

GENDER ROLES AND STEREOTYPES REVEALED IN RECENT BEST-SELLING  
ADOLESCENT LITERATURE: A CONTENT ANALYSIS

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by  
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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School of the University of Missouri, have examined the dissertation entitled:

GENDER ROLES AND STEREOTYPES REVEALED IN RECENT BEST-SELLING  
ADOLESCENT LITERATURE: A CONTENT ANALYSIS

presented by Dawn Castagno-Dysart,

a candidate for the degree of doctor of philosophy,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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**Dedicated to my Grandma Sadie Castagno who was the teacher I aspire to be. A woman who in a time when few men had a college degree, chose to obtain a master's degree rather than remarry when her husband died.**

**Thank you, Grandma for passing on your love of learning and teaching to me.**

**Dedicated to my children, Owen and Gwendolyn who demonstrate daily what it means to be young feminists.**

**Dedicated to my husband, Chris who has been beside me through this journey.**

**Without his love and support I never would have made it.**

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This has been a long journey for me spanning ten years. I began as a full-time student and then had my first child. I decided to take only one class a semester at that point. After having my second child I took a two-year maternity leave. When my daughter went to pre-school, I decided it was time to start back part-time. This has led me to this point, finally the end is in sight.

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Of course I must acknowledge my parents. I learned the value of hard work at a young age when I started working at age 10 as a waitress at my father's pizza restaurant. Those Sundays, which did not end until I graduated from college, greatly shaped me into the person I am today. I do not think my father realizes how much those Sundays mean to me. Just my dad and me working together. You can imagine over the years all the talks we had. It was from those Sundays that I learned the value of a hard work ethic, to never give up, and to always be honest. Both my parents taught me the value of an education and my parents told me from a young age that I could be anything I wanted to be. My mother has always been there to listen and give advice when I need it. She was my first running buddy and I love her for that. I will never be able to thank my parents enough for everything they have done for me.

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## ABSTRACT

This content analysis explores the gender roles and stereotypes in the top three best-selling adolescent books over the past ten years (2004-2014). The research was gathered on the books: *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) through book synopsis, book notes, and methodological notes. Because a transaction takes place between the reader and text when one reads and books are an important mode of transmitting social and cultural norms, it is during reading that these cultural norms can be transmitted. In this study a typological analysis using aspects of Heine et al.'s (1999) Characteristics to Consider when Examining Children's Books for Positive Gender Role Models and open analysis were used and revealed major and minor themes in regard to both gender roles and stereotypes, as well as progressive gender roles. Findings reveal the major themes being lack of autonomy, damsel in distress, and conventional female stereotypes (a focus on physical/outward appearance, mama bear (compelled to protect young), and female being passive/submissive). The minor themes were cares for others (the characters putting others wants/needs/feelings before their own wants/needs/feelings), value of romance (the female needing the love of a man to be happy and a boyfriend/husband equals female worth), and traditional male stereotypes (the male behaving in an aggressive/assertive manner, controlling and strong). Teachers, media specialist/librarians, and parents need to take care when choosing books to read to children and make sure to include books that have strong female characters, as well as encourage children to think critically about the gender roles and stereotypes they may encounter in the books they read.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“You are smart and beautiful,” I told my two-year-old daughter, Gwen.

“No, I am not!”

“What do you mean, you’re not smart?” I asked.

“I’m a girl and boys are smart.”

A few months later Gwen said, “I need a boy. I need true love.”

As you can image, both of these conversations shocked me. I had never told Gwen that she is anything but smart, that she could pursue whatever profession she wants, and that she in no way needs a man to accomplish things. Her great-grandmother had a master’s degree (amazing since she came from a generation where most men did not have this education). Where would she ever get such an idea? The only answer I can come up with is her obsession with reading and watching Disney princess movies. She does, after all, call herself a “princess.”

Even before having this conversation with Gwen, I was interested in gender differences. As a parent of a girl and boy, I noticed the differences between my son, Owen and my daughter. She talked earlier, and was interested in dolls and other “girl” toys even though she had access to boy’s toys because Owen was older. She was also interested in skirts, dresses and “looking pretty.” I began to wonder if she were embodying what society deems as a “girl” because of DNA (nature) or because of nurture and seeing what society portrays as appropriate girl behavior and interests. To be honest after all the reading I have done, I’m still wondering if it isn’t a little of both, nurture and nature.

The conversation with Gwen reaffirmed my desire to research gender bias in children's books. It also brought many questions to mind in regards to potential gender stereotypes in children's and adolescent literature. Because of these questions, I began reading the research concerning gender bias in children's literature, especially the Newbery Award winning books. Although these award-winning books are quality literature that doesn't necessarily mean these books are popular with young adults and sell well. So, I began thinking about reading the most popular and best selling adolescent books and examining them for gender stereotypes.

### **Rationale**

Feminist literary theory argues that women are often portrayed in stereotypical ways in literature. Showalter (1985) states:

In it's the earliest years, feminist criticism concentrated on exposing the misogyny of literary practice: the stereotyped images of women in the literature as angels or monsters, the literary abuse or textual harassment of women in classic and popular male literature, and the exclusion of women from literary history. (p. 5)

These extreme stereotypes which reduce women to "angel" and "monster" significantly conflict with a woman's sense of herself (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979). This limits her potential as a person by restricting her autonomy and creativity (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979).

Children's views on gender are affected in crucial ways by children's books (McCleary & Widdersheim, 2014). In fact, books may be the basic model of delivery by which children develop ideas about themselves as well as about other people (Tepper & Cassidy, 1999). When children and adolescents read they become familiar with culture and subconsciously ingest traditional female and male roles (McCleary & Widdersheim,

2014). Books are an important method of transmitting social norms. In fact, “studies have found that the written word is one of the most powerful ways to transmit ideas and information” (Kinman & Henderson, 1985, p. 885). Because there is a transaction that occurs between the reader and the writer (Rosenblatt, 1993), these cultural values can be transmitted to the reader. According to Schweickart (1986), the problem is that some readers can be misled and manipulated, and when they finish reading the book their experience turns into knowledge, as if reading the book took them outside the experience of the book and gave them mastery of it. These cultural ideals become what the person reading the text believes to be true. In this case, what is true in regards to gender roles and stereotypes. Therefore, feminist literary theorists realize the importance of the influence texts have on the cultural ideals and perceptions of children and young adults.

This study analyzes the top three best-selling adolescent literature books over the past ten years (2004-2014), because these are the most popular books, selling millions of copies, and books are important transmitters of culture. In fact, all three of these books were also made into movies. So, these books were widely read by millions of teenagers; therefore, impacting millions of adolescents. Therefore, the overarching question that guides this study is: How are male and female gender roles and stereotypes portrayed in the top three best-selling adolescent literature books over the past 10 years using content analysis from a feminist literary theory perspective?

Using a content analysis methodology, I analyze the top three best-selling adolescent literature books over the past ten years. This methodology is the best “fit” to analyze texts, because it allows me to look at communications and messages in texts, including those implied messages from the author to the reader. Content analysis is an

appropriate methodology to use when conducting research on texts. In education content analysis has been used to analyze textbooks for the racial, sexual and national prejudices they contain, including how the portrayal of wars is different in the history books of former enemies (Krippendorff, 1989). Content analysis goes outside observable behaviors and looks at symbolic qualities to find consequences of communications (Krippendorff, 1989). He states, “Communications, messages, and symbols differ from observable events, things, properties or people in that they inform about something other than themselves; they reveal some properties of their distant producers or carriers, and they have cognitive consequences for their senders, their receivers, and the institutions in which their exchange is embedded” (p. 403). Therefore, my process of analyzing the top three best-selling adolescent books over the past 10 years for the possible messages that are being transmitted concerning gender bias/stereotypes and looking for implications of these messages fits well with the content analysis methodology. Data used for a content analysis should communicate and it should transmit a message from sender to receiver (White & Marsh, 2006). So, text in a book can be used for content analysis. In my study the text can be subjected to a content analysis to explore the gender stereotypes transmitted from an author to the reader.

There is also a lack of research in regards to gender stereotypes in adolescent literature. I searched the EBSCOhost Databases for both “gender bias in adolescent literature” and “gender bias in young adult literature” and found no relevant results. Kimsey (2011) states in her master’s thesis, “There is not as much research on literature for young adults as there is for children (Turner-Bowker, 1996), despite the fact that adolescence is a time of self-discovery” (p. 8). Kimsey (2011) does review five articles

concerning gender roles and stereotypes or issues related to masculinity in her master's thesis. I was only able to gain access to one of these articles which I discuss in my literature review.

This study will add to current research by examining gender stereotypes in best-selling adolescent literature. The results of this study are significant because they may affect how parents, teachers, librarians, and adolescents choose and discuss books.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

I used three main theoretical frameworks for this study, feminist literary theory, gender development, and transactional theory. Feminist literary theory is different from many theories in that its literary principles are not derived from a single authority figure or important texts (Showalter, 1985). It is used in a variety of activities and in a variety of contexts when applied to the study of literature (Kolodny, 1975). Feminist critics are concerned with the ways in which women have been excluded from the literary canon and the ways women are represented in literature.

Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert, and Susan Gubar are the most commonly cited feminist literary theorists. Although these three theorists have different names for each stage, they all agree that feminist literary theory has moved through various stages. Feminist literary theory began to view women's writing from a cultural perspective. This new view considered literature as a social institution, that is rooted not only in its own literary traditions, but also within the artifacts from the society from which it resides (Kolodny, 1980a). Women need to be represented in multiple ways in literature instead as having romantic love interests or as mothers (Kolodny, 1980a). So, as feminist literary

theorists look to the future it is necessary for the perceptions of women's literature to be challenged and the forgotten works of women to be realized.

Children receive messages, which are unique to each culture, from parents, teachers, siblings, and others about what it means to be a "boy" or "girl" from the moment they are born. The appropriate gender schema developed by females and males is influenced greatly by culture. Because these cultural gender schemas are so powerful, feelings of unhappiness and dissatisfaction can be felt by boys and girls who deviate from gender schemas. During adolescence there is potential for disruption and change in the gender schemas of boys and girls.

Rosenblatt's transactional theory considers books as an important method of transmitting social norms. When a child reads, there is a transaction that occurs between the reader and the writer. During this transaction the cultural values embedded in the text can be transmitted to the reader. Rosenblatt considers reading to be a continuum; the efferent and aesthetic are the two poles of the continuum (Rosenblatt, 1982). Efferent reading occurs when the reader focuses attention on what he/she wants to retain or recall. It is during the aesthetic reading experience that the story becomes a lived through experience because of the ideas and feelings experienced by the reader (Rosenblatt, 1982). The meaning found in the text comes not only from what the author has written, but also from what the past experiences the reader brings to the text (Rosenblatt, 2005a). The reader creates meaning from the text through the transaction between the text and her/himself. It is because of this transaction between writer and reader that the gender stereotypes portrayed in texts can be transmitted to the reader.

## Methodology

In order to study the male and female gender stereotypes in the top three best-selling adolescent literature books over the past ten years (2004-2014), I analyzed the books: *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), *Divergent* (Roth, 2011), and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008). These three books were the top three best-selling books according to the *USA Today's* Best-Selling Book List (2004-2014). To get a greater variety of books only one book from each series was chosen, because the number one and two best-selling books were both from the same series.

I used a content analysis methodology, an inductive method of analyzing data. Because of this ability to view the data within a specific cultural context, content analysis allowed me to analyze the texts for potential gender roles and stereotypes that may be transferred to the reader. Content analysis helped me consider both my theoretical perspective and the culture in which these gender roles and stereotypes are based and not just the authors' style or literary elements as a literary analysis would.

This study included four sources of data: synopsis of the books, typological book notes, open book notes, and methodological notes. In the synopsis, I focused on the plot and theme of each book. I took book notes regarding gender roles and stereotypes as I read through each book a second time. I used my methodological notes to keep track of what I found interesting each day, the big ideas I had, questions I had regarding data I worked on that day, and my methodological process. This reflection on the process on collecting and analyzing my data was also useful in supporting the discussion of my findings.

For my analysis procedures I used both a typological analysis and an open analysis. I began my analysis of my book notes with typological analysis, where the categories are established prior to analysis based on some theory (Stemler, 2001). In this study, I used the portions of Heine, Inkster, Kazemek, Willams, Raschke, and Stevens (1999) framework. This framework also helped me examine the text for instances of progressive female and male gender roles and stereotypes.

Typological coding was followed by open analysis. The context units were the reflections from my book note. I used the conceptual framework (feminist literary theory, gender, and children's literature studies) to analyze my data set in order to create book notes based on open codes. Through open coding I followed character shifts over time, the personality shifts of characters as they interacted with different characters throughout the books and examples of male and female stereotypes. It also allowed me to find themes that were specific to each individual book. The typological and open coding led to the large themes found in my study.

### **Definitions for This Study**

Never before has there been such an openness about gender identity. Individuals may choose many ways to identify themselves: straight, lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ), cisman, ciswoman, and many more. There is great fluidity of gender choices. Although we have many new ways to define our sexuality and our gender, we still have many books that portray gender in highly traditional ways. Furthermore, anyone who identifies as a boy or girl could identify with the gender roles and stereotypes expressed in books. The word 'traditional' itself, may mean different things to different people. To some it may be a positive word, referring to one's

homeland, etc., while to others, it may have a more negative connotation. So, there are many ways to define gender.

Based on my background and my transactions with the literature, I define the following terms for this study. I realize that some may define these terms in different ways. However, these are the definitions used for this study.

**Adolescent:** “There is currently no standard definition of ‘adolescent.’ Although often captured as an age range, chronological age is just one way of defining adolescence. Adolescence can also be defined in numerous other ways, considering such factors as physical, social, and cognitive development as well as age. For example, another definition of adolescence might be the period of time from the onset of puberty until an individual achieves economic independence” (Gentry & Campbell, 2002, p. 1).

**Young Adult Literature:** Literature for those as young as ten and as old as twenty-five. It includes not only fiction that addresses contemporary world issues, problems, and life circumstances that are relevant to young readers, but also other forms of literacy. These include other forms of narratives (new forms of poetry, nonfiction), comics, picture books, and graphic novels (Cart, n.d.).

**Gender:** The “behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online).

**Gender Roles:** Personality traits that children learn to associate with males and/or females and are “shaped by the universally shared beliefs about gender roles that are held by their society” that “often take the form of oversimplified gender role stereotypes” (Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993, p. 220 in Jachowicz, 2010, p. 16).

**Stereotype:** “Learned, widely shared, socially validated general beliefs about categories of individuals” [that are] “typically inaccurate. Stereotypes oversimplify and exaggerate attributions made to groups creating distinctions between categories which are greater than actual observed differences” (Turner-Bowker, 1996, p. 461 in Jachowicz, 2010, p. 16).

**Traditional Females:** “Primary caretaker of children and home, sensitive, comforting, dependent, physically weak, engaged in jobs such as secretarial and clerical work or nursing” (Powell, Gillespie, Swearingen, & Clements, 1993 p. 98\*).

**Traditional males:** “Primary provider, physically strong, brave, adventurous, independent, engaged in jobs such as law, business and medicine” (Powell et al., 1993 p. 98\*).

**Progressive Females:** “Married women working outside the home, physically strong, brave, independent, in male dominated jobs such as law and medicine” (Powell et al., 1993 p. 98\*).

**Progressive Males:** “Caretakers of children and involved with duties at home, sensitive, working female dominated jobs such as secretarial, clerical, and nursing” (Powell et al., 1993 p. 98\*).

\* Powell et al., 1993, seminal study

### **Best Seller’s Book List**

In order to determine the books that are the top three best-selling adolescent books over the past ten years I had to consider which book list I would use. I looked to the two most popular/familiar lists: the New York Times and the USA Today. The New York Times Best Seller’s list reflects the sales that are reported by vendors who offer a

wide range of general interest titles. The locations of the sales for print books include national, regional and local chains; independent book retailers; supermarkets, university, gift and discount department stores online and multimedia entertainment retailers; supermarkets, and newsstands. The E-book rankings reflect sales from leading online sellers of e-books in a variety of common e-reader formats (The New York Times Best Sellers). The E-book sales are included for all adult categories except graphic novels and all children's categories except picture books. If an e-book is available through a single vendor it is not currently tracked (The New York Times Best Sellers).

Similar to the New York Times, USA Today incorporates information from a large number of book sellers including: “Amazon.com, [Amazon Kindle](#), Barnes & Noble.com, Barnes & Noble Inc., Barnes & Noble e-books, BooksAMillion.com, Books-A-Million, Bookland and Books & Co., Costco, Hudson Booksellers, Joseph-Beth Booksellers (Lexington, KY; Cincinnati, Charlotte, Cleveland, Pittsburgh), Kobo, Inc., Powell's Books (Portland, Ore.), Powells.com, R.J. Julia Booksellers (Madison, Conn.), Schuler Books & Music (Grand Rapids, Okemos, Eastwood, Alpine, Mich.), Sony Reader Store, Target, Tattered Cover Book Store (Denver)” (USA Today Booksdatabase). Sales data are collected by *USA Today* each week from booksellers from a variety of outlets: independent bookstores, bookstore chains, online retailers, and mass merchandisers. This data is used to determine the week's (sales Monday through Sunday) top selling 150 titles. Each Thursday the first 50 are published in print in *USA Today* and the top 150 are published online (USA Today Booksdatabase). Since such a wide variety of sellers is used, both physical stores and online stores, the numbers sold should be accurate.

Also, *USA Today* put together a list of the top selling books over the past twenty years. This separates the books by fiction and nonfiction then by genres, this includes a “youth,” section. I chose the top three books listed based on the total number of weeks listed as number one. There were books within the same series, such as *Twilight* series, *Harry Potter* series, etc that dominated the list. Therefore, to get a greater variety in books and authors, I chose to use only one book from each series if books from the series appeared multiple times. Therefore, I will analyze the following three books: *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008), and *Divergent* (Roth, 2012).

*Table 1: Number of Weeks at Number One on Best-Seller List*

| Title of Book                       | Number of Weeks |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Twilight</i> (Meyer, 2005)       | 18 weeks        |
| <i>Hunger Games</i> (Collins, 2008) | 17 weeks        |
| <i>Divergent</i> (Roth, 2012)       | 10 weeks        |

### **Limitations**

One must consider the limitations of the methodology. Berg (2001) states, “The single serious weakness of content analysis may be in locating unobtrusive messages relevant to the particular research questions. In other words, content analysis is limited to examining already recorded messages” (p. 259). Therefore, if the message is oral it must first be recorded. In the case of my research, the texts are already written as books, which makes this not a problem for my study. Another limitation of my study is that I only reviewed three books instead of more books. This made my sample size smaller and

provided me with a smaller range of texts. Also, the books were in either the horror or dystopian genre. So, one might wonder if books from other genres would show more or less examples of gender roles and stereotypes.

### **Dissertation Overview**

This chapter provided an overview for this study, including theoretical frameworks and methodological procedures. The three theoretical frameworks: feminist literary theory, gender studies, and transactional theory were briefly introduced. The definitions for this study terms used in this study was also included in this chapter. A discussion of the two most popular best-selling book lists: New York Times and the USA Today and why I chose the USA Today for this study in included. Finally, the limitations of this study conclude the chapter.

In Chapter 2, I go into greater detail describing the three theoretical frameworks: feminist literary theory, gender studies, and transactional theory. Within the discussion of feminist literary theory, I discuss the major theorists, modern feminist literary theory, the cultural assumptions of feminist literary theory, and the future of the theory. I follow this with a discussion of gender studies that includes a gender role development, the difference between “sex” and “gender”, and the role of culture in gender development. I review the previous studies of gender bias in children’s literature including Caldecott Award winning books, Newbery Award winning books, and in *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2010). I conclude this chapter with an examination of Louise Rosenblatt’s transactional theory.

In Chapter 3, I describe content analysis as a methodology. This is followed by a list of my data set, and data sources. My data sources include synopsis, typological and

open book notes, and methodological notes. Then, I describe my analysis procedures, which include both typological and open coding. Finally, I discuss methodological considerations with trustworthiness.

In Chapter 4, I begin with a synopsis of each of the three books: *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008). I then discuss the major and minor themes I found with open coding. The major themes were codes found at least seven times and present in at least two of the three books. Next, I examine the minor themes, which were found at least five times in each book and found in at least two of the three books. I used two categories from Heine, Inkster, Kazemek, Williams, Raschke, & Stevens (1999) list of Six Characteristics to Consider when Examining Children's Books for Positive Gender Role Models to analyze for deductive themes, which allowed me to consider the progressive male and female gender roles. Finally, I end the chapter by exploring the themes specific to each of the three texts.

In Chapter 5, I begin with a brief review of my theoretical frameworks, and methodology. Then, I more closely examine each of the themes discussed in Chapter 4 by giving a short summary followed by interpretations. This is followed by implications for teachers, media specialists/librarians, and parents. I end the chapter by discussing areas for future research in the area of gender bias.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Introduction**

This section reviews literature that has guided this study about feminist literary theory, gender, and previous studies related to gender stereotypes in children's literature. I begin by discussing feminist literary theory's major theorists, its cultural assumptions, and the future of the theory. Second, I discuss gender role development, the difference between "sex" and "gender," and the role culture plays in determining gender roles. Third, I review literature on gender stereotypes in children's literature, Caldecott Award winners, Newbery Award winners, the *Twilight* series, and *The Hunger Games*. Finally, I end this section with a discussion of Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory and its impact on transmitting social norms through text.

### **Feminist Literary Theory**

#### **Introduction**

Books convey social and cultural messages on how women and men should behave. As Rosenblatt (2005a) said of books, "Always too, in greater or lesser degree, the author has written out of a scheme of values, a sense of social framework or even, perhaps, of a cosmic pattern" (p. 26). It is then through the transfer that occurs between the reader and the text that the reader receives these cultural and social messages. Feminist literary theory views the social and cultural messages, specifically those related to women, that are embedded in texts. Critically analyzing texts for these literal and implied messages concerning stereotypes is necessary. This section begins by addressing how feminist literary theory differs from other critical theories. Following that, I discuss the three major theorists of feminist literary theory (Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert, and

Susan Gubar) and how they historically view the representation of women in literature. Finally, I discuss cultural assumptions and look to the future of feminist literary theory.

### **Roots of Feminist Literary Theory**

It is important to note that feminist literary theory differs from other critical theories. Feminist literary theory does not derive its literary principles from a single body of important texts or a single authority figure (Showalter, 1985). In fact, different feminist literary theorists have different ideas on the number and names of stages of feminist literary theory. It is used in multiple contexts to cover a variety of literary critiques (Kolodny, 1975). According to Kolodny (1975), these include:

- (1) any criticism written by a woman, no matter what the subject;
- (2) any criticism written by a woman about a man's book which treats that book from a "political" or "feminist" perspective; and
- (3) any criticism written by a woman about a woman's book or about female authors in general. (p. 75)

This lack of a clear and formulated definition is a concern for both feminist literary theorists and critics. Even so, it fits my study well because although feminist literary theorists and critics may not agree on all aspects of the definition of feminist literary theory, they do share certain beliefs that align with my study: specifically, the transaction between the text and reader, and how the reader receives social and cultural messages. Regarding these common beliefs, Warhol and Herndl (1997) stated:

Feminist critics generally agree that the oppression of women is a fact of life, that gender leaves its traces in literary texts and on literary history, and that feminist literary criticism plays a worthwhile part in the struggle to end oppression in the world outside texts. (p. x)

Feminist literary theory began in the 1960's during the Civil Rights movement in the United States and Europe after second wave feminism (Plain & Sellers, 2007). As feminist literary theory evolved into the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, it was supposed that reading could lead to an educated, open-minded political or a world view (Dinshaw, 2007). Feminist literary theorists emphasize the ways in which women were represented in literature and how women have been excluded from the literary canon. These theorists wanted to challenge the male-centered outlook of authors who portrayed women as objects. Feminist literary theorists rejected the view that the canon reflects the objective judgments of posterity and history; instead, they viewed the canon as a culture-bound political construct (Showalter, 1985). It was, therefore, necessary to begin to unearth and rediscover texts by women that had been ignored up to that point. The assumptions behind the major authors and the accepted canon needed to be rethought (Kolodny, 1975). Most importantly, Kolodny (1975) said, "Probably the most valuable and long-lasting achievement of feminist scholarship and feminist criticism, however, will be their insistence that we give the same kind of critical attention to women writers that we have always accorded our male writers" (p. 88).

Western literary history was overwhelmingly male or patriarchal (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979). Therefore, it was assumed that the canon had valued the literature of male authors because it chose male authored texts as those in the canon. Gilbert (1980) stated by "replacing heroes with heroines, these writers insisted, like Jane Eyre, that women feel just as men feel . . . they suffer from too rigid a constraint . . . precisely as men would suffer" (Gilbert, 1980, p. 35). It is important that the canon represent women authors and include literature about the lives and the true nature of how women live.

## **Major Feminist Literary Theorists**

This study is grounded in the work of the three seminal feminist literary theorists: Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert, and Susan Gubar. The work of these theorists, while rooted in the 1970s and 1980s, transcends the multiple stages of feminism and feminist literary theory and provides the theoretical framework for this study. These theorists described feminist literary theory in stages. Although the stages are named differently, the underlying philosophies are similar and intertwined.

Showalter's first stage is the Feminine/Critique stage (Showalter, 1989). This stage emphasizes the connections between the literary and social mistreatment of women to reinforce the importance of their work (Showalter, 1985). Gilbert saw the beginnings of feminist literary theory as comparable to the conversion experience. Showalter quoted Gilbert regarding this initial stage, "Most feminist critics speak...like people who must bear witness, people who must enact and express in their own lives and words the revisionary sense of transformation that seems inevitably to attend the apparently simple discovery that the experiences of women in and with literature are different from those of men" (1985, p. 5). Therefore, Gilbert believed it is important that women begin to redo their history (Gilbert, 1980). Redoing this history means rethinking, rewriting, and reimagining, and reinterpreting the documents and events that represent it (Gilbert, 1980).

Gubar posited that this first stage is concerned with the proliferation of books about the ways in which male authors have portrayed female characters and feminine imagery (Gubar, 1998). Feminist literary theorists, when looking at gendered narratives, produced new readings that emphasized the manner in which a work of art liberated or debilitated sexual ideologies (Gubar, 1998). Gubar compared women to an art object.

Women are shown as the ideal art piece or replica but never the sculptor (Gubar, 1982). In other words, women are seen as inanimate objects that are acted upon.

A look into the canon and at the portrayal of females in literature was the beginning of a change in the focus of the feminist literary theory. In the 1970's, this theory began to evolve. Showalter called this second stage the "Feminist Stage" (Showalter, 1989) and Gubar "Gynocritics" (Gubar, 1998). The term "Gynocritics" to Showalter means "to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories" (1979, p. 131). This is the point that women free themselves from male literary history and stop trying to fit women into the male tradition. The focus, instead, moves to the new female culture (Showalter, 1979). Gubar (1998) said of this second phase, "The recovery of female literary traditions began in the late seventies with books whose bold, inclusive categories appear evident in their titles" (p. 882). Some of these books include *Women Writers and Poetic Identity* by Margaret Homan and *Literary Women* by Ellen Moers (Gubar, 1998). Showalter (1985) says of the second phase:

The second phase of feminist criticism was the discovery that women writers had a literature of their own, whose historical and thematic coherence, as well as artistic importance, had been obscured by the patriarchal values that dominate our culture. (p. 6)

A focus and rediscovery and rereading of women's literature and women's writing was seen as a specific field of inquiry. As hundreds of lost women writers were rediscovered, the connections between women's writing became clear for the first time and the

relationship between female ability and literary tradition was explored (Showalter, 1985). Books began to define women writers in their own terms. This recognition of the evolutionary stages of women's writing over the past 250 years and the connections that were discovered led to the concept of a female aesthetic (Showalter, 1985). Showalter (1985) described this female aesthetic:

Since 1979, these insights have been tested, supplemented, and extended so that we now have a coherent, if still incomplete, narrative of female literary history, which describes the evolutionary stages of women's writing during the last 250 years from imitation through protest to self-definition, and defines and traces the connections throughout history and across national boundaries of the recurring images, themes, and plots that emerge from women's social, psychological, and aesthetic experience in male-dominated cultures. (p. 6)

The recognition of connections in women's writing of these themes, plots, and images encouraged the emerging of the female aesthetic (Showalter, 1985).

As a result of this female aesthetic, concern began for the female works of literature that had previously been neglected. Scholarly attention was given to the narrative of literary history by focusing on aesthetic periodization and evaluation (Gubar, 1998). So, books began to appear about women's cultural situations within various periods, such as the Renaissance or modernist (Gubar, 1998). When discussing female literary works being ignored and left out of the canon, Gilbert (1980) said:

For what feminist criticism and scholarship have taught me in the last twelve years is that, although we obviously can't "throw out a thousand years of Western culture," we can and must redo our history of these years. Nothing may have been

thrown out of the record, but something has been left out: “merely,” in Carolyn Kizer’s ironic understatement, “the private lives of one-half of humanity”—the private lives of women and sometimes their public lives, too. (p.32)

For the feminist critic it is important that literature written by women and about women not be overlooked and excluded from what is considered “important literature.”

Identifying these “forgotten” and “overlooked” literary works by women requires a new way of looking at reading texts. Kolodny (1980b) quoted Bloom’s second formula for canon formation:

“You are or become what you read.” To set ourselves the task of learning to read a wholly different set of texts will make of us different kinds of readers (and perhaps different kinds of people as well). But to set ourselves the task of doing this in a public way, on behalf of women’s texts specifically, engages us—as the feminists among us have learned—in a new challenge to the inevitable issue of “authority” ...in all questions of canon formation. (p. 59)

During this time, not only were women’s texts looked at more closely, but also men’s text began to be looked at with more scrutiny. Kolodny (1980b) suggested that men and women would both be challenged to read texts differently when women’s texts were seen as important as male texts.

Gilbert (1980) indicated there did not exist an intimate interaction between writers and readers through and in which each defines for the other what he/she is about.

Therefore, because texts written by men were included in the canon and were used to teach “good” literature to the next generation, women may write in a way that mirrors the

way in which a male would write. When discussing the interaction between readers and writers Kolodny (1980b) stated:

You cannot write or teach or think or even read without imitation, and what you imitate is what another person has done, that person's writing or teaching or thinking or reading. Your relation to what informs that person is tradition, for tradition is influence that extends past one generation, a carrying over of influence. (p. 48)

It is important to note that not all female literary theorists agreed with the idea that women have a separate way of writing or literary history. This assumes that women do have a unique consciousness and experience of the world and that this uniqueness has led to a different literary production (Kolodny, 1975). The question was how feminist literary critics will go about discovering whether something is different about women's literary production. Kolodny (1975) said of making discoveries concerning women's literature:

Instead, we must begin by treating each author and each separate work by each author as itself unique and individual. Then, slowly, we may over the course of time and much reading discover what kinds of things recur and, more important still, *if things recur.*" (p. 79)

Kolodny believed that it is important that we do not just throw out what has been learned from past critical analysis techniques because they are based on male texts and male language (Kolodny, 1975). Instead we should use what we can from the past, add to it, enhance it, and where these critical methods are found lacking, it is there that energy should be expended to ask new questions and find new methods of analysis (Kolodny,

1975). It would seem that Gilbert, too, addressed this issue when she discussed that replacing heroes with heroines shows that “women feel just as men feel...they suffer from too rigid a constraint. . . precisely as men would suffer” (1980, p. 35). So, a feminist critic must ask if women are so different from men when it comes to expressing themselves in authoring texts.

### **Feminist Literary Theory in the Last Twenty Years of the Twentieth Century**

In the late twentieth century, feminist literary theory moved to viewing women’s writing from a cultural perspective. For Showalter this is the “Female Stage” (Showalter, 1989) and Gubar “Engendering” (Gubar, 1998). Literature was seen as a social institution (Kolodny, 1980). The power relations in the culture at large were reflected and encoded in the conventions of men’s and women’s literary legacy (Kolodny, 1980a).

In the late 1990s and early 2000s a postcolonial feminist approach expanded feminist discourse past that of just gender or literary works (George, 2006). During this most modern stage of feminist literary theory, theorists began looking at women’s own literature that was based on breaking free of the cultural assumptions society had given them. This begins with a gender identity based on a sameness with one’s mother. When reading, a girl might internalize the false binary that female characters either have romantic love and marriage or a conflict with a desire to not become her mother. Feminist critics realize that women need to be represented in different ways and truly have a literature of their own; a theory that includes ideas about how women’s psyche, body, and language can be interpreted in relation to the social contexts that occur (Showalter, 1981). The cultural environments in which women reside impact the way in which they see their

bodies and their reproductive and sexual functions (Showalter, 1981). Gilligan (1993) said of various studies on gender:

The repeated finding of these studies is that the qualities deemed necessary for adulthood—the capacity for autonomous thinking, clear decision-making, and the responsible action—are those associated with masculinity and considered undesirable as attributes of the feminine self. (p. 17)

So, the cultural assumptions portrayed in literature may teach girls that the traits valued by society are masculine traits and that they should not have these traits as women. Breaking free of these societal constraints is important because women need to find their voice and identity. When young girls and boys read these books, they internalize these traits and believe that this is the way they should be to be valued and a female or male of worth.

This focus on cultural studies includes that of not only cultural practice, but that of the images of women in media, film, television and popular music (Moody, 2006). Textual representations reproduce gender ideology (Moody, 2006). Feminist literary critics are concerned with the ways in which the media maintains patriarchal ideals and images by creating stereotypes and misrepresentations of the realisms of women's lives and social change (Moody, 2006). This is especially true of Hollywood films, which are often produced for male consumption, requiring women to agree with male desires (Moody, 2006). Since all three books in this study were made into films, this is also true for these books.

Feminist literary critics could also broaden their study to the popular culture genre fiction (Moody, 2006). The romance novel needs to be given serious consideration

because the stories tend to end in declarations of commitment and love but do not continue beyond this point (Moody, 2006). What is concerning to feminist literary critics is that women participate in maintaining the patriarchy expressed in these novels (Moody, 2006). Looking forward, Moody (2006) said, “Within the new narrative structure, not only does the hero have to move beyond the ideological standard of the nineteenth-century patriarchy, but more work is required from the heroine, who has to overcome the influence of her mother’s damaging and ‘old-fashioned’ feminism” (para. 29). These novels often do mirror changing cultural conditions; however, they are structured around the need for romance (Moody, 2006).

Modern feminist literary critics also began to consider Black feminist literary theory, as well as lesbian feminist literary theory. The debates within African-American theory and criticism are similar to those of feminist critical theory (Showalter, 1989). Concerning this issue, Showalter (1989) asks two questions, “First, who is qualified to be a critic of black literature? Second, can black criticism appropriate white or Western theory without sacrificing its hard-won independence and individuality?” (p. 219). It came to light when looking at African-American criticism that there were many of the same issues with feminist literary theory, in that it was patriarchal, narrow and chauvinistic (Showalter, 1989). So, Smith, V. (1989) said of Black feminist theory, “Black feminist literary theory proceeds from the assumption that Black women experience a unique form of oppression in discursive and nondiscursive practices alike because they are victims at once of sexism, racism, and by extension classism” (p. 317). Therefore, when considering an African-American feminist theory, these issues must also

be considered because when Black feminist criticism is applied to a text or piece of written work it can expose its actual elements (Smith, B., 1977).

In the same way an African-American feminist literary theory has arisen, so has a lesbian feminist literary criticism. We must consider, Zimmer (1981) said:

...the vigor of lesbian criticism and its value to all feminists to raising awareness of entrenched heterosexism to existing texts, clarifying the lesbian traditions in literature through scholarship and reinterpretation, pointing out barriers along the way of free lesbian expression, explicating the recurring themes and values of lesbian literature, and exposing the dehumanizing stereotypes of lesbians in our culture. (p. 91)

Important to this aspect of feminist literary criticism is asking whether or not a woman's affectional and sexual preference have influence over the way a woman thinks, reads and writes (Zimmerman, 1981). So, when looking at adolescent African-American literature we must consider books that empower young women of color.

### **Cultural Assumptions**

Feminist critics believe that society and society's cultural assumptions have led to the ways in which females and males are portrayed in texts. Gilbert (1980) stated:

Assumptions about the sexes, we saw, are entangled with some of the most fundamental assumptions Western culture makes about the very nature of culture—that "culture" is male, for example, and "nature" female—and we decided that at least until the nineteenth century, even apparently abstract definitions of literary genres were deeply influenced by psychosocial notions about gender. (p. 33)

These cultural assumptions impact the ways in which females are portrayed in texts. This is true in the ways certain power relations, especially those where males have numerous forms of influence over females are inscribed in texts (Kolodny, 1980a). Kennard's approach suggested that what is important about a fiction is not whether it ends in marriage or death, but what the conventional ending implies about the beliefs and values of the world that engendered it (Kolodny, 1980a). So, literature needs to be considered a social institution, rooted within not only its own literary traditions, but also the precise mental and physical artifacts of the society from which it was written (Kolodny, 1980a). Kolodny (1980a) says of Kennard, "Her work thus participates in a growing emphasis in feminist study on the fact of literature as a social institution, embedded not only, but also within the particular physical and mental artifacts of the society from which it comes" (p. 23). Therefore, feminist literary theorists realize the importance of the influence texts have on the cultural ideals and perceptions of gender that are portrayed through texts. For example, that women are submissive and weak, as Bella is portrayed in *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005). We can see evidence of the cultural perceptions of gender even in the present election, where we see the candidates perceived differently. When discussing how Clinton is being treated in the recent election Pavlovitz (2016) states, "Regardless of our politics, we should be honest about what we're seeing right now. We're seeing an experienced, highly qualified, intelligent, confident woman, being treated as if those things are somehow liabilities (p. 3). So, these cultural assumptions about what it means to be a woman are still prevalent for many today.

### **A Look to the Future**

When looking to the future of feminist literary theory one must consider the past and its historic evolution (Nusser, 2014). This has been true for a large number of research and publications over the last ten years. Nusser (2014) says:

These publications examine the past in order to determine where feminism and gender theory stand today. All too often they present a narrative of origin, in which feminism falls by the wayside as being in the past and its political claim is undercut. (p. 1)

Therefore, similar to these publications, this study has examined the past and will now look to the future.

When asked, “What do Feminist Critics want?” feminists want everything: a complete and earth-shattering change in all our ideas of literary meaning and literary history, a “revisionary imperative” (Showalter, 1985). Feminist literary theorists do need to make clear that what women have expressed in literature so far is what they have been “*able to express*” based on the interplay between innate biological determinants and the larger effects of socialization (Kolodny, 1975). Therefore, it is necessary for feminist literary critics to challenge the way society views women and they in turn write and read in a way deemed “correct” by society. So, as a society changes its definitions of what is acceptable or appropriate, it then alters the ways in which its authors may reveal and express themselves (Kolodny, 1975).

Although women seem to be forgotten, their texts not included in the canon or considered noteworthy literature, some women did begin to write in the voice of a woman. Gilbert discussed these women, saying, “My colleague and I realized that, more than most other participants in a thousand years of Western culture, these women had

been forgotten, misunderstood, or misinterpreted” (Gilbert, 1980, p. 34). Reading these “forgotten” women authors can help us create a new literary history that includes these women authors who were not traditionally included in the canon. For example, by reading Constance Fenimore Woolson’s *Miss Grief and Other Stories*, we hear the different perspectives and voices of women.

It is also important to begin to include these women authors in the syllabi of English courses taught in both high school and college classes. Young adult literature taught in classrooms needs to be diverse and include women authors, and books with strong female heroines and progressive male characters. Kolodny (1976) argues,

Moreover, since we teach a number of male texts simply on the grounds of their historical or “sociological” interest, why not also include women’s texts on these grounds as well? — especially if, as Voloshin suggests, they reveal “numerous covert rebellions against male authority.” (p. 832)

Women must begin to be considered as an important part of literary history and, by pushing for the inclusion of women’s texts in college courses, feminists are not continuing society’s oppression of women. Scholars and critics from all schools must be willing to expose and reexamine the innately sexist components within the inherited traditions for any kind of intellectual revolution to occur involving women’s literature (Kolodny, 1976).

### **Summary**

Feminist literary theory is informed by feminist theory and does not necessarily mean the same thing to each theorist. It is this difference that has been a challenge of this theory. Feminist literary theory’s main theorists, Elaine Showalter, Susan Gubar, and

Sandra Gilbert, have contributed much to the study of this theory. These theorists began by focusing on male dominated societal structures to the recovery of female authors and the canon (Gubar, 2006). The focus now is on the effect of gender on power dynamics and the interaction of the reader and text.

## **Gender Studies**

### **Introduction**

For centuries, physicians, scholars, and laypeople in Western Europe and the U.S. used biological models to describe the various legal, social and political statuses of women, men and people of different races (Fausto-Sterling, 2005). In the 1970's, when the feminist second wave came into the political arena, they made a theoretical claim that gender differs from sex and that social institutions yield observed social differences between women and men (Fausto-Sterling, 2005). So began the debate of "sex" and "gender" and their meanings. I will discuss research on gender role development, the difference between "sex" and "gender," and the role culture plays in determining gender roles.

### **Gender Role Development**

Where does gender begin and how does it develop? From the moment a child is born, it is given the label of "boy" or "girl" and from this point forward every instant of the child's life will be assaulted with plentiful agents that instruct him/her in fulfilling his/her "appropriate gender role" (Cherland, 2006). These agents include siblings, peers, television, parents, books, etc. (Cherland, 2006). Throughout childhood, and then as they develop into adolescence, girls develop differently in all areas, including mannerisms, interests and games, preferred playmates, styles of dress, and ways of talking. (Best,

2005). “Children learn the gender role for the sex—the behaviors and social roles that are expected of males and females for their particular society” (Best, 2005, p. 199). Earlier patterns of interactions may, in fact, influence patterns of social behavior in adolescents (Perry & Pauletti, 2011). Initially, young children do not see feminine and masculine characteristics as opposites; however, as they get older, their views grow ever more dissimilar (Stets & Burke, 2001). Even so, the gender stereotypes learned in early childhood may continue or change during adolescence. Emmerich and Shepard (1982) argue, “If a traditional sex stereotype is known to be absent during the chosen developmental end period, it is possible that the nontraditional consensus neutralizes the stereotype during prior developmental periods as well” (p. 406).

### **“Sex” and “Gender”**

It is also important to distinguish between “gender” and “sex,” with “gender” referring to “the psycho-socio-cultural aspects, which are constructed by culture” (Best, 2005, p. 200) and “sex” referring “to biological aspects of masculinity/femininity that presumably reflect the effects of nature” (Best, 2005, p. 200). Therefore, it is important that when discussing gender stereotypes one must consider both these terms. Although, Best (2005) argues that differentiating these terms causes unnecessary separation in the terms “sex” and “gender” and that both boys and girls are products of both the environment and biology. Both masculinity and femininity are entrenched in the social (one’s gender) rather than biological (one’s sex) (Stets & Burke, 2001).

### **Role of Culture in Gender Development**

Culture plays a large role in boys’ and girls’ gender development. Best (2005) states, “Culture has profound effects on behavior, prescribing how babies are delivered,

how children are socialized, how they are dressed, what is considered intelligent behavior, what tasks children are taught, and what roles adult men and women will adopt” (p. 202). For example, the issues in the media involving the 2016 Presidential Election with the way Donald Trump refers to women and the recent rape case involving Brock Turner send messages to both boys and girls about what being a boy and a girl looks like. When looking at the cultural role of gender development, it is important to consider the cultural variables involved. Gender needs to be examined relative to culture, such as myths, rituals, social systems, beliefs, practices, etc., and also in the perspective of the economics and history of society (Best, 2005). What one culture deems is appropriate female or male behavior may be different than what another culture deems is appropriate female or male behavior. For example, women in Saudi Arabian culture are not allowed to drive cars, while women in the United States are expected to drive cars. When identifying the mechanisms within a culture that are responsible for age-related developmental change, one must also take into account the variation between individuals within a cultural group and variation between cultures (Best, 2005). So, gender looks differently across different cultures and throughout different time periods.

As Bem (1981), a seminal theorist, discussed, the distinction between female and male serves as the fundamental organizing standard for every human culture. Most societies assign adult roles on the basis of sex and anticipate this assignation in the socialization of children even though these specific tasks look different for each society (Bem, 1981). Girls and boys are not only expected to procure sex-specific skills, they are also expected to procure or have sex-specific personality attributes and self-concepts that are to be feminine or masculine as defined by that culture (Bem, 1981). “The process by

which a society thus transmutes male and female into masculine and feminine is known as the process of sex typing” (Bem, 1981, p. 354).

This sex typing teaches the child content-specific information concerning particular attributes and behaviors that are linked with sex (Bem, 1981). These include associations related to female and male biology, such as reproductive functioning and anatomy, personality attributes, and division of labor (Bem, 1981). The child learns to process this gender related information in terms of an evolving gender schema and it is this schematic processing that constitutes sex tying (Bem, 1981). In regards to gender schema, Bem (1981) stated, “As children learn the contents of society’s gender schema, they learn which attributes are to be linked with their own sex and, hence, with themselves” (p. 355). The gender schema becomes a guide the child uses to dictate how he/she should act. An example of a gender schema looks like the following: When a young girl is presented with an object, she will make decisions based on her sex-typing schemas (Martin & Haverson, Jr., 1981). If she is given a doll, she will decide that dolls are relevant to her and that because she is a girl and dolls are for girls, dolls are for her (Martin & Haverson, Jr., 1981). Martin and Haverson, Jr. (1981) stated, “The results of these decisions are that the girl will approach the doll, explore it, ask questions about it, and play with it to obtain further information about it” (p. 1120). The girl will continue to explore the doll, ask questions about it, and play with it (Martin & Haverson, Jr., 1981). The opposite will occur if the girl is given a toy car. The girl will decide based on her schema related to toy cars that trucks are “for boys” and she is a girl, so the toy car is not for her (Martin & Haverson, Jr., 1981). Therefore, Martin and Haverson, Jr. (1981) believed, “The result will be avoidance of the truck. No further information about the

truck will be seen as important and none will be acquired beyond the information ‘for boys, not for me’” (p. 1120). The girl’s schema for the “correct” girls’ and boys’ toy has been developed -- girls play with dolls and boys play with trucks. Although we see what is considered “appropriate” for a girl and “appropriate” for a boy changing in regards to gender (for example, boys can wear pink, girls can have tools), we do still see many gender stereotypes prevalent in boys and girls clothing, toys, advertisement, and so on.

In fact, these sex typing gender schemas become so ingrained that both boys and girls are motivated to maintain them and avoid cross-sex behavior. Bem and Lenney (1976) argued, “This avoidance could emerge either because sex-typed individuals are motivated to maintain a self-image as masculine or feminine or because they are motivated to present a public image of masculinity or femininity to those around them” (p. 48). In their 1976 study, Bem and Lenney had individuals perform nine tasks, three considered masculine, three considered feminine, and three considered neutral.

Afterwards, the subjects were asked to rate how they felt while performing the tasks. The results showed that the sex-typed individuals experienced the most discomfort and felt the worst about themselves while performing the cross-sex activity (Bem & Lenney, 1976). Therefore, these culturally acquired gender schemas dictate who and what boys and girls believe they should be and how they should act. What it means to be a boy or what it means to be a girl; in other words, one’s gender identity. Although, it should be noted that what is considered to be “appropriate” for a boy and for a girl in regards to gender roles is changing for some in society.

What are these schemas based on? Current gender stereotyped traits associated with men embody industriousness and agency, whereas those associated with women

encompass expressiveness and commonality (Murnen, Greenfield, Younger, & Boyd, 2016). Current traits strongly encouraged for women include being warm, emotional, sensitive to others, interested in children, friendly, attentive to appearance, and a good listener (Murnen et al., 2016). Traits strongly encouraged for men include assertiveness, leadership, aggression, and independence (Murnen et al., 2016). Many of these traits strongly encouraged by society for males are associated with higher status people (Murnen et al., 2016). Men are discouraged from having the following traits: naïve, weak, and being emotional (Murnen et al., 2016). These traits are associated with lower status people (Murnen et al., 2016). Children often unconsciously learn these stereotypes and then use them to guide their own behavior (Murnen et al., 2016). Murnen et al. (2016) state, “Through cultivation processes, gender-stereotyped behaviors can come to be seen as normative if the themes are repeated frequently” (p. 79). This is especially true if the stereotyped behavior is associated with rewards or portrayed in a positive way (Murnen et al., 2016).

Gender schemas also affect not only one’s gender identity, but also one’s attention towards memories and interpretation of gender-related information (Signorella & Frieze, 2008). This could also include the embracing of sexist or traditional opinions toward gender roles, describing oneself using personality traits customarily related with one’s own gender, expressing penchants for activities typically associated with one’s gender, and aiming for traditional family roles or occupations (Signorella & Frieze, 2008). The reverse could mean the adolescent is rejecting these traditional opinions towards gender and adopting more progressive ideals. Gender schemas can be changed during adolescence. This information is important to this study, because during

adolescence, when females and males read popular literature, these books can either reinforce traditional gender roles and stereotypes or exemplify progressive gender roles. The reading of books can help adolescents change their views in regards to gender roles and stereotypes.

Research on gender role development in adolescents has discovered that, as children grow older and move into adolescence, they become less flexible in regards to gender stereotypes (Alfieri, Ruble, & Higgins, 1996). However, it also found that when there were certain types of social life transitions, there was an increase in flexibility regarding gender role stereotypes (Alfieri, Ruble, & Higgins, 1996). When discussing adolescence, Lo (2012) stated, “During adolescence, teens not only have to deal with the de-stabilizing, often alienating confusion of understanding their own changing bodies, they have to deal with cultural and familial pressures about ‘manhood’ and ‘womanhood.’” In fact, during a chosen developmental end period, in this case late adolescence, a traditional sex stereotype can be present or absent, and the developmental trend for the stereotype or the absence of the stereotype can take one form or another (Emmerich & Shepard, 1982). Evidence has been found that shows, especially among girls, an increased polarization of femininity and masculinity during adolescence (Emmerich & Shepard, 1982). This flexibility in both males and females regarding gender roles and stereotypes may be due to the fact that an important mode of reaching independence during adolescence is rebelling against social conventions (Bartini, 2006). Bartinini (2006) states, “Katz (1979) predicted that adolescents would be less likely to adhere to gender role stereotypes and would become more flexible, especially when their peers are modeling and supporting this flexibility” (p. 234). In fact, attitude flexibility

and tolerance for others may be at its highest in late adolescence (Bartini, 2006).

Therefore, gender roles and stereotypes can be influenced and changed during this period.

### **Summary**

From the moment a child is born he or she begins to be assailed with messages of what it means to be a “boy” or a “girl.” These messages are unique to each culture and are demonstrated to the child by parents, teachers, siblings, media, books, etc.

Masculinity for males and femininity for females are embedded in their gender (socially constructed) and not in their sex (biological). Culture plays a large role in the development of the gender schemas by females and males concerning what is appropriate for each gender. Often, when boys and girls deviate from typical male or female gender schemas, they have feelings of discontent. However, it is during adolescence that there are potential disruptions and changes in gender schemas.

## **Children’s Literature**

### **Introduction**

A large amount of research has been done with respect to gender stereotypes or bias in children’s books, Caldecott Award winning books, and Newbery Award winning books. Jackson and Gee (2005) stated, “During the 1970s and 1980s a wave of research emerged that focused on gender in children’s books and school reading materials, primarily driven by concern about equity issues” (p. 116). A vast majority of the research done at this period of time studied the balance of female and male representation in picture books, reading schemes, early readers, school journals, fiction, and text books. Gender representation in children’s reading materials has continued to be researched

using content analysis since the 1980s (Jackson & Gee, 2005). According to Jackson and Gee (2005),

Such work revealed the disproportionate number of references to males compared with females, the predominance of male main characters and the depiction of male main characters as active and females as passive. More recent work suggests limited evidence of changes in gender representation over time. (p. 116)

These studies have also found that there is differentiation of activities according to gender. Specifically, females are shown in restricted and mainly domestic activities, and males in a wider array of activities. Other studies that focused on language discovered that females were associated with emotionally specific words (Jackson & Gee, 2005). The opposite is true for adolescent literature—very little research has been done concerning gender roles and stereotypes in these books.

### **Gender Bias in Children's Books**

Of the many studies reviewed regarding gender stereotypes in children's books, several were often cited. The first often cited is Paterson and Lach (1990), who noted that in previous studies of children's literature regarding gender stereotypes, males were often portrayed as independent, active, and competent while females as dependent, passive, and incapable. These findings were consistent throughout a variety of reading materials including fiction for older readers, picture books, and school books (Paterson & Lach, 1990). Paterson and Lach (1990) selected 136 picture books from 1967, 1977, and 1987 from the Horn Book list. Overall, they determined that the prevalence of stereotypes has decreased somewhat, however the decreases in the kind and quantity have not been statistically meaningful.

In another children's literature study, Diekman and Murnen (2004) examined gender stereotype in children's literature. In this study, the authors examined the way in which books recommended to parents and teachers as "nonsexist" differed from those books categorized as "sexist." Diekman and Murnen (2004) reasoned that this study was necessary because the roles of women have changed more than the roles of men. By examining these books they were hoping to find a difference in male and female gender roles that reflected the changing roles of men and women in society. The main goal of the study was to explore whether or not the gender equality shown in nonsexist books was actually equal.

The overall findings showed evidence that even books acclaimed as nonsexist still portrayed a narrow vision of gender equality, where women adopt male stereotypic roles and attributes (Diekman & Murnen, 2004), such as men or boys being dominant. It was far less likely for a woman to be shown adopting a male stereotypical role than a female stereotypical role (Diekman & Murnen, 2004). Females often portrayed characteristics typically associated with males, however the reverse was not true (Diekman & Murnen, 2004). Males did not show aspects of characteristics typically associated with females (Diekman & Murnen, 2004).

Tepper and Cassidy (1999) studied the gender differences in the emotional language used in children's books. They found that children learn societal values at a young age and by the age of five most children have already formed strong gender stereotypes. Similar to Paterson and Lach (1990), the authors of this study also stated that the gender stereotypes considered appropriate for males and females are often passed on through storytelling and books.

The data showed that males were more often associated with emotional words than females. To see if this was due to the fact that there were more male than female characters in the books, the researchers divided the total amount of emotional words per books for gender by the number of characters of that gender in the books, which created a variable, “emotional words per gender.” When this was done, it was determined that there was no difference in the amount of emotional words for males and females. When the researchers looked specifically at the Caldecott Medal winning books in the sample, males were associated with significantly more emotional words. It was also found that like-love words were equally associated with characters of both genders, although these words are often associated with female stereotypes.

Heine et al. (1999) argued that girls are negatively impacted by the messages that they are measured by their beauty and that they are second best to males. Since books play an important role in the development of ideas, the authors “are committed to finding the best female role models in children’s literature to accompany our children on their journeys” (Heine et al., 1999, p. 427). Heine et al. (1999) realized that to examine children’s books for positive role models, they also needed to find quality children’s literature. Heine et al. (1999) stated:

A high-quality gender book provides the reader with a character who serves as a positive role model. The first consideration should be the quality of the literature itself. There should be a believable and interesting plot, complex characters, worthwhile themes, powerful language, and high-quality illustration, if it is a picture book. The next consideration should be the strength of the gender representation. (p. 429)

To do this, Heine, et al. used three sources: The Council for Interracial Books for Children's (1980) "Ten Quick Ways to Examine Texts for Racism and Sexism," (p. 24-26), Joan Blaska's (1996) "Images and Encounters Profile: A Checklist to Review Books for Inclusion and Deception of Persons with Disabilities" (p. 51-54), and Frances Day's (1997) "Evaluating Books for Bias" (p. 5-8).

Once the six characteristics were developed, they used them to examine *The Ballad of Lucy Whipple* (1996) in-depth and then mentioned briefly several picture books and chapter books that exemplify the characteristics of positive gender role models. The authors ended the article by listing four professional books that provide more examples of books that feature strong female characters.

### **Gender Bias in Adolescent Literature**

One study conducted by Bean and Harper (2007) analyzed the activities and character traits of males. The authors analyzed three young adult novels in which the implementation and nature of masculinity were important to the story. There were few examples in the books that showed examples of males as "representations of masculinity outside the norms of tough guy poses and violence" (Bean & Harper, 2007, p. 27). The authors note that there needs to be more study of masculinity in young adult novels, as well as teacher guidance in helping students to have critical discussions concerning masculinity (Bean & Harper, 2007).

A second study (Du Mont, 1993), analyzed young adult science fiction and fantasy books from the 1970, 1980, and 1990. The author used a content analysis of 45 young adult and fantasy books (15 from each of the time period of 1970, 1980, and 1990). Each book was analyzed according to specific characteristics, and the number of

primary and secondary characters of each sex (male and female) was counted. The results showed that in 1990 the women in fantasy and science fiction were more often portrayed as intelligent and independent instead of being classified by their relation to men.

### **Gender Bias in Caldecott Winning Books**

Caldecott Award winning books are considered to be the most distinguished picture books in the United States. The award is given each year to the illustrator who may or may not be the author of the book. Many studies have been conducted regarding gender stereotypes in Caldecott Award winning books; of these, the most repeatedly referred to is the Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada, and Ross (1972) study (Gooden & Gooden, 2001). In fact, Clark, Lennon, and Morris (1993) and Clark, Guilmain, Saucier, and Tavarez (2003) both replicate the Weitzman et al. 1972 study. In their 1972 study, Weitzman et al. examined 18 Caldecott Award winning books to find out if gender differences existed in the representations of character roles and in characters. The data showed that women were greatly underrepresented in the central roles, titles, and illustrations. When women did appear, their characterization reinforced traditional sex-role stereotypes. Boys were shown as active, while girls were passive, boys led and rescued others and girls served others and followed. The adults in the texts were equally as stereotyped as the children. Women were shown as wives and mothers, while men were shown in a variety of occupations.

Since steps towards equity were being made for women, Clark, Lennon, and Morris (1993) extended the Weitzman et al. (1972) study. The 1993 study extended books to 1993 and included Black illustrators, the second looked closely at Caldecott winners in specific time periods from 1938-1971. The sample included the 18 books from

the Weizman (1972) study, which looked at Caldecott winners from 1967-1971, 16 Caldecott winners and runner-up books from 1987-1991, and 11 Coretta Scott King award winners.

Female characters and female relationships received considerably more attention in recent books by both conventional and Black illustrators. Male and female characters are shown in a more egalitarian fashion than they were in the late 1960s in books by mainstream authors. Black illustrators are more apt than others to highlight women's involvement in an ethic of caring and an ethic of personal accountability.

In their 2003 study, Clark et al. used the same measures as the 1993 study, but the books they examined were different. These books included 20 Caldecott winners and runners-up from 1938 to 1942, the 28 from 1947 to 1951, the 18 from 1957 to 1961, and 18 from 1967 to 1971. They did this to make sure the four authors applied the same standards to the books of all four time periods. Clark et al. (2003) reported their findings for each decade: 1930s, 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. In the 1930s there was a high visibility of female characters in the winning books, but there was a great deal of gender stereotyping. In the 1940s, female characters were much more visible than they were in the late-1960s winners but less visible than in the late 1930s or the late 1950s. However, they were associated with less gender stereotyping than those of any of the decades examined. This could be a result of the fact that there were signs of uncertainty from publishers, authors, and award givers as a result of the push for equality left over from World War II (Clark et al. 2003). Clark et al. (2003) stated:

Female visibility in the 1950s Caldecott Award winning books was second only to its counterpart in the 1930's Caldecott's, and the amount of gender-stereotyping

was also second only to that found in the 1930s books. Female characters were more dependent, submissive, and nurturing than male characters, and were less independent, competitive, persistent, explorative, creative and aggressive. (p. 444)

Finally, the Caldecott winners in the early 1960s had high visibility of female characters with more visibility in the late 1960s. The authors did not, however, find as much gender stereotyping as the Weitzman et al. study did. Clark et al. (2003) did mention that the “trend” toward visibility and decreased stereotyping can’t be taken for granted and hopefully indicates the consciousness of the award committee toward these issues.

This is a continuing trend that Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus, and Young (2006) discovered when reviewing top-selling books from 2001 and a seven-year sample of Caldecott award-winning books for sexism (total of 200 books); gender stereotyping was still prevalent. There were twice as many male main and title characters as female. In the illustrations, males appeared 53% more often than females. Female main characters were portrayed more often in indoor scenes and were more often seen nurturing others than were male characters. Occupations were also stereotyped, with women in non-paying jobs. When the authors compared their book sample to the 1980s and 1990s books, they did not find reduced sexism.

In two more recent studies, Crisp and Hiller (2011a, 2011b) collected data on gender of author and illustrators, the male and female characters in single-gender illustrations and the number of male/female/ungendered characters pictured in each book. According to Crisp and Hiller (2011b), “This quantitative data provided the foundation for a subsequent textual analysis, through which we interrogated the content of depictions in each individual book, as well as across decades and across the history of the Caldecott

Medal” (p. 20). To guide their textual analysis, the authors used the behavior characteristics used by Davis (1984) to examine how the leading characters were depicted in each book. These are the same characteristics used by Clark, Lennon, and Morris (1993) and Clark, Guilmain, Saucier, and Tavaréz (2003). However, Crisp and Hiller used this list of characteristics in a qualitative analysis.

Crisp and Hiller (2011a) note that 10% of the 74 winners depicted ungendered leading characters. The authors describe several of the books with ungendered characters. They did find that gender is not defined, but there are cultural cues in the text and pictures, such as style of dress, hair length, and physical attributes. The authors end by saying that as teachers, librarians, etc., we need to be continually examining our own assumptions and teaching children to read critically and “resist” what they read in regards to gender stereotyping.

In the article, “‘Is This a Boy or a Girl?’: Rethinking Sex-Role Representation in Caldecott Medal-Winning Picturebooks, 1938-2011,” Crisp and Hiller (2011a) expand on their previous 2011 study, “Telling Tales About Gender: A Critical Analysis of Caldecott Medal-Winning Picturebooks, 1938-2011,” and describe in detail several of the examples of the textual analysis they did on the Caldecott Medal winning books. However, different from the previous article, they focused on ungendered examples of the books they analyzed. The authors concluded this article by emphasizing the importance of teaching children to read critically, using both the text and the pictures looking for examples of gender. They ended the article saying that there is a need for wider representations of diverse gendered identities in all children’s literature.

### **Gender Bias in Newbery Award Winning Books**

Many studies have been done over the years looking at the gender roles and stereotypes portrayed in Caldecott Medal winners. However, a much fewer number of studies have been done examining gender roles and stereotypes in Newbery Award winning books. One such study conducted by Kinman and Henderson (1985) examined Newbery Award winners from 1977 to 1984.

Kinman and Henderson (1985) updated the *Feminists on Children's Literature* (1971) study that stated books about boys outnumbered girls 3 to 1. The books also contained derogatory character portrayals and comments about girls and stereotypic behavior (Kinman & Henderson, 1985). For example, in *The Two Sisters*, the female main character must give up her university scholarship to follow her husband who receives a new job in a different city (*Feminists of Children's Literature*, 1971). Her father tells her that her husband should be ambitious and that she should not stand in his way because a man who is unable to fulfill his ambition makes a terrible husband (*Feminist on Children's Literature*, 1971). *Feminist of Children's Literature* (1971) stated, in reflection to this, "It doesn't occur to either that a woman who sacrifices her potential may also end up making a terrible wife" (p. 24). Kinman and Henderson (1985) decided that an up-to-date replica was necessary. Compared with the data from the previous study, *Feminists on Children's Literature* (1971), the books contained more female main characters (18 female and 12 male) compared to an earlier ratio of 1:3. Also, 18 of the books presented positive images of females, while only six presented negative images (overall image rather than character). The authors concluded the study by arguing that it would seem that children's book authors are observing society as it is and evolving stories and characters that fit into it.

Powell, Gillespie, Sweringen, and Clements (1993) built on the Feminist on Children's Literature (1971) and Kinman and Henderson (1985) studies by not only looking at the portrayal of females, but also the portrayal of males. Powell et al. (1998) stated,

The purpose of this investigation is to provide a complete review of the Newbery Medal winners from 1922-1992 to determine which are progressive or traditional in terms of gender roles and to identify trends in the numbers of male and female main characters. (p. 98)

If a book contained both progressive and traditional gender roles, then the time period of the book was considered. A brief rationale is given along with the label (traditional or progressive) for each book.

The conclusion this study reached was that Newbery Medal books have shown improvement in the balance between male and female characters and in gender roles, especially since 1972. However, from 1982-1991 the balance of male to female characters was once again in the male favor. Some may argue that this is because several of the books were historical fiction. However, it is also important to remember that there can be strong female characters that overcome obstacles set by the standards of society in any time period.

Valput (2008) continued where Powell et al. (1993) left off by studying the Newbery Award winning books from 1998-2008. The author notes that the gender of the authors over this ten-year period is split evenly, 50/50 between female and male main characters. Valput (2008) noted that of these winners with female main characters a majority have progressive roles, citing Lucky in *The Higher Power of Lucky* (Patron,

2006) as a progressive female and Despereaux in *The Tale of Despereaux* (DiCamillo, 2003) as a progressive male. The author also noted that several of these books deal with social issues, such as racial prejudice and poverty.

Houdyshell and Kirkland (1998) took a closer look at Newbery Award winner heroines. The authors compared the first dozen Newbery winners, 1922-1933 with twelve more winners, 1985-1996 (Houdysell & Kirkland, 1998). The books were divided into categories based on those with one or more female central characters, one or more male characters, or other, such as biography or poetry. Those in the 1922-1933 group had 58.3% in the male category, 16.7% in the female category, and 25% in the other category. A change occurred in the 1985-1996 group with 33% in the male group, 50% in the female group, and 17% in the other. Houdysell and Kirkland (1998) went into further detail by discussing several of the books in each group, 1922-1933 and 1985-1996. They described the female central characters in the 1922-1933 group as stereotypical females. In the more recent group, 1985-1996, only two books demonstrated that gender does not need to inhibit a female from being who she wants to be. Houdyshell and Kirkland (1998) also noted that as the number of female central characters increased, so did the number of female authors, commenting that the gender of the author may not be important, but the gender of the main character can be vital. A female central character with independence and spirit can be a positive role model for a female reader.

Similar to Houdyshell and Kirkland (1998), McCleary and Widdersheim (2014) analyzed the Newbery Award winning books from 2000-2011 for gender bias and underrepresentation. McCleary and Widdersheim (2014) used a generalized list of stereotypical gender roles and activities that denote characters as feminine or masculine

and an adjective list that represents the stereotypical attitudes and behaviors of females and males to analyze the stereotypical roles in these books. A gender coding sheet was used to tally and record the resulting percentages to answer the authors' four hypotheses: (1) "females will be depicted less often than males (at least one-third of the protagonists will be female)," (2) "the major female character(s) will be viewed as 'odd' or an 'outsider' due to her/their behaviors," (3) "males and females will more often appear in 'traditional gender roles in both attitudes and activities,'" and (4) "if a book is a work of historical fiction, there will be a greater gender bias in the form of lessened female empowerment or perspective" (p. 19). The first hypothesis was proved wrong with 48.6% of the protagonists being female. The second hypothesis was also proven incorrect because the female characters were supported 75% of the time or did not have peers around them to pass judgment. In regards to hypothesis three, it held true for the males in the books at a ratio of 10:1 for traditional versus progressive roles. However, it was not true for females with a 1:1 ratio for traditional versus progressive roles. The fourth hypothesis did not apply to many of the texts. Of the six works the authors classified as historical fiction, an empowering female perspective or a strong female role model was seen in 76%. Therefore, McCleary and Widdersheim (2014) concluded that females were not underrepresented and bias was not shown towards females. However, in these Newbery Award winning books, bias was shown toward traditional male representation.

### **Gender Bias in *Twilight* and *The Hunger Games***

In the literature reviewed discussing *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), the authors considered the series in its entirety, including in their analysis all four books in the *Twilight* series. Franiuk and Scherr (2013) focused their content analysis on vampire

fiction on the issues of gender roles in relation to domestic violence and eroticized violence in these types of texts. The authors considered both the *Twilight* series and *The Vampire Diaries* and discussed that the nurturing female and the aggressive male are central to both of these series. The vampire may be a threat to any human, not just the love interest. However, the message these texts are sending is the normalization of male violence against women and that women should stand by their man. Franiuk and Scherr (2013) also discussed that although Meyer attempts to empower Bella, she repeatedly defers to Edward's authority and is the stereotypical "damsel in distress."

Franiuk and Scherr (2013) noted that Bella is attracted to Edward because of his stereotypical masculine displays, as is seen when Edward saves Bella twice. The characteristics seen in the vampire boyfriend parallels predictors of relationship violence seen in real-life relationships. These include direct guarding, jealousy, and public possessiveness. Edward displays direct guarding (monitoring one's whereabouts) by watching Bella as she sleeps. In *Eclipse*, we see Edward's jealousy when he refuses to allow Bella to see Jacob, ironically because Jacob, who is a werewolf, is dangerous. Finally, one of the many examples of public possessiveness is seen when Bella wants to hug Jacob when he apologizes to her at school and Edward holds her to him so that she can't do this. The authors made note that this series fails to acknowledge the gendered nature of these displays of possession (Franiuk & Scherr, 2013).

Media messages concerning violence and sex create a reality that lead men to believe that a partner desires violence or that it is necessary to show one's masculinity and that lead women to think violence during sex is normal (Franiuk & Scherr, 2013). Edward shows this in the series by refraining from having sexual intercourse with Bella

and by pulling back when he is feeling violent when he is kissing Bella. These series also eroticize violence by showing scenes where the vampire drinks his human girlfriend's blood. This pairing of sex and violence has the potential to lead to an association between violence and sex for men and promote a harmful sexual reality for women (Franiuck & Scherr, 2013).

Similar to Franiuck and Scherr (2013), Snider (2012) discussed that the *Twilight* series portrayal of women is oppressive because it legitimizes violence against women in relationships and portrays acts of violence as appropriate parts of loving relationships. Women are also seen as stereotypically feminine; Bella is shown as having stereotypical female interests, appearing delicate, and being fulfilled by traditional female roles (cooking, cleaning, and mothering; Snider, 2010). This longing for motherhood is carried beyond Bella and to other characters in the series because both vampire and werewolf females lose their fertility once they "change." For example, another vampire, Rosalie, is still devastated that as a vampire she is unable to conceive a child. Rosalie is often angry because of her longing to have a child and her inability to fulfill this desire.

Finally, the *Twilight* series oppresses women by glorifying unequal relationships where the woman is dependent on the man (Snider, 2012). Bella is often described as childlike compared to Edward, who is characterized as the adult and who becomes Bella's protector. Bella is also often noting that Edward is superior to her in terms of appearance, intelligence, and strength. Of course, this all leads to the fact that Bella's happiness is dependent on Edward. Snider (2012) ended her article arguing that the *Twilight* series and the messages the series is sending readers must be taken seriously.

More importantly, these messages must be considered when assessing why these books are so popular and resonate with young girls.

Silver (2010) began her study with much the same argument as Snider (2012), with the mention of the *Twilight* series popularity with adolescent girls. As did Franiuk and Scherr (2013) and Snider (2012), Silver (2010) addressed the issues of gender in the *Twilight* series as a whole. Snider's (2012) content analysis took a somewhat different tone than that of Franiuk and Scherr (2013) and Snider (2012). She does argue that the texts' gender ideology is patriarchal but that the texts need a more in-depth discussion. It is noted that Meyer often blurs the two discourses between patrimonial and romantic when Edward speaks with Bella, which insinuates a power dynamic where Edward makes important decisions for Bella (Silver, 2010). Silver (2010) also discusses that Bella is passive and insecure, and her clumsiness provides many opportunities for Meyer to demonstrate the dynamic of Bella as the perpetual "damsel in distress."

Silver (2010) enumerated positives with Edward where Franiuk and Scherr (2013) and Snider (2012) did not. She noted that Meyer does show Edward's faults and shortcomings and makes evident that he changes in response to Bella's demands (Silver, 2010). Interestingly, she sees Edward's strong responses towards Bella as due to danger, whereas both Franiuk and Scherr (2013) and Snider (2012) see this behavior as representing violence.

What makes this article unique is Silver's (2010) inclusion of Meyer's Mormon religion and its influence on her novels. This is evidenced in Edward's reluctance to have premarital sex despite Bella's insistence and Bella's refusal to "get rid" of the baby she

carries (Snider, 2012). The Mormon religion takes a strong stance against premarital sex and abortion.

Finally, Silver (2010) conducted an informal discussion with her undergraduate students and it revealed some tension in regards to their interpretation of the texts. These students expressed frustration with Bella's lack of friends and Edward's absence in *New Moon* (Silver, 2010). Snider (2012) argued that while it might be important and appropriate to critique and identify characteristics of Meyer's texts from a feminist perspective, it is also necessary that critics not construct an imaginary, entirely passive reader of the *Twilight* series (Silver, 2010).

The study of *The Hunger Games* differs from those of those of the *Twilight* series because it involves a case study rather than a content analysis of the book. Taber, Woloshyn, and Lane (2013) discuss in their analysis of *The Hunger Games* trilogy with regards to class and power, that there were mixed messages in deference to gendered stereotypes. In their study, the authors documented the book club discussions of four girls with reading difficulties. These book clubs were designed to promote critical discussions of sociocultural gender issues, which focused on critiquing the ways in which violence, gender, and power played out in *The Hunger Games* (Taber et al., 2013).

The four participants attended four, two-hour book club sessions over eight weeks with the primary data collection methods being book club sessions and exit interviews. The participants' drawings, notes, journals, and graphic organizers were also collected. When discussing issues regarding class none of the girls supported the idea that someone should be marginalized due to socioeconomic status. They began to see the Capitol as a bully because the Capitol was forcing the tributes to fight and the girls began to conceive

ways to resist and stand up as a collective group rather than individuals (Taber et al., 2013). Interestingly, the girls did not perceive the contradiction that they suggested that the tributes should band together to resist or run off to escape on their own (Taber et al., 2013). This may suggest that the young girls feel powerless to enforce change (Taber et al., 2013). Also, three of the four participants believed that girls are more interested in romance than violence and girls don't fight. The girls' perceptions of Peeta and Katniss challenged traditional views of "feminine" and "masculine;" however, they had difficulty accepting these alternatives (Taber et al., 2013). This demonstrated the strength of societal gender norms with respect to how they viewed the characters and their own agency. Based on their findings, Taber et al. (2013) encouraged research projects that assisted girls in challenging gendered norms and the feminine beauty ideal that work to hamper their agency by involving them in girl-focused groups that help give them voice through learning and literacy (Taber et al., 2013).

### **Summary**

Research has been conducted concerning gender roles and stereotypes in children's literature and Caldecott Award winning books. A considerable amount of research has been completed on Newbery Award winning books. These studies found that males were represented in greater numbers than females in these books and males and females were often shown in typical gender stereotypes, such as males as active and females as passive. The *Twilight* series contains both gender stereotypes, with Bella taking on typical female stereotypes of cooking and cleaning and dependency on a male. There are also issues of violence towards women evident in these texts. There are some differing opinions from the authors as to how much influence these gender stereotypes

have on the readers. Finally, *The Hunger Games* contains characters that deviate from typical gender stereotypes; however, the girls in the Taber et al. (2013) study had difficulty accepting these alternatives.

### **Transactional Theory**

One cannot consider the gender stereotypes in adolescent literature without considering Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory because it considers the transaction that takes place between the reader and the text. Books are an important method of transmitting social norms. In fact, "studies have found that the written word is one of the most powerful ways to transmit ideas and information" (Kinman & Henderson, 1985, p. 885). Since there is a transaction that occurs between the reader and the writer, these cultural values can be transmitted to the reader. Rosenblatt (1993) stated:

...the recognition that each individual absorbs the assumptions and values of the society or culture—became the basis for seeing the individual as completely dominated by the society, the culture, or "the community." Thus for some cultural, historical, or Marxist critics, texts became the complicitous indoctrinators of the dominant ideology. (p. 384)

There is a social aspect to the reading, but there is also a single individual person choosing and constructing meaning during each transaction with the text (Rosenblatt, 1993). The individual internalizes the set or part of the public system of language (Rosenblatt, 1988). The linguistic-experiential reservoir is made up of what is left of what is internalized (Rosenblatt, 1988).

For Rosenblatt (1982), the reader is reading somewhere along the efferent/aesthetic continuum. When reading efferently, the reader is focusing attention on

the public aspect (Rosenblatt, 2005b) and what is to be retained, recalled, or analyzed after the reading (Rosenblatt, 1985). Aesthetic reading involves the reader focused on the private elements (Rosenblatt, 2005b), what she/he is affectively and cognitively personally living through during the reading event (Rosenblatt, 1985). When reading aesthetically, a broad range of elements will become conscious to the reader, as well as ideas, personal feelings, and attitudes (Rosenblatt, 1982). The story or poem is a new experience lived through these feelings and ideas (Rosenblatt, 1982).

During a reading event, the reader is reading along the efferent/aesthetic continuum because each reading event involves both public (efferent) and private (aesthetic) elements (Rosenblatt, 2005b). Rosenblatt (2005b) said of this continuum, “In any reading, at any point in the continuum, there are both cognitive and affective, publicly referential and privately associational, and abstract and concrete elements” (p. 36). If the reader is in the predominately efferent half of the continuum, then the reader’s attention will be greater focused on the public elements than the private (Rosenblatt, 2005b). The reverse is true for aesthetic reading. Some texts lend themselves to a more efferent reading while others a more aesthetic reading. However, because most texts have such a mix, it is important that readers keep the purpose of their reader in mind (Rosenblatt, 2005b). For example, someone reading a social studies text for an efferent purpose could get caught up in the story created in the history itself and begin reading from a more aesthetic stance.

The meaning and message the author and reader gain when they write and read a text is important. The reader tries to participate in another’s vision, to understand the resources of the human spirit and attempt to gain knowledge of the world, to gain insights

that will make his own more understandable (Rosenblatt, 2005a). The meaning found in a text by the reader is from what the author has written and what the reader brings to the text (Rosenblatt, 2005a). The reader brings to the text a vast number of past experiences with the world and language (Rosenblatt, 2005a). When the text that is read is linked to these past experiences, then these linked experiences come to be realized by the reader (Rosenblatt, 2005a). When discussing this transaction between the reader and the text Pearce (1997) stated:

...the emotional fabric of the reading process depends very much on an interweaving of textual and extra-textual associations, as some cue in the text prompts us to the scripting of a *parallel* text based on some aspect of our personal or intertextual experience. (p. 9)

This entails finding exactly who or what aspect of the text or textual experience the reader absorbs in the interaction with it (Pearce, 1997).

Rosenblatt's transactional theory is not truly a critical or feminist theory, it is a theory of reading (Cai, 2008). Cai (2008) stated, "but Rosenblatt does address social political concerns in connection with literature education and discuss concepts of anthropology, sociology, and psychology, along with issues of democracy, tradition, economic environment, gender and culture" (p. 213). It is not the focus of Rosenblatt's theory to promote the critical perspective or impart these concepts (Cai, 2008). So, the child's assimilation of culture will influence her transaction with various texts. In fact, the reader brings his/her social philosophy, religious and moral code, which has been primarily assimilated from community and family background to the text (Rosenblatt, 1976). Both the text and reader will bring something to the transaction. The reader taking

from the text based on what the text is saying and what the reader brings with her to it. In this way, the gender stereotypes portrayed in literature can be transmitted to those reading the texts because aesthetic reading may contain critical elements and may divulge the reader's subject position (Cai, 2008).

When reading aesthetically, the reader may respond in three basic modes: association, perception, and affection (Cai, 2008). In association mode, the reader relates to events, characters or any other aspects of the story. In perception mode, the reader notices whatever is surprising, meaningful, confusing, or whatever catches her attention. In affection mode, the reader expresses her emotions and feelings about what happens in the story. These modes may contain the beginnings of critical reading that can lead to further critical reading of a text as a political and social construct. When using the mode of perception, a reader may notice something and respond to it strongly. For example, when reading a book about women's rights and women not being able to vote, someone may respond: "That's not fair." Her response is not only personal and pleasurable, but also social, political and critical (Cai, 2008).

Reading aesthetically may also divulge the reader's subject position (Cai, 2008). Readers approach the text from a non-neutral position, therefore their response to the text reveals assumptions, beliefs, values, and attitudes that derive from a certain ideology (Cai, 2008). This may impact how the reader transacts with the text and the reader may show resistance in interpreting the text (Cai, 2008). This can act as the starting point for future critical reading (Cai, 2008).

## **Conclusion**

Although not all feminist literary theorists agree on all aspects of feminist literary theory, they are in agreement that there are gendered power dynamics transmitted through text. Women must break free of these cultural assumptions and find their own literary identity. Masculinity and femininity are culturally constructed and children begin to develop their gender schema as either female or male from birth. However, adolescence is a time that gender schemas can be changed and adapted. Previous studies in children's literature, Caldecott Award winning books, and Newbery Award winning books revealed that there were more male main characters than female main characters and female and male stereotypes were present. The *Twilight* series contain gender stereotypes and also issues of relationship violence and abuse. *The Hunger Games* study by Taber et al. (2013) reveals that, although the characters display gender stereotypes that differ from typical gender stereotypes, the group of girls in the study had difficulty accepting them. Books are an important mode of transmitting cultural and social norms. Rosenblatt's transactional theory argues that there is a transaction between the reader and the text that takes place when reading occurs (Rosenblatt, 2005b). During this time, these cultural norms are transmitted.

In the next section I discuss the methodology used in this study, including content analysis, analysis procedures, and trustworthiness of the study.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative content analysis was to analyze the content of the top three best-selling adolescent literature books over the past ten years regarding the portrayal of gender roles and stereotypes using both a typological and open content analysis. A feminist literary perspective was used as a lens in this study. The idea that undergirds this study considers that books transfer cultural messages about gender roles and stereotypes both males and females.

### **Content Analysis**

The two major types of research on children's literature as text have been content analysis and literary analysis (Beach et al., 2009). Literary analysis is defined by Beach et al.(2009) as, "Literary analysis examines the actions of authors within the text, such as character development, symbolism, postmodern stylistic devices, intertextuality, and narrative patterns, from the view of children's literature as an object of literary criticism and analysis" (p. 130). These analyses may focus on one or many texts within or across genres, may be historical accounts of genres, or study the work of authors by describing literary elements (Beach et al., 2009).

Content analysis, in contrast, is a specific type of inductive research methodology (Berg, 2001). Content analysis can be defined as a technique used to make inferences by systematically recognizing special characteristics of messages in texts (Berg, 2001). Texts can be defined broadly as "books, book chapters, essays, interviews, discussions, newspaper headlines and articles, historical documents, speeches, conversations, advertising, theater, informal conversation, or really any occurrence of communicative

language” (Colorado State Writing Center, 1993-2016). In this study, the texts are three adolescent literature books.

Verbal, written, and visual communication messages can be analyzed using a content analysis methodology (Elo & Kyngas, 2007). Often in education, content analysis is used to analyze textbooks for any national, racial, and sexual prejudices they contain, including how wars may be depicted differently in the history books of former enemies (Krippendorff, 1989). Content analysis “is a conceptual approach to understanding what a text is about, considering content from a particular theoretical perspective, such as sociohistorical, gender, cultural, or thematic studies” (Beach et al., 2009, p. 130). A content analysis methodology looks at data within a specific context in a view that is specific to a culture or group and the meanings that culture or group give it (Krippendorff, 1989).

Content analysis goes outside observable behaviors and looks at symbolic qualities to find consequences of communications (Krippendorff, 1989). Krippendorff states:

Communications, messages, and symbols differ from observable events, things, properties or people in that they inform about something other than themselves; they reveal some properties of their distant producers or carriers, and they have cognitive consequences for their senders, their receivers, and the institutions in which their exchange is embedded. (p. 403)

Therefore, content analysis allowed me to consider the transactions between the text and myself. In fact, Duke and Mallette (2011) state that Ole Holsti’s (1969) third basic category of uses of content analysis is “making inferences about the effects of

communication (e.g., What impact does a particular text have on patterns of interaction?)” (p. 31). Content analysis, not literary analysis, fits well with this analysis of the top three best-selling adolescent books over the past 10 years. It allowed me to analyze the texts for gender roles and stereotypes that are transferred to the reader by supporting both my theoretical perspective and the culture in which these gender roles and stereotypes are based, and not just the authors’ style or literary elements as a literary analysis would.

## **Research Study**

### **Data Set**

This study examined the top three books listed on the *USA Today’s Best Selling Book List* (2004-2014) based on the total number of weeks listed as number one. The book list contained many books within the same series, such as the Twilight series, Harry Potter series, and others that dominated the list. Therefore, to get a greater variety in books and authors, I used only one book from each series if books from the series appeared multiple times. I analyzed the following three books: *Twilight* (Meyer, 2008), 18 weeks on the best-seller list; *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2010), 17 weeks; and *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), 10 weeks.

### **Data Sources**

Content analysis can be used to evaluate any recorded information as long as the material is available to be reanalyzed for reliability checks (GAO, 1996). This study included four sources of data: synopsis of the books, typological book notes, open book notes and methodological notes.

**Synopsis.** As I read the books, I took note of the plot and theme of each book. This allowed me to gain an overall picture of the plot and theme. Once I read through these books, I wrote a synopsis of each book. This provided me with additional information about the overall plot of each book so I did not have to focus on learning the plot, theme, and other aspects of the story. I was able to focus on the gender roles and stereotypes as I wrote book notes when reading through each book a second time.

**Book notes.** Teachers using a “workshop” approach to teaching reading often require students to take book notes as they read. These book notes are often written on sticky notes and students are taught these book notes are their “thinking” about the book because “reading is thinking” (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). A book note is a summary or thought about what happened in a book. This book note is usually only a sentence or two long and typically synthesizes a paragraph or two of a book. Usually the reader makes a connection to the text in some way. For example, the reader makes a connection to something in his/her own life, something going on in the world, or something that happened in another book. For the purpose of this study, my book notes consisted of a three-column chart based on male and female gender roles and stereotypes and the actual text from the books, as well as my own thoughts about each quote from the book. One column was assigned to the page number of the quote, one column of the actual quote and a column of my thoughts concerning the quote.

*Table 2: Example of Book Note from Twilight*

| Pg. # | Quote From Text Regarding<br>Gender Issues | Reflection |
|-------|--|------------|
|-------|--|------------|

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| 4 | How could I leave my loving, erratic, harebrained mother to fend for herself? Of course she had Phil now so the bills would probably get paid, there would be food in the refrigerator, gas in her car, and someone to call when she got lost, but still.... | Her mother can't take care of herself and needs a man to take care of her or she won't make it. |
|---|--|---|

Table 3: Example of Book Note from *Divergent*

| Pg. # | Quote From Text Regarding Gender Issues  | Reflection   |
|-------|--|--|
| 300   | “Stay away from me,” I say quietly. My body feels rigid and cold and I am not angry, I am not hurt I am nothing. I say my voice low, “Never come near me again.” | Females are taught to forgive. Tris doesn't forgive Al for being with the group who tried to harm her. |

Table 4: Example of Book Note from *The Hunger Games*

| Pg. #   | Quote From Text Regarding Gender Issues  | Reflection  |
|---------|--|---|
| 344-345 | “One.” Maybe I'm wrong. “Two.” Maybe they don't care if we both die. “Three!” It's too late to change my mind. I lift my hand to my mouth, taking one last look at the world. The berries have just passed my lips when the trumpets begin to blare. | Katniss decides they will both die together (or act like they will), thinking that the Capitol will want a winner, and will not allow both of them to die. She is taking back some of her autonomy. |

These book notes allowed me to keep track of the actual text from each book along with my own reaction/reflection to each example of gender roles or stereotypes expressed in the text.

**Methodological notes.** When concluding my research, each day I spent ten minutes typing out what I found interesting in the data that day, questions I had about the data, big ideas I discovered, and any other thoughts I had concerning my work for the day. I was also able to debrief about whether or not what I was doing or not doing was working or if I needed to try a new approach. These methodological notes allowed me to reflect on the process I was following to collect and analyze my data. Here is an example of my note from September 18, 2015 as I was reading and taking book notes on *Divergent* (Roth, 2012):

*I went back and added a note from page 48 concerning both Beatrice's father's and mother's reactions to her choosing Dauntless. For some reason this just popped in my head that this was important because her father felt that this was a betrayal and she shouldn't do what would make her happy. Is this because she is a female? I'm not sure because we don't know if he gave the same look to her brother. Her mother however, is smiling so it would seem that she is happy that Beatrice chose that faction that would make her happy.*

*Overall, my notes today are somewhat inconsistent. Tris stands up for herself and moves away from female stereotypes in some instances by speaking up and not showing fear. However, she follows a typical female stereotype in other instances by liking when she is made over and looks, "Striking," and being interested in Four. Mixed messages.*

These notes also helped as I was writing up my data because they provided me with information about what I was thinking as I went back to support my discussion of my findings.

I did go back and read through all my methodological notes as I began coding my book notes for each book. I read through them before and after coding the books notes for each book. I noticed that these methodological notes mirrored my book notes and helped me to think about my coding and subsequent themes. For example, my note for *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) on September 9, 2015 concerns Bella's low self-esteem and examples of female stereotypes which I make note of in my book notes and then in my final coding.

My note reads:

*There were several examples in today's notes where Bella shows her low self-esteem. She comments again on how she doesn't understand why Edward would be with her when she is ordinary and Edward is not. Also, examples of female stereotypes - females not good at sports and know nothing about cars.*

I also wrote in my methodological notes on September 22, 2015 about *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) that I am seeing Tris often being brave and assertive and then being saved by Four. This is something that I ended up writing about as a theme in *Divergent* (Roth, 2012). My methodological note reads:

*Not really any new insights gained again today. Same trends that I have been seeing all along. Tris shows bravery and assertiveness. She stands up to Eric and speaks her mind about him being a coward. She doesn't flinch when told she has to stand in front of the target and have Four throw knives at her, but once again she has to be "saved" by Four when he nicks her ear with the knife to get her out of the situation.*

These methodological notes were beneficial in helping me when going back through my book notes and initially coding my data. It reminded me of thoughts, and

themes I was seeing as I was immersed in the data. These methodological notes reinforced my book notes and thus my coding. They were also helpful in the process of categorizing and determining themes in my research because I was able to look back to see my thinking throughout the process of reading the books.

### **Analysis Procedures**

**Typological analysis.** In typological data analysis, the categories are established prior to analysis based on some theory (Stemler, 2001). Existing descriptors can help provide the relationships among variables or predictions about variables the researcher is interested in learning more about. This helps to determine the initial coding scheme or relationships between codes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

I began my analysis by reading through each of the three books to gain an understanding of the overall plot and theme. After reading each book, I wrote a summary documenting the plot and main events that occurred. This helped me to focus on the gender roles and stereotypes when reading each book the second time. I then read each book taking book notes when I noticed something relating to gender roles and stereotypes.

I began initially coding each book note using a typological analysis. I used a typology for gender roles and stereotypes and the definitions from my conceptual framework to take book notes, utilizing the following framework from Heine, Inkster, Kazemek, Willams, Raschke, and Stevens (1999; see Appendix A). Their research is considered seminal and has continued to inform the field:

#### **Examine how the character departs from traditional stereotype**

*Typical female stereotypes*

Is the character moving away from the following traits: passive, frightened, weak, gentle, giving up easily, unoriginal, silly, confused, inept, dependent, follower, conformer, emotional, concerned about appearance, innate need for marriage and motherhood, passive language and behavior?

*Typical male stereotypes*

Is the character moving away from the following traits: active, strong, brave, rough, competitive, logical, unemotional, messy, decisive, leader, innate need for adventure, aggressive language and behavior?

**Examine whether the character provides a voice for those who are often unheard in children's literature**

*Roles*

Is the character in a role not usually found in literature such as male nurses, female inventors, females during the gold rush? (p. 429)

Heine et al. (1999) looked at three sources to help expand their definition of “a positive role model” and developed six characteristics to consider when examining children's books for positive gender role models. The sources were: The Council for Interracial Books for Children's (1980) “Ten Quick Ways to Examine Texts for Racism and Sexism” (p. 24-26); Joan Blaska's (1996) “Images and Encounters Profile: A Checklist to Review Books for Inclusion and Depiction of Persons with Disabilities” (p. 51-54); and Frances Day's (1997) “Evaluating Books for Bias” (p. 5-8). Using these three evaluation criteria provided the authors with an additional lens with which to create and hone their own evaluative instrument (Heine et al., 1999). They then used their six

characteristics to explore gender issues in two children’s chapter books and two picture books.

I read through each of my book notes from *Twilight* several times to familiarize myself with the codes. After doing this, I read each book note individually and considered whether or not it fit into either of the two main categories: “1) Examine how the character departs from traditional stereotype, and 2) Examine whether the character provides a voice for those who are often unheard in children’s literature” (Heine et al., 1999, p. 429). If the book note did fall into one of these two categories, it was then highlighted the appropriate color to match the descriptor it represented. I used green to highlight the book notes I coded “Departs from Typical Female Stereotypes,” blue for book notes I coded “ Departs from Typical Male Stereotypes,” and yellow for book notes coded for non-stereotypical roles. After reading and coding all the book notes using the typological analysis for *Twilight*, I read through the book notes a second time to make sure there were no book notes I missed that should be coded using the Heine et al. (1999) conceptual framework. I also wanted to be certain that all the codes I highlighted were correctly coded.

Once I completed this process for *Twilight*, I repeated the process for both *Divergent* and *The Hunger Games*. Below are examples of typological coding from each book.

*Table 5: Typological Coding from Twilight*

| Pg. # | Quote From Text Regarding<br>Gender Issues | Reflection |
|-------|--|------------|
|-------|--|------------|

|     |  |   |
|-----|--|---|
| 65  | <p>“You’re not going to let it go, are you?”</p> <p>“No.”</p> <p>“In that case . . . I hope you enjoy disappointment.”</p> | <p>Bella knows that Edward was not standing right beside her when Edward saved her from the car almost hitting her. He is trying to convince her otherwise. Bella is not giving in.</p> |
| 171 | <p>“Are you ready to go home?” he asked?</p> <p>“I’m ready to leave,” I qualified.</p>                                     | <p>Edward actually asks Bella if she’s ready to leave and doesn’t just order her to do something.</p>   |

Table 6: Typological Coding from *Divergent*

| Pg. # | Quote From Text Regarding Gender Issues   | Reflection   |
|-------|---|--|
| 30    | <p>But my brother made breakfast this morning, and my mother prepared our lunches, and my father made dinner last night, so it’s my turn to cook.</p> | <p>Moving away from traditional roles (at least for males). Everyone help prepare meals, not just the females.</p> |
| 146   | <p>I imagine my body plummeting, smacking into the bars as it falls down, and my limbs at broken angles on the pavement..</p>                         | <p>Tris is brave and continues to climb even though she is scared and fearful of falling to her death.</p>         |

Table 7: Typological Coding from *The Hunger Games*

| Pg. # | Quote From Text Regarding Gender Issues   | Reflection  |
|-------|---|---|
| 40    | <p>Peeta Mellark, on the other hand, has obviously been crying and interestingly enough does not seem to be trying to cover it up. I immediately wonder if this will be his strategy in the Games..</p> | <p>Peeta shows his emotions by crying—showing as Katniss sees it “weakness” to others (moving away from a typical male stereotype).</p> |
| 102   | <p>The arrow skewers the apple in the pig’s mouth and pins it to the wall behind it. Everyone stares and me in disbelief.</p>   | <p>Katniss shows bravery and assertiveness by shooting the arrow at the Gamemaker’s table to get their attention.</p>                   |

Finally, I examined my highlighted book notes and created a table with a category heading for each category that was represented and listed the descriptors underneath each category heading.

*Table 8: Twilight (Meyer, 2005) Category Table*

| Moving Away From Typical Female Stereotype  | Moving Away From Typical Male Stereotype                                 | Role Not Typical to Male or Female                     |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Doesn't give up easily (chasing after Edward)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows sexual restraint</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>none</li> </ul> |

*Table 9: Divergent (Roth, 2012) Category Table*

| Moving Away From Typical Female Stereotype   | Moving Away From Typical Male Stereotype  | Role Not Typical to Male or Female  |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>assertive</li> <li>brave</li> <li>doesn't give up easily</li> <li>takes risks</li> <li>women are fighters</li> <li>intelligent</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>men prepare meals</li> <li>male doesn't want to hurt people</li> <li>shows emotion (crying)</li> <li>expresses love first</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mother works outside home</li> <li>woman in leadership role</li> </ul> |

*Table 10: The Hunger Games (Collins, 2008) Category Table*

| Moving Away From Typical Female Stereotype   | Moving Away From Typical Male Stereotype  | Role Not Typical to Male or Female   |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>no desire to be a mother</li> <li>brave</li> <li>assertive</li> <li>aggressive</li> <li>little care for physical appearance</li> <li>doesn't give up easily</li> <li>intelligent</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>kind</li> <li>shows emotions (crying)</li> <li>takes care of others</li> <li>admits to love</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>hunter (female)*</li> <li>cake baker/ decorator (male)*</li> </ul> <p>* (Taber, Woloshyn, and Lane, 2013)</p> |

This allowed me to see trends within each book for these predetermined descriptors, as well as compare the tables between the books. Once I went through all my typological coding, I went back through all the book notes and began my open analysis.

**Open analysis.** When using open coding, the researcher must decide on the units of analysis, which are called “recording units” (GAO, 1996; Krippendorff, 1989) because it is typically not practical to use long documents as context units (GAO, 1996). To others these “recording units” are called “context units” (GAO, 1996). “Context units set limits on the portion of written material that is to be examined for categories of words or statements” (GAO, 1996, p. 10). This unit could be a word, a sentence, a group of words, a paragraph or an entire page. One may also use the materials, natural or referential units (Stemler, 2001). For this study, the unit was the “reflection” from my book note. It is what was coded.

I used the conceptual framework (feminist literary theory, gender, and children’s literature studies) to analyze my data set in order to create book notes based on open codes. It is in this aspect of coding that I looked for examples of male and female stereotypes. Open coding enabled me to follow character shifts over time and personality shifts of characters as they interacted with different characters throughout the books. It also allowed me to find themes that were specific to each individual book.

*Table 11: Twilight (Meyer, 2005) Open Coding Example*

| Quote From Text Regarding | Reflection | Code |
|---------------------------|------------|------|
| Gender Issues             |            |      |

|   |  |                                   |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| <p>“How did your first day go, dear?” the receptionist asked maternally. “Fine.” I lied, my voice weak. She didn’t look convinced. (p. 27-28)</p>   | <p>Girls and women often lie about their feelings or hide them because they think they should say what others want to hear or they say what they think others expect them to say and invalidate their own true feelings.</p> | <p>Females hide true feelings</p> |
| <p>Then his hands moved so fast they blurred. One was suddenly gripping under the body of the van, and something was dragging me, swinging my legs around like a rag doll’s, till they hit the tire of the tan car. (p. 56)</p>           | <p>Edward saves Bella from getting hit by a car. Damsel in distress. Bella needs saving.</p>   | <p>Damsel in Distress</p>         |
| <p>Edward-“You’re wrong, you know,” he said quietly. Bella-“What?” I gasped. “I can feel what you’re feeling now – and you <i>are</i> worth it.” “I’m not,” I mumbled. “If anything happens to them, it will be for nothing.”(p. 404)</p> | <p>Bella has low self-esteem. Belittles herself and thinks others are better than she is. She isn’t worth what others are.</p>   | <p>Low self-esteem/self-worth</p> |

I then followed the process of developing categories and subcategories for the book notes that did not fit the predetermined descriptors by using my own conceptual framework to open code.

The process I took with the book notes that remained (those that did not fit into one of more of the predetermined categories) followed an open coding approach. Since initial codes are comparative, provisional, and grounded in the data and because one’s goal is to remain open to other analytic possibilities and create codes that best fit the data one has (Charmaz, 2006), once I coded all the book notes, I grouped them based on similarities. From these codes, I named the categories (broad descriptors of my data). To

be considered a category, I had to see each initial code at least five times in a book and in at least two of the books for it to be listed. Concepts that relate to the same phenomenon can be grouped together to form categories (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). These were then listed in a word document under Typical Female Stereotype, Typical Male Stereotype, and Nontraditional Female Role.

*Table 12: Initial Codes for Twilight (Meyer, 2005)*

| Typical Female Stereotype   | Typical Male Stereotype   | Nontraditional Female Role                               |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female does cooking</li> <li>• Female not good at sports</li> <li>• Submissive</li> <li>• Puts other's needs before her own</li> <li>• Low self-esteem/self-worth</li> <li>• Damsel in Distress</li> <li>• Female hides true feelings</li> <li>• Male protects female</li> <li>• Isolates herself</li> <li>• Gives up everything for boy</li> <li>• Puts own safety second to be with boy.</li> <li>• Needs love of man to be happy</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggressive</li> <li>• Controlling</li> <li>• Strong</li> <li>• Saves female</li> <li>• Jealous</li> <li>• Male as protector</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul> |

*Table 13: Initial codes for Divergent (Roth, 2012)*

| Typical Female Stereotype  | Typical Male Stereotype  | Nontraditional Female Role   |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frightened</li> <li>• Avoids</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggressive</li> <li>• Saves female</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female saves male</li> <li>• Brave</li> </ul> |

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>confrontation</li> <li>• Damsel in distress</li> <li>• Low self-esteem/<br/>self-concept</li> <li>• Playing a role/part</li> <li>• Mama bear</li> <li>• Focus on<br/>physical/outward<br/>appearance</li> <li>• Needs love of man<br/>to be happy</li> </ul> |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intelligent</li> <li>• Autonomy</li> </ul> |
|---|--|---|

Table 14: Initial codes for *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008)

| Typical Female Stereotype  | Typical Male Stereotype   | Nontraditional Female Role  |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on<br/>physical/outward<br/>appearance (by<br/>Capitol)</li> <li>• Mama Bear</li> <li>• Playing a role/part</li> <li>• Loss of autonomy</li> <li>• Woman must be<br/>desired by a man to<br/>be worthy</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong</li> <li>• Male as protector</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brave</li> <li>• Hunter</li> <li>• Intelligent</li> <li>• Autonomy</li> <li>• Female Saves Male</li> </ul> |

Once I had my list of initial codes, I looked for codes that fit under a specific theme. At this point, I just wanted to consider my initial codes and begin to contemplate how I would organize these codes into subcategories of larger themes. This is the second phase of coding according to Charmaz (2006), “..a focused, selective phase that uses the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize large amounts of data” (p. 46). This second step of focused coding allowed me to look at the most significant codes and begin to sift through the large amounts of data (Charmaz, 2006).

At this point in the analysis process, Hsieh and Shannon (2005) say of the researcher, “After coding, Researcher Y examined the data for each category to determine whether subcategories were needed for a category...” (p. 1282). Creating subcategories allowed me to use all the data and not exclude book notes because they did not fit into one of the predetermined categories. So, “any text that could not be categorized with the initial coding scheme would be given a new code” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281).

Next, I related categories to subcategories (Charmaz, 2006) based on my knowledge of feminist literary theory and my conceptual frameworks for male and female stereotypes and gender roles. I also kept in mind that my previous knowledge of categories from previous research may influence these categories and subcategories. I used all the codes I had listed in my word table and began to highlight similar codes to come up with the subcategories, which I hand coded in a notebook.

I grouped codes together that fit together under a common “theme.” Examples of the codes are “female needs love of man” and “boyfriend/husband equals female worth.” I considered these to both have to do with romance. Other examples were “male as protector” and “female rescued.” These initial codes both concerned the male in some way protecting the female or keeping her safe.

Once I had my initial codes grouped under the main theme, I developed a theme “descriptor.” I used the table below to help add trustworthiness to this process. Developing explicit definitions for each category helped me in “determining exactly under what circumstances a text passage can be coded with a category. Those category

definitions are put together within a coding agenda” (Mayring, 2000). These included the category, definition, examples, and coding rules.

Table 15: Theme Descriptor

| Category | Definition | Examples | Coding Rules |
|----------|------------|----------|--------------|
|          |            |          |              |

The rules for determining different category definitions and rules for differentiating categories that are formulated with regards to material and theory can be revised as the data is analyzed (Mayring, 2000). For my study, I used my conceptual framework to determine my definition of each theme. I found that this table was actually beneficial in determining my definitions for each theme.

Table 16: Theme Descriptor Example

| Theme                         | Definition  | Examples   | Coding Rules   |
|-------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Traditional Female Stereotype | focus on physical/outward appearance, mama bear (compelled to protect young), and female being passive/submissive | <p>“Maybe, if I looked like a girl from Phoenix should, I could work this to my advantage. But physically, I’d never fit in anywhere. I <i>should</i> be tan, sporty, blond – a volleyball player, or cheerleader, perhaps – all things that go with living in the valley of the sun” (Meyer, 2005, p. 10).</p> <p>“I turn and head back to the stream, feeling somehow worried. About Rue not being killed and the two of</p> | <p>Focus on physical/outward appearance- Relates to female or male physical appearance or attractiveness.</p> <p>Mama Bear- Female feels the need to protect someone else that is she feels is weak or needs protection.</p> <p>Female being passive/submissive-</p> |

|  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
|  |  | <p>us being left for last, about leaving Rue alone, about leaving Prim alone back home. No, Prim has my mother and Gale and a baker who has promised she won't go hungry. Rue has only me" (Collins, 2008, p. 213).</p> <p>After Edward saves Bella from almost being raped.</p> <p>Edward tells Bella-<br/> "Get in,' a furious voice commanded.<br/> 'Put on your seat belt,' he commanded, and I realized I was clutching the seat belt with both hands. I quickly obeyed." (Meyer, 2005, p. 162)</p> | <p>female does not stand up for herself, does what the male tells her to do even if it is not what she wants to do.</p> |
|--|--|--|---|

I read back through my codes several times, comparing them to each other to look for any more similarities, differences and anything I missed. Hatch (2002) suggests, "Vital to these procedures is the notion of constant comparison, through which researchers engage in detailed analytic processes that require repeated confirmations of potential explanatory patterns discovered in the data" (p. 26). Reviewing the codes again allowed me to find any codes I missed, therefore coming up with my final list of codes.

Reading over my themes and codes allowed me to adjust my list and decide if there was any final rearranging I needed. After naming my themes, I realized that "cares for others," which I had initially placed under conventional female stereotypes, should actually be its own theme. Hiding one's true feelings to avoid hurt to others did not compliment the other codes under conventional female stereotypes. I also realized that I

had a large list with six themes and that I wanted to make it manageable. To do this, I considered how the codes overlapped or did not overlap for each of the three books.

I found some of the codes in just one book, two books, or in all three books. This can be seen on the initial code tables. I broke the themes into major themes: lack of autonomy, damsel in distress, and conventional female stereotypes; and minor themes: cares for others, traditional male stereotype and value of romance. If there were at least seven examples of codes of the theme in one of the books and the theme was present in two of the books, I designated it as a major theme. The other themes were then considered minor themes. Some of the initial codes were book specific and I did not want to leave those out because they are important to this study. For example, in *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), Edward’s abusive behavior can be seen in my codes of Bella isolating herself, Edward’s controlling behavior, and jealousy. Therefore, I write about this in a section dedicated explicitly to themes found only in *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005).

*Table 17: Theme Final List*

| Cares for Others   | Lack of Autonomy   | Damsel in Distress                      | Conventional Female Stereotypes  | Traditional Male Stereotypes  | Value of Romance   |
|--|--|---|--|---|--|
| Putting other’s wants/needs/feelings before their own wants/needs/feelings typically by hiding one’s true feelings and/or thoughts | Female playing role other than whom she is<br><br>Low self-esteem/self-worth | Male as protector<br><br>Female rescued | Focus on physical/outward appearance<br><br>Mama bear<br><br>Female passive/submissive | Male behaving in an aggressive/assertive manner<br><br>Controlling and strong | Female needs love of man to be happy<br><br>Boyfriend or husband equals female worth |

### **Trustworthiness**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) define four criteria to assess whether or not a qualitative study has “truth value”: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (White & Marsh, 2006). To show that a study has credibility and dependability, a researcher must show validity and trustworthiness and use methods of triangulation. I worked towards triangulation of the data by reading each text multiple times, each time looking at different aspects of the books. For example, I focused on plot and theme, and then focused on gender roles and stereotypes. Writing a synopsis helped me to later focus only on gender roles and stereotypes when writing my book notes. I also had many data sources including synopsis, methodological notes, and book notes. Also, my themes were seen across at least two books.

I also worked towards triangulation by participating in collaboration with a fellow doctoral student who has studied gender socialization concerning my thematic analysis. Peer debriefing or review offers an external check of the research process, similar to interrater reliability in quantitative research (Creswell, 2013). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest:

The purposes of the debriefing are multiple: to ask the difficult questions that the inquirer might otherwise avoid (“to keep the inquirer honest”), to explore methodological next steps with someone who has no axe to grind, and to provide a sympathetic listening point for personal catharsis. (p. 283)

My peer reviewer and I engaged in collaborative dialogue, explored different theoretical lenses, and discussed gender socialization. We also sifted through possible themes and discussed examples from the texts that might or might not support or generate a theme.

As with any qualitative analysis, one must consider validity/trustworthiness. Validity/trustworthiness refers to the legitimacy and reliability of understandings grounded in data (Yeh & Inman, 2007). One way a researcher can show validity/trustworthiness is to have a diverse data set. I included one book from each series in my data set, making my data set only three books. This could be considered a small data set and a limitation for my study. However, each book can be considered a representative for the other books within its series.

Another way I show trustworthiness is by doing a negative case analysis. In a negative case analysis, the researcher is purposely seeking out pieces of data that differ from his/her own assumptions, working theories, or expectations (Brodsky, 2008). These pieces of data call into question the researcher's analytic framework; however, these negative cases strengthen the findings (Brodsky, 2008). As I took book notes and coded my data, I looked for data/examples that resisted what I expected to find, which is that these books contain male and female gender roles and stereotypes. These examples of negative cases (examples of progressive female and male gender roles) helped to strengthen my findings. An example of a negative finding was Katniss's bravery and assertiveness when she skewers the apple in the pig's mouth (the pig was right by the Gamemakers) to gain their attention. She had no idea how they would react, still she was willing to take a great risk in order for the Gamemakers to notice her skillfulness.

It has been argued that credibility should go beyond just a large sample size and that it should include multiple points of evidence and quality of data (Yeh & Inman, 2007). One way a researcher may do this is through data triangulation. Hatch (2002) suggests that, "Vital to these procedures is the notion of constant comparison, through

which researchers engage in detailed analytic processes that require repeated confirmations of potential explanatory patterns discovered in the data” (p. 26). Constant comparison also assists the researcher to guard against bias (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). To do this, I compared my coding of my book notes with my previously coded book notes in the same and in different groups coded in the same category (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This allowed me to see the categories I constructed for myself as well as those that had emerged from the texts (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, this process of constant comparison helped lead to both explanatory and descriptive categories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which was especially important when developing categories and subcategories for the data that did not fit under one of the predetermined categories. This was discussed in detail previously in my Open Coding section.

Transferability can be difficult to attain in content analysis. Thick description is needed to best explain the context in which behaviors take place. This means that when I took book notes I needed to be thorough and explain in detail what was occurring that might be the cause of a certain stereotyped behavior. I had to be explicit in the details included in my book notes so that it was clear why each fit under the typological categories or are a new category. These thick descriptions help aid in transferability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state, “It is *not* the naturalist’s task to provide an *index* of transferability; it *is* his or her responsibility to provide the *data base* that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers” (p. 316). Because subjectivity plays such an important role in this study, thick descriptions were important so that my data base allowed other researchers the opportunity to attempt to replicate my data.

A final limitation of content analysis is confirmability. Confirmability relates to objectivity and it is measured in content analysis by evaluating inter-rater reliability (White & Marsh, 2006). Two ways for me to deal with this limitation are through triangulation (discussed above) and through reflexivity. In order to be reflexive, I needed to reflect on my own bias, background, paradigm, and theoretical lens. This was especially true when considering my book notes, because they were based on my own experiences and perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes, which are influenced by my lens of feminist literary theory, as well as my own culture and transactions with the texts. These transactions may be different from another's transactions with the texts; therefore, my notes may look different than another researcher's reading the same books. Within the context of all three paradigms of qualitative research, a major threat that has been identified is the researcher's subjective control on data collecting and evaluating processes (Yeh & Inman, 2007). To help combat this, I had to be self-reflexive. This involves explaining any bias I have and how I dealt with it (Yeh & Inman, 2007). These biases and ideas are influenced by a number of things: my own experiences, my interaction with the data, and the feminist literary lens I am using to view the data. This also includes my own transactions with the text. The meaning found in a text by the reader is guided by what the author has written and what the reader brings to the text (Rosenblatt, 2005a). The message I receive from my transaction with the text may be different from someone else's. My strong feminist ideals and beliefs, as well as my experiences with my own children in regards to gender influence my interactions with both the books and the data. Again, being open about where I come from personally and theoretically is important so that the reader knows how these are reflected in the data that

is gathered. Also, the fact that I am using as a part of my coding process predetermined categories/descriptors provides me with less ambiguity and adds reliability in my initial coding because the categories are already decided. Although some might argue that the predetermined categories/descriptors might cause me to miss some data, I would argue that because I am also using open analysis along with predetermined categories I will be able to analyze the data found outside the areas of the predetermined categories in this way.

### **Conclusion**

I used a content analysis methodology, an inductive method of analyzing literature, because I wanted to examine gender roles and stereotypes in the top three best-selling adolescent literature books over the past ten years. Using the *USA Today's Best Selling Book List* (2004-2014), I analyzed the following three books: *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), 18 weeks on the best-seller list; *Hunger Games* (Collins, 2010), 17 weeks; and *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), 10 weeks.

This study included four sources of data: synopsis of the books, typological book notes, open book notes, and methodological notes. These book notes allowed me to use two approaches to coding, one that had predetermined categories and another that allowed me to code those book notes that did not fit into the predetermined categories. This assured me that no data were excluded.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative content analysis is to examine the different portrayals of gender existing in the three best selling adolescent literature books over the past ten years, *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008).

### **Plot Summaries of the Selected Books**

To prepare for my research, I read through each book in its entirety before taking any book notes to gain a sense of the overall plot and theme. I then returned to each book to look closely at the gender roles and possible stereotypes portrayed and documenting them with book notes.

#### ***Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) Summary**

Bella's move to Forks, Washington with her father Charlie is not what she expected. She anticipates finding a boring Northwestern town and instead discovers one with resident vampires. Renee, Bella's mother, is following her new husband, Phil around the minor league baseball circuit, so Bella can no longer stay with her mom in Phoenix. According to Bella, Renee has difficulty taking care of herself and now has Phil to take on the job of caring for her.

Bella sees herself as awkward and not fitting in with the school's in-crowd. Despite her outsider status, she quickly begins to make friends. Several boys take an interest in her, but Bella is immediately interested in Edward Cullen and the entire Cullen family in general. Partnered with Edward in Biology, Bella is upset when Edward leaves class and she later overhears him requesting a transfer to another class after school.

After an unexplained month long absence, Edward returns to school and seems kinder to Bella. She is wary about the change and unsure why other boys at school seem to like her when she looks and acts the same as she did in Phoenix.

Edward lies about his proximity to Bella when he saves her from a nearly catastrophic car accident in the icy school parking lot. Bella is taken to the hospital and she argues with Edward because she knows he is lying about having been standing right next to her. She begins to question who/what Edward is.

When the Biology class tests blood types Bella becomes ill and Mike, a competitor for Bella's attention, argues with Edward over who will take her to the nurse's office. Edward wins the argument and volunteers to take Bella home. Bella resists, and insists she is capable of taking care of herself. Edward high-handily overrules any objections she makes and does not allow for her opinions. He ignores any objections she makes, and in the end, she yields. Thus the script for the rest of their relationship is set.

To find out more about Edward and his family, Bella visits Charlie's Quileute friends. There she charms the old legend of the cold ones from Jacob Black, great-grandson of Ephraim Black, of the agreement of Quileute made with them. Bella considers what she knows about Edward and his family and what she has learned about the cold ones. Are the cold ones of the legend and the Cullens one in the same?

Bella goes into Port Angeles with friends to shop for dresses for the upcoming school dance. Even though Bella is not going to the dance she decides to be with her friends. Bella is quickly bored with the shopping expedition and wanders off to a bookstore. When she sets off to rejoin her friends, she is cornered by several men who

intend to rape her. She is saved once again by Edward. He takes Bella to a restaurant for something to eat and drink to give her time to recover after her frightening experience.

On the way home from Port Angeles Bella tells Edward she thinks he is a vampire. He admits the truth and again warns Bella she should stay away from him because he is dangerous. Bella decides that even though Edward is dangerous she loves him. After Port Angeles, Edward and Bella become a couple doing everything together. Bella cannot understand why Edward wants to be with her because she is ordinary and plain and Edward is beautiful.

Edward takes Bella to meet his family. Esme, Edward's "mother-figure," wants her children to find mates and to be happy. Carlisle, Edward's "father-figure," is a physician. Everyone tries to make Bella feel welcome, even cooking for her even though they do not eat. The exception is Rosalie, Edward's "sister" Rosalie is jealous because she does not like Bella coming into her territory and is jealous that she is "alive" while Rosalie is not.

During a family baseball game in the woods, three vampires, James, Victoria, and Laurent come upon the Cullen family and Bella. At first things are fine and the vampires just want to join the baseball game, but soon the newcomers realize Bella is human. James, in particular, takes an interest in Bella and decides to kill her. The Cullens try to protect Bella by distracting James and hunting Bella becomes an obsession for James.

Bella leaves Forks and returns to Phoenix while the Cullens try to get rid of James. When James figures out Bella is in Phoenix, he convinces Bella he has her mother captive and she needs to meet him at the dance studio near her mother's house. When she arrives, Bella discovers James does not have her mother. Instead, James plans to kill

Bella, but Edward and the other Cullens arrive in time to save her and James meets his demise. Bella wakes up in the hospital with Edward and her mother at her bedside, with Bella's injuries explained by a false story of a fall through a window. Bella's mother wants her daughter to stay in Phoenix, but Bella insists she will return to Forks where she can be with Edward.

Upon returning to Forks, Edward continues to take charge and escorts Bella to prom even though she does not want to go. Bella tells Edward she wants him to turn her into a vampire and she is willing to give up everything (family, friends, her life) to be with him forever. This is her main concern at the end of the book—remaining with Edward forever.

### ***Divergent* (Roth, 2012) Summary**

Beatrice (Tris) Prior lives in a dystopian society that is divided into five factions: Erudite, Abnegation, Dauntless, Amity, and Candor. Each faction places value in virtues that its members adhere to throughout their lifetimes. Beatrice has grown up as a member of the Abnegation faction, which places value in selflessness. At age 16, teenagers are administered an aptitude test. Each teen is injected with a serum to create a simulation that helps the teen decide the faction she or he will choose for the rest of their lives. Tris does not know what to expect or what the results might be. She does not believe Abnegation is who she is inside.

During the simulation Beatrice experiences many situations that are foreign to her and she just acts and reacts. When the simulation concludes the woman administering the test cautions Beatrice to keep her results to herself, that she will enter her results manually because Beatrice tested as Divergent. She does not display the characteristics of

just one faction, but all five factions. Beatrice is unsure what she should do at the next day's choosing ceremony when she must decide which faction to join.

Beatrice decides to be brave and make a choice for herself. She chooses Dauntless. Her brother, Caleb, chooses the faction of Erudite. Beatrice's father seems pleased with Caleb's choice, however, he will not look at Beatrice after the ceremony.

At the conclusion of the ceremony Beatrice, like all the 16-year-olds must leave with her new faction. She joins the Dauntless faction members and makes a harrowing jump onto a moving train that takes her to the Dauntless compound. Displaying grit, courage, and determination, Beatrice jumps from the moving train to a rooftop, and is the first to jump off the roof into nothing, not knowing what waits her below. At the bottom she meets Four for the first time and he tells her to choose the name she wants to be called as a member of Dauntless. Beatrice decides on "Tris."

Four takes the initiates into the Dauntless living quarters, gives the initiates new clothes, and shows them where they will be sleeping. Exhausted and alone, Tris cries for all that she has lost and hears others crying too. The next day, Tris is given a gun and taught to shoot. Tris realizes she has no choice. As Abnegation, firing a gun would be unthinkable; as Dauntless, it is necessity.

Tris begins to settle into her new surroundings, Christina, another new Dauntless initiate, offers Tris new clothes to make her look less like she is from Abnegation. Tris notices Four when he is around her during practices in the gym and around the compound.

All initiates fight other initiates. Winning is crucial because it determines how the initiates are ranked. The lowest ranked initiates at the end of the first phase will be kicked

out of Dauntless and will become factionless, the equivalent of homeless. Tris is paired with Peter, the most brutal of the initiates. Peter beats her badly. She is still recovering from the beating she received at Peter's hands, Tris pushes past her pain and joins the initiates when they are sent out on an exercise that night. The initiates are divided into two teams for a game of capture the flag. Tris decides to climb the Ferris wheel to get a high vantage point. She spots the opposing team, and, on the way down makes a misstep and nearly falls. Four pushes the Ferris wheel down saving Tris. Tris's team captures the flag, and Tris lets Christina take the flag and the glory.

The following day the initiates are learning to throw knives. Al is having trouble and as a result Eric, one of several antagonists, decides to teach Al a lesson by throwing knives at him. Tris stands up to Eric and ends up taking Al's place. Four grazes her ear with one of the knives he throws at her. Tris is immediately angry with Four until he explains he did it to get her out of the situation. Once again, Four saves Tris.

The Dauntless born take Tris outside the walls to have some fun riding a zip line. They have accepted Tris as one of their members and feel she is truly worthy of Dauntless. She will no longer be called *Stiff*, a pejorative reserved for those from Abnegation. When she returns, her initiate friends are somewhat jealous of the standing and comradeship Tris has earned with the Dauntless born.

After many weeks of training, Tris made it through the first phase of Dauntless. Other initiates are not so fortunate. Top-ranked Edward lost an eye, opening a spot for a lower-ranked initiate. Phase Two includes simulations that force the initiates to confront their personal fears. Tris does a good job with these simulations because she realizes

while she is in the simulations that the situations are not real. Tris's unexpected success causes Four to become curious regarding how she is approaching the simulations.

Four tells Tris she needs to be careful. She is doing too well on the simulations. People are taking notice and this is not a good thing. Tris goes to Tory, who knows she is Divergent and talks with her. Tory cautions Tris, telling her she will be killed if anyone finds out Tris is Divergent.

One evening, Tris is attacked by three people while walking in the compound. They grab her and touch her breasts, cover her head with a sack and she cannot see. Tris hears Al's voice and she knows he is one of them. Four arrives on the scene and saves Tris before the trio can throw her into the Chasm. He tells Tris she need to act vulnerable and weak so her Dauntless enemies will leave her alone and her initiate friends will help protect her. He tell Tris the reason Al was a part of the group was because Tris was becoming so strong and he expected her to be the weak girl from Abnegation.

Tris's final simulation is quickly approaching. Four works with her, training her to confront her fears and think like a Dauntless rather than a Divergent. He is afraid her responses may place her in danger. As the two grow closer, Four agrees to take Tris into his fear landscape, a simulation that holds all of an individuals fears. Tris learns that Four is Tobias Eaton, son of Marcus Eaton, the leader of Abnegation. She also discovers Marcus physically and mentally abused Four, and that's part of why he left Abnegation. Four tells Tris he cares for her and wants to have a romantic relationship with her.

Before her Phase Two final simulation, Tris freaks out and runs away from Dauntless in an attempt to see her brother, Caleb. She is caught and taken to Jeanine, the head of Erudite, at the Erudite headquarters, Jeanine, ever watchful for Divergent,

questions Tris about her test results. Tris lies to her and want only to get away from Jeanine.

When Tris returns to Dauntless, she misleads Eric about why she ran away, saying it was because Four rejected her. While completing her Phase Two fear landscape test, she learns she has seven fears, one of them related to having a sexual relationship with Four. She sees Four as strong and handsome, while she is unattractive.

All the Dauntless are injected with a serum and tracking device that takes them to a simulation controlled by the Erudite leader, Jeanine. Tris and Four, both Divergent, are immune to its effects. Jeanine is determined to bring all of the factions under Erudite control, by force if necessary. She intends to make Dauntless, who are trained fighters, her army, take over Abnegation first, then the remaining factions. Eric, once a leader in Dauntless, has become Tris's and Four's nemesis, and Jeanine's brutal enforcer.

As Jeanine's army marches through the city, indiscriminately killing those who are Abnegation, Tris seeks out her mother, trying to save her. Tris and her mother are caught in the crossfire and both fight for survival. Tris's mother dies saving her child's life. The tragedy is compounded when, later the same day, Tris loses her father in a skirmish to capture the control room at the Dauntless compound. She is also forced to shoot Peter as part of the same skirmish.

Jeanine and her henchmen capture Tris and Four. Four is injected with a simulation inducing serum and, not recognizing Tris, nearly kills her. At the critical moment, Four realizes he is killing Tris, releases her and together they attack Jeanine. Tris stabs Jeanine through the hand and destroys the simulation control panel, saving the lives of countless about-to-be executed members of Abnegation.

Grieving for her mother and father, Tris climbs aboard a train bound for Amity accompanied by Four, Marcus, and Caleb, with hope they will find sanctuary. As the train moves out, Four admits he loves Tris and wants to have a future with her.

### ***The Hunger Games (Collins, 2008) Summary***

Panem is a dystopian society divided into 12 districts. Many years before the book begins, there were 13 districts that rebelled against the Capitol. In the conflict that followed twelve of the districts were defeated and the 13<sup>th</sup> supposedly destroyed. As punishment, the Capitol began the Hunger Games requiring each district to send one randomly chosen boy and girl between the ages of 12 and 18, to compete to the death, with one winner. Katniss Everdeen lives in the Seam of District 12. Her father was a coal miner who was killed when Katniss was 12. Since then, Katniss has hunted with Gale, a male friend, to keep food on the table for her mother and sister, Prim. What the family does not eat themselves, Katniss trades for other items they need. Brave and assertive, Katniss hunts even though she could be executed doing so outside the boundaries of the city.

When the reaping ceremony is held to select the male and female tributes for District 12, Katniss's sister, Prim is selected. Peeta, the baker's son, who once gave Katniss bread when she was starving is the chosen male. Katniss has always protected her younger sister and volunteers to go in Prim's place. Both Katniss and Peeta must leave almost immediately. Katniss entrusts the well-being of her mother and sister to Gale, her friend, and Peeta's father.

As the train speeds toward the Capitol, Peeta and Katniss are dismayed to realize Haymitch, the only Hunger Games winner from District 12, is their new coach for the

games. Haymitch is constantly drunk and both Katniss and Peeta let him know they need his help, stone cold sober, preparing for the games.

Once they arrive in the Capitol, Katniss cannot decide if she wants to be friends with Peeta or not. At first, the two tributes decide to train together. However, Peeta changes his mind and decides to train on his own. His physical skills are not as strong as those of Katniss. Peeta's life has been decorating cakes; Katniss is a hunter who has deadly accuracy with a bow and arrow.

Each tribute gets required time alone to show the Gamemakers their skills. The Gamemakers score each tribute and the scores are announced on television, helping the tributes acquire required sponsors who will support them financially and otherwise during the Games. When Katniss's turn finally arrives, the Gamemakers are paying the tributes little attention. Katniss startles the bored Gamemakers, shooting an arrow into an apple placed in a cooked pig's mouth with deadly precision. The pig happens to be placed next to the Gamemakers, getting Katniss their attention and a good score.

The final event before the Hunger Games is a live interview with each of the tributes broadcast to all of Panem. During his interview, Peeta acknowledges he has feelings for Katniss and thinks many of the boys in District 12 do too. Katniss is angry with Peeta because she does not have a choice in what was said about her on national television. Haymitch explains this only helped her because it makes her desirable to those in the Capitol and more appealing to potential sponsors.

The tributes are taken to a holding area beneath the arena in an undisclosed location. No one knows the landscape the tributes will face. Lifted into the arena level, an alarm sounds, the Game begins. Katniss races off on her own into the woods. She

becomes very thirsty and is in urgent need of water which she must have to survive, finally she finds a source that meets her needs. Gathering what intelligence she can on her competitors, Katniss discovers Peeta has made an alliance with the Careers and vows to pay him back for betraying her. The Gamemakers intervene, starting a fire that burns Katniss's leg and hands, forcing her to leave her water source. She is chased by the Careers and climbs a tree to get away from them. The Careers wait at the bottom of the tree knowing she eventually has to come down. While Katniss conceals herself in the tree, Rue, another tribute, finds and shows Katniss a tracker jacker stinging insect nest. Stealthily, Katniss cuts down the nest and it drops on the Careers. The poisonous insects kill Glimmer, a tribute who is after Katniss, and Katniss is able to retrieve Glimmer's bow and arrows. Rather than fighting with the Careers, Peeta defends Katniss against his new allies, enabling her to get away.

Katniss and Rue form their own alliance and decide to destroy the food the Careers have stored. Rue agrees to start distraction fires while Katniss destroys the food, however Katniss realizes the food must be booby trapped when she sees Foxface avoid the explosives as she steals some of the stockpile. Katniss changes her strategy, and shoots a hanging bag of apples causing the apples to fall and set off the booby trapped food. The resulting blast blows her back and causes her to temporarily lose her hearing in one ear. That night, Katniss cannot find Rue. She frantically searches for Rue the following day, and hear Rue yell for her. Katniss arrives to find Rue caught in a net and to see her fatally stabbed by a tribute from District One. Katniss kills the tribute, then sings to Rue until she dies. Katniss knows she cannot just leave Rue in the open and she

wants to show the Capitol she is still herself inside, so she covers her friend Rue, in flowers.

The Gamemakers, ever devious and manipulative, announce that, if both the boy and girl tributes from the same district live through the Hunger Games, each will be declared winner. Katniss knows Peeta is badly hurt but still alive. She searches for him, finds him and does her best to clean his wounds. Katniss moves Peeta to a cave where she can better tend his life-threatening injuries. Peeta refuses to eat and his wound is now infected. He needs medicine to fight the infection in his leg and reduce his fever. Katniss realizes she and Peeta must once again play the romantic couple their sponsors are waiting to see to get Peeta the medicines he requires to live.

Once again the Gamemakers decide to increase the excitement level of the Games. Those tributes still alive will find what they need in the cornucopia located where the games began, bringing all together in a final fight to the death. Peeta wants to go, but Katniss knows he is too weak and will never survive. Katniss resorts to trickery, getting a sleeping drug from Haymitch and giving it to Peeta, so she can go alone.

When Katniss arrives at the cornucopia and gets what she needs Clove, another tribute, tackles her to the ground and is going to kill her. Thresh, the boy tribute from Rue's district, overhears Katniss talking about Rue and kills Clove. Thresh releases Katniss; he doesn't want to owe her for what she did for Rue. Katniss takes the medicine back to Peeta and gives it to him. Later that evening, Peeta and Katniss hear the canon that is fired when a tribute dies and learn Thresh is dead.

The creek gradually dries up and the only remaining source of water is the big lake. The Gamemakers are manipulating events to force Peeta and Katniss into conflict

with Cato. Suddenly, Cato erupts from the woods with a contingent of mutated dead tributes on his heels. The three living tributes head for the safety of the cornucopia. Once on top, Cato grabs Peeta and Katniss unleashes an arrow at Cato's hand, causing Cato to release Peeta's hand. Cato falls to the ground and is immediately swarmed by the mutant tributes who torture him the entire day. Katniss finally can no longer listen to his cries and shoots him with an arrow.

Katniss and Peeta are the only two remaining tributes. The cruel Gamemakers revoke their earlier promise, requiring one of the two to kill the other. Neither of them wants to do it, so Katniss present an alternate solution. Each tribute will take deadly nightlock berries, eat them at the same time and both die. This is unacceptable to the Gamemakers who stop the two before they can consume the berries. Both Peeta and Katniss are declared winners, picked up in a hovercraft and Katniss blacks out.

Back at the Capitol, Katniss wakes to find all of her scars removed. She finds out that the Gamemakers wanted to enhance her breasts, but Haymitch would not permit it. Haymitch tells her that higher up people in the Capitol were unhappy with the way she and Peeta handled the end of the game taking control by trying to eat the berries. Katniss must continue to act like she loves Peeta despite being confused about her true feelings. Peeta has no doubts. He cares deeply for Katniss. At the end, Peeta and Katniss have little choice but to put on a show for the Capitol and for District 12 one more time acting as if they are in love.

### **Findings**

When analyzing the book notes using both the typological content and open analysis I found three major themes that were visible in at least two of the three books:

*Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008).

There were also three minor themes that I found that fit at least two of the three books.

These three books could be considered on a continuum from least to most gender stereotyped moving from *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), being the most gender stereotyped, to *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), in the middle, and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008), being the least gender stereotyped. Finally, each book contained overall themes unique to itself. I will begin by discussing typological analysis findings, followed by the major themes, then the minor themes, and finally the overall themes unique to each book.

### **Typological Analysis Themes**

When coding for the deductive themes I used two predetermined categories from Heine et al. (1999) list of Six Characteristics to Consider when Examining Children's Books for Positive Gender Role Models. As I discussed in Chapter 3, I used only two of the categories, those relating to gender stereotypes and roles, because these best fit the focus of this study. These predetermined lists helped me to focus on how the progressive gender roles characters displayed in *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008).

**Examine how the character departs from typical female stereotypes.** When examining how the character departs from typical female stereotypes, Heine et al. (1999) ask, "Is the character moving away from the following traits: passive, frightened, weak, gentle, giving up easily, unoriginal, silly, confused, inept, dependent, follower, conformer, emotional, concerned about appearance, innate need for marriage and motherhood, passive language and behavior?" (p. 429). When coding I looked for examples of the characters behaving in a manner that demonstrated the opposite of these

descriptors. For example, instead of being passive, the female was assertive; strong instead of weak; independent instead of a follower. I also found examples of perseverance, intelligence, taking risks, and determination.

***Twilight.*** Bella only departs from the typical female stereotype in *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) in one way: not giving in to Edward at the beginning of their relationship. After Edward saves Bella from being hit by a truck, Bella knows that he was not near her and that it was unnatural how he was able to keep the truck from hitting her. She continues to question Edward about how he was able to get over to her so quickly. Edward says to Bella, “‘You’re not going to let it go, are you?’ Bella responds, ‘No.’ Edward says, ‘In that case. . . I hope you enjoy disappointment’” (Meyer, 2005, p. 65). Despite Edward trying to “put off” Bella from the information, Bella does not “give up easily” and continues to try to find out how Edward was able to save her from being hurt from the truck.

Edward repeatedly tells Bella that he could harm her and is not good for her because he is a “monster.” “. . .His voice was low but urgent. His words cut me. ‘It’s not safe. I’m dangerous Bella – please grasp that.’ Bella responds, ‘No.’ I tried very hard not to look like a sulky child” (Meyer, 2005, p. 190). However, in this case, Bella is not giving in is negative because Edward, is in fact, dangerous and Bella staying with him is similar to a woman in an abusive relationship (I will discuss this further at a later point).

***Divergent.*** In *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), Tris begins to depart from the typical female stereotypes when she enters her first simulation that will help her determine which faction she will choose. While in the simulation Tris (at this point she is still called Beatrice) is confronted by a man who tries to stop her and grabs her. Even though she has

grown up in Abnegation, the faction which focuses on selflessness, she begins to assert herself. She is prepared to defend herself and not just stand by and let the man terrorize her. She knows what she will do, “I am ready. I know what to do. I picture myself bringing my elbow back and hitting him. I see the bag of apples flying away from me. I hear my running footsteps. I am prepared to act” (Roth, 2012, p. 26). So begins Tris’s move towards a more progressive female role.

Tris continues to depart from the typical female stereotype by continually showing her bravery and determination. When the Dauntless initiates reach their new home they are told to jump. They can’t see anything below; it is just a black hole. Even though she has no idea what is at the bottom or how far down she will fall, Tris shows bravery and is the first person to jump. She reveals, “I don’t think. I just bend my knees and jump” (Roth, 2012, p. 58). It is at this point that Tris is asked what her name is and she decides instead of Beatrice she will be called Tris. This is important because Tris realizes that this is a turning point for her and her life will never be the same. She does begin to come out of her shell and move towards being a less stereotypical female from this point on.

Tris begins to become outgoing and express her thoughts more often as she trains with the new transfers in Dauntless. She stands up for herself and doesn’t back down when she is challenged. When the families are allowed to visit, Tris’s mom comes to visit her in the Dauntless compound. Tris introduces her mother to Will’s, (another initiate) family. Will’s sister insults Tris’s mother for being in Abnegation and supposedly hoarding goods. Tris stands up for her mother saying to Will’s sister, “‘Don’t speak to my mother that way,’ I say, my face hot. I clench my fists. ‘Don’t say another word to her

or I swear I will break your nose” (Roth, 2012, p. 185). Tris doesn't remain meek and allow Will's sister to insult her mother, instead she speaks up and defends her.

The Dauntless faction is focused on being physical, fighting, and protecting of all the other factions. This is different for Tris who came from Abnegation, people who are selfless and give themselves to others. Females typically respond to altercations and disagreements through verbal blows. Tris begins to responds to altercations with others through physical means. Is this because of the Dauntless factions to whom she belongs or because it is who she thinks they expect her to be? Nevertheless, she is moving away from a typical female stereotype. Molly, another member of Dauntless, insults Tris and her family. Molly has done this before and Tris is tired of it. Tris has fought with Molly one time previously and she decides that she must Molly again. So she does, “Defending myself isn't the most important thing on my mind. But it is the easiest thing to address. I twist, and my fist connects with her jaw” (Roth, 2012, p. 306).

Tris also takes risks while in Dauntless. She is not afraid to try new things. Many of the Dauntless born initiates are leaving the compound (which is forbidden). The Dauntless transfers are not invited to go along, however Tris is invited to go. Tris realizes that it is an honor that she was asked to go, but knows that she will be in trouble if she is caught. She decides that it is worth the risk to go. “I briefly consider my options. I can sit here. Or I can leave the Dauntless compound” (Roth, 2012, p. 210). While out with the other Dauntless initiates Tris shows them that she isn't scared and joins them in flying down a zip line. “...I should scream, like any rational human being would, but when I open my mouth again, I just crow with joy. I yell louder...” (Roth, 2012, p. 221).

Later in the book, Tris contradicts another stereotype when she shows her intelligence. No one else figures out that the injection all the Dauntless have been given is the way that the Erudite will manipulate the Dauntless to do what the Erudite want or that the Erudite leader, Jeanine even plans to do this. Right after getting the injection Tris realizes what has happened, “A moment later, Tobias’s thumb brushes over the injection site in my neck, and a few things come together at once. I don’t know how I didn’t figure this out before” (Roth, 2012, p. 415).

Everything Tris has become builds towards her showing her bravery and realizing who she truly is when she tries to save her family from the Erudite take over and then saving Four from the simulation Jeanine Matthews puts him in. As all the Dauntless get on the train, they seem to be in a trance, Tris figures out that they are under Erudite control from the injection they received in their necks, everyone is controlled but herself and she hopes -Four. She knows she must act as if she is also under the simulation and under their control or they will know she is Divergent. She also knows that she has to pretend to get to Abnegation to save her family, she thinks to herself, “... I will pretend long enough to get to the Abnegation sector of the city. I will save my family. And whatever happens after that doesn’t matter. A blanket of calm settles over me” (Roth, 2012, p. 418). Tris and Four are captured; however, Tris is saved by her mother. She finds her father, brother, and a few other Abnegation members who were able to hide. Tris, her father, brother, and Marcus go back to Dauntless to try to stop the simulation and save Four. Through all this Tris is leading and showing her bravery. Tris finds Four and even though she thinks he is going to kill her, she doesn’t give up and continues to talk to him to get him out of the simulation. When Four is finally able to bring himself

out of the simulation Tris says, “How did you do it?’ I say. Four responds, “I don’t know,’ he says. ‘I just heard your voice.’” (Roth, 2012, p. 478).

Tris has worked through her fears and become a brave female who speaks her mind. She begins in Abnegation, which is the selfless faction that stays to itself and in some ways represents a traditional female stereotype. Abnegation gives of itself to others. As a Dauntless member she learns that she is also selfless, giving of herself in another way – by defending others and giving of herself by protecting others. Tris learns that she can be Dauntless and still be true to herself and selfless.

*The Hunger Games.* Of all three main characters, in *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008), Katniss in *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) begins as the least stereotypical female and remains so throughout the book. Early on we learn that Katniss is moving away from the desire to be a mother when she says to Gale, “I never want to have kids” (Collins, 2008, p. 9). Katniss says this because she knows how difficult it is to take care of children and keep them fed. She has had to be the provider for her mother and sister since her father died. She does not want this burden to continue by having children of her own. So, is this desire to not have children driven by a lack of resources? Would Katniss feel differently if she had an easier time supporting her family?

We see Katniss’s bravery at the beginning of the book when we learn that she has been hunting illegally for many years. It is against the law to hunt, Katniss knows this, but she does it anyway regardless of the consequences. “...I could be shot on a daily basis for hunting..” (Collins, 2008, p. 17). Those who hunt illegally are shot and killed because those in charge do not want anyone outside the fence. Also, they want to be in

control and if the members of the community can go outside the fence to hunt, they will be better able to feed themselves and less dependent on the food provided by the Capitol.

Katniss is also determined to be unemotional and unfeeling. Females are often portrayed as being emotional or reacting over emotionally to an event, situation, etc. Katniss knows that if she wants to win the Hunger Games or at least have a chance at surviving, she must not allow her emotions to show or get the better of her. We first see Katniss do this when she pushes down her emotions so that she doesn't cry when Prim is hugging her and crying because Katniss has taken her place in the Hunger Games. She tells Prim, "'Prim, let go,' I say harshly, because this is upsetting me and I don't want to cry. When they televise the replay of the reappings tonight, everyone will make note of my tears, and I'll be marked as an easy target. A weakling. I will give no one that satisfaction. 'Let go!'" (Collins, 2008, p. 23). So, she pushes down her emotions because she does not want to appear weak to the other tributes participating in the games. We also witness Katniss's attempt at controlling her emotions when she is on the train to the Capitol to begin preparations for the Hunger Games. Peeta's father gave Katniss some cookies before she left and Katniss had been thinking how nice that was of him. She decides that she cannot accept kindness from anyone. So she gets rid of the cookies he gave her, she reflects, "I quickly open the window, toss the cookies Peeta's father gave me out of the train, and slam the glass shut. No more. No more of either of them" (Collins, 2008, p. 49).

Katniss departs from the typical female stereotype by being assertive instead of passive. She stands up for herself and speaks her mind often throughout the book. We see this when she is frustrated with Haymitch because he is a drunk and is not helping to

adequately prepare them for the Hunger Games. Katniss decides it's time to stand up for herself and let Haymitch know how she feels. "When he turns to reach for the spirits, I drive my knife into the table between his hand and the bottle, barely missing his fingers" (Collins, 2008, p. 57). In this way Katniss gets Haymitch's attention and lets him know she is serious about wanting him to help Peeta and herself prepare for the games.

Of course one of the most evident examples of Katniss's assertiveness is when she becomes angry because the Gamemakers are not noticing her as she shows off her talents. It is important that they watch, because the rating they give her will determine how much money people will give so that she will have supplies while in the arena. Katniss decides to gain their attention by making a statement-shooting an arrow right into the pig's mouth that is on platform right next to the Gamemakers. "The arrow skewers the apple in the pig's mouth and pins it to the wall behind it. Everyone stares at me in disbelief" (Collins, 2008, p. 102). This was a gamble for Katniss and she is concerned that her assertiveness will anger the Gamemakers. It is an effective gamble and Katniss receives a high rating.

Katniss also shows her strong intelligence while in the arena. She observes one of the other tributes and watches what she does. She guesses that Foxface, another tribute, stays back and watches everyone and must know what is going on with the food that Cato's group has stored. Katniss intuits that it must be booby trapped, so she sits back and watches. "I was right about the girl, too. How wily is she to have discovered this path into the food and to be able to replicate it so neatly" (Collins, 2008, p. 218). So, both Katniss and Foxface are good examples of females who show strong intelligence.

**Examine how the character departs from typical male stereotypes.** When examining how the character departs from typical female stereotypes, Heine et al. (1999) ask, “Is the character moving away from the following traits: active, strong, brave, rough, competitive, logical, unemotional, messy, decisive, leader, innate need for adventure, aggressive language and behavior” (p. 429). When coding I looked for examples of the characters behaving in a manner that demonstrated the opposite of these descriptors. For example, instead of being unemotional the male showed emotion, instead of being aggressive the male did not want to hurt others, and instead of being strong the male showed weakness. There were also examples of the male showing sexual restraint, males preparing meals, males focus on physical appearance, and admitting to love.

*Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) provides only one example of a male moving away from a typical male stereotype. Edward, not Bella shows sexual restraint. He does not wish to have sexual intercourse with Bella. He is old fashioned and believes that sex should be after marriage. He is also concerned with harming Bella because he is a vampire and she is human. This will be discussed in more detail later in the paper.

In *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), there are several examples of males departing from the typical male stereotype. In Tris’s Abnegation household everyone takes turn preparing the meals, including her father and brother. It is not just a female’s job. Preparing meals is typically seen as a female’s task, so this is moving away from a typical male stereotype. The sharing of preparing meals. Tris notes, “But my brother made breakfast this morning, and my mother prepared our lunches, and my father made dinner last night, so it’s my turn to cook...” (Roth, 2012, p. 30).

We see another example of a male moving away from a typical male stereotype with Al, one of the other transfers to Dauntless in *Divergent* (Roth, 2012). He is not aggressive and does not want to hurt people. He counters the typical male stereotype of male aggression in this way. In Dauntless everyone is required to fight and this requires them to hurt other people so that they will have a high ranking. Al does not like hurting others and he tells Tris. Tris responds, “‘You’re not a coward just because you don’t want to hurt people,’ I say because I know it’s the right thing to say, even if I’m not sure I mean it.” (Roth, 2012, p. 115). Tris reassures Al, but she doesn’t believe it. As readers we don’t know if she doesn’t believe Al is a coward because he doesn’t want to hurt people and he’s a male or because he is trying to be in Dauntless and in Dauntless you are supposed to be tough. This would be something that would be left up to the reader to decide. I think Tris believes everyone in Dauntless needs to be tough, male or female. She would view a Dauntless female as a coward if she didn’t want to hurt someone.

We see males showing emotion in both *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008). Stereotyped Males do not show their emotions. Tris tries to talk to Al in *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) about what he is feeling. Al gets emotional and cries. Al cries, “‘I just ...’ The tears that have been gathering in his eyes spill over, wetting his cheeks,’ want to be alone.’” (Roth, 2012, p. 270). It is unusual for some males to allow others to see them cry. Al has no difficulty hiding his emotions from Tris. Al is an example of a male moving away from a typical male stereotype because he is reluctant to harm others and is open with showing his emotions.

In *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008), Peeta, like Al shows emotion by crying. However, he does not cry in front of Katniss, she can just tell that he has been crying.

Similar to Tris, Katniss sees this as a weakness. Katniss believes that, especially in the situation of the Hunger Games, Peeta should be putting on a brave face and controlling his emotions. She believes he may be doing this as a strategy to make the other tributes think he is weak and by crying he is showing weakness. So, the message being sent to the readers is that males showing emotion means they are weak, because Katniss thinks this is why Peeta is allowing others to see he has been crying. Katniss comments, “Peeta Mellark, on the other hand, has obviously been crying and interestingly enough does not seem to be trying to cover it up. I immediately wonder if this will be his strategy in the Games...” (Collins, 2008, p. 40).

In both *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) we see examples of males who admit to their feelings of love for a female. In *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) Four is the one who admits at the end of the book that he loves Tris. They are talking about what happened while Tris was trying to get Four out of the simulation, Four says to Tris, “‘Fine,’ he says. ‘Then I love you’” (Roth, 2012, p. 486). He does this because Tris says that she could not shoot him when he was trying to kill her in the simulation because it would have been like shooting herself. It is an example of the male admitting that he loves the female before she admits it to him. Although some may argue that Tris basically admitted her love for Four by not shooting him while he was under the simulation and trying to kill her. We often think of the female expressing her love for the male before he reciprocates.

Peeta admits to the entire country that he has loved Katniss for a long time before they enter the arena. Katniss thinks this is for show, but soon realizes that Peeta does truly have feelings for her. He admits to Katniss that he fell in love with her in school

when she sang a song at an assembly. Peeta tells Katniss, “‘No, it happened. And right when your song ended, I knew – just like your mother – I was a goner,’ Peeta says. ‘Then for the next eleven years, I tried to work up the nerve to talk to you’” (Collins, 2008, p. 301). Peeta is expressing his feelings for Katniss even though he knows that Katniss may not return those feelings.

Finally, in *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008), the males in the Capitol depart from the typical male stereotype by focusing on their appearance. The males in the Capitol take great pride in their appearance wearing elaborate clothing, getting plastic surgery, and wearing make-up. This is typically a female stereotype. It almost seems like what we would call a metro-sexual. Katniss notes that Cinna her stylist is only wearing a small amount of makeup. Katniss is surprised at how normal Cinna looks when she first meets him, she reflects, “The door opens and a young man who must be Cinna enters. I’m taken aback by how normal he looks. Most of the stylist they interview on television are so dyed, stenciled, and surgically altered they’re grotesque” (Collins, 2008, p. 63). Only the males of the Capitol depart from the typical male stereotype in *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008). The rest of the Districts are the workers and they adhere to more traditional male stereotypes, perhaps because they don’t have time to be frivolous like the males of the Capitol. I wonder if this is what the author is trying to portray with this departing from male stereotype – that only males who don’t have blue collar jobs are frivolous and therefore care about/focus on their appearance. It would seem that those in the Capitol have a different view of the world and have time and money to focus on clothing, grooming, and plastic surgery. In contrast those in the poorer districts have almost nothing, therefore all their time is focused just on survival. Leaving no time for

frivolous things like clothing, make-up, and so on. It could also be that only in the Capitol just learn to focus on their clothing, appearance, etc and because make it an important part of their lives.

**Roles.** When examining how the character departs from typical female and male roles found in literature, Heine et al. (1999) ask, “Is the character in a role not usually found in literature such as male nurses, female inventors, females during the Gold Rush?” (p. 429). I looked for examples of these characters within each the three books and did not discover any examples in *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005). Bella’s father is the Chief of Police in Forks, a typical male role. She states, “Charlie was waiting for me with the cruiser. This I was expecting, too. Charlie is Police Chief Swan to the good people for Forks” (Meyer, 2005, p. 5). Her mother doesn’t work and follows her husband around as he travels for baseball. Edward’s family is also very stereotypical. Carlisle, Edward’s “father” is a doctor, while Esme, “his mother” stays at home taking care of everyone. Carlisle created a typical family by creating other vampires that became his wife and children. Edward explains to Bella how his family came to be, “I was the first in Carlisle’s family, though he found Esme soon after. She fell from a cliff. They brought her straight to the hospital morgue, though, somehow, her heart was still beating” (Meyer, 2005, p. 288). Edward then goes on to tell Bella how Carlisle brought each of his “siblings” into the family, providing him with a family.

In *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) there are several examples of females in roles that are not typical female roles. Tris’s mother works outside the home. Tris suggests, “Like my father, she works for the government, but she manages city improvement projects” (Roth, 2012, p. 31). Often we see women portrayed as homemakers- staying at home and taking

care of children. A woman, Jeanine Matthews is put in a position of power as the leader of the Erudite leader. This is similar to a governor, “Jeanine Matthews is Erudite’s sole representative, selected based on her IQ score” (Roth, 2012, p. 33). It is not often that women are portrayed in high ranking positions of power in literature. Finally, in the Dauntless faction all women are taught to fight. In fact, women fight not only other women, but also men when they train. Tris is shocked when she says, “I look at the chalkboard when I walk in. I didn’t have to fight yesterday, but today I definitely will. When I see my name, I stop in the middle of the step. My opponent is Peter” (Roth, 2012, p. 107). They must defend the community just as the males do.

*The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) offers two examples of roles not typically found in literature. Katniss is a strong female who hunts, she provides for her family in this way, she reflects, “But there’s also food if you know how to find it. My father taught me some before he was blown to bits in a mine explosion” (Collins, 2008, p. 5). Often times it is the male who hunts and provides for the family. Peeta on the other hand is a baker. He tells Katniss that he enjoys baking cakes and that it is his job in the bakery after she discovers how good he is at the camouflage station. “I do the cakes,’ he admits to me” (Collins, 2008, p.95). He means the ones they display in the windows. Fancy cakes with flowers and pretty things painted in frosting” (Collins, 2008, p. 96). Women are usually portrayed as cake bakers and enjoying cooking. It is as if the typical stereotyped female and male roles are reversed in this book.

### **Typological Analysis Summary**

Heine et al. (1999) Characteristics to Consider when Examining Children’s Books for Positive Gender Role Models was the typological analysis instrument used to analyze

the books. When considering the characteristic: examine how the character departs from typical female stereotypes, I discuss how the female characters don't give in, are assertive, show bravery and determination, are physical, take risks, show intelligence, and control their emotions. The characteristic of examining how the character departs from typical male stereotypes is exhibited by the males in these books by showing sexual restraint, preparing meals, showing emotion, admitting love for a female, focusing on their appearance. Finally, when discussing the characteristic: Is the character in a role not usually found in literature such as male nurses, female inventors, females during the Gold Rush?, I discuss females working outside the home and females as leaders, a female who hunts, and a male who bakes.

### **Open Analysis Findings**

My open analysis procedures began with coding my book notes for gender roles and stereotypes using my conceptual framework (feminist literary theory, gender, and children's literature studies). I then examined my codes to determine categories and finally organized these codes into subcategories of larger themes.

**Major themes.** Major themes were codes found in at least seven times and present in at least two of the three books. The three major themes include lack of autonomy, damsel in distress, and conventional female stereotypes.

***Lack of autonomy.*** I defined lack of autonomy as the 1) female playing a role other than whom she truly is or 2) the female character having low self-esteem or self-worth because the character could not act as herself or by making her "own" choices.

Autonomy is living and making choices based on values or standards that are in some conceivable sense one's "own" (Friedman, 2000a). Friedman (2000a) says of

autonomy, “Personal autonomy involves acting and living according to one’s own choices, values, and identity within the constraints of what one regards as morally permissible” (p. 37). Autonomy, its fundamental traits, and lives and actions that seem to mark it are publically admired much more often in men than women (Friedman, 2000a).

In the past, autonomy has been considered in terms of traits that insinuate an anti-female bias (Friedman, 2000a). Friedman (2000a) states, “Besides connecting autonomy to reason, popular Western culture has also associated autonomy with other masculine-defined traits, for example, independence and outspokenness. Traits popularly regarded as feminine, by contrast, have no distinctiveness connection to autonomy – social interactiveness, for example” (p. 39).

In *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), Bella provides an example of a character exhibiting low-self esteem/self-worth. Bella believes she is not good enough or pretty enough to be with Edward or for him to care about her. Bella says, “‘Well, look at me,’ I said, unnecessarily as he was already staring. ‘I’m absolutely ordinary – well, except for bad things like all the near death experiences and being so clumsy that I’m almost disabled. And look at you.’ I waved my hand toward him and all his bewildering perfection” (Meyer, 2005, p. 210).

Forty pages later, Bella once again expresses how little she thinks about herself, when she discusses his family’s feelings about her. Edward says, “...”They don’t understand why I can’t leave you alone.’ I grimaced. ‘Neither do I, for that matter. ‘...I told you – you don’t see yourself clearly at all. You fascinate me’” (Meyer, 2005, p. 244-245). Edward tries to reassure Bella and improve her self-esteem/self-worth. This however, does not work and Bella continues to have low self-esteem the entire book.

Tris plays a role or a part in *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) when she acts differently than who she truly is in order to not seem too strong. Four wants her to show some vulnerability in order for the other transfers to rally around her and help protect her after some of the others try to kill her. Four says to Tris, “The others won’t be jealous if you show some vulnerability. Even if it isn’t real” (Roth, 2012, p. 285). The next morning when Tris sees Peter, one of her attackers, she decides she must act scared and vulnerable. “Peter’s eyes find mine across the dining hall, and I have to force myself to look away. It brings a bitter taste to my mouth to show him that he scares me, but I have. Four was right. I have to do everything I can to make sure I don’t get attacked again” (Roth, 2012, p. 291-292). Tris must pretend to be someone she is not in order to protect herself. This upsets her and goes against who the person she wants to be, someone who stands up for herself, but she does it anyway.

Katniss plays a role/part in *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008). Throughout the Hunger Games she must pretend to be in love with Peeta in order to play into what the society wants in order to get money. This money will allow them to get the things they need during the games. It is announced partway through the games that if both of the competitors from a district are the only two left then they will both be allowed to live. Katniss immediately goes looking for Peeta, both because she likes Peeta as a friend and because she knows she must. Katniss thinks, “And in my case—being one of the star-crossed lovers from District 12—it’s an absolute requirement if I want any more help from sympathetic sponsors” (Collins, 2008, p. 247).

After finding Peeta, Katniss tries to help tend to his wound. She continues playing the role/part of having feelings for Peeta in order for them to get the food they need.

Katniss thinks to herself, “It’s as if I can hear Haymitch whispering in my ear, ‘Say it! Say it!’ I swallow hard and get the words out. ‘You don’t have much competition anywhere.’ And this time, it’s me who leans in” (Collins, 2008, p. 302). Katniss has to continue playing this role/part throughout the entire book.

In most instances when the female main characters did show autonomy it resulted in negative outcomes. Both Tris and Katniss show autonomy several times throughout the books, however Bella does not show autonomy once. In *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), Tris shows autonomy when she chooses to leave Abnegation and join Dauntless leaving her family behind. She knows this is not what her family wants but she makes this decision for because she knows this is where she wants to be for the rest of her life. As a result, her father gives her a hateful look and will not speak to her again. “..Then, with a gasp I can’t contain, I shift my hand forward and my blood sizzles on the coals I am selfish. I am brave” (Roth, 2012, p. 47). Tris looks to her father and she notes, “My father’s eyes burn into mine with a look of accusation” (Roth, 2012, p. 48). Instead of being praised for making a decision about the rest of her life based on what would make her happy, Tris’s father is angry and will no longer acknowledge her.

Katniss shows autonomy in *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) by showing the Capitol she does have some control in the arena by covering Rue in flowers when she is killed. Katniss shows everyone that no matter what the Capitol makes her do to survive in the arena she can still care about another person by honoring her in death. She gives Rue as much of a proper burial as she can under the circumstances saying, “I want to do something, right here, right now, to shame them, to make them accountable, to show the Capitol that whatever they do or force us to do there is a part of every tribute they can’t

own.... Slowly one stem at a time, I decorate her body in flowers. Covering the ugly wound. Wreathing her face. Weaving her hair with bright colors” (Roth, 2008, p. 236-237). When Katniss returns to the Capitol after winning the Hunger Games and the clips from the games are shown, all the tributes’ deaths and body removals are shown except Rues. The Capitol is showing that it did not appreciate Katniss’s show of autonomy.

It is only Katniss and Peeta left at the end of the Hunger Games. Peeta and Katniss are told only one tribute will now be allowed to live. Katniss is angered by this change in rule and her loss of autonomy. So she decides to take it back. Katniss and Peeta have poisoned berries and she tells Peeta that they will both eat them at the same time, so they will die at the same time. Katniss believes that the Gamemakers must have a winner and won’t allow both of them to die. Katniss and Peeta begin to eat the berries, “‘One.’ Maybe I’m wrong. ‘Two.’ Maybe they don’t care if we both die. ‘Three!’ It’s too late to change my mind. I lift my hand to my mouth, taking one last look at the world. The berries have just passed my lips when the trumpets begin to blare” (Collins, 2008, p.344-345). Both Katniss and Peeta are allowed to live. However, the leaders in the Capitol are not happy with Katniss’s act of autonomy. Haymitch warns Katniss about the Capitol being upset over Katniss’s actions with the berries and tells her she must continue to act as if she is in love with Peeta as an explanation for her actions. Hence, the negative consequences to Katniss’s autonomous actions. Katniss explains to Peeta why she is continuing to act as if she cares for him, “‘It’s the Capitol. They didn’t like the stunt with the berries,’ I blurt out. ‘What? What are you talking about?’ He says. ‘It seemed too rebellious. So, Haymitch has been coaching me through the last few days. So, I didn’t make it worse,’ I say...” (Collins, 2008, p. 372). So, throughout *The Hunger Games*

(Collins, 2008) when Katniss attempts to assert her autonomy it is met with resistance and negative consequences.

***Damsel in distress.*** I defined damsel in distress as the male as the protector or as a female who has to be rescued. Curtis (2015) notes that the damsel in distress trope has been a part of storytelling since Greek mythology. In modern times it can be seen in films, romance novels, magazines, and most frequently in fairy tales (Curtis, 2015). In stories where the “damsel in distress” storyline is used the focus may be on the damsel (female) or the male who saves the female (Curtis, 2015). It is difficult to find current research on damsel in distress (Curtis, 2015), which is similar to what I found. However, as can be seen in this study this theme is still prevalent in current literature.

In *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), Bella is the classic damsel in distress. She is constantly in need of rescue. Bella is standing in the parking lot that is snowy and icy. Another student loses control of his car and is going to smash into Bella. Edward, using his super speed, rushes over to save Bella. Bella notices how quickly Edward is across the parking lot to get to her, “Then his hands moved so fast they blurred. One was suddenly gripping under the body of the van, and something was dragging me, swinging my legs around like a rag doll’s, till they hit the tire of the tan car” (Meyer, 2005, p. 56). Edward saves Bella from being smashed between the van and other car, which would most likely have resulted in Bella’s death.

Edward is Bella’s protector later in the book when he realizes that outside vampires who drink human blood are coming close to Forks, where Bella and Edward live. Edward explains how their blood hunting and blood drinking habits differ from his family’s, “Yes . . . well, they aren’t like us, of course – in their hunting habits, I mean.

They probably won't come into town at all, but I'm certainly not going to let you out of my sight till they're gone" (Meyer, 2005, p. 328). Edward believes that he needs to protect Bella because she is unable to protect herself.

Finally, at the end of *Twilight* (2005), James (one of the vampires who drinks human blood and has decided to kill Bella), has trapped Bella in her old dance studio. James is playing with Bella before he kills her when Edward once again arrives to save Bella. After being attacked and bitten by James, Bella fades in and out of consciousness and suddenly Edward is there. She thinks, "And I was in his arms, cradled against his chest – floating all pain gone. 'Sleep now, Bella' were the last words I heard" (Meyer, 2005, p. 457). Once again, Edward has come to Bella's rescue. Edward brings his family to kill James and save Bella because she is unable to save herself.

When discussing her relationship with Edward after he saved her from James, Bella says to him, "I'll be the first to admit that I have no experience with relationships,' I said. 'But it just seems logical . . . a man and woman have to be somewhat equal . . . as in, one of them can't always be swooping in and saving the other one. They have to save each other *equally*'" (Meyer, 2005, p. 473-474). What Bella means by "somewhat equal" is that she wants to be a vampire. She believes that by becoming a vampire then Edward will no longer feel the need to be her protector or save her. Meyer has been questioned concerning the fact that Bella is a stereotypical damsel in distress. Her response to this is, "My answer to that has always been that Bella is a 'human in distress,' a normal human being surrounded on all sides by people who are basically superheroes and villains . . . I've always maintained that it would have made no difference if the human were male and vampire female-it's still the same story" (Bodner, 2015). However, I would argue

that Edward's behavior is that of a stereotypical male, and Bella's a stereotypical female. Even if both Edward and Bella are vampires, Edward is still going to be controlling and Bella submissive. What is also evident here is that Bella is willing to give up her entire life and family to be with Edward. It can also be noted when discussing Meyer's 10<sup>th</sup> edition of *Twilight—Life and Death* (2015) that the language was also changed. So, if Bella is as Meyer argued only a "human in distress" why does Beau (the male version of Bella) have a different personality from Bella and become someone different? Because Meyer after all claimed she was only going to switch the character names to prove that her novel was not gender stereotyped.

In *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), we also see damsel in distress, however it is implemented in a different way than in *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005). The transfers are divided into two groups to play capture the flag. Tris decides that the best way to find the flag is to climb to the top of an old Ferris wheel. She makes it to the top and keeps climbing even though she is scared and fearful of falling to her death. She says, "I imagine my body plummeting, smacking into the bars as it falls down and my limbs at broken angles on the pavement..." (Roth, 2012, p. 146). Here we have a progressive female role – a brave female overcoming her fear. However, it is followed by Tris becoming a damsel in distress. On her way down Tris can't reach one of the rungs and can't hold on much longer. Four ends up saving Tris by turning the Ferris wheel and lowering Tris to the ground just in time. She thinks, "One, two. In, out. *Come on, Four* is all I can think *Come on, do something*" (Roth, 2012, p. 149). This was a trend in *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) with Tris being brave and a progressive female, but as a consequence becoming a damsel in distress.

We see this again when Tris stands up to Eric, a Dauntless leader and bully. Eric is picking on Al, a fellow initiate of Tris. Al is struggling when they learn to throw knives. Eric tells Al that he must walk in front of everyone throwing the knives to retrieve his own knives. When Al doesn't want to do this Eric tells him he must stand in front of a target and have knives thrown at him. Tris stands up for Al and speaks up to Eric. She tells Eric, "Any idiot can stand in front of a target," I say. "It doesn't prove anything anything except that you're bullying us. Which, as I recall, is a sign of *cowardice*" (Roth, 2012, p. 162). Because she stands up to Eric, he makes Tris stand in front of the target while Four throw knives at her. Four nicks her ear with one of the knives and Tris confronts him about him afterwards because she knows he did this on purpose. Four lets Tris know that he did it on purpose to help get her out of the situation. He says, "Yes, I did," he says quietly. "And you should thank me for helping you" (Roth, 2012, p. 165). Not only does Four save Tris from a situation that began from her asserting herself, but he believes she should be grateful for his help.

*The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) has only one example of Katniss as a damsel in distress. Katniss goes back to where Glimmer (another one of the tributes) has died to get the bow and arrows that Glimmer had for herself. When she arrives the other tributes in Glimmer's group are coming back. Katniss is weak and Peeta sees her first. Peeta (whom Katniss thought was in the group) saves her life by telling her to run, "He shoves me away from him hard. 'Run!' he screams. 'Run!' Behind him Cato slashes his way through the brush... Sick and disoriented, I'm able to form only one thought; *Peeta Mellark just saved my life*. Katniss was too weak to fight the entire group so Peeta truly saves Katniss, who was a damsel in distress. Although we do need to consider that

Katniss is shown as strong and brave throughout the book and is only rescued this one time. She too saves Peeta. One might see this as one episode of Katniss being “rescued” but that she is not truly a damsel in distress throughout the book.

In both *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) the opposite also occurs, where the female saves the male. This is the more progressive female role. Tris saves Four in *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) when Four is in a simulation and going to kill her. She fights Four, but won’t kill him. She keeps talking to him and until he is finally able to bring himself out of the simulation. Tris asks Four, “How did you do it?” I say. ‘I don’t know,’ he says. ‘I just heard your voice.’” (Roth, 2012, p. 478). This was the one example of Tris, the female saving Four, the male. However, in *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) there were many more instance of the male saving the female.

Katniss saves Peeta several times in *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008). She first saves Peeta when she finds him hiding injured in the stream. He has camouflaged himself to blend in with the surrounding scenery. If Katniss had not found him and begun to take care of his wound Peeta would have died. Katniss realizes the severity of Peeta’s injuries, “But when I start to help him to the stream, all the levity disappears. It’s only two feet away, how hard can it be? Very hard when I realize he’s unable to move an inch on his own” (Collins, 2008, p. 253). Katniss continues to save Peeta by keeping him alive during the rest of the Hunger Games because of her ability to hunt and knowledge of the forest. Katniss saves Peeta by giving up her own autonomy and playing a role, acting as if she is in love with Peeta to help keep him alive, essentially saving him.

***Conventional female stereotypes.*** I defined conventional female stereotypes as a focus on physical/outward appearance, mama bear (compelled to protect young), and

female being passive/submissive. I realize that others may view the “mama bear” stereotype as being compelled to protect her young differently. In this case, it is seen as a female stereotype where the female feels pressure to take care of the young or defenseless although it may cause harm to herself. Each book did not exemplify every aspect of the definition. We often find conventional female stereotypes in fairy tales. In most fairy tales, the female characters are valued most for their passivity, beauty and their ability to clean (Kuon & Weimar, 2009). Therefore, girls learn from reading fairy tales that beauty is the most important trait they can possess. Girls also learn that good things happen to princesses who are quiet, sweet and fairly helpless (Kuon & Weimar, 2009). Heine et al. (1999) mention an innate need for marriage and motherhood, and being passive as two of the traits on their list of typical female stereotypes.

*Focus on physical/outward appearance.* In *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), Bella discusses what a girl’s outward appearance should be, especially a girl from a certain part of the United States. When thinking about her own appearance Bella does not see herself in a positive light. She muses, “Maybe, if I looked like a girl from Phoenix should, I could work this to my advantage. But physically, I’d never fit in anywhere. I *should* be tan, sporty, blond – a volleyball player or cheerleader, perhaps – all the things that go with living in the valley of the sun” (Meyer, 2005, p. 10).

Bella notices that the Cullens have money and they are beautiful, but they don’t seem to fit in with everyone else. She decides they must not want to fit in because if one has both good looks and money then that means one fits in automatically. It does not seem fair to her that they should have both good looks and money. She thinks, “It seemed excessive to have both looks and money. But as far as I could tell, life worked that way

most of the time. It didn't look as if it bought them any acceptance here. No, I didn't fully believe that the isolation must be their desire; I couldn't imagine any door that wouldn't be opened by that degree of beauty" (Meyer, 2005, p. 32).

In *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) Tris has never given much thought to clothing or appearance because the members of Abnegation frown upon that. Everyone wore grey clothing and they did not spend time worrying about their appearance. Tris learns that this is not the same in the other factions. They do value appearance. Christina shows this to Tris by telling her that she needs new clothes. Tris questions Christina about what is wrong with her clothes and Christina tells her, "'They're ugly and gigantic.' She sighs. 'Will you just let me help you? If you don't like what you put me in, you never have to wear it again, I promise'" (Roth, 2012, p. 86). Christina doesn't stop at changing Tris's clothing but also putting make-up and letting her hair loose. After making over Tris, Christina tells her, "'See?' she says. 'You're . . . striking?'" (Roth, 2012, p. 87). The importance of physical appearance makes an impact on Tris because later in the book she believes that Four only views her as a sister and someone he needs to protect. She thinks this is due to her physical appearance, and says, "I wish I was taller. If I was tall, my narrow build would be described as 'willowy' instead of 'childish,' and he might not see me as a little sister he needs to protect" (Roth, 2012, p. 312).

The citizens in the Capitol in *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) focus on looks, getting plastic surgery and wearing crazy clothing. They extend this to the tributes of the Hunger Games. After Katniss wins the Hunger Games she is lifted out of the arena and passes out. When she awakens she finds that all her scars, flaws, and imperfections have been removed. She is amazed at how perfect her skin and body look. Katniss is amazed

when she wakes up thinking, “I start to sit up but am arrested by the sight of my hands. The skin’s perfections, smooth and glowing. Not only are the scars from the arena gone, but those accumulated over years of hunting have vanished without a trace” (Collins, 2008, p. 351). The Capitol wants its victors to look physically beautiful, so they fixed all of Katniss’s flaws, scars, etc after they retrieved her from the games. Even after she just killed people in the arena and almost died several times, she must look perfect now.

The reader learns a few pages later that the Gamemakers wanted to alter Katniss surgically, but Haymitch wouldn’t allow it, furthering the emphasis on physical beauty/outward appearance. Katniss notices the padding as she gets dressed. Katniss takes note of her clothing, “I immediately notice the padding over my breasts, adding curves that hunger has stolen from my body. My hands go to my chest and I frown. ‘I know,’ says Cinna before I can object. ‘But the Gamemakers wanted to alter you surgically. Haymitch had a huge fight with them over it. This was the compromise” (Collins, 2008, p. 354). This is also an example of a loss of autonomy for Katniss because she didn’t have a choice in adding the padding or how she is going to present herself to the country.

*Mama bear.* In *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), Four finally sees his dad, Marcus, after many years. Tris has been inside Tobias’s fear landscape and knows that Marcus physically abused Four. When Marcus approaches Four, Tris acts like a mama bear and wants to protect Four from being hurt again by Marcus because she remembers the pain he experienced before. Tris stands up for Four saying, “‘Hey,’ I say, pulling away from Caleb. I remember the belt stinging on my wrist in Tobias’s fear landscape and slip into the space between them, pushing Marcus back. ‘Hey. Get away from him’” (Roth, 2012,

p. 482). Tris believes that she needs to protect Four from being hurt by his father again. She wants to keep him safe from the harm his father can cause him.

Katniss plays the role of the mama bear several times in *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) to her sister, Prim and then to Rue, another tribute, in the Hunger Games. Katniss has the need to protect and care for her younger sister Prim. She knows that although she can protect her in most things, the reaping is a lottery and beyond her control; “I protect Prim in everyway I can, but I am powerless against the reaping” (Collins, 2008, p. 15).

Once in the arena, we see Katniss acting a protector and mama bear to Rue, whom she sees as as similar to Prim. She says, “No, I meant it, I say. I can almost hear Haymitch groaning as I team up with this wispy child. But I want her. Because she’s a survivor, and I trust her, and why not admit it? She reminds me of Prim” (Collins, 2008, p. 201). Katniss continues to want to protect Rue watching over her, “I turn and head back to the stream, feeling somehow worried. About Rue not being killed and the two of us being left for last, about leaving Rue alone, about leaving Prim alone back home. No, Prim has my mother and Gale and a baker who has promised she won’t go hungry. Rue has only me” (Collins, 2008, p. 213). Even though Prim is at home and well taken care of by others, Katniss can’t help her mama bear tendencies and she worries for Prim.

*Passive/submissive female.* Bella is the passive/submissive female throughout the entire *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), text. Bella passes out during science class when they are pricking their fingers so that each student can determine his/her blood type. Bella and Edward are leaving the nurse’s office and she wants to drive her own car home. Edward refuses to let her. At first Bella argues with Edward and stands up for herself, but then, as

is typical for Bella, she submits to Edward and gives in to do what he wants. Edward says he is going to drive her home and Bella insists that she is fine to drive herself home. Edward continues to push and says, “‘Didn’t you hear me promise to take you safely home? Do you think I’m going to let you drive in your condition?’ His voice is still indignant” (Meyer, 2005, p. 103). Of course, Bella gives in and allows Edward to drive her home.

After almost being attacked by several men and rescued by Edward, he takes Bella to dinner. Bella has no say in going to dinner, Edward decides that Bella needs to eat and so that’s what they do. While at dinner Edward continues to tell Bella what to do; “‘Drink,’ he ordered. I sipped at my soda obediently, and drank more deeply, surprised at how thirsty I was” (Meyer, 2005, p. 169). Once again, Edward gives Bella a command and she submits even if it is not what she wants to do. She is passive and does whatever Edward says without standing up for herself.

In *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), it was Tris’s idea to climb the Ferris wheel to see where the flag was located. When her group reaches the flag she allows Christina to take the flag because she doesn’t want to say anything and look too greedy. Tris thinks to herself, “‘Uriah claps my shoulder, and I try to forget about the look Christina gave me. Maybe she’s right; I’ve already proved myself today. I do not want to be like Eric, terrified of other people’s strength” (Roth, 2012, p. 154). Tris gives up the flag easily to Christina and does not take the flag herself even though she deserves to be the one to capture it. She passively steps aside so she does not seem too greedy.

**Minor themes.** Minor themes were found at least five times in each book and found in at least two of the three books. The three minor themes include: cares for others, value of romance, and traditional male stereotype.

***Cares for others.*** I defined caring for others as the characters putting others wants/needs/feelings before their own wants/needs/feelings. In many cases this was done as to not hurt the feelings of another character and was accomplished by hiding one's true feelings and/or thoughts. When discussing the differences between men and women, women are often more concerned with practical moral matters of personal relationships, care, and avoiding hurt to others (Friedman, 2000b). Friedman (2000b) say concerning women's care of others that, "by the early 1980's some feminist theorists had already begun to theorize that caring relationships entered significantly into women's conceptions of selfhood and personal identity" (p. 206).

An example of a character putting another's needs before her own is in *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005). Bella decides to leave her mother in Phoenix and go to live with her father in Forks, Washington. Bella loves Phoenix and the sunshine, however she realized that her mother was lonely because she couldn't follow her significant other, Phil, around the country playing baseball because of Bella. When telling Edward about leaving her mother Bella says, "'She stayed with me at first, but she missed him. It made her unhappy...so I decided it was time to spend some quality time with Charlie.' My voice was glum by the time I finished" (Meyers, 2005, p. 49).

Although Bella did not really want to leave Phoenix she did so because she put her mother's happiness before her own. This is typical behavior for Bella in *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005). Bella again puts other's feelings before her own when she tries to soothe

Edward when she was the one who was almost raped, "...until it occurred to me that his expression was murderously angry. 'Are you okay?' I asked, surprised at how hoarse my voice sounded" (Meyers, 2005, p. 163). The conversation continues with Edward saying, "'Distract me please,' he ordered... 'Just prattle about something unimportant until I calm down,' he clarified." (Meyers, 2005, p. 163). So, Bella is more concerned about how Edward is feeling when she has almost been raped and Edward himself is less concerned about Bella's feelings and more concerned with how he is reacting to the situation. He is so self-absorbed that he expects Bella to be more concerned with his feelings about what has just happened rather than her own.

In *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), Tris provides an example of a character putting another's feelings first. Tris is worried about what will happen during the simulation that will help her determine which faction she will join. This is the decision that will define how the rest of Tris's life will go. She is concerned about it, but does not give away her true feelings when asked about it, "I could tell him I've been worried for weeks about what the aptitude test will tell me—Abnegation, Candor, Erudite, Amity, or Dauntless? Instead I smile and say, 'Not really'" (Roth, 2012, p. 5-6). Tris is more concerned with making sure her parents are not worried for her than letting them know that she is truly anxious about the simulation and what the results will tell her about her future.

In *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008), Katniss puts her sister's wants above the needs of the family's resources and ability to provide for everyone. Prim, Katniss's sister brings home a cat which the family can not afford to keep because they barely have enough food for themselves. Katniss knows that Prim really wants to keep the cat, however she knows that it will be a burden. So, Katniss takes the cat and tries to drown it.

She is unable to do it because she knows that Prim really wants the cat. Katniss puts the wants of her sister before her own and the resources of her family. Katniss remarks, “Even though it was years ago, I think he still remembers how I tried to drown him in a bucket when Prim brought him home” (Collins, 2008, p. 3). Years later the cat is still hissing at Katniss and Katniss is still finding extra food to keep the cat alive for her sister to be happy. Another example of Katniss’s care for others can be seen when she tries to spare Peeta’s feelings by hiding the fact that she does not truly care for him in a romantic way. This is not as prevalent a theme in *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) as it is in *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) and *Divergent* (Roth, 2012).

***Value of romance.*** I defined value of romance as the female needing the love of a man to be happy and a boyfriend/husband equals female worth. Society often defines female worth by a woman having a man or her desirability to men. England et al. (2011) note that the feature female character (the princess) in the Disney Princess movies is linked romantically to a male character. The princess is often revered and portrayed in a positive light and therefore there is an implication of the desirability of a female having a man. In fact, Greenwald et al. (2002) state in their study that women on average, automatically associated romantic partners with heroism with chivalry and heroism seeing them as a white knight or prince charming.

It has been argued by feminist theorists that some women at sacrifice their own needs, and place a great value in social relationships (Rudman & Fairchild, 2007). It is through these social relationships and interactions, especially those with their peers that women in college are educated in romance instead of learning independence (Rudman &

Fairchild, 2007). Therefore, women learn to that they are valuable because of the love of a man and not on their own or through their own accomplishments.

In *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), Bella, has been disappointed and sad because Edward has been gone from school and then ignores her. She wants him to pay attention to her and have feelings for her. Her self-worth is tied up in him paying attention to her and having him specifically having feelings in return. Edward finally pays attention to Bella and of course she responds and doesn't care that he had been ignoring her previously. She gloats, "Once he'd caught my eye, he raised one hand and motioned with his index finger for me to join him. As I stared in disbelief, he winked" (Meyer, 2005, p. 86). This made Bella's day because she is happy now that Edward is paying attention to her after all this time. She feels that she needs the love and attention of a man to be worthy.

After spending the evening with Four and getting closer to him Tris is in a new relationship euphoria in *Divergent* (Roth, 2012). She is in a good mood and excited to go to breakfast and see Four. She muses, "The next morning I am silly and light. Every time I push the smile from my face, it fights its way back" (Roth, 2012, p. 339). This quickly ends when Four comes into the common area and completely ignores Tris at breakfast. Tris's mood and happiness completely revolves around how Four is acting towards her and her relationship with him. After Four ignores her in the dining hall Tris is upset, "I stare at my toast. It is easy not to smile now" (Roth, 2012, p. 340). Tris feels that Four may not have feelings for her anymore and therefore she is unhappy.

In *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) Katniss learns that a woman needs a man to find her desirable to be seen as worthy. Each tribute gets time on the television in an interview. When it is Peeta's turn, he tells the country that he is in love with Katniss and

that many of the young men back home also desired Katniss. This angers Katniss. When they get back to their quarters she confronts Peeta about the things he said, she shouts, “You had no right! No right to go saying those things about me!” (Collins, 2008, p. 134). Haymitch responds to Katniss letting her know that Peeta has actually done her a favor and made her desirable by saying he has feelings for her. Haymitch chides her, “He made you look desirable! And let’s face it, you can use all the help you can get in that department. You were about as romantic as dirt until he said he want you. ..” (Collins, 2008, p. 135). Haymitch continues telling Katniss that because Peeta has made her worthy and desirable by his love, as well as the boys back home, she will receive more sponsors. Haymitch says, “Oh, oh, oh, oh, how the boys back home fall longingly at your feet. Which do you think will get you more sponsors?” (Collins, 2008, p. 135). Although Katniss does not necessarily see her own worth as determined by the love of a man, she learned that she has to be found desirable and have the love of a man to be considered worthy in the eyes of society. She will not be judged on her own merits or accomplishments by society.

***Traditional male stereotype.*** I defined the traditional male stereotype as the male behaving in an aggressive/assertive manner, controlling and strong. Heine et al. (1999) list several traits as being typical male stereotypes, including “strong” and “aggressive language and behavior” (p. 429).

Edward, the main male character in *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) displays the most examples of traditional male stereotypes. Edward shows aggressive behavior by “following” Bella to Port Angeles. He rationalizes this by saying that he is doing to for her own safety because she always seems to find trouble, when really he is essentially

“stalking” her. When Bella asks him about following her. He says, “‘I followed you to Port Angeles,’ he admitted, speaking in a rush. ‘I’ve never tried to keep a specific person alive before, and it’s much more troublesome than I would have believed’” (Meyer, 2005, p. 174). This behavior doesn’t seem to bother Bella at all and doesn’t question Edward as to why it was acceptable to follow her.

Throughout *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), Edward, is extremely controlling of Bella and everything she does. Bella has told Edward for quite some time that she does not want to go to prom. Edward tricks her into getting dressed up and then takes her to prom. Bella is upset and angry when she discovers what is going on and as usual she can not stay mad at him when he just “looks” at her “that” way. She muses, “‘I’d guessed there was some kind of occasion brewing. But *prom!* That was the furthest thing from my mind. The angry tears rolled over my cheeks” (Meyer, 2005, p. 484). Edward then tells Bella, “‘I brought you to prom,’ he said slowly, finally answering my question, ‘because I don’t want you to miss anything. I don’t want my presence to take anything away from you, if I can help it, I want you to be *human*. I want your life to continue as it would have if I’d died in nineteen-eighteen like I should have’” (Meyer, 2005, p. 495). So, Edward is controlling Bella’s life and experiences to be what he believes she should experience. He does not consider what Bella wants for her own life or that she should be in control of her own life.

In *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) Four is assertive with Jeanine, the Erudite leader, when she takes both Four and Tris captive even though he knows she may kill them both. He stands up to Jeanine and speaks his mind, “‘Now that your intelligence has been verified, you might want to get on with killing us.’ Tobias closes his eyes. ‘You have a lot of

Abnegation leaders to murder after all' (Roth, 2012, p. 428). Four knows that Jeanine is killing an entire faction of people and will most likely kill Tris, as well as him, but he still speaks up and says what he wants to to Jeanine.

The only traditional male stereotype that Peeta exhibits in *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) is that of strength. He managed to get this way by lifting very heavy bags of flour at his parent's bakery. When deciding on what skills to show the Gamemakers, Katniss tells Peeta that he should show them this trait. She challenges, "What about you? I've seen you in the market. You can lift hundred-pound bags of flour," I snap at him. 'Tell him that. That's not nothing.'" (Collins, 2008, p. 90). Although Peeta is a baker, he is extremely strong.

### **Open Analysis Summary**

Open analysis findings were divided into two sections: major themes, and minor themes. I defined a major theme as having been observed at least seven times within a book and present in at least two of the three books. The major themes found in this study were: lack of autonomy, damsel in distress, and conventional female stereotypes. I defined a minor theme as having been observed at least five times within a book and present in at least two of the books. The minor themes found in this study were: cares for others, traditional male stereotypes, and value of romance.

### **Book Specific Themes**

There were themes that became evident while reading the three books: *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), and *The Hunger Games* that were important, but were specific to each specific book. In this section I discuss the themes exclusive to each of the books.

***Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) specific themes.**

***Abusive relationship.*** I defined an abusive relationship as one in which one of the partners remains in the relationship even though the other partner can or does cause harm, the abused partner begins isolate her/himself, and the abuser is jealous and controlling. *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) not only contains female and male gender roles and stereotypes, but it also displays relationship dynamics between Bella and Edward that mimic that of those seen in an abusive relationship. Gender roles and stereotypes can encourage male abusive behaviors towards women. Franiuk and Scherr (2013) suggest, “Undeniably, gender roles and stereotypes are a prime cause of relationship violence” (p. 18). Men’s violence against women is normalized because male stereotypes describe men as tough, dominant, and aggressive and women as weak, nurturing, and submissive (Franiuk & Scherr, 2013). Bella knows that Edward can kill her, but that does not stop her from seeking him out and trying to date him. Edward tells Bella that he is dangerous and could kill her. He says, “...His voice was low but urgent. His words cut me. “It’s wrong. It’s not safe. I’m dangerous Bella – please grasp that.”” (Meyer, 2005, p. 190). However, Bella ignores his warnings concerning the fact that he could kill her. “No.’ I tried very hard not to look like a sulky child” (Meyer, 2005, p. 190). Franiuk and Scherr (2013) note that “Edward’s warnings and Bella’s dismissals are a recurring exchange throughout the *Twilight* series” (p. 18).

Just like in an abusive relationship, Bella begins to isolate herself from her friends. In fact, Bella’s friends’ comment on the fact that she is often no longer sits with them at lunch in favor of sitting with Edward. “You’re not sitting with us today, are

you?’ She guessed. ‘I don’t *think* so.’ I couldn’t be sure that he wouldn’t disappear inconveniently again” (Meyer, 2005, p. 206).

Edward is also jealous and needs to control Bella. For example, he constantly needs to know her whereabouts. This type of behavior is called Direct Guarding and it is a predictor of relationship violence (Franiuk & Scherr, 2013). Franiuk and Scherr (2013) state, “Direct Guarding is a tactic that is intended to control a person’s autonomy and prevent access to other potential relationship partners” (p. 20). He says that he wants to know where Bella is because she “seems to find trouble” but in actuality it is because he wants to be in control of her. Bella finds out that Edward has been coming into her room to watch her sleep and she doesn’t seem to care. Instead of being upset that he was sneaking into her room without her knowing, she is flattered. Bella questions Edward, “‘You spied on me?’ But somehow I couldn’t infuse my voice with the proper outrage. I was flattered” (Meyer, 2005, p. 292). Edward also wants to make sure that Bella is not around Jacob Black, whom Edward views as a threat because Jacob cares for Bella. This control and jealousy does extend to other males who are around Bella. Tyler thinks he is going to take Bella to prom and Edward can not have that. Tyler shows up at Bella’s house to take her to prom; however, Bella is already gone with Edward. Edward speaks with Tyler on the phone while Bella listens:

“I’m sorry if there’s been some kind of miscommunication, but Bella is unavailable tonight.” Edward’s tone changed, and the threat in his voice was suddenly much more evident as he continued. “To be perfectly honest, she’ll be unavailable every night, as far as anyone besides myself is concerned. No offense.

And I'm sorry about your evening." He didn't sound sorry at all. And then he snapped the phone shut, a huge smirk on his face. (Meyer, 2013, p. 483)

Edward once again has taken control will not allow Bella to interact with another male showing that he does and can have jealous tendencies.

***Old-fashioned courtship.*** I defined old-fashioned courtship as a relationship that abstains from sexual relations before marriage. In a somewhat role reversal, Bella and Edward only kiss in their relationship. In fact, Bella is the one pushing for more of an intimate physical relationship, while Edward is more conservative, a product of his early 1900's upbringing. Edward refuses to give into Bella's desire for sexual contact. Silver (2010) states, "Despite Charlie's concern that Bella will become pregnant out of wedlock, Edward is the perfect suitor for an old-fashioned father" (p. 128). Although Edward wants to wait until marriage to have sexual intercourse he is also reluctant to get too close to Bella because he could harm or kill her. Edward tells Bella about her being so close to him,

"That's certainly a problem. But that's not what I was thinking of. It's just that you are so soft, so fragile. I have to mind my actions every moment that we're together so that I don't hurt you. I could kill you quite easily, Bella, simply by accident." His voice had become just a soft murmur. He moved his icy palm to rest it against my cheek. "If I was too hasty . . . if for one second I wasn't paying enough attention, I could reach out, meaning to touch your face, and crush your skull by mistake..." (Meyer, 2005, p. 310)

It is also Bella, not Edward who is reticent of marriage. It is Edward who keeps saying, no, not Bella, which is not the typical male or female stereotype we see when it comes to

sexual relationships. One possibility concerning Edward's views on restraining from sex before marriage relates to the author of *Twilight*, Stephanie Meyer's Mormon religious beliefs concerning sexual intercourse before marriage being a sin. According to the doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, "The Lord and His prophets condemn sexual immorality. The prophet Alma taught that sexual sins are more serious than any other sins except murder and denying the Holy Ghost" (The Books of Alma, ch. 39). All sexual relations outside of marriage violate the law of chastity and are physically and spiritually dangerous for those who engage in them (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, n.d.). Stephanie Meyer may have attempted to have Edward uphold her own Mormon beliefs that abstinence is the desired outcome, even if it is the male holding back. It is also interesting to note that in this case, premarital sex is portrayed as especially dangerous because Edward could potentially kill Bella.

***Divergent* (Roth, 2012) specific theme.**

***Independent to damsel in distress.*** I defined independent to damsel in distress as the female being brave, independent or standing up for herself and then being rescued by the male. In *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) Tris begins to find herself and becomes independent, brave, and stands up for herself. Tris is truly the strong female character feminist would like to see in literature. However, many of the times she does something independent, brave, or stands up for herself, it is followed by danger and Four, the male character, saving her. Tris can not be a progressive female and, instead she has to be rescued. The first example of this is when Tris is participating in capture the flag. She decides to climb the Ferris wheel to get a better view of the opposing team and where they have their flag. This is extremely smart and brave. In fact, Four follows her up and he admits that he is

actually afraid of heights. So, the female is actually seen as the braver of the two in this scenario. Tris makes it to the top and sees the other team. As she is coming down she gets stuck and is going to fall to her death. Of course Four makes it to the ground and turns the wheel until Tris is able to touch the ground, saving her.

This happens again, when Tris stands up for another student. Al has to stand in front of a target as Four throws knives at him because he was too afraid to go get them when Eric told him to. Four purposely grazes Tris's ear with the knife so that he will be able to stop throwing knives at her. Once again Four rescues Tris from a situation that started off with Tris as a strong female standing up for herself.

Finally, Four comes to Tris's rescue after she has been brave when she returns from having left the compound. She had stood up to Jeanine Matthews and when she returns she is ready to stand up to Eric. However, Four steps in and saves her again. He makes it seem as if Tris is just a silly girl to Eric. Four says to Eric, "'No,' Tobias says, 'She's just a foolish girl. There's not need to her here and interrogate her'" (Roth, 2012, p. 363). Not only does he save Tris from being interrogated by Eric, but he demeans her by calling her a "foolish girl," making it seem like she ran off because she was angry with Four. Four does this because he says he doesn't want to draw attention to Tris and what she did. Even if Four does not see Tris as a "foolish girl," it would see that the rest of society views girls this way. This makes it seem as if girls do silly things and they don't know why they do them.

***The Hunger Games (Collins, 2008) specific theme.***

***Gender role reversal.*** I defined gender role reversal as a male behaving in a manner considered to be feminine and a female behaving in a manner considered to be

masculine. In *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) we see a gender role reversal. Katniss behaves in a manner similar to those considered more “male” and Peeta behaves in a manner similar to those considered more “female.” In their study, Taber, Woloshym, and Lane (2013) discussed gender roles in a book club discussion over *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008). The girls identified Katniss’s character as more complex than that of Peeta, indicating that she presented some characteristics and attributes that typically are categorized as traditionally masculine and others that could be categorized as traditionally feminine” (p. 1031). One student even commented that she visualized Katniss as a boy when she read independently (Taber, Woloshym, & Lane, 2013). Katniss is a hunter, strong, and takes care of her family. She is unconcerned with her appearance and does not desire to be a mother. In fact, Haymitch remarks on Katniss’s spirit and believes it’s what they should play up to in her interview before the games. Haymitch notes, “...’No one can help but admire your spirit.’ My spirit. This is a new thought. I’m not sure what it means, but it suggests I’m a fighter. In a sort of brave way” (Collins, 2008, p. 121-122).

Peeta on the other hand is a baker who enjoys baking and decorating cakes. He’s not your typical male stereotype role. He is free with showing both his emotions and his kindness. When Peeta does something nice for Katniss she thinks about his kindness to herself and remembers that he has always been kind. Katniss muses, “*It’s because he’s being kind. Just as he was kind to give me the bread*” (Collins, 2008, p. 49). Peeta is however strong from lifting heavy bags of flour, which is a typical male stereotype.

### **Conclusion**

Chapter 4 began with a summary of each of the books analyzed for this study: *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008). These summaries provided a detailed description of the plot of each of these books that provide the reader with the background knowledge to understand the themes discussed in the chapter. The summaries were followed by a discussion of the open analysis findings were divided into major and minor themes. The major themes being: lack of autonomy, damsel in distress, and conventional female stereotypes. The minor themes being: cares for others, traditional male stereotypes, and value of romance. I used Heine et al.'s (1999) Characteristics to Consider when Examining Children's Books for Positive Gender Role Models to analyze the books using a typological analysis. I discussed how the character departs from typical female stereotypes, examined how the character departs from typical male stereotypes, and discussed if the character was in a role not usually found in literature such as male nurses, female inventors, females during the Gold Rush? Finally, I discuss themes specific to each book. In *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) these specific themes include abusive relationship, and old-fashioned courtship. The book specific theme in *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) is the female character going from independent to damsel in distress and in *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) is gender role reversal. In Chapter 5, I will discuss implications of the findings discussed in this chapter.

## CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS]

### **Research Purpose**

This qualitative study examined the male and female gender roles and stereotypes embedded in the top three best-selling adolescent fiction novels over the past ten years: *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008). Feminist literary theory was the lens with which I viewed both the obvious and hidden stereotypes that could be transferred to the reader. I used a content analysis methodology, which included both typological and inductive methods to determine both the traditional and progressive male and female gender roles and stereotypes.

### **Summary of the Findings**

When analyzing the book notes using both the typological content and open analysis I found three major themes that were visible in at least two of the three books: *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008). There were also three minor themes that I found that fit at least two of the three books. Considering these books on a continuum: *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), was the most gender stereotyped, *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), in the middle, and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008), being the least gender stereotyped. Finally, each book contained overall unique themes.

### **Typological Analysis Themes**

When coding for the deductive themes I used two categories from Heine et al. (1999) list of Six Characteristics to Consider when Examining Children's Books for

Positive Gender Role Models. I used only two of the categories, those relating to gender stereotypes and roles, because these best fit the focus of this study.

**Examine how the character departs from typical female stereotypes.** When examining how the character departs from typical female stereotypes, Heine et al. (1999) ask, “Is the character moving away from the following traits: passive, frightened, weak, gentle, giving up easily, unoriginal, silly, confused, inept, dependent, follower, conformer, emotional, concerned about appearance, innate need for marriage and motherhood, passive language and behavior?” (p. 429). When coding I looked for examples of the characters behaving in a manner that demonstrated the opposite of these descriptors. For example, instead of being passive, the female was assertive; strong instead of weak; follower, independent. I also found examples of perseverance, intelligence, taking risks, and determination.

***Twilight.*** Bella only departs from the typical female stereotype in *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) by not giving in to Edward at the beginning of their relationship. Bella does not accept his answer when he says he was standing right by her when he saves her from being hit by a truck.

***Divergent.*** Tris departs from the typical female stereotype throughout *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) by continually showing her bravery and determination. She also stands up for herself and doesn’t back down when she is challenged.

***The Hunger Games.*** Katniss in *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) is the least stereotypical female of all three female main characters in these three books. Katniss tells Gale, her friend and hunting companion, that she does not want to have children. She is

also determined to be unemotional and unfeeling. Katniss is assertive instead of passive, standing up for herself and speaking her mind.

*Interpretations.* Strong female characters show both females and males that females can be brave, assertive, and strong. These characters provide positive role models for female and male readers. As society's gender roles for both females and males have changed, it has become more acceptable for females to take on more progressive gender roles. As was mentioned previously, it seen as less appropriate for boys to participate in female-stereotypic behavior than for girls to participate in male-stereotypic behavior (Mulvey and Killen, 2015). Therefore, it is becoming more acceptable for women to be strong, and assertive. This needs to be reinforced in the books both children and adolescents are reading. The characters in these books can be strong role models for the changing gender roles seen in today's society.

**Examine how the character departs from typical male stereotypes.** When examining how the character departs from typical male stereotypes, Heine et al. (1999) ask, "Is the character moving away from the following traits: active, strong, brave, rough, competitive, logical, unemotional, messy, decisive, leader, innate need for adventure, aggressive language and behavior" (p. 429). When coding I looked for examples of the characters behaving in a manner that demonstrated the opposite of these descriptors. For example, instead of being unemotional the male showed emotion, instead of being aggressive the male did not want to hurt others, and instead of being strong the male showed weakness. There were also examples of the male showing sexual restraint, males preparing meals, male focuses on physical appearance, and admitting to love.

In *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) Edward only moves away from the typical male stereotype in one way-by showing sexual restraint. It is Edward, not Bella who refuses to have premarital sex. In *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), there are several examples of males departing from the typical male stereotype. Both men and women take turns preparing meals in *Abnegation*. Al, one of the transfers to Dauntless shows emotions and does not want to hurt others. In *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008), Peeta also departs from the typical male stereotype by showing emotion. Katniss can tell that he has been crying when he leaves for the Hunger Games. Peeta also admits his love to the country on national television. The males in the Capitol in *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) focus on their appearance.

**Interpretations.** Male characters who show emotions, help prepare meals, and admit their love illustrate to readers that males can be something other than the stereotypical assertive, aggressive, controlling male. These male characters also confirm to boys that it is appropriate to behave in these ways. We want boys/young men to have examples of nonstereotypic male characters. As I discussed previously, some males are rejected and excluded when they participate in nonstereotypic ways or activities (Mulvey & Killen, 2015). Therefore, it is important that boys see these examples and learn that it is normal for males to prepare meals, profess their love, and behave in other nonstereotypical ways. This is especially true as we see the gender roles of males changing within today's society and needs to be reflected in the books children and adolescents are reading.

**Roles.** When examining how the character departs from typical female and male roles found in literature, Heine et al. (1999) ask, "Is the character in a role not usually

found in literature such as male nurses, female inventors, females during the Gold Rush?” (p. 429). There were no examples found in *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005). In *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) there were several examples of females in roles that are not typical female roles. Tris’s mother works outside the home. Jeaninie Matthews, is the Eurdite leader and in a position of power, and in the Dauntless faction all women are taught to fight. *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) offers two examples of roles not typically found in literature. Katniss is a strong female who hunts. She is the provider for her family. Peeta is a baker and cake decorator. He tells Katniss he enjoys baking and decorating cakes. The typical stereotyped male and female roles are reversed for Peeta and Katniss in this book.

***Interpretations.*** As society has changed and more women have begun to work outside the home and the roles of both women and men have changed, literature has needed to reflect this change. These three books provided several examples of these changing roles and by doing so show readers what their roles too can change. Taber, The girls when discussing *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) in a book club believed Katniss’s role of hunter and Peeta’s role of baker/cake decorator made Katniss more like a boy and Peeta more like a girl. One participant even remarking that Katniss was more like a guy because she, “doesn’t just stay at home with her sister and like does medicines and . . . makes food and . . . does more household stuff she goes more outdoors and does physical stuff” (Taber, Woloshyn, & Lane, 2013, p. 1031). These young girls viewed Katniss as more like a boy and Peeta more like a girl because the characters were portrayed in ways and in roles that are traditionally considered appropriate for the opposite sex. So, even though we are seeing a shift in the gender roles of women and men, there is still a belief by at least the girls in the article that these traditional roles are

appropriate for each sex and should hold true. Hopefully, the more often males and females read books and interact with texts that contain females and males in progressive gender roles these notions of what is “appropriate” male and female behavior will change.

### **Typological Analysis Summary**

I used Heine et al. (1999) Characteristics to Consider when Examining Children’s Books for Positive Gender Role Models as the instrument to analyze the three books for the typological analysis for this study. This allowed me to analyze the books for the more progressive gender roles.

### **Open Analysis – Major Themes and Interpretation**

I identified major themes as codes seen at least seven times and present in at least two of the three books. The three major themes include: lack of autonomy, damsel in distress, and conventional female stereotypes.

**Lack of autonomy.** Stoljar and McKenzie (2000) suggests personal autonomy entails living and acting in ways that fit one’s own values, choices and identity within the limitations of what one considers as morally acceptable (Stoljar & McKenzie, 2000). Similar to Stoljar and McKenzie (2000), I defined lack of autonomy as the female playing a role other than whom she truly is or the character having low self-esteem or self-worth because the character could not act as herself or make her “own” choices. The characters had to play a role to fit into what society thought they should be or had low self-esteem or self-worth as a result of not being able to be themselves.

I found examples of the female main characters in all three of these texts exhibiting lack of autonomy. In *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), Bella shows low self-

esteem/self-worth often when she puts herself down, often commenting on the fact that she isn't good enough or pretty enough for Edward. In *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), Tris plays a role or a part when she acts like she is not strong and cannot protect herself in order to receive the support of the other transfers. Similar to Tris, Katniss plays a role/part in *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008). Throughout the *Hunger Games* Katniss must pretend to be in love with Peeta in order to play into what the society wants in order to get money. This continues throughout the book in order for Katniss and Peeta to get what they need.

In most instances when the female main characters did show autonomy it resulted in negative outcomes. Both Tris and Katniss show autonomy several times throughout the books, however Bella does not show autonomy once. For example, Katniss shows autonomy when she tells Peeta they will eat the poisonous berries and kill themselves because the Game Makers promised them they could both survive and then went back on that promise.

***Interpretations.*** Adolescents girls reading these books may receive the message that they need to change who they are to fit into the role that society sets for women, even if these roles go against their own identity. Also, they may interpret from the novels that they are not good enough or pretty enough and may need to change their outward appearance to better fit the "model" of what society regards as the perfect female. This leads to self-objectification. McNay (2013) state, "Self-objectification refers to the process by which women come to internalize and accept the beliefs that society projects on them" (p. 55-56). More importantly, from *Divergent* (Collins, 2008), girls may learn that being a strong female can backfire and that it will only lead to problems, because when Tris is strong and independent she becomes a target. As a result, she has to play a

role and acts vulnerable in order to stay safe. This inconsistent outcome is similar to the instances where the female main characters showed autonomy and negative consequences resulted.

When Tris and Katniss show autonomy there are negative outcomes. Readers could possibly believe that although they may try to assert their autonomy it may be met with resistance. As a result, females may be reluctant to assert their own autonomy because they may not see any point in doing so when the outcome will be a negative one. This negative outcome from a female asserting her autonomy is also an indication that society does not place value on females who are autonomous. Instead, society values women who fit the mold of a stereotypical female who does as she is told. In this way women may learn to turn away from acting in ways that fit their own values, choices and identity.

Why did the authors choose to punish the female main characters for asserting their autonomy? What message does this send readers? It is possible the authors are continuing the dominant gender stereotype of the submissive female. By showing the females as suffering negative consequences the authors are reinforcing that women should not attempt to be autonomous, but rather be submissive females instead.

**Damsel in distress.** I defined damsel in distress as the male as the protector or as a female who has to be rescued. In stories where the “damsel in distress” storyline is used the focus may be on the damsel (female) or the male who saves the female (Curtis, 2015). It is also seen in books, movies, and magazines.

Bella is the classic damsel in distress in *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005). Edward saves Bella numerous times, the first time being when a truck skids out of control on the snow and ice and almost crushes her.

In *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) Tris plays a different form of the damsel in distress. Tris is often brave, assertive, and progressive, however something unexpected occurs that makes her a damsel in distress. This occurs several times throughout *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), letting young girls and boys know that a female can be assertive and brave, but eventually she will need rescuing.

We see only one example of Katniss as a damsel in distress in *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008). Katniss goes back to retrieve a bow and arrow and it almost killed by the group of tributes. Peeta sacrifices himself to save Katniss's life.

**Interpretations.** Females have been portrayed as the “damsel in distress” for centuries. When discussing the portrayal of the female characters in fairy tales Kuon and Weimar (2009) state, “...it is best for a girl or woman to be fairly helpless because amazingly good things happen to sweet, quiet, demure fairy tale princesses” (para. 3). This helpless female needs to be rescued in order for good things to happen for her. This archetype socializes females to be rescued by a man and learn that they are unable to save themselves. Traditional gender roles teach males the reverse, that females are weak and in need of rescue. Females internalize this archetype and learn to be dependent on a man and in turn do not learn the necessary skills to “save” themselves from situations that may occur throughout their lives.

In a reversal of the damsel in distress there are examples in both *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) of the female saving the male. This occurs

only once in *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) when Tris saves Four from the simulation he has been put under. However, Katniss saves Peeta multiple times in *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008).

One would hope that with this reversal of the standard “damsel in distress” archetype both female and male readers will begin to internalize this new progressive gender role for both males and females. Females can begin to see through Tris and Katniss that a strong female is capable of saving herself and others. The reality is that this reversal of the archetype needs to be more prevalent if we wish for both females and males to internalize it and for it to become a new gender role. However, it is a beginning and female and male readers can begin to realize the possibility of a female saving a male, as well as herself.

**Conventional female stereotypes.** I defined conventional female stereotypes as a focus on physical/outward appearance, mama bear (compelled to protect young), and female being passive/submissive. Each book did not exemplify every aspect of the definition. We often find conventional female stereotypes in fairy tales. In most fairy tales, the female characters are valued most for their passivity, beauty and their ability to clean (Kuon & Weimar, 2009).

**Focus on physical/outward appearance.** In *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), Bella focuses on both her appearance and that of the Cullens. In *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), Tris learns that although the Abnegation faction did not focus on appearance other factions do. Tris begins to realize the importance of appearance when her friend Christina makes it a point to change how Tris dresses and puts on make-up. This focus on physical appearance is also apparent in *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008). The citizens of the Capitol wear

outrageous clothing and alter their appearance using plastic surgery. In addition, at the end of the Hunger Games, the Capitol officials have all Katniss' scars and imperfections removed to make her physically perfect.

*Interpretations.* Many women tend to focus on appearance and learn that they need to fit a specific model of what society understands as beautiful. Females hear this again and again from books, magazines, the media, and other sources. This can lead to body dysmorphia and eating disorders. Muth and Cash (1997) state:

Many researchers and feminist scholars have maintained that cultural norms and expectations lead girls and women to be attentive to and psychologically invested in their physical aesthetics, which may undermine their well-being and contribute to their developing eating disorders and other psychological problems. (p. 1439)

A majority of the research has found that relative to men, women are more behaviorally and cognitively invested in their appearance (Muth & Cash, 1997) and over-all adolescent girls have greater body image discontent than boys (Phillips, Didie, Menard, Pagano, Fay, & Weisberg, 2006). A focus on outward appearance for females is valued by society. Therefore, when young girls read books and see that the female characters in these books focus on their outward appearance it reinforces what they learn to be an important aspect of being female. When females feel they don't measure up to society's female ideal it can lead to low self-esteem, body dysmorphic disorder or eating disorders. These can have life-long effects or worse result in death.

***Mama bear.*** In *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), Tris tries to protect Four from his abusive father. Katniss plays the role of mama bear multiple times in *The Hunger Games*

(Collins, 2008) both to her sister Prim, whom she protects by entering the Hunger Games in her place and Rue (a fellow tribute) by protecting her throughout the games.

*Interpretations.* Girls and boys see women as caretakers through literature such as fairy tales. Female main characters in fairy tales are almost always shown in traditional roles, such as cleaning, cooking, and tending to children (Kuon & Weimer, 2009). This image of females as caretakers continues in picture books, not just in text, but also in illustrations. Then as can be seen in *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) and *Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) it carries on into adolescent literature. Young girls and boys learn that it is females who should care for children and others. What does this mean for males? Could it possibly lead some males believing that it is the females role to cook, clean, and be the primary care takers of children? As we move forward with changes in how we view the roles of both males and females and as more females have jobs outside the homes, these roles may be challenged.

These images and ideas also show females and males that women should be the primary caretakers of children. What does this mean for females and males in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where both the female and male work outside the home? In many households both the woman and man come home from work and the female ends up doing a majority of the child care. These stereotypes portrayed in the literature perpetuate these roles even as some aspects change (like women working outside the home and more men taking care of children).

***Passive/submissive female.*** Bella is the most passive/submissive female main character of these books. Bella often argues with Edward and then submits to his demands and does what he wants her to do in the end. In *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), Tris

allows Christina to capture the flag even though Tris found the enemy camp where the flag was located, passively stepping aside to not seem too greedy.

*Interpretations.* Some females do not express their feelings or emotions and are passive. This often leads them to allowing men to tell them what to do. Similar to the mama bear theme, where females are portrayed as the caretakers, females and males see the passive/submissive female early on in fairy tales. Parsons (2004) states, “In many traditional tales, being rewarded with the prince and the security of marriage is the result of the heroine’s submission and suffering, along with her beauty, rather than her agency” (p. 137). The embedded messages considered appropriate by the patriarchy: being chosen, suffering in silence, living happily ever after, encourage females to embrace these requirements (Parsons, 2004). When females are socialized to believe these messages of being submissive to males and suppressing their wants, feelings and desires it can lead to them remaining in abusive relationships. Passive/submissive women may remain in abusive relationships because they often do not stand up for themselves. They go along with what they are being told to do and even if they attempt to stand up for themselves they end up giving in in the end.

### **Open Analysis Themes - Minor Themes**

Minor themes were seen at least five times in each book and found in at least two of the three books. The three minor themes include: cares for others, value of romance, and traditional male stereotype.

**Cares for others.** I defined cares for “others as the characters” as the characters putting others’ wants/needs/feelings before their own wants/needs/feelings. This was

often done so that the female character did not hurt the feelings of another character and was accomplished by hiding her true thoughts and/or feelings.

Throughout *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) Bella is often putting others' feelings before her own. She leaves Phoenix and the home she loves so that her mother can be free to follow her husband around. She soothes Edward after she is the one almost raped. Tris worries more in *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) about her parents being concerned about the simulation than her own fear about what is to come. In *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008), Katniss does not drown a cat her sister brings home because she knows her sister wants to keep the cat. For years Katniss has to find extra food to keep the cat fed. She does this to keep her sister happy even though it is a hardship to find extra food.

***Interpretations.*** Instead of making themselves happy, females put others' needs and feelings before their own. Females learn this stereotype at a young age and learn to be "people pleasers." Friedman (2000b) says when discussing women's versus men's personal relationships, "Women, by contrast, are more often concerned with substantive moral matters of care, personal relationships and avoiding hurt to others" (p. 206). Often this means that they will keep their "true" thoughts, opinions, and feelings to themselves rather than sharing what they feel. This can lead them to careers they do not want or may not make them happy. It could also lead to no career because they do what pleases someone else rather than what will they want to do and unhappiness.

I found myself in this situation in regards to choosing my career path after graduating with my undergraduate degree. I had taken the LSAT and applied to law school, mainly just to make my father happy. He had always wanted me to be a lawyer. I wanted to be a teacher because I love teaching. A few weeks after graduation I was

offered a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teaching position in the school and with the teachers I had student taught with (exactly where I wanted to be) and a spot in the fall MU law class. I went back and forth for almost a week debating whether I should take the teaching job or go to law school. It was a horrible time for me because I wasn't sure what to do: take the teaching job and make myself happy or go to law school and make my father happy. In the end, I chose the teaching job and to make myself happy. To this day, my father is still bothering me about not going to law school and trying to get me to still go. Luckily, I am more concerned with making myself happy than my father and I am happy with my career. However, many women do not make this same choice and choose careers based on what make other influential people happy rather than themselves.

**Value of romance.** I defined value of romance as the female needing the love of a man to be happy and a boyfriend/husband equals female worth. This is often seen in literature as the princess who is linked romantically with the male character. Greenwald et al. (2002) note in their study that women associated romantic partners with chivalry and heroism.

In *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) Bella's self-worth is tied to whether Edward is paying attention to her. Tris mirrors this in *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) although not to the same extent as Bella. She is upset because Four ignores her the morning after he expresses his desire for her the previous evening. This does ruin Tris' day, however she does value herself. Katniss learns in *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) that a woman needs to be found desirable by man to be worthy. This is why Peeta says he is in love with Katniss on national television. Katniss does not allow herself to dwell on this and instead does everything she can to win the Hunger Games. Both Tris and Katniss may learn and/or see

some of their worth tied to a man, however they are unlike Bella in that they do not define their entire self-worth to a man the way Bella does with Edward.

***Interpretations.*** Females learn from fairy tales read to them at a young age and then from other literature that for a woman to have worth she needs to have the love of a man. In fact, feminist literary critics argue that when reading, a girl will pick on the fact that female characters either have romantic love and marriage or a conflict with a desire to not become her mother. Female characters' value is tied to that of someone other than herself. Therefore, marriage is seen as the ultimate goal. Get the prince, then you'll be happy. Many girls believe that to have joy and to be fulfilled, they need to find a husband. When in reality they can find this fulfillment from other avenues, such as hobbies, friends, careers, and so on. Females may believe that it is their sole purpose to find a husband.

Recently, we have seen much in the media about the value of a women being tied to a man with the rape case involving Brock Turner. Many people have said, "What if the victim was your wife, your sister, your daughter, your cousin?" The argument to this statement is that a woman is "someone." Her value is not defined by who she is relative to or her relationship to a man, but to herself. However, we teach through some literature that a female's worth is determined by her relationships or marital status and not by her own accomplishments, personality, and so on. This needs to change. A woman's value and worth are her own.

**Traditional male stereotype.** I defined the traditional male stereotype as the male behaving in an aggressive/assertive manner, controlling, and strong.

Edward in *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) exhibits the greatest number of examples of traditional male stereotype. He follows Bella to Port Angeles. He rationalizes this by saying it is to keep her safe when he is actually just stalking her. Four is assertive and aggressive towards Jeannine, the erudite leader, when she captures both him and Tris. Peeta displays the traditional male stereotype of strength. He is extremely strong from lifting heavy bags of flour.

***Interpretations.*** Traditional societal beliefs frame females believing that males are aggressive/assertive, strong, and controlling and that males who act this way are acting the ways males are supposed to act. Some males may believe they should portray this stereotype. Boys who do not fit this stereotype may feel inadequate. Mulvey and Killen (2015) state:

Not all gender stereotypes have the same social status. Research has shown has shown that gender-associated activities for boys have a higher status than gender-associated activities for girls. It is often viewed as less desirable, for example for boys to engage in female-stereotypic activities (such as playing with dolls) than for girls to engage in male-stereotypic activities (such as playing with trucks); the same is true for adults. (p. 681-682)

So, males suffer greater negative consequences when participating in activities considered typical for females than females participating in an activities considered typical for a male. When choosing to participate in nonstereotypic activities males have more limitations than females who chose to participate in nonstereotypic activities (Mulvey & Killen, 2015). Children, especially males, who resist gender social norms are often excluded and rejected from peer groups (Mulvey & Killen, 2015). This can have a

significant impact on children's welling being, mental health, success in school, and academic motivation (Mulvey & Killen, 2015). So, when males act in ways that are not "gender appropriate" there are greater consequences for them.

### **Open Analysis Summary**

Open analysis findings were divided into two sections: major themes and minor themes.

#### **Book Specific Themes**

There were themes that became evident while reading the three books: *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), *Divergent* (Roth, 2012), and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) that were important, but were specific to each specific book. In this section I discuss the themes exclusive to each of the books.

##### ***Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) specific themes.**

***Abusive relationship.*** I defined an abusive relationship as one in which one of the partners is remains in the relationship even though the other partner can cause or does cause harm, the abused partner begins isolate her/himself, and the abuser is jealous and controlling.

*Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) displays relationship dynamic between Edward and Bella that mimic those seen in an abusive relationship. Men's violence against women is normalized because male stereotypes describe men as tough, dominant, and aggressive and women as weak, nurturing, and submissive (Franiuk & Scherr, 2013). Even though Bella knows that Edward can kill her she still seeks him out and wants to date him. Bella also isolates herself similar to those in an abusive relationship. Edward is jealous and needs to control Bella.

*Interpretations.* Reading about young girls who stay in relationships where mental or physical abuse takes place can validate for young girls that it is okay to stay with someone who could potentially or does hurt them because they love them. In the same way girls may find it acceptable for a boyfriend to be jealous of his girlfriend's friends and isolate her as much as possible. Bella in *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) plays the submissive who isolates herself from her friends because of her controlling boyfriend, Edward. This book sold millions of copies and was a box office hit. So, young females are connecting with this book. Maybe girls believe it is permissible for their boyfriends to be jealous or even for them to isolate themselves from their friends. However, are they learning that it's okay for their boyfriend to sneak into their bedroom at night without their knowledge and watch them? Do the young girls reading this book find this romantic or creepy? One would think that even girls who think it is okay for their boyfriends to be jealous would not be as happy with one who sneaks into their bedroom and spies on them while they are sleeping. This is something we must ask ourselves. The reality is that in a society that should respect women, this shows little respect for women. The reality is that books with characters that portray controlling, jealous boyfriends as romantic do have the potential to teach young girls that this is the ideal "boy" and the type of relationship for which they should strive.

***Old-fashioned courtship.*** I defined old-fashioned courtship as a relationship that abstains from sexual relations before marriage. In a somewhat role reversal, Bella and Edward only kiss in their relationship. It is Bella and not Edward who is pushing for a more intimate sexual relationship. Edward is conservative and a product of his early 1900's upbringing and believes that there should not be any sexual intercourse before

marriage. He is also worried that he may harm Bella if they go too far physically because he is so much stronger than she is.

*Interpretations.* A traditional view is that couples should abstain from sexual relations if they are not married. This was an interesting twist in *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005). We often think of males as pushing females for sex and as the females being the one to resist. However, in *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) it is Bella, not Edward who pushes to get physical. Edward has his reasons for resisting: the time period he is originally from (early 1900's) and that he is afraid he will harm her. Why did Meyer include this tension? One possibility is that her Mormon beliefs controlled this part of the book. The Mormon church believes that sex before marriage is a sin (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Chastity). So, perhaps Meyer is trying to express her Mormon beliefs about sex before marriage and since Edward is unable to be the "aggressor," it becomes Bella.

***Divergent* (Roth, 2012) specific theme.**

***Independent to damsel in distress.*** I defined independent to damsel in distress as the female being brave, independent or standing up for herself and then being rescued by the male. This is similar to Damsel in distress, except in this case the female begins as independent and brave and then becomes the damsel in distress in need of rescue. Tris finds to find herself among her new faction, the Dauntless. However, each time she shows her independence, or bravery, something unexpected occurs and she must be rescued by Four, a male character.

*Interpretations.* Females can be brave and assertive, however in the end they need to be rescued from a man. So, it doesn't matter if she is brave and independent, she will still need the help of a man when she needs to get out of a situation. This may lead to

females believing it is not necessary to attempt to be assertive or independent because they will always need the male's help anyway. This is concerning because females may learn from these types of books that even if they do attempt to be independent and accomplish things on their own in the end it won't matter because they will still need to be rescued by a man. Young women need to know that they can expect that they can stand up for themselves and not need a man to come to their rescue.

I am wondering why this happened so often in *Divergent* (Roth, 2012). It is as if Roth wanted Tris to be brave and assertive, but needed to have that element of helplessness. Did Roth do this unconsciously or was it something she did with purpose? Maybe because of the gender roles and stereotypes all of us grow-up unconsciously absorbing she just wrote the scenes this way. There is not really a way of knowing without interviewing the author. However, Roth may come up with an answer similar to Meyer who argued that her novels were not about a damsel in distress but about a human in distress (Bodner, 2015). It could also be that because one of the purposes of dystopian novels is to explore social structures, these novels are more apt to push the boundaries of typical gender stereotypes and explore more progressive male and female gender roles.

***The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) specific theme.**

***Gender role reversal.*** I defined gender role reversal as a male behaving in a manner considered to be feminine and a female behaving in a manner considered to be masculine. There is a gender role reversal in *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008). Katniss behaves in a manner considered more "masculine" and Peeta behaves in a manner more "feminine." Katniss is a hunter who is strong, independent, and provides for her family,

while Peeta is a baker who enjoys decorating cakes. He is free with showing both his emotions and his kindness.

*Interpretations.* Peeta and Katniss show readers that character do not have to fit into the typical female and male roles and stereotypes. Hopefully, readers will understand that it is normal for them to step out of traditional gender roles themselves. This is especially true as society is realizing a change in what it means to be a male and female. It was less acceptable for males to deviate from traditional gender roles and stereotypes than females and that males suffered more negative consequences (Mulvey and Killen, 2015). Along similar line, Taber, Woloshyn, and Lane (2013) mention in their study that the girls in their study “maintained that Katniss’ strength and willingness to participate in violence marked her as ‘more like a guy,’ while Peeta’s relative weakness and unwillingness to participate in violence marked him as ‘more like a teddy bear’” (p. 1035). So, even though they were engaging with a text that included progressive gender roles, the traditional gender roles so pervasive in our society could not be overlooked. Hopefully, if both males and females can interact with more texts that portray females in roles typically considered masculine and males in roles typically considered feminine then these gender roles and stereotypes can begin to change. Also, both boys and girls who deviate from what is considered “typical” for their gender can begin to be accepted.

### **Overall Book Interpretations**

What does all this mean for the readers of these books? All three of these books sold millions of copies and were made into movies. When discussing popular books Taber, Woloshyn, and Lane (2013) state, “Once certain books have caught the attention of the media, they can become artifacts of popular culture in that they attract youth, who

may not consider themselves as books lovers, to reading” (p. 1023). These books become a part of our culture and the messages concerning gender roles and stereotypes they are sending the adolescents of today are important.

As I found in these three books, *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) contained more progressive gender roles. Concerning these more progressive roles, Taber, Woloshyn, and Lane (2013) state, “Although girls and women are sometimes represented as strong and capable main characters, they are, nonetheless, in the end often tied to traditional feminine norms and representations that position them needing rescue or confined to domestic roles” (p. 1025). Both Tris and Katniss fit this pattern; they are strong female characters who at times are in need of rescue or are shown in traditional female roles or stereotypes. What does this teach adolescent females and males about strong females? We can argue that society is changing in its views of what it means to be a male or female, but many of our books and even young men and women are holding true to traditional gender roles and stereotypes as Taber, Woloshyn, and Lane (2013) found in their study.

As we see examples of these progressive female and male characters in some books and we at the same time see a change in the gender roles of males and females deemed appropriate by society, the popularity of *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) is unsettling. Why is it that adolescent girls are so drawn towards this series of books with a submissive main female main character in constant need of rescuing from her controlling boyfriend? The vampire genre itself may lead to this type of submissive female character. Even though we often see women as portrayed as submissive in books, we often see this occurring in the vampire genre because the vampire’s desire for blood puts the female he

desires in a constant state of vulnerability (Franiuk & Scherr, 2013). This vulnerability is a drastic contrast to the invulnerability of the vampire who is not only unnaturally fast and strong, but also unaffected by ordinary human weapons. So, the female is helpless to all men because she is a woman, but she is also in perpetual risk from her boyfriend. Authors use the human female in a continual state of danger to excite and frighten readers (Franiuk & Scherr, 2013). In regards to this message to readers Franiuk and Scherr (2013) state, “Therefore, the image of the woman who is vulnerable to a man’s violence not only titillates its audience but has long provided justification for putting men into the protector role” (p. 17). So, again the message to females is that she needs the man as a protector. The vampire genre helps to perpetuate this stereotype.

### **Implications for Teachers**

There are methods that teachers can employ in the classroom that will enable both female and male students to begin to analyze and think critically about the books/texts they read. The reality is that students are going to read books with traditional gender roles and stereotypes similar to *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005) and those containing mixed messages similar to *Divergent* (Roth, 2012) and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008). What is important is that they are reading them critically and recognizing both the traditional gender roles and stereotypes, as well as the progressive roles. In regards to this, Rosenblatt (1976) states, “The more conscious the individual is of the nature of the cultural forces with which he is interacting, the more intelligently can he accept or resist them, and the more intelligently can he modify their power and their direction” (p. 155-156). Teachers can facilitate this by teaching both females and males to think critically and provide them with books that contain females and males in progressive gender roles.

For example, getting students to ask critical questions as Christensen (2000) suggests, “Whose voices are left out of our curriculum? What stories are buried?” (p. 145). Then thinking about how this helps us understand about the roles of women and men.

Teachers must be aware of gender roles and stereotypes in literature and make it a point to discuss these with students. It would seem that although teachers do have the power to help change females’ and males’ views of what is gender appropriate behavior many are blind to the opportunity (Louie, 2001). Because females and males are conditioned to read books in certain ways teachers tend to perpetuate the male perspective in literature discussions. Because often boys read as boys and girls read as boys, it is suggested that teacher encourage and teach both boys and girls to read as girls. One way a teacher may accomplish this is by providing students with different stories and allow girls the space to express their feelings. During these literature discussions teachers need to open discussions with students about the characters in books. What emotions do the characters feel? What emotions does the student feel as a result? For example, finding novels that discuss the gender stereotypes and bias in our society and how the characters over come these bias (Louie, 2001). Some of these novels include: *Speak* (1999) by Laurie Halse Anderson, *I was a Teenage Fairy* (1998) by Francesca Lia Block, *The Skin I’m In* (1998) by Sharon Flake, *Finding My Own Voice* (1992) by Marie Lee, and *If You Come Softly* (1998) by Jackie Woodson (Louie, 2001).

These discussions with students concerning gender stereotypes are important because as students read aesthetically they pay attention to what the words they are reading bring to their consciousness (Rosenblatt, 2005b). When reading aesthetically students can spend time appreciating the feelings and associations the words they are

reading bring forth for them (Rosenblatt, 2005b). Unfortunately, both teachers' and textbooks' questions can hurry students to quickly move through this experience (Rosenblatt, 2005b). So, teachers need to spend time questioning students about what feelings and emotions these readings bring forth for them.

One way to get students to begin thinking about gender roles and stereotypes is to create an activity around toys (Let Toys Be Toys, n.d.). Teachers in primary grades can have children state their favorite toy and why. They then create a chart based on the various toys. The teacher can then bring in an array of toys (dolls, trucks, games, etc) and ask who each toy is for. After doing this the class can watch the following YouTube video discussing girls' and boys' toys:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vU5GGtMhmo> (Let Toys Be Toys, n.d.). The teacher can then have a discussion with students about whether or not they agree with the video. Do companies market certain toys for boys and certain toys for girls? They can look back at class created chart and discuss whether there is evidence of boys' toys and girls' toys. This can be used to get students thinking about gender roles and stereotypes in their own lives.

Teachers of upper elementary grades (5<sup>th</sup>) and middle school can get students thinking about gender roles and stereotypes is by asking students their opinions and discuss them. For this active, there are two pieces of chart paper. One that says, "What being a female means.." and one that says, "What being a male means..." Student can write their answers on post-its and put them on each piece of chart paper. Then discuss with students whether or not these words and phrases seem true for them. This can then lead to a discussion concerning gender roles and stereotypes.

Once teachers have done these activities with students, the class can develop a list of male and female gender stereotypes. Each student can be given a copy of this list to use as they read a common passage or text. Students can mark when certain characters display these gender roles or stereotypes. The list could include both traditional and progressive stereotypes. After completing the read aloud for the passage or text the class can then discuss what was found (Podolski, n.d.). Did the class find that the characters often fit into the stereotypical male and female gender roles and stereotypes? Were there examples of progressive male and female gender stereotypes? Students can then try to use the list when reading independently and the class can compare various titles. Are there certain types of books that contain more traditional or progressive gender roles and stereotypes? Are there stereotypes that they see more often? These discussions and activities support students' thinking about gender roles and stereotypes.

### **Implications for Media Specialists/Librarians**

Media specialists and librarians need to take care when choosing books to purchase for their libraries to include books that feature strong female main characters. Adults, including media specialists and librarians play an important role when they make purchasing decisions and select books to include in their libraries (McCabe, Fairchild, Grauerholz, Pescosolido, & Tope, 2011). This is of extreme importance because many libraries contain more books with male main characters because during the 1980's textbooks advised that while girls' preferences for central characters in books were less strong boys preferred male central characters. Because of this strong preference of boys for books with male central characters, it was believed libraries should contain a ratio of books containing strong male characters to those with female main characters 2:1

(McCabe et al., 2011). It is possible that because of this many libraries contain a much greater number of books with boy main characters than girl main characters. As a result, librarians and media specialists need to flood their libraries with many books with feminist stories that empower females and contain both progressive male and female characters.

It is also important that media specialists include books with characters who are transgender or who identify as something other than a “boy” or “girl” because of the fluidity of gender identity. When I met with the director to the public library, she stated that she met with high school teens who identify as transgender. They shared with her that the library had a decent selection of books with transgender characters, however their school libraries did not. Media specialists and librarians in schools need to be aware of this criticism and be sensitive about the selections of books they offer in their media centers and libraries. All students need to be represented and have books in which they can “see themselves.”

Media specialists and librarians need to include historical fiction books that allow students to see that females can be empowering within various periods of history. Some of the books that might be included are: Karen Cushman’s *The Ballad of Lucy Whipple* (1996), Lensey Namioka’s *Ties That Bind, Ties That Break* (1999), Paul Yee’s *Roses Sing on New Snow* (1992), McKissack and McKissack’s *Sojourner Truth: Ain’t I a Woman?* (1992), and Jeri Ferris’s *Native American Doctor: The Story of Susan LaFlesche Picotte* (1991) (Louie, 2001). These books show that women in the past were intelligent and capable. It is also important to include books that allow students to investigate diversity in gender identities. These books include: Judith Ortiz Cofer’s *Silent*

*Dancing: A Partial Remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood* (1990), Omar Castaneda's *Among the Volcanos* (1991), Adeline Yen Mah's *Chinese Cinderella* (1999), and Yoshiko Uchida's *Picture Bride* (1988), and Suzanne Fisher Staple's *Shavanu: Daughter Daughter of Wind* (1989) (Louie, 2001).

These books not only add to the library collection but can also be used by media specialists and librarians as read alouds. This enables media specialists and librarians the opportunity to discuss gender roles and stereotypes in books with students. Just as teachers can help students to think critically about the gender roles and stereotypes they read in books, media specialists and librarians can use read alouds to do this also.

### **Implications for Parents**

As with both teachers and librarians, parents need to be actively engaging their children in conversations regarding gender roles and stereotypes. Parents need to be models themselves and demonstrate for children that it is normal to step outside these traditional roles and stereotypes. Justin Trudeau, Canada's Prime Minister is one such example. He is not afraid to call himself a feminist and urges others to do so. In fact, in his speech at the 2016 Catalyst Award's Dinner Trudeau made many points about the role parents should play in helping to improve gender equality and empower females (Trudeau, 2016). Trudeau told the audience that his wife Sophie reminded him that he needs to not only make sure that his daughter understands that she is empowered and that her gender should never be a limiting factor, but that he should spend an equal amount of time making sure he discusses equality and feminism with his sons. Trudeau (2016) made it clear that everyone should be comfortable identifying themselves as feminists stating:

Because at the end of the day, we are all accountable, women and men. We are all responsible for making sure that the change we want to see around the boardroom table is a topic of discussion around the dinner table. (para. 27)

Children look to their parents as role models, therefore it is important for parents to show their children what equality looks like.

I realize that I am writing my dissertation on gender roles and stereotypes, and I am outspoken on the topic of feminism and this topic. However, my son and daughter are examples of what discussing and teaching children to critically analyze movies and books for gender roles and stereotype can lead to. My eight-year-old son is proud to call himself a feminist and his hero is Justin Trudeau. In fact, he wants to be Justin Trudeau for Halloween. He will watch a movie with a princess and say, “The princess is capable of saving herself” and has asked people, “Are you a feminist or are you a jerk?” My six-year-old daughter also questions what she sees on television or reads in books. When her school was rehearsing “The Lion King” musical she commented on Nala not being able to save herself. She noticed that her brother checked out a book from the library about WWII and on the cover was a picture of Rosie the Riveter. Her response, “No fair! Now he will learn more about feminists than me.” Her critical thinking has extended beyond just gender roles and stereotypes to what messages commercials are really sending. After seeing a commercial the other evening for a cleaning product she said, “Liars. I bet it doesn’t really do that. They just want you to buy it.” As parents we want our children to think critically, not just about gender roles and stereotypes, but about what messages the media, politicians, and others are actually sending. In regards to this, Taber, Woloshyn, and Lane (2013), argue, “... that it is of crucial importance to facilitate critical

discussions of the content of various popular culture artifacts in order to assist youth in engaging in critical literacy that will lead to a sociocultural critique” (p. 1022). Teaching them these critical thinking skills is necessary.

Parents’ reasons for selecting books for their children was based on their own childhood favorites instead of opposing the gender roles and stereotypes found in many stories with feminist versions of old stories (Peterson & Lach, 1990). Therefore, parents must be made aware of the gender roles and stereotypes contained in these stories and make a conscious effort to discuss them with their children instead of focusing solely on their personal favorites or using their personal favorites but including talk about how things might change. When discussing gender roles and stereotypes with their children, parents should point out specific examples of the gender roles and stereotypes in the books they are reading. This includes both the traditional and progressive gender roles.

Parents can also compare books that have traditional gender stereotypes to those with more progressive stereotypes, such as a traditional fairy tale like *Cinderella* (Craft, 200) and *The Paper Bag Princess* (Munsch & Martchenko, 1980) After reading both the books parents can ask questions that encourage their children to think about the differences between the two tales. For example, who saves whom in the two books? What does the paper bag princess do that makes her independent? These types of questions encourage children to think about traditional gender stereotypes and compare them to more progressive ones.

### **Future Research**

Gender roles and stereotypes are everywhere, in the books we read, the movies we watch, the video games we play. More research can certainly be done in adolescent

literature. As was evidenced by this study, these best-selling books all contained some aspects of gender roles and stereotypes. It is interesting to note that some movies are attempting to provide strong female characters. As my daughter said about the latest Star Wars movie, *The Force Awakens*, “Finally, a female who saves herself.” In this movie the writers and directors made an obvious attempt to stick with a strong female. For example, Finn attempts to step in and save Rey, and before he can she fights them off herself. Finn then keeps trying to pull her along and she is adamant about helping herself saying, “Stop taking my hand.” Research on recent films regarding gender roles and stereotypes would provide information regarding whether or not the film industry is truly making strides towards characters who exhibit progressive gender roles.

Because of the openness in our society involving gender and how gender is defined future research involving the ways books express gender roles and stereotypes for transgender and other ways in which adolescents define themselves. Is there an impact on books with regards to LGBTQ characters? It would seem from the best-selling books that many adolescents are still buying books that express stereotypical gender roles and stereotypes. What does this mean for those who do not define themselves as a “boy” or “girl?” Are we seeing an increase in books that contain characters who define themselves not as a “boy” or “girl” and are they being portrayed in a positive way? These are all questions that could be answered with future research.

Further research involving video games is also necessary. Gender stereotypes are prevalent in many video games. The video game culture discourse is still stereotypically male, white, heterosexual, and young, although there are higher numbers of female players being reported (Vermeulen & Van Looy, 2016). Game content often portrays

females in a sexualized and stereotypical way. The female characters in these games are typically shown as helpless and innocent, and are unplayable or supplemental characters (Vermeulen & Van Looy, 2016). Because video games portray gender roles and stereotypes and are a form of media both males and females play video games can transfer gender roles and stereotypes to adolescents.

### **Conclusion**

I used three main theoretical frameworks for this study, feminist literary theory, gender development, and transactional theory to guide this qualitative study. In order to study the male and female gender stereotypes in the top three best-selling adolescent literature books over the past ten years (2004-2014), I analyzed the books *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), *Divergent* (Roth, 2011), and *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) using a content analysis methodology, which included both typological and inductive methods. Content analysis allowed me to determine both the traditional and progressive male and female gender roles and stereotypes including both major and minor themes.

As we see changes in how society views the gender roles of both males and females we need to see a change in the texts adolescents are reading. We need to ask the questions of why books like *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005), which contain so many examples of traditional gender roles and stereotypes are so popular. It is vital that teachers, media specialists/librarians, and parents encourage children and adolescents to think critically about the gender roles and stereotypes in the books they are reading and to provide them with texts that contain examples of strong female protagonists. We want our children to be aware of the gender roles and stereotypes in the world around them. And more

importantly, for both boys and girls not afraid to be themselves even if it means not fitting into a traditional male and female gender role or stereotype.

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## APPENDIX A: HOW TO EVALUATE CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Six Characteristics to Consider when Evaluating Children's Books for Positive Role

Models (Heine & Inkster, 1999. P. 429)

Underlined Text: Characteristics added to Heine & Inkster, et al. (1999) from [In Time (Evaluating Children's Books for Bias, n.d.).]

### **1. Examine the personal traits of the character**

*Complex character*

Does the character display a variety of emotions, abilities, concerns?

*Dynamic character*

Does the character change and grow throughout the books?

*Admirable traits*

Is the character perseverant, courageous, feisty, intelligent, spirited, resourceful, capable, independent? Does the character wrestle with significant problems and issue?

### **2. Examine the issues important to the character**

*Gender issues*

Is the character concerned with gender images, with determining what actions, attitudes, and roles are appropriate for females and males?

*Body-image issues*

Is the character concerned with body image? Is physical beauty an issue?

*Coming-of-age issues*

Is the character facing experiences that help in growing up and reaching maturity?

*Social, political, ethical, or moral issues*

Is the character concerned with issues that make a difference in the world?

*Achievements issues*

Are achievements of women and girls based on their own initiative and work or are achievements due to their appearance or to their relationships with males?

### **3. Examine how the character solves problems**

*Strength of character*

Does the character use personal qualities such as humor, strength, intelligence, or cleverness to solve problems as appropriate to situation?

*Initiative*

Does the character initiate solving problems rather than waiting for someone else?

*Inner Strength*

Does the character find strength and answers from within?

*Variety of problem-solving strategies*

Does the character use a wide range of strategies, including seeking help from others, discussing problems with family or friends, exploring solutions through writing and reading?

#### **4. Examine the character's relationships with others**

##### *Effort*

Does the character put forth effort in establishing healthy relationships with others?

##### *Characteristics*

Are the character's relationships with others based on or working toward admirable traits such as mutual respect, equality, loyalty, honesty, friendship, commitment, collegiality?

#### **5. Examine how the character departs from traditional stereotypes**

##### *Typical females stereotypes*

Is the character moving away from the following traits: passive, frightened, weak, gentle, giving up easily, unoriginal, silly, confused, inept, dependent, follower, conformer, emotional, concerned about appearance, innate need for marriage and motherhood, passive language and behavior?

##### *Typical male stereotypes*

Is the character moving away from the following traits: active, strong, brave, rough, competitive, logical, unemotional, messy, decisive, leader, innate need for adventure, aggressive language and behavior?

#### **6. Examine whether the character provides a voice for those who are often unheard in children's literature**

##### *Roles*

Is the character in a role not usually found in literature such as male nurses, female inventors, females during the gold rush?

##### *Parallel cultures*

Does the character represent a cultural, religious, ethnic, ability, or socioeconomic group found infrequently in children's literature?

## VITA

Dawn Castagno-Dysart graduated in 1999 from the University of Missouri with a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. After graduating she taught fifth grade for two years in Columbia, Missouri. She then moved to Rochester, MN where she taught a year of Title I Reading, grades 1-3, and two years of fifth grade. While in Rochester, she completed her master's degree in Professional Development at Winona State University. Once again, Dawn moved and taught two years of third grade in Quincy, IL.

In 2006, she enrolled in the doctoral Learning, Teaching, Curriculum Program at the University of Missouri. While working on her studies, Dawn had many roles. She was both a graduate assistant who participated in research projects, and an instructor of both methods courses and a field supervisor. She was passionate about teaching and helping students grow as teachers and educators.

Currently, Dawn is the District Wide Literacy Specialist for the Rochester Public School District. She provides professional development in the area of literacy to teachers in the district. Dawn also spends time in classrooms helping implement the two new literacy curriculums the district has adopted. This is an enjoyable part of the job because it allows her to work with both teachers and students.

Completing the Ph.D. program has always been a dream for Dawn. She is looking forward to moving forward and filling her new role as the literacy specialist.