# universität wien

# DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit

## Creating Teen Drama Series for the Millennial Generation – Josh Schwartz' *The O.C.* and *Gossip Girl* - An Analysis of the Genre and Two Pilot Episodes.

Verfasserin

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

> By and large, scholarly consideration of teen culture has circled around topics, which have little to do with television. Certainly, there have been publications about single shows such as E. Graham McKinley's *Beverly Hills, 90210: Television, Gender, and Identity,* or Roz Kaveney's *Reading the Vampire Slayer. The Unofficial Critical Companion to Buffy and Angel.* […] However, these have all been fairly tightly focused, examining, mainly, either televisual texts themselves or their audiences without wishing to concentrate on teen TV as a genre or on the place of youth programming. […][1]

Like Davis and Dickinson, editors of *Teen TV,* Ross and Stein, the editors of the book Teen Television, have lamented the lack of academic texts on Teen Television. I started my research during a semester studying abroad at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the fall of 2008. At that time, I had not read either of the authors mentioned above, but I soon learnt that their statement rang true. There was an abundance of literature covering topics such as screenwriting or specifically writing for television, and numerous essays focusing on single series, but books that offered definitions of the genre in general were sparse. Luckily, the library at my host university offered DVDs of most television shows on air right now and of the past. I took it upon myself to define the genre by watching teen television shows ranging from *Beverly Hills, 90210* from the early 1990s to shows from the early 2000s, focusing on topics they dealt with, their structure and their main characters. In the fall of 2009, I went back to my former host university for a few weeks and did some more research, mainly looking up articles I could not access in Austria. Most of my definitions and sub-categorizations of the genre stem from watching the teen drama series I will later list and the articles I found online. I also briefly tried to compare modern television serials to the early radio serials, Rudolf Arnheim analyzed in the study "The World of the Daytime Serial", and tried to determine which patterns remained the same and are still applicable to modern television. What I ultimately discovered when I was watching and analyzing teen drama series, were core characteristics that can be found in teen drama series on air during the last twenty years, and others that were added to keep the shows young, hip and trendy.

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[1] Davis and Dickinson. *Teen TV.* London: British Film Institute, 2004, p.4

With the year 2000, a new generation of teenagers came along, dubbed the millennial generation. Those were and are teenagers that had already grown up with mobile phones, laptop computers and more spending money than previous generations of teenagers. After the teen drama genre regained its popularity in the early 2000s, newer shows paid close attention to this development and started to provide teenagers with links to download songs featured on the shows or addresses to buy clothes worn by the protagonists of the series. While teenagers have always looked to television for advice on "cool" behavior, modern teens can rely on Teen TV to tell them what music is hip and which clothes are "in".

One of the reasons I got interested in Teen TV is that I belong to the millennial generation and grew up with series such as *Dawson's Creek* or *The O.C.* In my early teens, my peers and I would mostly watch U.S. series made for teens and did not watch a lot of series targeted to adults. Now, at the end of the first century of the new millennium, teens not only watch Teen TV, but most other series available to them as well. TV networks in the United States do not make a difference between Teen Drama Series and "Adult" Series in their prime time programming. Although series targeted to teens will sometimes air as early as seven o'clock, most of them are part of the prime time schedule.

Growing up watching U.S television series also ties in with my decision to write my thesis in English. As soon as it was available to me, I started watching my favorite shows in English instead of German, because I wanted to hear the characters' real voices and I did not like how jokes or wordplays often got lost in the translations. However, one of the main reasons for writing this paper in English was that I started my research during my semester studying in the United States and therefore, most of my research produced only English language material. Additionally, the two books mentioned above, which were my main source of information, did not exist in a German translation at the time I read them, which would have meant that even if I had written in German, the majority of the paper would have been in English anyways. By the time I returned to Austria in early 2009, I was also considering writing a joint thesis for my Theater, Film and Media studies major

and my English major, which also influenced the decision to write my thesis in English.

When I started writing this paper my first concern was explaining the term Teen TV. What constituted television made for teens? What were the shared characteristics and most importantly, how was it constructed? By analyzing two successful teen drama series, I wanted to learn what factors made a series a success. In the second part of this paper I will look at the two pilot episodes of *The O.C.* and *Gossip Girl* to understand how a teen series' pilot has to be constructed in order to attract viewers. I will also briefly look at the audiences of Teen TV to explain why people watch teen drama series and what they hope to gain from it. One of the main foci will lie on new elements introduced or elements reintroduce into the two shows, such as a heavy emphasis on music, technology and clothing or the increased screen time for parent characters and their storylines. I will analyze how characters are presented in the show in order to get the audience to invest in them. And last but not least, I will look at the issues the shows deal with and how they are dealt with. Nowadays, when teenagers feel patronized, they will not continue to watch a show, when they have so many other shows to choose from. With an increased number of series available to a teenage audience, teen drama series have to work harder to interest the audience. That this does not mean changing realistic storylines to more and more over the top ones, and replacing well-rounded characters with stereotypical characters the audience will soon be fed up with, should the analysis of *The O.C.* and *Gossip Girl* pilots show.

**PART 1: TEEN DRAMA – History, Structure, Content, Characters and Intended Audience**

## 2. TEEN DRAMA SERIES

Teen TV – be it on the now defunct WB and UPN, or the newly evolving CW or the N – offers crucial space for the negotiation of political, social, and cultural issues. The images and narratives of adolescence found in Teen TV are relevant to a wide range of viewers.[2]

### 2.1. Introduction

What is a teen drama series? One definition comes from screenwriter and writing teacher Pamela Douglas:

Teen drama is a broad description of any series that has characters who are young. Usually the kinds of issues that they have – and this applies most especially to shows on networks that emphasize teen drama, such as CW – are romantic issues or sometimes parent issues or self-empowerment issues or friendship issues. These are all things that teenagers go through. There's no reason that a teen drama cannot have the depth, sincerity and meaning of any other show. They are sometimes, however, played so light that instead of really dealing with what teenagers cope with in their lives, which are very serious to them and sometimes to others, they tend to be easy fare and that frankly is a merchandising excuse for selling fashions in some cases. [3]

While the second part of this statement certainly applies to most teen drama series, one has to consider the introductory sentence an overgeneralization. Not all drama series that include younger characters can be called teen drama series but rather family drama. In a teen drama series, the young characters are the main focus of the series and older characters tend to play a minor role or are completely omitted. They also tend to have stereotypical characters and address a variety of topics that teenager can relate to. However, some family shows such as *7th heaven* and *Gilmore Girls* have also been analyzed and included in subcategories coming up later in this chapter, because the teenage characters and the storylines revolving around those characters are very similar to those in "real" teen drama series.

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[2] Sharon Ross, Louisa Stein. [eds.] *Teen Television.* Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 2008. p.1
[3] http://www.videojug.com/expertanswer/types-of-tv-dramas-2/what-is-a-teen-drama
Accessed June 5, 2009

Another definition comes from Ross and Stein, editors of the book Teen Television. They argue that "television featuring the lives and experiences of teens not only touches on coming of age issues, but also on questions of self, identity, gender, race and community."[4] In the introduction to *Teen Television* they further argue, that "in popular discourse, Teen TV is associated as much with its assumed audience (of teens) as with its content."[5]

Davis and Dickinson, editors of the book *Teen TV* raised the question of "how to identify Teen TV in the first place?"[6] "Should one think about it primarily in relation to a target audience or is it more of a genre with an intricate interrelationship between recurrent thematic concerns, certain types of audience and their modes of engagement with these defined texts?"

This paper is following the second suggestion that teen drama is characterized through shared "recurrent thematic concerns," certain types of characters, cast, and appearance of those series.

What cannot be ignored when dealing with teen drama series is that there is a significant input from the dominant adult society at most points of planning, production, distribution and marketing. Adults create the programs, "arguably with a particular adult agenda,"[7] but if they [the adults] "make it right," those programs may be 'our' shows to teenagers. According to Davis and Dickinson, these agendas, in the broadest sense, might be:

> To educate and inform while entertaining; to set certain agendas at this delicate time
> just prior to the onset of a more prominent citizenship; and/ or to raise crucial issues
> (of adult choosing) in a 'responsible manner' that is entirely hegemonically negotiated.[8]

It is important, however, to present topics in teen dramas in a way that is not patronizing and, "without alienating teens and without destroying the sense that these are 'their' shows."[9]

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[4] Sharon Ross, Louisa Stein [eds.] *Teen Telvision.* Jefferson: McFarland&Company, 2008,p.1
[5] Ibidem, p.5
[6] Glyn Davis, Kay Dickinson. [eds.] *Teen TV*, London: British Film Institute, 2004, p.5
[7] Ibidem, p.3
[8] Ibidem p. 3
[9] Ibidem p.3

Those topics, characters, and the development of the teen drama series will be discussed on the following pages.

## 2.2 History of U.S. Teen Drama

> The rise of 'teen' programming in American TV schedules was indebted, at least on part, to market economics. TV series appealing to teenage audiences and depicting the exploits of jaunty teens were a bankable proposition because young people had come to represent a powerful force after World War II. Furthermore, the rise of teen TV was also part of the television industry's attempts to experiment with different kinds of programme format.[10]

The teen drama series came into prominence in the early 1990s, after most series with a focus on teenagers had been sitcoms for years. Teens in drama series did of course exist, but they were only part of a large ensemble comprising adults and children, instead of being the main focus of a drama series.

Teen drama series already existed before the creation of *Beverly Hills, 90210*, but the first teen-oriented shows did not call themselves "Teen Drama". The late 1960s and early 1970s were the starting point for series that depicted characters, actual teenagers could relate too.[11]

> Several patterns emerge when we consider early teen shows. First and foremost […] the majority of series that featured teen characters through the 1970s co-featured other demographics – notably parents, and also pre-teens in the form of siblings. Thus, most shows with main teen characters did not necessarily privilege those characters' experiences or point of view.[12]

Those early series were daytime soap operas instead of the primetime series that are on air nowadays. However, one has to note that a lot of countries are still airing U.S. teen dramas in afternoon slots, instead of their original primetime slots. Those most popular among a teen audience were the series *Love is a Many Splendored Thing* (1967 - 1973) followed by *All My Children* (1970 - 2011) and *The Young and the Restless* (1973 - ) Primetime slots were

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[10] Matt Hills. „Dawson's Creek: ‚Quality Teen TV' and ‚Mainstream Cult'" in Glyn Davis, Kay Dickinson [eds.] *Teen TV,* London: British Film Institute, 2004, p.72
[11] http://www.imdb.com Accessed June 13, 2009
[12] Sharon Ross, Louisa Stein[eds.] *Teen Television.* Jefferson: McFarland&Company, 2008, p.13

reserved for family shows, but some of them put great emphasis on their teenage characters, such as *The Waltons* (1972 – 1981). Another one of those nighttime dramas was *Peyton Place* (1964 – 1969), which focused on a group of teen characters, rather sensationalizing teen experiences instead of providing a realistic portrayal.[13]

Before teen drama became a popular genre in the United States, there were already some extremely successful teenage TV series on air in Canada, which also enjoyed great popularity with an American audience. *Degrassi Junior High* and later *Degrassi High* aired in the United States in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the United States, networks, prior to the 1990s, largely ignored the teenage audience.

> Prior to the mid-1990s, the teen market was largely ignored by the entertainment industries that believed that the teen demographic did not have a large enough presence to support strictly "teenaged" entertainment products. […] The teen population had begun to decline in 1976, but by the 1990s a turnaround had occurred. Beginning in the mid-1990s, significant numbers of children began entering their teenaged years.[14]

Things changed in the early 1990s. On October 4, 1990, *Beverly Hills, 90210*, "the mother" of hour-long teen drama aired for the first time on FOX. Entertainment Weekly wrote about the creation of *Beverly Hills, 90210*:

> Until Oct. 4, 1990 no one had thought to create a serious, hour-long drama about teenagers who had real problems. But when Fox launched 'Beverly Hills 90210", a series about the social, sexual, and style dilemmas of rich high schoolers, it spawned a titillating new genre in television: the teen drama.[15]

In the early 1990s *Beverly Hills, 90210* was unique in its portrayal of serious problems mixed with trivial and often ridiculous ones. Many criticized the show for its unrealistic portrayal of teenage life, but the attempted audience did not seem to care. It started out with poor ratings, but soon became a favorite among a teenage audience.[16] For the first time, teenagers could watch a

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[13] http://www.imdb.com Accessed June 13, 2009

[14] Valerie Wee. „Teen Television and the WB Television Network" in Sharon Ross. Louisa Stein. [eds.] *Teen Television,* Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2008, p.46

[15] Monica Mehta. „Zip Code Breakers" http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,358334,00.html Accessed: June 5, 2009

[16] Monica Mehta. „Zip Code Breakers" http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,358334,00.html Accessed: June 5, 2009

show that openly talked about teenage sexuality instead of demonizing or belittling it. Series creator Darren Star, who later went on and created *Sex and the City*, said about the portrayal of teen sex on the show that "the show looked at teenage sexuality in a way you hadn't seen [before]. The characters didn't apologize for being sexual, because the show wasn't moralistic about sex."[17] Even though the show ran until 2000 – longer than any other teen drama - it became increasingly less popular with teens, because of its very unrealistic storylines. In the last few years of its existence, the show had become a standard nighttime soap for adults, with "exhausted relationship do-si-dos among a constant stream of departing and arriving characters."[18]

Another 1990s teen drama was *My So-Called Life (1994)*, which was short lived, but critically acclaimed. FOX's *Party of Five* (1994 – 2000) premiered the same year and became an instant success with a young audience. Based on the premises of the sudden death of the parents of a large family, their five children have to find a way to raise themselves without parental supervision. As will be discussed later on, the subject of absent parents is very popular in teen dramas, because it is used to explain why those teenage characters behave so very grown up and sound so smart.

In 1995 The WB network was founded which had its focus on teen drama and family oriented programming. Over the next three years series such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Felicity, 7th Heaven and Dawson's Creek* premiered on the network. *Everwood, Gilmore Girls* and *Smallville* followed and were all hugely successful among a teenage audience. All of these shows shared a range of characteristics:

> They feature a young and highly attractive ensemble cast and they trace the experiences of youth and growing up with an appealing blend of intelligence, sensitivity, and knowing sarcasm. In addition, the shows addressed many sensitive and relevant teen and youth issues, such as self-destructive teenage behavior, alcoholism, teenage

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[17] Darren Star in Monica Mahta. „Zip Code Breakers"
http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,358334,00.html Accessed June 5, 2009
[18] Monica Mehta. „Zip Code Breakers"
http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,358334,00.html Accessed June 5, 2009

sex, and sexual identity. Furthermore, these shows' central focus revolved around the relationships and friendships of the key protagonists.[19]

Some critics were quick to dismiss the new WB shows as "soapy" and riddled with clichés, while others understood their cultural value in a society more and more dominated by popular culture.

> Ostensibly built on easily dismissible "teen shows", the WB turned high school melodrama into a remarkably cohesive brand, crafting its own aesthetic and narrative conventions with an overwhelming emphasis on youth. […] Culturally, these shows gave us a new code for reading adolescence, a newly defined narrative that shifted focus away from how adults see teenagers to how teenagers see teenagers. In the WB-verse, characters were young, but not stupid, sometimes powerless, but never wrong, confused about their actions but never morally unsure.[20]

In the early 2000s, teen drama's popularity declined, with young people watching shows such as *Friends*, which had people in their early to mid-twenties as main characters. At the same time, MTV's reality shows featuring real teenagers became more and more popular. However, things changed again in 2003 with the premiere of two new teen drama series; *The O.C.* (2003 – 2007) on FOX and *One Tree Hill* (2003 -) on The WB (now The CW). People were overfed with reality shows and were interested in watching scripted drama again. The late 2000s also brought about a resurrection of *Beverly Hills, 90210* now titled *90210* (2008 - ) and *Melrose Place* (2009 - 2010) another teen drama series from the 1990s. At the same time the TV series Gossip Girl (2007 - ) and Privileged (2008 – 2009) premiered.

As of fall 2011 there are twelve ongoing or new teen dramas on air in the United States, six on The CW network: *Gossip Girl* (2007- )*, 90210* (2008-)*, One Tree Hill (*2003 - )*, Supernatural* (2005 - )*, The Vampire Diaries* (2009-), and *Smallville* (2001- );  four on ABC Family: *The Secret Life of the American*

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[19] Valerie Wee. „Teen Television and the WB Television Network." in Sharon Ross, Louisa Stein. [eds.] *Teen Television,* Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2008, p. 48
[20] Hemal Jhaveri. „Young, Hip and Deadly. The Changing Face of Teen Drama"
http://www.poppolitics.com/archives/2006/10/young-hip-and-deadly-the-changing-face-of-teen-drama
Accessed: June 5, 2009

*Teenager* (2008- ), *Greek* (2007- ) *Lincoln Heights* (2006- ), and *Pretty Little Liars* (2010- ); and one on FOX: *Glee* (2009- ).

## 2.3. Types of Teen Drama

Davis and Dickinson raised the question of genre, inquiring if there is "a teen genre per se, or if what we call teen TV simply is a collection of different, previously existing genres, mutated in order to take adolescent sensibilities into account?"[21]

Teen drama can be divided into subgenres just like the drama genre. While the most popular teenage dramas like *Beverly Hills, 90210* were set in wealthy communities, others also reached popularity through their portrayal of teenage life in fictitious town settings, such as *Dawson's Creek*. Some teenagers had to battle demons and aliens like the teens in *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* or Clark Kent in *Smallville*, while others were battling alcohol and drug addiction. (e.g. *90210*)

> The WB created their own small town America – a safe, apolitical Utopian space within our TV's reminiscent of "home and hearth" ideals. Capeside, Sunnydale, Stars Hollow, Smallville and Everwood to name but a few, quickly became insular spaces with their own social order and very little influence from the outside world. Free from the conformity and sterility of suburbia, the grittiness, crime and confusion of the big city and the dull monotony of the country, these fictional places often embraced liberal urban ideas while remaining charmingly intimate and sophisticated providing a sense of purpose, community and belonging sorely lacking in our "real" lives. Despite the dangers in Sunnydale or the abundance of villains in Smallville, moral absolutes often prevailed."[22]

Shows, on the other hand, that tended to depict teenage life in a more realistic setting, even if they had been critically acclaimed shows, often did not exist for more than one season, because they could not attract enough viewers.

Therefore, when taking into account setting, topics and the reality of the issues portrayed, this paper will divide teen drama into three subgenres.

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[21] Glyn Davis, Kay Dickinson [eds.] *Teen TV,* London: British Film Institute, 2004, p.6
[22] Hemal Jhaveri. „Young, Hip and Deadly: The Changing Face of Teen Drama"
http://www.poppolitics.com/archives/2006/10/young-hip-and-deadly-the-changing-face-of-teen-drama Accessed: June 5, 2009

However, it is important to remember that even though it is possible to categorize teen drama into different subgenres, "in television, genre is not a static system. A single series can make generic transformations from season to season, and some times even from episode to episode."[23]

Serials were already divided into different categories by setting very early on. Rudolf Arnheim, in his study about the daytime radio serial, tried to determine the popularity of a series by looking at their locale. Two types of settings were prevalent in his sample: Large cities and middle or small towns.[24] He concluded that "the preference for middle towns may reflect an intention of catering to listeners who belong to just that social setting."[25] Judging from the number of series set in small town America, producers seem to take the audience's need to be able to identify with characters and setting, as expressed in Arnheim's study, to heart and cater to this audience. Arnheim furthermore stated that, "listeners are believed to enjoy a familiar environment rather than one which permits or demands that they imagine what may happen else where."[26] In this case, one can argue that this only applies to radio, because as Arnheim says, the audience has to imagine what life in a large city or exotic placed would be like, where as television simple shows the audience what life on New York's Upper East Side, or in Beverly Hills can be like. Series, set in affluent locations, are popular for exactly that reason nowadays; the audience gets a chance to look into the lives of others instead of just seeing on TV what they already know.

Even though, Arnheim's way of dividing serials into subcategories is a very valid approach that can still be applied to most series on air today, here the subcategories try to connect a certain setting to certain subgenre – i.e. large city equals high society, small town equals supernatural or focus on a group of people that are normally considered outsiders, as well as what is dubbed "teenagers with adult responsibilities".

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[23] Miranda J. Banks. „A Boy for all Planets: Roswell, Smallville and the Teen Male Melodrama." in Glyn Davis, Kay Dickinson [eds.]. *Teen TV,* London: British Film Institute, 2004, p. 20
[24] Rudolf Arnheim. „The World of the Daytime Serial." in Willbur Schramm [ed.]. *Mass Communication.* Urbana: University of Illinois, 1949, p. 360
[25] Ibidem. p. 360f.
[26] Ibidem p. 361

### 2.3.1. High Society

Teen drama series like *Beverly Hills, 90210*, *The O.C.* or *Gossip Girl* have one thing in common, namely that their main characters live in affluent locations, like Beverly Hills and Orange County in California, or Manhattan's Upper East Side. While viewers outside the United States might not be familiar with those places and what they stand for, American teenagers know what they can expect from a series that is set in places like Beverly Hills, Bel Air, Newport Beach or Manhattan's Upper East Side. These areas have the most expensive Zip Codes in the country, and they have found their way into popular culture as denominators of a wealthy and privileged lifestyle. The main focus of those TV series often lies on issues like drug and alcohol abuse, promiscuity and ways to spend the rich parents' money. Even though they often appear to be very superficial from the outside, they also focus on issue like friendship, first love and problem's with parents, especially in terms of fulfilling the high expectations set by the successful parents.

### 2.3.2. Science Fiction

*Smallville*, *Roswell* or *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer* are teen drama series that show teenagers who have superpowers, struggling to fit into normal high school life while having to save the world on a daily basis. Often set in fictitious town settings like Smallville or Sunnydale, they focus on how people who are different fit into normal high school life and the hardship of trying to lead the life of a teenager, in addition to having adult responsibilities. Other important issues are, again, friendship, first love and especially important, trust. The teenagers are trying to hide their abilities, only to discover that it is a lot easier to save the world when they have friends who stand behind them. This genre is also very popular with a teenage audience because it depicts strong willed and independent teenagers who seem to be able to take care of their own lives from a very young age onward, only occasionally relying on their parents' help. According to Moseley, teen drama series often "deal with questions of difference, otherness, increased power and the impact of these on personal and community relationships." Furthermore, she suggests that a big number of series that fall into the science fiction and fantasy category,

"use supernatural power as a motif through which to explore these concerns."[27]

### 2.3.3. Teenagers in adult jobs

As with the teenagers in science fiction series, the teenagers in those series take over adult responsibilities, like crime solving and healing illnesses. The TV series *Veronica Mars* is an example of this genre. These teenagers already have adult jobs and most of the time they are better at what they are doing than the surrounding adults. The shows appeal to a teenage audience because they show that being a teenager does not mean that you are a babbling, hormonal idiot, but someone who is already capable of taking on adult responsibilities. However, the series also make it clear that having an adult job does not save the character from teenage related problems and does not imply making good decisions in his/her personal life.

### 2.4. Structure

The one-hour TV show nowadays is forty-two minutes long, after commercials, intro and end credits have been subtracted. The shows consist of episodes that can be viewed in any order or they advance their storylines in the weekly episode. Whether serial or series with closure the following two attributes apply to all teen drama series.

### 2.4.1 Length

> Television dramas on networks are written in four acts. […] Think about what happens every 13 to 15 minutes on a network show. You know: a commercial break. These breaks aren't random; they provide a grid for constructing the episode in which action rises to a cliffhanger or twist. […] I don't know whether 15-minute chunks have been carved into contemporary consciousness by the media, or if they're aspects of human psychology which somehow evolved with us, but the 15-minute span existed before television. […] Whatever the origin, four acts are the template for drama series on the networks…[28]

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[27] Rachel Moseley. „The Teen Series" in Glen Greeber. [ed.] *The Television Genre Book,* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillian, 2009, p.43

[28] Pamela Douglas. *Writing the TV Drama Series*. Studio City: Michael Wiese Productions, 2005, p.19

Structurally, teen drama series are constructed as every other TV drama on air in the United States. Only shows on HBO or Showtime have a different act structure attributed to different rules for commercial breaks on cable.

**2.4.2 Intro**

The intro now typically consists of a catchy song that is either already well known before the show's premiere, or came into prominence through the show's popularity. Dido's song "Here With Me" was used as a theme song for *Roswell, Veronica Mars* used the song "We Used to be Friends" by the Dandy Warhols, and *Smallville* started each episode with "Save Me" by Remy Zero. When we hear "Where You Lead" performed by Carol King we think about the *Gilmore Girls* and Stars Hollow and when we here "So open up your morning light, and say a little prayer for right, you know that if we are to stay alive, then see the peace in every eye..." the opening lines from "I Don't Want to Wait" by Paula Cole it brings back the memories of Joey climbing through Dawson's bedroom window. Before Phantom Planet's song "California" became the opening title of *The O.C.* most people were not familiar with the song, but as the theme song for the new hit TV series it became an instant success.

Intros must be easily recognizable and separate one show from another and while most teen drama series use songs for their opening titles there are of course also those that employ a purely instrumental intro. Important is the purpose of the intro. It introduces the audience week after week to the main characters and main actors, welcoming the audience back into the fictional life of the characters.

Not all intros are placed at the beginning of the show. Some teen drama series start with a teaser before they show the opening titles.

> A teaser, also called "a called opening", refers to dramatic material before the titles (before the name of the series and credits). It may be a one minute "hook", or as long as 10 minutes that include several small scenes, making it nearly as full as a whole act. In any style, it exists to grab viewers faster than the enemy, which is the remote. The

notion is to open the hour with an action, image, situation or character that provokes enough anticipation to keep viewers through the title sequence and into the first act.[29]

### 2.4.3 Anthologies, series with closure, serials

Episodic drama comes in three forms: anthologies, series with closure, and serials. Little has changed since radio's heyday, when the daytime serial was the prime medium of entertainment. Writers and producers of television series still seem to follow the patterns described by Rudolf Arnheim in his 1940s study, especially when it comes to serials. They know it worked for radio for many years, so why should those patterns not be applicable to television.

**Anthologies** "are free-standing stories, like short movies, unconnected to other installments except by frame."[30] Up till today there is not a single teen drama series that employs this form and it is also very rare in any other form of television drama. An example for this genre would we the television program *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, in which filmmaker Alfred Hitchcock would introduce the story the audience was about to see, at the beginning of every episode. Hitchcock's opening monologues were the only constant in this format; the stories and characters changed from episode to episode.

**Series with closure** "have continuing main casts but new situations which conclude at the end of each episode: they close. Most series have some closure, even if they continue other story lines."[31] TV shows, such as *Buffy – The Vampire Slayer, Veronica Mars* or *Smallville* fall within this category, because the typically build an episode around a case that needs to be investigated (*Veronica Mars*) or an evil/ strange occurrence that needs to be fought / investigated (i.e. *Smallville/ Buffy – The Vampire Slayer*). Each episode ends, after the episode's villain has been caught/ destroyed. Most TV shows, following this pattern, however, do not limit themselves to just investigating one case per episode, but usually introduce a storyline that they deal with throughout the season and which is only resolved at the end of it. Veronica Mars, for example, the title character of *Veronica Mars*, spends most

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[29] Pamela Douglas. *Writing the TV Drama Series.* Studio City: Michael Wiese Productions, 2005, p.72
[30] Ibidem p.10
[31] Ibidem p. 10

of the show's first season investigating the murder of her best friend. Additionally, she helps her father, a private detective, with his cases, and conducts her own investigations in each episode, which are often connected to the high school she attends with her friends.

Arnheim defines this type as one where "a leader, generally by personal qualities, guides the other characters through their personal troubles. The 'conflict- carriers' as well as the type of conflict involved may vary from episode to episode."[32] Translated to modern teen TV, characters such as Buffy, Clark Kent or Veronica Mars are the leaders and the "conflict-carriers" are the various vampires, demons and monsters they have to fight each week or cases that have to be solved.

> **Serials** also describe soap operas. Today's serials include all the award-winning dramas on cable. And most of the acclaimed series on networks and other cable outlets use serialized storytelling along with closed stories. A serial is any drama whose stories continue across many episodes in which the main cast develops over time. It's called the "long narrative", the epitome of what episodic television can offer: not one tale that ties up in an hour or two but lives that play out over hundreds of hours.[33]

Arnheim states that in serials, "there is a group of people, generally a family, to whom disaster after disaster occurs. If the family is large enough and has a fringe of fiancés and friends, the victims of new troubles are never lacking."[34] Applied to modern teen television serials, one can argue that the family Arnheim mentions is replaced by a group of friends (i.e. Serena, Nate, Chuck and Blair on *Gossip Girl*, Seth, Summer, Ryan and Marissa on *The O.C.,* Dawson, Pacey, Joey, Jack and Jen on *Dawson's Creek,* or Hanna, Aria, Spencer and Emily on *Pretty Little Liars*) and "the victims for new troubles" are brought in as new boy-/ girlfriends, school friends, teachers and other characters that connect with the core group of friends.

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[32] Rudolf Arnheim. „The World of the Daytime Serial." In Willbur Schramm [ed.]. *Mass Communication.* Urbana: University of Illinois, 1949, p. 366

[33] Pamela Douglas. *Writing the TV Drama Series.* Studio City: Michael Wiese Productions, 2005, p. 10

[34] Rudolf Arnheim. „The World of the Daytime Serial." In Willbur Schramm [ed.]. *Mass Communication.* Urbana: University of Illinois,1949, p. 366

Most teen drama series on air at the moment are a mixture between series with closure and serials. Some episodes end with cliffhangers and then remind audiences in each new episode about what had happened in prior episodes to emphasize the importance of the past for the future. Typically, shows that belong to the high society subgroup have more serial elements and are "soapier" than for example supernatural shows. These usually have storylines that involve battling an evil monster or solving a case and are resolved at the end of the episode. The development of relationships between characters over time is the serial element of these shows. Cliffhangers are not exclusively used by serials, but can be found in series with closure as and mixtures of those two genres as well. Some memorable cliffhangers are for example, *Buffy – The Vampire Slayer*'s season five ending. The season ends with a shot of Buffy's tombstone - the title character is dead. The audience has to wait for the following season to find out how this will be resolved.

*Gossip Girl – Season three* ending. The last scene shows two men trying to steal the engagement ring Chuck was going to give Blair. He struggles, gets shot and is left to die in a dark alley. *The O.C.'s* third season even has an episode called "The Cliffhanger" (3x14). The episode ends with Ryan and Marissa rushing to the beach to calm down a drunken Johnny. Johnny is standing close to the edge of a cliff when he stumbles backwards. Ryan tries to grab him, but misses. We hear the bottle Johnny was holding breaking before the image fades to black.

**2.5 Topics**

"Problems in the realm of 'personal relations' i.e., problems occurring between lovers, marriage partners, in the family, or among friends account for 47 percent of all problems,"[35] Arnheim remarks in his study. He also classified a second category named "problems endangering the individual".[36] Again, this concept can be applied to modern teen drama, even though the problems the characters have to deal with in those two categories differ from those mentioned in Arnheim's study, mostly because teenagers face different

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[35] Rudolf Arnheim. „The World of the Daytime Serial." In Willbur Schramm [ed.]. *Mass Communication*. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1949, p. 366
[36] Ibidem, p. 366

problems than adult characters. Although, we have established before that there are different subgenres of teen drama, they all deal with the "universals" of teenage life – school, sports, love, friendship and relationship with parents. (= "personal relations") and some include what shall be called "catastrophic events" (= "problems endangering the individual"). They tend to differ in the way these issues are portrayed and they often focus more specifically on one or two of the above-mentioned topics.

> The existing literature argues that teen television tends to focus on a recurring set of themes that are said to be of interest to the teen experience. We are informed routinely that such themes highlight adolescent anxiety about love, sex, impending adulthood, concerns about family relations and issues surrounding one's place in the world.[37]

U.S. Teen drama series also tend to bring in characters to focus on controversial issues that are mostly resolved in a single episode and those characters are quite often not seen again after that particular episode. Sharon Marie Ross discusses this phenomenon in her comparison between Canadian TV series and U.S. American ones.

> At times characters' racial, national, and ethnic backgrounds are issues – openly discussed and part of the narrative. However, the regular referencing of people's heritages works to offset what many label as the U.S. teen TV cliché of a "very special episode": a special character is brought in (usually never to be seen again) who calls attention to bigotry and ignorance for one day. An offshoot of this is the "within limits" approach to intense teen issues commonly found in U.S. television, particularly those concerning sexuality and/or violence: a main character deals with an intense issue (rape, gay desires, bullying, drugs, pregnancy), the problem is resolved relatively quickly, and once resolved it is never mentioned again – leaving no mark on the character involved (unless it is that they are punished by being written out of the show). In the United States, this has much to do with the FCC [Federal Communications Commission] and restrictions that are placed on content aimed at children, which includes teens; it has even more to do with networks' fears of losing advertisers concerned about their product being associated with controversial issues and liberal stands on those issues.[38]

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[37] Rebecca Feasey. „Anxiety, Helplessness and ‚Adultescence'". *European Journal of Cultural Studies,* 2009, quoted from Banks, 2004; Moseley, 2002; Rutherford, 2004, p.431 Accessed April 23, 2010 http://ecs.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/12/4/431

[38] Sharon Ross. „Defining Teen Culture: The N Network" in Sharon Ross, Louisa Stein [eds.]. *Teen Television*, Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2008, p. 64

The following storylines can be found in most U.S. teen dramas, and can be seen as criteria a TV series has to fulfill in order to qualify for the title teen drama. For the analysis of the topics of teen dramas the following series were watched or researched if no episodes were available: *7<sup>th</sup> Heaven, 90210, Beverly Hills, 90210, Buffy, the Vampire Slayer, Dawson's Greek, Everwood, Gilmore Girls, Glee, Gossip Girl, Melrose Place, Party of Five, Pretty Little Liars, Privileged, Rosewell, Smallville, The O.C., The Secret Life of the American Teenager* and *Veronica Mars.*

## 2.5.1. Alcohol, Smoking, Drugs

First experiences with alcohol and smoking can be found in most modern teen dramas, but while underage drinking or even drug abuse seems to be frowned upon but still tolerated, smoking is usually banned from teen drama or associated with "bad characters". Typically, a character who smoked prior to the beginning of the series might be seen smoking in the very first episode, but then gives up smoking because he realizes the dangers of smoking or because he is scared into quitting cigarettes (i.e. Jess on *Gilmore Girls*). Although, it is unacceptable for main characters on a teen drama series to smoke cigarettes, antagonistic characters are often seen smoking, making a connection between a "bad person" and smoking. Quinn on *Glee*, for example, is seen smoking in the first episode of season three. (3x01, "The Purple Piano Project") The former cheerleading captain and former president of the celibacy club, dyes her hair pink over the summer and starts hanging out with a group of girls calling themselves "skanks." In order to emphasize her new "bad girl" persona she is now hanging out under the bleachers, smoking cigarettes.

Attitudes toward underage drinking and the abuse of certain drugs can differ greatly from one show to another. While some – mostly set in wealthy communities and developed in recent years - seem to accept underage drinking as something that is unavoidable and part of growing up, others – mostly set in small towns in Middle America – preach about the negative effects of alcohol and let characters who drink get into all kinds of predicaments. An episode of *7<sup>th</sup> Heaven*, (6x13 "Drunk") focuses on underage

drinking. Simon, a high school sophomore, invites himself to a party hosted by a group of seniors because he is fed up with being called "Saint Simon". The older boys decide to have some fun with him and give him alcoholic drinks without his knowledge. The same night, nineteen-year-old Mary, and eighteen-year-old Lucy go out with friends from college. Mary gets upset when she realizes that they are going to a bar, where everyone is drinking, even though Lucy tells her that they do not have to drink. At the beginning, Lucy contemplates having a drink with her older friends, but later asks Mary to stay with her at the bar so she does not feel obligated to drink. Later on, a friend drops off a very drunk Simon at his house. His siblings try to hide it from their parents because Simon tells them that he did not know that the punch he drank contained alcohol. In the end, his parents find out anyway and he gets into a lot of trouble. He later apologizes and says that is was his fault, because he insisted on going to a party hosted by older students. Lucy decides that she will stop being friends with the older girls from college, because they go out to bars occasionally and drink alcohol when they do.

Double standards also exist in the depiction of drug use, with a line being drawn at cannabis. If drug use is not completely demonized by a program, it is usually acceptable for a character to consume marihuana, but every other drug is depicted as being addictive and dangerous.

How drug abuse is portrayed, also has to be analyzed in context with the setting of the series. If the main character of a TV series focusing on a big, white, middle class family in small town America is caught smoking a joint, there usually is a story arc dealing with the incident for several episodes. On the other hand, if the same would happen to a character in a series that shows teenagers who have access to cocaine and other narcotics, the incident is not discussed in most of the series. Seth in *The O.C.* for example, (3x13, "The Pot Stirrer") is worried about his college interview and takes a walk on the beach. He runs into Marissa's younger sister who is smoking a joint. When she offers it to him, he declines at first, stating that he wants to save the experience for college and tells her that his father smoke marihuana in Berkeley [University of California, Berkeley] which ruined it for him. Later on, he takes her up on the offer and spends half of the day before his

interview smoking joints in his room. Ryan finds him and tries to sober him up in time for the interview. Ryan does not have a problem with Seth smoking pot per se, but he points out that he finds it problematic that Seth did it alone and in secret.

Until recently, these differences in dealing with issues like alcohol and drugs could be connected to the network airing a certain show; with family oriented networks like the WB (now CW Network) focusing on educational teen dramas (e.g. *7<sup>th</sup> Heaven*) while FOX (e.g. *The O.C.* and *Beverly Hills, 90210)* and cable networks like Showtime aired more racy teen dramas, unafraid to include issues parents were uncomfortable with.

### 2.5.2. Teenage Sexuality

Other important topics in teen drama series are relationships and teenage sexuality. As with alcohol and drug use, it depends on the various shows, how these issues are portrayed and dealt with. In her study "Discursive framing of teenage sexuality", Maura Kelly, suggest three frameworks that are employed by teen dramas to depict teenage sexuality on screen, namely: "abstinence, management, and urgency." [39]

Abstinence Framework

"The abstinence frame conceptualizes unmarried teenage sexuality as immoral and highly dangerous and focuses on attempting to stop teenagers from having sex."[40] Although this framework is rarely found in today's teen dramas, it does still exist in some, sometimes being used for a specific character, often from a Christian family. *7<sup>th</sup> Heaven* is a prime example for a show employing the abstinence framework. The oldest three children of the Camden family – Matt, Mary, Lucy – all got married young, while they were still in college or at the being of their careers. In the final season, teenage Ruthie asks her older siblings why they got married so young, and Mary and Matt admit that they got married young so they could have sex. Simon, the second oldest son, defies the family tradition and starts having sex with his

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[39] Maura Kelly: „Discursive Framing of Teenage Sexuality." New York, Aug 11, 2007, p.2
http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p184495_index.html  Accessed: July 28, 2009
[40] ibidem p.3

girlfriend his first year in college. His character is used to show the audience all the bad things that can happen to you if you have premarital sex. One girlfriend claims that he got her pregnant because she is afraid to lose him, and later on, when he has a new girlfriend, who he is sleeping with as well, he believes that he might have contracted a sexually transmitted disease. At that point in the series, Matt is a doctor and he points out to his father, that it would be better to give his son condoms instead of a lecture on abstinence, but the Camdens insist that preaching abstinence is better than talking to their children about contraceptives.

Grace, a Christian character on *The Secret Life of the American Teenager*, blames herself for her father's death because she believes that God is punishing her for going against her family's beliefs by sleeping with her boyfriend. Later on in the series, she changes her mind however, and decides that it is acceptable to be in a sexual relationship with a person she is not married too, as long as she uses protection and is in committed relationship with the other person.

## Management Framework

> The management frame accepts teenage sexual activity as inevitable, if not entirely desirable. It focuses on managing the physical, social, and emotional risk associated with sexual behavior, most notably through the promotion of contraception. [41]

This framework is employed by most teen dramas on air today. Teenage sexuality is not portrayed as being dangerous or wrong, but as a process associated with growing up. Emphasis is put on the use of contraception, even though pregnancy scares are also very popular in series employing the "management framework". One example for the "management framework" can be found on *Dawson's Creek.* Joey contemplates for a long time if she should sleep with her long-term boyfriend Pacey. Even a summer alone together on a boat does not rush their decision and Joey only decides during a school trip their senior year that she is ready to take that step with Pacey.

A recent episode of *Glee* (3x05, "The First Time") focused on the topic as well

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[41] Maura Kelly: „Discursive Framing of Teenage Sexuality." New York: Aug 11, 2007, p.5 http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p184495_index.html  Accessed: July 28, 2009

and gave all the sexually active teenage girls in the series a platform to voice their opinions when Rachel asks them for advice concerning her relationship with Finn. Those with positive experiences emphasize that it was a joint decision, that they talked about it for a while and that in the end it seemed to be a natural progression.

Urgency Framework

> The urgency frame portrays sex as not only a highly enjoyable activity, but as necessary to affirm one's gendered identity as a sexually sought-after individual, to be perceived by others as desirable, and to achieve social status.[42]

This framework can be more commonly associated with teen movies, notably with the movie series *American Pie*. Teen drama series sometimes use this framework for single characters, which are mostly male and about to graduate from high school, although, lately, also female characters have been depicted as actively going after sex and acting as the "seducing part". In season one of *Glee* for example, Santana, one of the cheerleaders in Glee club, tells Finn that in order for him to improve his popularity he should lose his virginity to her. He declines the offer at first, but later approaches her and tells her that he wants to take her up on the offer. However, in the end, he is not very happy with the decision because it did not mean anything.

The prevalence of teen pregnancies and single teenage parents tends to be very high in more conservative shows, while pregnancy scares in less conservative shows tend to be just scares and happen most of the time in long term relationships after a couple has already been sexually active for some time, and not, as in some conservative shows, as a result of having sex for the first time.

In the tenth season of *7th Heaven*, Martin a seventeen-year-old boy living with the Camden family discovers that the older girl he lost his virginity to is pregnant. Martin had been portrayed as strongly opposed to pre-marital sex and therefore, following the pattern of the series, his one time transgression had to have a negative outcome, i.e. impregnating an older, more

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[42] Maura Kelly: „Discursive Framing of Teenage Sexuality." New York: Aug 11, 2007, p.5 http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p184495_index.html  Accessed: July 28, 2009

experienced girl he barely knew. Martin, however, was not the only teenage parent on the show. One of Mary's early boyfriends Wilson, was a single teenage father, as where many others that needed the Camden family's help. An episode in season four of *The O.C.* (4x08, "The Earth Girls Are Easy") deals with a pregnancy scare as well, involving Summer and Seth. Seth's long-term girlfriend believes she might be pregnant and the two discuss what a positive pregnancy test would mean for their future. Even though, they try to convince each other that they would be happy either way, they are quite relieved in the end when the test is negative.

### 2.5.3. Romantic Relationships

Another major topic in teen drama series is relationships, often starting with first love storylines and focusing on first break-ups and feeling heart-broken. The teenage characters have to deal with infidelities, falling in love with their best friend's boy– or girlfriend, as well as, unrequited love. They have to learn how to combine their romantic relationship with their relationships with friends and family, without suddenly excluding one party.

Relationship storylines tend to develop the same way on most shows, although the ultimate goal of a relationship on more conservative programs is often marriage, with characters dating various people to find out if they are "marriage material".

Examples for romantic storylines in teen drama series are the following:
Pacey on *Dawson's Creek*, falls in love with his best friend's best friend/ love interest Joey. When they start a relationship it causes a rift between Dawson and Pacey. *Gilmore Girls* closely follows Rory's first relationship with Dean, focusing on their first date, first kiss and first fight and later on their break-up and Rory's feelings about the break-up.

Unrequited love can be found on *Smallville* where Chloe is in love with her best friend Clark Kent, who in turn is in love with Lana Lang. While Chloe's love stays unrequited, Clark's feelings for Lana are eventually reciprocated.

## 2.5.4. Friends and Family

In teen dramas one can often find issues like disagreements with parents over curfews, boyfriends and school work, as well as, sibling rivalry. Some programs use a different approach to parent – teenager issues, showing parents that are their children's best friends, and are therefore able to lead honest discussions about every possible topic. Other programs show dysfunctional families, sometimes going as far as depicting teenagers that have been abandoned by their parents and are living on their own or with substitute families. A good example for parent - teenager friendship is the mother-daughter relationship portrayed on *Gilmore Girls*. The age gap between mother and daughter is only sixteen years, which results in a relationship between Lorelai and Rory that is not like a typical parent – teenager relationship where one person has all the power over the other one. They appear to be best friends, and more often than not, Rory takes on responsibilities typically considered to be parent responsibilities.

Friendship storylines tend to focus on betrayal by a best friend or befriending people that were previously considered to be enemies. Newer teen dramas have introduced the term "frenemies" which stands for "someone who is both friend and enemy, a relationship that is both mutually beneficial or dependent while being competitive, fraught with risk and mistrust."[43] The previously mentioned on and off friendship involving Dawson, Pacey and Joey on *Dawson's Creek*, also serves as example for this category. A "frenemie" friendship as defined above can be found on *Gossip Girl.* However, as in *Dawson's Creek*, the trigger for this kind of on again/ off again friendship is usually a third person with whom one party may or may not be romantically involved. When Blair discovers that her boyfriend Nate had cheated on her with her best friend Serena, she declares Serena her enemy. However, they soon become friends again to be a united front against an outside "evil."

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[43] http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=frenemy  Accessed June 15, 2009

### 2.5.5. High school Life

The trials and tribulations of high school life play a big role in teenage drama, because high school is the place where teenagers spend most of their time, making friends, falling in love and shaping their futures.

Storylines focusing on a group of popular teens – typically cheerleaders and football players – getting to know less popular peers, are prevalent in most teen dramas, often with the result that both groups realize that they were prejudiced about the others and that they are not so different after all. At the beginning of the series *Glee* for example, the only teenagers in the school's Glee club are "outsiders" – the boy in a wheel chair, the Asian girl in Goth attire, an overweight African-American girl, a self-absorbed Jewish girl and a gay teenage boy. In the first episode, the high school quarterback is blackmailed into joining the club, and soon after other football players and a group of popular cheerleaders join the club as well. New friendships and romantic relationships between the two groups are formed; most notably the relationship between quarterback Finn and self-proclaimed star of the Glee club Rachel.

Typically, characters on teen drama series are sophomores or juniors in high school – aged fifteen or sixteen- at the beginning of the first season, which leaves the creator of a series with enough time to develop a storyline, before being faced with the dilemma of high school graduation. The majority of the teenage characters on shows such as *Dawson's Creek, The O.C., Gilmore Girls* and *Glee* were all sophomores at the beginning of the first season, whereas the majority of the characters on *Gossip Girl* and *Veronica Mars* were juniors. For a TV series to be successful, it is important to keep the characters on a show close to each other, but in real life teenagers do not usually all attend the same colleges. This leads to the next point.

### 2.5.6. College

The search for the right college is featured in most teen dramas as well, with characters preparing for their SAT examinations or spending time on campus tours, meeting and sometimes also "hooking up" with college students, while

dreaming about a life after high school and away from home (e.g. *Gossip Girl*). The outcome of this search is the same in the majority of teen drama series: Characters either defer college for a year – a year in which the writers of the show have time to find a solution to the "college problem" – or they all "end up" at the same college or in the same city. Often single characters start out at a different university than their friends, but usually, within the first couple of episodes of the "college season", they are back for various reasons such as getting suspended from the college they are attending, finding a job, being unable to afford their college tuition or just missing their friends.

Examples for this pattern can be found in most existing teen dramas, such as: Dawson on *Dawson's Creek,* after a brief stay in Los Angeles, joined his friends in Boston, because he had decided to drop out of USC [University of Southern California]. Another character of the same series, Pacey, did not attend university at all, but still moved to Boston to find work there.

Rivals Paris Gellar and Rory Gilmore from *Gilmore Girls* both attended Yale University and even shared a dorm room.

Veronica on *Veronica Mars* decided to go to college in her hometown although other universities further away from home had accepted her as well. The same applied to the character of Willow from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Instead of going to Paris and studying at the Sorbonne, she stayed behind in Sunnydale and enrolled in the local college together with her best friend Buffy.

The same pattern also applies to the series *The O.C.* and *Gossip Girl.* Characters who went to college out of town returned to Newport during the forth season and others deferred college for a year. By the time the show's creators were faced with the college dilemma again, the show had already received its cancellation notification.

*Gossip Girl*, currently in its fifth season, enrolled all its main characters in two big New York universities.

## 2.5.7. Social Events

Prom, Homecoming, Winterball, catwalk shows, extravagant birthday parties and big weddings – there is basically no social event that is not portrayed by teen dramas. Teen dramas set in wealthy communities tend to baffle audiences with catwalk shows, often featuring the teenage characters; charity events in New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art and other big society events, most adults will never be able to attend. The first episode of *The O.C.* features a catwalk show that used the teenage characters as models. On *Gossip Girl* and *90210* many elaborate parties are shown, hosted by either the teenagers themselves or their high society parents.

Other shows focus on different social events or "rituals" such as the senior prom and the importance prom has for a lot of the characters. Quite often, whole episodes are devoted to prom preparations that include finding the perfect dress and finding a date for the event. The election of prom queen and king plays an important role as well because it proves how popular a character is in high school. An episode in season two of *Glee* for example (2x20, "Prom Queen") and the episodes leading up to the prom episode, show prom preparations such as finding the right dress for each character, putting up posters for prom queen and king campaigns, finding the right partner for the event and taking lots of pictures with their partners before the event. The prom episode also showed that teenagers are under a lot of pressure when it comes to finding a date for prom and that those who do not manage to find one and still plan on going to the event are pitied by others.

Teen characters usually only attend big weddings, but there are some shows or often episodes at the end of a series that depict teenagers, or more often so, college freshman and sophomores getting married as well, with all their friends in attendance and a big party afterwards. An example of characters getting married at the end of a series is *The O.C.* The final episode takes place some years later and shows Seth and Summer's wedding.

## 2.5.8. Catastrophic Events

Teen dramas more often than not include soap opera like elements in their storylines such as murder, rape, tragic accidents or domestic violence.

Some catastrophic events in teen drama series are the following:
On *Dawson's Creek* Dawson's father dies in car accident in season five, leaving Dawson, his mother and his baby sister behind. At the end of season three of *The O.C.*, Marissa, one of the main characters, is killed in a car accident. Another character fell off a cliff in season three, and yet another character threatened to shoot Marissa and himself in season two.
Veronica, on *Veronica Mars,* is raped at a party after someone had drugged her drink. She has no recollection of what had transpired and when she reported the incident to the sheriff he calls her a liar and throws her out of his office. And finally, there is Ryan from *The O.C.* who gets beat up by his mother's boyfriend and thrown out of his own house.

Although, it is of course possible that teenagers are faced with tragic incidents in their lives as well, the amount of bad things that happen to TV teenagers is often less than realistic. Teen drama, like "adult drama" depends on the audience's investment and interest in a show to be renewed. Therefore, more "interesting" or surprising storylines are included, based on the assumption that a TV audience easily gets bored by more realistic storylines and drawn to a show by less life like stories.

## 2.6. (Main) Characters

The main focus in teen drama series lies, as the name suggests, on teenage characters, which at the beginning of a series are typically fifteen or sixteen years old. The protagonists of teen dramas have often been described as being able to "articulate with great emotion teens' fear of their own coming of age, while remaining an object of desire for audiences."[44]

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[44] Miranda J. Banks. „A Boy for all Planets: Roswell, Smallville and the Teen Male Melodrama." In Glyn Davis, Kay Dickinson. [ed.] *Teen TV,* London: British Film Institute, 2004, p.19

A variety of different kinds of characters can usually be found on teen drama series, of which the most prominent usually are the two opposing groups comprising the "popular kids" and the "outsiders." Arnheim initially introduced three types of characters: good, bad and weak. He defined them as such:

| Moral evaluation | Role in plot | Listener's attitude |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Weak | helpless, troublemaker, guilty, sufferer, reformable | Resonance to portrait |
| Good | helpful, leader, innocent sufferer | Identification with ideal |
| Bad | outside cause of trouble unreformable[45] | Hatred towards enemy |

Drawing the analogy to the two main groups in teen drama series, one can argue that the popular group represents weak characters and the "outsiders" represent good characters. Bad characters are usually characters that do not belong to the main characters and are introduced to cause trouble for the good and weak characters. The popular group can be seen as weak because they care more about their social status than how their behavior affects other people. Through contact with people from the outsider group they learn how to be better people and are reformed. If a member of the popular group is unwilling to reform, he/she can be classified as a bad character. Once the character has called all the problems he/she can cause, it will result in an early exit from the series. The "outsiders" can be seen as good characters, because they are more often then not ridiculed, ignored or hurt in other forms by the popular group, just because they are different.

With modern teen television drama, it is however not enough to just divide characters into those three groups, because they can only be applied to the main characters (the teenagers) and disregard other character traits that are interesting, such as minorities. Therefore, this subchapter will divide the main characters into two groups – "popular" and "outsider" and add the categories "parent" and "minority."

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[45] Rudolf Arnheim. „The World of the Daytime Serial". In Willbur Schramm. *Mass Communication.* Urbana: University of Illinois, 1949, p.376

### 2.6.1 The Popular Group

Usually involved in sports such as football or basketball, the colloquially called "jocks" typically rule American high schools on screen and off-screen. Their female counterparts in most series are the cheerleaders, a group of pretty and admired girls who treat everyone who is not part of their group badly. Becoming a part of one of those two groups typically means becoming part of the high school elite. Water polo player Luke and it-girl Marissa on *The O.C.*, quarterback Finn and cheerleading captain Quinn on *Glee* or cheerleader Lana and star quarterback Whitney on *Smallville* are all couples that represent this group. Often times, the arrival of an "outsider" character causes a popular couple to break up – usually after one party realizes that they are used solely because of their popularity and would never be a couple if it were different. More often than not, one party then begins a relationship with the new "outsider" character. On *The O.C.* Marissa starts dating Ryan, on *Glee* Finn starts dating Rachel – here the roles are reversed as the show focuses on a group of outsiders and the popular kids are the new arrivals – and Lana Lang starts dating Clark Kent on *Smallville.*

In series that focus less on life in high school but after school activities, popularity can be afforded through social standing. The teenager's social background determines if she/he is part of the in-crowd or not. People are not only judged by the way they look or the clothes they are wearing but also by their address. *Gossip Girl, 90210, Veronica Mars* and *The O.C.* all fall into this category. The rich popular girls on *Gossip Girl* do not accept freshman Jenny at the beginning of the school year, because she is from Brooklyn and cannot afford designer clothing like everyone else in her school. When Summer on *The O.C.* hears that Ryan is from Chino she immediately loses all interest in him, and Veronica on *Veronica Mars* was only part of the popular crowd while she was best friends with a girl from that group and dated her brother. After her friend's death and the break-up she is shunned by the popular 09ers.

### 2.6.2 The Outsiders

While some teenagers choose not to fit in, others are classified as outsiders because they do not play the right sports or because they are interested in

activities that are deemed un-cool, such as high school theater or being part of a science group. This group is colloquially called "the geeks", be it math-geeks, science-geeks, theater-geeks and many others. People who are part of those groups do not necessarily view themselves as outsiders but are viewed as such by the popular group. Outside of high school, clothing, hairstyles, friends and address can turn a teenager into an outsider. Graphic novel a.k.a. comic book fan Seth and "car thief" Ryan on *The O.C.,* book loving, in Brooklyn living Dan on *Gossip Girl, or* superhero Clark Kent on *Smallville*, are all considered outsiders, because they have different interests, look different, or live in an unacceptable area. However, those are the underdogs the audience roots for and can identify with. A majority of television series is told from those "outsiders'" point of view and what most also have in common is that insurmountable differences seem to stand between the "outsider" and the "popular" group in the beginning of the TV series and only over time do some members of the groups manage to reconcile these differences and eventually prove that "jocks" and "geeks" can be friends if they step out of their comfort zone as proved for example by Cordelia Chase, popular it girl turned member of the "Scooby Gang" on *Buffy – The Vampire Slayer.*

### 2.6.3 The Parents

For years, one of the most striking characteristics of teen drama series was the absence of father or mother or both parents. Many series had at least one character living on his/her own without parental supervision despite the fact that he/she was still in high school, as seen for example on *Party of Five*, where five siblings between the age of eleven and twenty-four were orphaned after their parents died in an accident and had to raise themselves without parental supervision. When parents were present, they were usually used to advance a teenage character's storyline, providing reasons for the teenager's behavior. "In the teen melodrama the focus of attention is a young adult, making the parents into characters that, at the most basic level, either support

or frustrate the lives of the teens that fall under their care."[46] On *Dawson's Creek* for example, Jen is shipped off to live with her grandmother and her parents are only ever mentioned or seen on screen when some of Jen's actions and behavior needs to be explained, or someone needs to be blamed for them. Parents seldom behaved like real parents; they were either "too good to be true" acting more like a best friend than a parent or horrible drunks who spent their time abusing their children and spouses. Rory and her mother Lorelai Gilmore on *Gilmore Girls* act as if they are best friends and Jenny and Dan Humphrey on *Gossip Girl* have their former "rock star" dad, while Joey Potter on *Dawson's Creek* is raised by her older sister because her mother is dead and her father in prison.

In recent years a new development could be observed in teen dramas on air - the return of the parents. Those parents never look quite old enough to be their children's parents and they are as good looking as their teenage counterparts. However, their purpose is to bring more realism into the shows providing family backgrounds the audience is familiar with. The audience sees families acting like families; parents who worry, parents who get angry, and parents who help with problems. The average teenager does not live on his/her own and therefore, parents are back on air – to make TV families more authentic. The Cohen family on *The O.C.* for example, or the Humphreys on *Gossip Girl* represent families that care about each other; they sit down together for breakfast or dinner, they talk about their day and parent characters offer advice on topics that are connected to growing up, such as romance, education or friendship. Single parent families are quite frequent in teen drama series, but those that give parent characters screen time and own storylines usually depict a very loving parent – teenager relationship where the parent is not just used as device to advance a storyline. Relationships like that are for example the one between Buffy and her mother on *Buffy – The Vampire Slayer,* Veronica and her father on *Veronica Mars,* Kurt and his father on *Glee* or Rory and her mother on *Gilmore Girls.*

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[46] Miranda J. Banks. „A Boy for all Planets: Roswell, Smallville and the Teen Male Melodrama." In Glyn Davis, Kay Dickinson. [eds.]*Teen TV,* London: British Film Institute, 2004, p.19

Parents are also included to attract an older, post-teenage audience. Characters on television should appeal to the audience; get the audience invested in a character. A post-teenage audience that feels to old to identify with the teenage characters can now – thanks to the return of parent characters – turn to those characters. This is the choice newer TV series offer their audience. They intend to tell the audience that it is perfectly acceptable to watch a teen drama series even if they are not teenagers themselves anymore, because there are other adults on the show. Another development was the increased screen time parent characters received in newer shows. Parents now have story arcs independent from their children's storylines and sometimes receive as much screen time as the teenage characters, to deal with love, loss and life in general as seen for example on *Gossip Girl*, where quite a lot of screen time was awarded to the developing relationship between Rufus Humphrey and Lily van der Woodsen.

Of course, TV parents do not look like the audience's parents, but if their behavior is authentic, they will be believable and add realism to the show. TV parents on most teen drama series can be summed up as appearing too young to be their children's parents, very attractive human beings whose lives are a lot more interesting and more glamorous than the parents the viewers are familiar with. Show creators need to find the right balance between making the parent characters believable on the one hand and not boring and too realistic on the other hand. Typically, parent characters in teen drama series set in fictional small towns or rural areas look more like real parents than those set in larger cities or are part of the high society.



Eric and Annie Camden (*7th Heaven)*



Jimmy and Julie Cooper (*The O.C.)*

### 2.6.4 Minority Characters

Lately, creators of teen drama series seem to have realized that not all American teenagers are straight, white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants who live in wholesome families in small town America. As Berry explained, the portrayal of minorities on television is no trivial matter:

> Whatever else commercial television is or does, one of its primary goals is to entertain. It is a tall order, therefore, to expect television scrupulously to offer the types of portrayals that capture the multifaceted aspects of human behavior and present desirable cultural depiction. Yet, because of television's power to define social reality about viewer's own group, as well as about people and cultural groups that are different from viewer's own groups, it is important that it's cultural lesson not be distortions of reality.[47]

Minority in television includes race, gender, sexuality, and believes that differ from what is viewed as majority. While Teen drama series were very much uniform in the make up of their cast in the past, shows developed within the last ten years now also have minorities as main characters. However, when looking at the thirteen teen drama series currently on air, one notices that most series on major networks still feature mainly Caucasian characters and very few African-American teenagers or Asian-American teenagers. There are, however, an increased number of homosexual characters on air today, which are now part of the main cast instead of being relegated to the sidelines and only put into the spotlight for "special episodes." *Dawsons's Creek* is an early example for this new pattern as it featured a gay teenager, Jack, who was one of the main characters. Especially newer series, such as FOX's *Glee,* picture a more diverse group of teenagers and are therefore more representative of American society.

### 2.7 Cast

One of the most striking characteristics of a teen drama series is that the cast is always consists of very attractive young actors. No matter if they play a "jock" or a "geek", good looks seem to be a prerequisite for being cast in teen

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[47] Berry, 1988, p.112 qtd. in John Condry. *The Psychology of Television.* Hilsdale [et.al] Erlbaum, 1989, p.73

TV. In addition to good looks, female actors are usually very skinny, a fact that has sparked controversies from time to time. Only recent TV series have started to include actors that look like the general public and they have added much needed authenticity. (i.e. *Glee*)

Another characteristic is that most actors are already in their early twenties when they are cast in a teen drama series. The simple explanation for this is that minors are not allowed to work the same hours as adults and some might require on-set teaching. Younger actors might also not be allowed to shoot scenes that feature more mature topics or even nudity. Networks are avoiding those problems by casting mostly over eighteen year old actors. Some teen drama series, however, have actors who are near or exactly the age of the characters they are playing, but most times, those actors are not part of the main cast; for example the actors playing Jenny Humphrey and Eric van der Woodsen on *Gossip Girl* are the same age or close to the same age as the characters they are playing. Interestingly, Canadian teen drama series mostly feature actors that are close to the age of the characters they play.

> Perhaps most noticeable is that the actors are near (often exactly) the age of the characters they play. The actors look like real teens; Williams stressed that when they cast they want less of the "beautiful people approach" that one sees in U.S. television (2005). This is not to say that the characters are unattractive by conventional or even Hollywood standards; but the range of body and facial types is considerably more representative of teens going through puberty." [48]

## 2.8 Appearance

According to Hilliard, "the writer must always keep in mind that television is visual. Where a visual element can achieve the desired effect, it should take precedence over dialogue; in many instances dialogue is superfluous."[49] However, TV series, especially in the last decade, have proven that witty and fast-paced dialogues can be a guarantee for success. Therefore, it can be assumed that dialogues are one important feature of a teen drama series.

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[48] Sharon Ross. „Defining Teen Culture: The N Network" in Sharon Ross, Louisa Stein. [eds.] *Teen Television,* Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2008, p.64; qtd. from Stephanie Williams, Interview. November 10, 2005
[49] Robert L. Hilliard. *The Psychology of Television.* Belmont: Wadsworth, 2000, p.6

## 2.8.1 Dialogues

Pop culture references, teen characters that are as good in self-analysis as probably Freud himself was, teenagers who voice their concerns, speaking out for a whole generation. (i.e. *Dawson's Creek*) "A use of language which is too sophisticated for the ages of the characters; frequent intertextual references; resource to a sense of community based on generation; a blunt, somewhat melodramatic use of emotion and aphoristic psychological reasoning; […]."[50] According to Glyn Davis and Kay Dickinson, those are the reoccurring characteristics of teen drama from the last decade.

Witty dialogues and pop culture references were the trademarks of most of the WB shows and those characteristic are still prevalent in today's teen drama series. Valerie Wee, in her essay on teen television, described the WB practice as the following.

> While earlier quality television shows were characterized by self-reflexivity and genre hybridity, the WB shows indulged in a degree of postmodern intertextuality, pastiche, genre hybridity, media mixing, and hyperconscious self-reflexivity, excessive enough to constitute a categorical distinction. […| The unprecedented degree to which the network's shows quote, and frequently spoof, both past and current popular culture made the practice one of the identifying traits of the WB teen television format.[51]

Networks recognized that the new generation of teenagers was obsessed with popular culture – especially after the creation of MTV – and was aware of the role the media played in nourishing pop culture.

> The fact that almost all of the WB's teen-oriented shows engaged in this practice, and did so repeatedly, suggested that the network used the technique to attract the pop-culture-obsessed teenager who visited the movie theaters regularly and who was, therefore, well equipped to recognize and appreciate the references.[52]

In addition to quoting movie dialogue or song lyrics, "the WB shows also had a distinctive, hyperconscious, self-reflexive tendency to reference each other,

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[50] Glyn Davis, Kay Dickinson. [eds.] *Teen TV,* London: British Film Institute, 2004, p.1
[51] Valerie Wee. „Teen Television and the WB Television Network" in Sharon Ross, Louisa Stein. [eds.] *Teen Television,* Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2008, p.52
[52] Ibidem, p.53

particularly through sly, overtly self-aware, dialogue."[53] The characteristics, originally associated with WB shows, began appearing in teen drama series on other networks in the early 2000s and are still important characteristics in modern teen drama series. According to Valerie Wee the characteristics of teen quality television were and are "self-referentiality, intertextuality, and the adoption of a liberal, humanist, perspective."[54]

## 2.8.2 Music

It is important to connect with teenagers in a way that mirrors the world they live in. "Teens seeks to identify with characters who are like themselves and many new shows incorporating teen-relevant topics such as music and clothing have begun to surface."[55]

Music in a TV show can be used in various different ways – highlighting emotions portrayed on screen or giving the show a hip and trendy appearance. Banks describes the use of music as the following:

> The genre develops music as an aural background that underscores the drama unfolding onstage or in front of the camera. Through music, the narrative is given an emotive base, that, when tied to thematic tropes of the genre, is designed to provide the audience with a heightened dramatic experience.[56]

She goes on explaining that the use of popular music on these programmes, "in their title sequences as well as throughout each episode, gives the stories the lush background that enhances the emotions of the drama unfolding on screen, while defining these dramas as distinctly young and trendy."[57]
Nowadays, shows have found ways to capitalize on the music used on a show by providing the audience with means to acquire the featured music.

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[53] Valerie Wee. „Teen Television and the WB Television Network" in Sharon Ross, Louisa Stein. [eds.] *Teen Television,* Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2008,  p.54
[54] Ibidem p.56
[55] L. Robbins. „Teen Screen Report: Tips on Creating a TV Show for Teens", 1997 qtd. in Carrie La Ferle. „An Overview of Teenagers and Television Advertising in the United States", *International Communications Gazette,* 2001, p. 12
http://gaz.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/63/1/7 Accessed April 23, 2010
[56] Miranda J. Banks. „A Boy for all Planets: Roswell, Smallville and the Teen Male Melodrama." In Glyn Davis, Kay Dickinson [eds.] *Teen TV,*  London: British Film Institute, 2004, p.18
[57] Ibidem, p.19

> Licensing up to ten songs an episode, contemporary teen programmes use introspective, seductive pop anthems to boost the emotional content of drama, while creating a second level of in-programme commercials by luring viewers at the end of each episode into buying the latest pop music from the programmes' website.[58]

Dickinson remarks that "unlike, say, the specially composed score, the songs we hear on teen TV shows have usually held a prior place in the world and have already establishes a set of definitions for themselves."[59] Newer shows often also include music that is not well known at the time and these shows give musicians a platform to promote their work. (i.e *The O.C.*)

## 2.9 The (intended) audience of teen dramas

In 2007 – according to Sadakofsky – approximately one hundred and twelve million United States households owned at least one television.[60] Since the invention of television there have been discussions on why people watch television and what those viewers expect from television. Two models have been developed in order to explain the audience's media use – namely, the effects model and the uses and gratifications approach.

The effects model   v    the uses and gratifications approach

People watch television for various reasons, most of which have been categorized into two paradigms that are useful for the analysis of television audiences: the "effects model" and the "uses and gratifications approach."

The "effects model" was developed during the Second World War to determine the effects of mass media on the public.[61] Studies have shown that media is capable of influencing people's attitudes and behaviors. Those early studies, however, have neglected to include factors such as social environment and social background of individuals, which play an important

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[58] Miranda J. Banks. „A Boy for all Planets: Roswell, Smallville and the Teen Male Melodrama." In Glyn Davis, Kay Dickinson [eds.] *Teen TV,* London: British Film Institute, 2004, p.19

[59] Kay Dickinson. „'My Generation?' Popular Music, Age and Influence in Teen Drama of the 1990s." in Glyn Davis, Kay Dickinson. [eds.] *Teen TV,* London: British Film Institute, 2004, p.100

[60] David L. Sadakofsty. *Product Placement,* Pennsylvania State University, 2007, p.1
http://www.personal.psu.edu/students/d/l/dls5096/productplacement.pdf
Accessed: July 16, 2009

[61] Gunter, 200, 11 qtd. in Julia Obwexer. *The audience of the TV-series Gilmore Girls – An Analysis*. MA Thesis, Vienna University, 2008, p. 5

role in media reception. Results from those studies have shown that "media operated within certain predetermined cultural and social structures. These structures were primarily responsible for the media choice and the responses of the audiences to certain information."[62]

However, research in the last decades has moved away from the "effects model", because results have shown that viewers actively choose media and programs that gratify their needs. This "uses and gratifications approach" as a new model emerged in the 1970s and stands in opposition to the "effects model." Several hypotheses have been formulated in connection with this approach:

> The first hypothesis assumes that the use of media is purposeful behavior and directed towards a specific goal. Every member of the audience is an active participant in mass communication who selects certain media or media contents. Second, this media selection serves the purpose of gratifying personal needs. What people expect from media use is influenced by individual predisposition and social standards.[63]

Applied to television series, it can be assumed that viewers are looking for guidelines or principles in the series that are relevant to their own lives. Since the existence of television some people have feared that the content of television might be corrupting the youth, because teenagers on the lookout for role models could adopt the behaviors and attitudes of TV characters. This fear can be seen in connection with the outdated "effects model." The "uses and gratifications approach", however, assumes that the audience – adult and teenage – wants something from the media and will therefore only consume content that depicts behaviors and attitudes that are similar to their own beliefs. McQuail who claims "media is also used to obtain reinforcement for personal values and models of behavior" has also formulated this hypothesis.[64] McQuail furthermore concluded that the reasons people gave for viewing [television programs] fell into four broad categories: "(a) to escape the boredom of everyday life (b) to have something to talk about with others

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[62] Julia Obwexer. *The Audience of the TV-series Gilmore Girls – An Analysis*. MA Thesis, Vienna University, 2008, p. 5
[63] Rubin in Bryant, 286 qtd. in Julia Obwexer. *The Audience of the TV-series Gilmore Girls – An Analysis*. MA Thesis, Vienna University, 2008, p.6
[64] Denis McQuail. *Audience Analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publ., 1997, p.73

(c) to compare the people and events in the programs with their own experience and (d) to keep in touch with the events in the world."[65]

In case of the audience of teen drama series the "uses and gratifications approach" can be used in order to determine why people are drawn to the genre, and what they expect from a teen drama series.

## 2.9.1 Age Group

Although teen drama series deal mostly with issues that relate to the personal experiences of teenagers, their intended audience, in terms of advertising and marketing profits, is 12-34 year olds according to Warner Bros. marketing vice-president Brad Terell:

> We know who our audience is and it allows us to focus all of our developing of programming, marketing and PR specifically to 12 to 34 year olds. That gives us a tremendous advantage because that group represents 84 million people who watch more TV than any other sector with the exception of 65+ and advertisers aren't interested in them anyway.[66]

Ratings are very important to keep a show on air. In the United States, the A.C. Nielson company is the best known and most widely used rating service, using two methods to investigate what viewers are watching, namely the "Audimeter" and the "Peoplemeter". For the "Audimeter" method, television sets are wired through phone lines to a computer at the Nielson Headquarter. This computer knows when a television set is on, and if so, what channel it is tuned to. The "Peoplemeter" essentially works like the "Audimeter", but it additionally records who is in the room watching the set.[67]

Demographic characteristics of each participating home are known, which enables the company to list who is watching what and how often. However, the numbers made available to the public do not specify what age group, gender or race the viewers belong to, and the main emphasis of the rating system lies on the age group that is of main interest to advertisers. Therefore, I am unable to specify if the audience of teen drama comprises more female

[65] McQuail, 1972 qtd. in John Condry. *The Psychology of Television.* Hilsdale: Erlbaum, 1989, p.44

[66] Brad Terell, qtd. in Deidre Dolan. „WB knows its Teens". *Media Network,* Feb 9, 1999 http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Valley/8414/wb.htm Accessed: June 3, 2009

[67] John Condry. *The Psychology of Television.* Hilsdale: Erlbaum, 1989, p.24f.

than male viewers or their exact age or race. In this chapter, when talking about the audience of teen drama, there can only be made reference to a group that is euphemistically called "young adult" – aged 12-49 - the group the Nielson ratings are referring to.

There is an increased sense that adults can and do watch teen drama series. Nowadays, it is completely acceptable for people well into their thirties or even forties to watch a teen drama series. Series creators have taken note of that development and some have reversed patterns found in early teen drama, such as the reintegration of the parent storyline. Of course, parents on those shows look more like the teen characters' older siblings than their parents, but that way they can appeal to a thirty-something audience.

Scheduling decisions have an impact on whether adults are "invited" to watch or not, and the U.S. prime time scheduling allows this audience coalition, bidding for pre-teen through thirty-something audiences. [68] Even though we are dealing with a very diverse audience, we can assume that the following reasons to watch a teenage drama series apply to the majority of all viewers.

**2.9.2 Incentives to watch a teen drama series**

People are watching television for often very different reasons. While some may just want to escape from their "boring" lives, others may be interested to see how other people their age are living their lives or they are indeed looking for guidelines or answers to problems they are dealing with. Another incentive to watch a teen drama series, especially for teenagers, could be peer pressure - the wish to be accepted by a group who shares an interest in a specific series.

Gaining insight into the circumstances of others can be considered a form of social empathy. Those who identify with others experience a sense of belonging. McQuail argues that people can use the media as a replacement for real-life companionship, also adding that the media can of course just be used for entertainment. For some television is only a pastime, while others

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[68] Matt Hills. „Dawson's Creek: 'Quality Teen TV' and 'Mainstream" in Glyn Davis, Kay Dickinson. [eds.] *Teen TV,* 2004, p.60

use it for emotional release. Teenagers, like adults, can use the media to escape from problems and distract themselves from frustration.[69]

To summarize, it can be said that people watch series for different reasons. Those reasons will be explored in the following chapters. However, it is impossible to determine if fictitious characters of a teen drama are capable of influencing their viewers without a thorough analysis of this audience. Therefore, this chapter is focusing on the uses and gratifications approach, exploring why people watch teen drama.

### 2.9.2.1 Identification

Freud first introduced the concept of identification, differentiating between imitation and identification. Identification, in comparison to imitation, was according to Freud a more complex and unconscious process. Many sociologists, who have assigned very different meanings to it, have discussed the concept of identification:

According to Bronfenbrenner the concept of identification can manifest itself in three ways:
- denoting similarities in the behavior of two individuals
- denoting a desire such as the desire to be like another person
- denoting a hypothetical process, which is viewed as the cause of the other two forms of identification.[70]

Herkner criticizes the third concept, because according to him it can lead to a pseudo-explanation, which connects the existence of imitation to the psychological process of identification.[71]

Kagan defines identification as something that is acquired by a person through the relationship between audience and character.

Identification is defined as an acquired, cognitive response within a person. The content of this response is that some of the attributes, motives, characteristics, and affective

[69] McQuail. *Audience Analysis.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publ., 1997, p.73

[70] Bronfenbrenner 1960 cf. Cordula Meindl. *Serienfiguren als Signifikante Andere.* MA Thesis, University of Vienna, 2006, p.53

[71] Herkner 1996, cf. Cordula Meindl, *Serienfiguren als Signifikante Andere.* 2006, p.53

states of a model are part of the subject's organization. The major implication of this definition is that the subject may react to events occurring to the model as if they occurred to him.[72]

This can also be seen in context with emphasizing with a character, feeling down when the character is down and being in a state of euphoria when something great is happening to the character. TV series create the illusion of real people, and the audience's ability to view characters as real people is a prerequisite for emotional engagement and involvement in the life of TV characters. Identification can therefore only occur when people see TV characters as real people instead of the actors behind them. Lewis wrote about this relationship between the viewers and characters stating that "the intimacy developed between the viewers and the characters enables the viewer to analyze and reflect upon their own life, thus contributing to their sense of personal identity."[73]

According to Hoffner and Cantor, film and TV series invite identification because they provide the viewers with much more information about characters than they usually have about real people.[74] Furthermore, they suggest that character traits such as strength, humor and physical attractiveness explain which characters are most liked." Cohen concludes from Cantor and Hoffner's findings that the criteria for choosing television and film characters are identical to the criteria one uses in being attracted to people in real life.[75] If identification does or does not occur depends on how viewers see a certain character. They have to ask themselves - "does the character concur with my beliefs and my place in society?"

> The audience interprets a character of a media text according to its knowledge of social schemes and social roles, and identification may or may not result. One of the prerequisites for this process of identification is an understanding of the other person,

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[72] Kagan, 1958, p.297 qtd. in Cordula Meindl. *Serienfiguren als signifikante Andere.* MA Thesis, University of Vienna, 2006, p.52

[73] Lewis, 1997 qtd. in Cordula Meindl. *Serienfiguren als signifikante Andere,* 2006, p.103

[74] C. Hoffner, J. Cantor. „Perceiving and Responding to Mass Media Characters." in Bryant Jennings, Dolf Zillmann [eds.] *Responding to the Screen.* Hilsdale: Erlbaum, 1991, p.84

[75] cf. Jonathan Cohen. „Defining Identification." *Mass Communication and Society,* 2004, 5 (3) p.245-264 http://hevra.haifa.ac.il/~comm/he/files/yoni/ident.pdf (August 25, 2009)

and more importantly, the realization that this other person shows similar character traits.[76]

Individuals react differently to presented characters and the form their identification can take on can be very different from one person to another. According to Reithner, one can differentiate between the following types of identification:

- Emotional Identification: The viewer shares the emotions of the TV character
- Role Identification: Some viewers imagine living the life of a character. This can be seen in connection with "wishful identification."
- Identification with the actor.
- Total identification: The viewer believes that he/she is exactly like the character.[77]

Identifying with a character – no matter in which way – does not necessarily mean that one will always identify with the same character. Like real people, characters develop through the course of a season or series and it is possible for viewers to find new character traits that they do not identify with. The reverse, of course, is also possible, with a viewer finding out that a "mean character" is not so bad after all and he/she starts identifying with that character. The transformation from bad to good is often found in TV series where the meanness of a character is explained through the revelation of a trauma, sustained prior to the start of the TV series. After it is explained why a certain character is "bad" and the viewer is content with the explanation, he/she can identify with the character without feeling guilty about identifying with a "bad character."

One can say that in order for a TV series to be successful with the audience, it has to provide characters viewers can identify with and have a relationship with.

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[76] Mikos, p.165 qtd. in Julia Obwexer. *The Audience of the Tv-Series Gilmore Girl.* MA Thesis, University of Vienna, 2008, p.13
[77] Reithner, 1994, 35f. cf. Cordula Meidl. *Serienfiguren als Significante Andere.* MA Thesis, University of Vienna, 2006, p.111

## 2.9.2.2 Empathy and Liking

Imagination is necessary for empathetic responses to fictional characters. Without imagination, it is impossible to empathize with protagonists; it is impossible to be involved in entertainment. The audience needs to be able to understand fictional characters in order to empathize with them. Imagining what the fictional character's life would be like can help this process. Together with identification, empathy and liking are the most common cognitive and emotional audience reactions to fictional stories, TV series or movies. An audience is able to understand a character's emotions with the help of narrative and dramaturgic elements such as, "the way the camera focuses on a teary-eyed face is responsible for evoking specific feelings in a media consumer."[78] Pictures alone, however, are not enough. An audience can only be sympathetic if storylines, topics and dialogues work well together with the images on screen.

Empathy for characters is not restricted to "good" characters.[79] Newer series build characters around the notion that people tend to like "bad" characters as much as good characters, for example in series such as *House* and *Californication.* The disposition theory of drama asserts, that enjoyment will increase when liked characters experience positive outcomes and/or when disliked characters experience negative ones. Conversely, enjoyment will suffer if the reverse is experienced.[80]

Interpersonal attraction, according to Hoffner and Cantor, "is one of the most basic reactions to another person."[81] Attraction to fictional media characters can be divided up according to three different reactions to a fictional character: liking, perceived similarity and desire to be like a character

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[78] Julia Obwexer. *The Audience of the Tv-Series Gilmore Girl.* MA Thesis, Vienna University, 2008, p.13

[79] Ididem, p.14

[80] cf. Arthur A. Raney. „Expanding Disposition Theory." *Communication Theory.* Vol. 14 Issue 4, Nov. 2004, p.348 - 369

[81] C. Hoffner, J. Cantor. „Perceiving and Responding to Mass Media Characters." in Bryant Jennings, Dolf Zillmann [eds.] *Responding to the Screen.* Hilsdale: Erlbaum, 1991, p.83

<u>Liking</u>

Liking or disliking of a TV character follows the same criteria as with real people. According to Hoffner and Cantor "similar and attractive people are viewed more positively." [82] The same applies to socially accepted behavior.

<u>Perceived similarity</u>

Similarities in connection with gender, ethnicity, social class or age can help the viewer to connect to the character in question.

<u>Desire to be like a character</u>

This phenomenon is also known as "wishful identification."[83]

> Viewers are attracted to such characters, but rather than feeling similar, they often view them as individuals whom they want to be like. As with perceived similarity, the desire to be like a character is thought to promote the viewer's tendency to take the character's perspective while viewing.[84]

Hoffner and Cantor proceed explaining that the mass media seems to be very adapt to invoke wishful identification in the viewers. "The possibility of imagining oneself in a glamorous or highly successful role is called one of the main incentives to watch a TV series. [85] Role models are characters that are highly successful or part of a social class the viewer aspires to belong to as well. "Typically, individuals may be able to generate unrealistically positive selves after exposure to a superstar - one can imagine a heroic self, a brilliant self or a glamorous superstar self."[86]

<u>Empathy</u>

According to Feschbach, empathy is an integrated cognitive-affective model that consists of three components:

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[82] C. Hoffner, J. Cantor. „Perceiving and Responding to Mass Media Characters." in Bryant Jennings, Dolf Zillmann [eds.] *Responding to the Screen.* Hilsdale: Erlbaum, 1991, p.84

[83] cf. J. F. Hoorn. E.A. Konijn. „Perceiving and Experiencing Fictional Characters." *Japanese Psycological Research,* Vol. 45, issue 4, Nov. 2003, p.250-268, Accessed: October 26, 2009 http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1468-5884.00225/abstract

[84] C. Hoffner, J. Cantor. „Perceiving and Responding to Mass Media Characters." in Bryant Jennings, Dolf Zillmann [eds.] *Responding to the Screen.* Hilsdale: Erlbaum, 1991, p.84

[85] Ibidem p. 86

[86] Lockwood and Kunda, 2000, p.159 qtd. in Cordula Meindl. *Serienfiguren als Signifikante Andere.* MA Thesis, Vienna University, 2006, p. 129

(1) Die cognitive Fähigkeit, affektive Hinweisreize bei anderen wahrzunehmen und zu definieren, (2) die reifere cognitive Fähigkeit, Perspektive und Rolle einer anderen Person zu übernehmen, und (3) emotionale Reaktionsbereitschaft als die Fähigkeit, Emotionen selbst zu erleben.[87]

## 2.9.2.3 Parasocial Interaction

In parasocial interaction, the audiences' role is always double-edged. On one hand, the audience is a passive consumer, but on the other hand it is an active participant. The relationship between the media consumer and the media character can be similar to real-life relationships in so far as both act as if there is personal contact between the two of them. […] This parasocial interaction can be seen as representing a real-life, face-to-face interaction, but the audience is not oblivious to this fact. [88]

Watching a certain TV series regularly means that viewers familiarize themselves with characters' habits, behaviors or attitudes, and this knowledge can generate familiarity. Viewers believe to know a character as well as friends or neighbors. Recipients are generally able to differentiate between the role played by an actor and the knowledge they have about the fictional character, but even adult viewers sometimes find it difficult to keep the fictionality of a character in mind.[89] Cantor and Hoffner call this phenomenon "suspension of disbelief."[90]

Development of a parasocial relationship

In television, especially, the image that is presented makes available nuances of appearance and gesture to which ordinary social perception is attentive and to which interaction is cued. Viewers are likely to feel more attracted to characters that they know and understand well, and are likely to feel that they have developed a close bond with such characters. […] Indeed, their [the viewers] continued association with him [the character] acquires a history, and the accumulation of shared past experience gives

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[87] Feschbach qtd. from Winterhoff-Spurk, 2004, p.78; qtd. in Cordula Meindl. *Serienfiguren als Signifikante Andere.* MA Thesis, Vienna University, 2006, p. 109 (1) the cognitive ability to recognize affective stimuli and to define them, (2) the more mature ability to adopt the perspective and role of another person and, (3) emotional readiness to react as the ability to experience emotions.

[88] Schröder, 124, qtd. in Julia Obwexer. *The Audience of the Tv-Series Gilmore Girls,* MA Thesis, Vienna University, 2008, p.14

[89] cf Cordula Meindl. *Serienfiguren als Signifikante Andere.* MA Thesis, Vienna, 2006, p.112

[90] C. Hoffner, J. Cantor. „Perceiving and Responding to Mass Media Characters." in Bryant Jennings, Dolf Zillmann [eds.] *Responding to the Screen.* Hilsdale: Erlbaum, 1991, p.91

additional meaning to the present performance. This bond is symbolized by allusions that lack meaning for the casual observer and appear occult to the outsider.[91]

Studies have shown that well-liked TV characters appear to be on the same level as neighbors, but neighbors do not usually evoke passionate feelings or thoughts. [92] These results have been connected to the attractiveness of TV characters and absence of the risk of rejection.

There are various factors that have an impact on parasocial relationships, namely: the characteristics of a TV character, the characteristics of the audience and dramaturgical elements.

Characteristics of the TV Characters

According to Visscher and Vorderer, the attractiveness of characters plays a more important role for the intensity of a parasocial relationship than the degree of reality one can assert to a show. [93] In addition to beauty, the term attractiveness encompasses the success of characters and their personality.

Characteristics of the Audience

The intensity of a parasocial relationship is strengthened through a person's need for entertainment, socially useful information and voyeurism.[94]

Dramaturgical elements

Various authors have suggested the following elements as being relevant for parasocial interaction:

- direct address of the audience

- close-ups

- POV shots from the audience's point of view instead of the characters'.[95]

**2.9.2.4 Entertainment and Escapism**

The term escapism denotes the flight from reality and association with the fictional world. Studies have shown that people watch television to forget their

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[91] Horton and Wohl, 1956 qtd. in Cordula Meindl, *Serienfiguren als signifikante Andere,* MA Thesis, Vienna University, 2006, p.215f

[92] Gleich and Burst, 1996 cf. Cordula Meindl. Vienna University, 2006, p.115

[93] Visscher and Vorderer, 1998, p.462 cf. Cordula Meindl, Vienna University, 2006, p.116

[94] Jungkee and Rubin, 1997 cf. Cordula Meindl, Vienna University, 2006, p. 117

[95] Horton and Wohl, 1956 cf. Cordula Meindl, Vienna University, 2006, 118

frustration with school or work, or to escape from other problems for an hour or more.

Valkenberg and Peter introduce two escapism hypotheses; the thought-blocking hypothesis and the boredom-avoidance hypothesis, with the first arguing that "individuals suffering from many unpleasant fantasies watch more entertainment in order to drive away these unpleasant thoughts" and with the second suggesting that "individuals suffering from a fantasy style called 'poor attention control' spend more time watching entertainment. Individuals with poor attention control are easily bored and distracted and hence, experience a great deal of fantasies, mindwandering and drifting thoughts."[96]

According to Gleich, TV enables the audience to experience – easily and without risk – attractive and sometimes exotic ways of life.[97] Even if set in exotic places, most series depict everyday situations that help the viewers with the identification process. They can observe other people's lifestyles without being held accountable for doing so and if the experience is getting to intense, they can easily "leave the scene" by just turning off the TV.

The discrepancy between the own reality and TV life is an incentive to watch TV because the viewers can "dive into" a new world. The viewers can feel with the characters – cheer them on or mourn with them - but whatever happens in the series has no physical impact on the life of the viewers. After an episode is over, the audience returns to its own reality, focusing on own problems and challenges, until the series returns the following week.

TV can be seen as a means against boredom or as way to fill ones leisure time, but that does not mean that watching TV is pointless. Viewers can learn from TV characters or reevaluate their own attitudes towards certain issues through the information provided by TV series.

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[96] Patti M. Valkenberg, Jochen Peter. „Fantasy and Imagination." in Jennings Bryant, Peter Vorderer. *Psychology of Entertainment.* Mahwah: Erlbaum, 2006, p. 107
[97] Gleich, 2001, p. 524 cf. Cordula Meindl. *Serienfiguren als signifikante Andere.* MA Thesis, Vienna University, 2006, p.89

### 2.9.2.5 Information

The term information in this context does not refer to the news broadcast on television, but to the information gathered by audiences about the characters in a TV series and different lifestyles or jobs. We can trace the success of TV series such as *Emergency Room, Law and Order, CSI* or *Beverly Hills, 90210*, to the audience's need for information. From those series the viewers can gather what it is like to work as a doctor, forensic anthropologist or a lawyer, or what growing up in a rich community looks like. One can assume that job portrayals on TV can also play an important role for the career choice of young adults.

Another way to process information is to look at characters' problems and how they solve them. The viewer's own problems are compared to characters' problems to either confirm their own intents or to learn new ways to deal with the problem.

### 2.9.2.6 Comparison

Hoorn and Konjin stated that the process of perceiving and experiencing fictional characters could be divided into three sub-processes, namely encoding, comparison and response.[98] In the encoding phase the viewer observes characters' behaviors and attitudes and judges them according to his/her own values. This evaluation of characters is the basis for future identification with or liking of a character. Comparison between the self and the fictional character can happen in terms of similarity, relevance and valence.

Similarity

According to Hoffner and Cantor, viewers like to see characters that are similar to them, because those characters tend to share values and attitudes that are familiar to the viewers. "The behaviors of similar characters are important indicators of appropriate or effective ways of behaving."[99]

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[98] J. F. Hoorn. E.A. Konijn. „Perceiving and Experiencing Fictional Characters." 2003 qtd. in Cordula Meindl. *Serienfiguren als signifikante Andere.* MA Thesis, Vienna, 2006, p.103
[99] C. Hoffner, J. Cantor. „Perceiving and Responding to Mass Media Characters." in Bryant Jennings, Dolf Zillmann [eds.] *Responding to the Screen.* Hilsdale: Erlbaum, 1991, p.84

<u>Relevance</u>

Relevance is an important trigger for emotional reactions. Fictional characters can be relevant for a viewer if they fulfill his/her basic needs.

> Most fictional works present FCs [Fictional Characters] and situations that draw upon more or less universal human concerns or preferred states, such as owning a home (social), security, food, and justice, as well as interpersonal attraction, sexual satisfaction, big money, cognitive growth and (threats to) subjective well-being through pleasant, interesting, informative or challenging experience.[100]

That means that – according to Lockwood and Kunda – social comparison can be seen "as drawing an analogy between the self and the other or, in other words, mapping the self onto the other."[101] This not only applies to the comparison with fictional characters, but also to the comparison with the stars of the series in question. "If there are enough similarities between the self and the superstar, the superstar may affect one's self-view even if he or she excels in an irrelevant domain."[102]

<u>Valence</u>

While relevance has an impact on the intensity of the emotional reactions, valence determines their direction – whether positive, neutral or negative. "In other words, valence refers to the expected match or mismatch between the potential gratification or obstruction of one's concerns and (im)possibilities offered by the situation."[103]

## 2.9.2.7. Peer Pressure

> The empirical research of Gauntlett and Hill suggested that teens often watch TV in order to socialise, to have common frames of reference through which to talk to others and that their desire to view is frequently motivated by peer pressure and a need to

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[100] J. F. Hoorn. E.A. Konijn. „Perceiving and Experiencing Fictional Characters." 2003 qtd. in Cordula Meindl. *Serienfiguren als Signifikante Andere.* MA Thesis, Vienna, 2006, p. 105

[101] Lockwood and Kunda, 2000, p.159 qtd. in: Cordula Meindl. *Serienfiguren als Signifikante Andere.* MA Thesis, Vienna University, 2006, p. 92

[102] Ibidem. p. 92

[103] J. F. Hoorn. E.A. Konijn. „Perceiving and Experiencing Fictional Characters." 2003 qtd. in Cordula Meindl. *Serienfiguren als Signifikante Andere.* MA Thesis, Vienna, 2006, p. 105

'belong' through a discussion of the media, rather than more conscious personal impetus.[104]

Teenagers might watch a certain "in"-show to belong to a group of popular teens or just to belong to a group. Successful TV has been described in connection with the office water-cooler. If the show is interesting people will meet around the water-cooler the next day and talk about it. Drawing the analogy, successful teen drama probably means that teenagers meet up in school between classes and talk about the shows they watched the night before.

## 2.10. Summary

In order to attract an audience, a TV series has to gratify the audience's needs. Viewers want to immerse themselves in the series, imagining, for example, what life in Beverly Hills would be like. This imagination is the basis for processes like identification or empathy and liking. In order to be successful, TV series have to feature characters that the audience can identify with or at least relate to, and the topics discussed have to be of relevance for the viewer. Applied to the TV series that will be analyzed in the following chapters, this means that people are able to identify with characters in all kinds of genres – be it science fiction or detective stories – and from all kinds of social classes, as long as they discuss topics or issues the viewer can relate to and map onto his/her own reality.

In order to attract young adults in the first decades of the new millennium teen drama series need(ed) to offer the following:

- interesting topics and storylines
- characters, viewers can relate to and identify with
- dialogue that is smart but not too elaborate or unbelievable
- a young, attractive cast
- use of modern technology and music
- writers that do not preach, but create authentic situations and realistic characters

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[104] D. Gauntlett and A. Hill, 1999, p.82 qtd. in Glyn Davis, Kay Dickinson. [eds.] *Teen TV.* London: British Film Institute, 2004 p.1

- provocation

Of course, not all these elements have to be in one single show, but most of them can be found in the series on air at the moment.

The second part of this paper will focus on two teen drama series created by Josh Schwartz, the youngest show creator at the present time, which were and are well known for often quite provocative storylines and handling of topics, as well as a heavy emphasis on music and modern technology. We will look at the pilot episodes of *The O.C.* and *Gossip Girl*, because the pilot is most important for new series and we will discuss the importance of the elements listed above for the success of both shows.

## PART 2 – ANALYSIS

### 3. Introduction

The following chapters will examine two teen drama series on air in the first decade of the new millennium, namely *The O.C.* and *Gossip Girl.* The main focus will lie on the two pilot episodes, because most viewers who do not get "hooked" to a TV series in the pilot episode will not return to the show for the following episodes. Therefore, a successful teen drama series has to be interesting for a teenage audience from the start and has to leave them wanting more, so they will return for future episodes.

### 3.1 The Pilot

For decades teenagers had either watched TV series specially created for them or family dramas with the whole family. Nowadays, the younger generation can choose from up to twenty TV dramas each week and while most of them might still be interested in content targeted specifically toward them, many also watch traditional drama series such as *Grey's Anatomy, House M.D* or *Dexter.* The pilot of a teen drama series needs to grab the teen audience's attention; it has to stand out. And most importantly, the series cannot belittle teenagers' problems or patronize them. If the audience feels that their issues are not being taken seriously or even mocked, viewers will not invest time in the series but rather watch "grown-up" series.

Every year up to a hundred of pilots are submitted to networks. Two that have been developed and picked up after the pilot are *The O.C.* and *Gossip Girl.* An analysis of the two pilot episodes should reveal which ingredients a good and successful pilot for a Teen Drama Series needs.

### 3.2. Filmic Terms

The terms and abbreviations below will be used in the following shot analyses. They have all – apart from two - been taken from Ephraim Katz – *The filmic encyclopedia*, third edition.[105]

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[105] Ephraim Katz. [ed.] *The film encyclopedia*. 3rd edition, New York: Harper Collins, 1998

### 3.2.1 Sequence – scene - shot

<u>Sequence</u>

A number of scenes linked together by time, location, or narrative continuity to form a unified episode in a motion picture. It is often linked to a chapter in a book, the scene being the equivalent of a sentence.

<u>Scene</u>

In the strictest sense, a section of a motion picture which is unified as to time and place. It is made up from a series of shots of varying angles and is usually filmed in one session. As a unit of film language, the scene is larger than a shot and smaller than a sequence.

<u>Shot</u>

A single continuous take, filmed in a single session from on camera setup. The basic grammatical unit of the language of film, a shot may range from a single frame taken from a fixed position to a setup involving complex camera movement.

### 3.2.2 Camera Angle:

The camera's point of view when it is set up for shooting; the relative depth, height, or width at which an object or an action is photographed. The angle from which the camera views the subject determines not only what will be included in any particular shot but to a large extent *how* the audience will view it – from near or far, from above or below, subjectively or objectively etc. The choice of camera angle thus affects not only the progression of the plot but also the aesthetic quality of a scene and the psychological attitude of the viewer.

<u>Eye-level Shot</u>

The eye-level shot is considered the most lifelike but least dramatic. It is supposed to provide the normal viewpoint and is usually shot from a height of four to six feet, with no distortion of vertical lines. The eye level of the performer, not the cameraman, determines camera height, and is especially crucial in close-up shots. Because of normal viewpoint, the eye-level shot is

considered useful in establishing situations and providing audiences with a frame of reference.

Low-angle Shot

A shot taken from a low camera setup with the camera tilted upward. Often used for dramatic impact, because it makes people and objects seem tall and over-powering.

High-angle Shot

A shot taken from an elevated position looking down on the subject or the action.

Subjective camera

Camera angle that views action through the eyes of a particular observer, rather than through the usual objective, impersonal point of view. Subjective camera angles are common in film. Whenever a *close-up* of a particular player is followed by a bit of action we assume we are seeing the action through that person's eyes.

### 3.2.3 Shot Size

Long Shot (LS)

A broad view of objects or action of principal interest. The shot requires a wide angle of photography and a scene in depth. The camera is positioned at a distance that allows general recognition of the subject matter at the expense of detail. When used to identify a setting and establish the background for subsequent detail it is know as *establishing shot.*

Full Shot (fs)

A shot whose subject completely fills the screen. When the subject is a person his or her full body is included in the shot.

Medium Long Shot (MLS)

A shot utilizing a wider angle than a *medium shot* but not as wide as *long shot*. The object or action of principal interest is in the middle distance rather than toward the foreground or far in the background.

Medium Shot (MS)

An intermediate shot between a *close-up* and a *long shot*. As with most camera angles, this shot cannot be described with mathematical precision. Generally speaking, it would cover the full figure of a person or a small group of people with a small portion of background showing.

Medium Close Shot (MCS)

A camera setup intermediate between a *close shot* and a *medium shot*. The average MCS will cut off the figure of a person at about the knees.

Close Shot (c.s.)

A shot closer than a medium shot but not as tight as a *close-up.* When the subject is a person, he or she is framed from the top of the head to the waist. When it is an object, the shot is relative to the size of that object.

Close-up (c.u.)

A shot taken from a short distance or through a telephoto lens which brings to the screen a magnified, detailed part of a person or an object. A *close-up* of a person, for example, might show only his hand, a shot of a car's interior might reveal just the steering wheel. A *close-up* is used to draw attention to a significant detail to clarify a point, designate a meaning or heighten the dramatic impact of a film's plot.

### 3.2.4 Camera Movement

The panning, tilting, tracking, or zooming of a motion picture camera. {...} The direction of camera movement is as important as the direction of subject movement within the frame.

Pan right and left

A camera movement on a horizontal plane from one part of a scene to another. A contraction of "panorama" or "panoramic", the term is sometimes used to describe any pivotal movement of the camera.

Swish Pan

Also know as "zip pan" or "whip shot". A rapid panning of a camera on its vertical axis from one point to another, causing a blurred sensation when the image is viewed on the screen.

Following pan

The camera swivels to follow a moving subject. A space is left in front of the subject: the pan "leads" rather than "trails". A pan usually begins and ends with a view seconds of still picture to give greater impact.[106]

Tilt up and down

The pivotal movement of a camera in a vertical plane. In a *tilt shot,* the camera is moved up (tilt up) or down (tilt down).

Dolly Shot

Also called "traveling", "trucking" or "tracking shot". A moving shot of a moving or stationary subject exercised by mounting the camera on a dolly or camera truck. To *dolly-in* (or track-in) is to move the camera toward the subject; to *dolly-out* (or track-out) is to move the camera away from the subject.

Zoom

The real or apparent effect of camera movement toward or away from the subject during a single continuous shot. […] In live-action cinematography, […] it is usually achieved by means of the zoom lens, with the camera remaining stationary. The camera operator is said to be *zooming in* when he brings the subject closer to view and to be *zooming out* or *zooming back* when he withdraws farther from the image.

Hand-held Camera

A portable, lightweight motion picture camera that is held in the hands of the cameraman and steadied against his body without the use of a tripod. […] used both as a matter of convenience and for achieving a greater sense of realism for certain scenes.

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[106] http://bildungsserver.berlin-brandenburg.de/fileadmin/bbb/medien/medienpaedagogik/filmpaedagogik/pdf/Filmglossar_Deutsch-Englisch.pdf
Accessed: November 20, 2010

### 3.2.5 Sound

<u>Actual Sound</u>

Sound whose source is either visible on the screen or implied by the action in a sequence, as distinguished from off-camera commentary such as narration.

<u>Voice Over (v.o. or v/o)</u>

Narration or dialogue spoken by a person not seen on the screen at the time his voice is heard.

<u>Off-camera (OC)</u>

Not within the field of view of a shot, such as an actor who does not appear in a shot but whose presence is felt by implication. An actor being heard in a shot but not seen.

<u>Background noise</u>

Unintelligible voices and other sounds added to the sound track to increase the realism of a scene, as on a busy street or other locations noisy with people, traffic etc.

### 3.2.6 Editing

<u>Cross-cut</u>

A cut from one line of action to another. Parallel development/ parallel editing/ cross-cutting means an intercut sequence of shots in which the camera shifts back and forth between one scene and another. Two distinct but related events seem to be happening at approximately the same time. […] Each scene serves as a cutaway for the other. Adds tension and excitement to dramatic action.[107]

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[107] http://bildungsserver.berlin-brandenburg.de/fileadmin/bbb/medien/medienpaedagogik/filmpaedagogik/pdf/Filmglossar_Deutsch-Englisch.pdf
Accessed: November 20, 2010

# 4. THE O.C.

## 4. 1. Introduction

*The O.C.* is an American teen drama television series that originally aired on the FOX network in the United States from August 5, 2003, to February 22, 2007, running a total of four seasons. The series, created by Josh Schwartz, portrays the fictional lives of a group of teenagers and their families residing in Newport Beach in Orange County, California. *The O.C.* has been broadcast in more than fifty countries worldwide and was one of the most popular new dramas in 2003.[108]

*The O.C.* attracted a strong 9.7 million viewers for its first season, but ratings declined as the show went on. The low ratings led to cancellation in early 2007, after 4 seasons, even after an online petition that gained over 700,000 signatures.[109]

### 4.1.1 The series

Set in Newport Beach, a city in affluent Orange County, California, the series revolved around the Cohen family and their friends and extended family. Newport Beach, home to frustrated housewives, caring more about maxing out their husbands' credit cards than about their teenage children; successful business men, and high school students having more access to alcohol and drugs than probably the average American college student, can be seen as a character on its own, portraying a lifestyle and not just a city close to the beach. For the teen characters this means that charity does not involve work in a soup kitchen, but rather organizing a catwalk show, with teen girls modeling haute couture. This is the world Sandy, Kirsten and Seth Cohen live in. Like most rich families in Newport, the family lives in a gated community overlooking the ocean, with an adjoining pool house that would make many apartment owners jealous. One day, Sandy, a defense lawyer, brings home one of his clients, Ryan, who had been arrested for stealing a car. The Cohens move the teenager into their pool house, a place roomier and more luxurious than his former lodgings.

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[108] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0362359/ Accessed: October 8, 2009
[109] http://www.petergallagher.org/hot/OCRatings.html Accessed: October 9, 2009

For four years the series followed the Cohens and Ryan as they made new friends, fell in love, fought, laughed and cried, and dealt with death, alcoholism, depression and most importantly, growing up. And although, Sandy and Kirsten played a surprisingly big part on the show, the main focus lay on Seth and Ryan and their on-again/ off-again girlfriends, Summer and Marissa.

### 4.1.2 The main characters

**Ryan Atwood** (Benjamin McKenzie) 92 Episodes



*Image 1*

Ryan is a teenager from the wrong side of the tracks, living with his alcoholic mother, brother Trey and his mother's abusive boyfriend in Chino – a suburb of Los Angeles – that is portrayed as a low class place to live in the series. After he and his brother Trey get caught stealing a car, Ryan meets Sandy Cohen - his lawyer – in prison. Sandy helps Ryan to get out of prison on probation and after Ryan's mother throws her son out of the house, Sandy takes pity on Ryan and takes him in. Ryan forms a deep bond with the Cohen's son Seth, helping him getting to know his neighbor Marissa and her best friend Summer. The Cohen family eventually adopts Ryan, because his own mother is unable to care for her son. On his first night at the Cohen house Ryan meets Marissa Cooper and is instantly attracted to her. Marissa is still dating someone else at the time but after she ends that relationship, Marissa and Ryan have an on again/off again relationship until her death at the end of season 3. Ryan has a hard time dealing with Marissa's death, but his friends and new girlfriend Taylor support him the whole time. At the end of season 4, we see Ryan – a graduate of the Cohen's Alma Mater UC Berkeley – working as an architect and following in Sandy's footsteps by offering help to a troubled boy.

**Seth Cohen (**Adam Brody) 92 Episodes
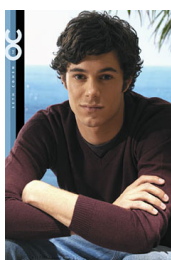


Seth is the son of Kirsten and Sandy Cohen and grandson of Caleb Nichol. When we first meet him, he is a lonely teenager who is not fitting in very well with the water polo playing crowd in Orange County and longs to live on the East Coast. He is very

proud of his mixed Jewish and Christian heritage, having invented the holiday Chrismukkah, a combination of Christmas and Hanukkah. Seth is a huge Comic fan, even creating his own comic series and uses a lot of pop culture references when he talks. Seth has been in love with Summer since childhood, but only after Ryan's appearance does he finally get to know her. They end up having a very steady relationship, with the exception of season two, in which they are both dating other people. Seth and Summer get married in the very last episode, which takes place some time after their graduation from college. *Image 2*

**Sandy Cohen** (Peter Gallagher) 92 Episodes
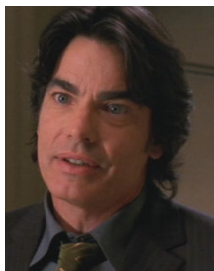


*Image 3*

Sandy Cohen is a public defender who is living with his family in Newport Beach, Orange County. He originally grew up in the Bronx in New York where his mother worked as a social worker, and according to him, spent more time with other people's children than her own. He left home at age sixteen and moved to California. At UC Berkeley he went to law school and met his future wife Kirsten Nichol. In the pilot Sandy takes in the troubled teenager Ryan, whom he had defended in court, much to the dismay of his wife Kirsten. He and Kirsten later become Ryan's legal guardians. Throughout the series he is a role model for proper behavior, doling out advice to his family and fighting for the good cause. Occasionally, he also strays from "the right path", opening his own private law firm and taking over as CEO of the Newport group, his wife's father's former company, before returning to the public defender's office.

**Kirsten Cohen** (Kelly Rowan) 92 Episodes



*Image 4*

Kirsten is the daughter of Caleb Nichol and wife of Sandy Cohen. In the beginning she is working for her father's real estate company Newport Group, but later takes over as CEO after her father's death. In the course of the series, Kirsten develops an alcohol problem and while she is in rehab working on her problem, her husband has to take over as CEO of the Newport Group. After rehab she co-founded a dating service with Julie Cooper, called New Match. Before she met Sandy, Kirsten was dating Jimmy

Cooper, Marissa's father, whom she grew up with. She is also a graduate of UC Berkeley with a degree in Art History. At the end of season four, Kirsten gives birth to a girl named Sophie Rose Cohen, and the Cohens move back to Berkeley to be close to their sons while they are in college.

**Summer Roberts** ( Rachel Bilson) 92 Episodes
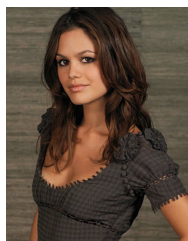


Summer is the spoiled socialite of the group at the beginning of the first season who has no idea who Seth Cohen is. She is Marissa Cooper's best friend and initially is very mean to everyone not part of her clique but it soon becomes apparent that she is mean to other people because she does not want

*Image 5* anyone to get close to her and she also uses this behavior to cover up her own insecurities. Her mother left the family and Summer is therefore raised by her father, Dr. Roberts and her stepmother, nicknamed "the stepmonster". In season two during her and Seth's break-up she is dating Zach – the "Anti-Cohen". In college on the east coast, Summer develops a passion for the environment, becoming an activist for animal rights and environmental issues. She marries Seth in the last episode of the series.

**Marissa Cooper** (Mischa Barton) 76 Episodes



Marissa is the popular rich girl of the group dating waterpolo player Luke at the beginning of season one. After her parents' divorce in the first season her life seems to fall apart as well. During the next three years Marissa has to deal with a cheating boyfriend, an overdose, alcoholism, attempted rape, her mother's affair with her ex-boyfriend, a crazy stalker, and an even crazier surfer madly in love with her, in addition to her father's decision to move away from Newport Beach. Marissa was always very close to her father, while her relationship to her mother is very troubled, even more so, after she is blackmailed by her stepfather into moving into the Cooper-Nichol household. At the end of season three, Marissa is killed in a car accident, after her last boyfriend, Kevin Volchok, runs her and Ryan off the road. She was on her way to see her father and spend the summer with him on his boat. *Image 6*

**Julie Cooper** (Melinda Clarke) 88 Episodes
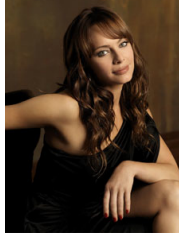
Julie is Marissa's and Kaitlin's mother and was married to Jimmy Cooper until he lost all their money. She had an affair with her daughter's ex-boyfriend Luke, while dating Kirsten's father Caleb. Julie and Caleb later get married, but after his death she ends up in a trailer park, because Caleb was broke and did not leave her any money. While living in a trailer she starts dating Summer's father Dr. Roberts but their engagement falls apart because Julie cannot cope with her daughter Marissa's death. In the last season Julie is romantically involved with a millionaire named "Bullit", but then falls in love with Ryan's father Frank. Julie and Frank end up having a son, but Julie decides that for once she needs to live her life without a man in it. In the very last episode Julie is graduating from college with her family and friends in attendance of the ceremony. *Image 7*

**James Cooper** (Tate Donovan) 39 Episodes

Jimmy is the father of Marissa and Kaitlin, married to their mother Julie until he lost a lot of money. He was a financial consultant, tried to run a restaurant and eventually moved away from Newport Beach to start over again. He dated Kirsten Nichol before he got married to Julie and later briefly went out with Kirsten's younger sister Hailey. *Image 8*

**Caleb Nichol** (Alan Dale) 35 Episodes

Father of Kirsten and Hailey and head of the Newport Group. In the course of the series Caleb marries Julie Cooper, nearly goes to prison for fraud and the mismanagement of his company, putting Kirsten in charge of the Newport Group. He dies in season two from a heart attack and after the reading of his will it is revealed that he was penniless at the time of his death. *Image 9*

**Taylor Townsend** (Autumn Reeser) 31 Episodes

Taylor was introduced in season three as a fellow classmate of Summer, Seth, Ryan and Marissa. She has a huge crush on

Seth and has no problems showing her affection for him, much to the dismay of Summer and she battles Marissa for full control of their High School. Taylor is a neurotic perfectionist, always trying to live up to her controlling mother's high expectations. Summer and Seth befriend her after they find out how lonely Taylor is. In season four she becomes Ryan's girlfriend and she also moves in with Julie, Kaitlin and Summer after her failed marriage to a French poet. *Image 10*

**Luke Ward** (Chris Carmack) 28 episodes



Luke is Marissa's boyfriend at the beginning of the first season. The have been dating for some time, but Marissa breaks up with him in season one because she finds out he cheated on her. After his parents' divorce Luke moves to Portland with his father. *Image 11*

**Kaitlin Cooper** (Willa Holland) 22 Episodes



Kaitlin is Marissa's younger sister who spends most of her time at boarding school. She returns for good in season four and attends Marissa's old High School. Her character is a lot like her mother's – very fashion conscious and used to getting what she wants.

*Image 12*

### 4.1.3 The creator – Josh Schwartz



In 2003, when *The O.C.* first premiered, its creator Josh Schwartz at age twenty-seven became the youngest person in network history to create his own television series and run its production. Many have attributed the success of *The O.C.* to Schartz' age which was a lot closer to his characters and actors than most writers' in the business.

*Image 13*

A young writer can write young slang young. He's [ Josh Schwartz] a little closer to the high school experience than someone fully adult. If there wasn't someone pretty young like

Josh, you might have a lot of people being frustrated and saying, 'Listen, dude, no one says "bitching" anymore'.[110]

Born on August 6, 1976 in Providence, Rhode Island Schwartz grew up on the east coast, before moving out to California to attend film school, studying screen and television writing at the University of Southern California. Before writing the pilot for *The O.C.* Schwartz had already tried his hands on a script about wealthy teenagers - a boarding school drama set in New England. The pilot was produced, but never aired.[111] In 2003, Schwartz handed in a pilot called *The O.C.* loosely based on his own experience attending college in Orange County. Fox liked the pilot but was not prepared to let a twenty-six year old run a show on his own. After many unsuccessful attempts at pairing Schwartz with seasoned professionals who all shared the same conventional ideas about running a TV show, Bob DeLaurentis, a TV veteran signed on and proved to be a good influence on the show.[112] Asked in an interview by Teen Hollywood in 2004, "what might be the top three or four factors that are responsible for the success of the show", Schwartz answered:

> The timing, I think, absolutely. The support that we have from the network in terms of launching us at an unusual time in the year and playing our episodes three times in a given week until we built an audience. I think the cast is exceptional. I think aside from being extremely attractive, they're also really talented […]. I think the tone of the show surprised people.

Schwartz went on explaining that "it's nice to put on a show for an hour a week and see a family that really loves each other and get some escapist entertainment […]."[113]

After *The O.C.* ended Schwartz created another teen drama series for "The CW" called *Gossip Girl* based on the novels by Cecily von Ziegesar. At the

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[110] Ari Posner. „The ‚O.C.' Rewrites the Rules of TV Writing" *New York Times*. 03/21/04, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/03/21/arts/television/21POSN.html?ex=1395205200&en=158d7ee8845cb98e&ei=5007&partner=USERLAND Accessed: August 20, 2009

[111] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josh_Schwartz Accessed: October 9, 2009

[112] Ari Posner. „The ‚O.C.' Rewrites the Rules of TV Writing" *New York Times*. March 21, 2004 Accessed: August 20, 2009 http://www.nytimes.com/2004/03/21/arts/television/21POSN.html?ex=1395205200&en=158d7ee8845cb98e&ei=5007&partner=USERLAND

[113] Lynn Baker. „O.C. creator Josh Schwartz – California Dreaming" *Teen Hollywood*. 2004 http://www.teenhollywood.com/2004/10/25/o-c-creator-josh-schwartz-california-dreamin Accessed: August 20, 2009

same time he is also running a show called *Chuck*, a spy drama on NBC featuring characters in their mid- to late twenties.

## 4.1.4 Structure/ Format

*The O.C.* can be described as a serial. Some episodes end with cliffhangers and even if they do not, storylines are typically developed over multiple episodes. Relationships of the main characters develop in the course of the season and the series is written with no end in sight other than the annual season finale. Each episode starts with the title song "California" by *Phantom Planet*, which accompanies images taken from the pilot episode and other episodes of the respective seasons. The average run time is forty-two minutes including intro and end credits.

## 4.2 The Pilot Episode

Original air date: August 5, 2003
Directed by: Doug Liman
Written by: Josh Schwartz
Produced by: Dave Bartis, Judith Blume, Loucas George, Doug Liman, McG, Stephanie Savage, Josh Schwartz
Original music by: Joseph Arthur, Christopher Tyng
Cinematography by: Jamie Barber
Editing by: Norman Buckley
Run time: 44 minutes
Film negative format: 35mm
Aspect Ratio: 1.78 : 1

Principal cast: Benjamin McKenzie (Ryan Atwood), Adam Brody (Seth Cohen), Peter Gallagher (Sandy Cohen), Kelly Rowan (Kirsten Cohen), Mischa Barton (Marissa Cooper), Melinda Clark (Julie Cooper), Tate Donovan (Jimmy Cooper), Rachel Bilson (Summer Roberts), Chris Charmack (Luke Ward), Daphne Ashbrook (Dawn Atwood).[114]

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[114] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0362359/ Accessed January 12, 2011

Settings:

Interior: Juvenile Correction Center, Atwood home, Cohen pool house, Cohen main house, Cooper Home, ballroom, dressing room, restroom, Holly's beach house

Exterior: Streets in Chino, highway 101, gated community, beach in Newport Beach, outside the Cohen home, outside the Cooper home, outside the Atwood home

## 4.2.1 Content

In the pilot, the audience is introduced to Sandy Cohen, a defense attorney, who takes Ryan, a teenage boy from a poor neighborhood, who had gotten arrested for stealing a car with his older brother, home for the weekend. Ryan quickly befriends the Cohen's son Seth and soon discovers, after getting in a fight with rich local teenagers, that the life of the rich is not that grand after all. He asserts: "I think I can get in less trouble where I'm from." At the end of the episode Sandy drives Ryan back home. Upon their arrival they find the house empty and all the furniture is gone. The episode ends with Sandy deciding to take Ryan back home with him.

The second major storyline focuses on the Cooper family, specifically on the apparent legal problems Jimmy Cooper is about to face and on his teenage daughter Marissa who meets Ryan on his first night at the Cohens.

## 4.2.2 Overview

### 0:00:00 – 0:01:16
Trey Atwood and his younger brother Ryan are stealing a car. The police are chasing them until Trey crashes the car.

### 0:01:16 – 0:04:30
Ryan meets Sandy Cohen, his public defender in prison. Sandy tries to talk some sense into Ryan. Ryan proves to be smart, but very cynical about his future.

**0:04:30 – 0:07:06**

Ryan is kicked out of the house by his mother's boyfriend. He tries to find a place to stay and as a last resort calls Sandy Cohen for help. As he waits for Sandy to pick him up, Phantom Planet's song *California* starts playing. Sandy and Ryan drive along the ocean to Newport Beach. The images from this drive are later used for the series' intro and *California* becomes the title music.

**0:07:06 – 0:07:24**

Sandy tells Ryan to wait in the car, while he talks to his wife Kirsten.

**0:07:24 – 0:08:21**

Sandy and Kirsten discuss if it is a good idea to let Ryan stay at their house for the weekend. Kirsten does not like the idea very much.

**0:08:21 – 0:11:05**

Ryan meets the Cohen's neighbor Marissa Cooper. They share a cigarette and Marissa invites Ryan to a fashion show taking place that weekend.

**0:11:05 – 0:11:41**

Ryan meets Kirsten Cohen in the Cohen's pool house, which looks more like an apartment than a pool house.

**0:11:41 – 0:14:51**

Ryan meets the Cohen's sixteen-year-old son Seth. They play video games together and later Seth takes Ryan sailing. Seth tells Ryan that he had named his boat after Summer, a girl he likes. Sandy, who meets them at the beach, convinces the boys to attend the fashion show. They agree because Ryan wants to help Seth with Summer.

**0:14:51 – 0:16:13**

Two government agents show up at the Cooper household, but Marissa tells the men that her father is not home. Inside she tells her father about their visit, but her father refuses to admit that something is wrong.

**0:16:13 – 0:17:55**

Sandy teaches Ryan how to tie a tie.

**0:17:55 – 0:18:21**

The Cooper family is getting ready for the fashion show. Marissa's mother criticizes Marissa's appearance.

**0:18:21 – 0:21:43**

First impressions from the fashion show. Ryan seems to be an instant success while Seth looks lost. Marissa's best friend Summer is introduced. She is not a very nice girl.

**0:21:43 – 0:22:03**

Behind the scenes of the fashion show. The models are all teenagers, but they have professional make-up artists and stylists.

**0:22:03 – 0:22:06**

Cut back to the catwalk.

**0:22:06 – 0:22:25**

Summer and Marissa are secretly drinking alcohol backstage.

**0:22:25 – 0:22:52**

Cut back to the catwalk. It is Marissa's turn. Marissa's boyfriend notices that she keeps smiling at Ryan and does not look happy.

**0:22:52 – 0:23:21**

The parents' table. The Cohens and the Coopers discuss their children.

**0:23:21 – 0:23:55**

Ryan runs into Jimmy Cooper in the restroom. He hears Jimmy cry in one of the stalls.

**0:23:55 – 0:23:58**

Cut back to the catwalk

**0:23:58 – 0:25:18**

Outside the fashion show. Summer invites Ryan to a beach party at one of her friends' beach house. Ryan tries to convince Seth that Summer had actually wanted to invite Seth. They all get into a car together and drive off.

**0:25:18 – 0:27:05**

Inside the beach house party. People are drinking alcohol and take drugs.

**0:27:05 – 0:28:23**

Kirsten and Jimmy meet outside their houses. By this point it had already been revealed that they were a couple once. They briefly talk about Seth and Marissa and reference their own past.

**0:28:23 – 0:28:27**

Cut back to the party

**0:28:27 – 0:28:37**

Seth walks into a bathroom where one boy and two girls are making out in the bathtub. From his reaction one can gather that this is his first time at a party like this.

**0:28:37 – 0:28:46**

Cut back to the party. Drug paraphernalia, liquor bottles and bikini clad girls dancing on tables.

**0:28:46 – 0:28:53**

Seth is trying to mingle with other people.

**0:28:53 – 0:29:22**

Marissa and Ryan meet again at the party. Marissa keeps refilling her glass with liquor.

**0:29:22 – 0:29:26**

Cut back to Seth sitting next to a keg drinking beer.

**0:29:26 – 0:30:42**

Cut to Ryan. Summer is trying to flirt with him. Seth sees them together and embarrasses himself in front of Summer. Enraged he tells everyone about Ryan's past and where Ryan is actually from. He then runs off to the beach.

**0:30:42 – 0:31:55**

Seth is walking on the beach. He is quite drunk. A couple of water polo players start pushing him around. Ryan comes to his rescue and gets into a fight with Marissa's boyfriend Luke. Seth is punched in the face.

**0:31:55 – 0:33:30**

Seth and Ryan arrive at home. Both do not look so well. Ryan sports a black eye and Seth passes out on the couch in the pool house.

**0:33:30 – 0:35:50**

Ryan steps outside for a cigarette. He observes as Marissa's friends drop her off in front of her house and leave her there. He tries to find Marissa's house keys but because he cannot find them he picks her up and carries her over to the pool house and lays her on his bed.

**0:35:50 -0:36:25**

The next morning: Seth is asleep on the couch, but Marissa is gone. Kirsten arrives and is furious because the boys had been drinking and gotten into a fistfight. She drags Seth over to the main house.

**0:36:25 – 0:37:47**

Sandy returns from the beach with his surfboard. Kirsten complains to him about Ryan's apparent bad influence on Seth, but Sandy seems rather pleased that his son finally lived a little. Kirsten tells Sandy that Ryan has to leave.

**0:37:47 – 0:38:31**

Ryan is preparing breakfast for the Cohen family. Kirsten tells him that he has to leave. Ryan tells her he understands.

**0:38:31 – 0:40:04**

Ryan and Seth say goodbye.

**0:40:04 – 0:42:45**

Sandy drives Ryan back to Chino. Marissa watches them leave. Ryan finds his house empty – his mother is gone. Sandy, who has walked into the house behind Ryan, tells Ryan that he is going to take him back home with him.

## 4.3. Pilot Analysis

### 4.3.1 Character Relationships

The following tables depict the already existing and the developing relationships between the main characters. At first we will look at the relationships between the teenage characters, followed by an analysis of the portrayal of the teenager – parent relationship. The third subchapter will focus on the relationships of the parent characters, which play a big part in the episode and set up for storylines involving parents in the following episodes and seasons.

### 4.3.1.1 Teenager – Teenager

The pilot's purpose is to introduce the audience to the main characters. At the beginning one knows nothing about their relationships and therefore, one can really identify with a character meeting another character for the first time, because this first impression will also determine for each member of the audience how a certain character is viewed and assessed. The audience also gets to see characters that already have relationships with each other and the portrayal of these relationships provides the viewers with the information necessary to judge a character.

### 4.3.1.1.1 Ryan Atwood and Marissa Cohen

**0:08:20 – 0:11:04 - Ext. Night: Street in front of the Cohen and Cooper Houses**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|---|---|---|
| 08:20 | (LS) Cohen driveway. Ryan walks down, takes a cigarette out. Camera pans right to (MS) a tall, pretty girl. Marissa looks up and spots Ryan. | Piano music is playing to underscore the beginning love story <br> A lighter clicks <br> M: "Who are you?" |
| 08:36 | (MS) Ryan with a cigarette in his mouth. | R: "Whoever you want me to be." |
| 08:38 | (c.s.) Marissa, reaction shot, Ryan's POV | M: "Okay." |
| 08:42 | (MCS) Ryan lights the cigarette, Marissa's POV | |
| 08:47 | (MCS) Marissa looks back to her house, then to Ryan, POV Ryan | M: "Hey, can I bum a cigarette?" |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 08:51 | (MCS) Ryan walks toward Marissa, Marissa's POV | |
| 08:56 | (LS) Ryan walks over to Marissa | |
| 08:59 | (c.s.) Ryan, over the shoulder shot. He offers Marissa a cigarette | |
| 09:03 | (c.s.) Marissa. Camera on Ryan's left side. She lights her cigarette with his | |
| 09:06 | (c.s.) Ryan, over the shoulder shot | |
| 09:08 | (c.s.) Marissa, camera behind Ryan | |
| 09:11 | (c.u.) Ryan, camera on Marissa's right side | |
| 09:13 | (c.s.) Marissa, camera behind Ryan | |
| 09:15 | (c.s.) Ryan, over the shoulder shot. Ryan walks backwards | |
| 09:20 | (c.s.) Marissa | M: "So, what are you doing here? Seriously?" |
| 09:25 | (MCS) Ryan still walks backward | R: "Seriously?" |
| 09:27 | (c.s.) Marissa, reaction shot. | R (cont.): "I stole a car, crashed it. Actually my brother did. Since he had a gun and drugs on him…" |
| 09:28 | (MCS) Ryan, over the shoulder shot. He takes a step toward Marissa. Ryan gets closer to her | R (cont.): "I stole a car, crashed it. Actually my brother did. Since he had a gun and drugs on him…" |
| 09:43 | (c.s.) Marissa | R (cont.): "he's in jail." |
| 09:45 | (c.s.) Ryan, over the shoulder. He is directly in front of her. Pan right to track Ryan (c.u.) | R (cont.): "I got out, and then my mom threw me out. She was pissed and drunk. So Mr. Cohen took me in." |
| 09:53 | (c.s.) Marissa | M: "You're their cousin from Boston, right." |
| 09:58 | (c.u.) Ryan, over the shoulder shot. Sandy approaches them. | R: "Right." S: "Hey, Marissa:" |
| 10:02 | (c.s) Marissa quickly drops her cigarette | M: "Hey, Mr. Cohen." |
| 10:04 | (c.s.) Sandy/ Ryan. Sandy looks at the cigarette, then up to Marissa. Sandy looks to Ryan. | M (cont./ OC): "I was just meeting your nephew." S: "Oh, my favorite nephew, Ryan." |
| 10:11 | (c.s.) Marissa, reaction shot | S (cont./ OC): "All the way from |

| | | Seattle." |
| | | M: "Seattle?" |
| 10:15 | (c.s.) Ryan and Sandy | R: "Dad lives there. Mom lives in Boston." |
| 10:17 | (c.s.) Marissa | M: "Hmm, hmm." S: (OC): "So, we're all…" |
| 10:19 | (c.u.) Ryan, (c.s.) Sandy | S (cont.): "really excited for your fashion show fund-raiser for tomorrow night." |
| 10:21 | (c.s.) Marissa teases Sandy | M: "Really? You are?" |
| 10:23 | (c.s.) Sandy, reaction shot | S: "No." |
| 10:25 | (c.s.) Marissa laughs | |
| 10:27 | (MS) A pickup truck driven by a teenage boy approaches the group. | |
| 10:30 | (MCS) Luke, over the shoulder shot | L: "C'mon! Let's go!" |
| 10:32 | (c.u.) Ryan looks to Marissa | |
| 10:33 | (c.s.) Marissa | M: "Hey, you should come by, check it out. If you don't have other plans." |
| 10:37 | (c.s.) Ryan and Sandy, Marissa walks past them | M: "See ya." S: "Good night." |
| 10:38 | (MCS) Marissa gets into the car and kisses Luke, over the shoulder shot | Hip Hop music in the car |
| 10:44 | (c.s.) While Ryan looks after Marissa, Sandy looks at him knowingly | |
| 10:45 | (MCS) Marissa and Luke, over the shoulder shot | |
| 10:46 | (MS) Sandy and Ryan The car drives off. | |
| 10:49 | (LS) Sandy and Ryan in front of the house. Ryan drops the cigarette. Sandy goes back to step on it. | S: "Let's go inside. Ah, there's no smoking in this house." |

Ryan and Marissa's first meeting is dominated by shots of them looking toward each other. There is little dialogue in the scene and Ryan's first lines are not very original. He answers to her, "Who are you", with "Whoever you want me to be", trying to impress her with his bad boy appearance. Marissa seems not so much repulsed but intrigued and attracted to the stranger in the leather jacket. Multiple shots focus on Marissa and Ryan lighting her cigarette

together and assessing the other person. When they first spot each other, Marissa is shown from Ryan's point of view and Marissa from Ryan's. When Ryan walks over to Marissa the point of view shifts from Ryan and Marissa's back to the audience's. The audience sees Marissa for the first time the same moment Ryan does. It is the only time viewers are shown her whole body and the clothes she is wearing up close, and like Ryan, they can look her up and down and form an opinion. When Ryan and Marissa move closer to each other, piano music starts playing to underscore their instant attraction toward each other. Close-shots alternate with close-ups and the camera stays close even after Sandy interrupts their conversation until Marissa's boyfriend Luke arrives and breaks up the intimacy of the group. The scene sets up for a love triangle – often found in drama series. Marissa, from the start, is presented as a perfect fit for Ryan. She clearly is not the nice, good girl she appears to be because she smokes one of Ryan's cigarettes and flirts with him even though she has a boyfriend.

Once the characters are established the camera becomes less static and starts tracking their movements while they talk to each other. In the second half of the scene, after they audience had time to familiarize itself with the characters' looks and the sound of their voices, some of the dialogue is off-camera so the camera can stay focused on the character the dialogue pertains to and show his or her reaction to what is being said while it is being said.

### 4.3.1.1.2 Seth Cohen and Ryan Atwood

**011:44 - 0:14:04 - Int. Day: Cohen living room / Ext. Day: Beach and ocean**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|---|---|---|
| 11:44 | (MCS) Ryan opens a door and steps outside to take in the view. Following pan. | |
| 11:58 | (LS) Ryan in front of the pool house | |
| 12:00 | (MCS) Ryan opens the door to the main house | |
| 12:02 | (MLS) A dark haired teenager sits on the floor, playing video games. | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 12:05 | (c.s.) Ryan spots Seth, the Cohen's son | |
| 12:07 | (fs) Seth | S: "Hey." |
| 12:08 | (c.s.) Ryan | R: "Hey." |
| 12:11 | (fs) Seth | S: "Do you wanna play?" |
| 12:15 | (c.s.) Ryan shrugs | |
| 12:17 | (MS) Ryan and Seth play video games. Camera tilts up slightly | S: "Oh, looks like someone's trying to be a hero, but you got a little cocky. X O, X O, it's an unbeatable combination. Oh, oh…" |
| 12:24 | (c.s.) Seth is excited about winning | S (cont.): "Oh. What happened to your head, dude? Where did it go?" |
| 12:27 | (c.s) Ryan with a spoon in his mouth | S (cont.): "I'm sorry. Did someone die?" |
| 12:29 | (c.s.) Seth | S (cont.): "So, hey. Do you wanna play *Grand Theft Auto?*" |
| 12:30 | (c.s.) Ryan, reaction shot | S (cont.): "It's pretty cool. You can, like, steal…" |
| 12:32 | (c.u.) Ryan, (c.s.) Seth | S (cont.): "cars … Not that that's cool. Or uncool. I don't know." |
| 12:37 | (MS) Sandy enters with grocery bags. | Sa: "I see you two have met." |
| 12:39 | (MS) Seth and Ryan on the floor | Sa (cont./ OC): "Seth, what are you doing inside on this beautiful day?" |
| 12:41 | (MCS) Sandy | Sa (cont.): "Why don't you show Ryan around?" |
| 12:42 | (MS) Seth and Ryan<br><br>He looks to Ryan | Se: "Okay, cause it's so great around here. There's so much to do, dad." |
| 12:46 | (c.u.) Ryan, (c.s.) Seth | Se (cont.): "I don't know, unless. What do you wanna do?" |
| 12:48 | (c.s.) Ryan | R: "What do you guys do around here?" |
| 12:50 | (c.s.) Seth | |
| 12:51 | (LS) Seth and Ryan are on a catamaran on the water | "Sweet Honey" by *Slightly Stoopid* plays until Seth and Ryan start talking |
| 12:53 | (MLS) The boat is named "Summer Breeze." | |
| 12:56 | (c.s.) Seth pulls some ropes. Pan left to Ryan looking skeptical | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 12:57 | (c.s.) Seth pulls more ropes. Pan left to Ryan | |
| 13:00 | (LS) The boat on open water | |
| 13:01 | (c.s.) Seth, pan right to Ryan moving around un-comfortably. Pan left to Seth pulling a rope with his teeth. | |
| 13:06 | (LS) The boat on the water | |
| 13:09 | (LS) The boat on the water | S: "I have this … plan. Well, I don't, I don't know what you'd think, but um, next July…" |
| 13:15 | (c.s.) Seth | S (cont.): "the trade winds shift west, I wanna sail to Tahiti. I can do it in 44 days, maybe even in 42. |
| 13:21 | (c.s.) Ryan squints because of the sun | R: "Wow, that … that sounds really cool, man." S: "Yeah. You just hit the high seas and…" |
| 13:29 | (c.s.) Seth | S (cont.): "catch fish right off the side of the boat. Grill them right there. Just total quiet. Solitude." |
| 13:38 | (c.s.) Ryan | R: "You won't get lonely?" |
| 13:40 | (c.s.) Seth | S: "Well, I'll have Summer with me." |
| 13:42 | (MS) Ryan points to the name on the side of the boat. | R: "You're gonna take this to Tahiti?" |
| 13:44 | (c.s.) Seth, reaction shot | S: "Um, no. It's the girl the boat's named after." |
| 13:53 | (MS) Ryan and Seth on the boat | R: "She must be pretty stoked." |
| 13:56 | (c.s.) Seth | S: "Yeah. She has no idea. I've never talked to her before." |
| 14:02 | (c.s.) Ryan, reaction shot | |

When Ryan first meets Seth, Seth is sitting on the living room floor playing a video game. Ryan is wearing a "wife beater" shirt while Seth is still in pajama bottoms and a t-shirt. Just by looking at them, the audience has to assume that they have nothing in common. However, the two boys start playing a video game together and Seth seems totally comfortable playing a game with a criminal. Seth is introduced as a "geek", getting overly excited about beating Ryan in the game. He also dominates the conversation while Ryan merely reacts to Seth's monologue. Seth references video games and game controller buttons, further emphasizing his "geek" status. It is also established

in this scene that Seth does not think that living in Orange County is great and that he rather spends his time inside in front of the television instead of outside with his peers. He appears to be the "anti-Californian", not interested in surfing or spending time at the beach. Nevertheless, he takes Ryan down to the beach and goes sailing with him in answer to Ryan's question: "What do you guys do around here?"

On the boat, Seth opens up to Ryan about the girl he named his boat after and about his plan to sail to Tahiti with her. Ryan, instead of mocking Seth, acts like any good friend would, and listens patiently while Seth explains. Their conversation on the boat is the staring point for what can be seen, at first, as an unlikely friendship. The two scenes in the sequence also establish Seth's "talents", namely video games and sailing, and although he is very good at both, the audience can gather from this information that Seth is probably not one of the "cool" kids.

### 4.3.1.1.3 Ryan Atwood, Seth Cohen, Summer Roberts and Marissa Cooper

**0:29:33 – 0:30:31 - Ext. Night: The beach house terrace**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|---|---|---|
| 29:33 | (c.s.) Ryan drinks from a cup. Summer staggers through the door in a bikini top (MS) She stops Ryan | Su: "Look who I found." |
| 29:40 | (MCS) Summers spills her drink on Ryan | |
| 29:41 | (MCS) Summer giggles | Su: "Oh, oops." |
| 29:42 | (c.s.) Summer tries to clean Ryan's shirt | Su (cont.): "I'm wasted." |
| 29:44 | (c.s.) Summer and Ryan. Pan left to Summer wraps her arms around his neck. | Su (cont.): "What's your name anyway?" |
| 29:47 | (MCS) Ryan, camera behind Summer | R: "Ryan." |
| 29:48 | (c.s.) Ryan tries to get Summer off of him. Seth comes outside | Se: "Ryan, you gotta…" |
| 29:49 | (MCS) Ryan steps away from Summer | Se (cont.): "come…" |
| 29:51 | (MCS) Seth, camera behind Ryan | Se (cont.): "What are you doing?" |
| 29:55 | (MCS) Summer and Ryan. Camera behind Seth. Ryan | R: "Hey, um." |

| | takes a step toward Seth | Su: "Excuse me!" |
|---|---|---|
| 29:57 | (c.s.) Seth is upset, camera behind Ryan | Se: "What are you doing? I named my boat after her." |
| 30:00 | (c.s.) Summer, reaction shot | Su: "What? Eww!" |
| 30:02 | (c.s.) Seth, camera behind Ryan | R: "Seth." Su (OC): "Who are you?" |
| 30:03 | (c.u.) Ryan leans in toward Seth | R: "It's not what you think. She's just a little bit drunk." |
| 30:05 | (MCS) Summer puts her arm around Ryan but he pushes her away. Seth walks way. Ryan follow him | Su: "C'mon!" |
| 30:09 | (MCS) Marissa joins them | R (OC): "Seth! Seth!" |
| 30:10 | (MCS) Ryan tries to stop Seth and Seth shoves him against a wall (c.s.) | |
| 30:12 | (MCS) Marissa, reaction shot | Se (OC): "You know what?" |
| 30:13 | (c.s.) Ryan, swish pan right to Seth. Swish pan left back to Ryan. | Se (OC then onC): "Why don't you just go back to Chino. I'm sure there's a really nice car in a parking lot that you can steal." |
| 30:18 | (MS) Ryan and Seth face each other. Marissa watches. Seth walks away. | |
| 30:20 | (MS) Seth walks off toward the beach | |
| 30:22 | (c.s.) Ryan, reaction shot | |
| 30:23 | (MCS) Summer | Su: "Chino? Eww!" |
| 30:25 | (MCS) Ryan walks away and nearly bumps into Marissa. Pan right | |
| 30:27 | (c.s.) Marissa looks shocked | |
| 30:29 | (MCS) Marissa steps aside to let Ryan through | |

This scene depicts Seth and Summer's first real interaction and it is not pretty. While Ryan is an outsider because of his address – Summer responds with, "Chino? Eww!", Seth is depicted as being an even bigger outcast, when Summer asks him, "Who are you?" Summer is portrayed as a mean girl, who does not care who she insults and it makes the audience wonder why Seth is in love with a girl like that in the first place and if there even is the slightest possibility that they will ever or should ever be together. Even though, Seth, in

this scene, shows his own mean side by telling everyone about Ryan's past and pushing him against a wall, one can easily forgive him, because one can see that he is truly hurt by Ryan's apparent betrayal. Marissa also shows in this scene that she is more superficial than the audience was led to believe at first. Surrounded by her peers, Ryan's bad boy image and his past suddenly seem less appealing to her and she looks away as he walks past her. The scene tells the audience a lot about the characters and their relationships with each other. It reveals their insecurities and less appealing character traits, but these traits and the characters' behavior turn them into more complex and less one-sided characters. The action that takes places in this scene seems to destroy Ryan and Seth's budding friendship, and it also seems less likely now that Ryan will cause a problem in Marissa and Luke's relationship.

At first the camera is static and shots are presented from the audience's point of view, but when Seth's emotions get the better of him and he pushes Ryan around, the camera quickly pans from Seth to Ryan and back, and the audience feels as if it was right in the middle of the fight and has to decide on which character to focus.

### 4.3.1.1.4 Ryan and Seth v „the jocks"

**0:30:42 – 0:31:53 - Ext. Night: Beach**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|---|---|---|
| 30:42 | (LS) The beach house. Seth walks down to the beach | |
| 30:47 | (MCS) Two boys look in Seth direction | |
| 30:48 | (MS) Seth throws bits of wood on the floor. He is drunk | |
| 30:52 | (MS) The two boys walk over to Seth and start pushing him around | Boy 1: "Go home, geek!" |
| 30:54 | (c.s.) Seth is being pushed around | Boy 2: "Who invited you sucker?" |
| 30:55 | (c.s.) Ryan looks over to the beach | |
| 30:57 | (MLS) Ryan's POV. Seth is being harassed by a group of teenage boys | |
| 30:59 | (c.s.) Ryan starts running toward the beach | |
| 31:00 | (c.s.) Seth is still being pushed around. | S: "You guys really wouldn't hurt me because that'd be so |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | The boys lift him up. | clichéd. Oh, I guess you are fans..." |
| 31:05 | (MS) The boys spin Seth around | S (cont.): "of the cliché."<br>Boy: "Shut up!" |
| 31:06 | (MS) Ryan comes running down the beach. Pan right | R: "Hey! Hey! Put him down! Put him down now!" |
| 31:10 | (c.s.) Seth upside down | S: "Hey, Ryan. What's up?" |
| 31:13 | (MCS) Ryan, Seth's POV | R: "Put him down!" |
| 31:14 | (MCS) Luke and the girl he left the party with earlier join them | L: "Hey! What's up, dude?" |
| 31:15 | (c.s.) Ryan | L (cont./ OC): "You got a problem?" |
| 31:17 | (MCS) Luke and the girl. | |
| 31:18 | (MCS) The girl looks worried | |
| 31:19 | (c.s.) Ryan eyes Luke and the girl and takes a step toward Luke | R: "You tell me." |
| 31:21 | (MS) The boys drop Seth | |
| 31:22 | (MCS) Luke pushes Ryan | |
| 31:23 | (c.s.) Ryan is being pushed by Luke | |
| 31:24 | (MCS) Luke, camera behind Ryan | |
| 31:24 | (c.s.) Ryan punches Luke in the face | |
| 31:24 | (MCS) Ryan's punch | |
| 31:26 | (MCS) Luke is down on the floor | |
| 31:27 | (MS) Another boy tackles Ryan | |
| 31:28 | (c.s.) Ryan is on his back trying to fight the boy | |
| 31:29 | (MS) Ryan and the boy struggle | |
| 31:31 | (MCS) Seth comes over | |
| 31:32 | (MCS) Ryan and the boy are still on the floor | |
| 31:32 | (MS) Another boy joins the fight | |
| 31:34 | (MS) Seth runs to them | |
| 31:34 | (MCS) Ryan tries to pull the boy off of Ryan | |

| Time | Shot | Dialogue |
|---|---|---|
| 31:35 | (MS) Seth pulls the boy off Ryan | |
| 31:36 | (c.s.) Seth faces the boy and gets punches in the face | |
| 31:37 | (MCS) The boy who punched Seth. Pan to Seth on the floor | |
| 31:38 | (MS) A boy pulls Ryan off another boy | |
| 31:41 | (MS) Luke kicks Ryan in the stomach | |
| 31:42 | (MCS) Luke is standing over Ryan, low-angle shot | |
| 31:43 | (MS) Ryan is lying in the sand, high-angle shot | |
| 31:44 | (MCS) Luke looks down to Ryan, low-angle, and walks away. Following pan (MS) | L: "Welcome to the O.C. bitch! This is how it's done in Orange County!" |
| 31:50 | (MCS) Ryan lies in the sand | |
| 31:51 | (MS) Luke and his friends walk away | |
| 31:52 | (MS) Ryan and Seth both lie on the beach | |

If one had not realized up to this point that Seth is an outsider who does not really fit in with the Newport crowd, this scene makes it explicit. At the beginning of the scene a teenage boy tells Seth to "go home, geek!", while another asks, "Who invited you?" They start pushing him around even though he had done nothing to provoke them. In the scene Seth is being presented as quick witted, when he tells "the jocks", that they would not hurt him, because that would be clichéd. It is established here, that the popular crowd does not take kindly to outsiders and is not willing to let anyone in who is different.

Ryan proves in this scene that he is not a bad person, when he comes to Seth's aid and demands that the boys put Seth down. Luke joins the fight, and the scene establishes Ryan and Luke as enemies, when Ryan punches Luke in the face. The scene also establishes the outsider as hero, while the popular teenagers are shown in a less flattering light. It is, therefore, easy for the audience to identify with Ryan and Seth or feel at least empathy for them because they are treated badly for no apparent reason.

When the fight escalates, the pace of the scene picks up and most shots in the last part of the scene do not take longer than one or two seconds. When Ryan first punches Luke the camera is close to them, but the remaining fight is shown predominantly through medium shots and medium close shots which allow the audience to watch from a save distance instead of being forced to watch Seth and Ryan in pain close up.

### 4.3.1.2 Parent – Teenager

The following tables focus on the relationship between teenage characters and their parents. These scenes tell the audience a lot about a specific teen character, because ones upbringing has a huge impact on ones behavior. Watching the characters with their families gives the audience an idea why characters act a certain way, and viewers might be more sympathetic toward a character acting out or misbehaving if they understand why the character does it.

### 4.3.1.2.1. Sandy Cohen and Ryan Atwood

**0:01:16 – 0:03:34 - Int. Day: Chino Juvenile Correction Center**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|---|---|---|
| 01:16 | (c.s) bars. Ryan walks by, camera tracks him. (c.u.) on his hand-cuffed hands | Background noise |
| 01:19 | (MS) a guard leads Ryan through a door. Pan left, as Ryan passes the camera, pan right to track him as he walks into a room. (LS) Seated at a table is a dark-haired man in his late thirties. | S: "Ryan. I'm Sandy Cohen. The court's …" |
| 01:33 | (MCS) Ryan, camera on Sandy's left side | S (cont.): "appointed me your public defender." |
| 01:36 | (MCS) Sandy, camera on Ryan's left side. Sandy and Ryan both sit down | S (cont.): "You could do worse. You okay? They treating you alright?" |
| 01:42 | (c.s.) Ryan, camera on Sandy's right side. Ryan avoids eye contact. | R: "Where's my brother?" <br> S: "Ah. Trevor is over 18. Trey stole a car. Trey had a gun in his pants…" |
| 01:48 | (MCS) Sandy, camera behind Ryan | S (cont.): "and an ounce of pot in his jacket and a couple of priors." |
| 01:50 | (c.s.) Ryan, camera on Sandy's right side. Ryan is | S: "I'm guessing that right now Trey is looking at 3 to 5 years. But Trey is |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | still avoiding eye contact | not my concern. This is your first time in lockup." |
| 01:56 | (c.s.) Sandy, camera behind Ryan | S (cont.): "I would assume you don't plan on coming back." |
| 01:58 | (c.s.) Ryan, over the shoulder shot | S (cont.): "Your grades…" |
| 02:00 | (c.s.) Sandy, camera behind Ryan | S (cont.): " are not great." |
| 02:02 | (c.s.) Ryan, camera on Sandy's right side | S (cont.): "Suspended twice for fighting, truancy three times." |
| 02:07 | (c.s) Sandy's hand holding a pen, tilt up to Sandy's surprised face. | S (cont.): "Now, your test scores…" |
| 02:10 | (c.s) Ryan, camera on Sandy's right side | S (cont.): "98 percentile on your SAT ones." |
| 02:12 | (c.s.) Sandy, camera behind Ryan | S (cont.): "Ryan, 98 percentile, if you start going to class." |
| 02:16 | (c.s.) Ryan, camera on Sandy's right side | S (cont.): "Are you thinking about college? Have you given any thought at all to your future?" |
| 02:21 | (c.s.) Sandy, camera behind Ryan | S (cont.): "Dude, I'm on your side. Come on, help me out here." |
| 02:26 | (c.s.) Ryan, camera on Sandy's left side. Ryan interrupts Sandy | R: "Modern medicine is advancing to the point where the average human life span will be one hundred. But I read this article that said social security's supposed to run out by the year 2025, which means people are going to have to stay in their jobs until they're … eighty. So I don't want to commit to anything too soon." |
| 02:47 | (c.s.) Sandy, camera on Ryan's right side | S: "Look." |
| 02:49 | (c.s.) Ryan, camera behind Sandy | S (cont.): "I can plea this down to a misdemeanor." |
| 02:52 | (c.u) Sandy, over the shoulder shot | S (cont.): "Petty fine, probation. But know this: stealing a car 'cause your big brother told you to is stupid, and it's weak. Now those are two things you can't afford to be anymore." |
| 02:59 | (c.s.) Ryan, camera on Sandy's left side | R: "Two more things."<br>S: "Do you want to change that? Then you have to get over the fact that live dealt you a bad hand." |
| 03:04 | (c.u.) Sandy, over the shoulder shot | S (cont.): "I get it. We're cut from the same deck, Ryan. I grew up, no money, bad part of the Bronx." |
| 03:09 | (c.s.) Ryan, camera on Sandy's left side. Ryan looks up at Sandy. | S (cont.): "My father was gone, my mother worked all the time. I was pissed off, I was stupid."<br>R: "And look at you now." |

| 03:16 | (c.u.) Sandy, over the shoulder shot | S: "Smart kid like you. You got to have a plan. Some kind of a dream." |
|---|---|---|
| 03:23 | (c.s.) Ryan, camera on Sandy's left side, reaction shot. | R: "Yeah, right. Let me tell you something, okay. Where I'm from, having a dream doesn't make you smart. Knowing it won't come true…" |
| 03:32 | (c.u.) Sandy, over the shoulder shot | |
| 03:33 | (c.s.) Ryan, camera on Sandy's left side | R (cont.): "that does." |

At the beginning of the episode Ryan Atwood meets Sandy Cohen for the first time. Sandy instantly comes across as a very likeable character because he really seems to care about his client's well-being. He shows his concern by offering Ryan advice on his future and tells him about his own upbringing to convince Ryan that he can have a bright future as well. Ryan, at first, is not very responsive and keeps looking at the floor. He does not trust that Sandy has an interest in him that goes beyond defending him in court. The first thing one really hears him say to Sandy, is a monologue about the world's bleak future. In this moment the audience learns that Ryan is actually a really smart young man, even if he got arrested for stealing a car. His behavior and way of talking distances him from the cliché TV teenage criminal that shows no remorse and defies all adult interference. Ryan stays emotionally distant until the end of the conversation but we can see him warming up to Sandy when he raises his eyebrow and smiles at him as he counters Sandy's upbringing story with: "And look at you know".  However, by the end of the scene, they seem not to have made much progress because Ryan basically tells Sandy that he thinks his talk about dreams and following ones dreams is stupid. Although the audience does not know at this point if Ryan's public defender will play a part in Ryan's life, it is relieved to see that the troubled teenager has an adult in his life now that he can talk to and who seems to have a real interest in him.

Sandy's trustworthiness and earnest concern are emphasized in the second half of the conversation through the use of close-ups of Sandy's face while he talks to Ryan. Ryan, on the other hand, stays distant throughout the conversation. Not even the camera gets closer to him than a close-shot. He guards his emotions, trying to hide them from Sandy and from the audience.

The pace of the scene is a lot slower in the beginning than in later scenes to give the audience the chance to become familiar with the characters, the storyline and the setting. As the scene progresses the pace picks up and shots of Ryan and Sandy alternate faster. The camera is static, there are hardly any pans or tilts and all dialogue is on camera, so the audience does not get distracted and can really focus on the character relationship developing in front of it

### 4.3.1.2.2. Ryan Atwood and his family

**0:04:30 - 0:05:13 - Int. Day: The Atwood House**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|---|---|---|
| 04:30 | Shaky hand held camera throughout most parts of the scene. Colors are flat. (MS) Mrs. Atwood pours herself a drink in the kitchen. Swish pan left to (c.s.) Ryan | Mrs. A: "I can't do this anymore, Ryan." |
| 04:34 | (LS) Atwood living room. Mrs. Atwood, her boyfriend A.J. and Ryan are in the living room together | Mrs. A: "I can't." R: "I'm sorry, mom!" |
| 04:37 | (MCS) Mrs. Atwood with a drink in her hand | Mrs. A: "I want you out of my house." |
| 04:39 | (MCS) Ryan, reaction shot | |
| 04:41 | (MCS) Mrs. Atwood | Mrs. A: "I want you out." |
| 04:42 | (c.s.) Ryan is upset | R: "But mom, where am I going to go?" |
| 04:44 | (MS) Mrs. Atwood, swish pan left to A.J. in the armchair (MCS). Swish pan left to Ryan (c.s.) | A.J.: "You heard your mother, man. Get your stuff and get out." |
| 04:48 | (c.s.) Ryan confronts A.J. | R: "Hey, this isn't your house … man!" |
| 04:48 | (MS) A.J. gets up from the chair (MCS) | A.J.: "Oh, you're a tough guy now." |
| 04:50 | (MCS) Mrs. Atwood tries to stop A.J. | Mrs. A.: "A.J., don't!" to Ryan "Just get out!" |
| 04:52 | (c.s.) Ryan walks over to A.J. | R: "Why don't you worry 'bout your own kids, A.J.?" |
| 04:54 | (MCS) Ryan is facing A.J. A.J. punches Ryan in the face | R (cont.): "Instead of freeloading off my mom." Mrs. A (OC): "Hey!" |
| 04:56 | (c.s.) Ryan and A.J. A.J. punches him again and throws him into a table | |
| 04:58 | (MCS) Mrs. Atwood takes a quick step toward A.J. Swish pan left to | |

| | Ryan. A.J. picks him up and pushes him out. | |
|---|---|---|
| 05:01 | (MCS) Mrs. Atwood turns around and tries to light a cigarette. | |
| 05:04 | (MCS) Ryan is zipping up his backpack. The title "The O.C." comes on the screen. Pan left as Ryan walks past A.J out of his room. | The title song "California" starts playing |
| 05:08 | (LS) Atwood front yard. Ryan leaves the house. | |
| 05:09 | (c.s.) Ryan drives away on a BMX bike. Pan right (LS) | |

Ryan's home life is presented in stark contrast to the other scenes in the episode. The colors are flat and the scene was shot with a, at times shaky, hand held camera. It makes Ryan's home appear toxic and although one feels bad for Ryan when he is kicked out of the house by his mother, one feels relieved to leave this place behind. Ryan's mother has to be portrayed as an unfit mother, in order for the audience to accept that Ryan is better off without her. Instead of defending her son and standing up to her boyfriend Mrs. Atwood just pours herself another drink while her boyfriend beats up Ryan. Even though the audience is aware that Ryan has done something wrong by stealing a car and deserves some form of punishment, it is hard not to pity him when the camera offers close-shots of his face that show his desperation. It is important that the audience sees Ryan's home life in order to understand how he ended up stealing a car with his brother. He clearly lacks a loving, caring family that is invested in him, but instead throws him out of the house when he makes a mistake.

### 4.3.1.2.3 Kirsten Cohen and Ryan Atwood

**0:37:47 – 0:38:29 - Int. Day: The Cohen House**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|---|---|---|
| 37:47 | (MS) Ryan in the Cohen's kitchen looking out of the window. Pan left to Kirsten entering. Pan right to track her as she walks toward Ryan. Pan right to Ryan. Ryan walks to the stove. Camera tracks him until he and Kristin are (MCS) Ryan puts some bacon on a plate. Ryan walks over to the dining room | K: "Look, Ryan. I don't need to play bad cop. It's nothing personal. Is that bacon?" R: "I usually make breakfast at my house. My mom's not much |

| | table with the bacon (MS). Pan right to track him. Pan left as Ryan walks back into the kitchen (MCS) | of a cook, so…"<br>K: "I'm sorry. (off-camera) You seem like a really nice kid."<br>R: "It's okay. I get it." |
|---|---|---|
| 38:17 | (MCS) Kirsten | |
| 38:19 | (MCS) Ryan takes his jacket | R: "You have a really nice family." |
| 38:23 | (MCS) Kirsten, reaction shot. Ryan walks by and out of the kitchen. | |

Kirsten is set up as Ryan's antagonist, but she is portrayed as caring mother who just wants what is best for her own son. Therefore, the audience cannot really hate her when she tells Ryan that he has to leave. At first she appears cold hearted when she tells Ryan about her decision, especially after he had just made breakfast for the family, but one can see that she believes she is doing the right thing. Ryan seems to have anticipated her decision, because his bag is already packed in the living room and Kirsten does not have to actually tell him she wants him out of the house, because he can guess it from the look on her face. From this interaction the audience learns, that should Ryan ever come back to the Cohens, winning over Kirsten will not be very easy, because she thinks he is a bad influence on her son. As Sandy had previously been established as "the good cop" who offers Ryan help, Kirsten has to be portrayed as "the bad cop" in order to create a conflict and keep the storyline interesting for the audience, so they will tune in again for the following episodes to see how and if the conflict will be resolved.

### 4.3.1.2.4 Marissa Cooper and her family

**0:17:55 – 0:18:21** - **Int. Day: Cooper House**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|---|---|---|
| 17:55 | (MLS) The Cooper foyer, pan right to a woman in her mid-thirties in front of a mirror, next to a 12 year-old girl. Marissa is seen walking down the stairs in the mirror. Swish pan left to Marissa (MCS). Pan right to Julie and Kaitlin (MCS) | K: "Oh, mom. Check my nails."<br>J: "Oh, love them, Kaitlin. Do you like my hair this straight? Or is it too Avril Lavigne?<br>M: "No, it looks good, mom.<br>J: "Oh Marissa, you look … oh honey. I thought you were gonna wear your hair down." |
| 18:10<br>-<br>18:13 | (c.s.) Marissa, reaction shot. She touches her hair self-consciously | J (cont./ OC): "Pulled back like that it's a little harsh on your angles."<br>Ji (OC): "Okay." |

| 18:13 - 18:19 | (MCS) Marissa. Jimmy walks past the camera. Pan right to track Marissa as she follows him. Camera pauses behind Kaitlin and Julie | Ji (cont.): "Let's go." Ju: "It's gonna be so amazing tonight. Are you gonna wear the *Donna Karen*, Marissa? I thought it was very forgiving." |
|---|---|---|
| 18:19 - 18:21 | (MS) Kaitlin, Marissa and Jimmy by the front door. | Ji: "You look beautiful, kiddo." |

In this scene the audience learns that Marissa's mother is quite critical of her daughter's appearance, commenting on her choice of a hairstyle and the dress she should wear in the fashion show. Marissa's mother Julie appears to be very self-centered and she expects her daughters to look perfect. Marissa, as seen in a previous scene is a tall, skinny, rather pretty girl, but it would come as no surprise if she would feel insecure about her self, after her mother tells her to wear a certain dress, because it is "very forgiving." At least, Marissa's father Jimmy acts like a loving parent and tells his daughter she looks beautiful. Just from this short exchange, the audience learns that Marissa is closer to her father than her mother, because her mother seems to care more about Marissa's appearance than her as a person.

### 4.3.1.2.5 Kirsten and Seth Cohen

**0:35:48 - 0:36:25 - Int. Day: Pool house**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|---|---|---|
| 35:49 | (MS) Ryan and Seth are asleep in the pool house. Ryan wakes up. Pan right to the now empty bed. | Birds chirp outside |
| 35:56 | (MCS) Ryan looks around | |
| 35:59 | (MS) Kirsten opens the door. She looks angry. She slams the door shut. | K: "Thank god!" |
| 36:01 | (MCS) Seth is woken up by the noise | |
| 36:02 | (MCS) Ryan | |
| 36:04 | (MCS) Kirsten walks in Seth's direction. Following pan | |
| 36:05 | (MCS) Seth waves at his mother | |
| 36:06 | (MCS) Kirsten sees Seth bruises | K: "What happened to your face?" |
| 36:07 | (MCS) Seth | S: "Mmm. I got into a fight." |

| 36:09 | (MCS) Kirsten | K (incredulous): "With who?" |
|---|---|---|
| 36:11 | (MCS) Ryan, reaction shot | S (OC): "I don't really know." |
| 36:12 | (MCS) Seth | S (cont.): "I don't really remember. Um. I was really drunk. Yeah. I think I still am a little bit." |
| 36:17 | (MCS) Kirsten grabs Seth's arm | K: "Let's go! House! Now!" |
| 36:19 | (MS) Kirsten pulls Seth up | |
| 36:20 | (MCS) Ryan looks over to them | |
| 36:22 | (MS) Kirsten pushes Seth through the door. Seth waves to Ryan. Kirsten turns and glares at Ryan before slamming the door shut again. | S: "Later!" |

Kirsten discovers Seth in the pool house with bruises on his face. Although she is clearly angry, she is also relieved that she found Seth. The audience can see that her anger stems from caring about Seth's well-being and rather than yelling at him for getting drunk and getting involved in a fight, she just orders him over to the main house. Seth, like the good boy he appears to be, does not argue with his mother, but rather lets her push him out of the pool house. What all scenes involving a Cohen parent and either Seth or Ryan have shown so far is that the Cohens are loving parents that really care about their son.

After the fight scene, this scene also provides the audience with some comic relief. Kirsten's overly dramatic entrance, her incredulous 'a fight with who question' and the slamming of the door after dragging Seth behind her make for some truly entertaining moments. It is not a very emotional scene that would necessitate close ups of the characters' faces and so the closest shots the audience is presented with are medium close shots of Ryan, Seth and Kirsten.

### 4.3.1.3 Parent – Parent

The following table examines how the relationship between the two adult Cohens is portrayed on screen and why their relationship matters.

## 4.3.1.3.1 Kirsten and Sandy Cohen

**0:07:25 – 0:08:20 - Int. Night: The Cohen kitchen**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|---|---|---|
| 07:25 | (c.s.) Kirsten Cohen | Audio starts in the previous scene. K: "You brought him home? This is not a stray puppy, Sandy." |
| 07:27 | (MS) Sandy, camera on Kirsten's left side | S: "I know that, Kirsten." K: "It was only a matter of time before you started bringing home felons." S: "Ryan is not a felon." |
| 07:34 | (c.s.) Kirsten, reaction shot | K: "Did you not meet him in jail?" |
| 07:36 | (MS) Sandy, camera on Kirsten's left side, walks toward his wife (MCS) | S: "Yes, technically. But it wasn't for a felony. I mean it was – but it won't be when…" |
| 07:40 | (MS) camera behind Sandy. Kirsten is leaning against a kitchen counter. | S (cont.): "I'm done." K: "You're endangering our home. Did you even think about Seth?" S: "It's only for the weekend…" |
| 07:46 | (MCS) Sandy and Kirsten | S (cont.): "just till child services opens on Monday." |
| 07:48 | (MCS) Kirsten, over the shoulder shot | K: "What if this is all a scam? What if he's just using you to case the house?" |
| 07:51 - 07:58 | (MCS) Sandy, camera on Kirsten's left side | S: "He's not a criminal mastermind. He's a kid who has no one and nowhere to go. When did you become so cynical?" |
| 07:58 | (MCS) Kirsten, over the shoulder shot | K: "When did you become so self-righteous?" |
| 07:59 | (MS) Sandy and Kirsten. Pan right, Kirsten starts to walk toward Sandy | S: "I've always been self-righteous. You used to find it charming." |
| 08:04 | (MS) Kirsten walks past Sandy | K: "He sleeps in the pool house." |
| 08:06 | (MS) Kirsten with her back to Sandy. She slowly turns around | S: "Where 're you going?" K: "To put my jewelry in the vault." |
| 08:10 | (MCS) Sandy, reaction shot | |
| 08:11 | (MS) Kirsten faces Sandy | K (cont.): "Where do you think I'm going? The boy's going to need fresh sheets, towels and a toothbrush." |

This scene introduces Sandy's wife Kirsten to the audience. In a previous scene Sandy had told Ryan that he was not the one earning a lot of money, but his wife was, and in this scene it appears that Sandy is asking his wife's

permission to let Ryan stay. Kirsten seems cold hearted at first compared to Sandy, when she accuses Ryan of using Sandy to rob the house. In this scene not only does the audience learn something about the characters, but it can also observe the characters learning something new about each other. "When did you become so cynical?" Kirsten asks Sandy and he is clearly taken aback by her reluctance to help a troubled youth. At the end of the scene it is Sandy that is shown in a less flattering light when he believes the worst in his wife after she sarcastically tells him that she is going to put her jewelry in the vault. Kirsten, on the other hand redeems herself through demonstrating that she is a caring person after all, when she tells Sandy that she has to prepare the pool house for Ryan, so he can feel at home in their home.

As this is the first scene that presents the Cohens together in their home, they are shown predominantly in medium close shots and medium shots to give the audience a chance to orient itself and stay focused on the conversation that is taking place in the Cohen kitchen. Kirsten in the very first shot of the scene is shown in a close shot to emphasize how she feels about her husband bringing home a complete stranger with a criminal record. Before the audience sees Kirsten for the first time, it hears her, because the audio track containing Kirsten's first utterance starts at the end of the preceding scene. The woman that is than presented on screen defies our expectations of what we assume a rich Californian woman looks like. She is good looking, not yet forty, nicely dressed, and looks surprisingly natural. While Kirsten is in line with the Cohen's down to earth appeal, her neighbor Julie Cooper, who is introduced some time later in the episode, can than in contrast to Kirsten be described as typical trophy wife fulfilling all the existing clichés about the rich and famous of Orange County.

**0:36:25 - 0:37:47 - Ext. Day: The Cohen driveway**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|---|---|---|
| 36:25 | (MS) Sandy takes his surfboard out of his car | S: "Oh, honey. You should have seen the waves come in." |
| 36:30 | (MS) Kirsten outside in a bathrobe. Sandy approaches her (MCS) | S (cont./ OC, then on camera): "Six foot and it was going…" K: "Seth got into a fight." |
| 36:33 | (MCS) Sandy and Kirsten, camera behind Kirsten | S: "He did?" K: "This is what happens…" |

| 36:35 | (MCS) Sandy and Kirsten, camera behind Sandy | K (cont.): "when you let someone like this into our house." |
|---|---|---|
| 36:36 | (c.s.) Sandy, over the shoulder shot. Sandy walks away with the surfboard | K (cont.): "When you let our son hang out with criminals." <br> S: "At least he has someone to hang out with." |
| 36:40 | (LS) Kirsten and Sandy, Sandy walks to the right with the board | S (cont.): "Don't salt his game, honey." |
| 36:42 | (c.u.) Kirsten looks confused | K: "What the hell does that mean?" |
| 36:44 | (MS) Sandy, over the shoulder shot. He walks back to Kirsten (c.s.) | S: "I, it, I don't know. I just know that I'd rather have Seth hanging out with Ryan that some trust fund kid from around here…" |
| 36:51 | (MCS) Kirsten, camera on Sandy's left side. He walks off again. | S (cont.): "who only cares about getting a new Beemer every year. There's a whole world outside this (off-camera) Newport beach bubble." <br> K: "You don't seem to mind living in this bubble." |
| 36:59 | (MS) Sandy, over the shoulder shot. He walks back to Kirsten (c.s.) | S: "I, I know there's something else out there. You remember when we were 22. What did you say? You said you'd never, you'd never be like your parents, never have their life." |
| 37:08 | (c.s.) Kirsten, camera on Sandy's left side | K: "I was 22. I stank of patchouli and I lived in the back of a mail truck." |
| 37:12 | (c.s.) Sandy, over the shoulder shot | S: "And you were fun. And rebellious and, and you married me." |
| 37:20 | (MCS) Kirsten, camera on Sandy's left side. Kirsten turns and walks toward the door. | K: "I can't. I'm sorry. I don't want this kid in my house anymore." |
| 37:32 | (c.s.) Sandy | S: "Where is he supposed to go?" |
| 37:33 | (MCS) Kirsten, over the shoulder shot. Kirsten turn to face Sandy | K: "He has a family, Sandy. It's not up to you to decide whether or not they're good enough." |
| 37:40 | (c.s.) Sandy, reaction shot | |
| 37:44 | (MCS) Kirsten, over the shoulder shot. Pan right as Kirsten goes inside | |

While the previous scene gave the audience some hints about what kind of people the Cohens are, viewers learn a lot about the Cohens' past in this one. The pattern that emerged in an earlier scene, presenting Kirsten as the strict parent and Sandy as a father who wants to be friends with his son, is

reinforced in this scene, when Sandy tells his wife not to "salt his [Seth's] game", repeating a phrase Ryan had used in an earlier conversation. Instead of being angry like his wife about Seth's involvement in a fight, Sandy seems to be rather proud of his son instead. In this scene the audience is reminded that technically Sandy is also an outsider who does not really belong, but instead of feeling bad about this or desperately trying to fit in, he is proud of being different and prefers his son to be different as well. He tells Kirsten that he prefers Seth to spend time with Ryan rather than the trust fund teenagers of Newport Beach. In this scene, the writers put a big emphasis on the notion that being different is actually a good thing and that in the Cohen universe being an outsider is better than being one of the Newport in-crowd.

There is quite a lot of movement at first in the scene and the camera tracks most of it to keep the scene dynamic. Toward the end of it, when emotions are running high and Ryan's fate is discussed, the camera moves in closer and focuses, especially, on Sandy's face as he reacts to Kirsten's decision about Ryan. One can see that he is disappointed in his wife and that he does not agree with her decision. This leaves room for more conflict in the case of Ryan's return, as Sandy is now aware that Kirsten really does not want Ryan around Seth because she thinks he is a bad influence.

### 4.3.2 Parent Storyline

The parent storyline has become an integral part in modern teen drama series in order to attract a wider demographic. The following tables examine how the *O.C.* pilot set up season one's main parent storyline and how in turn this storyline affects the other storylines in the pilot and in the first season.

### 4.3.2.1 Parent storyline is established

**0:14:50 – 0:16:13 – Ext. Day: Cooper Balcony/ Int. Day. Cooper House**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|---|---|---|
| 14:50 | (MLS) Marissa is standing on a balcony | |
| 14:56 | (LS) Marissa watches the Cohens and Ryan walk up the street, over the shoulder shot | |
| 15:00 | (MLS) Marissa looks down from the balcony | |

| 15:01 | (c.s.) Marissa turns around. The Cohens and Ryan in the background, out of focus. Marissa walks way. | |
|---|---|---|
| 15:05 | (MCS) Marissa walks toward the front door and opens it (MS) Two men in black suits are outside | Men 1: "Hello again." |
| 15:13 | (MCS) Marissa, camera behind the two men | M: "My dad isn't here." M1: "When can we expect him? M: "I don't know." |
| 15:17 | (MCS) The men, camera behind Marissa. She blocks the entrance with her arm. | M1: "Hmm. Well, then, if you see your father please remind him again…" |
| 15:23 | (MCS) Marissa, camera behind the men | M1 (cont.): "how much we would like to talk." |
| 15:24 | (MCS) The men, camera behind Marissa. One man hands her a card. | M1 (cont.): "Let me leave you another one of my cards. |
| 15:27 | (MCS) Marissa takes the card and closes the door. | M1: "Have a good day." |
| 15:31 | (MLS) Marissa closes the door and looks at the card | |
| 15:33 | (c.u.) Business card. "Steve Pearlman. U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission." | |
| 15:34 | (MLS) Marissa walks through the foyer. Dolly-out as she walks forward When she is (c.s.), following pan as she walks into an office. Her father is sitting behind his desk. (MS) | J: "Thanks, kiddo." |
| 15:46 | (MCS) Marissa hands her father the card | J (cont./ OC): "I just didn't have time to deal with those guys right now." |
| 15:49 | (MCS) Jimmy takes the card and puts it away | M: "Who are they? J: "Suits. Bureaucrats. "The Man" |
| 16:00 | (c.s.) Marissa, reaction shot | M: "But I mean, everything's okay, right?" |
| 16:03 | (MCS) Jimmy stares at his computer. He looks up. | J: "Yeah. It's, it's just a thing with, uh, a client. Nothing for you to worry about, okay." |
| 16:10 | (c.s.) Marissa, reaction shot. She turns and walks away. | |

The pilot's main parent storyline – it becomes apparent in this scene – concerns the Cooper family, specifically Marissa's father Jimmy. His daughter opens the front door to find two government agents outside, whom she tells

that her father is not home. The men hand her a business card and ask her to tell her father that they need to speak to him. From the conversation the audience can gather that this is not their first visit and later in Jimmy's study it becomes clear that Marissa had lied for her father before. At this point, the audience can only guess what the problem is, because it does not yet know Jimmy's occupation or why someone from the U.S. securities and exchange commission would want to talk to him. All one learns is that all is not well in the Cooper household. While Jimmy still denies that there might be a problem, because he does not want to worry his teenage daughter with his problems, it is clear that he is in over his head. Marissa does not believe her father when he tells her everything is all right and her reaction to Jimmy's answers to her questions are shown in close shots. Jimmy avoids looking in Marissa's and the camera's direction, and as Jimmy stays emotionally distant, the camera stays distant as well, not getting closer than medium close shots.

After Marissa closes the front door, the camera tracks her as she walks through the foyer into her father's study. The audience gets a sense of where in the Cooper home the action takes place and it is also informed that Jimmy works from home. Even though, the audience does not learn what kind of trouble Jimmy is in, it is established that the government is investigating him for some wrongdoing.

### 4.3.2.2 Parent storyline continues

**0:22:50 – 0:23:54 - Int. Night: A ballroom**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|----|---------------|-------|
| 22:50 | (MCS) Kirsten, Sandy and another couple at a table. Pan left to reveal Jimmy and Julie next to them. | K: "She is so beautiful, you guys." S: "Oh, I think you spent more on this dress than I make in a year." Man (OC): "That's why we trust him with our money." |
| 22:57 | (c.s.) Kirsten and the man | Man: "I expect to die a very rich man, Jimmy." |
| 23:00 | (c.s.) Jimmy smiles uncomfortably | S (OC): "Well, you're bound to be half right." |
| 23:04 | (c.s.) Kirsten looks worried, over the shoulder shot | K: "You okay, Jimmy?" |
| 23:05 | (MCS) Julie, Jimmy, Sandy | Ji: "Ah, yeah. It's just, ah, it's a little stuffy in here." |
| 23:10 | (c.s.) Jimmy gets up | Ji (cont.) Honey, I'm, uh, gonna get…" |

| 23:12 | (c.s.) Julie ignores Jimmy | Ji (OC): "some fresh air, okay?" <br> Ju: "Marissa wanted to wear these *Prada Mary Janes…"* |
|---|---|---|
| 23:15 | (MCS) Julie, Sandy, Kirsten. Pan right to focus on Sandy and Kirsten | Ju (cont.): "but I told her she had to wear the stiletto *Manolos."* |
| 23:18 | (c.s.) Kirsten and Sandy look worried | |

This second scene explains to the audience what Jimmy's problem is. Although, the issue is not directly addressed, the audience gets all the pieces of information necessary to piece together the puzzle, from this scene. A man at the table informs the viewers that Jimmy handles his finances and the shot showing Jimmy's reaction to the same man's "I expect to die a very rich man", tells the audience that the man will probably not die rich. The scene also provides the audience with more information about Julie Cooper. She is depicted as a very superficial person who does not seem to – or rather want to – notice that her husband is not feeling well. Instead she goes on discussing expensive designer shoes. Her superficiality is of course important for future episodes. This scene sets up for the possibility that Jimmy has lost a lot of money, and one can probably guess how the haute couture loving Julie Cooper would react to suddenly being poor or worse.

The Cohens, in this scene, again act like decent human beings among a crowd full of rich, superficial people, and voice their concern as Jimmy attempts to abruptly leave the table. What this tells the audience is that there are people Jimmy can rely on or go to for advice and who care about him. As all the main characters in this scene had been established in previous scenes, the camera stays rather close to emphasize what they are feeling, rather than establishing the setting through wide shots and medium shots.

### 4.3.3 Setting

The following two tables provide a glimpse of the world *The O.C.* is set in. They not only introduce the audience to the Newport Beach lifestyle, but also provide Ryan with an idea of what living in Orange County is like.

### 4.3.3.1 At the fundraiser

**0:18:21 – 0:18:38 - Ext. Day: Terrace**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|---|---|---|
| 18:21 | (MS) Ryan walks out onto a terrace. | |
| 18:25 | (LS) The terrace. Pan right to a waiter coming down the stairs. | W: "Mushroom leek crescent? Crab and brie phyllo?" |
| 18:32 | (MS) Waiter, Ryan looks skeptical | |
| 18:35 | (c.s.) Ryan leans over to Ryan | S: "Welcome to the dark side." |
| 18:37 | (MS) The Cohens and Ryan | |

From this short scene the audience can actually learn a lot. One, the affluent Newport crowd likes to serve exotic food. Two, the fundraiser organized by high school students is a black tie event. Three, the venue in which the catwalk show takes place has a huge terrace overlooking the ocean on which guests can mingle and show off their designer dresses and jewelry. At this point the audience might disagree with Seth, who whispers "welcome to the dark side" into Ryan's ear, because viewers probably think that there is nothing wrong with enjoying being waited on and attending a party at a great venue. The longest shot in the scene is a long shot used to establish the scene. The camera slowly pans to the right, proving the audience with a 180°-view of the venue and the people at the fundraiser, only to stop in front of an overly enthusiastic waiter. The camera stays distant for most part of the scene and the only close shot is used when Seth leans over to Ryan to whisper in his ear, to emphasize Ryan's reaction.

### 4.3.3.2 At the beach house party

**0:25:19 – 0:25:54 - Ext. Night: In front of the beach house/ Int. Day: Beach house**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|---|---|---|
| 25:19 | (LS) A yellow jeep pulls up to a beach house | People partying |
| 25:23 | (LS) people party outside and on a balcony. Tilt down. The girls get out of the car (MCS) | |
| 25:27 | (MCS) The girls get out of the car | |

| 25:29 | (MS) Summer and her friends walk toward the camera | |
|---|---|---|
| 25:31 | (MS) Summer hugs a blond girl | |
| 25:34 | (c.s.) Inside: A table full of bongs. Someone snorts drugs. Pan left past a boy putting his hands under a girl's t-shirt to Ryan and Seth entering | Party sounds |
| 25:42 | (MS) camera behind Ryan and Seth. Bikini glad girls are dancing | |
| 25:45 | (MCS) Ryan and Seth, low-angle shot. Ryan walks past the camera | R: "Welcome to the dark side." |
| 25:48 | (MS) high-angle shot. People around a table drinking and taking drugs. A girl in a pink bikini. Following pan. | |
| 25:51 | (MCS) low-angle shot, Seth looks nervous | S (deadpan): "Oh, hey. Cocaine. That's awesome." |

While the previous scene presented a party venue with adults, this scene shows how the rich teenagers party when they are on their own. Now it is Ryan's turn to tell Seth, "welcome to the dark side" as they arrive on the scene. Most shots in the scene are also either long shots or medium to medium long shots to establish the setting and the people in the setting. In the first scene inside, the camera is closer, focusing on a table full with drug paraphernalia and the party behavior of the crowd. With the camera right behind Seth and Ryan when they enter the beach house one feels as if one was there with them, following the boys into the house. To make it clear to the audience what kind of party Seth and Ryan are attending – just in case viewers somehow missed the bongs and the boy snorting something off a table – Seth nervously says to no one in particular: "Oh, hey. Cocaine. That's awesome." The scene portrays the supposedly glamorous side of having rich parents and seemingly unlimited access to alcohol and drugs. The girls dance around in their bikinis and everyone seems to have a really great time. But the crowd just functions as decoration to show Seth and Ryan what they normally miss out on.

### 4.3.4 Music and Clothes

The following songs were used in the pilot episode:

- „California" by *Phantom Planet*

- „Sweet Honey" by *Slightly Stoopid*
- „All around the world" by *Cooler Kids*
- „Swing swing" by *The All-American Rejects*
- „Hands Up" by *Black Eyed Peas*
- „I'm a player" by *The K.G.B*
- „Into the dust" by *Mazzy Star*
- „Honey and the moon" by *Joseph Arthur*
- „Let it roll" by *Maximum Roache*
- „Show me" by *Cham Pain*

Music has always been a part of teen drama series, but older series predominantly used pop music that had already found its place in cultural discourse. *The O.C.* did not follow this pattern, but replaced music by well-known artists with mostly "indie" music or less famous songs by well-known musicians. By doing so, it exposed the audience to music most viewers had not been familiar with. The pilot episode started this trend, which gave the series – from the start – a young, trendsetting and taste making appearance.

The pilot also introduces the audience to rich Californians' fashion choices. Most characters are predominantly shown in either couture during the fashion show and in bikinis and mini skirts at the beach house and therefore, the pilot does not really dictate what is in and worn by the popular crowd and what is probably uncool because it is worn by either Seth or Ryan. Julie Cooper and some parents backstage at the fashion show, however, mention designer labels to make the viewers aware what kind of clothes the teenagers on the show wear.

### 4.3.5 Topics

The following issues were raised or mentioned in the pilot, some to progress a storyline or explain a character trait to others and others just to give the audience an idea of the setting. The following subchapters will break down how the topics were dealt with. This part explores *The O.C.* as a text, focusing on content and topics, hoping to elucidate what elements might be prompting engagement.

### 4.3.5.1 Alcohol, Smoking, Drugs

Ryan and Marissa connect over a cigarette. Ryan's smoking emphasizes his bad boy image, which Marissa finds intriguing. To show him that she is not a good girl she asks him for a cigarette. What follows is probably one of the best cigarette commercials produced in recent years. Marissa and Ryan exchange longing looks while lighting her cigarette with his, while the camera alternately shows Marissa and Ryan's face and their respective cigarettes, in close shots. Because teenagers cannot smoke on network television unless they portray bad people, this is the only time one sees Ryan and Marissa smoke in the pilot. After they connected it was no longer necessary for Ryan to smoke on camera because his image had been established. As long as Ryan smoked he was a bad boy but toward the end of the pilot, instead of lighting a cigarette, Ryan picks up Marissa and carries her into the pool house.

Seth acts like a normal teenager who is insecure and lonely at a party that offers large quantities of alcohol and gets drunk. The incident is not discussed in the episode, because rather than yelling at Seth for getting drunk, Kirsten is angry that he got into a fight. She does not tell Sandy, "your son was drunk" but complains to him about Seth's involvement in a fight. In a world where teenage characters get served alcohol at the bar and their parties look more like college parties than high school parties with everyone drinking and people taking drugs, it does not seem to be a big deal that Seth got drunk. There are no real consequences to drinking too much portrayed in the episode. Summer and their friends even drunk-drive Marissa home, but the worst that happens to her is being left alone in front of her house. When Kirsten catches Ryan ordering a drink at the bar she just makes him give her the drink and tells him that she hopes her husband is not wrong about him, instead of giving him an impromptu lecture. The episode shows a liberal approach to teenage drinking, accepting it as inevitability and not turning it into an issue worth discussing.

People at the beach house snort cocaine and utensils needed for smoking marihuana are focused on twice at the party. Just in case the audience is not aware of what substances are being consumed in front of Seth and Ryan, Seth spells it out for the viewers when he mentions cocaine. One can say that drug abuse is depicted in the episode, but its depiction is used solely to

establish a setting and to show how different Seth and the other Newport teenagers are.

## 4.3.5.2 Teenage Sexuality

The following moments, which can be seen in connection to the subcategory teenage sexuality, were found in the pilot. At the beach house party Seth accidentally walks in on people having a "three-way" in a bathroom. At the same party people are grinding up against each other and the viewers see a boy putting his hand under a girl's t-shirt. On the beach house patio Summer throws herself at Ryan, a boy she has not even spoken to before. She gets angry when he is trying to get away from her and rejects her advances. The moments shown inside the beach house were again used to establish the type of party Seth and Ryan are attending. What those moments, coupled with the portrayal of drug use and alcohol consumption, seem to tell viewers about the Newport crowd is, look at them, they are cool and popular, have access to alcohol and drugs and are so nonchalant about sex that they even have three-ways in their friend's house's bathtub.

Summer throwing herself at Ryan is used to create a conflict between Seth and Ryan and it also depicts Summer as a promiscuous mean girl who does not mind throwing herself at someone when she is drunk. However, because none of the main characters in the pilot are in a relationship with another main character, teenage sexuality is relegated to minor characters and extras whose sole functions is to cause conflict and establish a setting.

## 4.3.5.3 Romantic Relationships

The pilot focuses on three couples and Seth's love for a girl he has never really talked to. Marissa's relationship with Luke, the viewers come to understand, is less than perfect. She flirts with a complete stranger she met in front of her house and he cheats on her with one of her friends. Only the former causes a conflict, which results in a fight between Luke and Ryan, because Marissa does not find out about Luke's indiscretion. Luke cheating on Marissa is necessary, so the audience can root for Marissa and Ryan without feeling guilty about Ryan being a reason for Marissa's and Luke's

breakup. Although viewers have already seen good enough reasons for a Marissa-Luke breakup, it does not happen in the pilot. However, it sets up Luke and Ryan's rivalry and because of Luke's behavior it is easy for the audience to wish for Ryan to win and Luke to lose.

Seth gets his heart broken in the pilot episode and reacts to it by pushing the only person who is nice to him away and insults him in front of everyone, making Ryan into an outcast like himself. His reaction is understandable though, because he believes that the person he opened up to about Summer betrayed him. What is established in this scene is that if Summer does not change Seth deserves better. She is not yet worthy of his attention and has to redeem herself first, before viewers will root for Summer and Seth as a couple.

Kirsten and Sandy lead a model marriage compared to Julie and Jimmy. They talk about issues they are dealing with and are honest about their feelings regarding those issues and regarding their relationship. Julie, on the other hand, is self-centered and appears not to notice that her husband is in trouble. At the table she ignores him and she sends him back to the store for a yogurt. Should Jimmy not be able to fix his problems most viewers will probably be on his side in a fight that is sure to ensue between Julie and Jimmy, because she is not a very likeable character. The portrayal of the parent relationships in the pilot sends out the message that the teenagers coming from a stable and loving family make mistakes because they are young and not because they feel the need to rebel like the teenagers coming from a broken home.
Kirsten and Jimmy's former relationship is referenced twice in the pilot and the audience can expect that this piece of information will be important for future episodes, because otherwise the writers would not have put it in the episode. In the pilot, this plays into the parent storyline and explains why Kirsten and Jimmy are really close and she offers her help.

### 4.3.5.4 Friends and Family

Seth, from the beginning of the episode, is portrayed as an outsider with no friends. Even, Marissa is his next-door neighbor, had never invited him to any of her parties. Seeing Seth's reaction when he learns that Marissa had invited

Ryan, a complete stranger, to the fundraiser, makes the viewers feel bad, because Seth is established as the character the audience should root for as much as for Ryan. Having this information about Seth also makes the audience forgive him for his bad behavior toward Ryan later on, because viewers understand that Seth must be really hurt by the apparent betrayal by his only friend. All the scenes that involve Ryan and the popular teenagers, for example, Luke and the "cool" teenagers mocking Seth and pushing him around, emphasize that Seth and Ryan are the characters the audience should care about and invest in, because they probably deserve it the most. The apparent message in the scene that follows the fight, in which Ryan and Seth settle their dispute, seems to be that friendship can endure everything if one is just honest about ones feelings.

After the party, Marissa's friends abandon her in front of her house, because they cannot find her keys. Instead of taking her back to one of their places they just leave her in the driveway, not acting like friends should, at all. Instead, it is Ryan who carries Marissa over to the pool house and lays her down on his bed. This scene establishes that Marissa can count on Ryan, even after she did not stand up for him at the party, emphasizing again, how nice Ryan is.

How the families are portrayed also has an impact on how the teenage characters are viewed. Marissa senses that her family is trouble and she compensates by drinking too much, which in turn she tries to hide even from her best friend Summer. While some viewers might not condone her behavior, they at least have enough information to understand why Marissa is acting a certain way, and why they should care about her and invest in her character's development. Seth, on the other hand, has a loving family who is interested in his well-being and cares about him getting in trouble. The Cohens are portrayed as the perfect family in the pilot, and one cannot help but compare all the other parents to them. Needless to say, they do not fare very well compared to the high standard set up by Kirsten and Sandy Cohen. By showing how much they care about Seth, the viewers cannot really be angry with Kirsten when she tells Sandy that Ryan has to leave, because the audience understands that she is doing what she thinks is best for her son.

### 4.3.5.5. High School Life

The pilot takes place during the summer break, and therefore the audience does not see the teenage characters in high school. Sandy, however, mentions the upcoming new school year to which Seth responds by reminding his father that his classmates are still the same and therefore things are not likely to change. What viewers learn from this short exchange, is that Seth is having a hard time in school and is not on the best terms with his classmates, which include Luke, Marissa and Summer. Sandy briefly talks to Ryan about school when they first meet, and it is revealed that Ryan is smart but cuts classes a lot. At this point, the audience does not yet know if it will ever see Ryan in Seth's high school and how that would change things for Seth.

### 4.3.5.6 Social Events

Two big social events are depicted in the pilot, with scenes from the fashion show fundraiser, organized by Marissa and her friends, dominating the first part of the episode. The audience sees the girls modeling different outfits and is taken behind the scenes into the dressing room, where scantily glad girls try to get ready for their big moment. Those scenes are used to introduce viewers to the apparent glamorous life the Newport teenagers are living. Everyone, but the girls who do not get to wear their favorite outfits, seems to be enjoying the event, and it gives the audience a first glimpse of life in Newport beach, in addition to showing viewers, what they can expect from future episodes in terms of opulence.

The second big social event is the party at the beach house, to which everyone but Seth is invited. While the fundraiser shows the audience what events including adults look like, the beach house party introduces viewers to the world of teenage parties. While a teenage audience might be intrigued by what is going on in the house, especially because the characters are portrayed as having a lot of fun while drinking and taking drugs, some older viewers, especially those with teenage children, might criticize the show's liberal approach to the depiction of teenage drinking. As mentioned early, there are no repercussions to the excess drinking shown in the episode other than Marissa being left lying in her driveway. The episode seems to portray

drinking and taking drugs as cool. However, one can argue that most of the scenes depicting alcohol and drugs, were used to establish the setting the party takes place in and to show what kind of world Seth and Ryan stumble into.

### 4.3.5.7 Catastrophic Events

The pilot is not all about the fun the rich teenage characters are having. At the beginning of the episode, Ryan and his brother are arrested for stealing a car that Ryan's older brother crashes into a wall. As a result of his arrest, Ryan's mother kicks him out of her house, but not before her boyfriend punches Ryan and pushes him around. Most bad things seem to happen to Ryan in the first episode, because at the end of it, Ryan learns that his mother had abandoned him. All those scenes are necessary for the audience to accept the premises that Ryan is better off without his own family and has a better chance of achieving something in his life, if he stays with the Cohens.

The pilot also sets up a storyline with a possibly catastrophic outcome for those involved in it. First, the audience is made aware of the fact that the government is investigating Marissa's father, and later it learns that Jimmy's problems are money related. Although, this storyline is just being developed in the pilot episode, the audience can expect that the fallout will have a huge impact on Marissa and her family.

### 4.3.6 Characters

There has to be a good, believable reason why a character returns or a new character arrives on the scene, if a series chooses to use the "a new or returning character disrupts the lives of the people living in the setting the character invades" approach. In *The O.C.* this character is Ryan and the show's writers present multiple reasons in the pilot why he comes to disrupt life in Newport Beach. First he is kicked out of the house by his mother and her abusive boyfriend and none of his friends can provide him with a place for the night, and at the end of the episode, Sandy and Ryan find the Atwood house empty and it becomes clear that Ryan's mother has abandoned her son. From the very beginning Sandy Cohen is portrayed as a compassionate,

caring person and the viewers can therefore easily accept that Sandy follows through on his offer to help Ryan out should he need help. Had the viewers not seen Sandy with Ryan in the juvenile correction center, they would probably have had a hard time believing that someone living in a gated community would bring a criminal teenager from a bad neighborhood home with him.

When looking at the characters of a teen drama series one has to ask the following question: Were the characters portrayed in a fashion that would make the audience want to invest in them?

Ryan

Ryan, from the start, is portrayed as the victim. First, his brother involves him in a crime, and then he is arrested, punched in the face, kicked out of the house and left stranded on the street. One cannot but hope that things will get better for him, as soon as his first meeting with Sandy, in which it becomes clear that Ryan is not really a bad person, but just had had some bad luck. Ryan, becomes a little bit of a hero in the first episode, first saving Seth from the "jocks" and later rescuing Marissa and bringing her to the beach house. From the very beginning, the writers put a huge emphasis on Ryan's apparent selflessness and his willingness to help others, even if they have wronged him. The audience is reminded again and again that Ryan is a character viewers should root for and follow his development as a character. They seem to have done a good job, because by the end of the episode one cannot but hope that Kirsten will change her mind and let Ryan stay at their house, because he really deserves some happiness.

Seth

Seth, like Ryan, is also portrayed as a victim, because the in-crowd is bullying him and does not seem to have a problem with physically hurting him. He, too, proves to be a hero, when he joins the fight to help Ryan. Watching Seth being mocked by the "jocks", one cannot but feel sorry for him and hate his enemies as much as he does. Viewers can probably identify with him the most, at least those who are not part of a popular group themselves, because even though Seth seems to be a really nice young man who just wants to

keep to himself and do the things he likes, he is mercilessly teased and bullied by Luke, Summer and their friends. Seth is a prime example of the loveable geek and the audience sees life in Newport Beach through his eyes. He makes snaky comments about the people living in Newport and through him viewers are able to see past the glamour and focus on what is really important – friends and family.

Kirsten and Sandy

Kirsten and Sandy are cast as "good cop" and "bad cop" in the pilot to create a conflict. However, that does not necessarily mean the audience does not like Kirsten. She is portrayed as a loving mother who only wants the best for her son and therefore, one cannot really be mad at her for wanting to protect him from Ryan's apparent bad influence. Kirsten and Sandy seem to be the perfect parents – trying to be friends with their son and not punishing him to harshly when he makes a mistake. Sandy, in particular, tries to act like a peer, making Seth point out Summer to him and being excited about Seth's involvement in the fight. The Cohen parents are the opposite of Ryan's family – loving, caring, understanding – and therefore, one cannot but hope that Ryan can stay with the Cohens.

Marissa

Marissa smokes and drinks too much at parties, but at the same time tries to uphold her image as a nice girl who works hard to help the community. It is interesting to see her transition from loving daughter to wild party girl to helpless abandoned girl in front of her house. She truly acts like a teenager; trying out forbidden things to rebel against her parents, and to forget all the problems she thinks she has to help dealing with, she drinks too much at a party and passes out. Marissa is portrayed as a party girl, but in the end, one can see that spending her time at wild parties does not necessarily make her happy, and that those parties are just her way to deal with what is happing at home. Knowing about the Coopers problems and the anxiety Marissa must be feeling, one can forgive her for not standing up for Ryan more easily, and is willing to invest in her because one hopes that her father's problems will not destroy her life.

<u>Jimmy and Julie</u>

While Jimmy, like Sandy and Kirsten, seems to care about his family, and lies to Marissa because he does not want to worry her, Julie is portrayed as a superficial and egocentric woman from the start. In making sure that the audience is aware of Julie's bad character traits from the start, the writers can expect the audience to be on Marissa and Jimmy's side in the future even if Marissa should do something viewers do not agree with, because Julie, in the pilot, is not a character, one would want to identify with, and not knowing why she acts the way she acts, it is hard feeling empathy for her.

<u>Luke, Summer and the "jocks"</u>

Luke, Summer and their friends are also shown in a bad light, in order for the audience to root for Seth and Ryan. However, viewers might be interested in finding out why Summer and Luke are so mean to someone they do not even know and has done nothing to hurt them. As soon as viewers learn why these characters act a certain way, they might be able to identify with the characters without feeling guilty for identifying with a mean character.

## 4.4 Conclusion

*The O.C.* pilot walks the fine line between presenting its viewers with this "teenage dream world" in which teenagers apparently can do whatever they want without fear of consequences, and, making the audience realize that all the money and the freedom does not necessarily make the characters happy. What does is a loving family – the message seems to be – who cares about and engages with the teenagers instead of just handing over a credit card.

As mentioned before, the pilot's purpose is to engage the audience enough to be interested in seeing how storylines progress and characters develop. The question now is: After watching *The O.C.* pilot, why should the audience be interested in seeing how the series progresses? The pilot has set up many storylines that have not been resolved in those forty-four minutes in order to convince viewers that they have to tune in again if they want to know how those storylines unfold. The audience might have already picked a character it wants to cheer for and is interested in seeing how that character and his relationship with others develop. From how the storylines were set up in the

pilot viewers will probably want to see the following issues being addressed and questions answered in episodes to come:

- How does Ryan's return to Newport affect the people living there and what effect does this have on his own life?
- How will Jimmy deal with his problems and what does dealing with them mean for his family?
- How will Ryan and Seth's budding friendship develop?
- How will Kirsten cope with Ryan's return? Does it cause problems in her marriage and can she warm up to the idea of having Ryan around longer?
- How long will Ryan be allowed to stay with the Cohens?
- Will Seth make progress with Summer?
- How will the Ryan – Luke – Marissa situation develop?
- Will Summer and the other cool kids continued to mock and harass Seth?
- Can Ryan and Seth find a way to deal with "the jocks" without resorting to violence?

By focusing on a small group of people with an emphasis on a small number of main characters, the pilot has given the audience the chance to really pay attention to those characters and their problems. By setting up storylines and not resolving them, viewers were made curious, and in turn, they wanted the show to come back with more episodes, because they wanted to see how these storylines would continue and how the issues mentioned above would be dealt with. *The O.C.* has accomplished the feat of providing the audience with likeable characters one feels the need to root for and provided the right amount of drama to keep people interesting, without overdoing it and introducing to many dramatic storylines at once. Although the pilot provides some stereotypical characters and does not shy away from clichés, the storylines seemed realistic enough for viewers to want to invest in the show and come back for more episodes.

## 5. GOSSIP GIRL

### 5.1. Introduction

> The glittering lights of Manhattan that served as backdrop for Edith Warton's bodice-heaving trysts are still glowing – but the stage is empty. No one has breakfast at Tiffany's and no one has affairs to remember – instead, we have breakfast at 7 am and affairs we try to forget as quickly as possible. How did we get into this mess?
>
> *Carrie Bradshaw, ,Sex and the City' Pilot*

It is understandable that *Gossip Girl*, a member of the CW family, has been called „Sex and the City for the younger set,"[115] because Carrie's voice over at the beginning of the series' pilot could have easily been uttered by the anonymous blogger *Gossip Girl* as well. The book and the TV series follow the lives and loves of rich Upper East Siders, but the foci of our attention are still in high school at the beginning of the series. *Sex and the City* has always attracted a younger audience as well and therefore, it comes as no surprise that youngsters „dig" *Gossip Girl.*

*Gossip Girl* is an American teen drama television series that began to air on the CW on September 19, 2007 and has, as of May 2011, aired four seasons. It is currently in its fifth season. The series portrays the fictional lives of a group of rich teenagers living on Manhattan's Upper East Side with their often defunct families and the Humphrey family, who lives in Brooklyn.

### 5.1.1 Book Adaptation

> The pilot mirrors the first book, and Josh [Schwartz] and Stephanie [Savage] drew from there for each character. We've deviated from the books for the show quite a bit. […] The book was used merely as a launching point for each character. Once the show was up and running, the writers' room mindset, per Josh and Stephanie was to "let the books be the books and let's use them where we can, but let's also make the series the series." Also, you have to remember that when we started, the entire series of books is a year of their high school life – their Senior year. Josh and Stephanie made them Juniors for the first season, so we couldn't even delve into the college stuff yet. And now, we are so far away from the books in a lot of ways.[116]

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[115] Teen people blurb on Cecily von Ziegesar. *Gossip Girl.* 2002

[116] Gruben, Adrienne. "'Gossip Girl' co-executive producer Josh Safran on kisses and disses in season 3" *Examiner* September 3, 2009/ Accessed: February 15, 2010 http://www.examiner.com/pop-media-in-los-angeles/3-part-series-gossip-girl-co-executive-producer-josh-safran-on-kisses-and-disses-season-3

The TV Series *Gossip Girl* is based on the immensely popular book series *Gossip Girl* written by Cecily von Ziegesar. While the characters in the book series are very one-dimensional and more like caricatures than real life people, the TV series gave the characters more depth and a wider range of interests and emotions. Some characters were changed to appeal to a wider demographic, while others were changed to fulfill the prerequisite of beauty in teen TV. Characters that were already what society and Hollywood considers beautiful were not changed at all, while others had to be turned into "TV material." Some of the TV series main characters were described as follows in the book series.

## Serena van der Woodsen

[…| tall, eerily beautiful blond girl. Her hair is longer, paler. Her blue eyes have that deep mysteriousness of kept secrets. […] Her parents' apartment is across the street from the Met. […] She got kicked out of boarding school. […] If we aren't careful, S is going to win over our teachers, wear that dress we couldn't fit into, eat the last olive, have sex in our parents' beds, spill Campari on our rugs, steal our brothers' and our boyfriends' hearts and basically ruin our lives and piss us all off in a major way.[117]

## Blair Waldorf

[…] long, dark brown hair. Very bow-tie proper preppy […].Blair liked to think of herself as a hopeless romantic in the style of old movie actresses like Audrey Hepburn and Marilyn Monroe. She was always coming up with plot devices for the movie she was starring in at the moment, the movie that was her life.[118]

## Jenny Humphrey

Constance ninth grader Jenny Humphrey. Jenny preferred to be invisible. She was curly-haired, tiny little freshman, so invisible wasn't a hard thing to be. Actually, it would have been easier if her boobs weren't so incredibly huge. At fourteen, she was a 34D.[119]

## Vanessa Abrams

Vanessa was an anomaly at Constance, the only girl in the school who had a nearly shaved head, wore black turtlenecks everyday, read Tolstoy's *War and Peace* over and over like it was the Bible, listened to Belle and Sebastian, and drank unsweetened black

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[117] Cecily von Ziegesar. *Gossip Girl*, New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2002, p.4
[118] Ibidem. p.4-8
[119] Ibidem p.41f

tea. She had no friends at all at Constance, and lived in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, with her twenty-two-year-old sister, Ruby.[120]

## Dan Humphrey

Dan wasn't into sun. He spent most of his free time in his room, reading morbid, existentialist poetry about the bitter fate of being human. He was pale, his hair was shaggy, and he was rock-star thin.[121]

## Rufus Humphrey

Rufus Humphrey, the infamous retired editor of lesser-known beat poets and a party animal himself. Their mother had already moved to Prague a few years before to "focus on her art" (p.49) If there were an award for the most embarrassing dad in the universe, Rufus Humphrey would have won it. He was wearing a sweat-stained white wife-beater and red checked boxer shorts, and was scratching his crotch. He hadn't shaved in a few days, and his gray beard seemed to be growing at different intervals. Some of it was thick and long, but in between were bald patches and patches of five o'clock shadow. His curly gray hair was matted and his brown eyes bleary. There was a cigarette tucked behind each of his ears. (p.71-72) Their father hated the Upper East Side and all its pretensions. He only sent Jenny to Constance because it was a very good school and because he used to date one of the English teachers there. (p.72)[122]

Jenny, in the TV series, is tall for a fourteen year old, has long blond hair and is very skinny. In terms of looks, she is nothing like her book alter ego.

Vanessa, on TV, does not go to High School at all. She is tall and has long dark curly hair. Vanessa dreams about becoming a filmmaker.

Dan, on *Gossip Girl*, is tall and handsome. He writes articles and short stories and wants to become a professional writer.

Rufus, in the TV series, is also nothing like his book alter ego, in terms of looks. He is a failed Rock star, who at the beginning of the series runs an art gallery. His wife left him and moved to Hudson, and he is probably the most loving parent on the show. He might not wear designer clothes like the other parents, but he is always nicely dressed. He is a handsome man in his mid- to late thirties.

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[120] Cecily von Ziegesar. *Gossip Girl.* New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2002 p.57
[121] Ibidem p.47
[122] Ibidem p.49-72

To emphasize the Humphreys' outsider status they were moved to Brooklyn while in the books they only live on the Upper West Side. And while the teenagers' parents are mentioned in the books, they do not play an important role and do not have their own storylines.

Because of the huge success of the book series, the TV series had an interested audience from the start that was curious to see how the television version of the books would turn out. As mentioned above the pilot of the show only mirrors the first book of the series, but judging from ratings and reviews, viewers do not seem to mind that the series did not faithfully adapt the books, but in many cases seem to prefer the development of characters and story lines in the TV series.

### 5.1.2 The TV Series

Set and filmed on location in New York City, the series focuses on the lives of Blair Waldorf, Serena van der Woodsen, Nate Archibald, Chuck Bass and their families, living on Manhattan's Upper East Side, and Dan and Jenny, who live with their father Rufus Humphrey in Brooklyn. An anonymous blogger called "Gossip Girl" chronicles their every move and comments on their lives via voice over. The group spends a great amount of time plotting the destruction of people they are enemies or frenemies with and by the end of season four we have seen many different relationship constellations between the main characters.

The series begins with Serena van der Woodsen's return to Manhattan, after having spent a year at boarding school in Connecticut. Numerous rumors surface suggesting reasons why she had left in the first place and why she had returned to the city. The first season focused mainly on the blossoming love story between Dan Humphrey and Serena van der Woodsen. Blair Waldorf breaks up with long-term boyfriend Nate Archibald, and secretly starts seeing bad boy Chuck Bass. The group has to deal with issues ranging from drug addict parents, a pregnancy scare, a parent's divorce, a brother who tried to commit suicide to being in a relationship with your future stepsister.

The following seasons saw the characters deal with the death of a parent, a parent remarrying, a parent in prison, and the discovery of a previously unknown half-brother. College applications and high school graduations surrounded by intrigues and scandals, all meticulously documented by the anonymous "Gossip Girl" and for all of New York to see. And while most story lines involving parents dealt with issues concerning a teenager and his/ her parent, a big focus has so far been put on Rufus Humphrey and Lily van der Woodsen's storyline, which is often presented independent from the teenage storylines.

### 5.1.3 The main characters (as of the end of season four)

**Serena van der Woodsen** (Blake Lively) 87 epsiodes



Image 14

It girl Serena van der Woodsen returns to Manhattan in the pilot episode, after having spent a year at boarding school. She is on-and off best friends with Blair Waldorf. She has been in a long-term relationship with Dan Humphrey, dated Nate Archibald, her college professor and her former high school teacher. Things and opportunities are often handed to her on a silver platter, which enrages her friend Blair. Season four saw her enrolled at Columbia University, after having taken a year off to search for her father and figure out what she wanted to do with her life.

**Blair Waldorf** (Leighton Meester) 87 episodes



Blair Waldorf, at the beginning of the series, is the Queen Bee of her high school. She surrounds herself with "minions" – girls who fulfill her every wish. She is in a relationship with Nate Archibald but breaks up with him after she finds out about him and Serena. For most parts of the series she has been in a turbulent relationship with Chuck Bass. She is very ambitious and loves scheming. It was her dream to attend Yale University, but after she was denied admittance she enrolled at New York University. She is currently studying at Columbia University and plans to follow in her mother's footsteps by pursuing a fashion related career. *Image 15*

**Dan Humphrey** (Penn Badgley)

Dan Humphrey lives in Brooklyn with his younger sister and his father. His parents separate early in the first season. He is down to earth and not interested in the least in the life his classmates are leading until he starts dating Serena van der Woodsen. He has been in an on- again/ off-again relationship with Serena, briefly dated his best friend, and Serena's worst enemy Georgina. Through the course of the series he has learned how to fit into Serena's world, especially after becoming her stepbrother. He is currently enrolled at New York University and has befriended his former enemy Blair Waldorf. *Image 16*

**Nate Archibald** (Chace Crawford) 87 episodes

Nate Archibald, the so-called golden boy at the beginning of the series, is in a relationship with Blair Waldorf, even though he seems to be in love with Serena van der Woodsen. His family life falls apart when he finds out about his father's drug problem and his father fleas the country, which results in the Archibald's accounts being frozen by the FBI. He briefly moves in with the Humphreys and has for the past two seasons been living with his best friend Chuck Bass in Chuck's hotel. *Image 17*

**Charles „Chuck" Bass** (Ed Westwick) 87 episodes

Bad boy Chuck Bass is raised by emotionally distant, real estate tycoon Bart Bass. After his father's death Chuck inherits the company and is adopted by his former stepmother Lily van der Woodsen in order for him to be able to take control of the company. Instead of going to college he opens a hotel and in season four tries to expand his business after nearly losing it to his father's former business partner. For most parts of the series he as been in a turbulent relationship with Blair Waldorf, but his self-destructive behavior often gets in the way. Image 18

**Jenny Humphrey** (Taylor Momsen) 65 episodes

Fourteen-year-old Jenny Humphrey wants nothing more than to become part of Blair's clique. She saws her own dresses and later in the series becomes an intern for Eleanor Waldorf Designs. Jenny is very impressionable and often gets into trouble because she is too eager to please the in-crowd. After getting into trouble one too many times, her father made her move in with her mother, because he thinks that the Upper East Side is toxic for her. She is very close to her brother Dan and becomes on-again/ off-again best friends with Serena's younger brother Eric.  Image 19

**Vanessa Abrams** (Jessica Szohr) 60 episodes

Vanessa and Dan have known each other since childhood and they had been inseparable until she moved to Vermont. In the first season she moves back to New York and causes problems in Dan and Serena's relationship. She briefly dates Nate and after Dan and Serena break up she finally professes her love for him. She is home schooled and at first does not intend to go to college. Then boyfriend Nate convinces her to at least take her SAT test and together with Dan she later enrolls at New York University, majoring in film. After getting involved in a plot to harm Serena she leaves the city and announced at the end of season four that she will be studying abroad the following semester. *Image 20*

**Rufus Humphrey** ( Matthew Settle) 87 episodes

Rufus Humphrey used to be in a band that *Rolling Stone Magazine* called one of the top ten forgotten bands of the nineties. In the nineties he was dating Lily van der Woodsen and it is later revealed that they had a child together that Lily gave up for adoption. Rufus and Lily start dating again in season one, but break it off because their respective children are in a relationship. They get married in season three and their marriage has so far hit many rocky patches. *Image 21*

**Lilly van der Woodsen** (Kelly Rutherford) 70 episodes



Serena and Eric's socialite mother is a multiple divorcee and currently married to Rufus Humphrey. At age nineteen she had Rufus' child but she hid the pregnancy and gave the child up for adoption. Early in the series she got married to Bart Bass and she later adopts his son Chuck. *Image 22*

**Eric van der Woodsen** (Connor Paolo) 52 episodes



Eric is Serena's younger brother. At the beginning of season one he is institutionalized because he had attempted to commit suicide. He later comes out to his friends after Georgina outs him to his family and his boyfriend pretends to date Jenny. He and Jenny are on-again/ off-again best friends and even though he tries to avoid his sister's drama, he is often pulled in and has to resort to scheming himself. *Image 23*

**Gossip Girl** voiced by Kristen Bell – 87 episodes



The anonymous blogger that chronicles the teenagers' every move relies on tips from the same teenagers and sends out "blasts" to the subscribers of her blog. The website is often used by someone of the group to discredit another member of the group or to spy on someone. So far the group has not been successful in finding out the identity of "Gossip Girl". *(Image 24)*

**Dorota** (Zuzanna Szadkowski) 52 episodes
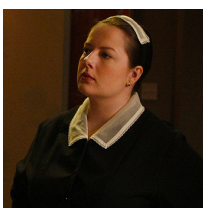


Dorota works for the Waldorf family and she seems to raise Blair while her mother is traveling the world. Blair consults her when she is facing problems, because she knows that Dorota is always there for her and loves her as if she were her own daughter. *Image 25*

### 5.1.4 Structure/ Format

*Gossip Girl* can also be described as a serial. Some episodes end with cliffhangers and even if they do not, storylines are typically developed over multiple episodes. Relationships of the main characters develop in the course

of the season and the series is written with no end in sight other than the annual season finale. The average run time is forty-two minutes including intro and end credits. Each episode features the *Gossip Girl* blog page either at the beginning of the episode or after a recap narrated by *Gossip Girl.* The blog page features a picture of a character with an accompanying text referring to a recent event. *Gossip Girl* begins each recap saying, "Gossip Girl here. Your one and only source into the scandalous lives of Manhattan's elite", and ends the recap with, "And who am I? That's one secret I'll never tell. You know you love me. XOXO. Gossip Girl."

## 5.2 The Pilot Episode

Original air date: September 19, 2007

Directed by: Mark Piznarski

Written by: Josh Schwartz, Stephanie Savage

Based on: "Gossip Girl" by Cecily von Ziegesar

Produced by: Jonathan C. Brody, Trey Coscia, Amy J. Kaufman, Bob Levy, Leslie Morgenstein, Joshua Safran, Stephanie Savage, Josh Schwartz

Original music by: Transcenders

Cinematography by: Ron Fortunato

Editing by: Timothy A. Good

Run time: 42 minutes

Film negative format: 35 mm

Aspect ratio: 1.78 : 1

Principal cast:

Blake Lively (Serena van der Woodsen) Leighton Meester (Blair Waldorf) Penn Badgley (Dan Humphrey) Chace Crawford (Nate Archibald) Taylor Momsen (Jenny Humphrey) Ed Westwick (Chuck Bass) Kelly Rutherford (Lily van der Woodsen) Matthew Settle (Rufus Humphrey) Sam Robards ("The Captain" Archibald) Florencia Lorenzo (Eleanor Waldorf) Connor Paolo (Eric van der Woodsen) Nicole Fiscella (Isabel Coates) Nan Zhang (Kati Farkas)[123]

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[123] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1036062/ Accessed January 12, 2011

Setting:

<u>Interior:</u> Grand Central Station, Waldorf Apartment, Humphrey Apartment, Palace Hotel, Sushi restaurant, art gallery, Ostroff Center, ballroom, party venue, cab

<u>Exterior:</u> Central Park, Manhattan streets, Brooklyn streets, roof top terrace, steps in front of the MET

## 5.2.1 Content

Serena van der Woodsen returns to Manhattan just in time for the new school year. Former best friend Blair Waldorf is less than pleased about Serena's return, especially after her boyfriend Nate Archibald reveals that he had slept with Serena while he was dating Blair. In Brooklyn, the Humphrey family prepares for the new school year as well. Freshman Jenny is working on invitations to Blair's party in order to get an invitation herself. Her older brother Dan finally gets to officially meet "the love of his life" Serena and takes her to his dad's rock concert. Their date is cut short when Dan receives a text message from Jenny asking for help. Bad boy Chuck Bass had escorted her up onto the roof and is forcing himself on her. Dan and Serena have to crash Blair's party to save Jenny from Chuck. The episode ends with Serena, Dan and Jenny leaving the party together in a cab.

## 5.2.2 Overview

**0:00:00 – 0:00:22**
Establishing shots showing famous New York City landmarks. A pretty blond girl – Serena van der Woodsen – is sitting on a Manhattan bound train.

**0:00:22 – 0:01:40**
The girl arrives at Grand Central Station. She is introduced through a voice over by someone named Gossip Girl. At the same time, the Humphrey family reunites at the train station. Father Rufus is picking up his two teenage children, sixteen year old Dan and fourteen year old Jenny.

**0:01:40 – 0:01:55**

Shots of various teenagers receiving Serena's picture on their cell phones. Blair Waldorf, a pretty brunette and Serena's best friend, seems less than pleased to receive the news of Serena's return to Manhattan.

**0:01:55 – 0:02:20**

A party at the Waldorf apartment. Blair's mother – a designer – briefly talks to her daughter and criticizes her choice of clothing.

**0:02:20 – 0:02:44**

A group of men talk to Nate Archibald, a handsome blond sixteen year old. Part of the group is his father, nicknamed "The Captain".

**0:02:44 – 0:02:53**

Nate and Blair walk through the crowd. They are greeted by their classmates Isabel Coates, Chuck Bass and Katy Farkas.

**0:02:53 – 0:03:06**

Blair pulls Nate into her bedroom and tells him that she is ready to have sex with him.

**0:03:06 – 0:03:13**

Cut back to Isabel, Katy and Chuck on a sofa. The girls receive the message about Serena's return.

**0:03:13 – 0:03:23**

Serena arrives outside the Waldorf apartment.

**0:03:23 – 0:03:43**

Cut to Blair and Nate. Blair tells him that she loves him.

**0:03:43 – 0:03:56**

Cut to Serena, arriving at the party.

**0:03:56 – 0:04:13**

Cut back to Blair and Nate. They are interrupted by the news that Serena has arrived.

**0:04:13 – 0:05:32**

Cut to Serena at the party talking to her mother Lily. Blair and Nate are reunited with Serena.

**0:05:32 – 0:05:50**

Serena visits her younger brother Eric at a treatment facility.

**0:05:50 – 0:06:12**

A Gossip Girl voice over commenting on a picture of Serena. Screen shots from the Gossip Girls website follow. Dan Humphrey is sitting in front of his laptop, reading the website. The intro to the TV series follows – an animation of the Manhattan skyline and the words Gossip Girl mixed together.

**0:06:12 – 0:07:35**

Cut to Serena in her brother's room. They talk for a while until their mother enters. Serena gets into an argument with her mother.

**0:07:35 – 0:08:55**

Establishing shots of Brooklyn followed by the Humphrey kitchen. Rufus, Dan and Jenny have breakfast together and discuss what is happening in their lives.

**0:08:55 – 0:09:43**

Nate is waiting for Serena in front of her hotel.

**0:09:43 – 0:10:38**

Dan is running to a bus stop. On the bus are Nate and Chuck discussing Serena. Chuck pretends not to know who Dan is.

**0:10:38 – 0:12:32**

Blair, Katy, Isabel and Jenny sit on the steps in front of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Serena joins them but Blair is not very welcoming.

**0:12:32 – 0:13:22**

Cut back to Brooklyn. Rufus and Dan are putting up flyers for Rufus' band.

**0:13:22 – 0:15:10**

Eric's room. Serena comes by and decides to take her brother shopping with her against her mother's will. In a store, they run into Jenny and Dan. Dan hides from Serena.

**0:15:10 – 0:16:07**

Nate and Chuck are walking through Central Park. They are smoking a joint and discuss their futures.

**0:16:07 – 0:18:35**

Serena and Blair are meeting in a hotel bar. They are drinking cocktails and discuss Serena's absence.

**0:18:35 – 0:19:46**

Jenny's bedroom in Brooklyn. She is sawing a dress for the *Kiss on the Lips* party and tells her brother to go visit Serena at her hotel.

**0:19:46 – 0:21:03**

Cut back to the hotel bar. Chuck enters and spots Serena drinking alone at the bar.

**0:21:03 – 0:21:53**

Blair's bedroom, decorated with candles. Nate enters and tells Blair he needs to tell her something.

**0:21:53 – 0:22:36**

Hotel kitchen. Chuck tries to blackmail Serena into making out with him.

**0:22:36 – 0:23:05**

Flashback. Nate and Serena are drunk at a party.

**0:23:05 – 0:23:21**

Cut back to Blair's bedroom after Nate told her his secret.

**0:23:21 – 0:23:46**

The flashback continues.

**0:23:46 – 0:24:10**

Cut back to Serena and Chuck. He tries to kiss her.

**0:24:10 – 0:24:12**

The flashback continues.

**0:24:12 – 0:24:15**

Cut back to Nate and Blair. Blair tells him to leave.

**0:24:15 – 0:24:19**

The flashback continues.

**0:24:19 – 0:24:20**

Cut back to Serena and Chuck

**0:24:20 – 0:24:21**

The flashback continues.

**0:24:21 – 0:24:23**

Cut back to Blair crying.

**0:24:23 – 0:24:24**

The flashback continues

**0:24:24 – 0:24:26**

Cut back to Blair

**0:24:26 – 0:25:10**

Cut to Serena and Chuck. She pushes him away and runs out of the kitchen. In the restaurant she bumps into Dan and drops her purse. She leaves without her cell phone.

**0:25:10 – 0:26:24**

Nate and his father in Central Park, discussing Nate's relationship with Blair.

**0:26:24 – 0:28:34**

Dan tries to return Serena's phone. To get out of Blair's party Serena asks Dan out in front of her mother.

**0:28:34 – 0:29:41**

Blair and Nate meet for dinner.

**0:29:41 – 0:31:07**

Lily visits Rufus in his gallery to discuss their children. It is revealed that Lily and Rufus had been a couple a long time ago.

**0:31:07 – 0:31:45**

Brooklyn. Dan and Jenny are getting ready for the night.

**0:31:45 – 0:32:28**

Blair's bedroom. Her mother comes in and criticizes Blair's dress again.

**0:32:28 – 0:33:02**

Nate, Chuck, Blair, Isabel and Katy share a limousine to the *Kiss on the Lips* party. They are drinking champagne and smoking marihuana.

**0:33:02 – 0:33:24**

Dan picks up Serena at her hotel.

**0:33:24 – 0:34:39**

Cut back to the limousine arriving in front of the party venue. Inside, people are dancing, drinking champagne and eating exotic food. Chuck spots Jenny and starts flirting with her.

**0:34:39 – 0:35:44**

Cut to Serena and Dan. Dan introduces her to his father.

**0:35:44 – 0:36:51**

Cut back to Chuck and Jenny leaving the party for the rooftop.

**0:36:51 – 0:39:06**

Cut to Dan and Serena after the concert. Dan receives a text message from Jenny asking for help. He and Serena go to Blair's party to look for Jenny.

**0:39:06 – 0:39:11**

Cut back to Chuck and Jenny. He is forcing himself onto her.

**0:39:11 – 0:41:55**

Cut to Dan and Serena. They decide to look for Jenny upstairs. On the rooftop they rescue Jenny from Chuck. As they leave the party people stare at them. They leave together in a cab as Blair and Chuck look after them.

## 5.3 Pilot Analysis

### 5.3.1 Character Relationships

The following tables depict the already existing and the developing relationships between the main characters. The first subchapter will analyze the relationships the teenagers have with one another, while the following will focus on the parent – teenager relationships portrayed in the pilot.

#### 5.3.1.1 Teenager – Teenager

As already mentioned in a previous chapter, the pilot should introduce the audience to the main characters and give viewers as much information about them as possible. The audience meets the characters for the first time and the first impression viewers get from this meeting will determine how they will respond to a certain character and if this character is worth their time. How the teenagers are presented in their interactions with others, will probably determine if they are deemed likeable characters or characters one detests.

##### 5.3.1.1.1 Serena van der Woodsen, Chuck Bass, Blair Waldorf and Nate Archibald

**0:21:02 – 0:24:32 Chuck and Serena cross-cut with Blair and Nate. A flashback that reveals a scandal bridges the two scenes**

**Int. Night: Blair's bedroom/ Int. Night: Hotel kitchen/ Int. Day: A ballroom**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|----|---------------|-------|
| 21:02 | (MCS) a lit candle is seen, a door opens inwards. Nate enters, looks up and looks surprised | "The Photograph" by *Air* plays throughout the cross-cut scenes |
| 21:08 | (c.u.) candles, tilt up to reveal Blair sitting in a chair in lingerie (c.s.) | |
| 21:13 | (MCS) Nate, reaction shot Nate looks a little unconfortable | N: "Wow." |

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| 21:16 | (c.s.) Blair smiling, tilt up as Blair gets up to stay on her face | B: "Hi." |
| 21:18 | (MCS) Nate looks down to his shoes | N: "Hi." |
| 21:21 | (c.s.) Behind Blair are lit candles. She walks toward Nate until the camera is on Nate's right side. | B: "Is it too much?" "I want it to be special." |
| 21:26 | (c.s.) Nate and Blair | |
| 21:29 | (c.u.) Blair, camera on Nate's right side. Blair tries to kiss Nate. | |
| 21:32 | (c.s.) Blair kisses Nate, he pulls away | |
| 21:34 | (c.u.) the back of Nate's head as he pulls away, Blair's face (c.u.) | |
| 21:36 | (c.s.) Nate with his eyes closed, camera on Blair's left, her hand rests on his shoulder, she tries to kiss him again, he pulls back | |
| 21:38 | (c.u.) Blair, camera on Nate's right. Blair looks confused | B: "What's wrong?" |
| 21:40 | (c.s.) Nate looks at Blair, camera on her left side He looks away, Blair's hand still rests on his shoulder | N: "Look, I don't know how to say this … that it's even the right thing to do … but uhm … There's something I need to tell you." |
| 21:52 | (MS) A kitchen, Chuck is talking to a man in a chef's outfit, two men are cleaning the kitchen. Chuck puts some money in the chef's breast pocket. Following pan: Chuck walks over to Serena who sits at a counter eating a sandwich. | C: "Now, uh, have a good night. We're closing the kitchen early. S: "Oh my god, this is so good. C: "Well, if you're looking for a way to thank me, I've got a couple of ideas." |
| 22:08 | (MCS) Serena sitting in front of Chuck in the kitchen, camera behind Chuck | S: "It's a sandwich, Chuck!" |
| 22:12 | (MCS) Serena is eating, Chuck looks at her. Chuck puts his hand on her thigh | |
| 22:14 | (MCS) Serena pushes Chuck away. She is holding a napkin. | S: "This is … uh, uh … this is not happening right…" |
| 22:18 | (c.s.) Chuck, camera on Serena's right side | S (cont.): "now." C: "You're worried Nate will find out." |
| 22:20 | (c.s.) Serena, camera on Chuck's left side. His face is close to her's. She looks surprised. | |

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| 22:22 | (c.s.) Chuck, camera on Serena's right side. Chuck raises his eyebrows | |
| 22:23 | (c.s.) Serena, camera on Chuck's left side | S: "What?" |
| 22:25 | (c.s.) Chuck, camera on Serena's right side | C: "Last year. The Sheppard…" |
| 22:28 | (c.s.) Serena, camera on Chuck's left side, zoom in on Serena's face | C (cont.): "Wedding." |
| 22:31 | (c.s.) Chuck, camera on Serena's right, zoom in on Chuck's face | C (cont.): "Think I don't know why you left…" |
| 22:32 | (c.s.) Serena, camera on Chuck's left side, camera zooms in on Serena's face. | C (cont.): "town." |
| 22:36 | Begin flashback, camera is shaky, hand held, the image is a little grainy throughout all the flashbacks. Serena and Nate's voices sound distant. (c.u.) a dress, camera moves back to reveal a girl dancing on a bar top (MS) Nate is sitting at the bar. | N: "C'mon. Hurry up. No one else will see you." |
| 22:39 | (c.s.) Nate sitting at the bar. Serena's bare legs are shown up to her knees. Nate puts his hand around her leg. <br> Tilt up to reveal Serena clutching a bottle of champagne, pan left to track her as she walks on the bar. | S: "Oh, if the happy couple didn't wanna put up the cash…" |
| 22:42 | (MCS) Serena's torso | S (cont.): "You'd think they put up a BYOB." |
| 22:42 | (MCS) Serena clutching the bottle, walking back to Nate. Nate reaches up to her | S: "Move!" <br> N: "Let me see it." |
| 22:46 | (MCS) Nate tries to grab the bottle from Serena | S: "No, Nate!" <br> N: "Let me show you. Come here. Let me see it." <br> S: "Nate stop!" |
| 22:50 | (MCS) Serena sits down on the bar top. Camera moves back, Nate and Serena wrestle with the bottle, the cork pops | |
| 22:52 | (c.s.) Serena on the bar top, camera on Nate's left side. Champagne spills out, Serena leans back, tries to catch the champagne with her hands | S: "Oh, Nate." |

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| 22:54 | (c.s.) Serena touches Nate's face | N: "That never happens to me." |
| 22:56 | (c.s.) Serena leans toward Nate, touches his hair, laughs. Nate pulls her toward him. He pulls her on his lap<br><br>(c.u.) They start kissing<br>End of first part of flashback | S: "That's okay. You're still a man in my eyes."<br>N: "Come here."<br>S: "Look at you. You're a mess."<br>N: "So are you." |
| 23:05 | Bedroom (c.s) Blair, camera on Nate's right side. Blair looks devastated | |
| 23:07 | (c.s.) Nate, camera on Blair's left side, Nate looks sad, turns to face Blair | |
| 23:09 | (c.s.) Blair, camera on Nate's right side | B: "But that was it? You guys kissed?" |
| 23:14 | (c.s.) Nate, camera on Blair's left side, Nate sighs | |
| 23:17 | (c.s.) Blair, camera on Nate's right side, Nate looks down, Blair starts to cry | |
| 23:20 | Flash back resumes, (c.s.) Nate and Serena kiss | |
| 23:24 | (c.u.) Serena takes off Nate's jacket | |
| 23:26 | (c.u.) Serena takes off Nate's shirt | |
| 23:27 | (c.s.) Nate and Serena kiss | |
| 23:31 | (c.u.) Nate and Serena kiss, Nate is shirtless | |
| 23:33 | (c.s.) Nate and Serena kiss | |
| 23:35 | (MS), high-angle shot, Serena and Nate kissing barely clothed, pan left until (c.u.) Chuck's face. He is looking down, watching Serena and Nate<br>End of this part of the flash back | C (OC): "Best friend and the boyfriend." |
| 23:46 | Kitchen (c.s.) Serena, camera on Chuck's left side | C (cont.): "That's pretty classy, S!" |
| 23:49 | (c.s.) Chuck, camera on Serena's right side | C (cont.): "I think you're more like me…" |
| 23:50 | (c.s.) Serena, camera on Chuck's left side, Serena looks devastated | C (cont.): "than you'd admit." |
| 23:52 | (c.s.) Chuck, camera on Serena's right side. He looks up to her | S: "No,…" |

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|---|---|---|
| 23:55 | (c.s.) Serena, camera on Chuck's left side | S (cont.): "no! That was then. I, I'm trying to change." |
| 24:00 | (c.s.) Chuck, camera on Serena's right side<br>He tries to kiss her. | C: "I liked you better before." |
| 24:04 | (MCS) camera behind Chuck and Serena, Chuck leans in to kiss her, but she tries to push him away | |
| 24:05 | (MCS) Serena struggles to get away from Chuck | S: "Chuck! Stop it!" |
| 24:07 | (c.u.) Chuck kisses Serena's face. She pushes him. | S: "Chuck!" |
| 24:07 | (c.u.) Chuck tries to kiss Serena's other side | S (cont.): "No!" |
| 24:08 | (c.s.) Chuck is still trying to forcibly kiss Serena | S (cont.): "Stop it!" |
| 24:10 | Flash back resumes (c.s.) Serena and Nate kissing | |
| 24:11 | (c.s.) Camera behind Nate and Serena kissing, Nate is shirtless | |
| 24:11 | (c.s.) Nate and Serena kissing. End of this part of the flash back. | |
| 24:12 | Bedroom (c.s.) Blair, camera on Nate's right side. He tries to put his hands on her shoulders. She pushes him away. | B: "I knew it! I always knew…" |
| 24:14 | (c.s.) Nate, over the shoulder shot. He takes a step back. | B (cont.): "there was something." |
| 24:15 | (c.s.) Blair. She yells at Nate | B: "Get out!" |
| 24:15 | (c.s.) Nate, over the shoulder shot, reaction shot | |
| 24:16 | Flash back resumes (c.s.) camera behind Nate and Serena. They are still kissing. | |
| 24:17 | (c.s.) camera behind Nate and Serena. | |
| 24:18 | (c.u.) Nate and Serena kissing. End of this part of the flash back | |
| 24:18 | (c.s.) Chuck still trying to forcibly kiss Serena | S: "Chuck! No!" |
| 24:20 | Flash back (c.s.) Serena and Nate kissing | |
| 24:21 | Bedroom - pan left to (c.s.) Blair crying | |
| 24:22 | (c.s.) Blair on the floor, tilt up to her face. She is crying | |
| 24:23 | Flashback, camera behind Nate | |

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|---|---|---|
| | and Serena (c.s.) | |
| 24:24 | Bedroom. (c.s.) Blair crying | |
| 24:26 | Kitchen. (c.s.) Chuck trying to kiss Serena. Serena pushes him hard. | S: "Get off…" |
| 24:27 | (c.s.) Serena pushing Chuck | S (cont.): "me!" |
| 24:28 | (MCS) camera behind Chuck and Serena. Serena pushes Chuck away and kicks him. | |
| 24:28 | (MS) Chuck bends over in pain. Serena turns and runs off to the right. | |

This sequence, which cross cuts three scenes, portrays the relationship of the tight knit group including Serena, Nate, Chuck and Blair. Viewers are presented with a lot of information about the characters in this sequence. They learn that Nate had cheated on Blair with Serena, but had not told anyone while Serena was at boarding school. Chuck had witnessed their indiscretion and tries to blackmail Serena with the information and Nate finally decides to do the right thing and confesses to his girlfriend instead of taking advantage of her not knowing and sleeping with her. In this scene, the previously established roles are reversed. Suddenly, one feels sympathy for Blair, forgetting how she was mean to Serena in previous scenes, and one sees Serena in a new light. Nate, even though he had done something wrong as well, is probably not judge so harshly, because he tells Blair the truth, even though he knows that this would probably result in them breaking up. Chuck's bad boy images is reinforced in the kitchen scene, when he first tells Serena that he likes her better when she misbehaves, and later when he tries to forcibly kiss her. Serena tries to convince Chuck that she has changed, but one has yet to see real proof of it. This sequence shows the audience how Serena's return to the city has an impact on all of her friends, because now that she is back, her secret is revealed with a disastrous outcome.

The pace picks up as the sequence progresses and the three scenes are intercut faster, jumping from Serena and Chuck in the hotel kitchen, to the flashback scene and to Blair's bedroom, jumping back again to the flashback, before returning to the hotel kitchen. As emotions run high in the second part

of the sequence, shots from the flashback become shorter until they barely last a second toward the end. This cross cutting and the quickened pace make the sequence very dynamic and one has to try harder to follow the drama that is unfolding on screen. The flashback distinguishes itself from the two other scenes through the use of a rapidly moving hand held camera. Serena and Nate's voices sound distant and the colors are different as well. With the camera moving around so much, never really focusing too long on either Serena's or Nate's face, one feels a little bit like they must be feeling. Everything is happening fast, spinning out of control. There are no commercial breaks in this sequence to ensure the undivided attention of the audience, because of the importance of the scene for the pilot episode.

### 5.3.1.1.2 Dan Humphrey, Nate Archibald and Chuck Bass

**0:09:43 – 0:10:38 - Ext. Day: Manhattan Street/ Int. Day: On a bus**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|---|---|---|
| 09:43 | (MLS) Dan running trough traffic, pan left as Dan crosses the street to track him running to a bus stop | Background noise - traffic |
| 09:51 | (MCS) Dan getting on a bus | "Concerto in G" by *Vivaldi* plays throughout the scene |
| 09:53 | (MLS) bus and street<br>Bus departs | Bus engine |
| 09:56 | (c.s.) bus window pan right to (c.s.) Chuck<br><br><br>Pan right to (c.s.) Nate | C: "Serena looked f-ing hot last night. There's something wrong with that level of perfection. It needs to be violated."<br>N: "You're deeply disturbed." |
| 10:06 | (c.s.) Dan listening in on Chuck and Nate's conversation | C (OC): "And yet you know I'm right." |
| 10:07 | (MLS) right side of the bus, Chuck and Nate sit while Dan is stands behind them | C: "You're telling me, if you had the chance…"<br>N : "I have a girlfriend." |
| 10:10 | (c.s.) Nate, pan left to (c.s.) Chuck and Nate<br><br>Chuck and Nate laugh<br>Chuck points to the door | C: "You guys have been dating since kindergarten and you haven't sealed the deal!"<br>N: "Who says 'seal the deal'?"<br>C: "Come on!" |
| 10:17 | (MCS) Nate and Chuck getting up, Dan at the same time also moves toward the door | |
| 10:21 | (c.s.) Chuck, behind him Dan, Chuck turns around to Dan | C: "Are you following us, or something?" |

| | | D: "No, I go to your school!" |
|---|---|---|
| 10:27 | (MCS) Dan, Chuck and Nate, Dan looks at his shirt | D: "Identical uniforms … kind of a tip-off?" |
| 10:30 | (c.s.) Chuck, Dan behind him. Chuck shakes his head, pan right to Chuck and Nate. Nate is amused. | N: "That's funny!" |
| 10:33 | (MCS) Dan watching Chuck and Nate get off the bus | N (sarcastically): "So you guys wanna sit together at lunch." |

This scene pitches the outsider Dan against the popular teens Nate and Chuck, and Dan is shown in a much more flattering light than Chuck. Dan proves to be witty, making even Nate laugh a little bit. Dan's outsider status is emphasized in this scene, when Chuck asks him if he is following them, neglecting to acknowledge that they are attending the same private school, even though they are all wearing the same school uniform. Dan proves to be unable to stay away from Serena, when he listens in to Nate and Chuck's conversation about her. After having invaded their privacy, one, however, can understand that Chuck is annoyed. As will be mentioned later on, Chuck's function in the pilot is mainly relegated to causing conflict and moving the plot along, and this scene establishes his bad boy images. Again, like in *The O.C.*, the outsider is shown in a more flattering light, than the popular teenagers, to make the audience root for a character that is not really popular, but smart and witty instead.

### 5.3.1.1.3 Serena van der Woodsen and Dan Humphrey

**0:34:38 – 0:35:44 – Outside the concert venue**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|---|---|---|
| 34:38 | Fade in to (LS) Brooklyn street. In front of a building people unload equipment. Dan and Serena walk toward the building | S: "So, I'm a little overdressed, aren't I?" <br> D: "Honestly, I don't have a problem with your appearance." |
| 34:45 | (MS) Dan and Serena talk while the walk toward the camera.. | |
| 34:48 | (MCS) Rufus is unloading some equipment. He turns around to face Dan. | |
| 34:50 | (MS) Dan and Serena <br><br><br><br> Rufus walks up to them | D: "Hey, c'mon. I want you to meet one of the guys in the band." <br> S: "Oh, so you're a groupie?" <br> D: "Well, not quite. <br> Serena, I'd like you to meet |

| | | Rufus Humphrey.  Dad.” |
|---|---|---|
| 35:01 | (c.s.) Serena, reaction shot | D (cont./ OC): “This is Serena.” R (OC) “Serena…” |
| 35:02 | (MCS) Rufus, camera is behind Serena. He smiles and shakes her hand | R (cont.): “van der Woodsen.” |
| 35:03 | (c.s.) Dan, reaction shot | R (OC) nervous laughter |
| 35:04 | (c.s.) Rufus, reaction shot | R: “Oh, I don’t know how I knew that. Nice to meet you.” |
| 35:07 | (MCS) Dan and Serena | S: “Nice to meet you too.” R: “You guys are a little bit early.” |
| 35:11 | (MCS) Rufus, camera is behind Serena. | R (cont.): “It’s gonna be a while before we take the stage.” D (OC): “Yeah,…” |
| 35:13 | (MCS) Dan and Serena | D (cont.): “I might have slightly over budgeted for travel time. |
| 35:15 | (c.s.) Serena, reaction shot | |
| 35:17 | (c.s.) Dan. He looks at Serena, then at his father | |
| 35:18 | (c.u.) Rufus, reaction shot, over the shoulder shot | |
| 35:19 | (LS) Rufus, Dan and Serena. A man gestures at Rufus with a guitar | M: “Hey!” R: “I should go tune that.” |
| 35:21 | (MCS) Rufus, camera on Serena’s left side | R (cont.): “Excuse me. Enjoy the show! Son … talk to you later.” |
| 35:24 | (MCS) Dan and Serena | D: “Yeah, see you.” |
| 35:28 | (MS) Rufus goes inside, guitar in hand | |
| 35:29 | (MCS) Dan and Serena | S: “So, you took me to meet your dad on a first date?” |
| 35:33 | (c.s.) Dan, reaction shot | D: “So, this is a date?” |
| 35:37 | (c.s.) Serena, reaction shot | |
| 35:38 | (MS) Serena and Dan look at each other. Serena laughs as they walk toward the camera. | D: “Wow. Maybe I shouldn’t have worn my loafers then … dress down a little bit.” |

In this scene, outsider Dan and it-girl Serena have their first date, although, it becomes clear throughout the scene, that Dan had not been aware that they were on an official date. Both manage to make fun of their differences, Serena pointing out that she is probably overdressed, and Dan joking that had he known this was an official date, he would have dressed down a little. In this scene, the audience learns that Dan is nothing like the boys Serena had

dated before. Instead of taking her to a wild party, they go to one his father's concerts and Dan even introduces Serena to his father, who in turn embarrasses Dan in front of Serena. Away from the Upper East Side, both look very relaxed and enjoy their company away from the scrutinizing eyes of the in-crowd. Even though, they had just officially met, they look comfortable around each other, and it makes one happy to see how happy Dan is to be with Serena. Serena, in this scene, learns quite a lot about Dan, especially about his relationship with his father, who inadvertently tells her that Dan talked quite a lot about her. Instead of mocking Dan, she seems to be flattered. The audience sees a whole different side to the girl that, in the flashback scene detailing her past indiscretion with Nate, had danced on a bar and did not care about who she was hurting. The new Serena the audience sees here, seems to be genuinely nice, and knowing Dan's feelings for her, one can only hope that she will continue to be nice, and not break his heart,

The camera, at first, stays distant, allowing the viewers to orient themselves and take in Serena's outfit again, as she points out that she is overdressed for the occasion. The audience can compare her look to Dan's, before they meet up with Dan's father and the camera moves closer to the group. During their conversation, shots alternate between medium close shots and close shots, depending on whether the person is shown on its own or in a two shot. Thanks to the use of shot – reverse –shots, the audience sees how the different characters react to what is being said, without having to decide which character to focus on.

### 5.3.1.2 Parent – Teenager

The following tables depict the relationships the various teenage characters have with their parents. They offer clues as to why characters behave a certain way, and depict the various kinds of relationships portrayed on the show.

### 5.3.1.2.1 Blair Waldorf and her mother Eleanor

**0:31:45 – 0:32:27 - Int. Night: Blair's bedroom**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|----|---------------|-------|
| 31:45 | Steady cam, one shot: (MCS) Blair, trying on a dress, her image is seen in the mirror (MCS) Eleanor enters, Blair's reflection in the mirror Eleanor walks over to Blair and takes her hand. She is standing next to Blair. Blair turns to face her mother. (c.s.)<br><br><br>Blair walks away from her mother. Eleanor follows her.<br><br>She touches Blair's hair. (c.s.) Blair turns to face her mother. Eleanor leaves the room while Blair touches and examines her hair, looking unhappy (MCS) | E (OC): "Let me see how it looks."<br>E: "Why are you wearing that one? Didn't you see the dress I left on the bed?"<br>B: "But I like this one."<br>E: "This one is not as elegant a choice as that one."<br>B: "Why do you care so much?"<br>E: "Because I love you." "Blair, you will never be more beautiful, or thin or happy than you are right now. I just want you to make the most of it"<br>B: "Guess, I have time to change."<br>E: "End put some product in your hair. The ends are dry." |

This scene consists of a one shot, in which Blair's mother comes into Blair's bedroom while she is getting ready for the *Kiss on the Lips* party. Blair's mother criticizes her choice of clothing, but saves the moment by telling Blair that she loves her. Blair is clearly moved by the statement until her mother ruins the nice mother – daughter moment by making Blair insecure about her appearance again. Viewers learn in this scene that approval is very important for Blair and not receiving her mother's approval brings out her insecurities. Blair's mother is depicted as being quite superficial, because instead of complimenting Blair on her inner qualities, she lists Blair's beauty and skinny figure as her best qualities.

### 5.3.1.2.2 Nate Archibald and his father "the Captain"

**0:25:11 - 0:26:23 - Ext. Day: Central Park**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|----|---------------|-------|
| 25:11 | (LS) Street in Central Park. Steady cam, moves right Nate and the Captain run toward the camera until they are (MCS) Camera moves backwards | C: "Nice try son."<br>N: "Maybe next time."<br>C: "You seem upbeat this morning. Did you have fun with |

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|---|---|---|
| | while Nate and the Captain walk towards it. | Blair last night?"<br>N: "Actually, we got into a pretty big fight."<br>C: "Well, you want my advice? Apologize! Even if it was her fault. Flowers work, jewelry if she's really upset – always works for your mom." |
| 25:32 | (c.s.) Nate and the Captain | N: "I don't know. I think it might be for the best." |
| 25:33 | (c.s.) The Captain stares at Nate. Nate steps in front of camera, | C: "Wait a minute – you guys broke up?" |
| 25:37 | (c.s.) Nate, reaction shot, camera on the Captain's left side | N: "Yeah." |
| 25:38 | (c.u.) Captain, over the shoulder shot. The Captain looks disappointed. | N: "I guess we did."<br>C: "Blair is a great girl!"<br>N: "I know." |
| 25:43 | (c.u.) Nate, camera on the Captain's left side | N: "I'm just not sure that she's the girl for me." |
| 25:47 | (c.u.) Captain, over the shoulder shot | C: "You guys have been dating since kindergarten."<br>N: "So I keep hearing."<br>C: "Well, you love her, don't you?" |
| 25:50 | (c.u.) Nate, camera on the Captain's left side | N: "Yes, I do." |
| 25:53 | (c.u.) Captain, over the shoulder shot | N: "I just think it might be good for us to take a break, you know?"<br>C: "Maybe not right know." |
| 25:57 | (c.s.) Nate looks confused. The Captain turns around and walks away. | |
| 25:59 | (MCS) Captain and Nate. Pan right - Nate is following his father. | C: "Eleanor Waldorf is gearing up to take her company public and I've been courting her for months to let me handle the deal." |
| 26:05 | (c.s.) Nate looks at his father questioningly. | N: "Then you should get it."<br>C: "I will get it," |
| 26:07 | (c.u.) Captain, over the shoulder shot | C (cont.): "if you'll just help me out a bit." |
| 26:10 | (c.s.) Nate, over the shoulder shot. Nate looks astonished. | |
| 26:11 | (c.s.) Captain, over the shoulder shot | C: "What?" |
| 26:12 | (c.s.) Nate, over the shoulder shot | C (cont.): "You love her, she loves you." |
| 26:13 | (c.s.) Captain, over the shoulder shot | C (cont.): "It's just a rough patch, that's all." |
| 26:16 | (c.s.) Nate, camera on the Captain's left side | C (cont.): "You don't give up, because things are hard. |

| | | Not in business…" |
|---|---|---|
| 26:20 | (c.s.) Captain, over the shoulder shot | C (cont.): "or if your family is depending on you." |
| 26:23 | (c.s.) Nate, camera on the Captain's left side. | |

The scene opens with a long shot of a path in Central Park. Nate and his father run towards the camera, both panting. At first the scene seems idyllic, a father and son enjoying some quality time together. Nate even opens up and tells his father about Blair and that he thinks the break up is for the best. His father seems to give him good advice at first until he reveals his motives for doing so. At this point the atmosphere changes; from now on it is all about business, and Nate's father is on his way to earn himself the worst-father-of-the-year award. Instead of really being there for his son, "the Captain" basically orders his son to get back together with Blair in order for him to secure a business contract with Waldorf Design. People, viewers can observe in this scene, constantly tell Nate, what he can or cannot do and what to feel or not to feel. Not even when it comes to his personal relationships, it seems, is he allowed to make his own decision. One can only feel sympathy for him, hoping he will be able to stand up to his father one day. "The Captain" meanwhile, is established as an egoistic, self-centered man who seems to care more about business than the well-being of his family; a man, audiences can despise.

During Nate's and his father's conversation the camera predominantly provides the audience with close shots and medium shots to really focus on their reactions, especially Nate's, to what is being said. After having established the setting at the beginning of the scene, it is not necessary anymore to show much background and instead the focus lies on the characters in the scene.

### 5.3.1.2.3 Jenny, Dan and their father Rufus Humphrey

**0:07:35 – 0:08:55  - Ext. Day: Brooklyn/ Int. Day: Humphrey Apartment**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|---|---|---|
| 07:35 | (LS) Brooklyn Bridge, Streets in Brooklyn Establishing shots | "Diamond Hipster Boy" by *Washington Social Club* is playing throughout the scene |

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| 07:37 | (c.u.) Envelops<br>The last says "Blair Waldorf" | |
|-------|------------------------------------------------|---|
| 07:39 | (c.u.) of someone taking a plate and walking to the counter.<br>(c.s.) Rufus Humphrey is serving breakfast. Steady cam tracks the movement of the characters<br>(MCS) Rufus with his back to the camera. His children Jenny and Dan are sitting opposite him on the kitchen counter. Camera tracks Dan's movement until he walks away. Rufus turns around to face the camera. Dan reappears next to Rufus. (MCS) Rufus hands Dan a magazine.<br>Dan hands the magazine back to Rufus. The title is now clearly visible and reads "Rolling Stone Magazine". Rufus walks out of sight. Dan remains standing in front of the counter with Jenny behind him (MCS) | R: "Guess who's dad is cool."<br>J: "It's a trick question."<br>D: " Yeah, because it can't be ours."<br>R: "Haha."<br>Look at this."<br>D: "Top Ten forgotten bands of the nineties."<br>R: "Yeah, check out who's number nine."<br>J: "He's very proud."<br>D: "Hey" Hey, way to be forgotten."<br>R: "Well, that's how you get remembered."<br>J: "Maybe you'd care if Dad's band was on…" |
| 07:59 | (c.s.) Dan, reaction shot<br>Dan turns around and walks away | J (OC/ cont.): "Gossip Girl."<br>D: "What? I don't read Gossip Girl, that's for chicks." |
| 08:03 | (MCS) Jenny is sitting at the counter, working on the invitations. Dan sits down next to Jenny. | J: "So, that wasn't your laptop open to it last night, reading all about Serena van der Woodsen?" |
| 08:07 | (MCS) Rufus standing opposite his children. Dan takes the magazine again. | D: "Rolling Stone, wow, let me look at this again. It's very cool." |
| 08:11 | (MCS) Rufus, over the shoulder shot, reaction shot. Rufus to Jenny. | D (OC/cont.): "Looking hot number nine!"<br>R: "Hey, what are you working on?" |
| 08:13 | (MCS) Jenny, part of Dan, camera on Rufus' right side | J: "It's called the Kiss on the Lips Party. Everyone's going." |
| 08:15 | (MCS) Dan, parts of Jenny, reaction shot | D: "You're invited to that?" |
| 08:16 | (c.s.) Rufus walking away, (MCS) Jenny and Dan. Jenny stares at Dan. | |
| 08:18 | (MCS) Dan, parts of Jenny | D: "Well, no offense if I sound surprised! It's, uh. I've never been invited." |

| 08:21 | (MCS) Rufus is walking back to the counter looking less than thrilled. | J (OC): "One girl in my art class saw my calligraphy…" |
|---|---|---|
| 08:23 | (MCS) Jenny and Dan. Jenny is showing Dan the invitations. | J (cont.): "and she said that if I addressed all the invitations than I could have one."<br>R (OC): "Sounds fair." |
| 08:28 | (MCS) Rufus, over the shoulder shot | R: "Seems like they could learn a thing or two." |
| 08:29 | (MCS) Jenny and Dan, reaction shot | J: "Dad, this is not a platform for your anti-capitalist arguments." |
| 08:31 | (MCS) Rufus working in the kitchen, camera behind Jenny | R: "Yes, it is." |
| 08:31 | (MCS) Jenny, parts of Dan | J: "Besides, you make us go to private school." |
| 08:33 | (MCS) Rufus, camera on Dan's left side | R: "That's for your education."<br>J (OC): "So we should just…" |
| 08:35 | (MCS) Jenny and Dan | J (cont.): "be anonymous loosers who eat lunch alone and never get invited to parties?"<br>D: "Works for me." |
| 08:38 | (MCS) Jenny, parts of Dan, camera on Rufus' right side | J: "Mom thinks it's a good idea." |
| 08:40 | (MCS) Rufus, over the shoulder shot | R: "And her judgment is always sound, right." |
| 08:42 | (MCS) Jenny, camera on Rufus' right side, reaction shot | |
| 08:43 | (c.s.) Rufus, over the shoulder shot, reaction shot | |
| 08:45 | (MCS) Dan, parts of Jenny. Dan stares at his father. | |
| 08:46 | (MCS) Rufus, over the shoulder shot | R: "Jenny, you wanna go to that party, you should go." |
| 08:49 | (MCS) Jenny, camera on Rufus' right side<br>Jenny smiles again. | |
| 08:51 | (c.s.) Rufus, over the shoulder shot | R: "You kids could use some fun." |
| 08:52 | (MCS) Rufus, Jenny and Dan at the kitchen counter. The family continues with their breakfast. Rufus walks out of sight. | |

The Humphrey family is presented as a model family. They have breakfast together, they talk about their days, and they discuss any issues they might be dealing with. However, the second part of the scene informs the viewers that even in the Humphrey family all is not well. Rufus makes his children uncomfortable, when he criticizes their mother, who had decided to take a

break from the marriage. To make up for it, he tells his daughter that she can go to Blair's party, even though he does not want her to spend too much time with the Upper East Side crowd. In the scene, the audience learns many things about the Humphreys. Dan's obsession with Serena, Rufus' failed music career and Jenny's ambitions to lose her outsider status. All those things are openly discussed while they are having breakfast, and all one sees is a happy family.

The scene looks very dynamic, with the steady cam tracking Rufus' and Dan's movements through the kitchen. At first, it is a little disorienting because the scene is not established through a long shot or medium long shot but starts with a close up of Rufus carrying plates. The next shot is twenty seconds long, and while the steady cam tracks the characters, one can catch a few glimpses of the Humphrey kitchen and dinning area. Compared to the Waldorf apartment the audience has seen in the beginning of the episode, this apartment looks as if people actually live here and one feels right at home. As mentioned above, this scene sets up the Humphrey family as a model family to which all other families in the pilot can be compared to.

### 5.3.1.2.4 Serena, Eric and their mother Lily van der Woodsen

**0:06:14 – 0:07:35  - Int. Day: Eric's room at the Ostroff Center**

The scene opens with Serena being asleep in her brother's room. After she wakes up, they talk for a while before her mother arrives as well. As only the second part of the scene is relevant for the character analysis, this table will skip the first part of the scene.

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|---|---|---|
| 06:42 | (c.s.) Eric and Serena Serena has her arm around Eric | S: "Yeah, but none of them mention you." E: "It's just like what mom wants huh?" Lily van der Woodsen (OC): "What do I want baby? For Serena," |
| 06:48 | (MCS) Lily van der Woodsen walks in | L (cont.): "to sleep in her own bed, possibly wearing pajamas." |
| 06:51 | (MCS) Eric and Serena sit in bed together, camera on Lily's left | S: "Morning, Mom. Hey, I was just about to ask the doctor if I can take Eric…" |

| 06:54 | (c.s.) Eric, half of Serena's face. Serena looks from Eric to her mother | S (cont.): "to breakfast. Wanna come?" |
|---|---|---|
| 06:56 | (MCS) Lily looking down to Eric and Serena, low angle shot | L: "Um, no. I think…" |
| 06:59 | (c.s.) Eric, part of Serena's face | L (OC/cont.): "what I'll do is go…" |
| 07:01 | (MCS) Lily, low angle shot | L (cont.): "get him a croissant down the street." |
| 07:02 | (c.s.) Serena, over the shoulder shot. Lily walks away. Serena follows her. Pan left to (c.s.) Eric watching his sister leave. | E: "Serena, don't!" |
| 07:07 | (MS) Serena leaving the room. | S: "Let me guess." |
| 07:10 | (c.s.) Serena, camera on Lily's right side | S (cont.): "You told everyone Eric's just visiting Grandpa in Rhode Island?" |
| 07:12 | (c.s.) Lily, camera on Serena's left side | L: "Your aunt Carol in Miami." |
| 07:14 | (c.s.) Serena, camera on Lily's right side | S: "So, you're actually hiding!" |
| 07:16 | (c.s.) Lily, camera on Serena's left side | S (cont.): "He tries to take his own life and you're worried…" |
| 07:18 | (c.s.) Serena, camera on Lily's right side | S (cont.): "it's gonna cost you Mom of the Year. |
| 07:19 | (c.u.) Lily, over the shoulder shot | L: "Serena. You've been gone. Doing God knows what with God knows who." |
| 07:23 | (c.u.) Serena, over the shoulder shot | S: "I told you Boarding School was not like that. L: "You know what. As happy as I am to have you back…" |
| 07:26 | (c.u.) Lily, over the shoulder shot | L (cont.): "you have no idea what's it been like." |
| 07:29 | (c.u.) Serena, over the shoulder shot, reaction shot. Lily walks away. | |

This scene reinforces the notion that on the Upper East Side keeping up appearances is everything. Lily seems not so much worried that her son might not be ready to leave the facility, but that someone could see him while he is supposed to live in Florida. Serena challenges her mother and basically calls her a bad mother. In those few moments, as the camera alternates between Serena and Lily, one can see that Lily does care and that she had a hard time dealing with it on her own because her daughter was away at boarding

school. Meanwhile, Eric does not have a say at all, but just has to watch helplessly as his older sister runs after their mother. The sweet moment he and his sister had shared before Lily arrived is gone. However, it does not mean that Lily is presented as being cold hearted, because she takes the time to visit and get Eric breakfast, and after her conversation with Serena, one has to reevaluate her reasons for not wanting Eric to leave the facility. This scene also establishes Serena's difficult relationship with her mother. Serena, in more than one scene in the pilot, defies her mother and tells her in typical teenage fashion that she believes she is always right and her mother always wrong. After knowing why Eric is in treatment, one cannot but feel sympathy for Lily, because she clearly has a lot on her plate, worrying about her son and her daughter. On the other hand, one also understands Serena's outrage when she is not allowed to take her brother to breakfast. In this case, it probably depends on the individual viewer which side is being taken in the argument. By not portraying Lily as a cold hearted, mean person, but rather as someone who is scared, on can take her side without feeling guilty.

### 5.3.2 Parent story line

Modern teen drama series often give their adult characters nearly as much screen time as the teenage characters to attract a wider demographic. The following table examines how *Gossip Girl* presents its main parent storyline.

### 5.3.2.1 Lily van der Woodsen and Rufus Humphrey

**0:29:41 – 0:31:08 - Int. Day: Art gallery**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|---|---|---|
| 29:41 | (LS) Lily walks into the gallery, Rufus enters from the left. At first he is not facing her, then he walks towards her. Pan right until (MS) Lily and Rufus | „Time won't let me go" by *The Bravery"* plays throughout the scene R: "Ah, Lily. Are you shopping for some art to match your furniture?" L: "Why is my daughter going to one of your concerts?" R: "Cause we're awesome." |
| 29:58 | (MCS) Lily starring at Rufus | L: "With your son?" |
| 30:00 | (MCS) Rufus, Rufus is surprised | R: "Dan's got a date with Serena?" |
| 30:03 | (MCS) Lily, camera on Rufus' right side | L: "Hm hmm." |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 30:04 | (MCS) Rufus, camera on Lily's left side | R: "Well, our kids were bound to meet. It's a small island." |
| 30:06 | (c.s.) Lily, over the shoulder shot | L: "Are you sure it's not some ploy, you using my daughter to get to me now that your wife left you?" |
| 30:10 - 30:12 | (c.u.) Rufus, over the shoulder shot | R: "How'd you know about Alison?" |
| 30:12 | (c.s.) Lily, over the shoulder shot | L: "Like you said – small island." |
| 30:14 | (c.s.) Rufus, over the shoulder shot | R: "Oh, I get it! You heard about Alison and use your daughter as an excuse to start something." |
| 30:20 | (MCS) Lily, laughing | L: "Haha! In your dreams!" |
| 30:22 | (MCS) Rufus, camera on Lily's left side | R: "But you are in my dreams, Lily. One in particular that recurs, involves finding you in the back of a *Nine Inch Nails* bus, with your shoes and your earrings," |
| 30:28 | (MCS) Lily, camera on Rufus' right side | R (cont.): "and Trent Raznor." |
| 30:30 | (c.s.) Rufus, over the shoulder shot, smiling | R: "Oh, wait – that happened." |
| 30:33 | (c.s.) Lily, over the shoulder shot, smiling as well | L: "No need to rehash details of decades past. So, I moved on." |
| 30:40 | (c.s.) Rufus, over the shoulder shot | R: "Yeah, from Trent to Lane, to Barry. Until you switched up rock stars for billionaires." |
| 30:44 | (c.s.) Lily, camera on Rufus' left side | L: "You think you're so cute. Washed up band," |
| 30:47 | (c.s.) Rufus | L (OC/ cont.): "crappy so-called art gallery."<br>R: "Well, not all of us have settlements from multiple divorces to sustain us." |
| 30:58 | (c.s.) Lily, Rufus walks away, passing in front of the camera, | L: "Just stay out of my life Rufus." |
| 31:04 | (MLS) Rufus, Lily is leaving the gallery behind Rufus | |

This scene introduces the audience to the main parent storyline. Lily confronts Rufus about their children's date, and thereby reveals quite a lot about her and Rufus' past. Their tone is flirty at first, but when confronted with some details about her past Lily would like to forget, she tells Rufus to stay away

from her and leaves. After having seen Lily's reaction to Dan's last name and his plans to take Serena to a *Linkin Hawk* concert – Rufus' band - in an earlier scene, it is revealed to the audience why Lily reacted the way she did. From the way Rufus and Lily talk to each other, viewers can infer that they know each other quite well and even though they do not say it explicitly, one can assume that they were a couple in the past and have apparently not ended the relationship on good terms. Both characters reveal information about the other character that is useful for the audience to understand their background and to better interpret their actions. In this scene, viewers are reminded that Rufus' wife left him and therefore, should he and Lily start seeing each other, he would not cheat on anyone. After their talk, however, it does not seem likely that anything will happen between the two of them anytime soon. One has to wonder though, what will happen between them in the future, after the writers have brought up their past and made the audience aware that Lily and Rufus are not strangers but exes.

In this scene, the audience is also introduced to one of the sets – the art gallery. To give the audience an idea what the Brooklyn based gallery looks like, the scene opens with a long shot, giving viewers the chance to orient themselves. In the beginning of Rufus and Lily's conversation the camera stays medium close and paintings can be seen behind the two, as if to remind people of the setting. As soon as the conversation begins to touch on personal subjects, the camera moves in showing Rufus and Lily's reactions to what is being said in close shots and close ups, thereby emphasizing their emotions. Once the camera is close it stays close, mostly alternating between close shots and close ups. Both characters had been introduced earlier in the episode and the audience is therefore already familiar with they way they look, dress and sound, and can now focus on what is being said and the emotions behind it.

### 5.3.3 Setting/ Lifestyle

The following two tables depict scenes that introduce the audience to the setting and the lifestyle of the people in the *Gossip Girl* world.

### 5.3.3.1 Opening scene

**0:00:00 – 0:00:21 - Ext. Day: Manhattan**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|----|---------------|-------|
| 00:00 | (LS) Manhattan Skyline, camera zooms in | „Young folks" by *Peter Bjorn and John* plays until 0:01:29 |
| 00:01 | (LS) Statue of Liberty, camera zooms in | |
| 00:01 | (LS) Fountain in Central Park, camera zooms in | |
| 00:01 | (LS) Central Park | |
| 00:02 | (MLS) Bergdorf Goodman | |
| 00:02 | (LS) Museum of Metropolitan Art | |
| 00:03 | (c.u.) Madison Avenue street sign | |
| 00:03 | (c.s.) Madison Ave and E 60 St street sign | |
| 00:03 | (LS) Empire State Building, tilt down to busy Manhattan street | |
| 00:04 | (LS) Central Park, shot from a moving helicopter | |
| 00:05 | (LS) Central Park, pan right | |
| 00:07 | (LS) Manhattan. Shot from a helicopter flying over the bridge. Focus on the Empire State Building in the back | |
| 00:09 | (MS) of a train passing the camera, pan right as the train passes by | |
| 00:11 | (c.u.) train windows, the camera halts in front of a blond girl staring out of the window (c.s.) | |
| 00:19 | (LS) A train traveling through the city | |

The opening scene introduces viewers more to the place the series is set in than the world the characters inhabit. Traditionally most television shows are filmed on soundstages in Los Angeles and only use establishing shots filmed in the city the series is set in to remind the audience where scenes are supposed to take place. *Gossip Girl*, however, films on location in New York City and in the pilot episode, viewers are presented with famous Manhattan landmarks in order for them to the get an idea of where the series takes place. The images are cut to the beginning of *Peter Bjorn and John's* "Young Folks", as song with a very up beat tempo. From the start, the episode appears

dynamic, just through the way the images are cut to the beat. It is also in this opening sequence that the audience catches a first glimpse of one of the main characters sitting on a Manhattan bound train. New York, in the series, is much more than just the setting; it is a character on its own. Not only is the audience introduced to one of the main characters, it is also given a chance to familiarize itself with the city, which is important for the episode.

### 5.3.3.2 In the limousine

**0:32:27 – 0:33:01 - Int. Night: Limousine**

| TC | Image/ Action | Sound |
|---|---|---|
| 32:27 | (LS) Manhattan street. A black limousine drives past yellow cabs. Pan right as the limousine passes the camera | Music: Albert Hammond – *Hard to live in the city.* Laughter, clinking of glasses |
| 32:30 | (c.u.) row of glasses, pan right to Chuck, Blair, Nate, Kati and Isabel toasting each other (c.s.) | |
| 32:33 | (c.s) Kati and Isabel dancing in their seat, Nate and Blair in the back, camera zooms in on the girls | |
| 32:34 | Swish pan to (c.s.) Blair sitting between Chuck and Nate. She is talking to Chuck | |
| 32:35 | (MCS) Chuck and Blair, zoom out to reveal Kati and Isabel and parts of the limousine | |
| 32:36 | (c.u.) clinking of glass | |
| 32:37 | (MCS) Chuck, Nate behind Blair. She is refilling glasses, camera zooms in as she spills some | |
| 32:38 | (c.s.)Blair is holding a bottle in front of Chuck's face tilt up to Blair's face. Chuck is laughing. | |
| 32:39 | (c.s.) Chuck is laughing, looks out of the window | |
| 32:40 | (c.s.) street as seen through the window. Pan right to Chuck and Blair. She takes his scarf. | |
| 32:41 | Swish pan from Nate to Chuck. Blair is pretending to shoot Chuck with her fingers | |
| 32:42 | (c.u.) a girl in a pink dress. Tilt up and pan left to Chuck and Blair | |
| 32:44 | (c.s.) Blair, Nate and Kati. Pan right to include Isabel | |
| 32:45 | (c.s.) Blair, Nate, Isabel. Zoom out to (MCS), Chuck refills glasses, Nate | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | smokes, the girls drink and laugh | |
| 32:46 | (c.s.) Blair, pan right to Kati blowing a smoke ring. Isabel and Blair are watching her. | |
| 32:49 | (c.s.) Kati's arm, zoom out to reveal her hand holding a joint pressed against Chuck's mouth | |
| 32:51 | (MCS) Chuck with a champagne bottle, Blair behind him, Nate is smoking. Chuck lets himself fall between Kati and Isabel who are both laughing. Zoom in | |
| 32:53 | (c.s.) Kati and Chuck with their arms around each other. Nate sits behind them. Pan left. | |
| 32:54 | (c.s.) Chuck is sitting between Kati and Isabel with his arms around them | |
| 32:55 | (MCS) Blair, Nate, Chuck and Kati toast each other. Zoom in on Nate looking sad. | |

In this scene the audience gets a glimpse of how the in-crowd parties. Everyone is dressed up, laughing and drinking champagne, while sharing a joint. There is no dialogue in this scene, just laughter and music from the audio track. Through the use of a handheld camera, the scene appears very dynamic and the quick paced editing adds to the dynamic of the scene. The shots alternate between medium close shots and close shots, with the camera zooming in multiple times to provide the audience with close ups of the group. When one watches this scene one does not really see a group of sixteen year olds, but rather a group of people appearing much older. The scene again reminds the audience of the group's lifestyle and the world they inhabit. Nothing really happens in the scene that would advance the plot, but it is still an important scene because it shows the popular teens in their element.

### 5.3.4. Music, Clothing Technology

The following songs were featured, either in part or full length, in the pilot episode

- "Bounce with me" by *Kreesha Turner*
- "Young folks" by *Peter Bjorn and John*
- "If it's love that you want" by *Rihanna*
- "What goes around comes around" by *Justin Timberlake*
- "Diamond Hipster Boy" by *Washington Social Club*

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- "99 %" by *Mooney Suzuki*
- "Back to black" by *Amy Winehouse*
- "Space for rent" by *Who made who*
- "Send you back" by *Matthew Dear*
- "Photograph" by *Air*
- "Joyful Waltz" by *Zdenek Bartak*
- "Concerto in G" by *Vivaldi*
- "Hang me out to dry" by *Cold War Kids*
- "Time won't let me go" by *The Bravery*
- "Hard to live in the city" by *Albert Hammond Jr.*
- "The way I are" by *Timbaland feat. Keri Hilson and D.O.E.*
- "Go" by *Hanson*
- "Don't matter" by *Akon*
- "Knock knock" by *Lyrics Born*
- "The Gift" by *Angles and Airwaves*

The *Gossip Girl* pilot follows *The O.C.* pattern, showcasing artists the general public was probably no so familiar with, because they were not constantly played on big radio stations. However, contrary to *The O.C.*, *Gossip Girl* also features chart hits by major artists from the very beginning, to show the audience that the show runners know what is popular and hip at the moment. Sometimes the choice of music seems to represent the characters – as Brooklyn meets Manhattan, indie meets pop.

Several scenes in the pilot episode revolve around fashion. At the beginning of the episode the audience is introduced to Eleanor Waldorf, who is a fashion designer and throughout the episode one can see Blair in at least two of her designs. Fashion plays a big role on the Upper East Side. What you wear or who you wear determines your social status. Therefore, it comes as no surprise when Jenny calls Dan for help, that she is referring to a fashion emergency. However, through Jenny one can also see that it is not necessary to spend ones rent money on a dress, if one is creative enough to design one. However superficial the Upper East Siders are in the pilot, no one seems to notice that Jenny is not wearing an expensive designer dress, or if they do, they do not comment on it. Should the series stay faithful to the look it has

created for itself in the pilot, the audience can expect a lot more drama surrounding fashion choices in future episodes.

The second thing that is very important in the *Gossip Girl* world is technology, even if it is never mentioned explicitly. Without a mobile phone that can receive emails and multi media messages, one cannot follow the anonymous blogger *Gossip Girl* who sends out her "blast" to her subscribers. Teenagers spy on other teenagers with their cell phones, taking pictures of them and telling everyone who is interested the location of that particular person. Everything the audience sees on the screen is reality for today's teenager. Real teenagers might not use the technology to spy on their friends or classmates, but they can let everyone know their whereabouts in a heartbeat and what they are doing, sometimes including pictures, while others, in turn, use their own phones to check up on friends or to find out what a "frenemie" is doing at the moment. When the show started in 2007, Internet use on a mobile phone was not yet possible on most phones. However, *Gossip Girl* popularized those phones, especially those used by the main characters in the pilot episode.

When it comes to music, fashion or technology *Gossip Girl* seems to dictate what is hip and cool. Young people look to the show to find out what to wear, who to listen to and which gadgets to buy, because the show itself appears to be young, hip and trendy.

**5.3.5 Topics**

This part again, explores the pilot as a text, focusing on content and topics, to hopefully elucidate what elements might prompt engagement.

**5.3.5.1. Alcohol, Smoking, Drugs**

The teenage characters are shown drinking alcohol on multiple occasions, some in the presence of adults. Serena and Blair seem to have no problems ordering Martinis at the bar of Chuck's father's hotel, even though they are only sixteen years old and the legal drinking age is twenty-one. At the "Kiss on the Lips" party, organized by Blair, Chuck convinces the even younger Jenny

to drink champagne with him before trying to seduce her. In the *Gossip Girl* pilot, however, drinking has consequences for the characters. Nate and Serena get drunk at a wedding, which results in them having sex, even though Nate is Blair's boyfriend. Serena leaves the city afterwards because she does not know how to cope with what had happened. Alcohol is also shown as a ploy to seduce an innocent girl, or as a way to cope with ones problems, by way of showing a depressed Nate drinking a beer by himself on the sidewalk. The show has a liberal approach to teenage drinking, on the one hand, because the pilot keeps close to the original books, in which it is explained that the Upper East Side parents have a more European approach to their children drinking alcohol, as long as they do not embarrass themselves and their families in public, and on the other hand, to set the tone of the show and to establish the world the main characters live in. The message seems to be that if you are rich and come from famous families you have no problem getting what you want. Contrary to *The O.C.* pilot, *Gossip Girl's* first episode does show that drinking can have negative consequences for those involved, because the incident at the Shepard wedding forced Serena to leave her friends and family for a year and caused a rift in her friendship with Blair.

When it comes to the depiction of drug use, the pilot also faithfully adapts the books, in which Nate and Chuck constantly sneak off to smoke marihuana. In the limousine that takes the boys, Blair and Blair's minions to the party, one can see a joint being passed around. Everyone seems happy and ecstatic about the party. As with drinking, the show does not make a big deal out of it and presents it as if it was the most normal thing in the world to smoke drugs in a park without even trying to hide it. However, in this pilot, there is no outside character that comments on it, or is shocked by it and therefore it is only used to introduce the audience to the life the characters are living and the world they live in.

### 5.3.5.2 Teenage Sexuality

In the pilot, one can see two frameworks being employed: the management framework and the urgency framework.

Blair, after having dated her boyfriend Nate for a long time, decides she is ready to sleep with him for the first time. She also tells him she loves him, and at first, it looks as if she made the decision for the right reasons. However, when she sees how Nate reacts to Serena's return, she tries to seduce him in order to keep him. Viewers are presented with a right reason to sleep with someone and a wrong one. The first time Nate and Blair are together in her bedroom during her mother's party, one sees a girl who seems to have made a mature decision because she believes she is emotionally ready to take her relationship to the next level. In the second scene, however, the audience sees an insecure girl who believes that in order to not lose her boyfriend she has to have sex with him. One has to give credit to Nate in this scene for not taking advantage of the situation and instead coming clean about his past with Serena and his feelings for her. The two scenes when Blair and Nate are alone in her bedroom fit in very well with the overall appearance of the episode. Blair in both situations wears lingerie and expertly tries to seduce her boyfriend. The first scene, in which the camera stays close and shows a big part of Blair and Nate making out on her bed, could cause a controversy, because it seems to glamorize teen sex. However, the audience is reminded countless times that Nate and Blair have been together for a long time, and therefore one cannot say that the scene presenting two teenagers kissing and touching each other on a bed was used just to include sex in the episode, but rather to show how their relationship develops and to set up for the conflict that ensues later in the pilot.

Chuck and Nate's discussions fall into the urgency framework. Chuck tells Nate numerous times that he thinks it is time that Nate and Blair sleep together, because they have been together forever and he deserves to "tap that." Chuck in the pilot episode, however, is mostly used to stir up conflicts and to move the plot along. After seeing Chuck's behavior throughout the episode one cannot really take him serious, and only hopes that Nate also gets advice from other people than his best friend.

The third scene involving teenage sexuality does not really fall into any category. The flashback scene details how Serena and Nate drank too much at a wedding and ended up having sex. The scene is important because it

sets up a conflict that involves most of the main character. It is cross cut with a scene in which Chuck confronts Serena with what had happened, and one, in which Nate confesses to Bair. However, the scene would probably have also worked, if it was shortened and showed Nate and Serena's behavior in less detail. With the scene being as it is, it gives the audience an idea of what to expect in future episode – lots of drama and a liberal approach when it comes to the depiction of teenage sexuality.

### 5.3.5.3 Romantic Relationships

In the pilot episode, the audience learns that Nate and Blair have been dating "since kindergarten", according to his father and best friend Chuck. However, while Blair seems to be unafraid to show her feelings for him and really believes they belong together, Nate seems to have feelings for someone else, even though he is with Blair. The audience can expect two things to happen in future episodes – Nate and Blair manage to work out their problems and stay together or they will break up, because of Nate's feelings for Serena. In the episode Blair tells Nate she forgives him and wants to stay in a relationship with him, giving the writers time to develop the relationship and the audience a chance to see Blair and Nate grow and deal with their problems.

The second storyline at first almost seems like on of those clichés often found in teen movies and teen drama series – that of the outsider falling in love with the popular girl. Dan has secretly been love with Serena for two years without really knowing her. Later on he even admits it to Serena when he tells her he was surprised she was nice. She counters by asking why he had asked her out if he did not thing she was nice. At this points he stirs away from the cliché and acts like a typical teenage boy when he tells her that he likes her because she is good looking. Serena in her answer plays with the cliché when she tells him that he is not supposed to be superficial because of his reputation. All the scenes involving Serena and Dan set up for a love storyline that will probably last for most of the first season. For the audience to root for their blossoming relationship, it is necessary that Serena is not depicted as a superficial, egocentric it-girl, like Blair is in the pilot, but as a down to earth young woman with a complicated past.

In the pilot it is also mentioned that Rufus and Lily were a couple before their children were born. Seeing as they are both single at the begining of the season and the way they act around each other, accusing each other of using the children to reconnect, the audience can expect to see more of them together in future episodes and might suspect that they might become a couple in the future again, to complicate their children's relationship. The pilot reminds the audience a few times that Rufus' wife left him and is therefore free to pursue other people.

### 5.3.5.4 Friends and Family

When looking at the parents in the episode, it looks as if they are all either divorced or in the middle of a divorce. Serena asks Blair how she is handling her mother's divorce and Blair opens up to Serena, telling her she had a hard time after her father left. Rufus involves his children in a discussion about their mother who decided to take time off her marriage, and one can see how uncomfortable it is for Dan and Jenny to have to take sides in their parents' dispute. The third divorcee in the group is Lily, who according to Rufus had married and remarried countless times. Not much is know about Nate's family life other than the fact that his father is trying to use Nate's relationship with Blair to secure a contract. Having many single, still young and attractive looking parents on the show leaves room for parent storylines to develop between the parent characters, but it is also an accurate portrayal of today's society in which nearly half of all marriages end in divorce, and patchwork families are not unusual.

The episode also presents very different kinds of friendship. There is the frenemies storyline involving on-again/ off-again best friends Blair and Serena. At the beginning of the episode the audience learns that Blair is not thrilled that Serena is back in the city, and it is later explained that Blair needed Serena during her parents' divorce and Serena could not help her get through it because she was at boarding school. For the time being everything seems to be alright again in their friendship, but as soon as Blair finds out about Serena and Nate's betrayal they become enemies again. Even though they are not speaking to each other at the end of the episode, one knows that they still care for each other, because the camera lingers on their faces for

some time when they see each other at the party, and none looks very happy. Future episode will have to show if the two former best friends can get over their differences and become friends again. One can expect them to eventually forgive each other, just to fight over some other issue later on.

Blair surrounds herself with a group of classmates who follow her around and fulfill her wishes, but one can not gather from the pilot if they are actually friends or if the girls are just nice to Blair because of her social power at school. One has to hope that those girls are not just using Blair as much as she uses them, because that would mean that she does not have any real friends she can rely on. Jenny tries to become part of Blair's clique by creating the party invitations, but it is apparent that she is just used by the group and that they do not really care about her. Jenny is either oblivious to that or does not care as long as she is allowed to spend time with the popular group. The message here seems to be that it is better to be part of the popular crowd even if they only accept you because you do things for the members, instead of having good, but unpopular friends. Of course, this is used to emphasize the shallowness of the high society, in which popularity is the most important currency. Dan tries to defy this attitude. He is an outsider who is not even recognized by classmates, but he does not seem to care and tries to remind his younger sister that popularity is not worth losing yourself over. When it comes to friendship and commenting on the lifestyle of the other teen characters, Dan is the voice of reason, pointing out their flaws.

The relationships the teenagers have with the parents are also portrayed in different ways. The opposition Brooklyn – Manhattan can be found in the parent – teenager relationships as well. On the one side, there is loving father Rufus Humphrey, who picks up his children at the railway station after they had only been gone for the weekend. He makes them breakfast and is really interested in what is happing in their lives, and he also tries to give them advice, even if they sometimes do not want to hear it. On the other side, there are Eleanor Waldorf, Lily van der Woodsen and "The Captain" Archibald. Serena had been away at boarding school for a year, but instead of being greeted by her mother at the station, she is met by a man in a porter's uniform. Meanwhile her mother is at a party to keep up appearances instead

of spending time with her fourteen year old son, who is currently staying at a treatment facility for attempting suicide. She even admits to Serena that she tells people her son is staying with relatives. Nate's father is presented in an even less flattering light when he basically orders his son to get back together with Blair, so he can convince her mother to give him a contract. From watching the parents interact with their teenage children, the audience learns that having a loving family that might not have much money, but cares for its family members is probably better than having parents who are extremely critical of their children, use them as pawns in their own games and make them fulfill the high expectations they have in them.

### 5.3.5.5 High School Life

In the pilot episode, it is only referenced that all the main teenage characters attend the same private school. They all have to wear school uniforms, although one can see that all the girls add their own personal touch to their uniforms through various accessories. In the scenes in which school is mentioned, one also learns something about the characters' relationships with one another. Dan, on the bus to school, points to his uniform to remind Chuck that he is in fact not stalking him, but goes to the same school as Nate and Chuck. As it is no problem for Serena to come back to school without problems, one can assume that the pilot is set right after summer break before school starts. At this point the audience does not know if any scenes will be set in high school, and if, what the private high school will look like.

### 5.3.5.6 Social Events

The pilot presents two social events, mostly used to establish the world the teen characters inhabit. After the opening scene, viewers are taken to the Waldorf apartment where a party is taking place. The first shot is a close shot of a buffet table laden with exotic looking food. Waiters are circling the room, serving champagne to the guests. It is at this party, that the audience is introduced to most of the main characters and their parents who are all attending the party. More than just getting a glimpse of the Upper East Side lifestyle, viewers can learn a lot about the characters and their relationships

with their families. From the start, one can observe that the characters do not seem to be all that happy, even though they are at a rather glamorous house party, because their parents criticize their appearances and tell them they are not allowed to make their own decisions when it comes to their college education.

The pilot builds up to the second social event – the *Kiss on the Lips* party, which takes place in the last part of the episode and is cross cut with Dan and Serena's date, to speed up the action and to build up to the climactic moment on the party venue's roof top terrace, where Dan and Serena have to save Jenny from Chuck. Knowing that the party was organized by Blair, a sixteen-year-old high school student, on cannot but be baffled when faced with the extravagant setting and opulence. Again, the audience is reminded that in Blair, Serena, Nate and Chuck's world nothing seems to be impossible as long as one can freely use one's parents' credit cards. It also sets the tone of the series, and viewers will probably expect to see more extravagant social events in episodes to come.

### 5.3.5.7 Catastrophic Events

The teenagers do not just plan parties in the pilot episode, but also face possibly life shattering situations. In the beginning of the episode, the audience learns that Serena's fourteen-year-old brother is currently a patient in a treatment facility, because he had attempted to commit suicide. Even though viewers are not informed what prompted Eric's decision to take his own life, one can observe how it affects his family. Eric's suicide attempt is also presented as the reason behind Serena's return to the city, and one can clearly see that Serena feels guilty about not having been there for her brother when he needed her.

Chuck, twice, tries to force himself on a girl in the pilot. First, he tries to blackmail Serena into kissing him, and when she tells him off, he tries to forcibly kiss her until she manages to push him away and flee the scene. At the *Kiss on the Lips* party he finds his next victim. He convinces Jenny to drink champagne with him and takes her up on the roof top, clearly taking advantage of her inexperience and desire to be liked by the in-crowd. Chuck

does not really understand what he is doing wrong and he yells at Dan that things happen at parties all the time. Jenny seems shaken but tells her brother she is fine after he rescues her. However, she does not seem fine, and one can expect that this issue will be dealt with again in the future and that it will probably take some time before Jenny is truly fine.

### 5.3.6 Characters

This chapter will look at how the characters were depicted in the pilot episode to determine why viewers might or might not be willing to invest in them and follow their development. Like *The O.C.*, *Gossip Girl* follows the pattern of bringing a new character in, or having a character return to disrupt the lives of others. On *Gossip Girl* this character is Serena, who after a year at boarding school returns to New York City, and disrupts the lives of her friends, family and outsider Dan. Her return sets everything in motion and the audience can observe how her character affects the lives of those close to her.

Dan

Dan is clearly an outsider. He lives in the wrong part of the city, his parents are not rich, and he does not seem to be interested in going to his classmates' parties, rather spending time with his family. He is most definitely not cool. However, he plays with the stereotype, and proves to Serena, that being an outsider does not mean that he is never superficial or always smart. Dan is also cast as the hero in the episode, when he rescues Serena from a possibly embarrassing situation, and later, Jenny from Chuck. Dan seems to be genuinely nice and one cannot but root for him and his blossoming relationship with Serena.

Serena

Serena represents the wild girl gone good category. Compared to Blair and the other girls in the episode, she seems to be down to earth and humble even though she lives in a hotel and wears designer clothes. To emphasize the difference between old and new Serena, the pilot includes scenes of her dancing on a bar with a bottle of champagne in her hand and kissing her best friend's boyfriend, while the new Serena is shown helping relative stranger Dan save his sister. Because of Serena's transformation from bad girl to good

girl, the audience can root for her without feeling guilty about liking a cheater. For the audience it will be interesting to see, if Serena stays good, now that she back in the city with her friends and the world they inhabit.

## Blair

Blair in the pilot episode represents the mean girl category. However, one later learns that Blair only acts the way she acts because she had been hurt by people, especially Serena. One can understand why she would be mean to Serena after finding out what Serena did to her. Bair is the leader, the queen bee, of her high school, which means that she cannot be nice to everyone if she wants to keep her position. Even though, Blair is very popular and surrounds herself with people who follow her lead, Blair, the viewers learn, is also insecure, especially when her mother criticizes her appearance and wardrobe choice. Seeing her vulnerable side makes her more likeable, and one can identify with the feeling of wanting to push people away in order to avoid getting hurt. As one of the central characters, her development will be interesting to observe, especially because she cannot act mean forever, if the show runners want the audience to root for Blair and be invested in her storylines.

## Nate

Nate is depicted as the golden boy. He is handsome, comes from a good family and has a beautiful girlfriend. At first, it looks as if he is the luckiest person. However, like all the other characters, he is not really happy because of his relationship with his father and his conflicting feelings for Serena. Even though, Nate did something awful to his girlfriend, one cannot really hate him, because he is nice to everyone, and does not make fun of Dan, like Chuck. One can clearly see in many scenes that Nate is not happy, and one cannot but hope that in the future he will be able to stand up to his father and take charge of his own life, because one can assume that this would improve his life. Nate does not really care about his parents' lifestyle, because for him it just means that he is being kept from following his own dreams. Many viewers will probably be able to identify with Nate in his struggle to be a good son and still follow his dreams.

## Chuck

Chuck is the bad boy of the group. He is depicted as a pretty awful person, who does not care about anyone but himself. The audience does not learn a lot about his character other than, that he likes to smoke marihuana, drink alcohol and seduce girls. In the pilot episode his character is mainly used to advance the plot and to create dramatic moments. He is also presented as an antagonist to good boy Dan. Every series needs a character the audience can hate and blame when bad things happen, and Chuck plays this part in the pilot episode.

## Jenny

Jenny seems to be very naïve when it comes to trusting people she does not really know, and she is willing to do a lot for other people in order to be admitted into the inner circle of the popular crowd. Jenny seems to be a nice girl, who is maybe trying a little bit too hard to be popular, but viewers can probably identify with her need to belong to a group, especially, considering that this is her first year in high school.

## Rufus Humphrey

Rufus, like Sandy in *The O.C.,* represents the model parent all other parents in the episode are compared to. He is a caring father who listens to his children's problems and encourages them to make new experiences even if he does not always agree with the choices they are making. He is the kind of parent one would like to have, invested in his children's lives, sometimes maybe a lit bit embarrassing and overbearing, but overall someone his children can look up to and come to with problems.

## Lily van der Woodsen, Eleanor Waldorf, Howard Archibald

Lily, Eleanor and "The Captain" are all presented in stark contrast to Rufus. All they care about is keeping up appearances, and more often than not, they use their children to achieve it. Their actions should explain why their children sometimes act a certain way, and to give the audience background information about the teenage characters' home lives. Even if they appear to be cold hearted, one can understand that they probably only act the way they act because the want the best for their children and want to make sure that

they have a bright future ahead of them. Finally, their actions prompt the audience to feel sympathy for their children, because even though they have all the money they want, they all come from broken homes.

Blair's minions

Blair's friends represent the minority group on the show. However, they are relegated to the sidelines and only serve as pawns Blair can move around to get what she wants. In the pilot episode, they serve mainly as informants, letting the audience and Blair know what Gossip Girl is posting about Serena. Their presence also reinforces Blair's social position, as they prove to be loyal to her, even if they sometimes question Blair's actions.

**5.4. Conclusion**

Like *The O.C.*, *Gossip Girl* also presents its viewers with, on the one hand, this dream world in which the teenage characters can do whatever they want, throw lavish parties, and wear fabulous outfits, while on the other hand, it also shows the dark side to all the glamour. The parents who do not seem to care about their children's feelings, the insecurities and the backstabbing between people who claim to be friends. This world is shown in stark contrast to the down to earth homeliness the Humphreys in their apartment in Brooklyn represent. They might not live in a huge apartment in Manhattan, cannot afford expensive clothes, and only attend private school in order for them to have a chance at being accepted into a prestigious university, but they are a family that cares and shows its love for the family members.

The question as to why the audience should be interested in future episodes has to be asked. The pilot, like *The O.C.* pilot, set up numerous storylines that are waiting to be developed further, and created conflicts that have not yet been resolved. After watching the pilot episode, viewers should be interested in learning the answers to the following questions:

- Will Serena and Dan become a couple
- How is Jenny dealing with what happened at the party
- Will Blair be able to forgive Serena

- Will Nate continue dating Blair for his father's sake or will he admit his feelings for Serena
- How will Lily and Rufus react should their children become a couple
- What will happen to Eric
- Will Chuck continue to insult people and get into fights

In the pilot, the audience is confronted with the life style of rich teenagers in New York City. In order for viewers to be able to identify with characters, the episode has opted to feature storylines and problems that the average teenager is familiar with and can relate to. As long as the series manages to portray issues in a way the audience can relate too, it will be able to add sometimes over the top dramatic storylines, without alienating its audience, which would make processes like identification impossible.

## 6. CONCLUSION

*The O.C.* and *Gossip Girl* both fulfill all the necessary criteria to be considered a typical teen drama series. They deal with the same issues, have similar characters and are both set in a wealthy community, like many other teen drama series. Contrary to older series, however, they have included elements that should attract a millennial teenage audience. While earlier shows often relegated parents to the sidelines or omitted them altogether, the two shows attempt a more realistic portrayal of what teenage life is like. Taking the wealthy lifestyle out of the equation, one sees typical teenagers having to deal with typical problems. This allows viewers to relate to characters that are very different than them and they can be empathetic to their experiences and emotions because they are familiar to the audience. Viewers also can learn what it must be like to grow up in a wealthy community with highly successful parents who do not expect any less from their children. Both series combine these two elements. On the one hand, showing the audience what other people's lives are like, and on the other hand, presenting storylines and issues that are familiar and the average teenager can relate to. All that is not exactly new. However, both series added elements that pertain to the teenage experience in the early 2000s. A more liberal approach to teenage drinking and sexuality, a focus on technology, which is used as a plot device, and a growing number of musical numbers in each episode that the audience can easily download afterwards without really having to try to figure out who the artist is.

It seems that in order to be successful, teen drama series have to walk a fine line between so-called OMG-moments ("Oh my God") and storylines that seem believable to the audience. They have to show characters the audience can identify with, sometimes loving them and sometimes hating them, just as with real friends. Real teenagers have parents, and therefore, storylines including parents or series that give adult characters independent storylines add realism to the overall look of a show. In fast paced shows that show drama after drama, those quiet family moments allow the audience to take a break from all the drama and focus on the message most shows seem to try to tell the audience; that no matter how bad it gets, no matter how badly you

mess up, you have your family to fall back on, and make all the teenage angst more bearable.

Both *The O.C.* and *Gossip Girl* mix moments of heightened drama with quiet family moments. Because of the pilot's need to draw in an audience quickly, both series presented its audience with big social events to show the glamorous side of living in a wealthy community, but then countered them by introducing the viewers to the Cohen family and the Humphreys, the heart of the series, in terms of showing the audience that having a good home life can make up for lots of other things. Both shows are presented from a somewhat outsider perspective. While *The O.C.'s* two main characters, Seth and Ryan, are neither considered popular nor cool, they are the characters the audience supports, roots for and can identify with the most. Because of their own outsider status, they can make fun of the lifestyle of their peers and their families, and are at first just spectators, like the audience, looking in from the outside. *Gossip Girl* is also presented, at times, from an outside perspective. It mostly contrasts the views and opinions of the down to earth Humphrey family in Brooklyn, with the snobbish, rich families on the Upper East Side. While Jenny Humphrey tries her best to become part of the in-crowd, her older brother seems content to stay away from the drama the wealthy lifestyle seems to entail. Again, viewers can probably identify with the need or wish to be part of a popular group, especially in High School. However, it is also shown, that those groups are often not what one had expected.

Both TV shows take into account the universals of teen drama and adapt them to cater to the millennial teenage audience. Mobile phones become plot devices in *Gossip Girl*, representing today's teens' and young adults' addictions to their cell phones. The shows offer clues as to what can be consider hip and trendy by including more and more music by often, at the time, unknown artists, providing links for music downloads and addresses for the stores that clothes the protagonists. Storylines revolve around topics, which are issues for modern teens, and there is a more liberal approach to the way those topics are presented and dealt with. The drama, sometimes, seems ridiculous, over-the-top, unrealistic at best, but the series manage to balance these moments of heightened drama with moments which let the audience

really see a character, his/ her problems, feelings and development as a person. Audiences might hate certain characters or storylines, but they do not abandon the shows, because there is one thing they do not do - they do not preach, they do not patronize the audiences, they do not "feel" like they were written by adults. *The O.C.* and *Gossip Girl* were/are a success, because they were created by relatively young people, who were not too far removed from the teenage experience themselves and who understood how to sell a "Beverly Hills 90210" like series to the networks, which in turn made fun of exactly that kind of lifestyle. A successful teen drama series, it seems, needs to offer dramatic storylines to keep the audience interested, but at the same time provide characters that are more than just the stereotypical jock or nerd, characters with which the audience can identify with even if they live in another states or live a different lifestyle. One does not need to be rich, tall and skinny to be able to identify with Marissa, who is affected by her father's legal troubles, or to be able to understand Serena's need to be a good sister to her brother. A successful teen drama series provides the audience with characters, they want to see grow up and grow as people, like real friends and family. Both *The O.C.* and *Gossip Girl*, in their pilot episodes, have established characters that the audience can either root for or despise, but there are no characters one feels indifferent to. The audience has to care one way or another, to keep a show running. Only when viewers are indifferent to the storylines and character relationships unfolding on screen, shows are in trouble. *The O.C.* and *Gossip Girl* have both provided characters that appear human enough for the audience to care about them, and this is why both shows can get away with sometimes outlandish plots. Viewers care enough about the characters to be actually interested to see how a specific character deals with an over-the-top storyline. And for those viewers well past their own teenage experience – they get a glimpse of the life of the modern teenager, his/her problems and the way modern teens deal with issues and what their experience entails.

## 7. APPENDIX

### List of Images

Images 1, 2, 4, 5, 10: The O.C. season 4 press kit - © Fox Broadcasting Company

Images 3,8, 9: Screen shot - © Fox Broadcasting Company

Images 6, 7, 12: The O.C. season 3 press kit - © Fox Broadcasting Company

Image 11: The O.C. season 1 press kit - © Fox Broadcasting Company

Image 13: © WireImage

Image 14: Frank Ockenfels - © The CW

Images 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21: Andrew Eccles - © The CW

Image 20: Patrick Harbron - © The CW

Image 22: Timothy White - © The CW

Images 23, 24, 25: Screen shot - © The CW

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## 9. IMAGE SELECTION

### 9.1 *The O.C.*

**Ryan Atwood and Marissa Cooper - Selection**
<u>0:08:20 – 0:11:04 - Ext. Night: Outside the Cohen and Cooper houses</u>









**Seth Cohen and Ryan Atwood – Selection**
<u>011:44 - 0:14:04 - Int. Day: Cohen living room / Ext. Day: Beach and ocean</u>

**Sandy Cohen and Ryan Atwood - Selection**
0:01:16 – 0:03:34 - Int. Day: Chino Juvenile Correction Center





**At the beach house - Selection**
0:25:19 – 0:25:54 - Ext. Night: In front of the beach house/ Int. Day: Beach house

## 9.2 *Gossip Girl*

**Serena van der Woodsen, Blair Waldorf, Nate Archibald, Chuck Bass - Selection**
0:21:02 – 0:24:32 Chuck and Serena cross-cut with Blair and Nate. A flashback revealing a scandal bridges the two scenes
Int. Night: Blair's bedroom/ Int. Night: Hotel kitchen/ Int. Day: A ballroom



**Dan, Jenny and Rufus Humphrey - Selection**
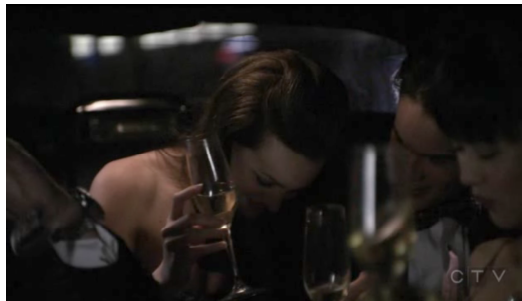0:07:35 – 0:08:55  - Ext. Day: Brooklyn/ Int. Day: Humphrey Apartment

**Opening sequence - Selection**
<u>0:00:00 – 0:00:21 - Ext. Day: Manhattan</u>



**Limousine ride to the "Kiss on the Lips Party"**
<u>0:32:27 – 0:33:01 - Int. Night: Limousine</u>

## 10. Abstract

Die vorliegende Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit dem Genre der Teen Drama Serien im Allgemeinen und mit den beiden Serien *The O.C.* und *Gossip Girl* im Speziellen. Nachgegangen wird der Frage wie das Genre zu definieren ist und welche Kriterien eine Serie erfüllen muss, um als Teen Drama bezeichnet zu werden. Dabei werden die verschiedenen Arten von Teen Drama Serien erklärt, Standard-Charaktere und Cast näher beleuchtet, sowie die Themen und deren Behandlung in den Serien erläutert.

Der Analyseteil der Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit den beiden Pilotfolgen der Serien *The O.C.* (2003 -2007) und *Gossip Girl* (2007 -). Durch Szenen-, Charakter- und Themenanalysen werden die Faktoren eruiert, die zum Erfolg der beiden Serien beitragen. Ein weiterer Fokus liegt auf neu- beziehungsweise wieder eingeführten Elementen, die speziell auf die Generation der „Millennials" zugeschnitten sind.

Die Conclusio gibt Antwort auf die Frage, was einen erfolgreichen Teen Drama Piloten ausmacht. Serien müssen Charaktere anbieten mit denen sich die Zuschauer identifizieren können, selbst wenn diese Charaktere in einem anderen Umfeld aufwachsen. Wichtig ist auch, dass Serien nicht nur dramatische Handlungen anbieten um das Publikumsinteresse zu halten, sondern vor allem Zeit in Charakterentwicklung und die Beziehungen zwischen den einzelnen Charakteren investieren.

# 11. CURRICULUM VITAE

## Zur Person:

| | |
|---|---|
| Name: | Christina Stadler |
| Geburtsdatum: | 3. April 1986 |
| Geburtsort: | Steyr |
| Staatsangehörigkeit: | Österreich |

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## Ausbildung

| | |
|---|---|
| 2005 – 2011/12 | Diplomstudium Theater-, Film- und Medienwissenschaft |
| 2006 – 2010/11 | Publizistik und Kommunikationswissenschaft (Bakk. phil) |
| 2005 – 2009/10 | Diplomstudium Anglistik und Amerikanistik (abgeschlossen mit Bachelor of Art) |
| 08 – 12/2008 | Joint Study: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign |
| 1996 - 2004 | Bundesgymnasium Steyr Werndlpark |

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## Beruflicher Werdegang

| | |
|---|---|
| 10/2011 – 01/2012 | Ulrich Seidl Film Produktion/ Produktionsassistenz |
| 06 – 07/2011 | Ulrich Seidl Film Produktion/ diverse Tätigkeiten |
| 06 - 08/2010 | Musikfestival Steyr/ Regiehospitanz |
| 03 – 10/2010 | Ulrich Seidl Film Produktion/ Trainee |