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Interpreting On and Off-Screen Lesbianism:
A Case Study of Emory University College Students

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Abstract

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Television is a powerful agent of socialization in our culture, a structure that reflects back to society that which is appropriate and acceptable, and a medium that presents images of lesbians infrequently and in limited ways. I investigate how young audience members of today make meaning of lesbian images on television, how they feel about lesbians in reality, and how their social locations relate to both their views and interpretations. This thesis examines how Emory University College students interpret lesbian representation on television today.

I created and distributed an online survey that asked respondents to report basic information about themselves, their attitudes about lesbians in reality, and their interpretations of lesbian TV representations. The survey requested information about Emory College students' social locations with questions about their same-sex attraction, gender, proximity/contact with lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer (LGBQ) people, religiosity, and socio-economic status (SES), and I analyzed these variables in relation to students' individual interpretations of lesbian TV portrayals and their attitudes about lesbians in reality. With feminist, sociological, and media theory, I examine how young audiences of today who occupy different social locations feel about lesbians on and off the television screen. This thesis begins with an historical overview of lesbians on American television, and concludes with an analysis of my collected quantitative data.

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INTRODUCTION

According to my results, more than half of the Emory College student population supports gay marriage, nearly one-third of Emory students think lesbians should be as publicly affectionate as they want, and almost one half want to see more lesbians on television. At a place where the majority of students support "real-life" gay and lesbian issues, why might 43% of these students express indifference about how frequently lesbians are represented on TV? Why might 33% of students not care how often TV depicts lesbian intimacy, and even more interestingly, why might more than 40% not be able to tell how stereotypical or not TV's portrayals of lesbians are? What about the audience members' social locations might help explain the stark contrast between their attitudes about lesbian visibility in reality and their interpretations of lesbian TV portrayals? This study investigates who of the Emory College TV-watching population cares most about lesbian visibility, who cares least, and what attitudes and interpretations they share or do not share about lesbians' presence in reality and on TV? I explore these questions by investigating relationships between television viewers' social locations, their interpretations of lesbian portrayals on television today, and finally, their attitudes about lesbian visibility in reality.

I begin my study with a theoretical understanding of television as a powerful agent of socialization in our culture, as well as a dominant and influential activity of adolescence (O'Guinn and Shrum 1997: 278). Media scholars have maintained that television genre serves to reflect back to society that which is appropriate and acceptable, and concurrently reaffirm through representation that which is neither. In a society where, according to Press, more people have TVs than indoor plumbing and where children

spend more time in front of the TV than in any other activity, “few would deny television’s symbolic power” (Press 1991: 8). Considering how powerful a cultural force and institution TV is, I assert that television transmits dominant ideologies by informing the public about appropriate ways to act, speak, dress, and – though sometimes more subtly – with whom one should go to bed. The genre in the U.S. “rarely offers systemic critiques and typically endorses dominant ideologies of social identity—gender, sexuality, class, and race” (Levine 2007: 1). From Levine’s perspective, TV even constructs sex and sexuality in particular by supporting what she calls “the dominance of heterosexuality over other sexual orientations and the subordination of women as objects of male sexual desire” (Levine 2007: 1). Feminist media scholars argue that TV represents lesbians, in particular, infrequently and in limited ways.

In chapter one, my historical overview, I review television’s history of defining lesbians by, and reducing them to, their sex and sexuality. Though creators of lesbian TV images often believe they are contributing to the diversity in their work by helping to eliminate discrimination based on sexual orientation, feminist media scholarship maintains that there are extremely few stories on TV today that deal with people “after they are already openly gay or … about the ways many lesbians … resist dominant heterosexual ideologies” (Sears and Williams 1997: 434-435). According to these scholars, TV rarely represents lesbians and symbolically annihilates, or purposefully neglects, them all together. When TV does, however, represent lesbians it symbolically marginalizes them by pigeonholing them into few, limited character types or scripts. While many alternative theories exist on minority representations, I present a feminist perspective in this paper by proposing that TV perpetuates heterosexual dominance

through the limited and marginalized representations of lesbians on television programs today. I begin my study by exploring audience reception and interpretation of these images; my genuine interest lies particularly in how audiences consume and interpret lesbians on, as well as off-screen today.

I begin my investigation of audience reception of lesbian images on television with Brown and Cantor's definition of viewers as neither homogenous nor passive, but instead as active consumers who choose, interpret, and apply media in a variety of ways (Brown and Cantor 2000: 3). Whereas early studies of mass media's effects on viewers treat audiences as helpless and vulnerable recipients of TV content, I recognize audience populations' diversity and agency when they encounter TV content. I use this idea of "actively interpreting audiences" to supplement my feminist argument that TV participates in maintaining the dominance of heterosexuality. I conduct my investigation by exploring how audience members' social "locations" correspond with their interpretations of lesbian visibility on and off screen. I commence my exploration by investigating how viewers' interpretations of lesbian TV representations relate to their levels of proximity to lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer (LGBQ) people (and/or their experience being LGBQ). I begin here because I expect to find differences in respondents' interpretations of lesbians TV representations based on their particular social locations (particularly based on their proximity to LGBQ people). I expect that people navigate the world differently due to who they are, what sexual preferences they have, and how close they have been with LGBQ people. I survey respondents' interpretations of lesbians on TV to find out how their social location relate to how they interpret lesbians on TV, and finally, I examine all respondents' attitudes about lesbians

in reality to gauge how their social locations and interpretations of lesbians on TV, ultimately, correspond with their levels of tolerance toward lesbians in reality.

Even after decades of researching mass media effects, we still know very little about how television influences individuals and social groups (Press 1991: 8). Though my study does not seek to illuminate how TV affects its viewers, I introduce possible explanations for why certain audience members respond to TV in contrasting ways. I do this by exploring how aspects of audience's social "location" – i.e. their level of same-sex attraction, proximity to LGBQ people, their gender, their religious identity, and their socio-economic status – corresponds with their interpretations of lesbian representations on TV as well as their attitudes about lesbians in reality (i.e. their views on gay marriage and public displays of lesbian affection).[1] I uncover patterns in audience reception by revealing how *who* watches TV relates to *how they interpret*, accept, or reject its images. I expect this research to lead society to reconsider the ways in which we employ, treat, and experience TV, as well as recognize how TV might acts as a potential site for progressive political and social advancement in our technological world.

The population I examine in this study is 419 nineteen college students enrolled in the 2008-2009 academic year at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. My findings suggest that about the same number of respondents think there are not enough lesbians on TV as those who do not care, and nearly half of all respondents (significantly more men than women, and almost twice the number of heterosexuals than homosexuals) express indifference about how often lesbian intimacy is depicted on TV.

[1]It is beyond the scope of my thesis to address gay male TV representations and audience reception though I recognize the importance of scholarly work on the subject and support any research efforts to further develop the field. Please contact me for analyses of my collected data on this population's reception to gay male TV representations.

Respondents' attitudes about lesbians in reality – their levels of tolerance – reveal that the clear majority of the Emory student population support extending marriage rights to homosexuals while about one-third of heterosexual (and two-thirds of homosexual) respondents think lesbians should be as publicly intimate as they want. My general findings suggest that social location do, in fact, relate to interpretations of lesbians on TV since more than twice the number of respondents who have lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer (LGBQ) college friends feels there are not enough lesbians on TV than those with no LGBQ college friends, over two times more secular respondents than very religious respondents thinks lesbians should be as publicly intimate as they want, and over three times more secular respondents than very religious respondents thinks there are not enough lesbian representations on TV. The highest percentages of respondents in all socio-economic status (SES) categories feel there are not enough lesbian representations on TV, while the next highest percentages were respondents who express indifference. Inconclusively, I found that respondents' tolerant and supportive views about lesbians in reality differed greatly from their interpretations of lesbians on TV; a significantly high percentage of all respondents do not care one way or the other about lesbian TV portrayals, while just as many cannot tell how stereotypical or not lesbian TV images are today.

My thesis begins with Chapter 1, an historical overview of how television has depicted lesbians since its invention. In Chapter 2 I provide theoretical background and formulate my hypotheses. Chapter 3 serves as a description of my sociological research methods, while Chapter 4 lays out how I conceptualize and test each variable in my

study. I conclude my study with chapter five and conclusion with an extensive report of my findings, and I suggest future directions for feminist sociological research.

CHAPTER I: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

I begin this study with a brief overview of how the primarily "straight" genre of United States television has portrayed lesbians in programming and has symbolically pigeonholed lesbians throughout the genre's history. I conclude this chapter by introducing two of television's most often employed lesbian character scripts today.

Although queer characters have existed since television was invented in 1927, the relative invisibility of LGBQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer) people in the media has inspired waves of scholars to spearhead investigations of LGBQ television representations and audience reception trends. LGBQ absences on television motivate scholars to actively critique TV's specific role in the "'symbolic annihilation' of non-straight people" (Becker 2006: 5). Throughout its early decades, TV rarely presented sexual themes, since "topics such as pregnancy, contraception, and other aspects of characters' sexuality were considered too sensitive to be portrayed or discussed in television shows" (Fisher et al. 2007: 167). The genre virtually denied the existence of homosexuality in its first four decades, "the families, workplaces, and communities depicted in most network programming were exclusively heterosexual" (Becker 2006: 3). Unfortunately, not a great deal has changed since the 1930s, for even in the early 1990s, "the most astute viewers could likely spot only a handful of openly lesbian, gay, and bisexual characters in an entire year of network television" (Becker 2006: 3). When

homosexuals were featured in programs, however, television history shows that they were often marginalized and treated in contradictory ways.

Television inherited a great deal of strategies and trends from the film industry's forty-year legacy, though among its inherited traits was the tendency to treat certain populations in often problematic ways. The history of gay and lesbian depictions on TV is, like the history of gay and lesbians in film, not a pretty one (Russo 1987: 347). One hundred years of films have shown that homosexuality has only rarely been depicted on the screen, and when it did appear, "it was there as something to laugh at – or something to pity – or even something to fear" (Russo, as cited in Highleyman 2003: 1). Similar to film, TV has presented homosexuals in an often negative light as images have included coming-out storylines filled with overtones of regret (*That Certain Drama,* 1972), secondary characters who served as gay-best-friend to the straight-girl (primary) characters (*My So Called Life,* 1994-1995 and *Dawson's Creek,* 1998-1999), murderers who kill because of their often repressed sexuality (*CSI,* 2000), and the ever-so-common lesbian psychopath (*Smallville,* 2002-2003 and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer,* 2002).

From the 1950s to the 1960s, gay and lesbian television images merely reflected U.S. reality. In most areas of American society, gay people were as invisible in reality as they were on TV and radio. Homosexual sex was a crime in every state in the Union, the public linked homosexuality with communism, and "public revelation often meant disgrace, loss of employment, jail time, or involuntary subjection to psychiatric procedures." As Capsuto states, "during this homophobic period in our country's history, gay men and lesbians protected themselves by keeping a low profile" (Capsuto 2000: 3). While lesbian rights activism was widespread in the 1950s and 60s, U.S. television

remained slow in responding with fair and accurate depictions of gays and lesbians (Haggerty 2000: 895). When writers and producers did depict them, they almost exclusively employed “a medical sickness model” (Sender 1998) and consistently marginalized lesbians when they referred to men as the population most commonly “infected” with homosexuality.

The 1960s television depictions of gay men as humorous, innocent and sissy images of failed masculinity shifted in the 1970s to lonely, predatory, and pathological representations (Russo, as cited in Nardi 1997: 428). TV portrayed gay men and lesbians during these years as “depraved or dangerous – victims or villains” (Nardi 1997: 428), and the media and public continued to refer to homosexuality as a threatening epidemic. “Partly in response to pressure from a growing gay activists’ movement, the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) in 1973 became the first became the first U.S. network to air a made-for-TV-movie about gay men called *That Certain Summer”* (Haggerty 2000: 895). Within the year, the first documentary on homosexuality, the CBS Report on Homosexuals, defined homosexuality as “a mental illness which has reached epidemiological proportions” (Sender 1998). The documentary even featured authority figures who used “the gay epidemic” paradigm to frighten their primarily heterosexual audiences into thinking gay men could “infect” others with their homosexual disease, and the documentary epitomized TV’s neglect of lesbians as it lacked even “a single reference to women” (Sender 1998). Even today, “when you look at news media coverage, men are represented about twice as often as women,” and according to Sender, certainly that same “kind of weighing toward gay men versus lesbians is true in both dramatic depictions and in news” (Sender 1998). Since the 1960s, TV history reveals that

"where the media have recognized gays, they have recognized gay men" (Edward Alwood, quoted in Sender 1998). Lesbians' relative absence in the media has been a hotly-debated topic in feminist, film, and media studies, and remains a major cause behind which thousands of activists rally today.

Despite the foundation of the Gay Liberation Front in 1969 to pressure television to include more LGBQ content and characters, and despite the American Psychiatric Association's removal of homosexuality from its list of mental disorders in December of 1973 (Conger 1975: 620-651), the sharp rise in conservatism after Ronald Reagan's presidential election manifested in the infrequent TV depictions of lesbians in the late 1970s. TV restricted lesbian TV portrayals to victims of violence often at the hands of other lesbians, women who mourned their lovers' death, or characters who typically carried a smoking gun or bloodied knife (Capsuto 2000: 4). These images were not only violent, but were generally transitory, one-shot guest appearances in series (Capsuto 2000: 4). Furthermore, in the 1980s, the HIV/AIDS epidemic forced male homosexuality into the media spotlight and virtually all news coverage on homosexuals concerned AIDS and infected gay male populations.

In the 1980s, producers and writers primarily relied on one-shot lesbian guest appearances I term "secondary one-off" characters to fill their queer quotas on the small screen (Sender 1998). Major sitcoms of the 1990s and today also employ this strategy when they introduce a secondary character to "represent the whole of lesbian and gay possibility" and to create "a problem for straight people, for an exploration of how straight people deal with that" (Sender 1998). In these episodes, the storyline centers on the main character's attempt to identify the lesbian characters as such (Lisa Henderson, as

cited in Sender 1998). According to media critics, writers and producers employ these one-offs to remind the audience of the main characters' heterosexuality (and thus, normalcy[2]), and to flatter the sensibility of the (mostly heterosexual) audience through overemphasizing the main heterosexual character's tolerance and open-mindedness about homosexuality. From a feminist perspective, many shows today, like *Will & Grace* and *Sex and the City,* forefront heterosexuality with their one-off lesbian characters, and symbolically "Other" (de Beauvoir 1949: 1) lesbians by reaffirming the main characters' heterosexuality. In 1992, even Executive Director of GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) Los Angeles, Chris Fowler, stated that TV's overuse of the single-episode one-off lesbian character inhibits the implementation of "ongoing, major characters on television to reflect the complexity of [LGBQ] experience" (The Column of Life Media).

The one-off lesbian character trend that persists today represents lesbians in very limited ways. Because of this, I maintain from my feminist perspective that the one-off lesbian character script epitomizes TV's marginalization of lesbianism as it prevents room for the possibility of diverse and accurate lesbian representations. TV's use of the one-off represents merely one way "lesbians are [symbolically told] by society as a whole, by the media – especially television – that women love men" (Abbot and Love, 1972 cited in Capsuto 2000: 8-9), and those who do not, are rare and atypical. TV reaffirms the heterosexuality of the main characters by reinforcing "the dominance of the

[2] Shows like *The Golden Girls, Friends,* and *Mad about You,* for example, featured lesbian characters whose personalities very much reflect those of the popular main characters. The familiarity of the one-offs drew the audience to them since they already liked the main characters.

In reference to Ellen's coming-out in 1997 (a watershed moment in lesbian TV history), scholar Sasha Torres explains that episodes in the 1990s that regularly featured lesbian characters, like *Ellen,* "are very difficult to watch as a lesbian viewer [because] they're entirely addressed to the heterosexual audience – they're all about reassuring a heterosexual audience that the main characters aren't gay" (Sender 1998).

heterosexual perspective and the outside status of the gay viewpoint" (Haggerty 2000: 897). Feminist scholars interpret TV shows as reflections of our patriarchal structure, as a genre that transmits dominant ideologies of gender, sexuality and sexual orientation. My study rests on this feminist assumption as I claim that the limited number and type of lesbians on TV – signified by one-offs and de/hypersexualized images – reinforce heterosexuality by rendering lesbians unthreatening through minimal and limited types of representations. In my analysis of TV, I propose that TV's polarized de- and hypersexualized lesbian images that originated in mid to late-1990s pigeonhole lesbians by disallowing the possibility for more accurate and diverse lesbian characters to enrich TV today. I shift gears below from my discussion of the one-off lesbian character to the popular, polarized de- and hypersexualized lesbian scripts of today.

The first of these images portrays the desexualized lesbian, whom television often presents as a saint-like woman whose perfection mitigates her lesbianism. Similar to how TV commonly portrayed gay male characters only if they were heroic and all-American, TV used the desexualized lesbian image to convey the message:

> if you're gonna be gay and still expect the audience to be with you, well, then you're gonna have to be so all-American, so respectable by middle-class, mainstream standards that the drama that would unfold couldn't be quite so readably attributed to psychopathology. (Sender 1998)

Ellen DeGeneres is often criticized for fitting herself into this lesbian role. When she became popular in the 1990s, she actively sought to maintain an unthreatening image in the eyes of her heterosexual viewers. She constantly reassured heterosexual audiences

that lesbians were "just like them," and thus not to be feared.[3] The desexualized lesbian image also maintains the taboo on same-sex touching, which contrasted greatly with the sex-filled 1980s and 1990s. Sex was a taken-for-granted part of the heterosexual television world since the 1980s, yet lesbian characters have often been portrayed as "devoid of desire" (Sender 1998)[4]. I argue from a feminist stance that producers and writers employ the desexualized lesbian script to present lesbians to mainstream audiences in as unthreatening ways as possible, thus securing a wider audience for the TV programs and a larger pool of consuming followers.

The most common script used today in television representations is the hypersexualized lesbian image. Feminist scholars consider this representation TV's strategy of marketing lesbian sexuality to viewers, yet they interpret it as ultimately detrimental to lesbians. The popular television series *Xena: Warrior Princess* is one example of how television hypersexualizes and commodifies lesbians. Though it might be interpreted as a liberating exploration of female homoeroticism, feminist scholar Hamming reveals that "this so-called 'liberation' masks the policing of the very lesbianism the show seemingly brings to the surface" (Hamming 2001: 1). Hamming explains that the more audiences discuss the sexual relationship between Xena and her

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[3] According to Torres in reference to Ellen's coming-out (1997), "surrounding that coming-out episode … was this constant recuperation – including by DeGeneres herself – of being a 'normal lesbian' who is not there to launch any threatening challenges" (Sender 1998). Even the progressive show *Ellen* epitomized the heterocentricity of lesbian TV representations of the 1990s and today.

[4] Though Ellen DeGeneres became one of the few lesbian TV characters ever to be permitted on-screen romances, "network anxiety about this [on-screen lesbian romance] has been one reason suggested for the show's cancellation" (Sender 1998). ABC even took extra measures to ensure that before any physical intimacy in the show was depicted (handholding between women included) by displaying a disclaimer on screen to warn that "This program contains adult content. Parental discretion is advised." Ellen expressed her frustration with the prejudice surrounding this policy on *Primetime Live* (1998) when she claimed, "You can't just have genuine feelings and hold someone's hand – then you get a disclaimer. But, if you wanna kiss a guy on the lips and wrap your leg around him and make fun of it, we're gonna advertise the hell out of that" (Sender 1998). Referring to *The Drew Carry Show*, Ellen refers to the double-standard imposed on her show by ABC executives.

In his 1998 *Primetime Live* response, president of ABC, Incorporated Robert Iger even admitted, "In the spirit of absolute honesty, I'd have to suggest that there is somewhat of a double standard here. Depicting characters who are gay on television in physical acts – I believe – is adult content" (Sender 1998). According to media critics, "what was considered 'adult content' on *Ellen* was mild compared with the sexual activities frequently represented on other primetime sitcoms" in the 1990s, including shows like *Mad about You* and *Friends.*

sidekick, Gabrielle, “the more that relationship is regulated as an already socially regulated site of sexual deviance” (Hamming 2001: 1). Hamming explains that lesbianism is being commodified and sold in this show, and since this lesbianism is so “marketed by pop-culture television,” it is far from politically progressive. While shows like *Xena* successfully bring lesbianism to the forefront, they appropriate lesbian subcultural style and “incorporate its features into commodified representations, and offers it back to … consumers in a packaged form cleansed of identity politics” (Hamming 2001: 1). In other words, the lesbian representations in these shows are problematic because they relegate lesbian sexuality to the domain of the “in-crowd [where it] like any other identity, is a politicized social construction rather than a political subject position” (Hamming 2001: 1). Since lesbian images such those in *Xena* lack subject positions, they epitomize TV’s “depoliticizing strategy which negates the effectiveness of a lesbian political agency … there is no volitional political affect ‘there’ in the first place, just as there is no ‘subject’ independent of a culturally mediated susceptibility ...” (Hamming 2001: 1). Feminist media scholars maintain that TV shows – such as *Xena* – objectify and hypersexualize lesbians to make them consumable to general public audiences.

Feminist theorists maintain that social mechanisms, like TV, construct compulsory heterosexuality by manifesting “self-perpetuating patriarchal structures, which seek to contain women’s desire,” and this containment of women’s desire, in the case of lesbians, mediates the threat they pose to patriarchy (Shari Zeck, as cited in Ringer 1994: 107). Ultimately, lesbians become victims of what Goltz calls “factional scapegoating” in their society. Society blames them for their social imperfection – for

their falling "outside the categories of normative[ity]" – and casts them as "factional scapegoats for the dominant culture" in response. Society punishes the nonnormative and disciplines "social deviance" in ultimately successful efforts to strengthen the moral myth of normativity (Goltz 2007: 1). Like heterosexual women, "lesbians are often perceived almost exclusively in terms of their sexuality, which is hardly the sum of their identities any more than of heterosexuals' identities" (Wood 1994: 262). I assert that TV devalues lesbians when it constructs them as sex-objects, as the hypersexual lesbian image reduces lesbians to the superficial, inferior status of desired object.

The history of lesbians on television since its invention reveals how TV has limited lesbian portrayals in both quantitative and qualitative ways. The one-off lesbian character, the desexualized lesbian image, and the hypersexualized lesbian image are merely three dominant scripts that have, and continue to circumscribe lesbian TV presence. They are but three examples of how TV has symbolically reduced lesbians to their sex and sexuality. I shift my discussion in the next chapter from the history of lesbians on TV to how audiences today – Emory College students in particular – interpret lesbian representations, and, even more specifically, how their social locations relate to their interpretations of lesbians on TV and their attitudes about lesbians in reality. As I state earlier, while "we still know very little about how mass media in general and television in particular influence individuals and social groups" (Press 1991: 9), I assume in my study that TV exerts "power to support the dominant classes and the status quo by reinforcing the dominant ideology through its routinized program choices" (Brasted 2004: 1). I commence my study with theories of culture and social location that inform my hypotheses on audience interpretations of lesbians, and I base my study on the

understanding of audiences not as "cultural dupes who blindly believe all that is presented to them," but as individuals capable of interpreting TV programming in different ways (Brasted 2004: 1).

CHAPTER II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

CULTURE AND SUBJECTIVE MEDIATION THEORY

Sociologists define culture in an infinite number of ways. One basic definition explains culture as patterns in people's behavior, beliefs, and interpretations of the world around them (Griswold 2004: 3). I use this definition to explore how audience members' social locations relate to their interpretations of lesbians on television. Wendy Griswold defines a cultural object as a something that tells a story, "a socially meaningful expression that is audible, visible, tangible, or can be articulated" (Griswold 2004: 13). The cultural object I examine, television programming (drama series, soap operas, reality television show, etc.), qualifies as such because it communicates social patterns by embodying meanings "through which human beings communicate and pass on knowledge and attitudes" (Gertz, as cited in Griswold 2004: 16). Humans use cultural objects like TV to define their culture through externalization, objectification, and internalization of their own human experiences in order to make meaning of them (Peter L. Berger, as cited in Griswold 2004: 16). The most essential aspect of the social object – and the one I find most worthy of in-depth study – is TV's dependence on receivers.

Audience members serve as the cultural object receivers as they "hear, read, understand, think about, enact, participate in, and remember" the objects (Griswold 2004: 16). According to Griswold's, when human beings receive cultural objects' messages,

they become an "interpretation-producing subsystem" who analyzes the images to produce their own meanings (Griswold 2004: 91). My study explores this relationship by investigating how who viewers are relates to how they interpret lesbian representations on TV today, and ultimately how those interpretations correspond with their individual attitudes about lesbian visibility in reality.

As Rebecca Beirne states, television in the twenty-first century pervades the lives of human beings, and "when we sit down to watch what is, arguably, the most dominant form of world entertainment, we hope to see some element of our lives reflected, responded to, turned into news or comedy or melodrama, for our collective consumption and catharsis" (Beirne 2008: 1-2). One sociological model called the Reflection Model expands on this relationship. The model explains that cultural objects, like TV shows, are made by people[5] to mirror society by reflecting various social, cultural, and political states of being that define our collective social reality. Michael Baxandall complicates this somewhat simplistic view by explaining that these reflections are "first mediated through the minds of human beings" (Griswold 2004: 37). He proposes that cultural objects are not mere reflections of society, but instead must be individually interpreted based on a receiver's past social experiences that produce a certain way of seeing things (Baxandall 1972: 32). Baxandall's Subjective Mediation Theory informs my project because it positions viewers as occupiers of different social locations, which, in turn, lead them to interpret images differently from one another. As scholar Brasted explains, audience's experiences as members of social groups lead them to interact with a text by "decoding it as an act of resistance that is influenced by their social location and grouping

[5] One of Griswold's ideas that is central to my study is her conception that a particular cultural object's meaning lies in the social structures and social patterns it reflects (Griswold 2004: 25).

… they are able to interpret texts created by the dominant ideology in an oppositional way. Because of the polysemy or multiple meanings in texts and the ability of audience members to resist the dominant ideology, the homogenization of culture can be avoided" (Brasted 2004: 1). In my study, I assume that past life experiences and social locations affect how individuals interpret television representations. I examine these social locations to understand how respondents accept, resist, and interpret what feminist theorists term "heteronormative" TV images of lesbians.

Not only are television viewers' interpretations mediated by their individual past life experiences, but according to scholar Gerbner, studies have found that the more viewers are exposed to TV, the more they confuse unreal TV situations with real life circumstances. Cultivation Theory explains that, "the more people watch television, and hence are exposed to these distortions of reality, the more they will come to view the real world as similar to the world portrayed on television and thus perceive a greater real-world incidence of the over-represented entities" (Pontius 2009: 1). In other words, though viewers interpret what they see on TV based on their past life experiences many viewers conflate the skewed images they see on television with reality and come to perceive their world as being in-line with what they view on the screen. These findings suggest more nuanced and complex connections between the media and audience reception since even when shows never suggest to be based on reality, viewers have been found to confuse the fake world of television with the real world of reality:

> Past studies indicate that students who viewed programming that was considered to be highly unrealistic (for example, the soap opera *As the World Turns*) still molded students' perceptions of reality (Grady, 1982). Those who viewed the soap opera were more likely to accommodate their perceptions of reality to include more deception and lack of trust in others when faced with hypothetical situations as

> opposed to weighing the situations and using critical thinking skills to discern the truth. (Pontius 2009: 1)

Considering this monumental impact TV images might have on viewers' perceptions of reality, TV's symbolic annihilation and marginalization of an entire population – like lesbians – might lead viewers to understand real lesbians in extremely limited ways. I expect that people who have been close with LGBQ individuals (or who are LGBQ people) and people who have not be close with LGBQ individuals to interpret lesbian TV representations differently; I expect the former group to have a more diverse and realistic idea of lesbians, and to thus recognize limitations of TV portrayals of lesbians, while I expect the latter group to have a skewed idea of lesbians, and to more likely fail to recognize limitations of TV portrayals of lesbians. I propose that Cultivation Theory might help explain respondents' interpretations as it sheds light on why viewers might respond in the ways they do to the images they see regularly on TV, as well as how their attitudes about lesbians in reality relate to their interpretations of lesbian on TV.

In my study, I combine feminist and sociological concepts such as heteronormativity and symbolic annihilation with media consumption theory, or audience reception theory, to explore relational boundaries between social location, audience members' interpretations, and their personal attitudes concerning lesbians. The five general social location categories I investigate are same-sex attraction, contact/proximity to LGBQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer) people, gender, religiosity/religious practice, and socio-economic status. I use the feminist critical media conception of TV as heteronormative to inform my hypotheses on same-sex attraction and gender. Next, I explore contact/proximity to LGBQ individuals since great volumes of scholarly work suggest that more contact to LGBQ-identified individuals results in higher levels of

tolerance and support for LGBQ issues. I investigate religiosity due to the fact that past studies suggest an inverse relationship between religiosity and attitudes about LGBQ issues. Finally, I explore how socio-economic status relates to viewers' interpretations of lesbians by testing how students' household annual income and parents' educational levels relate to their interpretations of lesbians on TV and in reality.

> *"Representation in the mediated 'reality' of our mass culture is in itself power … those who are at the bottom of the various power hierarchies will be kept in their place in part through their relative invisibility; this is a form of symbolic annihilation …*
>
> *[When] groups or perspectives do attain visibility, the manner of that representation will itself reflect the biases and interests of those elite who define the public agenda. These elite are mostly white … mostly male, mostly middle- and upper-middle class, and (at least in public) entirely heterosexual."*
>
> *(Larry Gross, as cited in Ringer 1994: 143)*

SAME-SEX ATTRACTION

According to feminist theorists, lesbians pose a major threat to patriarchy because they reject the traditional role of woman by actively redefining their relationships to each other "without regard to their patriarchal obligations to men and the institutions of marriage and the family" (Zeck, as cited in Ringer 1994: 108). Adrienne Rich explains that "lesbian existence comprises both the breaking of a taboo and the rejection of a compulsory way of life. It is also a direct or indirect attack on the male right of access to women" (Rich 2003: 27). I base my study on the assumption that television "ultimately caters to the desires and expectations of mainstream audiences" (Akass and McCabe 2006: 44), and thus targets the heterosexual majority to make the most profit since they represent the largest population of consumers. Because it caters to the expectations of the mainstream, the television genre has been called "compulsory heterosexual" since it is "unwilling to threaten heterosexuality and the heterosexist male role of definer and center

of female relationships" (Fisher et al. 2007: 167). Feminist media theorists conclude that TV limits lesbian representation since lesbianism is nonnormative and affirms "the patriarchal reality that restricts the definition of and expression of women's desire" (Hantzis and Lehr, as cited in Ringer 1994: 108). Some theorists propose that "female-initiated active sexuality and sexualized activity of lesbians has the potential to reopen a space in which straight women as well as lesbians can exercise self-determined pleasure" (Straayer, as cited in Ringer 1994: 108), yet until TV abolishes its sexist and heterosexist images (Hantzis and Lehr, in Ringer 1994: 119) [6], feminist media theorists claim that TV will continue to reinforce patriarchy through the symbolic mistreatment of women. TV's compulsory heterosexuality that symbolically mistreats and marginalizes lesbians, leads me to expect that respondents who have experienced same-sex attraction will interpret lesbian TV representations completely differently from respondents who have not experienced same-sex attraction.

In conjunction with this idea, Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2001) explains that TV provides "vicarious experiences on which to model beliefs, attitudes, and behavior when real-life experiences are more limited." TV depicts sexual scenarios that people might not be able to see anywhere else and provides "scripts for enacting various sexual behaviors…" (Fisher et al. 2007: 168). Unfortunately, "images of gay and lesbian people of all ages have been rare and often negative" (Gross, 1991, 1996; Moritz, 1994) and "portrayals of young nonheterosexuals are even less common" (Fisher et al. 2007: 168). Since many young homosexuals "use television as a source of information about gay issues," limited representations contribute to feelings of isolation among

[6] Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of my thesis to engage with the various feminist arguments concerning racial, bisexual, and transgender issues in TV representations today.

nonheterosexual youth (Fisher et al. 2007: 168). I predict the following hypothesis based on TV as teacher of sexual behavior script and on TV as compulsory heterosexual.

Hypothesis #1: Same-Sex Attraction (SSA)

a.) Respondents who have had SSA will:

Support gay marriage.

Support more lesbian intimacy in reality.

Want more frequent lesbian TV representations.

Recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations.

Want more lesbian intimacy in TV representations.

b.) Respondents who have not had SSA will:

Support gay marriage.

Support more lesbian intimacy in reality (social desirability).

Want more frequent lesbian TV representations.

Be less likely than homosexual respondents to recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations.

Want more lesbian intimacy in TV representations.

Whereas I expect respondents who have experienced same-sex attraction to be more supportive of lesbian visibility, I expect respondents who have been close with lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer (LGBQ) people to be supportive of lesbian rights and visibility, and to be sensitive to lesbian stereotypical TV content.

PROXIMITY/CONTACT TO LGBQ PEOPLE

Results of a recent national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press show that in the past 40 years, “growing numbers of gays have come out of the closet and into the mainstream of American life” (Neidorf and Morin 2007: 1). Currently, about 40% of Americans report that “some of their close friends or family members are gays or lesbians” (Neidorf and Morin 2007: 1) About “[half of] all women, young people,

college graduates, political liberals and mainline Protestants say that someone close to them is gay," while "significantly fewer men, conservative Republicans and older Americans report that a good friend or family member is homosexual" (Neidorf and Morin 2007: 1). Another study's results show that "overall, those who say they have a family member or close friend who is gay are more than twice as likely to support gay marriage as those [with little or no personal contact with gays] -- 55% to 25%" (Neidorf and Morin 2007: 1). Among respondents under the age of 30, another Pew study showed that "about half (49%) of those who know a gay person are supportive of gay marriage compared with 27% of those who do not have a gay acquaintance or relative" (Part 2: Gay Marriage 2009: 1). These studies suggest that familiarity with LGBQ-identified people is closely linked to high tolerance and positive views about homosexuality. I predict from the studies above that respondents who have had LGBQ-identified friends or family members will be more supportive of lesbian rights, visibility, and positive representations.

Hypothesis #2: Contact/Proximity to LGBQ-Identified People

a.) People with LGBQ family members or friends will be more likely to:

Support gay marriage.
Support more lesbian intimacy in reality.
Want more frequent lesbian TV representations.
Recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations.
Want more lesbian intimacy in TV representations.

b.) People with no LGBQ family members or friends will be more likely to:

Not support gay marriage.
Not support more lesbian intimacy in reality.
Not want more frequent lesbian TV representations.
Not recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations.
Not want more lesbian intimacy in TV representations.

Whereas the most key variables in my study are respondents' interpretations of lesbians on TV, attitudes about lesbians in reality, same-sex attraction and contact/experience with LGBQ people, I investigate the following broader social location variables, beginning with gender, in efforts to see if other social locations relate to audience interpretations of lesbians on TV.

While familiarity with LGBQ-identified individuals should create more favorable views towards lesbian visibility on TV and greater support for LGBQ issues, I predict female respondents to be more attuned to misrepresentations of lesbians on TV, and I expect respondents of both genders to support high lesbian visibility on TV.

GENDER

I draw my hypotheses concerning gender from film theorists Joan Rivière and Michèle Montrelay's concept of the "masquerade of femininity." They define this common filmic trend as reflecting the gaze away from the female character's interior. The "woman turns herself into a fetish object in order to conceal those aspects of her body disturbing to the male onlooker … [by] accumulating excessive signifiers of femininity" (Lindsey 1996: 288). I examine this idea in the context of television since TV shows often depict women as fetishized objects and thus construct their female bodies as sites of "sexual saturation" (Foucault, as cited in McLaren 2002: 91). Ultimately, these female characters are meant to "satisfy needs of the masculine voyeur who initially glimpsed the … sight of sexual difference [as horrific]." Objectification through "masquerade" works by "separate[ing] body from image, interior from exterior [and attempts substitutes] the monstrous female body with a void" (Lindsey 1996: 289). I use

this concept from film theory to explain how TV hypersexualizes lesbians and offers their bodies to male voyeurs who fantasize about and consume them.

One example of the television's hypersexualization of lesbians to render them consumable to the male voyeur is the popular current Showtime television show, *The L Word.* The series targets a wide audience of heterosexuals and homosexuals by depicting mostly hypersexual and hyperfeminine images of conventionally attractive women doing every day, and not so every day things. The show's promos featured "a montage of sexual scenes set to sexy music featuring conventionally attractive women interacting with one another in various sexual and non-sexual ways … [that was] designed to attract both gay and straight viewers." The strategy worked on the mainstream media "who eagerly ran cover stories featuring the women of *The L Word"* (Sarah Warn, as cited in Akass and McCabe 2006: 4). Since the show's premier, Showtime has emphasized how similar the characters on *The L Word* are to their heterosexual counterparts in *Sex and the City,* and even modeled *The L Word*'s initial marketing slogan after the series with "Same Sex. Different City" (Sarah Warn, as cited in Akass and McCabe 2006: 3). Showtime drew "comparisons to the mostly heterosexual hit show *Sex and the City"* (Sarah Warn, as cited in Akass and McCabe 2006: 3) to appeal to heterosexual audiences, to convince the majority heterosexual audience that homosexuals were just like them and not to be feared. Showtime's strategy of intentionally appealing to heterosexual audiences strengthens the idea of TV as heteronormative. Since *The L Word* is one of the most popular TV shows today that features lesbian characters – and since it intentionally constructs lesbians as similar to heterosexual women in clothing style, behavior, and character hypersexualization – I predict that heterosexual audiences will support lesbian

visibility on TV since conventional, hyper-femme images of women are often interpreted and accepted as unthreatening. Furthermore, the lipstick (femme) lesbian, such as many of those depicted on *The L Word,* is "what straight men, in a case of wishful thinking, like to imagine *all* lesbians are like," as it is commonly associated with the heterosexual male fantasy of watching woman/woman sexual activity. According to Tvtrope, "main-character lesbians on TV tend to fall into this category more often, as it's often seen as 'safer,' unless the show is going for 'edgy'" (Tvtrope). TV writers and producers use this image to convince heterosexual audiences that lesbians resemble most heterosexual women characters on TV and are, therefore, not threatening, and thus consumable.

In terms of attitudes about lesbians in reality, many studies on U.S. college student populations have determined that heterosexuals, particularly males, typically hold more negative attitudes towards gays than lesbians, though significant gender differences were not found in attitudes towards lesbians (Parrott and Gallagher 2008: 229 and Ogletree and Harper 2006: 3). One study had contrasting results that demonstrated that heterosexual women, compared to heterosexual men, report more negative attitudes toward lesbians (Parrott and Gallagher 2008: 229). Studies on gay marriage, however, have found that while majorities of both genders are opposed to the idea, "men express somewhat more opposition than women. This gender gap exists across all age ranges, with men consistently four-to-eight percent more likely to oppose gay marriage than women" (Part 2: Gay Marriage 2009: 1). I assume from these studies, from the sexual saturation concept, and from the similarities between lesbian and heterosexual female TV portrayals (*The L Word* and *Sex and the City*) that all respondents will support greater lesbian visibility, all will support lesbian intimacy in reality, while women will be more

aware of the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations and will approve of same-sex marriage. I base the following hypotheses on the theories and studies I present above.

Hypothesis #3: Gender

a.) Female/Women respondents will:

Support gay marriage.
Support more lesbian intimacy in reality.
Want more frequent lesbian TV representations.
Recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations.
Want more lesbian intimacy in TV representations.

b.) Male/Men respondents will:

Not support gay marriage.
Support more lesbian intimacy in reality.
Want more frequent lesbian TV representations.
Not recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations.
Want more lesbian intimacy in TV representations.

Similar to my prediction that women respondents will be more supportive of less stereotypical images of lesbian on TV, I expect respondents who are less religious to be support greater visibility for lesbians on TV and in reality.

RELIGION

Many people in the United States think religion plays a central role in shaping their views, worldview, and behavior. In terms of attitudes about television portrayals, one study shows that individual beliefs and values, and specifically their level of religious beliefs, are the determining factors in how they rate the media's portrayal of homosexuality (Anderson et al. 1999: 1). Anderson’s study found that more religious respondents had significantly more negative attitudes towards gays and lesbians in the media as well as in reality. The more religious respondents were likely to believe that

"portrayals of homosexuality or sex in the media would lead to negative consequences," to reject "gay or lesbian teachers and pediatricians," to support keeping "known homosexuals out of their lives and homes," and to "believe that homosexuals are responsible for the AIDS epidemic." Previous research on the relationship between media portrayals of homosexuality and personally-held attitudes are equivocal (Anderson et al. 1999: 1). These results show that very religious respondents feel the media glorifies/promotes homosexuality, and that it presents gays and lesbians "in too positive a way… ($p = .004$)" (Anderson et al. 1999: 1).

Over the last few decades, studies have also shown that "the importance of religiosity has been found regarding attitudes toward abortion (Blasi, 2006), lesbian and gay rights (Hicks & Lee, 2006), and euthansia (Soen, 2005). Overall, findings suggest that increased levels of religiosity are associated with more politically conservative attitudes," while other studies suggest, more specifically, that religion strongly influences opposition to same-sex marriage in the United States (Walls 6). Other studies on religiosity and gay marriage show that "the most religious Americans are the least likely to favor gay marriage. Nearly 50% of Americans with relatively low religious commitment approve of allowing homosexual couples the right to marry, compared with just 17% of those who are more religious. This gap along religious lines exists across all age groups" (Part 2: Gay Marriage 2009: 1).[7] Studies on seculars – those with no religious affiliation or those who identify as either agnostic or atheist – have shown that members of this population "have consistently expressed the most progressive attitudes

[7] "Past research demonstrates that the more religious, particularly the more extrinsically religious and of more fundamentalist backgrounds, and those who are more politically conservative are more opposed to gay marriage" (Brumbaugh, et al. 2). Unfortunately, while I asked respondents to identify their particular religious denominations and race, it is beyond the scope of my thesis to investigate how these relate to their views about LGBQ rights and visibility (please see ancillary analyses in appendix).

towards morality issues (Burdette, Hill, & Moulton, 2005; Steensland et al., 2000). This pattern has been found on issues such as abortion and sexuality (Bolzendahl & Brooks, 2005; Evans, 2002a)" (Wall 5). I base the following hypotheses on the studies cited above that suggest a strong inverse relationship between religiosity and positive attitudes about homosexuality.

Hypothesis #4: Religiosity

a.) People who identify themselves as not religious to be more likely to:

Support gay marriage.
Support more lesbian intimacy in reality.
Want more frequent lesbian TV representations.
Recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations.
Want more lesbian intimacy in TV representations.

b.) People who identify themselves as very religious to be more likely to:

Not support gay marriage.
Not support more lesbian intimacy in reality.
Not want more frequent lesbian TV representations.
Not recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations.
Not want more lesbian intimacy in TV representations.[8]

While I predict a strong inverse relationship between religiosity and positive attitudes about lesbian visibility, I do not offer directional hypotheses on relationships between socio-economic status and attitudes about lesbian visibility.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS (SES)

According to the Pew Forum on Religious & Public Life Study on Gay Marriage,

> Although few people volunteer the impact gay marriage might have on the traditional family structure as the main reason they oppose such unions, these concerns do resonate with the public … more than half of Americans

[8] I expect to find only slight differences between respondents' self-identified "religiosity" and how often they practice their religion. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of my thesis to examine respondents' actual religious traditions, their self-identified degree of religiosity, and how frequently they attend religious ceremonies. I expect to examine these variables in future studies.

> (56%) believe that allowing gay and lesbian couples to legally marry would undermine the traditional American family, and four-in-ten say they completely agree with this argument. Fully 76% of those who oppose gay marriage believe it would undermine the traditional American family, and 61% feel strongly about it. (Part 2: Gay Marriage 2009: 1)

Whereas the study above finds a relationship between non-supporters of same-sex marriage and their views on the traditional American family, other studies have found relationships between level of support for same-sex marriage and educational level. According to the Pew study, Americans with high educational degrees have more positive views about homosexuals. Findings show that "overall, Americans with college degrees are divided almost evenly over the issue of gay marriage (49% oppose, 44% favor) while those without [college degrees] oppose the idea by well over two-to-one (63% to 27%)." The study also found that "college graduates 65 years old and older are more than three times as likely to favor gay marriage than are seniors with less education (33% to 9%) and college graduates between 50 and 64 years old are twice as likely to favor gay marriage as their less educated counterparts (43% to 21%)" (Part 2: Gay Marriage 2009: 1). Whereas the Pew study found a relationship between views on same-sex marriage and educational level, the following study found a similar relationship between views on same-sex marriage, age, and annual income.

Results from a poll taken at Cornell University determine that voters who favor gay marriage tend to be young, educated, earn a comfortable living, and watch CNN (Friedlander 2004: 1). Data from the Cornell study also show that voters who oppose gay marriage tend "to be older, to be less educated, to be not as wealthy, to vote Republican, and to watch Fox News" (Friedlander 2004: 1). While socio-economic status is the least key variable I examine, these studies lead me to predict that there is some kind of non-

directional relationship between respondents' attitudes about lesbian visibility and their socio-economic status (household annual income and parents' educational levels).

Since people inherit their views about the traditional American family from kin, friends, religious beliefs, and even media and advertising (and these are not directly related to socio-economic status), I refrain from suggesting any directional relationship between people's views about lesbian visibility and their SES. While I expect higher socio-economic status (SES) to correlate with more support for same-sex marriage, I propose only non-directional hypotheses about the relationships between socio-economic status and views about same-sex marriage.

Hypothesis #5: Socio-Economic Status (SES)

a.) On the one hand, past studies lead me predict that people of high SES might be more likely to:

Support gay marriage
Support more lesbian intimacy in reality
Want more frequent lesbian TV representations
Recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations
Want more lesbian intimacy in TV representations

If this is the case, I might predict people of low SES to be more likely to have views opposite those of high SES respondents.

b.) On the other hand, I predict that people of low SES might be more likely to:

Support gay marriage
Support more lesbian intimacy in reality
Want more frequent lesbian TV representations
Recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations
Want more lesbian intimacy in TV representations

If data show this second prediction to be the case, I might predict people of high SES to be more likely to view opposite those of low SES respondents.

CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

I obtained data by means of an online questionnaire that I sent to all students who were enrolled in Emory College in the spring semester of 2009. I chose to use an online Survey Monkey survey since it was an inexpensive, practical, standardized, and efficient way to collect and analyze data. An online survey is most easily-accessible to my sample since college students at Emory University often use email as a primary means of communication. In addition, the survey ensured respondent anonymity and allowed me to request person information of my peers on topics ranging from sexual orientation to political views to socio-economic status. Furthermore, the survey created the necessary distance between researcher and participants, and invited respondents to feel more comfortable answering sensitive questions in private and in their own time than they might have felt if they had been face-to-face during a scheduled in-person interview or telephone-administered survey. I also used a survey because it allowed me to collect a large amount of data from a relatively sizeable sample. According to sociologist Earl Babbie, "a large number of cases is very important for both descriptive and explanatory analyses, especially wherever several variables are to be analyzed simultaneously" (Babbie 276: 2007). The large sample allowed me to collect and analyze data on several key variables as well as generalize to the larger population of Emory students.

I used closed-ended survey questions to facilitate data collection and analysis. I standardized the data by requiring respondents to select the majority of their answers from a provided list of options. I formatted some questions (such as those on respondents' interpretations of lesbian representations on TV) with the four or five-point

Rensis-Likert scale "in which respondents are asked to strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree, or perhaps strongly approve, approve, and so forth" (Babbie 246: 2007). I left other questions (such as sexual orientation and gender) open-ended to allow respondents to type their responses into text boxes. While hoped this method would help me avoid restricting respondents to certain binaries, I quickly learned that the majority of respondents still used binary categories. I also used open-ended questions to ask respondents to identify the TV shows they watch since I was interested in which respondents' interpretations correspond with which lesbian TV characters[9]. (Please see Appendix C: Survey for complete questionnaire.)

Finally, I tracked the IP (Internet Protocol) addresses of all computers (via a Survey Monkey setting) respondents used to complete my survey to ensure that students could not take the survey more than once.

Data Collection and Analysis

The first step in the data collection process was receiving my Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Certification on October 10, 2008. Next, I applied to receive permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct this study and received my Notification of Exempt Determination on November 5, 2008. (Please see Appendix A: CITI Certification and IRB Approval for all documentation.) I then sent Emory University's Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education Joanne Brzinski my CITI Certification and IRB Approval paperwork, and she gave me access to the comprehensive list of all Emory College students' email addresses that served as my sampling frame. Since the Dean allowed me to distribute my survey to all Emory College

[9] It is beyond the scope of my thesis to examine how the shows respondents watch relate to their interpretations of the gay and lesbian representations. I plan to conduct investigations such as this in future studies.

students, I did not need to generate a random sample from the list or to use probability sampling to adequately reflect variations that exist in the entire population. Since all students had equal opportunity to participate in the study, my sample was mostly representative of the entire Emory College student population.

The next step in the data collection process was uploading and pilot-testing my online survey. I chose all appropriate settings and ensured that Survey Monkey would collect every respondent's incomplete and completed survey. I then distributed the recruitment email invitation and online survey link to all Emory College students via Learnlink[10]. (Please see Appendix B: Recruitment Email for the text of the email). Once 419 students completed my survey, I stopped collecting data.

I followed Survey Monkey instructions to download all collected responses from the website, to then import the data set to Microsoft EXCEL, and to finally transfer the responses to the statistical program package SPSS. My final step was analyzing my data. I ran univariate analyses and bivariate cross-tabulations to compare independent and dependent variables with one another. I also calculated and reported the Chi-Square statistic and marked all p-values less than or equal to .05 statistically significant, and all p-values from .05 to .10 marginally significant.

Sample

My study extends the larger body of scholarly research on audience members' social locations, interpretations of lesbian portrayals on television, and views about lesbians in reality. I conducted this study to discover trends in college students' social location, interpretations of lesbian TV representations, and attitudes about lesbians in

[10]Learnlink is Emory University's campus-wide server.

reality. I was particularly interested in how students' gender, experience with same-sex attraction, proximity to lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer-identified people, religiosity, and socioeconomic status relate to their interpretations of lesbians on TV and attitudes about lesbians in reality. I examine gender, same-sex attraction, and proximity to LGBQ people because they reflect a great about individuals' past experiences and possible connections with lesbianism, I investigate religiosity because it often affects individuals' beliefs and attitudes about particular issues, and I explore socio-economic class because I am interested in how family educational levels, annual income, and class in general relate to how individuals experience and interpret the world around them.

The population I studied was appropriate since I am interested in the relationships between college students' social locations, interpretations, and attitudes. My population comprised all 4,974 Emory University College students in Atlanta, Georgia who were enrolled in Emory College[11] in 2009. The students who responded to my survey comprised a sample of 419 (8.4% response rate), and since I surveyed the entire college population, my sample contains variations that exist in the entire Emory College student population.

I collected basic demographic information on the population I studied including statistics on gender, religion, and race of the Emory College student population. (Please see Population Table at the end of this chapter for further break-downs.) I found that my sample contains similar variations as those of Emory College.

[11] These statistics are from the Office of the Dean at Emory University. The percentages are based on date of recorded information for spring 2009; the College uses the official date of enrollment, February 4, 2009, for federal reporting purposes.

Since 106 males/men responded (25.3% of total) and 286 females/women responded (68.3% of total)[12] to my survey, my sample over represents women and underrepresents men. The racial breakdown of my sample is similar to that of the College, though my sample slightly over represents Caucasians/Whites, African Americans/Blacks, and Biracial people, and slightly underrepresents Asians and Latinos/Latinas. The percentage of students in my sample who identify with organized religions was similar to those of Emory College. Approximately the same percentage of respondents to my survey identify as some type of Christian (36%) as those in the College (33.6%) and about the same percent of Muslims identify as such in my survey as those in the College (about 2.1%). Slightly more students identify as Jewish, Catholic, and Other in my survey than those who identify as such in the College. Slightly more students in my sample respond as having no religious affiliation (or as being atheist or agnostic) than students who identified as such to the college. The most important statistics in my study is the 28.1% of students who identify to the College as having no religious affiliation or being atheist or agnostic. I refer to these respondents in my study as "secular." (Please refer to the Population Table at the end of this section for statistical breakdowns.)

This study has several limitations. One limitation is that my relatively small sample does not allow me to conclusively generalize my results beyond the Emory College student population. Though I suggest that similar trends might be found in populations of undergraduate students at schools similar to Emory, this cannot be confirmed by the data I collect and analyze, nor can I successfully propose that the same

[12] Only one student did not identify within the gender binary of "Woman" or "Man," thus I was unable to analyze the student's attitudes and interpretations. Twenty-seven students (6.4% of total) did not report their gender.

trends exist in other college student populations. Another disadvantage to using this sample is the selection bias; while students choose whether or not they want to complete the survey, the arbitrary nature of the self-selection process still qualifies the sample as random. In addition, my data is biased in many ways given that the questions most often skipped are the ones I was most interested in investigating. In order of most system missing to least, respondents often skipped questions about LGBQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer)-identified college friends (117 respondents did not answer), LGBQ pre or during high school friends (116), respondents' own sexual orientation (116), past experience with same-sex attraction (115), past experience being in a same-sex relationship (115), LGBQ family members (114), view about reserving marriage for heterosexuals (114), their attitudes about the frequency of lesbian TV representations (112), how stereotypical representations are (112), degree of support for lesbian intimacy on TV (112), and finally degree of support for lesbian intimacy in reality (112). The least skipped questions pertained to primary parent's educational level (21), academic year (17), and age (15).

Another limitation of this study stems from my particular approach to audience. I explore audience in my study in terms of their social groupings/locations, yet a common debate in Film Studies centers on the idea of how audience members do "queer readings" (Doty) of media products and thus bring individual meanings to what they see on television as opposed to what creators and writers expected to convey through their work. According to theorist Alexander Doty, "the most slippery and elusive terrain for mass culture studies continues to be negotiated within audience and reception theory." He explains that this is perhaps due to the fact that:

> Within cultural studies, 'audience' is now always already acknowledged to be fragmented, polymorphous, contradictory, and 'nomadic,' whether in the form of individual or group subjects. Given this, it seems an almost impossible task to conduct reception studies that capture the complexity of those moments in which audience meets mass culture texts. (Doty 1993: 1)

These personalized readings therefore reflect individual interpretations of those images rather than the intent of the creators, and through these readings "audiences" become divided into individuals who read the media texts before them in uniquely personalized ways. Since audience members are, in fact, individual interpreters of media images, one major limitation of my study is that it is beyond the scope of my project to examine audience members' specific "queer readings" of the images, for such qualitative research would require me to conduct interviews with my respondents to explore what these shows and lesbian TV portrayals actually mean to each individual viewer. Such extensive research is necessary, however, and must be done in future audience reception studies.

Population Table

	Sample	Emory College
GENDER		
Women	286 (68.3%)	2774 (44%)
Men	106 (25.3%)	2200 (56%)
RELIGION		
None	22%	28.1%
Jewish	13.8%	11.5%
Catholic	9.1%	7.4%
Type of Christian	36.5%	33.6%
Muslim	2.1%	2.2%
Other	6%	3.4%
None	22%	28.1%
RACE		
Caucasian/White	64.1%	51.6%
Asian	15.3%	20%
African American/Black	11.2%	10%
Latino/Latina	2.5%	3.6%
Biracial	4.3%	.04%

CHAPTER IV. CONCEPTUALIZATION AND OPERATIONALIZATION

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Interpretations of Lesbians on Television

My historical overview of lesbians on television in chapter one reveals how relatively invisible LGBQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer) people were in the first few decades of television history. I investigate respondents' interpretations of lesbians on TV today to find out whether or not audiences still think TV "symbolically annihilates non-straight people" in today's television programming (Becker 2006: 5). Though in its early years TV rarely presented topics such as aspects of characters' sexuality since they were considered "too sensitive to be portrayed or discussed in television shows" (Fisher et al.

2007: 167), I am interested in discovering if Emory students think TV continues to marginalize lesbians. Ultimately, I aim to discover if Emory students agree with Becker who, in 2006, felt "not a great deal changed since the 1930s" (Becker 2006: 3) in terms of homosexual representations on TV.

I frame my measurements, or operationalization, of audiences' interpretations of lesbians on television after Peter B. Anderson's 1999 sociological study on audience attitudes about lesbians and gays in the media. The first question I use to measure respondent's attitudes about lesbians on TV asks respondents to report whether or not they approve of the frequency of lesbian TV representations today. This question was framed "How do you feel about the presence of lesbian women TV characters?" I offered the following options as responses: there are "too many," "not enough," "just the right number" on TV, and "I do not care." (Please refer to Appendix C: Survey for complete copy of questionnaire.)

I used a similar question to measure how respondents feel about how often TV should depict lesbian intimacy. I asked "how do you feel about public displays of lesbian women's affection on TV?" The response categories were: lesbian female characters should "never show affection," "rarely show affection," "sometimes show affection," "often show affection," "always show affection" on TV, and "I do not care."

Since I am also interested in finding out which audience members consider lesbian portrayals stereotypical or not, I use Anderson's survey as a model. He used survey questions to collect information on whether or not respondents think the media glorifies gays and lesbians and how positive or negative they consider the media portrayals of gays and lesbians to be (Anderson et al. 1999: 1). I measure which audience

members recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations in an effort to discover whether or not audiences today agree that TV is "compulsory heterosexual," and punishes non-normative populations by disciplining social deviance to strengthen "the moral myth of normativity" (Goltz 2007: 1). In this way, lesbians, like heterosexual women, "are often perceived almost exclusively in terms of their sexuality, which is hardly the sum of their identities any more than of heterosexuals' identities" (Wood 1994: 262). I extend this feminist argument to television and investigate whether audiences today agree that TV devalues lesbians through stereotyping.

I measure respondents' interpretations of lesbian representations on TV by asking "how stereotypical or not stereotypical would you say these TV portrayals of lesbian women are?" I offered respondents the following options: "I can't tell," "extremely stereotypical," "somewhat stereotypical," "neutral," "not stereotypical," and "I don't know."[13]

Views about Lesbians in Reality

Several past studies found a strong relationship between audiences' interpretations of lesbians and gays in the media and their attitudes about homosexuality in reality. Anderson's results, for example, found that respondents who thought media portrayals of homosexuality would lead to negative consequences were most likely to reject gay or lesbian teachers and pediatricians, to support keeping known homosexuals out of their lives and homes, and to believe that homosexuals are responsible for the

[13] I asked two additional questions about respondents' reactions to lesbian television representations: one about their level of comfort or discomfort with the portrayals, and the other about their interpretations of how positive or negative the images of lesbians were.
Since both questions asked for information similar to that of the frequency of lesbian TV representations and the stereotypical nature of the portrayals, I chose to leave the questions on level of comfort and positive/negative portrayals out of my analysis. I chose, instead, to analyze respondents' attitudes about lesbians on TV from responses to the questions on respondents' feelings about how frequent and how intimate lesbian representations should be on TV.

AIDS epidemic (Anderson et al. 1999: 1). Whereas some studies conceptualize peoples' attitudes about homosexuality as people's desire to spend time with homosexuals, their feelings about allowing homosexuals to work with children, and their opinions concerning whether or not homosexuals are mistreated in our society (Larsen et al. 1980: 251), I measure people's attitudes about lesbians in reality by investigating their views on gay marriage as well as their views on how public lesbians should be with their displays of intimacy in reality. I use these measures to gauge respondents' attitudes about lesbians in reality because people's political views reveal a great deal about what they deem important as well as how they feel about the rights and freedoms of others. I also ask about respondents' attitudes concerning lesbian public displays of affection on TV and in reality because I recognize that tolerating homosexual behavior on television and witnessing it first-hand in reality are completely different experiences, thus I am interested in comparing responses to both.

The first question I used to measure respondents' views about lesbians in reality states, "Marriage should be reserved for heterosexuals." I offered "Yes" or "No" as possible response categories.[14] The second question I used was "How do you feel about public displays of lesbian women's affection in reality?" I offered six possible responses: "lesbian women should not be so public with their feelings because it makes me feel uncomfortable," "lesbian women should not be so public with their feelings because I fear for their safety," "lesbian women should not be so public with their feelings because I feel that way about all public affection," "lesbian women should be as public as they

[14] Initially, I asked three questions about their support for gay marriage, their support for civil unions with the same rights as marriage, and their support for civil unions with limited rights as marriage. Respondents merely had to select "Yes" or "No" for all three questions. I found that the questions about civil unions achieved the same purpose as the question about gay marriage, thus I only focus on "Gay Marriage" as a key variable in my study.

want to be with their feelings," "lesbian women should be more public with their feelings," and "I do not care." (Please refer to Appendix C: Survey for complete questionnaire.)

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

I define "social location" in my study via the independent variables same-sex attraction, proximity to LGBQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer) people, gender, religiosity, and socio-economic status.

Same-Sex Attraction (SSA)

According to the Encyclopedia of Sociology, sexual orientation can generally be described as "the integration of the ways in which individuals experience the intersection of sexual desires and available sexual social roles" (Encyclopedia of Sociology 2001-2006). The definition maintains that "for some people, this intersection is experienced happily as an unproblematic confluence of personal and social expectations … [yet] for others, it is experienced as a persistent conflict." Still others might experience "issues of sexual orientation [as] occasion for experimentation, compromise, and sometimes change in how they see themselves, how they present themselves to others, and how different segments of social life respond to such outcomes" (Encyclopedia of Sociology 2001-2006). Due to the complex nature of sexual preference, I examine sexual preference/sexual orientation in my study by examining responses to three separate questions regarding sexual attraction and past experiences.

I operationalize sexual preference with three question questions. The first question asked, "Have you ever been physically attracted to someone of the same sex?" I provided three options as responses: "Yes," No," and "I choose to not respond." The

second question I asked was, “Have you ever been in a same-sex relationship?” and I provided the same three options as above. Finally, I asked, “How would you describe your sexual orientation?” and provided a text box for respondents to type their response.

Most respondents identified their sexual orientation as heterosexual/straight, gay, lesbian, or homosexual; very few respondents identify as queer or questioning. Several respondents explained that that they identify as Straight or Heterosexual, but they are sometimes attracted to members of the same sex[15]. I determined that I could not use results from my sexual-orientation question or my same-sex relationship question since too few respondents identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer (n = 43), and even fewer reported having been in a same-sex relationship (n = 30). I was therefore unable to generalize about these respondents’ attitudes and interpretations, and empirical reasons (n = 78) made it more feasible to use the broader definition of same-sex attraction[16] as basis for classifying respondents’ sexual orientation. (Please refer to Appendix C: Survey for complete questionnaire.)

Proximity/Contact to LGBQ-Identified People

In addition to same-sex attraction and gender, I examine proximity/contact to LGBQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer)-identified individuals. Studies have shown that those who say they have a family member or close friend who is gay are more than two times more likely to support gay marriage as those who do not - 55% to 25% (Neidorf and Morin 2007: 1). Furthermore, about half (49%) of respondents under 30 years old who know a gay person support gay marriage compared to only 27% of those who do not

[15] List of original response categories for this and all other variables available upon request.
[16] I used respondents’ past experience with same-sex attraction to define their sexual preference in a broader way (as opposed to using their self-identified sexual orientation classification).

have a gay acquaintance or relative (Part 2: Gay Marriage 2009: 1). I conduct my investigation to determine whether or not these patterns exist in Emory College's student population.

I operationalize proximity to LGBQ-identified people with my questions about whether or not respondents have LGBQ-identified siblings, parents, high school friends, or college friends. Since I found an extremely low number of respondents in the siblings and parents categories, I collapsed these to form the new variable "LGBQ-identified family members." I used response categories "Yes" or "No" to determine whether or not respondents have, or report having, LGBQ-identified family members.

I also measure how respondents' proximity to LGBQ-identified friends relates to their attitudes about lesbians on TV and in reality. I operationalize this variable by asking two questions. The first asked whether or not respondents were close with any LGBQ-identified people before or during high school, and the second asked whether or not respondents are now close with any LGBQ-identified people in college. I offered "Yes/No" as response categories for both questions.

Gender

The first main identifying characteristic I examine is gender, namely whether a respondent identifies as a woman or a man. While I recognize gender "a social, symbolic creation [that] grows out of a society's values, beliefs, and preferred ways of organizing collective life" (Wood 1994: 21), this symbolic category reflects "the meaning a society confers on biological sex … [and that] these meanings are communicated through structures and practices of cultural life that pervade our daily existence, creating the illusion that they are natural, normal ways for women and men to be" (Wood 1994: 25).

Gender is "socially constructed" because society teaches individuals how to navigate within a strict gender binary with man – defined as one who possesses traditionally "masculine" attributes like "physical strength and endurance" – on one side, and woman – defined as one who possesses "feminine" traits like "physical weakness and dependence on men's strengths" (Wood 1994: 25) – on the other. I conceptualize gender as a shifting category defined by both the individual, as well as by the society in which the individual lives and operates (Wood 1994: 25). For the purpose of this study, I use the traditional categories of gender, i.e. the woman/man binary.

I operationalized gender in my survey by asking the open-ended question, "What is your gender?" Though I chose to provide a text box for respondents to type-in their preferred gender identity, an overwhelming majority of respondents identified themselves within the dominant binary, either with Female/Male or Woman/Man categories. Only one respondent identified as Androgynous. (Please refer to Appendix C: Survey for complete questionnaire.)

Religiosity

I also examine how religiosity, one's intensity of attachment to religious beliefs, relates to individual respondents' interpretations of lesbians on TV and their views about lesbians in reality.[17] I define religiosity as "the devoutness or importance of religion in one's life" (Craven, 2004; Regnerus, Smith, & Sikkink, 1997). Social science research has found that religiosity:

[17] I also decided to ask respondents to report how often they attend religious ceremonies, or practice their religion. Though I was interested in how frequency of religious practice relates to individual interpretations and attitudes about lesbians, I found that responses to that question mirrored the responses to the degree of religiosity question.

> has explanatory value above and beyond denomination or religious tradition in predicting sociopolitical attitudes. Many of the relationships between religious tradition and political attitudes and behaviors are actually mediated by religiosity, with differences between religious traditions becoming attenuated as levels of religious commitment are controlled. (Walls)

In other words, Walls' study suggests that religiosity is often a key determinant, or predictor, of people's sociopolitical attitudes. Similar scholarship on religiosity and attitudes about "issues of morality"[18] has also found that seculars, or "those who have no religious affiliation or who identify as either agnostic or atheist," consistently express the most progressive attitudes towards these issues (Burdette, Hill, & Moulton, 2005; Steensland et al., 2000). I examine Emory College student respondents' reported religiosity in relation to their attitudes about lesbian visibility to determine whether these patterns exist in young television audiences today.

I operationalize religiosity with the question, "How religious are you?" I offer the following response categories: "I am not religious at all," "I am a little bit religious," "I am religious," and "I am very religious." (Please refer to Appendix C: Survey for complete questionnaire.)

Socio-Economic Status (SES)

The last independent variable I examine is Socio-Economic Status (SES). In this study, I suggest that family is one site where an individual's political personality is formed. The family is where "the child … tends to identify with [her or] his parents and to adopt their outlook toward the political system" (Davies 1965: 1). I suggest that family

[18] "The term 'morality' is typically used in the literature … to indicate issues regarding sexuality and reproduction. This is clearly problematic in that its narrow focus implies that issues like poverty, access to medical care, and other such issues have no moral dimension, and is also a product of the religious cultural hegemony whereby Christian privilege has dictated the landscape of the political discussion deciding which issues are considered morality issues and which are not" (Walls).

might be a key venue for which older generations pass down attitudes, and I therefore explore how respondents' SES (in terms of annual income and parental education level) relates to their attitudes and interpretations of lesbians in reality as well as on television.

I conceptualize SES with traditional Marxian and Weberian understandings of class, or status groups. Marx argues that social classes are "based on property relations" and that "exploitation is the key to the understanding of social inequality in capitalist society," while Weber defines SES as a combination of "the resources one possesses, such as certain skills, education, or even inherited wealth … [which] translate into purchasing power." Weber asserts that "education, and not ownership of capital, lead[s] to certain occupations with high incomes…" (Weber 1998: 47-48). I use this definition to justify my conceptualization of Socio-Economic Status as a combination of parental household annual income and parental educational levels.

I operationalize socioeconomic status (SES) by asking respondents to report what they estimate to be their parental household annual income and to report their parents' educational degrees. I refer to Weber's definition of SES by associating individuals of higher SES with having more opportunities to attain higher educational degrees and higher annual incomes, while associating individuals of lower SES with the opposite. Furthermore, since American society is generally represented by the nuclear two-parent heterosexual household (Lister 1986: 6), I only analyze data concerning educational degrees of Parent A and Parent B.[19] Since results from the Cornell University poll and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life study suggest that Americans with high educational degrees have more positive views about homosexuals, I use non-directional

[19] I asked respondent to report the educational degrees of all parents in their household, A through D (if applicable). I do not focus my analysis of parental educational level on respondents who have more than two parents in their household since there were too few respondents in that category. Please see Appendix for tables on these respondents' third and forth parents' educational degrees.

hypotheses to examine whether Emory College students' parents' educational degrees and parental household annual income correspond with their own attitudes about lesbian visibility on TV and in reality.

I operationalize socio-economic status with three questions. The first question was, "What would you estimate to be your parental household's annual income?" I offered the following as response options: "<$15-20,000," "$20-50,000," "$50-100,000," "$100-500,000," "$500-1,000,000," and ">$1,000,000." The formatted questions about Parent A and Parent B's educational degrees similarly. They asked, "What is the highest educational degree attained by the adults who raised you? Parent A:" and "What is the highest educational degree attained by the adults who raised you? Parent B:" I provided the following response categories: "High school diploma," "University/College," "Professional (for example, M.D., J.D.)," "Graduate (for example, M.A., M.S., Ph.D.)," "No Degree," "I don't know," and "I choose to not respond" for both questions. (Please refer to Appendix C: Survey for complete questionnaire.)

CHAPTER V. RESULTS

UNIVARIATE ANALYSES

I. Dependent Variables: Attitudes and Interpretations

Interpretations of Lesbians on Television

The frequencies I ran on respondents' attitudes about the how often lesbian representations should appear on television reveal that the highest percentages of respondents feel there are not enough lesbians on TV (140, or 45.6%) or express indifference about the frequency representations (134, or 43.6%). This high number of

respondents who expressed indifference about frequency of lesbian representation on TV was completely unexpected. One reason why so many respondents selected this response might be respondents' preference for watching cable or broadcast TV. If they do not pay extra to be able to see the lesbian/gay television shows on Showtime or HBO, and if they are comfortable with the minimal presence of lesbians on broadcast TV shows, then maybe viewers' expression of indifference stems from their lack of care about the infrequency of lesbians TV representations on broadcast TV? Another reason for their indifference might be their wearing a social desirability masks, i.e. selecting "I don't care" as a way to show that it does not affect them either way, and that they therefore tolerate lesbian presence? Another version of this possibility is if respondents "don't care" because they want to express that they are, in fact, tolerant of, or "cool with" lesbianism on TV. A final possible reason respondents might select "I don't care" is because, as mostly heterosexuals, they feel that issues pertaining to lesbians do not pertain to them, and that if they feel they do not want to see lesbians on television, they will be able to simply change the channel when they are watching TV. (Please refer to Table 1: Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians in Reality and On TV in the Table section for further breakdowns.)

I also found that far fewer respondents feel that TV represents just the right numbers of lesbians (23, or 7.5%), and the lowest percentage of respondents feel that TV shows too many lesbians (10, or 3.3%). Data suggest that the majority of Emory College students are divided about how they feel concerning the frequency of lesbian TV portrayals; finally, the highest numbers of students either want to see more lesbians represented on TV, or do not care one way or the other (express indifference).

The final data on respondents' interpretations of lesbians on television reveal that the highest percentage of respondents (109, or 26%) cannot tell or do not know if TV representations of lesbians are stereotypical or not stereotypical. The next three highest percentages of respondents feel TV representations of lesbians are somewhat stereotypical (70, or 16.7%), feel they are neutral (63, or 15%), and feel they are not stereotypical (56, or 13.4%). The lowest percentage of respondents thinks the images are extremely stereotypical (9, or 2.1%). These analyses suggest that most Emory College students do not think lesbian TV representations are very stereotypical since the highest percentage report that they cannot tell or do not know, and the lowest percentage report they are extremely stereotypical. About 30% of the sample feel lesbian TV representations are neutral, somewhat, or not stereotypical. (Please see Table 1: Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians in Reality and on TV in the Tables section for further breakdowns.)

Interpretations of Lesbians in Reality

Univariate analyses concerning respondents' attitudes about same-sex marriage reveal that 235 respondents (56.1%) do not believe marriage should be reserved for heterosexuals, while 70 respondents (16.7%) believe it should. Over three times more Emory student respondents support same-sex marriage than those who do not. (Please see Table 1: Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians in Reality and on TV in the Tables section for further breakdowns.)

Data show that more respondents (134, or 32%) feel lesbians should be as public as they want with their displays of affection in reality than those who feel lesbians should

not be so public with their feelings because they feel that way about all public displays of affection (86, or 20.5%). Of the remaining respondents, the highest percentage (59, or 14.1%) express indifference about how intimate lesbians should be in public, and the lowest percentages think lesbians should not be so public because it makes them uncomfortable (15, 3.6%), feel lesbians should be more public with their feelings (9, or 2.1%), and feel lesbians should not be so public with their feelings because they fear for their safety (4, or 1%). Data suggest that the majority of respondents either feel that lesbians should be as public as they want with the intimacy, or lesbians should not be so public because they feel that way about all public affection, while very few respondents reported having extreme attitudes (i.e. that lesbians should not be publicly intimate because they are uncomfortable or because they fear for lesbians' safety, or that lesbians should be more publicly intimate). (Please see Table 1: Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians in Reality and on TV in the Tables section for further breakdowns.)

II. Independent Variables: Social Location of Respondents

Same-Sex Attraction (SSA)

As I state in my previous chapter, there is not enough variation in respondents' sexual orientation or past experience being in a same-sex relationship to identify any patterns in those individuals' views. Too few respondents identify as gay, lesbian, or queer and too few report having been in a same-sex relationship. I therefore only use data on same-sex attraction in my analysis of sexual preference.

Data show that 78 (25.7%) of the 304 respondents who responded to this question have experienced same-sex attraction, while 222 (73%) respondents have not. Four respondents (1.3% of respondents) selected the "I choose to not respond" option and 115 respondents (27.4% of total sample) skipped the question. (Please see Table 2a: Gender, Same-Sex Attraction, and Contact/Proximity to LGBQ People in the Tables section for further breakdowns.)

Proximity/Contact to LGBQ-Identified People

The data on questions concerning respondents' proximity to LGBQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer) people (i.e. whether or not they have LGBQ-identified family members or friends) show that while only 17 (5.6%) respondents of 305 who responded to the question report having an LGBQ-identified family member, 170 (55.9%) of respondents report having been close with LGBQ-identified people before or during high school, and 223 (73.4%) report that they are now close with LGBQ-identified people in college. The difference between the number of respondents who did not have LGBQ friends in high school (133, or 43.8%) and those who currently do not have LGBQ friends in college (79, or 26%) suggests that a greater number of Emory College students are now close with LGBQ-identified people than the number who were close with LGBQ-identified people before or during high school. An extremely low number of respondents report having an LGBQ-identified family member. I analyze bivariate analyses on attitudes and interpretations of these respondents in the next section with the knowledge that the majority of this sample have been, or are, close with LGBQ-identified people. (Please see Table 2a: Gender, Same-Sex Attraction, and Contact/Proximity to LGBQ-Identified People in the Tables section for further breakdowns.)

Gender

My sample comprised 419 of 4,974 total students enrolled in Emory College in the spring semester of 2009, a response rate of approximately 8.4%. The sample includes 106 men (25.3% of respondents), 286 women (68.3% of respondents), and 27 respondents (6.4%) who did not report their gender.[20] My sample over represents women and under represents men since 44% of Emory College (2200) are men, while 56% of the college (2774) are women. (Please see Table 2a: Gender, Same-Sex Attraction, and Contact/Proximity to LGBQ People in the Tables section for further breakdowns.)

Religiosity

Though I do not investigate relationships between respondents' specific religious identification and their attitudes about lesbians in this study, I investigate differences between a little/not religious respondents' attitudes and religious/very religious respondents' attitudes.

Univariate analyses show that 130 respondents (or 33%) identify as a little bit religious, 118 respondents (or 29.9%) identify as not at all religious, 100 respondents (or 25.4%) identify as religious, and only 46 respondents (or 11.7%) identify as very religious. Data therefore show that about 62.9% of Emory College students identify as either a little or not at all religious, while 37.1% identify as religious or very religious. These statistics suggest that two times more Emory College students are not religious

[20] Only one student did not identify within the gender binary of "Woman" or "Man," thus I was unable to analyze the student's attitudes and interpretations since that individual was the only respondent who occupied the "Androgynous" category.

than students who are religious.[21] (Please refer to Table 2b: Independent Variables Religion and Socio-Economic Status (SES) in the Tables section for further breakdowns.)

Socio-Economic Status (SES)

Data on respondents' parental household annual income reveal that the highest number of respondent have parents who make between $100,000 and $500,000 per year (42.6%), the next highest number have parents who make from $50,000 to $100,000 per year (27%), and the third highest number have parents who make from $20,000 to $50,000 per year (13.6%).[22] These results suggest that over half (56.2%) of my sample come from families that have annual incomes over twice that of the median household income in the state of Georgia (about $50,000 per family per year[23]). These data align with those of the national average college student household annual income in the U.S.[24]

In terms of parents' educational degree, the highest number of respondents report that at least one parent has a graduate-level degree (36%). The next most common responses are having parents with college/university degrees (24.3%) and having parents with professional degrees (21.5%). Most respondents who reported the educational degree of their second parent report that their parent to has a college/university degree (36.8%). The next most popular option was the second parent's having a graduate degree (26.7%). Only about 11.5% of respondents report that one of their parents has less than a college/university degree. The general trend in the data reveals that respondents were

[21] The frequencies on religious practice reveal that the highest percentage of respondents (about 40%) is those who attend religious ceremonies one to two times per year. Fewer report that they never attend religious ceremonies (21.6%), attend at least once or twice a week (20.3%), or attend once or twice a month (18.5%). Data suggest that the highest number of respondents practice their religion once or twice a year, while the rest of the respondents are almost evenly distributed among the remaining three categories –slightly fewer respondents report that they attend ceremonies often (at least one to two times a week) than respondents who report that they never attend. (Please see Table 1b: Religion and Socio-Economic Status in the Tables section for further breakdowns.)

[22] See Appendix for further break-downs of parental annual income.

[23] U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2005 to 2008 Annual Social and Economic Supplements

[24] "In 2005, entering freshmen came from households with a parental median income of $74,000, 60 percent higher than the national average of $46,326. This represents a 14 percent increase from 1971, when students' median family income was $13,200, 46 percent higher than the national average of $9,028" (UCLA 2007: 1).

most likely to have one parent with a graduate level degree and one with a college/university degree.

Though studies have found that "education makes relatively little difference among those under age 30, where support for gay marriage runs highest … since younger generations are more likely to have college degrees than older" (Part 2: Gay Marriage 2009: 1), I determine that the family effectively socializes individuals, and parents' attitudes might somehow relate to their children's attitudes. (Please refer to Table 2b: Independent Variables Religion and Socio-Economic Status (SES) in the Tables section for further breakdowns.)

I proceed with my investigation of how respondents' social locations relate to their views about lesbians on TV and in reality with bivariate analyses of my data below.

BIVARIATE ANALYSES

As theorist Brasted states, audience's experiences as members of social groups lead them to interact with a text by "decoding it as an act of resistance that is influenced by their social location and grouping … they are able to interpret texts created by the dominant ideology in an oppositional way. Because of the polysemy or multiple meanings in texts and the ability of audience members to resist the dominant ideology, the homogenization of culture can be avoided" (Brasted 2004: 1). I focus my analysis on how audience members' social locations relate to their interpretations of what feminist theorists term "heteronormative" images of lesbians on TV. I investigate below respondents' attitudes in relation to five social location categories: gender, same-sex

attraction, contact/proximity to LGBQ-identified people, religiosity practice, and socio-economic status.

I use the feminist concept of television as heteronormative to inform my hypotheses on same-sex attraction and gender, I explore contact/proximity to LGBQ individuals because large volumes of scholarly work suggest that greater contact/proximity to LGBQ individuals results in higher levels of tolerance and support for LGBQ issues, I investigate religiosity since past studies suggest an inverse relationship between religiosity and attitudes about LGBQ issues, and I explore the ways in which socio-economic status relates to viewers' interpretations of lesbians.

SAME-SEX ATTRACTION

I expect respondents who have experienced same-sex attraction to recognize stereotypes and limitations of lesbian TV representations and to support greater visibility for lesbians in reality and on television.

Hypothesis #1: Same-Sex Attraction (SSA)

a.) Respondents who have had SSA will:

Support gay marriage.

Support more lesbian intimacy in reality.

Want more frequent lesbian TV representations.

Recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations.

Want more lesbian intimacy in TV representations.

b.) Respondents who have not had SSA will:

Support gay marriage.

Support more lesbian intimacy in reality (social desirability).

Want more frequent lesbian TV representations.

Be less likely than homosexual respondents to recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations.

Want more lesbian intimacy in TV representations.

Table 3a: Same-Sex Attraction (SSA)/ Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians in the Table section shows that in terms of respondents' attitudes about lesbian TV representation, my hypothesis was not supported since all respondents are not, in fact, satisfied with the frequency of lesbian portrayals. Similar to respondents' attitudes about lesbians in reality, two times more non-SSA than SSA respondents report indifference about how often lesbians are depicted on TV (24% SSA, and about half of all non-SSA respondents). Almost three-quarters (73%) of respondents who have experienced same-sex attraction, and 37% of respondents who have not, feel there are not enough lesbian TV representations, while only 1% of SSA (and 10% of non-SSA) respondents feel there are just the right numbers of lesbians on TV. Analyses show that very few respondents are, in fact, satisfied with the number of lesbian portrayals on TV, with the majority of SSA respondents wanting more lesbian representations and with the highest number of non-SSA respondents not caring. I propose that the high percentage of non-SSA respondents who support more lesbian TV representation is partially because of social desirability. I propose this because the highest percentage of non-SSA respondents report they do not care one way or the other about lesbian TV representation, thus I assume the next most "socially desirable" response would be that of support.

Whereas my hypothesis concerning frequency of lesbian TV representations was somewhat supported, data support my hypothesis that SSA respondents are more likely to recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations than non-SSA respondents. Data show that 32% of SSA respondents report that lesbians TV portrayals are somewhat stereotypical, while 20% of non-SSA feel that way. I propose that 35% of non-SSA respondents cannot tell either way because representations of another

population does not affect them as much as representations of their own population would (reflected in SSA respondents' recognition of stereotypical lesbian TV representations).

Data do not confirm that all respondents support lesbian intimacy on TV. Results show that non-SSA respondents are almost two times more likely to be indifferent about lesbian intimacy on TV than SSA respondents (51% of non-SSA, 28% of SSA respondents). Finally, while 30% of SSA respondents think TV should often depict lesbian intimacy, only 11% of non-SSA respondents feel that way. About one-fifth (22% of SSA and 20% of non-SSA) of all respondents feel TV should sometimes depict lesbian intimacy. (Please see Table 3a: Same-Sex Attraction (SSA) / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians in the Tables section for more specific information regarding relationships between variables.)

My data on same-sex attraction align with Gross' comment that "images of gay and lesbian people of all ages have been rare and often negative" (Gross, 1991, 1996; Moritz, 1994) since results show that respondents who have had same-sex attraction would more frequent lesbian portrayals and support frequent displays of lesbian intimacy on television even though they recognize the current portrayals as stereotypical in nature. I explain why 32% of same-sex attraction respondents recognize lesbian TV images as somewhat stereotypical while 35% of non-same-sex respondents cannot tell one way or the other with concepts from Critical Race Theory including the notion of "the unmarked category" and race privilege. Respondents who have had same-sex attraction have most likely experienced symbolic marginalization as they recognize the need for more lesbian TV representations. The invisibility, or lack of presence of lesbian images – other than

few and limited ones depicted on TV – epitomizes the exclusion of nonnormative groups. Lesbians are "marked" in this way, and excluded from "the unmarked dominant categories 'male' and 'heterosexual'" (Walker 2001: 50). The duality of this in-group and out-group construction stems from marked and unmarked categories:

> As Monique Wittig has suggested, heterosexuality is constructed as a general, unmarked category. Those who identify and are identified as heterosexual are not positioned within discourses as heterosexuals so much as 'people,' and heterosexuality is merely 'sexuality'" (Ingraham 2005: 97).

By default, lesbians are "marked," and rendered "queer," or abnormal. Their marked status is merely reinforced by their limited presence on TV, and, due to TV's pigeon-holing them into very few character scripts, their TV portrayals are marked. Lesbians' non-normative status, like that of Native Americans in Shively's "Cowboys and Indians: Perceptions of Western Films among American Indians and Anglos" study, leads them to "take what they can get" and prefer seeing stereotypical images of themselves to none at all. Whereas in Shively's study "American Indians and Anglos both liked the film," they did so for different reasons. "Indians perceived Westerns as representing a set of values about the land, autonomy, and freedom, while Anglos linked the Western myth to their own history and turned it into an affirmation of the values their ancestors strove for and imposed on the West. These results imply that the meaning imputed to cultural works varies over social space" (Shively 1992: 725). This marked/unmarked category idea explains why lesbians desire more representation and desire greater lesbian intimacy in the media. As a marginalized and marked population on TV, I propose that like American Indians lesbians assume that "something is better than nothing," while the normative respondents – or non-same-sex attraction students – occupy the role of the

white men as they confuse fiction with reality, and learn from the media that lesbians are rare and limited in type. The unmarked population, the non-SSA respondents, therefore expresses indifference about lesbian TV representation because they have learned from television that lesbians are uncommon, and limited in personality. (Please see Table 3a: Same-Sex Attraction (SSA) / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians in the Table section for further statistical breakdown.)

In conclusion, if a high percentage of respondents cannot tell how stereotypical TV images of lesbians are, and if the majority of respondents are heterosexual, Cognitive Theory maintains that the invisibility of alternative, realistic, and diverse images of lesbians means TV offers audiences extremely limited exposure to "real-life" lesbians, and as a result, normative (non-SSA) audiences come to have skewed perceptions of what lesbians are like in reality.

Not surprisingly, data in Table 3a: Same-Sex Attraction (SSA)/ Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians in the Table section confirm that homosexual respondents are more supportive of same-sex marriage than are heterosexual respondents (89%, and 73% respectively) and the highest percentages of both SSA (60%) and non-SSA respondents (38%) believe lesbians should be as public as they want with their displays of affection in reality. Though these results show that a high percentage of Emory College students (over 40% of total respondents) support lesbian intimacy in reality, I interpret these data as results of social desirability, that so many respondents report that they support lesbian intimacy in reality because they feel they are "supposed" to be tolerant. I interpret these data in this way because I found the next two most common responses to be that lesbians should not be so intimate in public because respondents feel

that way about all public displays of affection (28% of total; 29% non-SSA, 23% SSA), and that of indifference. These data somewhat support my hypothesis that all respondents support lesbian intimacy in reality, though I found that two times more non-SSA respondents (23%) than SSA respondents (9%) do not care about lesbian intimacy in reality. (Please see Table 3a: Same-Sex Attraction (SSA)/ Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians in the Table section for further breakdowns.)

PROXIMITY/CONTACT TO LGBQ PEOPLE

The next relationship I examine in Table 3b: LGBQ-Identified Family and Friends / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians is how respondents' proximity/contact to LGBQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer)-identified people relates to their attitudes about lesbians on television and in reality. Similar to why I expect respondents who have experienced same-sex attraction to be more supportive of lesbian representations, I expect respondents who have been close with LGBQ people to be supportive of lesbian visibility on TV and in reality.

Hypothesis #2: Contact/Proximity to LGBQ-Identified People

a.) People with LGBQ family members or friends will be more likely to:

Support gay marriage.
Support more lesbian intimacy in reality.
Want more frequent lesbian TV representations.
Recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations.
Want more lesbian intimacy in TV representations.

b.) People with no LGBQ family members or friends will be more likely to:

Not support gay marriage.
Not support more lesbian intimacy in reality.
Not want more frequent lesbian TV representations.
Not recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations.
Not want more lesbian intimacy in TV representations.

Table 3b: LGBQ-Identified Family and Friends / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians in the Tables section shows my analyses of respondents' proximity to LGBQ people and their interpretations of lesbians on TV. These data reveal that over 50% of respondents who had an LGBQ friend in high school or have one now in college are likely think there are not enough lesbians on TV (55% of those with LGBQ high school friends, 54% of those with LGBQ college friends), while 35% of respondents who had no LGBQ high school friends and 24% of those who have no LGBQ college friends also feel there are not enough lesbians on TV. Similar to my previous findings on same-sex attraction, data show that about 51% of respondents who did not have an LGBQ friend in high school and about 53% of those who do not have an LGBQ friend in college do not care about the frequency of lesbian TV portrayals. Data show that the highest percentages (25% to 30%) of respondents in all categories cannot tell, or do not know whether or not portrayals are stereotypical. (Please see Table 3b: LGBQ-Identified Family and Friends in the Tables section for further details on these relationships).

The data I report above somewhat disprove my hypothesis that respondents who have been close with LGBQ people will be more likely to support lesbian visibility than those who have not. Though the highest percentages of all respondents cannot tell how stereotypical TV representations of lesbians are, the next highest percentages of respondents who have an LGBQ family member (over one-third) and those who have had LGBQ friends (about one-fifth) feel TV should often show lesbian intimacy. Therefore, my results support the claim that respondents' familiarity with LGBQ people is linked with their attitudes about lesbian visibility (i.e. their interpretations of lesbian TV portrayals).

In terms of attitudes about lesbians in reality, my data confirm that respondents who report having at least one LGBQ-identified family member or friend before, during, or after high school are more likely to support same-sex marriage (Please see Table 3b: LGBQ-Identified Family and Friends / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians for further breakdowns). Slightly more respondents who have an LGBQ family member (82%) support same-sex marriage than those who do not have an LGBQ family member (77%). A wider margin exists between respondents who currently have an LGBQ friend in college (83%) and who support same-sex marriage and those who do not currently have an LGBQ friend in college (65%) and who support same-sex marriage.[25] Data therefore show that respondents who have, or had, LGBQ friends are more likely to support same-sex marriage than those with an LGBQ family member.

In general, my study's results reflect those of Neidorf and Morin who found that "overall, those who say they have a family member or close friend who is gay are more than twice as likely to support gay marriage as those [with little or no personal contact with gays] -- 55% to 25%" (Neidorf and Morin 2007: 1). My data also reflect that of the Pew study which found that among respondents under the age of 30, "about half (49%) of those who know a gay person are supportive of gay marriage compared with 27% of those who do not have a gay acquaintance or relative" (Part 2: Gay Marriage 2009: 1). While my data reveal that having an LGBQ family member has less of an affect on a respondent's support for same-sex marriage than does having an LGBQ friend, this relationship does not exist when examining respondents' interpretations of lesbian

[25] Respondents who had an LGBQ friend before or during high school were more likely to support same-sex marriage than their peers who did not have LGBQ friends before or during high school (80%, as opposed to 74%).

representation on television. (Please see Table 3b: LGBQ-Identified Family and Friends / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians for further statistical breakdowns.)

GENDER

The first of the more general social location variables that I examine is between respondents' gender and their attitudes about lesbians in reality and on TV. (Please refer to Table 4: Gender / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians in the Tables section for the following gender breakdowns.)

Hypothesis #3: Gender

a.) Female/Women respondents will:

Support gay marriage.
Support more lesbian intimacy in reality.
Want more frequent lesbian TV representations.
Recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations.
Want more lesbian intimacy in TV representations.

b.) Male/Men respondents will:

Not support gay marriage.
Support more lesbian intimacy in reality.
Want more frequent lesbian TV representations.
Not recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations.
Want more lesbian intimacy in TV representations.

The crosstabulations on respondents' attitudes about lesbian intimacy on television are the most central to my study. These data do not confirm my hypothesis that respondents of both genders support lesbian intimacy on TV. Far more report they do not care than I expected (45% of respondents), and this number was significantly larger than the number of respondents in any other category including those who believe lesbian intimacy should sometimes be depicted on TV, always be depicted on TV (4% of female, 3% of male), and often be depicted on TV (12% of females, 14% of males). The same

percentage of male as female respondents thinks TV should sometimes show lesbian intimacy (15%), but far more male respondents than female (51% of males, and 30% of females) report indifference. Three times more male respondents than female respondents (11% compared with 3%) think TV should "never" show lesbian intimacy. (Please see Table 4: Gender / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians in the Tables section for more specific information regarding relationships between variables.)

From the feminist theories I employ in my theoretical background and hypotheses chapter, I expected men to approve of the objectifying images of lesbians on TV because I expected they would be sexually satisfied seeing these images of lesbians on TV. I expected women would also approve of the images, since they often reflect conventional femininity which is familiar to heterosexual women since they too are relegated to these images of beauty. I assume the perspective that most lesbian TV portrayals, such as *The L Word*, are "designed to attract both gay and straight viewers" (Sarah Warn, as cited in Akass and McCabe 2006: 4) by making lesbian characters resemble conventional femininity. My hypotheses were not supported, though, since data reveal that the highest percentage of respondents of both genders "do not care" one way or the other about lesbian TV intimacy. Surprisingly, since men were more indifferent than women about the lesbian TV images and men were more likely to think lesbians should never be intimate on TV. (Please refer to Table 4: Gender / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians in the Tables section for further breakdowns.)

These findings mean that the most common lesbian portrayals – the hypersexualized "lipstick" lesbian, femme TV characters – are not, in fact, what men enjoy. Men, heterosexual men especially, are less supportive of lesbian intimacy on

television than I expected. I expect this is for two related reasons that stem from the idea that these lesbian representations ruin their "ultimate heterosexual male fantasy" of being with two sexy women who will eventually invite them to join in, and who will later return to heterosexual sex. One reason men might reject lesbian TV images is because, as viewers, men are not physically *present* in the room with the women are intimate. As they watch from the safety of their own TV sets, men are never invited to "join the fun" and enter the bedroom. In pornography, for example, men are able to identify with a male character present during sex scenes, but in lesbian TV portrayals men are often absent all together, thus leaving male viewers with no one to identify with, making it difficult for them to imagine being present.

The second way I explain men's indifference about and lack of support for lesbian intimacy on TV is because when two women are affectionate with one another on television, they are often presented and introduced to the audience as actual "lesbians." Since this label implies that they are women who are solely attracted to other women, I propose that men's fantasy is shattered once again, this time by the fact that these lesbian TV characters are full-fledged lesbians and not the "temporary lesbians" of their "ultimate heterosexual male fantasy" who put on a sex show for male viewers, yet eventually return to heterosexual sex with men after their lesbian experience. I propose that the strict lesbianism of lesbian TV characters often steers men away from being attracted to lesbianism on the small screen, and leads to men's indifference and/or lack of support for more lesbian characters and intimacy on TV. According to my data, when TV writers and producers make lesbians seem as conventionally pretty/heterosexual female as possible to convince heterosexual audiences that lesbians are not threatening, the

majority of their audiences feel indifferent about these images, and men, especially, care the least.

Table 4: Gender in the Tables section also shows that, in terms of gender and respondents' attitudes about lesbians in reality, analyses confirm my hypothesis that women respondents are more supportive of same-sex marriage than are men (80% of women, 66% of men) and that respondents of both genders support lesbian intimacy in reality (100, or 35% women and 33, 31% men). My data align with other studies' results on gender and gay marriage in that I find men express somewhat more opposition to same-sex marriage than women. My data confirm that men are "consistently four-to-eight percent more likely to oppose gay marriage than women" (Part 2: Gay Marriage 2009: 1). Data also confirm that women are slightly more supportive of lesbians being as publicly affectionate as they want in reality, while men are more likely to not care about how often lesbians are intimate in public (24, or 23% men and 35, or 12% women). I explain that respondents of both genders support lesbian intimacy in reality (100, or 35% women and 33, 31% men) and that men report indifference about how often lesbians are intimate in public either because everyone feels they *should be* comfortable with lesbian displays of affection in reality (the social desirability mask) or because people are not used to seeing many public displays of lesbian affection in reality and they assume they *would* be comfortable with it.

I propose that men, in particular, are more supportive of lesbian intimacy in reality than TV because they interpret television as the fantasy world where their ultimate fantasies could potentially come true; and when their fantasies do not come true, when lesbians are portrayed as women who are sexually attracted and intimate with other

women, and when no men are present to participate in that intimacy, the ultimate male fantasy is shattered, their attraction lost, and their support for lesbian TV representations pushed to the sidelines. In contrast, I think men's support for lesbian intimacy in reality relates to why men, in general, are more tolerant of lesbians than they are gay men. I interpret this finding to mean that men at Emory are either accepting of lesbian intimacy because they feel they should be (socially desirable) or they do not find female-female intimacy threatening in reality.

RELIGIOSITY[26]

Whereas respondents' familiarity with LGBT individuals should create more favorable views towards lesbians on TV and greater support for lesbian visibility, I expect higher levels of religiosity to produce an opposite effect on respondents' attitudes and interpretations of lesbian visibility. I base the following hypotheses on studies I address in my theoretical background section that suggest a strong inverse relationship exists between religiosity and attitudes about homosexuality. (Please refer to Table 5: Religiosity / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians in the Tables section for the following breakdowns.)

Hypothesis #4: Religiosity

a.) People who identify themselves as not religious to be more likely to:

Support gay marriage.
Support more lesbian intimacy in reality.
Want more frequent lesbian TV representations.
Recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations.
Want more lesbian intimacy in TV representations.

[26] Please also refer to Table 6: Religious Practice / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians in the Tables section for further breakdowns of respondents' religious practice and views about lesbianism. These results somewhat reflect those of Religiosity, thus I chose to focus my analysis on the latter.

b.) People who identify themselves as very religious to be more likely to:

Not support gay marriage.
Not support more lesbian intimacy in reality.
Not want more frequent lesbian TV representations.
Not recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations.
Not want more lesbian intimacy in TV representations.[27]

Data on respondents' interpretations of lesbians on TV support my hypothesis since 52% of the very religious respondents and 32% of religious respondents report they do not care about how often lesbians are depicted on TV while the highest percentages of secular respondents (42% of whom are not religious, and 42% of whom are a little religious) feel there are not enough lesbians represented on TV. None of these secular respondents feel there are too many lesbians on TV, while 13% of very religious respondents feel that way. (Please refer to Table 5: Religiosity / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians in the Tables section for further breakdowns.)

The highest number of respondents in every religiosity category could not tell or did not know whether or not lesbian TV representations were stereotypical. Finally, like my results on same-sex attraction and respondents' attitudes about lesbian visibility, data on respondents' views about lesbian intimacy on TV reveals that the highest percentages of all respondents do not care how often TV should depict lesbian intimacy. Differences exist, however, in the numbers of respondents on the extreme ends. For instance, 31% of very religious respondents (and 6% of not at all religious respondents) feel TV should rarely/never depict lesbian intimacy while 0% of very religious respondents (and 18% of

[27] I expect to find only slight differences between respondents' self-identified "religiosity" and how often they practice their religion. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of my thesis to examine respondents' actual religious traditions, their self-identified degree of religiosity, and how frequently they attend religious ceremonies. I expect to examine these variables in future studies.

not at all religious respondents) feels TV should always/often depict lesbian intimacy on TV. (Please see Table 5: Religiosity in the Tables section for further details.)

My data suggest that religiosity and positive attitudes about homosexuality are inversely related. Like other studies, my analyses reveal that "increased levels of religiosity are associated with more politically conservative attitudes" (Walls 6), especially with regard to lesbian visibility in reality as well as on television. Also similar to past sociological studies, my data show that respondents who identify as very religious are not likely to support more lesbian representations or more lesbian intimacy on TV.

Data confirm my hypothesis that states that all respondents across all world religions who identify as very religious are less supportive of same-sex marriage and less supportive of lesbian public displays of affection in reality than respondents who are secular (those who identify as not religious at all).[28] Data confirm my hypothesis since analyses reveal that 61% of respondents who identify as very religious do not support same-sex marriage while 72% of respondents who are a little religious and 73% of respondents who are not at all religious do. Respondents' attitudes about lesbian intimacy in reality were similar to those about same-sex marriage since the highest percentage of secular respondents (42%) and the highest percentage of respondents who are a little religious (39%) feel lesbians should be as public as they want with their affection. In contrast, 43% of very religious respondents feel lesbians should not be so public (28% of whom feel that way about all public affection, and 16% of whom feel that lesbian intimacy makes them uncomfortable). (Please see Table 5: Religiosity in the Tables section for further details on these relationships.)

[28] I also examined relationships between respondents' religious practice and their views about lesbian visibility. Since I found similar patterns in my religiosity analyses, I chose to focus my study on how degree of religiosity relates to attitudes about lesbian visibility in reality and on TV. Please see Table 6: Religious Practice in Tables section for further breakdowns.

The relationships I report above might result of various factors, including the fact that my sample consisted of a large number of students who identify with Western religious traditions – including Christian, Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, and Jewish – that often base their practice on ancient texts and doctrine which might address homosexuality. These religious congregations/communities might interpret those texts and define homosexuality in a particular way, thus instilling in their members one certain conceptualization. While past studies have found that religious populations feel the media glorifies and promotes homosexuality, and that gays and lesbians are presented in too positive a way by the media (Anderson et al. 1999: 1), I suggest that very religious respondents in my study might feel similarly because of their individual religious beliefs and/or ideas concerning traditional family life.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS (SES)

While studies suggest that higher levels of religiosity correspond with less favorable views towards lesbians on TV (and less support for LGBQ issues), studies on socioeconomic status are less conclusive. The last hypothesis that I test is non-directional, meaning that I do not have any predictions about the relationship between respondents' socio-economic status and their views about lesbian visibility in reality and on television. Please refer to Tables 7a and 7b: Socio-Economic Status (SES) / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians SES (Parental Education), and 8: Socio-Economic Status / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians SES (Parental Household Annual Income) for the following analyses.

Hypothesis #5: Socio-Economic Status (SES)

a.) On the one hand, past studies lead me predict that people of high SES might be more likely to:

Support gay marriage
Support more lesbian intimacy in reality
Want more frequent lesbian TV representations
Recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations
Want more lesbian intimacy in TV representations

If this is the case, I might predict people of low SES to be more likely to have views opposite those of high SES respondents.

b.) On the other hand, I might predict data to show that people of low SES will be more likely to:

Support gay marriage
Support more lesbian intimacy in reality
Want more frequent lesbian TV representations
Recognize the stereotypical nature of lesbian TV representations
Want more lesbian intimacy in TV representations

If data show this second prediction to be the case, I might predict people of high SES to be more likely to view opposite those of low SES respondents.

Analyses on respondent interpretations of lesbians on TV suggest that respondents of all annual income levels cannot tell whether or not lesbian TV portrayals are stereotypical and the majority also express indifference about how often TV depicts lesbian intimacy. Data on respondents' attitudes about the frequency of lesbian TV representations, however, show that lowest-annual income respondents are 15% more likely to express indifference toward frequency of lesbian TV representations than they are to want more lesbians on TV, mid-annual income respondents are slightly more likely to want more lesbians on TV than to express indifference, and highest-annual income

respondents are 21% (4 times) more likely to want more lesbians on TV than to express indifference.

Therefore, data reveal that parental annual income relates to respondent interpretations of lesbian on TV since respondents with the lowest-annual income express more indifference about frequency of lesbian portrayals on TV, while those with the highest-annual income and mid-annual income feel there are not enough. Data do not correspond with either possible hypothesis above since respondents with mid-annual income are more likely to support same-sex marriage, are more likely to think lesbians should be as intimate as they would like in reality, and are more likely to support greater lesbian visibility on TV. In contrast, highest and lowest-annual income respondents are more evenly split; both groups are as likely to express indifference as they are to think lesbians should be as publicly intimate as they wan. While respondents with the highest annual income are far more likely to want more lesbian representations on TV than to express indifference, respondents with the lowest annual income are more likely to express indifference about frequency of lesbian TV portrayals than to want more. (Please see Table 8: Socio-Economic Status in the Tables section for further breakdowns).

Data show that respondents who were most evenly split on the issue of same-sex marriage were respondents in the lowest annual income category (parents make less than $15,000 to $20,000/year) and those in the highest annual income category (parents make more than $1 million/year). Respondents in the lower-mid annual income categories (parents made between $20,000 and $100,000) were two times more likely to support same-sex marriage than to not support it; respondents in the higher-mid annual income categories (parents made between $100,000 and $1 million/year) were from five to six

times more likely to support same-sex marriage than to not support it. These data reveal that respondents who are not located on the extremes of the annual income scale (those between the highest and lowest annual income) are most likely to support same-sex marriage than are those on the extreme ends. (Please see Table 8: Socio-Economic Status / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians for further breakdowns.)

I found a similar trend in respondents' attitudes about lesbian intimacy in reality. Respondents on the extreme ends of the annual income scale are evenly split between thinking lesbians should be "as publicly intimate as they want" in reality and expressing indifference (chose "I don't care" option), while respondents in the middle categories are about 15% more likely (than those in the extreme categories) to think lesbians should be "as publicly intimate as they want" in reality. (Please refer to Table 8: Socio-Economic Status / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians SES (Parental Household Annual Income) for further breakdowns.)

Data on frequency of lesbian TV representations reveal that respondents with parents with graduate-level educations are most likely to feel there are not enough lesbians on TV, while all other respondents were evenly split between indifference and feeling there are not enough. While the highest percentage of respondents in all categories cannot tell how stereotypical TV portrayals of lesbians are, data reveal that the highest percentages in all categories do not care how often television depicts lesbian intimacy. Data on respondents with high school and professional-school educated parents show that they are three times more likely to express indifference than they are to support TV depicting lesbian intimacy sometimes/often. Please see Tables 7a: Socio-Economic Status (SES) / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians SES (Parental Education)

and Table 7b for further breakdowns of parental educational level and views about lesbian visibility.

Data on respondents' parental education levels in Table 7a and 7b also reveal that the majority of all respondents support same-sex marriage. Data on respondents with graduate and professional-educated parents reveals that four times more of these students support same-sex marriage than those who do not while only two times more students with college-educated parents support same-sex marriage than those who do not. Results on respondents' attitudes about lesbian intimacy in reality reveal that the highest number of respondents feel lesbians should be as public as they want with their intimacy, and the next highest number feel lesbians should not be so publicly intimate since they feel that way about all public affection. (Please see Tables 7a through Table 8 about respondents' Socio-Economic Status and attitudes about lesbians in the Tables section for further breakdowns.)

CONCLUSIONS

My study of the Emory University College student population concludes that these students are, overall, supportive of lesbian visibility in reality. About sixty percent of students support same-sex marriage and nearly one-third think lesbians should be as publicly affectionate as they want. Why, then, might almost half of the students express indifference about how frequently lesbians are represented on TV and why might one-third express indifference about often TV depicts lesbian intimacy? I propose that the difference between students' attitudes about lesbian in reality and their attitudes about lesbians on television might stem from more complex relationships between the media,

its viewers, and their attitudes. While I focus my study on audience members' social locations to determine who cares most and least about lesbian visibility, far more research must be done on relationships between media images and personal beliefs and attitudes.

I propose that while viewers might understand the differences between a television show and reality, many do not yet comprehend the overwhelming power of media representations. As I state in my introduction, television is an incredibly influential agent of socialization in our ever-increasingly technological American culture. While TV informs us about the weather, sporting matches, and inaugurations, it also entertains us with fictional characters who remind us of ourselves and the people we know. We relate to the stories, lives, and experiences of certain TV characters and we get caught up in the action and attach ourselves to the media. While we might theoretically distinguish between on-screen and off-screen living, it might be too early in the history of technological innovations like TV for us to grasp the tremendous potential they have to influence how we interpret our own world.

I describe in my historical overview that the television genre has had a history of defining lesbians by their sex and sexuality, yet a great deal has changed; the number of representations has multiplied ten-fold in the last decade. While TV has begun to integrate lesbians into mainstream programming, these representations are limited and limiting. As a Women's Studies scholar and feminist, I maintain that it is essential for our society to recognize power dynamics at play in relationships between individual audiences and a universally-accessible venue such as television. We must realize who is being depicted most often on television and how they are being depicted, but more importantly we must ask ourselves who is being left out of the picture all together, and

who is being depicted in the same ways they have been for years? Most importantly, we must consider the implications of the images we see on television, how they might inform our thinking about particular populations in reality, and how those newly engrained attitudes might shape who we are and how we function in our world.

The data I collected on Emory University College students' interpretations of lesbians on TV show that an extremely high percentage of heterosexuals, and a low (though reportable) percentage of homosexuals, express indifference about lesbian TV portrayals, though many scholars have asserted that the "cultural mirror" of television has failed to reflect gay men and lesbian images accurately. According to Nardi, this failure is detrimental for, "to be absent from primetime, to be marginally included in it, or to be treated badly by it are … serious threats to their rights as citizens" (Nardi 1997: 428). I interpret the high number of students' indifference about lesbians on TV as a failure to recognize the vast influence television has on society, as well as the influences of the sweeping messages in conveys. Our indifference here at Emory, as well as the potential indifference that might plague the American public, might be explained by our current inability to see and interpret the on-screen worlds of representation as influential. While TV images' impressions slip under our radar, while we fail to engage in analysis of what we see on our screens, and while we refrain from self-conscious viewing and recognizing our social locations as television viewers, producers, writers, and directors will continue to show and tell us what they please about our own world, how to navigate within it, and what to think about those beside us on the journey.

Could the extremely negative portrayals of homosexuality in the past have helped suppress positive attitudes about homosexuality? Might more positive portrayals reverse

this trend and lead to more support for homosexuality, as well as more self-reported homosexual behavior? These and other important questions need further research. Future studies must be done to pinpoint why populations like Emory College might support lesbian visibility in reality, yet refrain from supportive lesbian visibility in the media. Through scholarly work that seeks to answer question such as this, we might come to better understand the role media occupies in shaping us as well as our beliefs. One recently developed theory, Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002), unveils how infrequent positive media portrayals of homosexuality may "influence the beliefs of heterosexuals." The theory suggests that "watching television influences viewers' attitudes and beliefs through a process whereby the world as portrayed by the media comes to be perceived by viewers—particularly high-volume viewers—as an accurate reflection of reality." Researchers who have studied this Cultivation Theory suggest "that the lack of portrayals of homosexuality on television may influence the beliefs among heavy viewers that homosexuality is abnormal or extremely rare" (Fisher et al. 2007: 167). Research such as that which inspired the Cultivation Theory – work that connects television portrayals with audience, and audience with their particular interpretations and attitudes – is essential. Scholarship such as this illuminates how the media affects audiences, and ultimately, how audiences' failure to question and analyze the images they see regularly might prove dangerous.

To answer the questions raised by my study would require qualitative data, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups as well as content analyses of lesbian representations on television. Future studies on audience identity and reception should incorporate these data sources. Moreover, the bivariate analyses presented here cannot

ascertain whether causal relationships exist between people's social locations and their views on lesbians and lesbianism. Future studies should seek to engage in multivariate analyses. As I conclude this study, I find I have more questions than answers; my findings show that a great deal is left unaddressed in the world of lesbian representations in the media. Researchers who continue to do this kind of work might ask questions in ways that help capture the intricate and powerful connections between television, audience, attitudes about off-screen, and interpretations of on-screen worlds.

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TABLES

I. UNVARIATE AND BIVARIATE ANALYSES

TABLE 1: Dependent Variables
Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians in Reality and on TV

		Valid % of Total
INTERPRETATION		
Frequency of lesbian TV representations n=307	Just the right #	7.5
	Not enough	45.6
	Too many	3.3
	I do not care	43.6
How Stereotypical Representations of Lesbians on TV n=307	Extremely	2.1
	Somewhat	16.7
	Neutral	15.0
	Can't Tell/Don't Know	26.0
	Not	13.4
Support lesbian intimacy on TV n=307	Always	4.1
	Often	11.7
	Sometimes	14.8
	Rarely	4.8
	Never	4.5
	I do not care	33.4
ATTITUDE		
Reserve Marriage for Heterosexuals n=305	Agree	16.7
	Disagree	56.1
Support lesbian intimacy in Reality n=307	Be more public	2.1
	As public as want	32.0
	Not so public; I fear for safety	1.0
	Not so public; feel all affection	20.5
	Not so public; makes me uncomfortable	3.6
	I do not care	14.1

Total number of survey respondents = 419.

Univariate Analyses: Descriptive Statistics: Identifying Characteristics

TABLE 2a: Independent Variables
Same-Sex Attractions (SSA), Gender, and Contact/Proximity to LGBQ People

		Valid % of Total
EXPERIENCED SAME-SEX ATTRACTION (SSA)		
n=304	Yes	25.7
	No	73.0
CONTACT/PROXIMITY TO LGBQ PEOPLE		
Family Members	Yes	5.6
n=305	No	94.4
Friends Before or During High School	Yes	55.9
n=303	No	43.8
Friends now in College	Yes	73.4
n=302	No	26.0
GENDER		
n=392	Woman	68.3
	Man	25.3

Total number of survey respondents = 419.

TABLE 2b: Independent Variable
Religious Identification and Socio-Economic Status (SES)

RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION		**Valid % TOTAL**
Religiosity	Not Religious at all	29.9
n=394	I am a Little Religious	33.0
	I am Religious	25.4
	I am very Religious	11.7
Frequency of Religious Practice	Never	21.6
n=394	1-2x/yr	39.6
	1-2x/mo	18.5
	At least 1-2x/wk	20.3
SES		
Parental Annual Income	<$15-20,000	3.3
n=397	$20-50,000	13.6
	$50-100,000	27.0
	$100-500,000	42.6
	$500-1,000,000	10.1
	>$1,000,000	3.5
Parent A Education	None	1.2
n=391	High School	10.3
	College/University	24.3
	Graduate	36.0
	Professional	21.5
Parent B Education	None	1.9
n=375	High School	10.5
	College/University	36.8
	Graduate	26.7
	Professional	12.2

Total number of survey respondents = 419.

Bivariate Analyses: Crosstabulations[29]

TABLE 3a: Same-Sex Attraction (SSA) / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians

SAME-SEX ATTRACTION (SSA)				
		Valid % Yes n=78	**Valid % No** n=222	**Valid % TOTAL**
Reserve Marriage for Heterosexuals** (.013)	Agree Disagree	12 89	27 73	23 77
Support lesbian intimacy in Reality* (.077)	Be more public As public as want Not so public; I fear for safety Not so public; feel all affection Not so public; makes uncomf. I do not care	4 60 1 23 3 9	3 38 2 29 6 23	3 44 1 28 5 19
Frequency of lesbian TV representations** (.000)	Just the right # Not enough Too many I do not care	1 73 1 24	10 37 4 50	7 46 3 43
How Stereotypical Representations of Lesbians on TV (.169)	Extremely Somewhat Neutral Can't Tell Not I do not know	5 32 15 22 23 3	2 20 23 35 17 4	3 23 20 32 18 4
Support lesbian intimacy on TV** (.003)	Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never I do not care	10 30 22 5 5 28	4 11 20 7 7 51	6 16 20 7 6 45

* All p-values between .05 and .1, marginally significant.
** All p-values less than or equal to .05, statistically significant.
Total number of survey respondents = 419.

[29] Percentages are rounded by the tenth decimal place.

TABLE 3b: LGBQ-Identified Family and Friends / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians

		Family			HS			College		
		Valid % Yes n=17	**Valid % No** n=288	**Valid % TOTAL**	**Valid % Yes** n=170	**Valid % No** n=100	**Valid % TOTAL**	**Valid % Yes** n=223	**Valid % No** n=79	**Valid % TOTAL**
Reserve Marriage for Heterosexuals (Fam* .072 HS* .094 C** .000)	Agree	18	23	23	20	26	23	18	35	23
	Disagree	82	77	77	80	74	77	83	65	77
Support lesbian intimacy in Reality (Fam** .012 HS** .000 C** .000)	Be more public	0	2	2	3	3	3	4	1	3
	As public as want	77	30	32	48	40	44	49	32	44
	Not so public; I fear for safety	0	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	1
	Not so public; feel all affection	12	21	21	27	29	28	26	33	28
	Not so public; makes uncomf.	6	4	4	2	8	5	2	11	5
	I do not care	6	14	14	20	18	19	19	20	19
Frequency of lesbian TV representations (Fam**.025 HS** .000 C** .000)	I do not care	24	32	32	38	51	43	40	53	43
	Just right #	18	5	6	7	9	8	5	14	8
	Not enough	53	33	33	55	35	46	54	24	46
	Too many	6	2	2	1	5	3	1	9	3
How Stereotypical Representations of Lesbians on TV (Fam .188 HS** .000 C** .000)	Extremely	0	2	2	2	3	2	3	1	2
	Somewhat	29	16	17	22	24	23	23	23	17
	Neutral	29	14	15	22	18	15	19	23	15
	Can't Tell	24	23	23	31	34	23	32	33	23
	I do not know	6	3	3	2	5	3	4	3	3
	Not	12	13	13	21	16	13	18	18	13
Support lesbian intimacy on TV (Fam** .044 HS** .041 C** .000)	Always	0	4	4	7	4	6	7	1	4
	Often	35	11	12	16	16	16	18	10	12
	Sometimes	12	15	15	21	20	20	22	15	15
	Rarely	6	5	5	6	8	7	5	13	5
	Never	6	5	5	4	8	6	4	11	5
	I do not care	41	33	33	47	44	45	44	49	33

* All p-values between .05 and .1, marginally significant.

** All p-values less than or equal to .05, statistically significant.

Total number of survey respondents = 419.

TABLE 4: Gender / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians

GENDER				
		Valid % Women n=224	**Valid % Men** n=80	**Valid % TOTAL**
Reserve Marriage for Heterosexuals** (.025)	Agree Disagree	19 80	34 66	23 77
Support lesbian intimacy in Reality* (.000)	Be more public As public as want Not so public; I fear for safety Not so public; feel all affection Not so public; makes uncomf. I do not care	2 35 1 26 4 12	4 31 1 12 5 23	2 32 1 21 4 14
Frequency of lesbian TV representations** (.000)	Just the right # Not enough Too many I do not care	7 50 3 40	9 33 5 54	8 46 3 44
How Stereotypical Representations of Lesbians on TV** (.000)	Extremely Somewhat Neutral Can't Tell Not I do not know	2 19 15 25 14 3	2 15 18 25 14 2	2 17 15 23 13 3
Support lesbian intimacy on TV** (.002)	Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never I do not care	4 12 15 5 3 30	3 14 15 6 11 51	6 16 20 7 6 46

* All p-values between .05 and .1, marginally significant.
** All p-values less than or equal to .05, statistically significant.
Total number of survey respondents = 419.

TABLE 5: Religiosity / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians

RELIGIOSITY						
		Valid % Not Religious n=92	**Valid % A Little Religious** n=104	**Valid % I am Religious** n=72	**Valid % Very Religious** n=37	**Valid % Total**
Reserve Marriage for Heterosexuals** (.000)	Agree	5	8	26	61	18
	Disagree	73	72	46	20	60
Support lesbian intimacy in Reality** (.006)	Be more public	2	2	4	0	2
	As public as want	42	39	25	20	34
	Not so public; I fear for safety	1	2	0	2	1
	Not so public; feel all affection	19	20	25	28	22
	Not so public; makes uncomf.	2	2	4	15	4
	I do not care	14	15	14	17	15
Frequency of lesbian TV representations** (.000)	I do not care	34	29	32	52	34
	Just the right #	3	9	7	4	6
	Not enough	42	42	29	13	36
	Too many	0	0	4	13	3
How Stereotypical Representations of Lesbians on TV* (.071)	Extremely	3	2	3	2	2
	Somewhat	23	24	12	8	18
	Neutral	18	15	17	13	16
	Can't Tell	23	19	26	46	25
	I do not know	1	3	4	4	3
	Not	15	19	10	9	14
Support lesbian intimacy on TV** (.000)	Always	4	6	4	0	4
	Often	14	21	5	0	12
	Sometimes	14	20	13	13	16
	Rarely	3	2	8	11	5
	Never	3	1	6	20	5
	I do not care	40	30	36	39	36

* All p-values between .05 and .1, marginally significant.

** All p-values less than or equal to .05, statistically significant.

Total number of survey respondents = 419.

TABLE 6: Religious Practice /
Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians

RELIGIOUS PRACTICE						
		Valid % Never n=68	**Valid % 1-2x/Yr.** n=122	**Valid % 1-2x/Mo.** n=56	**Valid % 1-2x/Wk.+** n=59	**Valid % Total**
Reserve Marriage for Heteros.** (.000)	Agree	6	7	23	46	18
	Disagree	74	71	53	28	60
Support lesbian intimacy in Reality** (.014)	Be more public	0	3	6	1	2
	As public as want	40	42	27	18	34
	Not so public; I fear for safety	1	1	1	1	1
	Not so public; feel all affection	22	21	19	26	22
	Not so public; makes uncomf.	1	2	4	10	4
	I do not care	15	11	19	19	15
Frequency of lesbian TV representations** (.000)	I do not care	40	28	30	44	34
	Just the right #	2	6	11	5	6
	Not enough	38	45	33	18	36
	Too many	0	1	3	9	3
How Stereotypical Representations of Lesbians on TV** (.033)	Extremely	4	1	6	1	2
	Somewhat	15	24	14	11	18
	Neutral	20	15	18	13	16
	Can't Tell	20	20	25	40	25
	I do not know	2	3	4	3	3
	Not	19	17	11	8	14
Support lesbian intimacy on TV** (.000)	Always	4	5	6	3	4
	Often	12	22	6	0	12
	Sometimes	19	15	16	14	16
	Rarely	2	4	7	9	5
	Never	2	3	4	13	5
	I do not care	41	30	38	38	36

* All p-values between .05 and .1, marginally significant.
** All p-values less than or equal to .05, statistically significant.
Total number of survey respondents = 419.

TABLE 7a: Socio-Economic Status (SES) /
Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians

SES (Parental Education) **Key: No - No Degree**
HS - High School Diploma
C - College/University Degree
Grad - Graduate Degree (M.A., M.S., Ph.D., etc.)
Pro - Professional Degree (M.D., J.D., etc.)

		Parent A					
		Valid % No n=3	**Valid % HS** n=28	**Valid % C** n=83	**Valid % Grad** n=120	**Valid % Pro** n=66	**Valid % Total**
Reserve Marriage for Heteros.** (.000)	Agree	20	14	25	16	14	17
	Disagree	40	51	57	65	59	56
Support lesbian intimacy in Reality** (.000)	Be more public	0	2.3	3.9	0 .7	3.3	2
	As public as want	40	27.9	34.3	35.8	34.4	32.0
	Not so public; I fear for safety	0	0	1	1.3	0	1
	Not so public; feel all affection	0	18.6	20.6	25.8	18.9	20.5
	Not so public; makes uncomf.	20	7.0	3.9	2.6	3.3	3.6
	I do not care	0	11.6	18.6	13.2	13.3	14.1
Frequency of lesbian representations on TV** (.000)	I do not care	0	33	37	31	34	32
	Just the right #	0	0	9	6	6	6
	Not enough	40	30	34	40	32	33
	Too many	20	5	2	3	1	2
How Stereotypical Representations of Lesbians on TV** (.000)	Extremely	20	5	1	2	1	2
	Somewhat	0	12	14	23	19	17
	Neutral	0	16	22	11	18	15
	Can't Tell	0	23	26	27	21	23
	I do not know	20	0	1	3	4	3
	Not	0	12	20	14	10	13
Support lesbian intimacy on TV** (.000)	Always	20	0	8.3	2.5	9	5.5
	Often	0	11.6	16.6	16.7	15.2	16
	Sometimes	0	11.6	16.6	26.7	15.2	20.2
	Rarely	20	4.7	7	4.2	7.6	6.5
	Never	20	2.3	8.3	7.5	1.5	6.2
	I do not care	0	37.2	42.8	42.5	51.2	45.6

* All p-values between .05 and .1, marginally significant.
** All p-values less than or equal to .05, statistically significant.
Total number of survey respondents = 419.

TABLE 7b: Socio-Economic Status (SES) /
Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians

SES (Parental Education) **Key: No - No Degree**
HS - High School Diploma
C - College/University Degree
Grad - Graduate Degree (M.A., M.S., Ph.D., etc.)
Pro - Professional Degree (M.D., J.D., etc.)

		Parent B					
		Valid % of Total No	**Valid % HS**	**Valid % C**	**Valid % Grad**	**Valid % Pro**	**Valid % Total**
Reserve Marriage for Heterosexuals** (.000)	Agree	25	21	20	17	4	17
	Disagree	50	60	59	62	69	56
Support lesbian intimacy in Reality** (.000)	Be more public	0	2.3	1.9	1.8	5.9	2
	As public as want	37.5	34.1	34.4	31.2	39.2	32
	Not so public; I fear for safety	0	0	1.3	0	2	1
	Not so public; feel all affection	0	18.2	22.7	27.7	11.8	20.5
	Not so public; makes uncomf.	12.5	2.3	4.5	3.6	3.9	4.6
	I do not care	25	22.7	14.3	14.3	9.8	14.1
Frequency of lesbian TV representations** (.000)	I do not care	25	39	37	34	22	32
	Just the right #	0	2	7	5	12	6
	Not enough	38	34	34	35	39	33
	Too many	13	5	1	5	0	2
How Stereotypical Representations of Lesbians on TV** (.000)	Extremely	13	0	3	2	2	2
	Somewhat	0	21	18	19	20	17
	Neutral	13	16	15	14	22	15
	Can't Tell	25	27	27	25	14	23
	I do not know	13	2	3	4	2	3
	Not	13	14	14	15	14	13
Support lesbian intimacy on TV** (.000)	Always	12.5	0	5.8	2.7	7.8	4.1
	Often	0	15.9	13	11.6	13.7	11.7
	Sometimes	12.5	2.3	14.9	17.9	17.6	14.8
	Rarely	12.5	4.5	6.5	2.7	5.9	4.8
	Never	12.5	4.5	3.9	8	2	4.5
	I do not care	25	52.3	35.1	35.7	25.5	33.4

* All p-values between .05 and .1, marginally significant.
** All p-values less than or equal to .05, statistically significant.
Total number of survey respondents = 419.

TABLE 8: Socio-Economic Status / Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Lesbians

SES (Parental Household Annual Income) Key: t – Thousand
m – Million

		INCOME						
		Valid % <15t-20t	**Valid % 20t-50t**	**Valid % 50t-100t**	**Valid % 100t-500t**	**Valid % 500t-1m**	**Valid % >1m**	**Valid % Total**
Reserve Marriage for Heterosexuals** (.005)	Agree	38.5	20.4	24.3	11.8	12.5	21.4	17.6
	Disagree	30.8	55.6	56.1	65.7	67.5	21.4	59.2
Support lesbian intimacy in Reality** (.000)	Be more public	0	3.7	.9	1.8	5.0	7.1	2.3
	As public as want	23.1	40.7	31.9	34.9	35.0	14.3	33.8
	Not so public; I fear for safety	0	0	2.8	.6	0	0	1.0
	Not so public; feel all affection	15.4	18.5	28.0	20.7	20.0	7.1	21.7
	Not so public; makes uncomfortable	7.7	3.7	3.7	3.6	5.0	0	3.8
	I do not care	23.1	11.1	14.0	26.0	15.0	14.3	14.9
Frequency of lesbian TV representations** (.000)	I do not care	38.5	27.8	40.2	33.7	32.5	7.1	33.8
	Just the right #	0	3.7	5.6	5.9	10.0	7.1	5.8
	Not enough	23.1	42.6	30.8	36.7	37.5	28.6	35.3
	Too many	7.7	3.7	4.7	1.2	0	0	2.5
How Stereotypical Representations of Lesbians on TV (.116)	Extremely	15.4	1.9	.9	1.2	5.0	7.1	2.3
	Somewhat	7.7	14.8	18.7	20.1	17.5	0	17.6
	Neutral	7.7	16.7	15.0	16.6	17.5	14.3	15.9
	Can't Tell	30.8	25.9	32.7	21.3	20.0	7.1	24.7
	I do not know	0	5.6	.9	3.0	2.5	7.1	2.8
	Not	7.7	13.0	13.1	15.4	17.5	7.1	14.1
Support lesbian intimacy on TV** (.000)	Always	0	5.6	3.7	3.0	10.0	7.1	4.3
	Often	7.7	14.8	9.3	13.0	17.5	7.1	12.3
	Sometimes	7.7	13.0	18.7	14.8	17.5	14.3	15.6
	Rarely	15.4	3.7	6.5	4.7	0	7.1	5.0
	Never	7.7	7.4	5.6	4.7	0	0	4.8
	I do not care	30.8	3.3	37.4	37.3	35.0	7.1	35.3

* All p-values between .05 and .1, marginally significant.
** All p-values less than or equal to .05, statistically significant.
Total number of survey respondents = 419.

II. ANCILLARY ANALYSES

Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies

TABLE 9a: Social Location Frequencies

		Valid % of Total
SOCIAL LOCATION	**Response**	
Age n=404	18 19 20 21 22 >22	17.2 15.0 22.0 27.0 14.1 1.2
Academic Year n=402	First Second Third Fourth > Fourth	20.8 16.9 21.2 35.1 1.9
Childhood Religion n=394	Other Christian Protestant Jewish Catholic None at all Hindu Muslim Buddhist	23.2 22.2 14.6 14.1 9.3 3.8 2.1 1.9
Current Religion n=394	Other Christian None at all Protestant Jewish Catholic Hindu Muslim Buddhist	24.6 22.0 11.9 13.8 9.1 3.1 2.1 1.4
Race n=393	Caucasian/White Asian African American/Black Latino/Latina	64.1 15.3 11.2 2.5
Frequency of TV-Watching n=342	<1hr/week 1-3hrs/week 3-6hrsweek 6-10hrs/week >10hrs/week	14.9 36.5 23.4 14.9 10.2
Sexual Orientation n=303	Heterosexual/Straight Homosexual/LGBQ	62.1 10.3
Experience being in a Same-Sex Relationship n=304	Yes No	9.9 90.1
Same-Sex Attraction n=304	Yes No	25.7 73.0

Total respondents = 419.

TABLE 9b: Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Gay Men in Reality and on TV

		Valid % of Total
	Response	
Support Gay Men's intimacy in Reality n=342	Be more public As public as want Not so public; I fear for safety Not so public; feel all affection Not so public; makes me uncomfortable I do not care	1.4 33.9 1 25.1 3.6 16.5
Frequency of Gay Men TV representations n=342	I do not care Just the right # Not enough Too many	41.3 6.4 30.1 3.8
How Stereotypical Representations of Gay Men on TV n=342	Extremely Somewhat Neutral Can't Tell I do not know Not	18.9 36.8 9.3 8.8 1.9 6.0
Support gay men intimacy on TV n=342	Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never I do not care	4.5 11.2 18.9 8.4 5.0 33.7

TABLE 9c: Views, Attitudes, and Interpretations of Increased Lesbian and Gay Visibility in the Past 10 Years

		Valid % of Total
	Response	
Increased lesbian visibility on TV and in reality n=308	Good so visible; should be even more visible Good so visible; public needs even stereotypical images Good so visible; wish images were less stereotypical Bad so visible; too stereotypical Be less visible; makes people uncomfortable I do not care	23.4 5.7 20.3 1.4 2.4 20
Increased gay man visibility on TV and in reality n=343	Good so visible; should be even more visible Good so visible; public needs even stereotypical images Good so visible; wish images were less stereotypical Bad so visible; too stereotypical Be less visible; makes people uncomfortable I do not care	12.6 7.6 38.4 3.6 2.1 17.2
Civil Unions with Same Rights n=305	Support Not Support	67.1 5.7
Civil Unions with Limited Rights n=305	Support Not Support	23.2 49.6
Political Affiliation n=298	Democrat Republican Independent/Other	52.7 7.4 21.7

III. SYSTEM MISSING

TABLE 10: Missing Values Table

Question	System Missing
LGBQ-Identified College Friends	117
LGBQ-Identified Pre/During HS Friends	116
Sexual Orientation	116
Same-Sex Attraction (SSA)	115
Experience being in a Same-Sex Relationship	115
Same-Sex Attraction	115
LGBQ-Identified Family Members	114
Reserve Marriage for Heterosexuals	114
Frequency of Lesbian TV Representation	112
How Stereotypical are Representations of Lesbians on TV	112
Support Lesbian Intimacy on TV	112
Support Lesbian Intimacy in Reality	112
Frequency of TV Watching	77
Parent B Education Level	44
Gender	27
Race	26
Religiosity	25
Frequency of Religious Practice	25
Childhood Religion	25
Current Religion	25
Parental Household Annual Income	22
Parent A Education Level	21
Academic Year	17
Age	15

Total respondents = 419.

APPENDIX A: CITI Certification and IRB Approval

CITI Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Basic/Refresher Course Human Subjects Protection Curriculum Completion Report
Printed on Friday, October 10, 2008

Learner: Zoe Fine (username: zfine)
Institution: Emory University
Contact Information Atlanta, GA 30322 USA
Department: Saint Andrew's School
Phone: 5617032107
Email: zfine@learnlink.emory.edu

Group 2. Social/Behavioral Focus: This course is suitable for Investigators and staff conducting SOCIAL / HUMANISTIC / BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH with human subjects. Social/Humanist/Behavioral research includes observational and survey research, population and/or epidemiological studies.

Stage 1. Basic Course Passed on 06/18/08 (Ref # 1845567)

Required Modules	Date Completed	Score
Introduction	06/02/08	no quiz
History and Ethical Principles - SBR	06/18/08	5/5 (100%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBR	06/18/08	5/5 (100%)
The Regulations and The Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	06/18/08	6/6 (100%)
Assessing Risk in Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	06/18/08	5/5 (100%)
Informed Consent - SBR	06/18/08	5/5 (100%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBR	06/18/08	3/3 (100%)
Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects	06/18/08	2/2 (100%)
Emory University	06/18/08	no quiz

For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI participating institution. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI course site is unethical, and may be considered scientific misconduct by your institution.

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.
Professor, University of Miami
Director Office of Research Education
CITI Course Coordinator

IRB: Notification of Exempt Determination

FROM: Carol Corkran, MPH
Senior Research Protocol Analyst

TO: Regina Werum, PhD
Principal Investigator

CC: Fine Zoe Emory College

DATE: November 5, 2008

RE: **Notification of Exempt Determination**
IRB00013946
College Student Attitudes and TV Representations

Thank you for submitting an application in eIRB. We reviewed the application and determined on **11/05/2008** that it meets the criteria for exemption under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and thus is exempt from further IRB review.

This determination is good indefinitely unless something changes substantively in the project that affects our analysis. The PI is responsible for contacting the IRB for clarification about any substantive changes in the project. Therefore, please do notify us if you plan to:

• Add a cohort of children to a survey or interview project, or to a study involving the observation of public behavior in which the investigators are participating.
• Change the study design so that the project no longer meets the exempt categories (e.g., adding a medical intervention or accessing identifiable and potentially damaging data)
• Make any other kind of change that does not appear in the list below.

Please do not notify us of the following kinds of changes:

• Change in personnel, except for the PI
• Change in location
• Change in number of subjects to be enrolled or age range for adults
• Changes in wording or formatting of data collection instruments that have no substantive impact on the study design

For more information about the exemption categories, please see our Policies & Procedures at www.irb.emory.edu. In future correspondence about this study, please refer to the IRB file number, the name of the Principal Investigator, and the study title. Thank you.
Sincerely,
Carol Corkran, MPH
Senior Research Protocol Analyst
This letter has been digitally signed

Emory University
1599 Clifton Road, 5th Floor - Atlanta, Georgia 30322
Tel: 404.712.0720 - Fax: 404.727.1358 - Email: irb@emory.edu - Web: http://www.irb.emory.edu/

APPENDIX B: Recruitment Email

Hello,

I am writing my senior honors thesis this year and I would really love your help. I am interested in what kinds of television shows people watch and what they think about them.

You will find a link at the bottom of this email that will direct you to my online survey. To be eligible for this study, you must be at least 18 years of age and an Emory College student (not attending the Rollins School of Public Health, the Goizueta Business School, the School of Nursing, etc.). This study is not for students who are pregnant.

There are no foreseeable risks in completing this survey. One benefit in completing this survey is allowing you the opportunity to share how you feel about the television shows that you watch. All of your responses will be confidential and it is your choice to participate in this study. You can change your mind and stop at any time with no penalty.

This survey should take **10-15 minutes to complete** on the Survey Monkey website. There are no follow-up surveys or meetings. If you agree to these terms and would like to participate in my study, please click on the link below.

Study Title: College Student Attitudes and TV Representations
Student Researcher: Zoe D. Fine
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Regina Werum
Research Facility: Department of Sociology, Emory University
1555 Dickey Dr. Atlanta, GA 30322
Phone: 404-727-7510

If you have any questions or comments or would like further information, please contact my advisor or me.

Dr. Regina Werum
Email: rwerum@emory.edu
Phone: 404-727-7514.

Zoe D. Fine
Email: zfine@learnlink.emory.edu
Phone: 561-703-2107.

Thank you so much for your help!

~Zoe Fine

APPENDIX C: Survey

After checking the informed consent box at the end of the third page, you will begin the survey.

Informed Consent
Title: Attitudes of College Students and TV Representations
Principal Investigator: Dr. Regina Werum
Co-Investigator: Zoe D. Fine

Introduction and Purpose: I invite you to take part in a research study. The purpose of the study is to investigate how your background and TV-watching habits shape your attitudes about TV shows.

Procedures: You have already received an email asking for your participation in this study. When you clicked on the link in the email, this informed consent document came up. You are currently on a website called Survey Monkey. If you agree to participate, please answer all of the survey questions to the best of your ability. Click the appropriate boxes or type your answers in the text boxes provided. Feel free to skip questions or stop at any time if you choose to discontinue your participation. The survey will take 10-15 minutes to complete, depending on how long it takes you to answer each question.

The survey includes questions about who you are, including your family background and structure, your attitudes and opinions, and your TV-watching habits. I will electronically collect, code, and analyze your survey responses, all of which are confidential and anonymous. I will see if people's backgrounds systematically shape their attitudes about TV shows. I am not collecting any information that could identify you as subjects in the study, and you should not enter your name or other identifiers anywhere in the survey.

After checking the informed consent box below, you will begin the survey. Please follow the directions for each question of the online survey and answer appropriately.

Risks, Discomforts, and Inconveniences: There is no physical risk and low emotional risk in participating in this study. There is low risk of breach of confidentiality. There is no financial risk since you will not have to pay to participate. The online survey method minimizes the inconvenience of using paper copies of the survey. This method minimizes your potential discomfort related to answering questions in person. The online survey also enables you to anonymously type out your longer responses.

Benefits: I did not design this study to benefit you directly, but benefits may derive from becoming more aware of how you watch television and analyze portrayals of groups of people. This study may benefit society by bringing to light possible connections between people's views and backgrounds and their interpretations of how TV portrays certain groups. The results may lead to a greater societal awareness of how particular groups interpret the media's representations of certain populations. If you are interested in learning more about such representations and how people interpret them, there is a lot of information available at the library, on the Internet, or in academic course curricula.

Confidentiality: I will protect the confidentiality and anonymity of your responses by keeping all data in a secured file on my personal computer. I will never know your name or email address throughout the entire research process. I will keep all data password-protected on my personal computer and on a secured server. The only individuals with access to it will be Dr. Regina Werum, Dr. Irene Browne, and the IRB (Institutional Review Board).

Compensation/Costs or Money Matters: You will not receive any compensation for participating in this study.

Contact Persons: For problems, questions, complaints or concerns about the study please email the Co-Investigator, Zoe D. Fine, at zfine@learnlink.emory.edu and phone (561) 703-2107, or the PI,
Dr. Regina Werum, at rwerum@emory.edu and phone (404) 727-7514.

For problems, questions, complaints, or concerns about your rights as research participants please email The Emory IRB at irb@emory.edu or call toll-free 1-877-503-9797 or (404) 712-0720. You may write to The Emory IRB office at 1599 Clifton Road, Atlanta GA 30322.

It Is Your Choice: You are free to choose whether you want to take part in this study or not. You can change your mind and stop at any time without penalty. This decision will not adversely affect your relationship with the researchers or Emory. It will not affect any benefits you may receive outside of the research. It is your choice to participate or not participate. You may withdraw from the study at any time after beginning the survey. Your participation or non-participation will in no way impact your class standing, course grades, or graduation status.

Withdrawal: The lead researcher, my thesis advisor, may withdraw you from the study if she decides that your participation is not in your best interest.

1. If you are willing to participate in this research study, please click the button below. You do not give up any rights by agreeing to these terms. You may keep a copy for your records. Do you understand the terms of the study described above?
Yes, I understand the terms and I agree to participate in this study.

1. How old are you? 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, >22

2. In what academic year are you? 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, >5th

3. How many sisters do you have? 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, >4

4. How many brothers do you have? 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, >4

5. How many adults raised you? 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, >4

6. Are your parents legally married? Yes, No

7. What country were you born in?

8. Where did you spend most of your childhood? (State/Region/Province, Country)

9. If you remember what the zip code was where you lived, please type it below.

10. If you have lived anywhere OTHER THAN your childhood town or city for more than 5 years (including your current living situation), where did (or do) you live?
(State/Region/Province, Country)

11. If you remember the zip code of where you lived (or currently live), please type it below.

1. Do you currently work more than 10 hours per week? Yes, No
(This does NOT include work-study.)

2. What is the highest educational degree attained by the adults who raised you?
Adult A:
High school diploma University/College
Professional (for example, M.D., J.D.) Graduate (for example, M.A., M.S., Ph.D.)
No Degree I don't know I choose to not respond

3. What is the highest educational degree attained by the adults who raised you?
Adult B: (If applicable)
High school diploma University/College
Professional (for example, M.D., J.D.) Graduate (for example, M.A., M.S., Ph.D.)
No Degree I don't know I choose to not respond

4. What is the highest educational degree attained by the adults who raised you?
Adult C: (If applicable)
High school diploma University/College
Professional (for example, M.D., J.D.) Graduate (for example, M.A., M.S., Ph.D.)
No Degree I don't know I choose to not respond

5. What is the highest educational degree attained by the adults who raised you?
Adult D: (If applicable)
High school diploma University/College
Professional (for example, M.D., J.D.) Graduate (for example, M.A., M.S., Ph.D.)
No Degree I don't know I choose to not respond

6. What would you estimate to be your parental household's annual income?
<$15-20,000 $20-50,000 $50-100,000 $100-500,000 $500-1,000,000 >$1,000,000

7. Please think of the on or off-campus club or organization in which you spend most of your time participating. Which of the following best describes the main purpose of the club or organization?

Volunteer, Political, Religious, Community Service, Social, Sport/Game, Hobby, Scholastic/Academic, Other, Honors Society

8. Is this club/organization Greek? Yes, No
If Yes, which fraternity or sorority?

1. What do you plan to major in?

2. What do you plan to minor in?
(If you have no minor, type "NO MINOR" in the box provided.)

3. What is the title of the most interesting class you have you have taken at Emory?

1. How religious are you?
1 - I am not religious at all, 2 - I am a little bit religious, 3 - I am religious, 4 - I am very religious

2. How often do you attend religious ceremonies?
1 – Never, 2 - One or two times a year, 3 - One or two times a month, 4 - At least one or two times a week, 5 - At least once a day

3. With what religion were you raised as a child?
Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, I choose to not respond, I don't know, Jewish, Muslim, None at all, Other
What sect or kind?

4. With what religion do you currently identify?
Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, I choose to not respond, I don't know, Jewish, Muslim, None at all, Other
What sect or kind?

5. What is your political affiliation?
Democrat, I choose to not respond, I don't know, Independent, Republican, Other
(Please specify)

6. Have you ever donated money for a political cause or worked on a political campaign?
Yes, No

1. Do you consider yourself biracial or multiracial? Yes, No

2. Please circle the race(s) with which you most identify.
African, African American/Black, Asian, Asian American, Caucasian/White, I choose to not respond, Indian, Latino/Latina, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Other (please specify)

3. What is your gender?

1. How often on average do you watch TV?

2. Please list up to 3 TV shows you've watched in the last year in which at least one MAIN character is a gay man.
(May include reality shows, traditional fictional shows, soap operas, etc.) If you cannot think of any, type "NONE" in the Box.
Show 1. Show 2. Show 3.

3. In general, how positive or negative would you say these portrayals of gay men are?
0 - I can't tell, 1 - Extremely negative, 2 - Somewhat negative, 3 – Neutral, 4 - Somewhat positive, 5 - Extremely positive

4. How stereotypical or not stereotypical would you say these portrayals of gay men are?

0 - I can't tell, 1 - Extremely stereotypical, 2 - Somewhat stereotypical, 3 – Neutral, 4 - Not stereotypical, 5 - I don't know

5. How comfortable or uncomfortable did these portrayals of gay men make you feel?
0 - I can't tell, 1 - Extremely comfortable, 2 - Somewhat comfortable, 3 - They do not affect me either way, 4 - Somewhat uncomfortable, 5 - Extremely uncomfortable

6. Think of the show (you listed earlier in the survey) that you watch most often. Please check the attributes that best fit this gay male character. You must select AT LEAST THREE.
1. self reliant, 2. yielding, 3. helpful, 4. defends own beliefs, 5. cheerful, 6. moody, 7. independent, 8. shy, 9. conscientious, 10. athletic, 11. affectionate, 12. theatrical, 13. assertive, 14. flatterable, 15. happy, 16. strong personality, 17. loyal, 18. unpredictable, 19. forceful, 20. feminine, 21. reliable, 22. analytical, 23. sympathetic, 24. jealous, 25. has leadership abilities,26. sensitive to others' needs,27. truthful,28. willing to take risks, 29. understanding, 30. secretive, 31. makes decisions easily, 32. compassionate, 33. sincere, 34. self sufficient, 35. eager to soothe hurt feelings, 36. conceited, 37. dominant, 38. soft spoken, 39. likeable, 40. masculine, 41. warm, 42. solemn, 43. willing to take a stand, 44. tender, 45. friendly, 46. aggressive, 47. gullible, 48. inefficient, 49. acts like a leader, 50. childlike, 51. adaptable, 52. individualistic, 53. doesn't use harsh language, 54. unsympathetic, 55. competitive, 56. loves children, 57. tactful, 58. ambitious, 59. gentle, 60. conventional

7. How do you feel about the presence of gay men TV characters? There are…
Too many gay men characters on TV, Not enough gay men characters on TV, Just right number of gay men characters on TV, I do not care.

8. How do you feel about public displays of gay male affection on TV? Gay male characters should…
Never show affection on TV, Rarely show affection on TV, Sometimes show affection on TV, Often show affection on TV, Always show affection on TV, I do not care.

9. How do you feel about public displays of gay male affection in reality? Gay men should…
Not be so public with their feelings because it makes me feel uncomfortable.
Not be so public with their feelings because I fear for their safety.
Not be so public with their feelings because I feel that way about all public affection.
Be as public as they want to be with their feelings.
Be more public with their feelings.
I do not care.

10. Gay men are more visible on TV and in reality than they were 10 years ago. How do you feel about this? It is…
Bad that they are so visible. They should become less visible because it makes people uncomfortable.
Bad that they are so visible. What the public sees is usually stereotypical.
Good that they are so visible. The public should see images, even if they are stereotypical.
Good that they are so visible, even though I wish the images were less stereotypical.
Good that they are so visible. They should become even more visible.
I do not care.

1. Please list up to 3 TV shows you've watched in the last year in which at least one MAIN character is a lesbian woman. (May include reality shows, traditional fictional shows, soap operas, etc.) If you cannot think of any, type "NONE" in the Box.
Show 1. Show 2. Show 3.

2. In general, how positive or negative would you say these portrayals of lesbian women are?

0 - I can't tell, 1 - Extremely negative, 2 - Somewhat negative, 3 – Neutral, 4 - Somewhat positive, 5 - Extremely positive

3. How stereotypical or not stereotypical would you say these portrayals of lesbian women are?
0 - I can't tell, 1 - Extremely stereotypical, 2 - Somewhat stereotypical, 3 – Neutral, 4 - Not stereotypical, 5 - I don't know

4. How comfortable or uncomfortable did these portrayals of lesbian women make you feel?
0 - I can't tell, 1 - Extremely uncomfortable, 2 - Somewhat uncomfortable, 3 - They do not affect me either way, 4 - Somewhat comfortable, 5 - Extremely comfortable

5. Think of the show (you listed earlier in the survey) that you watch most often. Please check the attributes that best fit this lesbian female character. You must select AT LEAST THREE.
1. self reliant, 2. yielding, 3. helpful, 4. defends own beliefs, 5. cheerful, 6. moody, 7. independent, 8. shy, 9. conscientious, 10. athletic, 11. affectionate, 12. theatrical, 13. assertive, 14. flatterable, 15. happy, 16. strong personality, 17. loyal, 18. unpredictable, 19. forceful, 20. feminine, 21. reliable, 22. analytical, 23. sympathetic, 24. jealous, 25. has leadership abilities, 26. sensitive to others' needs, 27. truthful, 28. willing to take risks, 29. understanding, 30. secretive, 31. makes decisions easily, 32. compassionate, 33. sincere, 34. self sufficient, 35. eager to soothe hurt feelings, 36. conceited, 37. dominant, 38. soft spoken, 39. likeable, 40. masculine, 41. warm, 42. solemn, 43. willing to take a stand, 44. tender, 45. friendly, 46. aggressive, 47. gullible, 48. inefficient, 49. acts like a leader, 50. childlike, 51. adaptable, 52. individualistic, 53. doesn't use harsh language, 54. unsympathetic, 55. competitive, 56. loves children, 57. tactful, 58. ambitious, 59. gentle, 60. conventional

6. How do you feel about the presence of lesbian women TV characters? There are…
Too many lesbian characters on TV, Not enough lesbian characters on TV., Just the right number of lesbian characters on TV, I do not care.

7. How do you feel about public displays of lesbian women's affection on TV? Lesbian female characters should…
Never show affection on TV, Rarely show affection on TV, Sometimes show affection on TV, Often show affection on TV, Always show affection on TV, I do not care.

8. How do you feel about public displays of lesbian women's affection in reality? Lesbian women should…
Not be so public with their feelings because it makes me feel uncomfortable.
Not be so public with their feelings because I fear for their safety.
Not be so public with their feelings because I feel that way about all public affection.
Be as public as they want to be with their feelings.
Be more public with their feelings.
I do not care.

9. Lesbian women are more visible on TV and in reality than they were 10 years ago. How do you feel about this? It is…
Bad that they are so visible. They should become less visible because it makes people uncomfortable.
Bad that they are so visible. What the public sees is usually stereotypical.
Good that they are so visible. The public should see images, even if they are stereotypical.
Good that they are so visible, even though I wish the images were less stereotypical.
Good that they are so visible. They should become even more visible.
I do not care.

1. Marriage should be reserved for heterosexuals. Yes, No

2. Civil unions with the same rights and obligations as marriage should be available to same-sex couples. Yes, No

3. Civil unions with limited rights and obligations compared to marriage should be available to same-sex couples. Yes, No

Now I would like to ask you a few more questions about your personal background.

1. How many of your brothers identify as gay, bisexual, or queer?
I have no brothers, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, >4

2. How many of your sisters identify as lesbian, bisexual, or queer? If you have none, select 0.
I have no sisters, 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, >4

3. Before or during high school, were you close with people who were gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer?
Yes, No, I choose to not respond.

4. Are you now close with people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer?
Yes, No, I choose to not respond.

5. How many of the adults who raised you identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer?
0, 1, 2, 3, 4, >4

6. Have you ever been physically attracted to someone of the same sex?
Yes, No, I choose to not respond.

7. Have you ever been in a same-sex relationship?
Yes, No, I choose to not respond.

8. How would you describe your sexual orientation?

Thank you so much for helping me with my research. Have a great day!!!