2018-07-01

A Content Analysis of Relationships and Intimacy in Teen Dramas on Television

Sara Valoise Lamb
Brigham Young University

A Content Analysis of Relationships and Intimacy in Teen Dramas on Television

Sara Valoise Lamb

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Thomas Eugene Robinson, Chair
Loy Clark Callahan
Scott H. Church

School of Communications

Brigham Young University

ABSTRACT

A Content Analysis of Relationships and Intimacy
in Teen Dramas on Television

Sara Valoise Lamb
School of Communications, BYU
Master of Arts

Television programs continue to play a significant role in a teenager's life as they become involved in dating relationships. Adolescence is a pivotal period of life. Teenagers' usage of media, especially television, provides a source of norms and scripts of what a relationship looks like. The portrayals of sexual content in teen programs has become a source of sexual information instead of parents and peers. Many parents are unaware of the sexual content teen programs deliver to their audiences. This study analyzes how teen dramas create expectations through their portrayal of relationships and intimacy on television. Five teen television programs were gathered to analyze the frequency of sexual behaviors depicted to a teen audience. This study investigates the ages, genders, types of relationships, and sexual behaviors shown and implied. The findings show all five programs consisted of high amounts of sexual behavior throughout their first seasons, which suggest that the entertainment industry for teen viewers is a powerful tool that plays a significant role in a teenager's sexual socialization.

Keywords: teen drama, television, cultivation theory, scripting theory, gender, relationship, intimacy, sexual behavior

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my amazing committee members Dr. Robinson, Dr. Callahan, and Dr. Church. They have been instrumental in my master's program here at BYU. I would especially like to thank Dr. Robinson who served as an excellent mentor, confidant, and friend throughout my graduate years. A special thanks to my incredible friends, coworkers, and family who have helped me, supported me, and cheered me on through every step of my thesis and completing this program.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Introduction

To create a compelling and enticing narrative for audiences to watch continuously, a television program needs to have an interesting plot, likeable characters, conflict, believable dialogue, and room for growth in the storyline and characters. Teen television focuses on teenagers' rises and falls in life as well as decisions they make in regards to family, peers, their future, and life in general. Television also plays an impactful role in viewers' lives because its messages can shape people's views about families, family life, friendship, and relationships (Signorielli & Morgan, 2001). Previous research showed emerging adults ages 18 – 25 are also engaged and frequent viewers of such television programs (Arnett, 2000). They are equally interested in the teenage experience because it is still applicable to their life because they are still developing and transitioning from teens to adulthood. Eggermont (2004) believed that "television viewing was found to be related to an especially private and personal inclination as one's expectations of a romantic partner" (p. 262). Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, and Morgan (1980) argued that "network drama is the locus of this time, and our most common, constant, and vivid learning environment" (p. 38). They stated that television is the source and it distributes images of our pop culture. It also "presents a world of places, people, and roles. Most of us experience this world with little selectivity or deviation and do so for an average of 30 hours a week" (Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, & Morgan, 1980, p. 37). According to the United States Department of Labor and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number has dropped to people spending 2.8 hours a day watching television. With access to different streaming websites, such as Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime, that stream previously aired television programs as well as movies, the number of hours watching could be much different today with terms such as "binge-watching" indicating a new trend of viewing substantial amounts of television. Most teen television shows use school as one of their constant settings within the storyline. The teen viewer

can automatically create a connection with the characters and the storyline and soon become a committed viewer to the program. Teen dramas display an understanding and engagement of their audience through representations of gender, age, and popular culture (Aslinger, 2008). The more they watch, the more they come to believe that the lives portrayed on television are the same as the lives outside of their homes. Relationships and intimacy are learned through television rather than peers, parents, and school because it plays a central part in representations of gender roles and stereotypes (Garcia-Muñoz & Fedele, 2011).

The media, particularly television, has been labeled as a "super sexual peer" for its portrayals of norms and expectations toward teens (Kunkel, Eyal, Finnerty, Biely, & Donnerstein, 2005). It plays a powerful force to "influence young people's sexuality" (Fisher, Hill, Grube, & Gruber, 2004, p. 529). The media's influence concerns parents, academics, and politicians that by the age of 18, young people spend more time in front of the television and computer than other daily activities (Van Damme, 2010). Televisions are no longer in one room where every person in a household can see it. Televisions have been moved into bedrooms where they can be viewed more intimately and without any interruptions. Thus, young viewers are more likely to watch shows without any parental controls. Because of this, it becomes harder for parents to know what their children are watching.

Some scholars argued whether such media promotes sexual behaviors (Ferguson, Nielsen, & Markey, 2016). The ability of "sexy media" to contribute to sexual behaviors among teenagers has been a controversial issue (Ferguson et al., 2016, p. 355). Sexual content has populated and been a common feature in magazines, television programs, films, radio, and even video games. There has been more sexual content, but not much talk of the positive or negative consequences on the television shows. Researchers discovered that most negative consequences of sexuality are emotional and social because adolescents care more about their sexual

reputations than their social reputations (Aubrey, 2004). However, the frequency of sexual socialization presented on television programs are scripted and cultivated into what would be the norm in any relationship. Studies found that heavily viewing sexual content on television "accelerates the initiation of sexual intercourse" (Kunkel et al., 2005, p. 7).

There have been high rates of teen pregnancy for years. Ten percent of 15 to 19-year-old females who are sexually active "become pregnant each year, an estimated 85% of these pregnancies are unintended" (Coyle et. al., 2001, p. 83). MTV's reality shows *16 and Pregnant* and *Teen Mom*, the film, *Juno*, and ABC Family's *The Secret Life of the American Teenager* ignited a long-standing societal issue of unplanned pregnancy in young girls that began to be portrayed on television. Although, these shows were to help prevent and lower the number of unplanned pregnancies, some critics believed these shows glorified teen pregnancies.

The purpose of this study was to analyze how teen dramas on television create expectations for relationships and intimacy. Some of these other expectations include gender roles and assumptions. It will also analyze the amount of intimacy and the kind of relationships presented, as well as, sexual behaviors implied and depicted, and any sexual encounters and protection use. Eggermont (2004) argued that "television highlights empathy, open communication, intimacy, and passion in romantic relationships" (p. 248). These television programs increased expectations for all things that involve a relationship. It is also a caution for parents to know what types of shows their teenagers are being influenced in their own sexual development and socialization.

Literature Review

This study looked at the effects that teen drama television has on the teen and young adult viewer through perceptions of gender roles, heightened expectations of their perceptions of the opposite sex, and sexual behaviors including sexual content. This review of literature contains

typical gender stereotypes, such as attractive characters for entertainment value and certain body types to represent the ages of the characters. Relationships and intimacy and how they are portrayed on television can heighten expectations for young viewers because of their cultivation in the media as well as the scripts depicted. The relationships in teen dramas are also applicable to "emerging adults" because they are in a transitional period in their life. They are still learning about themselves and finding their identity. This heavily influences their ability to create themselves and form relationships. To some extent, a variety of relationships shown in the media also portray and discuss gender roles in relationships. Researchers found that sexual behavior, sexual encounters, and sexual protection play major roles in intimacy in relationships depicted on television.

Gender Stereotypes

In any given film genre, the leading characters in an archetypal drama media are always attractive. The good guys are handsome, and the women are always beautiful in order to appeal to the audience, to grab their attention immediately. With most dramas, there is romance, and "romantic relationships involve popular and attractive characters" (Van Damme, 2010). Most media, especially in the United States, teaches through their television programs and films that an acceptable person to date must be attractive physically. When a person evaluates the opposite sex, most people tend to focus more on "physical attractiveness" (Eggermont, 2004, p. 247). Eggermont (2004) also pointed out that "television may reinforce this attention, as it is said to portray most women as slender and curved and most men as slim and muscular" thus receiving "more social rewards, often in connection with romantic and sexual success" because a "real man never says no when the opportunity for sex crosses his path" even if they just met (Eggermont, 2004, p. 247; Van Damme, 2010, p. 82). Eggermont (2004) cited Fouts and Burggraf (1999) by saying that "most women in situation comedies are thin, and that male

characters treat these slender characters more positively than female characters of above-average weight" (p. 247). Physical attractiveness becomes more of a crucial advantage, "even a necessity, in successful dating on television" (Eggermont, 2004, p. 247). Van Damme (2010) argued that the majority of female characters are stereotyped as damaged and wounded teenagers and that "the way a girl is depicted is more important than being intelligent" (Van Damme, 2010, p. 81). On the other hand, the representations boys have are consistently those that show how to be a man (Van Damme, 2010). Some of these depictions of how to be a man are drinking, smoking, using physical force, and having athletic, muscled bodies to show off under their tight clothes (Van Damme, 2010). However, their physical appearance, unlike female characters, is hardly a topic of discussion because most male characters portray their abilities and talents, not just their looks (Van Damme, 2010).

TV Can Create Heightened Expectations

In Behm-Morawitz and Mastro's (2008) study, they applied the social learning theory and argued that "the more the consumers identify with the movies and characters, the more likely they are to adopt the gendered attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors portrayed in these movies" (p. 137). When the consumer empathizes and identifies with a character, their perception of themselves blend in with that character. They embody the character's personality and even their on-screen relationship. They begin to compare their character counterpart to people in real life, and they look for the similar traits and physical attractiveness of a particular actor. Behm-Morawitz and Mastro (2008) argued that "the effects of media exposure demonstrate that media consumption has a measurable influence on people's perceptions of the real world, and, regardless of the accuracy of these perceptions, they are used to help guide subsequent attitudes, judgments, and actions" (p. 131). Television helps the viewer to be able to have a question answered about something in their life or an escape from their reality.

Previous research suggests that “people seek romantic content in the media in order to see relationships that appear to work despite all obstacles” as well as learning about relationships in general (Hefner & Wilson, 2013, p. 151). Other researchers, such as Wood, Senn, Desmarais, Park, and Verberg (2002), “found that both male and female adolescents seek out romantic content in television and other media in order to get information about dating” (Hefner & Wilson, 2013, p. 151). In some cases, it is difficult to learn about dating through parents, guardians, or friends if an adolescent feels uncomfortable. They therefore observe it on television rather than someone talking to someone directly.

Hefner and Wilson’s (2013) study focused on the young people’s romantic ideals and beliefs about relationships through the portrayals in movies. They believed that “movies offer stories that trace relationships from the beginning to the end in one packaged narrative” (Hefner & Wilson, 2013, p. 152). They looked at films rather than television shows because the development of relationships happens in one sitting instead of them happening over several episodes. They hypothesized that the “potent messages could boost the impact on attentive viewers” in a film rather than a television show. However, I believe a television show has more similarities to the development of a budding romance in real life time: it takes some time to happen, and viewers can see the change of characters and their feelings toward their counterpart. Most relationships happen slowly, over time. In film and television, the famous “spark” is supposed to remain throughout the relationship, but in reality, the “sparks” fade into familiarity.

The media creates heightened “expectations about relationships and love that extends beyond individual partners” where there is a sense of “the power of love and the perfection of romance” (Hefner & Wilson, 2013, p. 152). The exposure that screen media, such as film and television, provides is a way for youth to learn aspects of their own lives as they see it in through various programs. Cultivation theory was applied in this study as Hefner and Wilson (2003)

explored how the media cultivates relationship beliefs among youth viewers. In a television series, the viewer looks at "expectations for how a model relationship should form, develop, function, and be maintained" (Hefner & Wilson, 2013, p 152). Hefner and Wilson (2013) suggested there to be four themes of the romantic ideal: "Love can overlook flaws; love can seek out that one perfect mate; love can happen instantaneously; and love can overcome all obstacles" (Hefner & Wilson, 2013, p 152). Through a series on television, characters often go through multiple obstacles, individually and with a companion. Obstacles can last over multiple episodes.

One of the reasons for heightened expectations is gender roles in the media. The majority of romantic comedies or drama films, and television shows attract a large female audience. Hefner and Wilson (2013) found that "the romantic comedy genre attracts a large female audience" where the "filmmakers are intentionally featuring the types of relationships that women want most—those in which both partners discuss the relationship" (p. 162). Behm-Morawitz and Mastro (2008) discussed the importance of gender roles in television that "gender portrayals [have] an effect on individuals' real-world gender-based attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors" (p. 131). These authors also argue that the "representation of female characters in the media would be expected to play a role in viewers' perceptions regarding gender identity, which may ultimately influence attitudes and beliefs about appropriate gender roles" (Behm-Morawitz & Mastro, 2008, p. 132). It was found in their study that most viewers rely on the stereotypical portrayal of genders.

Teen Dramas Affect Emerging Adults

Although popular teen dramas on television are catered for a teen audience, they are still appealing to young adult and emerging adult viewers. Previous research shows the recurring themes of teen studies focusing mainly on love, sex, and identity. So many of today's television programs show the life experiences of an "average teenager" and their "anxieties about love, sex,

impending adulthood, concerns about family relations and issues surrounding one's place in the world" (as quoted in Feasey, 2009, p. 431). Feasey (2009) used the term "young adult" to describe the "twenty to thirty something generation. . . who has turned their back on marriage, mortgages and secure employment in favor of a less rigid definition of adult maturity" (p. 431). In Feasey's (2009) research she focuses and hypothetically argued the "ways in which the young adult audience might look to use, take meaning from and find pleasure in adolescent programming" (p. 432). Besides teenagers watching television catered to their demographic, teen television is also appealing to young adults.

The term *Emerging adults* has been used to describe young adults because Arnett (2000) stated that emerging adults are "late teens through the twenties, with a focus on ages 18-25" (p. 469). He argued that emerging adults are in the transition period between teens and adults because they are "distinguished by relative independence from social roles and from normative expectations" (Arnett, 2000, p. 469). They have not yet entered into adulthood where they have normal responsibilities as would one would assume in adulthood. Instead, these emerging adults "explore a variety of possible life directions in love, work, and worldviews." This time in their life is full of various directions and possibility. This is the time "when little about the future has been decided for certain, when the scope of independent exploration of life's possibilities is greater for most people than it will be at any other period of the life course" (Arnett, 2000, p. 469).

Arnett (2000) also argued that "emerging adulthood is a period of the life course that is culturally constructed, not universal and immutable" (p. 470). This group of people learn and grow by what they have learned in their adolescence, but also through new insights and experiences happening learned through what is around them as they emerge into adulthood. During the years 18 to 25, defining a demographic for emerging adults is hard. Arnett (2000)

remarks how “a person's demographic status in these areas is very difficult to predict on the basis of age alone” because there is so much unpredictability (Arnett, 2000, p. 471). There is “a reflection of the experimental and exploratory quality of the period” (Arnett, 2000, p. 471). One of the main reasons for the unpredictable demographic status is because they “tend to have a wider scope of possible activities than persons in other age periods” for they do not have the feeling of being constrained by a certain role they are supposed to embody as adults (Arnett, 2000, p 471). These individuals are in a unique stage in their life where they are figuring out their own identity. The influence of the media may send messages as a source of information to help them make choices.

In a recent study, Gamble and Nelson (2016) looked at how “emerging adulthood is a time when increased independence and the postponement of responsibility grant people the freedom to explore their sexual identities” (p. 146). These 18 – 25-year-old individuals are developing their identity and finding their niche in the world. At the same time, they may also be learning information about sex from television which may influence their expectations of it in their own relationships (Gamble & Nelson, 2016). Although this present study does not focus on the sexual relationship ideals, it is interesting to note that consumers also have heightened expectations for this aspect in a relationship.

Not only can relationships be idealized, but there can also be high expectations or even unrealistic expectations of marriage. The media is a huge influencer and “a significant source of romanticized and idealized views of marriage” (Segrin & Nabi, 2002, p. 248). In their study, using cultivation theory, Segrin and Nabi (2002) argued that the use of television is “the single most common and pervasive source of conceptions and action related to marriage and intimate personal relationships for large segments of the population” (p. 248). The authors refer to American teenagers who embrace the ideals and culture of romance and romantic relationships

that are closely associated to images in the media (Segrin & Nabi, 2002). Segrin and Nabi (2002) explain the idealized images of marriage to be:

> a great deal of romance, physical intimacy, passion, celebration, happiness, "love at first sight," physical beauty, empathy, and open communication. At the same time, media portrayals that exclude or minimize conflict and mundane marital behaviors and interaction could also contribute to idealized views of marriage (p. 249).

Thousands of love stories penetrate our lives through media such as television, films, music, books, and even the Internet through social media. Galloway, Engstrom and Emmers-Sommer (2015) argue in their study that there are "mythic, stereotypic and archetypal representations of a hegemonic worldview. They have become sources of inadequate and unrepresentative relational role models in mediated avenues" (p. 687). A lot of these characters are not always the ordinary type of characters that may challenge the norms of their own life. When these characters begin portraying their romance and love, it "may engender unrealistic expectations in those who are exposed to them" (Galloway, Engstrom & Emmers-Sommer, 2015, p. 688). Galloway, Engstrom and Emmers-Sommer (2015) argue that these "symbols and representations that mold a child's 'romantic imagination' become resources used later in life to satisfy experiences and shape understanding of the child's personal relationships" (p. 688). In Galloway, Engstrom and Emmers-Sommer's (2015) study, the results of their survey showed that participants who frequently watched films in both the genre of comedy and drama "indicated a desire to get married" and that their time was spent "fantasizing about marriage and romantic relationships" (p. 702).

Not only do emerging adults look at these types of themes, but what appeals to them are the things they could be struggling with like "crisis of adulthood," working "in a string of short-

term, minimum wage 'McJobs'" (as quoted in Feasey, 2009), "living rent-free with their ageing parents and enjoy fleeting personal relationships – or put more simply, live a prolonged adolescence" (Feasey, 2009, p. 432). There is a big possibility that they "do not see themselves as adolescents, but many of them also do not see themselves entirely as adults" (Arnett, 2000, p. 471). These individuals are still trying to figure out their identity and possibly struggle to "feel they have reached adulthood before they have established a stable residence, finished school, settled into a career, and married (or at least committed themselves to a long-term love relationship" (Arnett, 2000, p. 472).

Intimacy in media is also prevalent in every relationship, but what is intimacy? For one thing, it is an understudied topic because of its complexity and frustrations for researchers to quantify it. However, Moss and Schwebel (1993) attempt to define intimacy in romantic relationships. While the general definition of it is based on an author's personal interpretation, vague, and lacks operational clarity, the authors find that there is more than one definition of intimacy. These definitions are multidimensional, operational, and identify predominant themes. In these categories of definitions, the authors also found subcategories of themes under the three types of definitions. Through their examination of themes, their formal definition of intimacy is: "Intimacy in enduring romantic relationships is determined by the level of commitment and positive affective, cognitive, and physical closeness one experiences with a partner in a reciprocal (although not necessarily symmetrical) relationship" (Moss & Schwebel, 1993, p. 33). Moss and Schwebel (1993) also explain that "level" indicates an individual's experience in a relationship where there is room for development.

Gender Roles in Relationships

In Van Damme's (2010) discourse, gender representations of teenagers were analyzed with an emphasis on relationships and sexuality in the teen series, *One Tree Hill* and *Gossip Girl*.

First, Van Damme (2010) examined the concepts of genders and representations as presented to teens. Using a non-essentialist view, Van Damme (2010) argued that gender is constructed as feminine or masculine through civilization and socialization. It is "created and recreated through human interactions and social life" and thus "cannot be equated with biological and physiological differences" (Van Damme, 2010, p. 79). Gender identity is also "constructed by cultural traditions, moral codes, economy and politics" and that these roles "differ across time and space" (Van Damme, 2010, p. 79). Parents, peers, school, and mass media work as agents and tools that guide adolescents along in the gendered world (Van Damme, 2010). Van Damme (2010) explained that gender is performative and that in many societies, there is a prestige and power ranking which makes gender unequal. In this power ranking, males receive greater worth and importance than females, regardless of race and class. The media assisted and still assists in the hegemonic view of gender roles, which leads to stereotyping (Van Damme, 2010). The example was given of female stereotypes that follow themes like "appearance, sexuality, relationships and traditional gender roles like housekeeping" whereas male stereotypes were followed with aggression and violence (Van Damme, 2010, p. 79).

Another part of gender has to do with how sexual behavior is represented. The representation of sexual behavior was defined as connecting meaning and language to say something impactful, to represent other people to a culture (Van Damme, 2010). Van Damme (2010) noted that representation in media interprets and provides its own presentation of reality because it does not reflect actual reality. Van Damme (2010) explained that youth representation in media is full of constructions of self-identities, values, beliefs about relationships and sexuality as well as "developing a healthy understanding of their own gendered, sexual behavior" (p. 80). This is at the center of identity construction that the media uses to target to teens as "virtual toolkits" (Van Damme, 2010, p. 80).

In his study, Van Damme (2010) analyzed a narrative of screenplays through audio-visual text and cinematographic elements. This was done since not all media messages are verbal but can also be coded and marked visually. The episodes were measured for spoken language, body language, facial expressions, and framing (Van Damme, 2010). In *One Tree Hill*, Van Damme (2010) noticed that the leading males play sports while the leading females are cheerleaders and that "the storylines are built around the male basketball players and we follow the story through their eyes" showing a male viewpoint (p. 83). In contrast, *Gossip Girl* showed a female viewpoint by having a female voice-over and following two girls in the beginning of the series. Van Damme (2010) found that in both series, there were recurring themes and "examples of helpless girls who are saved by strong, heroic boys," but also boys being saved as well as ambition, for example, graduating high school and moving on to university to "illustrate the idea of the 'American dream'" (p. 83). Van Damme (2010) noted the difference of how the males and females react to certain events in their lives. Boys are to be cool and collected, controlling their emotions, but girls displayed their emotions openly. Most of the time, boys tend to "get drunk or look for a one-night stand" (Van Damme, 2010, p. 84). Among both series, the plot developments were a representation of the American Dream because over the course of a season, "black and white, girls and boys, sporty and less sporty, rich and less rich" all get along to recognize that the "boundaries of class, ethnicity, gender, and subcultures" come together to form an "American community" (p. 85).

Van Damme (2010) analyzed the sexual gender roles and found that media degrade female characters to sexual objects, as shown in *One Tree Hill* and *Gossip Girl*. It was noticed in visual representation of the body that the "camera regularly wanders over a female character's figure from head to toe, highlighting her slim, perfect body" and uses it to intimidate a boy or "get what they want" (Van Damme, 2010, p. 85). Van Damme (2010) did not find any similar

ways of boys using their body to get what they want based on the sample. Literal objectification was also found among the two television shows. Girls' bodies and sexuality were a prize to win either in a competition, by completing a task, or to thank him for the efforts he put forth (Van Damme, 2010). Male bodies were also objectified by using one boy to make another boy jealous (Van Damme, 2010).

Between the two television series, Van Damme (2010) found that "having a (sexual) partner is important in the teenagers' process of identity construction" (p. 86). The importance matters especially when a relationship does not last and both male and female teenagers struggle finding their own identity again after giving their heart to someone they loved (Van Damme, 2010). In this context, love was never considered negative, but an idealized concept of an aid to overcome and withstand challenges of life. It was also illustrated that sexual intercourse is a "normal step in a romantic relationship" that tends to happen rapidly and hastily without talking about it first (Van Damme, 2010, p. 87). However, in *One Tree Hill*, there were precautions taken in exploring sex in a relationship. A couple of characters decided to wait until marriage to have sex for the first time, and there was also a group of teenagers that formed a pact to wait until marriage (Van Damme, 2010). Van Damme (2010) noted that it was crucial for the teenagers to "reflect about themselves and who or how they want to be" (p. 87). On the other hand, in *Gossip Girl*, engaging in sexual intercourse, mostly not visible in the programs, "gives [them] a higher social status, but lying about it is unforgivable and results in the opposite" (Van Damme, 2010, p. 87). The author found that sexual intercourse was only depicted unrealistically and idealistically because of time frames (having sex two weeks after a baby was born) and a female undressing in front of her male counterpart (Van Damme, 2010). Even the use of contraception and sexually transmitted diseases were never mentioned, which can be considered problematic; however, the majority of the findings from Van Damme's (2010) study was the

impressions of how the representations of teenagers are sexually active, but also thrived on normalizing the acts of sex as casual.

In recent years, the representations of same-sex attraction in sexuality and gender roles has grown among leading characters in television shows. In their content analysis, Raley and Lucas (2008) studied the theories of Clark and Berry (1969) on the "four stages of media representation for minority groups: non-representation, ridicule, regulation, and respect" (p. 19). The authors sought to identify representations of gay males, lesbians, and bisexuals in shows that have a recurring homosexual character. They focused on the interaction of gay males, lesbians, and bisexual characters and their interactions with children (a misidentification of a stereotype of "gay males, lesbians, or bisexuals as child molesters or perverts") and romantic relationships as well as the prominent issue of legitimizing romantic relationships on television (Raley & Lucas, 2008, p. 25). There have been numerous heterosexual characters who are unmarried that are often shown engaging in displays of affection such as kissing and sexual behavior. Raley and Lucas (2008) argued that gay males, lesbians, and bisexuals should be allowed the opportunity to express their feelings the same way heterosexual characters do because it would be an important step in acceptance on television as well as in the general public instead of being a threat to "heterosexual audiences that consider displays of affection" as "flaunting sexual orientation" (p. 25).

Raley and Lucas (2008) conducted a content analysis of the portrayals of gay males, lesbians, and bisexuals on prime-time television in 2001. Five episodes of nine television comedies and dramas were recorded from network TV. The choice of program was based on the researchers' knowledge that these shows had one recurring gay male, lesbian, or bisexual character. The recurring role was determined by if the character had appeared in three or more episodes. The television shows were analyzed for "gender, race, sexual orientation of the

characters, the number of times the character engaged in displays of affection with another character, and whether the character interacted with children" (Raley & Lucas, 2008, p. 28). The authors coded displays of affections as "holding hands, hugging/embracing, kissing, shown in bed together with no implication of sex, and shown in bed together or other occasion where sex implied" (Raley & Lucas, 2008, p. 28). In order for interacting with children to be coded, Raley and Lucas (2008) looked at whether the character could touch a child, speak to a child or about the child, or look at a child who looked younger than 13-years-old.

From their results, Raley and Lucas (2008) coded 62 characters from 8 shows and found only minor representation of gay males and lesbians and no representation of bisexuals. Gay males and lesbians were mostly ridiculed by heterosexual characters through jokes, although most of the jokes were said by the gay males and lesbians (Raley & Lucas, 2008). Raley and Lucas (2008) believed that the writers of the shows sensed that "it [was] more acceptable to have gay and lesbian characters ridicule themselves than for other characters" to do so (p. 31). The interaction between gay males, lesbians, and bisexuals with children were no different than heterosexual characters. Some shows portrayed these characters to be a teacher or a loving father where they were in almost constant interaction with children and there was no threat against them (Raley & Lucas, 2008). There was also not much difference in displays of affection among the characters whether they were gay males, lesbians, bisexuals, or heterosexual. The only difference was the display of affection among gay males, lesbians, and bisexuals in that it was not done with a partner or someone of the same gender. Raley and Lucas (2008) argue that "gay and lesbian characters are limited to non-sexual displays of affection in romantic relationships" (p. 31). Most representation of gays and lesbians in Raley and Lucas's (2008) study did not portray a high percentage in the main casts. Hollywood in 2001 preferred to stick to more

general issues, like dating, that teaches the viewers about sexual orientation rather than normalizing gay males, lesbians, and bisexuals.

Sexual Behaviors, Encounters, and Protection

A previous study looked at how teen films portray sexual behavior over time. Callister, Stern, Coyne, Robinson, and Bennion (2011) discussed how film is one of the most important sources of information on sexual attitudes and behaviors for teenagers. They also addressed an understudied area of teen characters in films centered around teens and the sexual portrayals shown. Teen-centered film focuses primarily on teen viewers. Callister et al. (2011) looked at the frequency of sexual activities from teen film over time, as well as sexual dialogue and safe sex practices. Teens can be susceptible to the influences of the media, and they are more likely to believe that their peers engage in sexual activities if that is what they are shown in the media. The researchers found that the amount of sexual content over time in the three decades (1980s, 1990s, 2000s) they analyzed stayed constant. It was also noted that sex in the media has become habitual in viewing. There is an expectation that sexual content in the media is on the rise in order to push boundaries to attract more audiences with such depictions. Passionate kissing was the highest shown sexual activity followed by intimate touching and implied intercourse.

In a previous study, Fisher et al. (2004) took a large sample of 1,276 episodes from a variety of broadcast and cable networks, including some programs that specifically targeted youth. In their content analysis, they measured sexual behavior and sexual talk. The purpose of their study was to measure the frequency of sexual content throughout most of the programs. The authors hypothesized that of the 1,276 episodes, more than half of the episodes "will have sexual content, with a higher proportion" that will contain dialogues of sex instead of sexual behavior. For their second hypothesis, the researchers expected to see "the prevalence of safer sex messages will be very low, present in less than 10% of shows" (Fisher et al., 2004, p. 532).

Along with the safer sex messages, they also expected movies "to contain sexual content, while children's cartoons and reality programs will be least likely" (Fisher et al., 2004, p. 532). Of their many episodes, the authors understood the "differences of genre composition of programming" and the "environments of cable versus commercial broadcast television" that consisted of shows that appealed to young audiences such as *The Steve Harvey Show*, *Moesha*, *Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, *Gilmore Girls*, *7th Heaven*, *Sabrina*, and *Smallville* (Fisher et al., 2004, p. 532). The last hypothesis expected that cable movie networks will most likely portray "shows with sexual content, to depict high level sexual behaviors such as intercourse, and to depict higher levels of explicitness" (Fisher et al., 2004, p. 532).

Fisher et al. (2004) took a large sample of programs that were of great interest to adolescents. Eleven sources were taped (ABC, CBS, Fox, NBC, UPN, WB, BET, Cinemax, HBO, MTV, and Showtime) during primetime showing because most youth were no longer in school. They noted that not all of the tapings were coded because "daily news broadcasts, game shows, sports shows and events, and paid programming" were excluded (Fisher et al., 2004, p. 533). As part of the researchers' content analysis, they defined sex as "any depiction of sexual activity, sexually suggested behavior, or any talk about sexuality or sexual activity" (Fisher et al., 2004, p. 534). Sexual behaviors were coded in eight categories: *physical flirting*, *passionate kissing*, *intimate touching*, *sexual intercourse strongly implied*, *sexual intercourse depicted*, *other*. Relationship status was also coded into categories "where intercourse was implied or depicted:" *married*, *not married – established romantic relationships*, *ongoing casual sex relationship*, *past history of romantic involvement*, *had met before in a nonromantic context*, *had just met* (Fisher et al., 2004, p. 534 – 535). Sexual talk was also coded as direct comments on specific topics like "statements about sexual desires, intentions, and actions" as well as sexual innuendo and "nonspoken verbal messages with sexual content" (Fisher et al., 2004, p. 535).

There were four categories to code for sexual talk: *comments about own/others' sexual actions or interests*, *talk about past sexual intercourse*, *talk toward sex*, *talk about sex-related crimes*. Sexual responsibility was coded in two themes: *sexual patience* (abstinence or postponing sexual intercourse for moral stance, avoiding unwanted pregnancy, or lack of readiness) and *sexual precautions* like protection.

From their research, Fisher et al. (2004) found in their results that "82.1% of the episodes coded contained some sexual behavior or talk" (p. 538). Of their 1,276 episodes, they discovered that about half of the sample portrayed physical flirting and included kissing and/or touching. With the results, it was determined that "sexual talk was more ubiquitous than sexual behavior" and "sexual responsibility were rare" and the shows with sexual portrayal were also minimal (p. 548). Sexual intercourse was more prevalent "among unmarried persons at a rate of nearly 5:1 from the study" (Fisher et al., 2004, p. 549). The genres that ranked highest percentage of sexual behavior in their shows was television movie and comedy drama. There were repeated patterns of sex talk among comedies, especially its subgenres of situation comedies, comedy dramas, and variety/comedies.

Among the youth-centered shows during primetime, Fisher et al. (2004) found in their study that "one in four shows. . . contained talk toward sex" that promoted "sexual relations with a partner" as a way to "[provide] youth with scripts for initiating sexual activity largely unavailable in natural social settings" (p. 550). Most importantly the authors concluded that "sexual content is pervasive in television programming" especially in shows and networks that are popular among teens (Fisher et al., 2004, p. 550).

Because of sexual content being portrayed in television programs, Aubrey (2004) argued the messages of sexual consequences between male and female characters are different depending on who initiates first. The purpose of Aubrey's (2004) study was to "discern what

types of messages regarding the functional value of sexuality" is presented to youth viewers (p. 507). The messages on these television programs may have "implications for adolescent viewers" as they decided to model their own actions after what they see on television (Aubrey, 2004, p. 507). Aubrey (2004) came up with two hypotheses: social and emotional consequences portrayed on television would outnumber physical consequences and the double standard of gender differences would be manifested in areas that included: males initiating sex, females bearing the brunt of negative consequences of sex, males are rewarded more positively in sexual intercourse than females, and females are the ones to receive negative consequences.

Aubrey (2004) created this study to fit a specific criterion in order to find the answers to the hypotheses. The criteria involved one-hour programs, (in the drama genre category, the program had to be aired during prime-time television), belong to a broadcast network (ABC, NBC, CBS, UPN, and WB), and the television program must feature college-aged characters or teens (Aubrey, 2004). The ages 12 – 22 were chosen to focus on in the study because around the age of 12 sexual identities begin developing, and age 22 "was thought to be the end of late adolescence" and sexual identities were most stable by that time (Aubrey, 2004, p. 507). As part of the sample, Aubrey (2004) also measured feature characters by their likeliness for viewers to be able to identify themselves with the characters, the networks like WB and UPN that catered to younger audiences. Most of their programs feature adolescent cast members and programs that portray sexual consequences that are targeted at adolescents.

Aubrey's (2004) study was measured using a coding system to examine scenes in an episode based on sexual references between dialogue and behavior as well as the initiator who was defined as someone who "started the conversation with the sexual topic" or whoever made the first move that progressed into sexual behavior (p. 508). Negative consequences were also coded under three types: emotional/social, punitive, and physical. Positive sexual consequences

were coded in the same types as negative and included “a clear expression of physical satisfaction and intentional pregnancy” as positive sexual consequences (Aubrey, 2004, p. 508).

The author found in the results that of the 220 negative consequences, 75% were emotional/social and 17.5% were physical. Physical consequences were not as common as emotional and social negative consequences. There were 676 scenes coded with sexual references, and of those scenes, a small percentage, 4.1%, contained positive consequences. In addition, Aubrey (2004) found that there was little difference between male and female initiation of sexual dialogue and sexual behaviors. It was also found that television programs such as *Felicity*, *Charmed*, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* that featured a strong female lead and targeted female viewers were more likely to experience negative consequences. Aubrey (2004) explained that not all television “portrays consequences because it does not portray unwanted pregnancies or STDs” (p. 511). Instead, there is a bigger picture of sexual consequences on television because many teens seem to care more about “the possible emotional and social pitfalls of sex than they do about the physical pitfalls” (Aubrey, 2004, p. 511). Aubrey (2004) argued that despite the difference between women and men receiving consequences, many young viewers will still grasp that it is more acceptable and appropriate for men than women to make the first move. Previous research states that the “nice” girls and “good” women do not initiate their sexual desires, but instead, wait for the men to initiate, then the women are in a position to control and restrict the advancing of sexual behavior (Aubrey, 2004). Aubrey’s (2004) study showed that there was a pattern whenever a female initiated sexual behavior - “bad things happened when women took the sexual initiative” (p. 512). This showed female viewers that initiating sex could be harmful to them and others. Aubrey (2004) also noted that television programs catered to teens contain more negative consequences because the screenwriters rely on conflicts to build and advance in storylines.

Another study looked at how television exposure affects emerging adults' attitudes and assumptions about sexual relationships. Ward (2002) argued that not only are teens influenced by media, but late adolescents and emerging adults are also affected through gender-specific norms and peer sexual behavior. Television has become a "prominent role in educating American youth about sex," however, it sends distorted, stereotypical, and potentially harmful sexual messages (Ward, 2002, p. 2). The purpose of this study was to determine whether media shapes the sexual attitudes and assumptions of students using correlational and experimental methods. For the correlational method, Ward assessed regular viewing habits and students' perception of sexual relationships. For the experimental approach, some students viewed specific sexual content that had stronger content than students who viewed non-sexual content (Ward, 2002). Another purpose of the study was to test the viewing amount and the viewer involvement because the frequency of "sexually oriented genres, namely prime-time comedies and dramas, soap operas, and music videos" would be "more associated with more stereotypical attitudes about sexuality" (Ward, 2002, p. 4). The last purpose of the study was to expand the impact of media exposure and how it affects students' sexual beliefs based on three themes: "dating is a game or recreational sport, women are sexual objects whose value is based on physical appearance, and men are sex-driven creatures who have trouble being faithful" (Ward, 2002, p. 4).

Ward (2002) had 269 undergraduate participants aged 18 – 22. The experimental component of Ward's (2002) study was to compare sexual attitudes among students who were exposed to nonsexual content to students who were exposed to sexual content that included "dating as a game, women as sexual objects, or men as sex-driven creatures" (p. 4). Clips from television shows of popular sit-coms and dramas like *Friends*, *Seinfeld*, and *Ally McBeal* were included. Ward (2002) also measured television behaviors in two dimensions: viewing amounts and viewer involvement. The participants were asked about particular genres of prime-time

comedies and dramas, music videos, and soap operas because they contain recurring characters and performers and emphasize sexual relationships rather than news programming and sports. The general involvement in viewing television also had two parts: viewing to learn and viewing for entertainment, as well as how passive or active the viewer was. The motives were as follows: "because they help me learn about myself and about others," "because it's something fun to do with my friends," "I often plan my day around the TV show I like," and "I often try to guess what will happen next or how an episode will end" (Ward, 2002, p. 5). The last viewer involvement was measure by how the viewer identified with each character.

Sexual outcomes were also measured in order to assess "both students' attitudes about sexual relationships and their perceptions of their peers' sexual activities" (Ward, 2002, p. 6). These attitudes were about sexuality and gender roles. Attitudes about sexual roles, dating, and romantic relationships were measured as it pertains to the themes of sexual commonality on television and in larger cultures (Ward, 2002). The measure for attitudes about gender roles is important to note because Ward (2002) assessed the roles and appropriate behaviors of women and men's behaviors. Some sample statements were included in the measurements like, "Swearing is worse for a girl than for a boy," and "Boys are better leaders than girls" (Ward, 2002, p. 6). Perceptions of sexual experiences among peers was also assessed. The participants were asked to estimate the frequency and engagement of both males and females in "risk-related or recreational sexual behaviors" (Ward, 2002, p. 6). For example, some of the sample statements were: "have had sex on the first date" and "have had more than 10 sexual partners" (Ward, 2002, p. 6).

Ward (2002) found in the results that from the female participants, there were positive correlations showing greater media exposure and media involvement was associated with stronger endorsement of the sexual stereotypes tested, as well as higher expectations of peer

sexual experiences. There was also consistency with the three sexual stereotypes: “females are sex objects, males are sex-driven, and dating is a game” that the participants endorsed (Ward, 2002, p. 8). For male participants, there were more viewing amounts than viewer involvement, with music videos being the highest consumption. Through the music video consumption, the men “endorsed each of the gender and sexual stereotypes examined” and more hours watching music videos “predicted stronger agreement that women are sexual objects” (Ward, 2002, p. 9). The results of peer sexual experiences among female participants found that the higher exposure to soap opera programs, the higher expectations of their beliefs about their peers (Ward, 2002). The male participants beliefs of their peers’ sexual experiences depended on their own knowledge and experience with sexual relationships (Ward, 2002).

The findings Ward (2002) found from the study was that the more frequently viewers watched TV and were exposed to sexual behaviors portrayed on screen, the greater the contribution to “greater expectations of peer sexual experience, lending support to the notion that ‘everyone is doing it’” (p. 12). Ward (2002) also found that based on the findings, youths’ assumptions on sexual roles between women and men have an effect on their sexual decisions regardless of the images on screen.

It is practically impossible that images on screen do not affect the viewers, especially youth while they are still developing and understanding their sexuality. Eyal, Kunkel, Biely, and Finnerty (2007) argued that the majority of the top 20 popular television shows among teenagers were filled with sexual messages, including portrayals of sexual behaviors, thus teaching young viewers sexual socialization. Media, especially television, greatly “[contributes] to young people’s sexual development” (Eyal et al., 2007, p. 316). Eyal et al. (2007) noted in their study that sexual behaviors appear frequently in most television shows, with passionate kissing being the highest occurring and sexual intercourse was usually strongly implied rather than depicted.

Soap operas and prime-time programs contained sexual intercourse more commonly than other shows.

In 2001, safe sex messages were rarely shown on television (Eyal et al., 2007). Some of the topics that were addressed were sexual patience, sexual precaution, and positive or negative consequences resulting from sexual intercourse (Eyal et al., 2007). Eyal et al. (2007) argued about the seriousness of risks and responsibilities that come with sexual intercourse. It should be addressed in television programs, and it may show young viewers the impact of "negative consequences of sexual intercourse are not meaningful, long lasting, or emotionally impactful enough to justify their depiction on television" that may not be taken seriously by young viewers (Eyal et al., 2007, p. 319). The majority of characters, when partaking in sexual behaviors, did not experience consequences, but if there were consequences, they were portrayed positively and "increased peer approval and relationship improvement" (Eyal et al., 2007, p. 319).

The purpose of Eyal et al.'s (2007) study was to examine and compare programs from their recent seasons to their earlier seasons by focusing on certain shows instead of a generalized landscape of shows. Adolescent sexual socialization was also focused on in the study to measure how intercourse was portrayed, as well as safe sex messages, like the use of condoms and other contraceptives and consequences (Eyal et al., 2007). The researchers came up with five research questions to find out the frequency of sexual messages, the possibility of the importance of contextual features associated with sexual portrayals in "scene, explicitness, age of characters involved in sexual intercourse, relationships between sexual partners" that are depicted in shows for young viewers, what sort of concerns about sexual risk and responsibility are presented, the frequency of sexual messages, and the consequences of sexual intercourse portrayed in popular teen programs (Eyal et al., 2007, p. 320).

The method used in Eyal et al.'s (2007) study analyzed 3 episodes from 20 television series that were popular among viewers aged 12 – 17. Sexual behavior was measured in five categories: physical flirting, passionate kissing, intimate touching, sexual intercourse implied and depicted; whereas, sex talk was measured in six categories: comments about sexual actions or interests, a discussion about sexual intercourse that has happened, talk to self about promoting sexual activity, talk about sex-related crimes, and expert advice (Eyal et al., 2007). As part of the content analysis, they used two different groups for different years of the seasons of television programs. Fifteen students coded the 2001 – 2002 television seasons and 17 students coded the 2004 – 2005 television seasons. Training was identical for both groups.

Eyal et al.'s (2007) results showed that the sexual content between the years decreased over time from 83% to 70%. However, the number of scenes that had sexual content stayed the same across both samples. In particular, 80% of shows in 2001 – 2002 included talk about sex, whereas in 2004 – 2005 there were only 68% that included sex talk (Eyal et al., 2007). It was also found that in one out of every two programs that was popular among teenagers contained sexual behaviors. The majority of these depicted behaviors that preceded sexual intercourse, like passionate kissing, physical flirting, and intimate touching (Eyal et al., 2007). It was discovered in their results that the age of characters involved in sexual intercourse were mostly adults over the age of 25. Small amounts of characters who engaged in sexual intercourse were between the ages of 18 – 24 and 13 – 17. Most of the characters in the 2001 – 2002 seasons who engaged in sexual intercourse had an established relationship (Eyal et al., 2007). There was no statistically significant difference between seasons in the years 2001 – 2002 and 2004 – 2005.

Along with the sexual content that was discovered in the research, Eyal et al. (2007) also found that the topics of sexual risk and responsibility were not significantly addressed in the television programs. Nearly half (45%) of safe sex messages "received substantial or primary

emphasis in scenes" (Eyal et al., 2007, p. 327). Only 1 out of 10 shows included any mention of the responsibilities and sexual risks, but the "teen-viewed shows devoted greater attention to risk topics" that depicted advanced types of sexual situations like conversations about sexual intercourse that might have taken place in the past (Eyal et al., 2007, p. 327). Eyal et al. (2007) noticed that only 4% and 5% of programs, between the two sets of seasons respectively, placed a strong emphasis on messages of sexual risk and responsibility in the programs that were most popular among teens. The top 20 genres that were popular among teens included comedies, reality-based shows, and dramas. Eyal et al. (2007) found that comedies and dramas had more sexual behaviors and sexual talk than reality shows. Sexual risk and responsibility surfaced more frequently in dramas than in comedies and reality shows (Eyal et al., 2007). The consequences portrayed in the programs popular among teens tend to portray less positive and more negative consequences of sexual intercourse.

Eyal et al. (2007) discovered that the high levels of sexual content among programs heavily viewed by young people were consistent with other studies. Although the frequency of sexual messages decreased, there are still many messages about sex on television shows viewed by teens "while at the same time there is little portrayal of messages about the sexual risks and responsibilities associated with these behaviors" (Eyal et al., 2007, p. 330). From the results, the "teen-preferred shows outnumbered" or were almost "equal to the overall television landscape in the proportion of shows that included portrayals of sexual behaviors" (Eyal et al., 2007, p. 331). Because young people "look to sources of authority and credibility," it is easy for them to turn to television as an important source of information to find information about sex topics that they may be too embarrassed to discuss (Eyal et al., 2007, p. 332).

Ferguson, Nielsen, and Markey (2017) conducted their study on whether sex in media does have an effect on society, particularly teens and if it causes a rise or fall in teen pregnancy.

Primarily, Ferguson et al. (2017) wanted to look at how the negative consequences not shown in television might impose an impression on the viewers depending on the type of media, type of sexual content, whether the viewers are more or less passive, and if it affects viewers at different times. In their meta-analysis, Ferguson et al. (2017) concluded from the results that "sexy media" did not "contribute to either of the initiation of sex among youth, nor to sexual behaviors more generally" (p. 355).

Although the researchers did not find what they were looking for in their study, some insights were included that were important to the study. Puberty played a role as a possible "motivation toward sexual behaviors," as was normative (Ferguson et al., 2017, p. 355). Parents play an important role in the development of morals and values about sexuality (Ferguson et al., 2017). The authors argued that in some cultures, the "delay of sexuality is a moral obligation particularly for youth," that they may have been taught that "youth sexuality as non-normative and search for outside influences that may 'corrupt' youth into sexual behaviors" (Ferguson et al., 2017, p. 355). Peers were also identified as persuaders to sexual behavior because of the messages that fit better with "biological drives than abstinence messages that conflict with them" (Ferguson et al., 2017, p. 356). However, the persuasion of media proved less influential than parents and peers according to the researchers, and it is better for parents to talk to their children about sex than for them to find the information elsewhere.

Cultivation Theory

George Gerbner introduced the cultivation theory. He believed that the more viewing an individual does, the more that individual will think that what they see on television is what is true in real life. He also coined the term "mean world syndrome" meaning that it is part of a cultivation effect that the more violence is viewed heavily, the more the viewer will believe that the outside world is violent as well (Gerbner, 1976). Heavy viewers become fearful, anxious, and

angry. Many studies Gerbner worked on focused mostly on television violence (Gerbner, 1976). Cultivation theory shows that we are not conscious as to how the media impacts individuals. In fact, "television's influence on social beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors tends to occur by a gradual, cumulative process that is most likely to develop with repeated exposure over time to common patterns of portrayals" (Kunkel et al., 2005, p. 7). Television has become one of the most universal mass mediums in American culture and has enormous power to affect the ways in which people think and behave (Raley & Lucas, 2008). Signorielli and Morgan (2001) argued that even the concept of storytelling is central to the cultivation theory because "we live in a world created by the stories we tell" and that over time, "aggregate and repetitive patterns of images and representations" are exposed and absorbed (p. 334). Scientifically, all organisms adapt and exchange energy with their environments and change their behavior as they become accustomed to their surroundings (Signorielli & Morgan, 2001).

Galloway, Engstrom, and Emmers-Sommer (2015) extended cultivation theory to "examine the 'flip side' of Gerbner's 'mean world.' This opposite of the 'mean world' is "a 'wonderful world' in which true love is perfect, everlasting, and ostensibly devoid of major conflict and, to an extent, personal responsibility" (p. 688). Previous research shows that "heavy viewers of romantic television were more likely than light viewers to hold traditional dating role attitudes, such as the belief that men should be in charge on dates" (Hefner & Wilson, 2013, p. 151). They found that "women express challenges, men express ideals" and it so happens that the films these authors studied "mirror sex differences observed in the real world" (Hefner & Wilson, 2013, p. 151). Hefner and Wilson (2013) found through the cultivation theory that the longer the exposure young people have towards romantic comedies, the more they will endorse romantic beliefs. This leads to "developing unrealistic norms and expectations about sexuality"

such as overestimating when youth are sexually active and underestimating the negative outcomes from taking part in sexual intercourse (Fisher et al., 2004, p. 550).

In another study, Eggermont (2004) discussed cultivation theory as the "the most prominent theory on whether relationships exist between television content and viewers' notions of social reality" (as cited in Eggermont's article by Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980). It is argued in Eggermont's (2004) study that adolescents who are easily influenced by the "realism of televised romantic portrayals" tend to hold high expectations similar to what they view on television (p. 249). It is interesting to see that Galloway, Engstrom, and Emmers-Sommer (2015) discuss in their study that watching romantic films frequently shows an "affirmation of idealistic expectations for romantic relationships" (p. 702). There is an excessive view of romanticized love and physical compatibility (Galloway, Engstrom, & Emmers-Sommer, 2015). It becomes a "wishful identification or desire to be or act like" a character from a movie to develop a feeling of affinity next to these characters (Behm-Morawitz & Mastro, 2008).

Scripting Theory

Scripting theory can also be used in the present study to determine romantic ideals in teen drama television. Television has become a "key source for information about gender and sexual and romantic scripts" (Van Damme, 2010, p. 80). This theory was introduced by sociologists, John H. Gagnon and William Simon. Hefner and Wilson (2013) suggested that "romantic movies and romantic ideals may constitute broader gender schemas" that television shows are filled with "packets of gender-relevant information, understanding, knowledge, and beliefs which guide gender scripts and expectations" (p. 164; Galloway, Engstrom, & Emmers-Sommer, 2015, p. 704). Van Damme (2010) stated that young people "develop their personal sexual behavior

according to the gendered scripts their society advocates" (p. 79). Heavy viewers, (even emerging adults if they are heavy viewers) will learn the ways characters from television shows act and react to certain situations. They see the outcomes from the shows and believe it could work the same way in the outside world. Viewers create these schemas or scripts in their head and hope for the way conversations or decisions will play out like they do in media. Kim et al. (2007) argued that "scripting theory necessarily broadens the conceptualization of sexuality to encompass both its social dimensions and the relational contexts in which sexuality emerges" (p. 146).

In a previous study, researchers "found that idealization in romantic relationships was associated with higher levels of relational satisfaction" (Hefner & Wilson, 2013, p. 170). The authors also pointed out that repeated views of a certain genre, like romantic comedies, encourage their romantic partners to be wonderful and perfect (Hefner & Wilson 2013). Media creates scripts for viewers to use to look for romantic interests. Eggermont (2004) describes a universal acknowledgement of what is prevalent in today's society:

> The omnipresence of beautiful women on the screen and the representation of good looks as a necessary condition for successful dating reinforces how boys find it necessary that girls are nice looking. A similar conclusion holds for girls. Generally, the physical attractiveness of a potential romantic partner is less important for girls than it is for boys. Nevertheless, in the female sample, as in the male sample, television viewing seems to reinforce the idea that a partner needs to be good looking (p. 259).

Previous studies identified that sexual content in television, mainly American media, impact emerging adults' and adolescents' sexual attitudes, expectations, and behaviors (Ward, 2003). According to the scripting theory, *scripts*, memory structures, are "formed through observation" and they may create ways in which viewers assume attitudes and expectations (Gamble & Nelson, 2016, p. 149). Some of these scripts depended on cultural scenarios among interactions. Emerging adults tended to "seek information from television about the relational and sexual roles appropriate in their culture and develop idiosyncratic interpretations" to use and apply in their own lives (Gamble & Nelson, 2016, p. 149). Because of seeking information through television, Gamble and Nelson (2016) suggested that viewers' consumption of romantic or sexual relationships may heighten their expectations for sexual interaction in their personal relationships. These expectations may cause frustration and disappointment when the result is different than what appears to happen on-screen. Boys and girls and men and women seek such scripts to orient themselves on how to "think, feel, and behave in relationships until they develop a body of experiences of their own" (Kim et al., 2007).

Kunkel et al., (2005) argued that there is "a sharply accelerating curve in the growth of scientific knowledge about the effects of exposure to sexual media content" where studies showed that it "impacts viewers, particularly among teens and young adults" (p. 7). This study identified patterns and approaches of sexual messages on television. This model was used to measure and code the levels of sexual content. In an ongoing television show, there were various themes featured in each episode. This present study will improve upon previous research as it has looked at current and popular television shows instead of films and television programs that are no longer airing. The following research questions are as follows:

RQ1: What types of relationships appear in popular teen drama television shows?

RQ2: What are the ages and genders of relationships portrayed primarily in teen dramas on television?

RQ3: What forms of sexual behavior are presented and how often are they portrayed?

RQ4: How often do sexual encounters occur?

RQ5: What portrayals of safe sex practice are presented?

The Shows

This study examined five television shows used to measure the relationships and intimacy of each couple. The shows are: *The 100, Reign, The Vampire Diaries, Pretty Little Liars,* and *Teen Wolf.* These programs promote teen drama, teen sexuality, relationships, and sexual behaviors. They are fictional representations of relationships and intimacy, but with an engaging storyline and characters. To begin with, *The 100* is a program about a spaceship that was home to the only surviving humans on planet Earth as a result of a nuclear war that happened 97 years previously. The ship sends 100 delinquent teenagers to Earth to see if it is habitable and if it is possible to repopulate the planet. When the teenagers reach Earth, they are finally "free" from their cells on the spaceship. Interaction and friendship progresses quickly to "in a relationship." Some characters did not want to waste time with one another in case Earth was not livable.

In *Reign*, the number of instances of couples coded were relatively equal in numbers. The "flirting or clear attraction" correlated with "in a relationship" because the characters had reputations to uphold. Since *Reign* is a period drama that takes place during Mary, Queen of Scots, in the sixteenth century, young women had to be virtuous and virgins before their marriage, in order to marry well and rise in class and society. However, if any young ladies carried on an affair with the King of France, the King had the authority to arrange a marriage for these girls to marry someone of high rank to hide the fact that they were no longer considered

virtuous. During the first season of *Reign*, there were 16 examples of married couples. Some of these married couples were older, but the majority of them were younger. For example, Queen Mary was betrothed to the prince of France, and eventually married him early on in the season. Since the television show is mostly about Mary, it showed her relationship with her husband many times. Several other characters, such as a couple of Mary's ladies in waiting and the King and Queen of France, were other examples of married couples. It was custom for a young lady in the royal court to marry well and it was one of the big themes throughout the first season of *Reign*.

The Vampire Diaries takes place in the modern day and follows Elena, a typical high school cheerleader, and Stefan, a vampire who returned to the same town he once lived years before. Other primary characters included Elena's high school friends, Stefan's brother Damon, and their connections with other vampires. Of the 23 instances of couples "in a relationship" Elena and Stefan remained in a relationship the majority of the first season. However, the other characters were in and out of different relationships with other high school friends. Elena and Stefan were the only couple who hung out together with a group. They were not quite in a relationship, but when they were "hanging out" it was clear that their friendship and attraction to each other would quickly evolve into becoming "in a relationship."

Interestingly enough, *Pretty Little Liars* was the only show in this study that portrayed a female-female relationship on-screen and throughout its first season. A female-female relationship is one of the minority social groups that has been negatively affected by lesser recognition and respect on TV in the past (Raley & Lucas, 2008). However, in recent years, television media's portrayal of male-male and female-female relationships has become more positive over time and "shown in leading roles and supporting parts" (Raley & Lucas, 2008, p. 32). In a teenage drama such as *Pretty Little Liars*, it showed the character Emily "coming out"

to her closest friends. Previous research showed that "individuals usually 'come out' around adolescence" and that adolescents have begun to formulate their own identity. This time in their life has become crucial to their identities (Raley & Lucas, 2008, p. 22).

Since *Pretty Little Liars* was set among a group of high school girls and their lives, "flirting/clear attraction" was what was expected to happen among them as well as "hanging out" with several instances of them working on homework assignments with boys and girls alike. The only couple that was coded as "dating" was actually a female-female relationship where they went on a date. After the date, their relationship progressed, but not much. The male-female relationships progressed quickly to "in a relationship." Because this show followed the lives of four girls, the viewers were introduced to their parents and their relationships with their spouses. Thus, the "married" option was coded.

Teen Wolf only had "flirting/clear attraction" and "in a relationship" represented in its first season because the series focused more on the male viewpoint in high school and their lives rather than females being the main protagonists in a teen drama. These male protagonists are seen playing lacrosse, and through their eyes, the drama of competition on the team, positions, and the game, were one of the main focuses of the show. Love, intimacy, and relationships were not the main themes presented in *Teen Wolf* as it was in other shows in this study. However, because of the hormones of a teenage boy, feelings arose and the character Scott, began dating a girl in high school. Along with other characters, the types of relationships in *Teen Wolf* became prevalent in this study and "flirting/clear attraction" between Scott and Allison started and later came to be "in a relationship" along with other school friends.

Method

The purpose of this study was to analyze how relationships and intimacy create expectations in teen dramas on television and was modeled after Hefner and Wilson's (2013)

study on the effect romantic comedy films have on viewers. Instead of a study on film, this study analyzed teen dramas on television. The television shows in this study were current and popular at the time this study began. The shows that were included in the study are *The 100, Reign, The Vampire Diaries*, *Pretty Little Liars*, and *Teen Wolf*. These shows were chosen because, at the time, *The CW* and *Freeform* were the top networks for the teen drama genre. At the start of the current study, these television shows were still being aired on networks and also had a complete first season with easy access to view it through streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime to assist with analyzing all the shows. Although *Teen Wolf* was from the *MTV* network, it was included because of its continued popularity among teen viewers. *Reign* was considered a period drama, and it was included in this study because it is on *The CW* network and the show followed the main characters, who were teenagers. The first season of each television show was analyzed, resulting in 20 episodes for each show. The full first season was the better season to analyze because it gave enough time to establish character development and the development of relationships. For many main characters, the first relationship shown in the first season could be their first relationship ever in the character's life. Thus, it can contribute to the development of idealistic beliefs of relationships and intimacy.

A coding sheet was constructed to note the information about different characters in a romantic relationship (see Appendix A). The information used in the creation of the coding sheet was gathered from similar studies (Kunkel et al., 2005; Hefner & Wilson, 2013; Callister et al., 2011). Kunkel et al. (2005) defined sex as "any depiction of sexual activity, sexually suggestive behavior, or talk about sexuality or sexual activity" (p. 14). Sexual behavior is defined as an action that conveys potential or a likelihood of sexual intimacy (Kunkel et al., 2005). A kiss between friends or family as well as minor or peripheral characters, or "extras," was not counted for the coding. Passionate kissing between two characters who are romantic interests was coded

for sexual behavior, and in this study physical flirting, which is "intended to arouse sexual interest in others" will be coded (Kunkel et al., 2005, p. 14).

Each episode was coded as a new couple and their state of relationship. To measure relationship, the coding categories and definitions of levels of relationships are provided in Appendix B. "Flirting/talking to/clear attraction" and "hanging out" are clear explanations, as well as "engaged" and "married." *Dating*, *in a relationship*, and *serious relationship* definitions are from Furman and Simon (1999) and Brown (1999). *Dating* is spending time or being together without any intimacy; *in a relationship* refers to companionship and intimacy as well as spending time together. To be in a *serious relationship* is to be in an extended lifelong bond and having intention to be exclusive as to talk about marriage and living together.

The measure of sexual behavior measure is modeled after Callister et al.'s (2011) study, the Kunkel et al.'s (2005) report, and definitions from the Oxford English Dictionary: holding hands, holding/embracing/hugging, cuddling (hold close in one's arms by lying or sitting), short kiss (peck on forehead, cheek, lips), passionate kissing (touching of another's body in a way that is meant to be sexually arousing), petting (engaging in sexually stimulating caressing and touching without the removal of clothes), disrobing (the removing of clothing that reveals parts of the body not normally exposed), sexual intercourse (implied: not shown overtly; shown: direct view of any person engaged in the act of intercourse).

Sexual encounters were coded as what they intend to be. A "one-night stand" is defined as a couple that has sexual intercourse just once and one partner leaves early while the other sleeps. An "extended" sexual encounter is having sexual intercourse more than once, but it will be coded as if the couple is not defining their relationship. A serious sexual relationship is a committed relationship where they have defined their relationship and it can correlate with a couple being engaged, married, or betrothed.

The measure of safe sex practice was also modeled after Callister et al.'s (2011) study where condom use is either shown, alluded to, or referred to in the dialogue. The mention or discussion of STDs was also coded. Abstinence, whether discussed, alluded to, or visually portrayed was important to code.

The age of characters, especially the ones in relationships, were important to measure. The definitions were defined by Lauzen and Dozier (2005). The ages were defined as: teens (13 – 17), emerging adults (18 – 25), later 20s and 30s (26 – 29, 30 – 39), and 40+ years were considered parents, as well as those who are in their 40s, 50s, and 60s.

The intercoder reliability was determined by Krippendorf's alpha (N=0.87). In order to determine intercoder reliability, two coders examined the first two episodes of each television show, which represented 20% of the entirety of episodes across all five shows. There was a 97.1% agreement in *The 100*, a 87.1% agreement in *Reign*, a 88.6% agreement in *The Vampire Diaries*, a 90% agreement in *Pretty Little Liars*, and a 97.1% in *Teen Wolf*. Once the reliability was established between the coders, the remaining episodes were coded by the main coder.

Results

From the 64 hours of teen drama in television coded, the coders viewed 91 episodes of the first seasons of five different television shows (*Teen Wolf*, *The 100*, *The Vampire Diaries*, *Reign*, and *Pretty Little Liars*). One hundred and eighty-two couples were coded from these five shows: 47.8% of the couples were "in a relationship" and 11.5% of the couples were coded as "married." In *The 100*, there were only 6 couples coded with 19 instances total of all types of relationships. *The Vampire Diaries* had 12 couples and coded a total of 35 instances of relationships. Four couples were coded 13 times in some type of relationship in *Teen Wolf*. There were 24 couples in *Reign* coded 65 times in some type of relationship as well, and there were 17 couples coded 50 times in *Pretty Little Liars.*

The first research question asked for the type of relationships that appear in popular teen drama television shows. Of the 182 couples, there were 55 instances of "flirting/clear attraction" (30.2%) and 87 instances of "in a relationship" (47.8%) (see Table 1). "Serious relationship" was coded 12 times (6.6%) and "married" 21 times (11.5%). Table 2 provides a breakdown of the types of relationship in each of the shows.

In *The 100* there were 19 couples coded in its first season, with 8 (42.1%) couples were coded as "flirting/having a clear attraction to each other" and 10 couples (52.6%) were coded as "in a relationship." There was only 1 instance of a couple "hanging out with a group." In *Reign,* there were 65 couples, and of those "in a relationship" and "flirting or clear attraction" were both coded 18 times (27.7%). There were 19 couples (29.2%) coded as "in a relationship" and 16 (24.6%) coded as "married." There were 35 couples coded in *The Vampire Diaries*. Out of those 35 times couples were coded in the first season, 23 instances (65.7%) of those relationships were "in a relationship." Only once was a couple coded as "hanging out." In *Pretty Little Liars*, there were couples coded 50 times throughout the first season. Of those 50, heterosexual couples were coded 40 times and, where homosexual couples were coded 10 times; 13 couples (26%) were coded for "flirting/clear attraction" and 4 couples were coded as "hanging out." Only one couple (2%) was coded as "dating." The couples who were "in a relationship" were coded 27 times (54%). There were 5 couples (10%) coded as "married." *Teen Wolf* had 12 episodes in its first season and 13 couples were coded in that season; 5 couples (38.5%) were coded as "flirting/clear attraction" and 8 couples (61.5%) were coded as "in a relationship." There was no other coding for the type of relationship present in this television show.

Table 1

Type of Relationships

Type of Relationship	Frequency	Percent
Flirting/clear attraction	55	30.2%
Hanging out–group	6	3.3%
Dating (1 on 1)	1	0.5%
In a relationship	87	47.8%
Serious Relationship	12	6.6%
Married	21	11.5%
Total	182	100%

Table 2

Type of Relationships in Each TV Show

The 100

Type of Relationship	Frequency	Percent
Flirting/clear attraction	8	42.1%
Hanging out—group	1	5.3%
In a relationship	10	52.6%
Total	19	100%

The Vampire Diaries

Type of Relationship	Frequency	Percent
Flirting/clear attraction	11	31.4%
Hanging out—group	1	2.9%
In a relationship	23	65.7%
Total	35	100%

Teen Wolf

Type of Relationship	Frequency	Percent
Flirting/clear attraction	5	38.5%
In a relationship	8	61.5%
Total	13	100%

Reign

Type of Relationship	Frequency	Percent
Flirting/clear attraction	18	27.7%
In a relationship	19	29.2%
Serious Relationship	12	18.5%
Married	16	24.6%
Total	65	100%

Pretty Little Liars

Type of Relationship	Frequency	Percent
Flirting/clear attraction	13	26%
Hanging out—group	4	8%
Dating (1 on 1)	1	2%
In a relationship	27	54%
Married	5	10%
Total	50	100%

The second research question asked for the ages and genders of relationships that are portrayed primarily in teen dramas (see Table 3). The ages were determined by gathering them in groups: ages 13 – 17 were "teens," 18 – 25 were "emerging adults," 26 – 39 was considered later 20s (26-29) and 30s (30-39), and 40+ was considered anything above 40s (40-49) and 50s (50-

59) and so on. Of all the episodes, 13-to-17-year-olds that are in relationships are the highest frequency, appearing 124 times (68.1%) with ages 18 – 25 only shown once (0.5%). Some characters were in relationships with an age group different from theirs. There were 26 couples (14.8%) shown in a relationship where 13-to-17-year-olds were dating someone who was in the age range of 18 – 25. There were characters who were in the 13 – 17 age range that were shown in relationships with characters who were 40+ years. The series *Reign* is a period drama that takes place in the sixteenth century and is based loosely on the reign of Mary, Queen of Scots. Some relationships occurred with the King of France; because of his power, several young women wanted to rise in social status and were able to do so if they had affairs with the king and gained favor with him.

Table 3

Ages of Characters in Relationships

Ages	Frequency	Percent
13 – 17	124	68.1%
18 – 25	1	0.5%
26 – 39	3	1.6%
40+	10	5.5%
13 – 17 & 18 – 25	26	14.3%
13 – 17 & 40+	14	7.7%
18 – 25 & 26 – 39	1	0.5%
18 – 25 & 40+	1	0.5%
26 – 39 & 40+	2	1.1%
Total	182	100%

Table 4 shows the ages of characters in each television show. In *The 100*, the age ranges of 13 – 17 was coded 15 times (78.9%) and there were 4 times (21.1%) when one partner in the relationship came from the 13 – 17 age range and the other from the 18 – 25 age range. *The Vampire Diaries* showed couples aged 13 – 17 twenty-seven times (77.1%) and couples who are both 26 – 39 two times (5.7%). There was only one couple coded once who were in the age range of 18 – 25 and 26 – 39 (2.9%). In *Teen Wolf*, all the 13 couples were 13 – 17.

Table 4

A*ges of Characters in Relationships in Each TV Show*

The 100

Ages	Frequency	Percent
13 – 17	15	78.9%
13 – 17 & 18 – 25	4	21.1%
Total	19	100%

The Vampire Diaries

Ages	Frequency	Percent
13 – 17	27	77.1%
26 – 39	2	5.7%
13 – 17 & 18 – 25	5	14.3%
18 – 25 & 26 – 39	1	2.9%
Total	35	100%

Teen Wolf

Ages	Frequency	Percent
13 – 17	13	100%
Total	13	100%

Reign

Ages	Frequency	Percent
13 – 17	38	58.5%
18 – 25	1	1.5%
40+	5	7.7%
13 – 17 & 18 – 25	4	6.2%
13 – 17 & 40+	14	21.5%
18 – 25 & 40+	1	1.5%
26 – 39 & 40+	2	3.1%
Total	65	100%

Pretty Little Liars

Ages	Frequency	Percent
13 – 17	31	62%
26 – 39	1	2%
40+	5	20%
13 – 17 & 26 – 39	13	26%
Total	50	100%

Following the ages of relationships, genders in relationships are important to note as provided in Table 5. Of the 182 instances that couples were coded, 172 couples (94%) were male-female relationships and 11 couples (6%) were female-female relationships. There were no

male-male relationships in any of the five shows coded. *The 100*, *The Vampire Diaries*, and *Teen Wolf* showed only male-female relationships. *Reign* and *Pretty Little Liars* showed female-female relationships. *Reign* only had one instance (1.5%), but *Pretty Little Liars* had 10 instances (20%).

Table 5

Type of Gender Attraction

Gender Attraction	Frequency	Percent
Male-Female	172	94%
Female-Female	10	5.5%
Total	182	100%

The 100

Gender Attraction	Frequency	Percent
Male-Female	19	100%

The Vampire Diaries

Gender Attraction	Frequency	Percent
Male-Female	35	100%

Teen Wolf

Gender Attraction	Frequency	Percent
Male-Female	13	100%

Reign

Gender Attraction	Frequency	Percent
Male-Female	65	100%

Pretty Little Liars

Gender Attraction	Frequency	Percent
Male-Female	40	80%
Female-Female	10	20%

The third research question was concerned about the frequency and forms of sexual behavior that were portrayed in today's teen dramas. As displayed in Table 6, the highest frequency of sexual behavior was "passionate kissing" appeared 96 times among all the shows. "Petting" was the lowest appearing only once amid the five television programs. "Short kiss" was the second highest incident, and "sexual intercourse," implied, followed being coded 23 times.

Table 7 presents the individual shows. In *The 100*, there were 20 episodes. Of those episodes, "passionate kissing" was shown 7 times, being the highest frequency among the other sexual behaviors in its program. "Cuddling" was shown only once. Two sexual behaviors were coded 5 times: "embrace/hugging" and implied "sexual intercourse." *The Vampire Diaries* had 22 episodes in its first season. "Passionate kissing" appeared 18 times during the season and "short kiss" appeared 8 times. There was no petting shown or implied. *Teen Wolf* only had 12 episodes in its first season. Of those 12 episodes, there was no cuddling or petting shown or implied. "Passionate kissing" had the highest percentage and was depicted 8 times. "Short kiss" appeared a total of 4 times. No sexual intercourse was shown or implied throughout *Teen Wolf*'s first season. In *Reign*'s twenty-two episodes, "passionate kissing" was coded 41 times. Implied

"sexual intercourse" happened 12 times with "short kiss" and "embrace/hugging" coded 11 times each. "Disrobing" was shown 8 times, and most of the time led to shown "sexual intercourse," which happened 6 times. Of the 22 episodes in *Pretty Little Liars*, "passionate kissing" was shown 23 times and "short kiss" was shown 20 times. No sexual intercourse was shown, but it was implied twice during its first season.

Table 6

Sexual Behavior Shown in Relationships

Sexual Behavior Shown	Frequency
Holding Hands	31
Embrace/Hugging	32
Cuddling	7
Short Kiss	46
Passionate Kiss	96
Petting	1
Disrobing	19
Sexual Intercourse	8
Total	240

Sexual Behavior Implied	Frequency
Embrace/Hugging	1
Sexual Intercourse	23
Total	24

Table 7

S*exual Behavior Shown and Implied in Relationships in Each TV Show*

The 100

Sexual Behavior Shown	Frequency
Holding Hands	2
Embrace/Hugging	5
Cuddling	1
Short Kiss	3
Passionate Kiss	7
Disrobing	4
Total	22

Sexual Behavior Implied	Frequency
Sexual Intercourse	5
Total	5

The Vampire Diaries

Sexual Behavior Shown	Frequency
Holding Hands	3
Embrace/Hugging	6
Cuddling	4
Short Kiss	8
Passionate Kiss	18
Disrobing	4
Sexual Intercourse	2
Total	45

Sexual Behavior Implied	Frequency
Sexual Intercourse	4
Total	4

Teen Wolf

Sexual Behavior Shown	Frequency
Holding Hands	2
Embrace/Hugging	2
Short Kiss	4
Passionate Kiss	8
Disrobing	1
Total	17

Reign

Sexual Behavior Shown	Frequency
Holding Hands	12
Embrace/Hugging	11
Short Kiss	11
Passionate Kiss	40
Petting	1
Disrobing	8
Sexual Intercourse	6
Total	89

Sexual Behavior Implied	Frequency
Embrace/Hugging	1
Sexual Intercourse	12
Total	13

Pretty Little Liars

Sexual Behavior Shown	Frequency
Holding Hands	12
Embrace/Hugging	8
Cuddling	2
Short Kiss	20
Passionate Kiss	23
Disrobing	2
Total	67

Sexual Behavior Implied	Frequency
Sexual Intercourse	2
Total	2

The fourth research question asked the frequency of sexual encounters that occurred. As provided in Table 8, the majority of the television shows did not show any sexual encounters. A "one-night stand" happened 16 times (8.7%). "Extended sexual relationship" was depicted 9 times (4.9%), and the "serious sexual relationship (committed)" was shown 5 times (2.7%). In *The 100* only "one-night stand" (21.1%) and "no sexual encounters" (78.9%) were coded. *The Vampire Diaries* revealed 5 "one-night stands" (14.3%), 2 "extended sexual relationships" (5.7%), and 28 "no sexual encounters" (80%). In *Reign*, there were 5 "one-night stands" (7.6%), 7 "extended sexual relationship" (10.6%), and 5 "serious sexual relationships" (7.6%). *Pretty Little Liars* showed only 2 "one-night stands" (4%). *Teen Wolf* was the only show that did not have any sexual encounters throughout the first season.

Table 8

Sexual Encounters Among Relationships

Sexual Encounter	Frequency	Percent
One-night Stand (once)	16	8.8%
Extended Sexual Relationship (more than once)	9	4.9%
Serious Sexual Relationship (committed)	5	2.7%
No Sexual Encounter	152	83.5%
Total	182	100%

Table 9

Sexual Encounters Shown Among Relationships in Each TV Show

The 100

Sexual Encounter	Frequency	Percent
One-night stand (once)	4	21.1%
No Sexual Encounter	15	78.9%
Total	19	100%

The Vampire Diaries

Sexual Encounter	Frequency	Percent
One-night Stand (once)	5	14.3%
Extended Sexual Relationship (more than once)	2	5.7%
No Sexual Encounter	28	80%
Total	35	100%

Teen Wolf

Sexual Encounter	Frequency	Percent
No Sexual Encounter	13	100%
Total	13	100%

Reign

Sexual Encounter	Frequency	Percent
One-night Stand (once)	5	7.6%
Extended Sexual Relationship (more than once)	7	10.6%
Serious Sexual Relationship (committed)	5	7.6%
No Sexual Encounter	48	73.8%
Total	65	100%

Pretty Little Liars

Sexual Encounter	Frequency	Percent
One-night Stand (once)	2	4%
No Sexual Encounter	48	96%
Total	50	100%

The fifth research question was concerned about the portrayals of safe sex presented in an entire season. From the 182 instances of couples coded, only 1 couple was coded for "condom use (shown, alluded)" provided in Table 10. There was also only 1 couple coded for "abstinence (discussed, alluded, portrayed)." These two instances only happened in *Pretty Little Liars*. There was no "STD (mentioned or discussed)" coded in any of the television shows.

Table 10

Safe Sex Practice Shown in Relationships

Safe Sex Practice	Frequency	Percent
Condom Use (shown, alluded)	1	0.5%
Abstinence (discussed, alluded, portrayed)	1	0.5%
None	180	98.9%
Total	182	100%

Discussion

This study was designed to examine the relationships and intimacy presented in teen drama series on television that creates expectations for its viewers. The results indicated the types of relationships, ages, genders, sexual behaviors and encounters, and any safe sex practice. From the results, the majority of examples of types of relationships were "in a relationship" since the majority of primary characters were teenagers. As most relationships begin, a lot of flirting and attraction to one another is portrayed in order to begin a friendship and eventually a courtship. Then, the relationship proceeds to "in a relationship" where most of the characters' relationships stay.

The majority of the ages of relationships in these shows (*The 100*, *Reign*, *The Vampire Diaries*, *Teen Wolf*, and *Pretty Little Liars*) were ages 13 – 17 since each show revolved around the characters within this age range. This is also the age range that teens become interested and involved in dating relationships (Fisher, Hill, Grube, & Gruber, 2004). All of the shows except *Pretty Little Liars* and one episode of *Reign* showed male-female relationships (172). *Pretty Little Liars* showed 1 female-female relationship because one of the main characters, Emily, comes out as a lesbian. In the beginning of the show, Emily was in a male-female relationship, mostly out of fear for what her peers and her parents think of her. When she met a new neighbor,

Maya, Emily was transfixed by Maya's confidence in who she was. That confidence helped Emily to be herself as a lesbian and she explored her new identity by beginning a relationship with Maya. This representation of a recurring same sex couple in *Pretty Little Liars* has changed from Raley and Lucas's (2008) study tremendously—from non-representation and ridicule, to regulation and, later in the season, respect. *Reign's* one episode of a female-female relationship was not much of a relationship, but they did partake in implied sexual behavior because the King commanded them to perform sexual behavior in front of him.

The highest number of sexual behavior shown in all of the shows was passionate kissing. It has also been found to be the highest shown sexual behavior in other studies as well (Callister et al., 2011; Eyal et al., 2007). These sexual behaviors were observed as the most frequent of sexual behaviors because it helped the relationship become established or helped it progress more quickly. Passionate kissing seemed like it was the norm of all relationships which could be interpreted as a script for young people as one of the "strategies for establishing relationships and tips on how to get sexually attractive" (Brown, 2002, p. 43) Implied sexual intercourse was the third most frequent form of sexual behavior. However, characters older than 18 – 25 who engaged in sexual intercourse could be role models for young viewers to emulate (Eyal et al., 2007). Young viewers see that kind of fictional lifestyle and think of it as an ideal they can aspire to be.

One of the more prominent findings from the coding was "no sexual encounters" showed a high percentage of 83.5%. It is important to discuss because when a sexual encounter happened, it was random and sporadic. The low frequency of the "extended sexual relationship" happened later in the season after the couple decided it was the right moment. There was no measure for when the right moment comes or when the relationship is established, but it was observed that when the right moment came, the couples decided to be committed to each other.

The “no sexual encounter” code was so prominent because the characters and storyline were important to be established first in order to move forward with character and story development. It was also coded that when a relationship was established, that during each episode following, if there was no sexual encounter in that episode, it was counted. One example is in *Teen Wolf* where no sexual encounters occurred throughout its entire first season. The story focused mainly how Scott dealt with changing into and out of a werewolf and the heightened sense that came along with being a werewolf. Scott had a romantic interest for a girl named Allison and soon they became a couple. They had no sexual encounters because when they tried to pursue further from their passionate kissing, they were either interrupted by a phone call or Scott was afraid his werewolf instincts would overtake him, and he would hurt Allison. In one scene, Scott was on an errand to retrieve an item from Allison’s house without revealing to Allison what he needed it for. While Scott was in Allison’s bedroom, they began kissing passionately and began to disrobe one another, but then Scott’s phone started ringing because his friend wanted to check in to see if Scott had found the item and if it was in his possession.

Although sexual encounters were significantly lower than “no sexual encounters,” the presence of sexual encounters shown or implied is thought-provoking. Why are there sexual encounters at all? One possibility could be that the producers or writers want to include that sexual intercourse is a common thing to do in a teen relationship but needed to keep the storyline progressing so there were little displays of sexual intercourse. Another possibility is that there is some kind of morality trying to be portrayed on television, but when sexual intercourse occurs, especially for the first time, it is love and is supposed to be a meaningful and life-changing experience for the characters. A strong bond is created between the characters, and their connection and trust between each other would matter to the story as well as to the viewers.

It is difficult to define exactly what a relationship in a teen drama is and when it begins, but from observing these five television shows, a relationship is determined by the commitment and desire between two characters and their willingness to submit to one another through sharing something that makes them vulnerable, through passionate kissing, and eventually, leading to sexual intercourse. There is an unspoken moment where they commit to one another. For example, in *The Vampire Diaries*, Elena and Stefan begin passionately kissing, but because Stefan is a vampire, his vampire instincts start to kick in. His veins around his eyes begin to pop and his eyes look red and possessive. He turns away from Elena, but she tells him to turn around and let her see him as a vampire. This moment showed Stefan allowing Elena to see him for who he really is, and she accepts him for that. Thus, the passionate kissing led to disrobing and then to sexual intercourse implied to consummate their committed relationship to each other.

The portrayal of safe sex was interesting to observe and code for in this study. Television shows that are heavily viewed by teenagers "have very high levels of sexual content" as was found in Eyal et al.,'s (2007) study and was also coded in this study (Eyal et al., 2007, p. 329). However, the portrayal of safe sex, whether it was shown, talked about, or alluded to, was almost nonexistent in this study. Only in *Pretty Little Liars* a condom was used and abstinence was discussed. The character, Hanna, was involved with two separate guys, at two different times, when there was sexual precaution and sexual patience. To illustrate, Hanna wanted to pursue further her relationship with the pastor's son in the beginning of the season, but he talked to her about how he wanted to wait until marriage to have sex. The second guy Hanna dated was ready to move forward in the relationship, but he asked Hanna before advancing. He also indicated that he had a condom. No other shows talked about or showed any safe sex practice throughout the entire season. Brown (2002) stated that 1 in 10 television programs that showed sexual content mentioned "the possible consequences or the need to use contraceptives or protection against

STDs" (p. 42). Pregnancies are rarely shown as an outcome, and if there was a "pregnancy scare," it would disappear in the story line. The portrayal of abortion is a taboo topic, and even in this political time it would be too controversial for television (Brown, 2002).

The "wonderful world" syndrome that Galloway, Engstrom, and Emmers-Sommers (2005) extended from Gerbner's (1976) coined term of "mean world" explained that "true love is perfect, everlasting, and ostensibly devoid of major conflict and, to an extent, personal responsibility" (p. 688). Sexual behavior has been shown and implied, but from observation, there were no consequences to sexual intercourse. Abstinence and protection are almost insignificant. They were mentioned in only two instances in the current study. Once a sexual encounter happened, the characters went along with their everyday lives. The thought of being pregnant never occurred. If there was a pregnancy scare, it would come up once, but then it would suddenly disappear as if nothing happened. Sexually transmitted diseases were also not brought up at all. With the "wonderful world" concept, the television shows were able to depict the benefits of an ideal relationship: perfect love never dies, and it is devoid of any personal responsibility such as pregnancy or diseases. Everyone lives happily ever after without any conflict. There was one character in particular from *The 100* who seemed to be perfectly happy and healthy despite her many hookups with minor characters. Once the teenagers landed on Earth, Octavia began to flirt, kiss, and engage in sexual encounters with several boys. She was one of the characters who feared she may not have much time to live on Earth, so she wanted to "live it up." It was hard to determine every encounter she had, but one can deduce that she had several sexual encounters with several minor characters, and they mostly happened out in the woods. However, there was no fear or scares of pregnancies. It was never a topic brought up between characters because they may not have had knowledge of the possibility of pregnancy or

sexually transmitted diseases. It may be possible that the writers and producers of *The 100* did not want those topics to be part of the story just yet.

However, Kunkel et al. (2005) indicated that the media and television can play a meaningful role to sensitize the viewers about sexual health issues and concerns. Currently, it has hit a plateau, but television has the capability to play a tremendous impact on viewers that could "literally save lives" (Kunkel et al., 2005, p. 59). The television shows in this study hardly showed or talked about sexual health issues, let alone, using protection when engaging in intercourse, whether depicted or implied. Even though parents and peers play a central role in young people's sexual socialization, teenagers are heavily influenced by television as it has been a monumental form of access and information to their sexual development (Eyal et al., 2007). For the most part, parents may not know what their children are watching in what is considered a "teen show."

According to the cultivation theory, the more someone exposed themselves to what they watch on television, the more they believe reality is just the same as what is presented on television. In these teen drama shows, as part of the storyline, each program explored and focused on relationships. With the frequencies of relationships portrayed, sexual behaviors, sexual encounters, and portrayals of safe sex practice in this sample showed that sexual behaviors were shown in almost every episode. From the gathered data, "in a relationship" was shown as the highest and "flirting/clear attraction" was the second highest, but the majority of the characters remained "in a relationship" for most of the first season. It could be assumed that once two people flirt or clear attraction is shown between them, they will be in a relationship as soon as the current episode ends or in the following episode. As viewers see this kind of pattern on television, they believe it can happen either to them or to others in a similar time frame and way as portrayed in the storylines.

The same can also be said for sexual behaviors and sexual encounters whether shown or implied. Overall, the frequency of "passionate kissing" was shown as the highest form of sexual behaviors as well as "sexual intercourse." "Passionate kissing" may not necessarily be a bad influence, but for the most part it can lead to "disrobing" and eventually "sexual intercourse." Teenagers watching these elements in teen dramas believe that these sexual behaviors are the "normal" for relationships because it is shown often, as demonstrated in this study. This sequence in television programs cultivates expectations in young people that want to move forward in their own relationships. They see how it happens on television and follow the same pattern and expect the same outcomes. Young people look to television and to their peers for advice and support, and, for some, to learn about their own sexual socialization. This can become a frightening thing for parents because they may not know exactly what their children are watching and whether it is appropriate for the child to be introduced to such behaviors at that time.

Additionally, scripting theory goes hand in hand with cultivation theory because as viewers observe the same genre over and over again, they create memory structures and ideals based off of the roles portrayed on television. For a young person with no prior experiences in a relationship, it would be easy for them to develop a script or an ideal situation inside their mind that is similar to what is portrayed on screen. It is so easy for viewers to compare their life to what is seen on television, especially to young viewers as they learn about relationships and the behaviors involved to maintain a relationship. This leads to the young person determining that that situation is what is supposed to come next in relational and sexual situations. For example, in many instances in the current study sample of television shows, the majority of the different couples did not enter into their relationship slowly. For the most part, the characters went from being flirtatious or having a clear attraction to each other to instantly kissing passionately with

each other. There was no development into the sexual behaviors such as hand holding, cuddling, and short, shy kisses. Thus, this kind of behavior can create scripts to the viewer that sends the message to go for that kiss and it will be reciprocated back. In reality, it may not be so easy as what is portrayed on screen.

Television can be a source of sexual health issues, but it can also be a source of how young people learn about relationships and expectations in a relationship. From the results, the majority of the characters seemed to rush into their relationships from their "meet cute" to passionate kissing. Some relationships did progress through flirting/talking, to holding hands, and then kissing, but most of the time it moved from flirting to passionately kissing one another. There was only one instance of a "date" and "hanging out" out of 91 episodes. If a teenager only watched these shows, it is possible for them to think that in order to be in a relationship, there is not much of a process that has to occur. It either just magically happens, or there is no connection, or magic. The expectations were set extremely high for what a person gets out of a relationship. The benefits of a relationship, i.e. holding hands, kissing, possible sexual intercourse, is rushed because of some sort of standard that is held to what is shown in these teen dramas and how to make "drama" happen. Young viewers see these types of relationship and intimacy on television and form expectations in their heads of what a relationship is supposed to look like and what to do in a relationship.

Limitations

There were some limitations to this study. Another coding element could have been added such as "sexual talk" since there were discussions about characters' relationships among each other and with other characters. Another addition would be to include the time frame between the characters in a relationship starting with the first meeting to when their relationship was defined. The show, *Reign*, could have been replaced by another show that was not a period

piece. That way, the coding between the 40-year-old king and young lady-in-waiting would be eliminated so it would not skew the data of characters in a relationship. The time to complete this study was quite long as it took time to watch from when the programs began, and the last episode of the television series ended.

Future Research

This research could be advanced through a survey study to see if young people, even emerging adults, are influenced by these teen dramas and form expectations about relationships using these shows or others. Another addition to this study could include focusing on the parasocial relationships between viewer and characters that is developed over an entire series instead of just one season. There could also be advancements in this research as to how much or how little time passes between the “meet cute” and “in a relationship” occurs. It would be fascinating to see how the portrayals of relationships have changed or have been pushed in more recent episodes of the same shows or other television shows that are airing currently. Streaming services have become popular in recent years and some of the streaming services create their own original shows. The content created in these shows could have a different allowance compared to a television network. Since some topics are taboo, like abortion and same-sex relationships among teens in television shows, there is room for research on these as well.

REFERENCES

Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist, 55*(5), 469-480. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.55.5.469

Aslinger, B. (2008). Rocking prime time: Gender, the WB, and teen culture. In S.M. Ross & L. Stein (Eds.) *Teen television: Essays on programming and fandom* (pp. 78-90). Retrieved from https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=rSGfBQAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA78&dq=relationships+in+teen+dramas&ots=dWfFOrYlIT&sig=oTXFs7nSPSG9ZUy8UzG8_IDYcaM#v=onepage&q=relationships%20in%20teen%20dramas&f=false

Aubrey, J. S. (2004). Sex and punishment: An examination of sexual consequences and the sexual double standard in teen programming. *Sex Roles*, *50*(7-8), 505-514. doi:10.1023/B:SERS.0000023070.87195.07

Behm-Morawitz, E., & Mastro, D. E. (2008). Mean girls? The influence of gender portrayals in teen movies on emerging adults' gender-based attitudes and beliefs. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 85*(1), 131-146.

Brown, B. B. (1999). "You're going out with who?": Peer group influences on adolescent romantic relationships. In W. Furman, B. Brown, & C. Feiring (Eds.), *The Development of Romantic Relationships in Adolescence* (pp. 291-329). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9781316182185.013

Brown, J. D. (2002). Mass media influences on sexuality. *Journal of Sex Research, 39*(1), 42-45. doi:10.1080/00224490209552118

Callister, M., Stern, L. A., Coyne, S. M., Robinson, T., & Bennion, E. (2011). Evaluation of sexual content in teen-centered films from 1980 to 2007. *Mass Communication and Society, 14*(4), 454-474.

Coyle, K., Basen-Engquist, K., Kirby, D., Parcel, G., Banspach, S., Collins, J., …Harrist, R. (2001). Safer choices: Reducing teen pregnancy, HIV, and STDs. *Public Health Reports (1941-), 116*(1), 82-93. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/25747587

Eggermont, S. (2004). Television viewing, perceived similarity, and adolescents' expectations of a romantic partner. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 48*(2), 244-265.

Eyal, K., Kunkel, D., Biely, E., & Finnerty, K. (2007). Sexual socialization messages on television programs most popular among teens. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *51*(1), 316-336. doi:10.1080/08838150701304969

Ferguson, C.J., Nielsen, R.K.L. & Markey, P.M. (2017). Does sexy media promote teen sex? A meta-analytic and methodological review. *Psychiatr Q*, *88*(1), 349-358. doi:10.1007/s11126-016-9442-2

Fisher, D. A., Hill, D. L., Grube, J. W., & Gruber, E. L. (2004). Sex on American television: an analysis across program genres and network types. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 48*(4), 529-553. doi:10.1207/s15506878jobem4804_1

Furman, W. & Simon, V.A. (1999). Cognitive representations of adolescent romantic relationships. In BB Brown, C. Feiring, & W. Furman (1), *The Development of Romantic Relationships in Adolescence* (291-329). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=IzRHqL4w4S4C&oi=fnd&pg=PA75&dq=Cognitive+representations+of+adolescent+romantic+relationships&ots=dr8vpldsfb&sig=qKSdbTPVoAR_bYBMfA843lYKzuY#v=onepage&q=Cognitive%20representations%20of%20adolescent%20romantic%20relationships&f=false

Galloway, L., Engstrom, E., & Emmers-Sommer, T. M. (2015). Does movie viewing cultivate young people's unrealistic expectations about love and marriage? *Marriage & Family Review, 51*(8), 687-712. doi:10.1080/01494929.2015.1061629

Gamble, H. & Nelson, L. R. (2016). Sex in college relationships: The role television plays in emerging adults' sexual expectations in relationships. *Communication Monographs, 83*(1), 145-161. doi:10.1080/03637751.2015.1049635

Garcia-Muñoz, N. & Fedele, M. (2011). The teen series and the young target. Gender stereotypes in television fiction targeted to teenagers. *Observatorio, 5*(1), 215-226. doi:10.15847/obsOBS512011389

Gerbner, G., & Gross, L. (1976). Living with television: The violence profile. *Journal of Communication, 26*(2), 172–199.

Hefner, V. & Wilson, B.J. (2013). From love at first sight to soul mate: The influence of romantic ideals in popular films on young people's beliefs about relationships. C*ommunication Monographs 80*(2), 150-175.

Hook, M. K., Gerstein, L. H., Detterich, L., & Gridley, B. (2003). How close are we? Measuring intimacy and examining gender differences. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 81*(4), 462-472. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2003.tb00273.x

Kunkel, D., Eyal, K., Finnerty, K., Biely, E., & Donnerstein, E. (2005). *Sex on TV 4: A Kaiser family foundation report* (Report No. 4). Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation. Retrieved from Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation: https://kaiserfamilyfoundation.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/sex-on-tv-4-full-report.pdf

Kim, J. L., Sorsoli, C. L., Collins, K., Zylbergold, B. A., Schooler, D., & Tolman, D. L. (2007). From sex to sexuality: Exposing the heterosexual script on primetime network television.

Journal of Sex Research, 44(2), 145-157. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/25701753

Lauzen, M.M. & Dozier, D.M. (2005). Maintaining the double standard: Portrayals of age and gender in popular films. *Sex Roles 52*(7), 437-446. doi: 10.1007/s11199-005-3710-1

Moss, B., & Schwebel, A. (1993). Defining intimacy in romantic relationships. *Family Relations, 42*(1), 31-37. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/584918

Potter, W. J. (2014). A critical analysis of cultivation theory. *Journal of Communication, 64*(6), 1015-1036. doi:10.1111/jcom.12128

Raley, A.B. & Lucas, J.L. (2008). Stereotype or success? Prime-time television's portrayals of gay male, lesbian, and bisexual characters. *Journal of Homosexuality, 51*(2), 19-38. doi:10.1300/J082v51n02_02

Segrin, C., & Nabi, R. L. (2002). Does television viewing cultivate unrealistic expectations about marriage? *Journal of Communication. 52*(2), 247-263. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2002.tb02543.x

Signorielli, N., & Morgan, M. (2001). The cultivation perspective. In J. Bryant & J.A. Bryant (Eds), *Television and the American Family* (pp. 333-351). Retrieved from https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=17SRAgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA333&dq=teen+drama+relationship+cultivation&ots=1EtdBDlCMN&sig=1ZaGgTm3gB707q9CQhct6ftxM7k#v=onepage&q=teen%20drama%20relationship%20cultivation&f=false

United States Department of Labor. (2016). Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retrieved from http://www.bls.gov/news.release/atus.nr0.htm

Van Damme, Elke. (2010). Gender and sexual scripts in popular US teen series: A study on the gendered discourses in One Tree Hill and Gossip Girl. *Catalan Journal of Communication & Cultural Studies 2*(1), 77-92. doi:10.1386/cjcs.2.1.77_1

Ward, L.M. (2002). Does television exposure affect emerging adults' attitudes and assumptions about sexual relationship? Correlation and experimental confirmation. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 31,* 1-15. doi:10.1023/A:1014068031532

Ward, L.M. (2003). Understanding the role of entertainment media in the sexual socialization of American youth: A review of empirical research. *Developmental Review, 23* (3), 347-388. doi:10.1016/S0273-2297(03)00013-3

APPENDIX A: CODING SHEET

Relationship and Intimacy as portrayed on Popular Teen Drama Television Shows Coding Sheet

TV Show: _____ Episode: _____

Characters in Romantic Relationship:_____

Relationship

a. Flirting/talking to/clear attraction b. Hanging out - group
c. Dating (1 on 1) d. In a relationship
e. Serious relationship (engaged) f. Married

Ages:

Partner 1

a. 13-17 b. 18-25 c. 26-39 d. 40+

Partner 2

a. 13-17 b. 18-25 c. 26-39 d. 40+

Gender attraction:

a. Male-female b. Male-male c. Female-female

Sexual Behavior	Shown	Implied
a. Holding hands	_____	_____
b. holding/embracing/hugging	_____	_____
c. Cuddling	_____	_____
d. Short kiss	_____	_____
e. Passionate kissing	_____	_____
f. Petting	_____	_____
g. Disrobing	_____	_____
h. Sexual Intercourse	_____	_____
i. none		

Sexual Encounter

a. One-night stand (once) b. Extended sexual relationship (more than once)

c. Serious sexual relationship (engaged, married) d. No sexual encounter

Safe sex practice

a. Condom use (shown; alluded; referred in dialogue) b. STD (mentioned or discussed)

c. abstinence (discussed, alluded, visually portrayed) d. None (nothing said)

APPENDIX B: CODING SHEET DEFINITIONS

Relationship and Intimacy as portrayed on Popular Teen Drama Television Shows

Relationship: "bond or connection between two individuals; spending a lot of time together; commitment"

- Dating: being together without intimacy; 1 on 1 (Furman & Simon 1999)
- In a relationship: going public; companionship and intimacy; spending time together (Furman & Simon 1999)
- Serious relationship: an extended lifelong bond intended to be exclusive (Brown 1999)
- Hanging out: group of friends; doing homework

Ages:

- 13-17: Teens
- 18-25: Emerging adults
- 26-39: later 20s (26-29) and 30s (30-39)
- 40+: 40s (40-49) and 50s (50-59) and 60s (60-69) (Lauzen & Dozier 2005)

Sexual Behavior - "actions must convey a sense of potential or likely sexual intimacy" (Kaiser Family Foundation 2005); "extras" in the background should not be counted

- Cuddling: "hold close in one's arms as a way of showing affection; lie or sit close" (Oxford English Dictionary)
- Short kiss: peck on forehead, cheek, lips
- Passionate kissing: "touching of another's body in a way that is meant to be sexually arousing" (Kaiser Family Foundation 2005)
- Petting: engage in sexually stimulating caressing and touching without sexual intercourse (Oxford English Dictionary)

- Disrobing: “the removing of clothing that reveals parts of the body not normally exposed” (Kaiser Family Foundation 2005)
- Sexual intercourse implied: “the behavior is not shown overtly on the screen; examples would include a couple kissing, groping, and undressing one another as they stumble into a darkened bedroom, with the scene dissolving before the actual act of intercourse ensues; or a couple shown awakening in bed together with their conversation centering on the lovemaking they had performed before falling asleep” (Kaiser Family Foundation 2005).
- Sexual intercourse shown: “a direct view is shown of any person who is engaged in the act of intercourse, regardless of the degree of nudity or explicitness presented”; whether bare shoulders or more (Kaiser Family Foundation 2005)