I examined the show *Frasier* to compare gender stereotypes in American society. Like all television shows, Frasier plays an active role in defining “real” men and females. In particular, this show perpetuates various stereotypes in a hilarious manner, which causes people to question their validity. One episode, titled “My Fair Frasier,” revealed Frasier adhering to more feminine behaviors. Mocked by his friends and family, he had to determine whether he was comfortable with his new role and the role of his dominating girlfriend. The audience got a glimpse of a gender-role reversal and could examine their own feelings about such roles for themselves.

*Frasier* is full of many interesting characters. Frasier’s father is called the man of the family, in more ways than one. Much to the displeasure of his sons, he loves baseball, beer, and steakhouses. He hopes that his sons might one day share his joy of outdoor activities. However, neither boy found the lifestyle suitable and became lesser men in their father’s eyes. Being a cop, he holds a strong sense of justice, which he tries to pass on to his sons. He is certain that if they could become more like him, they would be able to scrape up some of their dignity.

Frasier and his brother, Niles, are very similar in their tastes. Both are respected, wealthy psychologists that define themselves by their possessions. They are proud of what they can buy with their money and often flaunt it to the other. In a way, they reflect the typical male mentioned by Daniel Tripp (2005) in his article, “‘Wake Up!’: Narratives of Masculine Epiphany in Millennial Cinema.” Tripp explained, “For as long as Jack’s identity is defined by his possessions and manipulated by corporate culture, he remains alienated from the traditional fictions by which men understand themselves to be men.” This explanation perfectly portrays Frasier and Niles. They can never be content as long as they spend their hours deciding how to decorate their apartments. They distinguish themselves by their lavish furniture and luxurious suits, but never actually participate in the production process that has defined men for centuries. In one episode, Frasier found himself helpless when his toilet broke. He had no knowledge or skill in home repair and was at the mercy of the repairmen. Although
neither enjoyed manual labor, they did not think of themselves as feminine by any means. They view manhood as having refined manners and an extensive education. Frasier’s manhood didn’t come into question until he got into a relationship with a strong-willed and determined woman. Throughout their interactions, Frasier suppressed his masculinity to accommodate his new girlfriend.

In her article, “The Relevancy and Gender Identity in Spectators’ Interpretations of Thelma & Louise,” Brenda Cooper (1999) summarized the typical role of men and women. Women, she explained, “Tend to describe themselves in terms of relationships and fulfill their interpersonal needs primarily through relationships with other women.” While men, “are more likely to describe themselves in terms of their separation and individuality from others.” During My Fair Frasier, Frasier found himself dating a woman, Samantha, who valued separation and individuality much more than relationships. She was focused on her career and was proud of her abilities as a lawyer. She often had to leave Frasier in the middle of dinner to get back to her work. From the beginning, Frasier was the one cooking dinner, while Samantha went to meetings and conferences. Feeling guilty, Samantha sent him flowers and several other gifts to prove her commitment to him. However, her actions suggested that she wasn’t interested in maintaining an equal friendship with him. As Frasier submitted to her rules, he found himself stripped of his dignity as a man. He did not control the relationship and felt more feminine with each passing day.

Frasier began to worry when he attended a lawyer party with Samantha. Upon their arrival, she was called to take an important phone call and Frasier integrated himself with the other lawyer’s spouses. Since the lawyers were predominantly men, a group of women entertained Frasier. As they joked about lawyers making boring spouses, they realized that they had a lot in common. Frasier instantly related to the women and turned to them for a more secure relationship, as characterized by Cooper’s typical female. Since he was unable to forge a meaningful relationship with Samantha, he flourished with the attention of his new lady companions. As the night continued, he realized he was no longer a man. He had adopted a passive nature and found himself scared by his feelings of resignation. He could no longer be sure whether he was happy as a gendered female. Frasier reflects on his situation to determine whether he could be
happy as the submissive partner in the relationship. In the end, he chose to dump her rather than compromise his manhood.

Although Frasier’s gender role was reversed for only a couple shows, it adequately portrayed some of the conflicts involved in adhering to a different gender. It was very easy to see how Samantha could be mistaken for a man and how Frasier mimicked the social women around him. While it has become more acceptable for women to be career driven, men are still trying to figure out how to deal with their evolving roles. Sometimes having a working woman for a partner can cause men to turn to more domestic duties. Other times, partners agree to hire someone to clean their house for them so they can both work. Either way, men have had less time to grapple with societal changes and therefore can still be uncomfortable in their new roles. While it has become acceptable for women to pursue careers, but is not completely normal for men to cry around friends. As we go about our lives, we should look for the stereotypes that exist around us and challenge them. In trying new things, we have the potential to find a more comfortable role for ourselves. It is during times of discomfort that we can best learn about our desires and how to fulfill them.
Works Cited

