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Film Families: The Portrayal of the Family in Teen Films from 1980 to 2007

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FILM FAMILIES:

THE PORTRAYAL OF THE FAMILY IN TEEN FILMS FROM 1980 TO 2007

by

Caroline Clayton Clark

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

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GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Caroline Clayton Clark

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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Date   Mark Callister, Chair

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Date   Tom Robinson

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Caroline Clayton Clark in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

FILM FAMILIES:

THE PORTRAYAL OF THE FAMILY IN TEEN FILMS FROM 1980 TO 2007

Caroline Clayton Clark

Department of Communications

Master of Arts

American adolescents watch an average of 3.5 hours of television and movies everyday; many attend more than one movie a month. Adolescents as a group watch more movies than any other group of the population, yet little research has been done on what is shown in teen movies. Adolescence is a time when values, beliefs, and opinions are formed and the media has been found to be a place that adolescents find information that can influence the construction of these identities.

While there has been a vast amount of research looking at the family as portrayed on television shows, there has been little research done on film families. More specifically, there has not been an examination of the family as seen in movies targeted towards the teen audience. Through the use of a content analysis, this thesis reviews three decades of families as depicted in teen films, focusing specifically on five areas: family

structure, ethnicity, occupation and children, socio-economic status, and parental depictions.

This thesis includes a sample of the 90 top-grossing teen movies made during the 1980s, 1990s, and the 2000s (2000-2007) and includes a total of 139 different families. Results indicate that the typical family as depicted in a teen movie, is a middle-class, Caucasian, dual or single-parent family with one or two children; dad is a working professional and mom stays at home. The parents are adequate in their parenting skills and are authoritative in their parenting style. The results of this thesis are compared to findings of past studies regarding television families and against U.S. census data. The implications of the results of this thesis are discussed through the lens of cultivation theory.

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Writing a thesis never goes as quickly or smoothly as you plan or hope, especially when you throw away the first attempt and start over. This thesis was no exception. But with the support and patience of many, I was able to finally complete my goal.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND CHARTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Introduction of Current Media Climate

Adolescents watch more movies than any other group of the population (Arnett, 1995; Considine, 1985; Levy, 1991; MPAA, 2007). The cultural environment of adolescents is filled with all types of media- television, music, magazines, films and more. These varying media types combine to form an immense source of socializing agents, or social influencers, in their lives. While the media acts as a socializing agent to people of all ages, it is an especially strong force in the lives of adolescents. Young people are at the stage in life where identities are being formed; values, opinions, and beliefs are being developed to create the defining characteristics of each individual (Arnett, 1995).

The portrayal of the family in the media is one place where adolescents learn about what families look like, how they behave and act towards one another, and the role of each family member. These images can have an impact on an adolescents' own behaviors and values; the "media can provide materials that adolescents use toward the construction of an identity" (Arnett, 1995, pg. 522). Cultivation theorist suggest that repeated exposure to the images seen in the media and specifically on television will create and mold the viewers conception of reality (Gerbner, 1986; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002). In more recent years as television stations have become more proliferate and most homes have DVD players or VCR's, the messages that

are being sent across media types are concentrating, rather than diversifying (Gerbner 1998; Gerbner, et al., 2002). Knowing that adolescents are at a time in their lives when they are forming their own identities and beliefs, it is important to recognize how the family is portrayed to them through the media.

While there has been an extensive amount of research examining family portrayals on television, specifically prime-time television families (Butsch, 1992; Callister, Robinson, & Clark, 2007; Cantor, 1990; Children Now, 2004; Dates & Stroman, 2001; Douglas & Olson, 1995; Greenberg & Collette, 1997; Heintz-Knowles, 2001; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000; Merritt & Stroman, 1993; Moore, 1992; Pohan & Mathison, 2007; Powers, Rothman, & Rothman, 1993; Robinson & Skill, 2001; Skill & Robinson, 1994) there has been little research looking at the family in motion pictures (Considine, 1985; Harwood, 1997; Levy, 1991; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998; Stern, 2005; Tanner, Haddock, & Zimmerman, 2003). Additionally, there have not been any studies identified that have surveyed the film family in movies targeted specifically towards a teenage audience.

Overview of Study

Procedures

Many research studies looking at the family as portrayed on television have used a content analysis to collect information. To find information that is comparable to other studies in the field, this study also utilizes a content analysis approach to achieve the information desired. A content analysis has been defined as, "a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the

purpose of measuring variables" (Kerlinger's, 2000 as citied in Wimmer & Dominik, 2002, pg. 141). In a content analysis, information is collected and analyzed according to a specific set of guidelines and rules. Because the procedures are set, the information will be collected in a relatively uniform manner and allow for fewer coder biases. Once the data is collected, statistical analysis are performed and results can be stated with supporting information. The results provided through a content analysis can be given in numeric measures, often in the terms of numbers and percentages, rather than as opinion or subjective statements (Wimmer & Dominik, 2002).

Significance

This thesis will be an examination of the way families have been portrayed in domestic motion pictures intended for a teenaged audience over the past three decades. Specifically, this study will review the 30 top grossing teen movies across the last three decades and will include a total of 139 families in the sample. This is an important study because, as stated above, there has not been much research on the film family in general and there has not been any research identified regarding the appearance of the family in teen films.

The current study is significant because it provides an extensive amount of information regarding the depiction of the family as seen in teen films, something that no other study has offered at this point. While this is not an effects study, it is important to recognize the images and messages being presented to teenagers while they are watching movies that have been specifically produced for their age demographic. This study also provides a strong starting place for other research to come forth on the subject of the

family in all types of film. A study looking at the family in other types of film would provide information for an interesting comparison of the depiction of the family across the medium. The results of this study could also be used as a data set for a future effects study.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 2 will be a literature review on past research findings about the family as seen on television and in film. Chapter 3 will present cultivation theory as a perspective to exam the results in the discussion section. It will also discuss the amount of time teenagers spend watching movies and possible cultivating effects it may have on them. This chapter will also introduce the hypothesis and research questions that guide this thesis. Chapter 4 will explain the methods used to acquire data for this thesis and give definitions for the different variable identified. Chapter 5 will be a report of the results obtained from the data after statistical analysis was performed. Chapter 6 will discuss the results and implications of the findings and chapter 7 will provide a conclusion, study limitations, and future research ideas.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Family Structure

The media family is one place that adolescents may learn about varying compositions of family structures and values (Levy, 1991). On television and in movies we find two basic family structures portrayed; these include the traditional family and the nontraditional family. The definition of a traditional family structure in this study includes a husband, wife and their children. For purposes of this study, the traditional family may consist of biological, reconstituted, or adoptive parents. The nontraditional family includes many other scenarios; for example a single-mother and her children-single by divorce, death, or never having married. This section will review what past studies have found concerning the structure of the family on television and in the movies over the past several decades.

The Traditional Family

Traditional Families on Television

The traditional or nuclear family, consisting of two parents with dependent children in the home, has always had a presence on television and film. In the 1950s the nuclear family had its greatest showing with approximately 38% of prime-time television families having both parents in the home (Robinson & Skill, 2001; Skill & Robinson, 1994). The presence of the traditional family on prime-time decreased after the 1950s. In

the 1960s 24% of prime-time families were traditional family structures; 25% in the 1970s and 26% in the 1980s. The percentage of traditional families on prime-time television remained consistent into the 1990s where approximately 26% of prime-time television families were represented in traditional family structures (Robinson & Skill, 2001; Skill & Robinson, 1994). These percentages suggest that from the 1960s into the 1990s representations of nuclear families on prime-time television remained fairly consistent.

Comparing these findings to the U.S. census shows that the traditional family has been underrepresented for every decade of television referred to above. However, these findings can only be compared to the census when married couples without children are included with the traditional families who have children; those families discussed previously. Robinson and Skill (2001) found that parents and married couples headed a combined total of 58% of prime-time families in the decade of the 1950s, however, in reality 88% of U.S. families were headed by both parents during this time period. The representation of dual parent homes remained underrepresented by approximately 30 percentage points through the sixties. Throughout the seventies, eighties and into the first half of the nineties, married couples with and without dependent children at home remained underrepresented on prime-time television by roughly 20 percentage points (Robinson & Skill, 2001).

Although no study could be found examining children's programming throughout the decades there is data concerning children's programming during the 2005-2006 season. This study found that 88% of children's programs featured two parent homes,

figures that actually exceeded 2004 census figures by a margin of approximately 16 percentage points (Callister, et al., 2007).

Traditional Families on Film

The trend in motion picture families appears to have followed a similar pattern to prime-time television families. Considine (1985) reviewed the cinema of adolescence from its early years through the early 1980s. Although he never gave an exact percentage, patterns can be seen in the films that he analyzed. He reported that many of the adolescents featured in films made during the 1940s belonged to traditional, two-parent American families. From the information reported, it appears that the majority of the film families in the fifties and sixties were also traditional two-parent families. However, it appears that there were fewer depictions of traditional families in films produced in the late sixties and early seventies.

Harwood (1997) looked exclusively at film families during the 1980s. Again no exact numbers were reported, but from his review, it appears that the many of the families during this decade represented traditional family structures.

Levy (1991) looked at cycles in family films from 1960 to the late 1980s and had similar finding to those of Considine (1985) and Harwood (1997). He also reported a decline in traditional family representations in movies made during the late 1960s into the 1970s. He reported an increase of traditional family depictions in the mid-late 1970s, a brief decline in the early 1980s, and then a return to the nuclear family by the late 1980s.

Tanner et al. (2003) examined 26 of the most popular feature length animated Disney films made between 1937 and 2000. Tanner et al. (2003) reported that only 30.8%

of these films featured traditional families; however, this percentage did not include families with step parents (13%) or adoptive parents (30.4%). Combining these percentages shows that approximately 73% of the films analyzed featured families that included a mother, father, and children.

Powers et al. (1993) did a study of the 146 top grossing films from 1946-1990. Although this study did not limit itself to films that featured families, it provided valuable information regarding family structure in the cinema over an extended period of time. Marital status was reported for the men and it was stated that women in these movies, especially early on, tried to get their husbands to be good fathers, indicating that they did in fact have children. From the years 1946-1955, 41% of characters were married; 1956-1965, 33% were married; 1966-1975, 34% were married and from 1976-1989, 25% of the characters were married. These percentages are well below those reported for prime-time television families; however to compare them is not a fair assessment because this study included all top-grossing films and not just films featuring families. However, when looking just at the general pattern, it can be concurred from Robison and Skill's (2001) study of prime-time families and Power et al. (1993) study of top grossing films that the patterns of representation of parents and married couples seen on prime-time television and top grossing films followed a similar curve.

To summarize the findings of the representations of traditional families on both television and film is difficult. However, given these studies a general conclusion is that portrayals of traditional families in the media have steadily decreased over time. Further, the traditional family structure has been continuously underrepresented on both television and film when compared to U.S. census; the exception to this underrepresentation of

traditional families portrayed in the media is on children's television programming and Disney feature length movies.

The Nontraditional Family

Nontraditional Families on Television

On prime-time television the portrayal of the single-parent has slowly increased. In the 1950s about 14% of prime-time television families were headed by a single-parent (Robinson & Skill, 2001; Skill & Robinson, 1994). Throughout the decades the representation of single-parents has slowly, but steadily, increased. In the 1960s they represented 16% of the teen-parent prime-time population; in the 1970s about 18%; in the 1980s another small increase to approximately 22% (Robinson & Skill, 2001; Skill & Robinson, 1994). The percentage of single-parents seen in the 1990s remained stable at 21% (Robinson & Skill, 2001; Skill & Robinson, 1994).

Moore (1992) found a greater percentage of single-parents in his study of prime-time families from 1947 to 1990. He found that out of 115 prime-time shows featuring families, 29% featured households run by a single-parent. Of those, 17% were headed by single-fathers and 12% were headed by single-mothers. (The higher percentages seen in single-parenthood are likely explained by the differences in sample parameters. While Skill & Robinson (1994) and Robinson & Skill (2001) included all prime-time shows featuring families, Moore (1992) included only programs that were 'successful'- defined as having aired for more than one broadcast season.)

In comparing the representation of single-parents on prime-time television to those of the U.S. census, it can be seen that single-fathers have been overrepresented on

prime-time, while the number of single-mothers has been comparable to real life numbers. The 1960 and 1970 census reported that single-fathers were just 1% of the U.S. population, but were portrayed as the head of household in 17% of prime-time families in the 1950s and 28% in the 1960s. The census reported that single-fathers headed about 2% of U.S. families during the 1970s, 3% in 1990 and 3.5% in 1995. Television had single-fathers heading 18% in the 1970s, 22% in the 1980s, and 23% in the 1990s; numbers which are clearly inconsistent with actual census figures (Robinson & Skill, 2001; Skill & Robinson, 1994).

Single-fathers have been overrepresented by 17 to 28 percentage points on prime-time television. However, the number of single-mothers on prime-time has closely paralleled census data with only a 1 to 6 percentage point difference. The 1960 census data reported that 8% of families were headed by single-mothers, while on television 14% were lead by single-mothers. The 1970 and 1980 census reported 11% and 18% of U.S. families were headed by single-mothers; for the same periods of time, 14% of households were headed by single-mothers on television. The 1990 census reported 22% of U.S. mothers being single in the 1980s and 23% in 1995; single television mothers heading 21% in the 1980s and 18% from 1990-1995 (Robinson & Skill, 2001).

One common denominator among several studies is the main cause of single-parenthood- widowhood. Widowers have generally been overrepresented on prime-time television, although the disparity has decreased considerably. The largest portrayal of prime-time widowers was in seen the 1960s with 84% of single-parents having been widowed, compared to 20% of the U.S. population having been widowed for this time period. This significant overrepresentation continued throughout the 1970s and then

began to decrease in the 1980s and 1990s. However, in the early nineties single-parents that had been widowed still made up 21% of prime-time's single-parents as compared to only 4% of the U.S. population (Robinson & Skill, 2001).

While widowers have been overrepresented on prime-time television the number of divorced parents has generally been underrepresented, especially in the earlier decades studied. Between the years of 1947 and 1995 an average of 4.8% of prime-time parents were single due to divorce (Moore, 1992; Robinson & Skill, 2001; Skill & Robinson, 1994). There were no prime-time representations of divorce or separation in the 1950s or the 1960s; in fact, the first divorced parents did not appear on prime-time until the mid-1970s in the show *One Day at a Time* (Moore, 1992). However, according to census data, between 50% and 60% of single-parents were single due to divorce in the 1950s and 1960s. By the 1970s 68% of parents were single due to divorce, with only 12% of prime-time single-parents having been divorced. The portrayal of divorced single-parents in the 1980s and into the 1990s has more closely paralleled the census, although still being underrepresented. In the eighties and early nineties 40% of prime-time parents were divorced and around 57% of U.S. parents were divorced (Robinson & Skill, 2001).

Another family type that has been examined are contrived families, defined by Moore (1992) as "families brought together through unusual circumstances", (Moore, 1992, p 47). This family structure includes guardians caring for children, either relatives or non-relatives. However, guardianship is not commonly seen on television. In Moore's (1992) study analyzing successful prime-time programs from 1947-1990, only 8% were contrived families. Robinson and Skill (2001) had a similar finding with 8.6% of prime-time families being headed by a guardian rather than a parent. The most common

guardian was a male (4.3%), followed by a female (3.3%) and lastly by a guardian couple (1%). Contrived families were most often seen in the seventies comprising 7.9% of prime-time families and least often seen in the sixties with only 4.1% (Robinson & Skill, 2001; Skill & Robinson, 1994). During the nineties the percentage of contrived families was similar to that of the 1960s with 4.6% (Robinson & Skill, 2001). This type of family structure was not compared to census data.

In children's television programming during the 2005-2006 season there were far fewer single-parents represented than on prime-time television. Callister et al. (2007) found that 12% of the families with dependent children under the age of 18 were headed by single-parents; the majority was single-mothers. Comparing these numbers to the 2004 census shows that children's programming during the 2005-2006 season underrepresented single-parents. Census data for this period indicates that 28% of parents with dependent children under 18 were single (Callister et al., 2007). Callister et al. (2007) had similar findings to those of prime-time television for families headed by a guardian (8.5%).

Nontraditional Families on Film

Information about nontraditional film families is not as readily available as it is for prime-time television; however there is some research about the structure of the film family. In 23 of 26 top grossing Disney feature length films from 1937 to 2000 alternative and nontraditional families were featured (Tanner et al., 2003). Tanner et al. (2003) reported a total of 30.4% of these parents being single, a comparable percentage to Moore's (1992) findings (29%) of prime-time television families for a similar time period

(1947-1990). Tanner et al. (2003) reported that a community as family, such as in *Peter Pan*, *Robin Hood*, and *Tarzan* made up 13% of the alternative family structures.

Considine (1985) reported that most of the films in the 1940s featured traditional families, however even as early as the 1940s a widowed wife was featured in the movie *My Reputation* (1946); he also reported that the fifties film family looked much different than those on television, because there were portrayals of divorce and nontraditional families.

Levy (1991) established several cycles of film families from the 1960s to the late 1980s. He noted that in the late 1960s there was a decline in the traditional "happy" family. Films such as *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1966) and *The Graduate* (1967) both featured married couples, but they were not traditional happy families where cohesion was the norm. The late 1960s and early 1970s brought on films with alternative structures to the nuclear family. *Alice's Restaurant* (1969) and *Easy Rider* (1969) both featured communal families (Levy, 1991). The mid-late 1970s saw a return to the traditional suburban family, but by the late 1970s and into the early 1980s this type of family was in trouble. There was an increase of on screen marital breakups such as in *Kramer Vs. Kramer* (1979) and single-parent families headed by men such as *Hide in Plain Sight* (1979), *Paternity* (1982), and *Tootsie* (1982) (Levy, 1991).

The mid 1980s brought on a new type of film starring teenagers and life as a teenager (i.e. *Sixteen Candles, Footloose, Seventeen, Pretty in Pink, The Breakfast Club)*. Several of these films again featured a single-father, either as a widower or abandoned by his wife as seen in *Pretty in Pink* (1986) (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998). Three of the most popular films of the eighties were the *Indiana Jones* trilogies; like other films of the

1980s the mother is totally absent from the fathers' and sons' lives (Harwood, 1997). As Harwood (1997) states, "The failure of the family to…support itself in nuclear form … is a central theme in the popular eighties films" (Harwood, 1997, pg. 60).

We see a gap in the literature regarding film families for most of the nineties, but there is information about family structures in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Stern (2005) did a study that examined 43 films from 1999-2001 that featured at least one teenager. He determined that of the 43 film sample, almost a tenth (8.95%) lived with only their mother and 7.6% lived with only their father; it was unclear with whom nearly half (48.6%) of the teen characters lived.

Comparing the information on film families to census data proves to be impractical, as there are no percentages reported about film families, only trends reported. However, from what research there is it could be stated that films began portraying nontraditional families at an earlier stage than did television (first divorced prime-time television parents were seen in the 1970s as reported by Moore, 1992; compared to the 1950s for film as reported by Considine, 1985). This tells us that possibly films have more closely represented the U.S. population than television, although it cannot really be determined how closely. Similar to prime-time television, it appears that in films made during the eighties, single-fathers were more often represented than single-mothers and that they were most often single due to either being widowed or abandoned by their wives.

A review of literature reveals that television and film families have not accurately represented the U.S. population over the decades. It has shown that the depiction of the traditional family has slowly decreased over time, that the portrayal of single-parents has

increased, and that there have generally been more single-fathers than single-mothers characterized (Cantor, 1990; Considine, 1985; Harwood, 1997; Levi, 1991; Moore, 1992; Powers et al., 1993; Robinson & Skill, 2001; Skill & Robinson, 1994; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998). These generalities however, do not hold true for children's television programming at least for one season of broadcast, where the traditional family was in the majority (73%) and single-parents were in the minority (10%) (Callister, et al., 2007).

Ethnicity

Reviewing literature regarding the representation of the different ethnicities portrayed on television and on film reveals a couple of things. First, Caucasians have been overrepresented and other racial groups have generally been underrepresented when compared to U.S. census data. Over time however, racial representations have fluctuated, become more diverse and some racial representations have become more in sync with the U.S. population. Also, it appears that as the portrayal of differing ethnicities has increased, so has the diversity of minority character roles.

Racial Representations

Racial Representations on Television

Caucasian characters have dominated prime-time television from the beginning; however as the years have passed, the representation of other races has increased. Moore (1992) did a review of successful prime-time television shows featuring families from 1947-1990 and found that of 115 families, 94% were white and only 6% were black. While there were character portrayals of African Americans in the 1950s, the first

successful black family presentation was not featured until the 1960s on the show *Julia*, which featured a widowed single-mother and her son (Moore, 1992; Robinson & Skill, 2001).

Other studies reviewing television families have also found Caucasians to be in the majority. Overall percentages indicate that from the 1950s into the 1990s around 88% of prime-time families were white. Approximately 9% were African Americans; Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans were featured as less than 1% of the television population (Greenberg & Collette, 1997; Robinson & Skill, 2001; Skill & Robinson, 1994). In fact Greenberg and Collette (1997) reported that only 12 Asian and 13 Hispanic characters were identified as having major roles of 1,757 total characters reviewed from 1966-1992.

Looking at a decade by decade comparison gives a greater understanding of racial representations throughout the years. In the 1950s whites dominated prime-time television at a much grander scale than they did in the nineties. In the 1950s, out of 85 prime-time network family characters, 97% were white and only 2% were Hispanic and 1% were Native Americans. There were no African American or Asian representations in the 1950s (Robinson & Skill, 2001; Skill & Robinson, 1994). The 1960s had the same percentage of white characters as in the 1950s and the only other race represented was African Americans (Robinson & Skill, 2001; Skill & Robinson, 1994). The 1970s saw the largest change in racial composition on prime-time television for Caucasians and African Americans. In the 1970s whites dropped to 84% and blacks jumped to 14%. Hispanics and Asians accounted for only 2% of all the characters and no Native American characters were seen (Robinson & Skill, 2001; Skill & Robinson, 1994). The

1980s saw a slight increase in white characters from the 1970s (87%) and the representation of blacks became less than half of what it had been in the 1970s (6%). Native Americans had a very slight showing with 1% and Hispanics with 2% of the prime-time family population (Robinson & Skill, 2001; Skill & Robinson, 1994). From the years 1990-1995 African Americans composed the same percentage to what they had in the 1970s with 14% of the prime-time family population. Whites continued to dominate with 81% and Asians (1%) barely made a showing at all; Hispanics and Native Americans both had 0% of the population (Robinson & Skill, 2001).

Mastro and Greenberg (2000) analyzed all of the characters from the 1996 fall prime-time programs. They found that of 558 characters, 80% were white and that 16% were African Americans and 13% were Hispanic. Asians only represented 1% of the population and there were no Native American characters.

Heintz-Knowles (2001) did a two-week study of prime-time entertainment programming in March 1998. She found that of 820 adult characters, 77% were Caucasian and 16% were African American; Hispanics made up 3% of the population and Asian's made up only 2%; Native Americans had a very small showing with 0.5%.

A study by Children Now (2004) reported that in the 2003-2004 prime-time season whites characters made up 73% of the total population. African Americans made up 16%, Hispanics 7%, Asians 3%; there were no Native American representation in the sample used.

Combined, these studies reveal a variety of things regarding the number of ethnic portrayals on television. The main point of information is that Caucasians have dominated the airwaves with 73% to 97% of the total prime-time population since the

fifties, but in decreasing numbers over the decades (Children Now, 2004; Greenberg & Collette, 1997; Heintz-Knowles, 2001; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000; Moore, 1992; Robinson & Skill, 2001; Skill & Robinson, 1994). Another finding is that African Americans on prime-time had a dramatic increase in representation in the seventies, and have continued to be portrayed as 14-16% of the prime-time population (with an exception in the eighties when African Americans only represented 6% of the prime-time population) (Children Now, 2004; Greenberg & Collette, 1997; Robinson & Skill, 2001; Skill & Robinson, 1994).

This research has also shown that the percentage of African Americans on prime-time television has begun to closely mirror the U.S. population. Although there were no black characters seen in the sixties on prime-time television, Mastro and Greenberg (2000) reported that in 1971, African Americans made up 6% of prime-time characters and 11% of the U.S. population; by 1993, they were 11% of the prime-time population and 12% of the U.S. population. Thus the percentage of African Americans on prime-time television has moved much closer to being a true representation of the U.S. population (Dates & Stroman, 2001; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000).

However, races other than Caucasians and African Americans have made up only a very minute proportion of the prime-time family. For example, in 2000 Latinos accounted for approximately 12% of the U.S. population, but only about 4% on prime-time television (Children Now, 2004; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000).

Children's programming however differed from prime-time television, Callister et al. (2007) found that in children's programming racial representation for several ethnicities closely paralleled census figures during the 2005-2006 season. Callister et al.

(2007) reported that 75% of characters were white, a near mirror of the 2003 census which reported a 72% white population. African American representations were also very close to census data at 11% compared to 12% U.S. population. Hispanics and Asian Americans were also represented quite accurately. Hispanics made up 9% of fictional characters and 12% of the population. Asian Americans accounted for 4% of the characters portrayed on children's programming for the season reviewed, which was equal to their real-life population at the time (Callister et al., 2007).

Racial Representations on Film

Little research could be found reporting racial representations in motion pictures. Considine (1985) did report that in 1978 a movie titled *Bloodbrother* featured an Italian-American family, which was a break from the traditionally shown white middle-class family. Also, Stern (2005) who reviewed 43 top grossing films from 1999-2001 that featured one or more teens as central to the dialogue did report racial representations. She found that of 146 teen characters 87% were white, 12% were black, 1% was Latino and 1% was Asian. Comparing these figures to the 2003 census data (as reported in Callister et al., 2007) indicates that white characters were slightly overrepresented (87% compared to 72% census data), blacks were represented fairly, Latinos were underrepresented (1% compared to 12% census data) and Asians were closely represented (1% compared to 4% census data).

Minority Roles in the Media

Literature has shown that not only are ethnic minorities generally underrepresented in the media, but that when they are represented they tend to be shown in a less than positive manner. However for some races this trend has recently become less true.

Portrayals of African Americans have made the most significant changes over the years. Poindexter and Stroman (1981, as cited in Dates & Stroman, 2001) reported that Africa Americans were generally depicted in stereotypical roles with negative connotations between 1950 and 1970; also they were generally cast into minor roles with low-status occupations. Later research indicated a change in this trend. Dates (1993, as cited in Dates & Stroman, 2001) found that African Americans were more likely to appear in situation comedies as competent members of the middle-class in two-parent families. Merritt and Stroman (1993) found that African American families were shown consisting of a husband and wife, who treated each other lovingly, equally and also treated their children well. As African Americans have increasingly been seen on television their roles have expanded to include a variety of family roles and structures, income levels, and educational levels. Basically over the years, the portrayal of African Americans on television has become more diverse and more positive (Dates & Stroman, 2001).

While the role of African Americans on television has become more favorable, the same cannot be said for other racial groups. Ethnicities outside of African Americans have had very little representation on prime-time television and those representations have often been unfavorable- being cast as criminals, uneducated and working in low-

status occupations (Children Now, 2004; Dates & Stroman, 2001; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000; Pohan & Mathison, 2007).

Occupation and Children

When reviewing the professions of both working men and working women on television, it becomes evident that professional and high-status careers have dominated (Callister et al., 2007; Children Now, 2004; Greenberg & Collette, 1997; Heintz-Knowles, 2001; Moore, 1992). Studies concerning early fictional character occupations on both television and film focus on the general occupation of women as wives/mothers and men as husband/father/breadwinner and are less specific about specialized occupations. However, research about more recent decades gives much more detail concerning the representation of varying professions (Callister et al., 2007; Children Now, 2004; Greenberg & Collette, 1997; Heintz-Knowles, 2001; Moore, 1992; Powers et al., 1993).

Working Adults and Parents

Televisions' Occupations

Greenberg & Collette's (1997) study of network television characters between 1966 and 1992 found that nearly one-quarter of all those who were shown working were in professional positions. Of characters analyzed, 24% were doctors, lawyers, teachers and accountants; 18% were in politics, sports, or religious professions; 10% were in law enforcement and related occupations; 9% held blue-collar positions and 5% were crafts-

persons. Of the working professionals reported, Greenberg & Collette (1997) found that 27% of all males and 17% of all females were professionals. Additionally they found that women were four times more likely to be homemakers or domestic workers than men during this time period (Greenberg & Collette, 1997). Moore (1992) who analyzed successful family series during a similar period of time (1947-1990), found that only 17% of all females depicted were employed outside of the home. Comparing the working women in all successful network series from Greenberg & Collette's (1997) study against the working women in the successful family series of Moore's (1992) study, it could be deduced that women in family series were less likely than men to work outside the home in any profession between the years 1966 and 1990.

During a two week period of network programming in March 1998, Heintz-Knowles (2001) found that out of 820 full-time, working-adult, characters were most often employed in professional occupations. Twenty-one percent of adult men and women were classified as professionals. Only 1% of males were depicted as nurses compared to 6% of women. Those in protective services and military occupations made up a total of 39% of the sample (males: 24%; females 31%). White collar jobs were fairly evenly split between male and female characters with 21% of men and 27% of women (executive, business owner, clerical, school administrator). Male teachers and child care workers made up 2% of the study and female teachers and child care workers made up 4%. In the service/retail industry men and women were almost equally represented (male: 5%; women: 6%). Two percent of males and no female technical/computer workers were characterized in this sample. Blue-collar workers made up only a small percentage of this sample with 4% of the males and 2% of the females. Other occupations

(writer, journalist, minister, agriculture, performer, and other) also had a showing in this study with 19% of the male sample and 16% of the female sample (Heintz-Knowles, 2001). For this time two-week period during March 1998, it was found that the majority of full-time working adults were employed in professional, protective services, military and white collar occupations (Heintz-Knowles, 2001).

However, Heintz-Knowles's (2001) study of this two-week period of prime-time network programming during March 1998, reported that while 70% of prime-time adults worked full-time, just 57% of TV parents were employed full-time, representing only 12% of the full-time worker sample. Only 1% worked part-time and 31% of the parents' occupations were unidentifiable.

The Fall Colors 2003-04 prime-time report (Children Now, 2004) also found that both male and female workers (both parent and non-parent characters) were frequently shown occupied in high-status positions during the 2003-2004 prime-time television season. The top occupation for both males and females was law enforcement (there was a large number of law enforcement shows during the season studied). Twenty-five percent of male characters and 10% of female characters were in law enforcement occupations. Thirty percent of male characters and 28% of female characters were shown in high-status occupations such as executive, physician, attorney, professional and elected and appointed officials. Only 6% of male characters were shown in service or retail positions and none were shown as homemakers. Eighteen percent of women were shown in service and retail occupations and 5% were depicted as homemakers (Children Now, 2004).

None of these studies have given information in regards to the U.S. census, other than one comparison made by Heintz-Knowles (2001). She reported that while less than

one-third of television mothers were shown working full-time outside the home during her two-week analysis in March 1998, two-thirds of American mothers were employed full-time outside the home (U.S. Department of Labor, 1996, as citied in Heintz-Knowles, 2001). Thus, full-time working mothers were underrepresented during this two-week period of television.

Similar to prime-time programming, Callister et al. (2007) concluded that during the 2005-2006 children's programming season most of the parents whose occupations were identifiable worked in professional occupations. Mothers were almost equally cast as professionals (48%) and stay-at-home moms (47%). The other working mothers were portrayed 9% as managers and 4% as crafts persons. For fathers, 57% were professionals, 17% were managers, 4% were crafts persons, and 8% were stay-at-home dads.

A difference can be seen between the prime-time stay-at-home parents and the children's programming parents during a similar period of time. The Fall Colors Prime-time report (Children Now, 2004) reported that during the 2003-2004 prime-time season 5% of women were stay-at-home mothers as compared to the 27% seen on children's programming during the 2005-2006 season (Callister et al., 2007). There were no portrayals of stay-at-home fathers on prime-time in the 2003-2004 season (Children Now, 2004) compared to 11% seen on children's programming during the 2005-2006 season (Callister et al., 2007). While there is a large discrepancy here, it should be noted that the Fall Colors Prime-time report (Children Now, 2004) included all working adults and not just parents, as did Callister's et al. (2007) study.

Due to the fact that there was no census data reported in all of the studies except Callister et al. (2007) no decade by decade comparisons can be made regarding

professions as seen on television compared to the U.S. population. However, Callister et al. (2007) did compare the 2004 census data to their findings on stay-at-home parents; this in turn can be compared to the findings on stay-at-home parents from the Fall Colors Prime-time report (Children Now, 2007) of the 2003-2004 prime-time season.

In order to compare their findings of stay-at-home parents against the 2004 census data Callister et al. (2007) had to distinguish family portrayals that included a married couple with children (nuclear, extended, and reconstituted) from those of other family structures (i.e. single-parents, guardians, etc). They found that 47% of married mothers and 8% of married fathers were stay-at-home parents on children's programming during the 2005-2006 season. The 2004 U.S. census data reported that of parents who were married with children 24% of the mothers and 0.6% of the fathers were stay-at-home parents (Callister et al., 2007). Thus it can be seen that for this season of children's programming both stay-at-home mothers and fathers were overrepresented.

Comparing these same census figures to the 2003-2004 prime-time season as reported by the Fall Colors Prime-time report (Children Now, 2007) shows that perhaps prime-time television more closely represents the number of stay-at-home fathers, while under representing stay-at-home mothers for this time frame. Stay-at-home fathers made up zero percent of this prime-time population (Children Now, 2007) and 0.6% of the 2004 married men census (as reported in Callister, et al., 2007). Stay-at-home mothers made up only 5% of the prime-time mothers (Children Now, 2007) compared to 24% of the 2004 married women census (as reported in Callister, et al., 2007). It should be noted however that an accurate comparison cannot be made because the Fall Colors Prime-time

report (Children Now, 2007) does not distinguish between parents and non-parent characters.

Films' Occupations

Reviewing occupations as seen on the big screen has proved difficult due to a lack of literature on the subject. One study done by Powers et al. (1993) looked at women's occupations in motion pictures from 1946-1989; men's occupations were not reviewed. For the years between 1946 and 1970 Powers et al. (1993) found that the main difference in occupational type was connected to whether the woman in the movie was or was not married.

Looking at a decade by decade comparison, Powers et al. (1993) shows that the percentage of women working in "traditionally" female occupations (housewives, elementary and secondary school teachers, nurse, secretary, and waitress) and "nontraditionally" female occupations (doctors, lawyers, CEOS, sales managers, military personnel, and other high-paying or otherwise elite jobs) varied depending upon marital status. Between 1946 and 1955, 51% of all major female characters and 40% of the married female characters held traditionally female jobs; an almost equal 49% of all major female characters held nontraditionally female jobs, as compared to only 24% of married women between 1946 and 1955. The percentage of women holding nontraditionally female professions decreased slightly between 1956-1965 to 43% and to only 11% of the married female characters (Powers et al., 1993).

There was an increase of the percentage of women working in nontraditionally female jobs from the mid sixties into the late eighties (1966-1975, 52%; 1976-1989;

72%) while there was a decrease in the percentage of these women that were married who were working in nontraditionally female professions (1966-1975, 10%; 1976-1989; 8%) (Powers et al., 1993).

What this study reveals is that the overall percentage of all major female characters working in nontraditionally female professions in motion pictures between the years of 1946-1989 increased from 49% to 72%. However, the percentage of married women working in these jobs decreased. Within the overall sample of female characters, the percentage of the women that were married and working in nontraditionally female professions decreased from 24% to 8% of the entire nontraditionally female job holders (Powers et al., 1993). However, when looking at just the married women as an exclusive group, the percentage of them working in nontraditionally female occupations actually increased. What this reveals is that the percentage of female characters working in nontraditionally female occupations, as represented in motion pictures between the years 1946 and 1989, increased. But, the percentage of these women that were also married decreased, as they became a smaller portion of the sample (Powers et al., 1993).

There was no census data reported by Powers et al. (1993) to be able to make any evaluations between the representations of occupations seen in motion picture as compared to the U.S. census.

Since the fifties, the majority of televisions' working adults and parents have been portrayed as being employed in professional or high-status occupations (Callister et al., 2007; Children Now, 2004; Greenberg & Collette, 1997; Heintz-Knowles, 2001). Women were more often portrayed as homemakers and domestic workers than men on television (Callister et al., 2007; Children Now, 2004; Greenberg & Collette, 1997; Moore, 1992).

Further, only a small percentage of working adults and parents on prime-time television have been cast in blue-collar occupations (Children Now, 2004; Greenberg & Collette, 1997; Heintz-Knowles, 2001).

Children

Although the number of traditional families in the media has decreased over time, the number of children in media families has slowly increased and the ratio of the gender of the children has fluctuated. In the 1950s the average prime-time television family had 1.8 children; 56% of the children featured were male (Robinson & Skill, 2001; Skill & Robinson, 1994). The 1960s saw a slight increase in the number of children per family to an average of two, with male children still slightly outnumbering the female children at 55%. In the 1970s gender distribution was nearly equal (52% male; 48% female) and families had an average of 2.4 children. During the 1980s gender distribution remained nearly equal; however, the number of children per family decreased slightly to 2.2 (Robinson & Skill, 2001; Skill & Robinson, 1994). During the first 5 years of the 1990s males again slightly outnumbered female children at 56%, and the number of children per family increased slightly to 2.45 children (Robinson & Skill, 2001).

Callister's et al. (2007) study of children's programming in the 2005-2006 season found that all but one of the families reviewed had children. The average number of children was 1.84 (this number excludes one family that had 15 children), 81% of the families had one or more son and 73% had one or more daughters.

Although no decade by decade census data was provided, the 2004 U.S. census (U.S. Census, 2004) reported that the average number of children under 18 per American

family was 1.83. Thus it can be stated that children's television programming for this time period represented the number of children per family accurately at 1.84 (Callister, et al., 2007).

Robinson and Skill (2001) and Skill and Robinson (1994) have concluded that male children have generally slightly outnumbered female children, and the average number of children per family has increased from 1.8 in the 1950s to 2.45 in the early 1990s. No studies could be found discussing average children per family in motion pictures.

Socio-Economic Class

Research indicates that most of the families depicted on television and in the movies have been portrayed as middle-class families, based on the homes they live in, the objects they posses, and the professions that the parents hold (Butsch, 1992; Considine, 1985; Moore, 1992). Generally speaking, there has been a lack of working-class families portrayed on television throughout the decades. Moore's (1992) study of successful prime-time family series from 1947-1990 found that of 115 families only 12% were working-class and a dominating 88% were middle-class or higher. Butsch (1992) had similar findings when analyzing four decades of domestic situation comedies. He reports that 11% of the families were blue-collar or working-class and that 70% were middle-class families, most of which were headed by a professional head of household. There is very little research about the social class of silver screen families, but it appears that much like broadcast, silver screen families have generally been middle-class (Considine, 1985).

Working Class

There has been a general lack of working-class families portrayed on television throughout the decades; however there have been a few peak periods of working-class representations. These include the mid-1950s when television was in its beginning with shows such as *I Remember Mama* and *The Life of Riley*. The early 1970s saw a rise in the working-class family (*All in the Family*, *Good Times*, and *Sanford and Son*) as well as the late 1980s (*Roseanne* and *The Simpson's*) (Butsch, 1992; Moore, 1992).

The only mention of working-class families on film was given by Considine (1985) who stated that, "the 1930s was the last decade of American filmmaking to seriously address itself to working-class existence" (Considine, 1985, pg. 14).

Middle and Upper Class

The socio-economic class that has mainly prevailed on television is the middle-class family. According to Butsch (1992) 70% of the 262 domestic comedies he reviewed between 1946 and 1990 had portrayals of middle-class families; 45% of all of these families had a professional as the head of the household. Further, Butsch (1992) notes that many of these families portrayed the head of the household as a professional in a prestigious and somewhat glamorous position; for example, there were 9 doctors as compared to 1 nurse; 19 lawyers as compared to 2 accountants. Additionally, families that depicted the wife working outside of the home were doing so not out of necessity, but rather as a professional pursuing an interesting and successful career of her own.

Butsch (1992) described quite a few of these middle-class families as closer to upper-class family characterizations. Between 1946 and 1990, 22% of all families had

servants, generally a maid or type of handyman (Butsch, 1992). The television families in the late 1970s and early 1980s depicted many "affluent" middle-class families, perhaps more likely upper-class portrayals, where some families were bordering on being independently wealthy. For example, the families in *Silver Spoons* and *Benson*, which aired in the late 70s early 80s, were rarely shown having any financial difficulties (Moore, 1992).

As for motion pictures, again there is very little research regarding the socio-economic standing of on screen families. However, Considine (1985) does report that middle-class families were prominent in movies in the forties, fifties and sixties.

Television and motion pictures have been dominated by middle-class families. This can be seen by the types of professional careers that head of households hold and also by observing the lifestyle, homes and home furnishings of the families depicted (Butsch, 1992; Considine, 1985; Moore, 1992). None of these studies that discuss socio-economic portrayals of media families included any census data, thus no comparisons to American families can be made.

Parental Depictions

This section reviews what has been found concerning the way fathers and mothers have been portrayed on television and in motion pictures.

Fathers

     Working-Class Television Fathers

Butsch's (1992) study of television families over four decades found that the working-class father has frequently been portrayed as inept, immature, stupid, and lacking in good sense. In the 1950s and 1960s working-class fathers were consistently portrayed as dumb but lovable men; they cared greatly about their families, but were often incompetent and immature. The 1970s working-class fathers still maintained many of these undesirable qualities but became less one dimensional, having to deal with more real life problems like racism and abortion. In the 1980s there again were more variations in themes and characters, but the father was still frequently type-cast as a buffoon; sometimes his children were even shown to be wiser than their father. There were some exceptions in the 1980s however, where fathers and mothers were shown working together as a team such as in the television programs *Family Matters* and *Roseanne*. These two shows portrayed fathers who were more sensible and respected by their children and worked as a team with their wives; however, the wife was still portrayed as the more sensible parent (Butsch, 1992).

Glennon and Butsch (as citied in Cantor 1990) also described the portrayal of working-class fathers in family series from 1946-1978 as bumbling and inept. Cantor (1990) reported that working-class husbands and fathers continued to be portrayed in this vein into the 1990s. He also reports that there were some exceptions to this rule, noting *Roseanne* as an example where the father is portrayed as a competent parent. As Scharrer

(2001) describes it, the lower the social class of the sitcom father, the more foolish he will be portrayed.

Middle-Class Television Fathers

Butsch (1992) classifies the middle-class father as "super-dad". The middle-class father varied greatly from the working-class father; he is intelligent, sensible, and mature and often is seen working through family issues with his wife. The 1950s had many successful middle-class families such as on *Father Knows Best*. This series was a good example of the 1950s "super-dad"; he was self-assured, successful, admired by wife and children, always calm, reasonable and ready with answers; he worked as a team player with his wife to raise their children. The 1960s middle-class father was much like the 1950s portrayals. The 1970s saw some shifts in the "super-dad" and "super-parent" teams, but when limitations were exposed, there were no young children to witness those limitations. The 1980s shifted back to the "super-dad" character, although they did exhibit some flaws, the father still knew best, often giving words of wisdom to encourage their children.

Cantor (1990) also found that middle-class fathers were generally portrayed as successful and able to deal with problems rationally during the 1950s and 1960s. Several of the most popular shows in the 1980s (i.e. *The Cosby Show*, *Family Ties*) continued the wise father tradition from 1950s. Although these families were different in that the mothers were shown working as professionals and were quite independent, the father was still shown as the leader of the family. Olson and Douglas (1997) stated that while gender

roles were more equalized, the opinion of the father continued to dominate in more contemporary domestic comedies (post 1984).

Father's did not fair very well on children's programming at least for one season of children's programming (2005-2006). Although fathers were generally portrayed in a positive light, they were shown as being immature nearly 25% of the time and as a buffoon 40% of the time (Callister et al., 2007). As for parenting style, Callister et al. (2007) found that male caregivers in children's programming were mostly either permissive (42%) or authoritative (40%), some were authoritarians (17%) and only a small percent could be classified as uninvolved (2%).

Films' Fathers

Motion pictures over the years have portrayed Dad in many different lights. In Tanner's et al. (2003) study of Disney films, fifteen movies contained information regarding the nature of the father. They report three themes about the nature of fathers: one, fathers as controlling, aggressive, protective disciplinarians; two, fathers as nurturing and affectionate; and three fathers as self-sacrificing. Some of the fathers fell into more than one category. Of these three themes, 53% were depicted as controlling, aggressive, protective disciplinarians that expected their children to earn their love rather than giving it unconditionally; 47% presented fathers as nurturing and affectionate, listening to their children; and 53% of the fathers were seen as self-sacrificing in order to save their children.

Wynn and Rosenfeld (2003) also looked at four Disney films (*The Little Mermaid, Beauty and the Beast, Aladdin, Pocahontas*) where father-daughter

relationships were analyzed. In *Beauty and the Beast* and *Pocahontas* the fathers allowed their daughters freedom to explore their adolescents. These relationships are described as close satisfying relationships, where the father was supportive and encouraging. Alternatively the fathers in *The Little Mermaid* and *Aladdin* are described as denying their daughters freedom to explore their adolescence; these daughters are described as being rebellious against their father's power and control over them. These fathers are described as not listening to their daughters and considering their daughters inept.

Fathers in non-animated motion pictures have gone through varying cycles of depictions. Considine (1985) reported that there was a visible trend in the 1950s in the decline of the patriarch. The fathers in 1950s movies were depicted as well meaning but as a somewhat inept parent. The father in *Father of the Bride* (1950) is noted by Considine (1985) as one of the last moments of family harmony and good parenting, particularly by the father in a film. Other films of the era, such as *East of Eden* and *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) both depicted father's that were unable to provide a good role model for their sons (Considine, 1985; Leitch, 1992).

As reported by Considine (1985) the 1960s brought back an era of ideal families with loving patriarchs (i.e. *The Sound of Music, Mary Poppins, Sunrise at Campobello*). The 1960s film father was characterized as well meaning and as the decision maker for the family. The seventies again portrayed incompetent parents as well as non-related families (i.e. *Harold and Maude, Kotch*). The film families with fathers in the home during the 1970s lacked good parenting skills and portrayed fathers that were not caring towards their children (i.e. *Saturday Night Fever, King of the Gypsies, The Great Santini, Breaking Away*).

While Considine (1985) reported that the father in *Ordinary People* (1980) provided a good role model for his son, Harwood (1997) described the role of the film father in the 1980s as a failure. She states that fathers in the 1980s all "failed" in some capacity. The popular films *The Breakfast Club* and *The Lost Boys*, both produced during the eighties, showed depictions of incompetent parents and particularly incompetent fathers (Leitch, 1992; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998).

Mothers

Working-Class Television Mothers

Mothers on both children's and prime-time television have generally been portrayed as wise, and often wiser than their husbands (Butsch, 1992; Callister et al., 2007; Cantor, 1990; Press & Strathman, 1993; Reep & Dambrot, 1994). Butsch (1992) found that working-class wives and mothers were often found helping their husbands out of situations he had gotten himself into. Television wives were often portrayed as more intelligent, rational, sensible, and more mature than their husbands. In fact, even the children were often portrayed in a more positive way than their working-class fathers.

Cantor (1990) reported that from the years 1946-1978 while the working-class father's role was commonly that of a buffoon, the wife was often characterized as the more competent parent and as the primary decision-maker. The role of the working-class wife and mother remained positive into the eighties where parents were portrayed as working together as a team, as was seen in the hit series *Roseanne* (Butsch, 1992).

Middle-Class Television Mothers

Like working-class women, both Butsch (1992) and Cantor (1990) found that middle-class women were also portrayed as being sensible, mature and responsible in their roles as wives and mothers on television. Butsch (1992) who described the "super-dads" of the middle-class family also reported middle-class "super-parent" teams where parents were depicted working together.

Callister et al. (2007) looked specifically at children's programming for the 2005-2006 season and found that nearly all female caregivers were viewed as competent, mature, and not buffoons. In addition they report that 50% of the female caregivers were authoritative, 30% were permissive, 18% were authoritarians and only 2% were uninvolved.

Films' Mothers

Unfortunately film mothers have generally not been portrayed as favorably as television mothers. The exception to this rule is seen in Disney animated movies. According to Tanner's et al. (2003) study of 26 films dating from 1937 to 2000, 12 showed the nature of the mother. Those mothers were depicted as the primary caregiver and as protectors.

Considine (1985) titled his discussion of the portrayal of mothers in films as "Movies' Monstrous Moms" and states that motion pictures have increasingly given mothers a negative treatment. He reported that in the late thirties and early forties images of mothers were generally favorable, in fact Considine (1985) claims that most of the film mothers during the forties were portrayed as sacrosanct. Motherhood, mother's love,

and self-sacrificing mothers were the long cherished tradition in Hollywood films in the thirties and forties, but this began to change in the fifties. These mothers were no longer depicted as the heart and hub of the home, the one who interpreted life to her husband and children (Considine, 1985). Films such as *Our Very Own* (1950), *Darling How Could You* (1951), *The Star* (1953) and *East of Eden* (1954) all featured mothers who were neglectful and uninvolved in their children's lives. The popular movie *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) featured a teenager that grew up in a family where the mother slowly destroyed his father; the other mother in this movie was depicted as an alcoholic (Considine, 1985).

The sixties weren't any better for film mothers. Film after film depicted love-hate relationships between mother and son. Examples such as *Sons and Lovers* (1960), *Return to Peyton Place* (1961), *Long Days Journey Into Night* (1962) and *All Fall Down* (1962) are all examples of middle-class mothers who in essence destroy their families (Considine, 1985). In the popular movie *The Graduate* (1967) the mother is reduced to an alcoholic and adulteress woman (Considine, 1985). "There can be no mistaking the sustained and systematic attack on motherhood…the film families of the sixties are morally bankrupt, bereft of principles, and unable to offer guidance to the young" (Considine, 1985, pg. 67). According to Considine (1985), even in the seemingly harmless movie *The Parent Trap* (1961), the mother is reported to be so engrossed in her own social world that she ignores her daughter.

The seventies film mother continued along the same line as the sixties film mother. *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds* (1972), *Summer Wishes, Winter Dreams* (1973) and *Carrie* (1977) all feature mothers who are not able to

parent well and in some instances are even destructive to their children (Considine, 1985).

Considine (1985) claims that the film mothers of the 1980s continued to be depicted as incompetent, but in different ways than those of the earlier years. The film *Foxes* (1980) and *Only When I Laugh* (1981) both show a role reversal where a daughter takes care of her mother and a daughter trying to communicate with her mother.

Studies of 1980s film families have found two main portrayals of film mothers. First, the passive, supportive and complacent mother; this mother is shown as a stay-at-home mother and is shown being rewarded for her home-making, good wife, and mothering skills as seen in movies such as *The Untouchables, Private Benjamin, The Heathers*, and *Footloose* (Considine, 1985; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998). The other typical portrayal of a mother during the 1980s was a working mother; these mothers were portrayed as inept, materialistic, and shallow as seen in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off, Weird Science, Risky Business, Valley Girls,* and *Less that Zero* (Considine, 1985; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998). However in most of the popular films of the era, the mother was literally absent (Considine, 1985; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998).

Reviewing literature gives a fairly complete analysis of the way parents have been depicted in the media, specifically the way they have been portrayed on prime-time television. The representation of the father appears to be affected by the socio-economic class in which his family is portrayed. Prime-time televisions working-class fathers have generally been portrayed as immature and incompetent. Prime-time televisions middle-class fathers have generally been portrayed as "super-dads"; as being intelligent, sensible, and as the primary decision maker (Butsch, 1992; Cantor 1990; Schrarrer, 2001). In

children's programming fathers have been portrayed as buffoonish and immature (Callister et al., 2007). In motion pictures the characterization of the father has moved from being family patriarch to a less mature and incompetent father (Considine, 1985; Leitch, 1992).

Television mothers have generally been portrayed as intelligent, mature, and responsible in both working-class and middle-class family depictions (Butsch, 1992; Callister et al., 2007; Cantor 1990; Douglas & Olson, 1995; Press & Strathman, 1993; Reep & Dambrot, 1994). Like the fathers in films, the depiction of the mother in motion pictures has shifted over the decades. Considine (1985) reported that in the thirties and forties mothers were shown as being revered. However by the 1950s and into the 1980s film mothers began to be characterized more and more as unskilled parents, immature, and neglectful (Considine, 1985; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998).

It is apparent from reviewing the literature on television and film families that there is a lack in information regarding the depiction of the family in motion pictures. Films are widely seen by the public, making them great socializing agents of values and ideals, especially for adolescents (Levy, 1991). Thus this study will analyze the portrayal of the family as seen in popular teen films.

CHAPTER 3

Theory

The Cultivation Perspective

Before discussing cultivation theory it is important to note that the current study does not propose to test the effects of watching teen films; rather it only provides information about what exists in recent teen films. However, the results of this study could serve as a resource of information to carry out a cultivation analysis concerning possible impressions that teen films may have upon adolescents' impressions of American families.

Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory is an effects theory aimed to determine the consequences of long-term exposure to systems of messages viewed on television. This theory proposes that television provides a central current of messages- a continual, dynamic, and ongoing system of images, portrayals, and values broadcast over the airwaves. Consequently, the images and messages that comprise this central current of television messages become virtually inescapable for regular and especially heavy television viewers. According to cultivation theory, watching a lot of television will repeatedly expose the viewer to these patterns, which will create and mold a shared conception of reality among an otherwise diverse population (Gerbner, 1986; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002).

The Cultural Indicators project, which began in 1967, was designed to study television policies, programs, and the impacts of growing up and living in an environment dominated by television viewing. What was found from these longitudinal studies of adolescents was that television could influence attributes and behaviors over time. It indicated that exposure to these central and mainstream themes and ideas, which cut across different program types and define the world of television, cultivate attitudes and behaviors in response to the world as portrayed on television. However, it is also noted that belief structures and daily life also influence the viewers' attitudes, beliefs, values, and practices. Meaning that the cultivating affects of television are not direct effects; rather they contribute to the viewer's concept of social reality. The degree to which it affects that viewer is dependent upon how much time they spend watching television and upon the amount of real life influence and experience they have. Thus those that are heavy viewers of television are more likely to experience these "cultivating" affects (Gerbner, 1986; Gerbner et al., 2002). For example, people that live in high crime urban areas have a stronger relationship between fear of crime and amount of viewing than those who live in safer neighborhoods (Gerbner, 1998).

Several cultivation analysis studies have been done over the years making the case for cultivation theory stronger. Although dated, a study done by Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, and Morgan in 1980 (as citied in Gerbner, 1998) is a good example of what a group of heavy television viewers perceived as reality and reality. This study reported that heavy viewers believed that elderly people were a vanishing age group, but in reality, those over the age of 65 were the largest growing population in the United States at the time. Another cultural analysis study more relevant to the current research is the finding

that heavy viewers are more likely to accept single-parenthood and out-of-wedlock childbirth than those who are not heavy viewers (Gerbner et al., 2002; Signorielli & Morgan, 2001). Gerbner et al. (2002) found that television characterized a typical single-parent as a financially stable male with full-time live-in help; this gives a "highly fantasized and luxurious notion of single-parenthood" (Gerbner et al., 2002, pg. 54) when compared to the typical single-parent in the United States.

While cultivation theory focuses specifically on the television viewer, it has been argued that movies may intensify rather than undercut the cultivating effects of television (Signorielli & Morgan, 2001). Gerbner and colleagues (Gerbner 1998; Gerbner, et al., 2002) suggest that while there has been an ever increasing ease of watching television and movies due to an increasing number of television stations, more televisions in the home, availability of cable, and an increasing number of DVD players and VCR's in the home, there has not been a substantial increase in the diversity of content (KFF, 2005; MPAA, 2007). Rather with the proliferation of television shows and movies available, the content and messages that individual viewers are watching may actually be intensifying and concentrating as unique content and messages are decreasing. For example, if an individual prefers to watch criminal investigation movies and television programming, they may do so with ease and almost unlimited availability due to the advancement of technology.

Because many teens are exposed to considerable amounts of television and film, as will be discussed in the following section, they are likely to be influenced by the images and messages from a combination of the two media. Further, these images are not necessarily representative of reality and thus can shape unrealistic expectations about life.

Media Effects

Adolescents and children are highly exposed to the mass media. A study done by the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) (2005) reported that young people (8-18 year olds) spend an average of 3.5 hours watching television and videos per day. The KFF (2005) reported that the average American home has 3.5 television sets and 2.9 VCR/DVD players; additionally one in four homes has 5 or more televisions and one half of the homes have 3 or more VCR/DVD players. The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA, 2007) reported that 38% of movie admissions between mid-July 2006 and mid-July 2007 were between the ages of 12 and 24, and that 41% of 12-24 year olds saw one or more movies per month. These findings emphasize that adolescents make up the highest concentration of movie goers in America:

> By its very nature, the adolescent film audience is a special and unique group responding to the cinema in a way markedly different from the way in which either children or adults respond. This phenomenon exists partially because of the young person's strength at the box office, where he functions as a powerful force operating on the cinematic product he consumes. In part, also, while his economic affluence enables him to influence the industry, his very immaturity renders him susceptible to its influence and manipulation. Unlike the adult, the adolescent is still in a stage of identity development, still formulating basic values and attitudes. Thus film must be regarded as one in a range of forces potentially capable of shaping either positively or negatively the young person's visions of himself and his society. The relationship between the young person and

the film industry is thus a dichotomy- while the young viewer is capable

of exerting an influence upon the products he consumes, it in turn is

equally capable of exerting an influence on him. While the search for self

renders the adolescent susceptible to suggestion, there is evidence that at

the same time, the young person is more perceptive and aware of film than

at any other time. (Considine, 1985, pg. 3)

Family structures seen in the media transmit values, both appropriate and

inappropriate to teens, which can influence the way they feel about themselves

and about others in real life (Berry, 2003; Levy, 1991). Television, according to

Gerbner and his colleagues (Gerbner, 1986; Gerbner, et al., 2002), is a centralized

system of storytelling. Gerbner, the father of cultivation theory, stated that:

Television is the source of the most broadly-shared images and messages

in history. It is the mainstream of the common symbolic environment into

which our children are born and in which we all live out our lives. While

channels proliferate, their contents concentrate. For most viewers, new

types of delivery systems such as cable, satellite, and the Internet mean

even deeper penetration and integration of the dominant patterns of images

and messages into everyday life. (Gerbner, 1998, pg. 177)

The argument of the current study is that movies are an additional type of delivery

system, much like cable, satellite and the Internet. Adding to Gerbner's (1998) statement

that the availability of satellite and Internet "mean even deeper penetration and

integration", so perhaps does film, which is a more concentrated media (being targeted at

a more concentrated and narrow audience) than even television. Thus while television is proposed to be the primary source of socialization and everyday information, perhaps over church and community (Gerbner, 1998), the images seen in motion pictures are arguably adding to the cultivating effects of television. Again, the current study will not test the effects that teen films may or may not have on their audiences. However, results gained from this study could be used as a resource of information in a future cultivation study looking to determine potential impact and influence on teen viewers. Gerbner et al., (2002) stated that it doesn't matter what medium the messages are being delivered through if the messages don't change. With this understanding Gerbner et al. (2002) states that, "there is little evidence to date that the dominant patterns of image cultivation will show any corresponding fragmentation. For most viewers, extended delivery systems signal even deeper penetration and integration of the dominant patterns of images and messages into everyday life" (Gerbner et al., 2002, pg 63).

Hypothesis and Research Questions

The hypothesis and research questions that will guide this research study are outlined below.

Hypothesis 1

Past research has shown that the traditional family as seen on both prime-time television and in non-animated movies has decreased over the decades (Robinson & Skill, 2001; Power et al., 1993). Thus it is fair to make the claim that this pattern will continue within the teen films reviewed for this study. Thus hypothesis one states:

The appearance of the traditional family as seen in teen films will decrease between the 1980s, 1990s and the 2000s.

Research Question 1

There have been fluctuations in the representation of traditional and nontraditional families on both television and in the movies. Because of this it will be interesting to see how the representation of the family as seen in teen films has fluctuated. Thus research question one asks:

What is the primary composition of the family as seen in teen movies?

Research Question 2

The portrayal of single-parents on prime-time television has slowly increased over the decades. Single-fathers have generally been overrepresented on prime-time television and in movies as compared to the U.S. Census. As well, single-parents on prime-time television and in the movies have more often been shown as widowers then as divorcees, especially among single-fathers; another finding that is inconsistent with American trends (Cantor, 1990; Considine, 1985; Harwood, 1997; Levi, 1991; Moore, 1992; Powers et al., 1993; Robinson & Skill, 2001; Skill & Robinson, 1994; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998). Children's programming is the one exception here, in that single-parents have been underrepresented rather than overrepresented (Callister et al., 2007). Because of the general misrepresentations of the number of single-parents in the two media, it will be worth examining how teen films represent single-parents. Thus research question two asks:

What percent of parents are single-parents and what are the various reasons for their being single?

Research Question 3

Caucasian characters have always had a dominating presence on television and in the movies. More recently, the representation of African American characters on television has begun to closely mirror the U.S. population; however, most ethnic minorities have had very little presence in either of the two media (Callister et al., 2007; Greenberg & Collette, 1997; Robinson & Skill, 2001; Skill & Robinson, 1994; Stern, 2005). In order to understand how ethnic representations have been portrayed in teen films, research question three asks:

How ethnically diverse are families in teen films?

Research Question 4

The majority of parent's depicted working outside of the home on television and in the movies have worked in professional or high-status occupations. And women were more often shown as stay-at-home parents than men (Callister et al., 2007; Children Now, 2004; Greenberg & Collette, 1997; Heintz-Knowles, 2001). To see if this trend holds true within teen films, research question four asks:

What percent of parents work outside the home and what professions are represented in teen films?

Research Question 5

Because no information regarding the average number of children per film family has been reported, this study took the opportunity to discover how many children the average family in a teen movie had. Thus research question five asks:

What is the composition of the family in terms of number of children and the proportion of girls to boys?

Research Question 6

Although little information was available regarding the socio-economic status of film families, it appears that the majority of television and film families are depicted in a middle socio-economic class. To see if this trend continues in teen films, research question six asks:

What are the various socio-economic levels represented in teen films?

Research Question 7

The depiction of the parent has varied widely across television and film. Televisions' mothers have generally been portrayed in a more positive regard than televisions' fathers. And it appears that the portrayal of the father on television appears to be linked to the economic class in which he is depicted. Films' mothers and fathers appear to have been generally cast in a negative light (Butsch, 1992; Callister et al., 2007; Cantor, 1990; Considine, 1985; Harwood, 1997; Leitch, 1992; Press & Strathman, 1993; Reep & Dambrot, 1994; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998). Because depictions of parents in

television and film have differed, it will be interesting to see how they are represented in

teen films. Thus research question seven asks:

> How are parents depicted in teen films in terms of parenting style and competency
>
> as a parent?

CHAPTER 4

Methodology

Selection Procedures

The sample for this study includes a selection of domestic teen films produced during the 1980s, 1990s and the 2000s (2000 to 2007). The top 30 films (see Appendix A) meeting specific criteria were selected from each decade. Each film included in the sample is a top-grossing domestic film for its decade and is considered a 'teen film'. The top-grossing domestic films were chosen based on information attained from the website www.boxofficemojo.com. Box-office performance was used to establish which films were the most popular for each decade because it is a good indicator of a films' popularity; also it is an effective means of determining what a film's non-theater viewings might be, such as video rentals (Stern, 2005). A film was classified as a 'teen film' if it met the following criteria: (a) the story line was centered on teenagers; (b) the film featured a teenager (ages 12–17) as the central character; (c) the film featured teens in major and minor roles; and (d) the teenagers family was also featured in the film. Only films that were rated G, PG, or PG-13 were used in this selection, as movies that are rated R or NC-17 are not targeted to teens, nor are teenagers legally allowed to see these movies in a theater without the company of an adult.

The sample did not include sequels, unless the first movie did not meet the 'teen film' criteria but the sequel did meet the criteria (for example, the fourth *Harry Potter* film was included because the characters in the first three *Harry Potter* films were not yet

12). Three decades of films were used in this study in order to provide a comprehensive examination of the portrayal of the family in teen-films over an extended period of time. A study that reviews an extended period of time will give evidence of societal and media changes, something that a review of literature has shown occurring in the past (Wimmer & Dominik, 2002).

Coding Procedures

Only characters defined as a major character were coded for this study. Major characters were defined as those who played a central role in the film either through speaking parts or actions and who helped to determine the direction of the film's plot or subplots (Stern, 2005).

Characters were analyzed in five different areas in order to obtain information to answer this studies hypothesis and research questions. The five areas included: family structure, socio-economic status, parent's ethnicity, parent's profession, and parental depictions (see Appendix B).

Six coders were used for this study. Prior to viewing and coding all 30 films, nine randomly selected films (10% of the sample and a total of 12 families) were viewed and coded in order to ensure inter-coder reliability. The agreement between coders, using Holsti's (1969) formula was over 90% for each category. The following reliabilities were achieved for each variable: family structure, 95%; socio-economic status, 98%; parent's ethnicity, 98%; parent's profession, 94%; parental depictions, 93%. Once all discrepancies had been resolved the films were equally divided among the coders for

analysis. The coders were not informed about the study's hypothesis and research questions.

<div align="center">Variables of Interest</div>

The operational definitions for the various coding units are provided below.

Family Structure

The structure of the family was coded such that the results might be comparable with U.S. census figures. Distinctions were made as to what 'type' of family structure the film portrayed. The *traditional nuclear family* was defined as having two parents in the home and having dependent children living with them. An *extended family* was defined as having dependent children living with relatives other than their parents. A *blended family* was defined as a two parent family with dependent children where both parents have brought a child or children from a previous marriage or relationship. *Single-parents* were coded as to whether they were a single-mother or father. *Guardians* that were not related to the children were also noted e.g., godparents or domestic live-ins. All nontraditional family structures, such as single or blended families, were coded as to the origin of their circumstance. For instance, was the parent single due to divorce, separation, being widowed, or never having married. Other variables that were included were the total number and gender of children per family, as well as any relatives that were not living with the family that played a role in the film, such as a teenager's aunt, uncle, or grandparent.

Ethnicity

The ethnicity of both the mother and father were coded. The ethnic categories included were: *Caucasian, Hispanic, African American, Asian, Native American* or *Arab*. If the ethnicity of a character was not identifiable they were placed into the *other* category.

Occupation

The profession of both the mother and father were coded. The occupational classifications were as follows: *professional* (doctor, lawyer, accountant, dentist, architect, etc.); *manager* (store manager, hotel manager, restaurant manager, etc); *clerical* (secretary, bookkeeper, support staff, etc.); *laborer* (unskilled worker, such as assembly plant worker, yard care, custodian, etc.); *farmer*; *craftsman* (plumber, electrician, artist, contractor, etc.); *stay-at-home parent*; or *not clear*.

Socio-Economic Class

Each family was defined as being in a lower, middle, or upper socio-economic class. The distinction between each class was based upon the following measures: occupation, possessions, and area of residence.

Families that were classified in the *lower socio-economic class* held occupations such as: assembly-line workers, bus/truck drivers, and carpenters. Also included were those that were chronically depicted as unemployed, occasionally employed, on welfare, or working as a "day" laborer. Families in this socio-economic class had possessions that were worn-out, e.g., older run-down vehicles, worn-out clothing; these families may have

been depicted as lacking in basic necessities such as food and shelter. These families were shown living in either slum areas, where houses were dilapidated and in serious need of repair, or in areas that were not yet slums, but had poor housing conditions and were strictly working-class neighborhoods.

Families that were distinguished in the *middle socio-economic class* were depicted in the following occupations: skilled craftsmen, small contractors, factory foremen, office workers, owners of very small firms, technicians, salespeople, civil servants, middle managers, teachers, social workers, and lesser professionals. These families lived comfortably and had simple and modest possessions that met basic needs. Families categorized into the middle socio-economic class were shown living in modest and well-kept homes. The neighborhoods included both blue-collar and white-collar families.

Families that were included in the *upper socio-economic class* were those that worked as lesser corporate officials, owners of middle-sized businesses, professionals and top corporate executives, "leaders" in the professional world and "rich" business owners. Their possessions were more luxurious than those in the middle socio-economic class and included items like brand-name clothing, flat-screen televisions, grand pianos, memberships at country clubs, and luxury cars. These families lived in large homes in wealthy neighborhoods that were predominately white-collar families.

Parental Depictions

There were several measurements used to define *parental depiction* or care-giving style. The level of competency as a parent/caregiver was identified for both the primary

female and male caregiver. The role that the parent or guardian played in their child's life was measured as to whether they were of central or marginal importance in the child's life. The style of parenting portrayed was classified following Baumrind's (1991) classification scheme, and finally specific interactions between parent and child were noted.

Parental Competency

The competency of the parent or guardian was classified as *competent, adequate,* or *incompetent.* Those ascribed as *competent* had the necessary skills and abilities needed to accomplish different tasks required of a parent. *Adequate* parents were defined as being competent in most areas, but lacking in some skills required of parents. *Incompetent* parents were depicted as lacking in the parenting skills, qualities, and abilities necessary to deal adequately with different tasks or domestic issues. Another variable used to understand the portrayal of the parents was whether the parent was portrayed as buffoonish. A *buffoonish* character was described as a person that amused others by consistently clowning and joking around; a buffoon would be regarded as behaving mildly inappropriate in situations that required more serious behavior (Callister et al., 2007).

Parent's Influence

The level of influence that the parent was depicted to have in their child's life was determined to be of *central* or *marginal* importance. *Central* figures had a great amount of influence on their child; they played a major part in their life and had a lot of influence

on the child's decisions. In comparison *marginal* parents were had a very small and unimportant role in the child's life and did not have much influence on the child's decisions.

Parenting Styles

Baumrind's (1991) classifications for differing parenting styles were utilized in this study; the classifications included: *authoritarian*, *authoritative*, *permissive*, or *uninvolved*.

An *authoritarian* parent was someone that enforced rules, demanded much and did not show much, if any, nurturing or affection towards their child. They required unquestioning obedience to their well-ordered and well-structured environment and rules.

Authoritative parents were also shown placing importance in clearly defined rules, but unlike the authoritarian parent, they were also high in responsiveness towards their child and were willing to give the reasoning behind their policies. These parents encouraged discussion and individuality in their child and tended to be high in nurturing. The authoritative parent is defined by Baumrind (1991) as someone who will, "monitor and impart clear standards for their children's conduct. They are assertive, but not intrusive and restrictive. Their disciplinary methods are supportive, rather than punitive. They want their children to be assertive as well as socially responsible, and self-regulated as well as cooperative" (Baumrind, 1991, p. 62).

Permissive parents are depicted as those who placed few demands on their children for household responsibilities or on orderly behavior; they demanded very little from their children. Although these parents were quite lenient on their children in terms

of rules they were quite involved in their child's life. These parents were shown as being extremely responsive to their children and allowing their children to act on whims rather than enforcing appropriate behaviors (Baumrind, 1991).

The *uninvolved* parent was someone that might be considered neglectful to their child. This parent was both low in responsiveness and in placing demands on their child. This parent seemed to take little to no interest in their child's life (Baumrind, 1991).

Parent/Child Interactions

The final item that the coders examined was specific interactions that occurred between the caregiver and the child. Each primary caregiver that the coders analyzed was marked as either acting out or not acting out the following actions: putting the children to bed, cleaning up after the children, consoling children, driving children, serving/preparing food, holding children, discipling children, house or car repair, shopping, and diapering (see Appendix B). These variables were reviewed in order to see if these specific interactions occurred in the teen films reviewed for this study.

CHAPTER 5

Results

This study sought to determine how families have been portrayed in teen movies during the 1980s, the 1990s, and the 2000s and was guided by one hypothesis and seven research questions. It has examined several aspects of a family, including structure of the family, ethnicity of the family, occupation of the parents, socio-economic status of the family, and the depiction of different parenting styles and levels of parental competency. Ninety movies were coded and statistical analyses were performed in order to draw conclusions concerning the hypothesis and the research questions.

Composition of the Family

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 proposed that the appearance of the traditional family in teen films would decrease between the 1980s, 1990s, and the 2000s. The percent of traditional families seen in teen films over the three decades did decrease (see table 1), however a Pearson's chi-square analysis indicates that the results are not statistically significant (X^2=3.723, df=2, n=139, p>.05). During the 1980s, 60.0% (n=27) of all the families (n=45) appearing in teen films were traditional, two-parent families. The decade of the 1990s saw a decrease in traditional families to 43.2% (n=19) of the total sample (n=44). There was another slight decrease moving into the 2000s with 42.0% (n=21) of all teen film families featured (n=50) being depicted as traditional, two-parent families.

Table 1

Traditional versus Nontraditional Teen Film Families by Decade

Decade	Traditional % (n)	Nontraditional % (n)	Total Number of Families (n)
1980s	60.0% (27)	40.0% (18)	45
1990s	43.2% (19)	56.8% (25)	44
2000s	42.0% (21)	58.0% (29)	50
Total	67	72	139

X^2=3.723, *df*=2, *n*=123, *p*=.155

Research Question 1

Research question 1 asked what the primary composition of the family was as seen in teen movies (traditional, blended, single-parent, guardian). Because there were so few guardian family structures and very little information distinguishing between blended and other dual-parent families, the categories were collapsed into dual-parent versus single-parent families. Pearson's chi-square showed no significant difference between the representation of dual and single-parent families (X^2=5.069, *df*=2, *n*=123, *p*>.05). However, reviewing the percentages reveals that a slight majority of the teen film families portrayed were dual-parent families across all decades reviewed (54.5%, *n*=67) (see table 2). Breaking the percentages into a decade by decade comparison indicates that while the majority in the 1980s were dual-parent homes (69.2%, *n*=27), dual and single-parent families had near equal representation in the 1990s and 2000s, although single-parent families did hold a slight majority in both decades (1990s: 53.7%; 2000s: 51.2%).

Comparing these figures to the census reveals several trends. In the U.S. dual parent families have remained the majority family structure type at a fairly consistent rate over the past three decades (1990 census: 72.6%; 2000 census: 75.9%; 2007 census: 70.7%). The representation of dual parent families in teen films was similar to the census in the 1980s with 69.2% in films and 72.6% of the population. The percent of dual parent families in the U.S. remained fairly stable into the 1990s (72.6%) and 2000s (70.7%), however their representation in teen films decreased (1990s: 46.3%; 2000s: 48.8%). Thus dual parents families were underrepresented in both the 1990s and the 2000s (1990s U.S. Census as reported in Robinson & Skill, 2001; U.S. Census, 2001; U.S. Census, 2007).

The percent of single-parent families in the U.S. has increased slightly over the past three decades (1990 census: 19.7%; 2000 census: 24.1%; 2007 census: 25.8%) as well as in teen films. However, single-parent families have consistently been over-represented in teen films and at an increasing rate. In fact in the 1990s and the 2000s, single-parent families represented half of the families in teen films, although only about one-quarter of the U.S. population (1990s U.S. Census as reported in Robinson & Skill, 2001; U.S. Census, 2001; U.S. Census, 2007).

While the percentages reveal that representations of different family structures have not necessarily been a reflection of the U.S. population, a two-sample chi-square indicated that there was no significant difference in the percentage of teen film and real life family structures ($p > .05$).

Table 2

Dual-Parent versus Single-Parent Teen Film Families by Decade

Head of Household Census 2007 [b]	Film 1980s	Census 1990 [a]	Film 1990s	Census 2000 [a]	Film 2000s
Dual Parents 70.7%	69.2% (27)	72.6%	46.3% (19)	75.9%	48.8% (21)
Single-parent 25.8%	30.8% (12)	19.7%	53.7% (22)	24.1%	51.2% (22)
n 96.5%	39	100.0%	41	100.0%	43

X^2=5.069, *df*=2, *n*=123, *p*=.079
[a] Inclusive dual or single-parent categories; represent millions of families.
[b] Does not include children living with no parents, i.e. living with grandparents.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 asked what percent of parents in teen films were single-parents and what the various reasons for being single were. In order to run simple percentages, single-parents where it was unclear why they were single had to be removed from the sample. Once the unidentifiable singles were removed, divorced and separated singles were collapsed into one group and simple percentages were figured.

The cause of being a single-mother in a teen film varied decade by decade. In the 1980s, an equal number of mothers were widowed as divorced or separated. In the 1990s the majority were divorced (62.5%, *n*=5); the inverse was true for the 2000s where the majority of single-mothers were widowed (71.4%, *n*=5) (see table 3).

Comparing the cause of being a single-parent in a teen film to census data (U.S. Census, 1990c; U.S. Census, 2000; U.S. Census, 2007) indicates that the cause of being a single-mother as depicted in teen films has been relatively similar for each decade except the 2000s (see table 3). Teen films made between 2000 and 2007 overrepresented widowed mothers with 71.4% of the single-mother population of film, while the census indicates that only 40.8% of women were single due to being widowed (U.S. Census, 2007) (it should be noted that the census data does not distinguish between women who are mothers and those who are not, while this study is looking only at mothers).

Table 3

Single-Parents and Cause of Single-Parenthood in Teen Films

Parent	Film 1980s % (*n*) [a]	Census 1990 [b]	Film 1990s % (*n*) [a]	Census 2000 [b]	Film 2000s % (*n*) [a]	Census 2007 [b]
Women						
Divorced/ Separated	50.0% (1)	50.4%	62.5 % (5)	55.8%	28.6% (2)	59.2%
Widowed	50.0% (1)	49.6%	37.5% (3)	44.2%	71.4% (5)	40.8 %
Men						
Divorced/ Separated	33.3% (2)	78.8%	50.0 % (3)	80.6%	50.0% (3)	1.2%
Widowed	66.7% (4)	21.2%	50.0% (3)	19.4%	50.0% (3)	18.8%

[a] Does not include single-parents where the cause of singleness was unclear; percentage within single-parent category.
[b] Census data reported includes all persons in the U.S. over 15 who were either separated, divorced, or widowed (married at one point); includes persons with and without children; percentages do not include those that never married.

Single-fathers depicted in teen films were as often widowed as divorced during both the 1990s (50.0%, *n*=3) and 2000s (50.0%, *n*=3) (see table 3). Films made during the 1980s showed the majority of single-fathers as having been widowed (66.7%, *n*=4). When comparing these percentages to census data (U.S. Census, 1990c; U.S. Census, 2000; U.S. Census, 2007) it is evident that for each decade widowed fathers have been overrepresented while divorced fathers have been underrepresented. The most drastic misrepresentation appears to have been made in the 1980s where 78.8% of men in the U.S. had been divorced as compared to 33.3% in teen films (U.S. Census, 1990c). Widowed fathers continued to be overrepresented in teen films made in the 1990s and 2000s where half of the portrayals of single-fathers had been widowed, but only approximately 19% had been widowed in the U.S. (U.S. Census, 2000; U.S. Census, 2007) (again it should be noted that the census data does not distinguish between men who are fathers and those who are not, while this study is looking only at fathers).

Ethnic Diversity

Research Question 3

Research question 3 asked how ethnically diverse families in the teen films studied were. Caucasian families represented 91.4% (*n*=127) of the total sample (*n*=139); there was 1 Hispanic family (0.7%) (1990s: *Hackers*), 9 African American families (6.5%) (1990s: *The Mighty Ducks, Good Burger*; 2000s: *Remember the Titans, Holes, Fat Albert, Friday Night Lights, Hairspray, Step Up, Gridiron Gang*) and one Asian family (0.7%) (1990s: *Drop Dead Gorgeous*); there were no Native American or Arabic families in the ,sample (see table 4).

Table 4

Ethnic Diversity of Families in Teen Films

Ethnicity	Films All Decades % (*n*)	Census 1990[a]	Census 2000[a]	Census 2003[a]
Caucasian	91.4% (127)	73.6%	68.2%	72.1%
Hispanic	0.7% (1)	8.3%	11.4%	12.1%
African American	6.5% (9)	11.1%	11.2%	11.9%
Asian	0.7% (1)	2.7%[b]	3.3%	3.9%
Native American and Alaska Natives	0	0.7%	0.8%	***
Islanders	0	2.7%[b]	0.1%	***
Other	0	5.0%	5.0%	***
Total	138[c]			

[a] Represents millions of people; percentages determined from census reports.
[b] Census 1990 combined groups Asian and Islanders.
[c] One interracial family was removed from the entire sample (*n*=139) due to sampling parameters.
***As reported in Callister et al. (2007); no numbers reported for these races.

Because of low cell numbers a decade by decade breakdown was not possible.

Three different census reports are provided in table 4 (U.S. Census, 2003 as cited in

Callister et al., 2007; U.S. Census, 1990a; U.S. Census, 2001a) in order to make general

comparisons. When reviewing the data it is clear that every ethnicity other than

Caucasians have been underrepresented in teen films. Caucasians have accounted for 68-

74% of the U.S. population and 91% of the families in teen films (see table 4). Hispanics

have represented 8-12% of the U.S. population, but less than 1% of the teen film

population. African Americans have accounted for approximately 11% of the U.S.

population since the eighties, while only 6.5% of the teen film families were African

Americans. Asians, Native Americans, Alaska Natives, Islanders and other races have also been underrepresented in teen films with only one appearance of an Asian family across the thirty year span of the sample.

Occupation, Family Composition and Socio-Economic Status

Research Question 4

Research question 4 asked what percentage of parents worked outside the home and what professions were represented in teen films. For mothers whose profession was clear, the majority were stay-at-home parents, representing 50-76% (1980s 75.9%, *n=22*; 1990s 58.8%, *n=10*; 2000s 50.0%, *n=12*) of the mothers in the sample. Mothers that were shown working outside of the home, 14-21% (1980s 13.8%, *n=4*; 1990s 17.6%, *n=3*; 2000s 20.8%, *n=5*) were professionals and 4-24% (1980s 10.3%, *n=3*; 1990s 23.5%, *n=4*; 2000s 4.2%, *n=1*) were depicted as laborers. Female managers, farmers, and crafts-persons were only depicted in the 2000s. Those depicted as managers represented 8.3% (*n=2*); both female farmers and crafts-person's accounted for 4.2% (*n=1*) each of the mothers working outside the home for that decade (see table 5).

As reported, most of the mothers in this sample were stay-at-home mothers. Stay-at-home mothers were the most prominent during the 1980s, where they made up 75.9% (*n=22*) of the sample. During the 1990s and the 2000s stay-at-home mothers accounted for 59% (*n=10*) and 50% (*n=12*) respectively of those whose profession was identifiable. The leading occupation outside of the home for women in the 1980s and 2000s was a working professional (1980s: 13.8%, *n=4*; 2000s: 20.8%, *n=5*) and the second most common occupation in the 1990s with 17.6% (*n=3*). The most common occupation for a

mother working outside the home in the 1990s was a laborer with 23.5% (*n*=4) (see table 5).

Table 5

Profession of Mothers in Teen Films

	1980s % (*n*) [a]	1990s % (*n*) [a]	2000s % (*n*) [a]
Professional	13.8% (4)	17.6% (3)	20.8% (5)
Manager	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (2)
Laborer	10.3% (3)	23.5% (4)	4.2% (1)
Farmer	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	4.2% (1)
Crafts Person	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	12.5% (3)
Stay-at-home	75.9% (22)	58.8% (10)	50.0% (12)
Total % (*n*)	33.0% (36)	30.3% (33)	36.7% (40)

[a] Percentages do not include mothers whose profession was unclear.

Pearson's chi-square showed no significance between the percent of stay-at-home mothers and working mothers (*p*>.05) over the three decades (see table 6). However, reviewing the percentages shows that the majority of mothers were portrayed as stay-at-home mothers 62.9% (*n*=44) across all decades. Although the percent of stay-at-home mothers outweighed the number of working mothers during the eighties (75.9%, *n*=22) and the nineties (58.8.9%, *n*=10); the 2000s had an equal representation of stay-at-home mothers and those working outside the home (50.0%, *n*=12) for those whose occupation was identifiable.

Stay-at-home mothers have been overrepresented in teen films for each decade studied. The U.S. census (U.S. Census, 1990) reported that in the 1980s 65.8% of two-parent homes had a stay-at-home mother, while in teen films 75.9% stayed home. In the year 1995 only 19.3% of mothers were a stay-at-home parent whereas in teen films during the decade of the nineties 58.8% were depicted as stay-at-home mothers (U.S. Census, 2007a). During the 2000s stay-at-home mothers were again overrepresented at 50.0%, but with only 24.3% of the census (U.S. Census, 2007a) (see table 6).

Table 6

Stay-at-Home Mothers versus Working Mothers in Teen Films

	1980s Film % (*n*) [a]	Census 1990[b]	1990s Film % (*n*) [a]	Census 1995[c]	2000s Films % (*n*) [a]	Census 2006 [c]
Stay-at-Home	75.9% (22)	65.8%	58.8% (10)	19.3%	50.0% (12)	24.3%
Working Outside The Home	24.1% (7)	34.2%	41.2% (7)	80.7%	50.0% (12)	75.7%
Total (*n*)	29		17		24	

[a] Excludes mothers whose occupations were unclear.
[b] Computed from 1990 Census of mothers in labor force and not in labor force; two-parent homes only.
[c] Data represents one year of information, 1995 and 2006 are years included; includes married-couple family groups with children under 15 years old.
p=.141

The fathers whose professions were identifiable in teen movies were most often characterized as having professional occupations for each decade reviewed (1980s: 76.7%, *n*=23; 1990s: 68.4%, *n*=13; 2000s: 87.5%, *n*=21) (see table 7). A father as a manager was the least common occupation for teen film fathers for each decade, with only two representations in the 1980s (6.7%) and one in the 1990s (5.3%); there were no

representations of managers in the 2000s. Fathers as laborers was the next least common occupation for teen film fathers, except during the decade of the 1990s where it was the second most common occupation after being a professional. The 1980s had two (6.7%) representations and the 2000s had only one (4.2%). For the decade of the 1980 and 2000s the second most depicted occupation for fathers was that of a crafts-persons with three (10.0%) representations in the 1980s and two (8.3%) in the 2000s; there were two (10.5%) fathers as crafts persons in the 1990s. There were no examples in any of the three decades of farmers or stay-at-home fathers of those whose professions were identifiable.

Table 7

Profession of Fathers in Teen Films

	1980s **% (n)**[a]	**1990s** **% (n)**[a]	**2000s** **% (n)**[a]
Professional	76.7% (23)	68.4% (13)	87.5% (21)
Manager	6.7% (2)	5.3% (1)	0.0% (0)
Laborer	6.7% (2)	15.8% (3)	4.2% (1)
Crafts Person	10.0% (3)	10.5% (2)	8.3% (2)
Total (n)	30	19	24

[a] Excludes fathers whose occupations were unclear.

Research Question 5

Research question 5 asked what the composition of the family was in terms of the number of children per family and the proportion of girls to boys as shown in teen films. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed and found that the mean

number of children per family was 1.63 children across all three decades (see table 8).

There was no significant difference among number of children per family across the three

decades, $F (2,136) = .910$, $p>.05$. In the 2000 U.S. Census (U.S. Census, 2000b) the

average number of children per family under 18 was 1.86.

Table 8

Composition of Teen Film Families

Decade		Mean by Decade	Census 2000[a]
1980s		1.78	
Children (*n*)	80		
Males % (*n*)	63.0% (50)		
Females % (*n*)	37.0% (30)		
1990s		1.55	
Children (*n*)	68		
Males % (*n*)	51.5% (35)		
Females % (*n*)	48.5% (33)		
2000s		1.56	
Children (*n*)	78		
Males % (*n*)	48.7% (38)		
Females % (*n*)	51.3% (40)		
Total	139 [b]	1.63	1.86
Children (*n*)	100.0% (226)		
Males % (*n*)	54.4% (123)		
Females % (*n*)	45.6% (103)		

[a] Represents millions of families.
[b] Total number of families with children.
p=.405

    A Paired Sample *t* Test indicated that there was no significance in the proportion

of male and female children in teen films (*p*>.05). Table 8 shows that over the three

decades studied, male and female children have been fairly equally represented (males: 54.4%, *n*=123; females: 45.6%, *n*=103). The eighties were the only decade where male and female children were not almost exactly matched in representation. During the 1980s almost two-thirds of all children in teen films were males (63.0%, *n*=50).

Research Question 6

Research question 6 asked what the various socio-economic levels represented in teen films was. Middle-class families represented the majority socio-economic status of families as portrayed in teen films with 66.2% (*n*=92) of the 139 family sample. Upper-class families were the next largest group with 20.1% (*n*=28) of the sample. Lower-class families were the least represented with 13.7% (*n*=19) of the 139 families analyzed (table 9).

This study divided socio-economic status by perceived level of living (i.e. condition of house, neighborhood, possessions, etc). Comparing the perceived socio-economic status to actual income levels recorded in census reports is not a precise comparison, but it is an interesting contrast to review (see table 9). A 2008 Census report (U.S. Census, 2008) divided levels of income into three brackets (up to $14,999 per year; $15,000 to $74,999; over $75,000 per year) for the year 2005. This census statement reports that 55.6% of the families in the U.S. were in the "middle" income bracket, 8.9% were in the "lowest" income bracket, and 35.3% were in the "upper" income bracket. Although this is not a direct comparison, it can be seen that while the findings from this study and those listed in the census are not equal, the general curve is similar (see chart

1). Both places show the majority of families in the middle bracket, the second largest

group is the upper bracket and the smallest group is the lower class.

Table 9

Socio-Economic Status of Teen Film Families

	Frequency Films	Percent Films	Census Distribution Levels[a]	Census 2008[a]
Lower Class	19	13.7%	Under $14,999	8.9%
Middle Class	92	66.2%	$15-$74,999	55.6%
Upper Class	28	20.1%	Over $75,000	35.3%
Total	139	100.0%		

[a] 2008 Census Report divided by three income levels: up to $14,999 per year; $15,000 to $74,999; over $75,000 per year.

Chart 1

Socio-Economic Curve of Teen Films Families versus U.S. Census Income Level Curve
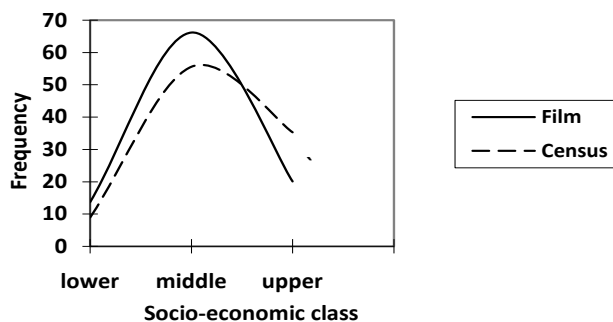
Indicates the similar socio-economic curve between teen films and 2008 U.S. Census.

This study also looked at the relationship between family structure and socio-economic status. Pearson's chi-square showed a significant difference between the socio-economic class of dual and single-parents families (X^2=11.556, df=2, n=123, p<.05). What this means is that the structure of the family as depicted in teen films significantly impacts the socio-economic status that the family will be portrayed. Dual parent families were more often shown in middle and upper socio-economic classes than were single-parent families in the teen films studied (see table 10).

Table 10

Socio-Economic Status of Teen Film Families by Dual-Parent versus Single-Parent

	Dual Parent Family[a]	**Single Parents Family**
Lower Class	3.0% (2)	21.4% (12)
Middle Class	70.1% (47)	64.3% (36)
Upper Class	26.9% (18)	14.3% (8)
n	67	56

X^2=11.556, *df*=2, *n*=123, *p*=.003
[a] Percent within dual or single-parent family.

Parental Depictions

Research Question 7

Research question 7 asked about how parents were depicted in teen films in terms of parenting style and competency. Looking at percentages reveals that most parents were depicted as being authoritative for both female and male caregivers (female: 79.6%, *n*=82; male: 74.8%, *n*=77) across every decade (see table 11).

Depictions of permissive parenting was the second most commonly seen

parenting style with 9.7% (*n*=10) of the female caregivers. Authoritarian female

caregivers made up 5.8% (*n*=6); and uninvolved female caregivers made up 4.9% (*n*=5)

of the 103 female mother/caregiver sample.

Authoritarian male caregivers was the second most frequently depicted male

parenting style with 11.7% (*n*=12); both permissive and uninvolved male caregivers

made up 6.8% (*n*=7) of the 103 male caregiver sample.

Table 11

Parenting Styles in Teen Films

	Frequency (%)	1980s % (*n*)	1990s % (*n*)	2000s % (*n*)	All Decades % (*n*)
Mothers/Female Caregiver					
Authoritarian	6 (4.3%)	3.0% (1)	2.9% (1)	11.1% (4)	5.8% (6)
Authoritative	82 (59.0%)	84.8% (28)	82.4% (28)	72.2% (26)	79.6% (82)
Permissive	10 (7.2%)	9.1% (3)	8.8% (3)	11.1% (4)	9.7% (10)
Uninvolved	5 (3.6%)	3.0% (1)	5.9% (2)	5.6% (2)	4.9% (5)
Missing[a]	36 (25.9%)				
Total Mothers		100.0% (33)	100.0% (34)	100.0% (36)	100.0% (103)
Fathers/Male Caregiver					
Authoritarian	12 (8.6%)	15.4% (6)	9.7% (3)	9.1% (3)	11.7% (12)
Authoritative	77 (55.4%)	76.9% (30)	77.4% (24)	69.7% (23)	74.8% (77)
Permissive	7 (5.0%)	5.1% (2)	6.5% (2)	9.1% (3)	6.8% (7)
Uninvolved	7 (5.0%)	2.6% (1)	6.5% (2)	12.1% (4)	6.8% (7)
Missing[a]	36 (25.9%)				
Total Fathers		100.0% (39)	100.0% (31)	100.0% (33)	100.0% (103)

[a] "Missing" parents represents those who were the absent parent in single-parent homes or any other circumstances where there was only one caregiver per family.

The second part of research question 7 asked about the level of parental

competency of both male and female caregivers. As table 12 shows the majority of

parents were portrayed as adequate caregivers (59.4%, *n*=123). The percentages also reveal that within each gender category, adequate parenting was the most common (females: 45.3%, *n*=63; males: 43.2%, *n*=60). Competent parents were the second most commonly depicted parents (combined: 28.0%, *n*=58; females: 23.7%, *n*=33; males: 18.0%, *n*=25). The fewest depictions were of incompetent parents (combined: 12.6%, *n*=26; females: 5.8%, *n*=8; males: 12.9%, *n*=18).

Table 12

Competency Levels of Male and Female Caregivers in Teen Films

	Competent % (*n*)	Adequate % (*n*)	Incompetent % (*n*)
Mothers/Female Caregivers	23.7% (33)	45.3% (63)	5.8% (8)
Fathers/Male Caregivers	18.0% (25)	43.2% (60)	12.9% (18)
Total	28.0% (58)	59.4% (123)	12.6% (26)

A one-way ANOVA test was run and found no significant difference in the level of parental competency and the three various socio-economic classes for female caregivers (*p*>.05). However, there was a statistically significant difference found among male parental competency levels, $F(2,100) = 3.95$, *p*=.02, and the three groups of socio-economic class. Table 13 shows that the mean competency for male caregivers is 1.43 for those in the lower socio-economic group, 2.13 for those in the middle socio-economic group, and 2.08 for those in the upper socio-economic group. Post hoc Tukey HSD Tests indicate that the low and middle socio-economic groups differed significantly in the level of parental competency (*p*=.02). Likewise, there was also a significant difference in parental competency between the low and upper socio-economic groups (*p*=.05). What

this says is that for male caregivers seen in teen films, competency as a parent is significantly dependent upon socio-economic class; those in a lower socio-economic class were depicted as less competent parents than those in an upper socio-economic class.

Table 13

Means and Standard Deviations Comparing Male Caregivers Parental Competency Level and Socio-economic Class in Teen Films

Socio-economic Class	Parental Competency		
	n	*M* [a]	*SD*
Lower	7	1.43	.53
Middle	71	2.13	.63
Upper	25	2.08	.64
Total	103	2.07	.65

[a] 1 = Incompetent; 2 = Adequate; 3 = Competent
Significance of competency between groups: $p=.02$ lower and middle; $p=.05$ lower and upper.

Another test of parental depictions in the teen films studied was whether or not the caregivers were shown as a buffoon or not as buffoon. A frequency test was run and found that the majority of both female and male caregivers were not depicted as buffoons (females: 89.4%, $n=93$; males: 86.4%, $n=89$) (see table 14).

The last measure of parental depictions in teen films was specific interactions occurring between parent and child. Because all but one of the interactions coded were traditionally female domestic roles, one variable was removed (house or car repair) from the data before analysis were performed. Removing the house or car repair variable allowed an analysis to be run in order to determine if female caregivers were more often

depicted in these specific, traditionally female roles than the male caregivers in the teen film sample. A paired sample *t* test indicated that female caregivers were significantly shown engaging in these typically, female domestic roles more often than the male caregivers in teen films *t* (139) = 2.07, *p*=.04, *d*=.18. (see Appendix B for a list of all parent/child interactions coded in the sample.)

Table 14

Female and Male Caregivers in Teen Films: Buffoon or Not Buffoon

	Buffoon % (*n*)	**Not Buffoon** % (*n*)
Mothers/Female Caregivers	10.6% (11)	89.4% (93)
Fathers/Male Caregivers	13.6% (14)	86.4% (89)
Total	12.1% (25)	87.9% (182)

CHAPTER 6

Discussion

This thesis reviewed the portrayal of the family in ninety teen films produced during the 1980s, 1990s, and the 2000s (2000-2007). A total of 139 families were analyzed. Films targeted towards teens were analyzed because adolescents watch more movies than any other group of the population (MPAA, 2007) and they are at a time in their lives when they are heavily influenced by the media (Arnett, 1995).

The Teen Film Family

As expected the appearance of the traditional two-parent home has decreased in the teen films over the three decades reviewed and single-parent families have increased. In fact in the 1990s and the 2000s, single-parent homes were depicted more frequently than two-parent homes. Contrary to the U.S. population where dual-parent homes hold a strong majority, both prime-time television and the teen films studied indicate that single-parent homes are just as common as dual-parent homes based upon their representation of the two family structures. While this is not an effects study, reviewing these findings in conjunction with past studies about television under the scope of cultivation theory, would suggest that adolescents who are heavily exposed to the media, will likely cultivate the belief that single-parent homes are just as common as dual-parent homes in the U.S. The argument of cultivation theorists that the proliferation of the media is concentrating, rather than diversifying messages, would be proven correct in this case, as both prime-

time television and teen films are misrepresenting the amount of traditional and nontraditional families in the same manner- they are sending a common message.

Although the implications of what this could mean to a teenager would have to be drawn on an individual basis, Signorielli and Morgan (2001) have made the argument that the image of single-parents in television are often misleading, depicting single-parents leading more comfortable and luxurious life-styles than those of the typical single-parent in the U.S. However, this study did not produce the same results; rather it showed that socio-economic status of a family, which was based upon occupation, living standards, and possessions, was significantly impacted by family structure type. The single-parent families in this sample were more often shown in a lower socio-economic class than dual-parent families. It could be concluded that single-parents as depicted in teen films are not glorified in the way that Signorielli and Morgan (2001) have proposed happening in television shows.

In the teen films studied single-parents and especially single-fathers are more often shown as being widowed than divorced, which is also a misrepresentation of Americas' single-parents. Prime-time television has also held to the overrepresentation of widowers. Why has there been an overrepresentation of single-parents and of widowers on both prime-time television and in teen films? Possibly a single-parent creates a more interesting character, or has the potential for a greater variety of love interests. Perhaps a widowed father is a character that more people can sympathize with or he is more likable as compared to a divorced father; being a divorcee indicate a character flaw that a widower doesn't have. This is a question that perhaps only television and screen writers could answer.

It could be argued on many planes whether becoming a single-parent by death or divorce is more traumatic for spouses, their children and the family as a group; however that argument will not be made here. The implications of the findings regarding cause of single-parenthood and the overrepresentation of single-parents to teenagers is two-sided. Some critics have said that the overrepresentation of nontraditional families may be leading to the disintegration of the traditional American family (Chesebro, 1979). Morgan, Leggett, and Shanahan (1999, as citied in Signorielli & Morgan, 2001) found that heavy viewers of television were more likely than light viewers to endorse nontraditional family values; in turn the overrepresentation of nontraditional families in teen films would strengthen this message which is common to prime-time television shows' representations of family structures. On the flip side is that adolescents who view a wider array of family structures depicted in the media will be provided with a broader spectrum of information to learn about family structures different from their own. It is difficult to say whether or not the media should be a true reflection of American family structures, on the one hand some research has shown that the depiction of single-parents is a bit fantastical as depicted on television, but this study has not found that to be the case. So perhaps the two media combined give a more balanced look at single-parenthood than was previously thought.

Like television, the presence of minorities in the teen films studied has been somewhat limited. Additionally, it seems that minorities have also had very little presence in movies that other researchers have reviewed. While depictions of African Americans on television have begun to closely mirror the U.S. population, the same was not true for the teen films studied. African Americans are the most visible minority group

in teen films, but they are still underrepresented as compared to the U.S. population. And other minority groups have had only a very minute appearance on the big screen in the teen films studied. Potentially it would be beneficial for teenagers who are forming opinions about the diversity of our society's makeup to see a broader array of race in the movies they watch. Currently minorities in the U.S. account for nearly one quarter of the population and are projected to become the majority by the year 2042 (U.S. Census, 2008a). As the presence of minorities in the U.S. increases and the world becomes more globalized, it becomes increasingly important that the future leaders are comfortable with ethnicities other than their own. Gorn, Goldberg, and Kanungo (1976) found that white children who were exposed to nonwhite children on television, had a stronger preference to play with nonwhite children than white children who were not exposed to nonwhite children. What this finding means is that more exposure to other races made these children comfortable with races other than their own. The author proposes that this will hold true for teenagers as well; the more exposure they have to minority depictions in the media (so long as they are positive) the more they will be socialized to see fewer differences between white and nonwhite people, making them more comfortable to associate and work with races other than their own.

The majority of the families in the teen films studied were in a middle socio-economic class, with stay-at-home mothers and professional fathers; a very similar family as one has seen on television. Again the two media are sending a unified message. As cultivation theorist have proposed the proliferation of the media does not diversify content, but rather concentrates the messages. Cultivation theorists propose that the repeated exposure to these images will create and mold a shared conception of reality,

among what may be an otherwise diverse population (Gerbner, 1986; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002). This could have a positive of negative effect upon viewers that do not belong to a family that fits this mold. On the one hand it could lead an adolescent to aspire to a greater socio-economic class, pushing him to strive for a better education and more discipline in his study and work ethics. Or it could be detrimental to a child whose parents are both full-time, blue-collar workers and lead them to feel "left-out" because they don't meet this perceived cultural norm. Additionally, those that are heavy viewers may develop more stereotypical notions of mothers being stay-at-home parents and fathers being the breadwinners, an argument that will be discussed further in the next paragraph.

As may be expected female caregivers in the teen films studied were significantly shown performing traditionally female domestic responsibilities more often than were male caregivers; actions such as cleaning, shopping, and diapering. As stated this may be an expected finding because most of the female caregivers in the teen films studied were stay-at-home mothers, placing them in a position to be more likely to carry out domestic roles or responsibilities, because they are at home. These cultural storytellers both reflect the values and ideals of American society and shape the attitudes and beliefs of those who are watching. The messages that are consistently being shown and those that are not being shown lend viewers to a perceived reality, which is often not a reflection of reality (Heintz-Knowles, 2001). Adolescents who are defining opinions about gender roles are seeing a great emphasis placed on stereotypical gender roles on both television and in teen films. Of note is that when mothers are shown working outside of the home, they too are most often depicted in professional positions.

The portrayal of parent's in teen films is important because the media has a strong influence on adolescents' beliefs and values at a time when the presence and influence of their own family is diminishing (Arnett, 1995). Adolescents are being influenced by their own parents, but those who watch movies are also forming opinions, beliefs and values based on what they are seeing. Fortunately the parent's in the teen films studied were generally depicted in a positive regard. Although the majority of parents were depicted as adequate rather than competent, the minority of them were depicted as incompetent. Ideally perhaps the majority would be portrayed as more competent than adequate, but presumably this is a more realistic depiction of parents than that of the 1950s "super-parents". What is concerning though is that teen film fathers that were in a lower socio-economic class were portrayed as less competent than fathers in middle and upper socio-economic classes; interestingly this finding is typical of prime-time television shows as well. It appears that these two media are pushing the opinion that financial success is equated to success in other areas of life, specifically parenting skills. Combined with the typical teen film father being a working professional, these findings support the argument that stereotypical gender roles are being emphasized in television and in the teen films studied.

A positive result of this study was the finding that few parents in teen films were portrayed as uninvolved in their child's life or as buffoons; the vast majority of parents were depicted as authoritative caregivers. This style of parenting is defined as a parent who is, "both demanding and responsive. They monitor and impart clear standards for their children's conduct. They are assertive, but not intrusive or restrictive. Their disciplinary methods are supportive rather than punitive. They want their children to be

assertive as well as socially responsible, and self-regulated as well as cooperative"
(Baumrind, 1991, p. 62). This type of parent is considered ideal because these parent's
are able to develop "optimal competence in adolescents" (Baumrind, 1991, pg. 72). It is
hard to make a case that it would be better for anyone to see more examples of
uninvolved or permissive parents. Past research of parental depictions in the movies has
found that in general they have been cast unfavorably; in fact Considine (1985) went as
far as to label them "*Films Failed Fathers*" and "*Movies' Monstrous Moms*" (Considine,
1985; Harwood, 1997; Leitch, 1992; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998). Because of the
negative parental depictions that others have reported, it is hopeful that the majority of
the parents in the teen films studied have been cast more favorable.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has found that the typical American family as portrayed in teen movies is a middle-class, Caucasian, dual or single-parent family with one or two children. The father is most likely a working professional and the mother is most likely a stay-at-home mother. The parents are adequate in their parenting skills and are authoritative in their parenting style.

Youth today live in a media saturated environment; the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF, 2005) reports that children between the ages of 8 and 18 are spending 3.5 hours a day watching television and movies in addition to listening to the radio, browsing the Internet, playing video games and reading books and magazines. One can draw their own conclusion as to the effects of what the whole of these images are having upon their children and our future leaders. A cultivation theorist would posit that the ideas, values and beliefs that make up the central current of media messages are virtually inescapable for those who watch a lot of television and movies. Thus it is important to know what messages are being sent via this central media current. And while this study only represents a sample of the teen film population, it represents the teen films that the most people saw based upon the movies financial success. Founded upon this argument the data reported is a good representation of the images that the majority of teen movie goers would have been exposed.

What does this mean to adolescents who are heavy media users? Is it sending an accurate message about what the typical American family looks and acts like? Perhaps it

is okay that the media is not a true reflection of American reality. What is wrong with a lifestyle that one can aspire too? Perhaps it is encouraging for some to see a better reality than their own, possibly giving them hope for a better future. Or perhaps it becomes discouraging for some, who don't see their own social reality depicted in the movies. Conceivably a fragile youth in the mist of developing their own self becomes discouraged when they can't recognize them self in the media, leading them to believe they are not normal. It is a hard argument to make. This is potentially an argument that a sociologist or a psychologist could make on an individual basis. This thesis does not declare whether these images are good or bad, or whether or not teen films should be a true reflection of reality. This thesis's goal was only to show what is out there, what the teen films studied are showing the youth of America and that there are many common messages being delivered through television and the movies in general, and that there are also differences. This thesis used cultivation theory as a ground for discussion of what the possible implications could be of the combined and common media messages that television and teen films are sending to our youth at the time in their lives that they are looking to the media for guidance to assist in the formation of self.

<center>Contributions of Research</center>

Research has shown that the teen years are a time when identities are being formed, that values, beliefs, and attitudes are being manipulated and created. Research has also stated that the media has a great impact on the formation of those ideas, especially in young people (Arnett, 1995; Berry, 2003; Considine, 1985; Gerbner, 1998; Levy, 1991). There has been extensive research on television families, which is just one

media source that adolescents look to for information about the family. Film is another form of media that teens look to for information about the family, yet it remains relatively undiscovered. This study which has reviewed three decades of teen movies adds a substantial amount of information to the body of literature about the family as represented in the media.

Study Limitations

While this study has provided a great deal of information about the family in teen movies it, like all research, has its limitations. This study can only provide what was seen in the movies, but cannot identify what effects the images may have on viewers whether helpful or harmful.

Additionally, because there was a limited amount of information between differing family structures, the categories had to be collapsed into dual and single-parent families. For example, there were instances of blended families, grandparents as primary caregiver, and others. Thus, this research study could not run any analysis on these individual groups.

Another similar limitation was that occupation types were classified differently than on the census. Because of these discrepancies, no real comparisons could be made.

Future Research

Further research of teen film families could include teen films before the 1980s, which would offer a chance to review changes over a longer period of time. Additionally, a study could be conducted that looked at films targeted to other audiences to see how

families are portrayed in other types of movies. This would enable the researcher to make comparisons similar to those between prime-time families and families portrayed on children's programming.

Also, an interesting cultivation analysis study could be conducted in the future using data from this study against teenagers' perceptions of families. Teenager's opinions of families could be surveyed and analyzed according to their level of viewing, i.e. "heavy" movie viewers and moderate movie viewers.

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APPENDIX A

The 30 Top Grossing Teen Films within Each Decade

(Domestic box office gross is in millions.)

2000s Movies (2000-2007)

1.	Spider Man	$403,706
2.	Transformers	$319,071
3.	Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire	$290,013
4.	Juno	$143,495
5.	Hairspray	$118,871
6.	Remember the Titans	$115,645
7.	Freaky Friday	$110,230
8.	The Princess Diaries	$108,248
9.	Save the Last Dance	$91,057
10.	Mean Girls	$86,058
11.	Bring It On	$68,379
12.	Holes	$67,406
13.	Step Up	$65,328
14.	Sky High	$63,946
15.	Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift	$62,514
16.	Friday Night Lights	$61,255
17.	Snow Day	$60,020
18.	Cinderella Story	$51,438
19.	Big Fat Liar	$48,360
20.	Fat Albert	$48,116
21.	Agent Cody Banks	$47,938
22.	When a Stranger Calls	$47,860
23.	Napoleon Dynamite	$44,540
24.	The Lizzie McGuire Movie	$42,734
25.	A Walk to Remember	$41,281
26.	Orange County	$41,076
27.	John Tucker Must Die	$41,011
28.	The Grudge 2	$39,143
29.	Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants	$39,053
30.	Gridiron Gang	$38,432

1990s Movies

1.	Casper	$100,328
2.	She's All That	$63,366

3.	Clueless	$56,634
4.	Rookie of the Year	$53,165
5.	The Mighty Ducks	$50,752
6.	Little Women	$50,083
7.	The Brady Bunch Movie	$46,576
8.	Romeo + Juliet	$46,351
9.	Encino Man	$40,693
10.	Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers	$38,187
11.	10 Things I Hate About You	$38,178
12.	Richie Rich	$38,087
13.	October Sky	$32,547
14.	First Kid	$26,491
15.	Don't Tell Mom the Babysitter's Dead	$25,196
16.	Good Burger	$23,712
17.	Flipper	$20,080
18.	Drive Me Crazy	$17,845
19.	Buffy the Vampire Slayer	$16,624
20.	Mad Love	$15,453
21.	School Ties	$14,453
22.	Excess Baggage	$14,515
23.	Little Big League	$12,267
24.	Drop Dead Gorgeous	$10,571
25.	Cry-Baby	$8,266
26.	Hackers	$7,536
27.	Dick	$6,262
28.	Mystery Date	$6,166
29.	Swing Kids	$5,632
30.	Angus	$4,821

1980s Movies

1.	Back to the Future	$210,609
2.	Honey I Shrunk the Kids	$103,724
3.	Dead Poets Society	$95,860
4.	Karate Kid	$90,815
5.	Footloose	$80,035
6.	WarGame	$79,567
7.	Ferris Bueller's Day Off	$70,136
8.	The Goonies	$61,389
9.	Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure	$40,485
10.	Pretty in Pink	$40,471
11.	Red Dawn	$38,376
12.	Taps	$35,856
13.	Adventures in Baby Sitting	$34,368
14.	Teen Wolf	$33,086
15.	Can't Buy Me Love	$31,623

16. The Outsiders	$25,697
17. Weird Science	$23,834
18. Sixteen Candles	$23,686
19. My Bodyguard	$22,482
20. License to Drive	$22,433
21. Say Anything	$20,781
22. Young Sherlock Holmes	$19,739
23. Some Kind of Wonderful	$18,553
24. One Crazy Summer	$13,431
25. She's Out of Control	$12,065
26. Just One of the Guys	$11,528
27. Better Off Dead	$10,297
28. Lucas	$8,200
29. Girls Just Want to Have Fun	$6,326
30. Hot Pursuit	$4,215

APPENDIX B

Coding Sheet

Movie:_____   Coder:_____

Movie Family (name:_____)

Structure: __Dual parent (adoptive or biological) __Single (mother) __Single (father)
         __Guardians/Godparents (relatives)   __Guardians/Godparents (nonrelatives)
         __ Domestic live-ins
         Other:_____

Additional Structure (check all that apply): __Extended
        (__grdma   __grdpa   __u   __a   __c)
___Step (mother)   ___Step (father)   ___Blended

If nontraditional family, answer following:

        Origin of single-parent: __divorced   __separated   __widowed
                              __never married   __can't determine

        Origin of blended or step family
              (mother): __divorced   __widowed   __not married __can't determine
              (father): __divorced   __widowed   __not married __can't determine

Socio-economic: ___ Lower class   ___Middle class   ___Upper class

Ethnicity: (Mother)   Caucasian Hispanic Afr. Am Asian N. Amer Arab Other

Ethnicity: (Father)   Caucasian Hispanic Afr. Am Asian N. Amer Arab Other

Profession: (Mother)   Professional   Manager   Clerical
                        Laborer Farmer   Craftsman   Stay at home
                        Not Clear
Job Description: _____

Status: Full-Time   Part-Time   Unemployed   Retired   Homemaker   Can't Tell

Profession: (Father)   Professional   Manager   Clerical
                        Laborer Farmer   Craftsman   Stay at home
                        Not Clear
Job Description: _____

Status: Full-Time   Part-Time   Unemployed   Retired   Homemaker   Can't Tell

Siblings (#):   ____ brothers   ____sisters

Relatives not living with family: ____ grandma(s) ____ grandpa(s) ____ uncle(s)
(from teenager's perspective)   ____ aunt(s)   ___ cousin (s) ____ other:

Parental Depictions:

   Female caregiver: __Mother __Grandmother   __Aunt   __Older sister
                        Other: _____

      [Competent/Adequate/Incompetent]   [Buffoon / Not Buffoon]
      [Central/Marginal]   [Authoritarian / Authoritative / Permissive / Uninvolved]

    Male caregiver: __Father   __Grandfather   __Uncle   __Older brother
                         Other: _____

   [Competent/ Adequate /Incompetent]   [Buffoon / Not Buffoon]
   [Central/Marginal]   [Authoritarian / Authoritative / Permissive / Uninvolved]

Female Caregiver:
Putting Children to bed: ____   Cleaning up after children:_____
Consoling Children: ____   Driving Child(ren):_____
Serving/Preparing food/feeding:_____   Holding Child(ren):_____
Disciplining Children:_____   House/Car repair:_____ Shopping: ____
Diapering: ____Other: _____

Male Caregiver:
Putting Children to bed: ____   Cleaning up after children:_____
Consoling Children: ____   Driving Child(ren):_____
Serving/Preparing food/feeding:_____   Holding Child(ren):_____
Disciplining Children:_____   House/Car repair:_____ Shopping: ____
Diapering: ____Other: _____