

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS OF  
CHILDHOOD MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY IN *BEN 10*.**

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates the representation of gendered childhood in popular children's television series *Ben 10*. The series focuses on ten year old Ben who is granted alien powers, deciding to use them to protect innocent people from danger. Alongside Ben is his ten year old female cousin, Gwen, presented as his foil and guide throughout the series. As the characters develop the series presents particular gendered ways of performing childhood and adolescence and responses to the challenges of growing up.

Before charting the trajectories of masculinity and femininity of the series I provide a theoretical framework drawing on the work of Foucault for his conceptualisation of discourse, discursive regimes and discursive subjects. The discursive approach is further explored by outlining particular concepts posited by Connell and Butler who argue for the discursive construction and performativity of gender.

Similarly, I employ a social constructionist approach to childhood, arguing for children as active meaning makers – albeit constrained by broader discourses. They are constantly learning behaviours which shape their social practice, indicating the significance of studies on children's media.

Consistent with a constructivist approach, this study employs a qualitative methodology to undertake a Critical Discourse Analysis of select episodes, also informed by narrative theories. These ideas underpin the textual analysis of each purposively sampled episode of the three series to present the progression of masculinity and femininity from childhood through early and later adolescence through the characters Ben and Gwen. The analysis serves to demonstrate that Rousseau's gendered notions of childhood still have considerable purchase in the twenty-first century, particularly in relation to the female character.

This study's findings propose a shift in children's televisual representations to espousing more liberal views of masculinity, wherein boys are permitted space to feel fear and anxiety. Unsurprisingly, the series continues to uphold traditional ideals of heteronormativity and a hegemonic masculinity which uses physicality to demonstrate dominance. Furthermore, despite the modern conception of self-actualising females the series expects its female characters to work doubly hard without fundamentally challenging patriarchal ideals. That conventional, patriarchal gender roles are rehearsed and privileged in this popular series has implications in terms of persistent gender inequalities.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

### Introduction

In 2005 Cartoon Network began broadcasting animated children's television series *Ben 10*, an action-packed science fiction show featuring the ten year old Ben and his cousin Gwen. Aimed at a younger audience, the first series laid the groundwork for one of the top-selling cartoon franchises in recent history, reaching 312 million households in 168 countries (Ito 2012). Since inception, *Ben 10*'s popularity was fuelled by a lucrative expansion of merchandise which includes a succession of further series, movies, games, toys, and even a theme song that Gordon Brown, then United Kingdom Prime Minister, allegedly could not get out of his mind (Ito 2012). Produced by (New York, LA-based firm) Man of Action, *Ben 10* and its sequels are distributed internationally by Cartoon Network to an active, worldwide fan base who participate in conventions, online communities, live action game shows and generate stories and designs that build on the series (Kendrick 2012).

The ongoing interest in the series has resulted in Cartoon Network considering a reboot (remaking the original series with slightly different storylines) scheduled for late 2016 with the aim of attracting a new generation of audiences. Despite its American origin the Ben 10 phenomenon has taken root in South African culture, with local stores carrying branded clothing and toys (merchandising often earns the franchise more money than the television series itself (Franck & Nüesch 2007). The popularity extends across socioeconomic boundaries as unlicensed street hawkers feature a range of *Ben 10*-branded merchandise and even local taxi cabs feature *Ben 10* imagery and logos printed on vehicle sides and windows. The uptake of the series has even spawned its own local vernacular: "Ben 10" has become the slang term for one's younger boyfriend. South African tabloid *The Daily Sun* features headlines such as "I live with my Ben 10 and my hubby!" (Michaels 2015) and "Her panties bust Ben 10!" (Politics Web 2015). The appropriation of the term into local culture is indicative of the market saturation and popularity of a global series which has become a household name in South Africa, reinforced by a recent advertising campaign in Johannesburg promoting the new series, which resulted in 3.37 million page views on [www.cartoonnetworkafrica.com](http://www.cartoonnetworkafrica.com), the highest count ever recorded for a Cartoon Network event in Africa (Burson-Marsteller n.d.).

The initial series revolves around Ben Tennyson, a 10 year old boy, his cousin Gwen Tennyson, also 10, and their grandfather Max. The story begins with a family vacation in which Ben acquires a mysterious gadget known as the Omnitrix. This watch-like device endows Ben with a special power. Of central importance to the narrative is Ben's possession

of this device that grants him the ability to assume the form of various aliens, each with particular powers. As the holder of the Omnitrix, Ben is charged with the responsibility to take action against evil and to become a hero. He consequently faces a series of challenges which threaten not only his safety, but that of the world. This narrative persists through the original and successive series of *Ben 10*.

### **Context of research**

Children who watch television are not only entertained but assume, consciously or unconsciously, that they are learning more about the world they live in, who they are in that world and how they should behave (Children's Rights Centre n.d.).

Children in many places across the world spend the majority of their leisure time in the presence of television, either actively watching or engaged in other tasks while programming continues in the background (Gunter & McAleer 1997; Davies 2004). According to a report released in February 2014 by the South African Audience Research Foundation, approximately 42.9 million people (ages 4 and older) had access to a television set in the preceding period of the survey (South African Audience Research Foundation 2014). Given the pervasiveness of the medium in children's lives, understanding the role of television becomes increasingly important, particularly during the time of identity formation.

Television has been theorised to hold many roles in the life of a child, including entertainment, information, escape and relaxation (Gunter & McAleer 1997) becoming for many the primary source of knowledge about the world, both factual and social. In providing audiences with serial narratives and dramatic programming, television "may convey lessons about how or how not to deal with other people, solve personal or family problems and disputes, make friends and influence people, and get on in life – professionally and personally" (Gunter & McAleer 1997: 19). Television thus provides audiences with potential scripts for behaviour and understanding their social environments, and, for young audiences, these scripts can underpin their comprehension of social practice. In short, television "has to help children in the task of growing up" (Davies 2004: 58).

### **Existing research into children's media**

Since its introduction, television quickly became a pervasive part of daily life, inspiring research into its effects and roles, primarily motivated by a growing concern with the amount of time children spent in front of the set (Friedrich & Stein 1973) coupled with the idea that television transmits content "that can cause, overtly and imperceptibly, learning to take place" (Berry 2007: 95). Scholarly research in the field has been steadily growing as

evidenced by the inception of the *Journal of Children and Media* ten years ago. More recently, UNESCO has undertaken an annual edition of the *Clearinghouse*, an anthology of studies related to children and the media. In recent years the field has developed a concern with gender in childhood and with the sexualisation of girl children (Durham 2008; Kincaid 1998; Walkerdine 1999; Lerum & Dworkin 2009). However despite the interest in children and the media there remains a relative lack of study investigating gendered content in children's media (Boshoff & Prinsloo 2008).

Having recognised television as a source of influence in young viewers' lives, early research into children's media tended to be motivated primarily by a concern regarding the negative effects of television (Buckingham 1993: 9). Underpinned by the behaviourist approach, this tradition presumes that these negative 'effects' – which are complex social phenomena – are the consequence of the singular, powerful force of the television. Overlooking social structures and influences, the effects approaches to television and the media consumption often assume that the overriding influence shaping children's thoughts and behaviour emanates from television which is further presumed frequently to circulate corrupting ideas. As such, effects research into the topic has inevitably sought to identify the debilitating effects of television with the presumption of their existence. This research took specific forms, for example, it was largely concerned with the correlations between television violence and violence in young boys (Hartnagel, Teevan & McIntyre 1975; Bignell 2002; Murray 2003) and the effects of televised violence and pornography on child audiences (Carlsson & Von Feilitzen 1998; Buckingham 1993; Murray 2003; Pecora 2007).

Within cultural studies the focus on television went to "the production and reproduction of ideology in the context of a hegemonic model of cultural power" (Barker 2004: 198) which tended toward presuming a passive reproduction of ideology in audiences. In reaction to this, the audience theorising began which constructs audiences, including children, as "active, sophisticated and discriminating viewers" (Buckingham 1993: 18). If children are recognised as an active audience, this entails the assumption of their agency in interpreting the text. The text must therefore be studied as polysemic, as a site of multiple varied meanings. Importantly, the emphasis on children as audience has spawned research on reception in recent years which focus on "how children are media literate, and capable of distinguishing between fiction and reality", that is, not merely an audience (Gauntlett & Hill 1999: 80). As a consequence of the audience focus, research into actual texts and the content which child audiences interpret has tended to get neglected in spite of the constant shifting in representations presented by these texts. Fürsich (2009: 247) reminds us of the importance of

textual analysis for identifying the reification of various subject positions and to “explain the hegemonic or emancipatory potential of a popular culture text”.

The caveat here is that by acknowledging the agency of a child audience in the interpretation of texts one risks constructing the viewer as unaffected by content, thus “repeating the binary oppositions between rational child and irrational child, active and passive, agent and victim, that have underlain much of the debate on both childhood and popular culture” (Bignell 2002: 136).

Despite this conception, there is still a relative neglect of close textual analysis of children’s televisual media. The pervasiveness of television and its availability to children implies the prevalence of texts which carry a multitude of meanings (Barker 1999) and the particular significance to this study comes in the role of television as a site of gendered representation of childhood. If television “influences the way that children build their own identities – how they understand who they are, what they like, their place in the world, and their goals and desires” (Selznick 2008: 108) then the televised representations provide ways of being masculine or feminine in childhood, creating points of identification with audiences through fictional narrative. In depicting how to behave as a boy or girl, television implicitly validates these gendered behaviours as normal and socially acceptable, in turn creating ideas of what would be construed as unacceptable social practice. This study thus focuses on the gendered representations of children in *Ben 10*, primarily investigating the representations of masculinity to discern what behaviours are validated for young boys. Due to limitations of scope this paper limits the study to the text itself.

### **Objectives of the study**

The primary goal of this study is to examine and understand the discursive construction of gendered childhood proposed by the globally popular children’s television series, *Ben 10*. This study seeks to chart the trajectory of masculinity as depicted through a character who develops from a boy into a young man, and, by extension, to chart the trajectory of femininity through the eponymous character’s female cousin in order to discern the discourses privileged by the series.

### **Significance of the study**

Since first airing, *Ben 10* has developed into a lucrative franchise with global retail sales of over US\$4.5 billion (Petski 2015). Despite this worldwide circulation and its popularity, I could not identify any scholarly work pertaining to it. Moreover, research into the gendered constructions of children’s television shows, which is the focus of this study, is relatively scarce in the field of media studies and the research that does exist tends to focus

on the construction of girls. The notable exception to this is Wannamaker's edited book (2011) that is concerned with the gendered construction of boys in children's media.

With the scarcity of study in this area, this investigation into the gendering of *Ben 10* will allow for a contemporary look into the representation(s) of male and female children in this set of sequels of widely distributed media. While previous studies have sought to highlight the effect of media on children or the unequal representations of female children, this study analyses the gendered constructions of a children's television show, with the aim of revealing what forms of behaviour are validated by the show. In doing this, the study also looks into what constitutes masculinities and femininities both in terms of behaviour/performance and representation within the popular *Ben 10*, drawing on concepts posited by Connell and Butler to argue for the conception of gender as both discursively constructed and performed.

Constructivist theory posits that reality results from the way in which things are signified. As the site of signification, television therefore furnishes viewers with a particular construction of reality manifest in discursive constructions embedded within televisual narrative. These discourses are embedded in narrative and offer viewers a way to make sense of their world, to "educate them in the established codes and values of their society, whether to reinforce or subvert" (Davies 2004: 204). These narratives thus construct positions which result in the naturalisation of particular societal conventions.

It is recognised that narrative can "help children come to terms with psychic inner conflicts and the struggles of development" (Davies 2004: 204). While this study does not engage with the psyche by drawing on psychoanalytic approaches to film (Mulvey 1989), this insight is salient to this study for the sequels chart the trajectory of the protagonist as he negotiates the challenges of childhood and later adolescence. These challenges offer viewers a point of identification, priming them to understand the particular way Ben handles the difficulties of growing up as natural and thus these values and actions are discursively validated. Through this lens the study attends primarily to the gendered behaviours that are validated by the television series.

While the focus is on gender here, the persistence of racial inequalities in post-apartheid South Africa indicates the significance of race to South African citizens. The depiction of whiteness in much popular culture as unraced or invisible and therefore normal (Dyer 1997) is thus problematic, particularly in a context where the majority of South Africans are not white. Whereas local programming tends to portray characters of diverse backgrounds and races, foreign or 'international' television generally encodes the heroic

protagonists of children's media as white (see Boshoff & Prinsloo 2008). In an African context this depiction arguably serves to reinforce the construction of whiteness as both ideal and normal.

### **Outline**

This study is divided into five chapters. This chapter has provided the context to the texts analysed and a brief discussion of the theoretical context of the study, followed by an outline of the objectives and significance of this research.

Chapter Two presents the theoretical framework underpinning the research which begins with a discussion of Cultural Studies and then argues the value of a social constructionist approach to representation. The chapter presents a Foucauldian understanding of discourse and extends this concept to theorising gender and childhood as discursive constructs. Finally, the chapter discussed narrative as a means of constructing reality.

Chapter Three focuses on how conducting an investigation into gendered behaviour depicted in a televisual medium is enabled by the use of a qualitative research methodology. It undertakes a critical textual analysis of the series. Making use of genre, intertextuality and narrative theories, the study adopts an eclectic method which draws on linguistic theory and media studies to establish discursive patterns made evident in the text. This chapter also describes for the sampling method used to create a corpus of texts. The qualitative nature of this research required transcription of the episodes and also generated extensive textual detail. This data is included in several appendices to provide textual evidence for my claims and arguments.

Chapter Four then presents the textual analysis and findings of this study, identifying with textual evidence the discursive patterns foregrounded by the text. The concluding chapter looks at how these patterns relate to dominant understandings of gender and what discourses are privileged in *Ben 10*. This chapter presents the findings of the study, first in relation to gendered childhood and second, to gendered adolescence, with a discussion of the implications entailed. The study thereafter concludes with an acknowledgement of limitations as well as suggestions for future research.

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework**

### **Introduction**

This investigation into the gendered constructions of the popular children's television series Ben 10, particularly in relation to masculinities, but by extension femininities, focuses specifically on the representations offered by the texts itself and the meaning they privilege. It works within a Cultural Studies paradigm and, in particular, is informed by the metaphorical construct of culture as a circuit (Johnson 1986; Hall 1997). The circuit of culture provides a holistic approach that, in addition to representation and production, addresses issues of consumption and identity, and accordingly it incorporates concern with gendered identities and the relationship between the media and the society it exists within.

This chapter outlines the theoretical underpinning of this study, beginning with discussion of Cultural Studies and the circuit of culture. Moving on, the chapter grounds the research in a social constructionist approach to representation, discusses gender and childhood as discursive constructs, and concludes with a focus on narrative as means of constructing reality, an issue of central importance to this study.

### **Cultural Studies**

The Cultural Studies paradigm is primarily concerned with the social production and circulation of meaning (Buckingham 2008). Conceptualising social practices as imbued with meaning, Cultural Studies seeks to investigate the way in which power relations are embedded in cultural practice, and how the consequent inequalities are maintained, negotiated or resisted in the cultural processes of production and reception (Buckingham 2008; Barker 2002). Adopting a Cultural Studies approach to investigating texts allows for the understanding of how texts work in a dialectical relationship with social practice and the production of meaning. Accordingly, representations of gender are recognised as a prime location of social inequalities and imbalances.

If the political economy approach, informed by Marxist theory, argues that meaning making is shaped "at every level by the structured asymmetries in social relations" (Golding & Murdock 2000: 73), Cultural Studies contests this by arguing that the lived experience and agency of consumers is also significant in the process of making meaning from texts. Cultural Studies is thus primarily concerned with the production of culture and meaning through representation and with "the construction and consequences of those representations, and thus with matters of power" (Barker 2002: 4).

Consequently, central to this approach is the emphasis on culture. A seminal paper

in the formulation of Cultural Studies theory is Raymond Williams's *Long Revolution* (1965) which distinguishes two diverging concepts of culture. The first conceives of culture as inclusive of every idea and interpretation of common experiences in a society. Culture is thereby "democratized and socialized" (Hall 1981: 21) to become a convergent site of interpretations. This conception of culture encompasses all "available descriptions through which societies make sense of and reflect their common experiences" (Hall 1981: 21). Culture in this sense challenges the traditional distinction between elite culture and popular culture, asserting that culture is constituted by all experience and interpretations in society rather than merely those deemed 'elite' (Dahlgren 1997). The second concept understands culture as more anthropological in its emphasis of social practices as performed by human beings. Culture is understood as "threaded through all social practices, and is the sum of their inter-relationship" (Hall 1981: 22). This understanding of culture draws attention to the way in which social practices are organised to create meaning. These conceptions of culture differ in that the former incorporates all ideas and interpretations of social experience as cultural whereas the latter focuses on social practice as meaning making and therefore culturally significant.

Meaning is ascribed to practices, events and objects according to our representation, of them, use of them and our interpretations of them (Hall 1997). In this way, culture is evident in all aspects of society. Meaning is "constantly being produced and exchanged in every personal and social interaction in which we take part" (Hall 1997: 3). Significant to this study is the production of meaning in modern mass media and the way in which these meanings are incorporated into the daily lives of media consumers in the constitution of their identities and of culture as a whole. In order to investigate how these meanings are produced, circulated and consumed, culture is metaphorically conceptualised as a circuit.

### **Circuit of culture**

The circuit of culture this study draws on was described by Johnson (1986), who provides a model that constructs the relationship between media and society as a circuit consisting of various moments, namely production, consumption, the text itself, and the lived culture/social context within which the text is produced and consumed.

Of central importance to this study is the moment of representation, that is, a focus the text itself as the cultural product that is circulated. As a cultural product, a text is a vehicle for creating and circulating meaning through particular representations occurring within a specific context. It is studied "not for its own sake, not even for the social effects it may be thought to produce, but rather for the subjective or cultural forms which it realises and makes

available” (Johnson 1986: 62). As a cultural product, a text is a vehicle for creating and circulating meaning through particular representations occurring within a specific context.

The moment of production relates to the social conditions in which the text is produced which include economic and political influences and production practices which shape the meanings of the text as it is historically located. The production of texts is similarly influenced by organisational structures which systematically constrain the meanings texts convey by favouring particular meanings over others, for example, a text produced within a feminist organisation is likely to contain meanings which relate to gender injustices.

Consumption refers to the reception and interpretation of the product, and is located within and subject to the social context in which the reader exists and interprets the text.

Context is the fourth element in the circuit of culture, that is, the lived social reality in which the text is produced, circulated and interpreted. While this study focuses specifically on the texts and representations, they are considered in relation to the social culture in which they exist. This context includes manifestations of relations of power inclusive but not limited to gender and consumerism. Each moment, according to Johnson (1986: 46), “depends upon the others and is indispensable to the whole”, that is, interlinked yet remaining discrete. Within this circuit, each moment is recognised as continuously interlinked and may be used as a framework in cultural analysis to examine specific aspects of the media and its relationship with society. Each of these moments sustain the other and constitute the circulation of a text in a social context. Without production, there would be no texts to consume and likewise a lack of consumption would negate the need for production. In the process of both production and consumption, the producer and reader of the text are situated in a specific socio-historic setting and the text itself is located within the context of multiple other texts to which it relates and refers (Buckingham 2008: 224). The circuit of culture provides an appropriate framework for this study concerned with how meaning is created and circulated, as well as with the hegemonic constructions of meaning, specifically in relation to the gendered meanings embedded in the children’s television series *Ben 10* (discussed in chapter 4). 10.

## **Representation**

As this focus understands culture to be a convergent site of shared meanings, language is integral to the process of producing, exchanging and interpreting these meanings through a representational system. Representation is argued to be “the production of meaning through language” (Hall 1997: 16), while meaning is understood as socially and historically located and thus subject to change. The social practice of meaning making is referred to as

signification.

This approach to meaning, described as a social constructionist approach (Hall 1997), considers representation to be an intrinsic part of the constitution of meaning. Rather than conceiving of events and objects in the real world as possessing their own integral, singular meaning, this approach proposes that meaning is constructed within the symbolic practices and systems that represent the world (Hall 1997). There are two strands of the constructionist approach namely semiotics and discourse. Semiotics is “the study or ‘science of signs’ and their general role as vehicles of meaning in culture” (Hall 1997: 6). It is primarily concerned with how representation produces meaning and is rooted in the work of Swiss linguist and semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure who conceptualised language as a system of signs (Fairclough 2001). Signs are comprised of a material dimension that may be written, vocalised, or animated, and a symbolic function which produces meaning, that is the referent which is represented by the sign. These two dimensions, the signifier and the signified, respectively, exist as components of the sign. For the signified meaning to be accessed or approximated, the representational system or language must be comprehended. Hall argues that “signs can only convey meaning if we possess codes which allow us to translate our concepts into language – and vice versa” (Hall 1997: 28-29). Meaning is therefore created not by apparent representation of the ‘real’ in language, but by the articulation of language in relation to the object or process it refers to in the real world. If language is understood as a signifying practice, the codes required for communication and interpretation of meaning are a product of social convention and may become naturalised due to constant use. This naturalisation does not negate the fact that the link between the signifier and signified is constructed or arbitrary and meaning results as a product of convention, rather than intrinsic to the sign. Saussure also posited that signs operate within a system and are defined in relation to other members of the system (Purvis & Hunt 1993; Van Leeuwen 2005). The meaning of the word ‘animal’ can only be defined in relation to the meaning of ‘human’, ‘bird’, and ‘reptile’ amongst others. Meaning is thus established in relation to that which it is not. It is by their difference that signs can signify.

The semiotic approach has been extended to include social semiotics where that meaning can be produced by objects as well as words and images. Objects can therefore be conceptualised as signs which construct and convey meaning through their signifiers and signifieds. For example, clothing signifies ‘formal’ or ‘casual’. The signifier, a tie or t shirt, and the signified, the mental concept of ‘formality’ or ‘casualness’. As signs they convey meaning and can therefore be likened to a language, and interpreted using broadly shared,

internalised codes. Again, these codes are socially constructed and arbitrary in nature. Members of a society thus use “language and other forms of social semiotics” (Purvis & Hunt 1993: 474) such as dress and conduct, to both communicate social experience and constitute social subjects and identities. Building on Saussure’s notion of signification, social semiotics is primarily interested in the production of meaning as “an inherently social phenomenon in its sources, functions, contexts and effects” (Hodge & Kress 1988: 261).

### **Discourse**

This second strand identified within the social constructionist approach is discourse, which draws on French philosopher Michel Foucault’s conceptualisations. Foucault posited discourse as a system of representation which produces knowledge and meaning. By ‘discourse’, Foucault refers to “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment” (Hall 1997: 44). Foucault thus uses the terms discourse to refer to “the production of knowledge through language” (Hall 1997: 44). A discourse describes acceptable ways of talking about and comprehending a topic while simultaneously ruling out other ways of constructing knowledge about the same topic. Because meaning and the knowledges it produces influence our conduct, discourse shapes the way in which ideas are put into practice, defining acceptable and objectionable ways of talking and conducting oneself. However, because all social practice necessitates meaning which in turn influences conduct, Foucault argues that all social practices possess a discursive aspect due to the meaning they produce. Discourse in Foucault’s terms moves beyond the linguistic definition to link language and social practice. Discourse can therefore be understood as governing not only ways of talking about a particular topic but also governing ways of conducting ourselves in relation to the topic (Foucault 1989; Hall 1997).

Foucault further argued that discourse is therefore historically located and so too are the objects of knowledge and the subjects of knowledge it produces. Meaning, however exists only within discourse. Therefore, the knowledge about a particular topic is produced through discourse, which prescribes and restrains ways of thinking about said topic in a particular historical context. Knowledge is understood as “always inextricably enmeshed in relations of power because it was always being applied to the regulation of social conduct in practice” (Hall 1997: 47). Knowledge is thus a form of power which “is implicated in the questions of whether and in what circumstances knowledge is to be applied or not” (Hall 1997: 48). When articulated with power and applied to the real world, knowledge assumes the authority of ‘the truth’ and in effect becomes true within the specific historical contexts (Hall 1997). ‘Truth’ is

therefore not an absolute construct; it is conceptualised as a discursive formation which sustains a regime of truth in a particular historical context. What counts as ‘true’ is produced within particular contexts and is given authority by the discourses that sanction it as truth.

In the production of meaning, the processes of selection and combination are identified as essential mechanisms in the production of meaning. This process of selection and combination is linked to relations of power. It involves active decision-making and representation is argued to work through both what is included, as much as through what is not (Hall 1997). Consequently the meaning produced is frequently shaped consistent with broader structures of power. For example, if men are consistently depicted as skilled workers and women as nurturing mothers, such representations produce meaning which conforms to patriarchal ideas about gender roles through the processes of repetition and naturalisation. Such representations exclude the idea that women work. This omission results in a particular meaning produced by the text which reinforces the inequalities between men and women. The interest in the social construction of meaning resulted in the development of thought which held representation to be intrinsic to the construction of knowledge.

Representation is therefore understood as implicated in power relations. Foucauldian theory holds that power does not emanate from a single source, but is conceptualised as permeating all levels of society and as productive. Rather than being conceived of as negative or repressive; it produces the objects and subjects of discourse (Foucault 1980; Hall 1997). This conception of power directs attention toward the ‘micro-physics’ of power as found at the bodily level of social practice.

In studying discourse, Foucault historicises discursive practice, arguing that meaning produced within discourse comes to be its truth within its specific historical context. Discourses are therefore liable to shift in meaning in different historical contexts and locations (Foucault 1979). If meaning is constructed within discourses to produce knowledge (with inherent power relations), an analysis of power relations discursively validated within a text entails the analysis of the representations and how meaning is constructed within discourse.

### **Subjectivity**

Within this approach, discourse is recognised as producing both the objects and subjects of knowledge, which exist in a dialectical relationship. Foucault’s discursive approach to the subject holds that the subject is produced within discourse and therefore does not exist outside of discourse. Because of this, the subject is constituted by the prescriptions and conventions of the discourse, that is, to the forms of knowledge produced within the

discourse. The subject of a discourse is simultaneously the bearer of the kind of knowledge which discourse produces. As discourse is historicised, so too is the subject it produces.

Foucault proposes two ways in which the subject is discursively produced. First, the discourse produces subjects who bear the knowledge produced by the discourse and act in accordance with the discourse that constitutes them. Second, the discourse also produces a position for the subject from which its particular knowledge and meaning most make sense (Foucault 1990; Hall 1997). In this way, discourse can be understood as constituting the subject. In locating themselves within this subject position, one is 'subject' to the discourse and its prescriptions and regulations, embodying the particular form of knowledge it produces. Knowledge is thus used discursively to regulate the conduct of others (Foucault 1979; Hall 1997). Turning then to the media and the variety of subject positions it produces, in consuming media texts the viewer is produced as the discursive subject, set up by the text to inhabit a particular position of knowledge. Media consumers are thus argued to be "both the site and the subjects of discursive struggle for their identity" (Weedon 1997: 93).

### **Discipline**

Different discourses shape the behaviour of individuals who regulate their conduct consistent with the discourses that constitute them. This process of constituting the subject has been further explained by the concept of 'discipline'. Power is conceived of as embedded in social practice and forms of behaviour and extends to the embodiment of power. It is applied to the body to regulate conduct in line with a particular set of discursive practices. This 'disciplining' (Foucault 1979) is effected through the application of knowledge/power to regulate the practice of the body. In this sense, power is understood as producing systems of ideas that regulate conduct. This conception of power functions to discipline subjects by incorporating them within a particular discourse. Being subjected to discourse entails subjection to the disciplinary regulation of the discourse. In this way, the ideas or knowledges of the discourse are enacted at the bodily level, resulting in people regulating their own behaviour according to the discourses in which they exist.

For example, the idea that girl children should be dressed in pink clothing and boy children should be in blue, stems from a historically changeable discursive practice which links colour of clothing to gender (Maglaty 2011). Children are also systematically exposed to and expected to engage in gender-specific leisure activities. For example, boy children are encouraged to play outside and are given toys such as soccer balls and bicycles whereas girl children are given dolls and tea sets, and are encouraged to engage in indoor play. This division of play areas and activities is influenced by the discursive practice which places

females in a supposedly passive domestic sphere and males in an active public sphere. In other words, the gendered subjects are ‘disciplined’ over time to accept these practices as natural.

The relationship between meaning and social practice is consequently a central concern in relation to representations in children’s television. Meaning is constructed discursively and texts privilege specific subjectivities: ‘subjecting’ us to the normative regulation of the meanings they presume. This normative regulation endorses behaviours which are then construed as ‘common sense’ accompanied by unquestioned practices with non-explicit or invisible discursive content. For example, a gendered subject position is constituted in a number of ways – including by means of images of how one should look and behave and validated ways of being a woman or man which constituted as ‘natural’. The gendered body has meaning within a discursive formation. It is constituted consistent with sets of power relations privileged by that discourse. A media text that validates a particular discourse, say a patriarchal one, promotes particular forms of behaviour while censoring other forms, and thus it reinforces the behaviour it validates as appropriate. The constant discursive repetition of the validated gender positions as socially acceptable is liable to shape the attitudes and actions of media consumers, reinforcing the regulation of their conduct in alignment with the prescriptions of the discourse. Media texts however also allow for resistance by contesting particular discourses and thereby endorsing particular forms of behaviour which directly contradict the normalised in contesting discourses. For example, feminist discourses contradict hegemonic patriarchal prescriptions which deem women to be inferior to men by arguing for gender equality. The behaviour endorsed by feminist discourses is thus one of resistance to patriarchy.

Analysing the discourses that are articulated and validated within *Ben 10* enables the researcher to identify and scrutinise the unquestioned discursive practices enacted in the series as ‘normal’ forms of behaviour. If television is a “major disseminator of representations in contemporary global culture” (Barker 1999: 59), the forms of behaviour validated by a television series contribute to the encouragement or discouragement of particular forms of social practice.

### **Audiences and the discursive subject**

Returning to the moment of consumption in the circuit of culture, the constructionist approach to audiences therefore constructs consumers as social subjects existing within particular social formations, constituted by both social and mediated experience (Fiske 1987). Popular texts are however understood as polysemic, that is, they potentially contain multiple

meanings that audiences might negotiate in the process of engaging with it. The polysemic nature of texts allow for a diverse audience to take different pleasures in reading a media text. These texts are therefore capable of representing both intended and non-intended meanings. In the process of interpreting such texts, the viewer is understood to be socially positioned, thereby structuring his/her social practice of interpretation. This positioning extends past the viewer's sociological location to their "subjective capacity to take meaning" (Hall 1997: 3). Reading a text thus becomes a dialogue between the viewer's existing subject position, and that offered by the text (Fiske 1987). The meaning making process is therefore influenced by the discourses that the reader brings to the text. Because the reader's subjectivity and the text are discursively constructed, they are likely to contain contradictory strands which give rise to a multiplicity of readings of the text.

Stuart Hall's (1980) early discussion of encoding/decoding argues that audiences are active in the meaning making process and thus negotiate meanings (Hall 1980: 131). The meanings audiences produce, however, are influenced by the socio-historical context in which they live, including race, gender, class and education as well as the discursive frames they possess within which to make sense of these texts. What is of prime significance to this study are the discourses presented in Ben 10 for child audiences to negotiate, specifically those that frame gender and childhood.

## **Gender**

The focus of this study relates to the hegemonic gender discourse. Theorising gender consistent with the constructionist approach, I draw on understandings of gender as discursively constructed rather than biologically determined. This approach is in opposition to more essentialist arguments which assert that male and female bodies determine the limits of masculinity and femininity respectively, as argued by Butler (1988). Essentialist approaches presume a dichotomous understanding of gender in which male and female (sex) are essential categories. Accordingly women are generally categorised in relation to their reproductive ability and men granted other, usually socially more powerful, roles. The essentialist approaches also tend to locate women in the domestic realm whereas men are accorded place in the public sphere, divisions that translate into power inequalities in society (Connell 1987).

Opposing socio-biological essentialism is the social constructionist argument which holds that the body is a site of social symbolism. Gendered characteristics are argued to be socially constructed and dynamic, not innate (Connell 1995; Morrell 1998). Masculine and feminine identities are thus "dependent upon the discursive processes that shape group and

individual expectations of what women and men ought to be” (Prinsloo 1999: 46). These constructions of masculinity and femininity are accompanied by unequal power relations between the genders. As a consequence of being constructed as binary oppositions, both genders create meaning by means of inclusion and exclusion. These serve in turn to influence and consolidate social practice due to assumptions of appropriate behaviour for men and women, which in turn reinforce existing power inequalities. The maintenance of an unequal gender order operates largely in the favour of men and this is referred to as the ‘patriarchal dividend’ (Connell 2002: 142). This advantage includes benefits in terms of authority, wealth and social power.

Consistent with the Foucauldian emphasis on embodiment, Connell argues that the body should not be overlooked in theorising gender as a cultural construct. Although the meanings associated with masculinity or femininity are socially constructed, they are ultimately bound to the male or female body respectively (Connell 2009). Rather than discounting the body entirely, the social constructionist approach to gender investigates the way in which the body produces meaning symbolically. This discursive approach to gender studies is therefore concerned with how the body constructs meaning and how this meaning functions to limit or sanction particular behaviours. In constituting ourselves as gendered subjects, Connell (2009) argues we are informed by the gender order in which we live. The ‘gender order’, refers to the social structures which define possibilities and consequences of actions for men and women (Connell 2009). For example, in a patriarchal gender order, women may be denied access or granted differential access to education or employment. Importantly, any gender order is socially constructed and subject to change over time and place.

The hegemonic gender order has thus been conceptualised as consisting of socially constructed patterns which are historically located. Working in an industrialised society, Connell (1995) divides the structure of the gender order into three main substructures which she proposes structure the relations of power between men and women, and inform the hegemonic construction of masculinities and femininities as social identities. These substructures are division of labour, power and cathexis. Since originally theorising gender in this way, Connell has stated that gender structures are historically produced and therefore these divisions are particular to the societies she examined (Connell 2011). Nevertheless, these divisions are useful in investigating how the relations of power between men and women are structured and have relevance to the analysis of the *Ben 10* television series produced in the industrialised north.

The sexual division of labour refers to the “allocation of particular types of work to particular categories of people” (Connell 1987: 99). Historically, industrialised societies assigned what counted as skilled labour at the time to men bringing with it superior wages and skills training when compared to these of women. This structure of labour is thus gendered, with men in managerial positions controlling the division of labour thus maintaining the economic advantages afforded to men workers. Referred to as “the political economy of masculinity” (Connell 1987), Connell argues that such division results in the association of paid work and economic superiority with masculinity while unpaid domestic work is associated with femininity. It is argued that the “hegemonic pattern of masculinity, in organising the solidarity of men, becomes an economic as well as a cultural force” (Connell 1987: 106).

Connell’s second substructure of power relations includes the domination of women by men. The inequality of power relations is both physical and cultural, manifesting at times in violence against women perpetrated by men, or in the overall accepted authority men have over women (Connell 1987). This power is not equal across all social settings, however. The practice of such power is, in certain circumstances, constrained. In these alternate settings, the power of men is diffuse or contested (Connell 1987). Within the domestic arena women tend to be powerful but in situations which are ultimately deemed inferior to the overarching patriarchal order in which they occur (Connell 1987).

Power inequalities are not limited to existing only between men and women, but extend to hierarchies between men. The mainstream media are significant cultural sites for the definition and symbolic structuring of social identities as they tend to validate particular sets of masculinities and femininities and the power relations implicit between them. This relates directly to the central concern of this study, namely the gendered constructions and subjectivities constructed and validated by the *Ben 10* series.

The third substructure of gender is that of cathexis. This structure of the gender order holds sexuality to be socially constructed. The organisation of emotional attachments and sexual practices is referred to as the ‘structure of cathexis’ (Connell 1987: 111). This refers to patriarchal definitions of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour for men and women respectively. In relation to sexuality, Connell cites how men’s promiscuity is considered to be healthy and natural, whereas for a woman, promiscuity is held to signify low moral standards. Such double standards serve to reify power inequalities between masculinities and femininities.

These three substructures of the gender order are useful for recognising the socially

constructed nature of masculinities and femininities and the ordering of gender as a discourse that proposes a particular ‘truth’ or power/knowledge and gendered subjects.

The construction of gender as embodiment is elaborated on by theorist Judith Butler (1988; 1999). Butler holds that gender is a performance defining the body as a site of cultural symbolism. Butler argues that the body “becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised and consolidated through time” (Butler 1988: 523). By this, Butler means that the body is an accumulation of gendered acts instead of predetermined by anatomical structure to be any one gender. Butler argues that the body is culturally constructed through conventions which prescribe how one should behave as well as in the “tacit conventions that structure the way the body is culturally perceived” (Butler 1988: 524). The reproduction of gendered identity thus occurs on a micro level through the ways in which bodies behave/perform in relation to the established expectations of gendered existence (Butler 1988). These performances become ingrained or normative, generating social prescriptions for a ‘real woman’ (or man) which over time become reified as appropriate binary oppositions of the sexes. By locating gendered performances within their wider political and social structures, she locates the actors in a specific historical context.

To say that gender is a performance necessitates investigation into how these performances operate to construct gender. Butler argues that an ‘act’ requires repeat performances of the action. This repetition is simultaneously “a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation” (Butler 1988: 526). Gendered performances thus become gendered modes with the aim of maintaining hegemonic understandings of gender within a binary framework. The other aspect of performing gender is that the actor is not a passive recipient of imposed social ideals. Bodies gain meaning by interpreting and enacting gender within the restrictions of existing scripts. These restrictions serve as a socially policed form of gender control and regulation (Butler 1988) in that a performance of gender that is culturally disapproved of results in marginalisation or punishment, whereas performances of gender that are socially accepted brings reassurance. In this way, gender practices are socially policed and maintained. The concept of gender as performative is significant for this study which aims to investigate the gendered acts depicted in the *Ben 10* series.

### **Masculinities**

A social constructionist approach to gender extends to dealing with masculinities and femininities. Theorising masculinity has recently received increased scholarly attention with the rejection of sex-role theory and the growing emphasis on the importance of social

structures in the construction of masculinities. This movement toward examining masculinities stemmed from a concern over the lack of research about men in comparison with feminist studies being primarily concerned with women's subordination. Motivated by the lack of investigation into assumed dominant forms of masculinity, research into masculinities has drawn heavily on Connell's conceptualisation of gender as socially constructed and dynamic (Connell 1995). She also argues that while a single form of masculinity is culturally promoted as the ideal, it is rooted in its particular social context. This hegemonic form of masculinity can be defined as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell 1995: 77).

Research into masculinities has investigated how hegemonic masculinities exercise and maintain power, arguing that some men are subordinated by this hegemony (Connell 1997; Morrell 1998). The dominant form of masculinity in a particular society constructs a version of masculinity which prescribes what an ideal man should be (Ratele 2006; Morrell 1998). Other forms of masculinity which do not conform to these expectations are then marginalised by the authority granted to the dominant form of masculinity, resulting in unequal power relations among men as different forms of masculinity compete for authority. Ultimately, the dominant form of masculinity, and those who subscribe to it, operates to subordinate the other forms of masculinity. In this way, men can also be subject to subordination within a patriarchal regime. Following gender studies' lead, scholarly attention in this area has also examined the unequal power relations within masculinities. Such differences, it was argued, "can only be understood with reference to the structure of the gender order" (Connell 1992: 736).

Research into masculinities has distinguished a range of masculinities across time and cultural spaces. This range is argued to indicate the relational character of gender by which different masculinities are created in relation to other masculinities and femininities through the structure of gender relations and social structures (Connell 1992).

These multiple forms of masculinity are not equally powerful. Four categories are offered to illustrate the power relations between masculinities: dominant, complicit, submissive and oppositional categories which are further described as dynamic between which movement is likely (Connell 1995; Morrell 1998).

The dominant or hegemonic form of masculinity operates to subordinate not only women but also other forms of masculinity. While "based on practice that permits men's

collective dominance over women to continue” (Connell 2005: 840), hegemonic masculinity posits particular behaviours for men as legitimate and ideal and other behaviours are condemned as inappropriate for ‘real men’.

Complicit masculinity refers to masculinities which are not actively engaged in maintaining hegemonic constructions but stand to gain from dominant masculinities oppressing women. By gaining from the operation of hegemonic masculinity, complicit masculinities are integral to the maintenance of the structure of gender relations. Submissive masculinities refer to the relation of power amongst different forms of masculinities. This type of masculinity is submissive to the dominant form of masculinity. The clearest form of dominance and subordination within masculinities is that of heterosexual over homosexual masculinities. The more recent histories of masculinity has constructed heterosexuality to be more legitimate than homosexuality (Foucault 1990) therefore subordinating homosexual masculinities to the hegemonic construction of ‘real men’. The final category of masculinity is that of oppositional masculinity. This type of masculinity is characterised by its opposition to hegemonic constructions of masculinity, holding the potential to upset or destabilise fundamental patriarchal assumptions about the dominance of men over women, as well as expectations of how men should behave.

Although Connell (1995) has outlined these categories of masculinity, it must be noted that these are not stable definitions. Membership within these categories is likely to be fluid, sometimes spanning several categories at once. The social construction of masculinity is therefore subject to contradiction and change according to the context in which it is enacted (Connell 1995). This theoretical framing pertaining to constructions of masculinity is valuable for my analysis of *Ben 10* which seeks to determine the ways in which gender is performed in the *Ben 10* series, and the extent to which it maintains or contests dominant hegemonies of gender and masculinities.

### **Femininities**

Emphasised femininity is conceptualised by Connell (1987: 183) as premised on the subordination of women to men resulting in a form of femininity that “is defined around compliance with this subordination and is oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men”. Posited as a complement to hegemonic masculinity, this form of femininity emphasises the attributes of obedience, empathy and nurturance and is the most socially valued enactment of femininity (Connell 1987; Kelly, Pomerantz & Currie 2005; Boshoff & Prinsloo 2008). The articulation of hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity therefore works for the “maintenance of practices that institutionalize men’s dominance over

women” (Connell 1987: 185). Most significant to this study is the underlying compliance central to emphasised femininity which renders female characters docile and obedient to male instruction. Often, this results in the female character complying with instructions in an effort to perform in an expected and validated feminine manner, i.e., to be a ‘good girl’.

The representation of female characters on television has, for the most part, been constrained by this traditional conception of what makes a good girl. Historically, girls on television most often inhabit the role of passive victim (Hust & Brown 2008; Woloshyn, Taber & Lane 2013), assuming a traditional role, frequently restricted to the domestic realm and displaying more affection (Signorielli 1993; Hentges & Case 2012; Berry 2007; Hust & Brown 2008). More recent research suggests that this stereotyping may be shifting to a more neutral representation (Hentges & Case 2012; Woloshyn *et al* 2013; Boshoff & Prinsloo 2008).

When assuming an active role, female characters exhibit more masculine behaviours such as physical aggression (Hentges & Case 2012), but despite their increased aggression often remain in supportive roles to their masculine counterparts. In media with female protagonists (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *the Powerpuff Girls*, *The Hunger Games*) the lead characters partake in violent acts, displaying skill and dexterity with their weapons, attributes usually reserved for male characters. Although this may be construed as a non-traditional representation of women it must be noted that these characters remain represented within heteronormative ideas of feminine beauty (Woloshyn *et al* 2013). Despite their heroism then, women remain subject to patriarchal prescriptions of beauty, an enduring feature of emphasised femininity.

By analysing the gendered performances within *Ben 10*, this study sets out to identify the forms or scripts of gendered behaviours that are validated for viewers, and the behaviours delineated as appropriate along gender lines. It is concerned with the power relations and consequent maintenance or possible contestation of gender hegemonies. Previous work in the area of gender and the media has largely focused on femininities, specifically the inequalities experienced by women in media constructions (Durham 2008; Lerum & Dworkin 2009; Berberick 2010). The relative lack of study into constructions of masculinity in the media foregrounds the significance of research into media representations of masculinities.

## **Childhood**

The second powerful hegemonic construction I consider is that of childhood. Consistent with a social constructionist approach to gender, this study holds childhood to be a

discursive construct rather than biologically determined. As with race and gender, childhood is tied to physical attributes, for example, an immature body, but is still conceptualised as a discursive construct. The current hegemonic construction of childhood understands it to be a period of innocence (Kincaid 1998; Hughes 2001; Duhn 2006). This construction stems from Enlightenment discourses of childhood in the Eighteenth Century (Kincaid 1998) which held it to be “governed by discourses that make us treasure childhood as a seemingly care-free, innocent and completely non-political, natural ... state of being” (Duhn 2006: 35-36).

The social constructionist approach to childhood arose as a response to this persisting conception of childhood. In particular, social constructionism challenged two dominant approaches to studying childhood. The first of these is a socialisation approach which focuses primarily on the progress of childhood toward adulthood. Socialisation approaches were concerned with the kinds of adults children become and therefore constructed children to be ‘becomings’ rather than ‘beings’ (Moran-Ellis 2010). The second approach to childhood is developmentalism. This approach sets childhood up in direct comparison to adult rationality, thereby constructing the child and childhood as deficient (Prout 2008). Developmentalism also constructed childhood as comprised of a sequence of natural stages through which the child develops.

These approaches to studying childhood were challenged by the social constructionist approach which critiqued the socialisation approach for constructing children as passive, thereby diminishing the meanings, significance and cultures of growing up. Constructionism also objected to the developmentalist approach, arguing that it assumes a “universality to childhood which historical, social and cultural studies suggest it does not have” (Prout 2008: 29). These approaches were thus criticised for overlooking the process of growing up, and the potential for children to be understood as social actors (Prout 2008).

By challenging dominant ideas about childhood, constructionist approaches led to the reconceptualising of childhood as socially constructed and historically located. Children, it was argued, should be recognised as “active participants in social life and as actors with the potential for agency” (Prout 2008: 29). Children became understood as active in the construction of their social lives and the societies in which they live. However, the notion of activity and agency runs the risk of being conflated with the autonomy of the Enlightened subject. Buckingham (2008) warns that describing children as ‘active’ should not imply their imperviousness to influence by societal practices including the media. It conceptualises children as discursively constructed within historically-located contexts and these texts form one aspect of the contexts they inhabit.

While afforded agency in a constructionist approach to children and the media, children remain thought of as vulnerable and in need of protection from corrupting influences. The imperative of being in need of protection is central to the prevailing hegemonic construction of childhood. Because of the assumed vulnerability of children, much research in this area has focused on the effects of the media, in particular television, on children. Such research employed essentialist perspectives and held children to be passive consumers of the media, liable to imitate what they see due to their lack of adult rationality, experience and discrimination (Hughes 2001: 359).

Developing alongside essentialist models, the cultural studies stream of research held children to be active meaning-makers in the process of consuming media. When ascribing ‘activity’ to child audiences however, it must be noted that children’s relationships to the media are shaped by broader social discourses which seek to define ‘childhood’ in particular ways” (Buckingham 2008). Children are therefore thought to be involved in a continuous process of social negotiation. In the meaning making process then, children learn behaviours and social norms which impact on their own social practice.

The reiteration of childhood as innocent in the media therefore creates prescriptions of normal childlike behaviour thus maintaining hegemonic constructions of childhood. The role of the media as a site of multiple meanings thus becomes significant in the construction of individual identities as well as the social practice of childhood by children.

Duhn (2006) presents another conception of childhood which constructs a binary opposition of the ideal child of promise and the dangerous child as risk. Whereas the ideal child is constructed as innocent, the undesirable child is constructed as the Other; unable to be governed and capable of corrupting the child of promise (Duhn 2006; Prinsloo & Moletsane 2013). The ideal child thus becomes the child at risk of losing his/her innocence and the idea of the child as risk becomes the rationale for governing childhood. Conversely, however, Duhn argues that childhood is “the site where the child as risk could be transformed into the child with promise (2006: 51) whereby the child as risk is reformed through particular discursive strategies to once more fulfil the socially accepted construct of child as promise.

The work of identity formation continues during adolescence, a transition period between childhood and adulthood, where “young people are preparing to take on the roles and responsibilities of adulthood in their culture” (Arnett 2013: 4). Frequently characterised as a period of rebellion, the adolescent pursuit of independence often results in heightened conflict with parents as the young person negotiates parental restrictions and personal desire

for freedom (Arnett 1999). Concurrently, sexual maturation results in the increased consciousness of gender roles as young people become aware of differing, gendered expectations placed on adults.

The media offers viewers gendered scripts for how to behave as an adolescent boy or girl, for the most part perpetuating traditional notions of boys as dominant and aggressive, and girls as emotional and passive (Hust & Brown 2008). Adolescents learn from mediated depictions how to navigate the challenges of adolescence, for example taking cues from television to approach a potential romantic partner, and learning the expected format of a date. The role played by the media in adolescence is therefore significant as it discursively constructs acceptable ways of being an adolescent boy or girl as viewers “find ideal selves to emulate and feared selves to avoid” (Arnett 2013: 340).

Of particular interest to gendered behaviour is Rousseau’s conception of the gendered child. He described the girl child (he named Sophie) as a complement to the boy child (Emile). He held femininity to exist solely as a complement to masculinity, with the girl child assuming an essentially adult role as she trains the boy child to develop into a socially acceptable form of manhood, monitoring his behaviour and validating or discouraging various behaviours (Rousseau 1979; Prinsloo & Moletsane 2013). In adulthood, femininity shifts from a monitorial role to a servile one, acting in service of masculinity by tending, supporting and obeying masculine direction. This results in a conception of femininity as compliant, docile and wholly traditional, thus constrained to a domestic sphere, whereas masculinity is allowed free rein to develop into an active citizen in the public sphere (Prinsloo & Moletsane 2013). Despite being written in the 1960s, Rousseau’s theory of gendered childhood remains useful due to its persistence into present ideas of childhood roles.

### **Narrative**

Studying a children’s fictional television series requires a theoretical framework of narrative. Based on the work of Vygotsky, constructionist understandings of reality hold that our representations of reality are constructed, mediated by cultural products such as language and other symbolic representational systems (Bruner 1991). Reality can therefore be understood as “the result or effect of how things had been signified” (Hall 1982:74). The meanings produced within discourse function as a statement of ‘how things are’ and can be interpreted as a confirmation of the obvious, thereby constructing and maintaining notions of reality. Discourse thus can be said to establish “systems of equivalence between what could be assumed about the world and what could be said to be true” (Hall 1982: 75). In

constructing reality through discourse in the media then, it can be understood that the media play an active role in the construction of how we understand the world. Because of the discourses inherent in media products, the narrative within these texts operates to construct positions from which the discourse is understood as ‘natural’. These meanings are not in fact empirical representations of the world but instead are carefully constructed to appear realistic – they are naturalised. The representation of reality broadcast by television programmes entails “skilful and elaborate procedures of coding: mounting, linking and stitching elements together, working them into a system of narration or exposition which ‘makes sense’” (Hall 1982: 76). The representation of reality thus appears natural and inevitable, constructing as fact the premises upon which the narrative depends.

Because discourse works through a representational system to produce meaning, it is argued that narrative can achieve verisimilitude in representing human experience (Bruner 1991). People are argued to organise their experiences and memories primarily in the form of a narrative thus representing and constituting their understanding of reality. Of central importance to this study then is how narrative “operates as an instrument of the mind in the construction of reality” (Bruner 1991: 217). Investigating this entails the discussion of the primary features of narrative. First, narrative diachronicity holds that in order to create and maintain meaning, events in a narrative are constructed along a timeline. Although the timeline of the narrative may be represented in a variety of ways, it is consistent with a mental model of events as occurring sequentially. Second, particularity asserts that narratives are structured along pre-existing types which, in some sense, constructs the narrative as generic, creating expectations in the viewer which are then fulfilled by the generic structure of the narrative. While the particulars of the narrative may differ, it nevertheless falls within a broader type. Third hermeneutic composability proposes texts as mediums through which someone is trying to express a meaning, and someone is trying to extract meaning (Bruner 1991). This implies that there exists difference in the meanings that are expressed and extracted from the text. In constructing a narrative, events are constituted in a meaningful way that goes beyond merely being placed in sequential order. To tell and comprehend a story relies on the human ability to interpret knowledge as constituted. It is ambiguity within the narrative itself which thus compels interpretive activity in readers while making meaning from the text.

Two ways in which narratives construct meaning as naturalised or ‘as is’ are through narrative seduction and narrative banalisation (Bruner 1991). The first refers to the construction of the narrative functioning so well that it temporarily pre-empts the possibility

of any but a single interpretation. It creates a 'narrative necessity'. Narrative banalisation, however, functions to construct a story as so conventional that it encourages an automatic interpretive routine on the part of the reader. In this way, the interpretation of the narrative is constrained to a particular reading. Such recognition of narrative by the reader can also be attributed to the function of genre. Understood as "both a property of a text and as a way of comprehending narrative" (Bruner 1991: 223-224), genre provides both producers and consumers of texts conventional, recognisable models of interpreting texts (Fiske 1987; Gledhill 1997). These models create expected ways in which stories are told and understood, shaping both the construction and interpretation of narratives along conventional ways of representing reality.

These conventional types of narratives begin to accrue over time to construct a recognisable pattern of narrational configurations. Of interest to this study are the genres of action and adventure, discussed in chapter 3. These operate normatively, shaping understandings of appropriate and objectionable behaviours. Such accrual functions effectively as a constraint on how meanings are constituted and interpreted, operating to validate hegemonic discourses. Although narratives may be constituted from a deviance from the expected, ultimately they work to maintain normative scripts by positing the deviance as a breach of canon – thus presupposing a norm (Bruner 1991; Silverstone 1999). Narratives thus offer generalised scripts of behaviour and social practice, normalising particular discourses while positioning others as deviant. In children's television, narratives may be understood as holding implicit arguments for ways of performing childhood as well as masculinities and femininities. The narrative therefore functions to legitimate normative discourses of childhood and gender.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the theoretical framework which underpins this study. Of prime importance is the constructionist approach this research employs in the understanding of representation, gender and childhood. Drawing on Foucauldian theory, discourse presumes a system of representation (and action) by which things come to have meaning. It is the way in which language is articulated in relation to the object or process it refers to in the real world. However the system of representation also allows for objects to behave as signs which convey meaning through representation, interpreted through the use of shared, internalised codes. Representation can thus be used to communicate and constitute social subjectivities and identities.

These social practices and identities are enmeshed in unequal relations of power.

The producers of children's television series are positioned as authoritative –they articulate particular discourses which propose and validate particular 'truths' and ways of being in the world – including how to be a gendered (child) subject. Thus two hegemonic discourses are significant here, that of gender and childhood. The constructionist approach to these discourses holds that both are socially constructed and historically located. Additionally, the concept of performativity is relevant to the enactment of both. The body has been argued to be a site of social symbolism upon and through which individuals perform their gender and childhood. This study uses Connell's gender order as well as Butler's performative view of gender to inform its analysis. As the focus is on *Ben 10*, the eponymous male protagonist, masculinity is a central issue and Connell's four categories of masculinity structure the analysis of the series' maintenance or contestation of dominant forms of masculinity.

The dominant construction of childhood holds it to be a period of innocence and vulnerability. The research has pointed to the 'agency' of the children as active meaning-makers, but within particular wider social structures in which they operate. As the media are held to be sites of multiple meanings, dominant representations of childhood and childlike behaviour are likely to propose ways of being in line with the hegemonic constructions of childhood.

Finally, narrational constructions are understood as constituting reality in particular ways. In analysing *Ben 10* narratives, this study seeks to make evident the embedded normative discourses that legitimate and maintain current hegemonies in the representation of childhood and gender.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This study adopts a social constructionist approach to representation consistent with its intention to examine the gendered constructions of the children's television series *Ben 10*, in particular focusing on the constructions of masculinities and, by extension, femininities within the show. Pursuant with this approach, a qualitative methodology is employed which undertakes a critical textual analysis of selected episodes of the *Ben 10* series. This analysis draws on insights from media studies, film theory and linguistics to examine how the series charts the eponymous character's development over time with a focus on representations of gendered childhood in the series. The textual analysis draws eclectically on critical discourse analysis as well as narrational analysis. This enables analysis of both narrative and narration (Bordwell 1985) and thus an examination of the cultural and political positioning of the series specifically in relation to gender.

This chapter first presents a brief discussion of qualitative methodology, moving on to discuss critical discourse analysis as a research method, and, because the text under analysis is televisual, the chapter moves to discuss the eclectic choice of methods chosen to establish discursive patterns within these visual texts. The methods emanate from linguistic theory, including intertextuality and genre, the field of media studies, notably narrative theory.

### **Research question**

This study seeks to investigate the gendered constructions of the children's television series *Ben 10* and its sequel series, particularly in relation to masculinities, but by extension femininities. To accomplish this goal, the study seeks to examine the representations offered by the texts and the implicated meanings and discourses they privilege.

Grounded in a social constructionist approach, this analysis understands meaning as constituted within discourse thereby making a critical textual analysis an appropriate method for pursuing the research question. The methodology and analytic tools employed are discussed below.

### **Qualitative analysis**

The prevalence of television as a medium is recognised as significant within media studies as it is the "major disseminator of representations in contemporary global culture" (Barker 1999: 59), allowing mass audiences access to a variety of representations which shape their identities and validate or discourage particular social practices (Lemish 2007; Caronia & Caron 2008). Much of the previous research into children's television viewing has fallen primarily into the effects tradition, thus employing a quantitative method of analysis

(Buckingham 1993; Wartella, Olivarez & Jennings 1998; Von Feilitzen 1998).

Quantitative research methods stem from positivist ideals of scientific inquiry and fact-based claims which depend on empirical evidence. The advantages of quantitative research include the high degree of reliability and validity of the data elicited, as well as the high degree of objectivity claimed by the researcher. Furthermore, due to the non-contextual nature of research, the results are usually generalised to a wider population, offering an explanation of similar practices in other population groups. This ability to be generalised stems from the “nomothetic strategy” (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 272) of quantitative research, which holds that research will empirically determine the regularities in human behaviour and social practice. Significantly, positivist quantitative research excludes the context of the study, thus leading to the critique of it as resulting in a possible loss of understanding due to the elimination of contextual data.

The second tradition of research pertaining to media texts stems from Cultural Studies and derives its research strategies from interpretivist traditions of thought. It employs methods that are qualitative in order to examine how meanings are established, circulated and negotiated (Buckingham 1993)

In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative research includes the context of the research. A major difference between qualitative and quantitative research process (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 270) is that while quantitative researchers aim for the utmost objectivity of the researcher, qualitative researchers consider the researcher to be a significant element of the research due to the interpretive nature of the research. Quantitative textual analysis takes the form of Content Analysis, a method which studies the manifest content of a text, that is, the text itself, without taking into consideration social or contextual elements surrounding the text (Richardson 2007). Content analyses seek to quantify textual evidence into coded categories so as to uncover the frequency with which particular codes occur. The key assumption driving this method is that meaning can be inferred from the quantitative description of textual content (Richardson 2007; Deacon, Pickering, Golding & Murdock 2007). In this sense, content analysis is a form of an audit that comes to conclusions on the basis of frequency.

Critiquing this method Richardson (2007: 18) uses the example of press coverage of Islam to make explicit the problem with counting the rate of recurrence. He argues that “the frequency with which ‘negative’ words and topics are included in articles ‘about Islam’ is perhaps not as important as the *agency* of this negative social action”. Because quantitative analysis looks for positive and negative words, it neglects to examine the agency of social

action, that is, who is saying these words. Quantitative analysis therefore, does not allow for investigation into the consequential nature of textual meaning. For example, the decisions about what constitutes negative or positive portrayals of women relegates some behaviours as positive for men, but negative for women. An example of this can be found in traditional assumptions of women as passive and compliant. An outspoken woman is considered rude, overly dominant and unnatural, whereas the same characteristics in a man makes him confident and a leader (see Walkerdine 1989).

In comparison to quantitative analysis, by including social context qualitative textual analysis enables the study of latent meanings within texts and the way in which these meanings exist in a dialectical relationship with wider social structures, for example processes of production and consumption. A qualitative method of analysis thus includes investigation into how discourse constitutes subjects and objects of discourse and links to relations of power. This is discussed in further detail below.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis**

The qualitative approach I adopt in my research draws broadly on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). According to Jorgensen & Phillips (2002), CDA allows for a number of different approaches, all of which exhibit five common features. The first of these is that there is a “linguistic-discursive dimension of social and cultural phenomena” (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 61). Discourse extends to not only written and spoken language, but to visual texts too, however due to its development out of linguistic theory, a discursive analysis of visual texts tends to assume the rhetoric of linguistic discourse analysis, treating visual texts as linguistic texts. Kress & Van Leeuwen (2006) address visual grammar of still images, but this study differs in that its focus on moving, not still, images.

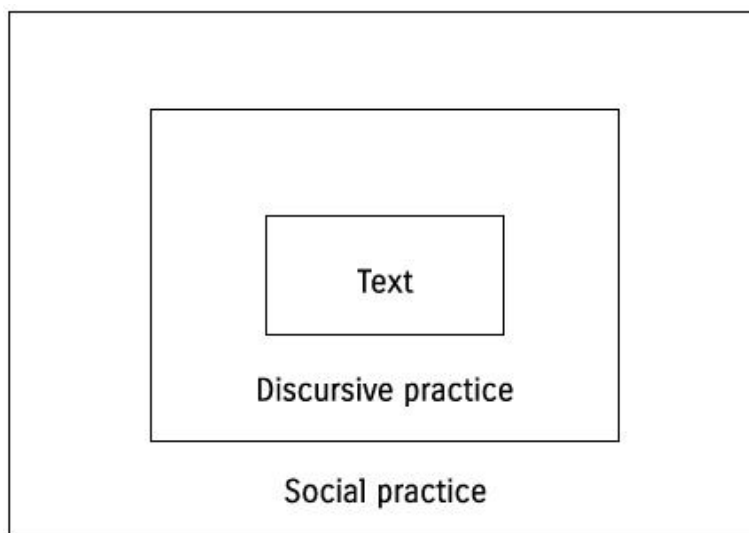
The importance of CDA for my research lies in its insistence of the constructivist nature of discourse: the idea that “discourse is a form of social practice which both *constitutes* the social world and is *constituted* by other social practices” (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 61). This is consistent with the second feature of CDA which insists on a dialectical relationship between discourse and society. Not only does society shape the discourses apparent in media, but is liable to be shaped by them in return. The discourses encapsulated by episodes of the series may be seen as not only a reflection of social gender discourse, but are as shaping the way in which young girls and boys view gender.

Third, CDA aims to analyse the linguistic interactions evident in texts, taking into account the context of the interaction. Rooted in linguistic theory, CDA foregrounds written texts. However, its strategies may be adapted and applied to the visual as well. In using CDA

as a method of textual analysis, this study examines the structuring, themes and patterns as well as the gendered nature of these patterns within *Ben 10*.

The fourth aspect of CDA is of particular interest to my research: “discursive practices contribute to the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between social groups” (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 63). This claims that discourse is implicated in creating or reinforcing relations of power. Frequently class is the focus of CDA research which investigates how discursive practices result in dominant and subordinate classes of people (Richardson 2007). This study however focuses on gendered power relations, that is, the way in which power inequalities influence how gender is viewed, and consequently frequently performed, by young girls and boys.

The final feature of CDA is that it is a “critical approach which is politically committed to social change” (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 64; Fairclough 1995). With its focus on uneven power relations encoded in discourse, CDA is useful for investigating how these discourses operate to validate unequal power relations. This study thus seeks to make evident the encoded power relations between different genders as well as the particular subject positions and types of masculinities and femininities that are validated. Critical discourse analysis is thus defined by its primary concern with the function of power in social life, which includes “not only the notion of struggles for power and control, but also the intertextuality and recontextualization of competing discourses in various public spaces and genres” (Wodak & Meyer 2009: 10).



**Figure 1.** Fairclough’s three-dimensional model for Critical Discourse Analysis (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 68)

Fairclough's three-dimensional model for CDA provides an accessible method of conducting textual analysis (Janks 1997; Jorgensen & Phillips 2002). It consists of three inter-connected dimensions of analysis: text, discursive practice and social practice. These three dimensions seek to "draw out the form and function of the text, the way that this text relates to the way it is produced and consumed, and the relation of this to the wider society in which it takes place" (Richardson 2007: 37). The innermost dimension of Fairclough's model, text, refers to the actual text under analysis (in this case, each episode). A common approach to an analysis at this level stems from linguistics, which examines the choices and patterns of language used in conjunction with grammar and structure (Blommaert & Bulcaen 2000) to establish the specific discourses contained by the text. Yet, as noted by Jorgensen & Phillips (2002: 155), CDA also goes beyond critical linguistic tools and enables eclectic choices of methods.

Using a combination of linguistic theory and media studies theory, this study employs an eclectic approach which seeks to establish discursive patterns within the text, incorporating genre, narrative theory and semiotics which are discussed below in order to make explicit the analytic approach and tools drawn on for this study.

The second dimension, discursive practice, focuses on the processes of production and consumption of the text under analysis and is therefore concerned also with genre and generic expectations/conventions of the text. The intertextuality and coherence of a text are analysed as links to its context (Blommaert & Bulcaen 2000). This dimension analyses the way in which "texts shape and are shaped by social practice" (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 69). The notion of genre and television is also discussed below.

Thirdly, the outer dimension is that of social practice in relation to wider discourses such as race, gender, class, childhood. An analysis at this level includes attention to whether the text serves to reproduce, contradict or negotiate dominant discourses and power inequalities evident in society (Richardson 2007). Applied to this study, analysis at this level seeks to investigate how discourses embedded in the text operate to validate or contest hegemonic understandings of masculinity and femininity in childhood and adolescence.

It must be noted that the primary focus of this study is on the textual dimension, but it recognises the centrality of the other two dimensions for any analysis. The macro production context has been discussed in introduced in chapter 1 with reference to the cartoon network and series production. The socio-cultural context is discussed there too when identifying the research context. This is extended in relation to childhood, gender identity and society in chapter 2. While reception or an audience study lies outside the scope of this study, it would

add an important dimension to holistic understandings of the series.

By providing a model for the analysis of the articulation of language and social practice, critical discourse analysis acknowledges that social practices are shaped by social structures and power relations that are often overlooked (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 66). Analysing the communicative event (defined by Jorgensen & Phillips (2002) as every instance of language use) is thus an analysis of social practice as reproducing or challenging the order of discourse. Communicative events therefore exist in a dialectical relationship with wider social practice through their relationship to the order of discourse.

This three-tiered analysis of a text allows for the text to be analysed as a single manifestation of discourse, but one that is embedded in social discursive practice. It directs the researcher to examine the intertextuality and interdiscursivity of the text, drawing conclusions about wider social practices as evidenced by the text. Critical discourse analysis thus aims to investigate the links between language and social practice and in particular, the role of discursive practices in the maintenance or contestation of the social order (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002).

### **Intertextuality/Genre**

Intertextuality directs attention to genres and discourses. A genre has been described as “a particular usage of language which participates in, and constitutes, part of a particular social practice” (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 67). Genres work within specific discursive practices that constrain the way texts are produced, consumed and interpreted. Able to draw on a range of discourses, they are “a socially ratified way of using language in connection with a particular type of social activity” (Fairclough 1995: 14).

There are two understandings of genre: one rooted in a linguistic approach and one in a media studies approach. This research project employs the media studies understanding of genre, conceptualising it as an attempt to “structure some order into the wide range of texts and meanings that circulate in our culture for the convenience of both producers and audiences” (Fiske 1987: 109). Genres are understood as using “fluid systems of conventions and expectations” (Branston & Stafford 1996: 113) that create categories into which media texts are seen to fit. Genres (generic categories) work to establish specific discursive practices that constrain the way texts are produced, consumed and interpreted. The conventions drawn on within a genre are socially and historically located, and are shared by both producers and audiences (Branston & Stafford 1996; Fiske 1987). Each new example of a genre modifies, albeit very slightly, the set of characteristics attributed to the genre (Fiske 1987), resulting in the repetition of existing characteristics of the genre, and the inclusion of selected

characteristics from other genres.

Understanding media texts generically foregrounds the similarities between texts over their differences (Fiske 1987; Gledhill 1997). The similarities contribute to the establishment of a genre and the expectations it creates and maintains in audiences. Once a genre has been established, alterations can be made to generic conventions (Branston & Stafford 1996), resulting in differences between that text and others in the same genre. Genres thus provide a way to “regulate the production of difference by producing their own differences within very circumscribed structures of similarity” (Feuer 1992: 142). In this way, texts fulfil audience’s expectations in terms of convention as well as difference. By establishing generic conventions, texts repeat the broad framework of the genre but some play can be had within these conventions to create new meanings. Over time, these differences cause a shift in generic conventions as they adapt to changes in audience and producers’ expectations. Generic conventions therefore operate as a way to both understand and construct a text (Branston & Stafford 2010).

Because different genres adhere to their respective conventions they each rehearse particular kinds of subject positions. For example, the traditionally masculine genre of action rehearses a particular kind of tough hegemonic masculinity which entails success through violence, often enabled by technology (consider for example the Bond movie phenomenon (Bennett & Woollacott 1987). Violence is an integral part of the action genre, which is characterised by the (usually male) hero being thrust into a trajectory of challenges which he navigates using his physical prowess aided by technology. This genre features fast-paced fight scenes, chase scenes, violence and life-threatening situations from which the hero emerges triumphant (Tasker 2004; Shimpach 2010).

In comparison, the typically feminine genre of romance focuses on emotional, romantic and intimate encounters between the protagonist and her romantic interest (Branston & Stafford 1996; Gledhill 1997). The protagonist in feminine genres tends to achieve her goals using wit and ingenuity whereas their counterparts in masculine genres rely on physical *force*. Although the series overall falls in the action category, *Ben 10* and its sequel series feature a combination of these genres evident in the different quests on which the hero and heroine embark. The series can simultaneously be classified as science-fiction, which is a sub-genre of action due to its incorporation of futuristic technology and outer space creatures which are typical of the sub-genre. As a genre, science fiction explores human nature through the lens of futuristic stories and scientific innovation: “it recycles the structure and tropes of ancient narrative tradition and to devise dramatic tension it deploys issues and angst

that are immediately present” (Sardar 2002: 1), showing a marked concern with human principle and morality, particularly with regard to new technologies (Wood 2004). This concern is carried through to the characteristic use of aliens in science fiction narrative as a way to “demonstrate what is not human the better to exemplify that which is human” (Sardar 2002: 6.) In the series studied, Ben’s quests are characterised by physical, violent battles with aliens and robots to protect innocent human bystanders. This will be evident in the analysis that follows.

### **Narrative analysis**

To inform this critical discourse analysis, the study draws on insights and strategies from narrative theory which are frequently deployed in critical media studies. These strategies are productive for interrogating the discursive work undertaken textually resulting in a macro-textual analysis. Narrative theories focus both on the syntagmatic and paradigmatic aspects of texts. I draw on syntagmatic approaches informed by Tzvetan Todorov and Vladimir Propp, and the paradigmatic approach of Claude Levi-Strauss to conduct narrational analyses (Wigston 2001; Fiske 1987). These theories seek to illustrate and analyse the structure of a text and aim to show how the narrative sequence, functioning as a sense-making mechanism, constructs a particular meaning in the text. Furthermore, these theories illustrate how the structure of a text draws on and embeds a range of discourses within the narrative which contribute to particular interpretations of the text itself.

Todorov posited a model of narrative structure occurring over five stages (Wigston 2001: 154). The first stage, Equilibrium, refers to a state of social harmony and is usually presented as the background against which the rest of the narrative plays out. The second stage of Todorov’s model is that of Disruption. This stage contains the event which causes the initial state of equilibrium to become disturbed and which then sets the narrative going. The third stage of Recognition refers to the identification of the disruption to the social equilibrium. In *Ben 10* for example, the state of disequilibrium could be in the form of a threat to Ben’s safety. His recognition of this threat results in a subsequent investigation which contributes to the following stage, that of Action. This stage encompasses an attempt to “restore the equilibrium” (Wigston 2009: 279). This attempt may be in the form of peaceful mediation, or, more usually, physical confrontation. This penultimate stage often spans a large portion of the narrative. The final stage of Todorov’s model of narrative analysis is that of Restoration. This stage encapsulates a return to a state of equilibrium. It is important to note however that this second equilibrium does *not* match the initial equilibrium presented by the text. While the initial state of equilibrium is convergent in that it draws

characters together for the duration of the narrative, the final state of (new) equilibrium is divergent, as characters move on in different directions (Wigston 2001).

Todorov (1971) posits that the ‘units’ of a text are organised in a logical, temporal fashion and thus can be termed causality, that is, that actions within a narrative are successive and exist within a causal relationship. However, by deconstructing a narrative into five stages, Todorov argues for the establishment of a new set of relationships between the stages: that of transformation (Todorov 1971). In moving from the first equilibrium to the final equilibrium transformation takes place and it is the discursive nature of this transformation that is salient to this study, for I am concerned with the nature of this transformation and with the possibility of transformations that work towards gender justice.

Cultural Studies theorists have drawn on this model of narrative in an attempt to make explicit the underlying discursive formations and resulting power relations within the text. According to Fiske (1987: 139) “the ideological work is at its clearest in the selection of *which* events are considered to disrupt or restore *which* equilibrium and in the description of what constitutes disequilibrium”. In my study Todorov’s narrative theory is particularly useful to first identify and establish the nature of the disruption and subsequently the action taken to reach an equilibrium. In doing so, I am able to establish who the text validates as hero or delineates as enemy or villain which subsequently enables an examination of the discourses validated by the text.

An analysis of the discourses of gender and childhood, in particular the identification of conduct deemed discursively appropriate is further enabled by applying a Proppian model of character functions to the text. To investigate the advancement of a narrative, Vladimir Propp identified thirty two narrative functions, subdivided into six, sequential categories: Preparation, Complication, Transference, Struggle, Return, and Recognition (Fiske 1987: 135-136). With this model, Propp aims to highlight what each of the thirty two functions *do* within the narrative. Additionally, and relevant to my analysis, Propp identifies various character functions within narrative, which constitute the fundamental elements of the narrative (Fiske 1987): the hero, villain, donor, helper(s), princess, dispatcher and false hero (Wigston 2001; Fiske 1987). These character functions are primarily concerned with the actions of the character as an agent in advancing the narrative, rather than the character’s personality.

Like Todorov, Propp’s model “emphasizes the social over the individual” (Fiske 1987: 138), showing the way in which characters engage with social disorder, in an attempt to return to a state of equilibrium, in Todorov’s terms, that is, to a state of social order. In

addition to the six categories of narrative functions mentioned above, there are clear character functions constructed within the text under analysis. This is significant to my research as a character function analysis allows for underlying discourses to become evident in the positioning of the hero, helpers and villain.

In addition to syntagmatic analyses of narrative structure, it is productive to analyse the paradigmatic structure as well. To this end, the model of analysis posited by Lévi-Strauss is employed. Lévi-Strauss considered a narrative to be reflective of “unresolvable contradictions in a culture” (Fiske 1987: 132) which are “usually expressed in terms of binary oppositions” (Fiske 1987: 132). These binary oppositions are often generalisations of abstract concepts, such as ‘good’ and ‘evil’, which are transformed by the narrative into tangible demonstrations of the oppositions, gaining meaning from their perceived contrast. These oppositions can then be analysed in terms of their deep structure. Attention to this deep structure enables analysis of the ideological or discursive positioning of the text. In terms of the gender order, the focus then turns toward male versus female. For example, if girl children are shown to be consistently in distress, while boy children are located in the role of hero, the binary opposition concretised by this depiction is that girl children are helpless and in need of help while boy children are capable and act to help. Analysing *Ben 10* in terms of its implicit binary oppositions identifies how the series concretises ideas of gender and childhood, particularly in terms of appropriate and inappropriate behaviours.

These narrative theories inform my analytic process. Through syntagmatic analysis provided by Todorov’s narrative model, one may identify the way in which the sequential structure of a narrative contributes to the meanings within the text. The choice of what constitutes an equilibrium and a disruption is vital to understanding the implicit assumptions encoded within a text. This functions as the starting point for my analysis as the disruption allows for an examination of what the series holds to be socially acceptable, that is the equilibrium, and objectionable, that is the disruption. The disruption thus becomes the point at which identification of binary oppositions of good and evil underpinning the text becomes possible. It is necessary to identify who acts for good and what behaviours he or she exhibit in this activity as these behaviours hold implications for what the text validates as good or heroic and evil or villainous.

Similarly, Proppian character functions enable the identification of how various actors are constructed by the producers of a text. In a paradigmatic analysis, as “Lévi-Strauss is not interested in the sequential development of the narrative, but rather in the relationships between the various characters and their settings” (Wigston 2001: 154), the analyst considers

the oppositions within a text, proceeding to infer the deeper structure of meaning entailed by these contradictions.

In addition to narrative analysis, I also employ analytic tools from visual semiotics and critical linguistics which are useful to the textual analysis. Semiotics, as discussed in chapter 2, provides a useful method of analysing a televisual text. A social semiotic approach to the text provides a more critical and contextual edge to analysis, allowing for an investigation into how meanings generated by the text interact with society.

Social semiotics seeks to understand the use of semiotic resources in specific contexts (Van Leeuwen 2005). For the purpose of analysing meaning, semiotics assumes that signs are never arbitrarily used; they are specifically chosen to convey a particular meaning, that is, they are motivated (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006). It is therefore worthwhile to assume that this motivation is “formulated in relation to the sign-maker and the context in which the sign is produced, and not in isolation from the act of producing analogies and classifications” (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006: 8). Social semiotics as an analytic tool is therefore complementary to the three-dimensional model of CDA which takes into account the text, discursive practice and social practice. Employing a social semiotics approach to this study, analysis was undertaken to examine how meanings are generated by the text as well as the way in which these meanings interact with dominant understandings of relevant discourses.

To further the analysis of gendered behaviour I conducted a visual transitivity analysis on character behaviour depicted in the series. Grounded in linguistic theory, transitivity with its attention to signifiers seeks to investigate the relationships between actors and the actions they undertake in a text (Richardson 2007). Of central importance to transitivity is the representation of actions described and the choices that have been made in order to produce a text (Richardson 2007). A transitivity analysis examines three components of each event: the participants, process and circumstances to determine the underlying choices that have been made to represent the event in a specific manner. Linguistic theory proposes four principal processes signified by verbs: material, which refers to acts of doing; mental, which refers to thinking and feeling; relational, referring to being; and verbal, which refers to speech acts (Richardson 2007).

By recognising the choice of process, transitivity makes evident patterns in the text which can be analysed to determine underlying discursive constructions at play (Janks 1997). Thus, a visual transitivity analysis is conducted on primary boy and girl characters by categorising their presented behaviour into the four processes to determine transitivity patterns which relate to how characters use signifiers in the performance of their gender. For

example, it is interesting to establish to what extent the male protagonist displays material behaviour in contrast to the primary female character. Material processes tend to construct the actors as more physically active, while mental processes are concerned with intelligence/strategies (mental processes of thinking) and emotions (mental processes of feeling) than boys. The emergent pattern can then be compared to hegemonic constructions of boyhood and girlhood.

### **Sampling**

The *Ben 10* franchise has expanded rapidly since its inception and now incorporates spin-off series, movies, an active online community and a wide range of merchandise. The series itself is ongoing and to date, over 200 episodes have aired with a confirmed reboot to be released in 2016 (Steinberg 2015). The three series from which I sampled episodes form a narrative trajectory that follows the eponymous character from childhood to young adulthood as he acquires an alien device that enables him to become a hero. Series one follows Ben over a summer vacation as he learns how to use the device to defeat villains. Series two, *Alien Force*, takes place five years later when Ben is fifteen. Having removed the alien device, Ben returns to using it to find his grandfather, who has gone missing. Series three, *Ultimate Alien*, takes place a year later when Ben is sixteen. Ben's secret identity is revealed to the world and alongside his newfound fame, he negotiates the challenges of a romantic relationship.

As it would be impractical to analyse every episode, purposive sampling was employed to create a manageable sample. Purposive sampling is useful in qualitative analysis as it allows for texts to be selected due to recurring themes and discourses which are salient to a particular project (Deacon *et al* 2007). Because *Ben 10* and its subsequent series present a trajectory from boyhood to young adulthood, episodes were selected from three series spanning the eponymous character's age of ten to sixteen on the basis of their narrative inclusion of gendered behaviour of primary characters.

The corpus of texts comprises eight episodes selected from three series. In series one, I selected episodes 101, 107 and 110. Episode 101 was selected as it established primary characters and the premise of the series, providing a starting point from which Ben evolves throughout the series and its sequels. Episode 107 depicts Ben's struggle for independence and his moral growth as he negotiates his role as hero. Significantly, the recurring character Kevin is introduced in this episode and constructed as a foil to Ben, providing an alternate construction of masculinity. Episode 110 was selected for its exploration of the primary female character, Gwen, assuming the role of hero. This episode enables an alternate construction of heroism as well as a gendered comparison of Ben and Gwen's actions in the

role of hero.

In the second series of the franchise, *Ben 10: Alien Force*, the episodes 107 and 204 were selected due to their portrayal of adolescence of boys and girls. Episode 107 was selected due to its introduction of adolescent anxiety in the negotiation of heterosexual romantic interest as it portrays Ben's first (awkward) date with Julie Yamamoto. Episode 204 deals with Kevin and Gwen's behaviour prior to a school dance, further exploring adolescent negotiation of romantic interest. It is a salient episode as it depicts supportive, mature behaviour as uncharacteristic of adolescent boys.

The third series, *Ultimate Alien*, continues to depict adolescent behaviour and provides sharper focus on Gwen's idea of relationships, made evident in the selected episodes: 102, 209 and 218. Episode 102 features three versions of Ben, enabled by the Omnitrix, who undertake the respective tasks of three kinds of masculinity: superhero, supportive boyfriend, and follower of personal desire. Episode 209 constitutes a break in the repetitive structure of the series as it focuses on Gwen's activities, providing a counterpoint to the construction of Ben and masculinities thus far. Episode 218, the final one selected presents conflicting ideas of what a "perfect girlfriend" should be. These episodes form a corpus of eight texts which create a masculine trajectory of childhood.

### **Analytic Process**

This study focuses on the enactment of gender by the male and female children in each episode in order to examine underlying gendered discourses validated by series. Drawing on a combination of critical discourse analysis and narrative analysis, once the sample of episodes had been selected I analysed each episode first in terms of narrative theory by identifying each of Todorov's five stages, moving on to use Propp's character functions to discern the role each character plays in the narrative and finally employing Levi-Strauss's paradigmatic approach to narrative to construct a list of binary oppositions to determine the discursive positioning of the text.

Following the narrative analysis, I conducted a more micro textual analysis of each episode, drawing on linguistics and social semiotics theory to unpack the gendered discourses underpinning behaviours presented by the boy and girl characters of the series. To support the textual analysis a visual transitivity analysis of the primary characters was conducted. This was accomplished by immersing myself in re-viewing each episode, creating a full transcription and summary. I worked through each episode sequentially to unpack representations of boyhood and girlhood evident in each text thus enabling me to make visible underlying discourses of gender and childhood. As a consequence of the qualitative

nature of the research and the necessity of demands textual evidence, the analysis has to include both description and analysis, and thus is lengthier than quantitative research. Data elicited from each episode is recorded in the attached appendices. Each appendix comprises a narrative analysis grid, a transitivity analysis grid and the transcript of the episode.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter outlines the two fundamental approaches to research, namely: qualitative and quantitative to explain my decision of a qualitative approach. The eclectic choice of methods I employ, draw on linguistic theory in the form of critical discourse analysis as well as media studies approaches to narrative. The chapter closes with a description of the sampling process and an outline of the procedure taken to analyse selected episodes. The following chapter draws on theory discussed in chapter 2 to present the analysis of each sampled episode.

## **Chapter 4: Analysis**

### **Ben 10 – the series**

The *Ben 10* series falls into the broad category of children's television. Aimed at a young audience, it features a storyline that draws on the genres of action and science fiction with strong themes of heroism and good triumphing over evil. Its narrative trajectory tracks Ben's development from boyhood to young adulthood over the three series and therefore offers a point of identification for children, specifically but not only boys, and a potential script for being and becoming a young adult. It is the nature of this trajectory that is of interest here. The popularity of the series and all the consumer products that have accompanied it speak to the success of the franchise.

*Ben 10* as a television series is subject to and complies with the expectations of both a series and the generic forms and conventions of the genres through which it is categorised (Fiske 1987). The television series is structured so each episode (or sometimes two) presents a narrational plot, repeated motifs and scenarios consistent with the expectations of the action, adventure and sci-fi genres it draws on. Consequently, characteristic of the action genre, the narrative of encountering and defeating evil is repeated, sometimes multiple times, in every *Ben 10* episode. During these encounters the hero primarily defeats the villain using physical and aggressive force, and these battles repeatedly present violence as necessary action for the greater good. In other words, the ends justify the means, and through violence the hero can defeat evil and retain power. These recurring elements ensure repetition of particular discourses including particular gendered ones, which are of relevance to this study. This repetition validates and reinforces particular forms of masculinity, and by extension, femininity and privileges them over other forms of masculinity or femininity. This will become explicit in the analyses of the sampled episodes.

#### **Series one synopsis**

Series one of *Ben 10* follows the adventures of Ben Tennyson, a ten year old boy, as he embarks on a road trip with his girl cousin, Gwen, who is also ten, and grandfather, Max, during his summer vacation. In the first episode, Ben finds a strange device, the Omnitrix, which allows him to transform into ten different aliens for a limited period. Ben wants to use this device to fight crime and the evil aliens they encounter along their journey. As Ben becomes accustomed to the device and defeats particular villains he is granted the ability to turn into ten more alien species. Alongside Ben, Gwen who is depicted as an average girl too is granted magical powers. Similar to Ben's struggle to master the power he is granted

through the Omnitrix to select the correct alien, Gwen also struggles with controlling her powers. This series, the first in a continuing franchise, spans the time period of Ben and Gwen's vacation. The narratives with their particular quests in series 1 present the eponymous Ben as the major protagonist who learns to use his new abilities in his desire to help others. As noted in chapter 3, in the first episode the narrative world Ben and other characters inhabit is established as is the nature of the recurring quests. In episode seven (107) Ben engages in a premature struggle to assert his independence and becomes entangled with Kevin, a more dissolute and constant male character. In episode ten (110) Gwen is granted magical powers and the ability to temporarily become a hero in her own right.

Series two of the franchise, titled *Alien Force*, occurs five years later with a supposedly darker story line than the original series (Internet Movie Database n.d.). At its outset, fifteen year old Ben has removed the Omnitrix, but chooses to use it again when his grandfather Max goes missing. Ben now has access to a new, more powerful set of ten aliens. The more mature Ben puts aside his differences with Kevin, introduced in the first series, in order to work together against evil. He also shows interest in a girl, Julie. A similarly more mature Gwen, also fifteen years old, has greater control over her magical powers. The narrative trajectory in this series follows Ben as he searches for Grandpa Max whilst battling new enemies and learning to work collaboratively.

Series three of the franchise, *Ben 10: Ultimate Alien*, takes place a year later when Ben and Gwen are sixteen years old. While the Omnitrix has been destroyed a more sophisticated technology is introduced in the form of the Ultimatrix and Ben must learn how to use it. In addition to the previous alien forms, it offers him access to 'ultimate forms' powerful forms of aliens. While Ben's alien abilities previously were kept secret, his identity is revealed to the world. Ben negotiates his newfound fame. Gwen now contributes to the team's heroic activities and is romantically involved with Kevin. The narratives depict Ben as he faces threats from aliens, human mercenaries and assassins, while the subplots address his relationships, both romantic (Julie) and platonic (Kevin). The three series thus validate a particular way of becoming and being through the trajectory primarily of Ben but also Gwen.

## **Season 1, Episode 1: "And Then There Were Ten"**

### **Episode synopsis**

Before leaving school on a summer vacation road trip with his Grandpa Max and his cousin Gwen, Ben attempts unsuccessfully to stand up to a pair of bullies tormenting another boy. They consequently humiliate Ben and the boy. At their first stop, Ben discovers a crashed

shuttle containing a watch-like device called the Omnitrix that fixes on his wrist and grants him the ability to transform into various aliens. Ben uses the Omnitrix to defeat evil robots attempting to steal the device. This narrative plot is sustained through the series as Ben becomes familiar with the device and defeat villains through a series challenges. (See Appendix 1 for transcription.)

### **Analysis**

This opening schoolyard scene introduces a subplot which introduces themes that recur throughout the series. Ben Tennyson is depicted as an ‘average’ boy in children’s televisual terms: he plays Little League baseball, is occasionally disobedient – he is depicted throwing a paper plane in class – and achieves average grades in school. It is noteworthy that this average or ordinary boy of children’s television tends is represented as white. As in other spaces whiteness is presumed generic or unraced and therefore neutral (Dyer 1997). These behaviours (playing baseball, occasional disobedience) relate to the discourse of boyishness (Kimmel & Aronson 2004; Connell 2005) and his whiteness enables him to be seen as “the human ordinary” Dyer 1997: 47).

Ben is introduced as empathetic in his concern for a victim of bullying and he courageously steps in to confront the bullies. The confrontation takes the form of physical aggression, although the fight is not shown. The audience see the consequences of the altercation: Ben and the original victim suspended from a tree by their underpants. His failure to protect the victim positions him as unexceptional. Even the boy he tried to protect expresses disdain at Ben’s ineffectuality, saying, “Next time you want to play hero, make sure you can back it up”. This unsuccessful attempt relegates him to a form of masculinity that is subordinate to the forceful, aggressive masculinity of the bullies and the scene functions to introduce Ben as intent on being a hero, as brave in the face of danger and considerate of weaker people, the required qualities of the action genre hero, although Ben is incapable of defeating the bullies as yet. This mini-narrative is suspended until the close of the episode.

The gendered element of the scene is significant. It presents a hierarchy of masculinities with the aggressive, physical bullies at the apex of this hierarchy and defenceless boys at the base. Ben falls between these two poles. In confronting the bullies he exercises his own agency, yet his failure to rescue the victim firmly locates him as subordinate to the bullies. The first victim of bullying is lower in this hierarchy as he accepts his fate as inevitable. Ben abhors his subordinate form of masculinity and seeks confronts it in order to move up the hierarchy of masculinities. This is consistent with Connell’s (1995) understanding of gender

roles as potentially dynamic, shifting and complex.

Against this backdrop to the episode, season and series, the narrative proper begins.

Ben, the protagonist, is depicted as a quirky character as is manifest through his verbal quips and body language. Ben's anticipation of the start of the summer vacation is evident in his anxious looks at the clock and his ecstatic "Yes! Out of here!" as soon as the bell rings. His constant recounting of his thoughts works as a narrational device which ensures the audience know his thoughts, feelings and motivations.

While his desire to behave heroically has been established, Ben is constructed as a vulnerable, defenceless and at times fearful boy presumably scripted to have resonance with the targeted child viewers who can identify with his feelings of vulnerability and fear. Consistent with the genre of *bildungsroman* (Bakhtin, Emerson & Holquist 1986), as child protagonist, Ben's narrative trajectory marks his journey as progressing from fearful boy to a capable hero figure as Ben negotiates the challenges of growing up. The subject position offered by his character, one chosen for its presumed relevance to modern child audiences, presents Ben as idealistic, disobedient, fearful and struggling with failure, all elements of the discourse of childhood and becoming.

When he sees an alien shuttle land his first reaction is to flee. Fear is soon overcome by curiosity, prompting him to investigate the wreckage. When the Omnitrix, an alien device, clamps on to his wrist, his inability to remove it makes him more fearful, and he calls his Grandpa for adult assistance. Soon, however, Ben is experimenting with the device, thereby presenting him as both inquiring and adventurous.

Guiding Ben's development, the adult character in the series is the adult male, Max, Ben and Gwen's grandfather. Although a minor character in this episode, he functions as the parent figure to Ben and Gwen, the role of the nurturing man, one that is frequent in children's fiction where parents, particularly the mother, are largely absent (Brydon 2009). A binary opposition thus exists between the primary male characters: Max as the adult and Ben as the child. This opposition presents Max as the mature, developed adult who guides Ben along his personal trajectory of development and becoming.

The narrative continues when Ben decides to go for a walk away from the campsite. After Gwen spots a forest fire and alerts Max to the possibility of Ben being in danger, they set out on different paths to find Ben. When Gwen encounters Ben as an alien in the forest, despite her fear, she attempts to subdue the alien by hitting him on the head with a fire extinguisher, behaviour stereotypically construed as masculine in contrast to passive and emotional femininity (Walkerline 1989; Thompson & Zerbinos 1995; Witt 2000; Signorielli

2001; Götz, Lemish, Aidman and Moon 2005). Again, when Ben transforms into an alien, Gwen again attempts to hit him but falls over clumsily. She once more displays courage and quick thinking when Ben is attacked by a drone and destroys the robot.

Despite taking the lead in these scenes, Gwen does not narrate her thoughts aloud as does Ben. In effect the audience is not privy to her thought processes in the same way, ensuring her status as the secondary character. Audience identification with her character is thus rendered more difficult or elusive and this is made more so as she is frequently off screen or in the background.

To further unpack this narrative, it is productive to employ Todorov's narrational stages of disruption, recognition and action to identify the discourses that are privileged. When Ben, Gwen and Max hear a mayday call on the radio describing robots attacking people, Ben wishes to use his powers to rescue them. With Max's approval, he uses the Omnitrix to transform into an alien, destroying the robot while Max and Gwen usher people to safety. Here, the social order of peace and safety at the campsite serves as the initial equilibrium. The disruption consists of the attack on the campsite by the robots sent by Vilgax, the villain, therefore threatening the social order. Ben's recognition of this disruption and his consequent action represents him as the narrative's hero in a Proppian sense (see chapter 3). The new equilibrium lies in the destruction of the robots and Ben's consequent decision to use his alien powers for good.

Having acquired the Omnitrix, which functions as the Proppian magical agent, Ben is enabled to pursue his boyish desire to be a hero. Ben's defeat of the villain with the assistance of the magical agent locates him in the role of hero who "in order to solve a problem or win a princess, is given a magical device by a supernatural agent" (Bordwell 1988: 7). He is able to transcend his weaker self, that self portrayed in the establishing scene of the series and the attack on the campsite gives him this second opportunity to be a hero. This time the Omnitrix enables Ben to use his alien abilities to assist those who cannot save themselves. In defeating the robots Ben triumphs over the threat, thus resolving the main plot. With the Omnitrix in his possession, Ben is relocated to a more authoritative position in the hierarchy of masculinities than he inhabited earlier in the episode.

The identification of Propp's character functions is productive in making explicit the role each character plays in propelling the narrative forward. The most marked difference in the construction of Ben and Gwen is the character function each assumes in the greater mission of defeating evil. While Ben's possession of the magical agent defines him as the hero, Gwen assists Ben, thus acting as a Proppian helper who aids in "transferring the hero in

space, liquidating the misfortune or lack, [and] rescuing the hero from pursuit” (Bordwell 1988: 9). Yet Gwen is not perpetually relegated to the role of helper; at times she is scripted as the hero, but importantly her heroic conduct differs from Ben as will be discussed later.

Attention to the visual signifiers make explicit the construction of Ben as the primary active protagonist and Gwen as the secondary character. Intent on altering the situations he finds himself in, Ben is constantly depicted as taking action, that is, through material processes (Janks 1997): he confronts bullies, transforms into aliens and uses their powers, climbs trees, destroys robots and vanquishes bullies. His is an active masculinity marked by being adventurous and taking risks, a kind of “boys will be boys” construction (Connell 2005). In addition a relatively low number of mental processes can be attributed to Ben, consistent with his inclination to boyish impetuosity and disregard for the consequences of his actions.

In contrast, the visual signifiers that depict Gwen engaging in several mental processes (Janks 1997). The emphasis here is on the intellect. She uses her laptop and newspapers to *investigate* strange events and people to aid Ben in his battle against evil. She often *judges* and *criticises* Ben for his immaturity and disobedience, suggesting by contrast her comparative maturity and compliance. At the same time Gwen’s acquiescence to Max’s instructions constructs her as more docile. In this way girlhood is constituted consistent with expectations of a more compliant femininity, here presuming her greater maturity in comparison to Ben’s active and at times defiant masculinity. Gwen’s compliance however stems from being biddable and cooperative and, in line with the Rousseau’s Sophie (as introduced in chapter 2), maturity is conflated with docility.

Todorov’s narrative model presumes causality and transformation. The causal chain of narrative is evident in the mini-narrative of the episode where Ben was established as a boy with good intentions, but unable to fulfil his quest. This final scene of the episode concludes this mini-narrative and constitutes a new equilibrium. It circles back to the initial location, where Ben was depicted as a victim. Now Ben uses his alien powers to inflict revenge on the bullies and reverse their roles: they end up suspended by their underpants from the tree. This final equilibrium depicts Ben’s success at dealing with the bullies, implying a transformation here in Ben’s development from being helpless to powerful enough to achieve his quest of defending the weak. Through these actions Ben contests the bullies’ initial powerful position to locate himself as hegemonically masculine and them as subordinate.

## **The use of violence**

Ben's desire for revenge is consistent with other action genres and validates notions of violent powerful masculinity on the part of heroes (Tasker 2004; Shimpach 2010; Knight 2010). Throughout the episode power is consistently manifest through physical violence. Both narratives (and the series more generally) pit good against evil and deploy violence as the means to achieve dominance. This 'tough' masculinity (Connell 1987), whereby characters are deemed powerful by the degree of violence the characters perform is naturalised here. Although Max is depicted as disapproving of Ben's impetuosity, he accepts violence when used to subdue evil; heroic intent thus justifies the violent nature of his conduct and violence against villains is presumed laudable. The increasing power Ben acquires through the defeat of various villains functions to enable his ascent through the hierarchy of masculinities.

Consistent with this discourse, Gwen's use of physicality discursively endorses violence used for some greater good. These actions of hers arguably contest a non-confrontational, weak or vulnerable emphasised femininity (Connell 1987). The roles a girl may play in this series are not merely confined to passivity. While Gwen is still represented through feminine signifiers and acts, the form of femininity she espouses is more fluid, allowing for that. This negotiated identity represents Gwen as differently capable but at the same time positions her as largely subordinate to Ben both in her role as helper and her less frequent use of violence.

## **Season 1, Episode 7: “Kevin 11”**

### **Episode synopsis**

In the seventh episode of the series, disobeying Max Ben uses the Omnitrix to enter a game exhibition where he encounters Kevin, a boy with the ability to absorb and release energy when touching electrical objects. Recognising a shared interest in video games and mutual dissatisfaction with family, the boys team up and break into a warehouse to steal an unreleased video game, but trigger the security alarm. Ben uses the Omnitrix to escape, thus revealing his alien abilities to Kevin. However, when Ben realises Kevin nefarious intentions to cause the collision of a passenger train with a money train, he refuses to co-operate and forcefully confronts Kevin who flees the scene. Later we learn that he has absorbed some of the Omnitrix’s power during the battle. (Appendix 1, Episode 107.)

This episode is selected for its portrayal of Ben’s struggle for independence, the introduction of Kevin as a recurring character, and Ben’s gradual moral development. The challenges he faces indicate his struggle for independence and gaining control of the Omnitrix. These challenges represent this trajectory to becoming a particular masculine hero: strong, courageous and honourable. Violence remains the means by which Ben defeats evil.

### **Analysis**

The differences in the gendered construction of Ben and Gwen are again immediately present in this opening scene. Gwen’s excited listing of the various ‘girly’ creature comforts offered by the hotel indicates her delight at the prospect of staying in a hotel instead of their RV. Her enthusiasm over, for example, the full day-spa, immediately aligns her desires with the traditionally feminine preoccupation with personal appearance and beauty treatments.

In comparison, Ben is disinterested at the prospects that entice Gwen, animated only when he sees an exhibition for a video game he enjoys. His decision to use the Omnitrix to sneak into the exhibition is in defiance of Max’s instructions, hotel policy and socially acceptable codes of conduct. Ben’s use of the device is indicative both of his growing familiarity with the device as well as his desire to use his powers for personal fulfilment. He has moved from a response of awe in relation to the device to a casual use of it for personal motives here. This response is important in his personal trajectory: this childlike desire to indulge his newfound powers presents a constant challenge that is indicative of his continuing struggle to balance his responsibilities with personal gratification.

Ben’s misuse of the Omnitrix to gain entry to the gaming convention lands him in trouble when a security guard apprehends him. However, despite getting himself, Gwen and Max expelled from the hotel, the headstrong and disobedient Ben stubbornly refuses to

acknowledge his actions as objectionable, eventually losing his temper and rejecting Max's authority by declaring, "You're not my dad!" This declaration of rejection of Max's guidance and support distances the two emotionally. Subsequently Ben leaves their camper van in a tantrum, an action that places physical distance between him and his Grandfather, mirroring the independence Ben seeks. His inability to view his behaviour as selfish compounded with his misuse of the Omnitrix connotes his boyish immaturity, a point Gwen is quick to pick up on. Ben's childishness and flaunting of authority are in accordance with constructions of boyhood as mischievous and rebellious. These motifs of rebellion and independence are carried through the narrative of the episode.

The first physical encounter Ben has in this episode is once more a battle against bullies who threaten his new friend, Kevin, echoing the establishing scene of episode one. Consistent with the genre of science fiction, Kevin has the ability to absorb and discharge energy. When threatened by three older boys Ben again uses the Omnitrix to defeat the bullies. The Omnitrix, functioning as a magical agent, enables him in his quest to protect those in danger, in this instance Kevin. Once again inhabiting the role of Proppian hero he deploys physicality to subdue the bullies and protect their intended victim. In confronting and defeating the bullies, Ben's conduct is consistent with this powerful, dominant form of masculinity, utilising physical aggression to claim superior status in the hierarchy of masculinities. In their defeat the bullies inhabit a subordinate place on the hierarchy of masculinities at play in this context.

Gwen's forethought and maturity contrast with Ben's boyish actions. A visual transitivity analysis supports this interpretation. She is constructed primarily through mental and verbal processes, rather than material processes as Ben is. Gwen judges (mental) his actions as inappropriate and repeatedly reprimands (verbal) Ben of his disobedience and the repercussions of his actions, disapproving (mental) of both his use of the Omnitrix and his decision to remain with Kevin. Gwen tells Ben, "You're on your own." By identifying Ben's misbehaviour as immature and deviant, Gwen's comparative maturity is established, as does her compliance with the parental figure Max's instructions. In this sense, girlhood is constituted as more sensible and mature, despite this maturity consistently being rooted in docility and cooperation with adult instruction.

Upon returning to the RV, Gwen hesitates to inform Max of Ben's whereabouts by repeatedly hedging her answers. Her reticence may be understood as loyalty toward Ben. In spite of her irritation, Gwen shows empathy for Ben, even wondering why she is not enjoying Ben being in trouble. Such concern is again an indicator of Gwen's forethought, reinforced

by her presentation as displaying more mental processes than material. In this sense, girlhood is constituted as more sensible and mature, despite this maturity consistently being rooted in docility and cooperation with adult instruction.

Ben encounters Kevin's different world. Kevin's situation of living alone in a dishevelled subway station appeals to Ben at this stage, consistent with his desire for independence from adult authority, specifically in the form of Max who obstructs Ben's freedom and his use of the Omnitrix's powers for his personal satisfaction. Egged on by Kevin, Ben sneaks into a warehouse with him to steal copies of the new "Sumo Slammers" game, conduct indicative of his rebelliousness from the moral strictures of family. When a silent alarm is triggered, the boys deploy their respective powers to evade the authorities. This is the second time Ben uses the Omnitrix for personal reasons. At Kevin's instigation, they later agree to form a partnership.

Ben and Kevin's newfound partnership is soon shaken over Kevin's plan to derail the money train with the help of the Omnitrix. Ben takes an ethical stand in his refusal to assist Kevin to carry out his robbery plan which will cause huge damage and loss of life. This scene serves to establish another moment in Ben's personal trajectory towards adulthood and a particular kind of masculinity. He has to negotiate a tension between the binary opposition of ethical behaviour for the greater good and unethical, selfish behaviour.

His decision to behave ethically constructs him as a worthy hero and his subsequent actions are deemed ethical in comparison to Kevin's immorality. This scene marks Ben's initial turn from self-centredness to a sense of social consciousness enacted by using the Omnitrix to save other people's lives. Ben's recall of Max calling him selfish marks the turning point, Max serving as the voice of his conscience impels a return to heroism, arguably an indicator of his emerging maturity. The use of Max as his voice of conscience legitimates familial and adult guidance as appropriate and necessary on Ben's journey to become a hero.

The endorsement of the adult / child relationship is firmly rooted in the discourse of childhood which holds children as innocent and malleable and therefore constructs youth as a time of becoming (Duhn 2006), and the notions of the child as either of promise, at risk or the risky or dangerous child.

Kevin's misbehaviour in contrast constructs him as the child as/at risk. He operates as a risk to Ben's morality, inciting him to misbehave and endanger innocent people. In the second sense, Kevin himself is at risk or in danger due to his un-childlike propensity for violence and rebellion. When Ben chooses to heed Max's advice and prevent Kevin's misbehaviour, he retains his status as 'child with promise'. Without familial support, Kevin

has strayed into risky territory, behaving unethically as the ‘child as risk’ (Duhn 2006). This depiction of Kevin validates Ben’s turn away from selfishness (his moral growth) and back to the traditionally heroic desire to use his powers for good.

The significance of family is emphasised when Ben is rescued from the roof of the train by Max who drives the camper van alongside, saving Ben’s life by enabling him to jump across from the train to the RV. His family function as his reliable helpers in his journey to becoming a hero. Once reunited with Gwen and Max, it occurs to Ben that Kevin (the villain in this episode) intends to misuse his powers. He enlists the help of his family to stop Kevin. This recognition leads to action as he urgently hunts Kevin down, activating the Omnitrix, which once more serves as magical agent that takes forward in this quest.

Ben’s transformation in this scene is both amusing and introduce suspense in relation to his confrontation with the villain. Despite declaring his intention to transform into Stinkfly, a flying alien, Ben instead transforms into Four Arms, a large, four-armed alien, a mistransformation suggestive of his struggle to master the Omnitrix’s technology<sup>1</sup>. If “[t]echnology has become part of the social construction of manhood” (Götz *et al* 2005: 134) then Ben’s struggle with mastering the device is consistent with his trajectory to manhood and a validated form of masculinity.

Despite the mistransformation, Ben assumes the role of hero as he prevents Kevin from harming the bullies. The final battle scene emphasises the differences between Ben and Kevin, this plot’s hero and villain. When Kevin pleads for mercy and reaches out to Ben, Ben is represented as forgiving and perhaps naïve in taking Kevin’s appeal at face value: Kevin’s intention is to steal the Omnitrix, and he attempts to pull the device off Ben’s arm. This action depicts Kevin as underhanded in contrast to a slightly foolish but basically moral Ben. Reacting to Kevin’s attempt to pry it off, the Omnitrix releases a blast of power, leaving Kevin powerless (his undoing) but Ben safe, literally in the hands of his family as Max catches him. Kevin is left to abandon the fight and alone departs the screen. Kevin’s deception and Ben’s forgiveness signal the difference in their characters.

The main plot is thus resolved as Ben defeats Kevin. Reacting to Kevin’s attempt to pry it off, the Omnitrix releases a blast of power, leaving Kevin powerless (his undoing) but Ben safe, literally in the hands of his family as Max catches him. Kevin is left to abandon the fight and alone departs the screen. The main plot is thus resolved as Ben defeats Kevin.

<sup>1</sup> This is the second time the Omnitrix has mistransformed Ben: earlier, Ben selected the four-armed alien but was instead transformed into the fire alien.

This episode has presented a significant moment in Ben's personal development as his character is tested on ethical and moral grounds, affording Ben the opportunity for personal growth when using the Omnitrix for the good of others rather than personal gain. His encounters with Kevin function as catalysts for this moral growth. Violence is once more presumed necessary in the battle between good and evil, with Ben defeating his opponent using physical aggression. His eventual triumph indicates his gradual progress to a more authoritative position in the hierarchy of masculinities. Ben's personal trajectory is thus consistent with the development of a worthy hero, that is, one that is ethical, courageous and powerful.

## Season 1, Episode 10: “Lucky Girl”

### Episode Synopsis

This episode of *Ben 10* is significant to this study as it explores the possibility of Gwen assuming the role of hero. Early in the episode, Ben defeats a villain and obtains a lucky charm as a souvenir. To make up for irritating Gwen by his conceit, he gives her the charm which grants Gwen the power of luck, enabling her to take on the primary role of hero. Ben struggles to accept Gwen’s role, claiming that he is the ‘real’ hero. It is the gendered constructions of each character in the role of hero that is the focus of the analysis below. (Appendix 1, Episode 110.)

### Analysis

Consistent with previous episodes, the tenth episode of *Ben 10* opens at the trio’s latest stop, this time: a witchcraft museum. Almost immediately, a villain named Hex appears and Ben uses the Omnitrix to “go hero” and defeat him, thus protecting innocent bystanders. Gwen and Max again assume their Proppian role as helpers, distracting Hex until Ben knocks him unconscious, claiming Hex’s lost charm as a souvenir. Following the battle, Ben is represented as basking in the attention from reporters and proclaiming “Who’s your hero?” while being photographed in alien form.

His behaviour angers Gwen, who feels resentful that her role in assisting Ben in his battles is unacknowledged. After Ben claims that “being a hero is not about getting attention”, Gwen immediately mimics Ben’s preening display in front of reporters. Ben argues that Gwen throwing a trash can at Hex “doesn’t exactly make you a hero. Unlike me.” With this statement Ben clearly dismisses Gwen’s role in the battle as secondary to his, positioning himself as superior in the fight against villains.

Gwen’s next response introduces the primary theme of this episode. Her statement, “The only reason you’re a big hero is because of that watch”, calls into question what constitutes a hero by attributing Ben’s heroic status to luck. In a conciliatory gesture Ben offers her the charm he picked up, thereby providing Gwen with a magical agent that enables her role as alternate hero for this episode. Because this episode allows the possibility of both Ben and Gwen as heroes, it enables the differences in representation of both characters in the role of hero to be considered.

The next scene makes explicit the nature of Gwen’s newfound powers as a consequence of the lucky charm. The trio are eating in a restaurant when Ben tries to take the last crawfish. Gwen knocks the fork from his hand prompting an improbable causal chain of events which embarrasses Ben and allows Gwen to take the last crawfish. Apart from

providing comic relief, the scene allows viewers to see how the charm works to influence events in the wearer's favour. This second magical agent enables Gwen to perform as hero.

Gwen soon has another opportunity to use her abilities, this time to defeat thieves. When Ben, Gwen and Max are out on the street they witness three thieves escaping after stealing a woman's purse and attempt to intervene. Max orders the thieves to stop but they taunt him. Ben hides behind a hot dog cart in an unsuccessful attempt to use the Omnitrix to transform into Diamondhead.

Unable to manage the Omnitrix, Ben attempts the role of hero while still in human form. Gwen has meanwhile decided to use her charm, her Proppian magical agent, but is interrupted by Ben pushing her out of his way, saying, "Let me take care of this". The charm's power then activates and causes a chain of events which disables all three thieves. Gwen stumbles backwards into a juggler who falls over and sends his unicycle into Thief 1. A juggling pin drops on the thief's head and he falls into Max's grasp. Gwen goes to help with Thief 2 and steps on a bottle of mustard sauce which sprays mustard in the hot dog vendor's face. He pushes the cart away and it hits Friend 2, slamming into a wall. This unbalances a flower pot which falls on the head of recovering Friend 1. The crisis over, an old woman calls Gwen a hero, but Gwen demurs that she was lucky, self-deprecation consistent with the traditional construction of modest femininity.

This scene is interesting as both Max and Ben act to protect Gwen. Their actions to defend the female character are consistent with the construction of powerful masculinity as chivalrously protective of women and children. Both Max and Ben's actions function to prevent Gwen from taking action to resolve a disruption, simultaneously disallowing Gwen the chance to face the threat and so protect herself – and her family. By allowing Gwen to successfully achieve the quest to stop the thieves, the series here allows the possibility of the female hero who can take credit for the save. Being heralded hero results in Gwen's decision to undertake this role in the guise of 'Lucky Girl', despite dismissing herself as "Just lucky"

With two heroes now in play, the next disruption presents an opportunity for both Gwen and Ben to exercise their powers. Seeing an explosion at a nearby construction site, both decide to assist the stranded workers. Ben prefaces his transformation into the alien Wildmutt by saying "Time to watch a real hero at work!" to which Gwen retorts, "Yeah, me!" These lines encompass the nub of the episode: what constitutes a real hero? Ben's assertion implies that Gwen's powers and abilities are secondary to his. Gwen's rebuttal contests Ben's claim.

While Ben leaves to help the stranded people Max finds a person trapped beneath a

steel girder. Gwen appears as “Lucky Girl”, dressed for her performance, wearing a purple superhero outfit complete with a mask. Once again the charm triggers a chain of events which allows Gwen to both save the trapped person and frustrate Ben’s efforts to rescue the workers. Her powers now contest Ben’s directly as the cousins race to rescue the workers. Gwen wins the contest, a victory which implicitly validates her success. Yet it must be noted that this success is largely accidental: when she inadvertently releases a vehicle’s handbrake, the charm takes over. Her heroism is limited more to intention than skill or capability. The scene closes with Gwen mimicking Ben’s earlier behaviour in front of reporters and asking, “Who’s your hero?” The cousins’ roles are thus reversed, with Ben angry at Gwen’s posturing and Gwen delighting by the attention she receives in her role as hero.

The question of what constitutes a hero is revisited when Gwen and Ben argue over the legitimacy of each other’s claim to power. When Max suggests donating the lucky charm to a museum, both Gwen and Ben protest, albeit for different reasons: Ben wants to try the charm for himself and Gwen wants to use it again to help others, an intention central to the discourse of heroism.

Another narrative plot commences when the trio hears a news report about visitors to a haunted house being held hostage. The villain, Hex, introduced in the first scene, has reappeared to set a trap to lure Lucky Girl to the haunted house. Both Ben and Gwen recognise the disruption and move to rescue the trapped tourists, each positioning themselves in the role of hero, with Ben using the Omnitrix as a magical agent and Gwen using the charm. Echoing the scene with street thugs, Gwen tells Ben: “Back off! I’ll handle this!” underscoring the role reversal between Ben and Gwen. Dismissing her, Ben prefaces his action by saying, “I’m the real hero here.” Undaunted, Gwen urges people to stay calm because “Lucky Girl’s in the haunted house!” Ben rejects her claim by retorting: “You don’t need luck when you’ve got skill!”

Despite the cousins’ struggle for dominance, they work together against Hex to rescue the trapped tourists. Hex chases Gwen, magically trapping her in vines which remove her lucky charm. Ben, still in the alien form of Four Arms, rescues Gwen and proceeds to battle Hex. Hex’s helpers/henchmen (in the form of animated statues) distract Ben, enabling Hex to continue his spell to destroy the city. Gwen throws rocks at him to disrupt him, saying “Luck only takes you so far, Grandpa!”

Gwen uses her own capabilities to defeat Hex by knocking him unconscious, demonstrating both courage and determination without the charm. Ben and Max destroy the henchmen while Gwen retrieves Hex’s charms. Finally, with Max’s help, Ben traps Hex in a

coffin.

Depicting Gwen as defeating Hex positions her as the hero, notably one without special powers. This scene finally affords Gwen the opportunity to exercise her own capabilities and protect those in danger (in this case, her family and the city). The close of this scene depicts Gwen's decision to destroy Hex's charm.

An analysis of the visual transitivity markers of this episode clearly depicts Gwen as displaying more material processes than previous episodes and than Ben does. Just as in previous episodes Gwen also engages in a greater number of mental processes than Ben, consistent with traditional constructions of femininity in girlhood as more perceptive and thoughtful than , with masculinity in boyhood presented as more active than thoughtful or emotive (Walkerdine 1989; Götz et al 2005). Gwen's more active construction in this episode contests dominant understandings of femininity as only passive, and in allowing Gwen more screen time, this episode positions her as capable of being an alternate hero, if only for a short time. Ultimately however, Gwen's decision to destroy the charms indicates her acceptance of the role as helper. This episode thus reinforces (and legitimises) its initial construction of masculinity as claiming the role of hero, a role which holds the most power in an action/adventure series.

The final scene of this episode presents Todorov's stage of New Equilibrium. Ben's approval of Gwen's decision to destroy the charms may be understood as his return to being on good terms with his cousin. However, it may also be argued that his approval stems from relief at no longer struggling for dominance with his girl cousin. Gwen allows that he is "back to being the only hero around here", but calls on Ben to admit that she did a good job. Ben concedes that his earlier dismissal of her was wrong: "Gwen. You did a good job". Unknown to Ben, Gwen records this statement, and is afforded one last, small victory over Ben as she repeatedly replays the recording to Ben's chagrin.

## **Alien Force**

### **Series two synopsis**

Five years after *Ben 10*, the second series entitled *Alien Force* takes viewers to a different point in Ben and Gwen's lives. As fifteen year old adolescents, Ben and Gwen are again constituted as gendered subjects consistent with the prevailing discourse of what it is to be masculine or feminine teens which the series arguably naturalises. My analysis therefore moves the discussion to adolescence allowing for an investigation into the gendered differences between feminine and masculine teenagers and what it means in terms of these teens' life trajectories in the overarching narrative of the series. Being a time of change and maturation, adolescence is constructed as a source of anxiety for characters who are inexperienced in navigating romantic relationships, presumed to be an important part of being an adolescent. The episodes selected feature narratives that focus on how adolescence influences the behaviour of Ben and Kevin, both male characters.

### **Season 1, Episode 7: "Pier Pressure"**

#### **Episode synopsis**

This episode of *Alien Force* introduces Julie Yamamoto, a fifteen year old girl who becomes Ben's romantic interest. The episode opens at a tennis match where Ben, Gwen and Kevin watch Julie defeat her opponent. With Gwen's encouragement, Ben clumsily invites Julie out on a date for that night. Thus, the heteronormative, romantic subplot of this episode is introduced. A complex primary plot is triggered during this date which causes a reluctant Ben his powers to Julie when he discovers that an alien requires assistance to rescue its partner. (Appendix 2, Episode 107.)

#### **Analysis**

This episode is salient to this study for its representation of Ben negotiating his first heterosexual romantic interest. It also rehearses the conventional gendered roles of hero and damsel-in-distress, with Ben the active hero and Julie the 'damsel in distress'.

The first scene establishes Julie Yamamoto immediately as athletic: she is portrayed winning a tennis match. Early in the episode she pauses to wave to Ben who visibly perks up and smiles back, thus introducing Julie as Ben's potential romantic interest. Observing this interaction Gwen urges Ben to ask Julie out. He reacts anxiously to her suggestion and turns away, self-consciously touching the Omnitrix as he worries about Julie finding out about his powers and confessing to Gwen, "I don't want her to think I'm weird". This relationship works as the introduction of romantic relationships for the adolescent Ben and his somewhat awkward 'becoming' in his trajectory to manhood. His concerns are dismissed by Gwen.

While she admits that he is weird, in a supportive tone she continues, “But you’re also funny and sensitive and well-mannered. Unlike some people I know.”

This assertion is significant on two counts. First, the combination of “weird” with positive attributes functions as a link to the pilot series, echoing the cousins’ good-natured insults and banter in *Ben 10*, suggesting that their familial relationship of support remains intact. Second, Gwen’s statement, “Unlike some people I know”, is her scathing reference to Kevin, who is asleep on the stands, snoring and drooling. This comparison recalls the opposition constructed between Ben and Kevin in the previous series of *Ben 10* wherein the dangerous child Kevin serves as foil to Ben, the child of promise.

Gwen is depicted as more socially adept in terms of relationships. When Julie wins her match, Gwen seizes the opportunity to encourage Ben to ask her on a date, physically coercing him to approach Julie when he begins to back out. Their initial conversation is awkward and brief. As Ben turns to leave Gwen again takes control, pushing him back to Julie, where he hesitantly asks her on a date. Ben reacts with happy disbelief at her acceptance but then panics, asking Gwen, “Now what?”

The fifteen year old Ben lacks confidence and is conversationally inept in his interaction with the girl he fancies. This is consistent with the discourse of adolescence as a time of confusion and awkwardness, particularly regarding romantic relationships (Arnett 2013; Furman, Ho & Low 2007). In negotiating the uncharted territory of romance, the hesitancy and hedging of his words portray Ben’s adolescent anxiety and lack of social maturity. He addresses his invitation to the pier as a string of questions instead of a confident invitation extended to Julie. This uncertainty serves as a potential point of identification for young audiences, also presumably confronting (or desiring) similar relationships (Arnett 1995).

In direct contrast to Ben’s self-doubt, Gwen is represented as at ease when setting Ben up on a date. Her confidence and management of Ben’s romantic life indicates her social confidence and greater understanding of dating practice. Gwen’s quick reaction to Ben’s panic consequently helps Ben avoid too obvious a conversational *faux pas* by decisively ending the conversation. Her final humorous comment, “Sometimes I wonder how this species survives” is a tolerant acceptance that boys are hopeless at expressing romantic interest. This judgement is reiterated when Kevin embarrasses Ben in the car. Gwen responds, “At least when Ben likes a girl, he lets her know. He asks her out. Maturity! Isn’t that a novel approach?”

Gwen’s conduct thus enacts the conventional gendered pattern of girls as more

socially competent in the negotiation of romantic interactions and portrays her consistent with Rousseau's conception of girlhood (see chapter 2) and their more adult role of training boys in their performance of a hegemonic masculinity.

On the afternoon before his date with Julie Ben is portrayed as anxious about his appearance. Grimacing at his reflection and attempting to smooth his hair he enacts adolescent sensitivity to his appearance: "My hair looks stupid, my shirt is wrinkled and I have a zit the size of Kansas", a scenario that fits with the construction of adolescent insecurity about appearance, one potentially shared by young audiences. It is notable that although concern with physical appearance is often presumed to be a feminine marker, the period of adolescence tends to introduce a heightened concern for both genders, as socially approved appearances are key to acceptance (Barker & Bornstein 2010; Arnett 2013).

Ben's date with Julie begins well with the two talking and Julie taking Ben's arm, indicating the reciprocation of romantic interest. This is short-lived as the Omnitrix suddenly begins to beep loudly, causing Julie to step back in alarm. The beeping, and Julie's reaction to it, visually represents the distance Ben's secret puts between him and Julie. In an effort to hide the truth of the Omnitrix from her, Ben lies about it, claiming that it is a broken watch. Leaving Julie under the pretence of buying cotton candy Ben hides behind a counter, managing to stop the Omnitrix beeping. As soon as he manages this, he notices a bumper car advancing on him, a car steered by an alien who then pursues Ben in the first disruption of this narrative.

Ben escapes the attack by tricking the alien car into crashing with a pillar. Quickly buying cotton candy, he returns to Julie, offering the excuse of a long queue to account for his absence. Julie is disbelieving and rather than being gullible, she is angry, but her distress is clearly rooted in her own insecurity as she admits "I thought you'd stood me up". This admission constructs Julie as similarly anxious about romantic relationships and extends the theme of adolescence as a time of uncertainty across the genders.

Ben hesitates when Julie suggests they try a jet fighter carnival ride for he notices that the alien that pursued him earlier has taken over the ride. When Julie asks if he is hiding something, Ben protests, "No, no secrets here! My life's an open book. Just your basic, regular guy!" This protestation of normalcy reiterates Ben's adolescent concern of being perceived as 'weird' by the girl he is interested in and his fear of rejection.

Predictably, his next alien encounter directly contradicts Ben's 'regular guy' assertion when he takes on the role of Proppian hero to defend Julie and himself against attack from the alien-possessed carnival ride. Recognising the disruption, Ben springs into

action, guiding Julie to a room and instructing her to remain there, so performing his chivalrous role as protector of the feminine subject, a recurring motif in the franchise. Ben then activates the Omnitrix but transforms into Brain Storm, an alien he considers “possessed of a highly advanced intellect” instead of Jet Ready. It is notable that Ben (in this alien form) uses physicality rather than intelligence or wit to engage his opponent in battle: he shoots electricity from his brain. When Julie steps out from the room, Ben creates an energy field around each of them, lifting Julie away from danger moments before the building explodes – another enactment of chivalrous hegemonic masculinity, as mentioned in the analysis of a previous episode. Setting her down on the other side of the pier, Ben confronts the enemy and scores a direct hit, ending the battle as the alien jet crashes into a carnival ride and falls into the water.

Quickly transforming back into human form in a bathroom, Ben returns to Julie’s side and feigns ignorance of the battle in order to keep his powers secret. Before Julie can question him the alien resurfaces, this time as in the form of a large, multi-armed carnival ride, which sweeps Julie up from the pier. This kidnapping of Julie comprises a second disruption and sets in motion Ben’s quest to rescue her, this time without his usual helpers. Julie here takes on the Proppian role of princess (for she must be rescued (Fiske 1987)).

Her abduction falls squarely in the traditional action genre trope of the damsel-in-distress (Knight 2010), where the female character must await rescue by a traditional masculine hero. Julie’s attempt to use her mobile phone fails when her phone is dashed to the ground by the alien’s movements leaving her clinging helplessly to the ride, calling for Ben’s assistance.

Ben has fallen into the water where he takes advantage of this cover to transform himself into a flying alien, subsequently pursuing Julie and the alien ride. He finally confronts the alien, demanding to know where Julie is. Following Todorov’s narrative theory this confrontation would ordinarily precede/introduce the final Action stage which, according to the repetitive nature of the narrative in the franchise, would take the form of a final, physical battle between Ben and the villainous alien. Instead, what occurs is a shift from this narrational pattern: Julie steps out from behind the alien ride, unhurt, and asks Ben (who is still in alien form) how he knows her name.

This question brings Ben’s anxieties about Julie considering him weird to the fore. His demeanour changes from confident hero to unsure adolescent boy as he swoops down to stand in front of Julie asking her not to be afraid before admitting who he is. Hanging his head as he tells Julie, Ben’s stance is arguably one of abjection, an assumption that is initially

confirmed when Julie refers to him as a “monster”. Using her terminology, Ben admits to being ten monsters, as the Omnitrix allows him to transform into a range of ten aliens. Here Ben is no longer the hero. Instead, he assumes the role of uncertain boy prone to the insecurities of adolescence. His fears are allayed however when Julie simply smiles and says, “Cool!” explicit acceptance of Ben’s unusual persona.

In contrast to the final battle scene anticipated in an action genre, this scene presents another disruption: Julie, recognising that the alien is attempting to communicate, draws Ben’s attention to the alien’s speech-sounds. Directed to a crashed spacecraft Ben and Julie find an injured alien trapped inside. An energy field prevents entry and the pair see flashing symbols on a screen, which Ben realises is a self-destruct countdown.

Recognising the imminent danger Ben again uses the Omnitrix to transform into a large beast-like alien and enter the craft, removing the explosive device, hurling it into the sky and crouching over Julie as it detonates. These actions mark a return for Ben to a heroic role as he saves the alien’s life and protects Julie in the process, the traditional, masculine hero of the action genre. Gone is the abject fear of the adolescent as he performs the role of capable hero, this time without fear of rejection from his romantic interest.

A transitivity analysis of the visual signifiers reveals Ben as still primarily material, but displaying significantly more mental and verbal processes than previously discussed episodes. This shift in his representation is linked to the discourse of adolescent anxiety, self-doubt – all emotions and experiences intended audiences are presumed to wrestle with. The greater number of mental processes allows viewers insight into and identification with Ben’s emotional turmoil as he negotiates his first date – an important point in his personal trajectory to adulthood.

In contrast, a transitivity analysis of Julie shows her to be constructed consistent with traditional femininity in that she engages in more mental and verbal than material processes, although also displaying significant physical prowess playing tennis. The focus here is the particular representation of femininity, that is, the well-used trope of damsel-in-distress (Knight 2010).

With Julie safe and Ben relieved at her acceptance of him, the narrative closes with a comical scene. The rescued alien berates Ben for his lack of knowledge about the Omnitrix, asking, “Don’t you know how that works?” a reminder of Ben’s continuing struggle to master the Omnitrix’s power and, consequently, renegotiate his location in the hierarchy of masculinities to one of greater power. Despite the alien’s lack of confidence in Ben, he allows Ben and Julie to assist in the repair of the spacecraft during which Ben reintroduces

the romantic subplot of their first date by asking Julie if this is the worst date she has ever been on. Julie's response finally dispels any doubts Ben may have when she says, putting her hand on Ben's, "No, not the worst. Just different. And being different is fine." If, as mentioned before, Ben's self-doubt fits the discourse of adolescent negotiation of relationships, Julie's acceptance discursively endorses difference and not mere conformity as "fine".

The closing scene shows the pair holding hands, contact that suggests growing familiarity with each other, in contrast to the awkward interactions at the outset of the episode.

## Season 2, Episode 4: “Save the Last Dance”

### Episode synopsis

This episode of *Alien Force* presents a mysterious new challenge for Ben when one of his aliens begins to misbehave. Ben discovers that while he is in alien form he has been devouring metal objects, so causing destruction and fear. His struggle to control the deviant alien comprises the primary plot of this episode in which we see Ben deviate from the narrative role of hero. Julie enlists the help of Gwen and Kevin to assist Ben.

During Ben and Julie’s attempt to solve the mystery, Kevin and Gwen become the subjects of a heterosexual romantic subplot in which Gwen manipulates Kevin to ask her to her school dance.

This episode is significant both for its representation of Kevin, and to a lesser extent, Gwen, both in terms of their adolescent and gendered behaviour. It is interesting that Ben’s uncharacteristically supportive behaviour is attributed to an alien’s influence in line with the expectation that maturity and nurturing behaviour is unusual in a/this fifteen year old boy.

### Analysis

The opening scene, a mini-narrative, introduces the primary plot. Pursuing a runaway car, Ben uses the Omnitrix to rescue two teenagers from falling to their deaths when the car plunges off a bridge. When the teenagers are safe, Ben exhibits abnormal behaviour by turning to their car and chewing on the metal, growling when the boys question him. The purpose of this scene is twofold: first, Ben’s rescue of the teenagers functions to reinforce the series’ validation of him as the hero who acts in the service of others, and second, Ben’s subsequent bizarre behaviour evokes the question that drives the primary plot: why is he behaving strangely? Ben himself is portrayed as mystified upon finding a shard of metal in his mouth and no recollection of how it got there. This is part of Ben’s struggle with mastering the Omnitrix.

Unaware of Ben’s predicament, Gwen and Kevin make their appearance. Kevin, consistent with interests conventionally considered masculine, is working intently on his car. In his absorption, Kevin fails to notice when Gwen drops a card on the floor next to him and attempts to get his attention by repeatedly sighing. Tiring of this, Gwen uses her magical power – a bright pink blast of energy – to grab hold of Kevin and pull him bodily out from under the car. When Kevin sees her, she is presented as confident and expectant: she stands above him with her hands on her hips, gesturing to the card. This is the subsequent exchange:

Kevin: Hey! (He looks up at Gwen, who is staring back at him with her hands on her hips.) What?

Gwen: (She points to the card on the floor next to him. Kevin picks it up and opens it.) Oh, look! They're having a formal dance at my school on Friday.  
Kevin: What, you want me to take you to the dance?  
Gwen: Great! Pick me up at 7. (She turns and walks away.)  
Kevin: What? Wait!

This brief conversation depicts Gwen as taking control of this interaction: she takes advantage of Kevin's casual question by responding to it as if it were an invitation and quickly making her exit, leaving the surprised and confused Kevin no time or opportunity to disagree with her. Gwen's confidence recalls her earlier behaviour (Season 1, episode 7), when she steered Ben toward asking Julie on a date and presents her as more socially adept at relationships. This episode again portrays girls as more savvy about romantic relationships than boys.

Kevin's attempt to follow Gwen is interrupted by Ben who is concerned that something is amiss with his powers for he found a shard of metal in his teeth. Kevin however asks Ben, "What do you know about girls?", an unexpected question from the rebellious, headstrong Kevin. The prospect of a social engagement with a girl in an upper class environment provokes anxiety in him made explicit through the fear in his rising voice,

But the dance is at Gwen's fancy prep<sup>2</sup> school, with a sit-down dinner and everything. What if she expects me to waltz? What if I use the improper finger fork?

Kevin's concern relates to being socially incompetent and the fear of committing a social *faux pas*, a potential point of identification for audiences who are also preoccupied with appearing suave and capable in public and avoiding social embarrassment. This anxiety in negotiating romantic relationships (similar to Ben's on his date with Julie) is consistent with constructions of adolescence as a time of becoming (adult).

Ben, uncharacteristically, responds confidently, a far cry from the stuttering, awkward boy who asked Julie out on a date. Here he reminds Kevin of his achievements and reassures the older boy saying, "I'm pretty sure you can handle the spring formal." Ignoring Ben's request for help, Kevin responds with, "I'd better rent a DVD on dancing, maybe get one about forks, just to be sure." While introducing comedy, Kevin's words betray his preoccupation with the upcoming dance.

Still seeking advice, Ben goes to the tennis court to meet Julie. Although only practicing once again the accomplished tennis player never misses a shot and, despite talking

<sup>2</sup> "Prep" here refers to a preparatory school which grooms its students for entry into Ivy League colleges. As a colloquial term, "preppy" or "prep" students are presumed to be upper-class teens who dress and speak in ways typical of their subculture.

to Ben. On discovering that Ben had a blackout the last time he used his powers, Julie offers to follow him when he transforms, keeping a record of his activities to show him afterwards. Julie's plan is logical, reinforcing the series' construction of feminine characters as frequently engaged in mental processes. Ben accepts her suggestion and, beginning in a parking lot, Julie watches Ben activate the Omnitrix and select the alien, Jetray. Immediately thereafter Ben transforms into Big Chill, the misbehaving alien seen in the first scene of the episode. This unintended double transformation signals Ben's struggle with the Omnitrix and with Big Chill in particular. With Julie in pursuit and taking notes, Ben flies to a local restaurant and begins to scare customers and eat metal objects. Ben's uncharacteristic behaviour continues when he leaves Julie at a cul-de-sac, flying away without explanation to later wake up in an unknown, desolate area in human form.

This behaviour contrasts with his heroic quests thus far. Instead of helping those weaker than him, Ben has terrorised and partially destroyed a local restaurant. Instead of being candid with Julie, he has abandoned her without explanation or apology and these behaviours lead Julie to acknowledge a definite problem with Big Chill. In this plot rather than serving as a magical agent enabling good, the Omnitrix is presented as empowering villainy. It is significant that Ben's misbehaviour is attributed to the alien, not his person.

The following scene shows Kevin returning for advice to find Ben at home unaware of his earlier actions and eating a jar of pickles. Kevin is agitated: "We've got a major problem" and "I've got nothing to wear to the dance!" The humour of this line lies in the incongruity between his concern with appearance and his characteristic tough male stance, flagging of his 'typical' adolescent concern with appearance and acceptability. Unusually, Ben acts maturely, dispensing advice and reassurance to a worried Kevin.

He helpfully provides Kevin with one of Grandpa Max's old tuxedos which Kevin dons, inspects and judges himself as "Not bad". This positive self-appraisal is soon eclipsed by confusion when he attempts to tie a bowtie. Again, Ben steps in calmly and ties the bowtie neatly. When Kevin articulates his fear of causing social embarrassment for himself and Gwen, (he is "not like all those prep guys from her school") Ben maturely advises him to just be himself.

In many ways this subplot is a reversal of Ben's first date with Julie. On this occasion, Ben performs Gwen's reassuring mentor role, bolstering Kevin's confidence by calling him "dapper" and suggests Kevin get Gwen a corsage with Gwen's favourite flower, another class-linked convention. Unusually, Ben acts maturely, dispensing advice and reassurance to a worried Kevin.

Thus far the episode has focused on Ben and Kevin's respective anxieties, with Gwen and Julie appearing as secondary characters. In the next scene Julie confides her discomfort with Ben's behaviour to Gwen and articulates her concern that Ben might have dropped her. Gwen reassures Julie that Ben will show up despite his odd behaviour and confides that she is more worried that Kevin will not show up for the dance: "Ever since I made him ask me to the dance, he's been acting really strange". Gwen's adolescent fears mirror those of Kevin, indicating mutual uncertainty for both adolescent boys and girls despite their different gender roles.

The next scene comprises a deepening of the initial disruption when Ben is once more drawn under the control of Big Chill. Transforming without apparent intention, Ben flies to a foundry with Julie in pursuit and begins eating pieces of metal. When three policemen interrupt him, Ben warns them to stay away. When they advance, Ben freezes one officer, and, despite Julie's protests, the other two fire their laser weapons at Ben. Ben's behaviour here is not that of hero: he has harmed a police officer and directly disobeyed the law. When Julie entreats him not to hurt the other two policemen, Ben responds: "They won't feel a thing" before freezing them too, with only their heads remaining unfrozen. By depicting the weapon blasts as lasers and Ben's powers as merely creating a cage of ice around the officers, the series avoids portraying bloody physical violence and death of human beings, although this is violence nonetheless. Ben proceeds to drink a large amount of molten metal before fleeing the scene. When Julie pursues him, Ben freeze her scooter's engine too, forcing her to abandon the chase. Here his conduct is that of this monstrous alien.

While this is happening, Kevin confronts his fears by meeting Gwen for the dance. Before knocking on her door, Kevin attempts a confidence boost, saying: "It's just a dance, right? Nothing to worry about. I look pretty good." In this way he regains some self-assurance which is quickly displaced by a concern that he should have breath-freshening gum. This oscillation between confidence and anxiety introduces a comic element, but it also rehearses the common experience of negotiating personal insecurity, arguably another point of youth audience identification. When Gwen opens the door, dressed in a sleeveless white dress, she radiates confidence as she stands in the doorway hand on her hip. Her evening wear signals her as an adult women and so does her poise.

On the way to the dance, Kevin recounts Ben's good advice and reassurance to Gwen who reacts with disbelief, recalling that, "Julie was saying something about him acting strangely." Her recognition of Ben's behaviour as uncharacteristic causes her to change her mind about the dance to Kevin's dismay. He hits his fist on the bonnet of the car for he

interprets Gwen's turnaround evidence of his unsuitability. Kevin's demeanour is abject as he voices his fears: "I knew it! You're embarrassed to go with me." Gwen quickly assuages Kevin's insecurity when she accounts for her change of mind.

Her fear is confirmed in a phone call from Julie. Her response, "We'll handle it" renders herself and Kevin as a team. With this, Gwen successfully defuses Kevin's anxiety and, presumably, the audience's empathetic anxiety.

Julie's response similarly confirms her commitment to Ben: "Ben's in trouble. I'm going too." A visual transitivity analysis of Julie's conduct in this episode reveals several mental and verbal processes, reinforcing her character's construction as principally affective and cerebral. Importantly, while she does display more material processes in this episode compared to others, her activity is motivated by concern for Ben, arguably signifying her role as primarily supporting and supportive.

At the site, Gwen, Kevin and Julie see Ben in the form of Big Chill, perched atop a metallic structure inside a crater. Without hesitation Gwen, followed by Julie, runs to help Ben who yells at them to "Go away!" Kevin chooses a different tack; he slides down into the crater saying: "Too much negotiating. I'm going to smack some sense back into him", before using his power to turn himself into metal and attack Ben, conduct that falls squarely within hegemonic constructions of tough masculinity, where physicality is presumed more effective than diplomatic negotiation. His presentation as 'tough' is quickly challenged when Ben attempts to chew Kevin's metallic arm until Kevin uses his power to become stone, falling back and angrily shouting as he returns to human form: "Dude! I borrowed this suit!" his concern with the torn sleeve interrupting his confrontation with Ben.

Gwen's activity in this battle scene consists primarily of material processes (although her actions throughout the episode remains consistent with constructions of her as primarily displaying mental processes). Taking advantage of a break in the fight, Gwen uses her power to blast energy at Ben in the form of bright pink light, a force thereby feminised but effective. While Gwen acts, she is not engaged in a physical conflict; Ben grapples with the light blast, not with her. Unlike the boys who are physically aggressive, the girls resort to a proxy to fight (a blast of light energy instead of the girls themselves) once reasoning has failed. Protecting herself and Julie, Gwen continues to use her power until she scores a direct hit causing Ben to fall to the ground. With Ben down, Gwen deduces that the metallic heap is the source of the problem. Kevin once more uses his power to smash through the top of the heap, exposing a bubbling yellow goo. He recoils in disgust, a 'girlish' reaction that humorously contradicts his display of toughness and physicality, as does his concern with

damaging his suit.

Kevin's disgust quickly changes to shock as all three watch bubbles float up from the pool to unfold into infant creatures similar in appearance to Big Chill. The girls react with delight, "Awww!" and Kevin with disbelief: "You've got to be kidding", as the creatures float to Ben, still in alien form.

As Big Chill, Ben stands and encourages the creatures to fly and they quietly float into the sky. On returning to human form Ben appears confused. Kevin uses a recorded video to explain to Ben that Big Chill laid eggs and that the creatures that hatched will live in space. Ben reacts angrily when Kevin calls him "mommy", going on to say: "Should've figured it out from your pickle cravings". Gwen adds: "And from Ben giving you (Kevin) good advice".

These two lines rehearse stereotypical gender attitudes, namely women are nurturing and supportive and pregnant women have particular food cravings. Ben, as a female alien enacts these roles. The implication is that supportive advice around self-image tends to be associated with femininity. Julie plays up her supportive role when she playfully teases Ben, "I think you made a great mommy.

In this episode Ben engaged primarily in material processes which remains consistent with his construction as the primary character in this series. Of interest here though is the increased number of mental and verbal processes exhibited by Ben, which, it is revealed, is due in part to alien influence. His warm support of Kevin is attributed to his alien pregnancy, implying that these nurturing, supportive verbal processes stem from a feminine characteristic/experience, one alien to Ben. I would argue however that by maintaining Ben's visual transitivity as primarily material, the episode does not allow the alien pregnancy to sabotage Ben's masculine identity, but rather to only colour it.

Ben is not the only masculine character to undergo a crisis. Throughout this episode Kevin, constructed as an anxious teenager, navigates unknown romantic territory. A transitivity analysis supports this construction. His primarily mental processes of feeling are interspersed with a lower number of material processes during the battle and the focus in this episode is principally driven by his emotional anxiety stemming from the dance.

With the primary plot concluded, the final scene focuses on the romantic subplot between Kevin and Gwen. Gwen's disappointment at missing the dance is understandable: she has missed out on an adolescent rite of passage, that of the formal school dance. Kevin responds by playing music on his car stereo and inviting Gwen to dance, each looking into the other's eyes as they do. The event Kevin had so feared comes to pass in a way that he is

able to manage. In these last few frames, he is presented as having shed his adolescent anxieties and comfortably dancing with Gwen despite the tear in his suit as he takes Ben's advice and behaves like himself instead of agonising over rejection.

## **Ultimate Alien**

### **Series three synopsis**

The third series in the *Ben 10* franchise takes place a year after *Alien Force*, when Ben and Gwen are 16 years old and Ben's powers are now public knowledge. His coming of age trajectory requires he both negotiate his celebrity status while serving as the heroic protagonist. Following his first foray into romantic relationships in *Alien Force*, in the *Ultimate Alien* series Ben is in an on-off relationship with Julie during which he encounters the challenges of forming and maintaining romantic partnerships. Gwen and Kevin remain in a close relationship.

### **Season 1, Episode 2: "Duped"**

#### **Episode synopsis**

In "Duped" Ben faces a moral dilemma as he decides how best to spend his time when three options are presented. The disruption that initiates the episode occurs when two Forever Knights (serving as the series villains and henchmen) attempt to force their way into a local museum. Ben frightens them away before hurrying to the National Junior Tennis Tournament in which Julie is participating.

When Ben informs Kevin and Gwen of the Knights' attempted break-in Gwen insists that he should be supporting Julie during her tournament. Ben also finds out that a new Sumo Slammers movie has been released, and immediately wants to see it. Ben thus encounters three options: one, to be supportive of his girlfriend; two, to play the role of superhero against the Knights with the help of his Ultimatrix; and, three, to satisfy his personal desire to see the latest Sumo Slammers movie. Ben uses the Ultimatrix to transform into three identical versions of himself so that each can act out one of the options; each engages in very different sets of behaviours before uniting to defeat this episode's villain, King Urien. It is how he performs as a gendered being in each of the three instances that are of interest in this analysis.

#### **Analysis**

The opening disruption, two Forever Knights attempting to burst into a museum using a tank, is quickly derailed when Ben, in the form of a large, tiger-like alien called Rath, appears and physically tears apart their tank. The Knights respond by firing laser guns at him but, undaunted, Ben warns the Knights against angering him. His confidence in having the upper hand is emphasised by the casual way in which he answers a call on his mobile phone in the midst of this confrontation with the Knights, who use the opportunity to sneak away. It is Gwen on the phone to angrily demand to know where he is, as he was meant to be watching

Julie's match. Following the call, Ben realises that the Knights have disappeared and throws their tank into a nearby pond. Two elderly onlookers show no surprise at Ben's appearance and behaviour, suggesting that Ben's reputation and aggressive conduct has become common knowledge, in a sense normalising aggression as a means to success.

Ben's arrival at the stadium causes a commotion as Julie, at match point, is ready to serve in the semi-final match of the National Junior Tennis Championships. The commentator interrupts the proceedings saying, "Hold on. There's a celebrity in the crowd: the infamous Ben Tennyson!" Amidst camera flashes Ben enters and confidently, poses, waves to the crowd, and stops to sign an autograph on the way to his seat. His performance indicates he is familiar with being in the limelight, simultaneously constructing him as somewhat narcissistic.

Ben's showboating is interrupted by Gwen who pulls him to his seat roughly while on the court Julie continues with her game. Her next serve is a fault, the first of a series of errors in her game. Her concentration is further disrupted when, in a silent stadium, Ben shouts, "Sorry!" He receives an elbow in the ribs from Gwen, the more socially sensitive of the cousins. When Julie does win the match, Ben leaps on to the court, complimenting her on her game. Julie's response is a cold, "How would you know?" before walking away. Again, Ben is represented as socially inept and needs Gwen to explain what he did to upset Julie. Gwen puts it plainly:

Gwen: It's what you did, Ben. You were late, and when you finally showed up you made a big entrance and blew her concentration.

Ben: I can't help it if I'm famous, right? (shrugs and waves at the crowd before looking down and speaking in a lower voice) I'm sorry. It won't happen again.

Gwen: It better not. The finals are in three hours. That should be enough time for you to figure out how to make this up to her.

Gwen's advice essentially operates as a polemic to make explicit what counts in this teen world as appropriate conduct in heterosexual relationships. The appropriate role for a boyfriend is to be supportive and attentive. Her position *vis a vis* relationships is constituted as more mature than Ben's boyish self-interested and tactless behaviour. She advises Ben: he needs to make up to Julie for his behaviour, thereby further discursively establishing what counts as acceptable. Ben's response (I can't help it if I'm famous, right?) is indicative of his arrogant assumption that his reputation makes him special, but it also presents him as naïve and thoughtless rather than malicious. Gwen in effect disciplines Ben's conduct and her guidance results in his disavowal of his thoughtless arrogance. His apology to Gwen is his

recognition that his behaviour was wrong,. This self-reflection and admission functions as a confession (Foucault 1979) and works as a disciplinary mechanism consistent with the caring masculine subject position being validated. This is part of his coming-of-age trajectory, for he must gradually adopt this persona and this episode focuses on this aspect of his development. The interchanges between Ben and Gwen reinforce Gwen's (feminine) role as his guide.

Gwen's value system is unequivocal. When Ben explains his tardiness as a result of his encounter with the Forever Knights, she is adamant that Julie's tournament demands preference. She dismisses the Forever Knights' attack as easy to deal with, reiterating that Ben's responsibility to his girlfriend should come first, and that Julie should be the focus of attention, particularly Ben's. Her argument explicates her value system: maintaining a romantic relationship is privileged over crime prevention. She is a willing subject of a femininity which places greater significance on the private realm and enacts a nurturing and parental role. The contrast between them is emphasised when, during Gwen's lecture, Ben looks up movie schedules on his phone, explaining that "I was thinking that while we were waiting around, I could go and catch "Sumo Slammers" in 3D!" In terms of relationships, Ben and Gwen are clearly poles apart.

Ben's marked self-interest contrasts with that of the other significant male character, Kevin. Kevin's response to Ben's suggestion to see a movie is to call him "dumb". However, Kevin's position is not as absolute as Gwen's. Although he agrees with Ben about investigating the attempted attack on the museum, he does not disagree with Gwen that Ben should be considerate of Julie. This positions him between the opposing poles of Gwen's insistence on constant support and Ben's lack of consideration in relationships. Gwen's response to Ben is to place her hand over his mouth and to warn him that he cannot be in two places at once.

When she and Kevin leave, Ben determinedly ignores her advice and uses the Ultimatrix for his pleasure – to transform into Echo Echo, a new alien form which manifests as three identical aliens. He transforms the aliens into three identical Bens. The following conversation takes place between the three Bens:

Ben1: I didn't really think that was going to work.

Ben2: Why not? You're a smart guy. You don't give yourself enough credit for that.

Ben3: I don't know. I think you're kind of a dope.

Ben1: Yeah? Well, this dope's going to see "Sumo Slammers".

Ben2: You work hard. You deserve to treat yourself every now and then. Tell you what: I'll go with Kevin and keep an eye out for those Forever Knights.

Ben1: Perfect. And you?

Ben3: ((sitting on the counter, looking at his reflection)) What?

Ben2: We were thinking you could go watch Julie play in the tournament.

After all, she's always so nice to us. It's only right that we-

Ben3: Yeah, fine. Whatever.

The first sentence each Ben speaks is an indicator of his particular personality, which the episode goes on to develop. Ben1 is pleasantly surprised by his success; Ben 2 is supportive and nurturing of Ben 1; and Ben 3 rudely calls Ben "kind of a dope". These traits are reinforced as the conversation reveals the plot: Ben1 will satisfy his original intention of seeing his movie; Ben 2 takes on the superhero role by accompanying Kevin on an investigation of the attack; and Ben 3, in the role of supportive boyfriend, will join Gwen at Julie's final match. Although the episode cuts between the action in these three spaces, each Ben is discussed separately here until the three regroup.

Upon joining Gwen, Ben 3 refers to himself as "Ben Classic", asking if Gwen has missed him. This recalls the Ben of the original series who was notably less mature than sixteen year old Ben. This statement is a harbinger of the behaviour to come during Julie's match as Ben behaves awkwardly and insensitively.

A transitivity analysis of Classic Ben reveals primarily material and verbal processes, with some mental processes confined to an inflated self-estimation marked by arrogance and a misreading of his social environment, discussed below. This presentation of arrogant immaturity serves as the initiating construction of a young man needing to acquire humility and respect for others, the preferred subject position which the discourse of the series espouses.

Ben's social ineptitude is depicted by his loud shouts of encouragement to Julie from the stands under the misapprehension that Julie "loves the attention". Ben worsens the situation by shouting, "Hey, other girl! You're a terrible tennis player and my girlfriend's gonna kick your butt!"

When the umpire interrupts the match to ask Julie what is happening, she admits reluctantly, "Uh, that's my... boyfriend." Julie's anxiety and embarrassment is doubled when the umpire responds sarcastically, "You must be very proud."

Ben's callous disruption of the match continues until, with growing frustration, Gwen uses her power to blast energy at Ben before dragging him back to his seat. She confronts Ben:

Gwen: All Julie wanted was a little support, but no! You're too busy being a chick magnet!

Ben: Come on! It's just a dumb old tennis game! Besides, she was supposed to

lose anyway. Huh. Sound really carries in here.

This exchange presents Ben's acute insensitivity to Julie. Gwen's response to Ben's behaviour positions her squarely in the role of moral guide, monitoring Ben's behaviour and attempting to guide him toward socially approved conduct, particularly with regard to his relationship. This calls to mind Rousseau's proposal of the girl child's role as entirely secondary and supportive to the boy child, asserting that "she is to be trained to complement the development of boys and men" (Prinsloo & Moletsane 2013: 6). The girl child is thus intended as a monitor and guide to the boy child, training him to develop in alignment with dominant understandings of masculinity. Gwen's reprimand of Ben can thus be construed as her again disciplining Ben into following social rules which advocate and constrain the behaviour of people within a romantic relationship.

Meanwhile, the second version of Ben joins Kevin in investigating the Forever Knights' attempted break-in at the museum. When Kevin warns him that Gwen is mad at him, Ben says, "Gwen might seem inflexible, but her heart is as big as all outdoors. She'll forgive my transgression."

Kevin's disbelief prompts Ben to reassure him, "This mission's important to you, and you're important to me, my good friend. Let's go." Despite his misgivings about Ben's uncharacteristic words, Kevin accompanies Ben to the museum. This more mature and sensitive Ben persona proffers a balanced assessment of Gwen and acknowledges the importance of his friendship with Kevin, showing a rare understanding pertaining to relationships and people.

A transitivity analysis of the visual signifiers linked to this version of Ben indicates that mental processes of feeling (not thinking) displayed by Ben heavily outweighs the material. This identity is reinforced subsequently when Kevin and Ben are in the car outside the museum, and Kevin notices Ben staring at him.

Kevin: What? Do I have corn dog on my face?

Ben: No. I'm just thinking about how long we've known each other.

Kevin: Why?

Ben: Because I don't think we've ever honestly talked about our feelings, about how we're friends now, but we were enemies. Which is understandable, what with you being criminally insane back then and all.

Kevin: I talk about my feelings all the time, like when I'm mad, or hungry or when I have to go to the bathroom.

Ben: Not to mention there's probably still unresolved tension from that whole "Hacking the Omnitrix" thing that turned you into a monster. Which, though I didn't want to say anything at the time, made you really hard to be around. Not that I blame you, since it was absolutely my fault that

things went so south.

This exchange is uncharacteristic of the original Ben who ordinarily struggles to interrogate his emotions, much less discuss them with Kevin. Ben 2 is introspective and emotionally less defended, and he attempts to articulate some of the complex emotions he feels in this discussion with Kevin. In contrast, Kevin identifies his ‘feelings’ as anger, hunger and bodily function. This simplification limits the range of his emotion to anger and his physical body, a construction consistent with a tough masculinity which tends to dismiss emotion as feminine, foregrounding physicality. In alignment with this, Kevin goes on to characterise Ben’s introspection as “girly”, stating his preference instead to “find some Forever Knights and pound them.” Kevin further enacts his tough masculinity when he denigrates Ben as a “baby” for complaining about getting hurt, implying that a tough man denies pain or weakness.

Their conversation is cut short on hearing rumbling and preparing for battle before falling through the disintegrating ground. Kevin uses his power to transform into metal and Ben uses the Ultimatrix to transform into Humungosaur, a large, dinosaur-like alien. Landing in a tunnel, they immediately engage in battle with the Knights who appeared in the opening scene, the henchmen to King Urien, the episode’s villain, who watches the battle. Ordinarily, Ben and Kevin would engage in aggressive banter during battle, however this time Ben enacts a sensitive and concerned role, proposing negotiation rather than violence. When Kevin comments on a lack of violent banter, Ben dismisses such actions as bad sportsmanship, in direct contrast with the Ben of earlier episodes who enjoyed their “smack talk”. In another uncharacteristic moment, Ben is caught off-guard when King Urien attacks, while Kevin dodges skilfully. Kevin’s depiction of tough masculinity is reinforced as he takes action to fight the enemy and assists Ben when he falls.

As Kevin fights the robot, Ben steps aside to call on the other two versions of himself, first apologising politely for interrupting their respective evenings and asking how they are before getting to the point: he and Kevin are not succeeding in their battle, courteous conduct that results in his being knocked over by Kevin.

At the museum, all three Bens watch Kevin flee from the villain before each transform – into Big Chill, Cannonbolt and Upchuck. The three take action against the villain but with comically disastrous results. Upchuck vomits acid at the villain which Cannonbolt slips in while trying to attack. Big Chill tries to freeze King Urien but instead freezes Upchuck. The villain easily knocks each alien down, prompting Ben to ask Kevin to hold him

off. Clearly fighting in three versions is not as effective as Ben assumed it would be. Instead of three forceful attacks, the Bens are uncoordinated and ineffectual, causing more harm to each other than to the villain. On realising this Ben reconstitutes himself into a single person just as Kevin is thrown to the ground. Transforming into Lodestar, an alien with magnetic and force-field powers, Ben quickly takes control of the battle and returns to battle banter, an indication that he is once more the Ben that audiences are accustomed to. The defeat of King Urien returns Ben to his position as hero, using the Ultimatrix to battle villains for the safety of others. The implicit lesson contained within this battle is that Ben requires all 'sides' of himself in order to successfully inhabit the role of hero.

This scene essentially also validates violence as the means to triumph over the villain, implying that negotiation and non-violence are unfeasible options for resolution in such circumstances.

Following the battle, the final scene depicts Ben, Gwen, Kevin and Julie sitting in the stadium at night. When Ben tells Julie that he is glad she won her tournament, her response is clipped, but when Gwen interrupts to chide Ben, Julie becomes more accepting: "Ben, I know you were off fighting bad guys. I was upset. But I guess that's the deal when you decide to date a superhero." Her words signal forgiveness. She accepts Ben's late arrival and early exit from her match because his superhero role justifies his behaviour, an acceptance and forgiveness consistent with a supportive form of emphasised femininity (Connell 1987).

However when Julie suggests they watch "Sumo Slammers: The Movie", Ben admits that he saw it during her tournament. Gwen, Kevin and an angry Julie walk off screen. Kevin's parting comment is, "Man, you are so insensitive".

These final words leave Ben outside of his meaningful relationships with his friends and he sighs as though only just realising the consequences of his actions. In comparison to his flippant reaction to Gwen's lecture earlier, Ben's behaviour in this closing scene depicts a degree of emotional recognition as he finally understands that the cost of his insensitivity.

## **Season 2, episode 9: “It’s Not Easy Being Gwen”**

### **Episode synopsis**

This episode takes as its premise a day in the life of Gwen, following her activities throughout the day. There is Doctor Animo’s attempt to take over the world, her mom’s request for handwritten invitations and Emily’s audition, and she will be hard-pressed to accomplish all three tasks in the time she has. The episode thus shows how Gwen manages her time in order to assist Ben and Kevin, as well as her mother, without missing Emily’s audition.

This episode is salient to this study as it deviates from the usual focus on Ben as he defeats evil. Its representation of Gwen and her concerns provides contrasting analysis in the comparison between Ben and Gwen – and masculinities and femininities. Furthermore, it allows access into Gwen’s perspective as Kevin and Ben interact with her.

### **Analysis**

The narrative is structured as a series of tasks Gwen is required to complete and can be likened to a series of quests which Gwen must achieve in order to successfully accomplish her goals for the day. As each request adds urgency and complexity to Gwen’s day, she must draw on a range of personal resources to succeed. Traditional quest narratives generally “prevent easy achievement of goals, forcing the central character to the display of more and more exertion, ingenuity or strength” (Cook & Main 2008: 402-403) and this can be consistently seen in other episodes of *Ben 10*, *Alien Force* and *Ultimate Alien* where Ben is the protagonist. Here however Gwen as protagonist displays qualities that are less physical and more about strategic time management, capability and dedication. Where Ben’s episodes feature a primary plot that deals with the villain, complemented by a subplot which deals with an emotional or moral challenge, Gwen’s primary plot deals with various social and emotional challenges while the subplot encapsulates the battle with this episode’s villain. This discrepancy is in alignment with traditional gender roles and arguably implies tasks requiring mental and multitasking skills are the *forte* of feminine protagonists.

Consistent with Rousseau’s conceptualising, Gwen’s quests relate to relationships and those who require her support include her parent, best friend and teacher, all of whom anticipate this behaviour of her. Her own needs are consequently secondary – she has to exercise at dawn and focus on educative elements simultaneously. Her adventures are restricted largely to the private sphere and are therefore markedly different from the Ben’s masculine trajectories.

This episode focuses on how she manages these challenges. Her anxiety potentially provides

a point of identification for audiences who similarly face demands on their time by schoolwork, friends, parents and personal interests.

To make explicit how this episode presents and validates a particular way of being a modern feminine subject, I focus on Gwen's persistent concern with accomplishing tasks and focus on two visual montages which depict her as a modern subject, notably positioning her as Ben's binary opposite. While this episode presents Gwen as the protagonist, it does not relocate her from the position of helper to that of a powerful hero.

The opening scene depicts Ben, Gwen and Kevin in battle with a villain, Doctor Animo. Although they appear to have captured him, he breaks free and escapes into the town, thus introducing the subplot of this episode. Had this episode retained Ben as its protagonist it is likely that the battle with Animo would assume primary significance. Here however, the subplot with Animo is merely introduced and the subsequent scene depicts the cousins discussing how to find the villain.

Gwen's primary concern with accomplishing tasks within a given time is signalled when Gwen's alarm clock wakes her at 05:30am. Beginning her day by going for a run while listening to a French lesson on headphones, Gwen is represented as taking her physical well-being seriously while simultaneously devoting attention and interest to academic work, a depiction that constructs her as both active and studious. Displaying equal numbers of material and mental processes arguably constructs Gwen as an active and mindful feminine subject. For example her material processes include practicing karate, and jogging; and using her powers to help with her workload; her mental processes include studying, anxiety over her tasks and figuring out why Kevin does not attend school.

On returning home, Gwen's mother requests help with writing out invitations for a family reunion. Gwen's suggestion to print them instead is met with disdain on the part of her mother as she asserts that her side of the family are not as informal as the Tennyson's side. The mother's conformity with polite society is further established in her discomfort with the light that emanates when Gwen uses her powers, saying:

Mother: "I'm not judging them, but let's face it. Polite people don't... Glow.

Gwen: I glow.

Mother: Not around me.

Gwen's mother's expectations of 'proper' behaviour imply that supernatural powers are out of the ordinary and a bit of an affront to polite society, distinctly placing value on ritual and formality. Her response indicates her position that Gwen's behaviour should be conventionally 'proper' in her mother's presence (perhaps a reference to traditional ideas of

women being polite, docile, and compliant).

Having acquiesced to her mother's request, Gwen uses her time before school to get started on the invitations but is interrupted by Ben who wants her help with researching Doctor Animo, placing her in what is her recurrent role as a Propitian helper to Ben's hero. As Gwen resumes her French lesson she realises that she does not have enough time to complete her task before school. Using her magical abilities, Gwen sets the pen to write on its own while she finds a grapefruit for breakfast but is distracted by Kevin's phone call and invitation to lunch. The scene cuts away, showing Kevin working on his car and attempting to make it a submersible. This conduct is consistent with the significance of cars and technology within a naturalised construction of working class masculinity which prides itself on mechanical skill and physicality.

Kevin's depiction of working class masculinity contrasts with Gwen's presentation as a modern middle-class girl, highlighting the difference in their class positions. Gwen's character is in alignment with a liberal form of feminism (Weedon 1997) which recognises women as being potentially socially mobile. Her learning French, for example, is indicative of her middle-class education and different social standing to Kevin. In terms of gendered behaviour however, Gwen enacts a conventional femininity as all but one of her quests in this episode are nurturing and foreground relationships.

Their conversation is cut short when Gwen's spell backfires, causing the invitations to catch fire. Gwen springs into action without hesitation using her magic to extinguish the flames before quickly leaving for school. Gwen's quick action constructs her as capable and unafraid, and outside of a traditional construction of the helpless and fearful women. The backfiring of the spell also indicates Gwen's as yet incomplete understanding of her magical abilities; as Ben must struggle to master the Omnitrix and Ultimatrix, Gwen too must learn how to control her abilities.

The next mini-quest is introduced when Gwen arrives at school and meets her best friend, Emily. Presuming that Gwen missed breakfast, Emily offers Gwen a bagel, a gesture indicative of the close friendship<sup>3</sup> and caring between Gwen and Emily – a recurring feminine subject position for girls in popular culture. Gwen accepts Emily's invitation to her audition for a prestigious music school. However, the audition is scheduled for later that day. Her realisation that she might not have enough time to make it to the audition serves as the Recognition stage in Todorov's terms (Wigston 2001): Gwen now has three important tasks

<sup>3</sup> BFFs: Best Friends Forever. A colloquial term for close female friends.

that demand she act: her mother's invitations, Emily's auditions and Doctor Animo's attempt to destroy the town, these in addition to her prior obligations too.

The effect of these accumulating tasks makes Gwen anxious as she fears disappointing her mother, her best friend, her cousin and boyfriend. Her concern relates to personal and social expectations whereas in previous episodes Ben's were linked to his abilities to defeat evil, indicating a gendered distinction which tends to position feminine accomplishments in the private realm of relationships and masculine ones in the public realm.

I consider two visual montages which discursively construct Gwen's feminine subject position to argue that Gwen is positioned as a foil to Ben. The first visual montage depicts Gwen's busy and fruitful day in which she is constructed as a willing feminine subject of modernity, loyal, industrious and enlightened. She is shown climbing a rope in gym class, answering questions in class, and writing furiously during a different class.

Back home Gwen sets down to write invitations while talking to Kevin about his education. Kevin attributes his non-attendance at school to having been imprisoned in the Null Void, an intergalactic prison. This sense of non-schooling as a lack thus proposes schooling as necessary to become an accepted member of society. In response, Gwen takes up a supportive role to assist Kevin enter the modern middle-class world Gwen and Ben inhabit. Reassuring Kevin of his technical and engineering skills (both traditionally linked to masculinity), she suggests that he get a high school equivalency degree and offers to find out the requirements and to assist him with studying. Education thus serves as a technology of self to produce subjects in accordance with modern norms (Foucault 1979). When Kevin teases Gwen about taking on another project she declares, "If I wanted to take it easy, I'd go live with my grandma. I'm not about to let anyone down." Loyalty is clearly what she deems important.

Her commitment to her own education is confirmed when she elects to return to school for a French test instead of joining Ben when he shouts for Kevin's help during a battle against Animo. Rather than neglecting her own priorities for those of her boyfriend and male cousin, Gwen contributes to the battle by providing Kevin with a magical protective charm.

A brief scene following her test constructs Gwen as intelligent and trusted by authoritative figures to assume a position of responsibility for she is asked to take over a teacher's algebra class during a free period. He walks away before Gwen has the opportunity to respond. That the teacher does not allow Gwen to accept or decline his request presumes compliance from Gwen. Her anticipated compliance here is an indicator of a presumed form of emphasised

femininity, an expected docility, particularly when addressed by the authoritative, masculine figure. In contrast, the scene closes with Emily offering Gwen a yoghurt, assuming that she has missed lunch. Her interaction with Gwen is nurturing in comparison to the teacher's presumptuous behaviour.

The second visual montage constructs Gwen as intelligent and active. We see her move from confidently writing algebraic equations on the board to successfully chopping a stack of eight planks during karate before meeting Emily outside school. Despite her clearly busy day Gwen remains intently aware of her commitments to her mother, her best friend and her team mates, reacting with dismay when Emily confesses her fear of losing her best friend. Compounding the situation,

Ben interrupts the girls and informs Gwen, "I can't do this without you." Torn between conflicting obligations, Gwen accompanies Ben to the battle but is presented as resigned and sad.

During the primary fight scene, Ben is presented as skilled but not masterful as he hits Animo's henchmen but cannot avoid being struck by the villain. Kevin, having used his powers to turn metallic, is thrown into the sky. When Gwen enters the fray, she uses only defensive powers to protect herself from the three henchmen simultaneously. When Animo attempts to destroy Kevin with a turret weapon, Gwen saves his life by shielding him from the blast, subsequently instructing him to assist Ben in subduing Animo despite her clear presentation of exhaustion and injury from defending herself and Kevin against attack.

Although this episode is focused on Gwen's world, it does not reposition her from helper to hero. She continues to assume the role of helper to Ben but her contribution is by no means diminished: she saved Kevin's life. In subduing Animo, Ben retains his position as hero, displaying physical skills in alien form. Both Kevin and Ben's masculinity remains rooted in material, physical actions which perpetuates the construction of masculinity thus far.

From the resolution of the battle with Animo the narrative moves to the resolution of Emily's audition. Upon completing her audition Emily receives a standing ovation. Looking at the crowd, she sees Gwen, clothes ragged and face bruised, proudly clapping from her seat in the front row. Emily looks happy and Gwen's mini-quest to support her best friend is accomplished. The final resolution is then depicted.

As Gwen enters her home in the final scene she informs her mother that she finished the invitations in the car. Tellingly, when her mother asks about her day, Gwen responds, "Oh, you know, the usual."

Gwen's is presented at the end of the episode as tired but having successfully accomplished all her tasks. She has been depicted occupying a range of roles which present her as active, studious, nurturing, compliant and heroic. In comparison with the roles Ben undertakes, Gwen is shown to work harder both at home and in public and clearly illustrates the difference in gendered expectations placed on male and female characters in the series, and by extension, that circulate in many realms of society.

If Rousseau proposed that girls be guides and nurturers, Gwen is positioned as the Sophie who must protect and train and serve as guide to Ben (as Emile). The form of emphasised femininity depicted by Gwen is here demonstrated through the role of modern feminine subject who is both active and engaged in a multitude of pursuits, but continues to serve in the role of carer, helper and guide to her masculine peers.

## **Season 2, Episode 18: “The Perfect Girlfriend”**

### **Episode synopsis**

This episode, the final one included in this purposive sample, focuses on the change in Ben and Julie’s relationship when Julie decides to skip her tennis tournament to stay home with Ben who ironically would actually would have preferred pursuing the escaped criminal Ssserpent. Julie’s increased servile toward Ben make Gwen and Kevin suspicious of her shift in behaviour. Hampered by a broken leg, Gwen gets Kevin to follow Julie to discover the cause of her uncharacteristically submissive behaviour towards Ben. Kevin instead gets caught up battling animated buildings, sent by Julie, which are eventually destroyed with Ben’s assistance.

Ben subsequently discovers that the overly compliant Julie is actually Elena Validus<sup>4</sup>, who has taken on Julie’s form. The real Julie, who did go to her tournament, arrives as Ben confronts Elena, resulting in a physical battle between them which concludes when Elena departs, vowing revenge.

The significance of this episode to this study lies primarily in the contesting constructions of the “perfect girlfriend”. If Gwen advocates that relationships should entail mutual compromise, Julie/Elena maintains that her partner’s wishes should take precedence over her own. The exposure of Elena’s deceit as nefarious privileges Gwen’s conception of relationships and her advocacy of mutual self-actualisation and support.

### **Analysis**

The contrast in Ben and Gwen’s conduct in the opening scene reiterates the gendered differences in their priorities: personal relationships versus action in the non-personal or public domain. Additionally, this scene constructs Julie as independent, dedicated to her interests and unwilling to compromise her commitments for Ben’s heroism. She is constituted as an autonomous modern feminine subject in contrast to the submissive girlfriend.

The episode opens with Ben driving Julie to the airport for her flight to a tennis tournament. He is depicted as a committed, if pompous and self-interested, boyfriend. Ben intends to spend extra time waiting with Julie knowing that ordinary citizens would be disbarred from the airport gate without a ticket: “What’s the point of international megastardom if I can’t abuse it for a few more minutes with my girl?” Ignoring the arrogance, both Julie and Gwen appear to approve of his sense of commitment. However Ben moves from

<sup>4</sup> She has previously shown romantic interest in Ben, but became possessed by nanochips.

devoted boyfriend to determined hero in seconds when the police scanner reports that that criminal, Ssserpent, has escaped prison and is holding someone hostage. Although Gwen tries to turn off the scanner to prevent Ben from changing his mind and offers to handle the situation, Ben immediately moves to act.

Clearly he presumes that Julie will support him in his heroic (very masculine) undertaking. Taking Julie's hand he pulls her back to the car with him. Julie however has a different view. Her sporting career takes precedence over supporting Ben in his investigation. Pulling away she informs him that her life "is just as important as yours" before walking away.

Stepping into her familiar role as relationship advisor, Gwen instructs Ben to follow Julie. His decision to pursue Ssserpent earns a chilly response from Gwen ("Then go by yourself") who stands alongside Julie. Gwen's support of Julie indicates her clear prioritising of relationships above Ben's interest in seeking and confronting an enemy.

Ignoring Gwen's disapproval, Ben pursues his enemy and the next scene presents his failed attempt to defeat Ssserpent. He becomes ensnared in a large centrifuge and is rendered helpless in the spinning device. Of greater relevance however is Julie's sudden appearance at the scene. After uncharacteristically pushing a policeman aside, she breaks through the police barrier and circles the building. When she eventually spots Ben through a window, she simultaneously catches the attention of and distracts Ssserpent. This moment of distraction provides the policemen sufficient time to break down the door and chase Ssserpent (off screen) while Julie disables the centrifuge and runs to Ben. Her appearance and swift responses enables Ben to survive this encounter with Ssserpent.

Julie's unexpected change of heart is the topic of her, Ben, Gwen and Kevin's conversation of the following day. Much to Gwen's chagrin, Julie justifies her shift from her independent stance to her decision to stay for Ben: "Why do I need a reason? Ben means more to me than some silly tennis matches. It's as simple as that." What counts as simplicity here is Julie sacrificing her opportunities towards self-actualisation and fulfilment to support her boyfriend. She presumes that the one precludes the other, a position indicative of patriarchal assumptions of women as supportive and secondary to their male partners. When Gwen counters this view Julie summarily changes the topic by focussing on a different one, that of consumerism, one equally located in the gendered domain, (Roberts 1998): "A girl's got to have her priorities. Like shopping! Wanna go?" Although discomforted by Julie's deflection Gwen agrees to go, assuming that Ben and Kevin will join them. Kevin's response of "Nothin' I'd rather do," is in contrast with Ben's half-hearted, "Guess so," prompting

Kevin to explain, “Cause it makes her happy. And when she’s not happy, I’m not happy.”

The idea of compromise in romantic relationships is thereby introduced. That Kevin is not actually interested in shopping is evident in his explanation to Ben. In a sense he takes on Gwen’s position about compromise in relationships. Ben clearly does not share this standpoint when he discovers that “Sumo Slammers” is on TV. Viewers are reminded of Ben’s previous transgressions presented in the series (breaking into a warehouse with Kevin to steal the game; using Echo Echo to sneak away to see the new movie), a thought which Gwen shares when she quickly warns him to record the show, arms crossed to imply she will not tolerate his disobedience. Before Ben can respond, the following exchange takes place:

Julie: Would you rather stay here and watch this? (Light tone)

Ben: Yeah! Uh... (Turns to look at her, anxious) But I just said I’d-

Julie: It’s okay. We can stay here and watch. (Still happy)

Ben: But... You wanna go shopping. (Sounds confused)

Julie: I don’t have to.

Ben: (smiles at Julie) Why don’t you go and I’ll stay here and watch? (Focus shifts back to the TV)

Julie: (both hands on B’s shoulder) would that make you happy? (Ben nods)

Julie: (runs her finger down his cheek playfully a few times, smiling) I’ll get you a snack before I go.

This slightly obsequious pandering and the ease with which she again accommodates Ben’s desires at the cost of her own plans is in alignment with a form of emphasised femininity, subservient women in service of dominant masculinity (Connell 1987). Ben’s unquestioning acceptance of Julie’s actions is at odds with that of Gwen and Kevin, who react with disbelief at the drastic shift in Julie’s behaviour.

Gwen and Julie’s argument in the subsequent scene introduces consolidates the opposition between their respective ideas of a relationship. Whereas Julie takes a stance consistent with traditional patriarchal notions, arguing that her relationship entails sacrificing her sporting career for her partner, Gwen takes a particular, more feminist or egalitarian view, declaring that in a relationship, “You both make sacrifices for each other” before pointedly asking what Ben is giving up for Julie. Since Julie can provide no response, Gwen attempts to convince Julie to rejoin the tour. Their difference in opinion results in an argument, and in the subsequent tension Julie ushers Gwen (with a guiding, not forceful, movement) into the elevator, neither aware that the doors open onto an empty shaft and Gwen falls, breaking her leg.

Despite the opposing perspectives on relationships rehearsed here, the idea of compromise is validated. When Gwen wants to investigate the broken elevator despite her

broken leg, Kevin feels she needs to go home to rest. He defines a working relationship by saying, “Okay. I guess this is where a normal couple would work out some kind of compromise.” Their compromise results in Ben and Julie inspecting the elevator and Kevin taking Gwen home. Her suspicions are clearly not allayed for she later instructs him to investigate Julie’s behaviour.

Julie continues to behave in a submissive feminine role, surprising Ben when she elects to watch a movie at the cinema featuring an actress she hates. She dismisses her incongruent behaviour with, “Oh. I forgot. But the boy should pick the movie, anyway.” Ben predictably picks “Sumo Slammers IV – The Movie”. In the subsequent scene Ben is presented with the conflicting choice between his girlfriend and his duties as a hero, Julie again defers to his desires, urging him to pursue his heroic trajectory. Despite her subservient behaviour Ben does show a willingness to consider Julie’s feelings as he hesitates before pursuing Ssserpent, reminding Julie: “I wanted to go, but you said your life is important too, remember?”

In direct contrast to Julie’s subservient behaviour and Ben’s tendency to self-interest and fulfilment, Gwen and Kevin operate as a team. While following Julie, Kevin keeps Gwen in the picture using his mobile phone. Their conversation is interrupted when two buildings come to life and pursue Kevin. He reacts with fear but resourcefully uses his power to evade the buildings until Ben arrives in alien form to destroy the buildings. Although Kevin confides his suspicion that Julie is responsible for the attack of the buildings, Ben steadfastly refuses to believe this.

The now nurturing Julie awaits Ben with a bag of chili fries on his return. Ben accepts this with a curt, “Thanks,” grabbing the food and pressing chips into his mouth. Inside, her servile conduct continues. Ben throws himself on the couch, stretching out a foot to reach the TV remote, she leaps up to grab the remote with both hands to give to Ben asking, ““Sumo Slammers’?”

Ben’s response is surprising for he shows consideration for her in turn. “Got a surprise for you. You’ve gone along with everything I’ve wanted to do these last few days. Now we’re going to see whatever you want to see.” It is important to note however that although Ben’s offer appears generous choosing a television show cannot be equated with Julie sacrificing her career to spend more time with Ben.

The following scene comprises a stage of recognition for Ben as he realises that the Julie sitting next to him is an imposter. Confronting her, Julie admits that she is the shapeshifting Elena Validus, in love with Ben and willing to erase her physical identity in

order to please him. She demonstrates this by shifting into four successive white, slim girls, each wearing form-fitting clothing. Shifting then from a nurturing form of femininity to a sexualised one, Elena's shapeshifting is significant. First it is only slim, young, white girls that are presented as desirable partners for Ben and, second, that femininity exists solely to complement masculinity. These implications betray Elena's manipulative actions as she pleads, "The [nano]chips let me do anything and all I want to use them for is to give you everything you want. What's wrong with that?"

Ben's reaction is a surprisingly thoughtful one, both caring and mature. He notes, "Kevin's changed a lot – and for the better – since he's been with Gwen. If she'd just done everything he wanted, he'd still be the same old Kevin." His position validates Gwen's understanding of compromise as key to relationships and simultaneously maintains his trajectory of personal growth. Underscoring this validation, the real Julie arrives and is constructed as mature, independent and recognisable when she says, "I don't play again until Tuesday, so I thought I'd compromise and spend the weekend with you."

The battle which ensues deviates from the subdued and subservient emphasised femininity Elena has displayed until now. Elena is vengeful and powerful as she dominates the action, throwing Ben aside despite his use of the Ultimatrix. With the power to shapeshift, the resourceful and quick-thinking Elena is able to temporarily disable Ben and take Julie hostage. Ben notably takes up a defensive position until the point when Julie is in danger, when he uses his alien suit to direct a sonic blast at Elena, forcing her to disintegrate into her constituent nanochips. Elena cannily is able to manipulate Ben by shapeshifting into Julie's form, using his hesitation to launch an attack which renders Ben incapable of retaliating.

Julie steps in and confronts Elena with: "You don't know what love is," simultaneously validating her perspective of relationships and dismissing Elena's idea of femininity in service to masculinity as inferior and naïve. The final shot of Julie and Ben kneeling together presents an image of equality, endorsing a mature relationship built on mutual compromise and consistent with the discourse of the series that endorses such (heterosexual) relationships. In contrast to the couple's closeness, Elena departs the scene alone and unfulfilled.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

### Introduction

*Ben 10* began airing as a series in 2005 and has since evolved into an award winning, globally watched franchise replete with movies, games, merchandise and an active online community. The volume of interest in the series speaks to its popularity and success, even setting a record for the television network which hosted the debut of *Alien Force* (Burson-Marsteller n.d.). In this study I have examined the representation of gender within this widely viewed series with a mind to establishing discursive patterns underpinning the first three series in relation to gender and childhood/adolescence. Following a brief discussion of the main points of each chapter thus far, this final chapter recounts key points of this investigation and presents a summation of the findings, as well as the major implications thereof.

Chapter one introduces the study, providing contextual information on the series and points to the dearth of similar research in the field of masculinities in children's media, thereby indicating the relevance of this study in a less-researched field. While my interest is primarily in the enactment of masculinities, it quickly became evident that gender is a relational term thus entailing an examination of how both masculinity and femininity are discursively constructed. This articulation necessitates a focus on the relational nature of gender instead of a sole concern with the representation of girls and, to a lesser extent, that of boys.

This chapter also introduces the objective of the study, that is, is to make evident the gendered discourses privileged by the series throughout the narratives that provide a trajectory through childhood and adolescence. It also establishes the nature of the theoretical framework underpinning the study, that is, a constructivist approach. As this study is concerned to investigate representations of boys and girls in one international series of media targeting a young audience, the discussion further establishes the relevance of the study to South Africa where traditional gender roles persist, and despite the country's moniker of 'Rainbow Nation', *Ben 10* presents whiteness as normal and unraced (Dyer 1997). Following this, the chapter presents an outline of the methodology employed and subsequent chapters.

Chapter two presents a discussion of Cultural Studies which understands social practice as produced within discourse. Seeking to elucidate how cultural practice functions to maintain, contest or negotiate dominant power relations, Cultural Studies is concerned with the social production and circulation of meaning (Buckingham 2008). Taking this as a starting point, the theoretical framework adopts a social constructionist approach to meaning

drawing on Foucauldian theory. The chapter provides a discussion of representation and the relevant discourses of gender and childhood understood within a constructionist approach. Gender is here conceptualised as socially constructed by discursive processes which play upon gendered expectation of what men and women should be (Prinsloo 1999). Childhood is similarly understood to be socially constructed, with children held as engaged participants in their social lives (Prout 2008). Focusing on meaning making then, the chapter concludes with an account of how narrative works to construct reality.

Consistent with a social constructionist approach, this study employs a qualitative methodology which undertakes a critical textual analysis of purposively sampled episodes of *Ben 10* with the aim of understanding how patterns of meaning privilege particular discursive constructions. This constitutes the focus of chapter 3. Seeking to elucidate this meaning, Critical Discourse Analysis is employed to enable the examination of the gendered nature of themes, structures and patterns of discourse in the series. As a consequence of the genre-based organisation of televisual narrative, the concepts of intertextuality and genre are introduced to make explicit how discursive conventions and elements are embedded within the text. Coupled with a critical linguistic approach, the methodology draws on media studies to discuss the significance of narrative theory to inform a macro-textual analysis. This eclectic approach incorporates linguistic analytic strategies generally associated with CDA (Fairclough 1995; Janks 1997) which are further discussed. The purposive sampling procedure resulted in the selection of eight episodes over the three series.

The textual analysis of these eight episodes of *Ben 10* that is presented in the lengthy chapter 4 sets out to make explicit the discursive, gendered patterns of behaviour depicted within the series. The fictional account tracks Ben and Gwen's passage to adolescence and in doing so engages in cultural work. It is this cultural and discursive work that this study sets out to demonstrate. I rehearse the strands of this discursive work in closing this study. I finally close by addressing the limitations of this work and point to further research that would be valuable in the field of children and media.

## **Findings**

### **Gendered childhood**

The first three series of *Ben 10* function as a sustained narrative tracking Ben's development from a courageous but ineffectual boy confronting bullies to a far more capable young man successfully defeating villains. Presenting Ben and Gwen at particular ages during each series, viewers are offered a vantage point into their trajectories to manhood and womanhood respectively.

If childhood is thought of as a time of being and becoming (Duhn 2006), series one offers particular, gendered ways of doing that through the discursive representations of Ben and Gwen aged 10. From the early series' depiction of childhood it is clear that the discursive patterns legitimate the institution of family contexts and support structures as necessary for the child to grow into a responsible, ethical adult. Both Ben and Gwen exist within this construction of a modern family<sup>5</sup> while Kevin, an 11 year old abandoned by his parents, serves as a foil. Lacking a family context during childhood, Kevin is constructed as the child at risk, and also the risky child who could contaminate Ben (Duhn 2006). The means by which Kevin could be offered entry to a validated position is through formal education, which, along with familial care and guidance, is legitimated as necessary during childhood. He becomes incrementally recuperated over the course of series through his contact with the 'good' children, notably Gwen in later episodes.

Presented against this discourse of childhood as a time of becoming, the series offers a deeply and specifically gendered way of 'becoming'. Boyhood is from the start constructed as active, mischievous, often associated with immaturity, and struggling for independence from adult authority. As primary protagonist, Ben depicts a particular form of boyhood masculinity which presents him as actively engaged in his environment, indicated by an analysis of the transitive signifiers linked to him, for example fighting, running, flying and playing in every episode. Consistent with the action genre, Ben as hero undertakes risky behaviour and his action is enabled by his use of technology. At times he missteps and must be rescued by an adult or female character in the Proppian role of helper.

In alignment with traditional constructions of gender, Ben offers viewers a masculinity that negotiates a more powerful position in the hierarchy of masculinities notably through the use of violence. The repeated narrative of good versus evil sanctions the use of physicality in the defeat of villains, resulting in a form of justified violence which is legitimated as appropriate behaviour for heroes. In this heroic role Ben must master new skills and learn to balance his personal motivations with his responsibilities as a hero, offering young viewers a point of identification as they presumably negotiate tensions between responsibilities and personal desires as they grow up.

Serving as a foil to Ben's gendered representation, Gwen provides the primary depiction of femininity in the series. Although the same age, Gwen is coded as displaying

<sup>5</sup> The parental figure in Ben and Gwen's lives is their grandfather, Max. The cousins' respective parents are primarily absent throughout the series. When Gwen's mother does appear, she presents demands aimed at furthering the narrative plot.

significantly more mental processes than material ones. Foregrounding her judiciousness and compliance with adult instruction, Gwen's behaviours correspond with traditional understandings of femininity as obedient and more mature than a more risky masculinity. Gwen's maturity however is grounded in cooperation as she obeys Max's instruction, signifying conflation of maturity with docility.

Importantly, her role as guide to Ben indicates her task of training him to develop into a socially accepted form of masculinity, thus a rehearsal of Rousseau's Sophie. This role maintains both the notion of femininity operating in service of masculinity and the conception of hegemonic masculinity. By presenting characters who support and maintain dominant conceptions of gender roles the series validates as acceptable and laudable these ways of being and, by implication, dismisses contesting gendered discourses.

Despite being presented with expected feminine signifiers, Gwen's emphasised femininity allows her to engage in what might be construed as the more masculine, or at least the active behaviours of physicality in battle. In addition to her monitorial role, Gwen's use of force in the fight against evil presents a modern femininity which is more active and capable, contesting those traditional constructions that prefer to view femininity as merely vulnerable and weak. However, by repeatedly assuming quests which are emotionally motivated, Gwen remains constructed within traditional gender roles as she is shown to work harder in both her private and public lives as compared to Ben.

### **Gendered adolescence**

If series one offered a particular construction of childhood, series two and three offer a construction of adolescence for its masculine and feminine subjects, and depicting Ben and Gwen primarily through their differences. Adolescence is here presumed as a time for entering into and negotiating heterosexual romantic relationships which become a source of anxiety particularly for the masculine characters.

Consistent with gendered expectations, the episode positions Ben as hopelessly inept when asking Julie out on their first date, hedging his words until Gwen intervenes as a socially superior character. Gwen's continued assistance and advice reinforce the idea of femininity as possessing innate understanding of social conventions regarding relationships whereas masculinity requires assistance and training in order to successfully negotiate romantic interactions. The significance of fear of rejection by a romantic interest extends to the female subjects, Gwen and Julie, who express similar fears at times. Again rehearsal of heterosexual romance is naturalised.

Underpinning both boys' anxiety is the fear of rejection for not 'fitting in',

indicating the importance of social acceptance during adolescence. Whereas Ben is concerned about being ‘weird’ due to his powers, Kevin fears rejection due to his lower social status compared to Gwen’s (briefly discussed below), with both boys betraying anxiety about their respective appearances. Influencing their actions, these fears transform self-assured boys into panicking, awkward adolescents struggling to avoid social embarrassment. Again, this provides a point of identification with audiences presumed to be undergoing similar fears about social rejection.

Femininity, represented primarily by Gwen but also by Julie, in comparison is constructed as socially mature and aware of conventions around relationships, giving Ben advice and directing his behaviour toward Julie. This nurturing behaviour is constructed as expected from mature feminine characters implying adolescence masculinities to be incapable of the same.

Having established an initial foray into romantic relationships, series three explores what it means to be in a relationship, presenting particular ways of negotiating consequent challenges as both Ben and Gwen, aged sixteen, have partners. Clearly privileging romantic partners over fighting crime, Gwen abides by a strict moral code, frequently corrects Ben when he gives preference to his duty as a hero or his personal desires in a depiction consistent with the conception of femininity as a complement to masculinity (Connell 1987). Her adult, monitorial role serves to train Ben ensuring that his behaviours are in alignment with dominant constructions of masculinity.

The consistent presentation and validation of Gwen’s understanding of relationships as both significant and equal proposes an idea of compromise as necessary in the maintenance of a relationship. Although a competing argument is made for femininity as self-sacrificing and subservient to masculinity (in the figure of Elena Validus) the series ultimately disallows this approach, endorsing equality as the ‘correct’ way to maintain a relationship.

Although this study focuses on gendered constructions it is useful to highlight the intersectional implications of *Ben 10*. Watched worldwide the series presents a particular way of being a child, drawing on and proposing a middle class, white existence. The points of race and class are of particular interest here. The exclusion of other races results in the construction of whiteness as generic and therefore invisible (Dyer 1997), neatly constructing the primary characters as ‘average’ and implying blackness to be ‘other’. This privileges white identities and people as ‘normal’.

Secondly, the idea of class is explored through Kevin Levin who performs a working

class masculinity. He is also depicted as anxious about not fitting in with his middle class girlfriend's peers. Additionally, Kevin's consistent depiction of a tough masculinity is in alignment with working class discourse which prides itself on mechanical prowess, made manifest in the series as Kevin frequently tinkers with his car. Gwen's plan to assist Kevin with higher studies indicates Kevin's upward movement into middle class domain serving again to discursively privilege middle class existence as 'normal' and therefore desirable.

These roles imply a particular form of childhood and adolescence that is validated, and any contesting view is constructed as deviant or unacceptable. For example, Kevin's non-attendance at school is positioned as a lack and for him to become an accepted member of society he needs to effectively be rehabilitated into a good adolescent through the schooling system. Implicitly, then, middle class existence is constructed as desirable. These roles work together to constrain childhood and adolescent performance to behaviours which are validated by the show as 'normal'.

By endorsing these particular representations of childhood and adolescence, *Ben 10* and its sequels clearly contribute to the normalisation of gendered differences. If television is understood as a site of meaning and influence, it can be argued that the series provides children with scripts of behaviour which teach them supposed 'correct' ways of enacting their masculinity or femininity. If children, in negotiating the uncharted territory of growing up, use television as a source of education, the narrative lessons they are taught by *Ben 10* position masculinity as involving physical activity, violence and an awkward approach to relationships.

Conversely, female children are taught to be docile, agreeable and expected to work twice as hard as their male counterparts in both public and private realms. Furthermore, although girls are represented as active, they are inevitably coded within traditional constructions of feminine beauty, that is, girls are expected to be attractive, thin and well made-up. The girls in *Ben 10* are positioned as modern, self-actualising middle-class female subjects who are not relegated to the private sphere. Both Gwen and Julie are active participants in public spaces. Despite this apparent non-traditional representation, this construction of femininity is consistent with a liberal form of feminism which allows that women function in a man's world *without* challenging patriarchal ideals, but instead use the world for their own purposes (Weedon 1997). *Ben 10* therefore does not present gender equality but merely allows women a more liberal position in which they may be actualised, but even this is inflected along class and racial lines.

### **Limitations and further research**

Due to the constraints of this study the corpus of texts is limited to eight episodes. This analysis however has drawn attention to the burgeoning field of study into masculinity but with less attention to masculinity in children's media, a topic I argue that requires further research. Additionally, the study would be usefully complemented by analysis of the merchandise available, with the aim of examining how it maintains or contests the series' discursive construction of gender. This analysis acquires salience due to the profitability of the merchandise which often earns distributors more than the original media product alone (Franck & Nüesch 2007).

The widespread popularity of *Ben 10* is enhanced and maintained by a variety of themed toys and merchandise available to audiences, the sale of which contributes to the lucrative nature of the franchise. The interaction with toys and merchandise entails drawing on knowledge from the television show, demonstrating the intertextuality of the series and further reifying the significance of studying the gendered effects of the merchandise.

This study has focused on the discursive nature of the text itself, however further research could be undertaken by means of a reception analysis to understand meanings made by the audience themselves and how these interpretations compare to this study's textual analysis. Finally, the field of research would benefit from studies focusing on more shows aimed at children to create a broader understanding of the children's media landscape in South Africa today, and how this reflects and impacts on gender identities of audiences.

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## Appendix 1

### Series 1: *Ben 10*: 101: “And Then There Were Ten”

#### Todorov:

- Equilibrium: Ben as a regular young boy going on a vacation with his grandpa and cousin.
- Disruption: The destruction of the campsite by robots.
- Recognition: Ben hears the call for help and decides to fight the robots.
- Action: Ben uses the Omnitrix to defeat the robots.
- Restoration: Ben has now accepted his new ability and decides to use his powers to become a superhero with the aid of his grandpa and cousin.

#### Propp:

Hero: Ben

Helpers: Max, Gwen

Magical agent: Omnitrix

Donor: (unclear, alien)

Villain: Vilgax

Henchmen: Robots

Binary oppositions	
Ben	Gwen
Immature	Mature
Action	Mental
Alien Skills	Intelligence
Rescuer	Victim
Disobedient	Obedient
Boy	Girl

## 101: Transitivity analysis

### Ben

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
<p>Confronting bullies            Goes for a walk            Runs, screams, investigates            Omnitrix, runs            Experiments with the Omnitrix            Starts fire by shooting flames at trees then puts it out using powers            Transforms back, tries to remove Omnitrix            Plays with Omnitrix            Transforms into another alien, dodges Gwen, goes running/ swinging in trees            Dodges laser blasts from robot, jumps on it and chews at wires, smashes it            Describes how to use Omnitrix with words like “press, twist, slam”            Transforms to help campers in trouble            Immediately takes on biggest robot, sends G and M to get campers to safety            Is shot by robot, jumps back up, gets pinned down, thrown            Runs, saves Gwen from falling tree            Defeats robot by reflecting laser blast            Celebrates by jumping then runs away            Races in as speed alien and helps pack up            Turns out he left to get revenge on the bullies</p>	<p>Wonders what watch is doing in space.            Constant narration of thoughts            Worries about playing Little League as a fire alien            Expresses curiosity about the Omnitrix            Wants to figure out the device to help people            Is glad to see Gwen after she saves him            Figured out how to use Omnitrix            Thinks this will be the best summer ever</p>	<p>“Super cool alien dudes”</p>	<p>Recounts story of how he found Omnitrix to Gwen            Swears it was not his fault</p>

## Gwen

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
<p>Runs into forest with extinguisher and starts spraying fire</p> <p>Hits alien Ben with extinguisher</p> <p>Tries to hit alien Ben, falls over</p> <p>Hits robot with a shovel to rescue Ben</p> <p>Goes to get the campers to safety</p> <p>Helping Max pack up</p>	<p>Vacation activities planned out in a timetable</p> <p>Mopes</p> <p>Reading on laptop</p> <p>Wonders if Ben will stay a “monster” forever</p> <p>Mock</p> <p>disappointment at Ben transforming back into a boy</p> <p>Asks about how it felt to be alien</p> <p>Asks what good the animal alien is if it can't see</p> <p>Wonders what the third alien can do (Diamondhead)</p>	<p>Calls Ben a briquette</p> <p>Calls alien ugly</p> <p>Says this is a weird day</p> <p>Calls Ben “plain old pizza face”</p>	<p>Reminds Max and Ben of forest fire</p> <p>Reminds Ben not to play with Omnitrix</p> <p>Warns Ben she's going to tell on him for leaving campsite</p>

## 101: Transcription

Scene opens to show a ticking clock. Ben is sitting in class, staring at the clock.

Ben: Come on... Come on....

Teacher: And I just want to remind you all that I will be teaching summer school this year and it's not too late to sign up!

B: Yeah, right. ((under his breath))

The school bell rings and Ben stands up immediately.

B: Yes! Outta here! ((starts walking out))

Teacher: Everyone, have a good vacation, and I hope to see you all again in the fall.

Benjamin! ((she calls Ben))

B: ((turns in doorway))

Teacher: Could I have a word with you before you go? ((holds up paper jet))

B: ((grumbles and walks back into the classroom))

—

Outside, a chubby boy wearing glasses backs toward a tree, afraid. Two bigger boys advance on him.

Bully 1: Normally we'd take your money *and* beat you up ((punches his own palm)) but since it's the last day of school, we're gonna give you a break. ((holds hand out)) Now fork over the cash, so we can get out of here!

Ben: ((off screen)) Leave him alone. ((both bullies and their victim look up))

Bully 2: Get lost, shrimp.

B: ((narrowed eyes, determined)) I said: back off!

Bully 1: Ohh, looks like we got us a hero! ((mocking)) Suppose we don't wanna back off? ((both bullies advance on Ben))

Bully 2: What are you gonna do about it, Tennyson?

The three boys stare at each other, Ben screams and runs forward at the bullies.

—

Next shot shows Ben and the victim hanging from a tree branch, suspended by their underpants.

Victim: Thanks a lot. ((crossed arms, unhappy))

B: I was just trying to help. ((miserable))

Victim: Next time you wanna play hero, make sure you can back it up.

Ben's grandfather, Max, pulls up alongside the boys in his Recreational Vehicle (RV).

Max: Come on Ben, let's go, we're burning daylight. I wanna make it to the campsite by nightfall.

B: ((still in tree)) Uhh grandpa? Little help here?

—

Ben follows Max into the RV.

B: I've so been looking forward to this. ((Max moves out of the frame to reveal a redheaded girl, Gwen, sitting at the table. Ben is surprised.)) What are *you* doing here? ((points at Gwen and speaks to Max)) What is *she* doing here?

G: Take it easy, dweeb. This wasn't my idea. Somebody convinced my mom that going camping for the summer would be a good experience for me.

B: Grandpa, please, tell me you didn't.

M: I thought it would be fun if your cousin came along with us this summer. Is that a problem?

The cousins look at each other.

—

The RV drives off. Inside, B and G are sitting at a table, both looking upset.

B: ((sighs)) I can't believe it. I wait all school year to go on this trip and now the queen of

cooties is along for the ride.

G: Hey! I had my own vacation already all planned out too, you know! ((she takes out a colourful schedule and points to it)) Each activity is colour coded so I never do the same thing two days in a row.

B: ((looks shocked))

G: Now I'm stuck with my geekazoid cousin, going camping for three months.

The cousins stare at each other.

B: Geek.

G: Jerk.

M: ((driving)) Something tells me it's gonna be a long summer.

They drive off into the distance.

—

At the campsite, a bowl of wriggling worms is set down, to B and G's horror.

M: Chow time!

B: Okay... I give up. What is that?

M: Marinated meal worms. Hard to find them fresh in the States. You know, they're considered a delicacy in some countries.

G: And totally gross in others?

M: If these don't sound good, I've got some smoked sheep's tongue in the fridge.

B: Ugh. Couldn't we just have a burger or something?

M: Nonsense! This summer's gonna be an adventure for your tastebuds! I'll grab the tongue. ((M heads into the RV))

B: ((whispering to G)) Okay. I've got a half-eaten bag of corn chips and a candy bar in my backpack. What do you got?

G: Some rice cakes and hard candy.

B: Think we can make them last the whole summer?

Both cousins slump down.

—

Space scene; battle between two spaceships. One alien says that he wants the Omnitrix now, before firing upon the smaller ship. Unseen by him, a small circular module flies away from the damaged spaceship, heading for Earth.

—

At the campsite, Ben is playing on his game device and Gwen is working on her laptop. Max walks up to them.

M: Who wants to roast marshmallows? ((no response)) Okay. Um. How about we tell scary stories?

B: Scariest than having to spend a summer with your freak of a cousin? ((laughs))

G: I'd like to, Grandpa, but I'm busy doing a web search on cures for extreme doofusness. Nothing yet, Ben, but let's not give up hope!

M: Oh come on you two, we're all in this together. You can mope around like this all summer, or we can have some fun. Now what do you say?

G: I vote for moping.

B: I'm gonna take a walk. Smell you around, Gwen. ((gets up and walks away))

M: ((sighs))

—

Ben walking through the woods.

B: Oh, man. This is gonna be the worst vacation ever. I might as well have gone to summer school.

He looks up to see a streak of light in the night sky.

B: Woah! A shooting star!

The streak suddenly turns in the sky and flies directly at Ben. He screams and runs away, the crash makes him fall. As the dust clears, Ben sees a glowing orb inside a crater.

B: Looks like a satellite or something!

The ground at the edge of the crater crumbles and Ben slips down, screaming. He stands up to see the orb open, and a green light shine out from a watch-like device.

B: A watch! What's a watch doing in outer space?

B smiles and reaches for the device. Before he can touch it, it leaps from its case and wraps around his wrist. Shouting, B tries to shake the device off.

B: Get off me, get off, get off!

((B struggles, falls, gets up and runs into the woods))

B: Grandpa!

—

At the campsite, G is still working on her laptop and Max is looking around.

M: Hmm. Ben's been gone a while. Well, I guess he can't get into too much trouble out here.

G: Unless he wound up bear food. Hey, I can dream, can't I?

—

Ben uses a stick to attempt to pry off the device. The stick breaks, and Ben gives up, sinking to his knees. He presses buttons, and the device shows an alien silhouette.

B: Cool! ((he pushes the button))

Green light shines out and Ben's entire body transforms into a humanoid fire alien.

Ben, in alien form, screams.

B: I'm on fire, I'm on fire! ((hopping around and running, only to stop a second later)) Hey.

I'm on fire and I'm okay! ((pulls a pose)) Check it out... I'm totally hot! ((chuckles to himself)) Oh yeah! Uh huh! Here goes!

Ben rears back and throws a fireball at a tree.

B: That's what I'm talking about! ((throws another fireball, destroying trees)) Liking it! ((he sees the trees catch fire)) Wait! Stop! Uh oh.

Ben tries to stamp out the flames but only spreads the fire.

B: Oh man... I am gonna get so busted for this.

—

At the campsite, M is sitting at the fire. Gwen looks over at smoke coming from the woods.

G: What's that?

M: Looks like the start of a forest fire. We'd better let the ranger station know. Probably some darn fool camper out there, messing around with something he shouldn't- ((M stops, and he and G look at each other anxiously)) Ben!

Max picks up two extinguishers, and hands one to G.

M: Better take this.

The two run into the woods.

—

Ben is still in fire alien form, trying to put out his fires.

B: This would be so cool, if it weren't so not cool.

Gwen runs around the corner, extinguishing flames. She aims the extinguisher at Ben without noticing he is there. When he screams, she turns to see him and screams too.

B: Look, I know I look weird, but there's no reason to be scared.

G: ((hits B in the head with extinguisher, sending him flying back to crash on the ground. She sprays more flame extinguisher on him)) I don't know what you are, but you'll stay down there if you know what's good for you.

B: ((sets her foot on fire and laughs))

G: Ow! ((Backs away, douses her foot, raises extinguisher)) I warned you!

B: Don't even think about it, freak!

G: ((recognises this insult)) Ben? Is that you? What happened?

B: Well, when I was walking this meteor fell from the sky and almost munched me, except that it wasn't a meteor or a satellite but this cool watch thing that jumped up on to my wrist, and when I tried to get it off I suddenly was on fire, only it didn't hurt, but I was accidentally starting this mega forest fire!

M runs up behind them.

M: Gwen, are you all right? ((M stares at B)) What in blazes?

G: Hey grandpa, guess who?

B: ((waving)) it's me, grandpa!

M: Ben? What happened to you?

B: Well, when I was walking this meteor-

G: Um, excuse me? Major forest fire burning out of control, remember?

B: What do we do?

M: Back fire. Start a new fire and let it burn into the old fire. They'll snuff each other out. Think you can do it, Ben?

B: Shooting flames? I can definitely do!

Ben runs off and starts another fire.

—

Smoke rises from the torched woods. A car pulls up and a ranger gets out, worried.

—

In space, the villainous alien Vilgax is angry.

Vilgax: What do you mean it's not there? This battle nearly cost me my life, and you say the Omnitrix is no longer on board the transport?

Helper: Sensors indicate a probe was jettisoned from the ship just before boarding. It landed on the planet below.

Vilgax: Go! Bring it to me.

—

At their campsite.

M: And you say that this watch just jumped up and clamped on to your wrist?

B: Hey, this time, it wasn't my fault, I swear!

M: I believe you, Ben.

G: Think he's gonna stay a monster forever?

M: He's not a monster, he's an alien. ((B and G looks askance at M)) Uh, I mean, look at him! What else could he be?

B: I don't wanna be Fireguy forever. How am I supposed to play Little League this fall if I charcoal the ball every time I catch a pop fly?

M: Don't worry, Ben. We'll figure this thing out.

The watch-device (Omnitrix) beeps and flashes red, and Ben transforms back into a human.

B: I'm me again! ((relieved))

G: Aw too bad, I liked you better when you were a briquette.

B: ((moving around, trying to pull the device off)) I still can't get this thing off.

M: Better not fool with it any more until we know exactly what we're dealing with. I'll go check out that crash site, you guys stay here until I get back.

—

space scene: robot crashes on earth, locates the remains of the Omnitrix module.

—

Ben is playing with the watch.

B: I wonder what this does. ((he looks around))

G: ((jumps out at him, scaring him)) Caught ya! ((laughs))

B: ((laughs mockingly at her)) Very funny. Like your face! ((he twists the Omnitrix dial

again))

G: Grandpa said not to mess with that thing

B: Yeah, so? What's your point? ((starts gnawing at Omnitrix))

G: Your parents drop you when you were a baby?

B: C'mon, you can't tell me you aren't a little bit curious what else this thing can do?

G: Not in the least.

B: You're sure you're related to me?

—

M: I don't like this one little bit. ((looking at a fragment of the Omnitrix module))

—

B: Look, if I can figure this thing out, maybe I can help people, I mean really help them. Not just, you know, make things worse.

G: So what did it feel like, going all alien like that?

B: It freaked me out at first. It was like I was me, but it was also like I was somebody else. ((tinkers with the Omnitrix)). Hey! I think I figured out how I did it. Should I try it again? Just once?

G: I wouldn't.

B: No duh, *you* wouldn't! ((activates the Omnitrix, transforms into beast-animal))

G: Ewww! This thing's even uglier than you are normally! Haha wow, put a flea collar on this mutt. And no eyes? What good is this one, it can't see! ((holding a marshmallow on a stick, she smiles and goes behind the alien, prepares to swing at it))

B: ((notices and leaps out the way))

G: ((swings, misses, falls over)) Okay.. so maybe it's not a total loser.

B: ((breathes in her face, she says "Eww two words: breath mints!" B scrapes dirt at her and runs off))

G: Ben?! Get back here! Ben! I'm gonna tell Grandpa that you turned into some freaky animal-monster-thing and went swinging around the forest when he told you not to! ((sighs)) This is a majorly weird day.

—

Ben swings around forest, A robot notices him and attacks, firing laser blasts. B leaps on robot, breaks it.

A second robot shows up, but the Omnitrix has run out, Gwen saves Ben by beating the robot with a shovel: "Back off Sparky! No flying tree-trimmer is gonna hurt my cousin! ((hits the robot with a shovel 3 more times))

B: Never thought I'd say this, but am I glad to see you.

The cousins run off as the robot explodes.

—

Inside the RV.

M: I was worried that you might get [popular?] with that thing on your wrist. That's why I asked you not to fool around with it until we know what the heck it is.

B: ((looks suitably dejected, admonished)) Sorry, Grandpa. But at least I figured out how to make it work. All you do is press this button, then when the ring pops up, just twist it until you see the guy you wanna be. Slam it down, and bammo! You're one of ten super cool alien dudes!

G: What about staying a super cool alien dude and not transforming back into plain old pizza face? ((arms crossed, mean smile))

B: ((looks away)) I kinda haven't figured that part out yet.

M: With a device as powerful as that watch clamped on you, my guess is, we'd better help you learn – fast.

B: All right!

Mayday for help comes over the radio – people being attacked by robots. Ben realises the robots are looking for the watch –

B: Sounds just like those things that attacked me. Must be looking for the watch. Those people are in trouble because of me! I think I can help them

G: You? What are you gonna do about it, Tennyson?

B ((looks at watch and smiles))

--

B, G, M head into forest. Omnitrix beeps, having recharged. Ben looks to M for permission, M nods.

B: Yeah... eeny, meeny, miney, here goes! ((selects an alien (Diamondhead) and transforms))

G: So what can this guy do?

B: I don't know, but I bet it's gonna be cool!

—

Robots destroying campsite with lasers, smashing things. Innocent campers run, screaming. One huge robot stands above, firing lasers.

B: Looks like papa robot this time. I'll get gearhead's attention. You guys get the campers to safety.

G and M run off.

The robot reaches down and picks up a camper.

B: ((off screen)) Leave him alone! You want somebody to pick on? Try me!

The robot scans Ben, noticing the Omnitrix on him. It drops the camper and fires a beam of energy at Ben, who falls back and is buried under metal. Using his alien arms, Ben cuts through the metal, standing up.

B: Cool!

The robot advances on Ben. Ben runs up and tries to hit it, but it flies up, spinning in the air. It falls, pinning Ben down.

B: Uh oh, think I'm in trouble.

M and G meanwhile try to usher people away. The ranger from earlier wonders: What is going on here?

G: You probably wouldn't believe me if I told you. Now come on!

She and M run off.

B and Robot fight. Robot throws B into a car, smashing it. B gets up. Robot fires power/laser blasts, smashing B. B dodges. Robot fells a tree that falls towards G. B jumps in the way and saves her by splitting the tree in half, each piece falling on either side of G

B: So, we even?

G: Even.

The robot reaches down and picks B up.

B: Uh oh! ((he is held in the air))

B resumes fighting the robot.

B: Come on, burn on in here! ((he points at his chest))

The robot aims and fires. B takes a direct blast, deflects the energy back at robot and destroys it.

B: What comes around, goes around. Let's see how you like it, you techno freak!

M and G: All right!

M: Way to go, Be- ((campers look at M)) uh. Diamond-headed guy!

B: Oh yeah, who's bad? Yeah! ((B jumps to celebrate)) Well, I think my work here is done. ((runs off))

Camper: Who was that guy?

—

Space scene: Vilgax is upset.

Vilgax: Failure, unbelievable! That puny Earth-being that is keeping the Omnitrix from me will soon hang on my trophy wall.

—

M and G are packing suitcases into the RV.

M: Where's Ben?

G: I haven't seen him since breakfast.

M and G turn to see a dust trail racing toward them. An alien stands in front of Max.

M: Ben?

B: Yup. Hey, check this out. ((he speeds around the campsite, packing away the last few things)) Pretty fast, huh? ((the Omnitrix times out and he transforms into a human)) I think this is gonna be the best summer ever.

M: Absolutely.

G: It's definitely going to be interesting. So, where'd you go, anyway?

B: Just had to take care of a couple of things before our vacation really got rolling.

—

Cuts to scene of bullies hanging from the same tree B and the bullies' victim were suspended in at the beginning.

Bully 1: Dude! How'd we get up here?

Bully 2: I'm not sure. It all happened so fast.

Bully 1: ((waving at a passing car)) Hey, somebody, anybody. Little help here please?!

## Appendix 2

### Series 1: *Ben 10: 107*: “Kevin 11”

#### Todorov:

- Equilibrium: Ben has grown accustomed to his powers, beginning to use them for selfish reasons.
- Disruption: Kevin using powers for self-gain at the expense of others.
- Recognition: Ben realising that Kevin was behaving selfishly, just as Ben had been doing earlier.
- Action: Ben uses the Omnitrix to fight Kevin, stopping the trains from colliding.
- Restoration: Ben has defeated Kevin for now, and has a better understanding of how to use the Omnitrix without being selfish. Kevin has disappeared (albeit with new abilities).

#### Propp:

Hero: Ben

Helpers: Max, Gwen

Magical agent: Omnitrix

Donor: (unclear, alien)

Villain: Kevin

Henchmen: none

Binary oppositions	
Ben	Gwen
Immature	Mature
Action	Mental
Disobedient	Obedient
Irresponsible	Responsible
Unethical (at outset)	Ethical (at outset)
Boy	Girl

## 107: Transitivity analysis

### Ben

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
<p>Running toward game exhibition            Using the Omnitrix to sneak into the exhibition            Plays video games            Shouts and has a tantrum, throwing things around            Leaves the RV            Goes to game arcade and plays games            Takes the tokens            Confronts the bullies harassing Kevin            Turns into alien and disposes of bullies            Walks around town with Kevin, going to the subway            Running to and breaking into the warehouse            Kicks down door            Catches game            Drops game and runs when police arrive            Transforms into Stinkfly and picks Kevin up, flying away            Evades police, flying around the city            Running down an alley            Running around the subway            Ben boosts Kevin up            Confronts Kevin about his train plan            Ben and Kevin fight            Transforms into Heatblast            Fights, struggles, falls over            Melts track controls, ensures trains don't crash            Hangs on to moving train to escape Kevin            Melts train roof for better grip            Jumps off the train and on to the RV awning            Turns into Four Arms, jumps</p>	<p>Constant narration of thoughts to himself            Wonders how Kevin made the arcade machine lose its tokens            Thinks Gwen and Max won't understand why he helped Kevin            Thinks living alone sounds great            Thinks of a way to evade the police            Expresses shock at the thought of hurting people            Decides he will stop Kevin            Remembers Max's words about being selfish            Is frustrated at the Omnitrix for turning him into the wrong alien            Expresses dislike of the Omnitrix running down            Thinks he has figured out where Kevin has gone            Expresses surprise/annoyance at once more turning into the wrong alien            Expresses negative emotion at the thought of the Omnitrix timing out before</p>	<p>"This place is a rip off"            Compares attendant's breath to sewer stench            Says Kevin seems "okay"            Omnitrix is "not that simple"            Calls Kevin "dim"</p>	<p>Asks Kevin what they are doing            Warns Kevin that he will get burned            Reminds Kevin he doesn't have to do this            Tells Max that Kevin is likely to be misusing powers            Refuses to share his powers with Kevin            Offers Kevin the opportunity to remain partners            Reminds Kevin he can't remove the Omnitrix            Apologises to Max</p>

<p>out the RV and damages other cars as he leaps out of sight          Finds and confronts Kevin          Picks Kevin up, they fight          Punching, kicking, grappling, falling          Runs after Kevin and punches him in rapid succession          Turns human          Tries to help Kevin up          Flies through the air, propelled by the energy blast from the Omnitrix          Watches Kevin leave</p>	<p>Kevin is defeated          Decides that him and Kevin should use their powers for good, instead of for themselves</p>		
---	--	--	--

**Gwen**

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
<p>Follows Ben out the RV          Walks back to the RV after leaving Ben          Runs down to help Max lift the pipe off the trapped bullies          Watches Kevin leave</p>	<p>Reading a brochure          Points out to Ben that he is behaving immaturely          Can't believe Ben turned into an alien          Wonders why she isn't enjoying Ben being in trouble</p>	<p>Calls Ben a doofus          Says that Kevin is "trouble"          Says Ben is on his own</p>	<p>Reminds Ben he doesn't get an allowance          Tells Ben to get back to the RV          Warns Ben that he is going to get grounded          Tells Ben they can't take the tokens          Warns Ben not to use the Omnitrix          Reminds Ben not to keep Max waiting          Tells Ben he's on his own          Compliments Max on his "catch"          Agrees with Ben about Kevin misusing powers</p>

## 107: Transcription

Scene opens with aerial shot of New York, then the lobby of a hotel, where Ben, Gwen and Max are standing at reception. Ben has his arms crossed and is leaning back against the counter, one foot propped against it. Gwen is standing and reading a brochure.

G: Wow! This hotel has everything! Indoor pool, full day-spa...

M: Now don't get used to it; it's only for one night!

B: ((notices a doorway with a sign above it reading: Sumo Slammer, the doorway is protected by a guard. Ben jumps up and begins running toward it.)) Hooohoo! The new Sumo Slammer video game's in there! ((The guard puts out a hand to stop him. Ben stops, looking up at the large man))

Guard: Pass?

B: ((rifles through pocket)) Uhh... must have left it inside! ((grin)) I'm one of the game pros testing out the system.

Guard: VIPs only.

B: ((slouches over and turns to walk dejectedly back to Max and Gwen))

M: ((looks sternly at Ben)) I know what you're thinking. So no sneaking back in there.

B: ((emphatic)) I won't! ((turns around to face viewer with mischievous expression. Ben holds up the Omnitrix and clicks it open, glancing sideways at the guard as he does so.))

Shot of the guard, and a ghost-alien (Ben) flies up to the guard and says "But he will!" Guard looks around, confused. Ghost flies into the expo, laughing.

B (as ghost alien): The ultimate sneak peek, for the ghost with the most freak! ((picks up game controller and begins to play)).

M: ((M and G are at the elevators, when M turns to look around)) Ben?

—

Scene cuts to image of video game high score.

B: Yes! New high score! ((B is facing the screen, back to the viewers. Suddenly, a large hand is placed on his shoulder))

Guard: Whaddaya got to say for yourself, kid?

B: Uh.. game over?

—

Max, Ben and Gwen are thrown out of the hotel.

Guard: And never come back!

M: ((looking angrily at B while G looks on, frowning)) I told you not to sneak in there.

B: Well if you wanna get all technical about it.

G: ((angry)) I never even got a chance to take a shower, in a real shower, for the first time all summer! Plus, they had a spa. A spa! Nice going, doofus.

—

Scene opens and M, B and G are in their RV.

M: How do you expect me to trust you if you keep misusing the watch?

B: ((crossed arms, sitting at table)) Excuse me, I used it a hundred times for good, why can't I use it just once for me?

M: It's not how many times you use it, Ben, it's how you use it.

B: It was no big deal.

M: To you. And that's all you care about. So, no more Sumo Slammer stuff for two weeks.

No comics, no playing cards, no-

B: Fair! ((stands up, shouting))

M: Neither is getting booted out of a four star hotel I already paid for ((leaning on table facing Ben))

B: ((sits down, crosses arms)) Fine! Take it out of my allowance.

G: You don't get an allowance.

M and B: Stay out of this! ((G slumps down, frowning))

B: This is my vacation too, you can't always tell me what to do. ((narrows eyes, scowling))  
You're not my dad.

M: ((pulls away, looking shocked)) Well, if I was ((pointing at Ben)), I... Look, I'm going back to the hotel and seeing if I can get at least some of my money back. I'll be back in a few minutes.

B: ((gets up and walks toward the back of the RV)) Don't hurry! ((draws screen door across, angrily))

G: He'll be fine.

M: ((walks out))

B: ((in background)) Not fair! Not fair! Totally not fair! ((sound of things being thrown))

G: Glad to see you're handling things so maturely.

B: Pushes screen door open again and walks past G, out the door)

G: Where do you think you're going?

B: Where does it look like? Out.

G: Get back here!

B: Sorry, I don't speak dweeb. ((walks away))

G: You're going to be so grounded.

G ((follows Ben and sighs)) Next summer, I'm going to sleep away camp.

—

Ben is in the game arcade, looking excitedly at video games. He tries a baseball game but loses.

B: Game over? It just started! ((looks around at passing attendant)) This thing ate my tokens.

Attendant: Read the sign, kid, it says 'Play at your own risk'. ((walks away))

B: This place is a rip off, you know that?

Kevin: ((speaking from background)) You're right. The games here stink.

B: Yeah, but not as bad as his breath! Major case of sewer mouth! ((waving hand in front of face))

K: ((laughs)) you're funny! Here, you owe me one. ((places hand on arcade machine and emits electricity, causing the machine to release all its tokens))

B: Whoa! How'd you do that?

K: I got some skills. ((pretending nonchalance))

B: ((plunges hands into the tokens))

G: We can't take those! They're not ours!

B: They are now! ((picks up handful)) Thanks! I'm Ben.

K: Kevin!

B: Wanna play some air hockey?

((two strangers appear and head toward Ben and Kevin))

K: ((sees the strangers and appears worried)) Na, gotta bail. ((turns and walks away))

G: He's total trouble.

B: He seemed okay to me.

((strangers push past them, heading after K))

Another stranger (S1) confronts K, preventing his escape.

S1: Long time no see. Where you going, freak? Home to recharge your batteries? ((K backs away, is stopped by the other two (S2 and S3)))

Ben steps in.

B: Need some help?

S2: Ha! He's gonna need a lot more than you! ((shoves Ben on to his back)) Now beat it!

B: I've got some skills too. ((looks at Omnitrix then walks off screen))

G: Ben, don't!

((Ben goes around the corner and uses the Omnitrix to transform into XLR8))

K: How's the hangout? Still trashed like I left it for you?

S2: Yeah, and you're gonna pay! You can't take us all alone, freak.

B (as XLR8): But I can.

S1: ((laughs)) Little early for Halloween, dude, isn't it?

((XLR8 speeds to the bully, and a swirling tornado of color is shown, propelling the bully to the ceiling, then dropping him. He falls, and XLR8 hits him with his tail, throwing him into a wall, where he collapses.))

S1: Where'd he go? ((looks afraid))

((XLR8 speeds to S1 and dumps him next to S2, then arrives in front of S3 and says: Trick, or treat? S3 runs away screaming as XLR8 waves, then runs off screen))

—

G: I can't believe you went alien ((frown, hands on hips))

B: He helped me, so I helped him. ((smile)) You wouldn't get it! ((angry expression at Gwen)) and neither would Grandpa. ((crosses arms)) That's the problem.

K: ((walks into frame)) You see what that speed guy did to those losers? (smiles at Ben who smiles back. Gwen looks anxious))

B: Yeah. Dude's name is XLR8. In fact, we're pretty tight. ((Gwen looks annoyed))

K: Cool! Hey, want a tour of New York?

G: You keep Grandpa waiting any longer, he's going to pop another gasket! We gotta go (?) ((angry)) like now, Ben.

B: Don't you mean *you* have to go?

G: You're on your own. ((walks away))

B: Good, that's the way I want it.

—

Ben and Kevin begin walking.

B: So, how'd you get your power?

K: I was born with it. I'm like an energy sponge. Motors, air conditioners, lights, batteries, whatever! Soak it up, then dish it out when I have to. Or want to.

B: Cool.

K: Come on, I'll show you where I live.

—

Gwen arrives at the RV and walks in.

M: Where's Ben? ((Gwen turns in surprise, mouth open, eyes wide. Max looks angry))

G: ((nervous laugh)) Yeah, about that..

—

Ben and Kevin are walking down train tracks underground. They arrive in a dishevelled room which has a Sumo Slammers poster hung up on the wall.

B: You live here?

K: Yeah, by myself.

B: What about your family?

K: Long gone. They weren't too thrilled having a freak for a son. But it just means I don't answer to nobody!

B: Sounds good to me. So why was that gang after you?

K: I kinda trashed their hangout under the 39<sup>th</sup> street bridge. What about you? Sounds like your grandpa is pretty steamed at you.

B: Like usual. And all I did was sneak in and play the new Sumo Slammer video game.

K: The one that won't be out until Christmas?

B: Yeah!

((K smiles, but has a mean look on his face))

--

Ben and Kevin are running toward a building in the dark. They reach it, and flatten themselves against the sides.

K: I got a tip the new shipment just came in! ((runs off screen, electrocutes security code box)) Help me kick in the door!

They kick down the door and walk in, triggering a silent alarm. Kevin switches on the lights to reveal rows of boxes stacked to the ceiling.

B: Woah!

K: ((lifts lid of box)) Check it out! Wait's over, dude. ((picks up a game and tosses it to B))

B: Yes!

Tear gas cannisters are shot into the warehouse, breaking windows and filling the room with smoke. Outside, there are police cars and two helicopters. Ben looks up in shock. Both boys are coughing, clutching a game to their chest.

B: What do we do?

K: Get out of here! ((drops game and runs, Ben follows suit. They dodge the light from a helicopter and Ben runs off screen while Kevin runs to a plug point. He absorbs energy from it just as the SWAT team throw open the doors and say: Freeze punks!))

K: ((climbs in a forklift)) Time to rev things up! ((electrifies the vehicle and sends it careening into a guard, jumping out in time)) Let's go!

They run outside, surrounded by police cars, followed by helicopter. They turn and run back in.

B: Great. No way out!

K: Any ideas?

B: Only one. ((looks at Omnitrix)) But can you keep a secret? ((hand on K's shoulder))

K: Sure! ((outside, cops moving in))

Ben programs the Omnitrix and transforms into a flying alien.

K: ((looks shocked, then understands and rears back)) Ugh, you reek!

B: I know! ((as the alien, he picks K up and flies outside, sweeping the SWAT team over))

K: Oh yeah! And people call me a freak! How'd you do that?

B: Talk later! ((helicopters in pursuit, shooting at B and K. B dodges.))

Guard: Where'd they go?

B: ((hiding below helicopter)) We're running out of time! I'll lose them in the city! ((he detaches and flies toward the city))

B: ((flying down streets and between cars)) Uh oh. ((Ben lands against the windscreen of a bus, causing the driver to lose control and run over a hot dog stand. They fly away, still being shot at)) Can't shake them! I've got an idea! ((he flies down, lands on a car transport truck just as it passes below a bridge))

Guard: Get them on the other side! ((the truck exits, B and K are gone)) Where'd they go?

Kevin and Ben are in one of the cars on the truck, hiding. They pop their heads up and K yells: Yeah!

K and B run down an alley, then pause to catch their breath.

K: So that watch lets you do that dragonfly thing whenever you want?

B: And not just that one, it sends out this special energy so I can turn into ten different aliens.

K: Ten?! So the speed guy at the arcade was you?

B: Uh huh.

K: You're the man! Show me what other aliens you can morph into?

B: It's not that simple. ((lifts wrist bearing the Omnitrix)) It has a mind of its own.

K: ((reaches for it)) Give me it, maybe I can make it work.

B: ((blocks K's hand)) Can't, it's stuck on my wrist.

K: ((looks away, annoyed, then expression changes, looks more...scheming)) We should be

partners. Between the two of us, with our powers, we could do ((makes fist with hand) whatever we want, whenever we want! We'd totally cash in! What do you say? Friends? ((holds out hand))

B: Friends! ((shakes K's hand))

—

RV driving down street. Gwen adjusts radio.

M: Of all the stunts Ben's pulled, this is the worst! When we find him...

G: ((sighs)) I should really be enjoying this ((looks down) so why aren't I?

—

Kevin and Ben are running through the subway. They stop at a deserted platform.

K: Check it out! Give me a boost, I need to recharge! ((Ben boosts K up to touch a light fixture. Ben looks worried. K recharges, then the two run across the tracks. K pulls a lever that changes the tracks to a different route))

B: What are we doing?

K: A money train loaded with cash comes down this track. So when it crashes into the oncoming passenger train.. Boom! Instant jackpot! You turn into that accelerant guy and we're out of here!

B: But.. Hundreds of innocent people will be killed!

K: Hey, no pain, no gain.

B: ((angrily walks up to K)) You can't do this.

K: ((crosses arms)) Sure we can! I just switched the tracks.

B: ((looks over at tracks)) I mean, I'm not going to let you do this. ((determined expression))

K: ((leans over to stare into Ben's face)) We shook. We're partners.

B: No, this is going way too far!

K: Then try and stop me, watchboy!

B: ((looks down, away, speaks quietly to himself)) 'You don't care about anyone else but yourself'.

K: ((shouts)) You talking about me?

B: No! I'm talking about me!

Ben runs at Kevin, who grabs him and throws him down on to the tracks. Ben gets up, Kevin approaches, with electricity coursing through his hand.

K: Ohh, you do not want to make me mad!

B: ((stands up)) Me neither! I'm switching the track back! ((activates Omnitrix and selects Four Arms)) Time to go Four Arms! ((he transforms into the fire alien, looks at himself))

Ahh.. stupid watch. ((annoyed)) Move back! (to K)

K: Or what? You going to burn my dinner?

B: Fight me, you're the one that's going to be burned.

Kevin runs to the track and releases energy, causing the lights to break. In the darkness, K sneaks up on B and jumps on him, electrocuting him. They struggle. K yells, then falls off. B turns to look for K. Something hits him in the face, knocking him over. B turns to see K transformed into half the fire alien. K has one fire arm, and the same fire alien head as Ben.

K: Psych! I absorb energy, remember?

B: You don't have to do this.

They fight. Kevin knocks Ben over.

K: It's time I got what's coming to me. Nobody's calling me "freak" anymore!

Train approaches, Ben is still on the tracks.

K: Payday!

Ben uses his fire powers to melt the track controls, shifting the tracks back to their original position. The train passes by, unharmed. Ben turns around in time to see the oncoming train headed straight at him. He uses his powers to move out of the way, disappearing.

K: ((looking around for B)) Forget the money! Time to get some priceless revenge.  
Ben, meanwhile, is clinging to the top of the train. He loses his grip and tumbles back, over the top of the train. He manages to grab a hand hold, then melts a hole in the train roof to secure a better grip.

—

RV radio is playing: Expect delays on the uptown subway lines near 51<sup>st</sup> street. There have been reports of fires breaking out all over the tunnels. ((M and G look worried))

G: Grandpa?

M: I know. ((RV turns around))

—

B: ((Omnitrix begins to beep and flash as it runs down)) Aw man, I hate that sound! ((Ben turns human, grasping the train with two hands now, struggling to hold on)) Come on.. Hold on!

Hooting can be heard as the RV drives up alongside the train. Max flicks a switch that extends an awning. Max looks horrified as he sees the train pass under a low structure which is rapidly approaching Ben. He pulls the RV up alongside the train and hoots, Gwen waves at Ben.

B: ((looks at structure)) Oh, that's going to hurt! ((he stands up, then leaps to the RV, landing and rolling on the awning))

G: Nice catch, Grandpa! ((thumbs up to M, they drive off screen))

—

RV is parked on the street. M, B and G are inside. Ben is sitting at the table, looking down, hunching over slightly. Contrite. Max is standing, talking to Ben.

M: Are you ever planning on listening to me? None of this would have happened if you'd just obeyed me. It's all about trust.

B: Then trust me that Kevin's probably misusing Heatblast's power right now.

G: ((standing next to Ben)) Grandpa, Ben's right. There's no telling what he could do now.

M: Okay. So where is he?

B: I think I know.

—

Scene opens under a bridge. The bullies/strangers from the arcade are here, as well as one additional bully. The place is on fire. The bullies are leaning back, hands held up, looking worried/afraid.

S2: Uhh Kevin..

S1: We can work this out!

Kevin, still as half Heatblast, walks toward them, arm outstretched, saying: I don't think so.

—

RV stuck in traffic jam. M honks the horn, saying: Move it!

B: ((standing in the RV, activating Omnitrix)) Going Stinkfly! See you at the 39<sup>th</sup> street Bridge. ((he morphs form into Four Arms)) Wait! Now I turn into Four Arms? ((He opens the door and steps out, damaging nearby cars in the process. He leaps quickly out of sight))

—

Kevin has the bullies trapped under a large pipe.

K: Ha, so much for your game! ((Kevin transforms back into his regular self)) Huh? What's going on?

B: (as Four Arms) Your power's gone!

K: Looks like you're about to give me some more, Ben!

B: ((crosses arms)) No!

K: ((holds hand out)) You don't have a choice. ((turns around, electricity shooting from his hands, approaches bullies)) I still got enough juice to fry these guys!

Four Arms picks K up from behind, forcing him to discharge the energy at a wall instead. K then places his hands on Four Arms, absorbing his energy and laughing. K turns into Four Arms too, but his transformation is not complete. K still retains one regular eye, and not all his arms are as large as Ben's. K punches B, who falls hard, but gets up.

K: Hahaha, this is going to be real fun!

B: Tell me about it.

They grapple.

K: I'm taking *all* your alien powers!

They keep fighting. In the background, the RV pulls up, Gwen and Max walk down, then run under the bridge to lift the pipe off the bullies. The bullies climb out from under, and Max says: Moving day! Get out!

As B and K are fighting, the Omnitrix begins to warn Ben that it's about to time out. B shouts: No! and kicks K away from him. B runs after K and punches him in rapid succession. K flies back, hits a pillar, and is covered in falling debris/rubble. He struggles to stand up.

K: Come on, I give, I give! I'm sorry, please, just.. lighten up. ((Ben turns human))

B: I just did. ((looks down at himself)) By about 300 pounds!

K: I guess I went too wild with power. ((looks down)) I don't have anyone else like you to help me.

B: We can still be partners! ((walks toward K)) We'd just be kicking butts for good. Instead of for ourselves. You could hang with us!

K: What's in it for me?

B: For starters, people will like you. ((reaches down, holding out a hand to help K up))

K: ((grins nastily, grabs Ben's wrist and tries to pull the Omnitrix off)) Oh man, you are so dim! ((Max runs up behind K and punches him in the back, but K pushes him away easily))

Your mommy drop you on your head when you were a little baby? Now give me that watch!

B: You're the one who's dim! I told you, I can't.

There is an energy blast from the Omnitrix. It pushes K and B apart. B flies through the air, M runs forward and catches him. K flies back into a support for the bridge, smashing through it. The entire bridge comes down. K sits up, back to human form. He looks at his hands in shock/disappointment, and yells: Nooooo! He turns and runs through the rubble, disappearing off screen.

Max, Gwen and Ben watch him go. Max has a hand on Ben's shoulder, Gwen looks on from the side.

—

RV driving, leaving NY. Ben is sitting at the table. Gwen is up front with Max.

B: ((fingers interlocked, arms resting on table)) I'm sorry Grandpa. For everything.

M: I know you are. ((turns to look at B)) You're my grandson and nothing will ever change that. ((turns forward)) But my trust is something you'll have to earn back.

B: ((lowers head to rest on hands))

—

In a subway tunnel. K is standing in darkness, only outlined profile visible.

K: They thought I was a freak before? Just they wait.. ((holds hand up and flames appear from it. He laughs maniacally))

### Appendix 3

#### Series 1: *Ben 10: 110: "Lucky Girl"*

##### Todorov:

- Equilibrium: Ben and Gwen both using their powers to help people in trouble.
- Disruption: Hex enchanting a Haunted Mansion tourist attraction, endangering tourists.
- Recognition: Ben and Gwen hear the news report about trapped tourists and decide to rescue them.
- Action: Working together, Ben uses the Omnitrix and Gwen uses her lucky charm to defeat Hex.
- Restoration: Gwen chooses to give up the charm and her powers, saying Ben is back to being the only hero around.

##### Propp:

Heroes: Ben, Gwen

Helpers: Max, Gwen

Magical agent: Omnitrix, Charm of Bezel

Donor: (unclear, alien), Ben

Villain: Hex

Henchmen: Animated gargoyles

Binary oppositions	
Ben	Gwen
Failing at rescuing people	Succeeding at rescuing people
Skill	Luck
Boy	Girl

## 110: Transitivity analysis

### Ben

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
<p>Uses Omnitrix to rescue people</p> <p>Attacks Hex</p> <p>Takes Hex's lucky charm</p> <p>Poses in front of reporters</p> <p>Gives Gwen the charm</p> <p>Screams and falls over</p> <p>Pushes Gwen out of the path of the thief</p> <p>Transforms into Wildmutt (alien) and goes to help the workers</p> <p>Jumps out the RV and goes to help people in the haunted house</p> <p>Transforms into Four Arms</p> <p>Catches a falling structure</p> <p>Runs after Gwen and Hex</p> <p>Rescues Gwen from Hex</p> <p>Tackles Hex</p> <p>Fights animated statues</p> <p>Picks up a pillar to hit statues</p> <p>Throws statue into a wall</p> <p>Smashes the head of the minotaur statue</p> <p>Grabs Hex and throws him against a wall</p>	<p>Dismisses Gwen's claim to heroism</p> <p>Resents being made fun of</p> <p>Thinks of himself as the "real hero"</p> <p>Annoyed that Gwen was deemed the hero at the construction site</p> <p>Thinks that his skill is better than Gwen's luck</p>	<p>"Being a hero is not about getting attention"</p> <p>Says this is not his lucky day</p> <p>Calls Hex "Mr Freak"</p> <p>Attributes Gwen's powers to the charm</p> <p>Calls himself the "real hero"</p>	<p>Commands the Omnitrix to work</p> <p>Tells Gwen they will not play basketball together</p> <p>Refuses to give Gwen the basketball</p> <p>Accuses Gwen of being jealous of him</p> <p>Approves of Gwen's decision to destroy charms</p> <p>Admits that Gwen did a good job</p>

### Gwen

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
<p>Throws trashcan at Hex</p> <p>Knocks the fork from Ben's hand, causing chain of events</p> <p>Plays basketball</p> <p>Jumps on a wooden board</p> <p>Dodges debris, runs to a truck</p>	<p>Anger at Ben's showing off</p> <p>Feels under-appreciated</p> <p>Feels like she should get Ben something in return for the charm</p> <p>Decides to use the charm to be a superhero</p> <p>Cross-referencing</p>	<p>Attributes Ben's status as hero to the Omnitrix</p> <p>Attributes her own heroism to luck</p> <p>Says that Hex's loss is her gain</p> <p>Attributes Ben's powers to the watch</p> <p>Says that her powers are "history"</p>	<p>Recites knowledge in the witchcraft museum</p> <p>Points out that she helped Ben</p> <p>Thanks Ben for the charm</p> <p>Points out that Ben has had more crawfish than she has</p> <p>Commands Ben to</p>

<p>Poses in front of reporters          Jumps out the RV and goes to help people in the haunted house          Pushes Ben out of her way          Poses          Runs up stairs          Leaps off a pillar and swings from chandelier          Runs from Hex          Causes roof to collapse on Hex          Runs and hides behind a tree          Throws rocks at Hex, knocking him unconscious          Picks up Hex's charms          Throws the charms to the ground and smashes them with a shovel          Records Ben's admission and repeatedly replays it</p>	<p>the Archamada Book of Spells          Thinks the world needs someone like Lucky Girl          Displays fear when falling from stairs          Fear when Hex chases her          Thinks about the abilities the charms would endow her with          Decides that she would rather just be herself          Happy when Ben says she did a good job</p>		<p>give her the basketball          Commands Ben to acknowledge her as a hero          Commands everyone to stay calm          Thanks Ben for saving her          Asks where Hex is          Asks Ben for a favour</p>
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## 110: Transcription

Scene opens in a witchcraft museum where B, G and M are in a guided tour of the museum's exhibits.

Tour Guide: And behind this impenetrable glass is the recently discovered and only known existing copy of the Archamada Book of Spells.

G and TG: It contains ancient witchcraft and rituals from the late 1600s. ((Gwen looks proud of herself, TG looks annoyed))

TG: Maybe *you* should work here, dear. ((Gwen looks upset))

B: Don't let Mummyface get to you, she's probably older than that spell book. ((pulls face, G laughs)).

Screaming, everyone is lifted to the ceiling and held there by an invisible force.

M: Something tells me this isn't on the tour.

-

From the window, red smoke streams through and materialises into a man wearing a black and red robe, holding a staff, standing in front of the spell book (Hex)

H: The Archamada Book of Spells! All of its power shall soon be mine! ((breaks glass and summons book to him))

B: ((on ceiling, twisting Omnitrix)) Now might be a good time to go – ((man turns to ceiling and lifts spell, people begin falling)) Hero-oh! ((Ben struggles with the Omnitrix then activates it, turns into XLR8 [fast alien] and uses a hanging banner to create a slide, catching everyone before they fall to the ground)) Everyone out!

M: Ben, be careful, you don't know what tricks he's got up his sleeve.

B: ((turns to Hex)) Dude, you want a book, try the library!

-

H uses spells to fight Ben, sends flames, crystals after XLR8. B is too fast and dodges these attacks. He turns to face Hex head on and is met with a bright light from the staff, which causes him to slide past and crash into cases on the wall. Hex holds his staff up to deliver the final blow, when a couple of trash cans hit him on the head. He turns around to see G and M.

G: Guess we got his attention!

M: Kinda wish we hadn't.

Hex uses his power to push G and M across the room. While he's distracted, XLR8 recovers and surprises Hex, running in circles around him, hitting him until he is knocked unconscious. One of Hex's charms falls off and Ben claims it as a souvenir.

M: Nice job!

B: Just doing what I need to do and keeping it low key.

-

Cuts to scene of Ben as XLR8 posing outside the museum, arms thrown in the air, surrounded by people photographing him and cheering wildly

-

B: Who's your hero?! ((Background, Hex is taken away in an ambulance)) ((Gwen is shown with an angry expression))

-

In the RV: Ben and Gwen sitting at a table facing each other. Ben has a box in front of him

-

G: All I'm saying is you didn't exactly stop that creep all by yourself today, okay? I helped save your sorry butt, but does anybody notice me? ((She looks angry, upset, hunched shoulders, crossed arms))

B: Hey, being a hero is *not* about getting attention.

G: ((throws arms into air, mimicking Ben)) "Who's your hero?!" Uh, hello?

M: I noticed you, Gwen.

G: We're related so that doesn't count.

B: Hey, no offence but you threw a trash can at the guy, that doesn't exactly make you a hero. Unlike me. ((smug expression, sitting comfortably back in his seat))

G: ((arms raised, angry, sitting forward)) Wake up! The only reason you're a big hero is because of that watch. ((Ben looks at watch with a sad/guilty look)) If I found it instead of you, I'd be getting all the attention *and* all the cool souvenirs.((hunches over and stares out the window, grim expression))

B: ((rummages around in box and pulls something out, sighing)) All right, here. ((opens hand to show G the charm that Hex dropped)) Take it.

G: ((turns to B with hopeful expression, happy)) Really?

B: ((expansive)) Yeah I got tons of other stuff. ((Gwen takes the charm happily))

M: Gwen, don't you have something you want to say to Ben?

G: You know this doesn't change the fact that you're just plain lucky? But thanks. ((smiles))

B: You're welcome. ((smiling))

-

Scene change to ambulance with Hex inside. His charms glow gold and he wakes up. "My destiny shall be fulfilled". The back of the ambulance explodes and he floats away.

-

B, G and M are in a restaurant, eating. Gwen is wearing the charm as a necklace.

-

G: I've been counting. You've had 11 crawfish to my 9. ((her necklace begins to glow))

B: Sounds like it's time to make it an even dozen! ((prepares to take the crawfish))

G: ((knocks the fork from his hand)) I don't think so!

The fork flies across the room, hits a waitress's foot, causing her to toss the glasses on her tray in the air. One of the glasses catches on a chandelier, causing it to spin. The glass is then tossed into the kitchen, disrupting the cook and making him run into a cart with a bowl of live crawfish. The cart then rolls back into the table that Ben and Gwen are sitting at, sending the bowl of crawfish straight onto Ben.

G: ((takes the last crawfish and eats it)) Okay! Now I'm full.

B: ((tries to get the other crawfish off, one crawls up his nose, he screams and falls over, making M and G laugh at him. G notices her glowing necklace just before it goes out))

-

Back at witchcraft museum. Hex is searching for the spell book. He asks a floating guard where it is, and he points Hex to the vault. Hex tears open the door and summons the book to him. "Yes. Soon my power will know no limits!" He tries to absorb the power from the book but cannot. "One charm is missing! Of course, the battle with that speed creature"

-

B, G, M are at a street market

-

M: You know, in all my travels I never actually saw a crawfish climb in someone's nostril, until today! ((rubs Ben's hair, G laughs))

B: ((laughs too, but without humour)) Glad I could make your day, Grandpa.

G: By the way, thanks again for the charm. I feel like I should get you something in return. ((runs up to hot dog cart)). One please!

((the trio overhear a woman calling for help because someone's stolen her purse. They see the thief: one guy and two friends. Thief is white, tall, lanky, dark-rimmed eyes. Friend 1 is chubby, black, strange blonde hair, Friend 2 is large, white, spiky jacket, strange blue hair))

M: ((steps into street and holds out a hand)) That's far enough.

Thief (Th): Yeah? Who's gonna make us? You, pops?

B: Actually, him and his close personal friend, Diamondhead ((Ben goes to change, thugs

advance on M, Th holding a pipe))

B: ((hiding behind hot dog cart, turning the Omnitrix)) Come on..Work!

Th: ((goes to G)) Hey, that's a nice necklace you got there little girl! ((Reaches for it))

M: ((stands in front of G to protect her, the thugs close in))

B: ((sighs)) this is not my lucky day.

((G's necklace glows and she prepares to do something. Before she can, B runs in front of her saying, "Let me take care of this" and pushes her out of the path of the Th. She stumbles back into a juggler, who falls over and sends his unicycle into Friend 1. A juggling pin hits Th on the head and he falls back and M grabs him. G goes to help with Friend 2 and steps on a bottle of mustard sauce, which sprays mustard in the hot dog vendor's face. He pushes the cart away and it hits Friend 2, slamming into a wall. This unbalances a flower pot which then falls on the head of the recovering Friend 1. G holds her necklace and looks at it in thought.))

Old woman: This little girl is a hero, officer!

G: ((hesitant)) Who, me? Just lucky I guess. ((she looks at a mask shop and her expression changes from unsure/hesitant to smiling/determined))

-

scene change to the RV, the next morning. M is sleeping, snoring loudly

-

B: Hey, Gwen, you got a mega sized cork on you? Gwen? ((looks at lower bunk, it's empty))

G ((at a basketball court. Her charm glows. Without looking, she tosses the ball behind her. It misses the net and bounces off the RV and goes through a series of improbable events before it eventually falls through the net)) Nothin' but the bottom of the net – again!

B: ((picks up the basketball)) Okay.. we are definitely not playing Horse!

G: Give me the ball! ((reaches for it))

B: Not until you tell me how you did that.

G: What can I say? I'm charmed. ((picks up necklace)) it's like every time it glows, everything just goes my way.

M: ((appears in doorway of RV)) Nothing like a good night's sleep. Who wants breakfast?

-

explosion at nearby construction site, cables on a lift break and two workers are stranded, hanging by a thread

-

B: ((turns Omnitrix)) time to watch a real hero at work!

G: Yeah, me! I'll be right back! ((runs off))

B: ((transforms into Wildmutt and goes to help the workers))

M: ((finds another person trapped in a car, under a steel girder. Gwen appears, dressed in a purple jumpsuit, belt, gloves, mask)) Gwen?

G: It's "Lucky Girl", Grandpa. ((she runs to the car)) Stay calm!

((her necklace glows. She runs to a nearby wooden board and jumps on it. The board hits a crane which drops its wrecking ball and knocks the steel bar away. The bar hits a button which sends the lift up. Wildmutt (B) meanwhile is climbing up the building to the workers. He is almost there when the lift hits him and he flies up, on the way down he breaks it into pieces. The pieces fly toward G, M warns her, she dodges and runs toward a cement truck. She jumps inside and accidentally releases the brake. The truck rolls and hits a metal chute which falls toward Wildmutt (B) who is clinging to a rope. It hits him, he falls into the cement. The chute lands in the perfect position for the workers to slide down and land on a mattress. Wildmutt climbs out and shakes off the cement. Lucky Girl is being interviewed by reporters))

Reporters: How did you pull off this amazing rescue?

G: With style, of course! Who's your hero?!

Reporter: You heard it here first, live!

((Wildmutt walks away, annoyed))

-

in another part of town, Hex is searching for the charm. He sees the news report with Lucky Girl, and sees the charm

-

M, B, G are in the RV

-

G: I cross referenced the Archamada Book of Spells with dark magical charms, and look: it's part of a set called the Charms of Bezel. This charm is Luck. There are also charms for Fire, Levitation, Reincarnation [fifth is lightning and electricity].

B: Woah. Those are the charms Mr Freak at the museum wore when XLR8 kicked his butt!

G: That's why he wanted the book of spells. But it says all the charms of Bezel must be used for the spells to be at their full power. Oh well. His loss is my gain.

M: I'm afraid more like "was". We need to turn that charm in to the museum.

B and G: No fair! Not before I-

B: -Try it!

G: -use it again! The world needs someone with the power of Lucky Girl.

B: Newsflash! I'm the only one with powers!

G: ((stands up, facing Ben)) Well you can make that "one" a "two" now.

B: ((backs away a little)) All that stuff you did, it's not you, it's that charm.

G: It's not you either, it's that watch.

B: You're just jealous of me!

G: Am not! ((they're face to face, yelling))

B: Are too! Times ten!

-

news report cuts them off, saying that the Haunted History mansion has come alive, trapping tourists inside

-

B and G: Grandpa!

M: On it.

They arrive at the mansion. Ben gets out the RV.

G: ((Dressed in Lucky Girl suit, leaps out)) Back off! I'll handle this!

B: I'm the real hero here! ((runs off))

The trio get inside, the house appears alive with things moving about and endangering people.

Hex: ((sees G and the charm)) I knew you couldn't resist, Lucky Girl.

G: ((pushes B out the way)) Everyone, stay calm. Lucky Girl's in the Haunted House! ((posing))

-

she runs, Hex tries to move objects to stop her, the debris makes B run under some stairs, and activate the Omnitrix

-

B: You don't need luck when you've got skill!

((G is running up stairs which begin to break up, she cries out in fear, then falls. The charm helps her land easily on a pedestal/pillar))

((a woman falls, M runs to catch her and move her to safety))

B: ((transformed into Four Arms, and runs to catch the balcony which is falling, and has people on it)) I've got it!

G: But who's got them?

((the second pillar breaks, G tips her pillar forward and as it falls, she leaps off and grabs the chandelier in the middle of the room, swinging it to the people. They all grab hold and swing to safety. As they swing back, Four Arms is thrown across the room by the tipping balcony. He almost hits the woman Max saved. The chandelier then falls, but is stopped short from the ground by the wire it is connected to. The last of the people then run out of the house before Hex seals it))

Hex: ((restrains G with magic and throws her across the room)) Give me my charm!

G: ((falls on a curtain, which falls on Hex, then tips over a suit of armour)) You should have said “please”! ((runs off))

Hex: ((gets up and follows))

They end up in catacombs beneath the house. M and B follow.

Hex finds G. The charm helps her touch a trick rock which drops the roof on Hex. He gets up, chases her again. She screams and runs. He blasts magic at her, she ducks, runs to a graveyard and hides behind a tree. Hex sees this and charms a vine into grabbing her and removing her charm. Soon, branches have swarmed all around her, Hex has the charm, G is trapped. Four Arms comes to the rescue, pulling branches off Gwen. She thanks him, he asks where Hex is.

Hex: ((floating in the middle of the graveyard)) Time to turn this city into an old memory!  
((summons powers, attacks city with lightning))

Four arms interrupts him, tackling him into a nearby mausoleum. Hex brings statues to life, they attack Four Arms. The statues distract FourArms, taking him away from the scene/Hex. Hex begins to recast his earlier spell, but is hit on the leg with a rock.

G: ((tossing and catching a small rock)) Luck only takes you so far, Grandpa! ((she throws the rock, hitting Hex in the face. He falls to the ground unconscious)).

M: ((statues flying around, coming to attack. M picks up a pole with cement on the end, holding it like a baseball bat)) Go.. going..Gone! ((releases pole and smashes statue))

B: ((Four Arms picks up a pillar, using it to battle the statues. He tosses the larger one into a wall, destroying it. He grabs the Minotaur statue in a headlock, squeezing its head until it breaks))

G: ((picks up the charms from Hex))

B: ((Hex stands up and is grabbed by Four Arms)) Now, time for the magician to disappear  
((throws Hex at a wall, he falls into a coffin. M shuts the lid))

G: ((holding the charms)) I could fly, shoot out bolts of electricity, bring trees alive.. I’d be unstoppable! Or.. I guess I could just be me ((tosses charms to ground then smashes them with a shovel, sending blue lights into the sky))

The police let Hex out the coffin and arrest him. M, B, G drive away in the RV.

M: You know, you two make a pretty impressive team.

G: “Made”, now that my power’s history.

B: Hey, you did the right thing, destroying those charms.

G: I guess. So, Ben, now that you’re back to being the only hero around here, just one favour?

B: what?

G: Maybe just admit I did a good job.

B: ((sighs)) Gwen.. You did a good job. There, happy?

G: Totally.

B: Good! Because I’m never saying it again! ((smug grin))

G: ((holds up tape recorder)) You don’t have to! ((plays recording twice))

B: ((looks up in disappointment)) Oh man.. ((shakes head, puts pillows to his ears as the recording keeps playing))

G laughs, camera pans to shot of Lucky Girl mask.

## Appendix 4

### Series 2: *Alien Force*: 107: “Pier Pressure”

#### Todorov:

- Equilibrium: Ben is on his first date with Julie Yamamoto but is struggling to hide his powers when an alien confronts and pursues him.
- Disruption: Julie is abducted by the alien inhabiting a carnival ride.
- Recognition: Ben sees the alien seize Julie and uses his powers to pursue the alien.
- Action: Ben confronts the alien.
- Restoration: Ben learns a little more about the Omnitrix and has forged a more solid relationship with Julie.

#### Propp:

Hero: Ben

Helper: Gwen

Princess: Julie

Magical agent: Omnitrix

Donor: (unclear, alien)

(Assumed) Villain: Unnamed alien

Henchman: Ship the alien

Binary oppositions	
Ben	Julie
Action	Passivity
Rescuer	Victim
Protective	Protected
Seeks approval	Gives approval
Boy	Girl

## 107: Transitivity analysis

### Ben

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
Shouts to Kevin	Worries that Julie	Calls Kevin	Congratulates Julie
Walks away from Julie	will find out about	“strange and	Asks Julie on a date
Walking along the pier	the Omnitrix and	dangerous”	Apologises for
Hits Omnitrix against a counter	think he's weird	Calls himself a	Kevin
Running, leaping, jumping to	Worried about	basic, regular guy	Apologises to
escape alien	appearance	with no secrets	vendor
Climbing a ride	Shocked when Kevin	Calls Brain	Apologises to Julie
Climbs on the hood of the	appears	Storm a	Lies to Julie about
bumper car	Angry at Kevin	“seafood platter”	why he left
Grabs and swings from a line	Upset at lack of car	Says he is ten	Assures Julie he
of flags	and licence	monsters	would not abandon
Waves jacket at car	Anxious about car		her
Buys cotton candy and runs	ride with Kevin		Suggests they skip
Grabs Julie's hand and pulls her	Upset about Omnitrix		the ride
to safety	beeping		Tells Julie to hide in
Transforms into Brain Storm	Says he is “over this”		a room
Falls	alien attack		Asks Julie not to be
Shoots electricity at alien	Doubts a simple		scared
Shields Julie and himself	explanation		Admits he doesn't
Shoots energy	Horror at having left		know very much
Transforms to human	his date		about the Omnitrix
Runs out, knocks over trash can	Thinks this is not his		Accuses Ship of
Dodges alien	night		wrecking the pier
Hangs on to pier	Wonders why he is		and kidnapping
Transforms into alien and flies	being attacked		Julie
over water	Understands what the		Apologises to Julie
Causes light poles to fall and	alien is trying to say		for being unable to
trap alien-looking	Thinks he has seen		fly them home
Falls	the alien before		
Flies up again	Realises ship is going		
Transforms back to human	to explode		
Steps forward	Thought the alien		
Runs toward crashed ship	was a Plumber		
Puts arm out to protect Julie	Thinks it's obvious		
Transforms into alien	that the alien required		
Grabs bomb and throws it into	help		
sky	Worried that this is		
Shields Julie from explosion	Julie's worst date		
Removes debris			
Helps repair alien shuttle			
Walking along road			
Waves arms at truck			
Continues walking holding			
hands with Julie			

## Julie

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
Playing tennis Walking along the pier Links arms with Ben Steps away to cover ears Steps out of the room Tries to dial phone Moves toward the alien Helps repair alien shuttle Walking along road Leans on Ben Waves arms at truck Continues walking holding hands with Ben	Wonders if the Omnitrix is a watch Upset/worried about Ben having left Angry at Ben lying Thought she had been stood up Fear at seeing the ride attack Wonders how Ben as alien knows her name Thinks the alien is trying to communicate Expresses concern for the injured alien Knows the alien wants to communicate Is not enjoying the last part of the date	Calls Ben nice to allow Kevin to insult him Says a ride looks fun Calls Ben a monster Says Ben being ten monsters is "cool" Says their date is "different" Says being different is fine Calls Ship "cute"	Asks why Kevin is mean to Ben Asks if Ben is okay Asks if Ben is hiding something Calls for Ben's help Commands the alien to put her down Pleads to be released Reminds Ben explosion is over Advises Ben to be nice to the alien Offers the alien help Declares they're going to get grounded

## Gwen

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
Grabs Ben and pulls him to Julie Pushes Ben back to Julie Pulls Ben away from Julie	Wonders how this species survives	Calls Ben weird, funny, sensitive, well-mannered Implies Kevin is not the above Implies that Kevin is immature Compares Kevin to Ben, unfavourably	Suggests that Ben ask Julie out Prompts Ben to speak to Julie Congratulates Julie Tells Kevin to give Ben a break

## 107: Transcription

Scene opens in an unspecified area where an alien-looking, glob-like being slithers out from a crashed alien shuttle, across the ground toward a road where a man is attempting to repair the wheel on a truck. The alien leaps into the cab of the truck and takes control, transforming the inside of the truck to match its own colouring (black with green highlights). It starts the truck and drives down the road with the man shouting after it.

Man: Hey! Where are you going with my -

The truck stops, turns to face the man and races toward him, rearing up on its back wheels with a what appears to be a mouth opening on the front of the truck. The scene ends with the man screaming as he watches the truck.

-

Ben and Gwen are watching a tennis match from the stands. The scoreboard is shown: Carol Smith and Julie Yamamoto are tied, with Julie holding the advantage.

Before serving, Julie looks up at the stands, smiling and waving to Ben, who visibly perks up, smiling in return to her. Julie serves.

G: ((leans over to Ben)) See? She waved! She likes you. You should definitely ask her out.

B: ((looks worried, turns away and touches the Omnitrix on his wrist)) No way, what if she finds out about the Omnitrix? I don't want her to think I'm weird.

G: Ben, you are weird. But you're also funny and sensitive and well-mannered. Unlike some people I know. ((She turns to glare at Kevin in the stands. Kevin is lying back, snoring and drooling in his sleep.))

On the court, Carol Smith misses Julie's serve and Julie wins. The crowd applauds, waking Kevin up.

K: What'd I miss?

B: ((shouting across to K while clapping)) She won!

G: ((turning to B)) Go ahead Ben, now's your chance.

B: Uh, I'm not sure that's.. aah! (G grabs his arm and drags him toward the court where Julie is shaking hands with her opponent. Gwen pushes Ben forward, toward J)

J: Ben!

B: Julie! Hey, uh, you know my cousin Gwen? ((points back at G))

J: ((waves)) Hi.

G: Congratulations. Uh.. Ben? ((G stares pointedly at B))

B: Right. Way to go! Great game.. Match. Set. Whatever ((his voice breaks a little on this last word)). Well. See ya. ((waves and walks away, Julie turns to go. Gwen grabs Ben by the shoulders and shoves him back toward Julie))

J: ((turning to look at B)) Back so soon?

B: ((nervous laugh)) Yeah. So.. Um.. Julie.. I was wondering if you'd like to, I don't know, get together.. sometime? ((looks up, smiling))

J: ((smiles)) Sure. When?

B: ((grinning, finger raised as he backs away to G)) ((whispering to G)) She said "When?"! That's, like, a 'yes' only more specific! Now what? ((looks at G))

G: You say 'How about tonight?'

B: Tonight?? ((voice squeaks as he looks back at J. He walks over to J and clears his throat)) I mean.. we could go to the pier? Tonight?

J: Great. Well. Guess I'll hit the showers.

B: Yes. Good. Me too. ((J raises an eyebrow)) I mean, uh..

G: ((walks over, sighing, takes B by the shoulders and speaks to J)) He'll come by around 7. ((she backs away, taking B with her, muttering under her breath as they walk away and B and J wave to each other)) Sometimes I wonder how this species survives.

-

Highway patrol are at the abandoned, overturned truck alongside the road.

Patrolman: ((speaking into radio)) Yeah I found that stolen truck. No, no sign of whoever took it.

((the alien slithers up to the police car and jumps onto its hood, transforming the car like it did the truck))

P: What do you mean he says "It drove away by itself"? That just doesn't happen.. ((in the background, the patrol car drives away, siren blaring, passing the officer)) much.

-

Ben is looking at his reflection in the mirror, smoothing his hair and frowning at his reflection.

B: Great. My hair looks stupid, my shirt is wrinkled and I have a zit the size of Kansas ((parts fringe to display zit)).

K: ((walks up behind B)) Yeah, that's one big zit all right.

B: ((looks horrified and shouts, turning around)) Ah! How did you get in here?

K: ((looks smug)) The usual way ((he holds up his arm as it changes colour)) Incidentally, you may want to fix that hole I punched in your back door before your mother sees it. ((reclines in a chair, arms folded above his head))

B: ((angry)) You couldn't knock?

K: ((eyes closed)) I sorta did.

B: ((sits down facing K)) Has anyone ever told you that you're a strange and dangerous person?

K: ((unconcerned)) Constantly. ((opens eyes)) But enough about me! Gwen says that you need a favour.

B: ((touches hair)) Uh, yeah. See, I kinda wanna go to the pier tonight. With Julie.

K: I bet you do.

B: And since I don't have a car..

K: Or a licence.

B: ((hangs head)) Or a licence. ((sighs)) I was wondering if you could give us a ride.

K: 'Kay. ((stands))

B: ((looks up at K)) That's it? No jokes, no insults, no blackmail?

K: ((walking away)) No.

B: Wow! Thanks! ((Thinks a second)) Wait. You're gonna wait until we're in the car and then you're going to make my life miserable, aren't you?

K: ((smiles and slams the door shut, breaking off the handle)) Knob's broken!

B: ((hangs head)) This should be fun.

-

K is driving his car ((muscle car, looks sporty, Camaro? Mustang?)) with Gwen in the front passenger seat and Ben and Julie in the back seat. Kevin catches Ben's eye in the rearview mirror and Ben looks away quickly.

K: ((putting on a mock adult voice and raising a finger)) Now remember Benny boy, your mother and I want you home by ten o'clock sharp or you can't go to the disco.

J: ((turns sharply to look at B)) Disco??

B: He watches a lot of reruns.

G: ((to K)) Give him a break, Kevin.

K: ((still in mock adult voice)) Gosh, pumpkin, what do you mean?

G: ((snapping)) You know exactly what I mean! ((In the back, Ben puts a hand over his face))

At least when Ben likes a girl, he lets her know, he asks her out. Maturity! Isn't that a novel approach? ((crosses arms, K looks embarrassed))

K: ((sing-song voice)) Ben's got a girlfriend, Ben's got a girlfriend! ((snickers))

B: ((face covered, puts his head down and sighs))

As the car drives down the road, we see that it is followed by the stolen police car, which is galloping down the road. Kevin stops to let B and J out. The shot widens to reveal the police car, standing on its rear wheels and 'hiding' behind a street light.

The next shot shows a laptop inside the police car with two tracking dots beeping, each with the symbol of the Omnitrix next to it.

-

Ben and Julie are walking along the pier.

B: Listen, uh, sorry about Kevin.

J: Why is he so mean to you?

B: It makes him happy.

J: ((laughs)) You're nice to let him.

B: ((looking around at the quieter pier)) Slow night. This place is packed on weekends.

J: Good. ((links arms with Ben)) This way, we have the place to ourselves.

B: Yeah, guess we do ((smiling at J. The Omnitrix suddenly begins beeping loudly and J steps away, covering her ears with her hands))

J: Is that a watch?

B: ((looks upset as he covers the Omnitrix with his hand)) Yeah, really have to get it fixed.

You like cotton candy? Good. You stay here, I'll be back. ((he runs around the corner as Julie watches))

B: ((sitting down behind a counter)) Typical. Everything's going great then this freaks out on me ((hitting the watch)).

Meanwhile, the alien creature is in its original form, bounding toward the entrance of the pier. It stops when it sees Ben then turns and heads toward the bumper car arena.

Ben smacks his wrist against the counter and the Omnitrix stops beeping.

B: That's more like it ((stands up)).

Ben hears screaming and looks up to see people fleeing the bumper car arena. The alien has taken over one of the cars and it leaps over the fence, directly at Ben. Ben backs away and the alien rears up, a mouth appearing on the underside of the car. It advances on Ben.

B: That can't be good.

Ben runs and the alien chases. He leaps over barrels which the alien ploughs through. Ben jumps over the cotton candy cart, with the vendor shouting: Watch it! Ben shouts back: Sorry! And keeps running.

The vendor leaps out of the way as the alien crashes through, bouncing down the walkway and coming to a stop. It shakes its head (still in bumper car form) and 'looks' around, spotting

Ben climbing a large ride.

B: ((looks down at it)) What is this, “When Carnival Rides Attack”??

The alien sends out a signal which causes the Omnitrix to begin beeping again, with Ben trying to shush it. The alien rams the pole causing Ben to fall directly into the car. It drives away with Ben.

B: Okay, I'm so over this.

Ben climbs up on the hood and leaps up, grabbing a line of flags as they drive beneath it. He swings there as the alien continues. He jumps down and the alien turns around to face him.

B: ((waving jacket like a matador)) Hey! Uppo, uppo, andale! (Spanish?)

The alien races toward his jacket, which Ben pulls away just in time to reveal a pillar, which the alien crashes into and falls over, apparently wrecked.

B: ((puts jacket back on)) I hope there's a simple explanation for all this. But I kinda doubt it. ((He walks away))

The alien lets go of the car and assumes its own form, slithering away.

Ben meanwhile walks into the cotton candy vendor from earlier.

V: Kid. You and me got a date with my insurance adjustor!

B: Date? ((slaps his hand to his face and screams)) Aaah! ((He takes two cotton candies and gives the vendor money)) Look, here's my allowance; it's all I've got! ((he runs away and the vendor pockets the money, smiling and shrugging))

-

J: ((on the phone, looks sad)) ...and then he ran off, and I've been – ((sees Ben, covers mouth and speaks quietly into the phone, happily)) Wait, he's coming back. Later.

B: Sorry. You would not *believe* the line. ((high voice, lying))

J: ((hands on hips, looks angry)) Ben. There's nobody here.

B: Umm, except at the concession stand, where they're doing *huge* business!

J: ((looks down, sad)) I thought you'd stood me up.

B: ((speaks quietly, more genuinely)) Julie. I'd never, ever do that to you. ((Holds out candy)) Look, I got pink and blue. Your pick! ((smiling))

J: ((smiles and takes the pink))

B: ((takes a bite of the blue and grins, his teeth stained blue))

J: ((laughs))

The scene closes on a shot of Ben and Julie standing together under the signboard for the Pier.

-

Back at the crashed shuttle, a hand touches the console and is electrocuted. The person is not shown but the audience hears a person shouting in pain.

-

At the pier, Ben and Julie are looking at the rides. They stop at a jet fighter ride.

J: This looks fun!

B: Especially if you don't mind wrenching G-forces and waves of nausea! ((out of their sight, the alien hops up and takes control of the ride))

J: ((laughs)) are you saying you don't want to ride it?

B: No.. ((smiles)) I'm saying it's a good thing I didn't get us the cheeseburgers! ((Ben sees the ride

take on the colours of the alien bumper car)) Uh oh.

J: ((facing B)) You okay?

B: Me? Fine, no problem. Listen, maybe we should skip this one.

J: Ben.. are you hiding something? ((smiling))

B: ((holds hands up)) No, no secrets here! ((forced grin)) My life's an open book. Just your basic, regular guy! ((looks up at the ride)) Here we go again..

B: ((The ride towers over Ben and Julie and Ben grabs Julie's hand and pulls her)) This way!

J: ((looking up at the alien, screams as it slams a wing down alongside them))

The ride, a jet, attempts to pull free of the mounting.

B: ((with J, runs around a corner and opens a door. He directs J into the room)) You stay here for a minute.

J: What are you going to do?

B: Uh, bathroom? ((He shuts the door as the Omnitrix begins beeping. The alien is still struggling to get free. The Omnitrix is displaying an alien silhouette and Ben raises his arm)) This looks like a job for Jet Ready!

Before he can activate the Omnitrix, the alien jet breaks free, causing the entire pier to shake. Ben stumbles, looking up, then looks back at the Omnitrix. The alien silhouette has now changed to a different alien. He activates it anyway and transforms into an alien resembling a crab. (?)

B: Ugh.. I'm not Jet Ready.. I'm a seafood platter! Hmm.. and apparently one possessed of a highly advanced intellect. Ergo perhaps I should assign this new life form a more *apropos nom de geurre*... What say.. Brain Storm! ((electricity bolts shoot around the alien's head))

The alien jet is hovering above the pier, searching for Ben. It spots Brain Storm and targets him, swooping down to knock him over.

B: ((is knocked over, slides down the pier then gets up)) Now, I am most decidedly miffed. ((Brain Storm's head opens to reveal a brain, from which electricity shoots out at the alien jet. The jet dodges)). What the deuce?!

The jet shoots electricity back at Ben, who creates an energy ball around him to serve as a shield. Julie opens the door and steps out. Ben creates a second energy shield for her, connected to his. He lifts her up, away from the bolts of lightning and across the pier as the building J was in explodes.

Seeing Julie, the alien frowns and flies over Ben in her direction. Ben shoots a burst of energy from his alien head, hitting the jet directly. It loses control and crashes, sliding off the pier and into the water along with a ride.

B: ((walking over and looking at the water)) And good riddance, might I say. ((Ben scuttles into a public toilet stall and transforms back into human form. He runs out, dashing around a corner and knocking over a trash can, arriving at Julie's side)) Hey, did I miss anything?

J: What? Wait, you didn't see that?

B: See what?

Behind them, the ride that was swept off the pier rises from the water and is transformed by the alien creature.

J: That!

She is swept up by the alien ride and ends up sitting inside a pod attached to the alien's arm. J takes out her phone and begins dialing, but loses her balance and the phone falls to the pier, breaking.

J: Beeeenn!

The alien begins swinging its arms around, smashing pods against the pier in an attempt to crush Ben. Ben dodges, then cries out as the part of the pier he is standing on breaks away. He grabs the edge and hangs on as the alien swings Julie away. She calls to him again and B responds: Julie! Nooooo!

B: ((hanging from the pier, looks at the Omnitrix)) This is just not my night. ((The plank he's hanging onto breaks and he falls into the water. He transforms into an alien and flies out of the water as an alien)). None of this makes any sense. Why am I being attacked by carnival rides?? And why do they have Julie?

The alien ride is meanwhile making its way along a highway, with Julie still in a pod.

J: Put me down!

B: ((flying overhead)) I can't hit it with the neuroshock, I might hurt Julie. So, I'll try the indirect approach.. ((swoops down and zaps two light poles, causing them to fall and trap the alien ride's feet)).

The alien stumbles, trapped. It struggles to wrench itself free, finally doing so and in the process one of its pods flies free, hitting Ben in mid flight. Ben falls to the ground but appears unhurt. He flies up again, searching for the alien and Julie.

J: ((in the distance)) Let me go! Let me go!

B: ((turns to the sound)) Gotcha! ((He swoops down and finds the alien ride)) What have you done with Julie?

J: ((steps out from behind the alien ride)) I'm here. And.. how do you know my name?

B: ((looks guilty, swoops down to stand on the ground)) Julie, don't be scared, it's me! It's..

Ben ((hangs his head and looks miserable))

J: You're a.. monster?

B: No. Well.. Yes. Actually, I'm, like, ten monsters.

J: ((smiles)) Cool!

B: ((Transforms back to human then takes a step forward to J)) Cool?

The alien ride behind them moves and begins making a noise.

B: ((gesturing to J)) Excuse me, we're talking here.

J: Ben, I think it's trying to tell you something.

The alien keeps making a noise, gesturing at them then at the crashed shuttle.

B: ((realising what the alien is trying to say)) Ship! You brought us out here to find that spaceship, right?

The alien leaves the ride, which falls over. Ben's Omnitrix begins beeping again. He looks at it then runs toward the ship, stopping outside when he sees a second alien inside.

B: Wait. I've seen that thing before.

J: You have?

B: Kinda. I used to be able to turn into one of those. Called myself Upgrade. ((The alien in the ship (A2) cries out as it is electrocuted))

J: Well whatever it is, it's hurt. ((She moves toward it))

B: ((puts arm out to stop her)) Get any closer to that energy field and it'll fry you like a potato. ((They see symbols flashing on a screen))

J: What's that say?

B: Sorry, I don't read alien. ((Ship, the first alien, rubs against Ben's leg to get his attention)) You're what's behind all this?

Ship: ((makes a noise))

B: Okay..Ship?

Ship: ((takes form of alien shuttle, then explodes, resuming normal form))

J: Okay, now I know it's trying to tell you something.

B: ((looks at the flashing symbols)) It's a countdown. That thing's gonna explode! ((Ben quickly activates the Omnitrix, turning into a large, powerful beast.)) Humungosaur!

Ben goes through the energy field, grabbing the power source/bomb and throws it into the sky where it explodes. He quickly crouches over J and Ship, protecting them.

J: ((after the explosion, with B still crouching over her)) Um. Explosion's over.

B: Right ((twiddles fingers, smiling, before going to remove debris that has trapped A2)) There you go.

A2: Yes uh, well as I was saying before I lost consciousness, I extruded this symbiote, the one you call Ship – ((Ship says its name)) – thank you, and set it off to find the nearest Plumber.

J: Because your sink was clogged?

B: No.. Plumbers are intergalactic police officers ((J looks unconvinced)) – I'll explain later. ((To A2)) And that's why it came after me?

A2: Well of course. Didn't you receive its distress signal?

B: You mean.. the beeping? ((points at Omnitrix symbol))

A2: ((dips head)) Yes. That beeping. Don't you know how that works?

B: Not so much, no.

A2: Really? Aren't you a Plumber?

B: I thought you were.

A2: ((sighs and mutters, holding its head)) gonna spend the rest of my life here-- ((Speaks normally)) Look, is there anyone else I can talk with? ((looks around))

B: Not really.

J: That's why Ship tried to get your attention.

B: ((transforms into human form)) Get my attention? He wrecked the pier, he kidnapped you! ((Julie and Ben turn to look at A2))

A2: ((crosses arms)) Well I needed help.

B: That's pretty obvious.

A2: ((sighs)) and you wonder why most aliens only communicate with your livestock. ((Sighs)) Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to repair my warp drive ((turns away and pushes buttons in the shuttle))

J: Come on now, be nice. After all, you guys are practically related. ((turns to A2)) There anything we can do to help?

A2: Well, uhh ((looks down)) I suppose.. Very well.

-

Ben and Julie are standing on the shuttle, repairing the last part.

J: There, now it's on tight.

B: I uh.. I guess this is probably the worst date you've ever had, huh? ((looks anxious))

J: ((smiles)) No, not the worst. Just different. And being different is fine. ((She leans closer to B and puts her hand on his))

-

Ben and Julie are on the ground with Ship, watching the shuttle hovering.

A2: ((inside the shuttle)) Right, well. Well done. Off I go.

B: Wait! What about this thing? ((gestures to Ship)) Doesn't he.. blorp back into your body or something?

A2: "blorp"... ((taps fingers)) That's not how it works. Besides, you and he have had such a lovely bonding experience. ((Begins closing shuttle doors)) He's yours now.

The shuttle blasts off into space while Ship rubs against Ben's leg.

J: He's cute! Are you going to keep him?

B: ((looks down at Ship, who is panting))

-

It's sunrise and Ben and Gwen are walking along the road with Ship. Julie stops and leans on Ben, stretching her leg, they look exhausted.

J: Actually, this part of the date? I'm not enjoying.

B: Yeah.. sorry I can't fly us home. But after so many quick changes, the Omnitrix shut down to recharge.

J: Well, doesn't matter, we're both gonna get grounded for a month after being out so late. ((sees a truck approaching)) Great, here comes somebody! ((The two begin waving their arms at the truck)) Stop!

B: Wait! ((The truck goes by and Ship follows, imitating the horn sound)) Well. So much for bonding. ((Ben and Julie continue walking, now holding hands.))

## Appendix 5

### Series 2: *Alien Force*: 204: “Save the Last Dance”

#### Todorov:

- Equilibrium: Ben continues using the Omnitrix to assist people.
- Disruption: Ben's powers are out of control – the Omnitrix malfunctions and he keeps transforming into Big Chill and eating metal.
- Recognition: Julie sees Ben's strange behaviour and enlists Gwen and Kevin's help.
- Action: The trio attempt to fight Ben but realise that his alien had built a nest and laid eggs.
- Restoration: Big Chill, Ben's alien, returns to regular behaviour.

#### Propp:

Hero: Julie

Helper: Gwen, Kevin

Magical agent: Gwen and Kevin's respective powers

Donor: Inherited

Villain: Ben (at first)

Binary oppositions	
Ben	Julie
Ben as himself	Ben under the influence of Big Chill
Active	Mental
Kevin	Gwen
Anxious, embarrassed	Confident, supportive
Boy	Girl

## 204: Transitivity analysis

### Ben

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
Riding his bike	Wonders where	“That's no joyride”	Asks why Kevin
Transforms into alien	shard of metal came	Says Kevin looks	wants to know what
Flies after the runaway car	from	“dapper”	he knows about
Freezes water to form ice ramp	Thinks something		girls
Grabs car bumper and stops	might be wrong		Admits to blacking
the car from falling	with his powers		out after using
Bites into the car	Hopes Kevin can		powers
Brushing teeth	help him		Demands more
Walks in front of Kevin	Thinks he can talk		metal
Walks away from Kevin	to Julie while she		Offers pickles to
Passes notepad to Julie	practices		Kevin
Transforms into Jetray then	Is unsure about his		Agrees that he and
immediately into Big Chill	problem		Kevin have a
Flies away	Thinks Julie's plan		problem
Presses intercom button	sounds good		Asks Kevin to trust
Swallows metal tray	Wonders how she		him
Pulls intercom off the wall and	will keep up with		Reminds Kevin that
eats it	him		Gwen wants to go
Using his power, he begins	Surprised by		to the dance with
destroying and eating parts of	Kevin's sudden		him
a car port	appearance		Advises Kevin to be
Takes off and lands on roof	Thinks the problem		himself
Begins eating metal statue	is his		Agrees that he likes
Flies off	malfunctioning		pickles
Leads Julie to dead end then	powers		Tells Kevin that
flies away	Wonders where		Gwen likes yellow
Ben searches the fridge and	Julie is		roses
takes a jar of pickles	Thinks Kevin and		Suggests that Kevin
Eats pickles	Max were close		get Gwen a nice
Ben eating pickles and looking	enough in size		corsage.
through a closet	Wonders if they		Admits he had a
Finds and holds up suit	have more pickles		problem with an
Still eating pickles	Worried		alien before
Walks over to Kevin and ties	Surprised he turned		Warns policemen
the bowtie correctly	into Big Chill		Tells Gwen, Julie
Finishes the pickles and drinks	Thinks Julie takes		and Kevin to go
the juice	great notes		away
Leaves the room	Is not surprised she		Refuses their help
Activates Omnitrix and	gets straight As		Warns them to stay
transforms into Big Chill	Can't believe this is		away from the
Flies away	happening again		metal heap
Eating metal at a foundry	Wonders if this is		Tells the creatures
Freezes a policeman	similar to a		to fly
Freezes the other two	previous problem		Insists he can give

policemen Jumps up to a large tank and drinks molten metal Flies outside and away Blows icy wind at Julie's scooter Flies away to the crater Spits molten metal into it Dodges Kevin's swipe and grabs his metallic arm, biting it Grapples with Gwen's energy blast Blows icy wind at the girls Swoops down at Julie Struggles out of the trap and flies to Julie Stands up (still alien) Transforms to human Jumps on the back of Julie's scooter	with an alien Feels he is on his own Confused about what happened Shocked at the creatures Upset at being called "Mommy" Feels embarrassed		good advice
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## Julie

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
Practicing tennis Walks off the court Drives her scooter after Ben Takes notes of Ben's activities Chases Ben on her scooter Standing under a lamp post, looking through notepad Goes to meet Gwen Hugs Gwen Jumps on scooter to pursue Ben Pursues Ben away from the foundry Drives scooter to Ben's location Runs into the crater after Gwen Runs to the heap of metal Touches the floating	Thinks Ben's blackout is weird Thinks they will figure out the problem Thinks Ben (as alien) is hungry Realises they have a problem Realises Ben only wants to consume metal Is unsure if Ben will show up Was worried about Ben Has kept detailed notes about Ben Worried that Gwen has hurt Ben Thinks the creatures are cute Thinks Ben made a good "mommy"	Asks if Ben's problem is serious Describes his behaviour as "not right" Calls Ben leading her to a dead end "Great".	Suggests that she follow Ben when he transforms Tells Ben to pass her her notepad Suggests she keep a record of Ben's actions Asks Ben to wait so she can talk to him Asks if Gwen has seen Ben Suggests they ask Gwen and Kevin for help Reminds Ben he is not alone – he has her Begs policemen not to shoot Ben Asks Ben not to hurt the policemen Informs Gwen and Kevin that Big Chill is on a rampage Refuses to be left out,

blue bubble Throws her notepad away Drives Ben and her home			says she is going with Gwen and Kevin Declares they want to help Ben Suggests Ben sits down Suggests Ben and her get going
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## Gwen

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
Walks to Kevin and drops card Uses her energy power on Kevin Walks away Runs into the crater to Ben Uses her energy power to distract Ben Blasts energy to deflect icy wind Steps in front of Julie Uses power to trap Ben Blasts energy at Ben twice Dances with Kevin	Crosses arms Sighs twice Is certain Ben will show up Worries about Kevin not showing up Thinks Kevin is acting strangely Admires Kevin's appearance Wonders how Kevin knew she likes yellow roses Skeptical that Ben gave Kevin good advice and tied his bowtie Disbelieves Ben's behaviour Remembers Julie saying Ben was behaving strangely Thinks Ben is in trouble Thinks there might be a connection between Big Chill and Ghostfreak Thinks that the metal heap is the cause of Ben's problems Thinks the creatures are cute Thinks they should have figured out the problem from Ben giving good advice Sad that the night was not so good Sad they missed the dance	Implies Ben is strange/behaving strangely	Asks if something is wrong Declares that Ben definitely will show up Admits she made him ask her to the dance Thanks Kevin for the corsage Refuses to go in to the dance Declares to Julie that she (Gwen) and Kevin will handle Ben Informs Kevin that one of Ben's aliens went rogue a while back Suggests ghost aliens might be evil Offers Ben help

## Kevin

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
Working on his car	Surprised at Gwen's acceptance	Says Grandpa Max wasn't the skinniest guy out there	Asks if Gwen wants him to take her to the dance
Jumps up to follow Gwen	Thinks Gwen expects him to take her to the dance	Says he is not like the prep guys from Gwen's school	Asks what Ben knows about girls
Walks away from Ben	Worries about the dance and making mistakes,	Says metal heap looks evil	Tells Ben to forget about the pickle
Inspects the tuxedo	embarrassing himself	Calls the creatures Ben's kids	Declares that he and Ben have a major problem
Places bowtie around his neck	Thinks he should rent instructional DVDs	Calls Ben "Mommy"	Jokes about being sensitive but retracts it
Attempts and fails to tie it	Angry at Ben's disappearance		Admits Ben told him about the roses and tied his bowtie
Walks to the mirror and inspects himself	Worries that he has nothing to wear to the dance		Invites Gwen to dance
Holds out a hand and practices asking, "Want to dance?"	Wonders if the borrowed tuxedo will work		Announces they will save Ben either way
Knocking on a door	Judges the tuxedo as "Not bad"		Declares he's going to "smack some sense into [Ben]"
Gives Gwen a corsage	Wonders if the bowtie is supposed to come with clips		Demands that Ben stop biting his arm
Driving himself and Gwen to the dance	Thinks Ben really likes pickles		Informs Julie that he has seen Ben take worse hits
Parks car and jumps out to open Gwen's door	Worried that he does not know what a corsage is		Suggests they take down the metallic heap
Hits the car bonnet with fist	Anxious, trying to remain calm		Invites Gwen to dance
Jumps into car and drives off to Ben's location	Thinks he looks good		
Slides into the crater	Thinks he should have brought gum		
Touches metal to transform	Shocked at/admires Gwen's appearance		
Runs at Ben and tries to hit him	Dismayed that Gwen does not want to go in to the dance		
Transforms into a stone version of himself	Is upset when he thinks Gwen is embarrassed to be		
Moves away from Ben			
Transforms into metal			
Jumps to the top of the heap of metal			
Smashes the metal to create a hole			
Transforms to human			
Turns on the car stereo			
Dances with Gwen			

	seen with him Wonders why Gwen thinks Ben is in trouble Angry that Ben tore his suit Disgusted at the goo on his suit Disbelief that the girls think the creatures are cute Thinks the creatures were weird Consults the device for information Doubts Ben will see the creatures again Thinks they should have figured out the problem from Ben's pickle craving		
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## 204: Transcription

Scene opens on a street where two young men are in a car which is veering across the road. The driver is having difficulty controlling the car.

C1: Slow down!

C2: ((pumps brakes)) I can't! The brakes don't work! ((screams and swerves to avoid a car))  
Aah! You're making me nervous! Stop screaming!

C1: You're screaming! Why can't I scream?!

C2: Fine! You want to drive?! ((both scream as the car swerves around a corner))

Ben: ((riding his bike alongside the road when the car narrowly misses hitting him)) Hey! Student drivers! ((the car grazes a parked car as the tyres screech and glass shatters. Ben dismounts his bike and removes his helmet)) That's no joyride. ((He activates the Omnitrix and selects an alien then transforms)) Big Chill!

As the winged alien, Ben flies after the runaway car, finding it as it crashes through a bridge barrier and plunges over the edge. As the alien, Ben swoops into the water then back up, freezing a column of it as he flies toward the falling car. The car passes through Ben (alien power) and lands on the ice ramp, sliding down. Ben grabs the back bumper and braces himself, managing to stop the car from falling into the water.

Both boys exit the vehicle

C2: What is that thing?

C1: Who cares? He saved our lives. T-thank you.

Ben: ((still in alien form, turns to the car and starts taking bites out of it))

C2: Hey, what do you think you're- ((Ben turns to growl at him))

—

Next scene opens inside a garage, where Kevin is working under his car. In an adjoining room, Ben is looking at his reflection while brushing his teeth. Spitting water out, Ben puts his finger in his mouth, pulling out a shard of metal and looking at it.

B: Where'd this come from? ((he knocks it against the tap))

In the garage Gwen walks up to Kevin, who is still working under the car. She drops a card next to him and crosses her arms.

G: ((sighs)) ((sighs loudly then uses her power to pull Kevin out from under the car))

K: Hey! ((looks up at Gwen, who is staring back at him with her hands on her hips)) What?

G: ((points at the card on the floor next to him. Kevin picks it up and opens it)) Oh, look! They're having a formal dance at my school on Friday.

K: What, you want me to take you to the dance?

G: Great! Pick me up at 7.

K: What?! Wait! ((Jumps up to follow her but Ben walks in front of him, making him stop))

B: I cannot stress enough the importance of flossing.

K: Uh-huh.

B: I found this in my teeth. ((holds up shard of metal and looks at it, stroking chin)) I think something might be going wrong with my powers.

K: Uh-huh. What do you know about girls?

B: Okay, that has...nothing to do with my problem. Why do you want to know?

K: Gwen's school is having some dance.

B: And?

K: I think she might expect me to take her.

B: So take her ((shrugs)).

K: But the dance is at Gwen's fancy prep school, with a sit-down dinner and everything. ((looks anxious, voice rises)) What if she expects me to waltz? What if I use the improper finger fork?!

B: ((calmly)) If she wants you to dance, you dance.

K: But I don't know --

B: Also, there's no such thing as a finger fork.

K: See? If I was a preppy guy, I'd know stuff like that.

B: You've saved the world. You've been to the Null Void and back. ((smiling)) I'm pretty sure you can handle the spring formal. ((Serious again)) The thing is, I'm having serious problems, and I was hoping you could help me --

K: ((places hand on Ben's shoulder)) I'd better rent a DVD on dancing, maybe get one about forks, just to be sure ((walks away)).

B: Thanks a lot. Really. ((walks away))

—

Scene opens with Julie practicing tennis at the court. She doesn't miss a shot.

Ben: ((waves)) Hey Julie.

J: ((stops and turns to Ben)) You're early. I've still got the court for another hour.

B: Yeah, I thought we could talk while you practice.

J: ((keeps playing)) Something serious?

B: I'm not sure. The last time I used my powers, I had a blackout.

J: Weird. You don't remember anything?

B: I remember slapping the Omnitrix, but that's all.

J: Easy enough to figure out what you're doing. How about you transform again, and I'll follow you? ((walks off the court)) Get my notepad from my bag. ((Ben retrieves the notepad and passes it to Julie)) I'll keep a record of everything you do. You can read it afterwards. We'll get to the bottom of this. ((smiles))

B: ((smiles)) Sounds good to me. But how are you going to keep up?

Scene fades away, then back into a new location: a parking lot. Julie is sitting on her scooter with Ben standing next to her.

J: Ready.

B: ((activates Omnitrix to show image of alien)) You remember Jetray?

J: From the pier.

B: Okay, here goes. ((slams the Omnitrix and transforms into Jetray, then immediately into Big Chill))

J: Big Chill? ((Ben as Big Chill begins flying away)) Okay. Fast!

Ben lands at a local shop with Julie pulling up on her scooter behind him.

J: ((takes out notepad and writes, then puts it away)) Followed Big Chill to burger shack. ((she drives alongside Ben))

B: ((as alien, walks up to intercom and keeps pressing the button))

J: ((writing)) Appears to be hungry.

Waitress: ((walks out the shop with a tray of food, walks toward Ben)) Here's your or-- ((screams as she sees the alien and tosses the tray of food. The tray falls on Ben's face and he swallows it))

J: ((writing)) Very hungry.

B: ((starts biting the intercom, pulling it off the wall. He swallows it then walks up to another patron. The guy turns to see Ben (as alien) and whimpers)) Scram. ((Guy jumps into car and races away))

As Julie watches, Ben tries to chew support beams and, when that fails, he uses his power to

freeze the structure. When it shatters, he begins to eat the pieces.

J: ((writing)) Support beams. Roof. We definitely have a problem here.

B: ((takes off, lands on roof and takes a bite out of a metal statue))

J: Seems only interested in eating metal.

B: ((bites the head off the statue, burping loudly))

J: ((watching)) Oh, that's not right.

B: ((in alien voice)) More.

((Ben flies off and Julie climbs on her scooter to pursue. She follows him as he flies down the street)) Big Chill! Ben! Wait up! I just want to talk to you!

B: ((turns into different streets, finally leading Julie to a dead end)) See ya! ((flies over wall as Julie screeches to a stop)).

J: Great.

—

Scene opens in a desolate area, Ben is lying on the ground in human form. He sits up and the view expands to reveal a large crater in front of him

—

Scene opens to establish location as Ben's house.

B: ((opens fridge, looking around inside)) They've got to be in here somewhere. ((Finds pickle jar and grabs it)) Score! ((opens jar and takes out a pickle, biting into it)) Mmm.

K: ((looking angry)) Where have you been? ((Ben shouts in surprise))

B: ((offers jar to K)) You want a pickle?

K: No!

B: ((unconcerned)) More for me.

K: Will you forget about the pickle? We've got a major problem.

B: I know. It's my powers. They're completely out of control. Yesterday, Julie and I-- Oh, man, where's Julie?!

K: Who cares?! (( angry)) I got nothing to wear to the dance!

--

Scene changes to show Ben browsing through clothes in a closet while eating a pickle.

K: You sure this thing is gonna work?

B: Trust me. It's one of grandpa Max's tuxes.

K: Grandpa Max wasn't the skinniest guy out there.

B: ((finds and holds up a tuxedo)) It's from when he was younger. You're the same size -- or close enough.

K: ((inspects tux))

—

Scene changes to show Kevin dressed in the tuxedo, adjusting a cuff.

K: Not bad ((looks pleased, he takes out an untied bowtie and places it around his neck, looking confused and frowning)). Aren't these things supposed to come with clips?

B: ((still eating pickles, smiling)) Not if you're older than 12.

K: ((attempting to tie bowtie, catches his finger in a knot)) Finger's caught.

B: ((puts down the pickle jar and walks over to Kevin)) It just takes practice. ((Ben proceeds to tie the bowtie correctly)) Over, under, around.

K: ((looking unhappy)) I'm not like all those prep guys from her school.

B: Which is why she wants to go to the dance with you and not one of them. Just be yourself. There -- don't you look dapper. ((dusts off K's shoulders))

K: ((looks down at bowtie and smiles))

B: ((finishes the last pickle then drinks the juice from the jar))

K: You sure like pickles. ((raised eyebrows))

B: Yeah. I wonder if we've got any more of these. ((Walks away, reaches door)) Oh, and

Gwen likes yellow roses. Get her a nice corsage. ((exits room, shutting door))

K: ((walks to mirror and straightens bowtie, looking at his reflection. He looks to the side, holding out a hand, speaking smoothly:)) Want to dance? ((expression changes to concern and he looks away)) What's a corsage?

—

Scene changes to show the time: 7:10pm. Julie is standing below a lamppost, looking through her notepad. She sees Gwen walking toward her and goes to meet her..

G: What's up?

J: Have you seen Ben?

G: No. Is something up?

J: I don't know. I haven't seen him since yesterday. ((concerned)) He turned into Big Chill, then disappeared.

G: ((looks unconcerned)) Yeah, he does that sometimes -- just part of being an alien.

J: I don't know.

G: I'm sure he'll show up.

J: I guess so. ((unsure))

G: ((firmly)) I know so. ((looks away)) I'm more worried about Kevin not showing up tonight.((Julie raises an eyebrow)) Ever since I made him ask me to the dance, he's been acting really strange. ((Gwen looks worried, then tilts head to look past Julie)) And speaking of strange: Hi, Ben. ((Ben was walking toward Julie's scooter, he turns to approach the girls)) ((Gwen touches J's arm)) Catch up with you guys later. ((Gwen leaves as Ben walks up to J))

J: ((hugging B)) I was so worried about you.

B: I'm a little worried, too.

J: Where did you go yesterday?

B: I don't remember. What happened?

J: ((flipping through notepad)) Let's see -- 6:30 pm: you transformed into Big Chill.

B: ((anxious)) Are you sure? I programmed Jetray.

J: At 6:31, you exclaimed, "Big Chill".

6:32: Ate drive-in stall., 6:33: ate giant metal burger. 6:36: ate giant metal statue eating giant metal burger. 6:38: ate a bus. 6:41: ate a car-wash sign. 6:42: ate the car wash. 6:43 --

B: Wow. You take great notes. No wonder you get straight As.

J: ((concerned)) You don't remember any of that?

B: I just remember waking up in a ditch this morning. ((turns away from J and looks down)) I can't believe this is happening again.

J: Again?

B: ((looking at J)) I had a problem with one of my aliens a few years ago. What if it's happening again?

J: We'll get Kevin and Gwen. They can help.

B: No, they're too busy with the dance. I'm on my own.

J: ((puts hand on B's shoulder)) You're not alone. You've got me. ((Ben smiles, then looks shocked, looking up))

J: ((steps back)) Ben?

B: ((activates Omnitrix, selects Big Chill and transforms as J shields eyes)) ((Ben says, in alien voice:)) Big Chill! ((He takes off, and J runs to her scooter, putting on her helmet))

—

Scene changes to show the outside of a foundry: Monongahela Foundry. Workers are running away as a police car drives in, sirens wailing.

Ben, in alien form, is inside the foundry picking up pieces of metal and eating them. Three policemen run inside the room, stopping when they see Big Chill.

Policeman1: What is that thing?

B: ((turns to look at the policemen)) Stay out of my way.

P1: ((draws gun)) That's not how it works, freak. ((Big Chill narrows eyes)) Come down here and surrender, or there's gonna be trouble!

B: I warned you. ((He inhales then exhales deeply, blowing ice at the policemen. They jump away but one of them is caught in the blast and remains frozen in place. Ben walks toward him.))

P1: Stop! Don't make me –

J: ((pulls up in her scooter and shouts)) Wait! He's a friend! Don't shoot!

B: ((hisses at the police and they fire weapons at him, which emit laser blasts))

–

Scene changes to show Kevin knocking on a door.

K: ((cracks neck)) It's just a dance, right? Nothing to worry about. I look pretty good. ((smiles briefly, back to looking anxious. He looks around then breathes on his hand before sniffing it.)) Ugh. Should've brought some gum.

((Gwen opens the door wearing a sleeveless, strapless white dress))

K: ((looks shocked)) Wow.

G: ((confident, smiling, hand on hip)) Likewise.

K: ((holds up a box)) I got this for you. It's a corsage.

G: It's beautiful. ((clasps hands)) Thank you, Kevin. ((he smiles and nods))

–

Scene changes back to the policemen firing weapons at Ben. Ben is depicted as an outline, walking toward them, and the lasers go straight through him without causing harm.

B: Some people just don't listen.

J: Don't hurt them!

B: They won't feel a thing. ((Ben blows ice over the two men, trapping them with only their heads sticking out. He jumps up to a large cauldron suspended above him and tips it over, pouring molten metal directly into his mouth. He drinks deeply then flies outside and away as Julie pursues on her scooter. While flying, Ben looks down to see her.)) Stay away! ((he blows a little icy wind at her scooter, causing ice to form then melt away as the engine sputters. He swoops away.))

J: ((pulls over)) Ben!

B: ((swoops down at the crater he woke up next to earlier. Standing at the edge, he spits out the molten metal, on to an assortment of metal parts.))

–

Scene changes to show Kevin's car driving down a road. Kevin surreptitiously looks at Gwen then adjusts his collar.

G: ((holding up a bouquet of roses, looking at K)) Yellow roses. How did you know?

K: I'm a sensitive guy with an eye for what the ladies like.

G: Really?

K: No. Actually, Ben told me. But he was really cool about it ((smiles)) -- gave me a lot of good advice.

G: Good advice? Ben? ((quizzical, laughing))

K: ((laughs)) Yeah. He tied my tie for me.

G: Ben? ((skeptical, surprised)) Gave you dating tips and helped you tie your tie? ((disbelief))

K: It could happen. ((looks away, they arrive at the school.))

G: ((looking down, thinking)) And Julie was saying something about him acting strangely.

K: ((parks car, jumps out and quickly runs over to open Gwen's door. He holds out a hand to her and suavely says:)) Let's dance.

G: ((seated, crossed arms)) We can't go in there.

K: ((dismayed)) But I learned the proper forks and everything! Outside to inside, right? Or -- or was that little to big? Aw, man! ((guttled))  
G: That's not the problem, Kevin.  
K: ((slams fist on car bonnet)) I knew it! You're embarrassed to go with me. ((unhappy))  
G: No! ((earnest)) It's just that I think Ben might be in some kind of trouble.  
K: ((anxious)) What makes you say that?

Gwen's cellphone rings. She takes it out of her bag and holds it up for K to hear.

J: ((over the phone)) : Big Chill's on a rampage!  
G: ((holds phone to her ear)) Where are you?  
J: ((sitting on her scooter)) Just outside the foundry, but he's gone.  
G: ((as K jumps into the car and closes door)) We'll handle it.  
J: Forget that. ((buckles helmet)) Ben's in trouble. I'm going, too.  
K: ((holding out a small disc that projects a map of the city with a red dot)) My badge has a lock on Ben's Omnitrix coordinates. It's outside of town, a mile west of Register Road, just North of Wigzell Avenue.  
J: I'll see you there. ((puts phone away and takes off on scooter)).

Gwen and Kevin are driving up a road with Gwen watching the projected map.

K: It's just up ahead.  
G: Julie said it was Big Chill doing this.  
K: Yeah?  
G: We had a problem with one of the aliens going rogue. It was Ghostfreak.  
K: Never liked that guy. What's your point?  
Maybe there's some connection between Big Chill and Ghostfreak -- like maybe these ghost personalities are just plain evil.  
K: Whatever. We'll save him either way, all right?  
They stop just behind Julie, who is sitting on her scooter looking outside the frame. Kevin and Gwen exit the car and look in the same direction. The scene changes perspective to show the crater. The trio walk up to the edge. Inside the crater, Big Chill (Ben) is sitting atop a heap of metal.  
K: Well, that looks plain evil.  
G: ((runs down into the crater, followed by Julie)) Ben! It's your friends. We can help you.  
B: Go away!  
K: ((slides into the crater)) Too much negotiating. ((he touches the metal, instantly transforming into a metal-covered version of himself)) I'm gonna smack some sense back into him.

Kevin runs at Ben and tries to hit him but Ben dematerialises so Kevin's arm passes through him. Ben rematerialises and grabs K's arm, biting it. The two fall off the heap onto the ground with Ben still chewing K's arm.

K: ((shocked)) Hey! Cut it out! ((K reaches out and touches a stone, transforming into a stone version of himself)).  
B: Huh? ((coughs and stands up, angry))  
K: ((moving away, looking at the hole in his suit, transforms to human)) Dude! ((waving fist in air)) I borrowed this suit!

Gwen sends a blast of pink energy shoots at Ben and he grapples with it on top of the heap of metal. He blows icy wind at Gwen and Julie (standing alongside her). Gwen uses her power to deflect the wind so that it misses the girls.

J: We're here to help! ((Gwen stops shooting energy))

B: I don't want any help!

He swoops down on Julie, who crouches with an arm raised in defence. Gwen quickly steps in front of J, creating a ball of energy that surrounds and traps Ben.

B: Let me out! ((J runs to the heap of metal)) Stay away from there! ((B struggles out of the trap, flying over J. A blast of energy from G distracts him, the second blast hits him and he falls to the ground.

J: You hurt him!

K: ((walks up to J holding his torn sleeve)) Not for long. I've seen him take worse.

G: ((joins them)) Whatever's wrong with him, it has to do with that thing. ((points to metal heap))

K: Then let's take it down.

Kevin touches a metal rod, transforms into metal and jumps to the top of the heap. He smashes his fists down and the metal breaks, splashing yellow goo all over him, making him transform back into a human.

K: ((recoils)) Nice. Goo all over my tux. ((disgusted))

Scene shifts to show the bubbling pool of goo

K: Agh! Maggot goo all over my tux.

A blue bubble rises from the goo, floating in the air at eye level. Julie walks up to it and touches it tentatively with G and K looking on. More blue bubbles rise, floating amongst the trio. A bubble unfolds to become a baby version of Big Chill.

G and J: Aww. ((smiling as the baby flies up to look at Julie))

K: ((unimpressed)) You've got to be kidding.

All the bubbles unfold and the creatures fly to Ben, who is still in alien form, lying on the ground. K, G and J look on. Ben stands up and the creatures remain floating around him for a few seconds, then all but one fly toward the moon. The last creature remains, staring at Ben. He cups his hands under it.

B: Go on. Fly. ((it flies off to join the rest))

K: Okay. ((K, G and J approach B)) That was weird.

B: ((transforms to human and looks confused)) What..just happened?

Kevin and Gwen look at each other and Julie pulls her notepad out of her pocket. She looks at it, flipping a couple of pages, then throws it over her shoulder.

J: You might want to sit down for this. ((B looks concerned))

--

Scene changes to show Julie sitting on her scooter, Ben sitting on a rock and Kevin and Gwen standing, facing Ben.

K: ((holding out a device that shows a video)) Yep. Those are your kids. ((close up of screen, showing the creatures))

B: How? ((shocked))

K: ((looking at device)) According to this, Necrofrigian -- that's Big Chill's race -- lays eggs only once every 80 years or so. They'll live in space, where it's cold, and then they feed on solar plasma. ((grins)) Doubt you'll ever see them again... Mommy.

B: ((frowning)) Cut it out!

K: ((crosses arms, grinning)) Should've figured it out from your pickle cravings.

G: ((walks up to K and places hand on his shoulder. They look at each other.)) And from Ben giving you good advice.

B: ((standing up)) Hey, I can give good advice! What about the time I (((looks away))). I, uh...

K: ((looking sideways at G and smiling)) It could happen.

J: ((looks at watch then starts scooter)) If you want a ride home, you'd better hop on. My curfew was half an hour ago.

B: ((walks over, puts on helmet and jumps on the scooter behind J.)) This is the most embarrassing.. ((looks upset))

J: ((smiling, looking at B)) I think you made a great mommy. ((B smiles and they drive off.))

G: ((sighs)) This didn't turn out to be such a good night after all. ((sad, looking up at the sky, then leans back to sit on the hood of the car, looking down.)) We missed the dance. ((dejected))

Kevin leans into the car and turns on the stereo, music plays softly and he extends an arm to Gwen. She smiles, takes his hand and they walk a few steps away to dance in front of the car's headlights, looking directly into each other's eyes.

The frame widens to show a few fireflies, then swings away from the couple to show the full moon.

## Appendix 6

### Series 3: *Ultimate Alien*: 102: “Duped”

#### Todorov:

- Equilibrium: All as normal (this stage not shown)
- Disruption: The Forever Knights and King Urien try to steal an ancient suit of armour.
- Recognition: Ben realises that he has three conflicting desires: fight King Urien, watch a new movie, and support Julie at her tennis match.
- Action: Ben transforms into 3 versions of himself and undertakes all three tasks. He realises that this is not working and he transforms into himself, defeating King Urien.
- Restoration: Ben is back to normal but has upset the rest of his team.

#### Propp:

Hero: Ben

Helper: Kevin

Magical agent: Ultimatrix

Donor: Alien

Villain: King Urien

Henchmen: Forever Knights

Binary oppositions	
Ben (as whole person)	Ben (split into three)
Mature	Immature
Capable	Unsuccessful in battle
Appropriately masculine	Feminine traits
Kind	Nasty
Polite	Rude

## 102: Transitivity analysis

### Ben

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
In alien form, tears tank apart	Angry at Knights	Calls G's reaction "harsh"	Explains his tardiness
Answers cellphone	Enjoying attention		Defends his behaviour
Tosses tank parts	Confused at J's reaction		Shouts apology
Walks away	Proud of fame		Congratulates J
Poses in tennis stadium	Thinks he can go see a movie		Defends his fame
Signs autograph	Confused at K's reaction		Apoogises
Waves at crowd	Thinks he can be in two places at once		Asks K for suggestions
Jumps over stands	Thinks K is right about the smack-talking		Explains to G
Runs to J	Glad J won her tournament		Complains to G
Uses cellphone to look up movies	Sad that his team are upset with him		Jokes with KU
Walks into men's restroom			Agrees with G
Transforms into Echo			Promises to make it up to J
Echo			Admits he saw the movie during her match
Transforms each alien into a version of himself			
Dodges KU			
Transforms into Lodestar			
Uses forcefield			
Intensifies forcefield			
Destroys KU's armour			
Defeats KU			

### Ben 1

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
Goes to the cinema	Did not think it would work		Explains that his movie opened today
Watches movie	Enjoying movie		Apologises to B2
Answers cellphone	Wonders where B2 is		
Leaves cinema to join B2			
Runs up to museum entrance			
Transforms into Big Chill			
Flies up			
Freezes Upchuck			
Flies up and freezes water			
Transforms into Echo			
Echo, then into single Ben			

## Ben 2

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
Joins K in going to museum Gets out of the car Transforms into Humongosaur Sings his own name Falls through hole in ground Takes cover from enemy fire Runs out and throws K Smack head on pipe Transforms to human Falls to ground Running away from KU Transforms into Upchuck Vomits acid Vomits acid on to ice Transforms into Echo Echo, then into single Ben	Wonders why B1 doubts himself Thinks B1 is smart and humble Thinks B1 deserves to go see the movie Hopes he did not keep K waiting Thinks G will forgive his transgression K is important to him Mission is important to him Thinking about K Does not think they talk about their feelings, their friendship Understands why they don't talk about this Thinks there is unresolved tension Does not blame K Thinks it is his own fault Thinking about team dynamics Understands K's anger Thinks K's response is interesting Wonders where the rumbling is coming from Does not think they meant to hurt K's feelings Thinks they are being hurtful Wonders why he must do something Thinks they should work toward a consensus Thinks they should respect their opponents Disappointed at how	Gwen as kind and forgiving despite appearing inflexible Smack talk as bad sportsmanship Villains are people too Says he is not himself today They are not doing too well	Offers to go with K Asks B3 to go to the tennis match Offers to go investigate the robbery Complains about pain Informs KU about the signs Asks if there were aliens in Central America Apologises for interrupting Asks if everyone is having a good evening Requests Ben 1 and Ben 3's help Explains that they were trying to be sensitive to everyone's needs Asks K to hold KU off

	little fun the battle is		
--	--------------------------	--	--

**Ben 3**

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
Staring at himself in mirror	Thinks B1 is a dope		Agrees to watch J's match
Shouting support for J	Thinks J likes the attention		Rude to G
Shouts insult at J's opponent	Enjoys the crowd's attention		Asks if G missed him
Loudly insults tennis and J	Is proud of himself		Promises he will speak to fan girl later
Answers cellphone	Angry at G		Apologises to announcer
Leaves stadium to join B2	Thinks J was supposed to lose		Sarcastic response to B1
Runs up to museum entrance			Rude question to K
Transforms into Cannonbolt			
Rolls toward KU			
Slips and falls			
Transforms into Echo			
Echo, then into single Ben			

## 102: Transcription

Scene opens on the grounds of a museum, showing two old men on a bench feeding pigeons. Suddenly, a tank rumbles down the main road and enters the museum driveway, passing the old men.

Inside the tank are two Forever Knights.

Knight1: Right, then. We go in fast, grab what we came for, and get out.

Knight2: Charging the cannon now.

Knight1: ((aiming the turret at the museum doors)) This will rip that door open like it was made of tissue paper!

Suddenly the roof is ripped off of the tank by Ben, in the form of a large, tiger-like alien.

B: Let me tell you something, Forever Knights. Nobody's ripping open nothing except Rath! ((one of the Knights shoots light blasts at Rath's face)) That's your first mistake. When you shoot Rath, it just makes Rath mad!

Rath roars at the Knights but is interrupted when his cellphone rings. He answers it.

B: Hellooo?

G: ((Gwen is in the stands at a Julie's tennis match)) Ben, where are you? Julie's in the middle of her set! ((On the court, Julie plays well.))

B: Let me tell you something, Gwen Tennyson: I was on my way there, when I saw this tank pull up to the museum and-

G: I don't care. Get here! ((she hangs up))

B: That was harsh. ((he turns back to the Knights, but they are no longer in the tank)) Now, where were we?!

Both Knights run, screaming, past the old men on the bench who calmly continue feeding pigeons. Rath roars at them, tears the tank into pieces and throws them after the Knights. One of the pieces lands in a lake behind the old men.

B: ((gesturing at the men)) What? It was already busted!

-

Scene opens at tennis stadium.

Announcer: Welcome back to our coverage of the National Junior Tennis Championships, where an exciting semi-final round is in progress. Newcomer Julie Yamamoto is at match point.

((audience cheers, cameras flash at the entrance to the stands)) Hold on. ((Ben steps out into the stands, at first surprised but then posturing in front of the audience)) There's a celebrity in the crowd -- the infamous teenage media sensation Ben Tennyson.

Ben makes his way down the stands, stopping to sign an autograph for a girl. He turns and waves to the stadium and is roughly pulled down into his seat by Gwen.

Julie serves, but the ball hits the net.

Announcer: Fault.

B: ((shouting in a silent stadium)) Sorry!

G: ((elbows him)) Shh!

Julie serves again, her opponent misses.

Announcer: Game, set, match.

Audience cheers, Ben jumps over the stands and runs on to the court.

B: Nice game, Julie!

J: ((angry)) How would you know? ((she walks away))

B: ((surprised, confused)) What? What did I say?

G: ((K standing behind her)) It's what you did, Ben. You were late, and when you finally showed up, you made a big entrance and completely blew her concentration.

B: I can't help if I'm famous, right? ((shrugs, waves at crowd then looks down)) I'm sorry. It won't happen again.

G: It better not. The finals are in three hours. That should be enough time for you to figure out how to make this up to her. ((G walks away))

B: ((asking K)) Any suggestions?

K: Yeah, there's a plan – ask me for girlfriend advice.

–

Elsewhere in an underground throne room, two Forever Knights kneel before King Urien.

King Urien: Explain yourselves.

Knight1: We attempted to show initiative, King Urien.

KU: And by doing so, you revealed our intentions to our enemies. And lost our sole remaining plasma-beam tank.

Knight2: We didn't lose it, Sire. It's right outside the museum. Ben Tennyson tore it into tiny pieces, but-

Knight1: We know exactly where. ((chuckles nervously)) Actually, it is almost funny when you think about it.

KU: Do you know what else amuses? ((KU blasts the Knight with light energy))

Knight1: Aah! ((falls to ground, does not get up))

KU: I can see that if I'm ever to restore the honor of this pathetic organization, it will require a more hands-on approach.

–

Scene opens inside stadium building, where Ben runs after Gwen.

B: Come on, Gwen! Wait up! Okay, so I was a little late. I was kind of busy.

G: ((crosses arms)) And this tournament is important to her.

K: ((walks up to join them)) If we're doing important, maybe we could try figuring out why those Forever Knights were trying to bust into that museum.

G: ((hands on hips)) Forever Knights? Like that's a big riddle. ((Ben quietly moves away))

They're trying to steal some piece of alien technology so they can slay dragons or take over the world or whatever.

K: So, now we just ignore them when they try and take over the world?

G: They're always taking over the world, but this is Julie's first professional tournament. We should be supporting her. She should be the center of attention, especially from Ben. ((G hears beeping and turns to see Ben typing on his phone)) What are you doing?

B: I was thinking that while we were waiting around, I could go and catch "Sumo Slammers: The Movie".

K: You're either the bravest man alive or the dumbest.

B: What?

K: Okay, the dumbest.

B: It's opening today. And there's a 2pm show just a few blocks-((G puts her hand over his mouth))

G: No.

B: But it's "Sumo Slammers" – in 3D! ((loud whiny voice))

G: Ben.

B: It's their first live-action movie. Everybody knows live action is better than cartoons.

G: ((loudly)) Benjamin Kirby Tennyson, don't even think about it. ((points finger)) You can't be in two places at once. ((she and K walk away))

B: ((quietly)) Or maybe I can.

He walks into the men's restroom, checking that no one is around. He uses the Ultimatrix to transform into a set of three identical aliens called Echo Echo.

Echo echo 1: Okay, boys, set your Ultimatrix to "Human" and follow my lead. ((all three turn

the device on their chests)) On the count of 10: One, two, TEN! ((each alien transforms into a version of Ben))

Ben 1: I didn't really think that was going to work.

Ben 2: Why not? You're a smart guy. You don't give yourself enough credit for that.

Ben 3: I don't know. ((crossed arms)) I think you're kind of a dope.

Ben 1: Yeah? Well, this dope's going to see "Sumo Slammers".

Ben 2: You work hard. You deserve to treat yourself every now and then. Tell you what -- I'll go with Kevin and keep an eye out for those Forever Knights.

Ben 1: Perfect. And you....

Ben 3: ((staring at own reflection)) What?

Ben 2: We were thinking you could go watch Julie play in the tournament. After all, she's always so nice to us. It's only right that we-

Ben 3: Yeah, fine. Whatevs.

Ben 3 walks out and over to Gwen, who has been waiting.

G: Where have you been? Julie's match is about to start.

B3: I'm here. Why don't you put a sock in it?

G: Whoa. What's with all the attitude?

B3: I'm Ben Classic. Miss me? ((They walk away))

Ben 2: ((joins Kevin)) Hello, Kevin. Hope I didn't keep you waiting.

K: Didn't I just see you with Gwen?

B 2: I guess so. Didn't you want to go investigate the Forever Knights robbery?

K: Yeah, but Gwen's pretty mad at you. You better-

B 2: Gwen might seem inflexible, but her heart is as big as all outdoors. She'll forgive my transgression.

K: Gwen will forgive you? Gwen Tennyson?

B 2: This mission's important to you, and you're important to me, my good friend. Let's go. ((walks away))

K: ((suspicious)) Something's definitely wrong here, but so far, it's working out for me. ((follows B2))

Ben 1: ((peeps out from the bathroom)) Julie's covered, Kevin's covered, and I'm off to the movies. ((he walks off))

-

In the sewers, King Urien leads his knights through tunnels, blasting through walls and tunneling through.

KU: Onward, my Knights. This time, nothing will stop us from gaining power beyond all reckoning.

-

On the court, Julie prepares to serve.

Ben 3: ((in silent stadium)) Go, Julie! Whoo-hoo! Julie Yamamoto is number one, baby! ((hoots))((G pulls him down)) What?

G: You're embarrassing her!

B3: ((dismissive)) She loves the attention.

G: No, she doesn't. ((on the court, Julie looks down, upset))

B3: ((looks down)) My bad. ((G looks away, B3 goes to the top of the stairs and shouts))

Hey, other girl! You're a terrible tennis player, and my girlfriend's gonna kick your butt!

((Julie looks worriedly at her opponent, who looks angry. Crowd murmurs, takes photographs of Ben and approach him))

Announcer: What's happening up there?

J: Uh, that's my.. boyfriend.

Announcer: You must be very proud. ((sarcastic))

Reporter: Ben, any comment on Will Harangue's editorials? He says you're a menace.

B3: Yeah? I say TV is a dead medium. Sorry, man. You know it's true.

A girl approaches Ben 3: I'm your biggest fan!

B3: ((G looks on)) Well, that makes two of us. ((G's eyes glow pink))

Girl: ((twirling hair)) Is that really your girlfriend on the court?

B3: Hey, things cha- ((G shoots light at B3's head)) ow! What? I'm just having fun.

Announcer: ((blows whistle)) Would you mind?!

B3: ((to girl)) We'll talk later. ((shouts:)) Sorry, Ref!

Julie begins playing, G returns to seat.

—

Meanwhile, Ben 2 and Kevin pull up in K's car outside the museum. They talk inside the car.

K: Whatever the Knights wanted, you kept them from getting it. I say we stake out the museum and wait till they try- ((notices B2 staring at him)) What? Do I have corn dog on my face?

Ben 2: No. I'm just thinking about how long we've known each other.

K: Why?

B2: Because I don't think we've ever honestly talked about our feelings, about how we're friends now, but we were enemies, which is understandable, what with you being criminally insane back then and all.

K: I talk about my feelings all the time, like when I'm mad or hungry or when I have to go to the bathroom.

B2: Not to mention there's probably still unresolved tension from that whole "Hacking the Omnitrix" thing that turned you into a monster, which, though I didn't want to say anything at the time, made you really hard to be around -- Not that I blame you, since it was absolutely my fault that things went so south.

Camera pulls back, voices fade away.

—

On the court, J takes a break, speaking to G.

J: I can't believe I blew that last shot.

G: It's okay.

You're still ahead. Just remember, I'm here for you. Kevin's here for you. Ben's here for you. ((the girls look up to see Ben 3 signing an autograph for the girl from earlier)). Okay. One out of three.

J: ((mutters while walking back to the court)) What is wrong with him?

G: ((walks up to Ben 3 and two girls)) You! Shoo! Go away! Especially you. ((uses energy to blast the two of them, pushing them off screen)) All Julie wanted was a little support, but no! You're too busy being celebrity chick magnet.

B3: ((loudly)) Come on! It's just a dumb old tennis game! Besides, she was supposed to lose, anyway! ((words echo)) Huh. Sound really carries in here.

—

In the cinema, Ben 1 throws his hands in the air along with other audience members, shouting, "It's slammer time!"

—

In the tunnels, the Knights and King Urien persist.

Knight2: Sire, um, I'm not certain I know how to read these blueprints.

KU: I have little patience for failure, Knight. Plant the device.

—

Ben 2: ((still in the car with K)) And, of course, we haven't even begun to unpack the team's interpersonal dynamics, what with your relationship with Gwen, who is, after all, my cousin, which means you and I might someday end up related, which could get kind of-

K: Ben! ((shouting)) You've always been kind of girly, but today Yeah? You're creeping me out!

B2: I understand. I'm truly sorry.

K: Stop understanding, stop apologizing, stop talking about your feelings. I just want to find some Forever Knights and pound them.

B2: Hmm. Interesting.

K: Cut that out!

They hear rumbling and get out of the car.

B2: Deterioration energy mine?

K: Yep.

B2: How bad?

K: Major dangerous. They can burn a hole through 10 feet of solid- It must be the Knights. We better suit up.

Kevin touches a metal manhole cover and becomes metallic.

Ben activates the Ultimatrix and becomes Humongosaur, announcing his name in an operatic sing-song voice.

K: Never do that again.

B2: Just trying it out. Can you tell which way they're coming from? ((ground beneath the two of them begins to crack and shudder))

K: Yes. ((both scream as they fall through the opening hole in the ground))

--

Walking through the tunnel, KU and his two Knights stop when K and B2 fall through.

KU: Who dares intrude?

Knight2: It's Ben Tennyson, the alien changeling, and his lackey.

K: Oh, now I'm a lackey?

B2: I'm sure he didn't mean to hurt your feelings. You didn't mean to hurt his feelings, right?

KU: Destroy them. ((the knights begin shooting laser beams at B2 and K.

B2: I think you're being deliberately hurtful.

—

In the cinema, Ben 1 is enjoying the movie.

B1: Love a good fight scene.

—

Back in the tunnel, K and B2 take cover from the Knights' fire.

K: Ben, do something!

B2: Why me?

K: Because you're a giant, indestructible dinosaur?

B2: Okay, but shouldn't we work towards a consensus that lets us both feel invested in the plan?

K: Forget it. Just throw me.

B2: Okay.

They run into the tunnel and B2 picks K up and throws him at the Knights. K knocks them both over.

K: Let's go.

The boys walk off but Ben2 (in dinosaur alien form, hits his head on a pipe))

B2: ((transforms into human)) Ow!

K: When did you get to be such a baby?

B2: Well, it hurt!

—  
KU: ((walking into museum exhibit of golden suit of armour, and a necklace. He smashes the glass and picks up the necklace, pulling off the large red stone)) It's mine. After all this time, it's mine.

B 2: ((approaching with K)) Excuse me, sir? ((holding a sign)) But the signs clearly say “Do not touch the exhibits.”

K: Signs? ((takes Ben's sign and tosses it away)) That's the best you got? Where's the usual smack talk? First we crack on the bad guys, then we trash them. It's what we do.

B 2: That's bad sportsmanship. And we should respect the ego space of our opponents. Villains are people, too.

KU: ((in the background, places the red stone into the golder suit of armour. He steps back as it comes to life, then picks him up, encasing him in the suit.)) This is Toltech battle armor -- a little parting gift left with the ancient Aztecs by a race of aliens.

B2: There were aliens in Central America?

K: They came for the scenery, but they stayed for the chocolate.

KU attacks the boys, K dodges but B is dashed to the ground.

B2: ((groans))

K: How could you let your guard down like that? ((helps him up))

B2: I'm not myself today.

K: Yeah? Well, pull it together! ((transforms into gold)) Okay, Tin Man, it's you and me. ((begins battling KU))

—  
Split screens show Ben 1 in cinema and Ben 3 in the stands at the tennis match. They both receive calls on their phones.

Ben 1 and Ben 3: Hello?

Ben 2: I hate to interrupt everyone's evening. Is everyone having a good time?

Ben 1: This movie's awesome!

Ben 3: It's okay.

B2: Well, we're fighting an Ancient Alien battle robot, and we're not doing too well. ((K is thrown into B2 and they both fall, K gets up at resumes battle, B2 rubs his head in pain)) I think I feel a knot.

B1: On my way. ((leaves cinema))

B3: ((running up stadium past people)) Heads up! One side! Hero stuff to do! ((Julie sees him leave and misses a return))

Ben 1 and 3 run toward the museum, past the two old men still feeding pigeons. They stop outside, panting.

B1: Where's the other us?

B3: What am I, a GPS?

The door opens and B2 and K run out.

K: Go, go, go!

B2: Going, going, going! ((stops and pants for breath by the other Bens))

K: ((running past)) If I wasn't running for my life, I'd totally demand an explanation.

B1: “Sumo Slammers” opened today and-

B2: We were trying to be sensitive to everyone's needs.

B3: What's it to you?!

K: Again, running for my life!

KU bursts out the main door and begins chasing the Bens.

KU: Three of you? The more, the bloodier.

Ben1: Boys, it's slammer time! (all three activate their Ultimatrixes and transform into: Big Chill, Upchuck and Cannonbolt. They attack KU))

Upchuck vomits acid, but KU dodges. Cannonbolt rolls up and speeds toward KU, but slips in the vomit and falls. Big Chill flies up and tries to freeze KU but instead freezes Upchuck. While he apologises, KU hits him, throwing him into the lake. Big Chill flies up as K watches, freezing water in his wake. Meanwhile Upchuck vomits inside his ice casing to melt it, as KU advances on him. KU punches both Upchuck and Cannonbolt, sending them flying.

Ben 2 (Upchuck): This is a lot less fun than I thought it would be.

Ben 3 (Cannonbolt): You're telling me.

Ben 2 (Upchuck): Hold him off, Kevin. We'll – uh I'll – be right with you.

Kevin turns into stone, transforms his arm into a spiked club, and runs to KU.

Ben (Big Chill): Time for a meeting of the minds.

All three Bens transform into Echo Echo, then into a single Ben.

K: ((is thrown at Ben's feet, sits up and rubs his head)) Your turn.

KU: ((advancing)) You've gone back from three to one. Really, Tennyson, haven't you learned there's safety in numbers?

B: You'd think so. ((B dodges KU's attack and transforms into Lodestar, a magnetic field alien))

As KU smashes his fist down, B uses a magnetic forcefield to push KU's arm back, and trap him there.

KU: I can't move! What black magic is this?

B: No magic. Just my natural magnetism. Which isn't to say you're not every bit as attractive. B intensifies the field, causing KU's suit of armour to become magnetic, attracting nearby benches and trashcans that crash into him. K's car then crashes into KU.

K: Every time! Ugh. ((he complains, then falls backwards as if giving up, or fainting))

B's magnetic forcefield starts breaking up KU's armour.

KU: Nooooo! ((the armour tears apart, dropping KU's body to the ground. B stops using the forcefield, causing the parts of armour to crash down on KU, who is left twitching on the pile of scrap))

B: Rest in pieces. ((turns to K, who is lying on the ground as if miserable)) Hey, Kevin.

You're totally right about the smack-talking.

The two old men throw breadcrumbs on K's face.

–

Back at the empty stadium, Ben is talking to Julie. G and K are also in the stands with them.

B: I'm glad you won your tournament, Julie.

J: Yeah. Thanks.

G: ((angry)) You should have been there. And by that, I mean, you should have been there.

B: Okay, Gwen.

J: Ben, I know you were off fighting bad guys. I was upset. But I guess that's the deal when you decide to date a superhero.

B: Julie, I promise I'll make it up to you. Whatever you want to do, I'm there. Just name it.

J: Well, maybe we could go see "Sumo Slammers: The Movie" together.

B: Actually, I, uh, already saw it.

J: When?

B: Uh... during your match. ((K smacks his head))

J: Well! ((stands up in frustration)) That's just- Ugh! ((she walks away))

G: ((follows J)) Nice.

K: ((follows G and J)) Man, you are so insensitive.

B: ((sighs and looks sad.))

## Appendix 7

### Series 3: *Ultimate Alien*: 209: “It’s Not Easy Being Gwen”

#### Todorov:

- Equilibrium: Gwen has a busy schedule and is proficient at multitasking.
- Disruption: Three events demand Gwen's attention: her mother's invitations, Emily's audition and Doctor Animo's attempt to destroy the world.
- Recognition: Gwen realises she might not successfully attend to all three tasks.
- Action: Gwen begins the invitations and later joins Ben and Kevin in battle against Animo. She leaves for the audition as soon as Animo is defeated.
- Restoration: Gwen made it to Emily's audition just in time, saving her friendship without dropping other commitments.

#### Propp:

Hero: Ben

Helper: Gwen, Kevin

Magical agent: Ultimatrix

Donor: Alien

Villain: Doctor Animo

Henchmen: Frog aliens

Binary oppositions	
Gwen	Ben
Mental	Active
Offers help	Seeks help
Multiple tasks	Single task
Girl	Boy

## 209: Transitivity analysis

### Ben

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
Flies in as Big Chill Blows ice at frog Transforms to human Drives away Walks in to Gwen's house Takes apple Eats apple Flying in alien form (Jetray) Shoots lasers from eyes Grappling with an enemy In Humungosaur form Tosses an enemy Punches an enemy Falls Hits enemy frog Running over cars in alien form Transforms to human Walks over to the girls Alien form: Cannonbolt, rolls toward Animo Rolls forward and knocks down three frogs Is knocked down by a frog Crashes into the control room Transforms into human form Grabs Animo Turns to watch the turret fire at Kevin Runs to the wall Transforms into Cannonbolt Smashed against a wall Leaps up on to the roof Falls to crash into Animo and frog Lands alongside Kevin Grabs frog tongue Spins Hits Animo and frog Catches charm Transforms to human	Thinks Gwen could use help Realises he needs Gwen's help Wonders how bad Emily and his date could have been		Admits the failed battle was embarrassing Requests help with a search Requests Kevin's assistance Admits they underestimated Animo Protests that he was protecting Emily

## Gwen

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
Using her magic to hover	Confident about	Calls her day	Agrees with Kevin
Sleeping	catching Animo next	“crazy”	Offers to do the
Goes running	time	Calls her day “the	invitations
Takes a shower	French audio lesson	usual”	Reminds Mom she
Sits at table with Mom	Thinks her mother was		glows
Writes invitations	rude about the		Assures her mom
Resumes writing	Tennysons		the invitations will
Casts a spell and heads to	Wonders who has a		be completed
the kitchen	formal dinner		Informs Ben how to
Answers phone	Thinks she may have to		do the search
Runs over to the fire	finish tonight		Agrees she could
Uses magic to extinguish	Resumes French lesson		use help
it	Realises no time for		Warns student not
Grabs bag	breakfast unless she		to copy homework
Runs out the house	uses magic		Congratulates Emily
Walking in school reciting	Unsure about joining		Agrees to attend
French	Kevin for lunch		audition
Takes the bagel	Proud of Emily		Promises to try and
Shows homework to	Worried about missing		attend
student	audition		Reassures mom
Hugs Emily	Answers question in		Informs Kevin that
Walks to class	class		she does not want
Climbs rope	Writes a test		him battling Animo
Walks during lunch	French audio lesson		without her
Jumps into Kevin's car	Shock at Kevin's		Suggests Kevin go
Answers phone	appearance		for a GED
Writing invitations	Upset at her mom		Offers to help Kevin
Walks to Kevin	Figured out Kevin does		study
Gives Kevin a charm	not go to school		Warns Kevin not to
Answers her phone	Worried about Kevin		mispronounce the
Runs out the house	Knows Kevin is smart		spell
Walks to window	Confident she will be		Promises her mom
Returns to her seat	able to help Kevin		she'll finish the
Writing on the board	Wonders if she should		invitations
Writing in class	assist Ben and Kevin		Advises Ben during
Walking in hallway	Anxious about time		battle
Practicing karate	Writes her test		Protests that she
Leaves school	Surprise at being asked		would not write
Pushes Emily's wheelchair	to take over algebra		Emily off
Using her magic to hover	class		Urges Kevin to help
Jumps to the ground	Annoyance at Animo		Ben
Runs forward and creates	Uncertain about going		Informs mom she
a shield	to Emily's audition		finished the
Creates a second shield	Worried about Animo		invitations
Creates a dome shield	Wonders if Emily is		
Creates a shield that	upset because of Ben		
protects herself and Kevin	Sad		

Falls to knees, tired Walks to Animo Takes Animo's charm Throws charm to Ben At the audition, clapping Walks into the house Walks to her mom Hugs her mom	Understands that she has been neglecting Emily Confident that they can defeat Animo Shocked at how late it is Proud to see Emily		
--	---	--	--

### Kevin

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
Working under his car Calls Gwen Picks Gwen up at lunch Opens door for Gwen Driving Gwen home Walks to the window Climbs up onto window ledge Transforms to metal Jumps out the window Metal form, struggling with a frog Leaps up and kicks two enemies Battling two enemies Backing away, beckoning frogs Dodges Turns and runs to Ben Transforms arm into sword Dodges frog tongue Transforms other arm into sword Cuts frog tongue off Runs forward to look for Animo Walks up to Animo Slings Animo over his shoulder	Wonders if Gwen knows about Ben's pass Surprised that Gwen knows he does not attend school Anxious about Gwen knowing he does not go to school Worried that him not being a student upsets Gwen Relieved Surprised he has to write cursive		Invites Gwen to lunch Teases Gwen about lying Assures Gwen that he and Ben can handle the fight Assures Gwen she will see him later Promises to discuss the GED application later

## 209: Transcription

Scene opens in a forest at night. A grey haired man is riding a frog-like alien beast. He checks that a canister with a biohazard symbol is secure in his bag. The beast runs.

DA: We've lost them. ((they skid to a halt in front of Kevin, who is in metal form))

K: Actually, you're kinda surrounded. ((Pink energy blasts at the frog beast and man.)) If you don't believe me, ask Gwen.

G: ((standing atop a platform of energy, with energy surrounding each of her hands)) Kevin's right. Surrounded.

DA: It'll take more than the likes of *you* to capture me ((pointing at G))

B: ((swooping in as Big Chill)) Then it's a lucky thing I'm here! Big Chill! ((blows icy air that forms ice at the feet of the alien))

DA: Giddyup! ((alien roars, cannot move))

B: You're the expert on animals, but frogs don't like cold weather, right? ((Transforms to human and lands on the ground, approaching the man)) It's over Doctor Animo.

DA: You underestimate me, Ben Tennyson! You think this is just a big frog?

B: ((confident)) You got me there.

K: ((arms crossed)) I'd say a big, frozen frog.

DA: Well, you're both in error.

He taps the frog and it begins to glow, then breaks out of the ice trapping its feet, leaping off into the city. K and G are sitting in the wreckage of ice and the scene ends showing Ben's grim expression.

—

Scene opens outside a house. Ben is sitting inside his car, Gwen talking to him through the open door.

B: That was embarrassing.

G: We'll catch him next time.

B: Tomorrow I'll check on every abandoned warehouse in Bellwood. And, I don't know, pet stores?

G: I'm around. ((she closes the car door and steps back as Ben drives off.)) ((yawns)) Kind of a lot for a school night.

—

In her room, Gwen falls on the bed, exhausted. Clock says 3:08am. A few seconds later, the alarm goes off and Gwen opens her eyes. The clock says 5:30am. Gwen groans and presses her face into the pillow.

—

Gwen turns off the alarm, groaning. She stretches and collapses again.

—

Opening the door to her closet, Gwen picks up her shoes and puts them on. Dressed in running clothes, she picks up her music player and goes running while listening to French lessons and reciting French phrases.

She continues the lesson during her shower (scene shows music player docked to speakers) and when picking up her bag to leave the house. She walks downstairs and her mom waves her over.

Mom: ((sitting at a table)) Morning, sweetheart. I need a favour.

G: ((removes earphones)) Sure mom. ((sits down at table))

M: I still haven't finished sending the family reunion invitations. Aunty Joyce is going to kill me.

G: ((picking up a pen and paper)) I can do it for you every morning. When do you need

them?

M: ((tired, bags under eyes)) Tomorrow, latest.

G: ((writing)) I could print them out?

M: *My* side of the family, sweetie. Invitations are written by hand. We're not all as... informal as your father's folks.

G: ((looks up)) *Mother*.

M: ((raises hands)) I'm not judging them. But let's face it. ((stands up and begins walking away)) Polite people don't... glow.

G: ((while writing)) I glow.

M: Not around me.

G: So no Tennysons at all? ((looks at page)) Not even Ben or Grandpa?

M: Ben's table manners leave a bit to be desired, and grandpa Max dresses like he's on vacation in Vegas. ((waving a hand in the air dismissively))

G: ((arms out, pleading)) I'm sure they can-

M: -and the things he cooks! Remember those kebabs he brought to thanksgiving? What is 'mogwai' anyway?

G: ((resumes writing)) I don't know. It tasted like chicken.

M: ((leans forward and taps envelope stack)) When can I have these?

G: You sure I can't just run them through the printer? ((shrug)) Who has a formal family reunion dinner?

M: We do.

G: Okay. I may have to finish tonight. Crazy day.

M: What about your free study block?

G: I have to study. ((still writing))

M: After school?

G: Karate. ((M walks around the table)) Don't worry mom, I'll get them done.

M: ((reaches G and kisses her on the cheek)) You're wonderful, Gwennie. ((walks away)) I'm off. ((opens front door to see Ben standing there about to reach for the door knob))

B: Hi Aunt Natalie. ((waves))

M: Good morning Ben. ((walks past him)) Bye Gwennie! ((waves as Ben walks in))

B: ((walking toward G)) How do I look up Animo's Plumber prison record on the extranet?

G: Multi-global phonetic search. Plusses, not quotes.

B: ((looking over her shoulder while she writes)) Looks like you could use some help with all that party stuff.

G: I could! ((looks up as Ben walks to the door))

B: You don't have to make out an invite for me. ((smiling)) That'll save you some work. And postage, too. ((picks up an apple and bites into it, walking away.))

G: ((goes back to writing out invitations, looks at the clock: just after 7:40am. She sighs and puts her earphones back in, resuming the French lesson, which mentions food.)) This is making me hungry. ((She switches off the player)) No time for breakfast and I'll still never get all this done before school. Unless ((she touches her chin, looking up, smiling. She takes out a spellbook from her bag.)) *Scribo in incendia*. ((the pen glows and begins to quickly write out invitations on its own as Gwen stands and walks away)) Maybe there's a grapefruit in the kitchen. ((Her phone rings and she answers)) Hey Kevin. What's up?

K: ((on his back below his car, surrounded by tools, working on his car)) Not much. I'm putting an electrolysis unit on the car.

G: Your car's got unsightly hair?

((scene shows the pen writing so quickly that envelopes catch fire))

K: Funny. It makes oxygen from water. I'm trying to make the car submersible. Wanna meet for lunch?

G: ((behind her, envelopes are on fire on the table, Gwen's back is turned so she does not see)) Want to. ((Sigh)) Not sure I can. Maybe- ((she turns and sees the fire, shocked)) Gotta go, call you later! ((she hangs up and runs over, waving her hands at the fire)) I meant.. *superthecka, superthecka!* ((the flames die out as Gwen hears hooting outside. She groans then shouts)) Coming! COMING! ((She grabs her bag and runs out the house.))

-

Scene shows a schoolbus pulling up outside the school then leaving.

In the hallway, Gwen is walking whilst reciting French phrases. She opens her locker when her friend Emily, who is in a wheelchair, comes up to her.

E: Gwen! No time for breakfast, I presume? ((holds out a bagel))

G: ((smiling, takes the bagel)) As usual. Thanks, Emily.

E: ((raising a finger)) Most important meal of the day. So, hey, they scheduled my piano audition.

The girls are interrupted when another student (black, male) approaches))

Student: Hey Gwen, can I see your homework?

G: ((passes him a page))

S: ((looks at the page)) Not the trig, the history homework.

G: ((swaps the pages)) No copying, I'm serious. ((she turns back to Emily)) You were saying?

E: I got my audition for the Academy of the Performing Arts!

G: ((throws arms out)) No way! ((they hug)) Em! Congratulations!

E: ((happy)) Yeah, it's huge. I'm expecting my best friend there for support?

G: ((smiling)) No problem.

E: Thanks. 5.15. ((bell rings))

G: Oh, today? ((holds finger to lip, worried. Starts walking to class)) I'll really try to be there. ((Emily follows her, looks sad))

-

In class, Gwen raises her hand. In gym, she climbs a rope. In class, she writes furiously. At lunch, Gwen walks along the pavement while listening to her French lesson and reciting phrases. A car screeches to a stop alongside her, surprising Gwen. Kevin looks out from the car.

K: You never called me back. ((opens passenger door for her))

G: ((pulls earphones out and throws bag into the car)) No time for lunch. ((gets into the car)) I need to stop at Office Mania then swing by the house. My mom needs something. ((gasps, staring at Kevin))

K: ((shows his shirt ripped up)) I found Animo.

-

Kevin and Gwen are driving down a road.

K: Giant mutant frogs. Plural. No joke.

G: Ben was right about checking pet stores.

K: Did you know that he can get a pass to go off campus any time he wants?

G: ((phone rings and she picks it up, holding a hand over the mouthpiece)) I didn't even know you could buy frogs at the pet store.

K: Snake food. ((dead pan))

G: Oh. ((answers phone)) Mom! Oh – you got the message. Yeah, I'm headed home right now. ((holds hand to her head)) I already bought new envelopes.

K: ((smirking)) Fibber.

G: ((holds up a hand in his face while speaking into her phone)) Some now, and I'll finish before bed.

M: ((on the phone)) Sweetie, ((Gwen holds the phone up to Kevin's ear)) this is family, and more importantly ((Gwen puts the phone back to her face and says, “Uh huh”)) this is my

family. When I got married, ((Gwen holds the phone in front of her, looking miserably at Kevin while covering the mouthpiece)) I knew the Tennysons were a little odd, but I had *no idea*. Some of them are even...((her voice continues in the background))

K: He got away again. Ben's using Wildmutt to track him. He'll call when he finds him.

G: Just because you don't go to school, I don't want you going up against Animo without me.

K: You know about that? ((surprised))

G: ((speaks into phone)) Gotta go mom. ((She hangs up while looking at Kevin, worried.))

—

Scene opens at Gwen's house.

G: I didn't mean to say anything, but there are only two high schools in Bellwood. I go to one, Ben goes to the other. ((She's writing invitations at her desk)) And, yeah, I noticed you don't go to either.

K: ((sitting on the bed behind Gwen, looking down)) I was in the Null Void for a long while. By the time I got out, I'd kinda outgrown fifth grade.

G: I know. But I also know how smart you are. There isn't a piece of tech in the whole galaxy you can't strip and rebuild by hand.

K: ((walks to window)) But it's still a thing, isn't it? ((looks at Gwen))

G: ((writing)) You're good at math. You know history. You read all those books in prison. Maybe you could go for a high school equivalency degree.

K: A GED?

G: Sure. I'll find out what you need to do, help you study. ((She turns to K))

K: Always room for another project, huh? ((smiling))

G: If I wanted to take it easy, ((she stands)) I'd go live with my grandma. ((Walks to K)) I'm not about to let anyone down.

Kevin nods and reaches for Gwen when they are interrupted by Ben, appearing in alien form (Jetray) at the window and shouting.

B: Kevin! Kevin, frogs! Come, on, hop to it! ((flying, Ben shoots laser blasts from his eyes and disappears from view))

G: Maybe I should go with.

K: ((ready to climb out the window)) You're busy, we got this.

G: ((her phone rings, she ignores it and opens her desk drawer, taking out a charm and handing it to Kevin)) Protection charm. When you need it, sound out the word on there carefully.

K: Sure ((turns away to leave))

G: No. ((touches his shoulder to make him turn back)) You mispronounce it, and I'll never see you again.

K: ((confident)) You'll see me tonight.

They hear a crash and screaming outside, and Gwen's phone rings again.

G: ((answers)) Hi mom, I'm sure Ben is on the news. I'm not with him. ((Kevin transforms, preparing to climb out the window)) You'll get the invitations, promise.

K: About that other thing? We'll talk.

G: ((holds hand over mouthpiece and speaks to Kevin)) Hey – How's your cursive?

K: ((disbelief)) I gotta handwrite for the GED?

G: For the invitations. W- You know what? Never mind. ((Kevin jumps out the window and Gwen looks at the time (12:45) and groans, then speaks into the phone)) Gotta get back to school, mom. Test at 1 o' clock. ((She hangs up and runs out))

—

Scene shows Gwen writing her test. She speaks out loud, reciting a French phrase. The teacher reprimands her and she covers her mouth and resumes writing.

From outside, Kevin shouts: Look out behind you! Ben, in alien form, is struggling with an

enemy. Inside the classroom, people notice the fight and shout, running to the windows.

Gwen turns and walks over.

Outside, the frogs are attacking Ben, who is in Humungosaur form. He tosses one aside and turns to another, punching it. A third leaps at him and they fall on a car. Ben recovers and hits it, sending it flying off. As another frog looks set to attack, the scene shows Gwen looking out the window.

G: Footwork, Ben! Stick and move! ((she closes the window and returns to her seat. The teacher shakes her head.))

—

Gwen is closing her locker when a teacher approaches her.

T: Gwen Tennyson? This is your free period?

G: Yes, but-

T: Take over my Algebra 2 class ((hands her a text book)).

G: Wha- Me?

T: The police just called. My car's been demolished. Something about a giant frog. ((He walks away))

G: But I-

T: ((muttering)) Sometimes I wonder why I live in Bellwood.

Emily approaches Gwen.

E: Missed lunch, didn't you? ((She takes out and holds up a yoghurt, offering it to Gwen))

—

Gwen is writing algebraic equations on the board in a classroom while students watch. Her phone rings, the phone showing it's her mom. Gwen ignores the call.

In another class, Gwen writes studiously.

Walking along the hallway, Gwen sees two students watching a video of Doctor Animo on a laptop.

DA: Every man, woman and child, every living thing that crawls over this miserable planet, will be at my mercy!

Gwen raises her eyebrows and walks on.

At 3:20pm, Gwen is at karate class and is shown chopping a stack of 8 wooden planks in half.

After karate, Gwen changes back into her regular clothes and exits the school, meeting Emily outside.

E: My audition's over the hill in an hour.

G: ((taking the wheelchair handles)) I still have those invitations and a thing with Kevin.

((She begins pushing the wheelchair))

E: It's the Chopin *Fantasia Impromptu*. I've been practicing it for months. ((She turns back to look at Gwen)) Come on. I'll drive.

G: Uhh... ((Gwen stops and lets go of the handles))

E: ((turns chair to face Gwen)) In or out?

B: ((shouting from afar)) Gwen!

The girls turn to look. In alien form, Ben bounds over cars and transforms to human when he reaches Gwen.

B: We underestimated him.

G: Animo?

B: I can't do this without you.

Gwen and Emily look at each other. Gwen is worried, Emily is sad.

—

E: You're not coming? ((upset))

B: Emily, Doctor Animo's trying to take over the world.

E: ((turns away from Ben and sighs)) Yeah, I know what's going on. ((She rolls her chair

away and Gwen follows. They stop a short way away and Emily speaks to Gwen.) We've been besties since kindergarten and it hasn't been easy with you flying all around the universe.

G: Is this about you and Ben?

E: ((looks away)) It's not that I hate your cousin.

B: ((walks up, interrupting them)) Come on, it was one date! How bad could it have been?

E: ((angry)) You left me at the top of a radio tower!

B: For your own safety!

E: ((leaning forward, furious)) Two hundred feet above the ground!

B: You couldn't have fallen. I webbed you to it.

E: ((looks at Gwen)) Actually, I *do* hate your cousin. ((She rolls backwards)) But you're right. That's not what this is about. ((She turns and begins rolling herself away. Gwen follows and Emily speaks to her)) You're always doing stuff I'm not a part of. Fine. But if I get into Performing Arts, I'll be the one doing something without you. And you're gonna write me off.

G: I wouldn't. ((protesting))

E: Not by choice. ((They stop moving)) But look. How often do we just hang any more? And different schools won't help any.

G: ((looks away, sad)) I didn't realise it was so important, Em.

E: No. You didn't. ((She turns and leaves))

B: ((runs up to Gwen)) You coming?

G: ((resigned, sad)) Yeah.

—

Scene opens to show a deserted area. Kevin, in metal form, is struggling to free himself from a frog tongue around his body. The frog smashes Kevin into a bench, destroying it.

DA: ((watching from atop the frog, smiling)) Rip him to pieces, my pets!

Two more frogs hop up to Kevin, leaping at him with jaws open. Kevin leaps off the ground, kicking each one and smashing into the ground, still held in the frog tongue.

DA: You're more resilient than I thought, Levin!

Kevin is on the ground, bruised and groaning. The frog lifts him and the protection charm falls to the ground. The frog suspends Kevin in front of Doctor Animo.

DA: But in the end you've fallen before me, just as the whole world will!

G: ((from off screen, confidently)) That'll be the day. ((Scene shows Gwen hovering on a platform of energy, with pink energy emanating from her hands. Next to her, Ben is in alien form – Cannonbolt))

DA: You're too late! ((a large turret-like structure emerges from a nearby building)) While the Plumbers held me I had time to plan my revenge. So I've scaled up my transmodulator ray and overclocked it! The entire earth will be-

B: -My cousin's on a schedule. Can we just skip this part and move directly to the terrific beating I'm about to give you? ((He rolls up and races toward Animo while Gwen jumps to the ground))

—

Scene shows a piano, spotlit on a stage. Applause as Emily rolls her chair up to the instrument and places her feet on the pedals. She pauses and looks into the audience, at an empty seat in the front row. She looks sad, and looks down; closing her eyes before beginning to play, and her music scores the next scene.

—

Cannonbolt rolls forward, knocking over 3 advancing frogs. Animo, from atop the same frog, controls the frog holding Kevin with its tongue, making it leap over Cannonbolt as he rolls forward. The frog lands on Cannonbolt, knocking him down and leaps away. It lands facing Ben and flings a metallic Kevin up into the sky.

--

Camera pans audience, rapt with attention as Emily plays.

--

Gwen runs forward, two disks of pink energy glowing at her hands. She's grimacing. She creates a shield that a frog presses against, but it holds. A second frog attacks from the side. Gwen quickly puts up another shield with one hand. When a third frog leaps at her, she repositions her hands to create a shield dome around herself. She sees the turret emerge from the building and begin firing a beam of burning energy that moves toward her. A faraway shot shows an explosion and smoke. Closer shot shows the smoke clearing away and debris falling. Gwen remains in her shield, three frogs prone on their backs around her. Animo, sitting atop a frog, is furious. He leaps off and runs toward the turret. Cannonbolt raises his head and watches.

--

Emily is still playing. The audience are smiling and silently watching.

--

Animo jumps down into the control room for the turret. He begins typing rapidly on the keyboard when Cannonbolt crashes in through a wall. Animo looks around and Cannonbolt transforms back into Ben. As Ben advances, Animo quickly resumes typing. Ben sees the turret pivot, aiming at Kevin who is warding off two enemy frogs. Kevin backs away and beckons the frogs. One shoots out its tongue and Kevin dodges. Meanwhile, the turret barrel begins to glow red then white. Inside, Animo is grinning while typing and Ben puts a hand on his shoulder. When Animo turns, Ben grabs him by the collar and drags him forward to face him. A bulb of white hot energy expands from the turret. Ben turns to look and the ball of energy explodes in a line, straight at Kevin. The line of energy plows through the earth, moving toward Kevin. Kevin turns from the frogs just in time to see the energy reach him. There is an explosion. Ben runs to the hole in the wall to see flames die down and the smoke clear. There is a bright pink energy shield glowing in the wreckage. The shield shatters and falls to reveal Kevin, still raising his hands against the energy. Gwen is holding her hands up and appears to be in pain, her sleeves partially torn. As Kevin moves toward her, she falls to her knees, one hand pressed to her forehead. Gwen looks up at Kevin and appears to say something. Kevin turns and runs. Ben smiles and turns back to Animo, looking angry. Animo backs away and touches the charm on his head, calling a frog. One bursts in, landing between Ben and Animo. Animo climbs on to it as Kevin races in to stand alongside Ben.

--

Close up shot of Emily closing her eyes as she plays. She looks unhappy.

--

Ben transforms and Kevin runs forward, transforming his arm into a sword. He swings at the frog and Animo but the frog leaps away to land behind Cannonbolt. Cannonbolt turns around to face it and the frog's tongue smashes into him, throwing him against a wall as Kevin watches. Kevin runs forward to fight and dodges the tongue but it wraps around his sword arm. Kevin transforms his other arm into a sword and chops the tongue off. It retreats and the frog closes its mouth, leaping up a wall to land on the roof. Animo sees a hole form in the roof and watches something fly up through it – it's Cannonbolt, in metallic and spiked form. He falls back down and crashes into Animo and the frog. From far away, we see the frog land on its back and skid out of the frame. Kevin runs forward and Cannonbolt lands alongside him, both watching the smoke on the ground. A tongue shoots out, wraps around Cannonbolt's arm and yanks him back into the smoke. We see the tongue bash Cannonbolt into the ground. When the smoke clears, Animo is atop his frog and Cannonbolt is on his back in front of them, apparently unconscious. Animo grins.

--

Emily concentrates as she plays. The camera pans to show the empty chair.

--

Cannonbolt grabs the frog tongue that flies at him, quickly spinning so that the frog and Animo are dragged toward him. As they reach him, he stops spinning and hits them, sending the frog crashing back and Animo falls from the sky behind Cannonbolt. Gwen walks up to the prone Animo and removes his head-charm. She throws it to Cannonbolt, who catches it and transforms back into Ben. Kevin walks up and slings Animo over his shoulder. Gwen looks at the time on her phone and looks horrified.

--

Close up of Emily's hand as she completes playing the piece. The audience give her a standing ovation. Emily rolls from the piano to the edge of the stage, looking out at the audience who are applauding and taking photographs. She looks at the front of the stage and sees that Gwen is now there, clapping. She has holes in her shirt and bruises on her face, but she looks proud. Emily smiles and Gwen winks at her while clapping. Emily bows in her chair and smiles happily.

--

Scene opens at Gwen's house.

G: ((walks in to the house and closes the door.)) Hey mom. I finished the invitations in the car.

M: ((placing plates on the table.)) Your father's getting dinner. Kevin called and I asked him and Ben to join us ((smiling as Gwen walks up)). Help set the table. ((Gwen hugs her and she puts an arm around Gwen)) How was your day, Gwennie?

G: ((while still hugging her mom)) Oh, you know, the usual. ((smiles then yawns loudly, covering her mouth then resuming her hug.))

## Appendix 8

### Series 3: *Ultimate Alien*: 218: “The Perfect Girlfriend”

#### Todorov:

- Equilibrium: Ben and Julie are spending time together after Julie skipped her tournament for Ben.
- Disruption: TV footage shows Julie at a tennis tournament in a different city.
- Recognition: Ben realises that Julie is actually Elena, having shapeshifted.
- Action: Ben fights Elena and defeats her.
- Restoration: The real Julie is back with Ben and Elena has left.

#### Propp:

Hero: Ben

Helper: Gwen, Kevin

Magical agent: Ultimatrix

Donor: Alien

Villain: Elena

Henchmen: Animated buildings

Binary oppositions	
Elena	Julie
Immature	Mature
Traditional idea of relationships	Modern idea of relationships
Subservient	Independent
Deceptive	Honest

## 218: Transitivity analysis

### Ben

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
Driving his car	Angry at Gwen for	Says J's dad was "acting weird"	Offers to
Uses Ultimatrix to	hiding the news report		accompany Julie to
transform into alien	Believes Julie will join		the airport gate
Approaches Ssserpent but	him in the fight		Questions Gwen
is trapped	Angry with the girls		about the scanner
Sitting on couch	Wonders why K agrees		Suggests Julie go to
Turns on TV	to go shopping		the tournament the
Runs to elevator	Surprised at		next day
Transforms into alien:	unscheduled TV show		Asks after G
Spidermonkey	Confused that J changed		Reminds J she
Leaps into elevator shaft	her mind		dislikes an actress
Releases emergency brake	Pleased that J is		Denies there is a
Goes to the movies	prioritising him		problem
Ben picks a movie	Worried about the		Reminds J about
Watches movie	elevator		their fight
Walking home with J	Surprised at J's movie		Suggests other
Uses Ultimatrix for news	choice		enemies could be
report	Wonders what J thinks		behind the attack
Runs to scene of crime	of the movie		Asks to see J
Turns into alien	Knew she would like		Offers J opportunity
Flies toward Ssserpent	the movie eventually		to pick what they
Transforms to human	Thinks the police		watch
Runs off	caught Ssserpent		Demands to know
Appears in alien form	Realises Ssserpent's		who the fake J is
Picks up buildings	ruse		Accuses E of almost
Dodges punches	Shocked that K was		killing K
Throws buildings	spying on J		Accuses E of
Kicks buildings	Does not believe J is		hurting G and trying
Chases buildings	behind the attack		to hurt him
Picks K up	Wants to make J happy		Commands E put J
Walks to J's house	by watching tennis		down
Walks to his house	Surprised at J on TV,		
Takes the fries and eats	and in his house		
Goes inside and jumps on	Realises that the J in his		
couch	house is an imposter		
Takes remote	Shocked at J being		
Pulls J to sit next to him	Elena		
Turns on TV	Wonders what E wants		
Transforms into Echo	Does not think E wants		
Echo	enough		
Transforms into Ultimate	Surprised by J at the		
Echo	door		
Jumps in front of J	Afraid of E		
Uses alien tech to blast E	Worried about E		

Catches J and sets her down Advances on E Choking on nanochips Transforms into Echo Echo Transforms into human Spits out nanochips	returning		
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### Elena (as herself and as Julie)

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
Pushes policeman Climbs dumpster Runs into the building Stops the centrifuge Runs to Ben Lying on couch Jumps over to sit next to Ben and hold him Strokes Ben's face Makes Ben a snack Pushes button for elevator Pushes button again Ushers G into the elevator Goes to elevator with B Uses power to stop elevator from falling Goes to the movies Watches Ben watching the movie Walking home with B Walks away alone Waits for B at his house Gives B chili fries Follows B inside Offers B the remote Sits next to B Transforms into Elena Transforms into 4 different girls, then back to herself Transforms into alien Tries to grab J Hits B Shapeshifts weapon Wraps whip around B Throws B	Feels that Ben is more important than her tennis matches Confused by Ship's behaviour Wishes B were at the mall Believes that her sacrifice for B is normal Does not want to rejoin tennis tour Worried about the elevator Afraid for B Wonders if B does not want to see the movie Believes that the boy should pick the movie Believes lots of things need time to grow on someone Wonders what the problem is Worried about the fight they had Thinks B should go (supportive) Anxious that B saw her dad Is happy to watch "Sumo Slammers" Worried at the tennis match on TV Wants to use her power to make B happy Wonders what is wrong	Choice to abandon tennis trip was "easy"	Demands policeman goes to help Ben Invites B and G shopping Offers to stay and watch TV with Ben Offers to make snack for B Warns B to be careful Asks repairman to calm down Pretends that the movie is growing on her Insists B tell her the problem Suggests that the match is a replay Reminds B she has done all he asked and promises that she always will Pleads with B Defends herself, accuses B of making the elevator fall Admits that she wants B Admits she loves B Warns B and J that she will come back

Transforms weapons again Grabs J and lifts her Transforms into J Transforms into nanochips Attacks B Transforms into nanochips Slithers away	with that Feels hatred		
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### Julie

Material	Mental	Relational	Verbal
On TV: winning tennis match Came back on first flight Walks into the house Runs outside Approaches E Goes to B	Angry with Ben Happy at winning a match Thought she would compromise and visit B Surprised at seeing E Wonders what E is doing there Angry Worried about B Fear of E Wonders what E is going to do Thinks that E does not know what love is Worried about E returning		Argues with Ben about her tournament Asserts that her life is as important Demands to know what E is going to do Asks if B is okay

## 218: Transcription

Scene opens outside an airport building. Ben is driving, Julie sits in the front passenger seat and Gwen sits in the backseat.

Gwen: ((pointing)) There's a spot right there.

Ben: On it. ((pulls up in the drop-off section and gets out the car))

Julie jumps out and meets Ben in front of the doors. Ben is carrying her racquet case.

J: Thanks, see you in three weeks. ((smiling, sad)) That's a long time, isn't it?

B: ((smiling)) I'll go up to the gate with you.

G: ((walks up)) Security won't let you in without a ticket.

B: Sure they will! What's the point of international mega-stardom if I can't abuse it for a few more minutes with my girl? ((starts walking off)) Back in an hour, okay?

G: ((gets in driver's seat and watches him leave)).

The radio/scanner plays: Breaking news. Ssserpent has escaped from prison.

G: ((shocked, quickly turns a dial on the scanner then speaks to Ben)) Sure! I'll.. come back for you. Win a trophy, Julie ((smiles))

B: ((and Julie both stop walking and turn around)) What's on the scanner, Gwen?

G: Nothing. I can handle it anyway ((unsure smile))

B: ((steps toward her)) What's.. on the scanner? ((hard voice, looks angry))

G: Argh. ((she turns the scanner back on))

Scanner: Police believe Ssserpent is holding a hostage and negotiators are trying to reach him by phone. But how do you bargain with something like that? This reporter has no idea.

B: I do. ((looks toward J)) Come on Julie, Ssserpent's come out of his hole again. ((He takes her hand and pulls her forward))

J: ((pulls back and stops walking, forcing B to face her)) I've got a tournament, Ben.

B: You can go tomorrow! ((raised voice))

J: ((pulls hand out of Ben's and holds it to her chest)) No, I can't! ((angry)) My life is just as important as yours. ((pulls racquet case from him, turns and carries it away with Ben looking on. Her expression is determined, angry.))

G: ((in the car, watching)) Go after her.

B: ((turns to G as J walks away)) Nope. I'm going after Ssserpent.

G: ((exited the car, walking past Ben)) Then go by yourself. ((turns to J and holds up a hand, waving)) Wait for me! ((walks up to J and puts her hand on her shoulder. The girls both watch Ben))

B: ((tyres squeal as he pulls away and drives, quickly. Expression is angry, determined.))

—

Ben pulls up at the scene of the crime where police stand outside the building, waiting. He exits his car and sees Ssserpent through a window. Ben uses the Ultimatrix to transform into Goop, a gooey, shapeshifting alien accompanied by a small, flying, alien device.

Policeman to Ben: There may be hostages. We're waiting for backup.

B: I'm all the backup you need!

Goop slides under the garage door through a small gap. The door slams shut just as he makes it inside, but traps the small flying device outside. The device slams against the door repeatedly.

Inside, Goop slithers up to Ssserpent's feet.

Ssserpent: Trying to sneak up on me, Tennyson? ((Goop smacks his head against a glass ceiling)) Sadly for you, this isn't going to turn out like our previous encounters.

Ssserpent pulls a switch and walls rise up around Goop, forming a circular barrier. The circle

begins to spin, forming a huge centrifuge. Red digits on a panel rapidly rise. Goop flattens as he spins, eventually being spun against the sides of the chamber.

Ssserpent: I've been studying you. Learning how you think. I knew you'd pick Goop for this job. And now, you're going to be very, very sorry.

In the chamber, a wailing, alien sound is heard.

—

Ssserpent: ((Goop spun against the walls)) By now, you're beginning to separate out into your components.

Outside, the police office is looking at the building with binoculars when he notices Julie standing next to him.

Policeman: Where'd you come from?

J: ((alien wailing in the background, J turns to policeman)) You have to go in there and help him!

Policeman: ((places hand on her shoulder)) This is a police matter, kid. Stay out of the way. J frowns and slaps his hand away, shoving him in the chest. He falls to the ground and J runs under the police tape and around the building, climbing up on a dumpster to peer through a window.

She sees the centrifuge and Ssserpent, and a close up shot of Goop being spun is accompanied by the wailing sound.

J: Ben!

Ssserpent: ((looks at Julie)) So! It's going to be a shindig! ((slithers toward her but stops and turns when he hears a loud thud))

A policeman uses a battering ram to break the door down. Four officers run inside, one shouts: Halt! Police!

S: Another time, Tennyson. ((topples a stack of crates behind him and escapes through door. The officers follow))

J pulls the switch that stops the centrifuge, staring worriedly at Goop as he coalesces in the centre. The flying alien device finally rejoins Goop and touches him, causing a flash of bright light.

J: ((runs over)) Ben?

Ben is lying on the floor in human form.

B: ((opens eyes)) Julie! ((she smiles))

—

Scene opens to show Julie relaxing on a couch.

J: ((smiling)) Why do I need a reason? Ben means more to me than some silly tennis matches. It's as simple as that. ((turns to look at Ben))

Scene widens to show Ben and Kevin sitting on a couch, Julie lying sideways on an armchair and Gwen leaning on the back of Julie's chair.

G: But to give up something you worked so hard for-

J: A girl's got to have her priorities. ((half shrug, raised hands))

Cut to shot of Gwen's face, confused, suspicious, half frowning.

J: ((sits up)) Like shopping! Wanna go?

G: Okay.. ((unsure, confused)) But I thought you wanted to spend more time with Ben?

J: I do. ((K and B in the background, sitting quietly)) That's why he's coming with. ((B looks up, eyes wide. J turns to look at him)) You bringing Kevin? ((K's eyes widen and he looks up. Both boys look worried.))

K: ((B looks over and smiles)) Nothin' I'd rather do.

B: So why do it?

K: ((smiling)) 'Cause it makes her happy. And when she's not happy, I'm not happy. ((B looks down, frowning))

J: Ben! You coming?

B: ((looks at K, who smiles)) Guess so. ((sounds happy.))

Ben turns on the TV and Julie jumps across to sit on the arm of the couch, her arm around Ben's shoulders. Sumo Slammers music plays from the TV.

B: ((shocked)) Sumo Slammers.. This wasn't in the channel guide!

G: ((tight voice, arms crossed, warning tone)) Record it.

J: Would you rather stay here and watch this? ((light tone))

B: Yeah! Uh.. ((turns to look at her, anxious)) But I just said I'd..

J: It's okay. We can stay here and watch. ((still sounds happy))

B: But.. You wanna go shopping. ((sounds confused))

J: I don't have to.

B: ((smiles at J)) Why don't you go and I'll stay here and watch? ((focus back on the TV))

J: ((both hands on B's shoulder)) Would that make you happy?

Ben nods

J: ((runs her finger down his cheek playfully a few times, smiling)) I'll get you a snack before I go. She stands and walks off screen with Kevin and Gwen watching. Ben is watching TV. K looks suspicious, G looks worried.

G: I don't believe this!

K: What'd you do, Ben? ((turns to B)) Hypnotise her?

B: ((smiling)) You heard what she said about priorities. ((G looks angry, K is frowning))

—

In the kitchen, Ship (alien that J and B rescued in series 1) is barking loudly and hopping at J's ankles. Gwen walks up.

G: What's the matter with Ship? ((Ship growls at J))

J: ((looks over at Ship, G and K watch)) Don't know. ((J is holding a bowl of popcorn))

G: He's never acted like this before. Not around you, anyway. It's not normal.

K: What exactly is normal for one of those? ((gestures at the alien. The girls look at him, worried)) Come on, we've got shopping to do. ((Girls follow him off screen as Ship watches and growls))

—

Scene opens at the mall.

J: I wish Ben were here. He'd love that new comic store.

Gwen and Julie are walking alongside each other while Kevin follows them, arms loaded with boxes and bags.

G: It's just as well he didn't come. ((Girls stop walking. In the background, K stops walking and almost drops the boxes but regains control)) I wanted to talk to you about not going to Europe.

J: I already told you. ((starts walking)) It was an easy choice.

G follows her, J looks determined.

G: But it shouldn't have been.

J: ((angry)) Look. I love Ben. That's all there is to it.

They're still walking, Julie in front, Gwen following her and Kevin (face obscured by boxes) following Gwen.

G: Fine. But that doesn't mean you should make such a big sacrifice for him.

J: ((shrugs)) That's what you do when you love somebody.

G: No ((gentle)). You both make sacrifices for each other. What's Ben giving up?

They reach the elevators and J pushes the button.

G: Look. Julie, is there any way you can get back on the tour? You've only missed a day.

J: ((shown from the back so audience only see the back of her head)) But I don't want to.

G: ((worried)) It's something you'll remember for the rest of your life.

J: ((turns, face in profile)) I don't want to! ((Pushes button for elevator twice more, urgent))

G: If you don't go, I just know you're going to regret it later. ((pleading with J)) You'll never know how far you could have gone.

J: ((turns to G and shouts)) No! ((G pulls back, shocked. Lift arrives and doors open)) Elevator's here. Just get on.

Julie takes Gwen's arm and turns her to the elevator, pushing her on. Gwen falls and screams, landing with a crash as J watches, shocked.

J: Gwen! ((K runs up and drops the boxes, looking horrified as he looks down into the elevator shaft))

Gwen lies on her back in the elevator shaft, not moving. She opens her eyes and groans.

—

Gwen is getting her leg cast wrapped in bandages.

She is sitting on a hospital bed with crutches next to her. Kevin stands next to her bed.

K: Guess this will teach you to look before you leap, huh?

G: It wasn't my fault. And anyway, elevators don't do that. ((looks annoyed)) I'm gonna check it out.

She gets off the bed and grabs her crutches, groaning as she stands.

K: ((holds her shoulders and puts her back on the bed)) The only place you're going is home.

G: ((staring at K)) I want that elevator given the once-over.

K: ((stands and sighs)) Okay. I guess this is where a normal couple would work out some kind of compromise.

G: ((looking up at K, determined))

—

K exits the room and is approached by Ben.

B: How is she?

K: The cast will be off in six weeks, but she thinks there's something weird about the elevator.

B: It's broken, that's all. ((shrugs)) Right?

K: She thinks there's more to it but she's not sure what, and she won't let me take her home until I get someone to check it out.

B: Meaning.. me?

J: No. ((the boys turn to face her)) Meaning us.

—

Scene opens with establishing shot showing the open elevator shaft.

A repairman is inside, holding a laptop and a device attached to the elevator. Ben runs up to the doorway, followed by Julie.

B: Figured out what went wrong yet?

Repairman: ((looks up at B)) According to this, nothing.

J: Except my friend got hurt. ((both look worried))

Repairman: How do you think I feel? ((walks over to rest his hands on the floor that Ben and Julie are standing on)) This thing is almost like a person to me. It's never been a problem, ever. ((He climbs up out of the shaft))

J: 'Til now.

Repairman: I gotta go get a wrench. Keep clear of it. ((walks away))

B: You bet. ((transforms into Spidermonkey and leaps into the elevator shaft))

J: ((walks to doorway)) Ben? Be careful.

Ben, as Spidermonkey, picks up the device the repairman was using and plays with the buttons, inadvertently causing the lift to come hurtling down above him.

J: ((screams)) Ben! ((her eyes glow white and the lift suddenly stops, metres above Ben))

Ben jumps out of the shaft and turns human, then hugs Julie.

J: I was so scared!

Repairman: I told you to stay away from that thing! I don't care how many superheroes you are. ((he notices the lift is halfway down)) You hit the emergency release, didn't you?

B: ((complaining)) How was I supposed to know? It didn't have a label on it.

J: ((steps forward)) Can you please calm down? Obviously the brake was on.

Repairman: No it wasn't. I just took the brake apart so I could check it.

B: Then what stopped it?

Repairman ((worried)) I don't know!

—

Scene opens at Gwen's house. Gwen and Kevin are sitting on a couch, Gwen speaks into her mobile phone. Her injured leg is extended resting on a table.

G: I'm okay Ben, but what about you? But what about you? Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Ben, just because it ends well doesn't mean all's well. Let me know if you find out. Bye. ((she hangs up and speaks to Kevin)) I think this all has something to do with Julie and Ship. Remember how he barked at her? K: Maybe he's got dysentery. Wonder who you'd take him to for shots -- a vet or a mechanic?

G: I think Julie's gotten some of Ship's powers. It's happened before, and she probably doesn't even realize it.

K: Maybe. But coincidence explains it just as well.

G: Go find out which.

K: Going. ((he immediately stands up and walks off screen as G watches))

—

Establishing shot of cinema building. Ben and Julie walk up to the entrance and look at the movie titles on display.

B: So, uh, what do you want to see? ((Titles: Handgrenade Honeymoon, Vampire Summer, Sumo Slammers IV – The Movie, Wendy's Wonderful Wedding))

J: How about "Vampire Summer"?

B: O-kay. ((upspeak. He sounds surprised, uncertain))

J: You don't want to see it, do you?

B: No, you don't want to see it. You hate Jennifer Nocturne. ((the actress))

J: Oh. I forgot. But the boy should pick the movie, anyway.

B: Since when? ((half laughing))

J: Since from now on. ((she hugs his arm to her chest and smiles at him))

B: Well, in that case... ((Ben smiles and looks at the list of titles))

—

Sumo Slammers music plays and we see Ben and Julie watching the movie, wearing 3D glasses. Julie watches Ben as he seems entirely engrossed in the movie, punching the air and grinning. Julie slips her glasses up and rests her chin on her hands, staring adoringly at Ben. The camera shifts to show a Kevin sitting at the back of the theatre wearing a dark green coat with turned up collar and sunglasses. He pulls the glasses down and stares at the couple.

K: Definitely something wrong.

—

Ben and Julie are walking on the street, holding hands. It's night time.

B: Well, what did you think this time? ((voice is excited))

J: It's... Starting to grow on me.

B: I knew you'd like it eventually. All you had to do was give it a chance. ((sounds satisfied))

J: Lots of things are like that. ((stops and they face each other, holding hands)) Aren't they?

Ben leans in to kiss Julie but they hear sirens and Ben stops, opening his eyes to see two police cars go by. Julie turns to look at the cars and Ben pushes up his sleeve, touching the

Ultimatrix.

B: I wonder..

The Ultimatrix glows and a police report issues forth from it: Fugitive code-named Ssserpent should be considered armed and dangerous. Repeat, all available units.

J: What is it?

B: Nothing.

J: Come on, Ben. You know it's something. Tell me. ((insistent))

B: Last time, we got in a fight over it, and I don't want-

J: A fight? ((she looks worried))

B: I wanted to go, but you said your life is important, too, remember?

J: Listen, Ben, if you need to go, you should go.

B: You're sure?

J: ((she holds his hand with both of hers)) If it's important to you, then it's important to me. Now hurry. ((pats his back, making him turn and run)) Don't worry about me. I'll take the bus. ((sounds happy, waves))

Ben runs off screen and Julie looks around then walks off screen too. In the background, Kevin leans forward around a building and quietly follows J as she walks through the streets in an industrial area.

—

Two snakes are writhing over a fence. Sirens wail and tires screech as cars pull up. Police officers grimly look at the hissing snakes and Ben runs up.

B: Looks like you got him this time.

Policeman: Soon as backup's here, we're gonna move in.

Ben: Why wait?

He activates the Ultimatrix and turns into Jetray. Jetray flies up toward the snakes and lands in the garden with them. He sees what appears to be a loose skin, flapping in the wind. It flops forward and falls at Ben's feet. Ben transforms back into human form as policemen burst through the gate.

Policeman: What did you do to him?!

B: This isn't Ssserpent. It's just his skin. He shed it. He's probably 50 miles from here by now. I got to go. ((Ben runs off screen))

—

Gwen is sitting at her desk, speaking on her mobile phone.

G: What's she doing?

Scene cuts to show Kevin still following Julie, hiding down alleys while speaking to Gwen on his phone.

K: Just walking, so far.

G: "Just walking" on Industry Boulevard? ((suspicious))

Julie turns just as Kevin ducks behind a wall. She furrows her brow then keeps walking.

K: Yeah. Not exactly a garden spot.

Huge, heavy footsteps rumble behind Kevin and he turns, looking shocked))

G: ((over his phone)) Kevin?

He sees what looks like a huge building, growling and approaching him steadily.

Sene shows Gwen's look of shock and fear as she hears Kevin scream on her phone.

—

Kevin throws his sunglasses to the ground, looking horrified. He looks down the street to see a second mobile building. Taking off his coat and throwing it to the ground, he touches the ground to turn into concrete (presumably) and runs toward the first building, leaping up and crashing through a wall. He runs through the building, crashing straight through walls until he lands outside again. His way forward is blocked by the advancing building and he is trapped.

One of the building's walls crumbles to expose steel points, forming a mouth. Two cables adjoining two smaller structures form the beast's arms. It tries to smash Kevin but he dodges and runs. From high up, a huge hand picks up one of the buildings. Kevin looks up in surprise.

K: Ben!

Ben is in the form of a giant alien called Way Big. The building he is holding attempts to punch him but Ben dodges. He flings the building and kicks it while it is in the air, causing it to crumble into pieces and land in the sea (or harbour?)

B: Owwww! ((the second building is trying to injure Ben's leg. Ben hits it away, forcing it to stumble back. He chases it and punches a hole straight through, and it falls, defeated.))

K walks up to Ben, transforming into human form. Ben reaches down a giant hand and Kevin steps into it so Ben can carry him up to face level.

K: How'd you know I was here?

B: Gwen called. But she didn't say what you were doing here.

K: I'm following Julie.

B: You were spying on her?!

K: Hey, it's not like I didn't have a good reason. I mean, look what just happened.

B: This doesn't prove anything.

K: Ben, I know you like her, but come on.

B: All the enemies we've had over the years – any of them could have done this.

K: Really? Animate buildings?

B: Well..Some of them. Three or four of them, maybe. Julie can't do this.

Kevin: No? So how'd she manage?

–

Establishing shot of Julie's house. Ben walks up and knocks on the door. Her father opens and looks at Ben.

B: Uh.. Hi. Can I see Julie?

Father: She's not here. You should know that.

Ben: How-

Her father closes the door. Ben makes as if to knock again but changes his mind, turning and walking away. He walks down the street and sees Julie sitting on the steps of his house.

B: Julie! ((he runs over))

J: I brought you some chili fries. ((she stands up, smiles and tilts her head, holding out a bag of fries))

B: Thanks. ((runs up and snags the bag, hurrying up the stairs and putting a chip in his mouth. He opens the door)) Oh, I just saw your dad.

J: What for? ((sounds sad, looks anxious))

B: Just wanted to see you, that's all. ((still munching on fries)) He was acting weird.

J: Well, you know parents.

B walks into the house and J follows. He throws the bag of fries on the table and jumps on the couch while J stands watching him. Ben stretches his leg, trying to reach the remote on the table. Julie jumps forward and grabs the remote with both hands, holding it out to him. Ben looks surprised.

J: "Sumo slammers"?

Ben: ((takes the remote and pulls her hand, making her sit next to him on the couch)) Got a surprise for you. You've gone along with everything I've wanted to do these last few days. Now we're going to see whatever you want to see. ((turns the TV on))

J: I'm fine with "Sumo Slammers", really. ((she sits with her torso facing Ben, both arms and hands on the couch as if leaning to look at him earnestly))

B: Nope. This time, it's going to be what makes you happy. ((flicking through channels))

Tennis? Yes!

J: You really don't have to. ((worried))

B: I want to.

On the screen two girls play tennis. A close-up shot shows Julie winning a match and pumping her fist in the air, happy.

B: ((surprised, turns to J on the couch)) Hey, it's you!

J: Must be a replay. ((worried))

B: ((gazes at the screen which has the title: Replay)) It is a replay -- from yesterday. ((turns to J then jumps up off of the couch and stands in front of J)) Who are you?

J: ((stands up, looking at him)) Ben, I've done everything you asked -- ((begins to glitter and transform and her voice changes)) and even things you didn't ask for. ((revealed as Elena, a slim, pretty young woman wearing a tight, short black dress))

E: And I always will.

B: ((shocked, blinks twice)) Elena!

E: I was Elena. Then I was Julie. But if you don't like them ((shapeshifts into 4 different girls before returning to herself)) I can be anyone you want me to be.

*(1. Slim, outdoorsy, cap, glasses, golf shirt and pants; 2. shorter girl, slim, wearing jacket, long red/brown hair; 3. Tall, blonde hair in ponytail, slim, collared shirt tucked into skirt; 4. Long brown hair slicked back, slim, shirt tucked into pants)*

B: You almost killed Kevin! ((hand gestures)) You used your microchips to make those buildings come to life! ((accusing))

E: He was following me. He was trying to keep us apart. ((pleading))

B: And that elevator ((pointing)) -- you hurt Gwen. You tried to crush me with it ((both hands in fists, angry)).

E: ((pointing back at him, angry, raised voice)) You're the one who made it fall! I used my chips to stop it! The chips let me do anything, and all I want to use them for is to give you everything you want. What's wrong with that? ((sad))

B: Elena, what do *you* want?

E: Does it matter?

B: It does. ((calm, persuasive? tone)) Kevin's changed a lot -- and for the better -- since he's been with Gwen. If she'd just done everything he wanted, he'd still be the same old Kevin.

E: I'll be more like Gwen if that's what you want.

B: It's got to be what *you* want, Elena.

E: Don't you understand? I just want you.

B: That's not enough!

Doorbell rings and Ben opens the door. Julie stands outside, smiling at him.

B: Julie! ((surprised))

J: I came back on the first flight. ((walks into the house past Ben)) I don't play again until Tuesday, so I thought I'd compromise and spend the weekend with you. ((she runs further into the house and stops, looking surprised. Elena looks at Julie, angry: crossed arms, frowning, raised eyebrow)) What's she doing here? ((Julie looks at Ben over her shoulder, looking annoyed))

B: Long story. ((Julie shifts her eyes back to Elena, her eyebrows raised and frowning))

E: I'll make it quick.

Elena shapeshifts into an alien wearing a tight suit, and her arm changes into a large, pincer-like weapon. Ben quickly activates the Ultimatrix and transforms into Echo Echo, then transforms a second time into Ultimate Echo, a larger and more powerful form. E extends her pincer at J but B jumps in front of her, deflecting the blow. E hits him again then rapidly shapeshifts the weapon into a whip, wrapping it around Ben and throwing him through the wall to tumble to a stop on the lawn outside. Julie runs through the hole, going to check on

Ben.

J: Ben!

Behind her, Elena has transformed both her arms into forked whips, using them to grab Julie's wrists and ankles, suspending her in the air while Julie screams.

B: Put her down!

E: ((raises eyebrow)) Or?

Four small discs disengage from Ben's alien form, fly over to Elena and surround her, blasting her with sonic waves. She grimaces then disintegrates into a pile of shimmery nanochips. Ben catches Julie when she falls, and the discs return to his suit. He sets Julie to stand on the ground before advancing on Elena, who is still disintegrated. He raises his arm but E transforms into Julie, looking up at Ben with a pleading expression. The camera moves to focus on Ben's raised fist, which he has not moved. Julie's head then transforms back into nanochips, snaking and swirling around Ben's head, forcing him to inhale them.

B: ((wheezing)) Inside..My lungs!

Elena stands by in the form of (whole) Julie, smiling nastily as Ben chokes.

J: ((approaches E, speaking angrily)) What are you going to do, kill him? If you can't have him, no one can – is that it?

E: I.. I love him. ((hesitant))

J: You don't know what love is.

Ben inhales then spits out the microchips, holding his throat. He transforms back into regular Echo Echo, then into his human form, landing on his hands and knees, groaning. Julie goes to him, putting her hand on his arm and her other arm around his back.

J: Are you okay? ((speaking tenderly))

E: Maybe I don't know what love is. ((begins to transform, her voice hardens)) But now I know what hate is. ((she becomes a mass of microchips, slithering over the grass and disappearing into a storm drain)) You'll see me again.

Final shot of Julie with her arm on Ben's shoulder, both looking worriedly toward the street.