

SECRET SUPERSTARS AND OTHERWORLDLY WIZARDS:
Gender Biased Hiding of Extraordinary Abilities in
Girl-Powered Disney Channel Sitcoms from the 2000s

By
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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Film and Media Studies and the Graduate Faculty
of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Date Approved: 25 January 2017

ABSTRACT

Conformity messaging and subversive practices potentially harmful to healthy models of feminine identity are critical interpretations of the differential depiction of the hiding and usage of tween girl characters' extraordinary abilities (e.g., super/magical abilities and celebrity powers) in Disney Channel television sitcoms from 2001-2011. Male counterparts in similar programs aired by the same network openly displayed their extraordinariness and were portrayed as having considerable and usually uncontested agency. These alternative depictions of differential hiding and secrecy in sitcoms are far from speculative; these ideas were synthesized from analyses of sitcom episodes, commentary in magazine articles, and web-based discussions of these series. Content analysis, industrial analysis (including interviews with industry personnel), and critical discourse analysis utilizing the multi-faceted lens of feminist theory throughout is used in this study to demonstrate a unique decade in children's programming about super powered girls. This research is invested in answering questions about how and why this decade of gendered programming was constructed and its impact on television's portrayal of female youth. To address these issues, close study of dialogue and action via textual analysis, and application of insights from socioeconomic and historical perspectives elucidate the antics surrounding the hiding and misappropriation of extraordinary power by young girl role models. In addition, such methodologies reveal much about the attitudes of the creators of these programs (mostly white, middle-aged, Western, heterosexual males). What is discerned from scripted material on the motivations behind elaborate attempts to hide the extraordinary are the meanings disseminated from the female subject-position representations in these blockbuster sitcoms that reveal despite Disney's progress towards creating empowered girls, the network is at best locked into tradition.

For girls and girls at heart.

Valuable.

Deserving.

Powerful.

Let us own who we are.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is the result of years of diligent research. I am indebted to a particular group of colleagues, friends, and family members who either encouraged me to pursue my longstanding interests in a scholarly environment or to persevere in completing what at times seemed a monumental undertaking.

First and foremost, I would like to express deep gratitude to my advisor Dr. Germaine Halegoua for her continuous support of my doctoral studies and research. Her immense knowledge and helpful comments on numerous drafts of this manuscript challenged me to think more critically about the world's most powerful medium as it relates to "girl power." I am indebted to Dr. Halegoua for her overall guidance, insightfulness, and patience in bringing my dissertation together.

I would also like to pay particular thanks and appreciation to the members of my dissertation committee: Dr. Catherine Preston, Dr. Ronald Wilson, Dr. Joshua Miner, and Dr. Alesha Doan. Their vital encouragement, constant motivation, and empathy—along with their extended support and critical commentary on both early and later revisions of chapters—assisted me at every point of the process and helped finely shape my research.

Further thanks are extended to the faculty, staff, and students of the Department of Film and Media Studies at the University of Kansas. The entire department—led by Dr. Michael Baskett—was involved in the process of deep learning about gender representations on children's television, by way of formal coursework and countless conversations shared over the years. Special thanks to my fellow grad students; their comradery and genuine interest in my work lifted my spirits and made the doctoral experience both intellectually stimulating and enjoyable. I would also like to thank my best friend and perpetual page-turner, Richard Paul

Paczynski, for five incredible years of unwavering support, understanding, and commitment to both my research and myself.

Although less directly related to the completion of this project (but no less instrumental) I would like to thank my dance teachers and classmates at the Lawrence Arts Center School of Dance, particularly instructors Cynthia Cruz, Shannon Pickett, and Jerel Hilding. I believe that I owe much of my success as a scholar, artist, and person to the uplifting and reassuring environment these individuals created every day in their classes. It perhaps goes without saying that their insistence on keeping dance in my life while working through school helped keep me fit, motivated, and balanced in the often demanding atmosphere of academe.

Of course, I must acknowledge my family—my parents, Donald and Marianne Hodel, and my brother Robert Hodel. Robert, thanks for being the “big guy” who taught me—way back before I could even walk—how to crawl to the TV and tune into Disney Channel. Mom and Dad, thanks for eventually abandoning the rule of “No TV after 5:00.” Growing up with free rein over that analog Sharp has finally paid off.

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INTRODUCTION

*You get the limo out front/
Hottest styles/
every shoe, every color/
Yea, when you're famous it can be kind of fun/
It's really you but no one ever discovers/
Who would have thought that a girl like me/
Would double as a superstar!/
You get the best of both worlds/
Chillin' out, take it slow/
Then you rock out the show/
You get the best of both worlds/
Mix it all together, and you know that it's the best of both worlds.*

“The Best of Both Worlds,” theme song from Disney Channel’s *Hannah Montana* written by Matthew Gerrard and Robbie Nevil

Hannah Montana (2006-2011) was an immensely popular Disney Channel sitcom created by Michael Poryes, Rich Correll, and Barry O’Brien. The program focused on protagonist Miley Stewart (Miley Cyrus), a teenager in junior high by day who had a secret life as teen pop star—Hannah Montana—by night. The theme song’s lyrics describe the premise of the series—that any girl may become famous and buy anything her heart desires. The words also reveal that such a life of glitz and glamor is to remain hidden from society, thus lending the girl the mystique of someone leading a secret, double life. At the heart of this conflict lies the discretion and restraint on the part of the divided teen, sometimes to the point of conscious subterfuge, required if she wants to continue to function in the “real world.”

This study examines themes of girls with hidden abilities on Disney Channel programming to better understand the powerful sociological, historical, and economic forces at work in Disney’s investment in girls’ subjectification. The super-tweens depicted in the Disney programs examined here possess extraordinary lives—phenomenal abilities, talents, and possessions that

will henceforth be labeled as superpowers. For the sake of this study, superpowers will be referring to over-achievement or highly expressed achievement in the human realm, access, and magical powers that derive from or emerge from a realm not human. More specifically, the powers referenced in this study are psychic abilities, wizardry skills, and the power of celebrity. On the one hand, these powers are a constant source of praise and potential jealousy for tween girl characters; these factors alone may justify the way that the characters and their allies exerted considerable effort to keep them secret. On the other hand, and particularly when the secretiveness was unevenly expressed in the depicted behaviors of young women, such hiding and suppression suggest the ultimate message to the impressionable viewership—even superstars must “stay in their place.” The indication that one gets the best of both worlds intimates that while a career of fame, fortune, and power are desirable, a normal life and a normal girl—that is, a traditional girl who remains in the home and expands less conspicuously outside its borders than the men in their lives—is safe, admirable in the eyes of many, and full of humble but very “real” perks. This study unequivocally demonstrates that hiding and secretiveness were common themes exclusive to girl superstars and super powered females on Disney Channel series airing between 2001-2011. The dichotomy that girls are powerful but must hide their powers warrants attention for such perpetuated fixed contradictions pigeonholes contemporary U.S. girls as being either with or without agency. These representations and interpretations of these girl characters raise questions about girls’ subjectivity, visibility, and embodiment.

Although not the first or only program with a message about girls hiding their assets, due to high ratings, successful marketing, and immersion into pop culture, *Hannah Montana* is the epitome of a string of similar programs including *That’s So Raven* (2003-2007) and *Wizards of Waverly Place* (2007-2012) airing on Disney Channel throughout the 2001-2011 decade. Each of

these three series catered directly toward a newly-targeted marketing demographic group known as “tweens”—a person (usually female) in *between* being a child and a teenager. While the term traditionally refers to the ages of 10-12, marketers have used it to refer to the 8-14 age range, realizing that young people beyond both ends of the traditional definition of tween are often also interested in the same products (Coulter 11; Siegel et al. 4). Recognizing the purchasing power of this previously untapped group, producers have expanded tween television at exponential rates.

While programs about powerful or magical females are not novel, Disney’s heavy and sudden focus on them starting in the first decade of the new millennium was a major shift for the network that proved efficacious. Three series to be focused on in this study are *That’s So Raven* (2003-2007), *Hannah Montana* (2006-2011), and *Wizards of Waverly Place* (2007-2012). *That’s So Raven* is set in San Francisco, California and stars Raven Symoné as Raven Baxter, a teen girl who draws on hidden psychic powers to get into and out of typical adolescent situations. *Hannah Montana* is set in Malibu, California and stars Miley Cyrus as Miley Stewart a teen living a double life as an average student by day and as the powerful pop star Hannah Montana by night. *Wizards of Waverly Place* is set in New York City, New York and stars Selena Gomez as Alex Russo, one of three wizard siblings with secret magical abilities competing to win sole custody of the family wizard powers. *That’s So Raven* easily attracted over a million and a half viewers for some episodes (Oei 28). *Wizards of Waverly Place* drew over 5 million viewers per episode in 2009 (“The Chart” 123) and double for its series finale in 2012 (“Gomez Laments” N.P.). *Hannah Montana* reigned supreme by reaching a global audience of approximately 200 million viewers by the end of its second season in 2008 (Armstrong, “Tween Queen,” N.P.).

Disney's decade of blockbuster television shows featuring young girls with extraordinary, yet often hidden powers begs to be studied in greater depth. The sudden uptick in tween girl programs about super powered girls for girl audiences is a comment on the transformations then taking place in the portrayal of gender in television productions aimed at younger audiences and therefore societal attitudes towards young females if television is to be seen as a reflection of society. The proliferation of these superpower-themed tween girl programs in the 2000s provoke questions of broad social significance relating to gender representation, third wave feminism, and postfeminism that have heretofore not been addressed (or addresses but only superficially) in the academic literature on youth television. These questions focalize American television's negotiation of girl power.

The central questions driving this project relate to the specific timing and form of these programs. These programs were produced and aired during a particular time in history and differed in plot and character types of series airing before and after them on the same network or other networks. Their immense popularity and cultural traction are due in part to social, historical, and industrial perspectives of the time leading up to and during their air dates. This study asks how and why actors, writers, producers, and networks produced tween programming about girls with hidden powers they must hide during this decade and how they impacted television's portrayal of female youth.

Addressing these ideas involves taking an intersectional feminist and critical cultural studies approach to media texts and meaning-making. Particular attention is to be paid to power relations and cultural contexts and drawing on sociology, cultural studies, media industries scholarship, celebrity studies, and feminist theory in conjunction with television and media. Through various methods including ideological, discursive, and narrative textual analysis;

content analyses of Disney programming; and industry interviews, how television can serve to provide both encouraging and yet enslaving images of gender for child viewers is examined. These multiple methods of interrogating Disney texts shed light on the role television plays for young people and the development of gender identity.

Strategies for data collection include considering the work of these creators via interviews and press releases, for example, and closely examining the texts themselves with a content analysis. Over the course of this research and the synthesis of the findings, concern was placed on the ways that audience-consumers interacted with the programming—a major theme of this work is that television programs with such massive followings reflect processes of co-construction. Consumers constantly influence the producers of commodities. Via a sociohistorical approach, industrial analysis, and content analysis, the following chapters once again analyze *That's So Raven* (2003-2007), *Hannah Montana* (2006 -2011), and *Wizards of Waverly Place* (2007-2012). These three programs were the most profitable, longest running, and most viewed during the 2000s and *Hannah Montana* still holds the record for merchandise sales. Additionally, each is similar in set-up, style, and thematic motif. The argument presented is that while these programs are all fictional, fanciful situation comedies, there is evidence that the themes and scripted relationships described above may influence the development of identity and social norms in impressionable audiences (Ellithorpe 2016, Meyer and Wood 2013, Crymble and Douglas 2009, Clark 2002, Burns 1996) and contribute to oppressive patriarchal/male-dominated power structures.

There is a relationship between cultural practices and broader practices of social power including the creation of television programming, and this research project includes a history of cultural interpretations of historical experience as viewed through television. These categories

for analysis each allow for diverse methodological investigations. Here follows a brief description of each method and how and why they are used to answer the questions below.

This study begins by examining how Disney portrays young female characters as possessors of heroic powers (so often presented as hidden, forbidden or in need of use with supervision) on these television series. What were these powers used for? Did these powers serve as a form of agency or a reinforcement of hegemonic gender roles? What are these representations expressing about perceptions of females? Next, it is considered that while conflict is expected to occur to increase the dramatic tension of the stories, the conflicts these girls face and how they deal with them is different from their male counterparts. How and why are females represented in the manner they are compared to males and what are these differences implying about females and males in American society? Lastly, this study seeks to reveal the role culture and industry played in the creation and demise of the decade's programs? Why was there a successful run of thematically similar programming at this moment in time and what events, either in culture or the industry, led to this one distinct decade of Disney Channel original programming? The hypothesis here is that the systems of signification and representation used by Disney, in these and similar programs from the same decade were cleverly written to appear empowering to girls while still reinforcing less progressive depictions of females. This hypothesis is compelling not only as part of American television history but because it is relevant to current and future youth programming in that it explains why current programming is more progressive in its portrayal of the genders.

The focus of this study is to bring attention to the texts themselves and to the process and motivation involved in their creation since similar studies (e.g., Hains 2012) or other studies about children's television (e.g., Robertson et al. 2013, Ashby et al. 2006, Johnson et al. 2002)

thus far have focused too heavily on audiences and effect. Media effects studies do not carefully examine the texts researchers claim harm children. There appears to be little convincing evidence about the correlation among children's viewing of texts, their subsequent behavior, and the content of the text itself. What is also unclear is the origin of television texts, who creates them and their motivations, and what the texts are truly articulating and mean. A cultural study examines the issues of gender, historical context, and industrial shifts of this decade of Disney programming and better addresses the themes and messages in these texts as well as identifies some possible origins, or at least motivations and inspirations, for their creation. Addressing the text more deeply reveals how female characters are presented as simultaneously opposing yet reinforcing traditional patriarchy and such character depictions function as a site of negotiation for portraying the levels of acceptability of young girls' power both on and off screen. Such a study reveals just how programming projects society's current view of girls which is that females are given agency while simultaneously undermined by their male counterparts. This study demonstrates that rather than show more progressive views, Disney tween programming can both challenge and support the dominant ideology. However, these programs and their messages are ultimately determined by the commodity culture of television.

On Disney Channel, for example, masculinity and femininity are presented in an explicitly oppositional and hierarchical manner. Masculinity is portrayed as the superior status. With a few exceptions, boys are depicted as rational, independent, and active. In contrast, girls only occasionally exhibit these traits, and when they do, they often hide them due to the requests of their male counterparts. The aim is to identify and describe the various gender images on Disney Channel and their relation to central existential and cultural concerns occupying the social agenda of the nation. Another aim is to uncover how program creators are struggling to

present gender in a market that is intensely profit driven and continually reinforces gender segregation for an audience living in a world with increasing gender ambiguity. Oppressive gender inscriptions do exist in the world—often in the form of television programming like that which Disney Channel produces—and society must be media literate to recognize and dismantle such gender inscriptions. Heroes on television (and this applies to girls with power) are representative of cultural values, and these tween characters are both rooted in and reflective of society's construction of American tweens. Therefore, the cultural parallel they represent should be examined to better understand how females in this country are viewed and valued.

What this study adds to this perspective, where it fits in with the conversation, is that in the course of analysis it provides elements of feminist sociology and cultural studies to map out girl culture within the tween television framework. The research conducted here builds on previous ideas that the impact of feminism on television and the portrayal of gender is growing, and thus, care should be taken in managing the quality and analysis of such programming. Programs with girl power messages are celebratory towards patriarchal norms, the pursuit of traditional female beauty, and express manufactured representations of sexuality and power. This study presents a rationale for interpreting girl power in Disney tween television thus illuminating the relevance of young females in popular culture by showing the construction of girlhood on television is essentially a hegemonic tool.

LITERATURE REVIEW

No literature addresses the portrayals of gender from 2001-2011 on multiple Disney Channel tween programs and how females are told to simultaneously utilize their special powers yet hide them. What has been studied thus far is that Disney's tween girls are represented

differently than their male counterparts. Girls across all forms of media are generally portrayed in ways that typically reinforce heteronormative, patriarchal, and politically correct gender roles (Gerding and Signorelli 47). What has also been studied in scholarly literature and popular culture is that while the girl characters are told they have freedom from restraints, they are often hampered by their gender (Murphy, 2008, 12). The following literature review is organized by an increasing specificity of scholarship related to girlhood and girlhood on television. The review starts with general scholarship regarding definitions of girlhood and feminism, moving on to girlhood as it relates to gender and television, and then girlhood and super powered females, before concluding with females in Disney films and Disney television.

Girlhood

In the 16th century, a new word developed in the Netherlands was used to describe young females—“meisje”—possibly reflecting an identity in itself, an autonomous category (De Ras 152). More recently, however, Catherine Driscoll has used the term girls to describe a constructed liminal state leading to womanhood. Barbara Hudson, on the other hand, argues that “femininity and adolescence are subversive of one another” (Hudson 31) in that adolescence has always been constructed as masculine therefore it is difficult to characterize what truly accounts for girlhood. Such differing viewpoints allude to the idea that girlhood and notions of girlhood should be reconsidered as girl’s roles, influence, and position in society change.

Regarding the kinds or types of girls that have been studied, Anita Harris in the *Future Girl* discusses the “can-do” or “at-risk” girls indicating that girls are hinging on issues of agency and individualism, but also alienation and destruction (Harris 14). When applying Harris’ work to this project, what results is a neoliberal shift by Disney Channel as they are making girls more

visible and providing them with opportunities for personal choice (albeit via consumerism). In contrast, Sarah Projansky's work illuminates ways in which Disney is reinforcing heteronormative gender norms for she argues popular media like Disney Channel positions girls as powerful consumer citizens, all while also addressing them as girlfriends, wives, and mothers. Projansky's work in "Mass Magazine" is invaluable to this project for it aids in uncomplicating some discourses of girlhood and the shifts mentioned above such as how girls are now represented in media like Disney Channel.

Some authors and works address feminist discourse, and their work involves cultural and critical media studies of which much of this study is based. Rosalind Gill's *Gender and the Media* along with much of Yvonne Tasker's & Diane Negra's (2005), and Angela McRobbie's (2010, 2009, 2004, 2001, 1990) work aids in understanding and defining postfeminism and postfeminist impact in the workforce allowing for a baseline for analyzing girlhood in postfeminist media culture. All of these authors and their works are used throughout this project to understand Disney's representation of girls through reoccurring themes, tropes, and constructions as seen in the network's programming. Media culture is a dominant site of the mutual constitution of girlhood and postfeminism just like Projansky, Tasker, and Negra have argued. The project at hand aims to further catechize the discursive construction of girlhood(s) within U.S. culture, with particular attention to one major media conglomerate that reproduces it: Disney Channel.

Gender and Television

The following readings below each reveal how gender is presented on television which aids this study in better understanding the preceding observations about gender. In some cases,

the literature below offers an explanation as to how tweens are making sense of gender via their use of television. They also reveal society's and the industry's influence on media, and likewise, media's role in these two spheres. Scholarship regarding girl-focused U.S. television since the 1990s includes analyses of the feminist potential of teen girl protagonists, as well as analyses of representations of gender and adolescence. Much of this scholarship also attributes the mid-1990s' increase in the media industries' attention to teen girl audiences as part of niche marketing strategies appealing to teens. For example, the launch of the Warner Brothers (WB) Television Network in 1995 (replaced in 2006 by the CW Television Network) and the 2002 launch of Nickelodeon's The N (later renamed to TeenNick) were geared towards youth audiences.

In *Screening Gender on Children's Television: The Views of Producers Around the World* by Dafna Lemish, industry interviews reveal how the representations of gender that children are learning from viewing television are both culturally based—although often Americanized—and profit-driven. *Mediated Girlhoods: New Explorations of Girls' Media Culture*, edited by Mary Celeste Kearney, examines many of Lemish's issues relating to gender. However, Kearney's book specifically examines constructions of girlhood via girls' media culture. In the chapter "This Tween Bridge Over My Latina Girl Back: The US Mainstream Negotiates Ethnicity" by Angharad Valdivia examines how race is presented in an ambiguous manner on Disney Channel. Using the series *The Wizards of Waverly Place* as an example, Valdivia discusses how the sitcom family's Latin origins are vague and appear more Caucasian. The only hint of their Latino heritage rests on the actions of the tween girl protagonist, Alex (Selena Gomez), who "functions as the bridge between three cultures in one attractive tween body" (Valdivia 102). Such representations of race are the norm on Disney Channel series

hinting Disney sees girls as a particular type of girl: a white girl. While race is not the focus of this study, it cannot be ignored since the girls represented all lead different lives and often it is not just due to their magical powers or gender, but their race. In a similar manner to Valdivia, Mary Beltran, and Camilla Fojas write in *Mixed Race Hollywood* that, “Mixed race imagery has been an enduring and powerful trope of U.S. culture, deployed to convey popular conceptions about national identity, social norms, and political entitlement” (Beltran and Fojas 11) and thus is deserving of being studied along with gender.

The literature mentioned thus far has merely theorized how children are affected by media and its gendered and racial messages. However, Rebecca C. Hains, author of *Growing Up With Girl Power: Girlhood on Screen and in Everyday Life*, did an in-depth study via focus groups and interviews of girls and their *use* of media including Disney television. Her findings reveal girls do not notice such negativity towards their gender on these programs; rather they attribute the program’s sexist incidents to the boy characters’ stupidity. What Hains is keen to address is that the “girls rule” rhetoric is not effective on or used by real girls but rather (possibly) a conceptual set of girls. While this project is not focused on effect studies or even how girls use media, Hains’ literature is important in acknowledging there are girl-powered-themed messages present on tween television indicating Disney Channel’s awareness of changing perceptions of girls and girls’ increasing visibility.

Two anthologies, *Teen Television: Essays on Programming and Fandom* by Sharon Marie Ross and Louis Stein and *Teen TV: Genre, Consumption and Identity* by Glyn Davis and Kay Dickinson are specific to television and a particular age group only slightly older than what is studied here. Both aid in understanding the different roles of Disney’s construction of the tween girl character and tween girl audience. These works discuss how networks address niche

markets, and the various ways characters are constructed as individuals with freedom and choice and yet held back indicating a cultural critique of females—insights applicable to this study in that similar scenarios appear on Disney sitcoms. In *Teen Television* Francesca Gamber details teen drama *Gilmore Girls* (WB 2000-2007), and focuses on how feminism is espoused in the program such as the main character's experimentation with different forms of feminism. Her study is in contrast to other scholars' work about teen dramas such as Jenny Beauvoir who writes about feminine weakness in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (WB/UPN, 1997-2003) in *Teen TV*. Such differing views indicate media text's abilities to offer sophisticated and subversive representations of tween girls—something taken into consideration for this study and detailed in chapter three with the textual analysis.

Super Powered Females

The literature on gender and children's television focuses mainly on construction and representation of gender roles with the hopes of better understanding how children use television (often it is to build gender identity) and how television affects them (reinforces stereotypes). There is also a substantial amount of literature about magically gifted adult female characters and the male hegemonic messages behind such portrayals. Such literature includes *Bewitched: Supernaturally Powerful Women on Television* by Julie D. O'Reilly. O'Reilly examines magical powers of the adult female leads on popular teen television series, such as *Charmed* or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, which aired from roughly 1996-2011. The mid-1990s and first decade of the 2000s were the most popular time for programming about supernaturally powered women regarding the number of highly watched series on air at the same time. Her findings reveal that

these women are submissive to their male counterparts who demand they hide their powers—thus informing the trend seen on Disney Channel’s youth programming.

Similar to the preliminary findings of gender representations on Disney Channel, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, a program about a super powered teen, portrays both a subversive and conservative view of gender as indicated by Lorna Jowett, in *Sex and the Slayer: A Gender Studies Primer for the Buffy Fan* (Jowett 1). Jowett sees this representation as being a product and response of culture. “These ambivalences and apparent contradictions in representing gender (both feminine and masculine) expose a complex negotiation and mediation of gender located within a particular social and historical context that I identify as postfeminist and postmodern” (Jowett 2). Similar conclusions can be made about girls in Disney Channel productions. However, rather than simply identify that there are gender stereotypes on these programs, this research adds on to previous studies in that it details the means and motivations by which these shows are constructed to be contradictory responses to culture.

Thus far, much of the research presented in this literature review has focused on general representations of gender in media. However, there is literature about representations of Disney women and females. While such literature focuses on animated films, it is nonetheless pertinent to this study for the same gendered themes can be found in contemporary live-action Disney Channel sitcoms. Amy M. Davis, the author of *Good Girls and Wicked Witches*, claims that due to these animated representations having been made so lifelike—they now appear to speak and move in an increasingly realistic manner due to film and digital technology—they are more important to study than ever before since, similar to what Jowett dictates, these films are responses to societal feelings about women. These findings substantiate this study’s claims that work produced by Disney may be indicative of societal outlook towards girls.

While Davis' book posits Disney films more as *reflections* of society, *From Mouse to Mermaid* by Elizabeth Bell, who studies women and performance, sees films as *constructions*. While a section of the book examines classic Disney movies and their role in constructing gender, that same lens can be used when analyzing Disney television. To hold onto the company's loyal fan base, Disney Channel propagates magical or princess-type themes in their television programming even throughout viewers' tween years but also dictating what it means to be or act feminine.

While thus far girls have been the center of attention, boys are not to be neglected for they are portrayed in a very different manner than girls. In the article "*Cowboy Up!*": *Non-Hegemonic Representations of Masculinity in Children's Television Programming*, Kristen Myers analyzes contradictory versions of masculinity in four contemporary Disney television series. While these programs portrayed boys who were, "soft-spoken, un-athletic, emotional, and thoughtful—antithesis to the hyper-masculine heroes of years past" (Myers 126), these images do not aid in shifting the patriarchal gender order. Such characters are feminized by weakness and failure and are tormented by their peers. Myers' work parallels this project in that it validates the findings presented in Disney programs by demonstrating how male characters portray traditional representations of men and these depictions are portrayed positively, thus allowing television producers to construct and reinforce their version of what masculinity should entail.

Literature most related to this study is often found in the form of dissertations and some book chapters. Such research has not addressed the exact phenomena I am examining, however. For example, *Tween Machine: How Our Youth is Consumed with Consuming* by Elise Curry, and the master's thesis *Postfeminism and the Disney Tween Empire* by Cassandra Deere, are both analyses of how Disney tween shows airing in the first decade of the 2000s are about

consumption in order to get viewers to purchase program-related products. While related to this research project, their literature focuses more on the political economy, portrayals of sexuality, consumption habits of viewers, and the manufacturing of tween stars. Nonetheless, their work helps to inform the industrial context aspect of this study.

Other notable work includes “The Mouse House of Cards: Disney Tween Stars and Questions of Institutional Authorship” by Lindsey Hogan. Here Hogan surveys how Disney stars are texts, commodities, and people, but also function as authors. Authorship to Hogan is “a constant process of meaning productions among various groups (or authors) competing for control” (Hogan, 2013, 298). Hogan explores the textuality of stardom using Disney star Hilary Duff of *Lizzie McGuire* (2001-2004) as a case study. Her work reveals the importance of looking at institutions’ intersecting motives and strategies to understand how those involved in authorship are creating meaning and competing for control over meaning. In a similar fashion, the dissertation “From Homeboys to Girl Power: Media Mergers, Emerging Networks, and 1990s Television” by Kelly Cole and Michele Hilmes, discusses how Disney’s merge with ABC in 2000 led them to engage in corporate synergy. This merger essentially created an assembly line of tween stars whose sitcoms served as fodder for the network to later expand into music and film work all to better capitalize off tweens thus revealing how Disney Channel works within the industrial framework.

The closest literature to this research project is Morgan Blue’s “Youth, Gender and Postfeminism in Disney’s *Hannah Montana*.” Blue’s research supports this project for it concentrates on the dual life of the protagonist in *Hannah Montana*. However, this literature focuses more on the circulation of postfeminist identity via fantasy, celebrity, and masquerade in

just one program rather than examining the creation and motivations of such messages in a decade of programming as this study accomplishes.

The literature above is scholarly in nature. However, primary sources such as reviews, ads, industry trade publications, blogs, and postings on on-line message boards were also used to inform this work. Thus far, the majority of the trade press, most notably, *Variety* and the *Hollywood Reporter*, discuss ratings but have also shed light on how and why Disney Channel programming is changing. In a trade press interview, Adam Bonnett, now a former senior VP of Disney Channel Original Programming, once stated Disney Channel is changing to be more realistic and so programming features more diverse families to better resonate with audiences and authentically reflect the times (Siegel, 2001, 63)—an important notion for the chapter on industry practices for it reveals the network’s awareness of the changing demographics of their audience.

The research presented here expands and builds upon the literature reviewed above by demonstrating that there are important messages about gender role expectations and girls’ agency being transmitted to viewers thus destabilizing the myth that television is simply entertainment. This study reveals how various elements of production changed the episodic stories to reflect society’s current perception of females and influenced the marketing schemes devised by Disney to capitalize on these perceptions. The implications of this research establish how influential television is in providing critical skills and understanding of women and girls’ contributions to society. There is no true equality between women and men, nor is there between boys and girls. This study impacts the field by shedding light on the nuances of this inequality (who or what creates this televised inequality and how/why it is presented on screen in the manner it is) and offers a plan for mutuality.

METHODOLOGY

Textual Analysis and Content Analysis

This form of study focuses on close readings of the programs and quantifying programming. The type of textual analysis used is informed by Stuart Hall's concept of encoding and decoding. Encoding and decoding are the processes that begin with broadcasters producing and encoding a message and then ends with the audience receiving and decoding that message (Hall 203). This is not a closed system, however. Other factors such as institutional infrastructure and agenda affect messages and are pulled from a larger cultural system meaning audiences can be both a source and receiver of messages, and the decoding process is subjective (Hall 129-130). More specifically, this research focuses on representations of characters, visual and aural depictions, and the narratives to induce conclusions about the possible meanings and messages embedded in these series. The Disney situation comedies chosen for textual analysis and content analysis are: *That's So Raven* (2003-2007), *Hannah Montana* (2006-2011), and *Wizards of Waverly Place* (2007-2012). In each of these programs, the protagonist had a power she had to hide and these three series dominated Disney Channel regarding ratings, sales, length on air, and multiple daily airings during the 2000s. The consistency of the messages and the projected meanings derived from them through scene-by-scene (and when necessary frame-by-frame) analysis was determined first via a content analysis. By comparing and contrasting differences and similarities between the depicted representations, further hypotheses about the meanings embedded in these programs were developed. Using textual analysis and content analysis allows for better understanding of the visual and aural representations that manifest in these series and which reinforce dominant ideology and aids in better seeing the social critique of females

happening on the programs. Using this methodology assists in answering the research questions about how females were portrayed on these programs.

Discourse Analysis I and II

Discourse Analysis I and II are used pursuant the definition provided by Gillian Rose in *Visual Methodologies*. In this context, discourse “refers to groups of statements that structure the way a thing is thought, and the way we act on the basis of that thinking” (Rose 190). Discourse can be articulated through a variety of means either verbally or visually, and therefore intertextuality becomes key. “Intertextuality refers to the ways that the meanings of any one discursive image or text depend on not only that one text or image but also by the meanings carried by other images and text” (Rose 191). Due to intertextuality, an entire decade of programming and some of the paratext surrounding it was chosen as a unit of study. Utilization of discourse analysis uncovered the way meanings connected in a particular discourse (discursive formation). For example, all of the girls in the Disney Channel programs viewed have a double life they hide from their peers and this hidden life is more powerful than their public life. While such characteristics are present in prior Disney Channel programming, and certainly also on previous programming elsewhere (e.g., *Sabrina the Teenaged Witch* [ABC 1996-2003], *Bewitched* [ABC 1964-1972], and *I Dream of Jeannie* [NBC 1965-1970]) connections, patterns, and similar themes between these programs were analyzed to reveal incongruous overarching themes about girlhood.

Discourse Analysis I is focused on images and texts, and the site of these images and texts, rather than the site of production practices (such as a sound stage) entailed by the discourses. It is more concerned with discourse, discursive formations, and their productivity. To conduct

Discourse Analysis I, iconography must be utilized. Iconography is focalized on an image's meaning or subject matter rather than form. Using iconography for this project entails an examination of themes between all the images and sounds, evaluation of the complexities and contradictions shown and heard, and exploration of how visual and auditory absences can have significance. Discourse Analysis I yields results about structures of meanings in these programs. These findings helped to answer the questions above about what these characters and stories are representing about society's real life tweens which in short is that girls are disenfranchised compared to boys despite the efforts of the girl power movement and feminism.

Discourse Analysis II focuses more on material products of institutions such as Disney Channel and is centered on an "emphasis on institutional apparatus and technologies" (Rose 175). Discourse Analysis II is valuable to this research project due to the fact that when this particular approach is applied to the spin-off merchandise and intensive marketing of the program, it is evident how Disney has put images of tweens to work. Conducting such an analysis demands analyzing how an institution like Disney Channel works through their apparatus (forms of power-knowledge that make up the institutions) or technologies (practical techniques to practice power knowledge like selling girl power-themed toys based off a series). The goal in using this analysis is to uncover Disney's discourses and how they materialized. Sources included mission statements from Disney gathered from websites; self-conducted interviews and interviews with Disney Channel employees published in trade press like *Variety*; blogs; online message boards; fan sites; and other audience-created content. Discourse Analysis II provides the information required to understand how and why these programs were created by whom to draw a conclusion about why this decade of Disney programming appeared in the historical context it did.

Cultural Studies and Historical Approach

While not necessarily methods, it is important to note that cultural studies and historical analysis inform this research project. Cultural studies informs this study by revealing the effects of cultural production and how media maintains patriarchy through portrayals of masculine ideals and subordination of females in Disney programming. A cultural studies approach demonstrates how media is used to construct and conduct everyday life for tweens.

A historical approach is vital to this project to uncover how the changing social climate from 2001-2011, specifically views of females, influenced Disney programming. One of many actions taken in this study is to examine historical texts created from 2001-2011 (from say, *Disney Adventures* magazine) about females to understand why Disney tween programs may be reflecting this literature. Beyond a historical approach to answering these questions, Disney as an institution is investigated. The investigation occurs via social constructionist approach and makes clear how Disney constructs its identity and the tween market against society's dominant ideologies of the time. Disney's blatant endorsements and advertisements along with more subtle promotions of ideologies for or against girl power continue to be studied and explored. Trade press and other primary sources also reveal insight into Disney's corporate brand and synergistic imperatives to better explain the motivations behind this decade of programming. The argument here is that the representations of tweens used by Disney in these programs were variations of the form of storytelling used in its first tween hit, *Lizzie McGuire* (2001-2004). Despite their light veneer of liberal gender representation presented in the form of assertive tween girl leads, these programs foster gender stereotypes due to these leads being too often controlled by males.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

While mentioned previously that this study is approached via a feminist theoretical perspective, what is intended is an interrogation of Disney Channel texts while adhering to an investment of female-centered media content and address, as well as performances and social constructs of gender—particularly femininity. The feminist lens from which this project is viewed is to be associated with third wave feminism. Hence a focus on identity politics; popular culture; concepts of power and agency; and viewing gender as both performative and yet fluid, unstable, or ambiguous—perspectives adopted from Judith Butler and Simone de Beauvoir.

When discussing notions of power and discourse, particularly in the context of the discursive and ideological approach taken in the content and textual analysis, the perspective utilized is firmly rooted in Foucaultian conceptualizations (1972). Discourse is a culturally constructed representation of reality rather than a copy. Such discourse constructs knowledge, and as such, instantaneously re/produces both power and knowledge. Concepts of power are discussed in Gramscian terms meaning that the attainment of power comes from subordinate groups through effective ideological struggle. In the case of this study, cultural hegemony is to be achieved first before power can be assumed. A Lacanian and Althusserian concept of ideology is employed in that “ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence,” “ideology has material existence,” and “all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects” (Althusser, 1970, 109-116).

Regarding locating meanings for the texts analyzed, a constructivist approach classified by Stuart Hall is used. Hall posits,

Constructivists do not deny the existence of the material world. However, it is not the material world which conveys meaning: it is the language system or whatever

system we are using to represent our concepts. It is social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to communicate about that world meaningfully to others (Hall, 1997, 25).

Meaning is not inherent within an object itself; rather we *construct* meaning using *systems of representation* (concepts and signs). How such a concept pertains to this work is that meaning in Disney Channel sitcoms is conveyed through spoken and visual discourses that produce polysemic interpretations.

CHAPTER OUTLINES

To put into context this unique decade of Disney Channel programming, the first chapter summarizes how the network's representations of powerful girls, social views on girls, and accompanying gender norms have changed over time in response to social consciousness. The chapter is divided into decades beginning with the Walt Disney's Company's inception and highlights the trajectory the company took in representing females since their earliest films and into their newest decade of television programming. This chapter addresses how Disney Channel has responded to changing liberalized social attitudes towards girls while still attempting to maintain their grossly conservative brand identity. Highlights of the chronological timeline of historical and sociological events include analysis of how the Feminist Movement, Riot Grrrls, and Girl Power manifest (or not) through Disney Channel television texts. Studying historical and social context adds to this analysis by demonstrating how television functions as an agent of history as well as memory by recording and preserving representations for future reference. This

chapter answers why the Disney Channel programs in question were able to be created and thrive due to the cultural climate of the time.

The second chapter is focused on industry, specifically Disney as an institution, and touches upon Disney's construction of the tween girl audience. Through the use of a political economy framework, this chapter examines connections between the network's industry strategies and audiences, ideology, and consumption. In so doing, this chapter reveals tensions and contradictions that have significant social implications relating to gender. Rather than focusing on the effect of these programs, this chapter focuses how Disney Channel conceptualizes its tween girl audience and the industrial tactics used to spread gendered messages while capturing the youth demo.

The third chapter on programming addresses the contradictory portrayal of young girls in powerful, yet controlled, positions in the social order, as well as addresses other representations of gender. Via content analysis of *That's So Raven*, *Hannah Montana*, and *Wizards of Waverly Place*, it is revealed girls play different roles than their male counterparts, and while they may have great power, they are encouraged to hide it. Discussion of results based on the content analysis focuses on the notion that girls are alternately portrayed as empowered/enslaved or capable/ineffective. In addition, girls are either dynamic and rejecting stereotypes, or static and stereotypical and such gender portrayals are dictated to audiences via gender performance. By considering these programs as part of a cultural forum, we begin to recognize that they are part of a process enacted by culture. Contemporary culture, therefore, examines itself through art, and in this case, television.

To further show how the 2001-2011 decade is unique and influential, the fourth chapter is dedicated to analyzing post-2011 Disney programming. Various sitcoms are presented in terms

of their structure and genre to illustrate how residual traits from the prior decade of programming remain present in recent or current series, but that gender is becoming increasingly ambiguous. Additionally, girls' roles are changing to reflect girl power and the emphasis on families and not solely tween girls is expanding. A brief overview of a new generation of tweens, the social and historical events that shaped them—particularly the move into fourth wave feminism (to be defined later)—and Disney's corporate strategies are examined to understand why and how a shift in programming points towards a new type of feminism.

The conclusion is meant to serve as a reaffirmation of the thesis statement and summarization of the main issues. The highlights of the conclusion are based on the culmination of research and offer possible directions Disney Channel may take in the future as well as suggestions for further study.

CHAPTER 1

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF GENDER IN DISNEY CHANNEL TELEVISION

From the moment television entered American households in the 1950s, it has both reflected and contributed to the development of cultural traditions and values. The relationship between culture and television has always been reciprocal. For example, the content produced by television networks has responded to political events while influencing viewers via slanted political commentary. Either way, the symbiotic nature of television and culture is demonstrated in broadcasts ranging from serious news reports to Disney Channel's tween girl fare.

Disney Channel's representations of power relations between the sexes and accompanying gender norms have undeniably changed over time in response to social consciousness. General social events—perspectives that emerge from economic developments and political movements—produce and represent certain notions about gender. These conceptions reflect the dynamic aspects of society, but also interact with what might be considered the core values of a society making them slower to change. As new types of small screen tough girls and super powered females have emerged, some traditional viewpoints have remained—this could well be Disney's attempt to hold on to their brand while adjusting to new audiences' values. This chapter addresses how Disney Channel has responded to changing liberalized social attitudes towards girls while still attempting to maintain their grossly conservative brand identity.

In this study, historical and social context are defined as the events, or the climate of opinion, that immediately led up to and surrounded Disney Channel's programming during the 2001-2011 decade. Considering sociological and historical context aids in understanding the

urgency, importance, shape, and timing of this decade of programming. What follows is a chronology of the historical and sociological events most pertinent to this research study. For example, the Feminist Movement, Riot Grrrls, and Girl Power are discussed since they manifest in some form in Disney Channel television texts via storylines about magic, super powers, and secret second identities in girls' lives, in particular during a specific historical moment (2001-2011).

This chapter builds on previous studies about aspects of feminist theory and gender representation in children's television (e.g. Lemish 2010, Hains 2009, Banet-Weiser 2004) by thoroughly outlining the web of interconnectedness culture and television content. A brief review of historical and social context adds to this analysis by demonstrating how television functions as an agent of history. Taking this stance upholds the perspectives of Horace Newcomb and Paul M. Hirsch in "Television as a Cultural Forum." Newcomb and Hirsch view television as an expressive communication medium that is central to society due to television's ability to critically examine and unite a culture. Television is essential to public thinking, social construction, and the construction of reality. It is possible to see how forms of historical and social consciousness may be transformed into stories intended for tween and teenage audiences. Mimi White and James Schwoch are careful to note that historical frames allow for an opportunity to explore socially charged topics and issues that would otherwise be considered highly controversial (White and Schwoch N.P.). However fictionalized, Disney Channel series may be revived in conjunction with contemporary social issues.

Media scholars have conducted contextual analysis in a variety of ways. For example, John Fiske has explored television during particular moments in history and has examined how a particular theme or entity appeared on screen by using a blend of cultural history, institutional

context, and textual analysis. Likewise, this chapter interrogates the moods, attitudes, and conditions that existed when these shows were created and aired to demonstrate whom or what may have influenced production. Additionally, a standard approach exemplified by Jason Mittell and his 2004 work with cartoons is to examine and track a process (how cartoons were created and received) over time in order to draw conclusions about what they mean, and how and why television operates as cultural practice based on industry, audience, and genre mixing. In a similar manner, this chapter contextualizes sources to demonstrate the web of specific processes and forces that aid in understanding Disney Channel series' larger role in modern culture. There is no way of knowing—unless one has the deep inside story from the producers of the shows—what specific influences affected programming. However, this chapter presents an informed discussion about a selected group of likely possibilities based on knowledge of the social and historical context. Since Disney Channel is an extension of the Disney Corporation, made most famous by their films, this chapter begins with a brief timeline of representations of women in Disney films before moving on to more contemporary portrayals of gender. Using quintessential texts as examples, the timeline addresses Disney's reaction to social movements that have strongly impacted women. In so doing, this analysis also demonstrates the ways that Disney, as a brand and cultural interpreter, has integrated (or not) various ideas most relevant to feminist theory.

DISNEY THROUGH THE DECADES

The Walt Disney Company originated in 1923 as a small production studio out of a garage with multiple later incarnations: Walt Disney Pictures, Touchstone, ABC, Miramax, Buena Vista Television, and, of course, Disney Channel. “Disney’s trademark innocence

operates on a systematic sanitization of violence, sexuality, and political struggle concomitant with an erasure or repression of difference” (Bell 7) and representations of gender in childhood are not immune to this systematization. Before Disney Channel, Disney Studios touched the lives of children and adults through its cartoons and feature films and had been constructing childhood and gender in a manner which its television network has followed suit. Here follows a summary of influential films and productions whose characteristics—in terms of plots and female characters—are either completely eradicated or remain present in some form in Disney Channel television programming of the 2000s.

1920s and 1930s

In 1923, shortly after the end of the Women’s Rights Movement led by suffragettes, Walt Disney and his brother Roy signed a contract with producer Margaret J. Winkler to produce a series of cartoons titled the *Alice Comedies* (1923-1927) under the name Disney Brothers Cartoon Studio. They produced these cartoons fourteen years before their first animated feature film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Hand et al. 1937), but the *Alice Comedies* were already establishing a precedent for Disney’s future heroines. The *Alice Comedies* were based on Lewis Carroll’s 1865 novel popularly known as *Alice in Wonderland*. The Disney short film series featured a girl who navigated animated wonderlands in her dreams and imagination. Protagonist Alice serves as a conduit into an illogical and magical world—the reverse of rational life in modernity.

The Disney Brother’s version of the Alice figure and the narrative itself address issues related to social, historical, and cultural change including shifting images of femininity in U.S. popular culture in the 1920s. Alice appears to have prompted the Disney Brothers to modify their

productions according to new standards of femininity, realism, and commercialism to influence the emotional and commercial investments of American audiences quite efficiently. When *Alice in Wonderland* was written, “Victorian culture was invested in the idea that women and children had a mediumistic connection to a spiritual, irrational world, which had the potential to counter or ameliorate the experience of the dehumanizing, corrupting public sphere” (Elza 8). Alice exemplified this role with her tween innocence and eagerness to investigate the imaginary. She is what Disney has since made into a trademark: a representation of an unadulterated and idealized childhood. In addition, children were depicted as a kind of *tabula rasa* through which audiences dealing with some of the more disturbing aspects of modernity reality could project their desires to escape to another place and time.

Disney’s Alice was already showing the underpinnings of contradictions like Raven, Alex, and Miley. On the one hand, she was submissive in that she also “tended to watch the action in her animated wonderland, reacting with histrionic gestures” (Crafton 284). On the other hand, Alice may be seen as a feminist hero who “extricates herself from the latest difficulty...If anything, she emerges stronger as a result of solving its problems on her own” (Brode 11). Both depictions are quite clear in a close examination of the texts. In the beginning, Disney’s Alice repeatedly saves the day; however, she is rescued by Julius the cat and “retraditionalized” when she follows a socially ordered path (metaphorically presented as a chessboard). The *Alice* series was the company’s first hit, and it encouraged audiences to invest in and trust Disney’s creative authority as the producer of a hermetic reality (Elza 23). As the series changed with the times, Alice relinquished her role as a conduit to the imaginary. However, that did not mean that the Alice prototype would not emerge again at a later time in various forms.

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (Hand et al. 1937) was a great financial success and received critical acclaim when it was first released. A beloved classic to many today, a large part of *Snow White's* enduring appeal may be the contradictory or paradoxical portrayal of its heroine. Similar to Disney Channel's girl stars of the 2000s, *Snow White* is rife with anti-feminist values and encouragement of domesticity while still being celebratory of society's females. Debuting in theaters during the Great Depression, in many ways, the interaction of the characters in *Snow White* reflects this era's social and cultural climate.

Snow White herself is an idealized domesticated young woman whose only desire is to love, and clean. In the first few scenes, Snow White seems to glorify these now problematic ideals. *Snow White's* backstory is that her wicked stepmother (a Queen) was so envious of the girl's beauty and Princess status that she dressed her in rags and forced her to become a scullery maid left to a wretched and miserable existence. According to Nicolaisen, "Apparently, it does not pay to stand out either way; normative behavior and normative looks ensure a quiet life" (Nicolaisen 67), which also means a life in the home. Snow White learns to cook and clean, essentially studying all she needs to know about being an ideal woman in the mystical period that the film was set, as well as the period in which the film was produced and distributed. When Snow White learns the Queen is out to kill her, she runs away. With no place to go, she is virtually homeless—a metaphorical representation of common occurrences in U.S. society at the time of the Great Depression when the film was released. Women constituted more than 25 percent of the total labor force in the United States in the 1930s (over ten million women were working out of the home at the beginning of the decade), only three million of whom were married (Abelson 106). However, they lost jobs at a higher rate than men in the early years of economic collapse, were often unable to find other sources of income, and were routinely

discriminated against in public employment (Abelson 106). Since social and charitable programs devised to address homelessness were only aimed at men, women—and in particular unmarried women—were left with very few options once they were unemployed (Abelson 106-107). Since Snow White’s only skills were of a domestic nature, at the beginning of the film, she is a typical unmarried working woman, lucky to have a roof over her head. Suddenly without a job, home, or man to watch over her, she found herself in a situation that would have resonated with many women at the time of the film’s release.

More than just demonstrating parallels between historical occurrences and plot, Snow White provided a blueprint for Disney Channel’s super-powered girls: traditional and yet progressive. Upon running away, Snow White relied on the only skills she knew to prove herself a worthy addition to the home of the seven dwarfs. In traditional female style, she filled the role of mother and began to clean the dwarfs’ messy home. A more progressive reading, however, is that Snow White is empowered in that “rather than falling prey to starvation or homelessness, Snow White is resourceful by relying on her ‘skills’ to provide her with a solution to her problems” (Garcia 19). Within the home Snow White possessed full agency and the dwarfs act in accordance—at times sheepishly—with her demands. Such a scenario would have been seen as a positive one when the film was released and perhaps even to some today. Either way, Disney portrays Snow White types in contemporary television programming—Raven and Alex are often depicted cleaning their homes, proving themselves worthy in a domestic context.

Snow White, like all other Disney films—and later in Disney Channel series—becomes a representation of what was important at the time of the film’s production. “For centuries storytellers have retold tales in their own ways, embellishing the storyline with details peculiarly representative of both the individual teller and his time” (Bacchilega 1). It is unlikely that Walt

Disney created *Snow White* and similar characters as a means to sell a patriarchal view of the role of women. It seems more likely that his objective was to capture an audience's attention by showcasing a character who merited more than she possessed; her downtrodden status, as well as her outstanding work ethic, made her deserving of the happiness that she finally received.

Creating such likable characters that audiences could identify with was a feat that the Disney company would succeed at for years to come, certainly including television hits like *That's So Raven*, *Hannah Montana*, and *Wizards of Waverly Place*.

1940s and 1950s

While many of Disney's stories, particularly the animated features, portray females in leading roles, these girls are often depicted as helpless ornaments that stay true to traditional fairy tale characters in that they remain in the home and clean while men head to work. With child audiences in mind, these types of scenarios and characters were repeated in Disney films since the usual stereotypes were thought to be comforting to child viewers (Zipes 40). However, when Walt Disney was making these films, he did not think only about the audience in terms of age, but rather gender. He knew his primary demographic was females, and so he made his movies appeal more to them by paying close attention to the standards of society at the time and having his films reflect those principles; he created films involving stereotypical female issues such as physical beauty and romance (Davis 128, 130). However, American society had gone through a transformation since the release of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Due to the demands of wartime production in the 1940s, women's roles had expanded dramatically, and Disney was quick to address the changes during and after WWII as evidenced by comparable changes in storylines and the conflicts faced by female characters.

Unlike Snow White, a domestic deity of the pre-WWII era, in the 1940s women took the power they held in the home into the workforce while the majority of men were away. When the war ended, and the men returned, women were forced back into their previous domestic roles – perhaps through a combination of the ensuing baby boom and competition with GIs for jobs. Many were stripped of any power they had held outside their home. *Cinderella* (1950) reflects the anxiety that many women of the post-war era felt upon being asked to resume their domestic duties. When speaking about women’s lives away from domesticity, Betty Friedan writes, “It is like remembering a long-forgotten dream, to recapture the memory of what a career meant to women before ‘career woman’ became a dirty word in America” (40). At the beginning of the film, Cinderella sings “A Dream is a Wish Your Heart Makes” symbolizing the ephemeral years when women were finally permitted a presence outside of the home—a nod to some women of the time who wondered if the freedom they possessed not long ago was lost forever.

Although Cinderella wants to run away and is smart enough to know that running away may help her escape the oppressive environment of her step-family, she might consequently enter into the world of controlling patriarchy—a position worse than the one she found herself in. This situation also seems to have rung true for many of the film’s viewers in this timeframe, explaining in part why the film was so warmly received (Gabler 476-478). Cinderella’s so-called passivity could actually be construed as an active choice that the character was making. Cinderella then embodies pragmatic agency—a progressive virtue indicative of the time of the film’s release.

Cinderella is eventually able to escape her life of never-ending housekeeping to enjoy a single night of freedom at the royal ball. However, the clock indicating her curfew and the end of the spell that had transformed her is a reminder that her emancipation is both temporary and

restricted. When WWII came to a close, and the threat of the Cold War impressed itself on America culture, women needed to take back their traditional domestic roles and support the solidarity that American society was advocating. When the clock strikes midnight, Cinderella's magic ends, her once stunning dress turns back into rags, and her fleeting moment of freedom is terminated. For Cinderella and women after World War II, it is time to resume lives of domesticity if they want to support the nation. It is time to wake up and cease dreaming of a life outside the home. With few alternatives available to Cinderella, she ultimately yields to the hope that perhaps her decision to marry the Prince will lead to a better life than the one within her evil step-mother's domain. According to Lieberman, "While it would be futile and anachronistic to suppose that these tales could or should have depicted alternate options or rewards for heroines or heroes, we must still observe that marriage dominates them" (Lieberman 386). Upon learning that the Prince wants her to be his bride, she is perhaps more excited about escaping her stepmother's house than she is about marriage. To Cinderella, joining the Prince in matrimony supposedly entails beginning a new life free from a kind of domestic slavery. As one of the last Disney animated fairy tales before the emergence of Second Wave Feminism in the 1970's, *Cinderella's* attempts to portray a tough and resilient female character are left unresolved until years later.

1960s and 1970s

The feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s focused on disassembling workplace inequality, such as denial of access to better jobs and salary inequity via introduction of explicit anti-discrimination laws. The women's movement became more mainstream in May 1968 after the release of the book *The Second Sex*, written in 1949 by women's rights defender Simone de

Beauvoir. De Beauvoir's writing explained the hardships talented women face to become successful. The obstacles de Beauvoir described included unequal pay, women's domestic responsibilities, society's lack of support of skilled women, and their fear that success would lead to an emasculated husband, or prevent them from finding a husband at all. De Beauvoir also argued that women lack ambition due to their upbringing. Most of the feminist issues discussed by De Beauvoir were taken up by Second Wave Feminists of the 1960s and 1970s, and many of these were reflected, albeit indirectly, in Disney films of the same timeframe. While no "princess films" were made in those decades, many others were like the princess films in that they indicated another shift in Disney's views of women. Examples include *Mary Poppins* (Stevenson 1964) and *The Rescuers* (Lounsbery and Reiterman 1977).

Mary Poppins (Julie Andrews) is depicted as a strong female standing up to her employer, Mr. George Banks (David Tomlinson). Incidentally, Mr. Banks' feminist wife, Winifred (Glynis Johns), is away protesting for women's rights during much of the film. This characterization is a direct nod to the women's liberation movement—a hot topic of the day. Similar to what appears to be occurring in Disney's tween shows of the 2000s, in *Mary Poppins*, the newly hired nanny, Mary, works her magic on the family, and in so doing disrupts the gender order, although she does not modify it. Much of her charming influence is undermined by the males around her, yet interestingly one of her chief aims is to uphold the patriarchal order by insisting that Mr. Banks could reclaim control of his family if he were not so career-oriented. In some ways Mary can be viewed as a feminist due to her assertiveness and autonomy; she is not male-defined, and she does not allow men to compromise her needs or desires. The modest reorientation in gender roles—more an aspiration than accomplishment—hints at women's changing roles during the 1960s. However, in this story men must (and do) reorient themselves

to what they believe is rightfully theirs, meaning that ultimately George Banks has authority (Cuomo 216-217), yet another throwback to Disney characterizations of the past.

While characters like Mary, and in particular Winifred, may appear to be true symbols of feminism, these moments are fleeting. When Disney goes against the grain and does create a strong-willed character, she is “softened” in a sense—after all, Mary was a nanny, a traditional woman’s role. In the 1970s there was a popular surge in feminist activity. The most intense struggle for many feminists during the 1970s was the fight for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) by the US Congress. Although it was eventually defeated (incidentally, in large part to due to the lobbying efforts of a woman, the late Phyllis Schlafly) the idea of equal rights for women began to influence a great deal of legislation and many court decisions. Examples include *Roe v. Wade*; the founding of influential organizations such as National Organization for Women (NOW); and more attention drawn to women’s needs in popular press such as *Ms. Magazine*, and the formation of women’s studies departments in colleges.

It was during this time that Disney released the animated feature film *The Rescuers*. One of the characters, Bianca (voiced by Eva Gabor), was portrayed as a resilient and level-headed female who fought for what she believed. However, Bianca was a small mouse. As noted by Davis, “[P]erhaps it was thought by Disney animators that portraying such a pro-feminist character in the form of a tiny mouse would soften it and make it more acceptable—by making it less noticeable—to a mainstream American middle-class audience” (Davis 152).

When making films for women, the idea of female unanimity is prevalent in Disney films and the thinking of producers. Disney executives and Walt Disney himself thought that all women liked babies and cute characters such as small mice, and disliked slapstick. Disney himself believed women to be more emotional, nurturing, and imaginative, and therefore created

films he thought would suit such qualities and never considered age, race, education levels, or other factors (Davis 130). Audiences, however, were changing as were women's and girls' roles. Keeping in mind that the company wanted to especially target a female audience who were then seen as most likely to accompany their children to movie theaters, heroines began to change yet again.

1980s and 1990s

The years between 1989 and 2005 were the Eisner era at Disney. Walt himself passed away in 1966, and after his death, the role of television became increasingly important to the company, although until the mid-1990s the Disney Channel was new and had a relatively small audience and little influence. However, representation of women and girls in the Disney company's television products continued to evolve, at times in parallel with and at other times in opposition to the trajectory of change in the roles of females in American society. In *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* published in 1991, Susan Faludi proclaimed that organized resistance to second-wave feminism throughout the 1980s successfully redefined feminism. According to Faludi, the backlash occurred largely in the form of dismissal through a mass media-inspired attitude that fostered the idea that feminism was passé and that women had already reached their goals. In addition, she alleged that numerous stereotypes relating to career oriented women were elaborated in the 1980s, the net effects of which were a defense of the status quo and inculcation of non-progressive ideologies. Disney films and Disney Channel appeared to be reacting to changes in ideology during the 1980s and 1990s, as indicated by not so subtle changes in their movies and new television series.

While virginal young ladies continued to dominate Disney's products on the large and increasingly small screens, a new kind of woman, the working woman who was trying to have it all, appeared in response (however indirect) to Faludi's observations. *The Little Mermaid* (Clements and Musker 1989) is one example. From a feminist perspective the leading lady, Ariel, literally gives up her voice for a man, a rather extreme representation of traditional gender relations. On the other hand, Ariel is a mermaid who wants it all—including to be “part of that [human] world”—and she asserts herself by making her own choices, taking risks, and staying determined to meet her goals. However, these are all constructed within relatively narrow constraints. Disney dichotomies of this sort continued to dominate its feature film offerings after *The Little Mermaid's* debut.

Five of Disney's major female heroines during the early-mid Eisner era, the aforementioned Ariel of *The Little Mermaid*, Belle from *Beauty and the Beast* (Trousdale and Wise 1991), Jasmine of *Aladdin* (Clements and Musker 1992), Pocahontas of *Pocahontas* (Gabriel and Goldberg 1995), Esmeralda of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Trousdale and Wise 1996), and Mulan of *Mulan* (Bancroft and Cook 1997), are portrayed as strong-willed and independent. However, each seemed ultimately defined by male standards and goals. While Ariel, Jasmine, and Belle for example, “live in male-dominated worlds and ultimately find fulfillment through romantic relationships” (Wasko, *Understanding Disney*, 116), the image of the Disney princess was beginning to change during this time in ways that seemed to eschew tradition. What were once passive girls waiting for a prince charming had morphed into young women who wanted more out of life than what was expected of them. These heroines were active, passionate, adventurous, and had a thirst for knowledge. After years of scholarly criticism finding Disney animation anti-feminist (e.g., Stone 1975, Lieberman 1972), the Disney princess

had indeed started to change in a manner that acknowledged women in the context of second wave feminism, albeit on a delayed basis.

One controversial example of this was related by Linda Woolverton, who was the screenwriter of *Beauty and the Beast* and the first woman ever to write a Disney animated film. After the film's release, Woolverton said of the female protagonist, "Belle is a feminist. I'm not critical of Snow White, Cinderella...they reflected the values of their time. But it just wasn't in me to write a throwback. I wanted a woman of the '90s, someone who wanted to do something other than wait for her prince to come" (Dutka N.P.). Woolverton's creation of Belle was represented as a direct reaction to the anti-feminist criticisms of the Disney company and could be responsible for the positive critical response as well as the overwhelming box-office success. After *Beauty and the Beast*, Disney animated features began to highlight more multidimensional female characters. The women in these films are characters like Pocahontas who was willing to stand up to her father to prevent a war and Mulan who pretends to be a male soldier in the Chinese army to protect her father and save her country from invaders. These representations were reflective of and a prelude to something important happening at the time, arguably a catalyst for the upcoming decade of Disney television: the so-called Riot Grrrl movement and its kid-friendly counterpart, the Girl Power movement.

While feminist themes in Disney productions well into the 1990s were geared towards adults, representations of the Riot Grrrl and Girl Power movements were geared towards youth and incorporated in many of Disney's television texts. The Riot Grrrl was a largely underground feminist punk music movement associated with third-wave feminism that originated in the 1990s near Olympia, Washington. The "grrr" in Riot Grrrls was akin to a growl. It alludes not only to girls' aggressive potentials, but also to the unwavering attitude toward the creation of girl culture

as a positive force embracing self-expression through writing, music, countercultural fashion, and acceptance of alternative lifestyles, including homosexuality. Notably, many leaders of the Riot Grrrl movement promoted the idea that they should create and produce their own material, independent of what was viewed as a music scene conquered by male-dominated mass media conglomerates (Aapola et al. 20). This was identified explicitly as the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) philosophy and became an integral part of the lives of female punk rockers and other free spirits who identified with them.

Disney co-opted a few elements of the Riot Grrrl movement, including watered down aspects of DIY philosophy. However, going into the latter half of the '90s and certainly by the 2000s, Disney embraced a gentler, more child-friendly form of third wave feminism that was much less countercultural: Girl Power. It seems clear that Girl Power, with its emphasis on having fun and self-expression through the pursuit of fashion and celebration of female sexuality, was much more likely to appeal to a mass audience, and thereby an ideal vehicle for profit generation. Girl power, embraced by mainstream artists in commercial culture such as the all-girl pop band, the Spice Girls, is a term denoting various cultural phenomena and perspectives about female youth that is meant to empower girls (Hains, 2012, XI; Currie et al. 8). Girl power has roots in the belief that girls have tremendous power and are not bound by traditional notions of feminism.

Programs like the musical-oriented *Kids Incorporated* (in syndication on Disney channel from 1986-1994) exhibited traits reflecting the movements described above. For example, in the latter years of the series, *Kids Incorporated* revolved around a group of children and teenagers of both genders who performed in their own rock group, namely Kids Incorporated. The band members struggled to deal with issues ranging from peer pressure to child abuse while

performing regularly at a local former music club. The members of the group were do-it-yourselfers who funded their own performances and solved their own problems. Some of the episodes revolved around feminist issues such as forming an all-girls club (“The Angels”), realizing the princess lifestyle is not for every girl (“The Basket Case”), and the rebellion of girls against authority and tradition (“Runaway Stacy”).

The importance of kids producing art on their own terms and practicing political activism may be similarly seen in more recent programming. For example, Miley Stewart as Hannah Montana is depicted as trying to produce her music in the spirit of DIY. She has a strong business acumen that is deployed in producing her own shows, although her father and manager also served as production coordinators. In some ways Hannah Montana reflected what the “real life” Riot Grrrls were advocating (female empowerment), but it was a watered down message both in the sense that her father’s involvement could be construed as an essential factor in her success, and that her elaborate stage appearances seemed very much the creation of mass entertainment. This mixed message contrasts with the hardcore DIY attitude of the Riot Grrrls who saw independent, small-scale production and other anti-capitalist ideals as essential aspects of their feminism.

The broader relevance of the Riot Grrrls to Disney Channel productions in the decade following the height of their movement is the way in which Disney seemed to both co-opt and dramatically tone down the radical feminist ethos. The lead character in *Hannah Montana* is only the most conspicuous example of this co-option. Other Disney productions from that period that involved pop music performers included Selena Gomez and her band—Selena Gomez and the Scene. There was also the Cheetah Girls, a girl-power themed band with Raven Symoné as one of the lead vocalists. Both groups were similar to the punk bands made popular within the Riot

Grrrl movement although they were heavily sanitized via kid-friendly lyrics about sisterhood, teamwork, and friendship. As another example, in a season two episode of *That's so Raven* (“Clothes-Minded”), the lead character takes on a Riot Grrrl persona when she rebels against wearing school uniforms by organizing a protest due to her belief in individuality. Although there are many other role models that Disney producers almost certainly took into consideration when creating their decidedly tamer and heterosexual girl rockers, the main point is that there are pale reflections of the Riot Grrrl movement.

In the 1990s and 2000s, tween girls were increasingly making headlines, and girls’ studies in academia grew just as shifts in the workforce for adult females, particularly women in the television industry, were occurring. Conterminous with these changes, the rhetoric of girl power, “a complex, contradictory discourse used to name a range of cultural phenomenon and social positions for young women” (Aapola et al. 19), was working its way into myriad homes across the United States. In so doing it intertwined feminist political thought and media consumption into a complex mix. The girl power movement introduced various contradictory representations of girls, and these representations appeared to have influenced Disney Channel programming, which in turn changed the social environment in which real life girls lived their lives and developed into adults. A complex process of mutual feedback emerged in which broader changes in society influenced the way that Disney produced their programs, with program content, in turn, influencing perceptions of role models for personal identity within society. This process of mutual feedback is suggested as a viable model from which to view the magical or super power-themed decade of television programming.

Specifically, a girl with magical powers starring in a Disney series did not appear until *Adventures in Wonderland* (1992-1995) a live-action musical television series based on Walt

Disney's animated *Alice in Wonderland*. In the series, Alice (Elisabeth Harnois) is an average preteen, often facing problems in school or her relationships with siblings and friends. Alice has a superpower of sorts in that she can transport herself to Wonderland by walking through her mirror. When she arrives, she helps her friends solve their problems, the act of which in turn offers solutions to her problems in the real world. While Alice is brave, resourceful, and solves complex problems on her own, her problems and solutions are traditionally female-oriented in that they are about helping others understand the true meaning of love, friendship, and family. What this contradictory discourse symbolizes is cultural captivation—yet apprehension—about girls. This incongruous discourse also seems to be signaling that perceptions of gender are changing; they are being reordered or reworked; perceptions of gender are shifting. Such throwbacks to the values held by the princesses of Disney's early days may be a sign that Disney recognizes girl power by creating a female-centered program, but is still unwilling to let go of the traditional values that have for so long been their brand. These contradictions are seen again in the next two decades of Disney productions.

2000s

In more recent years, Disney's film characters have been portrayed in significantly different and less gender-role-stereotypic ways than in the past. Princesses Anna and Elsa from the animated hit *Frozen* (Buck and Lee 2013) are examples in that these strong-willed girls' lives revolve around sisterhood rather than romance. Similarly, Disney's newest princess, Moana, from the 2016 film of the same name directed by Clements and Musker, is more concerned about finding herself and saving her people than she is about romance. Television has continued following the same course; recently, Disney's small-screen girls have been portrayed in more

heroic roles, sometimes more concerned with civic responsibilities than home life. In comparison, a 2013 study by Robert Gray demonstrates that while Disney's male film characters are increasingly depicted as leaders, heroes, explorers, and villains, they are simultaneously being portrayed as victims, followers, and without careers (Gray 64)—a switch in gender roles. This is not to suggest, however, that Disney is necessarily a vehicle for progressive social change. To do so would be to underplay Disney's decades-old history of supporting traditional values in American society and the powerful position that Disney was into *selectively* representing elements of the girl power movement, in effect acting as more of a filter—albeit one with tremendous creative input—than a mediator of those changes. As a result, a spectrum of representations—including traditional *and* progressive archetypes including more characters with extraordinary powers—emerged in Disney programming that aired in 2001-2011.

The portrayals indicate a new societal awareness of the changing roles of young females in leadership and power positions or at least new ways of portraying already established gender roles (e.g., homemaker with a second career). On the other hand, these characterizations can be viewed less generously as masking deeper levels of sexual inequality in the cultural and economic domains of contemporary society. During the same decade, other channels such as WB (currently the CW) produced programming for a slightly older demographic including *Sabrina*, *the Teenage Witch* (1996-2003), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) and *Charmed* (1998-2006), all of which featured contradictory images of females. These leading ladies possess superpowers and extraordinary physical and mental abilities yet according to O'Reilly, "These same characters continuously face challenges to and infringements upon their abilities, as their empowerment—their agency—is limited through various social mores and institutions... In short, their power does not translate into empowerment within their fictional universes; despite

their potential to be symbols of resistance, these characters reinforce the same hegemonic power structures that they challenge” (O’Reilly 3). Disney’s girl leads also had superpowers, and while not always magical, these powers were limited due to the gendered hardships these girls faced.

One of the observations that stimulated this study of tween television was the discovery that nearly all of these Disney programs were conceived, written, and produced by men indicating that constructions of female youth were made from the standpoint of adult men, or at least an adult male’s idea of what tween girl audiences enjoy. The suggestion of a double standard with young girl characters being “given” powers (but then having to hide them) while boys seemed able to use their powers freely (without the need to negotiate disclosure), deserves closer analysis than what is currently available in the literature concerning youth television programs which focus on sexuality (Hanes 2011), gender role socialization (Witt 2000), or consumption (Calvert 2008, Salamon 2002). Along with other authors (e.g. Bae 2011), I noted in my analyses of Disney Channel series that from feminist points of view, there are perhaps both negative (e.g., “keep women in their place”) and positive (e.g., hidden powers as especially potent and held in reserve) messages conveyed by what might be referred to as the Hannah Montana double standard.

These double standards or contradictions may be related to third wave feminism (focusing more on individualistic identity), but more closely aligns with postfeminism—an important aspect of feminism in the 1990s and 2000s. This study defines postfeminism as a new form of empowerment and independence, individual choice, consumer culture, and hybridism. Hybridism is the idea that everyone has a multiplex of identities. These identities may be seen as operating as inherent contradictions in a person’s concept of self-feeling/self-being. When put into context, postfeminism is better seen as a discourse that gives tween girls the opportunity to

be girly and pretty yet feminist at the same time. Postfeminism is a politically impure practice, which is at odds with other feminist strategies of resistance (Genz 338). There is evidence of a connection between postfeminism and television productions in the 2001-2011 decade. The main issue with postfeminism as reflected in programs produced for Disney Channel is that it is “selectively inconsistent.” Some of these conflicts occur due to paradoxical engagements in consumer society as well as in theoretical debates concerning anti-essentialism and difference.

There is another consideration in this study’s definition of postfeminism: the ability to make choices. Other writings about postfeminist in programs such as *Sex and the City* (HBO 1998-2004) and *Ally McBeal* (FOX 1997-2002)—programs for adults on other networks airing right up to the 2001-2011 decade—help place Disney programming in context. This study supports the work of other scholars (Henry 2010, Probyn 1997) in that these programs for adults feature female protagonists making choices that are more important than the choice itself where postfeminism is concerned. Independence and autonomy are essential values; postfeminist women are autonomous, financially independent, and have successful careers (Gorton 154). Likewise, many of the girls in more recent Disney programs are depicted as career-oriented and on their way to independence (not in need of a man such as a husband or a boyfriend to care for them). The girls and many of the female family members (older sisters, mothers) on these programs are portrayed as equal to their male counterparts in many ways such as being able to make their own choices; hence the notion that there is “no need for feminism” anymore. Yet these programs also depict girls in a questionable light when it comes to whether or not they are truly autonomous, a leading example being the secretiveness that surrounds the possession of extraordinary powers, and the elaborate hiding rituals that form the heart of the drama in many episodes. These representations harken back to the critique of Susan Faludi concerning the 1980s

and early 1990s, suggesting that while characterizations of females in youth-oriented television from the 2000s and early years of the current decade have certainly changed, the degree of change is perhaps less so than may be suggested by superficial analyses.

Although there are several possible interpretations for Disney's depictions of secretiveness and hiding when it comes to girls with special powers, the conveyance of antifeminist messages—whether explicitly intended or not—is certainly an important one for which there is much evidence. Indeed, the juxtaposition of families headed by fathers in a supposedly postfeminist society and young girl family members frenetically hiding powers from their male counterparts is one of the hallmarks of Disney television in the magic decade. In short, young female characters are often shown making much ado about issues that should not be the source of so much drama if in fact all things were equal.

CONCLUSION

No proper understanding of the prelude and success of the 2001-2011 decade can be gathered unless the context is considered. Hence, situating the Disney Company and Disney Channel's tween television programs within shifting gender norms and social consciousness makes absolute Disney's awareness of their audience's feelings, perceptions, and viewpoints. Disney films and Disney Channel television programs demonstrate how media does its cultural work and negotiates the meaning of social change formed by movements like Girl Power and feminism. This positioning is at the heart of this study's inquiry due it telling a great deal about the transformative agency of girls, and hence the potential future for girls and women by providing different examples of how television operates hegemonically.

Being aware of these ideas about how television works helps to make sense of Disney's reflective tendencies, but also the contradictory attached meanings embedded in these works and pressed on viewers. These Disney stories mark shifting values and norms as our society experiences economic, social, and other large-scale changes. Studying these movements of the first decade of the new millennium and their presentation in media allows for a better understanding of females in traditional and resistant roles (Jones et al. ix). By interacting with popular culture through these Disney Channel series, we can better challenge and resist the negative portrayals of girls represented in programming even as we highlight the positive portrayals that are present.

The representation of females in popular television has fascinated communication, gender, and media scholars due to media's power to both perpetuate and challenge dominant gender norms and expectations. Through popular culture like Disney television, audiences learn about gender, sexuality, and power in various contexts (Hassard and Halliday 7-8). While the characters and plotlines are artificial, they nonetheless provide insight into society's thinking about girls and girls' roles and thereby may have an impact on social change. The demonstrable shift in the rise of third-wave feminism and girl power is undoubtedly evident in programming as will be detailed in Chapter Three. Characters and narratives on Disney Channel programming very much include themes of strong-willed can-do girls. While in some ways, these programs stand in opposition to the feminist and girl power movements, generally, they are affiliated with or support the movements. This decade was able to thrive due to the openness and general acceptance of the movements, but also due to commodification.

There is a common thread in all of these television programs in that they are each hallmarks of girl power, a growing movement leading up to and during the airing of these

programs. The programs highlight different implications of girl power and represent a new phase in societal reaction to girls due to their shifted position, as well as increased awareness by marketers at the time of the production of these series. While much of this chapter has been about the societal influences that set the stage for Disney Channel television to succeed, it is important to remember Disney Channel is a key producer of girl power culture within a context in which girl power practices and commodities are proliferating in various ways. Disney Channel is essentially rearticulating feminism and girl power in a way that is not only appealing to the masses but is profitable as well. In appropriating girl power and feminism in programming, Disney Channel has claimed and trained young girls to be consumers.

CHAPTER 2

DISNEY CHANNEL PACKAGES GIRLHOOD

Disney Channel has emerged as one of the largest and most powerful media networks in the world. Using a political economy framework, this chapter examines how the network's strategies have expressed and efficiently communicated a particular ideology to its target audience regarding consumption, through which actual consumption is facilitated. Focusing on marketing policies and procedures that Disney pursued in the 2000s, this study defines consumption as the purchasing or utilization of goods and services such as clothing, toys and subscription entertainment in the satisfaction of wants and needs. Consumption is a broad term with many facets. It is of course associated with corporate advertising and promotional efforts, which at least in the case of Disney, have gone hand and glove with market development—in particular creating conditions that favor the emergence of new consumers—and reinforcing thought patterns that have driven a particular type of youth-centered consumerism. Examining Disney Channel's practices of identifying and encouraging the growth of a target demographic; cross-promotion to build and secure an audience; branding to convert audiences into consumers of products and services; transforming talent into mega stars to create a fan base oriented to consume; and infiltrating their brand into everyday life to sustain these practices reveals a number of tensions and contradictions with important social implications.

One of the social implications of these marketing practices concerns the molding of perceptions related to gender identity, and in the timeframe on which I have focused the gender identity of young females in particular. These gender-relevant marketing practices have permeated into various domains ranging from the consumption patterns of individuals, the allocation of financial resources within families, and institutional behavior. From a feminist point

of view, it is well documented that Disney's marketing strategies have maintained adherence to the dominant cultural distinctions between, for instance, "girl" and "boy." It can certainly be argued that Disney has capitalized on stereotypical sex roles and social expectations.

Furthermore, "they may perpetuate and reinforce the oppressive discourses and practices that are linked to social and gender inequality" (Arsel 1553), and have been deemed exploitative and ethically suspect.

Some of the more interesting operational characteristics of the contemporary Disney Corporation reflect their ability to organize a very tightly knit marketing machine. Unique to them within the youth-oriented mass entertainment market of the 2000s, and to a large extent today, is their capacity to utilize vertical and horizontal integration tactics to internalize nearly all of the above-mentioned marketing strategies. Disney deploys very little advertising from outside entities, and it has managed to keep most aspects of subsidiary production (for example, spin-off merchandise such as dolls and fashion accessories) within the family. Since the network's inception in 1983, it marketed itself as a commercial-free family channel to distinguish itself from competitors that do air commercials such as Nickelodeon. In 1996, with the goal of increasing their viewership, the network switched to basic cable yet kept their non-commercial approach until 2002 when they began to occasionally promote sponsors before and after shows. The purpose of vertical and horizontal integration of most of their operations allowed it to efficiently organize a web of cross-communication and cross-promotion. As stated by Santoli, "The ultimate goal was to achieve synergy, where the sum of all these interactions by different divisions (in revenues and profits) would be greater than each division could achieve on its own" (Santoli XI). Although their vast international integration efforts were very expensive in the short term, and therefore counterintuitive to some as part of Disney Corporation's grand marketing

strategy, the managers Disney Channel took horizontal and vertical integration to new heights. This rather extreme approach has allowed them to dominate the tween entertainment market for many years now. Horizontal integration largely involves merging with or acquisition of companies at the same stage of production in similar industries (e.g., Disney's acquisition of ESPN and Pixar). The approach rests in the expectation that mergers and acquisitions will expand business through an increase in market share, capture new target markets, and achieve more profit through economies of scale. Vertical integration resulted when Disney developed the ability to conceive, produce, market, and distribute nearly all of their merchandise under one roof. The result is that content, communications, advertising, *and* audience are all neatly wrapped together on a single platform, assuring Disney enduring access to their audience.

Previous studies (e.g., Gillan 2014) have addressed the ways in which analyzing a network's promotional strategies highlights their cultural aspirations and anxieties to attract audiences. By addressing viewers as peers or friends, networks like Disney Channel can link television series to other consumer goods on the basis of a presumed understanding of audience desires and personal problems. Since the great majority of the tween market of the late 1990s and 2000s was female, a key issue of concern with this very personal approach to marketing is that it rested on suspect conceptions about femininity and youth. Other studies (e.g., Bickford 2015) have pointed out this is due to how the term tween itself is gendered. The very definition of the term stresses an age-based tension between adult autonomy and childhood domesticity. In other words, by marketing to tweens Disney became more and more a vehicle for cultural change, and in particular, the changes that were manifested in the girl power movement and ideologies associated with postfeminism.

Disney Channel was quick to recognize girl power is related to consumer power. Rather than use girl power as a true political stance, Disney Channel used it as an industrial strategy to cultivate their audience and justify the commodification of young females and the prioritization of consumption over substance. Disney Channel is cognizant of their influence over audiences and tweens' buying power and thus the network, a powerful transmedia conglomerate, asserts its oligarchic power over a consumer base of predisposed tween girls. Corporate priorities are inserted via the girl (Clark, 1987, 203) meaning Disney sees girls as a commodified audience segment on which the network, through programming and marketing of products related to programming, presses fixed ideologies that disenfranchise and yet empowers young females. Some media scholars (e.g., Blue 2013) argue series like *Hannah Montana* apply postfeminism to girlhood and the manner in which this is done limits girls to femininity and consumerism. *Hannah Montana*, for example, is an adaptation of the postfeminist trope of "having it all" in that Miley struggles as a careerist and domestic daughter living in a world fueled by consumption.

Using Derek Johnson's work (2014, 2013) in media franchising as a framework, this chapter examines the corporate strategies and industrial practices to construct tweens as not only as an audience but consumers. In so doing, this chapter demonstrates how the cultural and industrial logic of audience construction, cross-promotion, branding, creation of the star, and Disneyfication has led to Disney Channel re-imagining creativity as an opportunity for exchange among both its personnel and young consumers/audiences. A case study of the Disney institution's further attraction of the tween audience rounds out the chapter to best understand the "how" of the company's inner workings by applying it to the series *Hannah Montana*. This chapter enables further comprehension regarding the proliferation of the network's images and

characters that may not have otherwise been so widespread if it were not for Disney's careful packaging—arguably exploitation—of girlhood.

BUILDING A TWEEN GIRL AUDIENCE

Disney Channel was not always television's unofficial tween girl headquarters as it is today. When the network debuted in 1983, it catered primarily to families. Over time, however, the network's recognition of their audience consisting of various demographics, not simply families, paved the way for audience segmentation (Weinraub D10) and eventually a focus on the tween girl demographic—and consumerism.

In its early years, the premium cable channel used the Disney Studios' huge inventory of classic films and cartoons to attract families to fill its days. Initial programming and scheduling proved successful: in the weeks after Disney Channel's debut, there were over 100,000 subscribers (Parsons 457). However, the network still struggled as a whole in its first few years. To appeal to a broad audience of all ages, in the 1990s, Disney Channel devoted mornings to preschoolers, afternoons to preteens and teens, evenings to families, and nights to adults (King 9). Such audience segmentation helped Disney Channel in designing and catering to particular audiences to sustain economic viability. Creating a specific audience segment such as "tween girl" aided the network in planning the most effective product development, promotions, and distribution strategies. More than just trying to reach a broad audience via segmentation, however, industrial shifts were occurring during this time that warranted audience segmentation. In the 1990s the media industry was changing—particularly the industrial climate of mergers and acquisitions—resulting in mass media conglomeration characterized by vertical and horizontally

integrated media companies. This industrial shift demanded a focus on certain audience groups, as well as synergistic production practices to safeguard profitability.

A principal production practice that Disney Channel utilized during this period is block programming. Block programming involves back-to-back scheduling of related shows which are likely to attract and hold a given audience for a part of the day (McGregor et al. 241) and creates fierce competition for a single audience group by building viewer loyalty (Eastman et al., 2013, 249). In the late 1990s, Disney concentrated its block programming strategies during the afternoon hours when tween viewers were tuning in. The network's most significant change in doing this consisted of an afternoon, evening, and weekend evening programming block called "Zoog Disney" and "Zoog Weekendz." The Zoog programming block targeted nine-to fourteen-year-olds and was the beginning of the channel's successful foray into cross-promotions for tweens (Bloom N.P.). During Zoog Disney's programming breaks, animated characters called Zoogs would direct viewers to Disney websites to further enjoy the shows they watched with programming-related games, message boards, chat rooms, and program-related merchandise (Business/Entertainment N.P.; Eastman, 2000, 195). Zoog Disney was just what the network needed to be successful in an age where children were being distracted by other forms of media such as video games and internet use. The Zoog programming block was also excellent for attracting tweens.

Around 2002, Anne Sweeney, then president of the Disney Channel Worldwide and the ABC Cable Networks Group, noticed that despite the success of Zoog Disney, there was still not enough programming for her tween son, who was too old for cartoons, but not yet old enough for MTV (Boorstein 112). Sweeney and new network head Geraldine Laybourne (formerly with Nickelodeon) wanted to further separate Disney from its main competition: Nickelodeon (Moss

10). After speaking with children and families who revealed they wanted to spend more time together, Sweeney and Laybourne decided Disney would not only continue to segment its day to cater to different ages—especially tweens—but allow for more of the tween programming to still be appealing to adults as well so families could watch together (Selznick 124, Sterngold N.P.). Sweeney helped spearhead original shows like *Lizzie McGuire* to accomplish this goal and further overcome the network’s dilemma regarding competition from other networks like Nickelodeon who had been successfully focusing on girls with programs like *The Secret World of Alex Mack* (1994-1998) and *The Mystery Files of Shelby Woo* (1996-1999) (Boorstein 112). *Lizzie McGuire* focused on a middle-class suburban family, but the series, a mix of live-action and animation to capture kids young and old, centered on a tween girl and ended up capturing the tween girl demo more than it did entire families. The “*Lizzie McGuire* following” consisted of 2.3 million viewers (Huff, 2002, 41) in addition to spawning a hit film and platinum albums for its star, Hilary Duff, as well as books and dolls all of which when combined brought Disney \$100 million in 2003 (Boorstin 110). Disney’s meteoric rise of *Lizzie McGuire* media and associated products is the beginning of the emergence of the tween girl viewer during this era as she became known to the consumer marketplace as a profitable customer, market, and audience. The success of the series illustrates how tweenhood is a product of a market geared towards youth. Such a marketplace positions tween girls as a separate market niche carved out of a transitory space amid childhood and adolescence.

CONCEPTUALIZING THE TWEEN GIRL CONSUMER

The term “tween” has become part of the American lexicon in recent years. Initially used to describe the ages in *between* childhood and teen years (ten to twelve years of age), the term

has since been used to describe a wider range of ages (e.g., seven to fourteen) and is therefore no longer taken literally. Tweens are a growing demographic of preadolescents and are “the epicenter of the Baby Boomlet, also known as the Echo Boom, and generation Y, the last offspring of the large and powerful Baby-Boom generation” (Siegel et al. 1). There are approximately 20 million of these preadolescents, split almost evenly between boys and girls, living in the United States today (“Age and Sex” N.P.). The tween demographic has been the focus of marketers in recent years, for their purchasing power has increased exponentially. Recent U.S. Census figures reveal families with tweens (about 8.7 million) are spending \$550 billion annually (“Age and Sex” N.P.). Tweens spend about \$10 billion each year on their own, while their parents spend another \$176 billion on them (Lino 10). Advertisers are increasingly paying attention to tweens’ buying power and are quick to take advantage of peer pressure and its abilities to influence tweens into buying certain brands. Disney Channel has also tapped into the tween market for they recognize tweens are a more powerful generation than past generations since they are a triple opportunity to marketers – “a primary market, an influencing market and a future market” (Norgaard et al. 197). The large amount of tweens and their tremendous purchasing powers means they are no longer a niche market, but a primary market. This group has been proven to influence family purchases of various products in many ways (Belch et al. 9, Foxman et al. 27, Caruana and Vassallo 13) hence they are an influencing market. Additionally, the group is young enough that they can be guided or even manipulated into becoming avid consumers while still children, a trend that will set them up to be heavy consumers as adults and therefore making them a future market. The network is motivated to study the characteristics, values, and attitudes of the tween segment to turn their audience into a consumptive audience for

their products for they know channeling tweens' tremendous buying power results in explosive sales.

Due to the tween being targeted for its consumption and that females are often signified as consumers, it made more practical sense to conceptualize the tween demographic in a gendered way. Hence Disney focused on tween girls, but a certain kind of tween girl: stereotypical, middle-class, and white. For Disney, this group is in-between being a child and teenager and therefore, in the network's eyes, are all going through often stereotypical milestones popularly conceived as, for example, struggling for independence, navigating friendships and first-time romance, and overcoming obstacles at school—themes present in all Disney tween programming. This liminal state, however, is not just a motivation for series' storylines, but something the network keeps in mind when constructing their audience as consumers.

There is a symbiosis between life stages, and the marketplace and Disney has tapped into this vibrant tendril. Consumer culture has long acknowledged the profitability of transitional phenomena, spaces, and places, as well as the experiences of an individual or group in flux (Cody 3), but Disney has taken the phenomenon a step beyond. For tween girls whose sense of self is abstruse, imprecise, or distorted by the experience of standing between two symbolically-loaded life stages, consumption practices and one's relationship with such practices take on a new meaning, a divergent core of which Disney Channel has honed in on. Disney Channel positions consumerism as liberation for young females, in part by marketing images of tween girls as autonomous subjects. For example, Miley Stewart and her stage persona Hannah Montana are marketed as representing resistance to tradition in that Miley has control, power, and independence as a young girl. Such an image may be viewed as positive for it is an

empowering image of youth and the constant circulation of images of Miley Stewart and Hannah Montana from about 2006-2011 imparts tween girls with cultural importance as well as authority that is empowering in itself.

Via programming and a constructed, evasive consumer culture, Disney Channel has situated tween girls as a group of dynamic agents of consumption via these tweens' relationships with and through products and their associations. Girl power—a theme present in some form in many Disney programs of the 2000s may be considered commodity feminism. One aspect of girl power was that it defined girls' function regarding their purchasing power: selling political liberation and economic independence through the consumption of goods and services. Disney utilizes girl power ideologies in their programming to capture their audience and sell products by, for example, flattering tweens with messages about the importance of their individuality—which they are then told to express through consumer goods. Despite these messages of uniqueness, that its tween girl audience is composed of consumers consisting of various ethnicities or class standings is not something Disney Channel ordinarily addresses in its programming or related products.

While 66% of tweens are white, the demographic is more culturally diverse now more than ever according to the *Census Bureau Statistical Abstract 2012* (“Age and Sex Composition” N.P.). Despite messages of uniqueness present in girl power and Disney programming, there is a homogenization of cultures or an Americanization of them in Disney programming (Wasko, “Is It a Small World,” 8-9). For example, Alex, the protagonist from the Disney series *Wizards of Waverly Place* airing in the 2000s, has a Latin American background that is not ordinarily brought up—insinuating notions of girlhood are universal. Disney may be wary of crossover success with a minority cast. Hence the stripping away of ethnic identifiers is meant to maximize

the audience (Vlahakis N.P.). Similarly, studio executives have mistakenly assumed that all-white casts have the most international appeal (Fisher N.P.). By making characters for whom race does not affect their lives or play into who they are, Disney has simply girls, not black girls, Mexican girls, or white girls. Such homogenization means they can attract a wide consumer base as they are not excluding or highlighting any one kind of girl—except the girl with money to spend.

Girl viewers' strength resides in the power to consume. Thus to speak of tweens is to speak of middle-class girls. Middle-class tweens, in particular, have achieved extraordinary amounts of purchasing power and autonomy to decide what to do with it (Kostman 86). Tween girl culture taps into middle-class parents' obsession with achievement hence adults' willingness to finance these youngsters (Kincheloe 144). Additionally, fantasy is a marketing device in that middle-class tweens fantasize they are a part of a higher class like *Hannah Montana* and in turn buy products associated with her to better live these fantasies (Giroux, 2010, 251). To best tap into tweens' fantasies and middle-class values of achievement, Disney presents programming like *Hannah Montana* which is about a small town girl who never gives up and works hard to become a high-class superstar via consumption of goods that change her appearance allowing her success. The same goods presented in the program and then marketing to tweens are goods similar to the products Miley buys to transform into Hannah such as a blonde wig. The Disney Company understood that associating middle-class and upper-class lifestyles would increase ratings and sales (Macedo 58), so their content shifted from being about the American dream to searching for a better lifestyle by pursuing a consumer lifestyle like the on-screen characters do to rise in class ranks.

Based on past studies (Lewis 1990, Stacey 1991, Malik 2005), Morgan Blue infers that the Disney Company believed that when characters on the programs bought something to feel better or thinking it would elevate them to a higher level, audiences would model the behavior as such imitation has been seen before in various fan cultures (Blue, “D-signed,” 60). After watching the series and developing an affection for Cyrus, tweens ask their parents to take them shopping so they can get, for example, the clothes that *Hannah Montana* has. A child who grows up too fast is engaging in the “fostering of new desires and insecurities” and to a young girl who wants to be like her on-screen idol, shopping cures those desires and insecurities (Freeman-Freene 16). The message in the consumption of consumer goods on Disney Channel and related Disney merchandise is that a girl can become what she buys. As Stephen Armstrong notes, these girls are “consuming their way into an identity” (“Scary,” 4). If a girl buys a Hannah Montana costume, she is Hannah Montana, and with that comes all the rights and privileges of being a white, upper-class tween.

Disney was metaphorically playing a game of darts when targeting tweens. They aimed for a certain demographic and hit the bullseye with tween girls. Now that they have located, investigated, and carefully crafted this target group, they needed to find a way to attract them, and their first step was establishing empathy via the storylines and carefully crafted spin-off products geared just for tweens. Establishing empathy is a way Disney lets tweens know they can relate to them and in so doing taps into what drives them emotionally. Tween viewers begin to feel as if someone—in this case, Disney Channel—understands their life obstacles, problems, and annoyances. The tacitly understood or *felt* implication is that the Disney brand understands the tween and therefore provides a solution to their needs and wants. Channeling tweens’ desires in these ways marks a significant shift in the way the social bond is structured in relation to

enjoyment and reveals its central role in sustaining Disney Channel's economic power and influence. Having established consumers' needs and wants, but also trust, the network goes on to create needs and wants in tweens that had not before existed in these youngsters' lives. They do this by creating products marketed as "must haves" which in turn generate even more money for Disney. These ideas are best illustrated by examining *Hannah Montana*.

Hannah Montana: Disney's Marketing Machine

From 2001 – 2011 tween programming on the Disney Channel was of enormous importance to the Disney Company as a whole in terms of growing their audience base and increasing revenue. For example, tween sensation *Hannah Montana*, a thirty-minute live-action sitcom, aired for four seasons beginning in 2006. The program premiered with 5.5 million viewers (Becker 3), and later episodes averaged 10.7 million viewers—the highest ratings for a regular series in the history of basic cable (Ostrow, "Disney Marketers," 2007). The series had reached a global audience of approximately 200 million viewers by the end of its second season in 2008 with one newspaper quipping, "If Miley's viewers were a country, they would be the fifth largest population in the world—just ahead of Brazil" (Armstrong, "Scary," 4). The program itself and massively marketed spin-off merchandise became major sources of profit for the Disney Company. In 2007, the year *Hannah Montana* merchandise was debuted, sales profited \$400 million, and by 2008, expected sales were at about \$2.7 billion (Ebenkamp M040).

Marketing and promotion are significant contributors to the success of the Disney brand, programs like *Hannah Montana*, and the messages in these series. *Hannah Montana's* success is due to consumption strategies including cross-promotion, branding, recreating the old Hollywood Studio Star System, and Disneyfication or the pervasive inundation of Disney

products in one's everyday life. The result is a near foolproof marketing strategy where "Disney can hammer a show into the public consciousness without having to expend much effort on the show itself" (Weinman 5). For example, with *Hanna Montana*, triple merchandise is sold for young girls may purchase products relating to either protagonist Miley Stewart, her alter ego Hannah Montana, or the actress who plays these roles: Miley Cyrus.

Rather than waiting for a series to become a hit, since the program's inception, Disney immediately rolled out merchandise in hopes of quickly creating a franchise with lasting appeal (Edelson 11). Miley Cyrus was performing in concerts before *Hannah Montana* even premiered. At these concerts, rather than appear as herself, Cyrus appeared as Hannah Montana to promote the series. Early concert footage was used to create interest in the Hannah Montana character already allowing Disney to inundate viewers with aspects of the series before it even aired (Deere 60). Such a promotion got audiences excited about a new and interesting character rather than yet another teen singing sensation thus leading them to want to watch the show she was set to be on. Tuning into the series later led to audiences wanting to know about who was playing the lead character. The stage was set from the beginning for *Hannah Montana* and its star, Miley Cyrus, to be a significant influence in tween culture and a mega-million-dollar franchise for Disney Channel. *Hannah Montana* enjoyed insurmountable success in comparison with other shows, and this case study describes and analyzes precisely how this came to be and how industrial practices and Disney's perception of the tween audience influenced programming itself. The practices and strategies outlined below highlight a sophisticated interweaving of relationships between consumption and identity. Disney was successful with the marketing of *Hannah Montana* products not just due to the massive tween girl demographic the network had

already lured, but because of the way the channel marketed itself and its content so much that it became a part of tweens' lives.

UTILIZING CROSS PROMOTION TO BUILD THE TWEEN AUDIENCE

An effective technique in marketing *Hannah Montana* was cross-promotion which exists in various forms. A 2012 study conducted by Erin Copple Smith about cross-promotion of the Bravo network applies to what was occurring on Disney Channel from 2001-2010. Cross-promotion, as discussed in Smith's study, is when the same stars or demographics are promoted across all programs on the network thus cultivating an environment which provides continuity within and among the channel's stars and series. Smith's study illustrates how cross-promotion encourages viewers to become fans of the channel and not only one program and builds a particular kind of audience (in this study's case, tween girl consumers for Disney Channel) to sell to advertisers. With cross-promotion, conglomerates like Disney can truly extend their reach to audiences through various holdings thus maximizing their profits through their many owned properties.

An example of such cross-promotion is that Miley Stewart, the lead character in *Hannah Montana* was in episodes of *The Suite Life on Deck*, a spinoff series of the only tween boy show on air on the network at the time, *The Suite Life of Zach and Cody*. By constantly cross-promoting Cyrus along with other network stars, a sort of community is formed and tweens can be part of this in-crowd simply by tuning into any of the network's programs. Other examples include Miley Cyrus herself making appearances on other Disney-owned networks such as the sports-oriented ESPN to promote the program and herself (Vance 65). Cyrus and the characters she plays appearing on other programs and related networks are Disney Channel's attempts to

appeal to the tween demographic and tap into viewers' various other interests with the hopes of generating loyal customers via increased exposure through various outlets.

In many cases, the kind of cross-promotion Disney Channel engaged in was teaming with an outside entity to promote its products and both parties benefitted in the promotion of their goods for sale. Working with in-house partners and outside entities helps to successfully expand each company's customer base. An example is Disney's partnership with Walmart, one of their few corporate partnerships including Coca-Cola, General Motors, and Kodak (Stein 217). In 2008, Disney collaborated with Walmart not only to sell licensed Miley Cyrus and *Hannah Montana* merchandise exclusive to Walmart customers but to design a system where parents could arrange for their young children to receive a recorded phone call from Hannah Montana serving as a wake-up call ("Walmart Offers" N.P.). The call system was devised around back-to-school time so parents could have a way of getting their child ready for school that their child would gladly participate in and enjoy. Parents could arrange for a choice of three calls to be made to their child's cell phone: wake up for school, school activity reminder, and a back to school shopping alert.

In the wake-up call, Hannah Montana is heard saying, "It's time to wake up and get a move-on!" For the reminder, she says, "Don't forget about art class," depending on the activity which parents can decide when arranging for a call. The alert is a shopping reminder saying, "Be a superstar and get your things together!" No matter the parent's choice, the call included a line from *Hannah Montana* encouraging youngsters to do their back-to-school shopping at Walmart since the store is packed with *Hannah Montana* gear and apparel to last for over a week. "This initiative really lets us reach out to tweens in a way that is unique and connects that tween to *Hannah Montana* in a way that is really personal," said Aaron Hunt, manager of Corporate

Communications for Disney” (Tsirulnik N.P.). Even when children are away from their screens, Disney—along with Walmart—wanted to ingrain in children’s minds from the moment they wake up, they should consume. Being able to connect with a celebrity by hearing her voice on a home phone and have the message directed towards the listener deepens a fan’s connection with the celebrity and hence the products surrounding her—exactly what Disney and Walmart want. Interpellation is at work here. According to Louis Althusser, interpellation is essentially a process where one encounters cultural values and internalizes them, ingraining in one’s mind how to think, act, and react in certain ways. Girls who answer the phone and listen to the personalized message are interpellated into the specific role of consumer. Interpellation such as this feels natural to consumers and as such allows Disney Channel hegemony over tween consumer behavior thus making the network a nodal point or whole way of a tween’s life.

Even when Disney was not directly partnering with another company to promote their products, smaller companies indirectly promoted Disney while boosting local economies with *Hannah Montana* cross-promotions. While not always Disney-endorsed promotions, the smaller companies running these promotions are saying they endorse Disney, and as such, the network gets free advertising. For example, a small business called Reliant Energy extended the idea of promoting *Hannah Montana* via a contest. Their approach was different from other companies, however, in that they geared the contest towards adults—twens’ financiers—who would participate in such a campaign for their children. Reliant Energy customers could be automatically entered into the sweepstakes to win Hannah Montana concert tickets by signing up for paperless billing (“Reliant” N.P.). Realizing their clients are parents eager to please their children, this company profited off Disney Channel, but the network still benefitted via consumer socialization, “the process by which tweens acquire the skills, knowledge, techniques,

and attitudes relevant to their shopping behavior (Michman et al. 140).” Consumer socialization assumes tweens develop such patterns of thought and actions partly as a result of their interactions and observations with significant others such as peers but of course parents—so-called socialization agents. Parent-child interactions determine how parents teach their child consumer behavior, and such a promotion targeting adults to buy into a children’s product is another way Disney—and in this case, Reliant Energy—continued to profit from the youngsters and ensured their spending power.

The above examples demonstrate that there are many ways to engage with television programs and therefore networks are striving to keep up with innovative solutions to keep viewers tuned in. One solution is cross-promotion and brand development through commodity flow, techniques which connect viewers to a community that the network has created within itself (Shada iii). Cross-promotion for *Hannah Montana* proved lucrative for retail sales were \$400 million globally in the 2007 fiscal year—the first year after the program aired. In 2008 retail sales were close to 2.7 billion dollars when combined with the Disney Channel Original Movie *High School Musical* (Szalai 1). Having so well attracted this group they created, Disney then needed to figure out how to sustain this group’s interests and their strategy for this was branding.

BRANDING, MERCHANDISING, AND FRANCHISING: CONSUMER SUBJECTIVITY FOR TWEENS

This study defines “brand” as the name given to a product or service from a specific source (Disney Channel). In this case, “brand” is similar to the meaning of “trademark.” One of Disney’s goals is to create commodities out of the entertainment it produces and to emblazon—

either literally or metaphorically—these commodities with their name. Such branding is important to the network in that “brands are a high priority for tweens; they associate brands with their identities” (Arnett 836) and will, therefore, be concerned about the brand name when making purchases. Turning *Hannah Montana* into a brand name ensures Disney’s revenue due to having created a specific perception in tween customers’ minds concerning the qualities and attributes of the series. While branding is a strategy through which Disney Channel tries to influence what tweens think about the company or product with the goal of improving profit, merchandising is one of the tactics Disney uses to accomplish this. Merchandising is the way Disney sells itself and its products and establishes a powerful, personal, and long-lasting experience between the Disney brand and the tween consumer.

In *Hannah Montana*, the main character, Miley Stewart; her pop star self, Hannah Montana; and the actress who played these roles, Miley Cyrus (the star), are all brands—a type of product manufactured by Disney under the Disney label. Merchandise included costumes, clothing, home décor, fashion accessories, shoes, wigs, dolls, child-sized guitars, school supplies, stationery, cereal, video and board games, and various electronics including television sets and microphones all adorned with the Disney name to distinguish them from other non-Disney products. Each product created supposedly fills in a tween’s desire or apparent need related to themes on the series such as fame, dreams, entrepreneurship, girl power, family, and friendship. These desires and artificial needs are satisfied by the good’s symbolic value. For example, the blonde wigs Disney sells—part of Hannah Montana’s signature look—is an element of fantasy representing stardom, money, and happiness. Disney-licensed merchandise sales were more than \$2.7 billion the year after *Hannah Montana*’s debut (Ebenkamp M040) and accounted for 40% of all licensed merchandise in the U.S. and Canada in 2007 (Giroux and Pollock, 2005, 19).

Disney's success with branding ubiquity demonstrates the cultural industry's power in influencing consumers to interact with the Disney brand in various ways.

Disney Channel's branding techniques enable them to become relevant to consumers beyond their initial or core offering. For example, in addition to the merchandise from the program, the show also promoted the lead star so much she turned into a brand as well. Miley Cyrus is a brand in that she is, "the product of a winning formula for creating shows that tweens love and make stars out of its leads" (McDowell, 2006, N.P.). What is unique here is not merely that Disney has created a character and star who represents their values, but did so in reverse compared to other brands. Other brands start with a physical product and then build a story around it in the form of content marketing, but Disney does exactly the opposite. They create a brand story—a movie or even simply a character or person—and then build products around that story, character, or person (Burns, 2015, N.P.). The network's strategy for doing this is that parallels between Miley Cyrus and Miley Stewart/Hannah Montana blur fiction and reality (e.g., both are teenagers from Tennessee and become famous singers). Such blurring allows for consumers to want to buy products related to either the fictional characters (Miley Stewart and Hannah Montana) or Miley Cyrus (the aspirational actress who portrays her) but ideally all three. Allowing opportunities to buy products of one or all of the girls gave tweens power to connect with the Disney brand on their terms.

Having established the various brands related to *Hannah Montana*, Disney needed to find a way to promote these brands. Thinking back to how tweens are loyal to their brands and connect with them by different means, Disney formed a way for fans to be loyal to Hannah and both Miley's: franchising and merchandising. In 2008, then Disney President and Chief Executive Bob Iger, believed leveraging a franchise across multiple businesses secures its value

over an extended period of time, hence *Hannah Montana* grew into more than just a series (Hau N.P.). Miley Cyrus was signed exclusively to Disney Channel and sang on the network's series and its crossover programs, giving Disney further opportunities to promote CDs for Cyrus and in turn, more of their *Hannah Montana* franchise. Further capitalizing off both the Hannah Montana character and Miley Cyrus, a concert tour entitled "Hannah Montana and Miley Cyrus: Best of Both Worlds Concert" came into creation in 2008. The tour—which featured Cyrus as herself and as Hannah Montana—sold out instantly. The videotaped concert was distributed in 3D in theaters across the nation further expanding the *Hannah Montana* and Miley Cyrus brands (DiOrio 1). As if the concert movie was not enough, a fictional feature film, a spin-off of the series called *Hannah Montana: The Movie* (Peter Chelsem 2009) was made to continue promoting the sitcom, its music, and its star. Furthermore, to bring fans as close as they can to the Disney brand without losing them, at theme parks around the world, there were *Hannah Montana*-themed participatory spaces such as meet-and-greets with Miley Cyrus as either herself or Hannah Montana. Such participatory opportunities made tweens feel like they knew the star thus driving a much more emotional connection to her and her associated products and therefore the Disney Brand (Taylor 139).

What these examples demonstrate is that the extension of the *Hannah Montana* and Miley Cyrus franchises grew at exponential rates. "Disney has made great strides in the primetime tween market in the past few years, finding shows that appeal to the young age group and, in many cases, making their leads into multiplatform superstars. But the push on *Hannah Montana* is a step beyond" (Becker 2). Such marketing schemes effectively penetrating all aspects of tweenhood further speak to Disney's ingenious ways of branding and creating girls as consumers in public.

CONSTRUCTING THE STAR, CONSTRUCTING THE CONSUMER

Girl culture consists of theories, representations, and changing cultural forms of girlhood via, for example, books, magazines, clothing, and music (Mitchell, 1995, 53; Driscoll 39). Like Hannah Montana, Miley Cyrus is positioned as a producer of Girl Culture—independent and creative. However, whereas the 1990s underground feminist punk movement, the Riot Grrrls, rejected normative femininity, Cyrus—while under contract with Disney—embraced it with her family-oriented and innocent bubblegum pop music. While the Riot Grrrls positioned girls as producers, Cyrus (via Disney) positioned girls as consumers. Her concerts encouraged fans to purchase Hannah Montana and Miley Cyrus merchandise as a purported means of empowerment. Girl viewers, in turn, are empowered in that they play an economically significant role and are realized to be a major group—albeit a consumer group.

In the light of neo-liberal society with its emphasis on ‘personal choice,’ postfeminists point to the importance of choice. Choice is a crucial part of postfeminist culture due to it aiding in the previous point about presenting women as being fully emancipated. The idea is that if the genders are truly equal, girls are free to choose to do as they please thus providing them with autonomy. The idea of choice may be seen in the arrival of girl culture in music for Ann Powers argues, “At this intersection between the conventional feminine and the evolving Girl, what’s springing up is not a revolution but a mall. Girl Culture’s impulse to make no distinctions produces a sense that any choice is a good one, a creed of unbridled consumerism” (Powers 80). In an attempt to provide an audience with more options in the products they could consume, Disney created Miley Cyrus the Star. Miley Cyrus was marketed as a product through the Disney conglomerate and has participated in associating her artistic personae with a variety of brand names. In her slightly different embodiments of girl power, Miley Cyrus demonstrates how

consumerism is intertwined with identity in mass media representations for she has been shrewdly marketed to tween girls as a beacon of success and empowerment of which girls could attempt to identify with.

Beyond getting girls to identify with these pop idols, girl power is somewhat involved here. Miley Cyrus, Miley Stewart, and Hannah Montana may be read as having chosen to perform a femininity that finds its locus in the maintenance and control of the body as an illustration of her power as a girl (Blue, "The Best," 660), even though neither of these girls directly references feminism. Despite not directly referencing feminism, girl power sells and using Cyrus' familiar face is a fast and easy way for Disney Channel to create brand associations in the minds of consumers. When a widely loved entertainer like Cyrus endorses a product or cross-promotes one of Disney's theme parks with her music by singing a song from her new album at Walt Disney World, those products gain immediate credibility.

Disney producing television talent into stars is not uncommon. The company's earliest television stars, like Annette Funicello of *The Mickey Mouse Club*, received recording contracts and were cast in many Disney movies, but Disney was still a small company at the time and not vertically and horizontally integrated as it is today. Miley Cyrus, on the other hand, is living in a different era, for Disney now has experience honing these youngsters to stardom and has perfected the nuances of turning a teenager into a household name. Miley Cyrus is an example of vertically integrated stardom. Her contract with Disney stipulated the relationship of the star to Disney Channel regarding service and compensation. Such long-term contracting (4-5 years) allows Disney to build an impressive stable of stars. Retaining talent in this exclusive manner had the benefit of reducing risks associated with not securing the desired artists since there was

always a roster of stars ready to go since Disney Channel had in effect a stock company of characters (McDonald 88).

Since Annette Funicello, Disney has found more outlets to promote its stars and plays a larger role in constructing a certain image of that star for the public. Implemented in 2007, Disney's Talent 101 course, modeled after the NBA's Rookie Transition Program, requires all incoming talent, as well as their parents and siblings, to listen to guidance from various department heads (Clements and Marcus N.P.). This boot-camp-like atmosphere Disney created for their up-and-coming stars teaches them to be media-savvy, sets up professional expectations according to the network (Armstrong, 2007, N.P.), and is the very beginning of star construction. Although the Talent 101 program was after Cyrus had already gained notoriety, the idea is that behind every star is a corporation—in this case, Disney Channel—coaching her to appear a certain way (e.g., wholesome) to the public all to capture the viewer's attention and money.

Richard Dyer's star theory argues that a star is not a real person, but a constructed image made from a variety of media including magazines, films, music, and television. According to Dyer, institutions like Disney manufacture icons and celebrities like Cyrus for financial gain. These stars are constructed to represent "real people" experiencing real emotions and audiences respond to various elements of a star's personality by buying her music and deeming themselves fans. Increasing the brand identity benefits Disney Channel as these branded stars become a household name thus amassing sales in all of the media platforms the company operates. Disney Channel then models artists like Cyrus around the target audience they choose (in this case tween girls) so that some fans may attempt to replicate the star in their behavior and this could include engaging in consumption practices.

Dyer's theory can be broken down into what he labels as constructions and hegemony, audience and institutions. In applying Dyer's star theory to Miley Cyrus, there are a few means by which Disney is constructing her to appear and behave to appeal to their target tween girl audience for financial gain. According to Dyer's theory, stars are commodities produced and consumed on the strength of their meanings; so Cyrus evolves to remain fresh to audiences. Concerning Dyer's categories of "audience" and "institutions," Disney created Cyrus not merely for entertainment, but for monetary gain. She was molded around an audience that "buys her," and in this case, the audience was tweens. As far as the category of "construction" goes, "Miley Cyrus the Star" is built for an audience and is not a real personality. While Cyrus is indeed a real person, her pop star persona, and television personality are Disney constructions.

Different than other stars, Cyrus is not only a singer but a teen actress and singer who plays a teen playing a famous teen singer. Popular press biographies of Cyrus all emphasize her girl-next-door assets as an average kid from Tennessee who dreamed of becoming a singer and had her dreams come true. Such constructed narratives allow spaces for fan identification, making her glamor and superstardom seem approachable and accessible to youngsters. One sell sheet for Hannah Montana products notes, "It is about everyday girls with secret, superstar lives both real and imagined... All girls can relate to girl next door Miley Stewart, but they want to be like her alter ego, Hannah Montana" (Ebenkamp M040). "The Hannah Montana television show also strengthens the identification between the show's main characters and its fans by blurring the line between fiction and reality as the television sitcom frames the real-life singing career of Miley Cyrus, which then frames and advertises the sitcom-turned-reality-television-show" (Giroux and Pollock, 2010, 84). With such synergy, brand promotion is continually reinforced

since every one of Disney's products or stars is a commodity and ad for all other Disney products.

Successive brand reinforcement relates to capturing the tween demo in that Disney Channel is getting their tween girl viewers to promote their own self-brand identities too. At the end of the pilot episode of *Hannah Montana*, Miley gives Lily the scarf she wore while performing as Hannah Montana. All of Hannah's fans want this scarf. The message to viewers in this episode is that true fans who have the right fashions are en route to fame and fortune. The message is that self-branding means being decisive about what will reflect "you." Tweens' ability to exercise creative consumer power to promote their own brand identities leads to self-actualization and possibly even being considered rich and talented. Such a model depicting glamor is suggesting kids are only a few purchases away from becoming the superstar they fantasize being about (Giroux & Pollack 85). These average-girl narratives participate in the discourse of girl power by assuring her fans that she is just like they are, and thus, they are just like her. However, biographies neglect Cyrus' show business links such as her country singer father Billy Ray Cyrus, making her celebrity appear easily attainable. Nonetheless, the idea here is that the audience relates to the star due to commonality or admiration. Knowing Cyrus herself is a real person, fans enjoy and fantasize about her life as a famous pop star even going as far as to buy outfits like hers to show their admiration for her (Flaim N.P.).

Cyrus, as well as Disney's other girls, are a public face to make money. Audiences consume the ideal personified by Cyrus and made by Disney who modifies the image of the star around the target audience. The network makes a star like Cyrus based on what they think the audience wants as they ultimately decide if a star is successful or not. Cyrus was built to be remembered and recognized and to have a certain "quality" (e.g., ambitious, successful,

entrepreneurial, lucky, happy) which is unique to her thus making her recognizable. Recognition aided tweens in relating to her for qualities she has are what they want and will therefore try to buy. Such an ideology is what keeps the audience repeatedly consuming allowing Disney Channel hegemony.

DISNEYFICATION: SUSTAINING A CONSUMER CULTURE VIA NARRATIVE

Disney wields ideological and commercial power and thus may be viewed as a culture industry empire in that it mass-produces standardized cultural goods such as clothing, food, toys, music, television shows, and amusement parks. Exposure to such Disney products typically begins around ages 4-5 and continues through adulthood (Franz & Smulan 415). In *Mass-Mediated Culture*, Michael Real discusses how Disney can be so successful and claims it is via a “Disney Universe.” A Disney Universe refers to a world of total Disney infiltration. Such Disneyfication is a direct result of corporate synergy’s success in creating a commercial intertext that connects Disney’s characters, stories, and merchandise across all media and product lines, saturating not only markets but lives (Franz & Smulan 416).

One way Disneyfication occurs is through the television characters and stories themselves. For example, Disney ensures that the influence *Hannah Montana* has over her fans perpetuate real life fans’ spending habits. Storylines about Hannah Montana’s concerts paralleled Cyrus’s real-life concerts dates, so when fans on the show rushed to buy tickets, real-life fans who watched *Hannah Montana* were compelled to do the same (Deere 64, Cryer 20). Such episodes about consumption aired multiple times a day (Ostrow, “Hannah Montana,” F1). The repetition of the episodes may have been due to not being able to produce episodes quickly enough to satisfy audience’s insatiable appetite for the series but likely was an advertising

technique. Repetition is used in advertising as a way to keep a brand or product in the forefront of consumer's minds. Although not directly suggesting what tweens should buy, in *Hannah Montana* and other Disney Channel series, storylines about buying possessions reminds audience members that material possessions are important, and they should be buying them too. Such characters and the tween idols who play them command great loyalty from viewers which Disney Channel turns into equally lucrative brand loyalty (Deere 18). Since what girls see on screen may be what they desire to emulate, Disney turned *Hannah Montana* into an appealing brand for girls to model and be loyal towards by creating products girls can buy that are featured in some form in the series.

Disney has spent a substantial amount of time and resources figuring out what children want and how they play owing their success to aspirational programming like *Hannah Montana*. Via telephone interviews, focus groups, and mall intercepts (where interviewers stopped tweens in the mall to ask them about their favorite show) (Montgomery 22), Disney learned "Girls look up to Cyrus as a kid just trying to get through the week or as a singer they aspire to be like and make their purchases accordingly" (Donahue 20). To further encourage girls to emulate what they see on screen, Miley Stewart is someone her friends and fans imitate. Watching television is more than just a leisure activity for tweens. Unbeknownst to tweens, by engaging in viewing these programs, audiences are bombarded with messages of consumerism while they aspire to the lifestyles depicted on screen, now suddenly made to appear accessible with a quick visit to the store where associated products may be purchased (Curry 14).

The mere fact that Miley Stewart is surrounded by friends who idolize her helps viewers fantasize that they could be friends with her, and now the tween consumer has more reasons to buy *Hannah Montana* products. Tweens who are truly dedicated to the series may become avid

collectors of goods from the program, or at least fantasize about being like the character and try to live their fantasies by purchasing associated products accordingly.

Similar to the idea above of getting tweens to engage in self-branding and relate to the characters, a second way that Disneyfication occurs is when tweens become emotionally invested in a program and characters. Getting tweens emotionally invested in the program begins by making *Hannah Montana* realistic or recognizable, yet filled with fantasy. Miley Stewart, for example, is an average teenage girl (which according to Disney Channel means white and heteronormative—so-called markers of authentic and legitimate all-American girlhood) who experiences the usual trials and tribulations of being a teenager. Miley Stewart attends school, quarrels with her older brother, and spends time in the company of her friends—when she is not out shopping or showing off her purchases. For these reasons, Miley is relatable to many girls of the same or similar age. However, by night, she leads a double life as *Hannah Montana*, an international singing sensation. Money, attention, traveling, and meeting famous stars is part of her posh lifestyle once transformed—something some girls dream of.

Her celebrity lifestyle is a clear contrast to her school-girl life allowing for both relatable aspects and fantastical aspects to be present in the program. Both lifestyles are aspirational to viewers in that no matter her persona, Miley appears in control and the center of attention. For example, she comes from a single-parent household (a repeat of Disney's absent mother trope seen in feature films) where her older brother's and father's lives revolve around her. The message the program sends is that the tween is in control. Such messages are concocted for it is what the networks believe tweens want and is a way for these youngsters to watch their hopes and dreams of control, for example, play out in front of them (Curry 18).

On the program, Miley has a walk-in closet as big as an entire room as well as fame and fortune. The more she has, the more her friends envy her and the more her status rises.

Audiences who have developed an emotional attachment to Hannah Montana may admire her and learn that her control, success, and happiness comes with excessive consumption because these onscreen role models would not be who they are without the possessions around them. The humanity of the character coupled with the real life similarities of the character and the star who portrays her makes tweens feel like they are only a few purchases away from being able to live the ideal lifestyle they see on screen. Series like Hannah Montana show capitalist class relations as natural and fixed—ultimately, our modern economic society with its consumer values.

As evidence that Disney has successfully positioned tween girls as consumers, on media outlets such as YouTube, *Hannah Montana* “unbaggings” have grown in frequency and popularity. In these videos, young users recorded themselves unpacking and displaying the many bags of *Hannah Montana* or Miley Cyrus merchandise they just bought. Having received requests from friends and subscribers to view her collection of merchandise, YouTube user Aly Walker shows off her “*Hannah Montana* Stuff.” Nearly 40,000 viewers have watched the crudely shot footage in which only Walker’s hands are shown displaying her *Hannah Montana* ice packs, sandwich bags, and deodorant. Halfway into the video Walker pulled out signed copies of Cyrus’s autobiography which she had received from the pop star herself—proof of her communion with fame. Disney created these products, of which Ms. Walker and others have eagerly consumed, as an extension of the fantasy world portrayed in the series and are constant reminders of fame, money, happiness, recognition, popularity, and acceptance; aspects of life many—especially tweens—desire (Hodel, N.P.).

CONCLUSION

This chapter described the ways Disney Channel constructs and attracts the tween audience for financial gain and in so doing, sells girl power. Disney sees the tween girl demographic as a recognizable target market segment, and while girls in this stage are in a state of complex flux, Disney acknowledges and essentializes them as homogenous. Seeing audiences in this way enables Disney to better instill ideology marketing and lifestyle marketing upon this liminal group. Both of these forms of marketing entail complex interactions between Disney Channel, consumers, cultural identities, and political identities.

As part of their lifestyle marketing, Disney Channel uses strategies such as cross-promotion and branding to solicit and resonate with tweens. The audience Disney has devised and attracted is one that is fabricated around stereotypes, agendas, and assumptions of which their lifestyles become subject to via Disneyfication. Such as audiences may be considered just as much a manufactured product as the television series themselves signaling girlhood cannot be divorced from how audience-consumers are imagined by the media giant. As far as ideology marketing is concerned, the term indicates cultural discourses are an integral component of the cultural product. Disney's products encompass messages of conformity and yet rebellion, oppositional culture, and mass culture—positions manifested in their television texts.

What studying industrial strategies has brought to this study is the notion that capitalism, culture, and ideology cannot be separated into autonomous forces since they are inherently related. As this study has thus far indicated, there are contradictions in Disney Channel ideology, and thus cultural products are also contradictory, indicating girl culture is the market of contradiction. Such contradictions are to be evaluated in the next chapter on texts.

CHAPTER 3

DISNEY CHANNEL TELEVISION: GIRL POWER AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Having established the cultural climate and industrial motivations of this era of programming, this chapter presents a content analysis of the programs themselves to illustrate and investigate previously stated material. As demonstrated in the aforementioned chapter, one-way audiences decode Disney ideology is by participating in the franchises through the products they purchase which then become a part of their everyday lives. However, in watching the shows themselves, audience decoding is also occurring. The goal of this chapter is to best gather what these programs are relaying to viewers regarding cultural anxiety precipitated by girls' increased visibility and shifting gender roles in society during the 1990s and 2000s. What are the prominent messages and themes these programs uphold and tweens may be decoding? To answer this question, a close inquiry into these texts is required to reveal how super or magical powers serve as a form of agency for girls, but also a reinforcement of hegemonic gender roles thereby expressing Disney's, and perhaps greater society's, images of females.

Disney is known for promoting a "princess culture" for girls, for which critics and scholars (e.g., Bell, Haas, & Sells 1995; England et al. 2011; Orenstein 2006 & 2011; Giroux & Pollock 2010; Towbin et al. 2004; Faherty 2001; Wiersma 2001; Giroux 1993) have argued portrays an unrealistic image of beauty and reinforces oppressive gender stereotypes. However, in the 2000s, the company began to shift some of its filmic portrayals of princesses with films such as *Tangled* (Greno and Howard 2010) by portraying alternative versions of the many other types of females a girl can grow up to be including independent and resistant to gender stereotypes (Rome 22-23). Images of gender in Disney Channel series of the same time are similarly changed but are still incongruent with the reality of gender roles in contemporary

American society. Nonetheless, female characters on Disney Channel series from the 2000s evolved in a direction very much in contrast with past representations of females in Disney produced media. Disney's girls of the 2000s shifted in a new direction replete with girl power. Characters like Raven, Alex, and Miley have agency, embrace fluid gender roles, and disrupt the dominant discourse, indicating Disney appeared to be refocusing the lens and reconstructing girlhood perhaps as a result of the socio-historical underpinnings mentioned in the previous chapter.

However, even when the research indicates positive gains for female characters, stereotypical gender scripts persist. For example, strong-willed and independent Alex wastes no time fighting off evil demons with her magical powers. However, she illustrates her apparent gender role constraint when she voluntarily relinquishes her power in season four to not only keep her family together but position herself for a life of domesticity. Likewise, Miley also gives up her celebrity power to hold tight to her family and friends rather than pursue a career indicating female desires, choices, and empowerment are ultimately linked to tradition. The main takeaway from these representations is that girls are empowered agential beings but only up to a certain point. While they occasionally display multi-dimensionality, they quickly fall flat in that they are also stereotypical and perform certain gender roles that society has dictated for them. The next section provides an overview and explicit discussion of texts chosen and the methodologies used in carrying out the content analysis revealing the kinds and frequency of gender representations related to issues of empowerment, agency, multidimensionality and gender performance on Disney Channel tween shows from the 2000s.

DESCRIPTION OF TEXTS

From 2001-2011, Disney Channel's most widely viewed and profitable programs were a series of live-action sitcoms meant for and starring tween and teen girls: *Lizzie McGuire*, *That's So Raven*, *Wizards of Waverly Place*, *Hannah Montana*, and *Sonny with a Chance*. These series were similar in that each was a 30-minute sitcom revolving around a tween or teen girl played by a real life tween or teen girl. Storylines contained plot points about stereotypical coming-of-age events such as first dates, struggling for independence, and obtaining after school jobs. The majority of these programs were profitable for Disney Channel, repeatedly aired throughout the day, broke company records in terms of merchandise sales, and the majority of these series were long running (four or more seasons). Two of these series, however, are standouts and will be not included in the content analysis. Girls and their especially endowed powers are the focus of this analysis, and in *Lizzie McGuire* and *Sonny with a Chance*, powers of this sort were non-existent deeming these series anomalies thus excluding them from the analysis.

Despite *Lizzie McGuire* being the flagship series of Disney's Decade of the Tween Girl (DDTG), it never approached the viewership or degrees of commercial successes of tween-targeted sitcoms that would come later. Similarly, *Sonny with a Chance* (2009-2011) was something of an irregularity as well. While the ensemble program follows the experiences of teenager Sonny Munroe (Demi Lovato), the newest cast member of her favorite live television sketch show, the series and its star never saw the substantial success the other programs or stars experienced. More importantly, both series are different enough from the others of the same era in regards to plots, characters, power usage, etc. that they could not be coded along with the others. For example, *Lizzie* and *Sonny* did not have special powers or double lives they were

trying to hide like characters from the other series did, and these were coding categories in the content analysis.

Before proceeding with the results of the content analysis, a brief description of the premise and characters of each of the coded programs is necessary. By understanding the general premise and characters, some of the main themes in each series will be more visible leading to an understanding of how coding categories emerged, the evolution of these programs, how one program influenced the other, and the similarities and differences among the programs.

That's So Raven

Debuting in 2003, this series is about a girl with psychic abilities. Teenager Raven Baxter (Raven Symoné) is from a middle-class African-American family and lives in San Francisco with her married parents, Tanya (T'Keyah Crystal Keymáh) and Victor (Rondell Sheridan). Tanya is a full-time mother who eventually goes back to law school to finish her degree, while Victor is a restaurant owner. Like other protagonists on series of the same era, Raven has a younger brother, Corey (Kyle Massey), who annoys Raven. Each episode focuses on Raven and typical teenage milestones she experiences along with her two best friends, Chelsea (Anneliese Van der Pol) and Eddie (Orlando Brown). Such milestones include dealing with mean girls, going on a first date, attending her first high school party, and learning to drive.

Raven is mature and independent, yet experiences some teen angst as the result of the trouble, adventure, and mischief she gets into when using her psychic powers. Although her psychic visions are not something she can ordinarily conjure on her own, rather they are more random and spontaneous events, Raven lives a double life in the sense that she has her psychic self and regular girl self. Her psychic self references her life as a teen psychic in which she

unexpectedly has psychic visions that she regularly acknowledges in front of her family and close friends. Her regular or authentic girl self is her life when it is unobstructed by her gift of seeing the future since she is not seeing visions all the time. While not too distinctly different personas, when Raven is around her friends and family, she announces and describes the visions of the future that arbitrarily present themselves to her (she is unable to purposefully conjure such future visions on her own). When outside of her close-knit circle of confidants, however, anytime a psychic vision manifests, she is sure to keep the moment private out of fear of ostracism as many believe she is lying, is mentally unstable, or is abnormal. Like many teenagers, Raven wants to be accepted for inner qualities like her vivacious personality and will hide her special abilities to accomplish this goal.

Hannah Montana

First airing in 2006, *Hannah Montana*, set in Malibu, CA, is about Miley Stewart (Miley Cyrus), who lives a double life as an average tween by day and famous recording artist, Hannah Montana, by night. While she does not necessarily possess a superpower, Miley does have celebrity power as Hannah Montana in that she has access to resources such as money and influential people that can help her achieve or obtain whatever her heart desires. Storylines previously seen in *That's So Raven* surrounding issues such as first kisses and feuding with friends and siblings are themes present throughout this series as Miley balances these typical adolescent issues and fame. While Miley does not have a younger sibling like Raven did, she does have an immature older brother, Jackson (Jason Earles) who, like many male characters on these series, is a slacker with little ambition and engages in constant sibling rivalry. Miley's slightly younger friend, Rico (Moises Arias), serves a similar function to what Corey did for

Raven: provide a constant source of annoyance and disgust to the girls around him. Differing from other programs, Miley is raised by a single father, Robby (played by Cyrus' life father, Billy Ray Cyrus) since the backstory is that her mother passed when Miley was just an infant. Like the other fathers described thus far, Robby works hard to be the best parent he can be and even manages Miley's career as Hannah, but sometimes he acts more like a friend to his children than a leader. Like the other protagonists, Miley is not without her two female and male sidekicks: Lily (Emily Osment) and Oliver (Mitchell Musso). Lily is much like Chelsea from *That's So Raven* in that her peers view her as an "airhead." Similarly, Oliver has a similar attribute to Raven's young brother Eddie: girl-crazy and sports-loving. Together the trio navigates tweenhood while having a few star-studded and glamorous adventures along the way.

The role of the double is prominent in this series. Miley is a typical schoolgirl who quickly turns into a singing sensation with the help of a blonde wig, a slight modification in persona, and the stage name Hannah Montana. Before becoming famous, Miley grew up in Tennessee watching her famous country singer father in the spotlight. Seeing that there is a downside to fame (e.g., lack of privacy or others befriending you only for your money or status), before becoming part of the cultural lexicon, Miley had already created Hannah to protect her private life. While stars often wear a disguise in public only after having become famous, Miley wore the disguise and used the stage name Hannah Montana since well before she became famous to hide her true identity and live what she calls a normal life—one not defined by fame and fortune. Like Raven, Miley was always scared to reveal her alternate identity out of fear. Her fears were that she would be liked only because of her celebrity rather than who she is on the inside. Like Raven, Miley has told her closest friends about her power and uses her special abilities as a celebrity to try to get what she wants or get out of trouble.

Wizards of Waverly Place

Lastly, there is the *Wizards of Waverly Place* which aired concurrently with *Hannah Montana* although it premiered and ended a year later (2007-2012). The series takes place in the Greenwich Village area of New York City and focuses on Alex Russo, a teen girl and wizard-in-training who knows spells that can help her do everything from turn back time to make herself disappear. Differing from the other series, Alex is not the only person with special powers. Alex and her siblings, younger brother Max (Jake Austin) and older brother Justin (David Henrie), are all wizards-in-training. The premise of the series is that each sibling competes with one another to eventually become the family wizard selected to pass on their magic to the next generation of Russo's. The Russo's are a mix of Italian, Mexican, and American and live above the Waverly Sub Station, their family-owned and operated restaurant. While their cultural heritage is important to them and they celebrate some traditions such as a *quinceañera*, their ethnicities are not prominent in the majority of episodes. Italian-American father Jerry (David DeLuise) comes from a wizard family and as a teen was crowned the family wizard after competing with his brother and sister. In an unusual move and much to the disappointment of his sister, he transferred his powers to his brother. He claims he did this because he needed them more and because he wanted to be a mortal in order to marry Mexican beauty Theresa (Maria Canals Barrera) since mortals (non-wizards) are only permitted to marry other mortals.

While giving up one's powers for love is a constant theme in Disney movies such as *The Little Mermaid* (Clements and Musker, 1989) in which a woman literally gives up her voice for a prince, a man doing similar for a woman is rare and has not been seen in Disney television. Despite this paucity, Jerry and Theresa are similar to the other parents profiled thus far for they do the best they can to raise their children. In the typical manner of these programs, Jerry is more

relaxed in his parenting style while Theresa is firm. Like Raven, and Miley, Alex's friends and family are important to her. Her sidekick, Harper (Jennifer Stone), is like Chelsea and Lily for she is considered dumb by most of her peers. Unlike Raven and Miley, Alex does not have a good friend who is a boy although her brother Justin fills this role.

Like Raven and Miley, Alex's adventures are unbeknownst to most of her friends since the number one rule in the Wizard World is to keep magic protected by hiding it from mortals. When Alex is not practicing magic, like Raven and Miley, she is learning what it is like to grow from tween to teen and experiences typical trials and tribulations of youth such as the stress from trying out for cheerleading to dealing with her first crush.

As demonstrated thus far, these three series were similar in that the lead characters possessed extraordinary powers. They were also similar in that the extraordinary powers sometimes caused "troubles" of the sort that often formed the dramatic nexus of any given program within the series. However, the content analysis reveals there were obvious double standards apparent in the ways that female and male tween characters navigated their lives. To be more specific, the protagonist Raven from *That's So Raven*, Alex from *Wizards of Waverly Place*, and Miley from *Hannah Montana* were each endowed with extraordinary power, but these abilities hindered their very empowerment due to the social context in which the storylines are set: school and home life. Boy characters did not face such predicaments. The girls feel pressured to hide their talents to fit in with Disney's representations of societal standards while boys were under no such pressure. It was as if the girls had lives tainted with extraordinariness. The double standard manifested not only in the type of trouble but in the lengths to which these female characters went to suppress or hide evidence of their extraordinariness. These ranged

from minor socially awkward situations or the need to temporarily redirect their powers to avoid embarrassments, to extended representations of expression of self-doubt and otherwise agonizing choices between living openly with their powers or giving up friendships and “normal family life.”

The content analysis of *That's So Raven*, *Hannah Montana*, and *Wizard of Waverly Place* interrogates these gender differences and in so doing uncovers a number of themes and messages about girlhood relating to empowerment, agency, and stereotypes. The content analysis makes sense of the extraordinary abilities of these tweens by showing how power served as a form of resistance to traditional gender roles despite the fact the girls experienced infringements on their abilities in ways male characters did not. Results of this content analysis show how giving characters superpowers is a narrative technique to diminish these characters and illustrates a paradox of girl power: so-called powerful girls are not powerful after all. Raven, Miley, and Alex have endured as a metaphor for those ladies who try and “have it all”; indicating travails of these television examples parallel those of their off-screen counterparts.

METHODS

A quantitative content analysis was performed to generate findings on the overarching topics that are addressed in and frame *That's So Raven*, *Wizards of Waverly Place*, and *Hannah Montana*. This section lays out how the content analysis was performed as well as the plan and procedure for carrying out such an analysis. The sample and sampling procedures, how episodes were coded, and how data was analyzed will all be discussed here. Some coding details have been put into an appendix to save space. The primary goal of this analysis is to summarize the usage and meaning of these girls' power and double lives to determine gender differences and

their meaning. The results of this analysis will better inform our understanding of public perception issues surrounding girlhood.

The content analysis was a broad, informal viewing of forty-eight episodes of three Disney Channel programs from DDTG: *That's So Raven*, *Wizards of Waverly Place* and *Hannah Montana*. Appendix A provides a detailed list of episodes used, and Appendix B provides information regarding the rationale behind which episodes were selected for coding. Briefly, however, for each season of the three series, the first episode and the last episode to air were coded. The highest rated episode regarding viewership (as reported by Nielsen) and one random episode (determined by a random number generator available online at Random.org) were also coded. In total, forty-eight episodes or approximately twenty-eight hours of viewing time were coded. This amount of time also corresponds to the average amount of hours a typical tween watched television in a week in 2009 (McDonough N.P.).

Narrative is more than the execution of a screenplay. To fully analyze a media product, the concept of narrative should be explored as was done in this content analysis. The field of “narratology” has its roots in structuralist approaches to rhetoric and linguistics, but has evolved over the years into a diverse form of inquiry that prominently includes the study of narrative structure in multi-media texts (Meister N.P.). Episodes of the previously mentioned series are examined from the perspective of Seymour Chatman’s concept of “contextual narratology” (1990, 1978). Contextual narratology emphasizes attention to both the storyline of a narrative and its discourse, the latter in turn a function of any of a number of perspectives. Those perspectives of greatest interest to this study include feminist philosophical positions and the intersection of feminist perspectives and power relations. Appendix D shows what exactly in these episodes regarding narrative elements were used for coding.

Other scholarly sources that provided guidelines of a more technical nature used for the operational planning of content analysis included Donald Treadwell's *Introducing Communication Research* and the previously mentioned *Visual Methodologies* by Gillian Rose. Treadwell's text informed the organization of data used in the quantitative analysis. Rose provided fresh insights into the ways that patterns of visually presented material in multimedia texts contribute to intertextuality, often in efficient and interesting ways.

To answer how Disney Channel is portraying gender roles, particularly girl's gender roles, the following categories for coding were devised, used, labeled and are defined and presented below. A more detailed explanation of these categories and examples are also present in Appendix C.

Themes: This category was used to record events or themes that commonly ensued in episodes from all three series or within a series.

Moral: The moral of every episode was recorded whether or not it had anything to do with gender or the research questions.

Protagonist's Power Use: What kind of power was used (celebrity, psychic abilities, supernatural abilities), by whom, when, and how were all recorded.

Explicit Gendered Comments: Remarks made by or towards a female or male that was directly about gender were recorded.

Gendered Observations About Females/Gendered Observations About Males:
The difference between this category and the other category above is that this

category examines implicit observations about gender or generalizations of gender representations while the other two categories looked at particular situations or explicit comments where gender played a crucial role and was expressly mentioned by a character.

Double Life: The double life theme was noted and recorded on the coding sheets. A double life entails the psychic, magical, or celebrity aspects of a girl's life as compared to life as an everyday girl where special ability does not come into play.

Having gathered this information and transferred it to a spreadsheet (included in Appendix D) for overall clarity and ability to compare and contrast the programs, occurrences of coding themes such as explicit insults relating to gender, for example, were counted. Similarities or aberrations of storylines, characters, outcomes, etc. within categories, but even among categories were also analyzed. Upon narrowing in on the frequency of events, looking at common or unusual themes and tropes, and utilizing narrative analysis to understand the stories and their messages and meanings, a few conclusions were able to be drawn and are detailed in the following sections labeled Empowerment, Multi-Dimensional, Agency, and Gender Performance. These sections are not the coding categories I used, but rather four conclusions I have labeled for simplicity and clarity based on findings from the above-mentioned coding categories.

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Girls and Empowerment

While there is no agreed-upon definition of the term “empowerment,” the definition presented by the United Nations is most useful for purposes of this study. The two indices the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) developed around 1995 are the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), and each is used to measure development regarding females around the world and their treatment compared to men. To paraphrase the UN’s pamphlet (*Women’s Empowerment*) and a section of their website (www.unwomen.org) containing the description of Women’s Empowerment Principles, they define empowerment as liberation from patriarchal constraints, autonomy, and capacity to fulfill any potential as a full and inclusive member of society.

For this study, a unique definition of empowerment based on the UN’s is used. Empowerment will be defined as a personal choice in which there is the ability to fulfill potential, capacity to resist patriarchy (this entails having freedom and independence), and a means of an expansive form of gender (ability to not be relegated to traditional gender roles). In the coded programs, empowerment was metaphorically presented as a special power: psychic ability, wizardry skills, or celebrity influence. Despite their special abilities—or forms of potential empowerment—Raven, Alex, and Miley were repeatedly depicted as impotent and subordinated. Despite possessing great powers, it was not uncommon to see them failing at fulfilling potential, being dominated by patriarchy, and remaining in regressive gender roles. For example, Alex can clone herself with her magic in order to be two places at once, but her brothers abuse her clone preventing her from accomplishing her goals and thereby deeming her impotent of resisting male forces. Additionally, all three of these girls experienced the difficulty

of not having their capabilities culturally recognized. For example, Raven often told others of impending danger and tried to break gender boundaries by being the girl who saves everyone. However, when questioned about where her information of impending danger stemmed, Raven acknowledged her psychic abilities only to be ignored and disregarded by nonbelievers in such metaphysical feats. No one following Raven's warnings of bad omens indicates a lack of empowerment since according to the definition presented in this study, she was not able to fully engage in an expansive form of gender if others were not recognizing her attempts at heroism.

In these above-mentioned cases, special powers did not necessarily correlate to empowerment. However, there were times when these girls did experience freedom, independence, the ability to fulfill potential or step out of oppressive gender roles and in these instances, their power aided them meaning there were occasions when girls were empowered. For example, Miley uses her celebrity power to maintain and attract important friendships and business contacts; Alex uses magic to escape imprisonment, and Raven uses her ability to predict the future to successfully prepare for and obtain a high profiled job.

To best understand power usage and how it works for or against the protagonists in terms of empowering them or not, the following were examined: 1) girls' goals in using their power—also interpreted as what they planned to do as an empowered girl; 2) whether or not they accomplished their goal with their power—seen as whether or not they were actually experiencing empowerment; and 3) the outcomes of their power usage which represents the effectiveness of female empowerment or an empowered girl.

Raven, Alex, and Miley each had goals when using their powers, and these goals were not always to empower oneself. The majority (56%) of the time it was the girl's objective to use her power to help a friend (make a friend happy, help a friend attain a desired object, or assist in

helping a friend achieve a goal). Girls were shown as being successful in these other-directed applications of power 75% of the time. The outcomes of such goals resulted in strengthened friendships or familial ties. For example, in the episode “Delinquent Justin,” as a birthday present for her older brother, Alex uses her powers to manipulate time and have him graduate high school and college early. With a wave of her wand and the use of a simple spell, she accomplishes this goal. In this instance, she was empowered because she had the goal of giving a thoughtful present to someone and successfully used her magic to accomplish her goal. Later in the story, she reverses the spell with another one to strengthen the bond she has with her brother, and this too works. At the end of the episode, the results of both spells was a deeper connection between the two siblings for when Justin was away at college; Alex realized just how much they cared for each other and upon his return home, the two were closer than ever.

According to the aforementioned definition of empowerment, when an extraordinary girl implemented her power but failed in meeting her goal (often this was when she was trying to help herself), this was counted as failure of attaining empowerment. Of the times girls were presented as having a goal to use their powers for themselves, they were only successful in self-directed applications about 30% of the time. For example, in the episode “The Road to Audition” Raven and her friends are obsessed with a television program called *Undercover Superstar*, where talent scouts come to schools to find musically talented students. Raven wants to be on the show after she has a vision of a janitor saying he is undercover at the school to find the next pop star. Eager for fame, Raven performs for all of the school janitors in hope that one of them is the undercover star searcher. Despite putting on stunning performances, none of the employees are the undercover talent agent. Giving up on trying to impress anyone with her musical talents, Raven abandons her quest for fame never realizing the one school janitor she kept neglecting

was the undercover talent agent the entire time. In this instance, Raven had an insight about the possibility of appearing on a favorite television series and was able to act on her desire in some capacity. However, her efforts did not work in her favor. Ultimately, she was not empowered.

Sometimes girls may have had a goal in mind that was well-intentioned but even in these cases, whether the goal was to help herself or others, she failed indicating despite extraordinary abilities these girls were rarely empowered. In the episode “Leave it to Diva” Raven’s paternal grandmother, Nana Loretta (Judyann Elder), makes an unexpected visit. Upon the visit, Raven gets a psychic vision of the weekend turning sour for reasons unbeknownst to her. Raven assumes the glimpse of the heated scene was due to Nana’s long held disbelief that Raven and her mother are psychic—often the cause of tension between Nana and the family during her visits. In response, Raven attempts to provide a pleasurable weekend for everyone. For example, when Nana wants Raven to join the “White Glove Society” a form of charm school Raven secretly abhors (indication of a desire to break from conventional gender norms), Raven nonetheless agrees to host a meeting for the society at her home in order to please her grandmother and avoid conflict of any sort.

In this instance, empowerment for Raven means the ability to keep her family from feuding and to ensure this does not happen; she goes along with something she disagrees with (hosting the White Glove event) to avoid confrontation. Despite Raven’s efforts, the weekend was disastrous due to her younger brothers’ antics with a rat that gets loose during the society’s event. Although Raven used her power by acting on the vision she saw, it was to no avail. While she may be read as powerful and impotent, she ultimately does not achieve her goal of keeping the peace while Nana is in town and therefore, according to this study’s definition, is not empowered after all. This is but one of the many examples in which girls establish goals and set

out with the best of intentions to achieve them, but despite having a viable power at her disposal, they lack empowerment. Especially unique to this episode is that Raven was trying to help her family (something girls usually succeed in) and still could not accomplish the task.

A pessimistic summary of the three protagonists' relationships with their powers reveals struggle as to whether or not to use their powers in the first place—often a matter of inner turmoil. This is then followed by partial victories and anticlimactic outcomes when they do. In many instances, the well-intentioned goals that the girls set their hearts on end up exposed as ill-conceived and often naïve in the eyes of secondary characters thus undermining their use of the powers. A specific example observed in several episodes of all three series was the scenario in which the extraordinary girl set out to impress someone in her social circle, and although she meets her goals, in the process she hurts her friends, realizing a bit too late that meeting her goal was not worth the cost of friendship. Not only does her application of extraordinary power hurt others, but the paradox is that her standing with her social circle is diminished and therefore there is loss of empowerment—at least from the perspective of typical tween girls with their notorious concern with tight-knit social circles (Jennings 2014, Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2007, Pattiselanno et al. 2015). One example of this is in the episode “Smarty Pants.” Alex agrees to participate as Harper’s teammate in an academic tournament called the Quiz Bowl. To give the team an edge in the competition, Alex wears the “Smarty Pants,” a magical pair of pants that gives its wearers superior knowledge. Alex answers initial questions correctly quickly putting her team in the lead and Harper is delighted that Alex studied. However, when Alex begins answering all the questions in the first round, Harper begins to feel angry about not getting a chance to answer and prove her intellect. Alex promises not to interfere during the second round but Harper storms off when she breaks her promise and continues to answer all the questions. To

make amends with her friend, Alex takes off her smarty pants in front of everyone. Harper forgives her and they win the tournament anyways. In this scenario, Alex's goal of helping her friend win was met when she used the magical smarty pants to her advantage. While Harper was initially upset about not having a chance to show off her knowledge of not answering questions, she was forgiving when she understood Alex's intentions. Alex ultimately accomplished her goal but did not realize her well-meaning efforts would nearly disrupt her tight-knit friendship with Harper. Ultimately empowered, the message here is that such power must be exercised with caution.

The numerical results from the content analysis presented in the previous section clearly support anecdotal impressions that when a potentially powerful girls' goals were accomplished, the intended outcome or the manner in which the goal was met was not always what was expected. Such results indicate partial empowerment in that a girl may have some level of empowerment but since she is not fully in control is not fully empowered. For example, in the episode "Sweet Home Hannah Montana," after her father redecorated her room to look like her childhood bedroom (pink, frilly, and horse-themed), rather than be grateful, Miley is embarrassed. To enlighten her father of her feelings, Miley uses her popularity as Hannah Montana to win a tacky shirt reminiscent of Robby's 1980s country singing days to gift to him. The shirt is a prize at an arcade booth, but Miley lacks the necessary number of tickets to redeem to get it. Eyeing a little girl with just the right amount of tickets, Miley tells her she will bring Hannah Montana to her if she gives up the tickets. The girl abides and a quick costume change and a few minutes of being Hannah Montana later, Miley gets the tickets and the shirt. Robby cherishes the shirt, however, and her message to him never got across. Since the shirt was not bought as a thoughtful gesture directed towards her father, but rather to criticize her father and

express ungratefulness at her father's gesture, her celebrity power ultimately did not work for the outcome was not what was intended. Surprisingly, empowerment via consumerism did not work here. Instead, capitalist patriarchy reinforces its ability to restrict Miley. In this episode, Robby was trying to do something nice for Miley, but Miley resisted his actions. Robby's interest in maintaining the patriarchal order is so strong that it overrides the respectful relationship he has with his daughter and her special power. Perhaps this is a message that a girl should submit to the patriarchal order rather than attempt to resist it as Miley had done. If this is indeed the message and is what is occurring on the series, Disney's girls have little means of empowerment.

Girls and Agency

A subset of empowerment is agency. Like the word empowerment, agency also has differing meanings and connotations. The definition of agency adopted for this study is that by Anthony Giddens for it considers agency and its relation to power. "What is the logical connection between action and power?...to be able to 'act otherwise' means being able to intervene in the world, or to refrain from such intervention, with the effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs" (Giddens 114). Under this definition, girls have complete freedom and autonomy when they are capable of making rational and moral choices that shape the conditions in which they live. When using Giddens' definition, a girl has agency when she can deploy a range of powers and can influence powers deployed by another. If a girl can make a difference in situations like this, that is, if she can change a course of events or the context of a situation using her special powers, she has agency. Not being able to use her powers in a way that creates change means a girl lacks agency.

Sometimes a girl was empowered (was able to use her special talents) but the outcomes of using these talents did not change her surroundings (in this case she did not have agency). When coding for agency, outcomes of a girl's special power usage and how much the power usage changed a girl's environment were examined. Generally speaking, there was a correlation with successful power usage and agency. If a girl succeeded in using her powers as intended, her environment was changed. This being said, the focus was not so much if girls had agency or not, but what were the sources and obstacles of agency. When examining this, it became apparent that agency was dependent on the men in their lives. There was a common reason girls were or were not denied agency, and this reason has to do with the males in their lives. To understand agency or lack of it in these sitcoms, how other characters, particularly the males, viewed these girls is considered. One of the best examples stems from whether or not others found girls "intelligent enough."

In the forty-eight coded episodes, there were forty-one instances—nearly one instance per episode—of girls being undermined or considered unintelligent by men in that males did not think they would accomplish much in their lives or they considered girls to lack substantial knowledge. Males viewing females as incompetent occurred twenty-five times more than females viewing males as incompetent. Boys usually thought girls to be lacking in cognitive abilities as verbalized by them referring to girls as "stupid." In scenarios such as these, girls were ultimately denied the opportunity to act and make a change because a boy would deem her too mentally incompetent and would step in preventing her from even attempting to use her agency.

For example, in the episode "Art Museum Piece," characters from famous historical paintings and pictures magically come to life. To put these characters back into the pictures from which they originated, Alex must not only know the magic words but must be able to know

pertinent information about the images such as the time and place they were created. After the Mona Lisa comes to life, Justin demands Alex use a spell to turn the Florentine woman back into a painting so as not to alter history by manipulating the iconic image. Despite his demands, Justin assumes that Alex is too unwitting to know when and where the painting was created—key information needed to complete the spell. His assumptions are correct for when he asks if Alex she even knows which Leonardo painted the masterpiece she replies with, “DiCaprio?” to which Justin rolls his eyes, literally pushes her out of the way, pulls out his wand, and attempts to the spell himself. In this instant, Alex had the opportunity to serve as an agentic being and save an object of artistic history from irreversible damage, but due to her brother’s demands, her lack of knowledge, and his awareness of her absence of cognitive abilities, she was unable to create this sort of great change herself, therefore, she lacked agency.

Throughout the coded episodes, there were no instances where a boy thought a girl was intelligent and thus allowed her to proceed with her action which resulted in a changed environment (the girl was not only empowered, she had agency). If a girl was intelligent and used her powers to create change (she had agency) this was always done alone, with another female friend, or with some help of a man. For example, similar to the example above, in the same episode, legendary baseball player Babe Ruth’s photo comes to life and talks with the children. When her father says she needs to know when and where the picture of Babe Ruth originates to put him back in the picture, she acknowledges her ignorance by saying, “I need to know stuff? [That’s] Justin’s department.” When Justin tells her “Yankee Stadium, 1929” she manages to complete the spell and put Babe Ruth back in the picture but only due to Justin’s assistance of providing key facts. In this example, Alex manipulated time and history by putting a deceased historical figure who had come to life back into a famous picture thus manipulating

history. Alex has agency in that she can create changes in her surroundings by using the spell, but this agency was provided to her by a male—she was not able to act on her own.

What is interesting about this last example and how it differs from the first is that Alex senses her intellectual weakness and resorts to the males around her for guidance. Alex's intuition she is different from her male counterparts is due to the fact she, like other tween girl characters, is treated differently too. Her differential treatment is due to her family and friends also perceiving her as lacking intelligence. In the *Wizards of Waverly Place* pilot "Crazy 10 Minute Sale." Jerry refers to Alex as a "dummy" and in a clear display of a double standard, disciplines Alex for her risk-taking behavior of using magic when he was not present, but acquits his two boys upon finding out they also used magic in a dangerous manner and broke his wand. Alex reasons her treatment as unfair and rolls her eyes in stereotypical teenage fashion while the boys think nothing of the situation and leaves Alex to stew in her anger. Alex's unjust treatment and subsequent punishment stymie her efforts for the day while her brothers can easily go about the rest of their business without repercussion. Here, Alex has no agency. Her efforts to explain her side of the story are not taken into consideration. Powerless to create change, it is the men who once again control her life in this episode. Not taken seriously by all those around her, any of her attempts at change are negated and Alex, therefore, lacks agency. What it means for the program that Alex lacks agency (is not able to create change) is that she is not as useful or as important as others—particularly the males—in the Russo family further upholding that there is inequality between the sexes.

Further examples of gender differences relating to intelligence and therefore girls' agency or hindrance of it may be seen in *Hannah Montana*. In the episode, "Wherever I Go" Miley confides to her brother, Jackson, that she does not understand why Lily is acting ambivalent

towards her. Jackson replies with, "Let me try to think like a girl." He then sits and stares blankly into space as he giggles and imitates flipping his hair before turning to Miley and claiming, "No, I still don't get it." His words and actions indicate his belief that girls do not think nor are they able to supply answers. Miley ignores his caricature of girls but recognizes Lily needs to be spoken with in person for her actions to be better understood. The context of the scene is important to note in that as part of the "B" storyline; Jackson feels emasculated now that his girlfriend, Sienna has a solid career as he struggles with a minimum wage job. When Miley goes to him for advice, his anger from his problems with Sienna become an angry generalization of all females which he then takes out on his sister with his silly imitation. The nonsensical giddiness Jackson displayed to portray his view of a superficial thought process for females, repeats in some form across all the series. Such a cultural stereotype goes back to, for example, women being withheld from voting or attending school due to their perceived lack of intelligence, and has long been present since even before the founding of the United States. The stereotype that women are not intellectual equals with men still linger as this scene demonstrates.

Incidentally, this episode is one in which Miley and Lily head to Stanford for college. Although these two girls are clearly rebelling against the stereotype and see education as a means of agency (again, the smarter one is, the more they can make changes to their environment), hence their desire to go to college, they nonetheless continue to face adversity for their family members continually cast doubts against their cerebral shrewdness. In the previous example, Jackson did not bother to help his sister, and while this may be due to him still fuming over whatever happened with Sienna, his words and actions indicate the reason he let his sister fend for herself is that he believes girls to be absent-minded or dumb. It was as if Jackson ignored his sister because he figured whatever advice there was to give would not help either Miley or Lily

due to their small mental capacities. With no way to get help when it is needed, Miley is left to her own devices and continues to be stumped about how to proceed with her waning friendship. While she ultimately decides to speak with Lily directly, she was not initially authorized agency—at least not by Jackson—therefore, she had no chance at utilizing any agency. Eventually, Miley did have agency, however. A flash of inspiration after the ill-fated encounter with her brother prompted her to go and discuss her feelings about her friendship and lack of communication with Lily in person. Doing so allowed Miley to reestablish her friendship with Lily thus changing the environment around her indicating she had agency. The change she made in their relationship is a symbol of agency as defined in this study because she had it within herself to change the environment (her friendship with Lily).

Despite boys' perceptions, girl protagonists were often academically gifted as displayed by, for instance, their excellent grades and problem-solving abilities. The fact that males do not acknowledge this could be a sign of cultural concerns about adolescent girl's intelligence and self-image. Nonetheless, these girls subvert the cultural expectation that girls should avoid displaying their intelligence allowing for tween girl protagonists to fluctuate between being agentic beings and not. Due to Raven's high intelligence and her good grades, she is often allowed to go about life as she pleases. She can and does make her own decisions and acts to create change and succeeds. For example, using her wit, she often acted on such goals as getting an internship or helping a child and succeeds with these goals. In one way Disney is positively depicting girls as possessing agency by showing their intelligence and therefore enablement to act and create change. Such portrayals are reacting against the idea girls are victims of a male-dominant culture and able to act and instill transformation on their own. In another way,

however, the network is also showing adverse depictions of girls incapable of utilizing agency due to male's thwarting their efforts.

The Disney programs discussed in this study elucidate some of the mechanisms leading to girls' lower confidence in their cognitive abilities and their biased treatment from parents. Girls were portrayed ten times more often than boys as undermined and, therefore, lacking in agency since, like in the examples above, the boys would always stop them from taking action thinking the girl would not know how to complete the task at hand. While at least one or two male characters on each program were portrayed as goofy, slackers or unintelligent, girls still suffered negative consequences by consistently being portrayed as clueless. The treatment of girls being called "dumb," believing it, and being reprimanded for their behaviors in a manner contrary to boys, is only upholding real life models of some boys' perceptions of girls, girls' self-perceptions, and adults' treatment of both genders. Studies (e.g., Steinmayr et al. 2009) reveal boys have more confidence in their intelligence, and one reason is due to parents' perceptions that are subject to gender-stereotypic biases—a notion that could be seen as being reflected in the above examples. It is such biases that exaggerate actual gender differences and, in turn, grant or deny girls agency. These perceptions contribute to children's biased self-perceptions. As for the parental treatment of the female characters compared to males, studies (e.g., Morrongiello et al. 2010) reveal parents have a tendency to encourage risk taking in boys, but caution in girls indicating storylines may be reflective of real life tendencies relating to girls' treatment thus indicating inequality between the genders. Such a theory aside, however, there may be a financial reason for such portrayals of unintelligent girls. Unintelligent girls reify the consumerist ethos of girl power by signaling to girls that intelligence alone is not enough—they must be stylish and consume to be successful—another ploy to get girls to buy Disney products.

Multi-dimensional Girls

When coding, gender stereotypes were searched for, and it was found that sometimes the girls perpetuated stereotypes, and sometimes they rejected them. In presenting these results about gender stereotypes, the label used is: multi-dimensional. Girls on Disney Channel are alternately presented as one-dimensional (static and stereotypically gendered) and multi-dimensional (dynamic and rejecting some or all gender stereotypes). For the sake of this study, a character fits the definition of multi-dimensional as presented by Crooks and Baur (146) when she or he is or has broken down gender stereotypes by showcasing many different dimensions or interpretations of gender. The contrary would, of course, signify girls that are stereotypically gendered and one-dimensional.

Gender stereotypes are common across television (Gerding and Signorielli 2014, McAnally and Hancox 2014) and Disney Channel is no exception. Social institutions, such as mass media like Disney Channel, still use gender stereotypes based on the assumption that they are well known to everyone and help young receivers understand the content of a program's message (Wolska N.P.). Disney may have presumed that to fully appreciate a movie and empathize with the characters, children need exposure to stereotypes since, "...perceivers draw on stereotypes to infer other people's thoughts and that stereotype use increases perceivers' accuracy" (Lewis et al. 181). After all, as Stuart Hall (1997) has noted, we regularly make sense of the world using *types* (broad categories of things with common characteristics). Doing so allows for meaningful categorization, and in turn, draws conclusions and extrapolates information about something due to previous experience of things of the same, or similar, type. However, difficulties in differentiating gender roles or managing traditional views of masculinity

and femininity, for example, are just a few of the negative social effects of using stereotypes. Also, not conforming to stereotypes leads to peer victimization (Mulvey and Kellen 681).

While the females portrayed in these series are multi-dimensional for they break traditional female stereotypes in that they are brave, assertive, and headstrong—for example, Alex destroys an asteroid and Raven goes to extreme lengths to secure a competitive internship—this multi-dimensionality is limited. Multi-dimensionality is limited in that it never takes long for traditional gender stereotypes to reappear and turn a multi-dimensional girl into a flat or static character thus hindering her progress toward transgressing gender boundaries. For example, girls are portrayed as being more concerned about trivial matters above all else and such superficial concerns prevents the girl from accomplishing a goal. For example, in two episodes of *That's So Raven*, Raven was unable to run from danger due to her cherished high heels that she refused to give up because of the grown-up and lady-like appearance they provided her. Similarly, in the episode “To See or Not To See,” Raven and Chelsea are rock climbing and put themselves in danger and by neglecting their safety when Raven applies lipstick so she can look good while rappelling. Supporting female characters are not immune to such superficiality. When Teresa, the mother from *Wizards of Waverly Place* is kidnapped along with the rest of her family, her only concern is how much she deserves a pair of new shoes for all the trouble. Her concern over the shoes does nothing to help the family escape captivity. Likewise, in the episode “Art Museum Piece” Alex’s best friend Harper is so concerned about accessorizing to enhance her appearance that she becomes unaware of her surroundings to the point she does not realize when others are belittling her thus reinforcing her “airhead” persona her friends have ascribed to her.

Female characters being concerned about appearance and not much else makes for one-dimensional girls, and such dimensionless characters are unable to help themselves. Adding more depth to a character signals them to be important and more than just a plot device, but with Disney creating one-dimensional girl characters, it is as if they are indicating girls are not important, but rather trivial. Disney Channel's reasons for creating stereotypical girls who are often conspicuous, vapid consumers could be to get girls to model what they see on screen. However, not all girl characters conform to gender stereotypes.

An example of a multi-dimensional or dynamic girl that is seen on Disney Channel is in the episode "That's Not So Raven" when Raven wants to participate in a fashion show but is denied due to her weight. In protest, Raven sneaks into the show and to the surprise of the event organizers, the enthusiastic crowd loves her fashion, body, and positive attitude especially when she exclaims, "In case you haven't noticed, people come in all shapes and sizes, and they are all beautiful!" In this episode, Raven fights for a recognition about female body image and beauty she believes in. In so doing she finds creative ways to pursue her career goals in fashion by not only intruding on the show but bringing a new perspective about what it means to be a model and clothing designer in a world where skinny rules. She proves herself independent by doing all of this with little to no help from anyone else. Due to these traits, Raven serves as more than just a television trope; she is truly multi-dimensional. Raven shows many dimensions of herself in this episode by not only rejecting the stereotype that a female should be skinny but being a noisy minority in the process breaking the adage that "women should be seen, not heard." This episode spotlights Raven's multi-dimensional ways: she is a creative go-getter and does not care what others think when it comes to gendered expectations. She proves she is not fixed in a limited identity, rather she views life and lives life from many angles thus breaking stereotypes

about girls. Similarly, in the *Hannah Montana* episode “Can You See The Real Me,” Miley, someone whose whole life is about appearance being that she works in entertainment, appears on a talk show to discuss how she realized there is much more to appearance than meets the eye. She claims that over time she learned it is not about being blonde or having trendy clothes that makes one happy and accepted by others, rather its personality and being true to oneself that is the key to happiness, success, and friendship. Such an observation highlights her multidimensionality and resistance to idealized western constructs of beauty and femininity.

Perhaps one of the more interesting aspects of the presentation of stereotypes and whether or not characters are multi-dimensional is the presentation of male characters. Girls are allowed to break out of their stereotypical sides, and when they do, they are presented as heroic. For example, Raven saves the day at the fashion show when she demonstrates how girls do not have to conform to being skinny to be considered beautiful. On the other hand, males who break out of their gender roles, are clowns and buffoons. For instance, in the episode “Pin Pals” there is a running gag of cross-dressing. Raven’s father Victor is excited about a new pair of jeans and proudly wears them around the house. His children, however, are mortified for they recognize Victor is oblivious to the fact his jeans are for women. The last scene in the episode is Victor leaving to head to a restaurant but his children stop him for they do not want him to go out in public wearing women’s clothing. Laughter from the studio audience and the characters signaled Victor’s buffoonery for wearing clothing of the opposite gender. In this episode, gender norms are initially broken but ultimately upheld. In this case, it was the children who had to correct the father for transgressing gender lines, but nonetheless, this is another example of sustaining gender traditions and dictating what is acceptable for the genders and what is not. Here multidimensionality was not accepted. Victor was expected to dress in a certain manner

according to his gender and his deviation from such gender norms when he wore women's jeans was quickly corrected once again making him stereotypical or flat.

In the *Hannah Montana* episode, "He Ain't a Hottie, He's My Brother," Robby, Miley's father, is concerned with his hair and is embarrassed when the children see him coloring it. Upon being caught, he tells the kids he must excuse himself to go, "watch football, monster trucks, things that explode, go boom...you know, man things!" as audience laughter is heard. Robby's reaction to being caught coloring his hair signals he realizes he is engaging in something stereotypical of women. Feeling insecure, he tries to prove his masculinity by mentioning wanting to engage in stereotypical male behaviors. In this same episode, Robby is working on a female-centered song—presumably for his daughter's career. Early on in the episode, he not only frightens his children but the delivery man when he answers the door and sings, "I'm super cute/I'm super hot/I'm the girl you like a lot/I'm super, super girl/I'm super, super girl." When he then asks the delivery man what he thinks of the tune, the man responds with, "I think you're super, super weird" before quickly rushing out the door.

In this instance, in the eyes of the delivery person, Robby was breaking a gender stereotype and considering himself a girl (at least this is what was occurring to the delivery man, even though Robby was likely writing the song for Miley to perform as Hannah). Robby was showing off his multi-dimensionality, in that in addition to being a father and manager for a pop star; he can also write songs for another demographic or was in touch "with his feminine side"—something not welcomed by the delivery person. With the above examples of Robby showing multidimensionality and the differing roles he plays, some were accepted and some were not. The rejection of Robby's feminine tendencies and his words about going off to do "man things" to the kids, reinforces gender roles and how each gender should behave or perform. Such scenes

indicate societal pressure follows those of us whose natural personalities and abilities fall outside the gender norms which are more convoluted and complex than we realize since, after all, gender-differentiated behavior comes in a wide assortment of flavors. The fact the men are funny rather than outright rejected for disturbing the gender order may indicate at least a little more leverage for men. The campy humor may also be indicating the plausibility of men acting in such a manner is so ludicrous it is laughable. Such stereotyping also indicates what Stuart Hall refers to as *splitting*—where those who do not fit society’s norms are excluded, and their exclusion is copper-fastened by fitting them to a set of stereotypes deemed unacceptable – the ‘Other.’ This denies the possibility of any meaningful discourse about them or with them and ensures their continued exclusion.

Gender Performance

Miley is constantly performing her gender, even caricaturing it by hyper-feminizing herself when masquerading as Hannah Montana with her excessively frilly dresses, highly made-up face, and blonde wig. All of the coded programs and much of Disney’s material are excellent examples demonstrating how gender is performed and therefore part of one’s identity. Gender identity stems from socially situated understandings of gender. The gender identity of Disney’s girl protagonists aids them in expressing themselves in relation to their status as a tween girl. As the below examples demonstrate, tweens are not at a very high status.

While gender performance was not specifically a category for coding, when reviewing the Double Life category, Themes category, and particularly the Implicit Gendered Observations categories, how stereotypes were presented was via gender performance. Judith Butler characterizes gender as performance. Butler believes individuals portray gender via a series of

well-practiced “acts.” Similar to actors in a theatrical performance, a gendered body acts in a particular cultural space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives. “Gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed” (Butler 527). For these very reasons, gender is always changing and morphing rather than remaining a rigid category—something becoming increasingly common on Disney Channel.

In “Three Maxes and a Little Lady,” a spell accidentally changes Alex’s younger brother, Max, into a little girl. Once transformed into a girl, Max, now dubbed “Maxine” (portrayed by Bailee Madison) by family members, fixes her hair in pigtails, wears dresses, and takes on the role of Daddy’s Little Girl—an overly cutesy, obedient, and eager-to-please daughter radiating innocence all for her father’s affection. Although Maxine claims she is still Max just trapped in a girl’s body, attempts at boyish behavior are curbed upon realizing being Daddy’s Little Girl garners extra attention from Dad. Maxine performs the female gender in front of her father having realized the positive gender differences upon the transformation. Additionally, eventually accepting the transformation, the Russo family further encourages Maxine’s girlish behavior and reinforces her female gender by, for example, urging her to participate in a beauty pageant. At the pageant, Maxine essentially performs her female gender in the literal sense by prancing around on stage in a pink dress, heels, and heavy makeup. Instances like these are reinforcing female stereotypes and continually dictate what is acceptable and what is not for each gender in terms of appearance and behavior.

Girls are not the only ones who have to act a certain way according to their gender. Boys and men feel the need to perform their gender as well. For example, in the *Hannah Montana* episode “Good Golly, Miss Dolly,” Miley’s Aunt Dolly (Dolly Parton) comes over for a visit.

Country singer-turned-actress Dolly Parton could be considered doing an intentional (or not) parody of gender with her own constructed appearance, but this aside, her character's actions and the actions of others in the house cleanly fit into normative gender categories. In the episode, Aunt Dolly makes herself at home in the Stewart residence by—as father Robby and brother Jackson claim, “girling” up the place with frilly pink pillows, perfumed tissue paper, and potpourri. The “girlification” causes Robby to exclaim in disgust, “Looks like my home has been invaded by aliens from the planet Fru Fru.” While both men stand around in repugnance at their “girlified” surroundings, the studio audience laughs at their sudden transformation to outsiders in their own home.

Jackson feels troubled because his shirt smells too girly due to Aunt Dolly's new fabric softener. Restrictive masculine gender roles contribute to Jackson's psychological distress. He worries he would be beaten up for wearing the feminine smelling clothes to school. Through his verbalizations, Jackson is well aware there is considerable effort placed on how men should conform to masculine roles or face the risk of belittling his manhood by performing feminine activities. He verbally articulates that girls may not be attracted to him for being feminine. Both Jackson and his female peers are equally products of patriarchy themselves, for the girls are taught to frown at men who do not meet the typical Alpha-male type (high ranking, domineering, leader, macho).

In another example, both Robby and Jackson are infuriated upon realizing Aunt Dolly has replaced the regular (manly) shampoo with girly shampoo and their hair becomes “volumized and dollycized.” After a weekend of being in their own home, which has been taken over by a female, the males feel they must compensate by acting especially masculine. The following exchange illustrates:

Jackson: I can't take this anymore, Dad. I mean, between the shampoo and the smelly tissues and potpourri and all these flowers, I mean, I'm losing my manly essence!

Robby: There's only one thing we can do son. Let's go to the gym and fight back with the one thing she can't take from us: our man stink!

Jackson: Uh, Dad, could we maybe do it tomorrow? Aunt Dolly buffed my nails and I don't want to ruin them.

Robby: Do you hear yourself, son?

Jackson: Oh no! Get me to the gym fast.

As the men scream—frightened by their stereotypical female inclinations— and run off camera with great comedic showmanship presumably to do manly things, the audience laughs just as they did after every line. Having gone to the gym and behaving like stereotypical men: working hard, pumping iron, and sweating they return home emanating body odor.

Robby: (smelling himself) Breathe that in, son. That's the sweet stench of independence, freedom, and manly pride.

Jackson: I hear ya, Daddy! (Smelling himself) Ahhh! My eyes are burning, my eyes!

Robby: I'm so ranky, I taste my own stanky.

Jackson: I can't stand it! I'm taking a shower and I'm using Aunt Dolly's peach body wash with exfoliating loofa glove!

Robby: Well you loofa all you wanna. I'm going to take a bubble bath with one of her citrus fizzy balls. (smelling himself again) Maybe two!

Such comedic representations of gender on these series are commenting on socio-cultural identity in that they emphasize how much gender identity is valued and used to make distinctions between male and female. If gender identity were not of importance and used in labeling male and female, the gender foibles of these characters would not be funny or even part of the series' storylines. While these witty exchanges are no doubt poking fun at gender differences, each is a comment about how ambiguous gender can or cannot be, and how one gender, in this case, the male gender, feels the need to act a certain way (like an alpha-male) to maintain their masculinity. These texts are polysemic and as such, multiple readings can be gathered from them. Of course, it could be said the men using the women's products is positive in that it shows

gender ambiguity. However, the final result of this—why this was put into the script—was for comedic effect. The canned laughter at the moments men act like stereotypical women is indicating it is funny when men do something that only women have been known to do. One interpretation is that the men are ignorant about boundaries and it is comical to see someone make such societal faux pas or muss with long-held expectations.

Comedic narratives also allow for gender ideals to be safely questioned. As Yvonne Tasker observes, comic narratives provide a “space in which taboos can be addressed, made visible and also contained, negotiated” (Tasker, 1998, 163). Also, the audience laughter cues the home audience that something funny is occurring. Lamponing Robby and Jackson allows audience members to participate in the mockery without feeling susceptible or estranged (Gilbert 324). In light of this larger context, Robby, Jackson, and Aunt Dolly are performing their assigned gendered and heterosexualized roles and thus working out gender identity and gender relations on screen. The overall message is that in this episode men attempt to hold onto their manly essence and freedom while a woman systematically takes it away by converting them into what men consider to be as emasculated. The men ultimately use the products though indicating these programs may also be lessening the uniformity myth that, for example, all men are the same and for example, prefer products marketed directly to them. Aunt Dolly’s strong influence and the men’s efforts to not let it overcome them to maintain their masculinity may account for why when Miley or any of the other girls tries to exert their power, they prevent her for fear she, along with her femininity as they perceive it, might take over.

In this episode, the rigid gender system encourages tween girl viewers to turn into feminine, sweet-smelling women, and tween boys to turn into stinky, independent, manly-men. The network is making fun of those who try to resist the system of gender roles Western society

has created and so long adhered to. The stylized acts and daily rituals (like using fizzy citrus bath balls) that are repeatedly practiced eventually form the defining characteristics of gender since the practice of them in a repeated and faithful manner help to create gender. Such repeated performances establish and reinforce what makes a girl and what makes a boy. For example, how does one know that Aunt Dolly is a woman who can give Hannah Montana proper advice on how to win a boy's heart and become a real woman herself? This is made clear when Aunt Dolly effectually performs her femininity/womanliness by decorating with girly housewares, smelling feminine, wearing stereotypical female clothes like form-fitting pants and heels, and sounding like a woman with her high-pitched voice. It is not the fact that she *is* a woman that forms her believability, it is the fact that she *acts* like one. The message in this episode is that one must perform their gender correctly otherwise one will be in gender trouble, that is, those around them will find motivation to laugh at them for not repeatedly and loyally practicing such gendered acts. The humor here in these gender performances derives from the act of identification. For this scene to be funny, the audience must "get it," that is, they must identify with the idea that there are gender norms that the men are not following.

Since consumerism is so much part of Disney's motivation, one must consider the messages like the ones above as they relate to financial motives. If we consider gender as an act, performance, and a set of codes and costumes (all of which are available as consumable items to viewers) rather than a core aspect of essential identity—Disney's ways of commodifying gender is made clear. Miley changing into a wig and transforming into Hannah or the men using women's beauty products and deeming themselves "Dollycized" is something like the commodification of gender and the understanding of taking on a gender as a kind of consumerism.

CONCLUSION

What most likely accounts for these examples of stifled or botched applications of girl power in these programs? Why did the writers and producers at Disney seem to give lip service to the rhetoric of girl power despite it falling flat when it came to representing an exercise of girl power in a less problematic (less ambiguous) fashion? It is difficult to connect this discrepancy with a clear-cut financial motive for a company that was at that time investing tremendous resources in building an organization that would increasingly depend on the sale of media products and spin-off merchandise to this demographic. In an article which delves into the contradictions inherent in what she has dubbed “commodity feminism,” Rebecca Hains states that, “For a generation of girls, girl power discourse has always existed, promoting the ideas that girls are strong, smart, and empowered and that their interests are of cultural value. Girl power rhetoric has also been full of contradictions, however; it has often implied that there is a limited range of acceptable behaviors” (2012, xi). While the examples above may also be meant to teach girl viewers valuable lessons (e.g., be appreciative of all gifts and thoughtful gestures, treat others well and not behave selfishly) they are nonetheless problematic in that they consistently suggest that when a girl tries to empower herself for her direct benefit, it is unacceptable.

These programs are unique to their time and a particular age group so, therefore, they are linked to the historical situation for that generation and are what dictate possibilities and problems for tween girls from 2001-2011. Society’s shift given girls’ roles, and changing notions of female identity are aiding in, “the new depictions of girls as either “can-do” or “at-risk,” and suggest that what it means to prevail or lose out in these new times has become bound up with how we understand girlhood (Harris 14)—or at least how the white, adult males who created these programs understand girlhood.

Changes in how girls are represented indicate young women and the symbolic value of girlhood have been deeply invested in but also symbolize hopes and concerns. Young people are a source of moral panic, yet viewed as “the future.” Morgan Blue writes that “the can-do girl becomes a vessel for society’s fears, anxieties, and hope for the future in contemporary, neoliberal culture, while her opposite, the “at-risk girl” functions as a scapegoat for misaligned and oppressive social and economic systems” (“The Best,” 663). What this means is that these programs uphold the idea these “can-do” girls are not only irrepressible, individualized, and self-driven, but have access to power. What is inconsistent is that these flexible, self-made girls live in an ethos where manipulation of their consumption and visibility occurs. These three programs from the 2000s are sending a message that there is not a cultural consensus about girls’ roles but the next question is, if that was then, what is occurring now?

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

This content analysis reveals how, “In a time of dramatic social, cultural, and political transition, young women are being constructed as a vanguard of new subjectivity...power, opportunities, and success are modelled by the “future girl,” a kind of young woman celebrated for her ‘desire, determination, and confidence’ to take charge of her life, seize chances, and achieve her goals” (Harris 1). Raven, Alex, and Miley have each proved they are more independent, assertive, intelligent, and above all—successful—compared to their female predecessors. The proliferation of Disney programs featuring such future girls is recognition of this new way of being, thus expanding on the conversation about girl’s roles in society.

With recognition comes validation, but also scrutiny. While these girls are actively constructed to be winners, they are under stringent surveillance and thus their powers do not always work in their favor, and their efforts do not result in any substantive change but rather the ever Foucauldian “incitement to discourse” (Foucault 1978) or provoking of change that does not manifest in change itself due to censorship. These findings expand on an aspect of previous work by Anita Harris. Harris claims there is a confessional culture in which girls are asked to speak out yet encouraging such involvement is a way to regulate young girls as well as construct an ideal version of a girl: feminine, family-focused, and heterosexual (Harris 11). The fathers model this theory by urging their daughters to reveal their powers to their friends, but yet doing so relinquishes the girl of her special abilities.

Despite the fathers occasionally telling their daughters it is permissible to reveal their powers to others, the girls are under hegemonic control due to surveillance they are under by their fathers who, with their watchfulness, enforce or undermine the cultural expectation of selfishness. Denied opportunities to voice their feelings, girls’ fathers (or other males in a girl’s life) enforce rules to serve their own purpose, often to the detriment of their daughters or sisters. For example, despite being an advanced wizard-in-training, Alex’s father imposes rules that infringe upon her abilities to use her magic and questions her worthiness to use magic at all. At the end of season three, the government finds out that the Russo family are wizards, and takes them into custody to find out more. During an interrogation, the government raids the Wizard World and switches off all magic. Season four starts with Alex wanting to do something about the family’s loss of power and so she reveals to reporters that her entire family is made up of wizards and in this instant, regains all her powers. She says that in addition to her family, a group of wizards is being held captive by the government and needs help. As she urges the press to

spread the word about saving all the other wizards who have been kidnaped, Professor Crumbs appears and tells her he had been watching her and that what had happened was a test of a sort of code of conduct that she failed. He orders her to Wizard Court for exposing wizardry to the world. In court she is sentenced to level one in the family wizard competition, putting her behind her younger brother Max by two levels.

Knowing they are being monitored and regulated, the girls become very conscious of their selflessness and begin to police themselves. Self-surveillance is usually understood as,

the attention one pays to one's behavior when facing the actuality or virtuality of an immediate or mediated observation by others whose opinion he or she deems as relevant – usually, observers of the same or superior social position...[and includes], individuals' attention to their actions and thoughts when constituting themselves as subjects of their conduct (Vaz and Bruno 273).

After the above incident, Alex decides to quit being a wizard at all, realizing the danger it poses to those around her. In a similar manner, Miley gives up hiding her dual life as Hannah Montana upon seeing the trouble and stress the masquerade has inflicted on her friends and family. Raven does not have the ability to give up her power but continues to mention she has it when needed in an attempt to help others understand what is occurring around them. In these instances, Disney's girls are functioning as a symbol of worries about an unknown future, what it takes to succeed in this future, and a girl's place in a hierarchy that is constantly changing in regards to cultural and social landscapes. Despite these powerful girls being held back by the males in their lives or societal pressure, she is appealing to tweens for her heroic qualities shine through her identity—whatever identity she may perform.

While not so much identities, girls on these programs are exhibiting various incarnations of feminism including girl power and postfeminism. Girl power is exhibited via the girl's special powers and postfeminism becomes evident with the girls' double lives. The content analysis shows that while there is girl power on Disney Channel, there are limitations of this power. What these programs are adding to the current knowledge of the girl power movement is that while girl power may be part of the American lexicon, ultimately it is not a competent movement in empowering girls due to its commercialization and contradictions (e.g., girls have power, but this power is limited; girls are agential beings, until males stand in their way; girls are strong and independent, but yet also fall into stereotypical gender roles that indicate otherwise). Disney's representations of girls as empowered and multi-dimensional, yet falling back on stereotypes or invoking stereotypes when the going gets tough makes for a contradictory representation of tween girls that closes more doors than it opens.

Feminist writer Rachel Fudge says, "girl power tricks us all into believing that girls are naturally powerful and therefore ignores the many ways their power is contingent on adhering to cultural expectations of female behavior" (160). She criticizes girl power by claiming, "if girl power provides their primary understanding of gender, when the going gets rough, and those girls come face to face with sexism, they don't have the tools with which to formulate a critique—nor do they have an awareness of the power inherent in collective activism. In other words, they don't have feminism" (Fudge 159). This statement holds true in regards to what is happening to the young female protagonists on Disney Channel, for in some of the programming, girls are often ill-equipped to deal with sexism or sexist insults despite their powers. For example, in the *Wizards of Waverly Place* episode "First Kiss," a boy insults a girl's ability at critical thinking by saying they are right brain dominant and have a large hypothalamus.

Someone who is right brain dominant expresses emotion and bases decisions off intuition. The hypothalamus regulates sexual behavior, parenting impulses, and hormones. This comment suggests he saw girls' choices based more on emotion and instinct than any non-bias, logical, or scientific way. The manner in which they boy said the comment suggests he was demeaning such ways of thinking. Girls in this scene did nothing to prove him wrong or stand up for themselves.

In the *That's So Raven* episode "Leave It To Diva" Raven's grandmother says young women should be proper, restrained, and well-mannered charm-school types. Upon hearing this, Raven's facial expressions indicate disgust of such a notion but unable to think of another option, she says nothing more and even joins her grandmother's society o women whose core values are similar to her grandmother's in that their goal is are to create proper (e.g., stereotypical) young ladies. The differences between genders are frequently bigger than differences between individuals and Disney's girls take little to no action in closing the gap in these differences. Disney's protagonists are conditioned towards certain biases that prevent equal treatment of girls in an everyday sense. Girls appear immune to the unequal treatment in that they do nothing to resist it or do not know it is happening. What this may be exemplifying is internalized sexism or the girls' belief that the stereotypes and myths about girls are indeed accurate. A possible consequence of such thinking is that girls are being taught to act out the lies and stereotypes, doubting themselves and other females thus colluding with other females in the perpetuation of sexism (Sherman 26).

Girl power aside, these series demonstrate postfeminist viewpoints represented by each of these girls' double lives. One life is a home life or private life where she is relegated to traditional—even stereotypical—female duties yet can be herself and use her powers. The second life is a public one where she must hide her capabilities, yet has the freedom to engage in

activities she finds personally satisfying or empowering. The double life allows girls to multiply their powers yet sets up parameters of their girlhood experience. The double life exposes the girls' subjectivity and agency. The power these girls have ultimately does not equal empowerment when used in a public setting. In fact, much like their intelligence, using their empowerment visibly in public can be turned against them in the context of postfeminist discourse. The double life meant to show alternative representations of girlhood is still upholding heteronormative gender conventions. Ultimately, the normal girl, the one who does not use her powers, is celebrated and portrayed as aspirational for young audiences.

That's So Raven, *Wizards of Waverly Place*, and *Hannah Montana* builds around narrative conflicts in which there are tensions or obstacles for the protagonist as she tries to balance her public and private life. What girls are most concerned about is their private life leaking out into their public life and preventing them from having friends and what they deem to be a normal childhood. The idea of the double life, also the private vs. public life, becomes key here for it is encouraged in certain settings. For public and private life to exist independently, each girl had to play a different role in society. Agency, empowerment, and multi-dimensionality are encouraged—but only in certain spheres and for certain audiences. However, certain traits like care-focused feminism are carried across boundaries thus mixing public and private life. Mixing public and private life leads to conflicts of the gendered binary order that are being restricted. The struggle between the dichotomies of public and private and also indicates this struggle is part of a power mechanism. While Raven cannot seem to control her powers, Alex and Miley can give up theirs, but neither of these girls cares to do so. What all the girls are trying to do is, as Hannah Montana would say, “have the best of both worlds” more commonly heard as “having

it all.” What all of these girls are representing is the anxiety that surrounds the changing role of females from being traditional domestics to independent wage workers.

“‘Having it all’ discourses often identify a conflict between ‘feminism’ and ‘femininity’ (Brundson 1991) that applies specifically to women in contemporary capitalism, in which an apparent incompatibility between public, professional roles as wage-earners and heads of households and private, domestic roles as wife and mother places impossible, contradictory demands on women” (Bickford, 2015, 68).

“Having it all” is mirroring real life debates about gender equality and feminism and if having it all is a metaphor for the public/private conflict females are facing, such depictions are paralleling discourse about Disney’s tweens. On these Disney programs, the girls’ primary desire to hide their powers is to maintain their friendships and family ties. In typical postfeminist style, these friendships are what assist the girls to transition between a home life and public life, yet friendships are also vulnerable when in public. Many times these girls are afraid of exposing their secrets and not only endangering themselves regarding having their core identity threatened, but they fear endangering the few friends they have who know their truth. In conventional postfeminist media, “having it, all” discourses allow three possible responses. The first is accepting the incompatibility of work and family and choosing just one of them. The second is superheroically/superficially collapsing the two and refusing the choice altogether. The third is highlighting the struggle, contradiction, and anxiety that the pursuit of “it all” creates in individuals’ lives (Bickford, 2012, 78). By the end of each series, all three of the girls are straddling the last two ideas, and as a result, causing constant inner tension for them.

At the end of *That’s So Raven*, Raven does not necessarily make a choice to choose to keep her psychic power or not since it is something within her she can never rid herself from.

Instead, she accepts that her power comes with pros and cons, and so she continues to move forward with life as is: living life with conflict and dealing with the fact the dichotomies that do exist in life such as public and private life, are essentially mutually exclusive. Raven's life is continually filled with struggle rather than resolution. In the final season of *Wizards of Waverly Place*, headmaster of the Wizard World, Professor Crumbs, restores the family's powers after revealing the captivity the family had gone through was a test. Although he restored their powers, he demotes Alex and Justin a few levels behind Max as punishment for exposing wizardry. Nonetheless, the siblings are all back in the Wizard Competition and each tries hard to win the title of Family Wizard of which Alex wins in the series finale. Although victorious in a competition between her brothers, what this represents is the opposite of the female Singleton. Alex fought hard to win this position and in so doing becomes the family matriarch, meaning she is now next in line for a life of conventional feminine motherhood because she is upholding family tradition and is now expected to have children of which she will pass her magic down to. While it can be argued Miley Stewart decided not to have the best of both world's but head off to college, she does so begrudgingly, her motivation to appease her best friend. Rather than showing an alternative to feminine conventions, the series finale is showing friendship as a relationship made up of care, dependence, and emotional support—ultimately, a traditional life path for females. While each girl seems like she is going to present an alternative to Disney's usual type of traditional girlhood—and does in some ways—she ultimately fails for she still desires to embody only traditional roles.

While occasionally the girls in these series are exemplifying girl power with their “can-do” or “you go, girl” attitude by, for example, rejecting traditional gender roles, it is unclear where they are going due to their power being contingent on conforming to cultural expectations of

femininity, and having their intelligence, and therefore, agency thwarted. The potential for success that lies within Raven, Alex, and Miley is not being used to the fullest extent due to an imbalance of power relations where males have the upper hand. These seemingly positive and powerful psychic abilities, wizard skills, and celebrity influence make these girls superhuman in a negative way since upon discovering their power, both their male and female peers view them as abnormal, above the rest of other humans, or simply causes these girls extra pressure for now they have something to hide and worry about accidentally revealing. To manage the repercussions of their powers, girls conceal them thereby making them unable to separate who they are from what they can or cannot do. Self-abnegation means girls are privileging their non-super powered personae and thus are failing to admit to themselves what they are truly capable of.

CHAPTER 4

A NEW DISNEY CHANNEL EMERGES

The window for being a tween is short, and viewers who grew up with Raven, Alex, and Miley have since moved on to more adult programming. There is now a new generation of tweens making up Disney Channel's audience, and the network realizes just how different and diverse this group is compared to their predecessors. For post-2011 tweens, socio-historical events leading up to or occurring during their lives, particularly the shift into fourth wave feminism to be discussed later in this chapter, have instilled in them values, perspectives, and lifestyles differing from tweens of a prior generation. These differences have certainly influenced new types of programming that address these changes. As evidenced by new programming that features multi-ethnic families and reversed or ambiguous gender roles, Disney Channel has recognized and responded to the shifts in values and audience demographics. When turning on Disney Channel today, at first glance viewers will find little has changed since the 2001-2011 decade. Most programs still star young, white actresses with high-pitched voices, perfectly curled hair, and an exaggerated acting style. The same stock characters: dumb bubbly female, slacker teen boy, and annoying younger brother characters, still dominate Disney's small screen. However, a closer and more informed viewing demonstrates that shifts in programming have occurred as the audience has changed over time.

Series airing post-*Hannah Montana* embody one or more of the following patterns or trends, thus differentiating it from prior programming: ensemble cast structure and female-buddy-comedy-driven structure. Both of these structures reveal an increasing emphasis on gender inversion/gender ambiguity and girl power. Such traits are possible acknowledgments of the currently increasing awareness of LGBTQ lifestyles but more generally, shifts in thoughts

about gender. In addition, characters on today's programming lack magical powers, yet are more empowered in other ways (e.g., have agency despite the lack of magical capacities) than females of the past decade. While some residual traits from the prior decade—the ability to time travel, lead double lives, and other stereotypical representations—remain present in some form on Disney Channel, the magic per se is gone. The network is taking a new and increasingly contemporary approach to representations of girls' lives that do not involve fantasy and exclude drawing attention to gender binaries. The changes in the stories the network is telling signify a shift that points to a new Disney Channel in which tween girls are represented as empowered (minus a few exceptions to be discussed in this chapter). In this chapter, the discussion will focus on how and why the new Disney Channel has responded to changes in social and historical context, industry, and audience.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF 2011-2011 TRENDS

Before venturing into Disney Channel today, what follows is an overview of concepts from previous chapters detailing trends in the 2000s to help better understand how current programming is diverging. The critical analyses presented throughout this research project reveal how Disney Channel's most successful decade circulated ideas about feminism and femininity to tweens via its programming. Television audiences during the 2001-2011 decade were barraged with contradictions about girl's roles and abilities. From 2001-2011, Disney Channel was in line with what Charlotte Brunsdon terms "heroine television." Heroine television consists of dramas and sitcoms that "are all, in some fundamental way addressing feminism or the agenda that feminism has made public about the contradictory demands on women" (Brunsdon 54). The impact of feminism in the sense outlined by Brunsdon was clear in programming from the 2000s,

with, for example, storylines that encouraged girls to strive for a career and education. However, such themes were countered by the prevalence of discourses that showcased traditionally feminine behaviors such as indulgent consumerism, romantic intertwinement, and dedication to physical adornment. These “counter discourses” ultimately reveal a hegemonic motive to put girls back in their place, so to speak. Disney programs airing from about 2001-2011 showed girls as empowered due to magical, supernatural, or some other extraordinary abilities, yet the girls often hid these abilities for fear of ostracism from peers or other family members. Thus, girls had agency, but this agency was limited—in fact, subverted—because male characters regularly undercut their intelligence and application of power. At the end of the day, these often one-dimensional girls were seen as performing typical gender roles, largely due to regulation by those around them.

One reason often not discussed in detail that may explain why Disney television looked the way it did in the 2000s is that adults, mainly men, created these narratives. Therefore, it is logical to think of the narratives as tending to reveal not how girls really are, but how the male creators imagined them to be. According to Nelson, “Historically, American fiction for girls has reflected adult efforts both to shape and to please its readers. Consequently, the fiction of any given period reveals less about what girls were really like than it does about what adults believed or wanted them to be like—itsself an enormously important clue for the understanding of girls’ lives in the United States” (Nelson 327). These programs illuminate the models that adult males may have held for girls. Additionally, these programs reflect cultural fears and apprehensions about girls coming-of-age and their impact on public and private lives during a resurgence of a new species of feminism (the girl power movement) that was particularly geared towards youth. Although girl-powered themes emerged rather explosively in Disney Channel narratives

throughout the 2000s, what also emerged were attempts to manage these girls. Management occurred via storylines featuring recycled narrative conventions—a tool for hegemonic containment. However, newer stories about girls have been crafted, and popular representations of girls being freed from many long-established conventions that hold them back from reaching full potential are now common. Disney Channel seems to be allowing its on-screen girls to get closer to liberation. For example, in *K.C. Undercover*, K.C. (Zendaya Coleman) is a typical teenager by day and a spy by night. She hides much of her life as a spy from her friends just as Miley hid her celebrity life from her peers. K.C., however, is hiding her identity as part of her dangerous job—not out of fear of societal ostracism. As a spy, K.C. saves her male friend's lives and accomplishes difficult missions her male counterparts cannot do; and she does it all on her own, using her intelligence and wit. While these newer stories are not in complete opposition to prior programming, important shifts have nonetheless occurred, and there are clear indications that Disney programming in the 2000s really was a thing apart, if not unique.

SHIFTS IN NEW PROGRAMMING

Programs premiering directly after *Hannah Montana* or towards the end of its run include *Shake It Up!* (2010-2013), *Good Luck, Charlie* (2010-2014), *A.N.T. Farm* (2011-2014), and *Jessie* (2011-2015). Like the previous decade these series star girls, but in contrast, these protagonists and their families are multi-dimensional, independent, and headstrong. For example, *Shake It Up!* and *Jessie* are each about girls pursuing career goals. While some characters in recent Disney programming are associated with more or less supernatural abilities, such as time traveling in *Best Friends Whenever* (2015-Present), these abilities seem less integral to the characters' character as it were. Furthermore, they are seen as acquiring access to

potentially powerful capacities rather than *possessing* superpowers. For example, Chyna (China Anne McClain) from *A.N.T. Farm* has “Advanced Natural Talents” which means she is a musical prodigy—something special, but not particularly unrealistic or related to magic.

As Disney continues to make more programming such as *Austin and Ally* (2011-2016), *Dog with a Blog* (2012-2015), *Liv and Maddie* (2013-present) and *K.C. Undercover* (2015-present), these modern portrayals of relatable girls become an increasingly prominent staple for the network by displaying their assertiveness and feistiness. In some ways these girls are stronger than ever before, having stepped into the male paradigm, if not surpassing it. As such these characters have been reconfigured in a way that opens up new vistas for female power and heroism. However, some traditional signifiers of gender are still in place. For example, in the episode “K.C.’s the Man”, K.C. is chosen over her brother to go undercover by posing as a boy at an all-male military academy in order to save a cadet-in-training. To find the missing cadet, she theoretically puts herself in the shoes of the boys she is around. Based on the behavior she sees from the other boys, and with advice from her brother, she says this means she must “spit, grunt and adjust something that shouldn’t be adjusted in public.” Throughout the episode, K.C. nearly blows her cover by “sitting like a girl” with her legs crossed and inviting her peers to go to the restroom with her. These two stereotypically feminine actions draw suspicions from the boys indicating there are certain things that men do and certain things that women do, with no crossover countenanced—a familiar theme from the previous decade. K.C. eventually teaches the school’s bully (and herself) what it means to be a real man, which she proclaims is someone “that doesn’t have to fit in, he stands apart. He stands up for what’s right even when he’s standing alone.” Her statement indicates that whether or not one acts like the stereotype of their gender, everyone should be judged by the content of their character. Incidentally, in this episode,

K.C. saves a boy, but she does so when dressed as a boy. In the episode in which she saves the First Daughter, no disguise is needed. In other episodes where she saves a boy, she does it with help from another male. A girl saving a boy is a rarity indicating that despite the program's many alternative portrayals of men and women, there are still some gender norms adhered to. To take a closer look at how gender norms are changing, the narrative structure of these programs should be considered in further detail.

While 2001-2011 programming focused on one tween or teen girl but featured her family and friends as supporting characters, current Disney programming is taking a new approach. Teen actresses persist in headlining series. However, these same programs feature ensemble casts in which parents and other characters are intermittently front and center rather than in supporting roles. Examples of such programming are *Dog with A Blog*, *Good Luck Charlie*, and *Jessie*. In a similar vein, while lead female protagonists in Disney Channel programming airing from 2001-2011 always had a female best friend, these friends were supporting characters—something not always the case in newer series.

If not an ensemble comedy, current programs are female buddy comedies in which two lead girls equally carry the sitcom. Examples here include *Shake it Up!* starring Bella Thorne and Zendaya, and *Best Friends Whenever* starring Landry Bender and Lauren Taylor. *Liv and Maddie* would also fall into this category even though one actress, Dove Cameron, doubles as the titular twin sisters. These shifts in how the stories are structured reveal a greater shift in programming along the lines of change in gender roles and true girl empowerment. When programs focus on a number of characters in addition to the female protagonist, or when programs are focusing on two females simultaneously, the dynamics of each character's roles change. With ensemble programming, the female protagonist is often in a role in which she

maintains family balance. However, male members of the ensemble are often seen as aiding her in achieving balance, and so gender boundaries tend to become blurred. In past programming, men ran the household and maintained balance by being the breadwinner and serving as an authority over the females. Newer programming portrays the opposite, or the male and females work in tandem. In the female buddy comedy series, sisterhood and female empowerment independent from male assistance is prominent. Additional examples of ensemble programming and female buddy comedies will be discussed further in a historical context.

Ensemble Programming

Ensemble programming originated with situation comedies and dramas that centered on the workplace. *St. Elsewhere* (NBC 1982-1988) and *Hill Street Blues* (NBC 1981-1987) are famous examples credited with establishing the trend towards ensemble programming in television. In both, the focus of attention shifted from the hero of the story to an ensemble of co-workers (co-heroes), if not the workplace itself (Schatz 85-100). More recent examples of female ensemble programs are *Sex and the City* in which four friends explore and chronicle New York City's dating scene, and *Desperate Housewives*, a series about the seemingly idyllic lives of four women living behind the facade of a postcard-perfect suburban community. What is important about ensemble programming is that such programs develop each member of the cast as well as the ensemble itself into a functioning work-family. In so doing, each character's role within the collective is highlighted. With the female ensemble drama in particular, they construct, "alternative lifestyles for women based upon meaningful social relationships with other women. In so doing, it undermines the heteronormative ideologies that have governed the normative feminine life course" (Ball 246). Hence, Disney's ensemble programs are worthy of further

examination in that they provide insight into girls' shifting roles and perceptions of femininity as presented on television.

Ensemble programming is not a new concept to television, nor is it to Disney. However, most of Disney's television series were not ensemble programs until after 2011 when numerous such programs emerged. Current ensemble programming includes: *Jessie* in which a Texas girl becomes a nanny to a brood of celebrity children, *Good Luck Charlie*, a series about a middle-class Denver family adjusting to life with a newborn in the house, and *Dog with a Blog*, a family-centered sitcom in which the household's dog can talk and blogs about his life with his human companions. Since numerous characters can potentially take the lead or be highlighted within a series, each character's role—particularly their gender role—is more easily visible in the sense that they can all be compared or seen in contrast to others. Interestingly, rather than hardening the lines defining gender the net effect of ensemble casting over time is to make gender boundaries less distinct, and more dynamic.

Each of the three Disney programs mentioned above highlights the teen female protagonist in a different role. In true contrast, the young female protagonists in *Jessie* and *Good Luck Charlie* are each very different albeit with a few similarities. In *Jessie*, Jessie Prescott (Debbie Ryan) cares for a brood of unruly children while receiving little help from Bertram (Kevin Chamberlin), the family butler. Some of the time Bertram is depicted as standoffish and contemptuous of the kids, and at others he serves as an involved father figure for the children and Jessie. While Jessie's life seems similar to Cinderella's (e.g. she lives with another family and does housework for them), she is quick to reject the idea of a Prince Charming. In the back-to-back episodes "The Runaway Bride of Frankenstein" and "There Goes the Bride" Jessie, at 22 the oldest main character on a Disney Channel sitcom, contemplates marrying her boyfriend and

finally decides that (besides there being no such thing as “the perfect guy”) she has a lot to learn about who she is before she can go and live her life with someone else. She does not want to give up on her dreams of pursuing a career in entertainment which was her whole reason for relocating to New York City. From a feminist perspective, this is truly a thought-provoking ending, especially for a series about a girl working in the traditional role of caretaker. While gender roles within this ensemble series are not necessarily reversed, Jessie does stand in for the career-oriented mother and Bertram as the stay at home father; the two continue swapping roles as needed depending on the circumstances.

Good Luck Charlie is another series that, while not necessarily depicting role reversal in an overt way, allows for gender bending or ambiguity among the ensemble cast—a novelty for Disney Channel. The 30-minute live-action sitcom starred teen Bridget Mendler as protagonist Teddy Duncan, a teen living with her family in Denver. Teddy, along with teen brother P.J. (Jason Dolley) and younger brother Gabe (Bradley Steven Perry) are all adjusting as their mother Amy Duncan (Leigh-Allyn Baker) and father Bob Duncan (Eric Allan Kramer) return to work after the rather unexpected birth of baby sister Charlotte, “Charlie” (Mia Talerico). All of the children are asked to pitch in and help care for their sibling. Although the program does emphasize Teddy, this is an ensemble series in that the other characters play prominent roles with storylines also revolving around them in any given episode. As in *Jessie*, since all the characters are more roundly developed, it is easy to see how each character conveys a wider and more flexible range of gender expression with behaviors that change from day-to-day or circumstance-to-circumstance. There is even an element of gender neutrality present on the program that network personnel consciously pursued.

Originally titled, *Oops* and then *Love, Teddy*, the series was finally called *Good Luck*

Charlie—what Teddy says at the end of each video diary entry—because the producers considered the earlier titles too feminized despite it being intended to attract more male viewers and allow for some gender neutrality (Owen N.P.). While programming like *Good Luck Charlie* still predominantly targets female tweens, the low concept, traditional, multi-camera style is a means of driving an increasingly diverse viewership (Kinon N.P.). Concerning the title change, Vaupen stated in an interview that, “You want a title that says, a) this is a sitcom and, b) this is something that will interest the main demographic, but also, we’re trying to expand the Disney brand beyond just girls...we also didn’t want to have the word ‘baby’ in the title because that would exclude certain people;” this series was also devised to entice viewers of all ages (Owen N.P.). In addition to taking care with the messaging of the program’s title, the producers hoped having the traditional boy’s name Charlie (a nickname given by Teddy to Charlotte) for the baby girl character would attract more male viewers. Likewise, they gave the lead character (female) the name of Teddy, and the other children the names Gabe and P. J. (both males) with the same goals—attracting a wider audience comprised of more male viewers (Owen N.P.). After devoting itself to capturing the girl market during the first decade of new millennium, there is clear evidence that Disney realizes that boys are not to be neglected. The network’s new approach was to ease male viewers into programming by being as gender ambiguous or gender neutral as possible by starting with neutral names and then through overlapping or switching of traits stereotypically associated with each gender.

Stereotypical gender roles hold true at first for Bob Duncan, the father in *Good Luck Charlie*. He owns a successful exterminating company, loves bugs, always wants to wrestle, and wants to be known as the family “fix-it” man. He also enjoys barbecuing, being in charge, and coaching his son’s basketball team. However, as the series progresses, Bob and his role in the

family change. Initially, Bob was seen as an incompetent father in his wife's eyes. She is nervous to leave him alone with the children, for example, and her instincts are spot on for Bob acts more like a child than a parent. Bob, however, literally grows out of his goofiness in tandem with a physical transformation. Actor Eric Allan Kramer lost a substantial amount of weight between the third and fourth season, eliminating the writers' fat jokes. Kramer's character then came to be portrayed as serious. The new Bob Duncan was portrayed as a thoughtful and devoted husband and father rather than an overgrown child: "The writers started coming up to me, saying, 'Hey what's going on? We wanted to write a joke about your physique and now we can't', Kramer said" (Massarella N.P.). His weight change was so noticeable that a few episodes devoted storylines to his new look. Suddenly, women's bodies were no longer on display or talked about, and the man's body and his self-consciousness of it was center stage—an unusual perspective for Disney. In the episode, *The Charlie Whisperer*, Bob tries to look younger and show off his weight loss by—to his family's humiliation—dressing like a teenager, even wearing the same pants as his sons. Ordinarily, such storylines in sitcoms are about mothers trying to look like their daughters, but here, the male talks about fashion and skinny bodies. Different from other gender reversals presented in this study, the episode is awkward and not quite funny because Bob is "acting like a woman." However, at the expense of humor, the producers seemed to be taking a new approach to what manhood entails, signaling that sometimes men face the same thoughts and feelings about their bodies as do women. However, there is evidence suggesting that Disney is not entirely comfortable with such gender reversals. The following provides examples of ways in which reversals may be briefly allowed before being reeled back in.

The mother character in *Good Luck Charlie* is portrayed in stereotypical terms of dress, demeanor, and career. Amy Duncan is a nurse, a job traditionally associated with women. In

addition, she is happiest when she is taking care of her children and constantly finds a way to protect them. She is skeptical of her husband when it comes to child rearing, but by the second season, she has finally gained confidence in her spouse to let him handle the kids when she is at work (although he still usually falls short at parenting). Often overwhelmed with her family of four, and a new child on the way, she continues to be a large part of her children's lives and continues to let her family expand. Her openness to feeling overwhelmed and possibly failing as a mother acknowledges the realities of motherhood; however, there is a sense that by having another son later in the series, her behavior and reactions to situations perpetuates the superwoman myth. She is depicted as needing to maintain her role as family matriarch while working, and doing it all without complaining, looking perfectly coiffed and with a smile on her face. Always trying to outdo everyone, Amy often fails initially or makes a fool of herself, but easily laughs off her foibles before finding a new way to succeed; she is often seen in trendy, form-fitting clothing with her blonde hair curled. Amy Duncan is the epitome of a traditional yet modern and idealized mother. Although she is an unskilled cook, she is excellent at cleaning and eventually quits her nursing job to tend full time to the needs of her growing family, including temporarily coaching her son's basketball team. Later, however, she returns to work as a news anchor. Traditional in some ways, Amy ultimately is the mom who successfully achieves the best of both worlds, a perfect blend of work/life balance.

Similarly, in "Scary Had a Little Lamb," textual analysis reveals gender reversal and the mocking that occurs as a result of it. This episode takes place on Halloween when Bob and Amy dress as each other. Bob, with his ill-fitting pink nurse's scrubs and blonde wig, daintily prances around the living room and talks in a high-pitched voice. As Bob carries on with this caricature of his spouse, Amy enters the room with her long hair pulled into a ponytail, donning an

exterminator's outfit. Flexing her muscles and talking in a deep voice, Amy declares she is the exterminator and is in charge of the house. Teddy videotapes the whole charade as Bob and Amy clamor and compete for camera time. Competition between the two is common, and the mother character is the initiator, trying to outdo her husband whom she feels rules the home. The exaggerated stereotypical characteristics do not match the appearance and stature of the actor playing the other character. These misplaced features and satiric portrayal when gender roles are reversed make the gender stereotypes prominent but also highlights their absurdity. As in much of the older Disney programming, when characters take on the traits not typically associated with their gender, awkwardness and absurdity are often the result.

As in previous decade's programming, when gender roles are switched, characters tend to fail at their non-traditional roles perhaps indicating individuals should stick to doing what they are good at—which includes following gender norms. In the episode "Teddy's Little Helper," not only do the parents switch traditional gender roles but so does their older son. The episode starts with Bob being fired from his youngest son's basketball team after a season-long losing streak. The players have to hire someone quickly and end up hiring Amy instead. Bob, a meticulous planner when it comes to sports, tells Amy coaching basketball is not easy and involves more strategy than she can ever know (a throwback to the theme in the previous decade about females lacking intelligence). Amy insists it is not easy for him either given all of the planning he does. Once hired as coach, she lets the team members run wild thinking less structure will do them some good. Her carefree ways appear to work to the benefit of the team who start winning all their games. It does not take long for the winning streak to cease, though, and after an important game in which Amy's team loses, the boys fire her, and Dad is back on board.

In the above example, the woman is successful and in control—for a brief moment—but her achievement and control is taken away and replaced by another male who ends up thriving; again, a throwback to the previous decade. In the same episode, eldest son P.J. takes baby Charlie to “Mommy and Me” class since Amy is too busy coaching. At first, it appears P.J. is breaking gender roles by voluntarily taking over his mother’s duties. However, after the class in which only mothers were present, P.J. ends up gossiping, talking on the phone, and going for “girls night out” with the ladies. The scenes with P.J. and the women are mocking in tone, once again enforcing traditional gender roles. However, while the family believes it to be unusual P.J. is enjoying being “one of the moms,” neither his parents nor siblings try to stop him from engaging in such activities.

In “Meet the Parents” Bob tells his wife that she cannot build a playhouse without his help. Amy attempts the feat solo nonetheless, and for a moment the playhouse is constructed. However, due to her unskilled work, the playhouse soon collapses. Bob successfully rebuilds the playhouse, once again reinforcing the gender stereotype that men are better at “constructing” and perhaps also that while women may have good intentions, men are ultimately more competent and successful overall (especially in terms of activities typically associated with their gender). In the same episode, P.J. and Teddy try to help young sibling Gabe out of detention by pretending to be Amy and Bob during a parent/teacher conference. Teddy portrays Amy realistically and even pretends she is a nurse like her mom. However, P.J. acts like a wealthy version of his father and an intellectual, getting into character with a fake mustache and foreign accent. In the end, P.J. gets away with his façade, but Teddy does not despite her much more realistic portrayal. The fake mustache is a symbol of masculinity and power here. While a convincing actress, Teddy was represented as being passive and in the shadow of someone that had to be taken seriously,

namely her brother with his over-the-top performance. The fact that the brother and later her dad wear the same mustache suggests that males can assume authority roles and “get away with” things that females cannot. These scripted interactions tend to reinforce the notion that men possess the ability to access success through guile. In these examples, the portrayal of gender reversal in the setting of a stage-within-a-stage transmits the message that at the end of the day a traditional gender script is best adhered to.

There are other characterizations with more emotional depth that acknowledge the hardships males and females face in dealing with their gender roles. Amy confesses to her husband that she is overwhelmed with becoming a working mother again. In one episode, Amy is contemplating child rearing again and is, “not sure she can pull this off”, says Bonnet [the show’s producer]...“and just playing that scene the way we did, a very real scene between husband and wife, kind of makes this show different” (Chmielewski, 2009, N.P.). Scenes like this acknowledge and transmit the message that everyone faces major challenges in life, and that regardless of gender roles we need to be attentive and help one another.

Perhaps Disney’s most daring step towards true diversity and inclusiveness is the famous 2014 episode in which a lesbian couple is featured. In a statement to *TV Guide Magazine*, a Disney Channel spokesperson said, “This particular storyline was developed under the consultancy of child development experts and community advisors. Like all Disney Channel programming, it was developed to be relevant to kids and families around the world and to reflect themes of diversity and inclusiveness” (Schneider, 2013, N.P.). In the episode “Down a Tree” Amy and Bob set up a playdate for Charlie and one of her new friends, Taylor. They become confused about whether Taylor’s mom is named Cheryl or Susan, only to learn that Taylor has two moms: Cheryl (Lilli Birdsell) and Susan (Desi Lydic). Here, gender roles are

truly fluid, in that two women are playing what would traditionally be viewed as mother and father. Amy and Bob try to label one of the moms “the mother” and the other “the father.” In private, Bob tells Amy that during playdates, he and the dad go downstairs and watch sports on television. With two women (two moms), he does not know which should be the one to ask to join him. Later, in an awkward exchange where he makes clear he is not going to assume anything about either of the women, Susan (the stay at home mother who also works as a graphic designer) volunteers out of politeness despite not being a huge sports fan. After the pair leaves the room, Cheryl (the full-time lawyer and second mother) turns to Amy and says knowingly, “First time with two moms?” Throughout the episode, Bob and Amy express sincerity over their mutual feelings of respect for what they perceive to be a loving couple, but their awkwardness is nevertheless present. However, Amy’s last line hints at that labels do not matter in the end since it was really Bob’s banal stories that made the playdate go sour, not the fact that the couple was homosexual.

Good Luck Charlie is groundbreaking not just that it focuses on a family rather than a lone girl character, but that while it does use many gender stereotypes, these stereotypes do not go unchallenged. Instead, the stereotypes are reversed resulting in gender ambiguity and/or inversion. No longer is Disney pushing its traditional princess storylines, but something more contemporary. The changes in *Good Luck Charlie* are likely the result of changes in the entertainment industry including more female writers on staff at the network, but also social changes including a broader appreciation of the arguments and issues of contemporary feminism. Feminist perspectives have very much aided in changing representations of gender roles on television, sometimes in subtle and clever ways. There is little doubt that contemporary Disney Channel programming is more inclusive and more likely to depict independent women less

ambiguously than in the first decade of the 21st century, or before. Although the themes in these programs have passed through the filters that render them suitable for entertainment purposes, ensemble programming has facilitated Disney's recent ability to seriously reflect the rather striking changes in perception of gender that have occurred in American society.

Female Buddy Series

While female buddy comedies may be somewhat new to Disney Channel, the idea itself has existed throughout television's history. Some of the more famous examples are *Laverne and Shirley* (ABC 1976-1983), a slap-stick comedy in which two beer factory co-workers become roommates, *Cagney and Lacy* (CBS 1981-1988), a crimes series about two female cops, and *Kate and Allie* (CBS 1984-1989), a series about divorcees who decide to live together to help each other raise their families. While these series star women, they nonetheless aid in contextualizing three Disney series starring two girls. These are *Shake It Up!* in which two friends have adventures starring on a local dance show, *Best Friends Whenever*, a series about girls who have adventures as they time travel, and *Liv and Maddie* a comedy about twin sisters adjusting to life when one of them moves back home after having starred in a television show.

Patricia Lengermann and Ruth Wallace point out that female friendship is an important social structure in the promotion of gender equality. This is due to the friendship between women being (1) a positive avowal of the essential worth of the female, (2) a means of which to construct a social reality that is not male dominated, and (3) support in the process of thinking through change (82). At the same time, however, as the traditional family structure diminishes and the concept of "friends as family" is more acceptable, women's aptitude in creating and

upholding friendships becomes an increasingly significant social resource for both women as well as men (Lengermann and Wallace 82).

These programs provide verisimilitude, leading viewers to think that they are a satisfying reflection of life. With television being thought of as a reflection and influential factor in shaping culture, it may be viewed as a consensus narrative in that it is a medium for many of society's beliefs and values, however revised (Thorburn 161-73). Taking Thorburn's insight into consideration, Lynn C. Spangler (1989) conducted a historical overview of female friendships in primetime television providing great insight into the buddy series that are certainly applicable to Disney Channel programs. Her work provides a great understanding of the portrayals of female friends which is "important in the consensus narrative function of television and in its contribution to socialization" (Spangler, 1989, 14). By examining programs such as *Laverne and Shirley* and *Kate and Allie*, Spangler (2003) concludes that friendship is akin to sisterhood and via friendship and associated deep trust, women can survive anything. For example, in *Laverne and Shirley*, the two protagonists did not depend on men to provide for them but rather their independence and friendship with one another stood strong enough. "What makes *Laverne & Shirley* an important series is its emphasis on the friendship between the two lead characters. Laverne and Shirley have a long history with each other. What Laverne and Shirley are searching for in their lives is not quite clear, but they are doing it together" (Spangler, 2003, 133). Spangler's overview reveals that across time, depictions of female friendships have gone from stereotypical to more realistic and in so doing "demonstrate the need for women and friends in today's society" (2003,22). The following critical comments on shifting views of females roles may be similarly applied to Disney Channel.

While Spangler's view of friendship on television was reaffirming feminism via collaboration, others such as Lauren Rabinovitz view female buddy comedies as not being as progressive as they first appear. Using *Kate and Allie* as an example, Rabinovitz states, "The male friend or relative necessary to the familial structure of the 1970s sitcoms had been replaced by a woman" (11) in that Kate was the stereotypical man—an unskillful cook, worked full-time, and signed the lease. Allie, on the other hand, prepares meals and decorates the house thereby taking on the typical role of homemaker. Rabinovitz's readings of such sitcoms is two-fold in that she sees how,

within such traditional iconographic patterns, Kate and Allie perpetuate conflicts of female independence and the search for female self-actualization. But because the binary oppositions (male domestic parent/female domestic parent) initially expressed are articulated through two female characters, the characterizations themselves are more fluid and interchangeable so that either may assume the passive-resistant role in relationship to the other's narrative direction (12).

Spangler's observation suggests that a structure of female control and assertiveness is established, yet it may conflict with values associated with a more active feminism.

In a similar vein, Karen Hollinger warns of being quick to celebrate media dealing with female friendship and its supposed influence on feminist concepts. Hollinger discusses "respeaking" sisterhood, a concept inspired by the work of Mary Ann Doane in *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s*. To Doane and Hollinger, female-centered programming should not be praised too quickly for merely "respeaking" (the act of work being reshaped to fit traditions) since, "When this reshaping involves the appropriation by popular cultural texts of feminist ideas, it seems to contain limitations that seriously call into question the progressive

nature of these works” (54). It is suggested that purported expression of feminist ideas is only masking the insistence of mainstream ideology. Using two other female double series as examples, Hollinger adds “The conceptions of successful female bonding and healthy female development ...thus involves the protagonists movement through insecurities and self-absorption to a female care ethic that is presented as tempering patriarchal power, curbing women’s career ambitions, and providing true feminism satisfaction through devotion to family” (56). Overall, through a strong emphasis on the family units, patriarchy is recuperated. Sisterly care is essentially substituting for maternal nurturance, and this is what equips females to succeed. In contrast to the theorizing of Spangler, mentioned above, what Rabinovitz sees in this type of programming is, “the notion of empowerment that is promoted involves women utilizing female bonding to find new ways to adapt more successfully to the patriarchal status quo...” (63). Rabinovitz’s views in some ways demonstrate what was happening on Disney Channel prior to 2011, but I argue a stance more in line with Spangler and see Disney Channel as progressing—something discussed in the next section of this chapter, using *Shake It Up!* as an example.

While the two female stars, Rocky (Zendaya Coleman) and CeCe (Bella Thorne) of *Shake It Up!* may be read as another version of the double theme present in *Hannah Montana*, their presentation by two different actresses, and their function for one another, points to a version of girl power concomitant with female friendship above all else. Together, Rocky and CeCe prove anything is possible. While Rocky and CeCe have some interest in boys, these two typical middle schoolers’ biggest dreams are to be professional dancers—goals they accomplish with their ingenuity in the series premiere.

In *Shake It Up!* themes of teamwork and sisterhood push the narratives forward sending a message that friendship is to be valorized. This message serves as a reminder that tweens are at

that stage in life when anxieties about inclusion or exclusion in social settings become paramount to them but also encapsulates a special power in female friendship. Lyn Mikel Brown, author of *Girlfighting* and Rachel Simmons of *Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls* discusses how girls' friendships are an important part of their lives respecting emotional development, but also in overpowering the more threatening aspects of patriarchal order. Female closeness leaves boys out of the picture and disrupts the heteronormative social ritual in which males ordinarily prevail (Lipkin 101). *Shake It Up!* with its theme of girls working together as “buddies” to accomplish common goals not related to males is a different take on a new, more enlightened kind of girlhood in which girls have power via community and are therefore not only unified, but their voices are heard, thus validating them. However, such a reading can be interpreted in a contradictory manner.

Robin Wood discusses how '70s male buddy films—applicable to Disney buddy-series—were hostile reactions to feminism and homophobia. “The films are guilty of the duplicitous teasing of which they have often been accused of continually suggesting a homosexual relationship while empathetically disowning it” (203-204). Robert Kolker examines buddy films and provides a different viewpoint, saying that the buddy operates in the mode of an extension of male bonding, but in so doing presents, a manner in which men are able to fantasize about freedom from female imposed repression. A “buddy” allows for adventure, a safe community, fun, and marginalization of women (280).

While *Shake It Up!* does not directly reflect either of these frameworks presented in that the girls are “established” as being heterosexual due to their stated interests in boys, it does fit more into Kolker's view. Using Kolker's model of what the male buddy films mean, the essential element of the female buddy film could be read as fantasizing about release from

the repression imposed by the company of men. To best understand this conception, it is important to look closer at female buddy films or television series. For example, *Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1991) is a classic filmic example, and *Cagney and Lacy* is a classic television example. As in *Thelma and Louise*, *Shake It Up!* caricatures men while weakly asserting heterosexual desire with a few storylines about the girls' crushes on boys. Just as the female protagonists in *Thelma and Louise* lived outside the confines of the patriarchal symbolic order, so do Rocky and CeCe. Parents are rarely part of the storyline. Rocky and CeCe make many of their own decisions. In the episode "Shake It Up, Up and Away" the girls travel out-of-state alone on a road trip and wind up in Texas. Similar to how Thelma and Louise were seeking escape from the masculine circuit of desire on their road trip (via bus) through Texas (Hart 445), Rocky and CeCe do the same in their efforts as professional dancers on a local dance television series: *Shake It Up, Chicago!* As in *Cagney and Lacy*, these two girls grow a tight bond with one another via the actions and experiences they share together and by taking control over their decision-making process. Similarly, in *Shake it Up!* the emphasis is on the ability of the girls to make a difficult decision together within the male-dominated system which they overcome with their success. Going back to Wood's comments about how male buddy films are hostile reactions to feminism and homophobia, female buddy films could be covert signals for same-sex desire.

Another possible reading is seeing the girls as symptoms of cultural anxiety in that they serve as an "anxious response to masculine isolationism" (Donald and Renov 232). Rather than a homosexual desire for one another, there is a sisterly bond between Rocky and CeCe. They find common ground in that they experience similar setbacks differing from men. There is a sense of sisterhood between the two girls. They support each other and realize that sexism also transpires when females are competitive with one another. Rocky and CeCe end their sexist behavior by

reaching out to one another—a true staple of girl power as discussed earlier in this study. Together, these two friends accomplish a goal that goes back to the idea that for feminism to be effective, women must work with each other. Rather than mobilization to combat patriarchy as such, Rocky and CeCe demonstrate that coalitions are a way to combat sexism; there is a common understanding that through shared experience comes both the motivation and the ability to act in concert (Lyshaug 77-78).

Unlike programs of the previous decade, *Shake It Up!* features successful, independent, career-oriented girls, and whether their desires help them or others, the girls get what they want. Although it appears feminism is present in these programs, like previous Disney programming, the on-screen girl power is present, although there are caveats. Sarah Banet-Weiser author of “Girls Rule! Gender Feminism and Nickelodeon” argues that,

...the media context of girl power, combined with the increasing recognition of adolescent girls as both powerful citizens and consumers, offers what at times looks like a radical gesture regarding disrupting dominant gender relations. However, we can also read the mainstream embrace of girl power as a restabilization of particular categories of gender, so that this “radical” challenge moves toward the entrenchment of conventional gender relations (111).

The above expressions are true where *Shake it Up!* is concerned although much less subtle than in programming of the previous decade. When it comes to the concept of power, Rocky and CeCe get it in the form of money and self-fulfillment from doing what girls usually do on these shows: perform. Their performing skills are not something CeCe and Rocky have to hide. Unlike *Hannah Montana*, there is no double life for either girl. Rather, dancing on the program is more of an extracurricular activity or part-time job that has no reason to be hidden. In most episodes,

Rocky and CeCe are surrounded by friends, family, or fellow dancers who do not treat them any differently because they are on television. At school *Shake It Up, Chicago!* is not usually discussed and there is no definite reason for this and little ado. The only indication that could account for Rocky and CeCe not being considered celebrities is that *Shake, It Up Chicago!* is a *local* program with limited viewership. Furthermore, Rocky and CeCe are paid only \$40 a week for their services on the show, barely enough to buy them the cell phones they never had but always wanted. While technically living their dreams as professional dancers, the local program is certainly not providing Rocky and CeCe power in the form of large amounts of money or celebrity perks that might be a motivation for hiding. Rather, they maintain a more average girlhood. As depicted in the details of each show throughout the series, instead of financial power or celebrity being at the center of their lives, camaraderie is key.

In *Shake it Up!* friendship is *the* theme. This is unlike previous programming in which girls did not share the spotlight, nor was sisterhood so thematically relevant. In an interview with *Television Week*, Adam Bonnet, VP of Original Programming for the Disney Channel said during *Shake it Ups!'s* run that he "...approached his job in programming as a place to re-create the golden age of television. 'As a development executive, the things I am developing are the things that I remember making me laugh and touching me emotionally when I was that age...'" (Cooper 29). He goes on to discuss buddy classics like *I Love Lucy* and *Lavern and Shirley* to provide context for *Shake It Up!* Like any buddy film, Rocky and CeCe are opposites, and this is what creates an entertaining dynamic. Rocky is a studious realist who thinks about the future more than the past or present. On the other hand, CeCe puts school at the bottom of her list of priorities, fantasizes overly ambitious dreams, and lives in the moment. Such a dichotomy actually creates a balance that in some ways makes it seem like they are one person. This concept

is mocked in the episode “Kick it Up” when a friend of the girls named Deuce (Adam Irigoyen) points out that they are too joined and should spend some time apart. CeCe and Rocky try the experiment and begin to miss each other. When CeCe is at the movie theater with her friend Tinka (Caroline Sunshine)—who is usually not seen without her twin brother Gunther (Kenton Duty)—she learns a few words of wisdom from Tinka, “Gunther and I are individuals...just individual together” which inspires her to rekindle her friendship with Rocky who is equally happy about the reunion.

With buddy films, a series of events will cause the friends to grow stronger, and this is the case in *Shake it Up!* In the episode, “Add it Up!” CeCe hides her dyslexia from Rocky. When Rocky finds out CeCe’s secret, she is taken aback that CeCe hid it from her for so long. The two swear to never hide a secret from one another again and in the process gain a stronger mutual respect for one another. While there is some hint of a double theme in that there are two girls pursuing closely similar goals, it is presented more like sisterhood allowing for some second wave feminist themes come to light. “Whereas the first wave of feminism was propelled by middle-class, Western, cisgender, white women, the second phase drew in women of color and developing nations, seeking sisterhood and solidarity” (Rampton N.P.). African-American, Rocky, and Caucasian CeCe are an effort to demonstrate that race, class, and gender oppression intersects and are initiating a concentrated effort to rid society top-to-bottom of sexism.

At first glance, the typical storylines, the young female stars, and the element of performance make it seem like *Shake it Up!* is simply another tween show with no unique qualities to separate it from the competition. As related by Stinson, “Here’s the thing about tween TV: The shows are remarkably similar to one another. The adult characters, whether parents or teachers, are generally dolts. The kids are wisenheimers. And the writing and stories

follow the conventions of what now seems like old-fashioned sitcom television. A latter-day *Three's Company*, but for kids, in other words” (Stinson N.P.). Closer examination, however, reveals *Shake It Up!* takes the first step into a new genre of tween programming, one in which celebrity culture and fantasy life are not glorified. CeCe and Rocky are relatable characters and while they do get into situations that are truly television fiction (e.g., fighting dark angels to save the world), most of the series revolves around values and lessons nearly any tween from any background can benefit from. As noted by Hains, “The tween is a girl negotiating a location between childhood and adolescence, aspiring to be a teenager but still attached to toys and childhood’s trappings. Thus, products and media texts that assist tween girls in imagining life as a teenager have enjoyed tremendous success” (Hains, 2009, 90). *Shake it Up!* remains groundbreaking for Disney Channel in that it points to a newly liberated girlhood, navigating coming-of-age milestones.

Lack of Magical Powers

Thus far we have talked about two different means to tell stories and how relative strengths of these approaches have facilitated changes in gender representations on Disney Channel. Perhaps the most dramatic change of all, however, is that Disney’s new girls lack special powers they must hide. In the older programs, powers were frankly supernatural, unrealistically attained, or very difficult to maintain (e.g., Miley’s celebrity power as Hannah). However, this is no longer the case on Disney Channel. While some girls have unique abilities, these abilities are realistic in nature. There are a few exceptions, and this next section will address this shift and how it relates to changing portrayals of girl characters.

After years of portrayals of females as caretakers in the tradition of Snow White, or as nymphs endowed with magical powers, Disney has recently created programming that more realistically reflects today's society and especially today's girls since the plots and character's fantasy worlds are less influenced by the supernatural. Tween and teen girl characters are high schoolers with part-time jobs rather than casting spells or headlining sold-out concert tours. Although a few residual themes, such as the second life theme from the prior decade remain present in some form, as exemplified in *K.C. Undercover* where the protagonist is a high schooler and spy, such gender modified representations are pointing towards a future of a new kind of girlhood. This is one in which the message is that opportunities for girls are positive, essentially endless, and realistically obtainable.

Girls with special abilities include Chyna from *A.N.T. Farm* (2011-2014), K.C. from *K.C. Undercover*, and Cyd and Shelby from *Best Friends Whenever* (2015-present). *A.N.T. Farm* revolves around Chyna Parks (China Anne McClain), an 11-year-old musical prodigy. Despite her young age, Chyna was accepted into the A.N.T. Program (Advanced Natural Talents Program) at fictional Webster High School. Unlike previous programming, the protagonist and her friends each have special abilities. Chyna's friends Olive Doyle (Sierra McCormick) has an eidetic memory, and Fletcher Quimby (Jake Short) is an artistic prodigy. While on occasion Chyna's powers helped her in accomplishing a goal (such as when a radio broke at a party and so she played her guitar to keep the party alive), her musical abilities are more of a device used in the development of the story that explains the unique environment and diverse group of people she is surrounded by as she comes of age.

K.C. Undercover is a series about K.C. Cooper (Zendaya Coleman) a high school student who gets recruited by her parents after she discovers that they are secretly undercover spies.

Each episode focuses on K.C. and her family as they navigate family issues while performing missions to save the country. K.C. does have to hide her life as a spy from her friends, but her specialness is not based on magical powers or superstar status. Rather, she is essentially getting involved in the family business where discretion is a must. In other words, she is using her intelligence and physical strength to aid her family, friends, and community.

Other examples of characters with special abilities include Cyd (Landry Bender) and Shelby (Lauren Taylor) from *Best Friends Whenever*. More of a scientific perk than a magical power, these two girls, friends who live together while Cyd's parents are working abroad, have the ability to time travel due to a science experiment went awry. The accident occurred in neighbor Barry Eisenberg's (Gus Camp) science lab. One of his lasers deflected off a cup of chemicals and gave Cyd and Shelby the ability to time travel. Despite a male's accident being the reason for the girls to have this ability, the ability only works provided the girls are thinking of the time they want to go and are together either hugging or high-fiving. In some episodes, Cyd and Shelby hide their powers from those other than their close friends for fear they will be experimented on, have their ability stolen, or face challenges to the sisterly bond they have formed. However, having to hide powers is not a prominent or ritually repeated storyline as in programming from the 2000s.

Superficially it may appear that *Best Friends Whenever* is like one of the Disney Channel programs of the prior decade. However, the series is distinctly different from the previous decade's programs in the ways that these girls handle and use power, and the overtly feminist subject matter presented on the program. In past programming, girls were only successful in using their powers to help others or when a male character helped them, and it was not uncommon for the use of powers to be bungled. However, on programs like *Best Friends*

Whenever and *A.N.T. Farm*, whether girls are using their powers for themselves or others, they more often than not accomplish their goals on their own accord. Cyd and Shelby have traveled in time to learn more about their families, have a chance to retake a test, attend special events, educate themselves on subjects they were curious about, and even save the world from an evil dictator. While hilarious misadventures ensued on their journeys, they usually accomplished what they wanted to do or were positively changed by the events of their time travel experiences. In contrast to previous programming, their success often occurred without help from any male character.

In the *Best Friends Whenever* episode “Cyd and Shelby Strike Back,” Cyd and Shelby are held captive in a strange, futuristic lab for reasons unbeknownst to them. Cyd says she wants her captives to see them as relatable in hopes that their captors will sympathize with and release them. She tells a fib to escape, the fib being that they both have kids and stay-at-home husbands they provide for and thus they should be spared. Despite this being an attempt to get out of trouble and perhaps read as a reversal of what a male in their situation would say, Cyd nonetheless said she and her friend were the family breadwinners, something she actually saw herself doing in the future. Later, when discussing what it means to be female, one of the girls mentions it means being anything she wants to be. In this same, sci-fi themed episode, one female character takes a baton and hits a man, uses a stun gun on another person, and saves other humans—traits ordinarily seen on Disney’s boy-oriented tween shows and performed by male characters. This episode has feminist themes embedded in it, and the female characters are surely not stuck in stereotypical gender roles. While these themes and atypical gender roles may be subtle and at times less so, episodes such as this one typify the subject matter seen in other episodes.

In “Jump to the Future Lab” Cyd and Shelby want to visit a top-secret laboratory populated by a mysterious being in a hazmat suit. They do not know who this person is or even if they are male or female but remark that they hope the lab is an equal opportunity employer. Later, when they go to visit the lab, dressed as office workers in pants suits, glasses, and hair in an updo, they encounter a male security guard who refuses them entry because they do not have identification cards. The girls complain that they are not being let in because they are women, exclaiming, “It’s gender inequality!” and “It’s the glass ceiling!” They claim that if they were men and they had identification cards with a man’s picture on them, they would be let in. The male security guard repeats it is because they do not have identification cards at all, but as two beautiful women enter the room, the guard lets them in without asking for any identification. This scenario demonstrates that the girls are aware of the stereotypes and double standards in the field of science, standards of female beauty, and the discrimination they may face when entering a predominantly male field. Their acknowledgment of gender bias and discrimination is an important signal that Disney is addressing the inequalities females face. This episode also addresses the issue that there appears to be a standard of physical beauty that a woman must meet to be granted—literally in this episode, but also metaphorically—some level of access.

Acknowledgment of stereotypes aside, one adult female in the series stands out. In a multi-series story arch (“Fight to the Future Part I, II, and III), Janet Smyth (Nora Dunn), tries to take away the girls’ time traveling power for herself so that she can become “supreme leader” of the world. Janet Smyth was mentioned in a few earlier episodes as being the CEO of GloboDigiDyne, a major technology corporation. It appears as if Disney has taken a new approach to women with this character. Janet is indeed powerful for owning a successful corporation and being tech savvy. While a budding scientist named Barry initially idolized Janet,

he realizes she is too good to be true upon learning she has evil intentions. Janet tries to kidnap the girls to experiment on them to learn more about their special abilities. While it appears Janet is following suit with characters from Disney films in which older females are unattractive and evil, her role appears to be a plot device to add excitement to the narrative rather than a yet another stereotype to make older women appear in a negative light. It is as if Disney is saying, “I know what you’re thinking. You’re mad at us and calling us hypocrites because although we have a strong, powerful female on the series, she is also the evil one. To prove to you, we don’t think this, listen to these feminist comments...”

In the part I episode of “Fight to the Future” the girls insult Smyth and her accomplishments regarding time travel. Smyth responds with, “Oh, so women can’t become supreme leader of the world without manipulating time and space?” Shelby responds by saying, “Of course a woman can. How dare we say otherwise?” in support of all that a woman is capable of doing. Not long after, Cyd and Shelby appear to be fighting about Shelby’s boyfriend. Shelby has a chance to stay with him or be friends with Cyd and save the world. Shelby chooses to leave her boyfriend to save the future from evil Janet Smyth. Shelby’s embracement of independence does not stop there; like Cyd, she is smart and technology savvy. Together the two girls fight off male captors and Janet Smyth in order to save their clumsy male friends, and they do it all on their own. At the end of the episode, the girls reflect back on a brief moment in their lives when they gave up their time traveling abilities to help their friends. Although they reclaimed their time-travel powers upon defeating Smyth, they realized they must never give up because together they can accomplish anything—a herald back to the idea that feminism will survive and be most effective if females work together so that needs and voices are not isolated.

In Part III of the “Fight to the Future” trilogy, Cyd and Shelby meet their future selves, two karate-fighting women who tell them, “the future isn’t written, we’re just a possibility.” By entering the lab and using their intelligence and knowledge of science and technology to defeat Janet Smyth, Cyd and Shelby are redefining and extending what is possible for them to be and do in situations where they had been restricted as females, and as such are redefining gender roles. Such storylines extend opportunities for girls and women to be mindful of their rights and capabilities, the courage and ability to make life-changing choices, and access to resources and leadership potentials.

If girls in new programming are for the most part lacking magical powers, what powers do they have then? To answer this question, it is important to look at family structure. Girls in Disney Channel programming have had to remain in the home as dutiful daughters and follow in their mother’s footsteps as homemakers. While gender roles were occasionally switched in older programming, Disney’s current families are presented as looking increasingly different, and so are the daughter’s roles and duties within them, allowing for Disney’s girls to have a new kind of power in that they are no longer pigeonholed into one way of being. Newer programming depicts not just fragmented families, but blended or alternative families including families with internationally adopted children, divorced single mothers, professional working mothers, and—albeit briefly in a small ‘B storyline’—a family headed by a lesbian couple. Duties are changing in families as well in that it is not uncommon to see fathers and brothers caring for children and siblings. While many of such instances are played out as serious and mature, Disney never lets the change in gender roles carry out for extended periods of time without poking fun (and essentially critiquing) the role reversals that involve men caring for children. Nonetheless, change is present. While recent programming still functions as expressions of feminine

discontent and feminist critique, they are nonetheless evolving to show reconceptualized versions of girls. The message is that girls can grow up to be anything they desire and the possibilities are endless—true empowerment.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF WHAT THESE SHIFTS MEAN

Disney Channel's girls are seeing diverse futures, and hence, opportunities for a multitude of choices. For example, girls on Disney Channel are now playing roles as caretakers but also, careerists. These new possibilities for the characters are results of a number of issues arising from sociohistorical context, industry, and audience.

In regards to sociohistorical issues, fourth wave feminism is key. The move into fourth wave feminism is a powerful force that has played a role in shaping many of today's tweens' values and beliefs and, therefore, programming. For this study, fourth wave feminism is the lens used to analyze the most recent Disney programming. Fourth wave feminism has a variety of definitions. Diana Diamond says that fourth wave feminism is, "The unfinished business of the first three waves of feminism—that is, the inequalities that persist in the political and personal spheres..." and adds that, "...these unfinished agendas will contribute to the fourth wave, in which social action and spiritual/psychological practice converge" (Diamond 213). Under this definition, compassion among people sought through spiritual enlightenment will allow individuals to transcend their differences to create positive change. Jennifer Baumgardner adds to the conversation noting that technology plays a significant role in the deployment of the fourth wave due to the creation of online feminist communities appealing to tech-savvy young females (Baumgardner 250). The young generation active in the fourth wave grew up with technology since birth, and not only took ideas from the previous waves of feminism but spread them rapidly

via media and globalization creating a revolutionary force that has permeated Disney Channel. Kira Cochrane, author of *Rebel Women: The Rise of Fourth Wave Feminism*, says the women's movement may have been quiet for awhile until about 2012 when it was taken to the web and streets with events such as Feminist Freshers Fair, Reclaim the Night, and websites like Everyday Sexism Project. Cochrane agrees with Baumgardner that this new wave is technology driven in that technological tools like the internet are allowing women to build a strong, popular, active movement online (Cochrane, N.P.).

Despite this seemingly changing stance on women's place in the world, adolescents are still living in a world where trends such as abstinence-only education and purity rings are growing in attention, allowing for differences in opinion as to whether or not the fourth wave is actually influential. Nonetheless, themes relating to fourth wave feminism and technology—often deployed by girls on recent Disney series—are prevalent in storylines. Disney Channel seems to be nurturing cultural mores and values related to the transition into fourth wave feminism. Rather than avoiding or glossing over issues about the inequality girls face in favor of an idealized portrayal of girlhood, Disney Channel has addressed subjects important to girls, finally incorporating this worldview into their programming. Despite television reflecting society, it must be acknowledged again that the relationship between social attitudes and television is reciprocal. Industry personnel do have potential influence over viewers. Consciously or not, producers of youth-oriented programs either resist or permit the symbiotic nature of television and culture to be exemplified in every episode aired.

Sociohistorical trends aside, two major industry changes are affecting post-2011 programming: changes in viewing platforms and expansion and recognition of diverse audiences. How programs are watched is changing and extending the viewing experience. However, this has

caused Disney Channel to lose some viewers through its subscription television channel service. A decreasing viewership means Disney Channel must find ways to retain viewers, and one way to do so is by making changes in programming content rather than viewing platform. In 2010, “Disney Channels’ free WATCH apps—WATCH Disney Channel, WATCH Disney Junior, and WATCH Disney XD—have logged more than 12 million downloads and over half a billion video views” (Wolfe N.P.). One reason for the free offerings through alternative viewing platforms is the recognition that Disney’s cable television channel is, “...losing subscribers for two years [2013-2015] running, presumably as consumers cord-cut or cord-shave, taking much of their viewing online with Hulu, Netflix and others” (Bond, 2015, N.P.). While Disney Channel may be losing viewers who cut cable, they are gaining viewers via other platforms. However, these other platforms are not all airing the majority of recent Disney programs. Additionally, the decision to cut cable is a parent’s choice indicating they regulate what their children are watching. Parental involvement in children’s television is a crucial aspect of Disney’s motivation to once again cater to the adult demographic, certainly one explanation for the “new looks” of the more recent programming that it is being geared to both children and supervising adults.

To continue to hold onto their key audience and solidify their standing as a major children’s and family network, programming is now featuring older adults in main storylines. Disney marketers are continually reaching every part of the youth demographic and increasingly a co-viewing woman 18-49 demographic (Wolfe N.P.). Programs providing nostalgia like the current series *Girl Meets World* (2014-Present) a takeoff of the hit 90s series *Boy Meets World* (ABC 1993-2000), a move meant to cater to tweens and their mothers who may have watched the original series. The change in programming has been successful, for at the very end of 2015,

“For the first time in its 32-year history, Disney Channel is ending the year as the most-watched cable network for total day viewers. That No. 1 status, with an average 1.234 million viewers, puts it ahead of Nickelodeon for the first time ever” (O’Connell N.P.). Considering that many of these programs are now featuring adults in order to attract an older audience in addition to a child audience is certainly another important interpretation of the numerous ways that gender roles have changed in recent programming—to acknowledge the changing roles of adult viewers.

It may be argued that since the end of the 2000s there has been relatively little documented change in women’s roles in society. However, the recession that gripped the United States in the late 2000s almost certainly has had some impact along these lines. More than 80 percent of the jobs lost during the recession had belonged to men, which led to women holding the majority of jobs in the United States for the first time ever (Rampell N.P.). With unemployed husbands, wives may now take on the role of breadwinner, while the men take care of the home, a shift that seems increasingly visible in Disney programming such as *Good Luck Charlie*.

After *Hannah Montana*’s run, Disney Channel’s programming was essentially forced to change for other reasons: diversity of viewers in terms of race and ethnicity. Shortly after the just previously mentioned decrease in U.S. viewership from 2013-2015, international viewership was rising. Bob Iger, CEO of Disney Channel, has reported an increase in some of its channels, particularly the international version of Disney Channel (Bond, 2010, N.P.). The network realized its international audience at home and abroad and so rebranded itself again in 2014 by debuting a new logo in an attempt to spotlight Disney Channel viewers worldwide. The strategy described in a recent interview is very telling. ““The new branding was an international collaboration between Disney Channel global and European teams, and is crafted so our teams everywhere can customize it to create local stories in familiar settings, featuring culturally

identifiable storytelling,' said Richard Loomis, Senior VP, and Chief Marketing Officer at Disney Channels Worldwide" (NG N.P.). As part of the rebranding strategy that included international audiences, multi-ethnic casts appear in some of the ensemble programs mentioned earlier in this chapter, in particular, *Jessie*. While the protagonists in newer Disney series are still mainly white, middle-class girls, a variety of races not previously seen on Disney Channel such as Indian and Asian have been portrayed by secondary characters. Also, Disney has greenlit future programs starring ethnically diverse actresses Olivia Rodrigo, Madison Hu (Wagmeister, "Disney Channel Greenlights," N.P.) and Peyton Elizabeth Lee (Wagmeister, "Disney Channel Orders," N.P.). The significance of the influx of non-white characters in current programming is consistent with the fact that a woman's gendered experience is intersectional, dependent on her race and class. Characters of different races allow for a more multi-dimensional version of the girl.

Perhaps the one standout program that is neither an ensemble program nor buddy series is *K.C. Undercover* and this is the only program to star a girl and her family that is not white, but rather African-American. However, Disney Channel missed a significant opportunity to highlight the characters' ethnic backgrounds. Like the previous decade's programming, protagonist K.C. is whitewashed in the sense that race appears not to affect her life. Aida Hurtado argues that white woman and women of color experience gender differently due to their relationship to white men, and both groups of women are used to substantiate male power in different ways (833-855). Women of color are subordinated through rejection or denial of the "patriarchal invitation to privilege" (Hurtado 845). Sarah Fenstermaker says that doing gender involves different versions of accountability, depending on women's "relational position" to white men (8). Referencing programming of the current decade, while all the other central characters other than K.C. and her

family are white, Disney Channel does not fully explore these dynamics but rather presents K.C. as racially ambiguous.

The effort to lure adults into programming makes sense considering the need to maintain ratings in an increasingly fragmented television landscape. The increase in racially diverse characters is also perfectly understandable considering the diverse audience that watches Disney Channel. What this addition of adult and especially ethnically diverse characters represents is Disney's breakthrough realization that audiences can no longer be seen primarily in terms of age group, and that tween and teen girls and their adult counterparts are more diverse than previously acknowledged.

There are two other reasons for the shift in programming content since approximately 2011 and these reasons are further related to industry. Not having a hit on its hands after the end of *Hannah Montana* meant Disney was scrambling to gain an audience and wanted to appeal to a broad base. Therefore, they included adults in storylines and tried to be as gender neutral as possible. Besides just wanting to attract a wider audience, other industrial changes were occurring, mainly the hiring of more women in high-level creative positions. More women such as Eileen Conn, Executive Producer on *Shake It Up!*, Betsy Sullenger executive producer of *Liv and Maddie*, creator and executive producer Pamela Eells O'Connell on *Jessie*, Corinne Marshall, creator for *K.C. Undercover*, and Producer Julie Tsutsui on *Best Friends Whenever*. All of these women were involved in recent productions indicating that the gender perceptions of writers and creators working behind the scenes may have influenced the gendered social roles of characters. On-screen portrayals represent the culmination of creative and business decisions made by the storytellers, network executives, and advertisers (in this case the Disney Corporation). Previous research (Lauzen and Dozier 2004) indicates television storytellers

function at the center of a web of cultural and organizational restraints indicating storytellers do have influences on gender portrayals on the series they work on. “Within their elastic creative sphere...creators of entertainment content make a wide range of creative and aesthetic decisions with regards to story, plot, characters, and production values” (Lauzen and Dozier, 2004, 486).

CONCLUSION

Disney Channel’s newer girl protagonists are more empowered and certainly more realistically presented than the iconic girl characters of the 2000s that made the company so much money. Gender is now presented in ways that indicate that girls are no longer restricted to the home and that a variety of life combinations are available to them. Girls are no longer wizards and psychics, but teenagers with jobs as babysitters, college-bound high schoolers, sports enthusiasts, musicians, and scientists. It is now more culturally acceptable for girls to play sports, attend college, and pursue careers in fields like science, engineering, and politics than even a decade ago, and Disney seems to be reflecting this broader cultural change with considerable fidelity. The recognition of these recent adaptations to changes in society by the Disney Channel and other Disney productions is important. It is important because it suggests that Disney is in a sense trying to keep up, paying close attention to what its viewers—current and potential—are both experiencing, but also wanting. Furthermore, in contrast to Disney’s Decade of the Tween Girl, there is evidence that the company is listening more to what its audience is thinking, rather than focusing on formulating ways to change that thinking in its own image.

CONCLUSION

Via textual analysis, content analysis, discourse analysis, interviews, and primary and secondary sources, this study used a cultural studies approach via a historical and feminist lens to explore and comprehend the representations of tween girls on Disney Channel television series airing from 2001-2011. This study sought to answer questions about meanings of the network's creation and evolution of powerful girl characters during a particular historical moment. In so doing, it examined culture—particularly dominant American ideologies about girls—and industry, mainly, Disney as an institution that serves as an instrument of dominant ideology by pressing its views upon its audience. Disney Channel can be said to construct girlhood through its narrative representations of girls, its appeal to girl consumers and audiences, and its promotion of girl celebrities. This study has identified the reasons and motivations for presentations of girls with hidden magical powers, and the decade's social, historical, and industrial influence and impact on Disney programming. This study has also shown how Disney Channel has influenced society and history with its persistent, and sometimes pervasive, portrayals of tween girls resulting in a tween marketing frenzy and more attention being paid to girl's issues.

The process of historicizing Disney Channel in chapter one by finding connections among national events, the Disney Company's patterns of representing females, and current series effectively addressed the intertwined cultural and commercial dynamics of the network. This analysis has firmly established the network as a specific historical formation. Regarding its programming practices, they are historically problematic. The historical developments and convergences of programming practices of Disney Channel as we know it are direct outcomes of and shed light on the interconnectedness among cultural production and gender constructions.

Chapter two demonstrated Disney Channel is very much a business and continues to rely on proven formulas, familiar genres, and stereotypical portrayals of gender to attract and retain its audience. Innovative gender sensitive programming is rare due to Disney Channel being so profit-motivated that they continue to create repetitious stereotypical content to push their brand and in turn, consumer's spending habits. Programming content aside, this chapter demonstrated how marketing techniques such as cross promotion not only captured audiences attention but dispels gender ideologies of which may or may not be empowering to girls.

New expressions of femininities and masculinities, as well as changes in gender relations, have emerged both in and out of entertainment such as in literature, pop culture, and politics. As gender constructions are replicating, they become progressively fragmented—even unsubstantiated—and such flexibility, therefore, bends or ends gender. Contrastingly, however, as demonstrated in chapters three and four, the majority of Disney Channel television programs have only recently begun to hold back on presenting an imaginary, isolated, hackneyed, and imbalanced gender world. This study, in particular, the interviews with industry personnel, supports the argument that men hold most of the decision-making positions and responsibilities that directly reflect in Disney Channel programming. The men interviewed for this project such as Michael Poryes and Steven Peterman, for example, indicated they interject their views and experiences via these programs since they are the creatives who produce and write these series.

Despite the feminization of media professions, especially within children's television, and the fact that numerous women now occupy key positions of power at Disney Channel (e.g., as of this writing, Christine McCarthy was recently promoted to Chief Financial Officer and Leslie Ferraro as president of Disney Consumer Products and Interactive Media) (Orendain et al. N.P.) they do not have influence (as again indicated by the interviews I conducted) over the final

say about the content of these programs as they are not in creative positions. Creative producers, in this case, the men who wrote, directed, and created these programs, do so from their experience rather than a female perspective. If this unseen area—this assumption that females are merely the second sex—is recognized, it can be adapted and opened up and in turn, renew creativity. Nonetheless, as discussed in chapter four, it is proposed that a new understanding and respect for girlhood is emerging as evidenced by newer programming’s portrayal of progressive young heroines. Disney Channel has made leaps and bounds in the way modern female television characters are characterized. Trends within Disney Channel television series reflect the trends within Disney corporate. Thus far the trend in programming up to present times displays an increasingly wide variety of female characters who are defined by unique ideas and motivations, and this parallels the inclusion of more women into positions of power at Disney Corporate.

This research provides insight into theoretical and policy implications of Disney tween television. Having made clear that Disney has portrayed girls in a contradictory manner despite including elements of girl power in their programming, it is much easier to brainstorm solutions about how to address these issues. Disney Channel is not going to change based on this single study. However, parents and educators can step in and teach children how to be media literate. In this case, being media literate means being aware of, for example, that what one sees on screen is only one version of a girl someone can be, but there are so many other versions not portrayed on these programs—a simple conversation to be had with viewers. By helping tweens be media literate, we can encourage them to consider various interpretations of media messages, put these depictions in perspective, and improve media use habits such as changing ritualistic viewing behaviors. Being that media is so dominant, media literacy is the best option regarding defense

against manipulation and keeping a perspective on the messages and images that are a part of media and youth culture. The heart of media literacy lies in talking with tweens about what we watch, hear, and read and then drawing out their ideas and guiding them to critically examine what they see and hear. Constantly probing answers helps young people expand their thoughts and helps them focus and understand how they perceive what they view.

Producers have long justified the current practice of featuring boys more than girls on television. Their argument relies on the perception that girls can identify with boy characters but that boys cannot identify with girl characters, and this is a proven fallacy (Gotz, 5, 2008). Both girls and boys wish to be entertained with surprise and humor and seek narratives and characters that represent their interests and ideals. While there may be some gender-specific preferences, there is substantial potential for diversity in the roles and identities of these girls and boys.

Hopefully, this research has also expressed new ways in which to consider the role of tween television. This is key considering television is highly appealing to youth, and that it offers them access to new situations they may not have encountered in everyday life including visions of what it means to be a girl or a boy—a woman or a man. As demonstrated, there is gender inequality on Disney Channel. Gender inequality is not passé nor does it belong to a previous century—in fact, it is an immediate pressing issue. It is important that we recognize this now if we wish to provide the next generation with the tools they need to confront imbalance and one-dimensional traditional constructs. What is called for here is gender sensitivity in television programming. Such sensitivity entails a heightened awareness of critical stereotypes and clichés, and points out new and appealing alternatives to both genders. There must be reflection and awareness of one's predispositions and conventions about gender that have become normalized

through repetition if we are to overcome one-dimensional, traditional constructs of what it means to be a girl or a boy.

The study has offered an evaluative perspective on gender representations on Disney Channel during a key period. Disney Channel revolutionized the entire entertainment industry by featuring tween girls in leading roles on many programs helping to reshape American perceptions of tweens—especially girls. This study builds on preceding research and understanding of Disney Channel especially as it relates to tweens and gender representations by showing that Disney Channel does portray some positive imagery of females indicating Disney Channel's handling and creation of tweens as a new demographic group. The research gathered and analyzed describes how Disney did something unprecedented by allowing girls to headline its network without losing its mainstream audience or adhering to conventional gender representations. While other literature on Disney Channel addresses the network's focus on the youth demographic, the period from 2001-2011 has not received the sustained, and detailed attention that other periods have. Nonetheless, this study now frames the first decade of the new millennium as one in which girls were finally considered by networks as tremendously important. More broadly, though, this study assigns Disney Channel television a place of prominence among the standard litany of phenomena that define the period. In discussions of girl power and gender in Disney film, Disney Channel itself has generally occupied a marginal role in academic literature. This study proves the network, like other cultural forms, has accomplished a great deal in recent years in addressing, normalizing, and recognizing girls' wishes, desires, and needs.

The study encountered some limitations, however, some of which were self-imposed, and which need to be considered. Due to the narrow focus, the study conclusions are limited. It was

mentioned in the introduction that the content analysis and textual analysis would focus on three programs due to these programs having dominated Disney Channel regarding repeated daily airings, merchandise sales, and viewership. However, there was other programming including bumpers and other short form content not considered since it was out of the scope of the research questions. For example, programming on Disney Junior, Disney's morning block of preschool programming was not viewed. The focus was on content for tweens, but the conclusions drawn about Disney Channel and their representations of gender may not apply to the rest of the network's programming—mainly programming for the non-tween groups, however small a portion this may be. In a similar vein, only ten years of relatively recent programming, a small amount of time in the scope of Disney Channel's history, was closely analyzed. Conversely, as indicated throughout this study, this decade did have enough differences from decades before and after that make it unique—however short a time it may be.

Two more technical aspects of the project relating to limitations pertain to the interviews conducted and content analysis. Only a small sample of industry personnel was accessible for interviews. A larger sample size consisting of marketers and studio heads may have bared varying results. In future content analyzes, perhaps with a more qualitative approach, researchers could more carefully analyze genre differences in the portrayal of gender. Music videos, soap operas, and talk shows are qualitatively different from the entertainment television programs analyzed here. Disney Channel does not usually produce these forms of entertainment. However, a closer analysis of their music, stars, and spin-off products from their sitcoms could prove vital in further understanding Disney Channel's representations of tween girls.

In addition, the sample size of episodes of the three sitcoms used for the content analysis could be expanded. According to sample size calculators or guidelines provided by websites like

Creative Research Systems, Qualtrics, and Checkmarket.com which considers the margin of error (confidence interval), confidence level, and standard deviation in determining proper sample size, the sample I used should have been around 237 episodes for a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 3%. The episodes used may well be considered a microcosm of what is occurring on Disney Channel. However, assuming an 80% confidence level, with 48 episodes, the margin of error is still small at about 7.5%. Once again, however, the sample size was chosen in order to gauge what, on average, children are viewing in a week. The sample size does determine the amount of sampling error inherent in a result. A larger sample size would increase the statistical power of the content analysis yielding more accurate depictions or more examples of how girls are portrayed.

In terms of future research, audience reception could build on the findings presented in this study. Children's television has long been in the realm of child psychology, but such studies are not making concrete connections between the content of the programming and girls' behaviors. Focus on studies about effects, for example, concentrate on children's behavior having viewed episodes of a certain program, but the results of studies are inconclusive since the episodes watched go unanalyzed. This study is meant to address this gap in research, hence the focus on texts.

In the future, I hope to expand on many of the themes interrogated in this study and to build on the initial research conducted for this project. Several of these chapters suggest avenues for further inquiry. For example, this project lays the groundwork for further research into the representation of boys on Disney Channel, however, since other than *The Suite Life of Zach and Cody*, tween boys shows were practically non-existent, the unofficial tween boy channel, Disney XD, should be examined. Originally meant as a subchannel for Disney Channel that focused on

tweens 24/7, the channel has unofficially become geared towards tween boys. While a more independent girl has emerged on Disney, girls appearing on Disney XD (which is minor supporting roles only since boys play the leads) are traditional in that they are, for example, submissive. Sexuality and violence absent from Disney channel is more present on Disney XD as is hypermasculinity. On Disney XD, action, violence, and male dominance, as well as aggression as threat and energy, take precedence. Programs on Disney XD appear to be teaching boys that they must be assertive and to stand their ground as males using violence, making how to act and be a boy a complex enterprise to navigate when faced against strong-willed girls.

While sexuality, commonly discussed in the context of children's television, was purposely excluded to focus attention on lesser known aspects of children's television such as gender representations of tween girls, another aspect of sexuality could have been considered as it relates to gender: forced heterosexuality. Researchers (Oliver and Hyde, 1995; Simon and Gagnon, 1986) have recognized and reported that there is a cultural script for relationships, such that certain types of relationships and specific behaviors within these relationships are considered culturally endorsed especially within romantic relationships. Developed by Kim et al. (2007), the heterosexual script is a specific coding method that could have been used in this study for it does relate to gender by providing an integrative script for how men and women are socially and stereotypically expected to act in sexual and romantic situations. Explicit discussion of sexual behavior was not present in the programs. However, storylines did entail romantic relations in the form of crushes. Disney Channel viewers are groomed for heterosexuality prior to entering the adolescent dating arena. Across all series, the same-sex romantic attraction was not offered as a viable or legitimate option for offspring. Additionally, episodes do address some heterosexual

options outside of conventional coupling. However, this is limited thus further restricting girl audiences' viewpoints.

In addition to using the above method for studying gender, aesthetics may provide insights into gender representations. Part of the methodology for this study was informed by the work of David Bordwell, Janet Stagier, and Kristin Thompson in their seminal study of the Classical Hollywood Cinema. The Classical Hollywood Cinema label was used to describe both a narrative and visual style of film-making which was present in American cinema between 1917 and 1960—eventually dominating movie-making in the United States. In addition to discussing economics and technology of the time in which characterized these films, aesthetics were considered as well. The same could be applied to Disney Channel. The Decade of the Tween girl ushered in a new visual look for Disney sitcoms. Besides the DDTG series being shot in HD—a first for the network, high key lighting and bright sets with a mix of candy-colored and pastel set items give Disney tween programming a distinct look that is also utilized by Nickelodeon as well. Television does operate on a stylistic level, and aesthetics are fundamental to any viewing experience. The stylistic dynamics of television raise important questions about the way we judge and interpret television as both an art form, but as pertinent to this study, a cultural artifact. Beyond just sets and lighting, for example, all of the girls looked similar in nature regarding dress but notably, hairstyles. Miley for example often wore her hair down and curled even when doing manual labor—a situation that would make such glamor look impractical in real life. Her appearance is forcing a heterosexual script. Miley, just like any of the other girls, has to constantly remind viewers that while she is doing typically boyish activities such as play sports or engaging in manual labor, she is still a girl as indicated by her long, perfectly coifed hair.

By doing this research, the groundwork for research on Disney Channel representations of gender, particularly the young, female gender was laid out. It is possible that exposure to television that supports the notion girls are intellectually challenged compared to boys could increase both genders' endorsement of this delusion in their lives. Exposure to these themes in television could contribute to the overall confirmation of gender stereotypes. In making television specifically for girls, it must be remembered girls are drawn to characters that reflect their experience of life. No different than boys, girls seek recognition and appreciation of their identity with all its complexities, abilities, and shortcomings. As evidenced by the continued popularity of Disney Channel, girls are enjoying multifaceted and multilayered characters who may fail at times—but are ultimately triumphant. Girls are deserving of and are looking for characters and narratives that reinforce their uniqueness and unparalleled potential. While Disney's protagonists may temporarily fail, they do still reach their goals of empowerment and girl viewers appreciate heroines who take control of their destiny, find their way, and make things happen all while avoiding stereotypes. It is passed time television, and media in general, take girls and their likings seriously.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF EPISODES USED FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS

That's So Raven

"Mother Dearest"	(S1, E1)
"Saturday Afternoon Fever"	(S1, E15)
"Escape Clause"	(S1, E19)
"To See or Not To See"	(S1, E21)
"Out of Control"	(S2, E1)
"Leave It To Diva"	(S2, E11)
"The Road to Audition"	(S2, E 18)
"Shake, Rattle and Rae"	(S2, E22)
"Psychic Eye for the Sloppy Guy"	(S3, E 11)
"Cake Fear"	(S3, E3)
"Country Cousins"	(S3, E27/28)
"The Four Aces"	(S3, E 35)
"Raven, Sydney and the Man"	(S4, E1)
"Pin Pals"	(S4, E2)
"Checking Out"	(S4, E11)
"Where There's Smoke"	(S4, E22)

Wizards of Waverly Place

"Crazy 10-Minute Sale"	(S1, E1)
"Movies"	(S1, E9)
"First Kiss"	(S1, E2)
"Art Museum Piece"	(S1, E21)
"Smarty Pants"	(S2, E1)
"Cast Away to Another Show"	(S2, E2)
"Wizard for a Day"	(S2, E4)
"Retest"	(S2, E30)
"Franken Girl"	(S3, E1)
"Delinquent Justin"	(S3, E24)
"Wizards vs. Werewolves"	(S3, E9)
"Wizards Exposed"	(S3, E28)
"Alex Tells the World"	(S4, E1)
"Harperella"	(S4, E26)
"Dancing with Angels"	(S4, E8)
"Who Will Be The Family Wizard?"	(S4, E27)

Hannah Montana

“Lily, Do You Wanna Know a Secret?”	(S1, E1)
“Grandmas Don’t Let Your Baby Grow Up To Play Favorites”	(S1, E6)
“On the Road Again”	(S1, E12)
“Bad Moose Rising”	(S1, E26)
“Me and Rico Down by the School Yard”	(S2, E1)
“Me and Mr. Jonas and Mr. Jonas and Mr. Jonas”	(S2, E16)
“The Test of My Love”	(S2, E27)
“We’re All On This Date Together”	(S2, E29)
“He Ain’t a Hottie, He’s My Brother”	(S3, E1)
“Cheat It”	(S3, E10)
“Superstitious Girl”	(S3, E19)
“Miley Says Goodbye (Part II)”	(S3, E30)
“Sweet Home Hannah Montana”	(S4, E1)
“I’ll Always Remember You”	(S4, E9)
“Can You See The Real Me?”	(S4, E10)
“Wherever I Go”	(S4, E13)

APPENDIX B

RATIONALE FOR CHOOSING EPISODES TO CODE, METHODOLOGY

For each season of the three series, the first episode and the last episode to air were coded. The highest rated episode regarding viewership (as reported by Nielsen) and one random episode (determined by a random number generator available online at Random.org) were also coded. The first and last episode of each season were coded for these are the episodes that ordinarily set up or conclude the premise of the series or season. Additionally, such episodes also attract a large number of viewers likely making a more substantial impact as compared to lesser viewed programs. Similarly, the highest rated episodes based on Nielsen data were chosen because these episodes would probably have a major influence on their respective audiences. In the instance that the highest rated episode was also the first and last episode, the second highest rated episode was used. Random episodes are meant to be representative of how a typical episode appears, for example, one not necessarily expressly advantaged by guest stars solely to attract viewers. Sometimes the episode determined by the random number generator would be one of these special episodes, however. The procedures described above made up a total of forty-eight episodes or approximately twenty-eight hours of viewing time. This amount of time also corresponds to the average amount of hours a typical tween watched television in a week in 2009 (McDonough N.P.).

As the sole coder, I viewed each of the forty-eight episodes twice on YouTube or the iTunes store. The first viewing allowed me to develop familiarity with the storylines. The second viewing was to analyze the program more carefully with closer attention to the elements of discourse within the narratives in the sense described above, particularly those with ideological components that seemed “out of place” for a tween audience, perhaps artificially imposed on the

narratives by adult script writers and producers. I took note of the episodes in which gender was a major or running theme. However, I decided not to unequivocally choose episodes for coding when gender was an explicit theme in that particular storyline. Since the focus of this study involves gender issues, if I were to clue into predominantly gender-themed episodes after my first viewing, or through reading episode summaries, I might have been biased toward coding them. Obviously all episodes in television series such as these will have some aspects of the storylines and/or discourses having to do with gender issues; nonetheless, I wanted to produce a sample of representative texts as random and free of bias as possible. Excluding the episodes that dealt explicitly with gender issues was the best way to achieve this end.

The live actions, scripted or inferred statements, and “inner thoughts” of the chief protagonists—tween female stars—of *That’s so Raven*, *Wizards of Waverly Place*, and *Hannah Montana*, were the focus of coding procedures. Coding “inner thoughts” sounds like a daunting challenge, but these were often readily interpreted—at least in outline form if not in detail—through narrated soliloquies, revealing facial expressions, stereotyped reactions of supporting cast members, musical and visual cues, and other devices.

Rather than simply look at how a given story was told by, for example, analyzing editing techniques, drawing from Chatman’s work, the overall message of the episode was examined as demonstrated through the selection of narratives. Particular attention was paid to where the scripted lines delivered by the lead characters echoed the language in previous episodes, or often as or more revealing what was *not* said or shown. In addition, the overall message of a given episode might be reflected in the unfolding of events—their sequence in the action, contingencies, and demonstrated or implied causalities. For example, when looking at plot construction with juxtaposed characters and setting, I would consider what is already known

about a lead character's previous actions, motivations, behavior, and ethical positions. This was done since these representations are arguably those most essential to socially meaningful discursive analysis developed in Foucault's work. The statements and behaviors of secondary characters/co-stars were included in coding decisions only when their words or actions were essential to the effective representation of the lead characters' "message."

Only incidents and actions that propelled the storyline forward (e.g., the story could not move forward, continue, or make sense without this information), were considered. Both boys and girls were frequently depicted in the act of consumption. Consumption arising from the interplay between social context and economic resources has been defined for the purposes of this study as a "situated practice" (Sparman and Sandin 2012); that is, consumer behavior involving the acquisition of (mostly) material goods to serve the interests of marketers and manufacturers seeking profits (Graeber 489). If the act of consumption did not propel the story forward—if the story could be understood without the act—the act was not considered when coding.

Preparing and consuming food could be considered acts of consumption as it is assumed the items used to prepare the food, the food itself, and the act of eating all involve consumption. Again, however, unless these activities were an integral part of the story, they were not coded when considering consumption habits portrayed in youth television. To give a simple example of an incident involving consumption that would *not* fall into the category of situated practice, in one episode of *Wizards of Waverly Place*, while eating sandwiches Alex and her friend are interrupted with news of a family emergency. They are engaged in the act of consumption (consuming sandwiches they bought), but the characters were represented in this trifling merely to enhance the realism of the scene; it has no relevance beyond that. Similarly, all the characters

in all the episodes were wearing clothes. Assuming these clothes were purchased, theoretically, this too could count as an act of consumption. However, unless expressly mentioned or serving a necessary plot element, their clothes were not counted as consumed items in the sense of being part of situated practice described above. On the contrary, in the series premiere episode of *Wizards of Waverly Place*, the lead character Alex expresses a desire to purchase the last of a highly sought after jacket before her friend does. In this case, the item that she wanted to buy is the highlight of the story and moves it forward, and so it is worth coding when examining this young female character's consumption practices. The point of these examples is to emphasize the importance of judgment calls in coding complex texts with the intention of addressing complex issues; automated or otherwise uncritical "coding for" selected features of a text are likely to produce ambiguous or meaningless results.

In addition to the visual elements of the programs addressed in another section, auditory cues, especially bars from recurrent musical scores, with or without lyrics, were coded because these often contained important messages about the tween protagonist or the program's leitmotif. Lyric-less intro music at the beginning of a scene after standard commercial breaks was excluded. Songs sung by a character or non-diegetic sound were considered when a prominent story element (moves the story forward/story would not be without it). For example, in a *Hannah Montana* episode titled "Love That Let's Go," Miley expresses her feelings for her beloved horse through a ballad. In so doing, she reveals much about herself and her outlook towards others; this seemingly trivial behavior plays into building a core character trait—Miley as a country girl at heart—that emerges more fully as the series drew closer to its final season.

APPENDIX C

FURTHER DEFINING THE MAIN UNITS OF ANALYSIS, CODING CATEGORIES

Similar to what was used in Donald Treadwell's work, used in this analysis are two self-designed coding sheets—a general code sheet and a specific code sheet. The general code sheet was utilized to track storylines relating to gender, power, and reoccurring themes with *the entire episode as the unit of analysis*. The specific code sheet was used to gather, organize, and analyze specific data and here, *the storylines were the main unit of analysis*. The outcome of a storyline, prominence, setting and lesson learned by the characters were gathered and analyzed. For both sheets, I looked for commonalities and tropes used within a series and among the series. To answer how Disney Channel is portraying gender roles, particularly girl's gender roles, the following categories for coding were devised, used, labeled and are defined as follows:

Themes: This category was used to record events or themes that commonly ensued in episodes from all three series or within a series. For example, about a quarter of all the programs coded for this study opened with a scene involving food. Whether or not this has any prominence to my research questions at first glance, I recorded what was eaten, who was eating it, and under what circumstances the food was eaten in case it would have significance later in the study. Other recurrences may include common character archetypes or plotlines within or among programs. The frequency of how many times an event happened within an episode is indicated. In some instances, something only happened once across all the series. While this is not a reoccurring theme due to its one-time existence, I noted it and considered it an aberration. An example is Harper doing something selfish when she is ordinarily doing things to help others. Some

recurrences that are inherently part of the series were not noted. For example, both Harper and Chelsea—regular reoccurring characters—are considered mentally slow in comparison with their friends, but unless their mental capacities were a particular part of the story, these character traits were considered a “given” so to speak and were not coded.

Moral: Disney is famous for its fairy tales, all of which provide a lesson or teach a moral. Ensuring its youngsters-turned-tweens now needed something more mature to hold their attention, but still wanting them to hold on to some Disney traditions for marketing purposes, it was hypothesized Disney Channel would follow a similar concept of making television series with a moral to them. Nearly every episode coded had a moral to the story just as the company’s movies had done. I recorded the moral(s) of every episode whether or not I thought it had anything to do with gender or my research questions. An example of a moral is in the episode of *That’s so Raven* called “Cake Fear.” In this episode, the Baxter teens are angry when their father hires a babysitter for them. Seeking revenge on their father, the kids are mischievous towards the babysitter. However, upon finding old newspaper articles and frightening news stories about the sitter, they begin to fear the babysitter thinking she is a murderess on the loose. Little do the children know, their father, along with the babysitter, are playing elaborate pranks on them to scare the children and teach them (and the viewing audience) via a didactic lesson that they must treat everyone they encounter with kindness and courtesy.

Protagonist's Power Use: What kind of power was used (celebrity, psychic abilities, supernatural abilities), by whom, when, and how were all recorded. In addition to simply noting what power was used, I distinguished what the female protagonist thought would happen if she used her power. I also noted whether or not she succeeded in using her power as intended and the outcome of power usage. An example is Raven having a psychic vision of seeing someone handing her money. The next day she spots an ad for an essay contest with a monetary prize and assumes the vision from the previous day is of her winning the contest and being handed the prize money. To ensure her vision comes true in the context it appeared to be occurring in her visualization, she enters the tournament and works feverishly on the essay. However, the next day, at a rehearsal for the school play, the script calls for someone to hand Raven's character money. Raven now realizes the context of her vision was not that she won money from the essay contest, but rather she saw a vision of something that was happening in the context of the school play she was in at the time. In this case, her power did not help her accomplish her goal of winning the essay competition to obtain the money, and such an example would be noted as unsuccessful. Although Raven did see the vision come true later that week, it was not at all in the context she had predicted, nor had it empowered her in achieving her ultimate goal which had been the prize money.

Explicit Gendered Comments: For this category, remarks made by or towards a female or male that was directly about gender were noted. Such an example is one boy character telling Raven he did not want to be in her group if she were the leader because she was a girl. Of course, while the focus of this study is on the girl child, for they were dominating Disney during this time, boys are not to be neglected. I was interested in seeing how the two gender portrayals would differ (if at all) and, therefore, in the same way I looked at females, I looked at the males as well. As I did with the girls, while my focus was on the treatment of the male co-stars, I considered supporting roles to get a bigger picture of gender portrayals.

Gendered Observations About Females/Gendered Observations About Males:

The difference between this category and the other category above is that this category examines implicit observations about gender or generalizations of gender representations while the other two categories looked at particular situations or explicit comments where gender played a crucial role and was expressly mentioned by a character. This category observes the roles and positions characters are in whether they be stereotypical or not. Is the father the breadwinning patriarch while the mother cares for the children as Western tradition has long dictated? If so, a note about this was made indicating traditional gender roles were adhered to. Was the mother in the series the breadwinner of the family while the father stayed home and tended to children? If not explicitly mentioned or a part of the main storyline, this too was noted indicating gender roles were reversed.

Double Life: Lastly, the double life theme was noted and recorded on the coding sheets. A double life entails the psychic, magical, or celebrity aspects of a girl's life as compared to life as a so-called everyday girl where special ability does not come into play. Anytime a girl used capacity to access her double life (her psychic self, her magical self, or her celebrity self) it is noted as to why, when, how and who (if not herself) told her to use her power and what the motivation was in taking such an action. If a girl attempted to hide her double life, the same components above were applied. In some instances, a girl was considered as having a double life that was not necessarily related to her power, such as when she masqueraded as someone else, and such cases were also noted on the coding sheets. For example, Raven often impersonated others to accomplish a goal originating from a vision she had, so anytime this occurred, it was observed and recorded as being a double life.

APPENDIX D

RAW DATA FROM CONTENT ANALYSIS

	Themes	Moral(s)	Power Use	Gendered Observations About Females	Gendered Observations About Males	Explicit Gendered Comments	Double Life & Hiding
<p>TSR 1, EP 1</p> <p>Mother Dearest (Pilot)</p>	<p>Jokes about body parts & bodily functions. These jokes are made mostly by boys about their own bodies or bodies in general (3X).</p>	<p>Nobody is perfect. Look to adults for guidance. Respect your elders.</p>	<p>Raven sees future self talk back to her teacher so she tries to make it happen. (U)* Dresses as teacher to get out of trouble. (U).</p>	<p>Role Reversal: Dad is a softie and gives into emotions. Caricature of older women. Raven depends on younger brother for help. Role Reversal: Raven hits a bully with her purse when she dressed as old woman.</p>	<p>Role Reversal: Mom is practical, Dad is a softie and gives into emotions. Boys objectify girls.</p>	<p>Raven said that the greatest present a teen girl could ever want is LeBron James or a phone.</p>	<p>Raven disguises herself as her teacher to not get in trouble with her parents about talking back in class.</p>
<p>TSR 1, EP 15</p> <p>Saturday Afternoon Fever (Random)</p>	<p>Boys and girls engage in silly discussions about bras and underwear. (2X).</p>	<p>Family comes first (and it's a woman's job to see this through).</p>	<p>A psychic vision of her mother wanting to spend quality time with her makes Raven want to avoid her mother and this results in disaster. (U).</p>	<p>Girls care about nothing more except to win a boy's heart. Implicit theme of episode is that women must create loving bonds within the family.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Friend poses as Raven so Raven can have fun and not be stuck with her mom all weekend. Raven poses as an employee to get out of trouble with boy/mom.</p>
<p>TSR 1, Ep 19</p> <p>Escape Clause (High Rating)</p>	<p>Storyline revolves around consumption of jewels. Concerns about appearance (1X).</p>	<p>Life is what you make of it.</p>	<p>Sees vision of getting necklace and opens present . Accomplishes goal, but was still not happy. (U).</p>	<p>Raven needs Santa (male) to succeed.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Sneaks out of school while making everyone think she is there so she can go to the mall.</p>

*U= Unsuccessful S=Successful

<p>TSR 1, Ep 21</p> <p>To See or Not to See (Finale)</p>	<p>Girls concerned about appearance (1x).</p>	<p>Happiness is being surrounded by family and friends. Accept others for who they are.</p>	<p>Vision of Eddie climbing was not in right context as Raven thought. (U). Second vision about helping a friend change their look doesn't happen. (U).</p>	<p>Chelsea uses sensuality (however mild) to distract boys.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Hides her double life because she wants to be normal and is worried she will not have friends if her secret is out.</p>
<p>TSR 2, Ep 1</p> <p>Out of Control</p>	<p>Boys have rats and lizards as pets (2X). The storyline of the protagonist worried about a romance between her best friends is repeated in <i>Hannah Montana</i>.</p>	<p>Being controlling backfires easily.</p>	<p>Sees image of Eddie and Chelsea romantically involved but vision was out of context. (U).</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Plumber is portrayed as stereotypical overweight white male.</p>	<p>Raven secretly dresses as plumber to spy on friends due to vision of romance between best friends.</p>
<p>TSR 2, Ep 11</p> <p>Leave it to Diva</p>	<p>Fake getting sick (1X).</p>	<p>Be yourself. A girl's job is to keep the family together.</p>	<p>Image of party going bad comes true since she fails to rectify the situation (U).</p>	<p>Raven's goal is to be fashion designer. Mother objectifies men.</p>	<p>Males objectify females.</p>	<p>Grandma says young women should be proper, restrained, & well-mannered (Charm School types).</p>	<p>Poses as "Society Member" she is not to make her grandma happy. Hides powers for fear of ostracism.</p>
<p>TSR 2, Ep 18</p> <p>The Road to Audition</p>	<p>Younger brothers want something for nothing (1X). Protagonist must face-off with "frenemy" (2X). Music and dance is big theme in this episode.</p>	<p>Take advantage of opportunities when they arise.</p>	<p>Sees vision of undercover star searcher coming to school and tries to win an audition. (U).</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Large theme here is about cliques and 'mean girls', things often associated with female adolescents.</p>	<p>No real double life is present.</p>

<p>TSR 2, Ep 22</p> <p>Shake, Rattle, and Rae</p>	<p>As part of the B storyline, Corey, like many boy characters on these TV shows, tries to find money. In this storyline, as seen in others such as <i>Hannah Montana</i>, older male character has a "dumb" girlfriend. Much physical comedy and pratfalls by boys and girls (6X).</p>	<p>Be a good person by solving differences with frenemies.</p>	<p>Vision of earthquake allows her to keep everyone safe. Vision works for reasons of helping friends. (S).</p>	<p>Girls do stereotypical things at slumber parties like paint nails. Males want money (presented in a greedy way) while women usually want social/emotional support or tangible items like clothes.</p>	<p>Males want money (presented in a greedy way), while women want social/emotional support or tangible items like clothes.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Raven knows there is going to be an earthquake and is hiding it for fear her new friends will not believe her. She reveals to her friends she can see the future but nobody believes her.</p>
<p>TSR 3, Ep 1</p> <p>Psychic Eye for the Sloppy Guy</p>	<p>Entire episode is about trying to change someone's appearance to make them more attractive.</p>	<p>Jealousy is dangerous. Sometimes one must let life take its own course.</p>	<p>Sees vision of a boy crushing on her as indicated by a flipbook he made about her, so she tries to further get his attention. However, she fails due to a missed opportunity. (U).</p>	<p>Girls are concerned with makeovers. Gender Reversal: Mom goes to law school and Dad plays Mr. Mom.</p>	<p>Gender Reversal: Mom goes to law school and Dad plays Mr. Mom.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None.</p>

<p>TSR 3, Ep 33</p> <p>Cake Fear</p>	<p>Entire episode is about how the dad character is a prankster. Generally, TV dads are more playful and likely to engage in pranks as compared to TV moms.</p>	<p>Taking advantage of others is quick to backfire.</p>	<p>Vision of dad saying kids died makes Raven take role of protector There really wasn't a problem, like she thought. (U)</p>	<p>Babysitter is female. This babysitter is an older female who is despised by the children. Male is true patriarchal role/controller/ puppeteer as he mentally "tortures" the kids (particularly Raven) by frightening them to teach them a lesson to be nice to everyone.</p>	<p>Male is in true patriarchal role/controller/ puppeteer as he mentally "tortures" the kids (particularly Raven) by frightening them to teach them a lesson to be nice to everyone .</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>No explicit double life here. However, the kids think their babysitter is out to kill them, but they are secretly on a reality show.</p>
<p>TSR 3, Eps. 27/28</p> <p>Country Cousins</p>	<p>Best friend (female) has low IQ (1X).</p>	<p>Patching up old arguments with friends or family is always worthwhile.</p>	<p>Vision of seeing previously ignoring family happy to see her comes true after she suggests a reunion. (S). Vision is that someone makes scarecrow to scare her but she's ready for the prank. (S).</p>	<p>Raven always has specific, feminine outfit for all activities and is almost always in heels resulting in the inability to save herself.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None. However, the actress playing Raven plays multiple characters in this episode.</p>
<p>TSR 3, Ep 35</p> <p>The Four Aces</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Happiness can be found by helping others and being selfless.</p>	<p>Vision of past helps Raven to allow for Ms. Wilcox to live her dream. (S).</p>	<p>Wants to open nail salon for senior she is assigned to as buddy.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None.</p>

<p>TSR 4, Ep 1</p> <p>Raven, Sydney, and the Man</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Message for Girls: patience and understanding towards others fixes all problems. Message for Boys: Be good to others. Being a man means being responsible and mature.</p>	<p>Vision of an angry child and door slamming are seen and the event happens as she saw it. She works with the angry child to rectify the situation. (S).</p>	<p>As per other episodes thus far, it is the girl's job to cater to the feelings of others and be a mediator of conflict. Raven can't run because of heels. Tomboy girl is guest star on this episode. Character is a troublemaker.</p>	<p>Friend tells Corey being a man means taking more responsibility for actions...and getting girls.</p>	<p>Corey donates money to schools after talking with Dad about what being a man really means (it means being generous).</p>	<p>No real double life is present although a girl is at first mistaken as a boy.</p>
<p>TSR 4, Ep 2</p> <p>Pin Pals</p>	<p>Female sidekick has low I.Q. (1X).</p>	<p>Always keep your promises or else you risk hurting your friends.</p>	<p>Raven's design for the fashion show does save the night despite vision being out of context. (S).</p>	<p>Raven strives to be fashion designer, a stereotypical female job. Corey leaves despised traditional jobs like cleaning to Raven who blindly accepts the responsibility. While Mom is away at law school, boy takes after Dad and cooks (but this is more of a hobby rather than a way of providing for the family). However, lack of skill causes him to hire a cook.</p>	<p>Corey leaves despised traditional jobs (like cleaning) to Raven who blindly accepts the responsibility. While Mom is away at law school, boy takes after Dad and cooks (but this is more of a hobby rather than a way of providing for the family). However, lack of skill causes him to hire a cook.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Raven disguises herself as a mummy to sneak into a special space as a result of a vision.</p>

<p>TSR 4, Ep 11</p> <p>Checking Out</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Work hard towards your dreams and you will achieve them (as long as males help you as was the case in this episode).</p>	<p>Raven saves a female celebrity but only because she used a spell that made the twin boys actually catch the celebrity (S). Envisions new boys clothing line which actually does happen with her ingenuity. (S). This helps boys who become famous models).</p>	<p>Raven's job as an intern (administrative assistant for fashion designer) is to work the 'Secretec' (electronic secretary) and she fails at this traditionally female assistant role due to technology.</p>	<p>Boys obsess over girls and nothing more. Boys practically objectify girls.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Raven takes on disguise of "Pistache the Fashion Designer" to not get fired from her internship.</p>
<p>TSR 4, EP 22</p> <p>Where There's Smoke</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Smoking is harmful and shouldn't be a part of a tween's life. Do not jump to conclusions about others/be careful when judging others.</p>	<p>Envisions Corey having a cigarette and she wants to teach him a thing or two about not smoking. He actually isn't smoking but his friend is so she wrongly accuses him. Her goal about teaching him the ill effects of smoking gets across. (S).</p>	<p>Unlike the boy, the girl does housework but does not receive credit for it. Raven becomes the mother figure of the house. It is mentioned that the mother is away at law school.</p>	<p>Boys obsessed with eating and eat in an ill-mannered way that makes them look bad. Stereotypical ill-mannered boys. Comes off as comedic for the audience. Hypermasculine male named Juice is going to "juice" Corey (physically attack him). Boys are interested in stereotypical activities like video games while girls like stereotypical social activities.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None. However, this episode is about Raven thinking her brother is living a double life.</p>

<p>WWP 1, Ep 1</p> <p>Crazy 10 Minute Sale.</p>	<p>Entire episode is about consuming clothes. Alex wants a jacket. Boys want to consume sneakers and wand (2X). Alex cares about sale to compete with frenemy (1X). Mean girls are sexualized and glam. Each of the mean girls received nose jobs (1X). Girls obsess about appearance (2X). Family sees Alex as incompetent slacker/dumb (1X).</p>	<p>Seeking revenge backfires easily.</p>	<p>Uses magic to duplicate self and skip class. She does it but gets caught. This is not result she wanted. Younger brother uses magic to break her cover. (U).</p>	<p>Alex cares about sale to compete with friend she hates. The idea of means girls and cliques are stereotypical for this gender and age group. Mean girls are sexualized, glam, and have nose jobs. Boy breaks magic rules and gets away with it but girl gets in trouble.</p>	<p>Dad calls daughter "dummy."</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Alex lies to parents about where she is going and cloning herself so one self stays home and the other (real) self goes to the store.</p>
<p>WWP 1, Ep 9</p> <p>Movies</p>	<p>Theme: food & consumption (movies) by boys & girls. (1x). Older brother is smart, younger brother is goofy. (1X). Dad is prankster (1X). Dad reminds Alex she is not smart especially w/math (1X).</p>	<p>Choose words carefully & be careful what you wish for. Do not grow up too fast & childhood is valuable.</p>	<p>Uses power to literally get into movie but in so doing, puts herself in a bad situation by getting trapped in a horror film and must await her brother coming to rescue her. (U).</p>	<p>Typical example of damsel in distress whom the prince must rescue.</p>	<p>Male character plays stereotypical prince charming/hero.</p>	<p>Justin saves Alex. Alex says he has to save her because he's the older brother (i.e. it's what boys do) rather than make any attempt to help herself.</p>	<p>None.</p>

<p>WWP 1, Ep 2</p> <p>First Kiss</p>	<p>Boys are seen with food. B storyline is about making an official sandwich for the New York Mets.</p>	<p>A girl's first priority should be to help others, especially male family members first.</p>	<p>Alex uses spell to help Justin a kiss girl. Again, the girl is the one creating a loving connection between people. (S).</p>	<p>Again, the girl is the one creating a loving connection between people. Restaurant: Men making food is highlight and management is left to women and considered not as important as food itself.</p>	<p>Boy feels emasculated having to admit he has never kissed a girl. Restaurant: Men making food is highlight and management is left to women and considered not as important as food itself.</p>	<p>Boy says he knows how girls think: right brain dominant (express emotions, base things off intuition) and large hypothalamus (regulates mating behavior, parenting and hormones?).</p>	<p>None.</p>
<p>WWP 1, Ep 21</p> <p>Art Museum Piece</p>	<p>Best friend cares about environment (1X). Alex is reminded by her male and female peers that she is not smart (1X).</p>	<p>Taking shortcuts or cheating easily backfires.</p>	<p>She ditches a school field trip using her magic but her plan does not work just like she wanted it to for she gets stuck in a museum overnight. (U)</p>	<p>Alex looks to Justin when someone needs to know something. She's putting herself down and not taking initiative. Mother is concerned more with spending money on decorative housewares than anything else. The jewelry Harper makes is considered dumb, and worthless and men say to her they have better ideas.</p>	<p>Dad is immature and childish. Brother goes to save his sister again when she is stuck in museum.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>No real double life theme is present here although Alex does sneak away from a group and remains hidden from her classmates.</p>

<p>WWP 2, Ep 1</p> <p>Smarty Pants</p>	<p>In various episodes, boys like stereotypical things like sports (1X). Like in other episodes, Harper's character has a low I.Q. similar to Chelsea and Lily from the other programs. Like Chelsea, she is interested in the environment and healthy eating. Sibling rivalry is a theme here as it has been on other shows & episodes (1X). Alex is reminded by her male and female peers she is not smart (1X).</p>	<p>Taking shortcuts or cheating easily backfires and ruins friendships.</p>	<p>Wears "smarty pants" to be good at quiz bowl in order to help a friend and attract a boy's attention and it works. However, her essentially cheating hurts Harper. She did do it to help a friend though and even took off the pants in front of everyone to make amends and it worked. (S).</p>	<p>Mom takes Dad's place teaching magic but son kicks her out because he knows more.</p>	<p>Mom takes Dad's place teaching magic but son kicks her out because he knows more.</p>	<p>Alex says something to the effect of "Don't look at me I'm a girl and I was just making posters" (after she rigs electrical buzzer and shocks someone). This is said in the context of her trying to hook up some electrical wires and failing at it. The comment implies girls are not good with electronics.</p>	<p>Hides the magical smarty pants she has in order to not expose her secret as a wizard because that's the rule of the Wizard World (headed by males) and because she doesn't want to be caught cheating.</p>
<p>WWP 2, Ep 2</p> <p>Cast Away to Another Show</p>	<p>Boys insult girls by telling them they are stupid (2X). One character tries to get another to lie for them. Both boys and girls do this (2X).</p>	<p>Cheaters do not prosper. Friendship is what's most important for girls. Be yourself.</p>	<p>To skip school Alex uses a spell to get Harper to take her place. Harper eventually blows her cover at trying to portray Alex. (U).</p>	<p>Alex is bad at math and science and yet a boy wins essay contest and trip on ship. While well-intentioned, Dad wants Alex to feel bad about herself. He thinks that by doing this he is being a good parent.</p>	<p>While well-intentioned, Dad wants Alex to feel bad about herself. He thinks that by doing this he is being a good parent.</p>	<p>Boy tells London, that like girls in general, she is dumb.</p>	<p>Alex lies about who she is to hide her faults and raise her social status.</p>

<p>WWP 2, Ep 24</p> <p>Wizard for A Day</p>	<p>This episode opens with female character getting food and food is a theme. Dad uses his powers to create food when he could wish for anything else in the world (1X). Sibling rivalry (1X).</p>	<p>A girl's first priority should be to help others, especially male family members first.</p>	<p>Magical hat does work like Alex had envisioned although some of the results of Alex's wishes aren't what she envisioned and actually causes problems. (U).</p>	<p>Justin takes over because he knows more than his sister. Justin thinks Alex doesn't have the selflessness and bravery needed to get a magical hat for dad. She tries to prove him wrong. Males take advantage of "airhead" Harper who gets first four shifts. Boy save the day rather than girl due to his knowledge of advanced technology.</p>	<p>Boy save the day rather than girl due to his knowledge of advanced technology (a type of laser gun).</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None.</p>
<p>WWP 2, Ep 30</p> <p>Retest</p>	<p>Opening scene revolves around dad eating ice-cream (1X).</p>	<p>Family is a girl's priority. One will be okay as long as they have family.</p>	<p>Alex relinquishes powers to keep family together & she saves the family. (S) (although a male technically had the final say in whether or not the family retained their powers).</p>	<p>Alex puts herself down by saying she can only learn so much. Mother likes stereotypical female things and is stereotypical self-sacrificing mother. Aunt Megan is a single adult woman (something not usually seen on Disney Channel) but she is unhappy.</p>	<p>Dad once had wizard powers but gave them to his brother rather than his sister because he said his brother needed them more. He gave up his powers to marry his non-wizard wife.</p>	<p>New aunt says brother likes trains and eating and the brother sarcastically replies he likes baking pies and knitting. They are poking fun of gender here.</p>	<p>None. However, Alex lies to her aunt at one point to persuade her to retake a wizard test to keep the family together.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">WWP 3, Ep 1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Franken Girl</p>	<p>Opening scene has characters eating popcorn and watching movies (1X).</p>	<p>If one does not listen to others (particularly men) they will face negative consequences.</p>	<p>Justin uses spell to make Franken-girl (female Frankenstein) Alex's best friend, but plan backfires when Alex and Franken-girl become fast friends. In this episode, Alex did not use any powers. Instead, boys used powers and science to ruin Alex's day and Alex does well in combating their attempts to ruin things for her. However, ultimately, no power was used so this could not be included for coding. The last scene is about Alex still being annoyed by Franken-girl indicating the boys got the best of her.</p>	<p>Franken-girl is created to keep Alex out of the boys' room. Franken-girl is under male control. Alex rejects a stereotypical female activity: cheerleading.</p>	<p>Boys smartly use technology to overrule girls.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None.</p>
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<p>WWP 3, Ep 24</p> <p>Delin- quent Justin</p>	<p>Female sidekick is (as usual), presented as "air head."(1X).</p>	<p>One must learn independence if they are to thrive in this world.</p>	<p>Alex helped brother Justin graduate high school and college with a wave of her wand. She did this as a birthday gift. Worried about missing out on the sibling rivalry she actually deeply enjoys, she changes Justin back to a high schooler so she can still spend time with him. (S). Despite this main spell above working, she tries two others spells to change Justin but they do not work. (U) (2X) She accidentally used the wrong spell. The third time he tries to change him back it works because she finally uses the correct spell. (S).</p>	<p>Alex's ideas are immediately put down by the family but her brother gets accolades.</p>	<p>The brother character is seen as smarter than anyone else.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Double life of boy. His clone is a hippy.</p>
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<p>WWP 3, Ep 9</p> <p>Wizards Vs. Were- wolves</p>	<p>Opening scene is about eating at a restaurant (1X). Food (popcorn) is another minor theme (1X). Many characters hug each other throughout this episode to show forgiveness (3X). Theme of wanting to fit in (not relating to power) (1X).</p>	<p>Girls need to grow up to be obedient wives. Being normal and fitting in comes with its challenges.</p>	<p>Power is used thought-out the episode to successfully fight off demons. Overall, however, her power is what hinders her from having a truly fulfilling romantic relationship that she desires. The boy she likes tells her she'll never have a normal life with him and leaves her in order to spare her from an abnormal (magical) life. (U).</p>	<p>Alex cries like emotional baby when love is not returned. Justin tells Alex that the important thing is that she is [romantically] with a man insinuating it's her job to be a wife. Girls cannot save themselves and must have men save them. Alex is passive during fight scenes and only cares about getting a necklace. One female character does fight hard but still cannot beat the male characters. Girl bites a wolf to protect a boy and it helps. Girl turns into old lady who has little power but is still loved. Girl Vampire uses her power accidentally during a fight by making a wrong move and her punishment is turning old. Girls offers to give up powers to be with boy.</p>	<p>Justin fears the dark when transformed into a wolf. Due to his fears, he is insulted and called a dog. Brothers are protectors of the family and fight to save them. Boy still loves girl despite her transformation into old age. The boy Alex likes tells her she'll never have a normal life with him and leaves her in order to spare her from an abnormal life. He is essentially telling her to keep the powers she has because being with him and not having powers won't be right for her.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>It is spoken about that having powers makes one abnormal and sometimes those with powers wish they didn't have them because they just want to fit in. In this episode, having powers is the reason the kids could not have romantic relations.</p>
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<p>WWP 3, Ep 28</p> <p>Wizards Exposed</p>	<p>Female sidekick acts dumb (2X).</p>	<p>Family first. Be yourself.</p>	<p>She uses a spell to get away from captors and save her family. (S).</p>	<p>Mom is scared and runs to dad for protection. Meanwhile Alex only cares about going on a double date. Alex has an idea to get the family out of jail but Dad puts the plan into action to make it happen.</p>	<p>Creators and controllers of the Wizard World are all older white males who give girls a harder time compared to boys.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>This episode is about Alex breaking a cardinal rule in the Wizard World which is that she can't tell others about her powers for reasons of being captured, experimented on etc.... she breaks the rule thinking it is the right thing to do and will overall be helpful especially to her family. She thought magic was tearing her family apart.</p>
<p>WWP 4, EP 1</p> <p>Alex Tells the World</p>	<p>Alex is once again considered a lazy & unintelligent slacker (1X). Food theme: boy eats all the ham to make his parents go away (1X).</p>	<p>Follow the rules (in this case, rules set forth by a male) or else face the consequences.</p>	<p>Alex and family are without powers. She exposes to the world they were once wizards and it's revealed kidnapping was test she failed. She is ordered to Wizard Court. She did not use powers, the powers she once had are having repercussions. (U).</p>	<p>Mom is punched by booby traps when she arrives home and only cares about taking a shower & appearance. Alex gets booby-trapped and the boys save her. In a time of crises, the Mom thinks of nothing else except how she needs new pair of shoes for her troubles. Alex is considered dumb.</p>	<p>Men are in stereotypical heroic roles.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Alex is in trouble for exposing her double life. This episode is about Alex breaking a cardinal rule in the Wizard World which is that she can't tell others about her powers for reasons of being captured, experimented on etc.</p>

<p>WWP 4, Ep 26</p> <p>Harper- ella</p>	<p>Harper reads with kids but not to do something nice, just as an extra-curricular activity to put on her college applications (1X).</p>	<p>Girls need to grow up to be obedient wives. Engaging in domestic duties is a girl's job.</p>	<p>Alex saves the day to use her power to get Harper safely out of a dangerous fairytale she is stuck in. (S).</p>	<p>Harper is put into role of domestic servant in the fairytale she is stuck in. Alex is the Godmother of the story. In the story, the boys try to make Harperella do laundry. This is sexist but also part of the Cinderella story. Alex eventually saves the day. Mom is really into a rich King character.</p>	<p>Boys make girls do traditional gendered chores.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None except for the fact this episode is a story within a story and Alex has some control over it. This story is female-driven. Alex has yet to be seen in charge of other stories where males are involved.</p>
<p>WWP 4, Ep 8</p> <p>Dancing with Angels</p>	<p>Opens at a restaurant on a terrace where food is being served (1X). Sibling Rivalry (2X).</p>	<p>Always be yourself. Lying is not admirable.</p>	<p>Using various spells gets her in trouble (e.g., almost gets caught sneaking into an exclusive club) but also helps her save the world from dark angels. (U)</p>	<p>Mother is presented as overbearing and stereotypical beauty pageant mom.</p>	<p>Max is in stereotypical boy clothes and when he turns into a girl she is in stereotypical girl clothes.</p>	<p>Max turns into a sassy girl and everyone wants her to turn back into a boy (metaphor for unacceptance for the transgendered?). In another episode he does turn back.</p>	<p>Double life: Max turns into a girl. Kids go into a club pretending to be angels but accidentally expose themselves. Rosie (guest star) secretly lives a double life as a teenager and dark angel.</p>

<p>WWP 4, EP 27</p> <p>Who Will Be the Family Wizard?</p>	<p>Food theme opening: Alex cooks dinner for the family and is rewarded for her selfless act with a second chance at competing in the Wizard Competition (1X).</p>	<p>Good girls are self-sacrificing. Family should be priority.</p>	<p>Her plan is to be a wizard for life and she was about to accomplish that goal but because she went back to save her brother she lost the opportunity. However, later a male headmaster gives her power as a reward for her selfless act. However, the same headmaster makes Justin the next headmaster which is a higher position. (S). Alex does get spells right in quiz. (S).</p>	<p>Alex cooks dinner for the family and is rewarded for her selfless act thus reinforcing the stereotype that women must be domestic servants for the family. Dad wants Alex to win the Wizard Competition because she defeated an asteroid and dark angel, besides, he wants her out of the house now that she is college aged. Alex is a server at the restaurant and boys are mean to her/put all the blame on her because she caused the family to be disqualified from the Wizard Competition. During the quiz portion of the completion (which shows knowledge of magic) Alex comes in last place.</p>	<p>During dangerous competition, the boys were braver and better at physical obstacles. Boys win the physical obstacle course.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>All the kids lose or gain power depending on how tight their family bonds are and their role in keeping the family together. Alex excels here.</p>
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<p>HM 1, Ep 1</p> <p>Lily, Do You Wanna Know a Secret</p>	<p>Concern about appearance (1x). Lying (1X). Battling sexualized mean girls (1X). Consumption (clothes) 1X. Revenge (2X).</p>	<p>Be yourself... but only around those you trust. Otherwise, blend in with the crowd.</p>	<p>Power is used to get by, not for any advantage. However, it can be used to win over friends. For example, Miley does give her scarf she wore as Hannah Montana to Lily who gives it to a fan they don't like (one of the mean girls at school) who gets mobbed because everyone wants to touch Hannah Montana's scarf. This is how the girls get their revenge on the mean girl. (S).</p>	<p>All girl characters want to consume Hannah Montana products and clothes.</p>	<p>Boys are girl crazy and use other's to attract girls. A flamboyant male costume assistant dresses Jackson in women's clothing making for great comedic effect.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Miley wants to hide double life to have true friends Dad encourages Miley to talk to Lily about who she really is. Miley doesn't want to for fear of losing her friend. The dad's motivation is to help his daughter to calm down and be happy--and be a regular girl (stay-at-home daughter).</p>
<p>HM 1, Ep 6</p> <p>Grandma Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up Too Play Favorites</p>	<p>Females and males are concerned about appearance (1x). Boys consume food (1X). Dad makes comments about watching weight & appearance as he eats junk (1x).</p>	<p>Family is a girl's (and boy's) first priority. Girls should sacrifice their career if that's what it takes to keep the family together.</p>	<p>Miley's power as celebrity ruins family bonds but these bonds are strengthened when she reverts to a home-bound daughter. (U).</p>	<p>Concerned about appearance from the get-go. Feels it's her duty to keep the family together. Grandma is actually tough lady not afraid to insult others and ask for what she wants.</p>	<p>Jackson is good at sports and wins the volleyball game. Males concerned about appearance.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Double life ruins family. She must try hard to balance both work & play, public & professional life etc. Miley forgot to hide double life due to stress & rushing but not much happened.</p>

<p>HM 1, Ep 12</p> <p>On the Road Again Cross Over</p>	<p>Jokes about body parts/bodily functions. Jokes are made mostly by boys about their own bodies or bodies in general (2X).</p>	<p>Family is a girl's (and boy's) first priority.</p>	<p>Power doesn't really come into play. Her experience as a star helps her convince her father to get back into the business but morphing into Hannah Montana to accomplish a goal doesn't fully happen. Her father goes on tour only to quit because he believes family time is more important than career.</p>	<p>Miley is in the role of caring for others and their feelings. She does everything she can to appease others. Girl's talent is singing and boy's is armpit sounds. No one hides fact dad used to be famous but Miley must hide her fame.</p>	<p>Jackson is girl crazy and hires three sexualized nannies for himself. His father is not very happy but does little to stop him. Gender Role Reversal: Dad gave up job to care for family. No one hides fact dad used to be famous but Miley must hide her fame.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Dad gets in disguise to help daughter lie about who she is. He does it for her (she needs it to keep up the lie and it makes her happy that he plays along).</p>
<p>HM 1, Ep 26</p> <p>Bad Moose Rising Finale</p>	<p>Consumption (2X).</p>	<p>Happiness can be found in consuming goods.</p>	<p>Power gets her dress she wanted. (S). Jackson must be chauffeur and after realizing the sacrifices he makes, Miley gives up some of her power. (U).</p>	<p>Miley nags dad about stereotypical girl items such as shoes, make-up, manicure, and fashion shows. Loses bet that she could take care of a child (alternative portrayal) although Jackson had rigged things fearing she would win.</p>	<p>Jackson is insecure when he sees Miley might win the bet for taking better care of a child compared to him. He rigs the bet by bribing the child to act like a brat to make things harder for his sister and it works.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Miley's double life gets her the dress she so wanted to consume.</p>

<p>HM 2, Ep 1</p> <p>Me and Rico Down by the School Yard</p>	<p>Concern about appearance (1X). Boys are girl-crazy (2X). Theme of wanting to fit in (1X). Consumption by females: clothes, jewels, shoes (1X). Boys want junk food, cheese, and butter (3X).</p>	<p>Teasing others is disrespectful. Always be a good friend to others.</p>	<p>Miley worried secret will spill. Someone blackmails her about hiding secret. She is good at keeping her identity secret although much credit is due to a male here (S).</p>	<p>Lily obsessed with clothes, jewelry and especially shoes.</p>	<p>Rico blackmails Miley by telling her she must be his girlfriend and Miley must oblige or else reveal her identity to the world. To attract girls and impress men, Oliver turns hypermasculine with his fake arm muscles. Boys objectify girls. Rico pressures Miley into kissing him.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>She hides her identity because she does not want an annoying person to find out she is a celebrity.</p>
<p>HM 2, Ep 27</p> <p>The Test of My Love</p>	<p>Males are slobs w/food (1X). Lying is a theme. Miley doesn't go out with boy who disrespects her (1X).</p>	<p>Always be yourself. Lying is not admirable. Don't hang on to people who disrespect you.</p>	<p>No one believes her when she tells them she is Hannah Montana. She cannot live up to the promises she made. (U).</p>	<p>Miley is boy crazy and changes who she is in order to win over a socialite. Lily is boy crazy over a celebrity she objectifies.</p>	<p>Boys are slobs and always have food.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>LIE: Stewart family pretends to be diplomats to impress an even richer family.</p>
<p>HM 2, Ep 16</p> <p>Me and Mr. Jonas and Mr. Jonas</p>	<p>Some couched gay jokes when boys hug and Lily (disguised a as boy) crushes on another boy. (1X) Food: marshmallow fights (1x).</p>	<p>Only make promises you can keep. Love is the tie that binds families. Jealousy backfires easily.</p>	<p>Nothing important happens with power here. It's not a main part of the storyline. Because of her status as a star she was at a famous recording studio when she meets a famous band but this was coincidence.</p>	<p>Some couched gay jokes when boys hug and Lily (disguised a as boy) crushes on another boy. Signals girls (and boys) are meant to be straight. When Dad comes home late from Concert, Miley acts like the mom whose teenager has come home after curfew.</p>	<p>Boys stereotyped as macho some couched gay jokes when boys hug and Lily (disguised a as boy) she crushes on another boy signaling girls (and boys) are meant to be straight. Miley and Lily act like boys (stereotypical macho) to get brothers to like her and not their dad.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Although unrelated to power, girls double as boys.</p>

<p>HM 2, Ep 29</p> <p>Were' All on This Date Together</p>	<p>Roxy tells lies to her family to impress them (1X). Gross-out humor involving food (1X).</p>	<p>Be yourself in order to make and keep friends. Optimism helps strengthen family ties.</p>	<p>Power was meant to be gift for brother but backfires at first. (U). Later the power helps her grow a stronger bond with her brother. (S).</p>	<p>Hannah Montana is auctioned off as a prize. Ray Romano is also auctioned off but nobody buys him. Instead, there is a musical fantasy of Hannah Montana with two different males eyeing her as object. Looks important to men and women in terms of what they want in others.</p>	<p>Hannah Montana is auctioned off. Ray Romano is auctioned off too but nobody clamors over him like they did Hannah. Rico is a gross womanizer who ruins a three-way date.</p>	<p>Looks important to men and women in terms of what they want in others.</p>	<p>Roxy tells lies to impress. Miley's double life or pressure to hide her power comes into play here. However, she is still hiding her identity from annoying Rico.</p>
<p>HM 3, Ep. 1</p> <p>He Ain't a Hottie, He's My Brother</p>	<p>Sibling rivalry (1X). Boys use crude bathroom humor (1X). Girl uses crass bathroom humor (3x). Man wants food (junk food) (1X).</p>	<p>Jealousy ruins friendships. Let others choose whom they love (as long as it's a heterosexual relationship).</p>	<p>There is sibling rivalry on a talk show when Hannah Montana gets interviewed about who her friends are. Power doesn't seem to help or hinder in this case, however. NEUTRAL.</p>	<p>Entire episode is about a girl trying to get a boy to like her and in the process she disregards the feelings of her best friend.</p>	<p>Robby sings a song about being a girl and other man thinks he is weird. Indication that being transgendered or gay is not an option for males and men should remain in line with gender roles. Boys act like stereotypical girls in love, which makes for comedic effect.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>None.</p>

<p>HM 3, Ep 10</p> <p>Cheat It</p>	<p>Dad is concerned about appearance (wants commercial hair products etc.) (2X). Sibling rivalry (1x).</p>	<p>Cheaters do not prosper.</p>	<p>Conscious gets better of her and makes her expose love with Austin as publicity stunt to help her Hannah Montana Image and teach Jackson a lesson. (U).</p>	<p>None except that the episode revolves around Miley trying to teach Jackson how wrong it is to cheat at school. Perhaps this is a metaphor for playing the good/obedient girl (a.k.a. the mother trying to teach the son the right ways).</p>	<p>Dad very much enjoys the role of being a stay-at-home-dad. Role Reversal: Dad consumes beauty products causing comedic effect. Jackson is considered dumb and must cheat to get by.</p>	<p>"I like football and monster trucks--guy things" says dad when caught doing his hair--something he is concerned about in this episode. Jackson points out how a sign on bathroom door with a picture of a figure in a dress must indicate it's a girls room.</p>	<p>Hannah Montana pretends she is romantically involved with Austin because publicity people want it to seem that way. She eventually hates lying and announces the whole relationship was a stunt even though the reveal could compromise her career. She reveals the lie to teach Jackson he should not lie.</p>
<p>HM 3, Ep 19</p> <p>Superstitious Girl</p>	<p>Very first line is advertisement for food (coffee) (1X). Childish dad buys bounce castle (1X). Theme of appearance (2X). Boys want food (1X). Jokes about body parts/bodily functions. Jokes are made mostly by boys about their own bodies or bodies in general (2X).</p>	<p>Loved ones are with you in your heart at all times. Material things are not as important as family.</p>	<p>Doesn't specifically use her power to accomplish anything but her power makes things harder for her as she tries to accomplish her goal of finding a lost anklet which she never finds. (U).</p>	<p>Almost all girls in this episode care about looks. Girls obsessed with jewelry.</p>	<p>With the boys at home without any women around, they are stereotypical bachelor's eating pizza and not doing dishes and otherwise living a dysfunctional life. Boys are obsessed with girl and continually talk about kissing and trying to get a girl's attention. Young boy calls older boys "dumb."</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Miley only needs to hide herself so she is not mobbed on the ship. She does this for efficiency since she is busy with other matters and cannot be bothered.</p>

<p>HM 3, Ep 30</p> <p>Miley Says Goodbye Part II</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Strong family bonds are a priority for all (male or female).</p>	<p>Power is not used or mentioned in the episode. Miley is homesick and misses her pet horse. This episode was not used when coding for power.</p>	<p>Miley likes stereotypical girl things like horses. Miley wants to leave her job to spend time with her family in Tennessee.</p>	<p>Jackson cannot be independent on his own and is still dependent on his family.</p>	<p>New aunt says brother likes [man] things like trains and eating and the brother sarcastically replies he likes [girl] things such like knitting. They are poking fun of gender stereotypes.</p>	<p>No talk of Hannah Montana in this episode where dad—stereotypical provider, buys Malibu ranch for the family.</p>
<p>HM 4, Ep 1</p> <p>Sweet Home HM</p>	<p>Sibling rivalry (1X). Dad/other males are concerned about appearance (hair/weight) (1X). Jackson is predicted to be an incompetent college dropout (2X). Males eat pie, juice, grapes, meatball sandwiches, turkey dinner Very. Men were concerned with pie. (3X). Jokes about body parts/bodily functions. Jokes are made mostly by boys about their own bodies or bodies in general (2X). Consumption: shirt, housewares.</p>	<p>Respect your elders and remain steadfast to the plans they have set forth for you.</p>	<p>Miley becomes Hannah to win tickets to buy a shirt for dad. However, her ultimate goal in buying the shirt was to send her dad a message and this did not work. (U).</p>	<p>Miley cares about cliques and being part of the social scene at school. Miley puts down her brother's intelligence & assumes he's going to be a college drop out. Miley is surprised her dad did a good job decorating the house because she's usually the one to do it. Dad decorated Miley's room to be like a stereotypical little girl's room (pink/frilly).</p>	<p>Miley puts down her brother's intelligence & assumes he's going to be a college drop out. Jackson very interested in girls based on their appearance. He uses her cousin to get close to her. Miley is surprised her dad did a good job decorating the house because she's usually the one to do it.</p>	<p>Lily says, "We're girls, we say things we don't mean."</p>	<p>Uses her power as a celebrity to get tickets to redeem for a shirt for her father. She did not have to hide her double life but in fact brought it out to aid her in accomplishing a goal.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">HM 4, Ep 10</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Can You See the Real Me</p>	<p>Female concerned with appearance (1X). Consumption: watch, movie (2X).</p>	<p>Always be yourself. Lying is not admirable.</p>	<p>This is a special episode with clips showing fun times as Hannah Montana (clips from previous episodes). Miley Stewart, in an interview with Robin Roberts, reflects on her time as Hannah now that her secret is out and the world knows she has two lives. She talks about the pros and cons of living a double life.</p>	<p>Miley can't do anything without the help of the mind of her god brother. Girl-on-girl fight occurs over things that were said about a certain man. Male courtroom judge serves justice to Hannah Montana by dumping spaghetti on her. Boys kissed girls or tried to kiss girls three times when the girls did not want it.</p>	<p>Boys kissed girls or tried to kiss girls three times when the girls did not want it. Girl implies boy is dumb. Male family member tries to act like Hannah Montana and it's supposed to be funny to see him act like a girl.</p>	<p>Fight like a girl insult said by girl. Rico calls girls dumb.</p>	<p>She thought with a disguise, no one would care about her unless she looked a certain way (blonde etc.), but she was surprised to learn people liked her for reasons not related to her appearance. "Nothing is more important than friends, normalcy and family" she said. She admitted it was a "downer" to have the hype of being famous and then going back to a normal girl life, but it was what audiences wanted after all. She admits juggling two lives puts strain on friendships but she did have the best of both worlds.</p>
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<p>HM 4, EP 9</p> <p>I'll Always Remember You</p>	<p>Food Theme: Dad is emotional eater (1X). Boy manipulates & bribes dad by making him food (2X).</p>	<p>Cheaters do not prosper. Friendship is what's most important for girls. Advice [in this case, from a man] is to be taken in order to get out of a bad situation.</p>	<p>Being a celebrity puts pressure on her and causes her to do the wrong things at the wrong time due to stress. (U).</p>	<p>Stereotypical role of woman/ other who tries to keep the family together and creates relations between people/care for them. Miley's closet is shown off as a reminder of desire to consume.</p>	<p>Malibu Community College is considered a bad school for the unintelligent. Robby tells his son that is where he is going to end up implying he is unintelligent.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Secret life ruined friendships Miley's conscious is seen in a mirror image. Dad tells her to live a normal life and that she should do it by spilling secret.</p>
<p>HM 4, Ep 13</p> <p>Wherever I Go</p>	<p>Miley lies and hides stuff from Lily like in pilot episode (1X). Jackson is concerned with food (1x).</p>	<p>Friendship & sisterhood is a girl's first priority.</p>	<p>Others like Miley now but because she's famous. No one else at college cares Miley is Hannah so her power is ineffective. Her power is no longer used nor discussed. The only indication she has any are the job offers for movies, but this means time away from friends which she doesn't like. She turns down movie roles to spend time with friends. (U).</p>	<p>Role Reversal: Sienna (girlfriend) buys Jackson expensive things which makes him feel emasculated since he is poor. Lily and Miley go to college. Girls leave boys for school.</p>	<p>Sienna buys Jackson expensive things which makes him feel emasculated. Boy gets job as video game designer.</p>	<p>"Girls like bunnies, not horses" says one girl to another. "Let me try to think like a girl" Jackson says giggling and then adding "I don't get it" to insinuate girls have nothing to say or think about.</p>	<p>Theme of lying and hiding aspects of her life as Hannah still come up. She is caught between continuing her career as Hannah or giving it up for school and friends. She begrudgingly chooses the latter.</p>