Prosocial Television Programming and Identity Development in Adolescence

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Erikson’s 5th Stage

- 12 – 18 (or early 20’s)
- Identity vs. Role Confusion
- Seeking identity outside of the family
Identity Development

- More vulnerable to media influence
- Use media to learn how to cope with challenges
- More pressure to define themselves
- Choose media as a way to express their identity
Identification

- **Identification** -- viewers see themselves or feel connected with a character

- **Wishful Identification** -- viewers want to be like or act like a character
Prosocial Behaviors

Help someone better themselves as individuals and as members of society

- Positive relationships
- Kindness toward others
- Success in school or career
- Confidence
- Prevents bad behavior
- Does not fall into peer pressure / negative influence
What were some of your favorite TV characters as teenagers?

And why?
Perpetuated Stereotypes--Girls

Attractiveness

Intelligent

Successful

Admired
Perpetuated Stereotypes--Boys

Successful

Intelligent

Lone ranger

Buff

Tough guy

Powerful one

Violent
On the bright side...

- Teens want funny, strong, independent, wise
- Characters are starting to break stereotypes
How do you see television having an effect on identity development among teens? Positive? Negative?

How much positive or prosocial programming do you think is available today?