Portrayal of Gifted Stereotypes in Disney Channel Media: Harmony or Disharmony?

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ABSTRACT

The harmony hypothesis and the disharmony hypothesis are two opposing theories about gifted youth and their future potential for success. Evidence of these hypotheses can appear in media content and potentially impact impressionable viewers. This research paper aims to investigate the prevalence of these hypotheses in the programming of Disney Channel, a popular children's television network. Through content analysis of a sample of Disney Channel shows, the study explores the degree to which the programming promotes harmony and positive social values versus disharmony and negative behavior. The results of the analysis show that Disney Channel overall have a higher prevalence of the harmony hypothesis, demonstrating that giftedness is displayed in a positive attitude. However, the differences between the prevalences are slim, suggesting that the frequency of positive gifted portrayals in the media are not significantly different compared to negative ones. Due to this negligible difference, future research should look into the implications of these portrayals in children's media.

Introduction

Hidden within the student body in countless classrooms, children with gifted abilities fall into one of two groups: popular, socially successful, and proactive, or awkward, introverted, and socio-emotionally maladaptive, or so the stereotypes say about gifted children. Significant research revolving around giftedness often highlights the current debate that researchers have about the correct application of the harmony vs. disharmony hypotheses, or whether or not gifted people exhibit positive or negative socioemotional characteristics (Baudson, 2016). Although these hypotheses are not entirely representative of true gifted behavior, societal patterns have cultivated a certain mindset that sets the gifted label as one of two personality behaviors. This labeling can be damaging to people labeled as gifted (Baudson & Preckel, 2016). Ultimately, regardless of whether the expectations are positive or negative, gifted stereotypes put a lot of pressure on gifted children. When expectations are so high and stigmatizing, gifted children view the "gifted" label as something to avoid and develop behavioral defense mechanisms, which can reduce their potential (Coleman & Cross, 1988).

Literature Review

Giftedness Definition

Before exploring these stereotypes, the definition of giftedness must first be recognized. A current theme among giftedness experts and researchers explores that there is not one common definition of giftedness. In a content analysis of 104 articles on the topic of giftedness, Carol A. Carman identifies that there is "no consensus in the field about the definition of giftedness" (2013). While the most commonly used method to identify gifted children was prior identification by the school, this term in itself is still vague due to having different evaluations according to each school district. However, a definition is necessary in order for accurate comparisons to be made. The National Association

for Gifted Children derived a legal classification definition: "Students with gifts and talents perform - or have the capability to perform - at higher levels compared to others of the same age, experience, and environment in one or more domains. They require modification(s) to their educational experience(s) to learn and realize their potential" (2018). Essentially, giftedness is recognized among students who are evaluated with having above-average skills in certain domains or areas than their peers, though these skills tend to be typically intellectual. A number of studies have demonstrated a need for a separate education taught by specialized teachers who have been educated to teach gifted labeled students due to their skills (De Haan, 1957; Sonja, 2010). With this definition, researchers have been able to make progress to add more to the already limited existing knowledge on the topic of giftedness.

Harmony Hypothesis VS. Disharmony Hypothesis

As previously mentioned, gifted researchers to this day continue to add more to the debate of harmony hypothesis vs disharmony hypothesis about giftedness. To define the harmony hypothesis, it suggests that gifted individuals exhibit superior behavior in most fields, typically being acknowledged as successful in intellectual and socioemotional abilities (Terman, 1925; Persson, 1998). This definition typically illustrates a gifted character displaying higher academic achievement, successful social skills, and efficient adaptability. The disharmony hypothesis speaks the opposite; gifted individuals, although display higher levels of a domain, lack in their socioemotional development, causing failure in different aspects of their life, known as the "mad genius" myth (Becker, 1978; Peterson, 2009). These types of gifted individuals typically are talented in their domain, but are unable to successfully socialize and maintain healthy relationships with others and within themselves.

These hypotheses both have real-world implications, as they both influence stereotypes that may be broadly applied about gifted individuals. The harmony hypothesis paints giftedness in a desirable way, as it states that gifted individuals are more likely to be able to adapt and be successful in all domains, developing positive attitudes about giftedness (Bergold et al., 2021). The disharmony hypothesis is more stigmatizing, as it paints giftedness in a negative and undesirable light. The effects of these negative stereotypes have caused many problems for the gifted, both internally and externally. Internally, gifted people can face conflicts within themselves, such as educational enthusiasm or even their own cognitive abilities, which typically lower their successfulness (Coleman & Cross, 1988). Externally, they can face stigmatization from others, whether it be their peers making assumptions about them that influence their social standpoint, parents influencing giftedness as a negative trait due to extreme amounts of pressure, or low motivation for teachers to enroll in programs to educate themselves about giftedness, resulting in inaccurate assumptions about their gifted students (Berlin, 2009; Coleman & Cross, 1988). Overall, most studies find that both harmony and disharmony can create contrasting opinions about giftedness, which can in turn affect the response and actions taken for giftedness.

However, despite these conflicting hypotheses, accumulating research indicates that access to special resources and opportunities for adequate gifted development can reduce negative outcomes for the gifted. Neihart and his colleagues imply that with the right resources such as education taught by specialized teachers, disharmony hypothesis effects in the gifted can be avoided. Neihart's comment suggests that the harmony hypothesis prevails because the disharmony hypothesis could potentially be debunked, widely due to the effect that social settings can have on the future outcomes for gifted individuals (Neihart et al., 2002).

Disharmony in Media

Within the harmony vs disharmony hypotheses debate, several studies have discovered a high prevalence of disharmony within media. A study by Bergold and his colleagues describes a content analysis on biased or neutral newspaper articles talking about gifted individuals, and found that people who read the biased article often adopted a negative attitude towards gifted people (Bergold et al., 2021). On the other hand, the neutral article group demonstrated more positive attitudes. Earlier research findings show similar results regarding the prevalence of giftedness in media; Cox

conducted a content analysis on different movies and found that media portrayed gifted children one of four ways: "brilliant rebel" (a misunderstood character who has asynchronous development), "super crip" (a disabled character who develops a gift that exceeds their disability), "the loyal sidekick" (a geeky character who only stands out due to their popular best friend) , or "environmental genius" (a character who develops their gifts due to a mentor) (Cox, 2000). Vialle also identifies that gifted characters are typically portrayed with undesirable and often obnoxious personality attributes, siding with the disharmony hypothesis (2007). In these studies, media is discovered to typically illustrate characters with giftedness in a negative manner.

There are assumptions by media experts in the current literature that these negative portrayals can influence those that consume media. Susan Villani criticizes certain content in media, stating that negative content such as violence, gender stereotypes, sexually explicit, and others can "skew the child's world view" by increasing risky behaviors and unsuccessful social relationships (Villani, 2001). If the prevalence of these content within consumed media can influence such negative behavior among children so much so that it affects world views, the portrayal of the disharmony hypothesis about giftedness within media could also potentially be a factor for such negative attitudes within children, as Bergold discovered. This is also supported by the fact that children ages 8 to 12 spend an average five hours and 33 minutes per day watching television, while teenagers ages 13 to 18 spend an average of eight hours and 39 minutes (Rideout et al., 2022). Because children spend almost 1/3 of their day consuming media, it is likely that they are also consuming certain messages spread by the media. Teachers without professional education on gifted students easily conform to negative gifted stereotypes found in, so it can be assumed that children, who are at the peak of their development, will easily conform as well (Baudson & Preckel, 2016). However, the case for the prevalence of positive gifted portrayals demonstrates the opposite, as Bergold and his colleagues identified that the group who read the neutral and positive newspapers about giftedness resulted in positive attitudes from readers. However, due to the overwhelming number of negative portrayals, most gifted reportedly find themselves being stigmatized (Baudson, 2016).

The influence of the media and the portrayal of gifted characters as negative has damaging consequences on gifted individuals. Previous research reveals that high school gifted students felt stigmatized by peers, teachers, and even parents, consequentially feeling pressured to exhibit one of three behaviors: high visibility, disidentifiers, and invisibility (Coleman & Cross, 1988; Berlin, 2009). All three behaviors fall under the description of the disharmony hypothesis, where the gifted students develop negative negative behaviors such as overemphasizing or completely ignoring their giftedness. This can ultimately lead to them stumping their potential, as the gifted go about without proper assistance or education to nurture their above-average skills (Ely, 2010). Similarly, giftedness research reveals that gifted children can develop underachievement behavior because of the pressure that others put on them, ultimately reducing the child's ability to accomplish more goals (Delisle, 1982; Alexopoulou et al., 2019). This is undesirable, as it can reduce academic potential and achievements for those who have been labeled gifted and as well as for those who have yet to be labeled as gifted. There is a compelling interest to increase academic potential within gifted students in recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The National Center for Education Statistics found that there was a decline of five points in reading and a decline of seven points in math in American nine-year-old students when comparing student achievement in 2020 and 2022 during the pandemic (2022). Researchers and experts in giftedness are concerned about increasing underachievement in American youth, especially gifted youth, especially due to connection to the decrease in skilled labor (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Feldhusen & Moon, 1992). This decline in academic achievement among American students demonstrates the need to increase the potential and achievement in gifted individuals. Gifted are needed in order for society to advance, as higher percentages of gifted are more likely to pursue higher level degrees (Kell et al., 2013).

There have been demonstrations when media was beneficial for evolving gifted stereotypes. Cross identified that "nerd" and "geek", terms under the disharmony hypothesis, adopted positive connotations as people began to connect them as compliments, evolving into terms under the harmony hypothesis (Cross, 2005). However, this is very uncommon and occurs rarely, denoting that gifted portrayals in media are, for the most part, negative.

Present Study

Previous research findings, utilizing various methodologies, indicated a significant relationship between media and giftedness. However, due to the limited amount of research done on the topic of giftedness in general, there are only a few sources that talk about this relation. Welhelmina Vialle recognizes this absence of literature, prompting her to explore giftedness in popular culture (Vialle, 2007). In addition, movies and TV shows that were chosen by these studies were typically for an older audience (Bergold et al. 2021; Vialle, 2007; Cox 2000). There was very little research done on media targeted for a younger audience, prompting this research's study on children's media.

It is also still unknown whether or not there are differential effects for viewers based on the different types of media (Bergold et al., 2021). This study aims to specifically conduct a content analysis on children's media, an outlet that is consumed most by children in their developmental years, specifically Disney Channel which targets an audience of 7- to 17-year-olds. Statistics from The Walt Disney Company recorded 238 million subscribers to Disney Channel in their annual report (The Walt Disney Company, 2021). As Disney Channel, a type of children's media, is able to reach a significant audience of children and adolescents, a portrayal of gifted individuals from their media is highly likely to influence their audience.

In addition, this study's findings would contribute to the current ongoing harmony hypothesis vs. disharmony hypothesis debate. Despite many giftedness researchers supporting the harmony hypothesis, the disharmony hypothesis is still prevalent in the uneducated population about giftedness. This study would further contribute to the debate by examining one of the largest producers of media content and how they portray gifted individuals on their program, furthering either the harmony or disharmony hypothesis. With this literature review, it leads to the study's research question: **Does Disney Channel display a prevalence of either the harmony or disharmony hypothesis about giftedness?**

Method

This study utilizes a mixed-method design, drawing from a directed content analysis of gifted stereotypes within Disney Channel shows. The purpose is to explore the prevalence of gifted stereotypes in Disney Channel media, generating a need for both quantitative and qualitative research. The mixed-method design works best for this study because it enables the types of gifted stereotypes within the media to be quantitatively compared, while simultaneously qualitatively evaluating the degree of either the harmony or disharmony hypotheses being displayed in the gifted stereotype codes, fulfilling this research paper's goals.

The benefit of utilizing a content analysis is that it directly examines a text, film, or any kind of media to make inferences, especially about human behavior in a social science discipline. This research does exactly that as it makes inferences about the portrayal of gifted stereotypes in movies and TV show episodes from Disney, a popular mass media and entertainment conglomerate.

Film Selection

Based on the number of views for Disney Channel premieres, the top 10 media were chosen as the sample. The top 10 were chosen because they have reached the largest audience, which is necessary for this research as the influence of the harmony or disharmony hypotheses will be examined within consumed media. According to multiple gifted researchers, if gifted stereotypes are portrayed in popular media, it suggests that viewers have been exposed to the stereotype and may consume it as real, causing opinions and attitudes to change accordingly, furthering stigmatization (Bergold et al., 2021; Cross 2005). Acknowledging this, the type of media was not taken into consideration; Disney Channel media was chosen solely on the number of viewed premieres (in millions), which was retrieved from Statista data from 2021(Stoll). The media selected were: *High School Musical 2* (2007), *Wizards of Waverly Place: The Movie*

(2009), *Phineas and Ferb - 'Rollercoaster'* (2007), *Hannah Montana - 'Me and Mr. Jonas and Mr. Jonas'* (2007), *Wizards of Waverly Place - 'Who Will Be the Family Wizard?'* (2012), *Wizards on Deck with Hannah Montana - Crossover Special* (2009), *Camp Rock* (2008), *Princess Protection Program* (2009), *Teen Beach Movie* (2013), and *Jump In!* (2007).

Coding

For all codes, they were counted when they were depicted in the behavior of any character. For example, for 'introvert', codes were counted when any character in the media depicted introverted behavior, or more specifically when they demonstrated shyness and purposefully avoided others. Prior to the analysis, pre-generated codes (Table 1) were set down first after looking through the studies of Baudson, Berlin, Cross and Ely, who provided specific gifted stereotypes. After setting these codes down first, the Disney Channel media was evaluated, making sure to thoroughly analyze them through inclusion of timestamps, context, and organization of codes through categories (harmony, disharmony, and stereotype deviations). For the self-generated codes of the directed content analysis (Table 2), additional codes that did not align with the previously generated codes were added to the code list. These new codes had previously not been observed in the literature review. For each movie or TV show analyzed, only relevant codes within each media were listed. Irrelevant codes for each movie or TV show were not added for the purpose of convenient counting.

Table 1. Pre-generated Codes.

Code	Definition	Example
successful/potential	talented across multiple fields *	Ryan Evans excels in both singing and sports (High School Musical 2, 2007)
higher academic self-concept/self-esteem	one's confidence in their talent *	Caitlyn Gellar showcases music producing ability to peers (Camp Rock, 2008)
higher adaptive perfectionism	adapts to obstacles*	Izzy Daniels seeks a better way to win the Double Dutch competition by suggesting a new routine (Jump In!, 2007)
higher educational aspirations	eagerly takes any educational opportunities*	Justin Russo is eager to learn about marine paleontology (Wizards on Deck with Hannah Montana - Crossover Special, 2009)
socially successful	excelling social skills*	Rosie successfully makes conversation with other students (Princess Protection Program, 2009)
creative	think of new ideas*	Phineas decides to create a roller coaster out of boredom during the summer (Phineas and Ferb - "Rollercoaster", 2007)

Code	Definition	Example
child prodigy turns into unproductive adult	giftedness is not used for success*	Rodney, a talented boxer, turns into a bully (Jump In!, 2007)
prefers studying	Choosing study over social activities****	Justin Russo is reading a book during a tourist walk, not paying attention (Wizards of Waverly Place: The Movie, 2009)
nerd/geek	socially inadequate***	Cody Martin, known for being a nerd, sits at the classroom front and scares those who make fun of him (Wizards on Deck with Hannah Montana - Crossover Special, 2009)
lower self-concept/self-esteem	low confidence in one's abilities*	Mitchie falters while singing in front of her peers (Camp Rock, 2008)
high anxiety levels	having unstable feelings**	Tess feels anxious when performing in front of her celebrity mother (Camp Rock, 2008)
introvert	having a small presence****	Mitchie describes herself as invisible (Camp Rock, 2008)
weird	suggesting something unfamiliar****	Dr. Fusion, a mad scientist, sneezes in an awkward moment (Teen Beach Movie, 2013)
mad genius	being gifted at the cost of one's sanity*	Dr. Fusion utilizes his intellectual gifts in the sciences to try and take over the world (Teen Beach Movie, 2013)
athletic	talent in physical activity*	Izzy Daniels gets first place in boxing (Jump In!, 2007)
musical	talent in musical activity*	Mitchie is applauded after singing (Camp Rock, 2008)
intellectual	talent in academic activity*	Cody Martin answers a student's question rather than the teacher (Wizards on Deck with Hannah Montana - Crossover Special, 2009)
outside acknowledgement	recognition of giftedness from others*	Side characters talk about a Izzy Daniel's physical superiority in boxing (Jump In!, 2007)

*(Baudson, 2016); **(Berlin, 2009); ***(Cross, 2005); ****(Ely, 2010)

Table 2. Self-generated codes.

Code	Definition	Example
leadership	leading the group	Justin Russo leads the group to safety by leading them to a cave to hide (Wizards of Waverly Place - "Who Will Be the Family Wizard?", 2012)
appeal to teachers	a student who is specially favored by a teacher	Side character asks teacher to talk about her summer, and other students groan because the class lasts longer (High School Musical 2, 2007)
high ego	having great pride in oneself	Justin Russo brags that he has access to the family's wizard wand and book (Wizards of Waverly Place: The Movie, 2009)
appeal to adults	a child especially favored by adults	Justin Russo, brother of Alex Russo, is seen as more responsible by his parents compared to Alex (Wizards of Waverly Place: The Movie, 2009)
passive	Acts submissive in the presence of more domineering characters	Dr. Fusion follows the command of Les Camembert obediently (Teen Beach Movie, 2013)
selfish	prioritizing one's needs over others	Justin Russo hesitates on saving friends who were kidnapped by a griffin (Wizards of Waverly Place - "Who Will Be the Family Wizard?", 2012)
mechanical ability	talent in engineering	Phineas and Ferb both build a roller coaster without prior knowledge of mechanics (Phineas and Ferb - "Rollercoaster", 2007)

   In addition to the codes under the two categories, another category was added. In cases where gifted characteristics were shown but had no codes leaning toward the harmony or disharmony hypothesis, they were added under the neutral category, or the stereotype deviations. The purpose of the stereotype deviations is to ensure that all portrayals of giftedness were included, especially behaviors that did not align with either the harmony or disharmony hypothesis. This is significant to this study's research because of the need to evaluate all displays of giftedness in the media, not only stereotypical displays.

   After each media was analyzed in two rounds of analysis to ensure accuracy of the data, the frequency of each code demonstrated in either movie or TV episode was calculated. This is necessary as frequency can help to explain to what degree gifted stereotypes were presented.

   Duration was also added to the coding procedure by adding up the seconds of each code. The length of time that a gifted stereotype was noted to provide a more accurate depiction of the stereotype throughout the media, rather

than solely depending on frequency. The longer the duration, the more prevalent the gifted stereotype was. After finishing the coding procedure, the duration of all codes were calculated by adding up the total seconds of the disharmony codes, harmony codes, and stereotype deviation codes. Prevalence was derived by dividing the totals by the total duration of all the media.

Limitations

Although the coding process was done twice to ensure accuracy, it is limited due to the fact that the process was only practiced by one person, limiting the number of perspectives and potentially other codes that were missed in the content analysis. Additionally, this method was performed by a person with potential bias as a person who previously had experience with the gifted labeling. To avoid extensive bias, self-generated codes were checked by peers and the coding process was done twice. Therefore, although this current study goes against the majority of what the literature says, there is a high possibility that unintentional and unconscious miscalculations were made to skew the results.

Results

Frequency

After analyzing all 10 Disney Channel media, the frequency of the disharmony hypothesis, harmony hypothesis, and deviating stereotype codes were calculated. There was a higher prevalence of the harmony hypothesis being displayed throughout the media with a total of 40 harmony codes, compared to a total of 38 disharmony codes and 28 stereotype deviation codes (Figure 1).
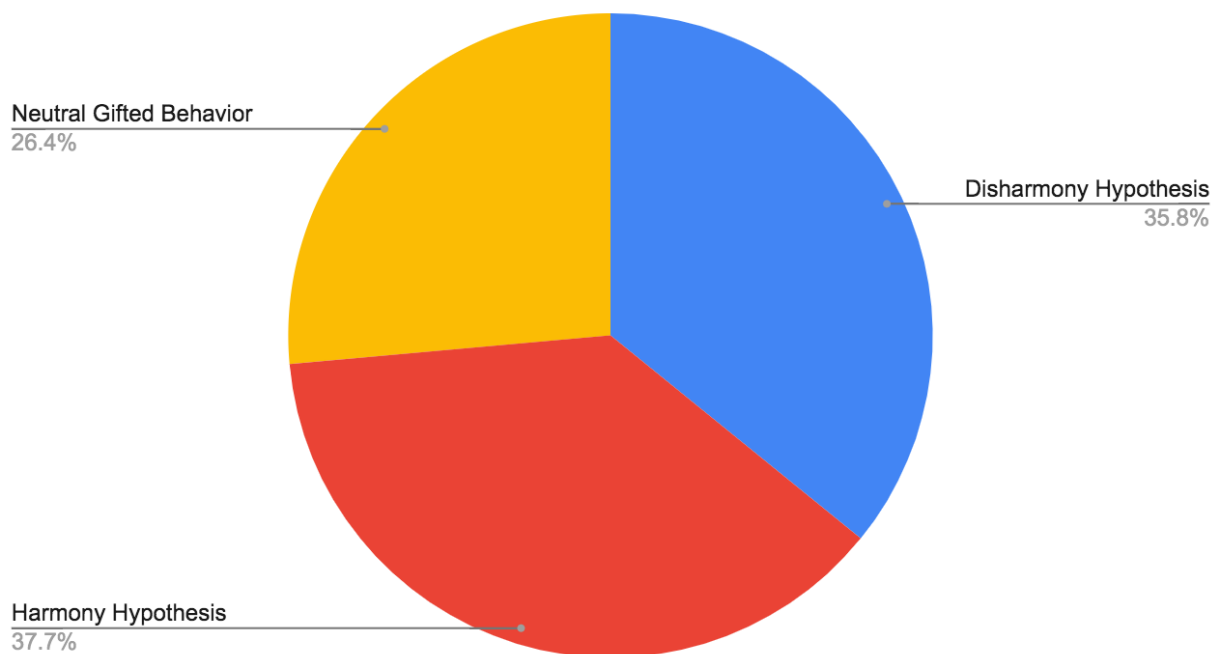

Figure 1. Frequency of Codes Across the Media.

Duration

However, frequency isn't entirely reliable to evaluate the prevalence across the media. In order to determine if the frequency of the codes accurately reflected the duration of the total frequencies of the codes, the total seconds of the disharmony, harmony, and stereotype deviation codes were calculated. It was found that the duration of the codes matched the frequency with the highest total of 1,495 seconds for the harmony hypothesis, disharmony with a total of 1,061 seconds and stereotype deviation a total of 758 seconds (Table 3). However, even though the harmony hypothesis is the more prevalent display of gifted behavior throughout the media, the disharmony hypothesis prevalence is similar; disharmony only had 2 fewer codes and 434 fewer seconds.

Table 3. Total Duration of Portrayals of Giftedness Across the Media

Existing Theory	Total Duration	Percentage across all media
Disharmony Hypothesis	17.683 minutes	2.59%
Harmony Hypothesis	24.917 minutes	3.65%
Stereotype Deviation	13.133 minutes	1.85%
Total	52.233 minutes	8.10%

To see if the duration of the existing theories were significant, percentages of the durations were calculated by taking the total duration of each category and dividing it by the total number of seconds across all of the media. After going through this procedure, it was found that there is a total percentage of 8.10% of the Disney Channel media portraying gifted behaviors. Despite this small percentage, this is potentially still significant, as these messages about giftedness are constant across the majority of the media. George Gerbner's theory of cultivation that long term exposure from media can influence perspectives supports this because the codes about giftedness were found in all but one media, *Hannah Montana - "Me and Mr. Jonas and Mr. Jonas and Mr. Jonas"* (Russell et al., 2014). It can be assumed that consumers of these media may potentially be influenced due to the constant exposure to gifted stereotypes.

Coding Results - Disharmony Hypothesis

There was a total of 13 codes that were used to analyze the disharmony hypothesis (Figure 2). After calculating how many times each code was analyzed (a total of 38), the order of the top 2 most prevalent codes that appeared on screen were **high ego (35.1%) and lower self-concept/self-esteem (13.5%)** (Figure 2).

Something to note is that the codes for the disharmony hypothesis did not follow one type of negative gifted behaviors; this is evident by the fact that although high ego and lower self-concept/self-esteem were the top 2 most prevalent codes, they completely contrast each other in terms of definition. However, high ego is still the most prevalent code. An example of this code is in the movie *High School Musical 2* when gifted character Sharpay Evans constantly brags and tries to showcase her musical abilities at the expense of others' own musical talents during the events leading up to a talent show at her summer country club. This example of the high ego demonstrates that gifted, in this case musically, characters are often portrayed as prideful, as well as see themselves as higher or superior compared to the surrounding environment. Having high ego as the most significant code implies that gifted behaviors in the Disney Channel media are more dominant than passive.

Lower self-concept/self-esteem is prevalent as well, but to a smaller degree. An example of this code is in *Camp Rock (2008)* when main character Mitchie shyly sings in front of her entire class softly, barely audible, during her first vocal lesson at Camp Rock after she is spontaneously asked by her teacher to do so. This scene depicts a musically gifted character who is unable to demonstrate her gifts and talents due to her internal beliefs that she is not

talented. This demonstrates the disharmony hypothesis as well, as the character was unable to succeed in her summer music camp because of her low self-esteem. These examples, although both under disharmony hypothesis, contrast each other with distinction, suggesting that beliefs about giftedness are rather variable.
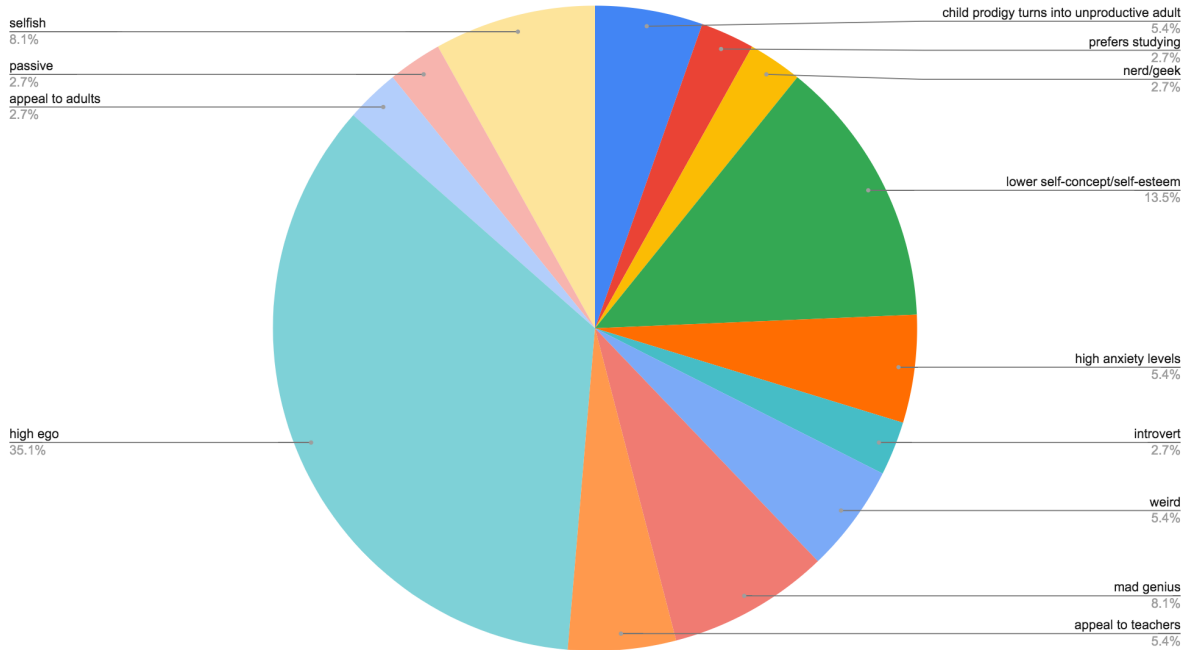
Disharmony Hypothesis Codes

Figure 2. Frequency of Disharmony Hypothesis Codes.

Coding Results - Harmony Hypothesis

There were a total of 7 codes that were used to analyze the disharmony hypothesis, starkly smaller than disharmony hypothesis codes (Figure 3). However, the total frequency of these codes was 40 codes, which is more than the disharmony hypothesis, suggesting that a similar type of gifted behavior was displayed across the media. While having more collective codes, there were fewer types of codes. The same codes were used over and over again, demonstrating that there is a similar view of positive gifted behaviors across the media.

Specifically, the order of the top 3 most prevalent codes that appeared on screen were: **socially successful (42.5%), successful/potential across a multitude of fields (17.5%), and higher academic self-concept/self-esteem(12.5%)** (Figure 3). The high prevalence of these specific codes demonstrate that gifted characters are typically seen as successful in multiple domains.
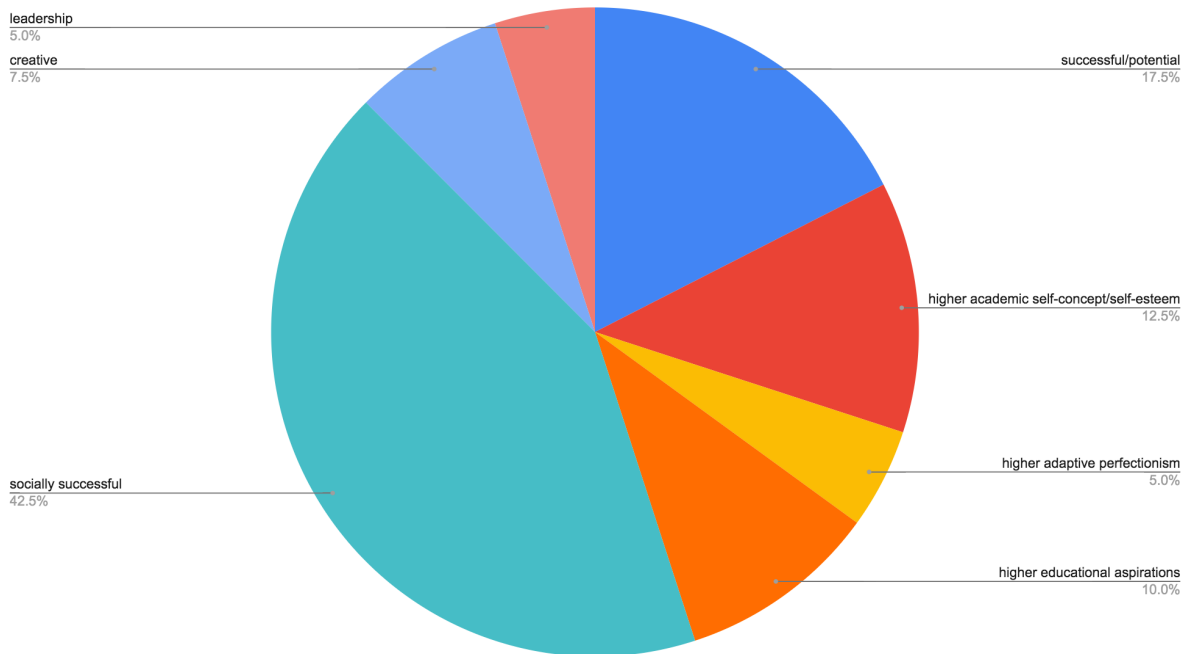
Harmony Hypothesis Codes

Figure 3. Frequency of Harmony Hypothesis Codes.

Coding Results - Stereotype Deviation

There were a total of 5 codes that were used to analyze the stereotype deviation gifted behaviors (Figure 4). Within these 5 codes, the total frequency was a total of 28 codes, suggesting that a similar idea to the harmony hypothesis in that a similar view of gifted behaviors were demonstrated. However, it is to be noted that because stereotype deviation codes entail of plain gifted behaviors that have neither a positive or negative implication to them, a similar view of gifted behaviors does not suggest a positive or negative view of gifted behaviors. An example of a stereotype deviation code was seen in *Teen Beach Movie*, when Laila was seen singing on a stage during a jam session open at Big Momma's, and when Tanner attempted to play the guitar romantically for McKenzie after falling in love with her. These scenes deviate from stereotypes because although both demonstrate their giftedness in music, they have neither a positive nor a negative connotation to them. There were no implications that there was a positive or negative attitude towards these actions. Rather, it is more about the type of giftedness that Disney Channel seems to display more. The order of the top 3 most prevalent stereotype deviation codes that appeared on screen were: **athletic, intellectual, and outside acknowledgement all tied with 25%** (Figure 4), suggesting that giftedness is seen as multidimensional once again.
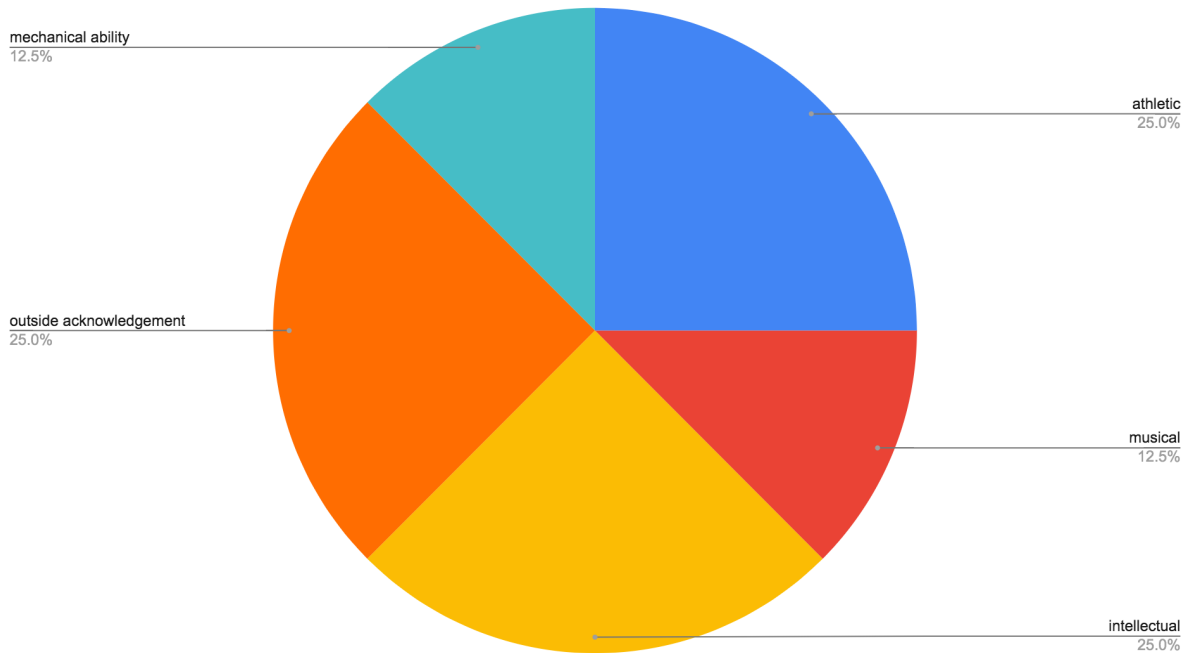
Neutral Codes

Figure 4. Frequency of Stereotype Deviation Codes.

Discussion

The findings of the content analysis that was conducted to answer the question of "Does Disney Channel display a prevalence of either the harmony or disharmony hypotheses about giftedness?" expands on the current limited information regarding gifted stereotypes.

After gathering and analyzing the resulting codes from the top 10 most premiered Disney Channel media, it was found that there was a higher prevalence of the harmony hypothesis than disharmony with a higher frequency of 40 codes compared to 38 codes from disharmony. The duration of harmony was also longer than disharmony as well. This meant that across Disney Channel media, there were more positive demonstrations of gifted behavior in the characters. The most prevalent harmony code was socially successful, which was seen multiple times across all the data. For example, *Princess Protection Program* demonstrated this code, as Rosie, one of the main characters, is complimented for her ability to socialize and befriend fellow peers at school in Louisiana. One of her peers, Carter, even goes on to say, "You're just so good with everybody" (Princess Protection Program, 2009), when she comments on how easily Rosie is able to make conversation with others. Another example is in *Jump In!*, where main character Izzy Daniels decides to create a truce with his enemy, Rodney Tyler, after they get into a fight at the boxing ring and Izzy shows Rodney mercy after refusing to take the winning punch. Both scenes demonstrate positive gifted behavior, as both characters use their gifts in the social and physical aspect to uplift others. Side characters demonstrated great admiration for these gifted characters when they were socially successful, which was seen the most.

Quite contrary to the literature, this is not consistent with the conclusions that many other gifted studies have made about the impact that media had on gifted people. As previously mentioned in the literature review, studies that have explored the relationship between media and gifted representation have mostly found a connection of negative representations, which follow the disharmony hypothesis (Baudson 2007; Baudson & Preckel 2016; Bergold et al.,

2021; Cox, 2000; Vialle, 2007). Although these examples were seen in this study, most of the gifted representations that were found were positive, suggesting that Disney Channel overall has a positive attitude towards giftedness.

Evolution of positive gifted behaviors can also be inferred due to the fact that most of the disharmony codes were more prevalent towards the beginning of the media, while harmony was most prevalent towards the end. What this means is that the character demonstrating gifted behaviors goes under character development as a gifted character. For example, in *Wizards of Waverly Place: The Movie*, Justin Russo, brother of main character Alex Russo, evolves from a gifted and talented character who has a high ego in his wizard abilities to an apologetic and socially successful older brother who admits his obnoxiousness when he and Alex have a deep conversation in the woods about his treatment of her. Another example is in *Jump In!*, where anti-hero Rodney Tyler evolves from being an insecure bully with boxing skills to a repentant friend who decides to become a boxing teacher who realizes his pointless pride when Izzy refuses to make the last hit. These instances were seen over most of the media that were coded, further suggesting that Disney Channel portrays gifted characters and gifted behaviors in a positive light.

However, only Cross' study supports this conclusion, as he demonstrates that the perceptions of giftedness in media has been moving into a more positive light through the changing definition of "nerd" and "geek". The large majority of the literature review, however, argue the opposite. Therefore, the current study mostly goes against the literature review overall.

However, what to note is the fact that the number disparity between the frequencies and durations of the codes for the existing theories was not very wide. For frequency, there was only a difference of two total categories, demonstrating that there were almost equal portrayals of both positive and negative gifted stereotypes. For duration, the disparity was only a 434 second difference. Although harmony is more prevalent, it is not by a substantial amount, suggesting that perhaps the prevalence of both hypotheses are similar across the selected media and therefore may not have a significant impact on the viewer because the behaviors almost cancel each other out.

In addition, the top most prevalent codes for each category all demonstrate how Disney Channel delivers content packaging about giftedness with variety and complexity. While the top most prevalent disharmony codes directly contrasted with each other, as the first one demonstrated high ego and the second one demonstrated low self-concept/self-esteem, the top most prevalence codes for the harmony and stereotype deviation categories both demonstrated that the gifted were seen as multidimensional. The variability of the top most prevalent codes seem to have almost no similarities, but rather differences, demonstrating how Disney Channel likes to portray a number of different gifted behaviors. What this suggests is that the entertainment outlet's portrayal of giftedness does well to not stereotype it in just one domain; rather, giftedness is incredibly complex, that no gifted are the same. This goes further to support the main conclusion about the overall positive portrayal of giftedness in the media, as it avoids stigmatizing giftedness as a singular type of behavior (Baudson, 2016).

Conclusion

What benefits that Disney Channel's display of giftedness has is that it would encourage students to let their giftedness be more pronounced in their identity, as well as encourage teachers, parents, peers, and any other social group to avoid stigmatized views about their gifted relation (Coleman & Cross, 1988). Fewer gifted students would feel socially different and awkward, embrace their giftedness, and potentially even alter their previous behaviors of either high visibility, disidentifiers, and invisibility to avoid stigmatization from their environment (Coleman & Cross, 1988; Delisle, 1982). These changes would encourage more achievements for the gifted, enabling for a potentially more advanced society, as previously mentioned.

Limitations

As mentioned before previously, the coding process was conducted by a single person, allowing room for inaccuracies in defining codes or missing depictions of gifted stereotypes in the media. This is especially seen in *Hannah Montana - "Me and Mr. Jonas and Mr. Jonas and Mr. Jonas"*, as there were no gifted codes extracted from the media at all. Having no codes extracted, although possible, could be a sign of inaccuracy as most other media had at least one kind of giftedness depicted, whether or not it was positive or negative. Another perspective, whether it be by a peer or another expert researcher, may have been beneficial for the sake of accuracy and narrowing down biases.

Additionally, although the top 10 media from Disney Channel were chosen due to the large audience that it attracted, it is not accurate to say that all Disney Channel media display a higher prevalence of the harmony hypothesis than the disharmony hypothesis. Only 10 out of hundreds of Disney Channel TV show episodes and movies were evaluated, which is a very small sample, so these conclusions cannot be applied generally to all Disney Channel produced media. Despite popularity and viewership being taken into account to help narrow down the limitation, this is still prevalent. It is also difficult to assume that the other children's media will have the same conclusions, as Disney Channel is only one major entertainment channel of many.

Future Directions

The current study utilized a direct content analysis in order to examine gifted portrayals in Disney Channel, an outlet of children's media, something of which the giftedness research field has not previously done before. In order to obtain a deeper understanding of giftedness depictions and possible stereotypes in the media, future research can use this method in larger and more complex samples, such as multiple children's entertainment channels or a larger sample size from Disney Channel. For accuracy as well, this would help to find potential similarities or differences from this study's findings, furthering existing knowledge on the topic of giftedness in children's media. In addition, due to the contradictory conclusions that study came to compared to the review of literature, there is a high probability for miscalculations and other errors. In order to achieve more credibility of the results, future research on other types of media of the prevalence of the harmony or disharmony hypothesis about giftedness is encouraged. This would either further support this current study or undermine it, which would contribute to research done on giftedness either way. Furthermore, future research should be done on the effects of the gifted stereotypes in children's media on children and adolescents, as only educated assumptions are being made on the impact that these stereotypes would have in this present study. Having research done on this topic would help to improve not only current gifted programs, but also perceptions by others. As mentioned before, destigmatizing the gifted is necessary in order to promote academic potential and achievement, all of which would only reap benefits for everyone, not only the gifted. Future research on these topics would help remind the film industry to be aware of harmful stereotypes.

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