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Romcom Relationship or Sitcom Single?

Comparison of Hyperfeminine Stereotypes, Counter-Stereotypes, and Their
Reactions in Sitcoms and Romcoms

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Abstract

This paper looks into hyperfemininity, counter-hyperfemininity, and the reactions to both concepts for situational comedy television shows in comparison to romantic comedy films. These genres are highly popular with adolescents, for whom television and film are two main sources of information with regards to sexuality and gender. Therefore, studying this content is relevant and necessary to determine what this susceptible audience is confronted with on both the big and small screen. The main goal of this research was to discover how the display of hyperfemininity and counter-hyperfemininity through statements and reactions differs in sitcoms and romcoms. The analyses showed that romcoms display more hyperfeminine expectations towards men, while simultaneously showing its viewers higher levels of certain counter-hyperfeminine ideas. However, in these movies the hyperfeminine stereotype is often confirmed through affirmative reactions, while counter-hyperfeminine statements receive negative responses. Sitcoms seem to paint a less stereotypical image with characters more frequently giving positive reactions towards counter-hyperfemininity. Overall it can be concluded that, to some extent, romcoms appear to tell a more hyperfeminine story than sitcoms.

Introduction

Media content is not always setting the best example for its viewers, as several content analyses have shown that a lot of television programs (Ferris, Smith, Greenberg, & Smith, 2007; Kim et al., 2007; Van Damme, 2010) as well as movies (Behm-Morawitz & Mastro, 2008; Neuendorf, Gore, Dalessandro, Janstova, & Snyder-Suhy, 2010; Smith, Pieper, Granados, & Choueiti, 2010) are filled with gender stereotypes (i.e., structured sets of assumptions, beliefs, and judgments about the personalities and psychological traits of the social categories ‘male’ and ‘female’; Ashmore & Del Boca, 1979). That is problematic since young people, especially adolescents (i.e., between ages 12 to 17), often turn to media characters for advice and inspiration about who to be in terms of gender and sexuality (Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2017a). This paper will focus on the media presence of one stereotype specifically: hyperfemininity, the stereotypical gender idea that women should be sexy and good-looking to attract and keep men and should have a man in their life who displays traditional dating and sexual behavior (Murnen & Byrne, 1991). Studies have already related this stereotype with higher levels of self-objectification and body shame (Forrest & Osman, 2011) and lower psychological adjustment (Kreiger & Dumka, 2006). Researchers have even inferred that women who show high levels of hyperfemininity are at increased risk of sexual assault victimization (Ehlke, 2013; Maybach & Gold, 1994). Therefore, it is relevant to know when media are promoting hyperfeminine beliefs.

Next to zooming in on a specific stereotype, this thesis will study two specific media genres: romantic comedy movies (romcoms) and situational comedy television shows (sitcoms). Researchers argue that different genres may express divergent messages, which could ultimately influence viewers in different ways (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010; van Oosten, 2017). Romcoms and sitcoms are focused on because it is very likely that adolescents make up a considerable part of these genres’ audience. Although no specific numbers of adolescent

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viewership per genre are publicly available, general data show that they do watch a substantial amount of film and television. On average, teenagers devote 13 hours to television every week and go to the movies approximately 6 times a year (Motion Picture Association of America, 2017; Nielsen, 2017). Moreover, adolescents tend to select media content that contains humor and deals with sexuality and romantic relationships (Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2017a) and romcoms and sitcoms usually contain at least one of these elements.

However, there are currently several gaps in the literature when it comes to what adolescents are exposed to when they watch these genres. First, most content analyses on gender stereotypes do not focus on the presence of hyperfemininity specifically. In addition, there is a lack of comparative studies on sitcoms and romcoms, even though previous research suggests that these two genres in particular can be expected to differ in terms of stereotypical messages (Lippman, Ward, & Seabrook, 2014; van Oosten, 2017; Zurbriggen, Ramsey, & Jaworski, 2011). Finally, multiple authors have emphasized the value of aiming attention at reactions to expressions of gender stereotypes (Birthisel & Martin, 2013; Hefner & Wilson, 2013) and looking further into counter-stereotypical content (Kim et al., 2007). This implies that more research is desirable on the hyperfeminine stereotypes as well as stereotype-rejecting or -countering elements presented in these genres. To address these gaps and the concerns about the potential influence of media content on adolescents' gender orientations my thesis will compare (counter-)hyperfeminine statements and reactions to such statements in sitcoms and romcoms.

Theoretical Background

Formation of Adolescents' Gender Roles and Attitudes

According to Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 1981), gender ideas in society have a big influence on young people that are still growing up, as they will internalize the gender roles and attitudes they are confronted with and eventually identify with these ideas. Children and

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adolescents take in information from their environment about what male- and femaleness mean and store this in schemata (i.e., structures in the brain). Those associative networks are used to fall back on when processing new information (Bem, 1981). Numerous sources and experiences, including media exposure, play a crucial role in shaping gender schema content (Ward, Hansbrough, & Walker, 2005). This notion that constant confrontation with certain (in this case gender-related) content in movies and television programs can make the viewed ideas part of an adolescent's set of attitudes and beliefs is in line with several other theories. For example, Cultivation Theory states that regular viewing of certain media images (e.g., seeing women prioritize a romantic relationship over friendships) leads to gradual internalization of the shown ideas (e.g., believing that a woman *should* prioritize men over female friends) (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1986; Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2017b). Social Cognitive Theory follows this idea by stating that behavior and attitudes are the result of observation and imitation of other people's behavior, including media characters (Bandura, 2002; Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2017b). These theories highlight the importance of gaining knowledge on gender portrayals in media, as they could potentially influence adolescents' gender attitudes and beliefs.

One particular relevant gender stereotype is hyperfemininity. Following Murnen and Byrne (1991), hyperfemininity can be defined as a stereotypical female gender role expressed through three dimensions: (1) the importance of (a relationship with) a man in a woman's life, (2) the importance of women's sexy physical appearance and sexuality to attract or keep a man, and (3) the traditional dating and sexual behavior of a man (e.g., a man should take the lead in a dating situation, men have uncontrollable sexual needs). One media effects study found that adolescent girls who often viewed romcoms more strongly endorsed hyperfemininity, whereas frequent exposure to sitcoms decreased endorsement of such stereotypical gender orientations (van Oosten, 2017). Due to a lack of studies comparing

hyperfeminine content in sitcoms and romcoms, it is hard to determine if the content of these genres is really at the basis of van Oosten's findings (2017) or if other factors are at play.

Differential Gender Stereotypes in Romcoms and Sitcoms

Several researchers argue that not all media should be tarred with the same brush because different genres can tell entirely different stories, also when it comes to gender ideas (e.g., Morgan & Shanahan, 2010; van Oosten, 2017). As mentioned in the introduction, the current paper will concentrate on two specific media genres: romcoms and sitcoms. For this study, I will define romcoms as films that focus primarily on romance and are mainly of a humorous nature and sitcoms as comedic television programs that are between 20 and 30 minutes long. Although very few studies on gender stereotypes in romcoms or sitcoms aimed attention specifically at hyperfemininity, some results did touch upon certain aspects of the construct. These results will be discussed in the following sections.

Gender stereotypes in romcoms. Most studies that concentrated on romcoms showed that this genre contains several aspects of hyperfemininity. For example, Johnson and Holmes (2009) demonstrated that most Hollywood romcoms display men taking the lead when it comes to relationships (e.g., taking more steps to initiate a relationship) and negativity towards being single (e.g., single characters depicted as lonely and frustrated). Researchers also found that several (less recent) romcoms (e.g., *Maid in Manhattan*, *Just Married*) featured characters falling in love before they really knew each other, based solely on looks (i.e., 'love at first sight') (Johnson, 2007; Rios & Reyes, 2007). This can be linked to the hyperfeminine idea that looks are women's most important attribute and a tool to attract men. Hefner and Wilson (2013) also looked into 'love at first sight', in romcoms released between 1998 and 2008 and found that this romantic ideal was only present in 7% of the films they analyzed. These studies all show valuable results, but are somewhat outdated and do not give clarity about the hyperfeminine content of more recent romcoms.

Gender stereotypes in sitcoms. At first glance, studies on sitcoms seem to indicate that this genre is also filled with hypergender stereotypes. Examples are Montemurro (2003) and Birthisel and Martin (2013) who looked into workplace-based sitcoms and found that humor is often used at the expense of women, with men degrading them for comedic purposes and a big focus on women's looks. Focusing on two other sitcoms (*Happy Endings* and *2 Broke Girls*), Hogan (2013) also found expressions of several gender stereotypes regarding women, for example, their need to be in a relationship and their use of sexy, seductive behavior to attract men. Simmons and Rich (2013) stated that most American sitcoms from 1952 to 2004 reaffirmed female stereotypes, but nuanced this by mentioning that some shows adjusted female roles and are more progressive (e.g., more single women, husband and wife as equals in marriage). Kim et al. (2007) also attest to this nuance by not just showing that sitcoms often invoke the Heterosexual Script (e.g., women's main value lies in their physical appearance, men are consumed by sexual thoughts and needs), but also pointing to the importance of portrayals countering that script (e.g., women relying on their intelligence in a romantic relationship). However, the most recent sitcom that was analyzed in the above-mentioned results dates back to 2006 (i.e., the second season of *The Office*; Birthisel & Martin, 2013). This means that there is a lack of recent analyses of sitcoms' gender-related content, which was also the case with romcoms.

Comparison of Gender Stereotypes in Sitcoms and Romcoms

Although studies looking only into sitcoms and romcoms show mixed results, research that examined both genres leads to the suggestion that gender stereotypes are more present in romcoms than sitcoms. In a study by Zurbriggen et al. (2011), the researchers asked ten experts to rate the objectification levels of several media genres. Sitcoms received a score of 7.22 out of 25 ($SD = 2.98$) and romcoms received a rating of 8.93 ($SD = 3.59$). Higher scores indicated that objectification was more frequent and intense (Zurbriggen et al., 2011).

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Although these numbers might not be significantly different, they do show that there is a difference in the genres' gender-related content. Lippman et al. (2014) also point to this by showing that heavy exposure to movies with a romantic theme or subtheme related to certain romantic beliefs being strengthened, whereas higher viewership of sitcoms was associated with weaker beliefs. It is important to signify a clear gap here since very few studies, except for the study mentioned earlier by van Oosten (2017), directly compared romcoms and sitcoms in terms of hyperfeminine content or influence. My thesis will address this gap with the following hypotheses. Since hyperfemininity consists of three specific dimensions, each hypothesis will focus on a separate dimension.

H1a: The importance of (a relationship with) a man in a woman's life (i.e., hyperfemininity dimension 1) is more present in romcoms than in sitcoms.

H1b: Women's use of physical attractiveness, sexuality, and sexiness to attract or keep a man (i.e., hyperfemininity dimension 2) is more present in romcoms than in sitcoms.

H1c: Hyperfeminine expectations of men's dating and sexual behavior (i.e., hyperfemininity dimension 3) are more present in romcoms than in sitcoms.

Countering the Hyperfeminine Stereotype Through Statements and Reactions

As mentioned earlier, Cultivation Theory points towards the importance of looking at media content, as frequent exposure to certain content will lead to viewers internalizing the presented behavior and attitudes (Gerbner et al., 1986; Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2017b). This has been linked to the dangers of gender stereotypes in media numerous times. However, looking at this theory through a more optimistic lens reveals the opportunities of counter-stereotypical actions because being exposed to such messages will cultivate similar attitudes and behaviors in the audience. Several researchers brought to light the importance of studying expressions of counter-stereotypical ideas (Collins, 2011; Hefner & Wilson, 2013; Kim et al., 2007; van Oosten, 2017). For example, Kim et al. (2007), as mentioned earlier, discussed the

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importance of assessing counter-stereotypical portrayals on television (e.g., independent single women, women relying on intelligence rather than looks and sexuality) because, in combination with stereotypical scripts, this has great potential to clear up the contexts in which gendered talk and behavior occur. Hefner and Wilson (2013) examined messages in romcoms that contradicted romantic ideals (e.g., negative statements about marriage, a reality check about long distance relationships). They found that 98% of the studied romcoms featured a so-called romantic challenge (Hefner & Wilson, 2013).

Although the aforementioned studies point to the importance of looking into counter-stereotyping no studies exist that actually analyzed or compared counter-hyperfeminine portrayals in romcoms and sitcoms. Therefore, no evidence can be presented to suggest a (direction of a) difference between the two genres, which is why for these topics research questions rather than hypotheses were developed. The hyperfemininity dimensions were reversed to gain insight on counter-stereotyping,

RQ1a: Is there a difference between sitcoms and romcoms in the expression of the idea that a man is not (most) important in a woman's life (i.e., counter-hyperfemininity dimension 1)?

RQ1b: Is there a difference between sitcoms and romcoms in the expression of the importance of women's personality ('inner beauty'), competence, and intelligence to attract or keep a man (i.e., counter-hyperfemininity dimension 2)?

RQ1c: Is there a difference between sitcoms and romcoms in the expression of non-hyperfeminine expectations of men's dating and sexual behavior (i.e., counter-hyperfemininity dimension 3)?

Furthermore, according to Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2002), it is not only important to *see* certain behavior for imitation to occur, but also whether or not the modeled behavior is *rewarded* or *punished*. Seeing others receive a reward for expressing certain

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gender stereotypical ideas might stimulate the observer to set the same behavior, whereas witnessing negative outcomes can do the opposite and discourage the observer to imitate the behavior as he fears facing the same punishment (Bandura, 2002). Based on this theory, several studies have highlighted the importance of the consequences that gender stereotypical actions or statements receive (Ferris et al., 2007; Hefner & Wilson, 2013; Kim et al., 2007). Consequences of stereotypical expressions have been measured in both romcoms (Hefner & Wilson, 2013) and sitcoms (Birthisel & Martin, 2013), for example by coding if an expression of a romantic ideal received praise or disagreement from another character. Hefner and Wilson (2013) found that expressing a romantic ideal in a romcom was more likely to be rewarded than punished, whereas the opposite appeared to be true for counter-stereotypical romantic ideas. However, no studies have measured and compared the consequences of (counter-)hyperfeminine portrayals in sitcoms and romcoms together in one study. That is why this research will look into whether or not there is a difference in rewarding and punishing of (counter-)stereotypical ideas by looking into the positive, affirmative reactions and negative, rejecting reactions the expressions receive.

RQ2a: Is there a difference between sitcoms and romcoms in the reactions that hyperfeminine ideas receive?

RQ2b: Is there a difference between sitcoms and romcoms in the reactions that counter-hyperfeminine ideas receive?

Methods

To provide an answer to the hypotheses and research questions, a content analysis of nine sitcoms (three episodes per show) and nine romcoms was conducted. This technique allows for systematic quantification and comparison of the hyperfeminine and counter-hyperfeminine content in both genres (Bryman, 2016). All sitcoms and romcoms that are popular with Dutch adolescents and were broadcast between 2014 and 2017 are of interest for

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this study. However, money and time restrictions as well as the absence of a clear overview of popular comedy television shows and films with adolescents, led to the decision to examine a purposive sample using the sample frames described below.

For sitcoms, first, a television diary from Dutch adolescents from September to December 2014 was consulted (data obtained from supervisor). All shows that were mentioned that had a maximum length of 30 minutes and were categorized as Comedy on IMDb qualified as sitcoms. Only the shows that were still running in 2017 (i.e., broadcast the last season in 2017 or will continue after 2017) were selected for analysis (i.e., *Liv and Maddie*, *The Big Bang Theory*, and *The Thundermans*). In addition, to include shows that were popular with teens in the years after this television diary was kept, shows that met the same criteria and were nominated as Choice Comedy TV Show for Nickelodeon's Teen Choice Awards of 2015, 2016 and/or 2017 were added to the list of shows to be studied (i.e., *Baby Daddy*, *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, *Girl Meets World*, *Modern Family*, *New Girl*, and *Young and Hungry*). Many respondents mentioned Nickelodeon in the 2014 television diary and several other researchers have argued Teen Choice Awards' nominations or wins reflect content that is popular with teens (Smith, 2012; Van Damme, 2010). Per show, three random episodes from seasons 2014-2017 were analyzed, since this roughly equals the approximate duration of a full-length movie (i.e., 90 minutes) and it is also common practice in television content analyses (e.g., Kim et al., 2007; Kunkel, Eyal, Finnerty, Biely, & Donnerstein, 2005; Tolman, Kim, Schooler, & Sorsoli, 2007).

For romcoms, box office numbers were used as a criterion for popularity, assuming that movies that appealed to the general audience have a high chance of being seen by adolescents. Dutch box office numbers were combined with Box Office Mojo to select the nine highest-grossing, English-language, non-animated movies that categorized as Romantic Comedy on Box Office Mojo, were popular in Dutch cinemas, and released between 2014

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and 2017 (Box Office Mojo, 2017; Grannetia, 2017). In line with Johnson and Holmes (2009), movies that were not set mostly within or close to those years were excluded. Box Office Mojo has been widely used in media content research (e.g., Hefner & Wilson, 2013; Johnson & Holmes, 2009; Smith, 2012). In addition to high box office numbers, the movies had to have a 'Kijkwijzer' (i.e., a label that provides information about appropriateness of media content per age category) that stated the content was fit and accessible for audiences aged 12-17 (Kijkwijzer, 2017). The following nine movies were selected for analysis:

Blended, Bridget Jones's Baby, Home Again, How To Be Single, 'Love, Rosie', Sleeping with Other People, That Awkward Moment, The Big Sick, and Trainwreck.

The author viewed the selected sitcom and romcom content to assess and compare the levels of hyperfeminine and counter-hyperfeminine content in these genres, and the reactions that such (counter-)stereotypical expressions received, following the codebook in Appendix A. The collected data were analyzed in SPSS to provide a clear answer to the hypotheses and research questions. To ensure that the way of coding was generalizable and not biased, 12.55% of the sample (i.e., 1 movie and 3 sitcom episodes, 199 out of 1,586 scenes) was double-coded. The intercoder reliability values for the items that were coded by the author and an additional coder can be found in Table B1 in Appendix B. All items reached adequate intercoder reliability with values for Cohen's Kappa (Landis & Koch, 1977) and Krippendorff's alpha (Krippendorff, 2004), which meant they could be used in the analyses.

Measures

The unit of analysis was every single scene of an episode or film. A scene change is characterized by a clear change in time and/or setting. In total, 1,586 scenes were coded (651 in sitcoms and 935 in romcoms).

Hyperfemininity. As hyperfemininity is mostly measured in surveys, the original scale by Murnen and Byrne (1991) was reformulated into content analysis items representing

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hyperfeminine ideas that may or may not be present in a scene of a romcom or sitcom. For every scene, the presence or absence of nine hyperfeminine ideas was coded, as well as whether or not reactions were given to the expression (0 = absent, 1 = present with no or neutral reactions, 2 = present with only affirmative reactions, 3 = present with only rejecting reactions, 4 = present with mixed reactions). These nine ideas represented the three hyperfemininity dimensions: importance of (a relationship with) a man in a woman's life (2 subitems), women's use of physical attractiveness, sexuality, and sexiness to attract and keep men (3 subitems), and hyperfeminine expectations of men's dating and sexual behavior (4 subitems). Appendix A contains an overview of all subitems. Examples of included subitems are "It is, or should be, important for a woman to have a relationship with a man" (dimension 1) and "Men have high, uncontrollable sexual needs" (dimension 3).

Counter-hyperfemininity. For this measure, the non-hyperfeminine scale items of Murnen and Byrne (1991) in combination with the items used in this study to represent hyperfemininity were used as a basis to create items that express the opposite idea: counter-hyperfemininity. In the same way as was done with hyperfemininity, absence or presence (with or without reactions) of several subitems that made up the three counter-dimensions were coded. The three counter-dimensions are the following: a man is not (most) important in a woman's life (2 subitems), importance of women's personality, intelligence, and competence (3 subitems), and non-hyperfeminine expectations of men's dating and sexual behavior (4 subitems). A full list of the subitems can be found in Appendix A. Examples of subitems to measure these dimensions are "For a woman, a relationship with a man is, or should be, just as important as herself, her female friendships, or her career" (dimension 1) and "A man does not, or is not expected to, take the lead in a sexual situation with a woman" (dimension 3).

Results

Differences Between Romcoms and Sitcoms in Presence of Hyperfemininity

Hypothesis 1a stated that the importance of (a relationship with) a man in a woman's life (i.e., hyperfemininity dimension 1) is more present in romcoms than sitcoms. This hypothesis was tested using a chi-square test with genre as independent variable and the overall dimension (i.e., variable coded as 0 for dimension absent and 1 for dimension present, if at least one of the subitems making up the dimension is present, *without* measuring precisely which or how many subitems). The test showed that there was no significant difference between sitcoms and romcoms in overall occurrence of dimension 1 ($\chi^2(1) = 0.33$, $p = .567$). Table B2 in Appendix B presents the presence or absence of every dimension and counter-dimension per genre. To further evaluate which *specific* subitems were more or less present per genre, a comparison in occurrence (with 0 is absent and 1 is present) of the separate items representing this first hyperfemininity dimension (i.e., subitems D1I1: it is important for a woman to have a relationship with a man and D1I2: a woman prioritizes a man she is romantically interested in or has a relationship with over herself, her female friends, or her career) was carried out. Both chi-square tests for the separate items revealed a statistically significant difference between sitcoms and romcoms, with Table B3 (Appendix B) displaying the absolute counts and column percentages for every individual item per genre. D1I1 was more present than expected by chance in romcoms and less present in sitcoms with $\chi^2(1) = 4.96$, $p = .026$ and Goodman & Kruskal's tau = .00, $p = .026$, which indicates that the association is very weak. The opposite was true for D1I2, which was more present than expected in sitcoms with $\chi^2(1) = 3.98$, $p = .046$, a very weak association with Goodman & Kruskal's tau = .00, $p = .046$. It is important to remark that whenever Goodman & Kruskal's tau is noted as .00 in this paper this means it is *close* to, but does *not equal* zero. Hypothesis

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1a is partially supported, for item D1I1, but should be rejected when looking at the results for D1I2 and the overall dimension-variable.

The second hypothesis to be tested, Hypothesis 1b, claimed that women's use of physical attractiveness, sexuality, and sexiness to attract or keep a man (i.e., hyperfemininity dimension 2) is more present in romcoms than in sitcoms. Similar to H1a a chi-square test was conducted to test for a difference between sitcoms and romcoms in terms of presence of the full dimension, which was not significant ($\chi^2(1) = 1.73, p = .189$), see Table B2 for absolute counts and column percentages. The presence of the separate items in romcoms compared to sitcoms was analyzed through chi-square tests as well (see Table B3). This was only significant for one subitem (i.e., D2I1: a woman's physical attractiveness, sexuality, and/or sexiness are (more) important than her intelligence, competence and/or personality to attract or keep a man), with the item being more present in romcoms than would be expected by chance, $\chi^2(1) = 4.37, p = .037$. This association is very weak with Goodman & Kruskal's tau = .00, $p = .037$. For the other two subitems in this dimension (i.e., D2I2: a woman attaches high value to her appearance and D2I3: a woman uses her physical appearance, sexiness and/or sexuality as a manipulation tool to attract or keep a man) there was no significant difference between sitcoms and romcoms. These results show that Hypothesis 1b is only true for one subitem: a woman's physical attractiveness, sexuality, and/or sexiness are (more) important than her intelligence, competence and/or personality to attract or keep a man. The hypothesis should be rejected when looking at the other individual items and the dimension overall.

In order to test hypothesis 1c, which predicted that romcoms would have a higher presence of hyperfeminine expectations of men's dating and sexual behavior (i.e., hyperfemininity dimension 3) compared to sitcoms, a chi-square test was conducted with genre as independent and the third hyperfemininity dimension as a dependent variable. This

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test was statistically significant with the dimension being more present in romcoms than sitcoms (see Table B2), $\chi^2(1) = 30.24, p < .001$, Goodman & Kruskal's tau = .02, $p < .001$, which shows a very weak association. To determine which specific subitems were more or less present per genre, the separate items forming the third hyperfemininity dimension were each subjected to an individual chi-square test which revealed a significant difference between sitcoms and romcoms for D3I1 (i.e., a man takes the lead in a dating situation with a woman) and D3I2 (i.e., a man takes the lead in a sexual situation with a woman) with respective results being $\chi^2(1) = 31.72, p < .001$, Goodman & Kruskal's tau = .02, $p < .001$ and $\chi^2(1) = 5.44, p = .020$, Goodman & Kruskal's tau = .00, $p = .020$. Both hyperfeminine items were present more often than would be expected by chance in romcoms (see Table B3) and the associations are very weak. For the other two subitems (i.e., D3I3: men find it important to be sexually successful and sexually experienced and D3I4: men have high, uncontrollable sexual needs) there was no significant difference between the two genres. These results mostly offer support for Hypothesis 1c.

Differences Between Romcoms and Sitcoms in Presence of Counter-Hyperfemininity

RQ1a posed the question if there is a difference between sitcoms and romcoms in the expression of the idea that a man is not (most) important in a woman's life (i.e., counter-hyperfemininity dimension 1). The chi-square test with genre as independent and the first counter-dimension as dependent variable was significant, with the counter-dimension being more present in romcoms (see Table B2), $\chi^2(1) = 5.68, p = .017$ and a very weak association with Goodman & Kruskal's tau = .00, $p = .017$. The chi-square test for the separate item CD1I1 (i.e., it is okay for a woman to be single and it is not important to have a relationship with a man) was significant, $\chi^2(1) = 6.09, p = .014$ and Goodman & Kruskal's tau = .00, $p = .014$, which indicates that the association is very weak. The counter-hyperfeminine item was more present in romcoms than sitcoms (see Table B3). For CD1I2 (i.e., for a woman, a

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relationship with a man is just as important as herself, her female friendships, or her career) a Fischer's exact test was conducted since multiple cells had an expected count below 5, thereby violating the requirement for a chi-square test. The test was not significant (absolute counts and column percentages in Table B3). These analyses provide an answer to RQ1a that shows the first counter-hyperfemininity dimension, especially the idea that it is not important for a woman to be in a relationship with a man and it is okay for her to be single, is more present in romcoms than in sitcoms.

RQ1b investigated if there is a difference between romcoms and sitcoms in expressing the importance of women's personality, competence, and intelligence to attract or keep a man (i.e., counter-hyperfemininity dimension 2). The chi-square test for the relationship between genre and the variable for counter-dimension 2 was not significant ($\chi^2(1) = 1.36, p = .244$) (absolute counts and column percentages in Table B2). For subitem CD2I2 (i.e., a woman does not attach high value to her appearance) a Fischer's exact test was conducted since multiple cells had an expected value lower than 5. The test was significant (Fischer's exact test = 0.02, $p < .001$, Goodman & Kruskal's tau = .00, $p = .016$), but the association is very weak. The subitem was more present than would be expected by chance in sitcoms compared to romcoms (see Table B3). The tests for the other two subitems forming dimension 2 (i.e., CD2I1: a woman's intelligence, competence and/or personality is (more) important than her physical attractiveness, sexuality, and/or sexiness and CD2I3: a woman uses her competence, intelligence, or personality to attract or keep a man) were not significant. These results show that there is only a difference between sitcoms and romcoms in the expression of the idea that a woman does not attach high value to her appearance, with the item being more present in sitcoms than expected by chance.

RQ1c asked whether or not sitcoms and romcoms differ in the expression of non-hyperfeminine expectations of men's dating and sexual behavior (i.e., counter-

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hyperfemininity dimension 3). To test if the full counter-dimension was related to genre, a chi-square test was conducted with genre as independent and counter-dimension 3 as dependent variable. This showed that there is a significant but very weak correlation between genre and the presence of the counter-dimension, with the counter-dimension being less present in sitcoms than in romcoms (see Table B2), $\chi^2(1) = 15.37, p < .001$, Goodman & Kruskal's tau = .01, $p < .001$. A chi-square test or Fischer's exact test was also conducted for every individual item forming the third counter-dimension. These were significant for both CD3I2 (i.e., a man does not take the lead in a sexual situation with a woman), Fischer's exact test = 0.00, $p = .004$, Goodman & Kruskal's tau = .01, $p = .005$ and for CD3I4 (i.e., men and women have the same sexual needs, or women have higher sexual needs than men), $\chi^2(1) = 16.56, p < .001$, Goodman & Kruskal's tau = .01, $p < .001$. Both subitems were more present than expected by chance in romcoms (see Table B3), but the associations are very weak. Based on these analyses, romcoms compared to sitcoms contain more statements representing non-hyperfeminine expectations of men's dating and sexual behavior, specifically the ideas that a man does not take the lead in a sexual situation with a woman and that men and women have the same sexual needs or women have higher sexual needs. However, there is no difference between sitcoms and romcoms in the expression of CD3I1 (i.e., a man does not take the lead in a dating situation with a woman) and CD3I3 (i.e., it is not necessary or important for a man to be sexually successful or sexually experienced).

Reactions Towards Hyperfemininity in Romcoms and Sitcoms

RQ2a assessed whether or not there is a difference between sitcoms and romcoms in the reactions that hyperfeminine ideas receive. Per dimension, for every reaction type (i.e., positive, negative, and mixed) a separate comparison was made between romcoms and sitcoms to test if there was a significant relationship between genre and reactions. The dependent variables used for this were coded as 1 if any of the subitems forming a dimension

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received the reaction in question (e.g., positive reactions) and 0 if any of the subitems received a different reaction (e.g., negative or mixed reactions). In some cases, the number of cells with an expected count below 5 was too high, which violated the requirement for a chi-square test, which is why then a Fischer's exact test was looked at instead. For the overall hyperfemininity dimensions, there was only a significant difference between romcoms and sitcoms in positive reactions towards dimension 2 (i.e., women's use of physical attractiveness, sexuality, and sexiness to attract or keep men), $\chi^2(1) = 5.35, p = .021$, Goodman & Kruskal's tau = .08, $p = .022$, this is a weak association as taking genre into account only improves the prediction of positive reactions towards the second hyperfemininity dimension by 8%. The dimension was significantly more present in romcoms ($N = 42$), with 34 occurrences (80.95%), than in sitcoms ($N = 24$), with only 13 occurrences (54.17%). For the individual items, new variables were created only including the reaction-categories 2 (present with only positive reactions), 3 (present with only negative reactions), and 4 (present with both positive and negative, mixed reactions). The tests were not significant for any of the individual subitems per dimension. To answer RQ2a, there is only a statistically significant difference between sitcoms and romcoms in the reactions to the expression of women's use of physical attractiveness, sexuality, and sexiness to attract or keep men, with more positive reactions towards this aspect of hyperfemininity in romcoms. The genres do not differ significantly in the expression of the other two dimensions of hyperfemininity.

Reactions Towards Counter-Hyperfemininity in Romcoms and Sitcoms

For RQ2b, which asked if there is a difference in sitcoms and romcoms in the reactions that counter-hyperfeminine ideas receive, the same approach as for RQ2a was taken. Fischer's exact test was significant for positive reactions to the third counter-dimension (i.e., non-hyperfeminine expectations of men's dating and sexual behavior) (Fischer's exact test =

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0.03, $p = .029$, Goodman & Kruskal's tau = .08, $p = .021$) with a higher level of positive reactions in sitcoms ($N = 15$) than in romcoms ($N = 53$). For sitcoms all occurrences of reactions to counter-dimension 3 were positive, for romcoms 38 out of 53 reactions to this counter-dimension (71.70%) fell into this category. The association is rather weak. Even though Fischer's exact test was not significant for negative reactions to counter-dimension 3 (Fischer's exact test = 0.06, $p = .057$), the post hoc Bonferroni z-test did show that the column percentages differed significantly on an alpha level of .05, with romcoms ($N = 53$) containing more negative reactions, with 13 occurrences (24.53%) compared to none in sitcoms. None of the individual items yielded significant results. This provides the following answer to RQ2b: when looking per individual item, there is no difference between sitcoms and romcoms in the reactions to counter-hyperfeminine ideas, but overall the third counter-hyperfemininity dimension (i.e., non-hyperfeminine expectations of men's dating and sexual behavior) was significantly more often reacted to positively in sitcoms and negatively in romcoms.

Discussion and Conclusion

The central purpose of this thesis was to discover if and in what ways there is a difference in hyperfemininity brought forward in sitcoms and romcoms. Next to the different dimensions of the hyperfemininity stereotype, the corresponding counter-stereotypes were studied as well as reactions to these (counter-)stereotypes. The analyses showed that, although it was not the case for all aspects of hyperfemininity, romcoms did contain more hyperfeminine content elements than sitcoms, especially hyperfeminine expectations of men are expressed more often in the romcom genre. On the other hand, romcoms also contained significantly more story elements expressing ideas directly countering this stereotype as well as displays of the idea that being a single woman is okay. However, in romcoms, characters' reactions more often rejected counter-hyperfeminine statements, whereas in sitcoms such

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claims received support through positive reactions. Moreover, certain expressions of hyperfemininity were even endorsed in romcoms through positive reactions.

It is hard to directly compare the findings of this paper to existing knowledge on the exact topic, since very little research so far has focused on comparing romcoms and sitcoms and studies on hyperfemininity rarely split up the results per dimension. However, several studies looked into similar topics with some corroborating and others differing from the results of this research. For instance, the finding that expressions of the idea that men should take the lead both sexually and in dating situations appeared significantly more often in romcoms than sitcoms is in line with several studies. For example, Johnson and Holmes (2009) showed that romcoms often put forward the idea that men should take the lead in a relationship, whereas Vandenbosch and Eggermont (2014) failed to link exposure to sitcoms to the belief that men should lead sexual activities.

Contrary to the predictions, two of the three dimensions of hyperfemininity were not significantly more present in romcoms than sitcoms. First, the importance of a relationship with a man was not more present in romcoms, with one of the subitems (i.e., a woman prioritizing a man over herself, female friends, or career) actually being significantly more present in sitcoms, thereby directly contradicting the hypothesis. The other subitem (i.e., it is important for a woman to have a relationship with a man) was, as predicted, more present in romcoms. This points out that both genres actually contain elements of this dimension and sitcoms may even be more stereotypical than romcoms in certain cases. More research would be needed on this topic to determine whether or not that is true. With regard to the second dimension, which concerns women's looks, sexuality, and sexiness to attract or keep men, the only subitem that was significantly more present in romcoms compared to sitcoms was the one that, among other elements, held the idea of 'love at first sight'. This finding is in line with other research already brought forward in the theoretical framework, which has also

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indicated that this stereotypical idea is indeed very present in romcoms (Hefner & Wilson, 2013; Johnson, 2007; Rios & Reyes, 2007). The absence of a difference between the two genres when it comes to the overall dimension is in agreement with authors arguing that in recent years, romcoms' storylines about women have evolved into being about more than just their beauty and looks (e.g., Krahn, 2015).

Romcoms did not only contain significantly more of certain stereotypical ideas, but two counter-hyperfemininity dimensions were also significantly more present in romcoms than sitcoms, which could lead to the conclusion that relationships, sex, and dating are bigger storylines overall in romcoms. That is an interesting finding that makes an important contribution to this field of research. It could also be evidence of romcoms slightly evolving into a more balanced genre, containing both stereotypes and counter-stereotypes regarding gender. However, the fact that counter-stereotypes are frequently reacted to in a rejecting manner, which actually contradicts earlier findings by Hefner and Wilson (2013), weakens this idea. Contrarily, hyperfeminine elements were clearly less present in sitcoms and although counter-hyperfeminine statements were also less present, they were more frequently reacted to in an encouraging, affirmative way in sitcoms, which demonstrates that this genre overall paints a less hyperfeminine image. This emphasizes the importance for content analyses and media effects research in general to not only look at stereotypes and its effects, but to also analyze responses to the displayed behaviors. This shows another important way in which the present research contributes to the field.

This study adds to knowledge on gender stereotypical content of two genres popular with adolescents and is also one of the first to focus on this in combination with counter-stereotypical ideas and reactions to (counter-)stereotypical statements. As adolescents often watch television shows and films to learn about romantic relationships (Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2017a) and hyperfemininity is a stereotype that mainly focuses on this topic, this

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makes adolescents especially susceptible to media content related to this stereotype. The findings show that sitcoms may be more suitable than romcoms to help them develop less stereotypical views on relationships. The study also offers a first step in creating a clearer view on how specific genres can be more beneficial than others to reduce or even counter stereotypical gender beliefs among the adolescent audience. Its relevance also lies in the fact that romcoms and sitcoms have not been compared through a hyperfemininity-focused content analysis before. In addition, genres keep changing and evolving and many studies analyzing gender stereotypical content in these genres were already somewhat outdated, which makes this research all the more important.

To some extent, the findings of this paper helped in clarifying the findings from the study by van Oosten (2017) (e.g., romcoms do contain higher levels of certain hyperfemininity elements). However, as some findings contradict her expectations (e.g., not *all* hyperfemininity dimensions were higher in romcoms), this also gives rise to directions for future research. For one, it would be interesting to see if watching specific genres like sitcoms and romcoms is related not only to hyperfeminine but also to certain counter-hyperfeminine beliefs. Additionally, future studies should look into the different dimensions of hyperfemininity and counter-hyperfemininity individually and in what ways watching specific genres contributes to viewers' endorsement of the separate aspects of the concepts, as this would provide even more knowledge than looking at endorsement of hyperfemininity as a whole through an overall scale, as was done in the study by van Oosten (2017). In line with this, new research should also look more deeply into what has the strongest effect: (counter-) stereotypical statements or the reactions they receive.

Furthermore, it may be interesting to look if there is a difference within the genres, for example by making a comparison between sitcoms from Disney and Nickelodeon (e.g., *Liv and Maddie*, *The Thundermans*) targeting early adolescents and more 'adult' sitcoms (e.g.,

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Baby Daddy, *New Girl*) targeting slightly older adolescents. It would also be useful to compare the presence of stereotypes versus counter-stereotypes within genres, since romcoms did contain more of both, but it is likely that the number of stereotypes was still higher, as a first look at the absolute values and percentages seemed to indicate this as well. Future studies should also focus more on male gender stereotypes. Even though some studies already focus on this (e.g., Alberti, 2013; van Oosten, 2017), most gender stereotype studies focus solely on women. As the findings of this study seem to prove that mainly the aspects of the hyperfeminine stereotype and counter-stereotype having to do with expectations about men are significantly different in the two genres, more studies focusing on male gender stereotypes (e.g., the hypermasculine idea that men need to be aggressive and dominant; van Oosten, 2017) are desirable.

Several recommendations can also be made based on the limitations of the present study. First of all, it was hard to compare television shows with an average length between 20 and 30 minutes to movies that are not always exactly 90 minutes long, so this calls for more research on how to effectively compare these two genres. Next, it is important to note that some scenes only contained very subtle references to a stereotype or counter-stereotype whereas in other scenes these ideas formed the overarching storyline. However, both cases were given the same weight, which may have impacted the findings. In the future, studies may benefit from taking this into account. Furthermore, as there were no figures available on what specific sitcoms and romcoms Dutch adolescents watch, it was impossible to draw a sample of which there was certainty that most teenagers in the Netherlands had seen the selected content. In addition, hyperfeminine statements were relatively rare overall in both genres, which could mean that the alleged presence of this stereotypical idea and its influence on viewers is not very large. Lastly, the very weak sizes of association and the fact that negative reactions to the third counter-hyperfeminine dimension were only significant in post

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hoc tests are important to keep in mind, because even if there were significant results, these associations and effects may not have always been substantial.

To conclude, this study has offered new knowledge on which genres might be more relevant to counter stereotypical gender beliefs among teenagers by demonstrating how sitcoms and romcoms differ in terms of hyperfeminine and counter-hyperfeminine content. The findings showed that romcoms especially bring forward more hyperfeminine expectations towards men, but the genre also contains certain counter-stereotypical content elements to a greater extent. However, characters in these movies often confirm stereotypes with their affirmative reactions and disapprove of counter-hyperfeminine ideas through negative reactions whereas sitcoms show people debunking hyperfemininity by offering supportive reactions towards the counter-stereotype. As such, it can be stated that overall, romantic comedy movies to some extent display a more hyperfeminine view than sitcoms.

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Appendix A: Sample and Codebook

Romcoms

Blended - 001

Bridget Jones's Baby - 002

Home Again -003

How To Be Single - 004

'*Love, Rosie*' - 005

Sleeping with Other People - 006

That Awkward Moment -007

The Big Sick -008

Trainwreck. -009

Sitcoms and Selected Episodes

Baby Daddy: Season 3, Episode 18 (3.18)-010, 4.15 -011, 5.20 -012

Brooklyn Nine-Nine: 3.11 -013, 3.20 -014, 5.03 -015

Girl Meets World: 1.10 -016, 2.23 -017, 3.03 -018

Liv and Maddie: 2.05 -019, 2.14 -020, 3.20 -021

Modern Family: 6.18 -022, 7.16 -023, 8.18 -024

The Big Bang Theory: 8.09 -028, 10.01 -029, 10.13 -030

The Thundermans: 2.22 -031, 3.01 -032, 3.06 -033

Young and Hungry: 2.15 -034, 2.18 -035, 4.03 -036

Episode or Film ID: Note the episode's or movie's number (see above)

Sitcom or romcom: Code whether this is a romcom (1) or a sitcom (2)

Scenes: Every scene is a single unit of analysis and a scene change is characterized by a clear change of time and/or setting. Give every scene a separate number (ID) and briefly describe the scene. If a scene continues after an interruption (e.g., title song, another full scene,

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flashback) this should be seen as another scene. If the interruption takes the shape of a phone conversation (i.e., switching back and forth between two places quickly) both ends of the conversation should be coded as only 2 different scenes (not more unless there is a shift in time or setting).

A fast compilation of multiple actions in the same setting may be coded as one scene.

(Title) songs need not be coded, neither do scenes that do not contain or focus on any specific people (e.g., shots of exterior of a building, cars driving around).

Expression of hyperfemininity: For every scene, it should be coded if the following ideas were expressed or not and if the expression received reactions (from other characters: every person that at one point in the episode/movie clearly speaks at least one full sentence, is referred to by name, is the subject of a conversation, and/or whose actions are or presence is central to the storyline). A reaction is anything from clear body language (e.g., a rejecting frown, an agreeing nod, a laugh) to an actual response to the (counter-)stereotype expressed.

0 = NOT PRESENT

1 = PRESENT BUT NO OR NEUTRAL REACTIONS

2 = PRESENT AND RECEIVED ONLY POSITIVE (affirmative) REACTIONS

3 = PRESENT AND RECEIVED ONLY NEGATIVE (rejecting) REACTIONS

4 = PRESENT AND RECEIVED MIXED (both positive and negative) REACTIONS.

If a negative reaction is not just merely rejecting a statement, but **clearly** expresses the opposite idea (negative reaction to hyperfemininity clearly expressing counter-hyperfemininity or a negative reaction to counter-hyperfemininity clearly expressing hyperfemininity) this should be coded as an expression of the corresponding category, **not** as merely a rejecting reaction. Next to coding this counter-idea reaction as representing a certain category, coders should also make a note of this to avoid confusion (e.g., if a category is

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coded as PRESENT, but NO or NEUTRAL reaction because it received no reactions other than the counter-stereotypical one this extra code will make this clear).

! Absence of a (counter-)stereotype does **not** qualify as a (counter-)stereotype, the idea should still be put forward clearly or addressed directly (e.g., a man is **not** expected to initiate sexual activity should only be coded as present if it is clearly discussed or shown that the man was not the initiator, not if a scene starts in the middle of a sexual activity and/or did not show or discuss the initiator).

Every verbal, non-verbal, explicit and implicit instance of any of the following ideas or ideas that lie in the same line of reasoning should be coded. The focus of this study is on heterosexual relationships and heterosexual single people. Homosexuality, pansexuality, or other forms of sexuality, although interesting, are beyond the scope of this research.

In case of doubt about whether or not a statement fits a certain item, the whole episode or movie should be used as a context to base the decision on.

Examples of every dimension can be found further down.

Dimension 1: importance of (a relationship with) a man in a woman's life

D1I1: It is (or should be) important for a woman to have a relationship with a man (as this determines her value and success) (this also includes negativity towards and ridiculing of women who are single)

D1I2: A woman prioritizes (or should prioritize) a man she is romantically interested in or has a relationship with over herself, her female friends, or her career (this also includes women competing with each other for a man/multiple men, ending a female friendship or *ditching* female friends for a man, a woman putting a man's feelings or wishes before her own)

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Dimension 2: women's use of physical attractiveness, sexuality, and sexiness to attract or keep men

D2I1: a woman's physical attractiveness ('good looks'), sexuality, and/or sexiness are (or should be) important or more important than her intelligence, competence and/or personality ('inner beauty') to attract a man or get/keep him interested

! This **does not** include women using looks, sexuality and sexiness as a manipulation tool, that is D2I3 (this also includes people talking about or emphasizing attractiveness, sexuality or sexiness of a woman instead of her intelligence, competence or personality, men being attracted to a woman or showing interest because of her looks rather than her competence, intelligence, or personality)

D2I2: a woman attaches (or should attach) high value to her appearance (this also includes display of concerns about appearance, spending time on trying to be pretty and looking well-groomed)

D2I3: a woman uses (or should use) her physical appearance, sexiness and/or sexuality as a **manipulation tool** to attract or get the attention of a man, to keep a man interested, or to get a man to do what she wants (this includes suggesting sexual activity without engaging in it as well as engaging in actual sexual behavior)

Dimension 3: hyperfeminine expectations of men's dating and sexual behavior

D3I1: a man takes the lead (or is expected to) in a dating situation with a woman (this includes that the man takes the initiative for a situation that leads up to a kiss, the man has to ask the woman out, the man is expected to pay for the date, breaking up is also a dating situation)

D3I2: a man takes the lead (or is expected to) in a sexual situation (i.e., any sexual activity, any situation leading up to more than just kissing) with a woman (this includes a man actively

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trying to get a woman to engage in sexual activity, a man initiating man-woman sexual activity)

D3I3: men find it important to be (or should be) sexually successful (i.e., possess the ability to get any woman to have sex with him) and sexually experienced (this includes that women prefer a man with sexual experience and/or find sexual experience important and sexual success determining man's masculinity)

! Men talking about the **importance of sex** qualifies as **D3I4**, men talking about the importance of getting **any woman to have sex with them** or the **importance of sexual experience** or **success** qualifies as **D3I3**.

D3I4: men have high (uncontrollable) sexual needs (more so than women) (this includes the idea that men talking about the importance of sex or their sexual needs, men have higher sexual needs than women and men not being able to control their sexual excitement)

Counter-dimension 1: a man is not (most) important in a woman's life

CD1I1: It is **not** (or should not be) important for a woman to have a relationship with a man, it is okay and accepted for a woman to be single (this also includes ridiculing of or negativity towards people in a (man-woman) relationship and the idea that a single woman can be just as (if not more) successful in life and valuable as women in relationships with men)

CD1I2: For a woman, a relationship with a man is (or should be) just as important as herself, her female friendships, or her career (this includes the importance of men and women being **equals** in their relationship, a woman valuing female friendships as equally important to her relationship with a man)

! A woman prioritizing something else (e.g., herself, female friendships, career) over her relationships with a man does **not** qualify as CD1I2 since counter-hyperfemininity is about **equality, not female dominance**.

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Counter-dimension 2: importance of women's personality ('inner beauty'), intelligence, and competence

CD2I1: a woman's intelligence, competence and/or personality is (or should be) important or more important than her physical attractiveness, sexuality, and/or sexiness to attract or keep a man (this also includes people talking about or emphasizing intelligence, competence or personality of a woman rather than her attractiveness, sexuality or sexiness, men being attracted to a woman or showing interest because of her competence, intelligence, or personality rather than her outer appearance)

CD2I2: a woman does not (or should not) attach high value to her appearance (this also includes negativity or ridiculing of women who display concerns about appearance or spend a lot of time on looking well-groomed and pretty)

CD2I3: a woman uses (or should use) her competence, intelligence, or personality to attract (or get the attention of) a man, to keep a man interested, or to get a man to do what she wants.

Counter-dimension 3: non-hyperfeminine expectations of men's dating and sexual behavior

CD3I1: a man does **not** 'take the lead' (or is not expected to) in a dating situation with a woman (this also includes that the woman takes the initiative for a situation leading up to a kiss, the woman 'takes the lead' instead, by asking the man out or paying the bill as well as man and woman splitting the bill, breaking up is also a dating situation)

CD3I2: a man does **not** 'take the lead' (or is not expected to) in a sexual situation with a woman (this also includes that the woman 'takes the lead' and actively tries to get a man to engage in sexual activity or a woman initiating man-woman sexual activity)

! This is **not** present if a woman 'takes the lead' in a sexual situation because she is using her sexuality as a manipulation tool (since this is D2I3), **only** when she is clearly stating and following her **own** sexual needs and desires

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! Women ‘taking the lead’ does **not** qualify as **CD3I1** or **CD3I2** if they do so in an aggressive or dominant way, a man should agree to the dating or sexual activity as counter-hyperfemininity is about **equality, not female dominance**.

CD3I3: it is **not** necessary or important for a man to be sexually successful (i.e., possess the ability to get any woman to have sex with him) or sexually experienced

(this also includes that women prefer a man without sexual experience and/or find sexually experienced men a ‘turn-off’)

CD3I4: Men and women have the same sexual needs, or women have higher sexual needs than men

(this also includes women talking about the importance of sex)

Examples of dimensions

Dimension 1: importance of (a relationship with) a man in a woman’s life

Examples of item 1 are a girl telling her best friend she ‘is nothing without’ the boy who just broke up with her, a mother telling her daughter she should find herself a husband ‘because women need a man in their lives or they are unhappy’, two men in a bar stating ‘without a man in their lives, women are worthless’, an adult woman who is single being for not being in a romantic relationship by sitting at the kids’ table at a wedding

Examples of item 2 are a woman canceling a night out with female friends for a date with a man, a woman choosing a relationship with a man over an opportunity to make advancement in her career.

Dimension 2: women’s use of physical attractiveness, sexuality & sexiness to attract or keep men

! A woman being physically attractive/sexy/not intelligent/not competent/lack of inner beauty does not automatically qualify as an instance of this dimension if she does not use it to attract

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or keep men, or if it is not shown as a reason why men are attracted or interested in this female character.

Examples of item 1 are 'love at first sight' from a man's side, a construction worker whistling at a woman passing by while saying 'hey sexy', two men talking about a girl who walks by saying 'she's really hot'.

Examples of item 2 are a girl asking her boyfriend if she 'looks okay?', a woman checking herself in the mirror and 'fixing' her hair, a woman having plastic surgery to look better

Examples of item 3 are a woman telling her husband that if he does the dishes she will... followed by suggestive whispers into his ears, a girl telling one of her friends that she 'has to sleep' with her boyfriend otherwise he will dump her, a woman pulling her T-shirt down to show more cleavage before walking up to the police officer who gave her a parking ticket.

Dimension 3: hyperfeminine expectations of men's dating and sexual behavior

Examples of item 1 are a man paying for dinner when on a date with a woman, a man telling his friend he should walk up to a girl if he wants to 'ever score a kiss with her', a girl talking about how a guy was 'a jerk because he expected me to pay for my own movie ticket'

Examples of item 2 are a man walking up to a girl with the intention of getting her to sleep with him, a couple lying in bed with the man suddenly making a move on the woman to start sexual activity.

Examples of item 3 are a guy high-fiving his male friend because had sex with three random women in one night, a guy boasting about how he got a stranger to sleep with him, a woman talking about how she loves to date older men because they are 'more experienced in bed'.

Examples of item 4 are a man talking about how sex is important for him in a relationship because he has 'his needs', a man getting an erection in public.

Counter-dimension 1: a man is not (most) important in a woman's life

Examples of item 1 are a group of women screaming out loud that they 'do not need a man', a woman stating that 'there is nothing wrong with not being in a relationship' as she is 'a happy single'.

Examples of item 2 are a woman saying she 'needs both her man and her girls', a couple having a talk about what they **both** want.

Counter-dimension 2: importance of women's personality ('inner beauty'), intelligence, and competence

An example of item 1 is a man talking about a good-looking girl stating 'she is pretty, but that is not enough'.

An example of item 2 is a man stating to his wife that she does not need make-up because she is pretty just the way she is.

An example of item 3 is a scientist woman seducing her husband with 'science talk' and getting him interested by showing off her intelligence.

Counter-dimension 3: non-hyperfeminine expectations of men's dating and sexual behavior

Examples of item 1 are a woman and man splitting the bill when they finish a date, a woman telling her friend that 'she should not wait for him to ask her out but should ask him herself'.

An example of item 2 is a woman telling her husband she is really 'in the mood' followed by initiation of sexual activity.

An example of item 3 is a woman talking about how a guy 'that sleeps around' is very unattractive to her.

An example of item 4 is a woman mentioning that sex is just as important for her as it is for her husband.

Appendix B: Results Tables

Table B1

Intercoder Reliability Values for all Separate Items

	Cohen's Kappa	Krippendorff's Alpha
It is important for a woman to have a relationship with a man (D1I1)	1.00	1.00
A woman prioritizes a man over herself, female friends, or her career (D1I2)	n/a	n/a
A woman's looks, sexuality, and sexiness are important to attract or keep a man (D2I1)	.90	.90
A woman attaches high value to her appearance (D2I2)	.82	.82
A woman uses looks, sexuality, and sexiness as manipulation tool to attract or keep men (D2I3)	1.00	1.00
A man takes the lead in dating situation with a woman (D3I1)	.90	.90
A man takes the lead in sexual situation with a woman (D3I2)	1.00	1.00
Men find sexual success and experience important (D3I3)	.92	.92
Men have high, uncontrollable sexual needs (D3I4)	.93	.93
For women, it is not important to have a relationship and okay to be single (CD1I1)	1.00	1.00

(COUNTER-)HYPERFEMININE CONTENT IN SITCOMS AND ROMCOMS

Table B1 Continued

	Cohen's Kappa	Krippendorff's Alpha
For a woman, relationship is just as important as herself, female friends, or career (CD1I2)	n/a	n/a
Women's intelligence, competence, or personality are important to attract or keep men (CD2I1)	.90	.90
A woman does not attach high value to her appearance (CD2I2)	1.00	1.00
A woman uses intelligence, competence, or personality to attract or keep men (CD2I3)	n/a	n/a
A man does not take lead in dating situation with a woman (CD3I1)	.91	.91
A man does not take lead in sexual situation with a woman (CD3I2)	1.00	1.00
Sexual success and experience are not necessary or important for a man (CD3I3)	.87	.87
Women and men have the same sexual needs or women's needs are higher (CD3I4)	.93	.93

Note. Names of subitems were shortened to fit table, full variable names are in Appendix A.

(COUNTER-)HYPERFEMININE CONTENT IN SITCOMS AND ROMCOMS

Table B2

Absolute Counts and Column Percentages of Dimension Present per Genre

	Romcoms	Sitcoms
	<i>N</i> = 935	<i>N</i> = 651
Dim. 1: importance of (a relationship with) a man in a woman's life	29 (3.10%)	17 (2.61%)
Dim. 2: women's use of physical attractiveness, sexuality, and sexiness to attract or keep men	88 (9.41%)	49 (7.53%)
Dim. 3: hyperfeminine expectations of men's dating and sexual behavior	149 (15.94%) ^{***}	44 (6.76%) ^{***}
C-Dim. 1: a man is not (most) important in a woman's life	17 (1.82%)*	3 (0.46%)*
C-Dim. 2: importance of female inner beauty, intelligence, & competence	20 (2.14%)	20 (3.07%)
C-Dim. 3: non-hyperfeminine expectations of men's dating and sexual behavior	103 (11.02%) ^{***}	35 (5.38%) ^{***}

Note. *N* = 1,586. Dim. = Dimension, C-Dim. = Counter-Dimension.

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

(COUNTER-)HYPERFEMININE CONTENT IN SITCOMS AND ROMCOMS

Table B3

Absolute Counts and Column Percentages of Item Present per Genre

	Romcoms, <i>N</i> = 935	Sitcoms, <i>N</i> = 651
Presence of D1I1: It is important for a woman to have a relationship with a man	25 (2.67%)*	7 (1.08%)*
Presence of D1I2: A woman prioritizes a man over herself, female friends, or her career	6 (0.64%)*	11 (1.69%)*
Presence of D2I1: A woman's looks, sexuality, and sexiness are important to attract or keep a man	67 (7.17%)*	30 (4.61%)*
Presence of D2I2: A woman attaches high value to her appearance	15 (1.60%)	11 (1.69%)
Presence of D2I3: A woman uses looks, sexuality, and sexiness as manipulation tool to attract or keep men	12 (1.28%)	12 (1.84%)
Presence of D3I1: A man takes the lead in dating situation with a woman	95 (10.16%)*	18 (2.76%)*
Presence of D3I2: A man takes the lead in sexual situation with a woman	14 (1.50%)*	2 (0.31%)*
Presence of D3I3: Men find sexual success and experience important	21 (2.25%)	10 (1.54%)
Presence of D3I4: Men have high, uncontrollable sexual needs	36 (3.85%)	14 (2.15%)
Presence of CD1I1: For women, it is okay to be single and not important to have a relationship	15 (1.60%)*	2 (0.31%)*

(COUNTER-)HYPERFEMININE CONTENT IN SITCOMS AND ROMCOMS

Table B3 Continued

	Romcoms, <i>N</i> = 935	Sitcoms, <i>N</i> = 651
Presence of CD1I2: For a woman, a relationship is just as important as herself, female friends, or career	2 (0.21%)	1 (0.15%)
Presence of CD2I1: Women's intelligence, competence, or personality are important to attract or keep men	18 (1.93%)	12 (1.84%)
Presence of CD2I2: A woman does not attach high value to her appearance	1 (0.11%)*	6 (0.92%)*
Presence of CD2I3: A woman uses intelligence, competence, or personality to attract or keep men	1 (0.11%)	2 (0.31%)
Presence of CD3I1: A man does not take lead in dating situation with a woman	40 (4.28%)	26 (3.99%)
Presence of CD3I2: A man does not take lead in sexual situation with a woman	11 (1.18%)**	0 (0.00%)**
Presence of CD3I3: Sexual success and experience are not necessary or important for a man	4 (0.43%)	1 (0.15%)
Presence of CD3I4: Women and men have the same sexual needs or women's needs are higher	52 (5.56%)***	10 (1.54%)***

Note. *N* = 1,586. Names of subitems were shortened to fit table, full variable names are in Appendix A. Significance level of overall chi-square test is indicated, except for CD1I2, CD2I2, CD2I3, CD3I2, and CD3I3 where the results from Fischer's exact test were used to determine statistical significance due to at least one cell with expected count below 5.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.