject anything associated with the opposite sex (Paoletti, 2012, p. 13), and pay more attention to items they believe are meant for their own sex (Martin & Ruble, 2009). They do so because they regard their gender identities favorably (Halim et al., 2014), which indicates that by adhering to and reinforcing gender stereotypes in daily life, children may be joyously telling the world: “This is who I am!” (Hains, 2014).

Children’s media and gender stereotypes

Children’s media, rife with gender stereotypes, reinforce children’s gender-rigid tendencies. With few exceptions, children’s television characters are clearly gendered. Even animals and anthropomorphized objects have overtly marked gender identities (Birthisel, 2014; Jane, 2015). Common children’s media’s gender stereotypes include depicting girls as more concerned with physical appearance (Gerding & Signorielli,

2014; Hentges & Case, 2013), more emotional (Thompson & Zerbinos, 1995), more invested in maintaining relationships (Baker and Raney, 2007), and more identified by relationships (Smith et. al, 2010) than boy characters, who are typically portrayed as aggressive or geeky/intelligent.

Gender portrayal seems to vary based on target audience. In genres and channels targeting boys, girls are more likely to be depicted as smarter, less emotional, and more technically savvy (Baker & Raney, 2007; Gerding and Signorielli, 2014; Thompson & Zerbinos, 1995). Conversely, genres and channels targeting girl viewers depict boys as more emotional and affectionate than do boy-oriented media (Aubrey & Harrison, 2004; Hentges & Case, 2013).

In sum, children's media reinforce gender role binaries and suggest that our culture values strictly delineated gender roles. Not all children accept these delineations, however, or feel like celebrating their assigned gender. As Projansky (2014) has argued, girls are often critical of female characters' depictions, rejecting portrayals of stereotypical femininity and taking pleasure in resisting gender stereotypes (p. 200-204). Moreover, trans activism has changed popular thought regarding gender's constancy or immutability, increasing sensitivity towards children who reject assigned gender identities. According to a 2012 study conducted longitudinally in the United States, one in ten children engages in significant gender nonconforming behavior (Roberts, Rosario, Corliss, Koenen, & Austin, 2012). While some gender nonconforming children may ultimately identify as transgender and/or LGBTQ, not all do. But according to Roberts et al.'s study, gender nonconformity elevates young children's risk of abuse and of later PTSD, regardless of sexual orientation. Gender nonconforming children may feel like outsiders, excluded by peers and children's culture alike (Hains, 2012; Hains, 2014).

Children's media culture has the potential to foster greater inclusivity. Children become attached to media characters early on, and their attachments can persist through adolescence (Wilson, 2008). As Bandura's social learning theory suggests, children identify with and learn from characters they perceive as attractive and like themselves (Linder & Lyle, 2010). If children see appealing, gender nonconforming characters on screen, and if other appealing characters model open-minded inclusivity, such storylines could encourage children's inclusion of gender nonconforming peers off screen, as well.

Given this background, we wondered: Do *Annedroids'* prosocial, progressive messages about gender construction influence the flexibility of children's thinking about gender?

Method

We piloted a multi-method study featuring individual interviews with a convenience sample of 21 eight- to ten-year-old children – 15 girls and six boys. Participants were predominantly Caucasian. Three researchers (all female) co-viewed excerpts of *Annedroids* on a laptop with each child; the excerpts (totaling 3 minutes, 20 seconds in

length) focused upon PAL's gender explorations. We also gave children pre- and post-test measures related to their flexibility when thinking about gender.

We conducted 21 interviews between July 2016 and March 2017 in the southeastern United States. Settings included a lab space, children's homes, and after-school care settings, per the interviewees' parents' preferences. An IRB approved this study, all parents provided consent, and all children gave assent. Each meeting lasted 15 to 25 minutes, and the researcher interspersed questions throughout the screening – a form of dialogic questioning. (This method has been shown to increase comprehension and engagement with televised subject matter; Strouse, O'Doherty, & Troseth, 2013). Conversations were videotaped, and the first author and research assistants transcribed all interviews.

Procedure

We began by administering a Pre-test measure (activity subscale) of the Children's Occupation, Activity, and Trait-Attitude Measure (COAT-AM; Bigler, Liben, & Yekel, 1991).¹ Next, we screened a short clip from the pilot episode (38 seconds), in which Anne powers up PAL for the first time and explains: “PAL stands for ‘personal android light-bot.’ I designed PAL to assist with dangerous experiments. PAL's my most advanced android. Or PAL will be once I power PAL up.” The clip ends with PAL's eyes opening.

Next, children watched a curated series of clips (1 minute, 45 seconds) showing PAL's gender identity exploration, including clips in which PAL acts in both stereotypically female and male ways. Examples include PAL choosing to try on cargo pants *and* a dress while shopping with a female friend, and PAL asking friends how to approach a school dance where girls and boys stand on opposite sides of the gym. Throughout, Anne reiterates that she did not program PAL with a gender, so it is up to PAL to choose.

After viewing, we asked each child participant whether PAL should choose to be a boy or a girl, and why.

We then screened a final clip (58 seconds) in which PAL declares, “I do not want to be a boy or a girl. I just want to be me,” in response to which Anne tells PAL she thinks it's a good decision. We then asked our participants what PAL had decided, to ensure they understood, and solicited their opinions.

Finally, we asked three questions:

- “Do you think humans like me and you can also decide whether or not they want to be a girl or a boy?”
- “Have you ever wanted to do something that you didn't think you should because you are a boy/girl?”
- “Do you think PAL has to worry about that?”

We concluded by administering two subscales of the COAT-AM (activity and occupation)².

Results and discussion

Reactions to PAL's decision

We anticipated a range of responses when we asked, "What did you think about PAL's decision?" Instead, all but one participant (20/21) thought PAL's decision was good. Many, like Camille, pointed out a freedom in being untethered to a gender identity. In addition to the quotes from this chapter's epigraph, children remarked:

"It's a good choice to be yourself." Jingyi, Age 9

"It was a smart [decision] ... because then he could just do whatever he wants... or whatever it wants." - Rose, age 10

"We should be able to choose what we wanna do, so why should they [PAL] not be able to choose what they wanna do?" - Joseph, age 10

Children's responses indicated they understood that gender identification determines what is socially acceptable to do. Past research has shown that even children whose parents minimize gender-typing have a nuanced awareness of gender stereotypes and demonstrate persistence in gender-typed toy and activity selection (Weisner & Wilson-Mitchell, 1990). When we asked whether PAL would have to worry about being held back by gender, participants' responses consistently reflected this understanding. Comments included:

"[PAL doesn't have to worry about that] because he's *neither* a boy or a girl, and he is *both* a boy and a girl." - R.J., age 10

"PAL can just be himself." - Elizabeth, age 9

"People don't know [PAL's gender]... so they just classify him as a person." - Lucy, age 9

Over half of the children (11/21) stated they were open to people also deciding whether to be a boy or girl. Of the nine who did *not* think humans could decide this for themselves, the reasons offered were generally biological, reflecting the common conflation of sex (biological) and gender (choice). Answers along these lines included:

"We are born to be a boy or a girl...someone tells you, 'you are a girl, and you have to stay a girl'. A doctor didn't from the start say [to PAL] you have a set gender - [PAL] got to choose and he chose to be non-gender. - Lucy, age 9

"It's either an X or a Y. It's XY it'll be a boy, it's XX, it'll be a girl. We can't decide which one it is." - Joseph, age 10

However, while other children acknowledged the biological aspect, they were still open to other options:

“We’re born into it, we don’t really get to pick... well you *can* change your gender, for like a million dollars. Like you can change your birth certificate.” – Etta, age 10

“They have plastic surgery and stuff...also, if you’re a girl....you can choose to act like a boy.” – Sophie, age 10

“We don’t really get to decide our gender as babies, but we get to decide what we want to act like.” – Elizabeth, age 9

Indeed, focusing on appearance or actions was a common theme among participants. For example, two children remarked:

“You can change your appearance so you can be a boy or a girl.” – Rose, age 10

“Boys can like what girls like, and girls can like what boys like.” – Alexandra, age 8

Stated beliefs about what PAL should choose:

Classifiers and non-classifiers

After children viewed clips related to PAL’s gender exploration, we asked if they thought PAL should choose to be a boy or a girl. Half (11 of 21) said PAL should not specify a gender. Interestingly, this pattern emerged even though we did not offer “neither” as an option, and the series of clips did not present the idea of “neither” as a choice. Children’s comments included:

“I think PAL will choose to not be a he or a she but to just be PAL. It doesn’t seem like PAL wants to be one way or another.” – Elizabeth, age 9

“I think he should choose to stay non-gender... Nobody would, like, judge him.” – Lucy age 9

“I don’t think he should have to choose...he should stand in the middle because he’s kind of both.” – Joseph, age 10

Among those who did specify a gender, watching clips of PAL doing both female- and male-gendered activities resulted in a balanced gender choice split: 5 said PAL should choose to be a girl, and 5 said PAL should choose to be a boy. We found no effects of age or gender on whether or not participants thought PAL should choose a gender.

In considering these patterns, we wondered if children’s responses meaningfully captured two distinct groups of children. For the purpose of the analysis related to our measures of the flexibility of children’s attitudes toward gender, we considered those children who thought PAL should choose a binary gender (boy or girl) as “classifiers”, and those who thought PAL should choose to be neither or both as “non-classifiers.”

Flexibility of Children's Thinking about Gender

We were interested in whether children's classification status (classifier/non-classifier) was associated with higher or lower scores on the COAT-AM.³ (Notably, participants' gender was not related to classification status; of the six males who participated in the study, three were classifiers and three were non-classifiers.) Non-classifiers were willing to think outside the binary gender spectrum in considering what PAL should choose as an identity, and we wondered if they would also be more likely to score "at ceiling" on the COAT-AM, in which higher scores indicate more flexible thinking about stereotypically gendered activities and occupations. Our analysis indicated this was the case: Non-classifier children (who thought PAL should choose both boy and girl or neither) were significantly more likely to be at ceiling on all three COAT-AM subscales as compared to classifier children (who indicated PAL should choose to be a boy or a girl).⁴ In other words, non-classifiers demonstrated flexible thinking about PAL's gender choices, and that pattern was mirrored in their pre- and post-test COAT-AM scores.

But what about the classifiers, who *did* readily provide a gender suggestion for PAL? We wondered whether the two groups might show statistically different patterns of change on the COAT-AM after viewing the selected clips from *Annedroids* and having a conversation about PAL with an interested adult (the researcher). Specifically, we hypothesized that classifiers might show more change in their thinking about gender stereotypes than non-classifiers since they initially showed less flexible thinking about gender. We conducted a Welch's *t*-test on the pre/post difference scores and found a statistically significant difference between the two groups.⁵ Classifiers (10 children) showed a significantly larger change in flexibility of gender attitudes from before to after the co-viewing experience than non-classifiers (11 children), demonstrating more flexibility in their thinking after viewing. From this small sample, we saw promising indicators that co-viewing progressive children's media might effect changes in children's gender attitudes. For children inclined to think binarily about gender, spending as little as 10 to 20 minutes co-viewing and discussing a show featuring a gender nonconforming character may encourage more flexible thinking. Compared to classifiers, whose average difference score was .113 (indicating an 11.3% increase in flexible thinking about gender), those who chose to conceptualize PAL's gender in less binary terms showed a slight decrease of .018, or 1.8%.⁶ Because 9 out of 11 of the non-classifiers scored above 90% on all three quantitative scales, however, more nuanced measures are likely needed to detect potential pre/post changes in that group.

Limitations

We wish to call attention to limitations of our pilot study, some of which suggest future research directions. First, although we decided to show children curated clips focusing on PAL's gender exploration, PAL's storyline unfolds gradually over four seasons, cul-

minating in PAL's series-finale decision to “just be me.” A more naturalistic follow-up would be modelled on children's actual viewing behavior, including repeated viewing of some episodes and/or “binge” watching entire seasons. Children's reactions to PAL could differ under these conditions; less concentrated exposure to PAL's storyline could result in greater identification with PAL as a character and potentially more reflection on gender or less attention paid to PAL's gender exploration and less subsequent reflection on gender.

Additionally, *Annedroids* has been lauded as groundbreaking for its depiction of Anne as a female scientist. Recent research has shown that children who viewed two episodes of *Annedroids* reported significantly greater interest in technology after viewing. They were also significantly more likely to disagree with the statement, “girls and robots don't really go together” (Götz, Mendel, Pritscher, & Rodriguez, 2016). Another recent study on *Annedroids* showed a decrease in children's STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) gender stereotypes after watching just two episodes (International Central Institute for Youth and Educational Television, 2016). In our study, we minimized the number of clips portraying Anne in a scientific role and asked no questions about her, to avoid calling attention to her; however, it is possible that the brief counter-stereotypical scene with Anne influenced our participants. Therefore, for the purpose of interpreting the current study, we acknowledge that *Annedroids* breaks with gender stereotypes in multiple potentially significant ways.

The current study's small sample size and recruitment method was another limitation. For our IRB-approved recruitment efforts, we mentioned that the clips would depict a genderless character. This is an unusual enough concept that it may have drawn disproportionate interest from families that have already discussed gender issues with their children. Conversely, some families we invited to participate may have declined due to discomfort with the idea of exposing their children to a genderless character, resulting in a less-than-representative sample. In the future, it would help to obtain measures of parental attitudes toward gender, to directly examine the potentially mediating influence of parental attitudes on children's evaluation of PAL. Additionally, although gender was equally distributed across the between-subjects variable (classification status), substantially more girls than boys participated in the study, which could have played a role in our findings.

General discussion

Our findings suggest that media content could positively influence children's gender norms. To recap, we introduced children to a genderless character, PAL, through a concentrated, curated series of clips and invited participants to reflect on PAL's gender explorations and their own experiences of gender with an attentive adult. Our results suggest that this type of experience may have the potential to encourage more flexible

thinking in children who hold rigid gender stereotypes. Though this finding is preliminary, it is culturally important. Today's children frequently negotiate gender identity and confront problematic gender stereotypes, neither of which is a pleasant or easy task. In our pilot study, more than a third of participants (8/21, all girls) reported having felt held back from an activity of choice because of their gender. Examples the girls provided included watching Marvel movies, playing arcade games and Minecraft, playing soccer and basketball, canoeing, getting a short haircut, rocket science, and aspiring to be a car engineer. Given the prevalence of such experiences, if progressive children's media content can help normalize counter-stereotypical behavior related to gender and encourage more flexible thinking about what boys and girls "should" do, we would argue that the children's media industry has a moral obligation to do so.

As this is the first study to explore children's reactions to a televised character who chooses to remain ungendered, the work of Bigler & Liben (1990, 1992) is relevant in interpreting our results: In a series of classroom experiments, Bigler & Liben were able to reduce children's gender-schematic thinking about occupations. They used one of two cognitive interventions aimed at calling children's attention to counter-stereotypical examples and helped them formulate new, differentiated schemas of the occupations in question.

In a similar manner, when children watch *Annedroids* and witness PAL's counter-stereotypical gender explorations, they may be nudged into thinking along two dimensions of classification – gender appearance and gender-typed behavior – and recognizing that an individual can be classified differently along these two dimensions. Our study suggests that for a subset of children who held rigid gender stereotypes, PAL's portrayal may have provided a salient counter-example to the dominant gender-typed schema, helping them make gender-related classifications on more than one dimension and revise their rule-based thinking on gender.

While additional research is needed to replicate and explore this result, children's almost unanimously positive appraisal of PAL's decision to "just be me" is informative. Our findings suggest that eight- to ten-year-old children may have a more sophisticated awareness of the societal constraints accompanying binary gender identity, and be more open to non-binary gender identities, than is generally assumed.

As 10-year-old Rose observed, "It would be cool if he could be neither....he can just be free and be who he wants to be. He can do everything."

Notes

1. In the COAT-AM scale, children are asked whether "only boys", "only girls", or "both boys and girls" should do certain activities (e.g. iron clothes, go to the beach, fix bicycles) and whether "only men", "only women", or "both men and women" should do particular jobs (e.g. librarian, artist, police officer).
2. We used a combined post-test measure consisting of two COAT-AM subscales for two reasons: the scales are highly correlated in our sample ($r=.916$) and in other studies (Bigler, personal communica-

- tion, June 14, 2016), and piloting showed children's tendency to note the repetition of the individual items of the activity subscale if given alone before and after viewing the brief set of clips.
3. COAT-AM scores are computed by subtracting gender-neutral items and generating a proportion of “both” responses for stereotypically male and female items; numbers closer to 1 indicate greater flexibility of thinking about gender.
 4. We determined that 10 of the children were “at ceiling” on all three subscales given, as defined by scores greater than or equal to .9. We then conducted a chi-square test for association between classification status and being at ceiling on all pre- and post-test quantitative scales. The analysis revealed a statistically significant association such that non-classifiers were significantly more likely to be at ceiling on measures of flexibility of their attitudes about gender than classifiers – $\chi^2(1)=10.831, p=.001$.
 5. Results of a Welch's two independent sample *t*-test on the pre/post difference scores of classifiers and non-classifiers indicated a statistically significant difference in a one-tailed test, $t(12)=2.108, p=.028$. The mean change in pre/post COAT-AM scores among classifiers was .132 higher than among non-classifiers.
 6. A single sample *t*-test showed that the mean difference score for the non-classifiers (.018) did not differ significantly from zero, $t(10)=.726, p=.484$. The mean difference score for the classifiers (.113) did differ significantly from zero in a one-tailed test, $t(9)=1.983, p=.0393$.

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The Cultivation and Reception Effects of Gendered Images

Proposing Ways to Move Beyond Gender Based Stereotypes for Boys and Girls

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This article presents an analytical discussion on how media images cultivate gendered beliefs and attitudes. The aim is to examine the possible patterns of media reception effects among young girls and boys which further influence their socialisation process. We do this by making complementing connections between the two theoretical approaches: George Gerbner's cultivation theory and Laura Mulvey's psychoanalytical approach. We observed that both the approaches are long-term effect theories and work simultaneously with reference to the social construction of realities experienced by children in their daily interaction with *screen oriented media*. Also, using textual analysis of video content available in the Indian context, we further argue that with a conscious projection of images that reflect gender justice and gender sensitisation, the cultivation of beliefs and attitudes about gender can be altered. In the conclusion, we highlight the challenges and risks involved in moving beyond gender stereotypes.

Children from a very early stage of their lives experience various socialisation processes. It has been established well that socialisation is a gendered process (Stockard, 2006). Also as Simone De Beauvoir argues "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir, 1949), she is referring to the binaries attached with socially constructed masculinity and femininity. The gendered process of socialisation rigidly categorises children into the binaries of femininity and masculinity, and teaches them gender roles and relations which are constructed through their own repetitive performance of gender (Butler, 1990). This gendered socialisation does not give children the flexibilities to move beyond the binaries of male and female or allow them to remain at the intersections of different genders.

In order to demonstrate gendered binaries, the society establishes socializing institutions for young girls and boys. Family and School being the most intimate institutions, play a major role in prescribing gender identities to children. Media as an overarching institution, however, produce and reproduce the social construction of gender via dif-

ferent media texts outside as well as within the institutions of family and school. The social status of parents and their interpretation of media texts influence the socialisation process of their children and impact their success in school specifically in terms of how they read the text provided to them and also, how they develop tastes for media (Notten, Kraaykamp, & Konig 2012). Taylor (2005) proposed that college undergraduates who found television to be realistic, got their attitude influenced by the sexual content displayed on screen. Also there was a significant influence in the group about the beliefs related to women's sexual activity. There is also a growing literature focusing on a robust connection between television viewing and increasing tendency among male grade school children stereotyping fat females. This stereotyping is also significantly related to increasing pattern of eating disorder among boys and girls (Harrison, 2000). The portrayal of sexuality in media suggests interesting analytical reference points to propose further contextual studies in this area.

The formation of gender through media

In this article, we are interested in discussing how gender based stereotypes are being formed and can be challenged through audio-visual media using Gerbner's cultivation theory from a functionalist perspective and Mulvey's psychoanalytical approach from a feminist media perspective. We believe, a considerable attention should be given to study all forms of traditional media (radio, television, and newspaper). We are, however focusing on television and online videos in this chapter because of their dominant audio-visual content. Also, both Gerbner and Mulvey have done their audience analysis using television and film respectively. We are opening our discussion to online videos as well, because today all forms of media converge into the digital space, and it is imperative to take into account children's overlapping viewership of television and online videos in the case of those with digital access. Going forward in the chapter, we wish to use *screen oriented media* as a common terminology for all forms of audio-visual media. For this article, we are focusing on Indian girls and boys in their pre-adolescence and adolescence (approximately the age group of 10 to 19) as our analytical category. Adolescence has been studied as a time period when young girls and boys build their individual identities and indulge in self conceptualization (Harrison, 2006). A study by Verma and Larson (2001) highlighted television as "a member of the family" and that adolescents in India spend about 12 hours per week in television viewing at home, majority of time with their family members. There is no strictly scheduled bed time and media time for children in most Indian households. Hence in India, television and film viewing become multi-generational practices. Also, it is common for teens and pre-teens to have access to the mobile phones and personal laptops of their parents to play games and watch videos. It is also not uncommon for Indian kids to have an access to parents' social media accounts; some even operate social media accounts for

their parents. Children's access to various multi-media devices expose them to different media content including that primarily created for adults.

There have always been screen oriented media in India- advertisements showcasing beauty products, jewelry, and deodorants, commercial cinema, and daily soaps- that prescribe specific conventional gender roles for both women and men. Ray and Jat (2010) highlighted the effects of media on "child health, including violence, obesity, tobacco and alcohol use, and risky sexual behaviors". Saraswati (1999) argues about the influence of mass media on the adolescence culture in India and highlight it as gendered and class based. There has, however, emerged a set of alternate thinking recently around production of screen oriented media in India that challenge gender based stereotypes. Although, this alternate thinking comes in myriad perspectives and face intense scrutiny through feminist critique, one positive contribution it has made is provoking a public debate around gender issues and we call this a paradigmatic shift. This shift has been strengthened by some critical questions raised by scholars within academic discourse around how the gendered images can be changed via media and "What kind of alternative portrayals of male and female role models for children can be offered, models that will offer children as well as the adults in their lives a vision of a possible more gender-equal world?" (Lemish, 2010). Also, we believe if synthesizing Gerbner's theory and Mulvey's approach help us understand how stereotypes have been established via media, it should also explain how appropriate screen oriented media content holds a reasonable potential to move beyond the existing stereotypes and influence the socialisation of Indian youth.

Cultivation effect of the screen oriented gendered images

Gerbner (1986) at the University of Pennsylvania, under the *Cultural Indicator* project, developed Cultivation theory and suggested that television *cultivates* concepts of social reality. For the *heavy viewers* of television, it becomes the dominant source of information and they are strongly influenced by the way television frames their world-view. The *light viewers*, however, seek information from alternate sources besides television and hold divergent world-views. There exist *first order effects* which are the general *beliefs* about everyday world and the *second order effects* which are the specific *attitudes* towards those beliefs.

Cheung and Chan (1996) offer an explanation of cultivation theory in terms of televisions' focus on materialistic values like luxurious home, clothing, extravagant car and the adolescents endorsing such values through heavy television viewing. Cultivation research would argue that children who are heavy viewers of television may inculcate belief of boys being "dominant, assertive, and powerful" as male characters quite often demonstrate such qualities on screen (Martins & Harrison, 2012). The cultivation

effect is also based on the cultural ideologies of desirable and ideal bodies and perceptions related to such ideologies which further motivate sexual activities (Thompson & Hirschman, 1995). Anuradha (2012) based on cultivation analysis and social learning analysis of 118 television commercials aired during children's programmes in India suggested that children interpret the stereotypes shown in the television as 'natural' and perceive the visual images to be true and in sync with the assigned gender roles within society. Collins (2011) suggested that women in media are portrayed "in traditionally feminine (i.e., stereotyped) roles ... as nonprofessionals, homemakers, wives or parents, and sexual gatekeepers". Other studies have shown that women playing the role of 'attractive' models in advertisements can set high standards for physical attraction and people start comparing those with their actual real life partners (Richins, 1991). Eisend and Moller (2007) conducted a study which supported the cultivation of beliefs and attitudes towards gendered body images and results show that for women, "TV viewing increases the real-ideal self discrepancy, which, in turn, leads to consumption behavior in order to achieve ideal bodies" (p. 101). The model they proposed in their study, suggests the cultivation effects of television viewing leading to body dissatisfaction for both men and women. Women, however, are more influenced towards body dissatisfaction and behaviour, leading to beauty-related consumption as their perception of self is more biased than men. We demonstrate this discussion with the help of an example in the following section.

In India, discrimination based on skin colour is one among the different forms of inequalities. Although, the country is a diverse nation and home to people of multiple skin colours, there exists a dominant preference for fair skin. Kakkar (1978) highlights the differences within Indian communities over complexions and their preferences for a fair complexion. This shapes into a double layered oppression when discrimination based on colour intersects with gender based discrimination (Collins, 2000). In India, the preference for fair skin has been specifically seen for women from their very early stages of lives and also when they approach job opportunities or marriage. In advertisements, for example in case of some fairness products for Indian women, such preferences have been observed to be shown for years to generate demand for the products from the non-fair coloured women who are assumed in 'need' to enhance their complexion or to 'empower' them (Karan, 2008). Adolescents, who are heavy viewers of television and get constantly exposed to such screen oriented media content over a longer period of time, are likely to inculcate certain beliefs in them towards such preferences. The beliefs may emerge from a sense of superiority for girls who have a fair skin while from a sense of subordination for those with a darker shade of skin tone. Such beliefs are often seen to be reciprocated by boys when they express and affirm their preference for girls with fair skin. This seems to be referring to a first order effect in cultivation analysis. As adolescents would grow with such beliefs, they would potentially develop specific stereotypical attitudes. Among girls with superiority beliefs, the possible attitudes might range from ethnocentrism to overshadowing and othering the girls with non-fair skin.

Also, among the girls with a sense of subordination, the attitudes might range from a loss of self-confidence while coming in contact with girls who have fair skin tone. This seems to be referring to a second order effect in the cultivation analysis. For boys, the attitude might range from showing 'approval' or 'disapproval' to girls of fair and non-fair skin respectively.

Psychoanalytical approach

Laura Mulvey, a British feminist media theorist discusses psychoanalytical approach which highlights, how men and women consume and respond to gendered images in films. The consumption is explained in terms of pleasure, unpleasure, shame and disappointment. For both girls and boys, a long-term exposure to television viewing can bring *Scopophilia* (pleasure in looking) and *Shame* (opposite of scopophilia which brings shame, disgust and morality). Freud (1905) discusses scopophilia as finding pleasure while watching other objects and subjecting them to a controlled and curious gaze. The opposite of scopophilia is when one feels ashamed of being scopophilic which brings shame and disgust for being immoral.

Mulvey (1975) relates scopophilia to the act of watching cinema. The example of fairness product advertisement can be understood using Mulvey's approach. With a cumulative long-term exposure to such advertisements, girls can become scopophilic by seeking pleasure of looking at the female model who is projected as 'beautiful' on screen and the kind of validation she gets from society for the fair skin tone she owns. Mulvey suggests that this act of being scopophilic takes a narcissistic aspect when girls identify themselves with the model and the process of recognition (if a girl meet the beauty standards set on screen) and mis-recognition (if a girl fails to meet the beauty standards set on screen) decide their experiences of pleasure and unpleasure respectively. The trajectory of scopophilia getting converted into narcissism can prove to be the unique selling point for the product to be sold through the advertisement.

There are other sets of similar images which include bollywood movies, daily soap operas, music albums etc, where women are shown with a 'perfect body' on screen. Boys who are exposed to screen oriented media for a long time, may become scopophilic by admiring the woman on screen as a sexual object. They may receive erotic gratification by seeing the hero taking control over the woman on screen and wish to seek that control in real life on their partners also. Here the narrative structure of the screen content projects a heterosexual division of labour, where the man is projected as active while the woman is projected as passive.

For boys when they grow up and pursue the societal role of a 'man', scopophilia can develop into narcissism when they identify themselves with the male protagonist in the film, trying to seek control in the real life situation while considering the female counterpart as passive. And, in case they are not being able to seek that control, it can bring

unpleasure, shame, and disappointment. This discussion is not so strongly brought in Mulvey's analysis, as she has limited her discussions to the conversion of scopophilia into narcissism only in the case of women. However, as socialisation progresses, this process of recognition and mis-recognition has potential to be equally relevant for boys aspiring to become a 'man'.

Synthesis

Understanding Gerbner and Mulvey together gives us a confident position to demonstrate how media highlight, reinforce, and reproduce gendered stereotypes generated in the larger process of socialisation. While the former discusses the cultivation analysis using a cause and effect explanation, the later helps us to understand the psychological responses of children while they are exposed to gendered media content over a longer time period. Hence, understanding the intersectional grounds offers an interaction between two different schools of thought. Some overlapping grounds from both the theories would be when children experience scopophilia and it gets converted into narcissism, there may exist the first order effect as young girls and boys develop gendered beliefs for how to function like a woman (passive, fair coloured or perfect body) and man (active, seeking control of the woman on screen). Later as they grow up as adolescents, they form attitudes towards such gendered beliefs. So now for example, in the process of recognition and mis-recognition, girls might possess specific social attitudes while passively responding to their male partners and boys might engage in specific attitudes while actively responding to their female partners and this signals a second order effect.

Moving beyond stereotypes

To reflect upon possible ways of producing gender sensitive media content, we need to visualize nature of images which should be represented to challenge stereotypes. The Indian media industry has observed in recent years a considerable paradigmatic shift in terms of gender representations. Indian viewers, including adolescents because of the multi-generational socialisation and media exposure, have been exposed to several ads, online videos, and films that address women empowerment, challenge the existing gender roles, and redefine gender relations. These media products and their messages have been debated from multiple feminist standpoints where feminists and general public have also at times taken extreme positions to support or challenge the viewpoints within the messages. We do not claim that this recent shift has been sustained and in existence long enough for any noticeable cultivation effect to have taken place but it has certainly generated a lively public debate which is a necessary step in the process of democratic

social change. One such example is the *Vogue Empower* campaign on “Women Empowerment and Social Awareness” which include content in the form of still graphics, online videos, radio content, merchandise available on their website and messages shared vividly with other social media platforms. Within this initiative, one video featured Deepika Padukone, a highly popular movie star in India. The video, titled “My choice” shows her claiming a radical role in exercising her choices in every dimension of her life. She also rejects the point of view of her male counterparts in some of the choices she claims (For example, she defends her choice of remaining or not remaining loyal to one sexual partner or having a child or not). This provoked controversial debates around the agency of woman over her body and her decision making in a spousal relationship context, and pre-dominantly discussions around gradual social change vs. radical revolution. There is another video, “Boys don’t cry” which features Madhuri Dixit, another popular but older Indian movie star with boys age ranging from infants, pre-teens, adolescents, and adulthood. It shows how the society is rendering boys equally victims of patriarchy when they are discouraged to express emotions. Madhuri, who in real life is a mother of two boys, at the end of the video, makes a request to the parents for allowing their sons to cry and express emotions. It is important to note here that these two videos went viral on internet via various social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, user blogs etc. These two videos come with epistemic juxtapositions, where one reflects a perspective of anger, and fights to exercise women’s choices, while the other is advocating sensitive gender socialisation for both men and women. The third example is a video featuring Nandita Das, an actress well-known for unconventional and socially sensitive on-screen and off-screen presence. Here, the dusky Nandita is challenging the ‘fair is desirable’ stereotype with ‘Dark is beautiful’. Another noteworthy example is the ongoing campaign by the Star TV using celebrity cricketers to recognize mothers’ role in our patriarchal society. The campaign is being showcased during the live telecasts of cricket matches that reach a large number of Indian youth. Several other brands such as Tanishque, Nike, Asian Paints, and Havell home appliances among others have made “the empowered woman” the focus of their brand identity. All these examples potentially demonstrate the emerging alternative thinking within screen oriented media.

There have been emerging institutional and academic discussions around measures for sensitizing media towards gender equality. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2012 came out with a set of gender-sensitive indicators for media which aim to “...contribute to gender equality and women’s empowerment in and through all media forms, irrespective of the technology used” (UNESCO, 2012). While UNESCO has been proposing gender-sensitive media strategies at practice level, Lemish (2010) has proposed an academic discussion by suggesting eight principles for improving gender images for children. The principles involve *Equality* which is equal roles and opportunities offered to both boys and girls on television while also respecting their differences; *Diversity* which is representation of children through variety of characters within social categories of gender, race, and ethnicity etc., *Com-*

plexity which is “different but equal” positioning of characters of both boys and girls and further broadening gendered traits within society by producing more “complex, rounded, and non-stereotypical characters”; *Similarity* which is to emphasize on the “shared aspects of girls and boys” within media scripts rather than on differences leading to stereotyping and conflict; *Unity* which is to construct relationship between boys and girls on equal terms; *Family* which is offering a supportive and caring ground to the social context of family while providing a positive role models for “parent-child as well as adult-child relations”; *Authenticity* which is constructing television programmes while depicting “true-to-life characters, narratives, and social contexts”; and *Voicing* which is to construct television programmes to present children’s perspective. These principles bring a foundational discussion around giving a sustained exposure to an entire new generation of young girls and boys towards gender sensitive media content. It would be further interesting to connect how and what the theoretical underpinnings of Mulvey and Gerbner have to offer in this area. How media can render cultivation effect in producing gender sensitive beliefs and attitudes and also how psychologically, children would respond to such effect? This discussion however, is missing in Mulvey’s psychoanalytical approach.

We will explain this possibility using the “boys don’t cry” video featuring Madhuri Dixit. If young boys are given a long-term cumulative exposure to images that question the existing gender roles, boys would be introduced to an alternate media content which gives them flexibilities to express emotions as it would no longer be portrayed as a feminine characteristic. Sustained exposure to such media messages would at least expose them to alternatives and help them critically engage with their socialisation. Also, two critical situations might happen when scopophilia would turn into narcissism for boys. Either they will identify and recognise with the boys projected in the video and would seek pleasure in looking at a new flexible image on screen where they receive an unconventional message of allowing the boys to cry if they need to. Or else, they would mis-recognise with the boys on screen and seek discomfort and displeasure in identifying with the unconventional gendered images being portrayed on screen. We believe in both cases, the media content would at least question and disrupt the existing societal narrative around gendered images among the young minds and this we argue is a good entry point to approach a gender sensitive media discourse. Sustained exposure to such messages would also encourage an alternate thinking position for parents to raise their children in a gender sensitive manner and give them opportunities to choose from multiple socially constructed feminine and masculine characteristics.

Moving beyond stereotypes: Challenges

We believe, as we celebrate the potential of gender sensitive content, that we should also be vigilant about multiple risks such alternative communication might possess.

Our analysis of the recent media content in India that claims to be contributing to gender sensitization points to three disturbing tendencies prevailing in media: One, oversimplification in media messages that ignores the complexities of gender issues; two, putting men down in an attempt to portray an empowered woman, and three, unconsciously reiterating the patriarchal norms within the messages. We explain these risks with examples. For instance, when Vogue Empower campaign came up with Deepika Padukone's "My Choice", the video discussed almost all individual choices of a woman in a binary hetero-sexual relational set up. One of the choices discussed was pertaining to the reproductive rights of a woman- "My choice, to have your baby or not" says the empowered woman in the video. The biological processes, however, allows only a woman to conceive and give birth and not to a man and in a monogamous marital relationship the man does not have any other way of fulfilling his desire to be a father. The debates around this video indicated that women shown in this video were perceived as holding the power to actually disempower their male counterpart by depriving them of having a child while exercising their choice over reproductive rights. We argue that oversimplification of gender issues in media messages do more harm than good and the aim of any gender sensitive media content should not be to disempower any gender, but to give an enabling environment where dialogue between genders can be initiated. The third risk is illustrated through a set of campaigns by the government of India for promoting the use of toilets in rural India to discourage open defecation. We evaluated some key messages in this multi-media campaign and observed that the cultivation of gender stereotypes has been so long and strong that it unconsciously enters into messages meant for gender justice. One of the messages, for instance, argued that one should have a toilet at home so that women of the family do not have to leave home. Leaving home and venturing out was portrayed as an unsafe practice for women. In another message, the elders of the family were asked, "we protect the women of the family by veiling them, how come they have to defecate in open?" Such messages reinforce the stereotypical practices of keeping women home-bound and imposing veiling as a desirable practice.

The above discussion suggests that moving beyond stereotypes is not just about bringing a radical shift, but to keep on revisiting the gendered socialisation process. We cannot move forward without learning from our past mistakes. We also need to recognize that patriarchal oppression is complex and is experienced by both, boys and girls and not just one gender. And finally, moving beyond the male-female binary and not just empowerment of women is an important step ahead in creating gender sensitive messages. The key is constant examination and critical reflection, not only on the part of media content producers but by everyone concerned about shaping a gender just society.

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- Ilana Eleá (Ed.) *Agents and Voices. A Panorama of Media Education in Brazil, Portugal and Spain*, 2015.
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