Fair LGBTQ representations

A case study focused on the LGBTQ representations of *The L Word* and its sequel *The L Word: Generation Q.*

Student Name: Saskia Blok Herrero

Student Number: 474164

Supervisor: Dr. Tonny Krijnen

Master Media Studies – Media and the Creative Industries

Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication

Erasmus University Rotterdam

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Abstract

This year the percentage of LGBTQ characters that appear in American broadcast scripted series will be the highest it has ever been (GLAAD, 2019). Meaning that media that we consume is slowly adding more and more LGBTQ representations. However, little is known about the quality of these representations. López (2018) conducted interviews with LGBTQ members and discussed how they felt they were represented in American scripted series. Most interviewees thought that the LGBTQ characters were mostly stereotyped. However, merely showing stereotyped LGBTQ characters causes harm for the community (Ross and Lester, 2003). LGBTQ representations should consist of well-rounded and unique characters, also called *fair representation*. Beginning of this year, the sequel of prominent lesbian television series *The L Word*: *The L Word: Generation Q,* arrived. Which according to GLAAD (2019) consists of the most LGBTQ portrayals ever perceived in one show. But how are these people represented? Have these representations changed in the last 10 years? Therefore, this research focused on the representations of the primary characters for both first seasons of the shows to see if and how these representations have changed. By conducting a thematical analysis of identifying certain tropes and stereotypes that are often used to portray LGBTQ people, a decision was made whether the representations are considered to be fair. Based on the findings, it can be stated that the primary characters of *Generation Q* are in fact more fairly represented than its predecessor.

KEYWORDS: *LGBTQ, (Fair)Representation, Stereotypes, Tropes, The L Word.*

Preface

Initially, my thesis idea was to conduct focus groups to try to comprehend what different lesbians thought about *The L Word* and its sequel *Generation Q.* Especially, to see how they felt about how they were being represented in the two shows. I thought it would be very interesting to speak with different LGBTQ people and discuss the primary characters of the show, primarily focused on how the LGBTQ community is represented through the show. However, suddenly Corona started spreading through the world and quickly arrived in The Netherlands too. This forced me to make changes in my thesis proposal. I discussed my concerns with my supervisor and we agreed that conducting focus groups would be too challenging during this Corona time.

An alternative idea was to conduct 1 on 1 interviews, but we were under the impression that people would not be in the mood to spend time discussing these topics. Everyone's minds were occupied with the pandemic happening and I did not want to bother people with my project.

This made me think about other possibilities to alternate my thesis, while still holding on to the same topic of LGBTQ representations in media, which really interests me and in my opinion needs to be researched. Quickly, we came to the new idea of comparing the two shows with each other, based on the stories and the appearances of the primary characters. This would make me able to conduct the thesis on my own at home, which goes in line with the Corona restrictions of social distancing.

After finalizing the new idea (which did take some time), I could easily start with my thesis again. Some changes in the proposal needed to be addressed, which lead to some delay, but I believe it was manageable.

1. Introduction

Before corona struck, I remember overhearing a conversation that stuck with me while traveling with public transport: 'Netflix is starting to look pretty gay right?' Meaning that the collection of TV series and movies that Netflix is currently offering is slowly displaying more and more characters representing LGBTQ ('Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer') communities. This increasement of LGBTQ characters appearing in media also caught my attention. Looking at the latest report from GLAAD ('Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation') - an organization that investigates and documents the number of LGBTQ characters on American television - we can conclude that the percentage of LGBTQ characters expected to appear in American broadcast scripted series in year 2019-2020 will be the highest it has ever been (GLAAD, 2019). With Netflix in a leading position, of having the most LGBTQ characters of all streaming services (GLAAD, 2019). Hence, the person in public transport was in a way correct, LGBTQ characters on primetime scripted TV are annually increasing and slowly being more prominent on broadcast TV and streaming services (GLAAD, 2019; Thomasson, 2019). Last year GLAAD's report revealed the percentage of LGBTQ characters to be regulars in scripted TV series were at 8.8 percent, simultaneously GLAAD discussed with broadcast networks to make sure that 10 percent of primetime broadcast scripted series regulars should be LGBTQ by 2020 (GLAAD, 2019). Sarah Kate Ellis, President and CEO of GLAAD says 'at a time when the cultural climate is growing increasingly divisive, increased representation of LGBTQ stories and characters on television is especially critical to advance LGBTQ acceptance' (GLAAD, 2019). GLAAD and Harris Poll's *Accelerating Acceptance* study showed that 20 percent of Americans aged between 18 and 34 are LGBTQ (2017). GLAAD is currently trying to convince the industry to increase LGBTQ regular characters to 20 percent by 2025 (GLAAD, 2019). Because according to GLAAD, the people watching these shows should be equally represented in the shows (GLAAD, 2019).

Not only do we see this change in the scripted series industry, but also in the commercials. For example, the commercial from the Dutch railway system the NS (Nederlandse Spoorwegen), have created a commercial portraying two young women showing the beginning of a romance between them (Homan, 2018). Similarly, the IKEA commercial showing a lesbian couple (Everink & Hemkes, 2018), and the newest commercial from Starbucks showing a transgender kid as its main character (Everink & Hemkes, 2020), are current examples of LGTBQ characters in commercial campaigns. Currently more attention is given in media to the LGBTQ community than ever before (Thomasson, 2019; GLAAD, 2019). Scholar in performance studies Lori Montalbano-Phelps claims queer television can have 'the power… to help define a generation of acceptance' (Montalbano, 2013, p.55).

The past decade a variety of portrayals of the LGBTQ community were created in popular culture, particularly through television dramas (McNicholas Smith & Tyler, 2017). These portrayals

are creating different representations of LGBTQ identities to the public. Marshall (2016, p.58) says 'television across many Anglophone markets (especially those of North America, the United Kingdom, and Australia) seems comparatively full of self-declared gay and lesbian characters', the market for sexual diversity is quickly growing to be able to incorporate 'a wider range of avowedly queer subjects'. Through multiple popular television shows we see an increasing amount of LGBTQ representations being portrayed in media, 'extending the visibility of non-heterosexual sexualities' (McNicholas Smith & Tyler, 2017, p.4/5). Think of shows like *Glee* (21ˢᵗ Century Fox Television), *Sex Education* (Eleven)*, Sense* 8 (Anarchos Production) and *Orange is the New Black* (Tilted Productions), all showing different characters of the LGBTQ community. But are these representations good? We see a clear increase of LGBTQ characters in media, but what about the quality of these representations? If the quality of these representations is bad, for example by using stereotypes, it could have negative consequences for viewers as for the community being represented. GLAAD tries to make sure that not only the visibility of LGBTQ characters is increased (the quantity) but that they should also be more 'fair' which entails, LGBTQ characters being more accurately reflected as well as diverse (the quality). Research on fair representation of the LGBTQ community in media is limited. This thesis focuses on fair representations of LGBTQ characters and could be considered a starting point for further research regarding rightful LGBTQ representations in media.

Television and film can influence the perception an individual has of the world (Gerbner, 1998). Fair representations of the LGBTQ community in media is crucial, because they can influence people. 'Television enters life in infancy; there is no 'before exposure' condition. [It] plays a role in the formation of those very 'predispositions' that later intervene (and often resist) other influences and attempts persuasion.' (Gerbner, 1998, p. 176). Viewers create an understanding of people they see in media. When media exclusively portray the LGBTQ community as stereotypes, viewers will not fully understand this community. In addition, by using stereotypes to represent the LGBTQ community, causes these people to feel harmed. Therefore, it is important that the LGBTQ community is represented fairly in media and not merely a bunch of misinterpreted stereotypes the community cannot identify with.

Media are 'the primary site of production for social knowledge [regarding] LGBTQ identities' (Gray, 2009, p.1189). American adult citizens spend an average of 3.35 hours watching television daily, thus creating their social knowledge about the world (Watson, 2019). With proceeding technological developments and the rise of smartphones gives people the opportunity to connect to the internet everywhere (McInroy & Craig, 2017), giving people the freedom to engage with media content whenever they desire. Most of the adult population (97%) use the internet and almost all (89%) make use of social media platforms. New media platforms for video-sharing such as Youtube and Snapchat are also attractive for the population (McInroy & Craig, 2017). As media consumption

keeps growing 'access to depictions of particular constructs (such as LGBTQ people) also intensifies' (McInroy & Craig, 2017, p.33). The result of more media being used by the population leads to an increase of the exposure of media messages (McInroy & Craig, 2017). TV is able to shape the way people view the world (Gerbner, 1998; Macey, Ryan & Springer, 2016). In fact, messages that are seen through visual media have an impact on people (Macey, et al, 2016). Based on the constructionist approach according to Stuart Hall (1997, p.25) '… that neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning in language. Things don't mean: We construct meaning, using representational systems – concepts and signs'. These representational systems are related to the wide meaning of 'language', which includes: words, sounds, gestures and images. All these shapes of languages are shown through TV through discourses. It is through these symbolic forms that have certain meanings and beliefs (discourse) that are shown on TV which enables people to construct their views on the world. Hall (1997, p.6) explains discourse: 'Discourses are ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic of practice: a cluster (or formation) of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society.' Discourses have great power. Foucault and Sheridan (1991) believe these discourses exercise micro-powers, trying to standardize a specific behaviour, while simultaneously making a separation between what is considered good and bad. These micro-powers are concealed; however, they do determine what is appropriate and what is not. They define '…what knowledge is considered useful, relevant and 'true' in that context; and what sorts of persons or 'subjects' embody its characteristics' (Hall, 1997, p.6).

Another, related, way that audiences shape their world through TV is according to Ryan and Macey (2015) through identification. Ryan and Macey (2015) discovered that it is through identification the audience has with the characters seen in TV and film that gives the power to media to captivate the audiences. People like looking at the journey and the success that characters have who they feel they can identify with (Ryan & Macey, 2015). 'identification is an imaginative process through which an audience member assumes the identity, goals, and perspectives of a character' (Cohen, 2009, p. 12). Audiences are rarely merely a passive spectator of what they see in media, they experience identification nearly consistently (Cohen, 2009). People would feel no emotions if there were no identification taking place. Some individuals are aware of how they feel when they identify with characters seen in media, however they are not always aware of the powers these characters have to form their own self (Wright, 2006). It is important for the LGBTQ community to see representations of themselves in media to be able to identify with them and form their own identity.

As we know, LGBTQ representations in media are increasing (Dhoest & Simons, 2012), resulting in LGBTQ identities being more accessible. Audiences understanding of LGBTQ people mostly is informed through media, generally it is also the first encounter individuals have with these

LGBTQ identities. This also includes the youth who later acknowledge being LGBTQ (Craig & McInroy, 2014). Traditional media and new media that portray LGBTQ representations help the development of the LGBTQ youth (Craig & McInroy, 2014). Kivel and Kleiber (2000) identified that lesbian youth use a variety of media sources to gain knowledge about lesbian identity and to also search for people to be able to really relate with. In these media sources, individuals find role models who inspire them to conquer the hard times and be successful. Their research concludes that LGBTQ people use media in a way that helps them feel more comfortable with their own LGBTQ identity (Craig & McInroy, 2014). Increased numbers of LGBTQ representations in media is thus important for the people in the community, but the quality needs to be good as well for them to be able to learn from them.

Even though there is a fast increase of LGBTQ members represented in media, the community has not noticed a remarkable increase in acceptance (Miller, 2018). Over the past year the acceptance for the LGBTQ community in the VS and The Netherlands has significantly lowered (Miller, 2018; 'Discriminatie in onderwijs neemt fors toe', 2020). Miller (2018) explains one reason for this is the current way the community is represented in media has not adequately addressed the real needs of this community (2018). López (2018) conducted a study on how the LGBTQ community in Spain felt about how they were being represented in Anglo-speaking TV shows. López (2018) shows that a big part of the interviewees thought the characters were mostly stereotyped or lacking of representation (2018), while 70% mentioned they did not feel represented (López, 2018). One respondent mentioned that the lesbian characters were mostly framed as promiscuous and all day available for having relationships, which does not accurately represent the true world (López, 2018). Johnson (2016) investigated the perception of the representation of bisexuals. In his survey with 627 respondents he illustrates that 46,5% of the respondents felt that the way bisexuality was portrayed in media was mostly negative (Johnson, 2016). He also asked them if they believed that someone's worldview can be shaped by media, 71,4% answered with 'quite a bit'. These numbers are worrying, bearing in mind that these people believe they are negatively portrayed in media and that they believe that media can shape one's view of life is concerning. Miller (2015) and Kaur (2017) found many problems in the way the transgender community is represented. Both concluded that out of the small portion of transgender portrayals in media, most of the transgender characters are distanced as objects of ridicule, instead of as actual characters.

The LGBTQ characters in media are increasing, but the way these characters are represented is not clearly monitored. We even see that the social acceptance of the LGBTQ community is currently lowering (Miller, 2018; Discriminatie in onderwijs neemt fors toe, 2020). Is perhaps something strange happening with the representations of this community in media? McInroy and Craig (2017) conducted interviews with LGBTQ participants between 18-22 to discover their opinions about LGBTQ representations in media. They discovered that youth think the LGBTQ characters are

mostly one-dimensional and stereotyped, consequently failing to portray the complicated and variated circumstances the community truly faces (McInroy & Craig, 2017). Participants believed that the LGBTQ characters had certain storylines that were rather or all positive or all negative, which helps maintaining the stereotypical vision of the community (McInroy & Craig, 2017). Driver (2007) discovered that, media that truthfully help LGBTQ youth is the one that highlights the uniqueness and creativity of every individuals journey as well as the point that being different is not wrong. If media portray the LGBTQ community as the same and not unique or different from one another, stereotypes maintain.

That is why this thesis looks at the primary LGBTQ characters of a popular LGBTQ drama series from 2004 and its sequel, which came out in 2020. Have these representations changed in 16 years? We see an increase in the number of these representations but what has happened to the quality? Have they become more fairly represented? This thesis will focus on the matter of fair representation of the LGBTQ community in popular scripted television series. By using a case study of analyzing and comparing the regulars of the popular drama series *The L Word* (Coast Mountain Films Studio) and its sequel *The L Word: Generation Q*. *The L Word* aired in 2004 and was considered to be a groundbreaking series for completely revolving around lesbian women and was very well received by the public (Lee & Meyer, 2010). Even though the show did receive some critique, the communities represented in the show were happy they finally recognized themselves in popular media (Lee & Meyer, 2010). 16 years later, a lot has changed. LGBTQ characters for example are currently everywhere in media, unlike when *The L Word* just aired. The sequel just aired: *The L Word: Generation Q* (Showtime)*,* and is currently available on the Dutch popular streaming service Videoland, just as its predecessor (Van Steensel, 2020). *The L Word: Generation Q* not only shows some former primary characters of the previous series, it also contains a new variety of members of the LGBTQ community. GLAAD's (2019) report revealed that this show contains the most LGBTQ characters ever perceived in a show. Have these representations not only increased but have they also become more fair? And what about the former primary characters, have they changed, to be more fairly represented? Therefore, the first seasons of *The L Word* and *The L Word: Generation* Q will be compared in terms of fair representation. The leading question for this study then is:

How are the primary characters of *The L Word: Generation Q* represented in comparison with the primary characters of *The L Word?*

To answer this question, a qualitative content analysis will be conducted in which the primary characters of both first seasons of the shows will be analysed, paying attention to their dialogue, physical appearances and plotlines. The analysis will answer two sub questions: 'How are the primary characters in *The L* Word represented? And 'How are the primary characters in *The L Word:*

Generation Q represented? The results of these sub questions will be compared to answer the primary question enabling understanding of how these characters have changed over time and if the new characters are represented more fairly than the old characters. Based on the reports from GLAAD we expect the representations of LGBTQ characters in *The L Word: Generation Q* to be increased, however not necessarily more 'fair' (2019).

This thesis is focused on fair LGBTQ representation in media. Firstly, in the introduction the social relevance of this topic is addressed. In the next chapter, theory surrounding gender and sexuality will be discussed, in order to get a better understanding of how to understand concepts of gender and sexuality and how the LGBTQ community is identified. Secondly, the theoretical framework elaborates different thoughts on narrative and visual representation, with an explicit focus on LGBTQ representation in media. Thirdly, a chapter concentrated on queer TV and *The L Word*, explaining the case study in its relation to queer tv. This will give the researcher sufficient comprehension about the topic of interest to be able to start with the research design. This chapter comprehensively elaborates how this research is conducted. Here the sensitizing concepts - tropes, stereotypes and attributes linked to fair representation – that were collected through the theory, are discussed. The next chapter answers the sub questions: 'How are the primary characters in *The L* Word represented? And 'How are the primary characters in *The L Word: Generation Q* represented? These results are divided into three parts: tropes, stereotypes and fair. Based on these findings the main research question is answered in the conclusion part of this research, which includes the limitations of the research as well as suggestions for further research related to this topic.

2. Theory and previous research

In this chapter, firstly, theories surrounding gender and sexuality are addressed. Especially focused on non-heteronormative sexualities. Chapter 2.2 is focused on LGBTQ representations in media, specifically looking at what tropes and stereotypes are and finally describing what fair representation is and its importance. The last section explains the genre of the series *The L Word;* queer TV*,* what the show consists of and previous research on the show are described.

2.1 Gender and Sexuality

Gender is commonly presumed to be based on a binary, binding system that ascribes certain social attributes to sexed anatomy (Hausman, 2001). When someone is born, one is traditionally categorized as male or female, based on one's visible genitalia, their sex. Gender is then viewed as the socially constructed meanings of a person's physical sex. This system further indicates that children that are born as male should act masculine and be attracted to females. Children that are born as female should act in a feminine way and be sexually attracted to men. This perspective on biological differences that determine a person's gendered behaviour is called biological determinism and is an essentialist approach. An essentialist approach dictates gender then is defined as implicit to sex, and both genders are defined to be actually different. This view defines gender and the supposed differences as natural and unchangeable.

Contrary to an essentialist approach is the non-essentialist approach which provides the opportunity to think about the meaning of gender, and sees gender as a social construct. Whereas the essentialist approach would see femininity and masculinity to be depended on one's sex, a non-essentialist approach sees femininity and masculinity as socially constructed conventions and norms concerning men and women on how they should act and appear (Oakley, 1972). Socially constructed entails that context and community have an important part in meaning making (Vygotsky, 1978). The interpretation of a person's sex is therefore not an obvious given, but is constructed by society. When society changes, and hence communities and contexts change, could suggest that meanings regarding gender would change as well. A non-essentialist approach suggests that both sex and gender cannot be considered dichotomies but as continuums. A person's sex can be found on a continuum between male and female. A person's sex consists of a certain mix of hormonal, anatomical and chromosomal attributes, which could be different for anyone. You can find this in some women having facial hair and men having a high-pitched voice (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). Likewise, gender can be seen as a continuum among masculinity and femininity. When gender is

seen as a social and cultural construct it already shows that gender norms concerning how to act and appear are dynamic and prone to change.

When looking at gender roles through essentialism and how males and females should then supposedly act we look at typical characteristics of stereotypes of women and men. Research on trait stereotypes have showed that the typical male and female differentiate in a couple of personality attributes (Spence, Helmreich & Holahan, 1979). Most researches describe males to have more characteristics that reflect personal competencies and goal orientation than females, while females supposedly have more characteristics that reflect social-emotional sensitivity and interpersonal orientation (Spence, Helmreich & Holahan, 1979). There are many lists that try to formulate certain assumed gender specified personality attributes. For the case of this study I will use the assumed stereotyped gender roles and traits to be able to differentiate between stereotypical feminine and masculine traits that are used for portraying stereotypical feminine gays and masculine lesbians. Often, the LGBTQ community is portrayed in a gender-inversion matter (Sedgwick, 1990), where lesbians are portrayed to be more 'manly' with typical masculine personality traits and gay men to be more feminine with more feminine personality traits. Using such stereotypes to represent the LGBTQ community can be damaging for the community and is thus considered to not be fair. In the next chapter of the theoretical framework, these typical stereotypes that represent the LGBTQ community and what fair representation consists of will be explained.

Related to one's gender is one's sexuality. As explained, from an essentialist point of view men are supposed to be attracted to women, while women are supposed to be attracted to men, which is the heterosexual hegemony. From a constructionist point of view, this relation is viewed differently. According to constructionists, sexuality is created by culture: political, familial, religious, economic, familial and social conditions (Plummer, 2003) and thus not necessary only heterosexual. Queer theory takes a poststructuralism (and postmodernism) approach, it challenges understandings about sexuality further than the heterosexual hegemony (Oswin, 2008). The term 'queer' is often used as a synonym for non-heterosexuals (Oswin, 2008). According to queer studies, people do not have pre-existing sexual identities.

The last 100 years there was an obsession regarding defining sexualities. Essentialists understand that homosexuality is biological and when looking back in history we can see examples of gay identities (Avila-Saavedra, 2009). For example, back in 1890 in New York, gay men would dominate certain areas of the city and many businesses would only serve them. Constructionists however, understand homosexual identity to be a cultural product as well as a social construction (Avila-Saavedra, 2009). When looking into Foucault (1978): sexuality and sexual definitions were built by society in order to restrain people who wish to get involved in acts that differ from the heterosexual model (Foucault, 1978).

Many philosophical and political comprehensions of nonheteronormative gender identity and sexuality stem from queer theory. Queer theory derived from deconstructivist and feminist theories that propose deviant as well as normative sexual behaviours and cognitions as socially constructed (Nagoshi & Brzuzy, 2010). Opposite of this are the essentialist ideas which are linked to gender roles, gender identity, and sexual orientation being firmly within a binary, biologically based, heteronormative gender point of view (Kimmel, 1996; Norton, 1997). ''Queer'' is a separate identity, revolving around a nonheteronormative sexuality, and a theoretical orientation for how identity is supposed to be understood. The label queer refers to ''the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or cannot be made) to signify monolithically'' (Sedgwick, 1998, p. 208). Which goes along the idea that gender can be found on a continuum between masculinity and femininity and is not based on someone's sex.

Looking at gender as a continuum we identify several categories that go beyond the binary feminine/masculine: transgenderism, homosexuality, and bisexuality. Transgenderism is defined by Green (2004) as the fragmentation of different gender roles and gender identities and/or the going beyond the tight boundaries of one gender to the other gender. Transgenders are typical to show gender identities that go outside of the traditional heteronormative descriptions, however some transgenders may not actually have the intent to have sex-reassignment surgeries or even hormone treatments (Bornstein, 1994). Transgenders have different beliefs about the fluidity of one's gender identity. Some do accept this fluidity only to the extent that an individual can change between the two pure and separate essentialist gender categories, while others think that the embodied gender identity can be adaptable (Nagoshi & Brzuzy, 2010). Transsexualism is described as inborn and biological, not to be chosen, and consequently worthy of social as well as legal recognitions. Contrarily, transgenderism is believed to be taught, individuals freely choose, and is socially decided, hence not completely deserving of legal recognition (Wallbank, 2004).

Another nonheteronormative sexual identity is homosexuality. In 1896 the term homosexual was created, before this time homosexuality was not considered a distinct orientation. The newly acknowledged sexual orientation suggests that a person's attraction towards an individual of the same sex was an intrinsic feature of their nature (Sullivan, 2004). Ford and Beach (1951) questioned the thought that homosexuality was unnatural. They established that homosexual behaviour occurred in almost all species and that all human societies experience homosexuality. Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin (1948) revealed that homosexual behaviour was more widespread and common through the world than formerly thought. Early stories of homosexuality show a liberal viewpoint when it comes to same-sex relationships, where it was even seen as a transitional ceremony in early Greek as well as Roman societies (Sullivan, 2004). Same-sex eroticism was not

classified as homosexual in certain Western or modern societies. The hetero-homosexual binarism is a fairly late creation (Chauncey, 1995). For example, gay lifestyle in large American cities literally thrived in the 1920's, with many commercial businesses contributing to the gay lifestyle (Sullivan, 2004). During the cold war, anti-gay enforcements of regulations in America increased heavily. Senator McCrthy claimed that homosexuals are a threat to the U.S. State Department's security (Sullivan, 2004) and police would spread ideas that homosexuals threaten the children of the country (Chauncey, 1995). When the war ended, few movements arose that argued against the morbid mainstream idea of homosexuality being bad (Sullivan, 2004). Kinsey (Sullivan, 2004) believed that Judeo-Christian culture was the original source of anti-homosexual thoughts. A different study from Klaassen, Williams, and Levitt (1989) supports this claim when they discovered that the more religious a person is the more likely the person has homophobic attitudes. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) considered homosexuality to be a disease, this was also written in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM), where homosexuality was classified to be a mental illness. In 1973, The APA terminated the thought that homosexuality was a mental disease and it was removed from the DSM. It is important to see that thoughts on homosexuality in society always change, currently discrimination towards homosexuals increases, therefore it is important for media to portray fair representations of this community for people to understand nonheteronormative sexualities better and to not fear them.

Another nonheteronormative sexuality is bisexuality. There are many different thoughts on bisexuality being a valid sexual orientation (Angelides, 2001). Often bisexuality is characterized within the dominant discourses of sexuality as many things, including, a form of immaturity, a phase, a state of confusion, a fashion trend, or even a marketing tool, but almost never as a legitimate sexual identity (Angelides, 2001). In the academic world bisexuality currently is often a blind spot in sex research (Angelides, 2001), because many academics find difficulty in defining bisexuality. Many researchers view bisexuality as a pattern where individuals have erotic responsiveness to both sexes (Rust, 2002). This results in, many studies concerning same-sex sexuality issues that specifically excluded people who identified as bisexual due to conceptual and methodological clarity (Rust, 2000). The amount of journal articles published regarding same-sex sexuality including the word *bisexuality* is because of these problems defining bisexuality low, resulting in empirical research on bisexuality being underrepresented (Diamond, 2008). This is ironic, however, because studies progressively show that bisexual patterns and behavior are more usual than previously thought (Diamond, 2018). Youth that identify as a sexual-minority, progressively identify themselves as bisexual or prefer adopting an 'un-labeled' identity rather than a lesbian/gay identity. These individuals choose this not only as to be a description for their attractions but also as an overall

philosophy where they embrace noncategorical, nongender-based models of sexuality (Savin-Williams, 2005).

Researchers define bisexuality in multiple ways, often it depends on the specific research questions involved in the specific study (Flanders et al, 2017). One of the original extensive studies on bisexuality is Garber's *Vice Versa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life* (1995) and is in line with queer theory as explained before. What Garber tells us*,* is that the 'nature' of sexuality cannot be found in the fixed identities that are *gay* and *straight.* But that it is mobile and changeable, she explains: The 'nature of sexuality . . . is fluid not fixed, a narrative that changes over time rather than a fixed identity, however complex. The erotic discovery of bisexuality is the fact that it reveals sexuality to be a process of growth, transformation, and surprise, not a stable and knowable state of being' (p. 66). She believes that bisexuality is far more than just another sexual identity, bisexuality is a sexuality that 'puts into question the very concept of sexual identity in the first place' (p. 15). What this entails is that Garber sees the *nature* of sexuality to be unpredictably fluid and not to be contained within the fixed hetero- and homosexuality. Other researchers formulate bisexuality to be the middle between heterosexuality and homosexuality. This procedure looks less at bisexuality as a separate identity but more at how bisexuality stands relative to monosexualities (i.e., these are identities where people feel attracted to only one sex and/or gender). This believe is that when one tries to define bisexuality in a relative context, they should combine it with other nonmonosexual identities because the focus is not on specific identities but rather the whole group of nonmonosexuality (Flanders, 2017). This categorizing of nonmonosexual people as well as identities together is frequently depicted as the 'bisexual umbrella.' (Flanders et al, 2017). Many researches do not distinguish bisexuality with other nonmonosexual identities, such as pansexuality, fluid sexuality, or omnisexuality, and instead use the umbrella method of combining the nonmonosexual identities into one big category categorized as 'bisexual' (Callis, 2014; Mitchell, Davis, & Galupo, 2014; Rust, 2001).

Flanders et al (2017), researched bisexuality by conducting interviews with 60 bisexual and pansexual participants aged between 18 to 30. One respondent commented, 'Bisexuality is when someone feels romantic and physical attraction to both sexes' (Flanders et al, 2017, p.46) someone else described bisexuality as 'Being attracted to or loving both genders' (p.46). Generally, references in this study describe bisexuality as being attracted to both genders or sexes (Flanders et al, 2017). Their conclusions reinforce the idea that bisexuals and pansexuals define bisexuality differently, additionally these definitions do not solely differentiate between 'individuals but also within individuals over different contexts' (Flanders et al, 2017, p.52). Diamond (2008) collected longitudinal data from 79 lesbian, bisexual, and 'unlabeled' women to try and figure out what they thought of models describing bisexuality as fluid, phase-based or a 3rd type of orientation. Her findings support

the idea of bisexuality being a separate type of sexual orientation as well as the notion of bisexuality having the flexible capacity for situation specific erotic response (Diamond, 2008).

In fair representations of the LGBTQ community in media. To understand what is considered fair it is important to have a better understanding of the different sexualities that belong to this community and how they are defined and thought of. *The L Word* consists mostly of lesbian women, but also bisexuals, transgenders and gay men. The show depicts all these LGBTQ community members in certain ways, it is important for me then to understand who these members are. As I explained in the introduction, how people think about different sexualities and thus the LGBTQ community is also formed through the use of media and its stories, for example by the use of discourses and representations of the LGBTQ community. The field that researches this topic is called queer studies.

2.2 Narrative and visual queer representation

Experiences human face, whether they are interpersonal or intrapersonal, are greatly influenced by the power of stories. These include the ability for one to understand stories, the ability to produce stories and the ability to execute the procedures that enable one to comprehend and produce stories. People are narrative consumers, where we are insatiable in discovering personal stories of other people because we find them captivating; think of gossip or anecdotes (Mar, 2004). We spend a lot of our time with media - books, theatre, movies and TV series - all involving stories (e.g. created or public narratives). This connection we have with stories (narratives) arises when we are children, when we start watching movies, reading books that makes us emotionally attached to them (Alexander, Miller, & Hengst, 2001). Mar (2004) explains that experiences we have with fictional narratives should not be taken lightly; 'stories have the power to change our beliefs about the real world.' (Mar, 2004, p.1414). As stated in the introduction, we know from Gerbner (1998) that television and film can influence the perception of a person's view on the world. Studies show that reader's viewpoint changes to be more in line with the narratives after being exposed to them (Green & Brock, 2000)

The primary attribute of a story is that it should have a causal event-structure (Mar, 2004). Graesser, Hauft-Smith, Cohen, and Pyles (1980), describe a narrative to be the characterization of a sequence of cases and affairs that unravel over time, following the causal concept. The concept of causation is that things happen in a restricted, logical structure. Barthes (1982) also notes that a narrative always has a function, everything in it has a meaning. The importance of a specific narrative component will eventually be decided by the objectives and purposes of the story character. The initial attributes of a narrative are: a setting, a character who has a specific purpose (e.g. buying a

new house) and whose purpose is then blocked (e.g. fired from work) or even helped (e.g. won the lottery) by specific occurrences (Oatley, 1992; Peterson, 1999). Stories helps people observe the formation of a completely different universe, which reflects a person's own area of experience (Oatley, 1999). People understand the portrayed experiences in a narrative by acquiring the point of view of a character (Rall & Harris, 2000), by visualizing the characters mental state (Gernsbacher, Goldsmith, & Robertson, 1992). Mentally reproducing characters perception have an affect on readers in a way that is in line with the character's circumstance which is similar to the emotional events experienced in real life (Oatley, 1992, 1999). Hence, narrative is the portrayal of affairs powered by the deliberate actions of autonomous agents in a way that displays a created world which mirrors the real world (Mar, 2004).

Since the beginning of mainstream television, important choices of media distribution were manipulated by 'an ideal family audience assumed as exclusively heteronormative' (Malici, 2014, p.189). *Heteronormativity* entails that 'heterosexuality is pervasively assumed and expected to be the norm throughout, privileging normative forms of heterosexuality over and above other behaviors and practices' (Malici, 2014, p.189). Meaning that throughout media we see prominently portrayals of heterosexuality in comparison with other forms of sexualities. However, since the past decade, we see changes happening in the television industry: slowly LGBTQ characters have risen in television to the point that they are largely being accepted by the public (Evans, 2007). With the increasing numbers of LGBTQ characters, queer television studies are interested in the visibility or invisibility, the normalization of queer identities, and queer representations (Campisi, 2013). Early research on the matter entailed investigating the character, storylines as well as discourses with regard to their helpful or harmful contributions to the queer visibility as well as LGBTQ rights movement (Campisi, 2013). Now that queer characters, storylines and discourses have become more commonplace on mainstream television shows, scholars in queer television are looking further than only the visibility and invisibility approach and are focusing now more on the 'assimilating, normalizing, and mainstream aspects of queer representations, as well as their relationship to commodification and political economy' (Campisi, 2013, p.26). Scholars thus currently focus 'on how gender, racialization and class play into which queer identities are represented' (Campisi, 2013, p.26).

Media are primarily focused on portraying the heteronormative for financial benefit because it conforms with the mainstream, scholars are thus trying to understand how LGBTQ portrayals can be of use for media producers to be profitable and fit within the current political economy. When looking at representations of queer women 'the very conditions of visibility are prescribed by class, race, gender and age norms according to which viewers come to see and recognize what a lesbian looks and acts like', meaning that the formation of queer identities being normalized creates results that move further than their plain visibility' (Campisi, 2013, p.27).

As I mentioned earlier, the last few years, there was an increase in the number of LGBTQ representations in media as well as research on the effects of this representation (Thomasson, 2019; GLAAD, 2019). Last year GLAAD's *Where We Are On TV* annual report revealed that the percentage of regular LGBTQ characters in American series was 8.8 percent, simultaneously GLAAD discussed with broadcast networks to make sure that percentage should reach 10 by 2020 (GLAAD, 2019). The latest report on these numbers mentioned that of the 879 series regular characters that are expected to appear in 2020, 90 (10,2 percent) are LGBTQ: hence, exceeding GLAAD's expectations and simultaneously making it the highest percentage of LGBTQ characters' representation ever reported (GLAAD, 2019). The biggest remark was noticed in scripted streaming originals, where the LGBTQ regular characters increased from 75 to 109 (GLAAD, 2019). Every year the number of LGBTQ characters in prominent dramatized series are increasing (GLAAD, 2019). Sarah Kate Ellis, President & CEO of GLAAD says 'at a time when the cultural climate is growing increasingly divisive, increased representation of LGBTQ stories and characters on television is especially critical to advance LGBTQ acceptance' (GLAAD, 2019). GLAAD and Harris Poll's *Accelerating Acceptance* study showed that 20 percent of Americans aged between 18 and 34 are LGBTQ (2017). Increasing the LGBTQ characters on prominent TV shows to 20 percent is according to GLAAD (2019) 'an important next step towards ensuring that our entertainment reflects the world in which it is created and the audience consuming it.'

Currently, the proportion of LGBTQ representations in media is uneven. The largest proportion of the LGBTQ members being prominent in media are gay men (Keegan, 2006). Gates (2017) explains how more women than men truly identify as LGBTQ, meaning that showing most of the LGBTQ characters in media as gay men does not truly represent the actual world. Bisexual characters make up 26% of all LGBTQ characters across all three media platforms (GLAAD, 2019). This is one percent less than last year, and also far from the truth that bisexual people make up the majority of the community (GLAAD, 2019). Transgenders are the least represented people of the LGBTQ community in the current media (GLAAD, 2019). Capuzza (2017) shows how the small number of transgender characters appearing in media there is also a disproportionate: most of them are trans women, trans men and non-binary portrayals are mostly not present. The amount of transgender people in real life is not correctly portrayed in media, this can lead to misunderstandings in the community.

The youth is also concerned about media not providing equal representations for the whole LGBTQ community, for example, bisexuals, transgenders or LGBTQ people of color (McInroy & Craig, 2017). They believe that transgenders are mostly portrayed as negative and stereotyped throughout media (McInroy & Craig, 2015). When it comes to LGBTQ people of color, we have seen an increase where LGBTQ people of color outnumber white LGBTQ people, 52% to 48% (GLAAD, 2019). Which is

great because Driver (2007) found out that for LGBTQ youth of color, when there is an exclusion of half of an individual's identity, it can lead to uncertainty about how to combine both roles into a meaningful whole. It is important for media representations of the LGBTQ community to show all aspects, including distinctive social as well as cultural factors. Not only LGBTQ youth mostly think current LGBTQ characters are portrayed as stereotypical, heterosexual youth feels the same way (Jackson & Gilbertson, 2009).

There are different ways the LGBTQ community is being represented in media. One way the LGBTQ community is being represented in media is by the use of tropes (narrative representation) and another way is by the use of stereotypes (visual representation).

2.2.1 Narrative representation

The LGBTQ community can be represented in media in multiple ways. One way is through tropes. This segment contains what tropes essentially are and which common tropes are used to represent the LGBTQ community.

Though the numbers, the quantity, of LGBTQ characters in prominent series are increasing every year, the quality of these representations remains largely unknown. According to Thomasson (2019) the quality of these representations varies. Discourses are partly determined by the use of representations. A story frequently makes use of tropes (already existing concepts; an idea that repeatedly appears) to make it easier for the viewer to comprehend the story. White (1978, p.254/255) describes four forms of rhetoric tropes namely: metonymy, 'the use of the name of one thing for that of another to which it has some logical relation' ('Metonomy,'n.d.) (e.g. straight, otherwise known as heterosexual); synecdoche, a figure of speech when a segment is used for the total or the total for a segment (e.g. queers, for the whole LGBTQ community); irony, which 'discrepancy between the real result of an order of circumstances and the expected or normal result' ('Irony,'n.d.) (e.g. she is stone cold, but we love him anyhow).; and lastly metaphor, 'a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them' (Metaphor.' N.d.) (e.g. drowning in money). Butler (1997, p.201) explains: 'a trope cannot operate, that is, generate new meanings or connections, if its departure from custom and logic is not recognized as such a departure. In this sense a trope presupposes an accepted version of reality for its operation'. In this case, tropes assume a specific 'reality', in addition they portray 'a deviation *towards* another meaning, conception, or ideal of what is right and proper *and true* 'in reality.' Thus, troping is both a movement *from* one notion of the way things are related to another notion' (White, 1978, p. 2). To simplify this concept, for individuals to comprehend what it entails to be 'straight', it is needed for

these people to have an idea what it means to 'not be straight'. Butler continues that tropes are 'not restricted to accepted versions of reality' (1997, p.201). Hence, tropes may not only strengthen what is already known, but can also design a new version of reality. Some classic tropes used in media are: The damsel in distress, the superhero, superhero fight scene, kiss between damsel and superhero. There are also tropes from real life, which we all may have encountered and understand, such as the strict father, the know it all and the high school dropout.

There are however some downsides on labeling people. Firstly, they do not allow for nuance and secondly these tropes could have negative connotations. There are some negative tropes used for depicting LGBTQ members in stories. For instance, the 'bury your gays' trope (Waggoner, 2017; Blair, et al 2019), which entails the fatal death of a LGBTQ character in a story. This circumstance is so common that it has obtained its own title in popular culture (Blair, et al 2019). This trope's first appearance was in 1976's soap opera *Executive Suite*. Where two women (Leona and Julie) are firstly portrayed as close friends until Julie confesses her love for Leona. They both are married women with husbands. When Leona thinks she feels the same way for Julie and tells her, she walks away to to clear her head because she is so confused. While Leona is walking away, Julie tries to reach her and gets immediately hit by a car. In 2006 people were fed up with the 'bury your gays' trope, when the umpteenth lesbian character was killed off in television show *the 100*, which led to a social media movement showing this disapproval. People are becoming aware of these negative tropes that are representing the LGBTQ community and are speaking out. We would expect such negative tropes to not appear in media, because they are damaging for the LGBTQ community and the audiences.

Another prevalent trope that we see in media is the 'Dead Lesbian Syndrome'. This entails just like the previous trope a fatal outcome, but now specifically for LGBTQ female characters (Blair, et al 2019), which is even more common than the 'bury your gays' trope. These phenomena cause problems because people connect their own experiences to what they see in media. Only seeing yourself in media as ending unhappily could damage future perspectives for LGBTQ members. Other common lesbian tropes are: the 'hot' lesbian, which is essentially a heteronormative feminine woman who is only in the show for the heterosexual male. The plain evil lesbian; which is a lesbian who primarily does bad things. The psychotic jealous lesbian; lesbians are often depicted to be hysterical, psychotic and jealous and act accordingly. The murderous, criminal lesbian in prison; often lesbians in media need to go to prison or are already in prison. The mentally ill lesbian; often lesbians are portrayed to have mental issues that can go as far to be suicidal. The 'bisexuality a la mode', is when a straight female character all of a sudden becomes gay just to later turn back to preferring men (Carlino, 2014). The 'victim' trope and the 'coming out of the closet' trope are also often used to portray the LGBTQ community in media (Marshall, 2010). The victim trope entails the fact that a LGBTQ character is portrayed to be a victim of their own sexuality and thus feels bad because the

person is not heterosexual. The 'coming out of the closet' trope is the fact that a LGBTQ character needs to come out of the closet or at least talk about it, to make clear that one is not heterosexual. There seem to be no 'happily ever after tropes', or even positive tropes for this community, which has damaging consequences for both the community and the viewers.

2.2.2 Visual representation

Next to tropes being a way to represent the LGBTQ community in media, there are also stereotypes. In this segment I will dive deeper into what stereotypes are and which stereotypes are often used to portray the LGBTQ community in media.

Media are, as we read, a source of information, people learn from media and thus it is important that what media portray should be carefully thought of. However, we see many negative stereotypes still in TV and film that have unfavorable consequences for its audience and for the communities being represented by that stereotype. Stereotypes have the power to shape the perception we have of people (Wright, 2006). Stereotypes can leave people with a sense of otherness, because they have the power to strengthen separation (Steele, 2011; Canales, 2000). By otherness we mean the situation where a person feels that someone else is completely different. Otherness can be felt by everyone (Steele, 2011).

This is embedded in what Steele calls 'identity contingencies' (2011, p.10) or linkages (Canales, 2000). These are the things a person needs to do because the other people in the group have given that person a certain identity. Stereotypes strengthen these identities that are given by the other people, creating this separation between a person and the other which is different. Stereotypes influence people, it does not matter If the stereotype portrayed in media is positive or negative, people continue to embody these stereotypes either way. Which makes it so important, that LGBTQ representations are fair.

Stereotypes affect how people see themselves, and how they must behave, through their internalization of stereotypes into themselves (Chalabaev et al, 2013). Internalization is when people merge certain values, standards, attitudes as well as the beliefs of others into their identity (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015). People internalize these stereotypes because they are so common in media. A study from Steele (1997) pointed out that if young African-American women would see themselves portrayed in media, regardless of them being positive of negative, they would identify with them and internalize certain character traits, including the negative ones if they were depicted in that way. Visual media thus can have a major part in maintaining these stereotypes.

Media creators inform their audience with what they depict in what they create, they should be responsible for what they portray to be fair. Ross and Lester (2003) however acknowledged that

media creators use stereotypes to make it easier for their audience to recognize and comprehend them. This has negative consequences however because the audience misinterprets the characters because they represent stereotypes that are accidental misrepresentations of the communities they are portraying. Misrepresentations in media can be damaging for the people being represented as well as for the viewers. Dyer (2002) declared that the way certain social groups are depicted in media reflects how these people are treated in real life. That is why it is important that media portrays fair representations of the LGBTQ community, for them to be accepted in society. Dyer (2002) continues explaining that how people are seen in media, affects how people are treated, because how people treat others derives from the way people view them. What stereotyping in media does is making sure people continue to view these people as a stereotype.

Ross and Lester (2003) and De Zengotita (2006) claimed that visual media plays an important part in one's construction of their social memory. When people see events, other people or stories in media, they can recall them because they are stored in their social memory. Having a social memory of negative stereotypes can thus have a negative impact on certain people or their community. Hence, regardless to the amount of times a person sees a stereotype depicted in media, it will repeatedly cause damage. De Zengotita (2006) claims that people regularly come across stereotypes, making it almost impossible for individuals to break free from the social memory that is invested in themselves. Making sure that the people we encounter in media are fairly represented, which consists of well-rounded and unique individuals without the use of stereotypes, can make sure that our social memory is corrected which can lead to less harm (Ross and Lester, 2003). This can help the viewers understand the people being portrayed in media better. Having fair representations in media of the LGBTQ community can not only help this community feel adequately identified but also teach other people who are not LGBTQ more about those who are.

In the past, stereotyped characters formed a prominent way of representing members of the LGBTQ community in media (Mahtani, 2001). Most of the LGBTQ representations we see show a narrow point of view and provides almost no room for the character to grow or reliable to their audience (Blair, et al 2019). Keegan (2006, p. 108) explains '...we queers are overwhelmingly white, male, wealthy, thin, young, fashionable, and seronegative. We live in expensive urban lofts and spend our free time whipping straights into shape with our catty relationship advice and snappy sense of style'. A good example of such a stereotype is Will from *Will and Grace.* Often the gay man is made 'acceptable' for the heterosexual audience by making him: muscled, handsome, well educated, good career, good income (Battles & Hilton-Morrow, 2002). This type of representation is only one example of the whole community.

Other harmful ways the LGBTQ community is often depicted is that their sexuality is made an issue (Fajer, 1991) or they are solely defined by their sexuality (Blair et al, 2019). Often gay men and

lesbians are portrayed with stereotyped gender inversion; gay males are more feminine, lesbians are more masculine (Sedgwick, 1990). Goltz (2009) showed how only 'young' gay men are valued on TV, because when showing an older gay man, they mostly resemble depressed, isolated, miserable as well as a bitter, sexual perverts. Goltz (2019) concluded that these negative destinies portrayed in media, which are according to him seldom true, can be damaging for gay young men. As it might make them believe their future will be rather dark. Gay men are also often depicted as being child molesters, having sex without commitment and also weak (Fajer, 1991; Connolly, 2018). Portraying the same stereotypical character in media reduces an entire community of diverse and unique people to one type.

Another problem around representation is that not all the characters being portrayed are fairly represented. Characters representing the LGBTQ community regularly are solely involved to serve as a joke, to assist the storyline of a heterosexual character or to be killed off in tragedy (Blair, et al 2019). Connolly (2018) observed the film *the gay deceivers,* about two men who fake being gay. He found out that the movie initially says that if someone is a homosexual man, he must not have a strong sense of masculinity (Connolly, 2018). This can be problematic for the youth, expecting that if a man is weak he must be gay and if a man is strong and patriotic he automatically is straight (Connolly (2018).

Media representations of lesbians are generally ambiguous, showing stereotypical depictions of lesbian women and are often negative (Raley & Lucas, 2006; Lee & Meyer, 2010). Negative representations of lesbians are assumed to have stereotypical tendencies, which result in harming marginalized identities (Campisi, 2013). Lesbian characters in television shows are often portrayed as missing sexuality, personal rights, and are anxious to let their sexuality be exposed (Lee & Meyer, 2010). Until now, mostly comedy series have shown popular representations of lesbians; in *The Golden Girls,* where they talk about sexuality and real lesbians through jokes, or Karen in *Will & Grace* who is only there for comedic purposes, or even *Ellen.* This however gives the audience the chance to disregard their sexuality to be solely a comedic feature in the storyline (Lee & Meyer, 2010). Looking at dramatized television, lesbians are often only involved in dramatic coming out circumstances to later only be disregarded or they are shown as exotic creatures only created for the heterosexual male (Herman, 2003).

Continuing, most of the lesbian characters accentuate a 'performance of the body, whereby most lesbians are femme' (Lee & Meyer, 2010, p.237). This is obvious in the comedy series *Ally McBeal,* where the main female characters would kiss one another, but not really represent a true lesbian relationship. This fulfills the heterosexual mainstream audiences' fantasies. Scholars argue that these femme lesbians are created for the heterosexual viewer by sustaining hetero/sexism through these femme bodies (Lee & Meyer, 2010). Guerrero-Pico et al. (2018, p.313) explain, 'TV

content might be also linked to the construction of an object of desire—the 'hot lesbian' trope—which is more aimed at pleasing a heterosexual male gaze than to provide a model of reference for lesbian women to identify with'. This helps the believe that the LGBTQ community is often portrayed by heteronormative ideals that please the heterosexual preference, instead of being true and fair LGBTQ characters which the community can truly identify with.

Opposite of the 'femme' lesbian we recognize the masculine 'butch' lesbian, which is less economically consumable and barely appearing in mainstream media (Ciasullo, 2001). A butch presents her gender along the masculine end of the gender spectrum (i.e. fashion style, hair, mannerisms), an example of a 'butch' lesbian is Bo from *Orange is The New Black*, a small but broad woman with short black hair and masculine traits. There are different levels of butch lesbians, for they are not necessarily have to be completely 'manly'. They can be soft-butch, where they are androgynous with both masculine and feminine characteristic traits. Usually, television accentuates the socially accepted lesbian as 'being 'gentle, sensitive, soft-hearted, soft-spoken, absolutely non-butch, [and] stereotypically feminine'' (Harrington, 2003, p. 216). This has made scholars label this embodiment of lesbians in television as ''the user-friendly lesbian'' (Dow, 2001, p.137).

Finally, the majority of lesbian representations in television 'promote the safe, femme, straight-friendly lesbian' while others 'correlate lesbianism with violence or villainy' (Lee & Meyer, 2010, p.237). Compared to gay men that mostly are depicted in media as having sexual relations without commitment, lesbians cannot have sex without (Fajer, 1991).

Bisexuals are often depicted as being (temporary) confused, where their sexuality is 'just a phase' (Barker et al, 2008). Frequently they are promiscuous and insatiable or they are defined by having problems with their relationship or at it with everyone (Barker et al, 2008).

If transgenders are represented in media, which is very limited, they are mostly depicted as abnormal and thus an outcast which is pitied (Gazzola & Morrison, 2014). Sometimes also portrayed as a prostitute (Jobe, 2013), someone that is confused (Gazzola & Morrison, 2014) or someone that is sick (Jobe, 2013).

2.2.3 Fair representation

Because there are many negative tropes and mostly negative stereotypes that represent the LGBTQ community in media, people have started to pay attention to the quality of these representations, to 'fair representation'. How that looks like will be explained in this segment.

While LGBTQ portrayals in media are increasing it becomes a topic of discussion whether they are represented fairly. It is not only crucial for these members to be solely present and visible in media but also to be represented in a divers and fair manner. The LGBTQ community needs to be

fairly represented for the sake of the people in the community as for its acceptance in society. It is important to have accurate and fair representations of the LGBTQ community in media. Currently this is not the case, even though there is an increasement of LGBTQ characters in media. Finding a way for the members of the community to be fairly represented is important for its acceptance in today's society, as well as for the youth that use these media portrayals to develop themselves. There are multiple elements of importance when we want to investigate the fairness of LGBTQ characters' representation. To find the right way to portray the people of the LGBTQ community where they feel they are being fairly represented in media there are a couple things that come to mind.

One is to find the balance between negative or harmful representations and positive or helpful representations. Harmful representations use stereotypes, one-dimensional characters which preserve the social stigmas that are tied to the community. Ross and Lester (2003) believe that the best way to battle stereotypes in social memory is by replacing the stereotypes with better representations, which are non-harmful and include unique as well as well-rounded characters that come from a big variation of social classes and backgrounds. Having more diverse characters representing the LGBTQ community would help everyone to feel a connection through media, which is important for an individual's formation of identity (Blair et al, 2019).

Next to stereotypes being used in media which are harmful, another point is that LGBTQ characters should not only be defined by their sexuality. There are many characteristics of an individual that are equally important. Only defining a LGBTQ character in media by its sexuality is also considered as harmful (Blair et al, 2019). For example, Blair et al (2019) studied media representations concerning the LGBTQ community, their respondents appreciated the persona Rosa from *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* because the show merely discusses the fact that she is gay. They did portray her coming out, but her sexuality was not her only characteristic. Her storyline has moved beyond it, normalizing it in a sense. They also concluded that LGBTQ characters should be more divers when it comes to race, ethnicity and religion (Blair et al, 2019). Combining these should create a more comprehensive perception of the LGBTQ community, which can be understood as more fair.

Thirdly it is important to film LGBTQ not differently than heterosexual characters. The way LGBTQ characters are filmed can have an impact on the normalization of this community. Martin (2014) concluded that if intimate scenes are filmed differently for LGBTQ characters than for heterosexual characters it maintains the sense that affection between LGBTQ people is abnormal and uneasy to watch. Even tough LGBTQ characters are present, if intimate scenes are somewhat hidden to make heterosexual audiences more at ease to watch. This can have negative consequences for the LGBTQ community being accepted in society. Fourthly, negative reactions towards LGBTQ characters in media, which are not clearly defined by its wrongness, could be seen as problematic

and harmful as well (Blair et al, 2019). When it is not clear why a character is being hateful towards a LGBTQ character, the viewer may not understand it either and assume that it is normal to feel hatred towards the LGBTQ community.

Finally, humorous representations of the LGBTQ community that does not educate the viewer is seen as negative, because it reinforces certain stereotypes and supports the message that being a member of this community is something to ridicule and laugh at.

In this research, 'fair' and 'not fair' attributes will be searched for in *The L Word* and *the L Word: Generation* Q, specifically focused on the plotlines of the primary characters. I will look for tropes and stereotypes in the primary characters that represent the LGBTQ community in the series. Even though tropes and stereotypes can be an easy way for audiences to comprehend a character, most of these cause harm. As I mentioned earlier, media content namely can play an active part in the process of shaping one's identity or understanding someone's identity (Sarkissian, 2014). If the represented LGBTQ community in media merely consists of negative tropes, stereotypes and other un fair attributes, it can be damaging for the community.

2.3 Queer TV and The L Word

Before the 1970's there were hardly any gay or lesbian portrayals in the U.S. media, let alone queer representation. In the 50's gay men became slightly visible in the news media; lesbians, however, were prominently invisible until the 90's. Resulting in relatively less research conducted on lesbians in media compared to gay men. With the gay and lesbian liberation movement in the late 60's came the first representations of gay and lesbian characters to the small screens, however prominently depicting these people as a victim, villain, or comedic prop (Gross, 2001; Walters, 2001). These stereotypical tropes lasted for decades, making television audiences slowly accustomed to the sporadic appearance of a primarily white, middle-class, gay male or lesbian (Peters, 2011). The initial two television sitcoms including lesbian and gay primary characters, *Ellen* (1994-1998), *Will & Grace* (1998-2006) where mostly argued to mainly have these stereotypical tropes as being comedic and depicting white, middle-class lesbian and gay men to be funny, charming and unstable (Peters, 2011). Where they mostly represent 'all talk and no action' (Peters, 2011 p.194).

As stated in the introduction, due to the increase of LGBTQ media portrayals in the 1990's, with now more recently also expanding on queer themes into cable programming, has resulted in an increasement for queer television scholarship (Heller, 2011). Becker (2006) believes that the way gay-themed television has developed is a way to direct heterosexual viewers who were upset about the culture's concerns of sexual norms. He thinks 'Gay TV' should be recognized in relation to the

changing paradigms of fear about the uncertainty of different categories within sexual identity (2006).

Alongside these developments a different fight was occurring in America between the big three networks in the television industry. The ABC, CBS and NBC experienced a massive loss in viewer dominance as well as cultural hegemony, when they tried to lure their adult audiences away from cable television (Heller, 2011). In the 90's networks changed their established procedures for new strategies that made way for narrowcasting. This completely changed television economics (Heller, 2011). Now, the networks were not dependent on household data to sell to advertisers for space anymore, the industry started to break viewers up into niche groups that were based on social attributes of identity including, class, race, gender and age. Advertisers for television now preferred to capture educated, socially liberal consumers aged between eighteen to forty-nine. They were not interested in keeping the dominant heteronormative view for alleged 'normal' Americans, consisting of television for and only portraying heterosexual views. This resulted in a complete change within prime-time programming. When in the past gay-themed programming was believed to be to tricky for prime time, now became the way to attract viewers who enjoy ironic, edgy and urban-chic entertainment (Heller, 2011). For these audiences, gay-themed programming became interesting and were believed to be sufficiently hip to view more uncensored, provocative material.

This made way for the American adaptation of the prominent gay show: *Queer As Folk* (*QAF*). *QAF* aired originally in 1999 on Channel 4 in Britain. This channel is funded publicly but also profit driven and was initiated in 1982 to deliver programs to minority populations that were 'not adequately served by existing channels' (Casey, Casey, Calvert, French, & Lewis, 2002, p. 36). This first version of *QAF* aired for eight episodes in Britain (Shindler & Davies, 1999-2000) and was initially created as a drama series to serve the public, especially the minority (Bignell, 2002). *QAF* grew to a big success which gave interest to commercially driven producers. Broadcast network Showtime from the States joined forces with Canada's Temple Street Production to create the American version of *QAF*. Showtimes reasoning for creating *QAF* is however slightly different than its previous British version. The intention of Channel 4 is to represent the minority population, which includes lesbians and gays. In America however, this was much less of importance. In the 70's the United States tried to show diversity and different perspectives of the population to serve the public's interest on TV, however in the 80's many procedures of deregulation took place that stimulated market profit thinking, being profitable became very important which led to the expense of representing the underrepresented population. Meaning that programming is only created to generate profit, thus for the mainstream heterosexual audiences. Generating profit is more important than representing minority groups, which includes the LGBTQ community, consequently underrepresenting this population in media.

Unlike the shows *Ellen* and *Will & Grace QAF* was different in many aspects. *QAF* essentially kept representing gays and lesbians as white and wealthy but also showed different varieties of the queer community. Beyond showing love, affinity, and sex between same-sex people, *QAF* also portrayed for the first time many non-normative sexual procedures, including polyamorous people and bondage. *QAF* rapidly grew to the number one series on Showtime in America. Due to the importance of being profitable and having 'valuable' audiences, *QAF* shows the prominent representations of mainly male, white, middle- and upper-class, gender normative gays and lesbians (Peters, 2009; Farrell, 2006). Showtime's portrayal of characters in *QAF* are mainly wealthier than those in the British version. This is due to the profit-driven mentality that Showtime has that wants its audience to be from the middle- and upper-class. This also happens in *The L Word.* Being white and wealthy are created as unnoted 'universal' categories, the American, white, urban, gays and lesbians that appear on *QAF* and *The L Word* come to symbolically represent the whole LGBTQ community, particularly for people who are not familiar with queers or the community (Peters, 2009). This community is however as I stated before, much more than that. This portrayal of the community is mainly the case in television series.

As stated in the introduction, there are many series that show depictions of the LGBTQ community (GLAAD, 2019). In 2019 out of 879 primary characters counted in series, 90 (10,2%) were LGBTQ. Which is the highest number ever counted (GLAAD, 2019). This however does not hold into account how these characters are portrayed, as many series still include stereotyped versions the LGBTQ community. One show that did show multifaceted LGBTQ representations is TV show *Glee*. Dhaenes (2013) concluded that by showing LGBTQ characters having conflicts and optimistic encounters could assist series to detach itself from heterosexual standards. Sarkissian (2014) noted that *Glee* has a diverse group of LGBTQ characters with their own unique experiences. Because of this, *Glee* can truly represent all the different sides of wat it entails to be identified as LGBTQ in high school. This community is depicted in a multifaceted and complex way emphasizing the certainty that no separate people experience the same exact things (Sarkissian, 2014). Research on LGBTQ portrayals in media is relatively new. As I mentioned, since the 50's gay men became visible in media and thus a topic of research. Since then, gay men in media have been largely studied, compared to the mostly invisible lesbians in media (Streitmatter, 2008). This has resulted in much less knowledge on lesbians on television and even less on bisexuals, transgenders as well as queers.

2.3.1 The L Word

The first television show that revolved around lesbian women is Showtime's *The L Word* and came out four years after *QAF*. *The L Word* (2004-2009) is a Showtime television series that is considered

to be one of the original television shows involving 'dramatized representations of prominent lesbian characters' (Lee & Meyer, 2010, p.1). The show portrays the lives of lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders living in West-Hollywood in Los Angeles. They are all in their late 20's except for Shane who is 25. It depicts a collection of racial, political, organizational, as well as interpersonal issues happening in the lesbian communities (Lee & Meyer, 2010). The series is interesting because it is the first TV show that has been created by a lesbian, about lesbians and to some extent, for lesbians (Kuorikoski, 2007). With the launch of the show in 2004, Showtime's average prime-time rating quadrupled to almost 1 million viewers (Lee & Meyer, 2010). The series promptly obtained international critical acclaim (Lee & Meyer, 2010).

The L Word's first season introduces Bette Porter (biracial, mulatto) who works as a director at a museum, and Tina Kennard (white) who quit her job to focus on becoming a mom. They are a lesbian couple who are together for seven years and try to have a baby; Marina Ferrer (white), a lesbian and owner of the local café where the primary characters spend a lot of their time; Jenny Schecter (white), an amateur writer who moved to Los Angeles to be together with her longtime boyfriend Tim Haspell (white); Shane McCutcheon (white), a very sexual, clearly butch, lesbian hairstylist; Alice Pieszecki (white), a bisexual journalist who invented 'The Chart' (a chart showing all the relationships of the characters of the show); Dana Fairbanks (white), a lesbian professional tennis player who is in the closet; and Kit Porter (black), the straight half-sister of Bette.

When Jenny moves to LA, she quickly finds out she is not only interested in men but also in women. She has an affair with Marina even though she is engaged to Tim. After she and Tim are through, she joins the friend group of the other women (Bette, Tina, Alice, Shane and Dana), who often (at least every morning for their breakfast) get together at The Planet to discuss whatever they have going on.

The show has been studied for several years now and has multiple critiques, through the seasons we see the lives, the problems and the relationships of these people, however some primary characters may come and go. For The L Word has also made use of the 'dead lesbian trope' multiple times. And looking back on the show, The L Word's creator Ilene Chaiken shows deep regret for having killed off certain characters (Shavick, 2011).

The show is homonormative because it constructs its narrative where lesbianism is accepted and also desired (Kuorikoski, 2007). Homonormative entails the privileging of heteronormative ideations as well as constructs onto the LGBTQ community. Meaning that certain values and norms that heterosexuals have should also be copied and carried out by non-heterosexuals. The show is placed in West Hollywood, where supposedly almost everyone we see is non-heterosexual. In the first episode when Jenny arrives at Tim's house, Jenny recalls the neighborhood to be 'rather traditional', Tim replies with 'not as traditional as you may think.' Implying that most people in that

neighborhood are not straight. When Jenny is in her garden talking to Tina, a couple of men walk by with babies wrapped around them. Tina calls them the 'gay dads', who come by every day to walk together through the neighborhood. Being gay is more normal than being straight in the show.

According to Ciasullo (2001) lesbian women are portrayed as desirable objects for heterosexual viewers through heterosexualisation, which is realized by presenting lesbians that embody hegemonic femininity. Meaning, that in media lesbians look like 'conventionally attractive straight women' (Ciasullo, 2001, p. 578). Making lesbians look more feminine and maternal, makes lesbianism easier for the heterosexual viewer. This is also the case in *The L Word*. According to Chambers (2006, p. 82) 'the narrative structure of *The L Word* often serves to perpetuate, preserve and sustain the normativity of heterosexuality'. Beirne (2007, p.1) concluded the show is 'soft porn, deliberately titillating a straight male audience'. This is clearly shown in *The L Word's* advertising: the show has been clearly marketed towards straight males as the show depicts lesbians as objects of desires to heterosexuals (Kuorikoski, 2007). The series however not only portrays the normatively feminine, femme lesbian, it also shows a wide variety lesbians who could be considered butch or soft butch. Meaning not all the women are very feminine, but some can have certain masculine traits, whether they are physical or personal. This makes the show homonormative in the sense that characters sometimes question the clearly defined feminine hegemony that should attract heterosexuals, but creates a space for different LGBTQ members to identify and desire the characters. Beirne (2006) believes *The L Word* shows a new world of lesbian visibility and representation to the mainstream, where lesbianism is fashionable and glamourized to combat the 'mannish, butch stereotype' into the new 'femme, lipstick lesbian'. Beirne (2006) also believes there are some images in *The L Word* that are constructed for a heterosexual audience, but that these are also explicitly required for that medium, to be able to have a large enough audience to be profitable.

Even though the series does primarily depict the feminine 'femme/lipstick lesbian', it also shows through the narrative that the feminine lesbian is rather questioned or inauthentic (Beirne, 2006). The show portrays a hyper visible feminine lesbian while simultaneously seeing them as less authentic lesbians, female masculinity (being butch) is however portrayed through the show as more authentic. This is clear in one of the episodes of the first season where one of the primary characters (Alice) sees a woman from across the hall and naming her a 'hundred-footer', because that woman is so clearly a lesbian, because of her masculine traits making her butch (man-sandals, sports bra, short hair). And when Jenny asks Alice to guess her sexuality based on her appearance, Alice cannot tell if she is gay because she looks so feminine (make up, long hair, skirt). Kern (2014) conducted a qualitative research on what viewers think of *The L Word* and its representation and narrative. He concluded that many felt a deep connection and identification with *The L Word* in comparison with

other TV series (Kern, 2014). 'L Word audiences have stated that the show presented an unseen community to which they belonged and could relate' (Kern, 2014, p. 447).

The main critique of LGBTQ representation in the show was concluded mostly positive for viewers from both inside and out the LGBTQ community. Kern further noted that 'It is productive because it increases cultural understanding of LGBTQ issues. More importantly, the show offers increased visibility of marginalized LGBTQ identities, and an increased sense of an accepting, larger, and cohesive LGBTQ community' (2014, p. 447). Even though the show is not perfect, The L Word does have a main positive response to representation and could set a standard for media producers.

The American broadcast network with the most portrayals of the LGBTQ community is Showtime (2019). Showtime released The L Word's sequel: The L Word: Generation Q, early this year and has according to GLAAD (2019) the most LGBTQ representations ever encountered in a television show.

Generation Q continues over 10 years after The L Word ended, not in West-Hollywood but in Silver Lake, Los Angeles. The first season consists of eight episodes of approximately 50 minutes. The actors who played Bette, Tina, Shane and Alice from the original series return to their old roles accompanied by a new and diverse group of LGBTQ individuals in their mid-20s; Dani Núñez, Bette's PR manager but formerly working very high up at her father's company, and is a lesbian engaged to Sophie; Sophie Suarez, Alice's TV producer, a lesbian and Dani's fiancée; Micah Lee, a homosexual teacher and trans man who lives together with Sophie and Dani; lastly, Sarah Finley, a bisexual woman from a catholic family who works for Alice as well, as her personal assistant. The new cast are all friends with different backgrounds and stories. The show revolves around their and the old cast's lives where they experience sex, love, heartbreak, setbacks, personal growth and success.

Jana Winograde (Showtime Networks President of Entertainment) announced that the launch of The L Word: Generation Q made way for the biggest weekend of subscribers' sign ups in 2019 for the network (White, 2020). Quickly after the release of Generation Q, showtime revealed the show will be renewed for a second season with ten episodes (White, 2020).

Little research has been done on this show due to its recent release. However some critics and viewers rated the show. On Rotten Tomatoes the show scores an approval rating of 83% based on 29 critic ratings and has an audience score of 72% based on 92 user ratings. In comparison to The L Word which has an approval rating of 57% based on critic ratings and has an audience score of 73% based on user ratings throughout the whole show.

Because it is so important that the LGBTQ community is fairly represented in television, and The L Word: Generation Q contains most of these portrayals in American drama series, I am going to analyze whether these portrayals are fair. We know the critique's as well as the positive reactions its

predecessor has, now it is time to compare the primary characters of the two series and see how and if the show has changed, for the better, to be fair.

3. Research Design

Primarily, the goal of this research is to find out whether popular scripted television series that portray the LGBTQ community have become more fair in their representations over the past 10 years. The quantity of these representations has grown, but what is the quality of these representations? To be able to answer this question a case study has been chosen to compare the primary characters of the popular lesbian television series *The L Word* with its sequel *The L Word: Generation Q.* Therefore, the research question holds: How are the primary characters of *The L Word: Generation Q* represented in comparison with the primary characters of *The L Word?* Furthermore, to be able to answer the main research question, two following sub-questions will be answered:

- How are the primary characters in *The L* Word represented?
- How are the primary characters in *The L Word: Generation Q* represented?

In order to answer the research question, a qualitative research approach is chosen. We have seen the number of LGBTQ representations increased over the last years in scripted television series, however we are still uncertain about the quality of these representations. To be able to understand the quality and the meaning of these representations, a qualitative analysis is necessary. We do not know if all these current portrayals are fair, we merely know that there are more portrayals of this community in television shows. To be able to understand if these representations are fair, a thematic analysis has been chosen as most appropriate. A thematic analysis allows a researcher to systematically identify, organize and find insights across meaningful patterns (themes) throughout a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

This analysis uses a combination of deductive and inductive research. Certain concepts, called sensitizing concepts, already are acknowledged in the theoretical framework and steer the analysis to determine what is considered 'fair' or 'not fair' regarding representations. This deductive part is complemented by an Inductive part with regard to patterns found in the data.

The analysis of this thesis is divided into three steps: tropes, visual, and fair representation. To understand if the series portray fair representations it is important to first search for tropes and stereotypes. Step 1: tropes. In this step I search for tropes that may be of use in the series. Step 2: visual. In this step I search for stereotypes. Not only if primary characters are portrayed as such but also if they speak about certain stereotypes. These two first steps help me answer the sub questions.

Step 3: fair representation. Here I analyze whether the characters of both shows are considered to be fair.

3.1 Data collection and units of analysis

This research focuses on both first seasons of the television show *The L Word* and its sequel *The L Word: Generation Q. The L Word* season 1 consists of 14 episodes that are approximately 50 minutes, except the pilot which is 1 hour and 35 minutes. *The L Word: Generation Q*, consists of 8 episodes around 55 minutes per episode. This research primarily focusses on the main 6 characters of *The L Word:* Shane, Bette, Tina, Alice, Dana and Jenny. And the main 6 characters of *The L Word: Generation Q:* Sarah/Finley, Sophie, Dani, Bette, Alice and Shane*.* These are chosen because they are the primary characters that are mostly present during the show.

I analysed the primary characters through their plotlines throughout the first seasons. Look at their appearances, relationships, narratives and goals. This will go hand in hand with step 1 and step 2. Where I search for signs of tropes and stereotypes, in order to encompass both parts of the representation: narrative and visual. Then In step 3 I will look at whether the characters are considered to be fair or harmful, which will be explained below. Furthermore, next to identifying the plotlines of every main character, when finding important signs outside these plotlines, these will be taken into account in the results as well.

3.2 Operationalization and analysis

To answer the sub questions: How are the primary characters in *The L* Word represented? And how are the primary characters in *The L Word: Generation Q* represented? First the plotlines of the characters and search for tropes and stereotypes, are analysed after which a decision on whether the characters are fairly represented or not is made. Finally, the representations of *The L word* with *Generation Q* are compared to answer my research question.

Braun and Clarke (2012) identified a six-phase approach for conducting a thematic analysis, which will be attained in this thesis. The first phase consists of familiarizing myself with the data. In this phase all the episodes are watched multiple times. Firstly, all the scenes of every episode are written down and clearly described. Then the plotlines of every main character are documented. These plotlines will be analysed. It is through these plotlines that tropes and stereotypes will be searched for.

Here phase two begins, where initial codes are generated. Already acknowledged concepts (tropes and stereotypes) that are described below will initially be searched for in these documented plotlines and be given a code. However, if new patterns are identified through the different plotlines

that are considered to be tropes or stereotypes will be also documented and coded. For example, if a certain trope or stereotype is appearing in multiple episodes but not already in the sensitizing concepts, will be coded as well. Only negative tropes and stereotypes are identified in the theory, however during this phase also positive tropes and stereotypes could be found. In phase 3: themes are created out of the identified codes. Codes that are similar will be grouped in an overlapping theme. The next phase consists of reviewing the themes. To check if the codes still fit within their theme. In phase 5 the themes will be defined and named. The themes need to be unique and clearly described. The last phase consists of creating the report. The identified themes are described within their own segment of the results chapter.

After identifying the themes for the tropes and stereotypes a decision will be made whether the characters of both series are considered to be fair or not. Which will make way to answer my research question by comparing the two.

Tropes & Stereotypes

The plotlines of the characters of both series and search for tropes are analyzed. Some tropes already have been identified in the theoretical framework, which are noted here below. When identifying new tropes that occur, these will be discussed in the results section. The tropes that function as organizing principles of this analysis (see Braun & Clarke, 2006) are: 'bury your gays' (Waggoner, 2017), the mentally ill lesbian, the plain evil lesbian, the lesbian in prison, the psychotic jealous lesbian, 'bisexuality a la mode' (Carlino, 2014), the victim trope and the coming out trope (Marshall, 2010) (see 2.2 Narrative and visual queer representation). All the tropes identified beforehand are negative.

The stereotypes that inform this analysis have been discussed in chapter 2.2 and are: being gay seen as an issue (Fajet, 1992), solely defined by sexuality (Blair et al, 2019), Gender inversion (Sedgwick, 1990) or Cross-gender stereotype, child molester, sex without commitment (Fajer, 1991), feminine gays (Battles & Hilton-Morrow, 2002; Blashill & Powlishta, 2009), weak male (Connoly, 2018), Being young equals valuable and being old equals being depressed, bitter, sexual perverts (Goltz, 2009), White, wealthy, thin, young, fashionable, and seronegative (Keegan, 2006; Battles and Hilton-Morrow, 2002), comedic prop (Lee & Meyer, 2010; Miller, 2015); Kaur, 2017); Jobe, 2013), femme lesbian (Herman, 2003; Lee & Meyer, 2010; Guerrero-Pico et al, 2018; Blashill & Powlishta, 2009; Ciasullo, 2001), butch (Ciasullo, 2001; Blashill & Powlishta, 2009), all day available for relationships (Lopez, 2018; Fajer, 1991), sex with commitment (Fajer, 1991), confused (Barker et al, 2008; Gazzola & Morrison, 2014), just a phase, promiscuous/insatiable, or struggling in a relationship

or at it with everyone (Barker et al, 2008), abnormal, outcast (Gazzola & Morrison, 2014), prostititutes, disease (Jobe, 2013)

Fair representation

After conducting step 1 and step 2 we looked into the fairness of the characters. The third step is to find out whether the characters of both shows are considered to be fair. For this research it is important to have clear what is considered to be fair and what not. When a representation is considered to not be fair, it could be harmful for the community being represented. There are four elements that determine whether representations are fair or not.

First, the most important thing when thinking about fair representation of the LGBTQ community is that these members are diverse and unique (Driver, 2007; McInroy & Craig, 2017). Divers includes differences in ethnicity, class, race and religion (Lester and Ross, 2003; Blair et al, 2019; Driver, 2007), that is what makes a character unique. When the LGBTQ community is represented as being the same one-dimensional character, it could be in the form of a stereotype or trope, which is then considered to be not fair.

The second element of fair representations of LGBTQ characters is that these characters should not only be defined by their sexuality (Blair et al, 2019). Meaning that the whole purpose of them appearing is solely because a person is from the LGBTQ community. There are no other elements that describe this person, he or she is solely defined by their sexuality. These people are not merely defined by their sexuality, they are much more than that.

Thirdly, it is important that all the people should be filmed in the same way (Martin, 2014), especially when regarding to intimate scenes. This entails the fact that many intimate scenes are filmed differently for same-sex scenes – to make mainstream heterosexual audiences feel more comfortable - compared to heterosexual intimate scenes, as explained in chapter 2.2. Things considering the camera position, lighting and how the characters act, should be filmed the same way for same-sex intimate scenes as for heterosexual scenes. Filming such scenes the same way for heterosexuals as for non-heterosexuals is considered to be fair.

The last element important to judge representations to be fair or not is the use of positive tropes and stereotypes. The mentioned tropes and stereotypes are considered to be harmful and thus not fair. The thematic analysis gives room to identify other tropes and representations that differ from these. In this step I will use the identified tropes and stereotypes to make conclusions about the fairness of the characters.

After finalizing this step, the synthesis can take place, where I will compare the representations of the primary characters of *The L Word* with *Generation Q* and answer my research question.

3.3 Validity and reliability

Research needs to be evaluated for its quality, overall people believe that validity and reliability can only be attained with quantitative research. However, there are several tools that can be of use to assess whether a qualitative research is valid as well as reliable.

Reliability generally refers to the degree to which the results of a particular research are independent of coincidental circumstances. This entails the replicability of a research: the notion of a researcher conducting the same research under the same circumstances should also result in the same findings, interpretations and claims (Silverman, 2011). However, unlike with quantitative research, qualitative research is subjective, which makes it difficult to exactly replicate the same findings. One way the reliability (and replicability) is ensured, is by making the research process, including the data analysis method as transparent and detailed as possible (Silverman, 2011). In this study, this is ensured by describing the used methods in a sufficiently detailed and transparent manner in the first part of this chapter.

Secondly, Silverman (2011) also suggests a researcher should pay attention to 'theoretical transparency', by explicitly creating the theoretical stance wherefrom the interpretation arises and displaying how certain interpretations are produced and others excluded. In the theoretical framework, the theoretical stance has been made clear, where already identified tropes, stereotypes and attributes considering fair representation are explained. Subsequently, in the research design chapter is explained how these characteristics form the basis of the narrative and visual analysis, as the appropriate analysis method to conduct the qualitative thematic analysis.

Validity entails the extent to which social phenomena investigated in the study accurately represent the real world. Qualitative research is 'valid' to the extent that it is consistent, reliable, believable and replicable and that the research truly studies what the main question entails. In this thesis this is attained by correctly describing the way the analysis is conducted and how the interpretations are executed. Secondly, a structural step by step work method has been apprehended which explains how the sensitizing concepts have been used throughout the analysis. Because the series are analyzed based on these sensitizing concepts, that have been explained throughout the theoretical framework, it is clear that what has been researched collides with the initial research question.

Furthermore, the issue of bias must be mentioned to enhance the ideal of trustworthiness. For the proposed study, the primary researcher is a 25-year-old white woman who is working towards a master's degree in Media. The researcher identifies as bisexual and holds the belief that fair LGBTQ representations in media is important for the social acceptance of the LGBTQ community.

4. Results

The result section will discuss the tropes, stereotypes and fair attributes that came out of the analysis for both shows. *The L Word* consist of many already identified as well as new tropes and stereotypes that are considered to be negative. *Generation Q* however, shows much less of these tropes and stereotypes. The results show that *Generation Q* is considered to be much more fair compared to its predecessor.

4.1. Tropes

The trope section will discuss the already identified negative tropes as well as new tropes that have been found in both shows. The results show that the primary characters of *The L Word* consist of many negative tropes, compared to *Generation Q* which noticeably consists of less.

4.1.1 The L Word

Most of the already acknowledged tropes that are described in the theoretical framework (see chapter 3.2) are present in *The L Word.* Firstly, the 'coming out of the closet trope' identified by Marshall (2010) appears very often and in different forms throughout the show. The 'coming out of the closet trope' has the necessity for 'coming out' as its core. Staying closeted is framed negatively. Marshall (2010) insists this trope is negative for the LGBTQ community, because it entails the fact that a LGBTQ member needs to come out to make clear that the individual is not heterosexual. The primary characters talk about coming out quite often and it seems to be very important in the show. One example is from Dana Fairbanks. Throughout the show she plays a closeted lesbian tennis player. Her friends often make jokes about her still being in the closet. Eventually she tries to come out to her parents, after her friends insisting her to do so. Her friends also try to help her in that situation, with how to appropriately tell her parents. This trope as explained by Marshall (2010) is often used to portray the LGBTQ community. This trope seems to be normalized in the show, because it appears so often, which is negative for the community.

The negative trope 'lesbians in prison' identified by Carlino (2014) is also present in the show. The 'lesbian in prison trope' entails the fact that a lesbian is most likely to be a criminal and needs to go to prison. As explained by Carlino (2014), this trope is often used in media to portray lesbians and

is negative because it gives the assumption that lesbians are villains and need to be punished, which is damaging for the community. One clear example is when the primary characters are helping Bette with protestors at the museum (episode 13) and they suddenly get arrested by police. Bette, Alice, Dana and Shane then need to go to prison and spend a night there.

The 'mentally ill suicidal lesbian trope' also identified by Carlino (2014) is evident in the character Jenny. This trope suggests that lesbians are mentally ill and consequently suicidal. According to Carlino (2014) this trope is used often in media to portray lesbians and is negative because it gives the idea that being gay is a mental disease. This is damaging for the LGBTQ community because it shows that if you are a lesbian you are mentally ill, with no other solution but eventually to take your own life. For non-LGBTQ members this is also damaging because it shows that lesbianism is a disease, which would make people assume that idea. This trope is evident in Jenny. She is a writer and throughout the show we see her stories and poems come to life. These stories are mostly very dark. The colours of the images are darker than the normal scenes occurring in the rest of the show. One of her stories even takes place at a funeral, where she then imagines herself having sex with Marina who is dressed up as a guy. Jenny also tells Marina in episode 4: 'I can't be around you anymore, it's confusing to me and it makes me feel insane'. There are always problems arising with Jenny, she is always confused and unsure about everything that is happening. Additionally, throughout the show everyone considers her to be weird and vague.

Carlino (2014) in addition, identified the 'psychotic jealous lesbian trope' which is also a common negative way to portray lesbians in media and is also evident in the primary characters of the show however mostly with non-primary characters. The trope assumes lesbians to be exceptionally jealous. This trope is negative because it shows that lesbians are hysterical, psychotic and jealous and act accordingly. Because this trope appears both with the primary characters as well as non-primary characters, the show gives the assumption that many lesbians have these negative personality characteristics, which is not essentially true and can be damaging for viewers perception on lesbians. One of Shane's ex's (Lace) for example is really mad at Shane for not calling her back after spending one night together. Lace makes a scene on multiple occasions throughout the show, where she tries to mess with Shane's life. In episode 4, Lace is giving out flyers with Shane's name, picture and what she supposedly has done, to random people on the street to humiliate her. She has also made a banner warning people of what Shane does: 'the 4 f's; she finds them, feels them, fucks them and forgets them'.

The 'victim trope' identified by Marshall (2010) is also considered negative. This trope consists of the LGBTQ community being portrayed as a victim for their sexuality and thus should be pitied. The trope is damaging because it makes viewers think the LGBTQ community are victims and thus lesser than heterosexuals. This trope does not appear often, yet still appears which is damaging

for the community. It appears with a non-main character: Lace. When Shane asks Lace why she is harassing her all the time, Lace explains how everybody always leaves her, her father, her sister, she does not want Shane to leave.

The 'plain evil lesbian' identified by Carlino (2014) is also negative because it assumes lesbians of being purely evil, which is damaging for viewers. This trope is evident in the show, however only in one non-main character: Gaby. Alice in episode 1 reconnects with her ex-girlfriend Gaby. Her friends however disapprove of this, because Gaby always treated her bad in the past – neglecting and cheating. Her friends call Gaby: an emotional cripple, narcissistic, with a personality disorder and she has to end things with her. Her friends even precisely describe how Alice has to break up with her. Shane eventually tells Alice, Gaby is cheating on her.

New tropes

There are however also other discovered tropes in the plotlines of the characters. The most occurring trope is 'parents dismissing gay child'. This newly identified trope is also considered negative, because it assumes that parents automatically dislike the fact their child is LGBTQ and express their disapproval accordingly, which leaves viewers with this negative believe. Throughout the show we see some of the primary characters frequently encountering this. Bette's father Melvin for example, calls Bette's relationship with Tina a friendship in episode 6, not accepting their love for each other. They explain in this episode to him that Tina is pregnant and that they are giving Melvin a grandchild. Melvin then proceeds to dismiss the baby for being his grandchild, because he believes two women cannot have a child together.

Another trope is 'pretending to be straight but gay'. This trope is also considered negative because it assumes that one needs to heterosexual to be accepted and successful in life, being LGBTQ then means not being accepted nor successful in life. LGBTQ members should pretend to be straight because this will make their life better, which is damaging for these members because they then cannot accept their sexuality and have to fake it. This is evident in the main character Dana. Dana has to pretend to be straight if she wants to grow her career in tennis, this is at least what her straight manager tells her. He tells her 'you can be a lez when you are retired, but now you are an ass kicking, dick loving athlete, to get the cheque, you only have to smile pretty for the camera.' Because her manager is so insisting, Dana on multiple occasions pretends to be a straight couple with her gay tennis partner Harrison.

Another trope is called 'lesbians unable to become parents'. This trope is also considered negative, because it assumes that lesbians are not able to have a child and thus become legitimate parents, which consequently shapes viewers perspectives into thinking that lesbians are not fit or

adequate to be mothers. This is not true because lesbians being mothers is possible, *The L Word* however makes it seem almost impossible for lesbians to fulfil their wishes of becoming parents. This is clear with couple: Tina and Bette. They desire and attempt to get pregnant throughout the whole show. They try to find the perfect sperm donor in multiple episodes, which seems almost impossible for them. Most men don't want to sponsor or the ones that do, do not have appropriate sperm. Eventually, after many struggles they finally do get pregnant, however their happiness is brief because they almost immediately have a miscarriage. Which accentuates the trope even more.

Another trope found is 'religion homophobic'. This trope is negative as well, because it shows religious people not accepting LGBTQ identities by harassing them. This trope appears often throughout the show which leads to perpetuating this negative statement upon viewers, which is damaging. This trope is clear when Bette gets harassed at work by homophobic Christians who disapprove of her art selection for the museum. In multiple episodes protestors stand in front of the museum harassing potential visitors by imposing how 'sick' the museum is. In one episode a protestor even says: 'this place is run by homosexual pornographers' urging people to leave the museum. Bette eventually challenges the lead of the protest to a debate on TV in episode 11. The leader of the protest then tells Bette during the debate that God has taken her unborn baby because God condemns homosexuals.

'Issues between ethnicities' is the last newly identified trope. This trope accentuates that there are differences between ethnicities which can result in issues. This trope is considered the only positive identified trope in the show. Because even though it shows differences and issues between ethnicities, the series also shows different perspectives on ethnicities which the characters then discuss together openly. By openly discussing differences in ethnicities and not exclusively perpetuating one to be better than the other, makes it a positive trope. This trope appears occasionally, where issues on ethnicities arises, however the show always portrays different perspectives on the matter, which makes it positive. This is clear when Bette and Tina are searching for a sperm donor, they mostly ask white men. However, on one occasion Bette tells Tina she finally found the perfect sperm donor. When Tina opens the door to meet him, she is surprised to see the sperm donor is black. Tina was expecting a white man which made her upset towards Bette for not telling her. Bette assumed it would not be a big deal. Bette herself is namely half black and half white. She believes having a child that resembles them both would be a positive thing. Tina later apologizes for her lack of comprehension, she sees that it is not bad for them having a black donor, and finally believes it is indeed not an issue. Tina at first expected a white man because she wanted a white child, however by discussing with Bette different options, she comes around and accepts also a black donor.

4.1.2 The L Word: Generation Q

In this show far less of the tropes appeared than in the previous show, only: the 'psychotic lesbian trope' and the 'coming out of the closet trope'. The 'psychotic jealous lesbian trope' identified by Carlino (2014) only appeared in episode 2 however, not in a main character. This trope is negative as I explained above because it assumes that lesbians are hysterical, psychotic and jealous and act accordingly. Even though it only arises once in the show, which is far less than its previous series, it is still a negative trope of a lesbian. It arises in one scene that takes place back in time where we see Alice with her current new girlfriend Nat at their house. All of a sudden Gigi shows up, the ex-wife of Nat. Gigi grabs a hammer and starts to hammer at the front door putting in a screw. On that screw she hangs her old wedding ring and screams 'I hope you are happy'. While Gigi walks away she yells 'Fuck you!'. Alice then asks Nat: 'where you really married to that person?', insinuating how inappropriate she thinks Gigi is acting and thus referring to how inappropriate that trope for lesbians is.

The negative 'coming out of the closet trope' identified by Marshall (2010) is evident primarily in the non-primary characters. However, in episode 3, main character Alice has a guest on her show who appears to be a popular 'lesbian idol'. The first question Alice proceeds to ask is about her coming out story. This reinforces the apparent importance or need the LGBTQ community in media has to announce to the world they are not heterosexual, which is negative. This trope appears furthermore just with non-primary characters and only in two other occasions, making it far less obvious than in its previous series.

New tropes

The trope 'parents dismissing gay child' has also been identified in *Generation Q.* This trope is negative, as explained above, because it assumes parents are displeased when knowing their child is LGBTQ, which is damaging for the viewer. This trope is only evident with Dani and her father, however it does appear in multiple episodes. When her father asks her for dinner, Dani asks if she can bring Sophie (her girlfriend). Her father then says she can invite her 'friend'. He continues saying: 'you are young and you are allowed to have fun.' Later in the series Dani tells her father she is getting married to Sophie, which makes her father furious and walks away. On another occasion, he finally seems to have accepted his daughter is getting married to a woman and he sends a prenup they should sign. The prenup however says that if Sophie bears children, they don't have rights to Dani's trust fund, only the children Dani bears. This causes a lot of problems for Sophie and Dani.

Another newly identified trope, which was also encountered in the previous show is 'lesbians unable to become parents'. As explained, it accentuates the negative belief that lesbians cannot be

parents. This is evident with Shane and Quiara, who were married but initially split up because Quiara wanted children and Shane did not, which already is a first sign of this trope. Suddenly, Quiara returns to Shane and tells her she is pregnant, which Shane has much difficulty with. Shane however, wants to be together with Quiara so she tries to accept her having this baby. Eventually she agrees on raising the child together, which makes Quiara very excited. In episode 8 however, they find out Quiara lost the baby. This makes them both extremely upset, however Quiara does not seem to believe Shane is truly upset and leaves her again. Their love story ended because of these baby issues, making it clear that 'lesbians cannot become parents', which is a negative portrayal that can damage viewers into believing this statement.

'Issues between ethnicities' is a trope assuming there are problems between ethnicities. This trope is considered positive because the series always shows multiple perspectives and clearly elaborates what the problem is from different standpoints. It does not assume one is better than the other. For example, when Dani and Sophie discuss their wedding. Sophie's family wants to celebrate it according to their culture – informal with many friends and family and lots of homemade food. Dani's father however, desires a formal wedding - at a luxurious hotel with high-end food and many business relations. Their cultures clash and Dani and Sophie get upset. Her father later calls Sophie's family a 'broken home' and does not want his daughter getting into it. Such discussions concerning cultures and ethnicities arise multiple times throughout the show, with many of the primary characters. However always showing multiple perspectives.

In this series religion is portrayed through multiple perspectives, unlike the past series where religion was solely portrayed as something bad and homophobic. Still the trope 'religion homophobic' arises in Finley. She is scared to go to church because she believes she will 'burn' (due to her past involving Catholicism) because of her sexuality if she enters one. However, her best friend Sophie is a lesbian and simultaneously religious, who truly enjoys going to church. This made way for a new trope 'gay and religious', which entails LGBTQ members also capable of being religious. Because both these tropes arise and the characters openly discuss their concerns and thoughts about religion it is believed these tropes are considered positive in this show.

Tropes and stereotypes intertwined

Many tropes are closely linked to stereotypes. Below, the identified stereotypes of the two series are described. Here I will elaborate when tropes are intertwined with stereotypes.

4.2. Stereotypes

The stereotypes section will discuss the already identified negative stereotypes as well as new ones that have been found in both shows. The results show that the primary characters of *The L Word* consist of many negative stereotypes, compared to *Generation Q* which again noticeably consists of less.

4.2.1 The L Word

In *The L Word* many already identified stereotypes appear often throughout the show. The general stereotypes for LGBTQ characters; sexuality is seen as an issue (Fajer, 1991) and solely defined by sexuality (Blair et al, 2019) appear also. The stereotype sexuality as an issue assumes that not being heterosexual is something bad, a problem which is considered to be negative. It additionally appears often which only perpetuates this negative believe, which consequently will be caught on by the viewers. Sexuality as an issue is seen in the trope: parents dismissing child of being gay. The parents who dismiss their child for being gay is because of the stereotype: sexuality as an issue. Which happens to Bette and her father and with Dana and her parents as explained in the trope section. Sexuality as an issue also made way for the trope pretending to be straight. Where Dana gets the advice of her manager to pretend to be straight for sponsors because being gay will not help her succeed in her tennis career.

The stereotype: solely defined by sexuality identified by Blair et al (2019) also appears constantly. As Blair et al (2019) explained, the stereotype is negative because it assumes that a LGBTQ member should be defined solely by their sexuality and other attributes that make an individual unique are needles. Which results in LGBTQ members to be the same, which is negative. This stereotype is evident especially when the cast describes what a lesbian is supposed to look like, which happens often and will be explained further in this segment. The main cast judge one another based on their sexuality frequently. Mainly between lesbians and bisexuals. For example, Dana (lesbian) is always picking on Alice for being bisexual. In episode 1 Dana asks Alice when she is going to decide between 'dick and pussy' and in episode 12 she even calls her a 'dirty bisexual'. Alice switches between dating men and women throughout the show. At one point she is dating a 'lesbian male' – a man called Lisa who believes to be a lesbian – and calls him 'such a lez' when he is being a bit too clingy. Alice later tries to date a straight male and refers to her previous dating with Lisa to be 'dyke-drama'. Because the show consistently portrays the primary characters judging everyone based on their sexuality it is considered negative. The characters themselves create certain sexuality categories that match certain negative thoughts (stereotypes) that supposedly match these categories and judge each other negatively based on them. This makes the viewer believe these categories (stereotypes) are true, and that it is okay to judge them because they do it themselves,

which is bad because they are not always true. For example, when Alice calls her boyfriend 'such a lez' because he is being to clingy, perpetuates the stigma.

Many stereotypes for lesbians are present in the show. For example, the stereotypes: femme (Herman, 2003; Lee & Meyer, 2010; Guerrero-Pico et al, 2018; Blashill & Powlishta, 2009; Ciasullo, 2001; Beirne, 2006a; Harrington, 2003; Dow, 2001) and butch (Ciasullo, 2001; Blashill & Powlishta, 2009). A femme lesbian representation is mostly used to please heterosexual audiences by showing a feminized lesbian (Beirne, 2006a; Herman, 2003; Lee & Meyer, 2010; Guerrero-Pico et al, 2018). This is also clear in *The L Word* because all primary characters clearly resemble the femme in their appearances, excluding Shane 'who looks like a Rockstar'. They all are considered to be attractive, wear make-up, take care of how they look and according to one straight male character look 'hot' and 'not gay'. Clear butch stereotypes are not present in the primary characters, most characters do have certain butch characteristics, but they mostly resemble femme; 'user friendly lesbian' (Ciasullo, 2001) and look generally the same.

Next to their feminized physical features that emphasise the femme character of the lesbian portrayed, there is the way maternal matters are discussed. The manner in which these things are discussed emphasis the femme-ness throughout the season (Ciasullo, 2001). Tina in the first scene of the first episode is holding an ovulation test and telling Bette that she is ovulating and ready to get pregnant. As I explained in the trope section, throughout the show Bette and Tina try to get pregnant. This is their biggest plotline. Ciasullo (2001) explained that the femme lesbian portrayed in media also consists of being maternal, because it makes it easier for the heterosexual audience. Because Tina is fixated on getting pregnant and wants to carry the baby, she is considered to be the most femme out of all the primary characters.

Opposite from femme is the butch lesbian. Which can be evaluated by the presumed masculine appearance or masculine behaviour (Ciasullo, 2001; Blashill & Powlishta, 2009). Soft butch is considered to be when a lesbian has some masculine features. This is clear with Bette. Who mostly looks like a femme but is only focused on work and her career throughout the show. She is clearly a workaholic, for example, arriving late at couple's therapy appointments because she was stuck at work in episode 1 and 2. Always receiving phone calls from work when she is with her friends at the planet and then walking away to take it. Tina even discusses in therapy group that Bette makes all the financial decisions in episode 9, making her more assumed masculine (butch) in her behaviour. A straight man even wondered to himself if Bette is 'the man' in her relationship with Tina, which is another assumption of being 'butch'.

Shane is also considered to be 'the most' butch when it comes to her actions and 'slightly masculine' appearance. However, still undermined by femme qualities. In the first episode Dana is insecure about Shane's appearance and wonders why she needs to dress the way she does:

'everything you wear screams dyke'. Meaning she looks rather masculine. This is also evident in episode 6 where gay men try to hit on Shane because they think she is a Twink (gay slim man). Shane explains how this often happens to her. In the show a butch is the established way a lesbian/dyke is supposed to look like, and how the main cast of the show also thinks a lesbian should look like. For example, in episode 3, Dana is wondering if a woman is gay or not, she asks her friends for advice. Who then tell her to look at certain physical features; her fingernails, how she dresses, to figure out if she is gay or not. Assuming that if she has certain butch features, she would be gay. In episode 12, this is made clear. When the friends go together to a lesbian convention. Alice then sees a 'clear and thus butch' lesbian at the pool: 'that's what I call a hundred footer', which makes the cast all laugh. Tina further elaborates 'that you can spot a lesbian from a hundred feet away.' Alice then continues whether it's the hair, the jock bra, the 'mandels', that make it clear a woman is a lesbian and thus butch. They all consider this way to be the clear example of a lesbian, even though the complete main cast does not look like this and laugh at it. Ciasullo (2001) explained how portraying a butch lesbian is less economically desirable, rather using a 'user-friendly lesbian'; femme, which helps the series gain more viewers. *The L Word* clearly makes use of the femme 'user friendly lesbian' to gain a bigger audience because the cast mostly resemble the femme lesbian and they laugh at the thought of butch lesbians, even though they do believe a 'real lesbian' is butch.

The 'always available for relationship lesbian' stereotype (Lopez, 2018) entails the assumption that lesbians spend all their time in their partner or searching for a partner. This is evident in Bette. When she expects Tina to wait for Bette constantly. In episode 2, Bette arrives early from work and expected to have dinner with Tina. Tina however already has plans and leaves. Bette shows clear disapproval. The show portrays lesbians to be always available for relationships, as if they have nothing else going on in their life's, which is not always the case and is negative.

Already identified bisexual stereotypes occur often in the show. The stereotype 'promiscuity' identified by Barker et al (2008) which entails that bisexuals are promiscuous and insatiable, appears to be also used for lesbians, because most of the main cast are portrayed as such. This is clearly evident in all the characters of the show, who are constantly having sex or talking about sex. Clear examples are with Bette (lesbian) and Jenny (bisexual) who persistently are cheating on their significant others. Also Shane, who explains that she has had sexual relations with around 1200 women. This stereotype seems to be the most evident in the primary characters throughout the show. The show is initially considered a drama which needs sensation, by making the whole cast promiscuous and unfaithful will lead to drama, even though it is seen as negative and gives a wrong image of women essentially being promiscuous and uncapable of having committed faithful relationships.

The 'confused bisexual' stereotype (Barker et al, 2008), refers to presenting bisexuals as being confused and is also evident in the show. This stereotype is also negative, because it gives the assumption that bisexuals are confused and have no idea what they are actually doing. This is clear with Jenny. She announces multiple times throughout the show that she is confused. In episode 4 she even tells Marina: 'I can't be around you anymore, it's confusing to me and it makes me feel insane'. In episode 5, while she is having sex with Tim, she keeps seeing Marina's face instead of Tim's.

The 'just a phase' stereotype (Barker et al, 2008), also appears in the show. This stereotype refers to presenting lesbian or bisexual identities as a 'phase' before one returns to heterosexuality. This is negative because it assumes that bisexuality or homosexuality is not a 'real' sexuality, but merely a phase. In episode 5, Tina asks Alice if she 'is switching back to men?' Alice explains that she thinks 'women are all crazy'. This is mostly evident in side characters that are older women. Who explain they had a 'lesbian phase', for example in episode 4, Peggy (an older rich woman) tells Bette she used to be gay in the 70's. Likewise, Alice's mom, having had sexual relations with woman when she was young.

The 'struggling in relationship' stereotype (Barker et al, 2008), entails the fact that a bisexual person always has problems when in a relationship. This stereotype is negative because it assumes that bisexuals cannot have committed relationships. This is evident with Jenny throughout the show. She is having troubles with her partner Tim, because she started to develop feelings she did not know she could have for a woman. Jenny suddenly keeps more to herself and seems more 'vague' than usual according to Tim. Tim feels something strange is going on, but Jenny says it's because of her moving to LA.

The 'comedic prop' stereotype (Lee & Meyer, 2010) was initially connected to lesbians who are funny and thus cannot, or rather do not need to, be taken seriously. This stereotype is negative because it assumes we cannot take bisexuals seriously because they are only present in the show to make their friends and viewers laugh, additionally it suggests hierarchy. In *The L Word*, this stereotype is not linked to lesbians but to bisexuals. This is clear with Alice (bisexual) who makes jokes about everything throughout the whole season. In episode 13 this is evident. When the primary characters are in the police car together after the protest at the museum, the police car also gets filled up with Christian protestors. Alice then whistles to one women Christian protestor and calls her good looking, which makes her friends laugh.

The show thus clearly makes use of many already identified negative stereotypes, mostly to gain more viewers by showing a femme lesbian or creating drama and sensation by making the characters promiscuous. Almost all these stereotypes are considered harmful, because they represent very negative assumptions surrounding the LGBTQ community.

New stereotypes

Throughout the show, two new identified stereotypes have been found. Firstly, the U-haul lesbian stereotype. Which refers to the joke: *What does a lesbian bring on a second date? A U-Haul.* Meaning the assumption that lesbians move in together after their second date. This joke: 'articulates a stereotype about lesbians, namely one concerning the speed with which lesbians enter into committed relationships with one another.' (Queen, 2005, p244). This stereotype expresses an extreme inclination toward monogamy which can be seen as complimentary or pejorative, however depending on the context. In *The L Word* it is overall pejorative. This stereotype is frequently used in the show. In episode 1 When Alice meets Jenny, she tries to get her attention but Marina joined the conversation and they only pay attention to each other, ignoring Alice. Alice then gets up and leaves saying 'I'll leave to let you guys get married'. Another example is in episode 10, when Alice is dating Lisa, as explained above. They have not spent a lot of time together and when Alice tries to go to the bathroom Lisa says: 'hurry back lover', while Alice leaves she says cringing to herself 'what a lez'. In episode 14 this is also clear. Dana just met a woman named Tonya, after a couple days Dana's cat dies and they both organize a funeral and invite Dana's friends. Dana and Tonya are wearing the same clothes and look identical. Alice then asks the rest: 'what is up with the twin thing, are they merging yet?' The friends laugh. Minutes later Dana announces that they are engaged. Even though they met a couple days prior. These are all clear examples of the u-haul stereotype, the primary characters clearly show disgust when referring to the stereotype, which sheds a negative light on lesbians.

Another common stereotype found is: lesbians all connected, which entails that every lesbian is an ex of a lesbian they know. This is evident in Alice her 'chart'. Where she visualizes all the relationships of lesbian women. In the chart it is visible to see the connections between all the lesbians. The chart is brought up throughout the show multiple times. This stereotype is not necessarily negative, it merely shows that the LGBTQ community is small in context, which leads to everyone knowing each other and thus being connected.

4.2.2 The L Word: Generation Q

In *The L Word: Generation Q,* some already identified stereotypes appear throughout the show, however far less than in its predecessor. The 'sexuality as an issue' stereotype (Fajer, 1991), does appear in the show however much less prominent compared to its predecessor. We only see this appearing with Dani and her father. Dani's father does not accept her daughter being gay. In episode 1 for example, he calls Dani's girlfriend a 'friend'. This made way for the trope: parents dismissing child of being gay. However, throughout the show her father slightly starts to accept his daughter being gay and wanting to marry her fiancé.

The lesbian stereotypes 'femme' and 'butch' also appear in the primary characters of the show, however just like with its previous series not fully covering the complete stereotype. In this show the primary characters are less prominently femme, when considering their appearances, compared to the previous show. The primary characters of the show appear to be a mix of femme and butch attributes, so no one is actually completely femme nor butch. Femme in the sense of showing a heteronormative lesbian, for example: by being maternal (Ciasullo, 2001), is evident with Alice. Alice is currently in a couple with another women (Nat) who has two children. She is now a stepmom and discusses 'motherly issues' with her quite regularly. In episode 2, Alice is in a meeting at work and gets a call that one of the children is sick. She needs to pick him up and has to leave the meeting, even though she actually does not want to. A straight man who her boss hired to help Alice with the show is present in the meeting. He tells her 'family comes first' nudging her to leave, so the boss and him can discuss matters without Alice present. This is femme in the sense that being femme is associated with being maternal, and being a mother thus comes first and work is less of importance. Femme being heteronormative is also present with Dani and Sophie who are planning their engagement party in episode 2. They discuss in episode 3 what they would wear to their wedding. Dani who initially is more considered to be butch (discussed below), announces she would like to wear her mother's wedding dress, which makes her more femme and 'user friendly lesbian' in this sense (Ciasullo, 2001).

Bette continues to be more butch in the sense that her career is the priority of her life. In this show she is running for mayor and works day and night to try to achieve this goal. She even needs to choose between dating Felicity (romance) or running for mayor (career) in episode 4, which Dani requested. In episode 5, she breaks up with Felicity because it is damaging her career. However, she still is more femme when considering her appearance. Dani is also considered to be more butch because also she puts her career first. She went to an ivy league school and worked at a very high position at her father's company. Dani gets so caught up in work she starts to neglect Sophie, which makes her slightly butch in this sense. Shane is still butch in the sense that her physical appearance (clothes) continues to look more masculine. However, she also shows signs of femme when she agrees on helping Quiara with her child. What a butch 'truly' is is evident in episode 3, during Alice's show. Alice has a guest who appears to be a 'lesbian idol' in the show who the crowd loves. A picture of the woman as a young child appears on the screen. The woman looks like a tom-boy (butch; short hair, boy clothes) and then jokingly Alice asks her 'really no one knew you were gay?', which makes the whole crowd laugh, including the woman and Alice. Implying that if a girl or woman looks like a boy or man (butch) she is automatically gay. This is the only remark made about being butch in the show.

This show also consists of bisexuals and lesbians being promiscuous (Barker et al, 2008). However, this is also much less prominent compared to its previous show. The stereotype is clear with Alice. Who wants to sleep with Gigi and Nat simultaneously and eventually do in episode 4. Finley, the other bisexual of the primary characters shows many signs of promiscuity. Throughout the show she tries to sleep with many women and also succeeds. This is also evident in Sophie (lesbian) who in the final episode's cheats on Dani with her best friend Finley. Even though promiscuity is less prominent in this show, it continues to be a main attribute of the characters.

The 'confused bisexual' stereotype (Barker et al, 2008) is also evident with Finley. In episode 5, she knows she is in love with Rebecca but she does not know what she wants exactly. Which results in them breaking up. This stereotype was very prominent in its previous series, however in *Generation Q* only slightly occurring.

The 'comedic prop' stereotype (Lee & Meyer, 2010) is also evident in this series and appears to be connected to bisexuals as well. Throughout the whole series, Finley and Alice are the 'funny one's'. Both making jokes all the time. Finley especially makes jokes about religion. In episode 3 for example, she asks Rebecca (who is a priest at a church) if she has a direct line with Jesus in the back. Another example is from Alice in episode 8, where Angie asks Alice when she lost her virginity. Alice replies to her saying she is still a virgin. In this series Alice has her own show that is filmed with an audience. Alice makes a lot of jokes during the show and the audience frequently laugh at what she says.

New stereotypes

Two new stereotypes arose in *Generation Q.* One is also found in *The L Word*: lesbians all connected. This is evident in episode 8, when Alice is swiping on a form of tinder and asks Dani what she thinks of a certain girl that pops up. Dani then tells her she dated her before. This stereotype is however also much less prominent in this series compared to its predecessor.

The other newly identified stereotype is: the angry lesbian. In episode 4, Bette gets told by her PR that she should not be too reactive during a debate, insinuating her getting too upset. This is also evident with Sophie, who constantly is mad at Dani and is cussing throughout the whole show. This stereotype is negative because it gives the assumption that all lesbians are constantly angry, which is not true.

4.3. Fair

The fair section will discuss the three important elements that make representations fair. The first element is that the characters need to be diverse and unique (Driver, 2007; McInroy & Craig, 2017)

and thus not merely tropes and stereotypes. The second element is that these characters should not only be defined by their sexuality (Blair et al, 2019). The third element is that all the people should be filmed in the same way, especially regarding intimate scenes (Martin, 2014). The results show that the primary characters of *The L Word* are mostly considered to be unfair, whereas the primary characters of *Generation Q* are considered to be fair.

4.3.1 The L Word

Firstly, when considering whether the primary characters of *The L Word* are fair is by looking at whether they are diverse and unique (Driver, 2007; McInroy and Craig, 2017). By divers we mean differences in ethnicity, class, race and religion (Lester and Ross, 2003; Blair et al, 2019; Driver, 2007), that is what makes a character unique. By the use of negative tropes and stereotypes to portray the primary characters it is considered to not be unique and thus believed to not be fair. The negative tropes: 'coming out of the closet', 'mentally ill suicidal lesbian', 'psychotic jealous lesbian' and 'lesbians in prison', are all present in the primary characters of *The L Word*. Which is considered to not be fair, because they have been of use in media to represent the LGBTQ often and have negative connotations.

Also, many stereotypes appear in the characters of the show. The general stereotypes for portraying the LGBTQ community: sexuality as an issue and solely defined by sexuality appear constantly. Which is considered to be not fair. The primary characters frequently experience sexuality as an issue, especially in the form of their parents not accepting their sexualities. The stereotype solely defined by sexuality is often used by the primary characters. They constantly judge one another or other people based on their sexuality. They believe a 'true lesbian' is a butch lesbian and think that is funny, which is also not fair. The stereotypes: femme, butch, comedic prop, promiscuity and all day available for relationships are also present in the show. However, most of the main cast is portrayed as femme and some have soft butch tendencies, where they look feminine but have some masculine behaviours; Bette, very attractive and feminine but a workaholic. They all mostly look like femme lesbians, except for Shane, how looks more butch. This makes the main cast in this sense not that divers, because they more or less look the same, which makes it not fair. Because these stereotypes arise in almost all the primary characters it is considered to not be fair. The stereotypes for bisexuals: confused, just a phase, promiscuous and struggling in a relationship, which are all considered to not be fair appear also. These stereotypes appear constantly throughout the show, perpetuating these stereotypes even more.

Further, when looking at divers and unique representations we look at differences in ethnicity, class and religion. When it comes to differences in ethnicity, Tina, Shane, Alice, Dana and Jenny are all white Americans, and only Bette is mulatto. Which is not diverse and thus not fair.

When it comes differences in class. The main cast is all middle- to upper class. Except for Shane, who lives with four roommates and used to be a prostitute. In the show however she quickly gets help from wealthy upper-class gay men who help her get famous clients for her hair salon which makes her earn more money and moves her up a class. Because the show mainly portrays 1 class, it is not that divers and thus not fair. When it comes to differences in religion. No one in the main cast is religious, at least no one talks about it. The only sight of religion in the show is when the museum gets 'attacks' from a Christian community, who do not like the exposition Bette is arranging. Bette is organizing an exposition called: provocations, and the art that will be exposed is rather provocative, but it's also art. The protestors harass the museum, by protesting in front of it and yelling at everyone trying to get in, telling them how filthy the museum is for showing 'porn'. The protestors harass Bette at her home. And when Bette challenges the leader of the protest for a debate to discuss the exposition, the leader tells Bette that God has taken her unborn baby because God condemns homosexuals. In this show, religion is very homophobic and negatively portrayed. There are no other sides of religion, no positive images, nor other religions portrayed, which makes it unfair.

Secondly, it is important that the primary characters should not be defined by their sexuality (Blair et al, 2019). Because this is also a stereotype which has been elaborated above, we know the characters are constantly judging everyone based on their sexuality. They also discuss their own sexuality constantly with each other, as if it were their only definition, which according to Blair et al (2019) is considered to not be fair.

Thirdly, it is important that all the people should be filmed in the same way (Martin, 2014), especially when filming intimate scenes, which *The L Word* consists of many. The many intimate scenes are filmed in the same way for everyone. Which is the only attribute that is considered to be fair in the show.

All attributes considered, we find the primary characters of *The L Word* to be mostly represented unfair.

4.3.2 The L Word: Generation Q

As we know, the matter in which LGBTQ representations are considered fair is firstly, if they are divers and unique. This is on one hand done by looking at whether certain negative tropes and stereotypes are present in *The L Word: Generation Q.*

In *Generation Q,* only two of the already identified tropes appeared: the psychotic lesbian trope and the coming out of the closet trope. The psychotic lesbian trope however, only appeared in a side character: Gigi getting mad at Nat and nailing with a hammer her wedding rim to the door.

Alice, is present when this happened and she responds by asking Nat: 'Where you really married to that person?', emphasizing how strange her behavior is. The coming out of the closet trope, only appears in a main character once: When Alice asks her guest on the show about her coming out story. Moreover, this trope appears in the side character Rebecca when she tells Finley she is 'more closeted of being Christian than being a lesbian.' Emphasizing her sexuality to be more accepted than her religious standpoint. Because this show merely uses these negative tropes, it is considered fair.

Looking at the stereotypes identified in the sensitizing concepts, we identified a couple stereotypes in *Generation Q.* The stereotype: sexuality as an issue, appears in the show. It appears in Dani's father not accepting her daughter's sexuality, by calling her girlfriend a 'friend' and that Dani 'is young and allowed to have fun.' Also, when Dani tells him the news about their engagement, he leaves the room angry. However, he then later leaves her a message saying he misses her and congratulating her on their engagement. Showing that he has accepted her daughter's sexuality. Which is fair because the stereotype changes positively. The stereotypes: femme and butch, also appear in the lesbian primary characters. However, mostly intertwined with each other. For example, Dani is femme in the sense that she is fashionable and pretty, and butch in the sense that her career is her nr.1 priority. Which is the same for Bette. Shane still appears to be more butch in her looks, however when agreeing on raising Quiara's child together she shows signs of femme. Because the stereotypes are not a 100% femme nor a 100% completely butch but more intertwined with both stereotypical features within one character, it is considered fair. The primary characters on *Generation Q* look much more divers compared to the ones in the previous series, where they tend to look more or less the same, which makes these characters more fair. The stereotypes: promiscuous, confused, comedic prop appear in the primary characters. Which are all considered to not be fair. Promiscuity is present with Alice, Finley and Sophie. Alice for example, when she desires to have a threesome with Gigi and Nat. Another example is in episode 2 with Finley, when she tries to flirt with every woman in the bar and has regularly intercourse with different people throughout the show. Promiscuity arises quite often still in this season, which is unfair as we know because it gives the assumption the LGBTQ community only desires sexual relations. The stereotype: confused, is also noticeable in Finley. When in episode 5 she declares she is in love with Rebecca, but does not know what she wants exactly. However, this stereotype is much less prominent than in its previous series, because this only arises once. Comedic prop is evident with Alice and Finley, because they are mostly making jokes throughout the show, making the characters to not be taken seriously and only there to laugh at.

Further, to be able to acknowledge that a character is divers and unique we look at differences in ethnicity, class, and religion. The primary characters of *Generation Q* mostly have different ethnicities. It namely now consists of: Bette; being mulatto and American, Alice and Shane;

white Americans, Finley; white American, but from a small town in Missouri, Dani; American but Hispanic parents, and Sophie; American but Hispanic parents from a different part than Dani's parents. Cultural issues arise when Dani's father tries to plan their wedding according to his preferences, which clashes with the desires of Sophie and her family. The father wants the wedding to be formal, placed in a very expensive hotel, with many 'important' guests of the father and specially made high end food. Sophie's family prefer a wedding more informal, full with family, joy and their cultural food. Through the portrayal of different cultures, and not solely one, makes the characters fair. The primary characters also show different sides of classes, even though mostly middle- to upper class. Bette and Shane now are upper class, Alice, Dani and Sophie are middle- to upper class and Finley lower class, because she does not have a permanent house and lives where she can. If the characters resemble different classes it is considered to be fair. This show, unlike its previous series portrays different religions (different Christians) as well as different thoughts on religion. Finley for example, has a catholic background, this however has scarred her in some way in the past because she is scared of religion throughout the show. When she meets Rebecca and sleeps with her, the next day Rebecca tells her she is going to church. Finley later discusses this with Sophie and tells her how strange it is that Rebecca went to church 'on a Wednesday?' Sophie, also a Christian, tries to explain that it is not that strange, churches are fine and suggests to go visit her at that church. Finley shows clear fear with 'won't we be burned?' Emphasizing the thought that religion does not accept LGBTQ people. When they go to that church they find out that Rebecca in fact is the priest of that church, which tells us religion does accept LGBTQ people. The show tries to incorporate different thoughts on religion through the characters and not solely positive nor negative ideas, which makes it a fair representation.

Furthermore, *Generation Q* tries to incorporate different and new forms of families. For example, Alice, Nat and Gigi, who raise the kids together. We see Alice who is learning how to be a good step mom for Nat and Gigi's children. We see them also trying to become a 'throuple' – a trio in a relationship, however failing in the end. We encounter Bette and Tina, who raise their child together even though they are separated and living far away from each other. Lastly, we also encounter Quiara who wants to become a mother, got inseminated and wants to raise her child with or without a partner (Shane). Because the show tries to portray different forms of families, it shows diversity and uniqueness in the way the LGBTQ community can live their lives, which is considered fair representation.

The second element of fair representations of LGBTQ characters is that these characters should not solely be defined by their sexuality (Blair et al, 2019). In this show, unlike its predecessor, this does not appear, which is considered to be fair.

Lastly, the characters should be filmed in the same way (Martin, 2014), especially when filming intimate scenes, which also *Generation Q* consists of many. The intimate scenes for all the characters are filmed in the same way. Which is fair.

All attributes considered, we find the primary characters of *The L Word: Generation Q* to be unlike its predecessor, mostly fairly represented.

5. Conclusions

This year, the most LGBTQ representations in American scripted series are encountered. However, not much is known about the quality of these representations. GLAAD's report (2019) announced that Showtime's sequel of prominent lesbian drama series *The L Word*; *The L Word: Generation Q*, consists of most LGBTQ characters ever appearing in a TV show. But how is the LGBTQ community represented in the show? We know from the past that media often portrays LGBTQ members by the use of negative tropes and stereotypes, which make the representations not fair and additionally causing harm (Lester and Ross, 2003). Have these representations changed over time? By looking at the representations of *The L Word* and comparing them with the representations in *Generation Q*, we can see how these representations have changed through time. Therefore, this research tries to answer the following research question:

How are the primary characters of The L Word: Generation Q represented in comparison with the primary characters of The L Word?

In order to answer this question two sub-questions were formulated:

- How are the primary characters in *The L* Word represented?
- How are the primary characters in *The L Word: Generation Q* represented?

The sub-questions were answered by conducting a thematic analysis of searching for tropes and stereotypes to be able to understand whether the primary characters of the shows are represented fairly. Additionally, the results for both shows were compared with each other to answer the research question.

The research results show that the primary characters of *The L Word: Generation Q* are far more fairly represented than the ones in *The L Word*. This is mainly clear through the use of negative tropes and stereotypes - identified in the theoretical framework - which are much more prominent in the primary characters of *The L Word* than in *Generation Q.* Based on these findings we can assume that not only LGBTQ representations have increased in American scripted series, additionally these representations have become more fair as well. Which is needed because as elaborated in the introduction, the acceptance for the LGBTQ community in the VS and The Netherlands has remarkably lowered these last years (Miller, 2018; 'Discriminatie in onderwijs neemt fors toe', 2020). A reason for this according to Miller (2018) is because of the prominent way the LGBTQ community is represented in media which has not sufficiently addressed the real necessities of its members,

namely being fairly represented. We expect if LGBTQ representations in media increase to be fair, acceptance of this community will increase as well. As explained in section 2.2, media content plays an important part in the process of shaping one's identity or understanding someone's identity (Sarkissian, 2014). That is why it's important that if media use characters representing LGBTQ identities they are portrayed in a fairly manner. Merely using tropes and stereotypes, as apparent in *The L Word,* is considered damaging for the LGBTQ community (Lester & Ross, 2003). Audiences perception of LGBTQ members is primarily formed through media, generally it is also the first encounter individuals have with these LGBTQ identities. Additionally, media that portray LGBTQ representations help the development of the LGBTQ youth (Craig & McInroy, 2014). According to Driver (2007), media that highlight the uniqueness and creativity of different LGBTQ individuals accurately helps the LGBTQ youth to form and accept themselves. Portraying unique and diverse LGBTQ representations in media helps the community believe being different (not heterosexual) is not wrong. Using fair representations of the LGBTQ community, which includes diverse and unique characters helps these people form and accept themselves without the threats of being judged because of negative tropes and stereotypes.

5.1 Limitations and future research

Although the data prove that the LGBTQ characters of *The L Word* have become more fairly represented after 15 years, which makes us believe that LGBTQ representations in American scripted series have become more fairly as well, the research comprises a number of limitations that should be addressed. First of all, both series are only available on subscription based streaming services, this excludes a large part of the population that are unable to watch the show. Additionally, the show has a specific audience, which is not the mainstream viewer, but a niche who are aware of the LGBTQ members that are portrayed in the show. Certain adjustments might have been added to secure the approval of their target audience. This makes it challenging to make conclusions about how people in general would feel about these representations, because not everyone watches these shows. Future research should focus on how LGBTQ representations are portrayed in mainstream scripted TV shows, to be able to make conclusions about how fairly LGBTQ representations in mainstream TV shows are and how this audience perceives these representations.

This study aimed to investigate if LGBTQ representations in media have changed in the past 10/15 years. A case study that investigates *The L Word* and its sequel *The L Word: Generation Q* was chosen to see if the representations have changed between these two shows in the last 10/15 years. Even though in this particular case the LGBTQ members have become more fairly represented, to be able to assume this is a reoccurring pattern throughout American scripted series, future studies should incorporate more TV shows that include LGBTQ representations and compare past shows

with current shows, to see if there are differences in how the characters are represented. Because the topic of fair representation is understudied, we hope by this research to inspire future researchers who are interested in ensuring that everyone is represented equally as well as fairly in media.

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Appendix A – Measuring instruments

Sensitizing concepts for stereotypes, tropes and fair attributes.

- Stereotypes (Campisi, 2013):
    - Being gay seen as an issue (Fajer, 1991)
    - Solely defined by sexuality (Blair et al, 2019)
    - Homosexual male
        - Gender inversion (Sedgwick, 1990)/Cross-gender stereotype (Fajer, 1991) : Feminine (Battles and Hilton-Morrow, 2002; Blashill & Powlishta, 2009)
        - Weak male (Connolly, 2018).
        - Young: valueable / old: depressed, bitter, sexual perverts (Goltz, 2009)
        - White, male, wealthy, thin, young, fashionable, and seronegative (Keegan, 2006; Battles and Hilton-Morrow, 2002)
        - Making the character 'acceptable' for heterosexual mainstream audience, muscled, handsome, well educated, good job, good income (Battles and Hilton-Morrow, 2002)
        - Child molester (Fajer, 1991)
        - Sex without commitment (Fajer, 1991)
    - Lesbians
        - Comedic prop (Lee & Meyer, 2010)
        - Femme lesbian (Lipstick Lesbian)/For heterosexual male (Herman, 2003; Lee & Meyer, 2010; Guerrero-Pico et al, 2018; Blashill & Powlishta, 2009)
        - Gender inversion (Sedgwick, 1990) / Cross-gender stereotype (Fajer, 1991) : Masculine/Butch (Ciasullo, 2001; Blashill & Powlishta, 2009)
        - All day available for relationships (Lopez, 2018)
        - Seks with commitment (Fajer, 1991)
    - Bisexuals
        - Confused (temporary) (Barker et al, 2008)
            - Just a phase (Barker et al, 2008)
        - Promiscious/Insatiable (Barker et al, 2008)
        - Or struggling in relationship or at it with everyone (Barker et al, 2008)
    - Transgenders
        - Comedic prop: Objects of ridicule/joking matter (Miller, 2015; Kaur, 2017; Jobe, 2013)
        - Abnormal (Gazzola & Morrison, 2014).
            - Outcast/Pittied (Gazzola & Morrison, 2014).
        - Confused (Gazzola & Morrison, 2014).
        - Prostitutes (Jobe, 2013)
        - Disease (Jobe, 2013)

- Fair (Campisi, 2013)
    - Not solely defined by sexual orientation (Blair et al, 2019)
    - Divers (ethnic, class, race, religion, unique (Lester and Ross, 2003; Blair et al, 2019; Driver, 2007)

- Tropes:
    - 'bury your gays' trope (Waggoner, 2017),
    - the plain evil lesbian (Carlino, 2014).
    - the psychotic jealous lesbian (Carlino, 2014).

- the murderous, criminal lesbian in prison (Carlino, 2014).
- , the mentally ill suicidal lesbian (Carlino, 2014).
- 'bisexuality a la mode', when a straight female character all of a sudden becomes gay just to later turn back to preferring men (Carlino, 2014).
- 'victim' trope (Marshall, 2010).
- 'coming out of the closet' (Marshall, 2010).

- Scenes:
  - Equal way of filming the intimate scenes for all groups (Martin, 2014)

Appendix B –Plotlines

After watching both first seasons of the shows and documenting every scene of every episode, the plotlines per character were made. Here initial coding began. Below is 1 plotline example out of the 12 characters documented.

The L Word – Season 1

Trope
Stereotype

Dana Fairbanks
Episode 1

Dana is still in the closet lesbian and is super insecure about it. When we see everyone getting together for the first time, she doesn't like Alice being bisexual. She asks Alice when she is going to decide between dick and pussy and that she should spare the gory details (**hate towards bisexual -> defined by sexuality**). Then Shane comes in who is super out and proud, Dana then asks Shane if she always needs to dress like that, Shane asks like what. 'everything what you wear screams dyke' and she doesn't want to be seen with her says Dana (**butch**). Dana then explains that if they know she is gay she can not be playing tennis anymore, no sponsor will like her. She is afraid to **come out of the closet.** But when they see Jenny walk in and Dana insinuates the ladies to look, everyone says who gay Dana is. And she knows.

At the party of Bette and Tina to find a sperm donor, Dana is there with her tennis mate Harrison **pretending to be straight**. When the party is over, Harrison leaves and says Dana can be gay again.

Ep 2.
Dana doesn't know much about the lesbian world. Alice explains some stuff to her. She explains the chart and how probably every lesbian in la is an ex.

Ep. 3
Dana is having lunch and a cute female chef sends her free food. She likes this. She likes the woman and is wondering whether she is gay. she speaks with her friends about it. They suggest she looks at her fingernails, how she dresses (**lesbians look alike? -> defined by sexuality)**. But she can only know for sure if she talks to her. She then has an awkward encounter with the chef in the locker room. The friends think of a plan to see if the chef is gay. the feel as if the plan failed and say sorry to Dana that the woman is not gay.

Dana plays tennis very high and with her manager they are looking for another sponsor. In the locker room another time Laura the sous-chef gives her a kiss, 'in case you were still wondering: which Dana likes.

Ep. 4
Dana is very awkward and shy in dating. She tries to ask Laura out, but she figured it out on herself. Laura asks Dana to pick her up (**butch).**

Dana explains she has her date tonight to her friends. Alice asks her what she is going to wear. The outfit Dana describes all the girls decline by saying noooo. While going to the date she calls up Alice

to discuss her outfit again. Laura comes out in a dress and sees Dana wearing more casual clothes. Laura says she overdressed and feels like a geek. Dana says no, I listened to my friends to put casual clothes on instead of the dress that I wanted. Laura says she can go change. Dana tells her she looks beautiful. Laura gives her a little kiss, grabs her arm and they walk away together.

Ep. 5.
Dana and Laura are lying in bed. Dana is with her head on top of Laura and Laura is caressing her hair. She says it doesn't matter what happened, she gave Laura a lot of pleasure. Dana cringes and hides underneath the covers.

Dana feels awkward and says she will never have sex again. She doesn't want to talk about it but Shane and Alice insist. Dana then whispers in Alice's ear something. Alice then tells the group she female ejaculated. Shane replies with Laura must be a killer in bed. Dana asks if that's a good thing? Alice explains her that woman go to workshops to find their g spot, they search for ever for it, she should be happy.

Ep.6
Dana is practicing tennis, Laura is watching her, Dana goes to her and they kiss. Dana's manager sees this and says 'HEY'. The manager tells them there is an event with saburu a possible sponsor. Laura is proud for Dana and feels hot for her there **(all day available for relationship?/for heterosexual male: in front of man talking about having sex-> femme / promiscuous).** The manager tells them he is still there, while Laura is whispering sexy things in Dana's ear. He then says that if they want another person to switch it up, they can call him, **(threesome with guy)** the women stare, then he says he is kidding. Laura then leaves and kisses Dana bye. The manager continues to tell Dana that she should bring Harrison tonight, it's her double's partner its who they want to see. The manager forces her to do this **(issues with sexuality) -> pretend to be straight**

Dana is in a dress getting ready for the event with suburu. Harrison is there too with drinks. Someone calls the door, Dana yells its open. Its Laura that comes up with different dresses, she talks about going to the event. Then Harrison walks down. Laura understands what is happening then she feels stupid and leaves. Dana tells her she is sorry, she tells her she knows she should have called, Laura says that would have been nice. Harrison then walks down and says hopefully she understands, being gay just doesn't sell, this is just business.

Dana knocks on Laura's door. Laura opens and lets her in. Dana is still in the dress from the party. Laura is in her pj's. Dana said she should have called. She says she always messes things up, did I mess everything up? She is sorry. She says she makes her happy. And she wants to give it another try. Laura agrees, but only on one condition, Dana needs to make steps towards to get out of the closet. Laura continues that Dana is really *really* gay. Laura tells her you are hiding the best part about you **(coming out of the closet trope).**

Ep 7.
The ladies are all sleeping after the poker night at Tina and Bette. Dana and Laura are awake, Laura starts to touch her and saying everyone else is sleeping. They start to kiss and touch and breath heavily. Alice then wakes up and sees what's happening. Shane sees this too, then Kit as well. They laugh quietly. Then Kit makes a coughing sound. Dana cringes and Laura laughs.

Ep. 8
Dana is with her manager, her manager tells her 'you look fucking hot'. They talk about the contract for Subaru. If she signs it, she is Saburu's property. She then asks about Marina, the manager says that she can not pull off the lesbian image that Marina has because she is not a star, like she is, but you are very hot, very sexy. He says you can be a lez when you are retired, but now you are an ass

kicking, dick loving athlete, to get the cheque, you only have to smile pretty for the camera. **(gay seen as issue -> pretend to be straight)**

Dana and Laura are at a restaurant. Laura is talking sexy to Dana, but she feels unease because other people see them. Dana says Laura has to stop kissing her and touching her. Dana continues that she knows she is hiding the best part of her, but Laura doesn't understand what it's like to be her. Laura asks if her agent scared her. Laura says she maybe pressured her. Dana then says it's all too hard and she doesn't want to be with Laura and then walks away.
They have broken up.

Ep. 9
Dana is with Alice, Shane and Marina, Dana brought materials from her shoot exposing her lesbian sexuality. Marina tells her the girls will be all over you now, your parents must be so proud. They then ask her if she has come out to her parents yet **(coming out of the closet).** She needs to tell them they say. Dana says she can not today because her mother is being honored by her woman's group. she is a member from the Orange County Republican woman's group, and they all laugh and cringe a little bit. Dana walks away. She is pissed off how things are going, she broke up with Laura and she can not handle anything. Alice runs behind her and tells her she is coming with her to tell her parents, she will help.

Dana and Alice are in the bathroom of the party. They discuss how Dana's parents don't understand the ad. But Alice says, that now they are really proud of her so now is the right moment to tell them **(coming out of the closet).** Alice asks to practice but Dana leaves.

Alice and Dana are on the terrace, her little brother is smoking a joint. Her brother tells Dana that if their parents disown Dana **(coming out of the closet),** he will still come and visit . Then Dana takes a hit as well.

Dana's mother and father leave angrily out of a room, Dana is in tears behind them. Her father says she has said and done enough. They walk to Alice, Dana's father asks her if she is also in this '**game**', **(parents dismissing lesbian)** Alice then says she has a bf. Dana is still in tears and sarcastically thanks Alice. Dana's father, mother and brother get in the car. Dana gets at the car and knocks and says I'm sorry, she didn't do this to hurt her. Her mother then says to her 'we all have feelings for our gf's Dana, it doesn't mean we have to act on them' **(coming out of the closet).** The mother then closes the window and they drive away. Dana stands still in tears. Alice runs up to her and hugs her.

Ep. 10
Dana is talking to her cat. She talks about Laura. She then tells the cat that Laura is gay, then she says she is gay. But do u still love me? **(coming uit of the closet).** She then hears the door and lies back in bed. Its Alice there for bringing her out of bed. Alice tells her that some have it more difficult than her, some are dating lesbian men.

Alice and Dana are at the planet, Dana is looking sad. Alice gives her a milkshake, saying angrily 'what is going to cheer you up'. Alice then proceeds to prank call someone. They pranked call Dana's mom. They hang up. Then her mom calls again. Dana proceeds to talk to her. She hangs up. Then Dana says 'its like I have come out to a wall' **(coming out).** Alice says that is good, accepting it through denial. Then Dana says no, she is setting her up with a man. Alice then says 'at least its not shock therapy'.

Ep 11.
Shane is doing Dana's hair, Alice is next to them. Alice is complaining about how annoying lesbian sex is, then Dana tells her that now that Alice is riding dick again it doesn't mean there is something wrong with 'our' sex **(defined by sexuality).**

Dana is alone in a gay bar. Then Jenny all of a sudden arrives at the bar. She asks if she can join Dana, who is sitting alone. Dana explains that Alice was going to come but her bf called. Jenny asks if Alice is bisexual, Dana responds with yeah. Jenny says this bar looks like out of the 50's its so butch and femme. Dana explains it's the oldest lesbian bar in la. Dana seems a bit upset but she broke up.

Jenny takes Dana to her house in the shed. Jenny sits down on her bed, Dana sits down next to her. They don't really have nothing to talk about. They don't seem interested. They have some small talk, Jenny asks Dana if she wants juice. Jenny tells Dana that he pays Tim rent. Then they drink their juice. Then Jenny takes of her top. Dana looks nervous, puts her drink down and they start to kiss. But she drops her drink. They very awkwardly try to lay in bed together. Very awkwardly Dana gets on top of her. They then start to kiss and rol. Now Jenny tries on top. Jenny then says this is a bad idea. Then Dana says its very bad. Maybe they should stop they agree on. Dana then says maybe we should just be friends. And Dana grabs her shirt. Awkward hookup

Ep. 12
They are on their weekend trip away, where Dana has to speak. Then Dana says that's why you are a 'dirty bisexual' **(hate on bisexuals-> defined by sexuality)**. Then Alice tells her to tell her coming out story. It was in tennis camp. Her mentor. She can not say her name because she is famous now. Alice asks how it ended. Dana continues that the girl told her friend in a letter and that friend told her parents and her parents removed her from camp (**sexuality as an issue**/**parents dismissing**). When she saw her at matches she would ignore her. Alice her mom says 'tennis players are like girls in college, gay until graduation' **(lesbian as a phase)**. The all laugh.

Dana is getting ready, she is wearing a white suite she asks the suite or a dress. Tina says the suite looks great. Then Tonya comes in, she compliments Dana. Tonya will handle Dana and help her. The ladies stay on the bed.

Dana and Tonya are walking through the hotel and lots of girls come up to her to hug her for autographs and whatnot. Tonya dismisses everyone saying she doesn't have time. She tells her we need to get out of here, your fans are getting out of control.

Dana and Tonya are in bed. Dana is lying down and Tonya wild on top of her. Kissing and touching her everywhere. Dana gets a call, she then picks up. Tonya continues to touch and kiss her while Dana is calling.

In the car, Tonya and Dana are talking a lot and everyone else is looking like they don't care. Tonya asks Dana a lot of questions. Then Tonya asks Dana cats or dogs. You better say dogs they are better. Dana then continues to talk a lot about Mr Piddles.

They drop Dana and Tonya off. Dana and Tonya go out and walk together. When Alice closes the door. She says to the group wtf are we going to do about her. She tells the group that she also stole some money from her.

Ep. 13
Dana is explaining Tonya how to take care of her cat. Dana says a long list what Tonya needs to do. Dana kisses Tonya and say goodbyes. Then Dana spends like an hour saying the cat goodbye. Tonya cringes. When Dana leaves, Tonya kicks the cat out. Then Tonya calls her friend saying you will never believe where I am.

Dana, Alice, candace, Bette, and some protestors get thrown in a police car. Dana says her parents will die if they find out about this, Alice replies with then being a dyke will seem as not a big deal

(**parent dismissing gay daughter**). Then Bette gets thrown in on top of candace. They seem like they want to kiss. One of the protestors is a girl. As a joke Alice whistles to her calling her good looking.

Ep 14.
Dana is crying next to her bed. Tissues everywhere. Tonya opens the door and says Alice is here. Alice comes in and sits next to Dana. Mr Piddles has died. Alice asks what she wants. They should get a casket. Tonya already left.

They are at the funeral for Mr Piddles. Tina and Alice discuss how Shane seems preoccupied. She is calling Cherie and trying to get her to call her back. Kit and Ivan arrive. Tonya doesn't seem to want to shake Ivan's hand. Dana is crying next to Tonya who is just standing there. Alice asks Shane and Marina, what is up with the twin thing are they merging yet (**clingy lesbian-> u-haul lesbian).** Bette gives Dana a gift and then proceeds to Tina. Everyone gets a glass a wine. Dana proceeds to get up and thanks everyone for coming, she thanks them for being the best friends. She then thanks Tonya. Dana then says they are getting married (**clingy lesbian-> u-haul lesbian)**. Dana is super happy, everyone is surprised.

Dana and Tonya arrive almost looking the same (**lesbian couples wear the same?/ clingy lesbians-> u-haul lesbian**) at the provocations, they see, Shane, Tina and Alice. Dana and Tonya go away. Tonya pulls her away. Alice says that she thinks Tonya killed Mr Piddles.

Alice gets at Dana's door at. Dana comes out. Alice says she can not marry Dana. Dana asks why. Alice then kisses Dana and looks down. Dana then kisses Alice back (**cheating-> promiscuous**). Tonya is inside. Then Alice leaves.

Appendix C – Coding

Below is the code list from the stereotypes for both shows. The tropes are collected and documented in the same manner.

Stereotypes:
The L Word

Sexuality as an issue
- Marvin (Bette father) not accepting Bette's child with Tina
  -> Parents dismissing child of being gay (trope, Bette, Dana)
- Dana's gf from camp taken away by her parents. (ep 12
- Dana can't show she is gay to a possible sponsor, her manager believes. She has to bring a guy to the party (ep.6
  -> Pretending to be straight (trope, Dana)

Solely defined by sexuality
- Ep 2, randy says how hot Marina looks, she doesn't even look gay.
- When figuring out if Dana's friend is gay or not: features that could mean the woman is gay (fingernails, dress)
- When Alice says about a woman they see at the hotel. 'that's what I call a hundred footer', Tina explains, means that you can spot a lesbian from a hundred feet away. Alice continues, is it the hair, the (jock)bra, the footwear (the mandels), and they all laugh (ep 12 -> what a lesbian is supposed to look like, but they laugh about it.

Lesbians hate bisexuals
- 'Hate towards bisexuals from lesbians' is another identified stereotype. Dana consistently is being mean towards Alice for being bisexual throughout the show. For example, asking her when she is going to decide between 'dick and pussy' in episode 1 and calling her 'dirty bisexual' in episode 12.

Lesbians are drama
- Alice referring to 'dyke drama' to heterosexual male about Lisa ep 10

Promiscuous

Promiscuous lesbians
- Laura talking sexy to Dana at the tennis field (ep 6
- Laura talking sexy to Dana in a restaurant (ep8
- Marina has sex with Jenny just after meeting her, slips into the bathroom with her ep1
- Franchesca and Marina have an open relationship where they both see different people (ep 8/10

Sex without commitment
- Shane has slept with multiple women through the show, she says around 950-1200 in ep 12. She sleeps with Cherie (married wife) ep 10, ep 11,

Promiscuous/

insatiable bisexuals
- Jenny is talking with her old professor having a drink. Jenny wants his opinion. He tells her its beautifuly written but bullshit. He asks her where her edge is 'where is that girl that masturbated in church' ep 5.
- Its over between her and Tim, but they still have sex ep 10.
- Jenny is dating a guy named Gene and a girl named robin simultaneously in ep 13. She has sex with robin in ep 13. She later has sex with Gene.

- Robin and gene are at Jenny's house. Then Marina calls to tell her she is in love with her. They both offer to leave but Jenny asks them both to stay ep 14.

Cheating bisexuals
- Jenny cheats on Tim with Marina (ep 1: Jenny goes to the bathroom, Marina follows her in and starts kissing her and touching her
- Jenny and Marina kiss and hold hands ep 2
- Jenny and Marina have sex ep 4
- Jenny and Marina have sex in the bathroom, while Tim is waiting outside (ep 5
- Jenny and Marina are having sex in Marina's office, Alice sees that Tim gets inside the planet and goes to the ladies warning them Tim is coming ep 5. (condoning cheating
- In ep 6, Jenny and Marina are having sex in Jenny/Tim's house. They get caught by Tim.

Cheating lesbians
- Alice kisses Dana, while Dana is engaged, Dana kisses back (ep 14
- Bette cheats on Tina in episode 12 where she kisses candace
- In episode 13 they are in prison in a cell together and they describe how they would have sex with each other Bette and candace
- In episode 14 Bette goes to a hotel with candace / also sex in Bette's office
- Bette upset about Jenny cheating on Tim with Marina (ep 3

Butch:
- When Alice says about a woman they see at the hotel. 'that's what I call a hundred footer', Tina explains, means that you can spot a lesbian from a hundred feet away. Alice continues, is it the hair, the (jock)bra, the footwear (the mandels), and they all laugh (ep 12 -> what a lesbian is supposed to look like, but they laugh about it.
- Bette is butch in the sense that work is the most important (career driven), always gets called by work/late at places because of work. (ep 1, she tells Bette to make a baby but then she needs to go to work. / also arrives late at therapist (ep 2, Bette comes in late because of work. (ep 4, walks away from friends to receive phone call from work
- Tina tries to defend her but Bette stops her (ep 9
- Tina tries to help Bette, Bette says they already have highly paid people on the job (ep 11
- A man wonders if Bette is 'the man' in the relationship
- Shane looks like a Rockstar, that would be her type (gf of randy) ep 2
- Dana asks Shane if she always needs to dress like that, Shane asks like what. 'everything what you wear screams dyke': ep 1
- Gay men think Shane is a (twink) gay guy at the planet (ep 6
- Tina tells the therapist that Bette makes all the financial decisions ep 9

Femme:
- Tina is femme in the sense she is maternal. The first episode she is holding a ovulating test and tells Bette she is ovulating. Her and Bette are trying to get pregnant throughout the show.
- In ep 3 they use Marcus sperm to impregnate Tina in a romantic way without doctors.
- In ep 4 she is preparing for the baby
- In ep 5 she gets pregnant Tina will be impregnated.
- (ep 7, reading maternal books. + Tina getting morning sickness
- Blessing of the baby (ep 8. Inviting the friends to celebrate their pregnancy.
- In ep 10 they figure out the baby died, Tina is very sad
- Lesbians sexy for men: slim daddy asking Bette to bring her friends for some excitement (ep 10
- Marina (lesbian) looks hot according to randy (ep 2.
- Randy says Alice is a blond cute one (ep 2

All day available for relationships:
- Bette expects Tina to be this for her. She came back home early from work and Tina leaves to go to the gym (ep 2.

Struggling in relationship bisexuals
- Jenny Struggling with relationship

Confused bisexuals
- Jenny to Marina: 'I can not be around you anymore, it's confusing to me and it makes me feel insane' (ep 4
- Jenny continues to say she can not hurt Tim and she doesn't know what to do. Jenny continues 'every time I look at you I feel so completely dismantled' ep 4
- While she is having sex with Tim in ep 5, she keeps seeing Marina's face.
- Starts crying during sex with gene ep 13

just a phase bisexuals
- Alice saying she is done with women 'women are all crazy' switching to men
- Tina used to date a man before she says in ep 12: her story how she met Bette

Comedic prop bisexuals
- Alice makes jokes all the time

U-haul lesbians: joke referring moving in after second date: very clingy very soon
- Lisa clingy lesbian male to Alice: When Alice tries to go to the bathroom Lisa tells her to 'hurry back lover', while Alice leaves she says to her self 'what a lez' ep 10
- 'ill leave to let you guys get married' Alice when Jenny and Marina start talking ep 1
- 'what is up with the twin thing are they merging yet' says Alice about Dana and Gaby
  . they just met and are organizing the funeral of Dana's cat together and they got engaged. ep 14
- (Dana and Tonya looking the same?
- Marina jokes at Jenny she should move in (ep 8

All the lesbians are connected: ex from one
- Alice her chart: connecting everyone.
- Alice ex with Bette.

Non-primary characters

just a phase
- Older women having a lesbian phase (ep 4: Peggy Peabody.

Angry lesbian?
- Black woman Yolanda in therapy.

The L Word: Generation Q

Sexuality as an issue:
- ➔ (trope) Parents dismissing child of being gay
- - Dani being gay, her father doesn't acknowledge their romance. (ep1/or engagement ep 2

Femme:
'mom' duties/maternal
- - Alice her stepchild is sick and she has to leave the meeting at work to pick him up. Drew says 'family comes first' ep 2

Heteronormative
- - Engagement party matters conversation Dani and Sophie (ep 2
- - Sophie and Dani discuss what they should wear for their wedding, Dani says she might wear her mothers wedding dress (ep3
- - Q comes back in episode 5 and tells Shane she is pregnant
- - Shane helpt Angie out with telling her crush she likes her (ep 6 > then Shane says she agrees on raising the child with Q

Butch:
- - Alice makes a joke about the appearance of the other woman as a child, looking a bit tom-boyish (butch), 'really no one knew you were gay?', whole crowd laughing. Alice proceeds asking a bunch of gay questions. Ep 3
- - Bette is running for mayor, work still number. 1 priority.
- - Dani tells Bette she has to choose between romance with felicity or becoming mayor: work before relationship (ep 4
- - Bette cuts it off with felicity because her campaign is suffering from it (ep 5
- - Bette working late at night (ep5
- - Dani took a job for Bette without discussing with Sophie (ep 2
- - Dani is a workaholic, used to work for her father at a big company, ivy league university, now works for Bette: 'if you want to win, I think you need me) ep 1. She gets really involved in trying to make Bette win the election in ep 4, she speaks with felicity try to help Bette.
- - Sophie gives Dani a ring to remind her: she is always with her, always thinking about her and that she is her person. They then start to kiss ep 4
- - Sophie is in the hospital to check on her grandma who fell, Dani didn't come because of work. When she does come, after Finley told her to come. She leaves soon because she got a call from work (ep 7
- - Work over now time for relationship/getting married? : Dani (ep 8
- - Shane moved to LA whole house empty, only beer in the fridge (ep 2
- - Sophie gets her old grandma's ring (normally the son gets it, but no son, but gay daughter so she gets it (ep2

Promiscuous
Cheating:
- - Gigi cheated on Nat in the past ep 3
- - Bette is sleeping with a woman who has a husband (ep 1/ in ep 3 they sleep together in a hotel. (sex without commitment?
- - Sophie cheated on her ex gf to be with Dani. She tells in ep 4
- - Sophie cheats on Dani with Finley (ep 7+8
Promiscuous lesbians:
- - Lena just broke up with Tessa and now is sleeping with Shane (ep3
- - Alice/Gigi/Nat: have a threesome ep 4:

Promiscuous bisexuals:
- Alice wanting to have sex with Nat and Gigi. Alice thought the threesome was great. Nat is unsure. (ep 4
- Finley just slept at a girls house leaves to go to Dani and Sophie's house to pick Sophie up from work and she sees a hot guy and talks to him.
- Finley in the bar with Shane, Finley tries to talk to every girl in the bar (ep2
- Finley has sex with Tessa at work (ep 5
- Finley kisses Sophie (ep7
- Finley has sex with Sophie (ep8

Confused bisexuals
- Finley does not know what she wants but she is in love with Rebecca (ep 5

Comedic prop bisexuals
- Finley makes jokes all the time

Angry lesbian?
- Bette gets told she shouldn't be reactive ep 3
- Sophie angry at Dani all the time

All the lesbians are connected: ex from one
- Alice on tinder, Dani says she dated a girl Alice asks what she thinks about her. ep 8
- Dani and Micah

New type of family?: **fair**
Poly?
- Alice/Gigi/Nat: have a threesome ep 4:
- Gigi says that her guy friends also do this sometimes (ep 5
- *throuples* are complicated says Shane ep 5
- Q telling Shane she wants to be with her, but doesn't need her to raise the baby (ep5: Bette and Shane do not understand this.

Non-primary characters
Promiscuous
- Felicity cheating with Bette

All day available for relationship
- Felicity wants to be with Bette (ep 5. Felicity lost everything to be with Bette