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Girls in Graphic Novels: A Content Analysis of Selected Texts from YALSA's 2016 Great Graphic Novels for Teens List

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Girls in Graphic Novels: A Content Analysis of Selected Texts

from YALSA's 2016 Great Graphic Novels for Teens List

(TITLE)

BY

Tiffany Mumm

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2017

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Abstract

This study examined the portrayal of female characters in selected texts from the Young Adult Library Association's 2016 Great Graphic Novels for Teens list.

Appearances, conversations, and behaviors of preteen and teenage female primary characters were coded. Results indicate that progress is being made in the portrayal of female characters in graphic novels. Diversity in appearances, relatable conversations, and a break from stereotypical behaviors have led to more complex characters that provide readers with better role models. While some stereotypical conventions remain, the progress indicates a positive change for all readers.

For Lennox

Acknowledgments

To my thesis director, Dr. Fern Kory, thank you for your guidance and unwavering support. If there ever comes a day when I am a professor, I hope to be just like you. To my readers, Dr. Melissa Ames and Dr. Tim Engles, thank you for sticking with me through this long process. Your wisdom and patience were invaluable. To my husband, Jesse Mumm, thank you for always believing in me.

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Introduction

As a kid, I thought superhero comics (the only graphic novels I knew) were boys' books. The few super-powered ladies I discovered had appearances that made me feel uncomfortable, and other female characters I encountered were too busy getting rescued to be any fun. After dabbling in the medium, I had enough of stereotypical appearances, conversations, and behaviors. I saw plenty of that elsewhere in the media. I never thought I would reach for one again, but then the unthinkable happened—graphic novels appeared among the list of required reading in one of my graduate-level English classes. I was perplexed. I thought grad school was a time to read serious literature, and to me (and many other literary snobs) graphic novels were not serious, nor literature.

Nevertheless, I picked up G. Willow Wilson's *Ms. Marvel: No Normal* and a few other graphic titles at textbook rental to prepare for Dr. Fern Kory's Young Adult Literature course. When the time came, I rolled my eyes and flipped open *Ms. Marvel: No Normal* ready to be disgusted by its contents. However, a few panels in I realized it was unlike the few graphic novels I had read before. The protagonist, Kamala Khan, is a smart, realistic-looking teenager with real teenage problems. For most of the comic she contends with her self-image and her intense desire to be normal. At one point, she abandons her true identity and transforms into the old Ms. Marvel, Carol Danvers, in hopes that it will solve her problems. Doing so causes Kamala to have an epiphany. She thinks to herself, "I always thought that if I had amazing hair, if I could pull off great boots, if I could fly—that would make me feel strong, that would make me happy. But the hair gets in my face, the boots pinch, and this leotard is giving me an epic wedgie" (Wilson 34).

Trying to be someone else did not make Kamala happy—what truly made her happy was being herself. As a high school teacher, I witness many of my female students dealing with the same issues as Kamala. As the school year progresses, I watch as they try on a variety of identities in the journey to find themselves. These students need role models like Kamala to provide a counternarrative to the negative female portrayals they see in other forms of popular media.

After reading *Ms. Marvel: No Normal*, I read it again and again before I breezed through the rest of the graphic novels on Dr. Kory's syllabus. Then I went to the library and did some research. What I found is that graphic novels have always sparked debate. At this point in their history, one of the liveliest debates circles the question of what to call these texts.

Comics, commix, funnies, manga, graphic narratives, graphic novels... these terms and more describe what Scott McCloud calls "sequential art," and what others simply call "comics." However, the former term has never caught on, and for many, the latter is a term that covers just some books that combine words and images. As I write, a debate about terminology continues. Catherine Labio states in "What's In a Name? The Academic Study of Comics and the 'Graphic Novel'" that the term graphic novel "sanitizes comics" and "strengthens the distinction between high and low, major and minor, and reinforces the ongoing ghettoization of works deemed unworthy of critical attention" (126). To further her arguments, she claims that the term seems to privilege the literary aspect over the visual and abandons the history of the format. In defense of the term, Eddie Campbell, illustrator-collaborator of *From Hell*, claims that it "signifies a movement rather than a form" and as a result many academics and librarians have

adopted it (qtd. in Larsson 44). Kathryn Strong Hansen, author of “In Defense of Graphic Novels,” states “The hazy definition telegraphs part of the graphic novel’s appeal. The boundlessness of the category of graphic novel hints at its almost limitless possibilities” (57). The medium itself tests boundaries, so it is likely that as the format continues to change, so will the names we call it (Larsson 44). For the purpose of this study, I will use the term “graphic novel.”

No matter what one calls them, controversy has always surrounded the format. Author Charles McGrath stated in a 2004 *New York Times*’s article titled “Not Funnies,” “the graphic novel is a man’s world, by and large” (qtd. in Allison 74). Up until recently, that statement held true. From its beginnings in the early twentieth century, men dominated the format, creating mostly graphic novels for male audiences, and female superheroes were few and far between. Overwhelmingly, female characters played subordinate roles, often as “sex objects” (Sabin 79). They were meant to be seen and rescued— “their vulnerability permitted the heroism of others while they remained stubbornly stuck in material conditions of danger” (Marshall and Gilmore 95). Female characters seemed to be at the mercy of their male counterparts.

Eventually the medium faced pushback. Feminists in the 1960s advocated for a reassessment of the industry’s treatment of female characters, but publishers were unwilling to change what had become a successful convention. The change came much later, and can be traced to a specific format and a changing readership. In the 1990s, manga, or Japanese comics, began to grow in popularity in America, especially with preteen and teenage females. Manga sales continue to expand, becoming one of the fastest-growing segments of the publishing industry, with girls as its fastest-growing

group of readers (Cart 173). In 2007, manga accounted for two-thirds of the U.S. graphic novel market, and girls between the ages of 13-17 made up 75% of that readership (Goldstein and Phelan 32). By 2010, an historian of young adult literature noted that females are not just reading graphic novels; they are creating them as well, which has led to many American graphic novel publishers “courting girl readers” (Cart 174). By 2015, it was clear that more females than ever before are “interested in all kinds of graphic novels and are making their presence felt across the pop culture marketplace” (Reid).

Publisher's Weekly recently claimed that publishing houses like Marvel and DC are “rethinking their characters, stories and merchandise to acknowledge the rapid growth of female fans” (Reid). I wanted to see if that claim is holding up. More specifically, I wanted to know if old stereotypes surrounding the format remained true in terms of the appearances, conversations, and behaviors of preteen and teenage female primary characters.

To find answers, I designed a content analysis of selected graphic novels from the Young Adult Library Services Association’s 2016 Great Graphic Novels for Teens list. The graphic novels that make their list include trade compilations and original works published in “a sequential art format” (“2016 Great Graphic Novels for Teens”). The results of this study are the basis of my thesis. Chapter One provides the scholarly and theoretical framework through discussion of media impacts on the development of female identity, the consequences of gender stereotyping in popular media, and a review of existing literature on gender stereotyping in popular media. Chapter Two outlines the research design and methodology used to complete the study. A brief description of the content analysis method is provided before outlining the sample selection and coding

procedure. Units of analysis and study measures are all introduced. Chapter Three reports the results of the study, including the findings on character status, character age, data on preteen and teenage female primary characters' appearances, conversations, and behaviors, and author/illustrator gender. Chapter Four uses specific texts to explore the major findings of the study. In addition, the limitations and areas for future research are addressed.

My study expands research on the portrayal of preteen and teenage female primary characters in young adult literature into new territory by focusing on an emerging visual narrative format. This work fills a research gap by adding inquiry into the state of preteen and teenage female primary characters to the handful of studies of adult female characters in graphic novels. It also provides an update on the state of graphic novels directed at young female readers, making it useful for not only scholars of youth literature and graphic novels, but also parents, educators, publishers, and beyond.

Chapter One: Literature Review

Graphic Novels and Identity Development in Preteen and Teenage Female Readers

Albert Bandura's social learning theory, which he labels "observational learning theory," explains that "most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea about how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions, this coded information serves as a guide for action" (22). Initially, parents and caregivers serve as the guide for socialization of their children, but around the age of two "the bid for independence and individuality begins" and the influence of peers and popular media increases (Allen 3). Children observe the world and look to popular media for models of normative male and female behavior (Huntemann and Morgan 308). They learn from the models they identify with or admire and use that knowledge to shape their understanding of what it means to perform properly (or if they prefer, improperly) masculinity and femininity.

All types of media can serve as a guide for behavior, and graphic novels are no exception. In *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, Scott McCloud presents a concept he calls "amplification through simplification" (30). Through this process, comics artists strip down images to their essential meaning and consequently amplify that meaning. To illustrate his point, McCloud compares a realistic drawing of a face to one drawn at the furthest level of simplification. McCloud explains that "when you look at a photo or a realistic drawing of a face, you see it as the face of another. But when you enter the world of the cartoon, you see yourself" (McCloud 36). The more "cartoony" an image, the more people it can be said to represent, and thus, the more easily readers can see themselves in it. McCloud's concept helps to explain how, when preteen and teenage

females read graphic novels, they may strongly identify with a character and thereby live vicariously through him or her, which can lead to expectations about behavior and guidelines for actions (Alsup 5). Children might then “emulate characters’ attitudes, appearance, behavior, or other characteristics” and continued emulation can contribute to the shaping of one’s identity (Hoffner and Buchanan 327-328).

With the increase in preteen and teenage female readership of graphic novels, it is imperative to critically analyze the ways preteen and teenage female characters are portrayed because media like graphic novels help shape preteen and teenager’s identities.

Media Impacts on Preteen and Teenage Females

Preteen and teenage females are especially “vulnerable” to popular media “because they are in a critical state of self-evaluation and self-definition” (Huntemann and Morgan 304). It is during this period in their lives that their “self-concepts are unstable,” and they “often vacillate due to the challenges of identity exploration” (Huntemann and Morgan 304). Adolescents’ identification and emulation of a character can lead to “the changing of attitudes, values, aspirations, and other characteristics to match those of a model” (Hoffner and Buchanan 327). This process is troublesome because every exposure to every media model “provides a potential guide to behavior or attitude, a potential source of identification, a human exemplar that adolescents may use... to define and construct identity” (Huntemann and Morgan 304).

Despite some progress in the portrayal of female characters in popular media, “the incidence of body dissatisfaction is not decreasing, but increasing rapidly” among preteen and teenage females (Younger, “Learning Curves” 5). Many studies show that in general, females’ self-esteem is “moderately, but significantly” lower than males, with the

average gender difference the greatest during middle adolescence (Clay et. al 451-452). For girls, their self-esteem commonly drops from ages 12 to 17 (Clay et. al 452). Popular media can be blamed because it emphasizes appearance over personality. Appearance is often portrayed “as an instrument that can be used to attain important life goals, such as successful romantic relationships” (Vandenbosch and Eggermont 874). Often the beauty ideals presented by popular media are unattainable for a preteen and teenage female whose body is in flux as puberty moves her further away from the societal standard of female beauty; airbrushing, digital alteration, and cosmetic surgery further increase the unrealistic nature of most media images of women as standards for self-evaluation (Clay et. al 452-453).

With appearance viewed as the means to achieve goals, girls’ body image can become an obsession: “Body image is central to adolescent girls’ self-definition because they have been socialized to believe that appearance is an important basis of self-evaluation and for evaluation by others” (Clay et. al 452). Unfortunately, the importance most media outlets place on beauty ideals can lead to “the formation of an objectified view of one’s own body resulting in an increased monitoring of one’s appearance” (Vandenbosch and Eggermont 870). Exposure to sexually objectifying media can trigger a chain of psychological events that may lead to various mental and physical health risks, including self-objectification or “the internalization of an observer’s perspective on one’s own body” (Vandenbosch and Eggermont 869).

Stereotypical images of gender are consistently reinforced by popular media and can affect preteen and teenage females in a variety of negative ways, such as the ones listed above. Although some forms of media now challenge outdated stereotypes, many still lag behind.

Review of the Literature on Gender Stereotyping in Popular Media

Countless studies have documented the prevalence of stereotyping in the appearance and behaviors of female characters in popular media, particularly in the areas of television, film, and advertising. Nancy Signorielli's 1997 study "Reflections of Girls in the Media: A Content Analysis. A Study of Television Shows and Commercials, Movies, Music Videos, and Teen Magazine Articles and Ads" found stereotypical messages about appearance, relationships, and careers in media targeted towards teen girls (Signorielli 1). Similarly, in Teresa L. Thompson and Eugenia Zerbinos's 1995 study "Gender Roles in Animated Cartoons: Has the Picture Changed in 20 Years?", they note that while there is some progress in this format, gender portrayals are still "rather stereotypical," with female characters portrayed as "more likely to show affection, more likely to emphasize relationships, and more helpless" (Thompson and Zerbinos 669). As evidenced by these two studies and a 2012 study by Huntemann and Morgan titled "Media and Identity Development," popular media often equates being female with "vulnerability," and the roles of females are "defined primarily in terms of romance and family" (308).

Similar to the media discussed above, children's and young adult literature have often perpetuated and reinforced unrealistic gender roles and beauty ideals (Younger, "Pleasure, Pain, and the Power of Being Thin" 54). Like television, films, and advertising, books influence the way children "see the world and one another" (Allen 3). In particular, illustrated books "significantly affect gender development" because of the visuals (Gooden and Gooden 91). Many studies suggest that gender bias in picture books and young adult literature is harmful to children. In a 2006 study, Hamilton, Anderson,

Broaddus, and Young found that females are still underrepresented in children's picture books (Hamilton et. al 763). Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada, and Ross (1972) claim that the lack of female representation in children's literature "teaches both sexes that girls are less worthy than boys" (Hamilton et. al. 758). Studies have also found that children who read biased books tend later to make more stereotypical choices, and Tognoli, Pullen, and Lieber (1994) concluded that gender bias in children's books and young adult literature "lowers girls' self esteem and occupational aspirations" (Hamilton et. al 758).

While there have been some improvements in the representation of female characters, a 2001 study by Gooden and Gooden points out that "gender stereotypes are still prevalent" in children's and young adult literature (Gooden and Gooden 89). Picture books and young adult literature have complicated matters because alongside the advances feminism has made for adolescent female readers, there are still numerous depictions that perpetuate stereotypes and an "unrealistic ideal physical appearance" (Younger, "Learning Curves" 1).

Like picture books and young adult literature, many comics have "promoted stereotypical gender roles and have hawked the values and wares of a consumerist culture in their obsession with boys and makeup" (Danziger-Russell 92). Although there are positive portrayals of female characters throughout the history of format, for many years, the majority of publications were produced primarily for "male consumption," and they often showed females in "weaker roles than their male counterparts" (Danziger-Russell 1). To date, the only book-length text I was able to find that considered preteen and teenage girls in graphic novels is *Girls and Their Comics* by Jacqueline Danziger-Russell, but this source primarily focuses on the history of comics. Briefer studies of the

limiting roles of adult females in comics include Katie Mullin's 2006 study "Questioning Comics: Women and Autocritique in Seth's *It's A Good Life, If You Don't Weaken*," Jumoke Isekeije's 2010 study "A Comparative Analysis of Female Characters in *Empire* and *Watchmen*," Laura Mattoon D'Amore's 2012 study "The Accidental Supermom: Superheroines and Maternal Performativity, 1963-1980," and Mitra C. Emad's 2006 study "Reading Wonder Woman's Body: Mythologies of Gender and Nation." I was unable to find any research on preteen and teenage female characters in graphic novels.

This study seeks to fill that gap and find out if the graphic novels on the Young Adult Library Service's 2016 Great Graphic Novels for Teens list fall in with the often outdated gender representations offered in other modes of popular media, or if they instead offer more positive representations of female primary characters. The next chapter outlines the research design and methodology used in this study.

Chapter Two: Research Design and Methodology

Text Set

To determine how preteen and teenage females are portrayed in current graphic novels, I designed a content analysis focused on the appearances, conversations, and behaviors of preteen and teenage female primary characters from select graphic novels. A content analysis is “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context” (Krippendorff 21). Content analysis was selected as the methodology for this study due to its ability to “cope with large volumes of data,” as I am using a text set with a large number of female characters (Krippendorff 31). Content analysis also works to prevent bias by allowing “the discovery of patterns that are too subtle to be visible on causal inspection and protection against an unconscious search... for only those which confirm one’s initial sense of what the [texts] say or do” (Rose 85).

To create the sample for the content analysis, fifteen graphic novels were selected from the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of 2016 Great Graphic Novels for Teens (GGNT). The GGNT list was utilized because YALSA helped make graphic novels into a “certifiable phenomenon” by elevating graphic novels as a medium for young readers (Cart 165; Kim and Myers 40). Since the formation of the GGNT Committee and GGNT list after the 2002 YALSA’s “Get Graphic @ Your Library” preconference, YALSA has become “a valued collection development, reader’s advisory, and program planning tool for teen librarians” (Kim and Myers 39). Arguably, the graphic novels on YALSA’s list are the ones most likely to end up in the hands of preteen and teenage females in public or school libraries.

In order for a graphic novel to make the GGNT list, the committee, which is comprised of eleven public and school librarians, must deem that it “demonstrates overall excellence and integration of story and art; has particular teen appeal or popularity; be especially relevant or timely to teen concerns and information needs; push the boundaries of graphic novel format through daring or experimental techniques, and represents themes, ideas, and audiences that are not often addressed by the format” (Kim and Myers 39-40). The 2016 Great Graphic Novels for Teens list is comprised of 112 fiction and nonfiction texts from 170 official nominations recommended for readers ages 12-18 (“2016 Great Graphic Novels”).

To focus the study, I limited the sample to fiction: 99 of the 112 titles fell into this category. With nonfiction, some of the choices have already been made for the creators (ex. appearance of characters, style of clothing, types of conversations, etc.). I wanted to see the types of choices creators were making on their own, therefore, nonfiction was omitted. Then I read each annotation provided by YALSA (see Appendix A) and removed the texts that made no mention of female characters. For the texts that remained, I used data from the reader’s advisory database *NoveList* to record the genre, format, age/grade level recommendation for each text.

The subgenres present in the remaining text set include historical fiction, realistic fiction, science fiction, fantasy, and superhero comic. I then randomly selected three graphic novels from each genre, so each genre represents 20% of the sample. To diversify the selection of superhero comics, I selected one published by DC Comics, one published by Marvel, and one published by IDW Publishing, one of the top four publishing houses

for graphic novels in the United States. Three (20%) of the texts are manga (Japanese comics), and the rest are classified as graphic novel or comics.

Table One shows an overview of the title, date of publication, format, genre, and age recommendation for the fifteen graphic novels initially selected.

Table One—Overview of Graphic Novels in the Study Sample

Title	Date of Publication	Format	Genre	Grade Level
<i>Assassination Classroom vol. 1: Time for Assassination</i>	Dec. 2014	manga	science fiction	9 th – 12 th
<i>Awkward</i>	Jul. 2015	graphic novel	realistic fiction	5 th – 12 th
<i>Girl in Dior</i>	Mar. 2015	graphic novel	historical fiction	9 th – 12 th
<i>Gotham Academy vol. 1: Welcome to Gotham Academy</i>	Jun. 2015	comic book	superhero	7 th – 12 th
<i>Lumberjanes vol. 1: Beware the Kitten Holy</i>	Apr. 2015	graphic novel	fantasy	4 th – 12 th
<i>My Neighbor Seki vol. 1</i>	Jan. 2015	manga	realistic fiction	3 rd – 8 th
<i>Nimona</i>	May 2015	graphic novel	fantasy	7 th – 12 th
<i>Princess Ugg vol. 1</i>	Dec. 2014	graphic novel	science fiction	8 th – 12 th
<i>Roller Girl</i>	Mar. 2015	graphic novel	realistic fiction	3 rd – 8 th
<i>The Scarlet Letter</i>	Mar. 2015	manga	historical fiction	7 th – 12 th
<i>Space Dumplings</i>	Aug. 2015	graphic novel	science fiction	2 nd – 8 th
<i>Strong Female Protagonist Book One</i>	Nov. 2014	comic book	superhero	10 th – 12 th
<i>Sunny Side Up</i>	Aug. 2015	graphic novel	historical fiction	2 nd – 7 th
<i>SuperMutant Magic Academy</i>	Apr. 2015	graphic novel	fantasy	9 th – 12 th
<i>The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl vol. 1: Squirrel Power</i>	Sept. 2015	comic book	superhero	5 th – 12 th

Before reading each text, I also identified the gender of both the author(s) and illustrator(s) of each graphic narrative to see how many women were taking part in the creation of these texts. The proportion of male to female authors and illustrators is presented in Table Two.

Table Two—Overview of Author(s) and Illustrator(s) Genders

Title	Author(s) Gender	Illustrator(s) Gender
<i>Assassination Classroom vol. 1: Time for Assassination</i>	male	Male
<i>Awkward</i>	female	female
<i>Girl in Dior</i>	female	female
<i>Gotham Academy vol. 1: Welcome to Gotham Academy</i>	one female and one male	Male
<i>Lumberjanes vol. 1: Beware the Kitten Holy</i>	females	female
<i>My Neighbor Seki vol. 1</i>	male	Male
<i>Nimona</i>	female	female
<i>Princess Ugg vol. 1</i>	male	Male
<i>Roller Girl</i>	female	female
<i>The Scarlet Letter</i>	female	female
<i>Space Dumplins</i>	male	Male
<i>Strong Female Protagonist Book One</i>	male	female
<i>Sunny Side Up</i>	female	Male
<i>SuperMutant Magic Academy</i>	female	female
<i>The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl vol. 1: Squirrel Power</i>	male	female

Coding: General Identifiers

I read each graphic narrative twice before creating the analysis codebook that would guide coding of responses to particular aspects of each book. The first read through was to get a sense of the plot. On the second read through, I identified all of the primary and secondary female characters (Appendix B). “Primary character” was defined as a main female character who was essential to the plot. “Secondary character” was defined as a supporting female character who did not play a central role but nonetheless helped move the plot along.

After identifying the primary female characters, character status and character age were recorded for each female character in order to obtain an overview of the primary female characters in the sample. The coding categories for each identifying variable are presented in Table Three.

Table Three—General Identifiers

Variable	Coding Category
Character Status	Primary or Secondary
Character Age	Elementary, Jr. High, High School, College, Young Adult

Once I had identified the primary female characters for the study, I developed an analysis codebook to code data on their appearances, conversations, and behaviors (see sample in Appendix C). A separate coding form was used for each graphic novel.

For each coding category I used a two-point scale to code variables either present or not present. When a character was identified as exhibiting a specific trait, the trait was marked with a one on the coding sheet. Traits not present were marked with zero. The

data was then compiled in a master coding spreadsheet in Excel, so frequency distributions could be calculated.

Coding: Primary Female Characters

Data on appearance, conversations, and behaviors of all preteen and teenage primary female characters was collected. Coding categories were derived from two studies. The first was Teresa L. Thompson and Eugenia Zerbinos's "Gender Roles in Animated Cartoons: Has the Picture Changed in 20 Years?" This study coded gender representation in 175 episodes of 41 different cartoons and determined that both male and female characters were portrayed stereotypically (Thompson and Zerbinos 651). Like graphic novels, "children's television has always been male dominated... when females did appear, they needed to be rescued" (Thompson and Zerbinos 653). When questioned, network executives pointed to a large male audience to explain their programming choices, similar to how publishers in the graphic novel industry often pointed to male readers to explain their choices. Thompson and Zerbinos's study was selected because of the similarities between graphic novels and cartoons, and because some of the coding categories in their study mirrored the ones I had already identified as relevant to mine, specifically communication characteristics and stereotypically masculine and feminine behaviors.

The second study utilized was Nancy Signorielli's "Reflections of Girls in the Media: A Content Analysis. A Study of Television Shows and Commercials, Movies, Music Videos, and Teen Magazine Articles and Ads." Signorielli examined the types of messages prevalent in the media directed at preteen and teenage females. To find answers, she coded each male and female's age, race, appearance, activities, discussions,

motivations, behaviors, and problem solving skills. In addition, she explored the products advertised in the various forms of media. Signorielli determined that while the media do offer many positive female role models for girls, they also contains “stereotypical messages about appearance, relationships, and careers” (Signorielli 30). The purpose of Signorielli’s study mirrored the purpose of my own, so I utilized it in the creation of my analysis codebook.

Signorielli’s study alone was utilized to create the appearance measures. An overview of appearance measures is in Table Four.

Table Four—Study Measures for Appearance

Variable	Coding Category
Perceived Body Weight	Very Thin, Thin, Average, Muscular, Bit Overweight, Obese
Type of Clothing	Sleepwear, School Uniform, Casual, Formal, Costume
Degree of Dress	Fully Clothed, Partially Clothed, Implied Nudity, Nudity

Signorielli’s and Thompson and Zerbinos’s studies were utilized to create the conversations measures. An overview of conversation measures can be found in Table Five.

Table Five—Study Measures for Conversations

Variable	Coding Category
Looks Acknowledged in Discussion by Character	Number who Made Statements about her Looks, Number who Made Positive Statements about her Looks, Number who Made Negative Statements about her Looks

Looks Acknowledged in Discussion by Other Character	Number who Made Statements about her Looks, Number who Made Positive Statements about her Looks, Number who Made Negative Statements about her Looks
Statements Made by or About Character That Linked Her Looks to Each of the Following Topics in a Positive Way	Romance/Opposite Sex, Popularity/Opinions, Job and School Performance, Self Confidence
Statements Made by or About Character That Linked Her Looks to Each of the Following Topics in a Negative Way	Romance/Opposite Sex, Popularity/Opinions, Job and School Performance, Self Confidence
Stereotypical Topics Discussed	Romance/Dating, Work/School, Appearance

Signorielli and Thompson and Zerbinos were both referenced to create the behavior measures. Bem's Sex Role Inventory was used to sort the behaviors as either stereotypically "masculine" or "feminine." An overview of behavior measures can be found in Table Six.

Table Six—Study Measures for Behaviors

Variable	Coding Category
Masculine Traits	Joking/Teasing, Leadership, Risk Taking, Rescue, Brawn/Physical Force/Athletic, Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression
Feminine Traits	Follower/Yielding, Crying/Whining, Victim of Physical Aggression, Victim of Verbal Aggression, Gullible, Shy, Affectionate/Flirting

The next chapter reports the results of the study including the findings on author/illustrator gender, character status, character age, and data on preteen and teenage female primary characters' appearances, conversations, and behaviors.

Chapter Three: Overview of Results

This chapter includes the findings that resulted from the study of preteen and teenage female primary characters' appearance, conversations, and behaviors in selected graphic novels from YALSA's 2016 Great Graphic Novels for Teens list. The study initially included fifteen graphic novels but the number of texts was reduced to twelve over the course of the study when three were eliminated because they did not contain either a primary female character or the primary female character did not meet the relevant age requirements (see below for more details). The omitted texts were not included in the coding of the three main analytical areas.

To start, the number of female characters in these texts is worthy of note. In 1985, cartoonist Alison Bechdel created what came to be known as the Bechdel Test to assess representations of female characters in works of film. In order for a film to pass, it needed to "have at least two women, who talk to each other about something besides a man" (Donald 65). Clearly, all titles in the initial text set pass the "at least two women in it" rule, with 112 total female characters: 17 primary and 95 secondary.

As far as appearance goes, the majority of the characters coded were of average body weight (75%). Most wore casual clothing (93.75%) and were fully clothed for the majority of the text. Conversations about their appearances were most often a mixture of positive and negative statements. 25% of characters made positive and negative statements about their own appearance while 43.75% of the characters had both positive and negative statements made about their appearance by another character. More times than not, their appearance was linked negatively to a topic than positively. 43.75% of the characters had their appearance linked negatively to their job or school performance and

31.25% had their appearance linked negatively to popularity and opinions. Appearance was not the most popular stereotypical discussion (it was second with 56.25% of the characters discussing appearance), but work/school took the lead with 68.75% of characters discussing that topic. Only 43.75% of the characters discussed romance/dating. Again, given the high frequency with which these female characters talk to each other and do so about something other than a man (or boy), Bechdel would most likely be pleased.

In terms of the behaviors captured in this analysis, preteen and teenage female primary characters often deviated from stereotypes of the past. Preteen and teenage female primary characters were most often seen taking risks (100%), being leaders (68.75%), being physically aggressive (62.5%) and coming to the rescue (56.25%). However, preteen and teenage female primary characters were also shown crying and whining (68.75%), being affectionate or flirting (56.25%), and being victims of physical aggression (50%).

Results

The rest of this chapter presents the data collected from the study. First data on character status and character age are presented and removal of three graphic novels from the original fifteen is discussed. This is followed by the data on the three main analytical areas: appearance, conversations, and behaviors in the remaining twelve graphic novels. Lastly the data relevant to author(s) and illustrator(s) gender(s) is examined.

Character Status

On the second read through of each graphic novel, the female characters were coded as either primary or secondary (see Appendix B). “Primary character” was defined as a female character who was essential to the plot. “Secondary character” was defined as a supporting female character who does not play a central role but nonetheless helps move the plot along. In the fifteen graphic novels, 112 female characters were identified as primary or secondary characters: 17 were primary characters and 95 were secondary characters. The majority (80%) of the graphic novels contain one female primary character. Table Seven contains the primary and secondary character data.

Table Seven- Number of Primary and Secondary Female Characters

Graphic Narrative	Female Character Status	
		n
<i>Assassination Classroom vol. 1: Time for Assassination</i>	Primary	0
	Secondary	7
<i>Awkward</i>	Primary	1
	Secondary	9
<i>Girl in Dior</i>	Primary	1
	Secondary	5
<i>Gotham Academy vol. 1: Welcome to Gotham Academy</i>	Primary	1
	Secondary	7
<i>Lumberjanes vol. 1: Beware the Kitten Holy</i>	Primary	5
	Secondary	2
<i>My Neighbor Seki vol. 1</i>	Primary	1
	Secondary	1
<i>Nimona</i>	Primary	1
	Secondary	6
<i>Princess Ugg vol. 1</i>	Primary	1
	Secondary	8
<i>Roller Girl</i>	Primary	1
	Secondary	9
<i>The Scarlet Letter</i>	Primary	1

	Secondary	2
<i>Space Dumplins</i>	Primary	1
	Secondary	3
<i>Strong Female Protagonist Book One</i>	Primary	1
	Secondary	8
<i>Sunny Side Up</i>	Primary	1
	Secondary	5
<i>SuperMutant Magic Academy</i>	Primary	0
	Secondary	21
<i>The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl vol. 1: Squirrel Power</i>	Primary	1
	Secondary	2
Total	Primary	17
	Secondary	95

Elimination of Texts Due to Character Status

On closer analysis, it was clear that two of the graphic novels with multiple female characters—*SuperMutant Magic Academy* and *Assassination Classroom*—needed to be removed from this study. *SuperMutant Magic Academy* was removed because it would complicate the data. The text itself is comprised of numerous independent comics. Each page contains anywhere from one to six panels, and those panels constitute the entire storyline for that scene. Most pages are unrelated and inconsecutive. As a review from NPR states on the back flap of the book, “Each strip is an independent delight.” Throughout the text, there are 21 female characters. One could say that each of them are primary characters in their respective comics, but using them would skew the data of this study considering more than half of the characters coded would come from this book. Therefore, this text was removed from the study taking the number of texts from 15 to 14.

Assassination Classroom focuses on a male protagonist, and all seven of the female characters in the text play secondary roles. This text was also omitted due to its lack of preteen and teenage female primary characters taking the text set from 14 to 13.

Character Age

The focus of this study is preteen and teenage female primary characters, so after separating the primary characters from the secondary ones, the primary characters were coded for age. The age measures include elementary, jr. high, high school, college, and early young adult. The early young adult category was included because four of the graphic novels (*Girl in Dior*, *Lumberjanes*, *Nimona*, and *The Scarlet Letter*) did not make mention of a specific school age.

Elementary age female primary characters appeared in *Roller Girl* (Astrid), *Space Dumplins* (Violet Marlocke), and *Sunny Side Up* (Sunshine a.k.a. Sunny Lewin) constituting 17.65% of the sample. *Awkward* (Penelope Tores) was the only graphic narrative with a Jr. High age female primary character. High school age female primary characters appeared in *Gotham Academy* (Olive Silverlock), *My Neighbor Seki* (Yokoi), and *Princess Ugg* (Princess O’Grimmeria Ulga). College age female primary characters were in *Strong Female Protagonist* (Allison) and *The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl* (Doreen Green). Early young adult primary female characters were identified in *Girl in Dior* (Clara), *Lumberjanes* (Mal, Molly, April, Ripley, and Jo), *Nimona* (Nimona), and *The Scarlet Letter* (Hester Prynne).

Table Eight shows the number and percentage of female primary characters in each category.

Table Eight- Number and Percentage of Female Primary Character Age

Character Age	Female Characters (N = 17)	
	n	%
Elementary	3	17.65%
Jr. High	1	5.89%
High School	3	17.65%
College	2	11.76%
Early Young Adult	8	47.01%

Elimination of Text Due to Character Age

While coding *The Scarlet Letter* for the female primary character's age, I discovered that although the story begins in Hester Prynne's early young adulthood years, the majority of the story takes place later in her life. The focus of this study is preteen and teenage female primary characters. Because Hester Prynne does not fall into this category for the majority of the book, the text was omitted, and she was not coded taking the text set from 13 to 12. The remaining 12 graphic novels contained 16 preteen and teenage female primary characters that were coded in this study.

Appearance

The appearance characteristics of preteen and teenage female primary characters in this study include measures of body weight, type of clothing, and perceived degree of dress. In order to code body weight, preteen and teenage female primary characters were coded based upon their size in comparison to other similar aged female characters in their relative books. The majority (75%) of the adolescent female primary characters were coded as average in body weight. Four characters deviated from the norm. Clara from

Girl in Dior was coded as thin, Princess Ulga from *Princess Ugg* was coded as muscular, and both Nimona from *Nimona* and Doreen Green from *The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl* were coded as a bit overweight. Table Nine shows the data on characters' body weight.

Table Nine- Number and Percentages of Primary Female Characters' Body Weight

Body Weight	Female Characters (N = 16)	
	n	%
Very Thin	0	0%
Thin	1	6.25%
Average	12	75%
Muscular	1	6.25%
Bit Overweight	2	12.5%
Obese	0	0%

After determining how preteen and teenage female primary characters' body weights were portrayed, the type of clothing the characters wore was coded. Each time a character changed outfits, the new outfit was coded. For the majority of the graphic novels, most primary adolescent female characters (93.75%) wore casual outfits. The only character never depicted in a casual outfit was Yokoi from *My Neighbor Seki*. Yokoi consistently wore her school uniform. Olive from *Gotham Academy* also wore a school uniform in addition to a formal outfit. Clara from *Girl in Dior*, Princess Ulga from *Princess Ugg*, and Violet from *Space Dumplins* also wore formal outfits. Some also wore costumes in addition to their casual looks including Astrid from *Roller Girl*, Alison from *Strong Female Protagonist*, Sunshine from *Sunny Side Up*, and Doreen from *The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl*. Only 12.5% (2) were depicted wearing sleepwear (Clara from

Girl in Dior and Sunshine from *Sunny Side Up*). Table Ten shows data on characters' clothing.

Table Ten- Number and Percentages of Type of Clothing Worn by Primary Female Characters

Type of Clothing	Female Characters (N = 16)	
	n	%
Sleepwear	2	12.5%
School Uniform	2	12.5%
Casual Outfit	15	93.75%
Formal Outfit	4	25%
Costume	4	25%

After coding the type of clothing each preteen or teenage female primary character wore, the perceived degree of dress was coded for each outfit. Each of the sixteen characters in this study was on average fully clothed throughout the majority of the text. Only Clara from *Girl in Dior*, Sunshine from *Sunny Side Up*, and Princess Ulga from *Princess Ugg* were depicted as partially clothed at some point. Princess Ulga from *Princess Ugg* was the only character in the study depicted nude or with implied nudity.

Table Eleven shows degree of dress data.

Table Eleven- Number and Percentages of Perceived Degree of Dress of Primary Female Characters

Perceived Degree of Dress	Female Characters (N = 16)	
	n	%
Fully Clothed	16	100%
Partially Clothed	3	18.75%
Implied Nudity	1	6.25%
Nudity	1	6.25%

Conversations

The conversation characteristics of preteen and teenage female primary characters in this study include appearance acknowledged in discussion by the character, appearance acknowledged in discussion by another character, statements made by or about the character that linked her appearance to selected topics in a positive way, statements made by or about the character that linked her appearance to selected topics in a negative way, and stereotypical topics discussed.

Table Twelve examines whether a character positively or negative discusses her own appearance. Of the sixteen preteen and teenage female characters in the study, 43.75% discussed their appearance. Only one character made entirely positive statements about herself. Two other characters made entirely negative statements about themselves. Four characters made both positive and negative statements about their appearance.

Table Twelve—Number and Percentages of Appearance Acknowledged in Discussion by Character

Appearance Acknowledged in Discussion by the Character	Female Characters (N = 16)	
	n	%
Made Statements About Her Appearance	7	43.75%
Made Positive Statement About Her Appearance	1	6.25%
Made Negative Statement About Her Appearance	2	12.5%
Made Positive and Negative Statements About Her Appearance	4	25%

Table Thirteen examines whether a character had her appearance discussed positively or negatively by another character. Out of the sixteen preteen and teenage female primary characters in the study, 62.5% had their appearance discussed by another

character. 43.75% of those discussions included both positive and negative comments about the character's appearance. 18.75% were entirely negative conversations. None of the conversations were entirely positive.

Table Thirteen—Number and Percentages of Appearance Acknowledged in Discussion by Other Characters

Appearance Acknowledged in Discussion by the Character	Female Characters (N = 16)	
	n	%
Had Statement About Her Appearance by Other Character	10	62.5%
Had Positive Statement About Her Appearance by Other Character	0	0%
Had Negative Statement About Her Appearance by Other Character	3	18.75%
Had Positive and Negative Statements About Her Appearance by Other Character	7	43.75%

Appearance was also examined in relation to how a preteen or teenage female primary character's appearance was connected to how well she did in school, on the job, or how other people relate to them. Table Fourteen shows that more negative statements were made connecting a character's appearance to the topics with 43.75% of negative statements relating to school/work. Positive statements were linked to the topics less often with the highest percentage of 18.75 linked to Popularity/Opinions and Job and School Performance.

Table Fourteen—Number and Percentages of Characters Whose Appearance was Connected to Each of the Following Topics in a Positive or Negative Way

Statements	Female Characters (N = 16)	
	n	%
<i>Positive Statements about Appearance and Romance/Opposite Sex</i>	2	12.5%

Popularity/Opinions	3	18.75%
Job and School Performance	3	18.75%
Self-Confidence	1	6.25%
<i>Negative Statements about Appearance and</i>		
Romance/Opposite Sex	1	6.25%
Popularity/Opinions	5	31.25%
Job and School Performance	7	43.75%
Self-Confidence	2	12.5%

Grouping topics of conversation into stereotypical categories, Table Fifteen shows the topics preteen and teenage female primary characters discussed. Interestingly, Work/School was the topic most discussed (68.75%) followed by Appearance (56.25%) while only less than half of the character (43.75%) addressed Romance/Dating.

Table Fifteen—Number and Percentages of Stereotypical Topics Discussed

Stereotypical Topics Discussed	Female Characters (N = 16)	
	n	%
Romance/Dating	7	43.75%
Work/School	11	68.75%
Appearance	9	56.25%

Behaviors

This section analyzes behaviors by examining the percentage of preteen and teenage female primary characters shown performing a behavior at least once in a graphic novel. The behaviors were sorted using Bem's Sex Role Inventory as either stereotypically masculine or stereotypically feminine.

In terms of the stereotypical masculine behaviors captured in this analysis, preteen and teenage female primary characters were most often seen taking risks (100%), being leaders (68.75%), being physically aggressive (62.5%), and rescuing (56.25%). The most common stereotypical feminine behaviors include crying/whining (68.75%), being affectionate/flirting (56.25%), being a victim of physical aggression (50%), and yielding/being a follower (43.75%). Table Sixteen shows the number and percentages for all behaviors coded.

Table Sixteen—Number and Percentages of Behaviors

Behaviors	Female Characters (N = 16)	
	n	%
“Stereotypically Masculine”		
Joking/Teasing	6	37.5%
Leadership	11	68.75%
Risk Taking	16	100%
Rescue	9	56.25%
Brawn/Physical Force/Athletic	7	43.75%
Physical Aggression	10	62.5%
Verbal Aggression	7	43.75%
“Stereotypically Feminine”		
Follower/yielding	7	43.75%
Crying/Whining	11	68.75%
Victim of Physical aggression	8	50%
Victim of Verbal Aggression	6	37.5%
Gullible	1	6.25%

Shy	2	12.5%
Affectionate/Flirting	9	56.25%

Gender of Author(s) and Illustrator(s)

Utilizing biographical information found in the graphic novels or on *NoveList*, I identified the gender of each author (see Table Seventeen). A total of five (41.67%) of these graphic novels were authored by a female compared to five (41.67%) that were authored by a male. One graphic novel (*Lumberjanes vol. 1: Beware the Kitten Holy*) was authored by a team of two females, and one (*Gotham Academy*) was authored by a co-ed author team.

Table Seventeen- Gender of Author(s)

Author Gender	Graphic Novel (N=12)	
	n	%
Male Author	5	41.67%
Female Author	5	41.67%
Male Author Team	0	0%
Female Author Team	1	8.33%
Co-Ed Author Team	1	8.33%

After determining the number of graphic novels composed by either gender, I used biographical information found in the graphic novels or on *NoveList* to identify the gender of each illustrator (see Table Eighteen). Seven (58.33%) of the graphic novels

were illustrated by a female compared to five (41.67%) graphic novels illustrated by a male.

Table Eighteen- Gender of Illustrator(s)

Illustrator Gender	Graphic Novel (N=12)	
	n	%
Male Illustrator	5	41.67%
Female Illustrator	7	58.33%
Male Illustrator Team	0	0%
Female Illustrator Team	0	0%
Co-Ed Illustrator Team	0	0%

The following chapter looks more deeply into the three main analytical areas (appearance, conversations, and behaviors) of this study. Specific examples from selected graphic novels are used to illustrate stereotypical conventions and deviations. To close the chapter, limitations of the study and areas for future research are presented.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

The results of this content analysis indicate that progress is being made in the portrayal of female characters in graphic novels. The preteen and teenage female primary characters coded often break with conventional stereotypes characteristic of the format. They are not plot devices or sex objects (Sabin 79). They are not written in to the plot simply to be seen and rescued (Marshall and Gilmore 95). Instead, they are most often depicted with realistic bodies, having realistic conversations, and exhibiting realistic behaviors.

It makes sense that these changes are happening because publishing houses like Marvel and DC are “rethinking their characters, stories and merchandise to acknowledge the rapid growth of female fans” (Reid). But I think they go deeper than that. Perhaps these changes are due in part to an increase in females taking active roles in the creation of these texts. What author Charles McGrath once called a “man’s world” is experiencing a shift (qtd. in Allison 74). Female are not just reading graphic novels: they are creating them too. Out of the twelve books in this study, seven of them were either written or collaboratively written by a female, and seven of them were solely illustrated by one. With more females involved in the creation process, female characters are evolving, and that is good for all readers.

As stated in the literature review, girls today are bombarded by messages about the importance of appearance. As Daniel Clay, Vivian L. Vignoles, and Helda Dittmar state in “Body Image and Self-Esteem Among Adolescent Girls: Testing the Influence of Sociocultural Facts,” the media “not only emphasizes that female self-worth should be based on appearance, but presents a powerful cultural ideal of female beauty that is

becoming increasingly unattainable” (452). The body size of females in the media is often more than 20% underweight (Clay et. al. 452). Add to that cosmetic surgery, airbrushing, and filtering used to perfect the often sexualized image of females, it is no wonder that what girls see in the mirror does not match what the media presents. Many graphic novels and comics of the past aligned themselves with the media’s picture-perfect female, but that is not the case when it comes to most of the graphic novels in this sample set.

The graphic novels analyzed here depict a diverse set of characters’ body weights. The majority of the characters (75%) are of an average body weight when compared to other similarly aged female characters in their respective texts. Four characters deviated from the norm, and these choices all felt purposeful. Clara from *Girl in Dior* was coded as thin, which makes sense because she is a Dior fashion model—being thin is part of her job description. Princess Ulga from *Princess Ugg* was coded as muscular. The decision to depict her that way also seems appropriate because she is a warrior. Her “mighty sinewed” body makes her stand out from the conventionally petite princesses at the school she attends (Naifeh 37).

Two other characters that deviate from the norm are Doreen Green from *The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl* and Nimona from *Nimona*. Both of these characters were coded as a bit overweight. All throughout *The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl*, there are sections titled “Letters From Nuts” that contain letters from actual fans. Many fans write to Erica Henderson, the illustrator, thanking her for illustrating Squirrel Girl the way she did (see figure 1). As one fan puts it, “It’s refreshing to see a female superhero that has the body type a lot of us girls have” (87). Another fan writes, “Thank you, Erica, for drawing

Squirrel Girl not like a sex symbol” (42). Henderson replies by saying, “My main thing is I like to draw heartier super ladies, if their powers are mostly physical, because I feel like I shouldn’t be able to take down a super hero by sitting on her” (Henderson 42). She goes on to say, “I honestly have a hard time believing that a 90-pound woman can take down a 200 pound steroidal dude who has equal fighting ability” (Henderson 87). So from the original drawing of Squirrel Girl, Henderson wanted her to appear “thicker” because to her that makes a more believable superhero (Henderson 87).



Figure 1. Ryan North. *The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl*. vol. 1, Marvel Comics, 2015. p. 23.

Careful thought also went into Doreen Green’s Unbeatable Squirrel Girl costume. In response to another fan letter in which the writer says, “It’s nice to have another superheroine who doesn’t go around fighting crime in her underwear,” Henderson says, “clothing choices are pretty important in getting across who someone is. Some people do want to run around in their underwear and that’s great for them, but that’s not everyone’s bag” (Henderson 87). The other characters in this sample set are not running around in

their underwear either. The majority (93.75%) of the characters wear casual attire that ranges from pants and a basic top to a simple dress. Their outfits make them all the more relatable for girl readers.

Another “heartier” super lady that dresses modestly is Nimona from *Nimona*. Interestingly, in the back matter of the book, there is a section with the “first ever Nimona sketches” (Stevenson 264). In the first sketch of Nimona, she has larger breasts and a smaller waistline, but as Noelle Stevenson continued to draw her, Nimona’s bust size decreased and her hip size grew (see figure 2). Stevenson decided to draw Nimona “stockier” and “kind of butch” because she wanted to create a character readers had never seen before (Stevenson).

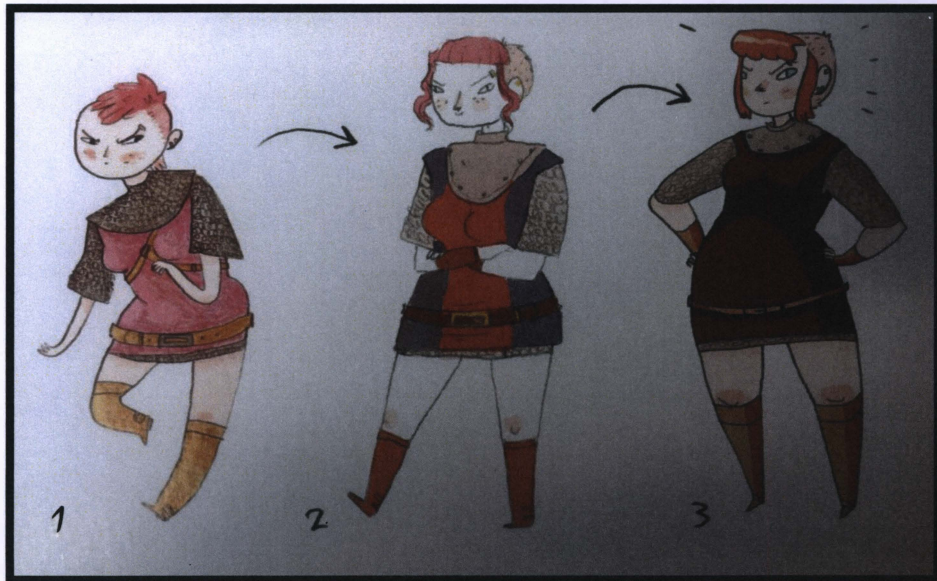


Figure 2. Noelle Stevenson, *Nimona*. Harper Teen, 2015, p 264.

She wanted Nimona to be a character readers would be comfortable to cosplay. As an avid cosplayer, Stevenson never wanted to dress as any female characters due to their appearance. She found herself wanting to dress as a guy (Stevenson). So for Nimona, she

decided to create a character “that people who weren't interested in looking particularly buxom or sensual might want to dress as” (Stevenson).

I would imagine Nimona’s appearance was also influenced by something Stevenson saw the first time she walked into a comic book store: a life-sized cutout of Princess Leia in a metal bikini, with a sign taped to her belly button advertising the deals of the day. Even at 11 years old, Stevenson was affected by that introduction into the world of comics: “you get a message from that. You get a message very loud and clear, and no one was throwing rocks at me and saying, girls can't shop here, get out of here. You just kind of know when you're not supposed to be somewhere” (Stevenson). While this kept Stevenson out of comic book stories, it did not keep her from creating graphic novels. And now through her creation of *Nimona*, girl readers, including those who deviate from conventional ideals, can find a welcoming place of their own.

Careful thought not only went into each character’s appearance, but also into their conversations. Appearance is a topic of conversation in many of the graphic novels in this text set. In fact, 56.25% of the characters coded talk about it just like teens do in real life. That is because preteen and teenage girls “have been socialized to believe that appearance is an important basis for self-evaluation and for evaluation by others” (Clay et. al 452). Around the age of 12, some girls show a marked decline in their perceptions of their physical attractiveness (Clay et. al 453). This pattern can continue until around the age of 17 (453). The preteen and teenage female primary characters in this study struggle with body issues, just like real girls do. Seven of the characters coded discuss their appearance. Of those seven, only one made entirely positive comments about herself, two made entirely negative comments, and four made both positive and negative

comments. Ten characters had their appearance discussed by another character. None of these discussions were entirely positive, three were entirely negative, and seven were a combination of both positive and negative remarks. Conversations about appearance were linked 62.5% of the time both positively and negatively to school or a job. School is where many of these appearance conversations take place in the form of bullying.

Bullying is “a negative interaction in which the perpetrator adopts an aggressive behavior towards the victim, with the intent to inflict injury or discomfort” (Duarte et. al 260). In 2013 the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) claimed that the rate of bullying in schools is decreasing. Just 24% of females and 19% of males ages 12-18 reported being bullied (“Measuring Student Safety”). As a high school educator, I would argue that those numbers are inaccurate due to the way this data is collected. At the school where I teach, if students feel like they are being bullied and want to report it, they have to speak to a staff member and then fill out a barrage of forms documenting their claim. Bully report forms have become a joke among the student population. They jokingly ask teachers to fill out a report on their friends, and many teachers bemoan the forms to their students because they do not want the hassle of additional paperwork. This casual attitude towards bullying prevents students who are really struggling with maltreatment to report their claims. Therefore this data collected in these studies is not telling the entire story.

Gruber and Fineran further my claim that the collection of bullying instances is inaccurate in “Sexual Harassment, Bullying, and School Outcomes for High School Girls and Boys.” They state that “the way questions are presented to the respondents and to the time frames they are asked to consider” sway the results of many bullying studies

(Gruber and Fineran). The studies often ask respondents whether they have been bullied in the last 30 days, and this data obviously does not cover the entire school year. As I stated above, I am skeptical about the data presented by the NCES because I see this type of behavior in school. Being bullied about one's appearance is common, and the characters in the graphic narratives in this study are no exception. What is interesting to see is how the mothers featured in these texts try to help their daughters combat bullying, specifically at school, by emphasizing appearance. Despite their efforts, though, they cannot fully protect their daughters, and in those cases, the daughters learn to deal with issues on their own.

Take Astrid's mother, Mrs. Vasquez from *Roller Girl*, for example. She often speaks with her daughter about the interconnectedness of appearance and school. (This is a common theme—62.5% of the characters have their appearances linked to school or work). When Astrid tries to wear a dirty shirt to roller derby camp, Mrs. Vasquez stops her and says, “Listen, kids can be cruel in Junior High, especially if you smell bad. Which reminds me, I should start picking up deodorant for you” (Jamieson 89). Astrid is mortified. In the panel she is depicted slouched over grimacing saying “MOOOOMMMM!” (Jamieson 89). By sneakily embedding this conversation in the text, Jamieson playfully reminds readers to take steps to prevent unwanted negative responses to the effects of changes related to adolescence.

Even earlier than Jr. High school, mothers in these graphic novels address the importance of appearance with their daughters. That is the case for elementary aged Violet in *Space Dumplins*. Violet's mother, Cera, jumps at the chance for her daughter to attend an elite Station School. On the day Violet tours the school, her mother helps her

get ready. Cera says to Violet, “Let’s pick out your fanciest outfit... and tame that wild mane... and be on our best behavior” (Thompson 18). Violet smiles in each panel as her mother helps her get ready. She continues to smile as she tours the school, and when her mother suggests she go and try to make new friends, Violet approaches a trio of girls and introduces herself. A buck-toothed red headed girl in the group laughs and points and Violet’s clothes. The unnamed mean girl says, “Ha Ha! Your clothes are homemade!” (Thompson 37). Another mean girl tells Violet her hair is “dumb,” and the three girls run off leaving Violet all alone (Thomson 37). In the two panels that follow this encounter, Violet does not speak. Her posture and body language change. She looks down at her clothes, and her smile disappears (see figure 3). She feels lonely.



Figure 3. Craig Thompson. *Space Dumplins*. Graphix, 2015. p. 37.

Similarly, Princess Ulga from *Princess Ugg* is also bullied by a trio of mean girls, but instead of attacking her attire, they comment on her body type. As stated above, Princess Ulga is depicted as muscular. This makes her stand out from the other petite princesses at the school, especially in the showers. While Princess Ulga is showering, three girls appraise her body. One says “It’s grotesque, but I can’t stop looking,” to which another replies, “I know. Whenever one muscle moves, the others have to get out of the way” (Naifeh 47). The mean girls question, “How does a girl get that lumpy?” (Naifeh

47). Princess Ulga's roommate, Lady Julifer, appears in the next panel and explains to the others that Princess Ulga is a "troglodyte," also known as a cave woman, which is why she has a muscular physique (Naifeh 48). This assessment makes the mean girls mock Princess Ulga all the more. They call her "subhuman" (Naifeh 48). Like Violet, Princess Ulga does not respond to her tormentors. It is clear that she heard what they said, and like Violet, Princess Ulga admits that she is lonely (Naifeh 49). Both of them learn to cope with this issue, but they do so in different ways.

Violet copes by reconnecting with an old friend, Zacchaeus, who is also bullied for his looks. Zacchaeus is a lumpkin, a term for those who are "famously tall and lanky," but not Zacchaeus (Thompson 86). He is short and stout. Because Zacchaeus does not fit into the norm of what others expect to see, he is often taunted. Reconnecting with Violet helps both of them feel better. Together they break things in a junk yard to blow off steam. Zacchaeus says, "This junk represents everyone who's ever done you wrong" (Thompson 51). In the process of therapeutic junk smashing, the duo stumble upon a space trike. Zacchaeus is ready to demolish it because he sees it as "just trash like everything else" in the junkyard, but Violet disagrees (Thompson 52). She calls the space trike "beautiful" and persuades her dad to purchase it for her (Thompson 52). Unlike the mean girls at the elite station school, Violet sees things beyond surface beauty. She knows that "underneath all that rust is a real treasure" (Thompson 52). Even though Violet is bullied for her appearance, she does not let negativity color her world. She sees beyond the surface, just like she does with her friend, Zacchaeus, and her space trike fixer-upper. Violet serves as a role model for readers because she is able to find beauty where others cannot.

Princess Ulga handles her bullies differently. At first, she is so lonely that she thinks about leaving the school, but her history teachers stops her and challenges her to make friends with her roommate, Lady Julifer. He tells her, “If you can lay aside your personal feelings and find common ground with your roommate, you will have taken a big step toward mastering the art of diplomacy” (Naifeh 71). As a future queen, diplomacy is an important characteristic, so she reluctantly accepts her teacher’s challenge. One day when Princess Ulga overhears Lady Julifer and the other mean girls discussing ponies, a topic Princess Ulga is an expert on, she joins the conversation. She offers to help Lady Julifer train for the “tri-kingdom equestrian completion” (Naifeh 73). Lady Julifer accepts her offer, intending to pass all of the hard work off on Princess Ulga, and the two start to train. Quickly Princess Ulga realizes that “this makin’ friends business is harder than (she) reckoned,” but she comes through for Lady Julifer and helps her win the competition (Naifeh 99). While this does not make Princess Ulga and Lady Julifer best friends, it does help to end the animosity between them. Lady Julifer thanks Princess Ulga for her help. Even though it was a challenge for Princess Ulga, she wins over her bullies through kindness. Like Violet, Princess Ulga serves as a role model for readers because she is able to come to terms with her bullies.

Not all of the bullied characters resort to kindness to solve their issues, though. Take April from *Lumberjanes* for instance. In one of the many adventures at Miss Quinzella Thiskwin Penniquiquil Thistle Crumpet’s Camp for Hardcore Lady Types, the campers fall down a tunnel while exploring a cave. In the tunnel, they encounter a gigantic talking statue of a man. The man is guarding a door, and he refuses to let them pass unless they best him “in a feat of strength” (Stevenson and Ellis 58). April, the most

petite member of the group of friends, immediately accepts his challenge to arm wrestle (see figure 4). The statue mocks her by saying, “Ho Ho Ho! You? But you are the smallest of all your friends! Your arms are little twigs!” (Stevenson and Ellis 59). April is not intimidated by the statue’s mockery. She battles him and wins, cracking off the statue’s arm in the process. Defeated, the statue allows the campers to pass. Thus, April saves the day showing readers that sometimes bullies have to be confronted head on.



Figure 4. Noelle Stevenson and Grace Ellis, *Lumberjanes*. vol. 1, Boom! Box, 2015, p. 60.

By being presented with Astrid’s, Violet’s, Princess Ulga’s, and April’s experiences, readers can learn to deal with their own issues in a variety of ways. They can be reminded that overbearing mothers often have good intentions, like Astrid’s. They can learn to see beauty in what others see as trash, like Violet. They can learn that even though it may be a challenge, it is worth it to put in the effort to be kind to those that are not always kind to you, like Princess Ulga. Or like April, they can prove their bullies

wrong and silence them. Each character serves as role model and helps readers discover a variety of ways to deal with everyday issues.

Progress appears not only the appearances and conversations about appearance in these graphic novels, but also in terms of these characters' behaviors. The characters coded in this study do not solely stick to stereotypical feminine characteristics. Sure, 68.75% cry or whine and 56.25% flirt or show affection, but in addition to crying and flirting, these female characters exhibit a whole host of stereotypically masculine behaviors. 100% of them take risks. 68.75% are leaders, and 56.25% rescue someone. Readers come to expect those types of qualities in superheroes, so it is not surprising when Squirrel Girl breaks into Iron Man's house to borrow some gear to save the universe or when Mega Girl comes up with a quick-thinking plan to defeat villain, Cleaver. It is more surprising to see the rescues, risks, and leadership roles in non-superhero characters like elementary aged Violet from *Space Dumplins*.

Violet Marlocke's dad, Garnett, is a manly, plaid-wearing lumberjack. His job is dangerous; he harvests whale lumber (whale poop) in the outer limits of the solar system. This job is important because whale lumber is used to power space stations. On one of Garnett's hauls, he goes missing. Violet's mother tries to locate him by going to the authorities, but in the panic she is separated from her daughter. Violet knows that time is of the essence, so she takes it upon herself to rescue her dad. She rallies her two friends together and says, "I know it's dangerous... and that outer space is no place for children, but Daddy needs our help, and sometimes kids know best" (Thompson 95). After encountering numerous roadblocks and bad guys, the group saves Garnett, and Violet reunites her family. Violet's mother embraces her and calls her "brave" (Thompson 289).

She tells Violet “You did something no adult could manage, you saved papa” (Thompson 289). Like April in *Lumberjanes*, Violet proves that no matter how small you are, you can still do big brave things.

While Violet’s situation is peculiar, in this text set girls take other more relatable risks. In *Roller Girl*, Astrid’s risk is trying something out of her comfort zone. Without any previous skating experience, she enrolls in a roller derby camp and finds out that it is more of a challenge than she anticipated. Initially, Astrid thought her best friend, Nicole, would enroll in the camp with her. They had been best friends since the first grade, so Astrid thought, “Of course she’d want to come. We were best friends, and that’s what best friends do. They do everything together” (Jamieson 27). When Astrid discovers that Nicole wants to attend dance camp with Astrid’s worst enemy, Rachel, instead of roller derby camp, Astrid feels betrayed (see figure 5).

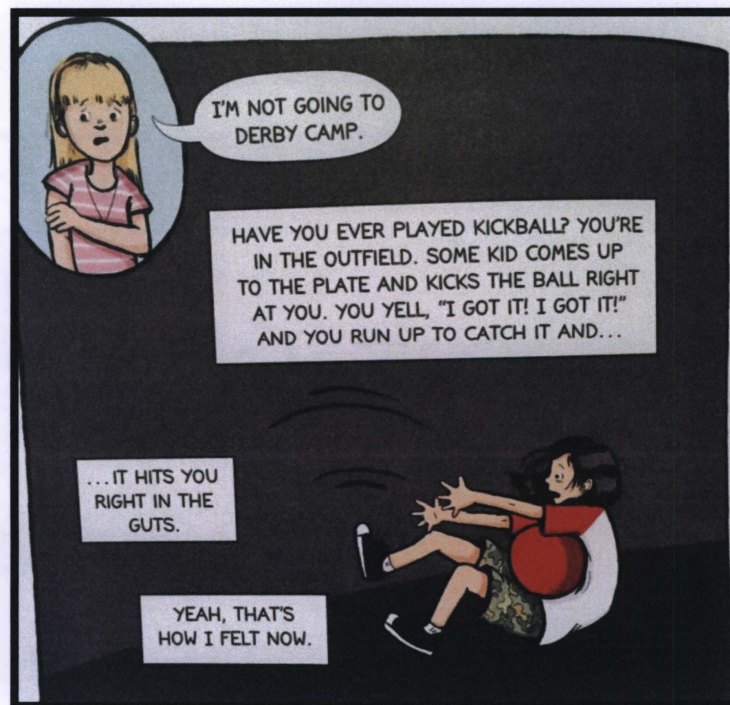


Figure 5. Victoria Jamieson, *Roller Girl*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 2015, p. 48.

Roller derby camp is tough for Astrid. Her skating skills are abysmal, and she feels intimidated by the other campers. Soon, however, she makes a friend, Zoey. Together Astrid and Zoey brave derby camp, and it is during a chat with Zoey that Astrid has an epiphany. Zoey asks Astrid “What’s your thing?” (Jamieson 110). For Zoey, her “thing” is theater. Astrid can peg everyone in her class. She knows who the child genius is and the horse girl, but it is difficult to figure out what her thing is because it used to be “Nicole’s best friend” (Jamieson 111). Astrid realizes that without Nicole she doesn’t have a “thing” anymore. She has to find something new to replace the void in her life, so roller derby becomes her “thing.” As camp progresses, Astrid becomes obsessed with being the jammer in an upcoming bout. She practices so much that it starts interfering with her friendship with Zoey. When Zoey is awarded the right to play jammer, Astrid’s disappointment gets in the way of their friendship. Astrid has to work to repair her relationship with Zoey while simultaneously trying to improve her skating skills.

In the end Zoey and Astrid work through their problems. This makes Astrid realize just how much her life has changed in a short amount of time. Her ex-best friend, Nicole, comes to their final bout and invites Astrid to dinner, but instead of going Astrid decides to stay with her team. Astrid’s thing is no longer being “Nicole’s best friend.” She now stands on her own.

The age recommendation for this text is 3rd through 8th grade. Astrid serves as an excellent role model for this group because during this time period, friendships often fluctuate. Girls discover new interests and hobbies and as a result gain new friends, and old friendships can fall by the wayside. That is all a natural part of growing up, even

though at times it can be tough. It is beneficial to have role models like Astrid who show girls they can survive the ebbs and flows of friends.

Another risk-taker is Penelope Tores from *Awkward*. She takes risks to bring her club, the art club, and their archrival's club, the science club, together despite the odds. Penelope is new at school, and throughout the book she offers tips to survive. One of Penelope's rules is "seek out groups with similar interests and join them" (Chmakova 12). She takes her own advice and joins the art club where she makes several friends.

Disaster strikes for Penelope's beloved club when the principal informs their sponsor that they will not receive a table at the school club fair unless they create a project that gives back to the school and is voted most successful by the student population. The club they have to compete with is the science club—their archenemies. The project the art club decides on is to draw comics about school life for the newspaper. Penelope is selected to co-edit the comics by the ambitious- Maribella Samson. Together the two make the comics a success, but they are worried that their project will not be enough to beat the science club's solar plane. Maribella sabotages the science club's project and dissonance continues between the two clubs to the point that the principal decides to not allow either club a table since they cannot get along. Penelope thinks fast and decides to take a risk to join the clubs together for one project. Even though she is afraid, she convinces both clubs to meet, and she convinces them to collaboratively create an indoor planetarium. Both clubs love the idea, and the principal loves it too. He awards both clubs tables at the fair. Like Violet, Penelope's risk pays off. She too is a role model especially for readers who move to new schools. The transition can be tough, but by following Penelope's lead, it can be a success.

With more realistic looking characters, relatable conversations, and girls engaging in both feminine and masculine behaviors, the result is better characters and better role models for young readers. However, despite all of the positive strides being made, some negative conventions linger.

In all of the texts, only one of the preteen and teenage female primary characters makes fully positive comments about herself. That character is Doreen Green from *The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl*. In one panel, Doreen is pictured admiring herself in a floor length mirror. She is talking to her friend-Tippy about how she is trying to fit into college by appearing to be a regular student. Consequently, she has to conceal her large squirrel tail, but lucky for her she “knows how to tuck her tail into her pants” to make it appear that she has a “conspicuously large and conspicuously awesome butt” (North 2). Doreen is smiling at herself in the mirror. I wish there had been more of this body loving positivity found in these books. Graphic novels are a perfect place for this because of the combination of visuals and texts. Girls of all ages should see and hear more characters loving themselves, especially during adolescence when they are faced with the pressures of the media and peers to appear a certain way.

In terms of appearance, three of the sixteen characters (18.75%) were pictured partially clothed: Clara from *Girl in Dior*, Sunshine from *Sunny Side Up*, and Princess Ulga from *Princess Ugg*. Of the three, Clara’s partial nudity makes the most sense. In each scene where she is partially clothed, she is dressed in a bra and an undergarment attending a dress fitting or changing during a fashion show. Scenes such as this would have really occurred in preparation for a Dior fashion show, so Clara’s degree of dress is appropriate. For the rest of the text, she is fully clothed.

Sunshine from *Sunny Side Up* is also typically fully clothed, preferring shorts and a tank top. Oddly, in many scenes where Sunshine is with her friend Buzz, she wears a crop top (see figure 6). She never exposes her midriff any other time throughout the book, and she rarely repeats an outfit, so it is strange that this is her outfit of choice when interacting with a young male character over a period of several days.



Figure 6. Jennifer L. Holm, *Sunny Side Up*. Graphix, 2015, p. 132.

Another text illustrated by a male is *Princess Ugg*. Princess Ulga is the most risqué character in this text set. She sleeps nude. She is also pictured nude bathing and showering throughout the text (see figure 7). Naifeh appears to use these instances to contrast Princess Ulga to the other princesses. At the start of chapter one, Lady Julifer is pictured awakening while clothed in a lavish suite. A few pages in, Lady Julifer is bathing with the assistance of three female servants. The caption reads, “’Tis said luxury knows no bounds in the palace of a true princess” (Naifeh 13). Juxtaposed throughout those panels is Princess Ulga’s morning routine. The caption reads, “But in the mountain kingdom of Grimmeria, ‘tis a somewhat different story” (Naifeh 12). Princess Ulga is

pictured awakening nude to a cold shower from the trunk of her mammoth, Snorri. She is then pictured nude jumping into an icy cold lake to bathe. The difference between Princess Ulga's panels and Lady Julifer's show the readers that the two princesses live very different lives. Lady Julifer surrounds herself in luxury, while Princess Ulga roughs it. There are many ways Naifeh could have shown the differences between the two princesses without showing both of them nude. He could have shown their garments, their meals, etc., yet he went with a shower scene. In this way, Princess Ulga is more sexually objectified than the other characters in this text set.



Figure 7. Ted Naifeh, *Princess Ugg*. vol. 1, Oni Press, 2014, p. 13.

A text that adheres to many outdated conventions in this text set is, *My Neighbor Seki*. In this text, Toshinari Seki is a classmate of Rumi Yokoi, the teenage female protagonist. Seki and Yokoi have all of their classes together. Yokoi finds Seki

“adorable” at times, and therefore she is often distracted by his wild classroom escapades (Morishige 31).

Seki never pays attention in class. Instead, he knits a cactus, makes a multitude of origami cranes, and he even brings two cats to school to play with. None of the other students or the teachers notice what Seki is doing, but Yokoi always focuses on Seki to the point where her school work suffers. Yokoi has 15 class periods during the day, and she gets in trouble in 6 of those due to her obsession with Seki. In her other classes she misses notes and cannot answer her teachers’ questions. Her grades suffer because she is constantly distracted. As a teacher, I have seen this dynamic play out, so I know this is a real issue that girls face. I was disappointed by this text because Yokoi never learns her lesson. She spends all 15 class periods focusing on Seki and at the end she does not realize the time she wasted. This is not the type of role model I want for my students.

Clearly, some stereotypical conventions remain to this day, and if this text set is at all representative, many male authors and illustrators continue to perpetuate them. Nevertheless, this study reveals that progress has been made. Preteen and teenage female primary characters are now presented in a variety of body types and apparel. They have real conversations about topics that concern preteen and teenage readers. They face bullies and well-intentioned mothers and live to tell the tale. They also engage in a variety of behaviors, some of which are often considered masculine and some of which are considered feminine. Many of these characters provide a counternarrative to what girls see in the media. These characters are worthwhile role models, but the way in which preteen and teenage female readers interpret the characters they encounter is beyond the realm of this study. As stated previously, children encounter graphic novels at a time

when they are using models to shape their identities. A study by Hoffner determined that girls identify with female characters, “especially those portrayed as attractive” (Hoffner 389). Social learning theory suggests that children will likely adopt the perspectives of those models with which they identify. Girls may view these characters and internalize the mixed message about appearance, conversations, and behaviors.

I must remind the reader that there were limitations to this study. The sample text set was selected purposefully—the texts had to contain a preteen or teenage female primary character and appear on YALSA’s 2016 *Great Graphic Novels for Teens* list. Therefore, the results of this study may not hold up beyond the text set analyzed. Also, I developed the codebook individually and was the only coder. Multiple coders would have produced more extensive results. Finally, because my unit of analysis was preteen and teenage female primary characters, other female characters in the texts were not examined. Readers most likely do not only attend to the primary characters, so it would be useful to see how the secondary characters are portrayed as well. In addition, a study of male primary characters compared to female primary characters could also reveal telling results.

Future research could overcome the limitations of this study. Working with a larger sample size would help increase the understanding and help establish a fuller and more accurate picture of what is taking place in graphic novels. Adding in additional variables like character race or character motivations would also be useful. Follow-up research should also include interviews and focus study groups with children to determine how and if the gender images they encounter affect their identities.

Data cited earlier in the literature review points to the fact that children are susceptible to the messages presented by popular media. Therefore, the media children consume, including graphic novels, must be carefully examined to see what kind of messages they are receiving. More content analyses must be completed and the results of these studies must be shared so stereotypical portrayals can be minimized. Graphic novels are not solely a man's world anymore. Graphic novels are for girls, too, making texts better for all readers.

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Appendix A

The following are YALSA's annotations for the primary sources I selected for my study:

Assassination Classroom, vol. 1. By Yusei Matsui. Illus by the author. Viz Media, paper, \$9.99, (9781421576077).

Students in the lowest-ranked class in the school must kill a tentacled creature who also happens to be their teacher before he destroys the world at graduation.

Awkward. By Svetlana Chmakova. Illus by the author. Yen Press, \$11.00, (9780316381307). Art club and science club go head-to-head for a table at the Annual School Club Fair, while a boy and a girl from each try to figure out how to be friends despite a bitter rivalry.

Girl in Dior. By Annie Goetzinger. Illus by the author. Nantier Beall Minoustchine Publishing, hardcover, \$27.99, (9781561639144). A young fashion journalist in Paris 1947 gets an inside perspective on the House of Dior when an assignment to cover a fashion show turns into a life-changing dream job.

Gotham Academy, vol. 1: Welcome to Gotham Academy. By Becky Cloonan and Brenden Fletcher. Illus by Karl Kerschl. DC Comics, paper, \$14.99, (9781401254728). Olive Silverlock and her friends at Gotham Academy solve mysteries while Olive struggles to remember what happened last summer.

Lumberjanes, vol. 1. By Noelle Stevenson, Grace Ellis and Shannon Watters. Illus by Brooke Allen. Boom! Box, paper, \$14.99, (9781608866878).

Five best friends spend the summer at camp defeating magical monsters and trying to find out what the junk is going on.

My Neighbor Seki, vol. 1. By Takuma Morishige. Illus by the author. Vertical Comics, paper, \$10.95, (9781939130969). Rumi is constantly distracted by the antics of her classmate Seki who indulges in elaborate extra-curricular activities at his desk but never gets caught.

Nimona. By Noelle Stevenson. Illus by the author. Harper Teen, hardcover, \$17.99, (9780062278234). Nimona is an impulsive young shape-shifter with a knack for villainy.

Princess Ugg, vol. 1. By Ted Naifeh. Illus by the author. Oni Press, paper, \$15.99, (9781620101780). Warrior Princess Ulga attends the prestigious Princess Academy at her dead mother's request.

Roller Girl. By Victoria Jamieson. Illus by the author. Dial Books for Young Readers, hardcover, \$20.99, (9780525429678). Astrid signs up for roller derby camp, but has no idea how hard it will be or what it will cost her.

The Scarlet Letter. By Nathaniel Hawthorne, Crystal Chan, and Stacy King. Illus by SunNeko Lee. Udon Entertainment, hardcover, \$24.99, (9781927925348). A manga retelling of the classic story of a Puritan woman caught in adultery and forced to publicly bear her shame.

Space Dumplins. By Craig Thompson. Illus by the author. Graphix, hardcover, \$24.99, (9780545565417). Violet embarks on a mission to save her outer space lumberjack father.

Strong Female Protagonist Book One. By Brennan Lee Mulligan. Illus by Molly Ostertag. Top Shelf Productions, paper, \$19.95, (9780692246184). Alison Green, a former and very powerful superhero named Mega Girl, endeavors to balance real life while grappling with her past as a biodynamic.

Sunny Side Up. By Jennifer L. Holm. Illus by Matthew Holm. Graphix, paper, \$12.99, (9780545741668). Sunny is sent to live with her grandfather during the summer, which gives her distance to consider the changes in her life back home.

SuperMutant Magic Academy. By Jillian Tamaki. Illus by the author. Drawn & Quarterly, paper, \$22.95, (9781770461987). SuperMutant Magic Academy is a prep school for mutants and witches but their paranormal activities take a back seat to everyday teen concerns.

The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl. vol. 1: Squirrel Power. By Ryan North. Illus by Erica Henderson. Marvel Comics, paper, \$15.99, (9780785197027). Squirrel Girl and her sidekick Tippy-Toe kick butts and eat nuts.

Appendix B

The following is a list of primary and secondary female characters in each graphic novel:

Assassination Classroom vol. 1: Time for Assassination

Primary:

Secondary: Nakamura
Kurahash
Meg Katoka
Toka Yada
Hinata Okano
Manami Okuda
A Real Professional

Awkward

Primary: Penelope

Secondary: Maribella
Miss Tobins
Tessa
Jenny
Akilah
Jamie's Mother
Felicity
Nina
Maribella's Mother

Girl in Dior

Primary: Clara

Secondary: Marguerite Carre
Raymonde Zehnacker
Mitzah Bricard
Suzanne Luling
Marie Therese

Gotham Academy vol. 1: Welcome to Gotham Academy

Primary: Olive

Secondary: Pomeline Fritch
Mia

Lucy
 Professor Macpherson
 Katherine
 Ms. Harriet
 Sybil Silverlock

Lumberjanes vol. 1: Beware the Kitten Holy

Primary: Mal
 Molly
 April
 Ripley
 Jo

Secondary: Jen
 Rosie

My Neighbor Seki vol. 1

Primary: Yokoi

Secondary: Tokoma

Nimona

Primary: Nimona

Secondary: Witch
 Anchorwoman
 Tabitha
 Dr. Meredith Blitzmeyer
 Gloreth
 Director

Princess Ugg vol. 1

Primary: Princess O'Grimmeria Ulga

Secondary: Queen Fridrika
 Princess of Atraesca
 Queen Eydis
 Queen Astoria
 Lady Julifer
 Desdemona
 Phoenicia
 Jasmin

Roller Girl

Primary: Astrid

Secondary: Nicole
Mrs. Vasquez
Rachel
Miss Judkins
Mrs. B
Heidi Go Seek
Zoey
Napoleon Blownaparte
Rainbow Bite

The Scarlet Letter

Primary: Hester Prynne

Secondary: Pearl
Mistress Hibbins

Space Dumplings

Primary: Violet

Secondary: Cera
Preeus
Livonia

Strong Female Protagonist Book One

Primary: Alison

Secondary: Violet
Dr. Rosenblum
Ms. McNeil
Feral
Heather
Crystal
Susan
Jennifer

Sunny Side Up

Primary: Sunshine Lewin

Secondary: Teezy
 Ethel
 Mrs. Levarski
 Myra
 Deb

SuperMutant Magic Academy

Primary:

Secondary: Susie
 Frances
 Marsha
 Gemma
 Sherri
 Wendy
 Cindy
 Julia
 Trixie
 Veronica
 Joanie
 Sheena
 Mrs. McDouggle
 Ms. Campbell
 Debbie
 Ms. Grimmdorff
 Belinda
 Jeri
 Glinda
 Helen
 Natalie

The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl vol. 1: Squirrel Power

Primary: Doreen Green

Secondary: Tippy
 Nancy Whitehead

Appendix C

The following is a sample coding sheet from the coding handbook:

Graphic Novel:

Appearance

Type of Clothing

Character's Name	Sleepwear	School Uniform	Casual	Formal	Costume

Perceived Degree of Dress

Character's Name	Fully Clothed	Partially Clothed	Implied Nudity	Nudity

Perceived Body Weight

Character's Name	Very Thin	Thin	Average	Muscular	Bit Overweight	Obese

Notes:

Conversations

Looks Acknowledged in Discussion by Character

Character's Name	Made Statement About Her Looks	Made Positive Statement About Her Looks	Made Negative Statement About Her Looks

Looks Acknowledged in Discussion by Other Character

Character's Name	Had Statement Made About Her Looks By Other Character	Had Positive Statement Made About Her Looks By Other Character	Had Negative Statement Made About Her Looks By Other Character

Statements Made by or About Character That Linked Her Looks to Each of the Following Topics in a Positive or Negative Way

Character's Name:	
Positive Statements about Looks And:	
Romance/Opposite Sex	
Popularity/Opinions	
Job and School Performance	
Self Confidence	
Negative Statements about Looks And:	
Romance/Opposite Sex	
Popularity/Opinions	
Job and School Performance	
Self Confidence	

Stereotypical Topics Discussed

Character's Name	
Romance/Dating	
Work/School	
Appearance	

Notes:

Behaviors

Character's Name	
Joking/Teasing (M)	
Leadership (M)	
Risk Taking (M)	
Rescue (M)	
Brawn/Physical Force/Athletic (M)	
Physical Aggression (M)	
Verbal Aggression (M)	
Follower/yielding (F)	
Crying/Whining (F)	
Victim of Physical aggression (F)	
Victim of Verbal Aggression (F)	
Gullible (F)	
Shy (F)	
Affectionate/Flirting (F)	

Notes: