

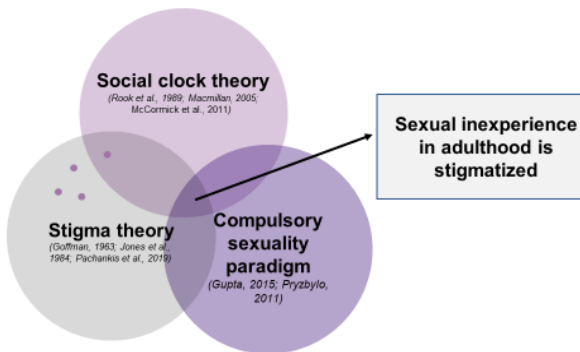
To tell or not to tell? Examination of emerging adult characters disclosure of their virginity in fictional television series and movies

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Introduction

- The current 'compulsory sexuality' paradigm (Gupta, 2015) presumes that all adults have sex and marginalizes disclosure of sexual inexperience or inactivity in adulthood.
- Recent studies have revealed that virgin adults experience stigma (Fuller et al., 2019; Gesselman et al., 2017).
- Because fictional television series and movies convey several messages regarding sexual norms, they may play a role in - or at least reflect - adult virgins' stigma (Boislard et al., 2022)

Conceptual framework

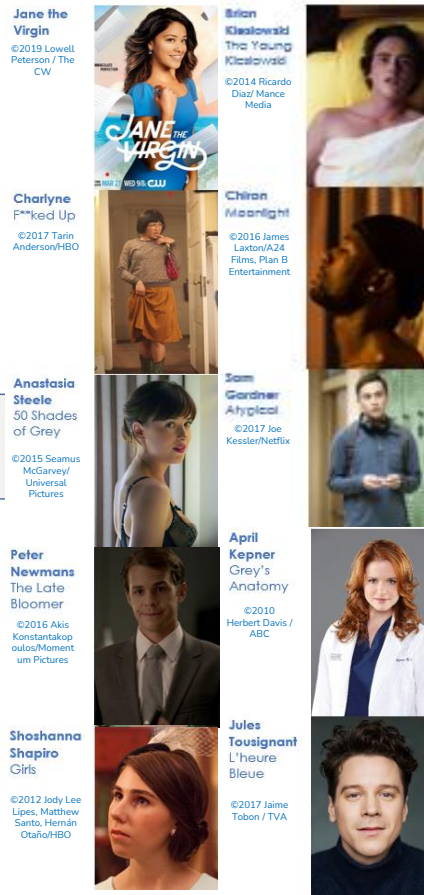


Study aim

Examine virginity disclosure of adult virgins' characters aged 18-29 in popular fictional television series and movies aired in a contemporary North American context.

Methods

- Thirty-one scenes depicting virginity disclosure or passing
- Inductive coding by two independent researchers (dialectical team-coding, Weston et al., 2001)



Analytical strategy

- Inspired by Fields' (1988) systematic techniques for qualitative content analysis of television news:
- unitizing content
 - transcription
 - developing and using categories
 - verbal and visual analysis (e.g., scene setup, non-verbal communication).

*"Ana: How can I know what I'd be willing to try?
Christian: Well, when you had sex, was there anything you didn't like doing?
[...]
Ana: I... I wouldn't know.
Christian: What do you mean?
Ana: Because I hav... I haven't..."*

*"Matt: Yeah, it's just really not my thing.
Shoshanna: What's not your thing?
Matt: Virgins.
Shoshanna: Oh, okay, but, like, except for the fact that I haven't had sex, I'm, like, totally not even a virgin. I'm, like, the least virgin virgin ever.
[...]
Matt: Yeah, it's not gonna happen."*

*"Jackson: Hey, there's no shame in it.
April: Really?
Jackson: No, there's shame.
Alex: A lot of shame. Tell her, Mer."*

Results

Disclosure

Motives: being put on the spot, sex or relationship about to happen, get disclosure over with, having reached a breaking point, seeking reassurance, regain control, being intoxicated
Approach: proactive vs reactive
Reactions: acceptance, rejection, laughing, ignoring, changing focus
Context: public vs private

Non-disclosure

Motives: continue passing or avoid it being 'a thing'
Approach: avoidance or outright lying
Reactions: persistence, teasing, suspicion
Context: public vs private

Depictions of virginity disclosure were more common than those of non-disclosure.

Conclusions

While it remains unclear whether television is imitating reality, or vice-versa, this study sheds light on the similarities between fictional and 'real-life' adults' experiences of virginity disclosure reported in empirical studies.

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