

GAY REPRESENTATION IN AMERICAN MEDIA

A Case Study on Will & Grace

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Strategies for Emerging Media

Introduction

High-pitched voices, flashy hand gestures and token, sassy quips; these are common stereotypes of gay men in American mass media, instilled in viewers since the early 1980s. In American mass media, the LGBTQIA community has been portrayed by a short but widely known list of characters: Chiron in *Moonlight*, Brian, Michael, Ted, and Justin in *Queer as Folk*, and most notably, Will and Jack in *Will & Grace*. While there is variety in the genre of show or movie that these characters appear in, there is an underlying principle that these characters are heavily stereotyped to reflect societal norms of gay men. There has been an attempt at broadening the definition of what it means to be a gay man, most recently illustrated in “Moonlight”. However, the continuing popularity of shows like *Will & Grace* and *Modern Family* are telling that Americans continue to embrace these displayed stereotypes and herald them as lovable, and in some cases, comical.

Literature Review

Television Defining Behaviors

Electronic media, in this case, television, has redefined the way social behaviors are constructed.

Behaviors, which were once dictated by family units and personal discretion, are now shaped and molded from a variety of sources, created from the evolution of electronic communication. Social media, music and television encourage interconnectivity, a rather new theme in American social systems. Meyrowitz continues this point when he explains that electronic media has "rearranged many social forums" (2014). People are still learning how to navigate new social situations, navigating the unfamiliar and developing new methods at altering behavior. Going further, he argues that “the combined situations of electronic media are relatively lasting and inescapable, and therefore have a much greater effect on social behavior” (Meyrowitz, 2014). Much of this inescapability is due to how addicted Americans are to electronic devices; people find it hard to disconnect and maintain a sense of

individuality. By shifting away from individual decision making, electronic media gains more power in being able to make societal changes to how people act and why. However, this isn't a bad trend. Specifically, for LGBT identity, the proliferation of content across channels has been beneficial, at least in regard to presence. For Pullen, this proliferation "offers new scope for sexual identity, in ways previously unseen" (2012). Television, especially, has led to the widening of people's social circles, and in Meyrowitz's opinion, has "heightened men's and women's knowledge of each other's social performances for the opposite sex" (2014). The same can be said for sexuality. According to Common Sense Media, a resource for instructors in media and communications, media has immense power in shattering traditional assumptions about the LGBT community, "Media creates meanings about sexuality, and plays an important role in the way we understand the role sexuality plays in our identities, our history, our social institutions, and our everyday lives" (LGBTQ). *Will & Grace* along with other LGBT shows and movies, have expanded people's knowledge of topics regarding sexuality and gender, while still being regarded as entertaining and popular fixtures in American media. With these shows becoming fixtures in American media consumption patterns, a threat emerges in how conventional they become. Common Sense Media explains that "when we see the same representations over and over, we start to internalize them and take them for granted. They become natural" (LGBTQ). If the already slim amount of stereotypical LGBT content becomes conventional, efforts at correcting the issue become dismal.

LGBT Portrayal in Television

Despite the importance of visual media in altering behaviors and attitudes, the portrayal of the LGBT community through the medium has been less than fair. In most cases, media has portrayed the LGBT community as one-dimensional and highly stereotypical. Kessler further argues this point, "I think TV writers are writing just as preposterously, wonderfully, formulaically, and at times just plain badly for LGBTs as they are for everyone else" (2011). While she argues that the problem exists for people

outside the community, the problem is magnified by the fact that there aren't enough examples of visual media that portray the LGBT community in accurate and honest ways. Gay men and lesbian women are portrayed as promiscuous in shows like *Queer as Folk* and *The L Word*. Gay men are reduced to becoming an accessory in *G.B.F.* Trans individuals are created to be one-dimensional on *Transparent*. But this isn't a new acknowledgement, media scholars have argued for the importance of true, gay representation for years, seeing gay people be portrayed as "villainous bloodthirsty monsters to fashion-savvy cosmopolitan leading men on 'Must See TV'" (Goltz, 2011).

Consequences of Portraying Stereotypes

The mainstream popularity of these types of shows has serious consequences. In *Smashing the Stereotypes: What Does It Mean to Be Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, or Transgender?*, Seba tells the story of Ed Wesley, a man who came out as gay but struggled in his identity as a result of LGBT portrayals on television, "He felt alone and out of place... To him, it seemed like all gay men squealed like girls, were obsessed with body image, wore women's clothing, and talked with a lisp. That wasn't Ed" (2012). The way people see themselves on television has a grand impact on how they view themselves; if people don't see themselves as being popular or accepted on television, they can never confidently be themselves in everyday contexts. The same goes for those who are intersectional, existing at a crossroads between race, sexuality and other identities. Gay media is known to be whitewashed, void of people of color. However, much of this whitewashing can be attributed to American institutional issues rather than issues solely located in LGBT cinema, as Harris points out that "racism is a set of often unconscious embedded institutional practices that produce and reinforce racially disparate results" (2006). It's here that the problem becomes clear: it's a matter of not being conscious about the type of content that exists in popular American media.

But it's not to say that there are no examples of quality or substance. In fact, there have been disputes over content that is currently locked in private servers, hidden from the public as a result of

continuing marginalization in mainstream media. Created by LGBT producers and directors, this type of content was created from a different point of view. As Kirste explains, "These films and tapes contain the great majority of images that have a queer point of view, portray LGBT people as complex individuals rather than stereotypes, offer a diversity of race, age, ethnic background, politics, gender identification, and other qualities, and show LGBT people in the context of our relationships, families, and communities" (2007). With this type of content being inaccessible, people are restricted and, in a way, forced to conform to societal definitions of sexuality that are presented to them.

However, despite being rather sheltered, people have the potential to change. A study done at the University of Illinois tested whether or not the sentimentality of gay films had an impact on how audiences viewed gay people. With three different clips, one that positively portrayed gay people, one that negatively portrayed gay people and one that was neutral, experimenters concluded that audience opinions directly mirrored that of the film they watched. They concluded that "it is in the way gay characters are allowed to appear in the mainstream media that will have a great effect..." (Levina, Waldo & Fitzgerald, 2000). This insight proves that by having accurate, positive representation of gay characters in media, positive societal assumptions of gay men will follow suit.

Although this may be true, presenting gay lead characters on primetime television has not been the norm for long, with *Will & Grace* being the first television show to have a gay male lead. In Battles and Hilton-Morrow's article, they analyze how *Will & Grace* continues to perpetuate gay stereotypes throughout the show, while still presenting itself to be a safe and conventional space to positively represent gay men. "*Will & Grace's* appeal went beyond the small, niche gay market, attracting large, mainstream audiences. By the program's fourth week, it ranked number one in its time slot in the highly lucrative 18-49 demographic" (Battles & Hilton-Morrow, 2002). Immediately the show was a hit, and despite having a gay male lead, audiences did not hesitate to tune in. This was a groundbreaking

moment for LGBT media presence, as more shows, movies and other media portrayed gay men. The show was praised by the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) for progressively showing two personalities of gay men through Will, a calmer character, and Jack, a more flamboyant personality. However, the stereotypes perpetuated by entertainment continued, as it did in *Will & Grace*, how the “two characters are positioned within a narrative space that relies on familiar comedic conventions for addressing homosexuality -- equating gayness with a lack of masculinity” (Battles & Hilton-Morrow, 2002).

The role of cultural memory as described in Castiglia and Reed’s article contributes to the gay characteristic perceptions of Will and Jack. Jack, portrays overtly gay characteristics through his sexual and social bonds with other men. As one of the first shows to openly illustrate gay personalities, “*Will & Grace* affirms gay memory as a viable basis for identity” for audiences to connect and recognize positively (Castiglia & Reed, 2004). However, Will is more disconnected and conservative to gay memory as opposed to Jack, as Will discusses “his own memory-narratives regularly rehearse experiences of humiliation and shame: breakups, missed opportunities, childhood embarrassments” (Castiglia & Reed, 2004). The potential impacts on audiences that they perceive from *Will & Grace* stem from both stereotypical homosexual memories presented, as well as the continuous heteronormative characteristics presented between Will and Grace’s relationship. This allows for more open dialogue based on the content of *Will & Grace* for viewers through the years of the show’s lifetime.

In order to thoroughly understand the relationship and characteristics of Will, Jack, and their friends, Grace, Karen and other friends throughout the series, this paper hopes to utilize a collocation analysis of scripts. In his article about collocation analysis, Mello describes that "the collocation of narrative is essential for establishing validity and for creating holistic and connected research texts"

(2002). This analysis is fitting for the review of scripts from *Will & Grace* to understand the word usages around "gay", "homosexual", "Jack", and "Will" and how the show conforms to gay stereotypes or rejects them through certain content. Creating a story of how gay stereotypes are sustained in various media, collecting qualitative research is necessary to "suggest using the term 'narrative inquiry' to characterize the 'eclectic assortment of multidimensional and heterogeneous fields" (Mello, 2002). This allows data to provide an understanding of the language utilized in LGBT media, specifically in *Will & Grace*.

Research Question

This paper uses *Will & Grace* as a case study to understand the language used in the show's scripts to characterize gay men. The purpose is to understand how words, phrases and descriptors reflect societal stereotypes and expectations of gay men. A question at the core of this research is how the language in *Will & Grace* perpetuates gay stereotypes in American culture. Examining keywords and unique words associated with them, allows generalizations to be made about the type of stereotypes portrayed that audiences use to understand the scope of gay identity in *Will & Grace*. This research hopes to unpack the LGBT community and its representation in American media, using *Will & Grace* as a case study.

Methods

In examining stereotypes in television towards the LGBT community, with an emphasis on gay men, ten scripts from *Will & Grace* were used: five from the first season of the sitcom, which first aired in 1998, and the other five are from the 2017 reboot. All scripts were loaded into the collocation analysis tool, TAPoR, and mined. Words like "gay", "man", "Will" and "Jack" were used as keywords to pull descriptors from. Once keywords were found, words that exist next to those key terms were counted five from each direction and aggregated in a table that corresponds to each key term. Words or phrases of

interest include those that refer to commonplace descriptors used in society to describe gay men, for example, feminine adjectives, over-the-top actions and dramatized speech. In some cases, it was necessary to refer to the actual scripts to better understand the context of certain words that could carry importance, only because of how they were used in the narrative. Because of the subjectivity of these words and phrases, this process was conducted jointly between researchers in the hopes of minimizing internal bias and confusion in selection. If English stop-words existed within the five spaces, the TAPoR software removed them from the count. These words include "and," "like" and "for", etc. Once phrases and words were collected across all scripts, they were aggregated into an Excel sheet. Then, words were sorted based on keyword, frequency and category of words. Finally, the cleaned Excel sheet was loaded into Tableau to generate visualizations that indicate significant correlations between words and phrases. These visualizations included bubble charts and tree-maps.

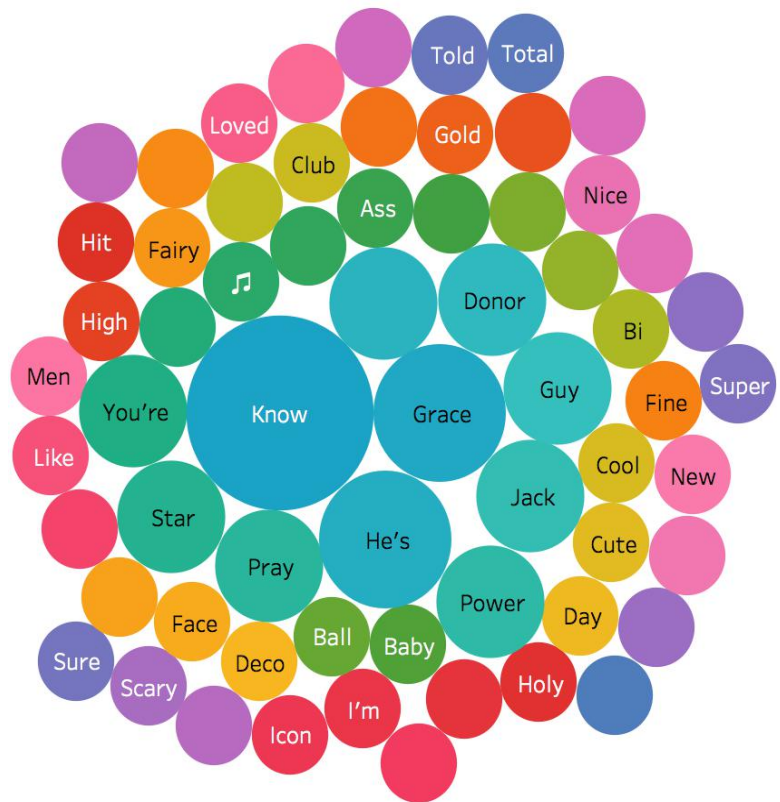
Data Analysis

Results of the collocation analysis were first analyzed by keyword and then by the category of the word. Results are broken up by section in order to promote clarity.

Gay

Perhaps the most closely aligned keyword to traditional stereotypes of gay men, words associated with “gay” indicate a sense of femininity and alienation from other groups in America. “Know” is the highest occurring word in relation to “gay.” As a society, people who question their sexuality or those who ask about the sexuality of others, tend to use the phrase “how do you know?” or “when did you know?” when talking about coming out. Instead of understanding being gay as something that is naturally expressed or understood, society often questions the legitimacy of coming out or being affirmed in a sexuality that is not heteronormative. Other words of interest included “fairy,” “baby,” “club,” and “ass.” “Fairy” was once considered a gay slur in the early 1920s but has later become less abrasive in the gay community. It’s worth noting that “fairy” was used in the first season of the show and was never again used in later seasons and the reboot. “Baby” is indicative of common phrases used by gay men when they refer to friends, however not in romantic contexts. Gay men are likely to incorporate typical heteronormative pet names into daily language practices. “Club” and “ass” are reflective of the party and carefree lifestyle that society assumes gay men to abide by. Spurred by the anti-AIDS hysteria in the 1980s and 1990s, gay men were often

Words Associated with “Gay”



Unique word. Color shows details about Unique word. Size shows sum of Totals. The marks are labeled by Unique word.

Figure 1

criticized for being careless and unsafe when it came to safe-sex practices and nightlife. While the aforementioned words are significant in generalizing gay behavior, other notable words are highly specific and indicative of a “gay-centric” culture.

Unique Words That Show Up Once With "Gay"



F1. Color shows sum of F2. Size shows sum of F2. The marks are labeled by F1.

Figure 2

“Gay-splain” is often used as a reference to the differences in how gay men describe something in comparison to other people. The premise that a gay man explains something in a way that no one else can is further proof of alienation between gay men and society as a whole. "Playing house" is a reference to the belief that same-sex marriages lack the legitimacy that traditional marriages have -- gay men are assumed to want to get married only to have the chance at resembling a sense of normalcy. "Hate crime" refers to the presence of homophobia in American culture and the fear of gay men for being assaulted in public spaces. It's interesting to note that this word only existed in the 1998 season and was never used again; a symbol of America's slow transition in accepting gay men. Perhaps the most stereotypical aspect of gay men comes from "best friend," an allusion to the idea of the GBF, gay best friend. Popularized by the 2013 movie, *G.B.F.*, the idea that girls desire to have a “gay best friend” is an ode to

the belief that having a gay friend is a hot commodity, reducing a gay man's status to that of an accessory.

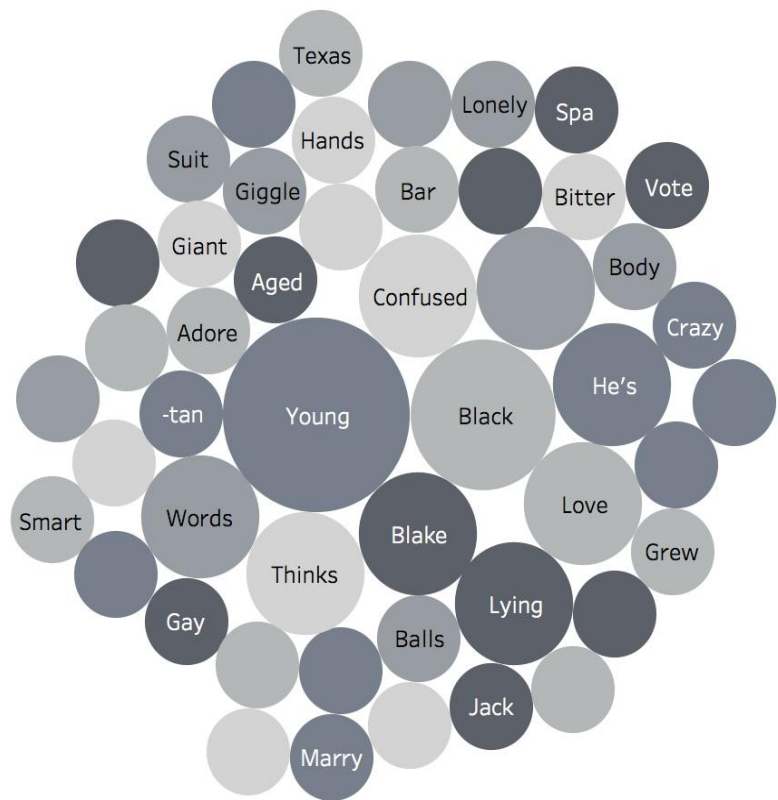
Man

Many of the words that are associated with "man" are used to describe men that Will and Jack are interested in or encounter in the show. The highest seen word associated with "man" is "young", bringing attention to the gay dating scene and men that are prevalent in it, as is seen in *Will & Grace*, specifically among Jack and Will. Perpetuating the stereotype that the gay dating scene is filled with young people is displayed in the first episode of season nine when Will meets a younger, 23-year-old man named Blake who is unaware of gay history and does not

understand the struggles of being a gay man in society. This further perpetuates his ignorance through his age and shows that as a young man, he does not fully understand the gay community. Will, instead of pursuing a sexual relationship with Blake, explains gay history to him.

Some of the other words related to "man" include "confused", "black", "hate crime", "lying", and "marry". Descriptor words like "confused" and "black" show the categorization of other men by Will and Jack to talk about masculinity and whether or not other men are comfortable in their sexuality

Keywords Associated with "Man"



Unique word. Color shows details about Unique word. Size shows sum of Totals. The marks are labeled by Unique word.

Figure 3

and identities. In one episode, Will and Jack talk about how hitting a gay man would be a hate crime, downgrading gay men as equals with other men in society, however, this continues to perpetuate to affect viewers' behaviors. As the drama continues throughout the episode, the word "lying" is showed to be associated with "man" because Jack and Will encounter men that cannot be trusted and have ulterior motives in their relationships and actions. This is important to note as the issue of men lying is also prevalent in the gay community. Finally, and with high significance, the word "marry" is used in association with "man" to explain men marrying each other while also promoting marriage equality. This word association is interesting to point out because when *Will & Grace* first aired, there was limited to no equality for the LGBT community, however in the reboot of the show in 2017, society drastically changed, as marriage equality was now accepted in America. Analyzing the frequency of words used associated with “man” is significant in understanding stereotypes and the realities of gay men and their roles and interactions with other men.

Unique Words That Show Up Once With "Men"

-tan	Bar	Gay	Hands	Handsome		High-fives	Jack
Adore	Beautiful	Giant	Jeff Sessions			Small lounge	Smart
Aged	Bitter	Giggle	Lonely				
Balding	Body	Goldblatt	Marry		Spa		Texas
Balls	Crazy	Grew	Muscular		Stocky		
Bandages	Flirting	Grown	Passive-aggressive		Suit		Vote

F1. Color shows sum of F2. Size shows sum of F2. The marks are labeled by F1.

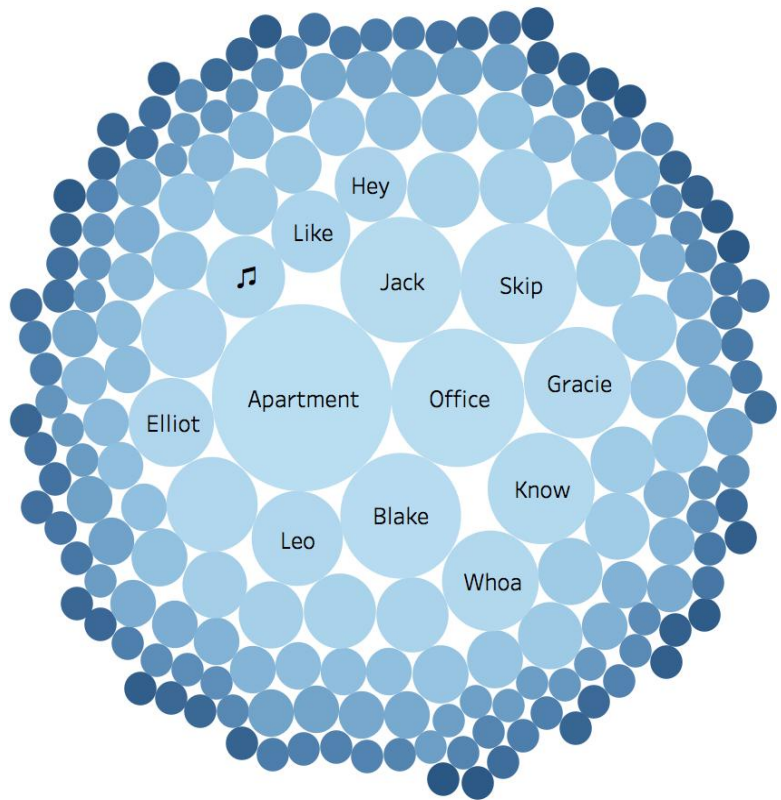
Figure 4

Will

In *Will & Grace*, two sides of gay personalities are shown through the characteristics of Will and Jack. Will is more introverted, logical, and could be seen as a more "traditional man" as he navigates various relationships throughout the series. He is also not as expressive as Jack, further countering common gay stereotypes that all gay men are loud and theatrical in their personalities. Through Will, a more serious and thoughtful personality is presented as he is traditional in his feelings and actions. The most commonly seen word associated with

"Will" throughout the ten scripts is "apartment"; this is because most interactions among all of the characters take place in Will and Grace's apartment. Audiences could imagine that because of Jack's more hectic personality, his apartment might be less organized and further shows the type-A personality type of Will as his friends tend to frequent his apartment. Five of the more frequently seen words are "Elliot", "Skip", "Leo", "Blake", and "Jack": all men that Will interacts with, in non-sexual ways, showing his traditional characteristics as he does not have that many love interests. Another significant word association is the music note, which appears in scripts as Will and Jack sing very often in the show. This rejects the traditionalism that Will frequently shows, he can bring out his extroverted side

Keywords Associated with "Will"



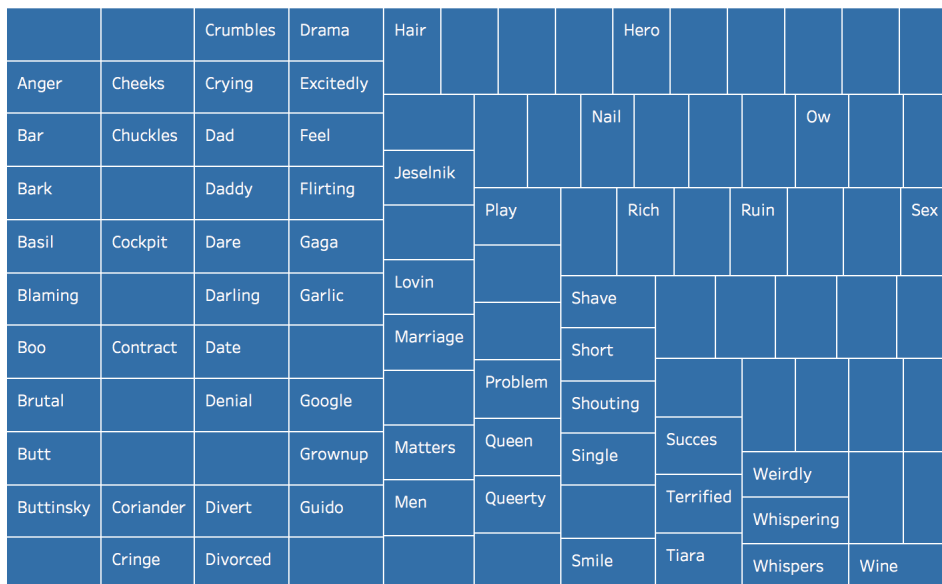
Unique word. Color shows details about Unique word. Size shows sum of Totals. The marks are labeled by Unique word.

Figure 5

and fun, theatrical relationship with Jack throughout the episodes. As mentioned above, “know” comes up in association with “gay” in many scenes because of men “knowing” when they were gay, and coming out with their sexuality as opposed to it just being naturally understood throughout across society.

Looking at the unique words that only show up once in association with “Will” is important as many of them include the various emotions that Will expresses in episodes. Some of the words include “blaming”, “crying”, “date”, “excitedly”, and “shouting”. These words represent interactions between Will and other people as well as his reactions to situations. It is necessary to note the word “date” because it shows that Will takes love interests more seriously, as opposed to being more promiscuous with men, relating back to a previous long-term relationship he had. Although looking at the serious side of Will is important, there is meaning to other words associated with him that are less serious. Some of those words include “flirting”, “buttinsky” and “chuckles” showing the fun and more outgoing personality traits of Will that audiences can also see. As often as Will is portrayed as a more “straight-

Unique Words That Show Up Once With "Will"



F1. Color shows sum of F2. Size shows sum of F2. The marks are labeled by F1. The view is filtered on F1, which excludes Friend.

Figure 6

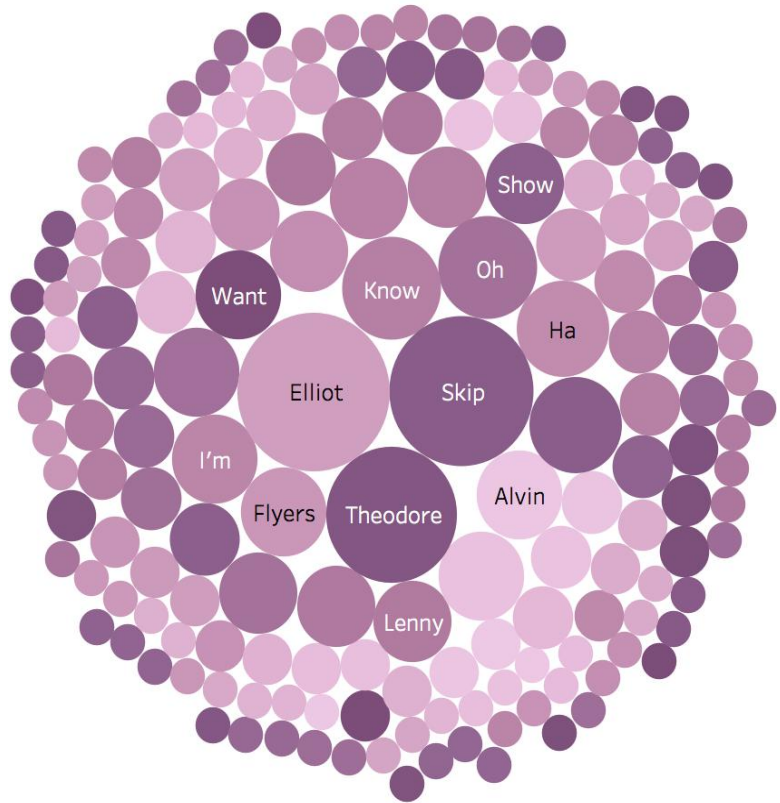
edge”, the show does not fail to encourage gay stereotypes of always flirting with other men and using the word “chuckles” instead of “laughs”. Will, as a more mature and traditional male character, serves as a foil to Jack’s flamboyant, feminine personality.

Jack

Notably, the most flamboyant character in *Will & Grace*, Jack’s persona is loud, blunt and theatrical. Representing traditional aspects of gay stereotypes, Jack’s actions, thoughts, and words are dramatic, promiscuous and above all, flamboyant. Despite the words that are associated with Jack as a whole, the real characterization is shown in the unique words that only occur once. Words like “biatch,” “gasps” and “giggles” are telling that Jack’s language and actions are highly feminized and dramatic. Gay men are known to incorporate traditionally known

curse words into their own language, commonly using “bitch” or “biatch” to address friends. Jack often uses “biatch” to refer to Karen, his closest friend. The changing of “bitch” to “biatch” is reflective of dialectical differences that exist in the language patterns of gay men, further characterizing them as being separate from other men. In terms of his actions, Jack often “gasps” at certain events, making loud noises and adding hand gestures that add dramatic flares to an already exaggerated action in everyday

Keywords Associated with “Jack”



Unique word. Color shows details about Unique word. Size shows sum of Totals. The marks are labeled by Unique word.

Figure 7

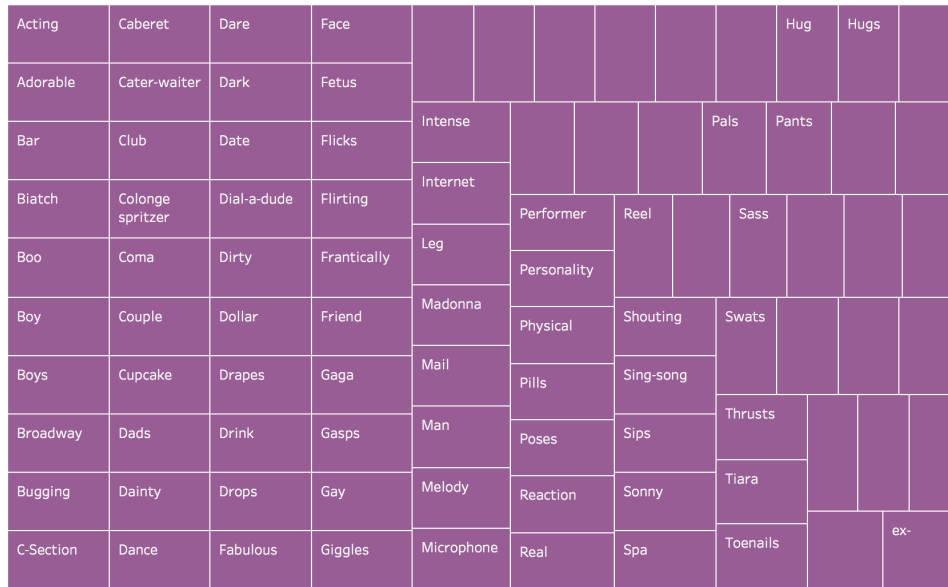
contexts, and “giggles” when he finds something comical. In everyday language, people usually think of “giggles” as something little girls do, not something a grown man does. Jack’s theatricality also expressed his sexuality through words like “cabaret,” performer,” “Broadway” and “sing-song.” Jack loves theatre and is often found singing, dancing, or prancing during scenes – regardless of the action, Jack’s presence is apparent in any situation. In addition to illustrating his theatricality, words also characterize Jack’s sexual and social behaviors as careless and promiscuous. Words like “flirting,” “pills,” “Dial-a-Dude”, and “bar” indicate that Jack frequents clubs and bars, sometimes under the influence of drugs, hoping to find sexual partners. With this, Jack’s actions illustrate the commonplace belief that gay men are unsafe, even dangerous in their nightlife behaviors. Jack lives up to the expectation that gay men have sex just to have sex. In fact, Jack never mentions concepts safe-sex practices or commitment, he’s only there to score a man for the night and live to tell the tale to other characters. It’s also worth noting words like “Madonna” and “Gaga,” referring to two of the most iconic gay icons in history. Jack uses these terms as people who he looks up to, sometimes incorporating them into his sayings.

When looking at words associated with Jack as a whole, “Elliot” and “Skip” are people in Jack’s life that are mentioned frequently. Jack’s son, Elliot, who was born before Jack finally embraced his sexuality, takes spite on Jack because of his gay lifestyle and has distanced himself from Jack. However, when Skip, Jack’s grandson, comes to visit and finally meets Jack, Jack realizes that Skip is gay and being forced to go to conversion camp. Jack’s family structure is representative of struggles that older gay men have had to overcome. Throughout the 1990s, gay men chose to be with women and raise families, repressing their sexualities as a way to avoid being marginalized. The inclusion of Skip as a coming-of-age character seeking Jack’s mentorship is a sign that attitudes towards being gay have

improved over the years. This mentorship also adds another dimension to Jack’s character, he cares deeply for his family, no matter previous struggles, and puts others before himself.

Jack’s character is one that closely resembles traditional stereotypes of gay men that Americans typically embrace. His voice is recognizable as being high-pitched and shrill and his actions are over-the-top and distracting. However, *Will & Grace* takes the opportunity to add deeper dimensions to his personality through his relationship with his family, proving that a typical gay man has the potential for deep, emotional reasoning.

Unique Words That Show Up Once With "Jack"



F1. Color shows sum of F2. Size shows sum of F2. The marks are labeled by F1.

Figure 8

Verbs

It is important to look at the verbs represented throughout the episodes of *Will & Grace* to see overarching theatricality between Will and Jack. The presence of Jack is very known throughout the show as he presents himself more dramatically than Will, with those examples being seen through the various keywords they are associated with. Beginning with the more dramatic actions represented, one can see “skip”, “singing”, “laughs”, and “flirting”. While many of these verbs are used in association with Jack, it further shows him as the more theatrical gay character while he skips, sings, and giggles in

reaction to conversations throughout the scenes. However, it cannot go without note that while Will is much less theatrical, his name as a keyword is still associated with the same verbs as Jack such as “skip”, “singing”, and “laughs”. Although he is not as frequent in displaying these actions, Will still engages in them when he is with Jack, at times even being prompted by Jack's presence. The overdramatic actions that Will engages with when Jack is with him continue to perpetuate the gay stereotypes of being feminine and having theatrical characteristics by entertainment, although this does not tend to be true in every case.

There are also a few words that are significant to point out that increasingly talk about being more outwardly gay in the series' reboot. This is seen in words such as "coming-out", "intro-seduce", and of course as mentioned in association with other keywords, "know". In the rebooted season, talking

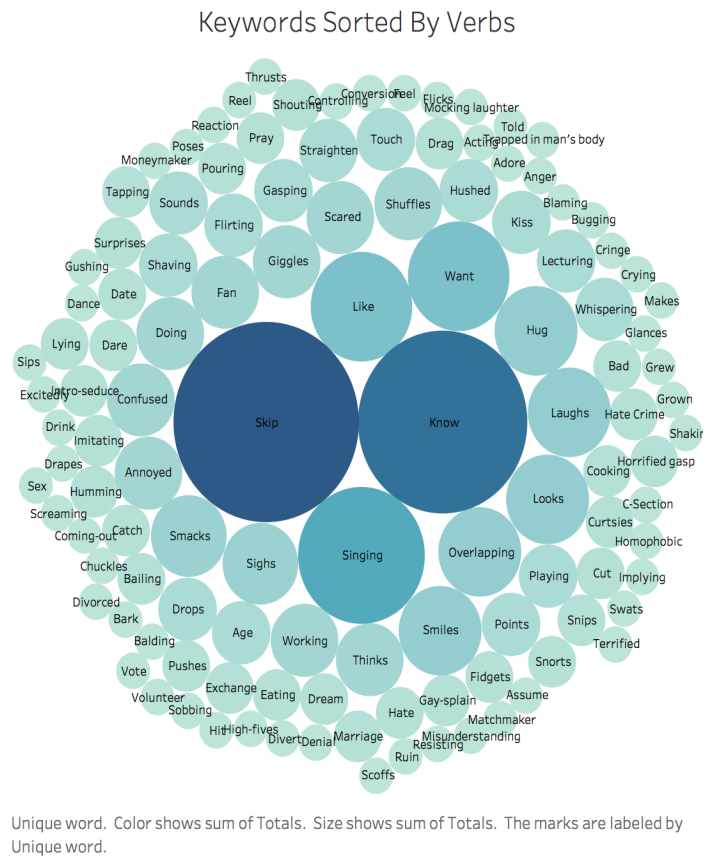
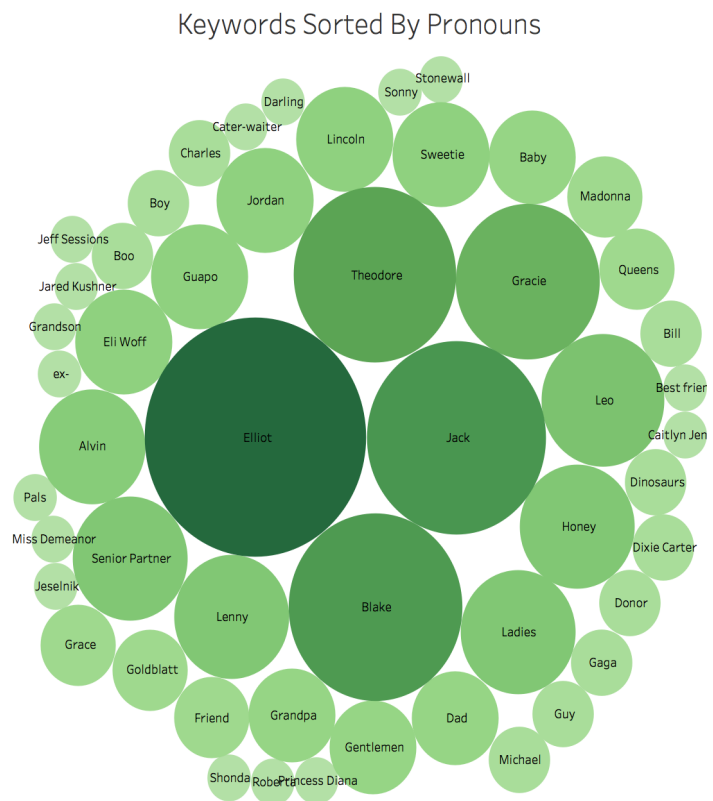


Figure 9

more blatantly about being gay is more accepted so when Will or Jack explicitly talk about coming out and "intro-seducing", it allows their behaviors to reflect society more appropriately and realistically. Also, in the rebooted season, Jack's grandson Skip is gay but is sent to a gay conversion camp, which also addresses anti-gay sentiment from politicians in 2017. Going further, there are some verbs that address Skip's experience as a young gay male in the 21st century including "coming-out", "straighten", "denial", "conversion", and also "know". The continuous appearance of "know" is still illustrating the need to "know" if someone is gay, it is not considered to be normal and naturally expressed among people, even in 2017. Overall, many of the verbs associated with the four main keywords "Jack", "Will", "gay", and "man" show the theatrical demonstrations from Jack and Will and sometimes focusing on what is stereotypical of the gay community in entertainment.

Pronouns

At first glance, it's clear that pronouns used in *Will & Grace* are mostly those of male characters, celebrities or politicians. The overwhelming presence of male characters is illustrative of Will's and Jack's dating habits, shown through pronouns like "Blake," "Lenny," "Alvin" and "Lincoln", as well as episodes that showcase Jack's family, "Elliot." This presence further perpetuates the promiscuity of the gay community; gay men are less likely to be monogamous instead choosing to date around. However, it's interesting to point out that



Unique word. Color shows sum of Totals. Size shows sum of Totals. The marks are labeled by Unique word.

Figure 10

“Elliot” is the most frequently used pronoun as a whole; the story arch explaining the background of Jack’s family is prevalent and explored throughout the first and last season. Like other unique words, this adds a mature, emotional dimension to Jack’s character that goes beyond his flamboyant mannerisms and sassy quips; he is more than what societal stereotypes make him out to be.

Celebrities are also commonly mentioned in *Will & Grace*, often used to refer to popular culture and gay icons. “Madonna,” “Gaga,” “Caitlyn Jenner,” “Dixie Carter” and “Princess Diana” are all considered to be famous, or notable, in the LGBT community. In most cases, Will and Jack mention these individuals when using them as comparisons to people, when talking to other gay men or when referencing specific events in popular culture. People often assume gay men to be highly knowledgeable about all topics regarding popular culture; gay men are heavily invested in pop music and one-of-a-kind female leaders. Instead of referring to male music artists or athletes, they talk about powerful females. Thus, Will’s and Jack’s usage of these celebrities in mundane conversation further perpetuates this stereotype.

On the other hand, starting in the rebooted season, both Will and Jack begin to refer to politicians, specifically members of the Trump administration. The Trump administration has received a lot of criticism for being anti-LGBT, with some being advocates for conversion therapy. "Jared Kushner" and "Jeff Sessions" are two examples of politicians that Will and Jack refer to, using them as comparisons for when someone in the show does something bad or nasty. The reboot season is the first time in the show's history where politics have been blatantly mentioned on-air, a sign that the show has gotten more political, progressive and bold in addressing concerns that threaten the LGBT community. At first, the show was about introducing and illustrating gay identity to mass audiences back in 1998. Now, however, the show hopes to prompt conversation about protecting gay identity in the wake of the 2016 presidential election using the show's popularity to its advantage.

Will and Jack are commonly described with adjectives like “beautiful,” “cute,” “fabulous,” “adorable” and “passive-aggressive,” although more so towards Jack. In everyday American culture, those types of adjectives are usually used to describe women or girls. Men commonly use beautiful, cute or adorable to compliment female partners and will use passive-aggressive to point out when females are upset; stereotypically, females tend to be covertly angry as opposed to when men blatantly lash out when angry. Females typically call their female friends fabulous or cute in terms of how they look. When Jack is described as those adjectives, it perpetuates the stereotype that gay men are more feminine in appearance and action, as well as the fact that gay men are vainer and obsessed with looks when compared to their straight counterparts. For example, when Jack sits on Will's couch, he states that he's sitting in the "pajama party position," a position that closely resembles how female models pose in photoshoots or how girls lay on the floor during sleepovers. While Jack's adjectives lead viewers to ascribe gay stereotypes to Jack's character, Will's adjectives tell a different story. Will, while sometimes described by the aforementioned adjectives, is typically described as "smart," "intense" and "single." With this, Will is more closely described as a traditional man in comparison to Jack, effectively challenging the stereotype that gay men are feminine and girly; Will is an intelligent lawyer who values monogamy and carries himself professionally.

Will and Jack effectively represent two gay men on the spectrum of gender expression, with masculine on one side and feminine on the other. Will, being more masculine and traditional, falls closer to the masculine side, while Jack, being more feminine and flamboyant, puts him closer to the feminine side. However, the importance is that both characters are gay. The adjectives used in the show serve as descriptors that are used to characterize male characters and indicate where they fall on the spectrum. In turn, the adjectives shatter traditional stereotypes ascribed to gay men, proving that how a man portrays his sexuality outwardly is subjective and personal.

Conclusion

As society continues to progress with the LGBT community, the issue of gay stereotypes perpetuated in media carries on. Will and Jack in the highly proclaimed TV show, *Will & Grace*, portray various types of characteristics, but nonetheless, continue to stereotype societal norms of gay men. As people continue to learn how to navigate social situations with the help of digital media, expanding the conversation and awareness of sexuality and identity through media is improving. However, it is important to understand that the LGBT community is still heavily underrepresented or misrepresented in mainstream media. As previously mentioned, media has illustrated the LGBT community stereotypically and one-dimensionally; gay men are reduced to being void of masculinity and are accessorized through the "gay best friend" archetype. Analyzing the ten scripts of *Will & Grace*, audiences can see that the collocation analysis upholds the perpetuation of gay stereotypes through word associations with "gay", "men", "Will", and "Jack". These datasets prove that there continue to be gay stereotypes in media today, while also showing large improvements towards reality, notably through the differences between Will and Jack. The LGBT community's representation in American media is changing, it is evolving in a positive direction. Still, it is important to understand that there must be more efforts made to equally integrate LGBT characters in media, while also portraying them in their own uniqueness and flare.

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