

MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION APPLICATIONS:

TWILIGHT AND GREY'S ANATOMY

AS ANTI-FEMINIST MEDIA

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Over the summer I asked my fifteen-year-old cousin what books she had been reading. After being given a very excited description of *Twilight* by Stephenie Meyer (2005) as a better romance tale than “Romeo and Juliet” and then an intense description of the male hero as a sort of god among men who has swept my cousin off her feet, I picked up the series.

Twilight is the story of Bella Swan, a teenage girl who has just moved back to Forks, Washington to live with her father while her mother travels the country with her new husband. When she starts at her new high school, she is immediately the talk of the small town among the boys, except for one. Edward Cullen, a dark and brooding beautiful boy, seems to want nothing to do with her. But when Bella is put into harm’s way wandering down a dark alley, the boy magically appears out of nowhere to save her. Edward is not a normal boy, but rather a beautiful 104-year-old vampire stuck at the age of seventeen. His two sisters, two brothers, and parents are all vampires, but they’re good vampires because they do not eat people but only eat animals.

The story follows the development of Edward and Bella’s relationship. Bella is entranced by Edward’s beauty and powers of mind reading, speed, and strength, while Edward is interested in Bella for several reasons. First, Edward has the ability to read

minds, but Bella is the only person he has ever encountered who he cannot hear. This intrigues him and he tries to figure her out through her interactions with others. Second, he finds her clumsiness endearing and it creates in him a desire to protect her. Lastly, vampires are drawn to people by their scent, and Bella is particularly intoxicating. Even though it causes him physical pain to resist her, he forces himself to be around her because he is devoted to protecting her. When Bella's life is threatened again, this time by a group of nomadic vampires that hunt humans, Edward risks his life to save her.

Twilight is a typical story of young love that showcases a girl pining over a boy who is off limits, but its depiction of relationships is strange. In my article (2008) for "The Daily O'Collegian" reviewing *New Moon* (2006), the second book in the series, I made a statement about a series of events that took place in *Twilight* that compared Edward to the other male lead, Jacob: "And his [Jacob's] caring isn't restrictive or stalker like — watching somebody sleep is creepy and possessive, Edward, not romantic." In the story, Edward breaks into Bella's room and watches her sleep every night, and this begins months before he admits to his feelings for her or even acknowledges her as a friend. Edward is always very protective of what Bella does and where she goes, gets jealous, and is often very controlling. In *Eclipse* (2007), the third book in the series, Edward goes so far as to take apart Bella's truck so she is unable to see her friend Jacob. According to "Helpguide" (2001), a website about relationship violence, and the University of Buffalo Counseling services (2008), Edward's behavior is consistent with warning signs for an abusive relationship. Bella says repeatedly that all she wants is to be with Edward, when she's not around Edward she is thinking about him, and has no other goals outside of being with Edward.

This attitude disturbed me because I wondered what girls thought about this relationship and some of the more unhealthy aspects of it. My cousin, along with countless millions of girls who have read this *New York Times* bestselling series, is obsessed with Edward Cullen as the ideal boyfriend. She only wishes she could find someone as caring and devoted as him. When I mentioned to her that Edward has flaws and his behavior is controlling, she immediately dismissed my comment as not understanding him. The way she speaks of the character, as though he is a living and breathing person she knows personally, is very interesting, even if she is defending the character's questionable behavior. My cousin also stated her admiration for Bella. Due to these reactions, and my own misgivings about the series, I decided to study this book, along with another popular television series *Grey's Anatomy*, to see the way these two currently popular series depict women and relationships. I wanted to see if relationships were different or similar in representations between the series marketed to different age groups. I was also interested in evaluating what the dynamics of a television series, with multiple subplots and side characters, would look like compared to a first-person narrative book about one girl's relationship.

Purpose

In his article "From YouTube to YouNiversity," Henry Jenkins (2007) states, "we must utilize the media in order to understand it and adjust our discourse in order to be able to include it because it changes so rapidly" (p. 2). The media are constantly changing and evolving so we, as educators, need to stay as current as possible in what our students are immersing themselves in so we can better understand them. Studies done five or ten years ago become outdated quickly. In order to accurately depict and understand the

images young girls face, researchers need to immerse themselves in what the girls watch, see, read, and enjoy regularly. By choosing a *New York Times* bestselling book that is intensely popular now, I can examine the types of messages that these girls are being exposed to. Although the audience may take away different types of messages from these two forms Pungente, Duncan, and Anderson (2005) point out “the media construct versions of reality. Media messages come with observations, attitudes, and interpretations already built in, ideological and value messages already built in, and social implications stemming from media” (p. 151).

In the case of *Twilight*, which chronicles the relationship of a teenage girl with a paranormal being, not only are the roles of women discussed, but also the role of relationships. I intend to examine this book by using content analysis with a focus on the social roles of the characters. This method will allow me to see how the characters interact and what their behavior states about them to the audience. For example, are girls being given examples of healthy relationships? Do the images in the book depict realistic representations of the verisimilitude of the human condition in spite of the insertion of paranormal beings?

Popular TV shows are also influential in young adults' lives. The Emmy award winning television series *Grey's Anatomy* has been prided on their inclusion of multiple races. Matthew Fogel (2005) in the *New York Times* article “*Grey's Anatomy*’ Goes Colorblind” says, “*Grey's Anatomy*’ has differentiated itself by creating a diverse world of doctors – almost half the cast are men and women of color - and then never acknowledging it... When Ms. Rhimes wrote the pilot, she didn’t specify the characters’ ethnicities, so her casting process was wide open” (p. 1). The article describes how the

show is forward thinking because race does not play a huge role in who the characters are. Though their cultural backgrounds do come up occasionally, it is not the focus of the show. No one character is pigeon holed or defined by their race. If the film production avoids, and even ignores, the issue of race, how is gender represented? By using the same analysis as for the novel, I hope to ascertain the social roles the female characters play within the context of the show.

This analysis will discuss the images of women in the popular media, as well as understanding what is needed in media literacy for young people to have a critical reading of these representations. Stock characters, as defined by Dr. Wheeler (2009) from Carson-Newman College, are “a character type that appears repeatedly in a particular literary genre, one which has certain conventional attributes or attitudes.” These are sometimes referred to as archetypes, which Wheeler defines as “An original model or pattern from which other later copies are made, especially a character, an action, or situation that seems to represent common patterns of human life. Often, archetypes include a symbol, a theme, a setting, or a character that some critics think have a common meaning in an entire culture, or even the entire human race” (Wheeler, 2009). Female types of stock characters include “the ingénue, the damsel in distress” (Nationmaster Encyclopedia 2005), “the mother, the old maid” (Savitt 2009), and other easily recognizable female characters. Archetypes of female characters relate more to the values of Greek gods and goddesses as they are represented in literature. Eleanor Sullo (2002) describes how Athena represents strategists, Aphrodite represents the lover, and Hera is the wife. Several studies have been done about women’s representations in today’s media and the effect of commercials on young girls (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Cole

& Daniel, 2005; Durham, 2008; Gill, 2007; Meyers, 2008; Thornham, 2007), but no such examination of either *Twilight* or *Grey's Anatomy* has been done. Since media content is constantly changing, evaluation of media needs to be a constant process because fads and influences on young people are also changing causing research that was done a few years ago, such as Lauzen and Dozier's (2005) "Recognition and Respect Revisited: Portrayals of Age and Gender in Prime-Time Television" or Tagliamonte and Roberts' (2005) article "So Weird; So Cool, So Innovative: The Use of Intensifiers in the Television Series *Friends*," to become outdated. An examination of the most current media for young adults, specifically these two popular series, would prove beneficial for media literacy education because it gives parents and educators an opportunity to see what images are present today and update their understandings of the media in order to relate better to the next generation for educational purpose. Examining gender representation in current media that is popular with females between the ages of 16-24 is necessary to understand what messages are being presented to this audience. Identifying the characters as stock or archetypal characters will help educators to see the types of characters the audience is exposed to and how we can help students understand that as well.

By focusing on Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* (2005) and the television series *Grey's Anatomy* Season Two, about twenty hours of film, I hope to analyze how the female characters are represented, what roles they play, and what messages these images send to girls. I am also interested in assessing the different representations in a young adult book series versus a prime time television show. For example, the book is written in first-person rather than the third-person view of the television show. How does being

exposed to the description of characters' inner world directly in a novel compare to watching things happen to other people from a distance in a television show?

Research Questions

This study will contain a content analysis with a focus on social roles by examining two forms of media to determine the roles the female characters fill in the story and as representative examples of female behavior. These roles will be identified and analyzed to determine what niches the female characters fill in their world. It is important that the questions are broad enough to be used across the various forms of media while narrow enough to allow a comparison of the way the women are portrayed in each scenario. In order for this to be achieved, the questions will focus on the way the characters interact with others and how they develop relationships.

- What are the stereotypical, positive, or balanced representations of women?
- In what ways does the storyline showcase representations of gender?
- How are romantic relationships and sexuality portrayed?
- What are the implications for media literacy education?

These questions will require a detailed analysis of the characters' behavior and how they perceive each other. A comparison of the different forms of media and how the characters are represented, viewed, and utilized will also be analyzed.

Research Methodology

Berger (1998) defines a social role as:

A persistent pattern of conduct and behavior that is connected to the individual's position in some social structure or organization. A social role can be thought of as a link between a person's personality structure and the social structure (p. 46).

Berger (1998) describes the social role analysis research method which examines the way in which fictional characters interact to determine what role they fill socially and professionally. For example, he had a class watch episodes of a soap opera in order to identify the different roles by examining characters' occupations, status, counter roles that complemented individual characters like doctor's patient, privileges, obligations, how other characters perceived them, how they perform around other characters and vice-versa, conflict between two roles the same character plays such as doctor and mother, characters' values, and props and costumes that help visually define the character (p. 48-52). Through identification and diagramming, the students were assigned to document the roles of each character and the counterroles of other characters, thus revealing each characters' social stratification and personalities. Social role analysis analyzes the content of the behavior displayed by people in a given situation, which is helpful for me to analyze the images of women represented in the media. An examination of the female characters' behavior would determine what roles are depicted and if they are stereotypical, realistic or balanced, or positive representations of women.

This analysis will be conducted through a feminist lens. Denski (2002), as quoted in Dwight Brooks's article, "Race, Gender, and Media Literacy in the Malltplex," states, "a critical pedagogy of media education combines the realm of media practice with a theoretically informed critical analysis of media institutions, practices, and texts" (p. 3). This study will incorporate this principle by conducting a feminist social role analysis through a literary and critical analysis of the content with specific focus on the characters' interactions with others and the plot.

Season Two of *Grey's Anatomy* and the book *Twilight* will be examined, and coding will be used to identify roles the characters play, how the characters demonstrate this, representations of healthy and unhealthy relationships, whether or not specific phrases are used repeatedly by the characters, and what all of this implies for the content of the work. The two mediums will then be evaluated against one another to determine similarities and/or differences in representations of relationships and representations of women. Discussion of the differences in the way each medium is utilized will be considered while analyzing the data collected, especially since the different forms of media may have different effects on the audience in terms of their involvement with the story. For example, *Twilight* is written in the first-person perspective of the heroine while *Grey's Anatomy* is a third-person representation of the characters with an occasional commentary allowing insight into the mind of the female protagonist. This may produce a difference in the audience's feelings due to the degree of separation they experience with the content. I will also include some frequency counts of the material such as the number of times a particular phrase is used by the characters. In this way, I hope to provide a triangulation of two mediums and methods.

Significance of the Study

Nelson (2007) says, "When it becomes acceptable to treat people badly on the basis of prejudiced stereotypes about their race, gender, and class, it is African-Americans, women, and the poor who have the most to lose" (p. 2). It is important for researchers, parents, and educators to stay current with fads amongst youth because it allows us to stay connected with the children and make thoughtful observations of the content and implications the media have. According to a study quoted in the journal

Pediatrics by the time adolescents have graduated high school they have watched 15,000 hours of television (2001, p. 2). The article also advises “Pediatricians and the broadcast industry should support further research into the impact of sexual content in the media on children’s and adolescents’ knowledge and behavior” (p. 4).

Specifically girls are given so many representations of women and sexuality that being able to decipher them all has become a lifelong task. bell hooks (2000) made the observation in *Feminism is For Everyone* that young girls need positive and strong female role models:

When contemporary feminist movement was at its peak, sexist biases in books for children were critiqued. Books “for free children” were written. Once we ceased being critically vigilant, the sexism began to reappear. Children’s literature is one of the most crucial sites for feminist education for critical consciousness precisely because beliefs and identities are still being formed. And more often than not narrow-minded thinking about gender continues to be the norm on the playground. Public education for children has to be a place where feminist activities continue to do the work of creating an unbiased curriculum. (p. 23)

I believe that as educators we have the responsibility to educate girls about themselves and the difference between fantasy and mutual respect. It is our responsibility to identify what models of gender and sexuality are being presented and to help debunk myths and encourage discourse and mutual respect between the sexes.

By examining what the media are saying in two popular and current formats, conversations about gender and sexuality can start to happen. For example, by looking at the way romantic relationships and sexuality—important to youth’s life—are portrayed in

Twilight and *Grey's Anatomy*, we as researchers and educators can get an idea about the type of representations of women girls are subject to and what we can do to help identify positive and negative representations and messages. Schwarz (2005) states "Perceptions of media literacy depend on who is doing the perceiving" (p.12). This concept is important for analyzing the data and will be addressed in this study. However, According to the Committee on Public Education in the article "Sexuality, Contraception, and the Media" (2001) television is a "super peer" normalizing sexuality while adolescents get the blame. They go on to state that pediatricians should encourage conversations with parents as well as safe sex programs in school and media (p. 3). This is one example of how the media affects viewers. By examining what the media is telling young people we can be better prepared to answer questions and set up opportunities for discourse about sexuality and media evaluation. However, none of this can be done without first identifying and evaluating the popular media that is present now. Brooks (2002) states, "Critical media pedagogy allows both students and teachers to explore relationships between the lessons learned in the classroom and the lives they live outside the classroom" (p. 15). What better way to connect with students than to evaluate the things they are interested in and give them the tools to evaluate it critically?

This study will allow for the identification of types of representations of women in media through their interactions and relationships. Without first identifying and understanding the problem and its implications we as parents, educators, researchers, and citizens will not be able to move forward to create a more media savvy and well-rounded society. This study will help us identify these current problems and set goals for future research as well as develop solutions to these problems for educators and students.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Creating a study that focuses on gender representation is a broad area with subjects ranging from feminism to sexuality to race and finally media literacy education. First, I will identify images of women as they have appeared in literature and media throughout the ages. This review will include studies done by others about gender representations in the media and what others have found. Included is feminist literature so that the reader can understand my perspective and what sort of lens I am using to evaluate the media I have consulted. Sexuality in media will also be looked at because I feel that it is important in the young adult world and should be understood and evaluated since the content deals with relationships and sexual practices. Some definitions of Young Adult literature and content will also be provided. Lastly, literature correlating my educational philosophies and a look at media literacy education will be examined.

I have consulted all of these elements in order to give myself a basis in the research and ideas that are currently popular among my peers. I hope that through the integration of these ideas I will be able to assess the data in an unbiased way that will provide answers to the state of media representations of gender and the message it gives to teens.

Gender Representations and Archetypes

David Herring describes Northrop Frye's definition of archetypes as "a symbol, usually an image, which recurs often enough in literature to be recognizable as an element of one's literary experience as a whole" (Herring, 2008). These archetypes, or stock characters, can be seen throughout history, and psychologist Carl Jung even developed theories about archetypes. Jung's definition of archetypes is "the observation of differing but repeating patterns of thought and action that re-appear time and again across people, countries and continents" (Jung, 1964). These images include family representations such as the father as stern, the wise old man, and the nurturing mother, among others. They are common conventions that can be seen throughout social structures and thus throughout literature and media.

Some of examples of these types of characters and representations can be dated back centuries. In the Greek and Roman plays there were images such as the wise old man, the jester or fool, and the harsh wife (Webb, 2002). *Commedia dell'arte* in Italy is an Italian comedy done with masks that portray characters like the miser, the lovers, the gossip, etc. (USQ, 2005; Book, 2000). This form of theater was done with masks and costumes so that the audience would be able to easily recognize the supporting characters as the classic representations.

These stock characters have evolved and expanded throughout the ages as the arts have progressed. Falstaff and Mercutio, for example, are examples of the jester or the fool. Joey from *Friends* could also fall in this category. The old man in *Oedipus Rex* is a stock character that represents a direct archetype discussed by Jung. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* contain lots of images of supporting stock characters including the knight, the whore, the old woman, etc. These images have progressed into film,

television, and literature today to the point that they have become norms, or tropes. The images are so common that a website (tvtropes.org) was created devoted entirely to the character, plot, and genre tropes that exist in media. Whether you call them stereotypes, archetypes, tropes, or stock, these plot and character devices have been present in Western literature, art, and media for thousands of years.

These generalities, although useful for an audience to quickly understand a character's purpose, are not ideal or deep representations of people. In fact, their continued use today can be harmful for those seeking equal and real representation in the media. In the article "Sapphires, Spitfires, Sluts and Superbitches: Aframericans and Latinas in Contemporary American Film" Freydberg identifies (2004) stereotypes according to race including prostitutes, whores, and bitches (p. 266). Freydberg says, "whether the image that a stereotype projects is positive or negative, however, it always limits the range of human behavior and emotions that viewers are willing to ascribe to a stereotyped group. In the language of fictive or imaginative media, stereotype creates 'flat' characters" (p. 265). Sexism and racism are still prevalent in media. In a study done by Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005) about the use of intensifiers in the series *Friends*, they say "the correlation of women with intensifiers may also be the result of the fact that women use more emotional language than men" (p. 289). Even the use of language is gendered. In *Brave Dames and Wimpettes* Isaacs (1999) identifies the differences in these two archetypes of women: the archetypal female heroine who is strong and independent (p. 12) versus the wimpette, an illusion of strength that is generally mooning over a man and/or participating in subterfuge of some kind (p. 19-20). Both of these images are still prominent in media today, but at times it is difficult to

identify the wimpette. Even Isaacs identifies sections in her chapters for “Semibravre Dames and Near-Wimpettes” (p. 38, 59, 92, 114) for those in the gray area between the two extremes. Bird (2008) says:

Over the last 20 years or so, feminist media criticism has moved past earlier, simplistic studies of media imagery—the kind of study that described media portrayals and discussed whether they reflected reality or perpetuated stereotypes. . . . as more women take part in the production of media—as scriptwriters, directors, producers, and actors—we see the opportunity to celebrate some of the huge advances that have been gained in the representation of women. (p. 202)

I think this statement is premature as the next generation does not necessarily have the tools to evaluate media critically and thus making content analysis an important aspect to be explored. And although the media has more series headlining women like *Grey’s Anatomy*, *Ally McBeal*, and *Sex and the City* there are still negative stereotypes of all women. Byerly (2008) analyzed data from the Global Media Marketing Project which studied women in the news in 1995, 2000, and 2005 and found that in each year around 20% of the stories featured women and in most of them they were portrayed as victims, mothers, or wives (p. 259). Stereotypical images of women, both positive and negative, still are very prominent in the media today. Conducting this examination of characters’ representations will benefit academia in that it identifies stereotypes of women that are blanketed across the board, regardless of race.

By looking some of the media analysis that has been done recently, we can see that other people have analyzed stereotypes and messages being given to the audience. In *Women, Feminism, and Media*, Thornham (2007) takes a look at the television series *Sex*

and the City. The protagonist of the series, Carrie, leaves a final voice-over about how true happiness can only be achieved through oneself and Thornham believes this is a post-feminist attitude of independence (Thornham, 2007, p. 80-81). Through this analysis we see the role this television series has on society through its post-feminist attitudes of identity being developed through oneself and not being interdependent on others, in opposition to the popular motif of the fairytale princess who can only achieve happiness through Prince Charming. Carrie says the important part of a relationship is yourself, promoting an idea through the message of the narrative for popular entertainment. However, Thornham goes on to point out that although these narratives push us forward in feminist thinking, for example, classic and conventional ideas still remain that should be pushed through. Comparatively, Freydburg (2004) talks about racial stereotypes in media, specifically surrounding Blacks and Latinas as “exaggerated images” of prostitutes, concubines, whores, and bitches (p.266). Freydburg then goes on to discuss images of women throughout films such as *Boyz N The Hood*, *Shaft*, *The Attack*, and *The Color Purple*. She later brings up more issues about Hollywood and the role of colored actors and actresses when she says, “Films have long ceased to be innocuous entertainment. ... Hollywood designs and distributes entertainment for the dominant culture. Art has been abused for the sake of maintaining the status quo” (p. 282). Although this focuses on the political nature of Hollywood, it shows that the messages the media send are biased in their fictional representations, specifically of stereotypes. By analyzing the actors and the roles they play, Freydburg has completed a sort of content analysis to determine that Hollywood is not as equal as some would like

us to think and there is still a long way to go. For a final example of media evaluation, Brooks and Hebert (2006) discuss race representations in the show *Ally McBeal*:

Thus the portrayal of Ling Woo, Lucy Liu's character in the television series *Ally McBeal*, garnered much scholarly attention. Although Woo breaks the submissive china doll stereotype, she is the epitome of the stereotypical dragon lady when she growls like an animal or enters a scene to music associated with the Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard of Oz*. (p. 302)

Through looking at the content of the show, specifically surrounding the music that is played during the character's entrance, it is easy to see that the "dragon lady" stereotype has been fulfilled and that negative stereotypes do exist, thus proliferating the need for content analysis to be an ongoing endeavor in any media evaluation.

Feminist Literature

"Like many heresies, feminism is often attacked by those who understand it least" (Johnson, 2005, p. 100). Feminism often carries with it stereotypes of male bashing and other negative connotations that descend even to the hygiene of the people who proclaim to practice in this ideology. Twenge (2006) in *Generation Me* states, "Young women believed in feminist values but rejected the label 'feminist' (prompting the frequent statement 'I'm not a feminist, but...,' after which the young woman makes a strong statement about equality between the sexes)" (p. 190). However, in the context of looking at media for representations of women as equal and independent, a liberal feminist perspective proves to allow analysis of the content in a critical way. Johnson states, "The liberal method (of feminism) is to persuade people to change by challenging stereotypes and demanding equal access and treatment" (p. 114). Understanding these

perspectives are important when trying to apply similar principles to the evaluation of the media being presented in this thesis.

But feminism is more than just representations of equality and independence among women. Violence is another important issue, especially in regards to women and identity. When women are portrayed as weak and taken advantage of in that way, it negatively effects society and promoting these ideals. hooks (2000) points out the role violence and domination play: “In a culture of domination everyone is socialized to see violence as an acceptable means of social control” (p. 64). Durham (2008) also recognizes this fact, specifically in the media, writing, “It’s important to recognize that media-generated sexual violence against girls highlight and perpetuates a well-established system of brutalization” (p. 149). These images of woman as subordinate continue to foster feelings of inadequacy among women and superiority by men. Domination and violence are not the answer when it comes to dealing with male/female relations but rather they are a symptom in a problem that must be addressed by the public at large in order for these images to change.

Keeping these definitions of images in mind as I evaluate the media will help me to keep my focus centered on equality through character representations and encounters with violence. Feminism is not just about changing the system, but bell hooks (2000) believes it’s about love: “With that awareness comes the understanding that love has the power to transform us, giving us the strength to oppose domination. To choose feminist politics, then, is a choice to love” (p. 104). Choosing love opposes domination, violence, and inequality through the very nature of the caring and giving spirit of the emotion. But more than love, feminism is about critically thinking and evaluating the world around us.

But how can we apply these thoughts to our practice? By critically evaluating media, and encouraging students to do the same, we are proliferating a feminist movement that supports a wealth of knowledge represents both genders in a positive light. When talking about literature, hooks (2000) says, “Children’s literature is one of the most crucial sites for feminist education for critical consciousness precisely because beliefs and identities are still being formed. And more often than not narrow-minded thinking about gender continues to be the norm” (2000, p. 23). For me, feminism can be defined through the literature of others. Johnson states, “The liberal method (of feminism) is to persuade people to change by challenging stereotypes and demanding equal access and treatment” (2005, p. 114). This signifies that women need to challenge stereotypes and should be treated equally in their representations. But feminism is more than just equality. Tavis (2002) says:

And as long as women focus exclusively inward on their feelings and their pasts, as long as they are lulled by the mindless if soothing hum of psychobabble, they will lack the knowledge and will to find solutions beyond the self -- and to reframe the conversation away from "us versus them," and forward to "us and them." (p. 7)

Yes, there should be equal representations, but this cannot simply be about choice or “us versus them.” Women need to be given the tools to think critically. We have to look toward the future to find solutions to support this strength and independence we have developed. Kamen (2000) in the book *Her Way* states, “Instead of viewing feminism’s purpose as telling young women what to think, they value it for teaching young women

how to think critically” (p. 189). Critical thinking, understanding of self, balance, equality, and the ability to make independent choices are key components to feminism.

With these thoughts in mind, I would like to create an operational definition of feminism as the equal treatment and representation of men and women working in cooperation to achieve a goal where each has a choice to do what is best for his or her self and achieve goals individual to them. These choices are not just the actions of a person or character, but the choices that define them as who they are. Independence and strength, for example, can be utilized in ways that are pro-feminist or anti-feminist. Someone may choose to follow gender roles that have been passed down through the ages, but if they do that with pride and of their own volition, without the coaxing of others for example, then their independence can be seen through their actions of responsibility and desire to fulfill a needed role in a domestic unit. Strength to stand up for this conviction and understand they are doing this because they choose to and not because they have to is something else I would like to incorporate in my definition. So, equality through choices and representations as needed by the individual to establish independence, solidarity, and strength within a person, regardless of gender, is what feminism is to me, and what I will be using throughout this study. Distinguishing representations of both men and women, and feminism, are necessary for our continued understanding of gender roles so that we can all continue to move forward in a more cooperative and egalitarian society.

Sexuality Literature

“Sexuality should be safe, self-directed, and free of violence and coercion. Girls need to have social and cultural support for their sexual growth and well-being”

(Durham, 2008, p. 205). Sexuality is an important element of development from an adolescent to an adult, and important element that many have sought to exploit while others seek to understand. Opinions vary about the degrees to which people should get involved with sexual education of youth. Durham also states the importance of adult involvement in sexual identity development:

It is usually important for adults to take some responsibility for guiding children and adolescents to adulthood. We need to be able to recognize and understand the potential dangers and problems in our social and cultural environment—problems that need to be analyzed, addressed, and even, at times, policed, in the interests of children’s basic well-being and safety. (p. 36)

As educators, we are adults that spend thousands of hours surrounded by youth in various levels of social, physical, and sexual development. Not only do we have to understand that to understand them, but we have to be willing to help support them in this growth in any way possible. In this study, it’s important to understand the role sexuality plays for youth and how people try to guide that development.

In one of the interviews conducted in *Generation Me*, Twenge’s participant makes an important observation: “Lisa concludes, ‘And that’s what sex is today to so many teenagers, not that big a deal’” (165). But sex and sexuality development is a big deal, especially in what it means for women. Carpenter (2005) states:

More often than not, experts, scholars, and lay observers have seen sexual activity and virginity loss among young women as problematic while considering such activity to be normal for young men. ... It also stems from the persistent belief

that women are fundamentally less sexual than men, a view that inevitably suggests that sexual women are deviant and dangerous. (p. 6)

Sexuality can be used to stigmatize women in negative ways by their peers and authoritative figures, as can be seen by the different images of virginity loss between the sexes described here. One is a hero while the other a deviant. Durham (2008) discusses what drives these sorts of myths:

But myths, as we define them in media studies, are the *dominant* ideas at a particular point in time—the ideas that are in the best interests of the most powerful groups in society. ... today, in an era of global neoliberal capitalism, myths need to shore up the financial interests of the superrich: they need to keep the machinery of capital moving. (p. 188)

If we can keep the kids and adults spending money in sexual education, abstinence education, magazines, or other tools and sources for information, that is good for business and capitalism. Companies are not interested in the development of children or the messages they present, but about the bottom line. We, as adults and educators, have the power to help youth navigate these messages. These mixed messages can be used against children who are often navigating this new territory without much help, as Durham points out:

When media literacy groups or advocacy projects point to the risks inherent in the explicit sexual representations available to children, they are dismissed as killjoys, eggheads, or closet conservatives intent on censorship and moral policing. The bottom line: we live in an increasingly sex-saturated society, while lacking the ability to talk about children and sex in measured or meaningful ways. (p. 51)

It is important for educators and parents to take any steps they can to debunk myths about love, relationships, sexuality, etc. for youth because it could be detrimental to their health, safety, and overall well-being.

Many articles have been written chronicling the importance of discourse on sexuality: Lyons (1991) “Our Young People Need More Education About Sexuality, and the Media Should Take Some Responsibility” discusses the importance of information about safe sex (Lyons, 1991); Ferguson (2008) states in “Youth Bashing Gets Old” that pregnancy, suicide, and substance abuse are lower in this generation of kids but there are still risk factors that should be addressed (Ferguson, 2008); Fleming (2007) wrote an article (“Critical Thinking About Sex, Love and Romance in the Mass Media: Media Literacy Applications”) about how the prince charming motif should be examined and critiqued (Fleming, 2007); and Lamb’s (2008) “The ‘Right’ Sexuality for Girls” discusses how the media affects girls and that they should take less passive roles in relationships (Lamb, 2008). All of these articles are discussing that things need to be done about this stage in adolescent development. Carpenter (2005) makes the point that there is an increase in sexual behavior from previous decades (p. 207). As educators and adults, we have the opportunity to help make this transition from child to adult as smooth as possible.

Specifically surrounding sexuality, educators have the opportunity to open up conversations about health and safety. In the book *The Geographies of Girlhood Identities In-Between*, methods of setting up discussion are brought forth by several different authors:

Educators can and should construct a discourse of sexuality that eliminates the sexual double standard and acknowledges that the desires of young women are as strong as the desires of young men, while recognizing that AIDS is a very real threat to the lives of adolescents. In this way, educators can begin to build a viable path through sexual and psychosocial development for all their students. (Liston & Moore-Rahimi, 2005, p. 225)

This method of discourse would debunk the myths surrounding women as not having sexual desires equivalent to men and the myths about female sexuality experience as deviant. Myths surrounding beauty are another field that needs addressing. Durham states, “one concern is the marketing rhetoric that forces Western, Caucasian standards of beauty on non-Western girls and women, e.g. the bleaching cream campaigns that stress ‘whitening’ and ‘brightening’ as beauty goals that improve on dark skin” (p. 106). By making this the norm, we continue to instill narrow-minded ideals on a very diverse society. Discussions of safety and health can then be brought forth in a safe and understanding way that would allow youth to not feel ashamed, or seek answers solely from the media or peers. It would also help the males to understand the females, as is described in another article from *The Geographies of Girlhood*, “A curriculum that grew from students’ own words and understandings of what it means to be female could provide a powerful vehicle to move into larger social issues surrounding gender, heterosexuality, and race” (Bettis, Jordan, & Montgomery, 2005, p. 81).

These conversations and opportunities for growth are important for the continued development of the students as well as developing a society that is safe and equal for both genders. Durham (2008) states, “The sex that sells is corrupted version of human

sexuality, because it denies and negates so many aspects of it, and because sexual ethics are not even considered” (p. 220). More to the point, Stringer (1997) discusses the role of sexual images for adolescents when she states:

The universal struggles related to sexuality include maintaining one’s own identity in intimate relationships, resisting peer pressure, developing moral codes, and integrating messages about sex from diverse sources. Resolving these issues strengthens the link between psychological well-being and interpersonal attraction, helping us to bypass unrealistic standards. (86)

Debunking these myths about sexuality and relationships is important in taking the next steps to further social equity among all races, genders, etc. It is also important for this study to understand how sexuality development effects students, teachers, and parents because in order to determine whether or not messages are being given to youth from the media about sexuality I first needed to understand where they are getting their information and what the involvement is, in a general case, of parents and other authority figures.

Young Adults and Young Adult Literature

Young adult literature is a genre within fiction specifically targeted at children between the ages of 12-18. Although cross genre content is present in the young adult section, fantasy and romance intermingled both within the books and on the shelves, it is specifically aimed at this age group through the age of the protagonists. Most young adult books are about young adults dealing with serious issues such as relationships, rape, suicide, etc. Even fantasy and science fiction books in the genre talk about issues such as

coming of age and responsibility in a fantastic world of make believe. But what else has been said about this genre, its readers, and the psychology behind it?

Adolescents are constantly negotiating their behavior as they shift between the different “worlds” of school, peer interaction, family, and sometimes work. Phelan, Davidson, and Yu (1998) discuss students as “mediator and integrator” (p. 4) between these worlds. Brown and Knowles (2007) identify that most young adolescents feel like “They’re sure nobody has ever felt the way they are feeling” (p.2). Adolescents are thus being forced to mediate different social planes while feeling isolated and alone. It is thus the responsibility of the adults in the adolescent’s life to make them feel comfortable, give them someone to talk or a venue to get help, and help guide them. Understanding this aspect of adolescents is mirrored in much of the young adult literature that guides readers through the ups and downs of adolescent problems.

Young adult literature is a relatively new genre, since adolescence itself did not get labeled until 1905 by G. Stanley Hall (Shadiow, 1992). Stringer’s (1997) book *Conflict and Connection: The Psychology of Young Adult Literature* has a theme of exploring “the universal themes of adolescence through young adult literature and psychological studies in order to counteract our culture’s ambiguity and negative stereotypes about teenagers” (p. xi). Stover (1996) made a comprehensive list about some of the themes in young adult literature, including: courage, community, power, communication, expression, patterns, change, proof, time, structure, design, adaptation, survival, trends, exploration, balance, justice, extinction, cultures, style, conflict, truth, beginnings, symbols, energy, relationships, forces, progress, independence, honor, environments, immigration, origins, war, influences, confrontation, freedom, color,

space, frontiers, boundaries, beliefs, order, sources, rights, cycles, behavior, tradition, and home (147-176). This list and the stereotypes of teenagers all work together to describe a demographic of people that are struggling to balance who they are, who they are becoming, and what they want to be. Through cathartic involvement in literature, they can learn about themselves and others, as well as about the world they live in. Shadiow (1992) says:

books are part of the larger social contexts of the times. Whether the books promote, report, or challenge the context, they become part of the conversation about what it means to live and grow up in an external world that is often as confusing as one's internal world. (62)

Not only are the books signs of the norms, questions, and desires of the readers, but they also are historical records of the social, historical, sociological, and political contexts in which a book is written. However, the verisimilitude of the human condition in works decades and centuries old still have something to tell us about ourselves and the world we live in.

This literature is very personal to the young adult experience, but it is important to note that in order for these works to have meaning for the kids they not only have to have a connection with the work, but with the teacher. Connecting with students is essential in any grade level in any content area for learning to be meaningful and students to feel comfortable with discussing these sorts of topics. Math and science even contain elements in which students demonstrate their skills, and if not in a supportive environment they could feel foolish in front of their teachers or peers for making mistakes. Sensitive issues take place in science classrooms that may contradict religious

philosophies, but if a student connects with the teacher, things run smoother as the student is invested in the material. Likewise, transferable skills of reading, comprehension, vocabulary, communication, and human condition issues arise regardless of the content that is being taught. For learning to really be struck home, it is essential for connections to be created in the classroom (Beattie, 2002; Wortham, 2003; Bergen, 2007; Hartnett, 2007; Doll, 1995; Palmer, 2007; Hasebe-Ludt, 2005; Bettis, 2003; Twenge, 2006; and Johnson, 2005).

Media Literacy Education

Thoman (1999) defines media literacy as:

The ability to create personal meaning from verbal and visual symbols we take in every day through television, radio, computers, newspapers and magazines, and of course, advertising. It's the ability to choose and select, the ability to challenge and question, the ability to *be conscious* about what's going on around us—and not be passive and vulnerable. (p. 50)

According to this definition, media literacy is about critical evaluation of the media through being conscious consumers of media. This is not just about children, but about the entire population regardless of age, class, etc. McBrien (2005) points out “Without instruction, news viewers and readers tend to accept news stories at face value; they read them as reality” (p. 29). Students, who are younger and less experienced than most adults, need to be guided into the concept of not taking information, specifically entertainment media, at face value because they can be influenced by the messages the media delivers. However, unless educators give them the tools to evaluate media critically students will grow up with a naïveté about the world around them. According

to a study quoted in the journal *Pediatrics* by the time adolescents have graduated high school they have watched 15,000 hours of television (2001, p.2). The article also advises “Pediatricians and the broadcast industry should support further research into the impact of sexual content in the media on children’s and adolescents’ knowledge and behavior” (p. 4). As the media continue to grow and spread their influence from televisions in grocery stores to ads in school buildings about milk and other products, media literacy education is essential to create a well-adjusted citizenry, especially in this age of globalization. Television and other technologies are used to represent other cultures, agendas, and ideas and without the proper tools for coping with this new environment students who will grow up someday and hold jobs and positions of power will not have the necessary cognitive tools and skills to evaluate media critically and analyze where the message is coming from and what they should take away from the message themselves. Pungente, Duncan, and Anderson (2005) reaffirm this idea by pointing out “the media construct versions of reality. Media messages come with observations, attitudes, and interpretations already built in, ideological and value messages already built in, and social implications stemming from media” (p. 151).

This type of education consists of critical analysis and evaluation of media in all forms: print, photography, advertising, television, film, internet, games, etc. Media literacy education, as described by Semali (2005), “uses critical pedagogical tools to help students interpret the layered meanings embedded in the stories they read and the characters they encounter in media texts (fiction or nonfiction). Also it enables learners to question the intentions of the producer, writer, and distributor, as well as the larger social context” (p. 41). Dissecting media is at times like reading hieroglyphics from

Egypt, yet no Rosetta stone exists to provide us with a translation or identify the bias of the makers. As educators, we have to learn the tools to evaluate media ourselves and pass them on to the next generation in order to create a critical thinking citizenry. These tools can be taught and implemented with students across the content areas and throughout their education.

Hobbs (2005) wrote an article about media literacy across the content areas. Her findings included applications of media literacy in different formats across the curriculum including: attitudes and behaviors derived from media in health classes (p. 77), critical-thinking skills in social studies due to media and source evaluation (p. 78), identifying social and cultural changes brought about by media (p. 79), and analysis and interpretation of messages in an English class (p. 79). She observed that students were more talkative when popular culture was attached to discussion (p. 79). When media literacy education is applied to a classroom the kids are thusly more engaged and articulate because the teacher has connected education with something they directly care about and are influenced by. This concept goes into Hobbs's next idea: creation of media. She says, "an increasingly prominent method of instruction in English education emphasizes the use of media and technology tools for *representing ideas in verbal, visual, or graphic forms* for the purpose of self-expression and communication" (p. 82), especially since "students get little time to engage in critical thinking about media messages or to create their own messages" (p. 94). Lastly, the importance of the inclusion of this type of education is that it allows students to "reach their conclusion on how to fully participate as individuals, citizens and consumers in a media-saturated society" (p. 92).

For the purpose of this study, learning to evaluate the content of a work, regardless of type of media formats used, is necessary for students to identify inaccurate representations of people and negative examples or role models. Without media literacy education this study could not be completed.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

“If enough people think studying the media is a waste of time, then the media themselves can seem less influential” (Douglas, 1994, p. 11). As previously discussed, media studies are important for educators to better understand and connect with their students. By the time adolescents graduate high school they have watched over 15,000 hours of television and pediatricians believe that their consumption of media is directly related to their ability to adjust and have realistic expectations about sexuality and other subjects (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2001, p. 3). Media analysis is not only good for educators, but for children and adolescents as well. Keeping this in mind, conducting a content analysis that could be replicated as a classroom assignment to help students evaluate media would help fulfill some of the concerns of these doctors.

This study has incorporated two different types of media: a novel and a television show. A content analysis, conducted according to the steps provided in *Media and Communication Research Methods* by Berger (2000, p. 184) and focusing on social roles, took place in both areas. Berger suggests the researcher develop a hypothesis of the content, explain the investigation, offer a definition for the topic, explain the sample, explain units of analysis, describe the classification system, determine a coding

system, test for interceding reliability, use this system, analyze data, and interpret results (2000, p. 186).

My hypothesis for this study is that there are both anti-feminist messages and inherent flaws in stock characters that are detrimental to female representations in media. In order to establish this, I decided to examine a widely popular television series, as witnessed by the numbers of viewers, and a *New York Times* bestselling book, another quantifiable representation of popularity. According to Nielsen ratings, *Grey's Anatomy* consistently wins the number one scripted show position between all demographics of adults 18-54 (Gorman and Seidman, 2009). The final episode of 2006 received approximately 22.5 million viewers (Nielsen Ratings, 2006). *Twilight* has sold over forty-two million copies (Acocella, 2009, p. 2). The present study is different from any other study in that no one has examined either *Grey's Anatomy* or *Twilight* through media literacy. Durham (2008) states:

But myths, as we define them in media studies, are the *dominant* ideas at a particular point in time—the ideas that are in the best interests of the most powerful groups in society. ... today, in an era of global neoliberal capitalism, myths need to shore up the financial interests of the superrich: they need to keep the machinery of capital moving. (p. 188)

Television and books are looking to make money, and they reiterate the popular themes of the time. By examining them, we can see the types of messages they send to people, which both reiterates norms the entity believes are true as well as encouraging viewers to mirror the behavior, even if it was not necessarily a norm. Both the television series and the book are widely popular in American society today, and with the above statement,

one would assume that is both because of the norms that it demonstrates through its character representations and for monetary gain. Both of these examples carry a lot of capital with them as movies, video games, and spin off television series that grow from the original source. Examining these two works let me see what some youth are immersed in and gave me material to analyze types of messages that these works may be giving to youth.

For both studies I identified key female characters and determine whether or not they fulfill a stereotype of female representation and what that stereotype is. Stereotype definitions have come from several sources about literary archetypes (Jung, 1964; Myss, 2007) and my own knowledge of literary evaluation from my undergraduate studies of English literature. These archetype characters that have developed into stock characters and tropes for media will be identified according to the behavior they display in the literature and within the confines of the television show. Body language, camera angles, and dialogue were evaluated to determine which stereotype they may be fulfilling and what evidence in the character's persona reinforces that this is, in fact, a stock character being used. All of the characters are complex characters, and their full character will be discussed in a character analysis, however, they all maintain stigmas of a certain plot dynamic that they need to fulfill by filling in the required stock character archetype for the show/book. By examining the characters in their entirety and then pointing out specific episodes in which the characters reveal their purpose to the plot, I hope the content analysis shows the types of women that are being represented and whether or not the use of the stock character detracts from the female character's persona, or negates

some of the breakthroughs the individual female has made by placing her in the role of a stereotypical representation.

Content analysis was used according to Berger (1998) and classified according to scenes in which characters reveal key aspects of themselves: who the characters are as people and as representatives of humanity. Scenes that reveal the personality of the characters according to their social roles will be defined as 1) scenes involving key plot points, 2) scenes in which dialogue about the character's inner feelings are discussed, and 3) scenes in which other characters reference the key character the study focused on. As someone who has read the entire *Twilight* series and written article reviews for a newspaper, along with seeing every episode of *Grey's Anatomy*, the extra knowledge I possess about the characters helped me to evaluate and narrow down the representations of the characters. The key characters were then identified as representing a television trope or stereotype. The categories were emergent and determined while viewing the episodes and reading the book in order to fairly analyze what the character's function is at a specific time. Scenes in which they represent this trope or denounce it were then coded and analyzed. By looking solely at the manifest content of these two works, and not considering the events that take place out of the space and time of these works (with the exception of explaining key plot points covered previously in *Grey's Anatomy*), a thorough and rigorous look at what is actually there and what messages are present in the actions and interactions of the characters was completed.

For the novel, I read through the novel and coded it as I found phrases that are repetitive, such as physical descriptions of characters and their actions or commonly used words. This included phrases like references to beauty, character interactions, and the

inner monologue the reader gets of Bella Swan. This provided numerical data of how often certain phrases are used, emotions in the audience that could be evoked, and what the main character, Bella, focuses on, specifically surrounding her interactions with the male lead, Edward. I also identified actions that take place in the novel that are pivotal to the plot and understanding the relationship Bella has with Edward. These scenes were then analyzed. The interactions and repetitive phrases helped in identifying the ways Bella fits into a stereotype and any discrepancies from that stereotype.

For the television series, all 27 episodes of season 2, over 20 hours of footage, were watched and analyzed. The female characters were identified according to a stereotype and specific scenes and/or episodes in which they fulfill or denounce these stereotypes were analyzed and coded. Each character was analyzed throughout the series and each has a couple of episodes that focus on that individual which contains quantifiable data. Scenes that feature the specific characters were coded according to 1) their interactions with others, 2) their behavior, 3) their body language, and 4) the dialogue that took place. This allowed for multiple instances for the characters to represent themselves as who they are and their function in the work. By defining the coding in this way, I hope to be able to have confirmability and reliability between the two subjects.

For the book series, types of interactions I looked at were times when Bella is saved by a male character, things she does when around a male character like playing with her hair or doing dishes, things Bella says out loud and in her internal monologue about other characters but specifically Edward, how their relationships play out such as how often they kiss, circumstances surrounding when they touch, etc. Then, I analyzed

a list of television tropes and stock characters to place Bella in a particular role, thus identifying the stereotypical representation of a woman, and wrote down things like the number of times things happen, such as how many times she is saved by another character, to affirm this trope. This also allowed me to add specific plot points in which her gender and social roles play out. Lastly, I analyzed and coded how her romantic relationship took place through counting the number of times romantic interactions occurred and the circumstances surrounding them. This helped me see whether or not Bella was the aggressor in the encounter, whether or not someone pulled back from the situation, and the ways in which the romance played out between the couple. For example, Edward pulls away from Bella because he is scared he is going to hurt her, but it also demonstrates control he has over her and over the situation. At the end, I counted up the occurrences to analyze what exactly happens to the character, and how often, to accurately analyze whether this character spends a predominant amount of time as a stereotype or trope.

When I viewed the television series, I had ideas in mind for what I was looking for because of the coding system I used for *Twilight*. I knew I wanted to look at how the characters are portrayed through their interactions, the plot developments, their dialogue, and other visual cues. After viewing the series the first time I placed several characters into stock character definitions and then viewed the series again to find specific episodes in which to code where these definitions could be seen clearly. Like most TV series, *Grey's Anatomy* has ebbs and flows with specific episodes centering on one character or another. I chose episodes in which the four women were identified as one of the lead storylines for that episode so that I could code interactions between them. Again, I

counted phrases and interactions within the plot, but I also added in a count for physical events such as the number of times someone cries. If a specific name was used to describe the person, such as “slut” or “Nazi,” I counted how many times that person was described in such a way. The stereotypes were identified, answering one of my research questions, and the coding helped to determine how the story line and other characters represented the key character being analyzed. “What key components in the story line helped this character be established as a trope?” was one of the questions I asked myself while coding. I also coded for mentions of romantic relationships and how they were represented, which is crucial since one character is met with shock when she reveals she is married and pregnant while the others are trying to make somewhat doomed and bleak relationships work in sometimes strange ways.

Finally, for both cases, I used my working definition of feminism (feminism is the equal treatment and representations of men and women as they work to achieve a goal, demonstrate independence, and/or develop personal strength and solidarity through their choices) to identify other key scenes in which characters proved to be failing to uphold the feminist model. Scenes in which characters seemed to lose themselves by acting hysterical or sort of going through the motions of a relationship or life were counted and analyzed. With *Twilight*, I paid attention to how Bella described Edward, how she described herself, how she described what she was doing and her motives for doing it, and any outside interests she had. With the characters from *Grey’s Anatomy* I looked more at what they did and how peers responded to them. How many times was someone called a name, how many times did a character cry, what were their motivations for their actions, were the choices they made wise, how did the choices they made effect other

characters, in what ways were their independence and strength demonstrated or not demonstrated, etc. I then took the data acquired and analyzed it according to the trope, and upon reflection, according to the feminist model I set up for myself. Lastly, I compared the two representations according to how the characters were represented and the events that took place in which key components of who the characters were as complex, fully developed people.

In order to improve validity and rigor, the content analysis included watching many episodes of the series *Grey's Anatomy* so that the audience can see the changes in the characters throughout the season and not just how the characters act in a couple of episodes. By using the book as well as the television series, it allowed me to look at differences in the two mediums as well as differences in something aimed specifically at young adults while the television series has a much greater audience.

Limitations

This study is limited to one book in the *Twilight* series and one season of *Grey's Anatomy* in order to fulfill time constraints, although there will be mentions of other elements in both the book and television series for continuity's sake. Another limitation of this study is that as the sole researcher only my interpretation of the texts and episodes will be included. Although I will try to be as unbiased in my content evaluation as possible, certain biases from knowing how future events play out in both series as well as my own personal likes and dislikes will be included in this study. That is not to say that this is the only view of the material because another person could watch the same show or read the same books and gather different messages from it. I will try to provide as unbiased a view of the characters and interactions as possible, and even go so far as to

include alternative interpretations and analyses of certain events. Since the coding is done by only me, different events or characters could be described in alternative ways; however, I will try to provide details of such characters or events in many ways as stated above. Due to the nature of content analysis there is only so much one can gather from a given work so I hope that by describing body language, setting, tone, dialogue, etc. the possible messages and characterizations of the work will be analyzed in a fair and thorough way.

Researcher Biases

As an English undergraduate, I focused on mostly British literature in my studies and have a special place in my heart for post-modernism and satirical writing. I also have a background in creative writing, which has led to a voracious appetite of young adult novels, my area of choice, in order for me to “keep up with the times” of my potential students and relatives while also doing research for what the market holds for my own pursuits. And the last great attribute of my English undergraduate degree is a taking several courses in film evaluation and film as literature. Because of this, I am often quite harsh on some of the media representations that are out there, specifically surrounding female protagonists, because I understand the mechanics that go into it. As someone who has studied Virginia Woolf, bell hooks, Angela Carter, and Joanna Russ, I get quite upset at reading books or watching television in which the women always need to be saved. From this perspective, I approached *Twilight* and *Grey’s Anatomy*.

Am I a sucker for a good story, in spite of flaws? Yes. And am I a personality type that cannot let something go and has to see it through to the end, even if I hate it? Yes. Lastly, will I sit around and discuss books and television for hours at a time, even

into the wee hours of the morning? Yes. It is important to understand this so you can understand the type of person I am when conducting this content analysis. Voracious reader, incredibly passionate, avid critic and analyzer, and sometimes a little opinionated about women's rights.

My passion for *Twilight*, and getting people stirred up, drove me to become a writer for the Oklahoma State University newspaper *The Daily O'Collegian*. After initially being laughed at when presenting the article idea, a lull in readership led to my debut, with my co-writer Chevy Carter. We decided to do satirical shorts about the plot and then delve into the meat of *Twilight*: the men. Chevy, in *Twilight* lingo, is an avid Team Edward person, meaning he supports Bella and Edward, the two main leads, as a couple. I, on the other hand, am an avid Team Jacob person, rooting for Bella and her friend Jacob to become a couple. We tackled all four books, the semi-released *Midnight Sun*, and the movie when it came out in November. Our first article had some hiccups in the editing process and Chevy's piece about Edward was lost, but everything got sorted out for the second article, after which I received my first hate mail. Readers were furious about the way I mocked their hero, Edward, and the editors were ecstatic that people were reading and writing. The stories continued for a couple more weeks, getting several hate messages on the online message boards, until our run was over. It was very fun to write about a book that I sometimes love and sometimes hate, but even more exciting than that was getting people thinking and talking about the books. Active discourse, whether positive or negative, is something that is always good in my book.

So, as you read through my content analysis, I will try to keep snarky comments to a minimum, though at times I cannot help myself, and I will analyze these works from

a perspective of someone who: believes women can be superheroes, too, is an avid reader and consumer of media, and has been educated to look at the details that make up the whole of the work and not just small snippets.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Over the course of my study I read and coded the novel *Twilight* and watched all 26 episodes of *Grey's Anatomy* Season Two. I looked for key phrases and scenes that contained repeated actions depicting the characters' inner thoughts through their behavior and behaviors that helped identify who they were. In this chapter, I will first discuss the overarching plot of both works, the key characters, the theme of the work, and then the content analysis of the selected female characters and how they fit into a TV trope/archetypal literary character.

Twilight

Content Analysis – Bella Swan – the Damsel in Distress

Bella Swan is the lead female in *Twilight*, but it is important to understand her role in the story beyond that. Bella easily falls into the TV trope/archetype character of the “damsel in distress.” This character is the female who needs to be saved, almost always by a male character that is stronger and braver than she is. Myss (2007) defines the trope as:

The Damsel in Distress may be the oldest female archetype in all of popular literature and the movies. She is always beautiful, vulnerable, and in need of rescue, specifically by a Knight and, once rescued, she is taken care of in lavish

style. When disappointed, a Damsel must go through a process of empowerment and learn to take care of herself in the world. The shadow side of this archetype mistakenly teaches old patriarchal views that women are weak and teaches them to be helpless and in need of protection. It leads a woman to expect to have someone else who will fight her battles for her while she remains devoted and physically attractive and concealed in the castle. Many women still expect to marry a man who will give them a castle and take of them. (Myss, 2007)

In *Twilight* Bella is supposed to be the lead of the story, a position of power that drives the plot in most cases. However, Bella is the epitome of the damsel in distress because the action happens around and to her while the male characters work to save her and she dreams about taking her rightful place at Edward's side.

Bella demonstrates how she fits into this role through many different representations throughout the story. Just like a great damsel in distress, Bella is clumsy and needs others to literally catch her when she falls; a total of 26 occasions of this occurs throughout the story. 5 boys throughout the story, including Edward, admit to being attracted to her, and all of them want to take care of her. Edward saves Bella from mortal danger three times throughout the course of the story, and even a couple of the other boys try to rush to Bella's rescue when she is almost hit by a van. As mentioned in the definition, Bella spends lots of time thinking about the boy she loves. Bella's desire for Edward takes up most of the book. Throughout the 498 page story, Bella refers to Edward's beauty 165 times, broken down into the following categories:

- Face: 24
- Voice: 20

- Eyes: 17
- Movement: 11
- Smile: 10
- Teeth: 8
- Muscles: 7
- Skin: 7 (Note: This only contains accounts of Edward's skin being beautiful. I didn't count references to it as "pale," "cold," or "white")
- Iron Strength or Limbs: 5
- Breath: 4
- Scent: 4
- Laughter: 3
- Handwriting: 2
- Chest: 2
- Driving Skills: 1

Note: This list does not include reference to Edward as strong, marble like, or statue like.

Also of note is the fact that the word “perfect” is used to describe Edward more than 50 times in the book. Bella’s focus on Edward’s physical presence detracts from the plot and shows how her focus is entirely on Edward, her hero.

Throughout the story, Bella is rendered speechless and befuddled, or “dazzled” in her words, 17 times and becomes absolutely desolate at Edward’s absence 12 times. Edward throughout the story denies himself to see Bella, but then sees her anyway 16 times. Unable to stand the pain he causes her, and the addiction he has to her and calling her

“his brand of heroin” (Meyer, 2004, p. 267-268), Edward begins a relationship with Bella. He literally stalks Bella, visiting her in her room while she sleeps for months. He does not tell her that he has been doing this until after they become a couple, but he does state that he was doing it before they were together.

Edward is not the only one who has taken this relationship to unhealthy levels of obsession. Bella describes how she does not deserve Edward 6 times. This behavior is not only detrimental to her relationship but also detrimental to her own self-esteem and self-worth. She even argues with Edward about who loves each other more. Bella sees herself as less than Edward, as can be seen by her calling him “Godlike” 6 times, almost like she does not deserve to be loved, and it even affects their physical chemistry.

Edward and Bella Kiss: 8 times throughout the story which plays out:

- Bella's Hormones Get the Better of Her and She Attacks Edward, Almost Causing Him to Submit to His Desire to Kill Her: 2
- Edward's Kiss Makes Bella Faint: 1
- Edward's Kiss Makes Bella's Heart Literally Stop: 1

Their relationship remains very chaste throughout the story due to his passion turning into a desire to kill her, but the extremes to which their engagement in physical contact turn into danger is almost comical. At the same time, due to this problem of his wanting to feed on her, Edward exerts even more control over what Bella can and cannot do.

Bella is not completely love sick or incompetent, running around desiring to be saved. She is responsible in her actions. She moves to Forks because she wants to help take care of her father, Charlie. Although a police chief, Charlie is not much of a cook or housekeeper. This plays into gender stereotypes of Bella being the woman of the house

and taking care of her dad, but it also shows a certain amount of responsibility and giving. Later, she tries to solidify an initial friendship with Jessica Stanley by setting her up with one of the boys that has been in love with Bella, though this friendship sadly falls by the wayside once Edward and Bella develop a relationship. This does illustrate how she is a sort of peacekeeper among her peers. Lastly, Bella offers herself up to the evil vampire James because she thinks her mother is in danger and she does not want all of the Cullens to be put in danger because of her. This is a very foolish move, but it is brave in a way, even if extremely co-dependent. These qualities are admirable within Bella. However, they are few and far between. Stephenie Meyer had the potential to write a very strong character, and although she shows how complex Bella is, overall Bella displays very few moments of strength and solidarity. The material was there, it just was not tapped into, and if it had been, this book could have been an excellent example of strong representations of female characters.

Although she has proven to be brave, and her boyfriend has proven to be noble a few times, both Edward and Bella are further in the negative and dangerous aspects of their respectively weak and obsessive personality traits than I would like from a novel written far after the equal rights movements of the 1970s. Bella Swan remains a weak female not only in her representations during danger, but in her personally having no goals outside of Edward. All she wants is to be with Edward, neglecting other friends and her mother to spend more time with him, and she completely identifies herself as with Edward and not as an individual. Bella is much more than just a damsel in distress; she does not identify herself as anything else outside of her relationship. Although there are some elements that are positive representations of women, the majority consist of a

young girl who has no goals, no dreams, and no personality outside of what this man sees of her.

Critically analyzing a beautiful love story of a young, speaking solely in terms of physical appearance and not the fact that he is really over a hundred years old and interested in a minor, vampire and his girlfriend changed the fluffy story of teenage love to something much more somber and at times scary, at least for me. No, the good vampire family, the Cullens, was not intended to be scary, but the behavior of Edward had a resonating experience of obsession, control, domination, and even stalking. These are not characteristics of a vampire, but human experiences that are touted as virtues among the love struck teenagers who see a bad boy that is honorable and sweet. At times Edward is the ideal mate, but his attitude towards Bella is disturbing. Part of this is Bella's own fault. She spends so much time fawning over his beauty, we get very little alternate thoughts from her. Edward is practically perfect in every way. What sort of example does that give to young girls? I believe that it is not a good one, and companies should make an effort to edit books to make them more empowering to everyone. Although some people like to feel protective and powerful in a relationship, why would anyone not seek companionship with someone that also challenges and supports them? I feel Bella and Edward's relationship is a caricature of idealistic love and not realistic in its representation of the human condition. They don't fight, argue, or even seem to care about anything except each other. Personally, I think that would get pretty boring after awhile, but this book is not a bestseller because of girls seeing Edward as flawed.

However, it is important to note that the story is immensely popular. I personally believe that the dangerous yet loving in a strange way boyfriend really appeals to young

people. This age group seems to thrive on drama and beating the odds, and making a relationship work with someone who is both off limits and Prince Charming is very interesting. First love is another aspect of this story that may appeal to youth. Here is the story of a young girl, relatively plain in her appearance and normal in her interactions, but she is made special by the power to conceal her mind from Edward the vampire. In a century this has never happened to him before. They spiral quickly into a relationship filled with danger and adversity from the biological truths they are plagued by and the societal judgments of family and friends. Bella's friend Jacob warns her about vampires existing, and then later his father pays him to tell Bella to break it off with Edward. Bella is challenged again by being accepted into the boyfriend's family, not only as the first girlfriend of Edward, but the potential danger that comes when associating with a house full of vampires. Because of these issues that resonate in young people's own lives, I think it even more important that positive messages of strength within character development takes place.

Grey's Anatomy

Content Analysis – Miranda Bailey – The Bitch

Freydberg (2004) defines bitches: "bitches – sexually emasculating, razor-tongued and razor-toting, hostile, aggressive women who will fight man or woman at the slightest provocation" (p.266). Dr. Bailey, in this sense, is the stereotypical African American female "bitch" character. Bailey is the stereotypical black woman who shakes her head, gets up in your face, and has a finger wagging as she says things like "No sir," and gives you looks that are so filled with sarcasm you cannot help looking down at your shoes for asking something so ridiculous. No one wakes Dr. Bailey when she's sleeping.

No one crosses her or disrespects her without her getting even. No one talks to Dr. Bailey like she is anything less than a strong woman who is not going to take anything from anybody, and will tell you right to your face where to stick it. When she's not bossing and intimidating her coworkers, she's giving them advice after they ask her, but giving the most blunt and straightforward answer anyone would want or not want.

Miranda Bailey is known by her fellow surgeons as "The Nazi." When a doctor from another hospital comes to visit Seattle Grace, in the episode "Thanks for the Memories," (2005), all he wants to do is follow around "The Nazi" who he assumes is a man, and even says so to Bailey, a very short, slightly round, black woman. She is so annoyed that anyone "hardcore" enough to be that devoted to the rules to get a name like "The Nazi" must be a man, with "balls the size of Texas," so Bailey sends the man to do grunt work and wait for "him." At the end of the episode, the Chief of surgery calls Bailey "The Nazi" in front of the new doctor and he stares open mouthed at her. There are a total of eight references to "The Nazi" in this episode, both by other characters and Bailey herself. To get a name like that, Bailey had to prove that she was willing to spend as many hours as possible in the operating room. She does not mess around with her interns, she bosses attending surgeons around, even the Chief knows not to mess with Dr. Bailey. During the final episode of Season Two, "Deterioration of the Fight or Flight Response" (2006), Chief Webber's niece has missed her prom due to collapsing during intercourse. He makes the interns give her a new prom, but the niece's high school friends are too much for the interns. They recruit Dr. Bailey who steps in the room and starts handing out orders about colors, balloons, dresses, and decorations. No one objects and they absolutely love her advice. Bailey is the bitch in the sense that she stands up for

herself, will not let anyone cross her, and everyone listens when Miranda Bailey talks. But more than that, she is treated like the men and acts like a man with her devotion to her career and attitude. All until she reveals that at the end of the day she's still a woman.

"I'm pregnant you blind moron," ("Let it Be," 2005) Bailey says as she sits across from the Chief and explains her weight gain and tiredness. She still performs surgery and is devoted to her work, but occasionally has to stop mid cut in order to wait for the baby to stop kicking. She does not openly share her pregnancy, the one thing that seems to define Bailey as a woman, but instead shares it on a need to know basis. When she comes back into the hospital to deliver, she yells at her interns about how they keep running off Residents to watch over them and how she is very disappointed in them, then her water breaks and she's back to being a woman. While in labor, one minute she's barking directions and the next she's crying. Everyone is so astounded by her ability to actually be a woman they do not seem to know how to treat her when she comes off of maternity leave. The Chief even cancels her surgeries and "Mommy tracks" her so that she can spend more time with her family, something Bailey does not want ("Name of the Game," 2006).

In this series, Bailey is a stereotype of a woman that is unbelievably hardcore and demanding. She is devoted to her career and no one can get anything past her. When she shows up pregnant, seemingly out of the blue, everyone is surprised. They are also surprised when she says she's been married for ten years. These people, like some men, define Bailey only through her work. She has no other life or existence besides bossing everybody around. When she shows up with a baby, her entire reputation seems to fall

apart around her. She confronts the Chief about his behavior, but he does not change. Women, in this example, cannot have a career and a life. Bailey can be a mother or one of the men vying for positions of rank and prestige. She is constantly fighting to maintain a dual identity others refuse to recognize. Bailey has given up her femininity and maternal cards to be the best surgeon in Seattle. She cannot maintain an ideal of masculinity to define herself through a prestigious career and her maternal instincts as a mother. She does not have a dual personality, but a dual role she is fighting to balance within the confines of a masculine world.

Content Analysis – Izzie Stevens – The Hysterical/Overemotional Woman

Hysteria was a disease commonly diagnosed during the Victorian Era to women. The Princeton University press defines it as: “neurotic disorder characterized by violent emotional outbreaks and disturbances of sensory and motor functions” (Princeton University, 2006). Dr. Isobel “Izzie” Stevens, unlike Dr. Bailey, is very devoted to connecting with her patients emotionally. However, she often gets too attached to patients to the point of becoming hysterical, and thus the stereotype for the hysterical woman. She talks to them, plays games, and sometimes gets wrapped up in moral dilemmas with them. For example, when a woman wants to remove her breasts and uterus for fear of getting cancer someday, Izzie tries to talk the woman out of what she calls castration (“Let it Be,” 2005). When a mother comes in to give birth to quintuplets, the neonatal surgeon makes Izzie stay all night with one that she knows is going to die in order to make Izzie more objective and understand she cannot save everyone (“Owner of a Lonely Heart,” 2005). The lesson is a hard one to learn, and one that Izzie does not retain.

Enter Denny Duquette, a strapping and charismatic young heart patient. Izzie is flattered by his flirting and smiles. She goes in to see him and play Scrabble since the poor man is all alone. She vents her frustrations with the other interns, some of which are also her roommates, to him and he listens attentively, hanging on her every word and throwing in innuendo whenever he can. Izzie gives him medical advice that is against what Dr. Bailey advises, and when Denny is concerned how Izzie will feel if he follows the new advice Bailey gets concerned (“Superstition,” 2006). She tries to keep the two separated and gives Izzie different cases, but she always goes back to Denny, even sleeping in his bed in the hospital with him. She is much too attached, but there is nothing anyone can do to stop her, not even Denny.

When Denny has the opportunity to get the heart transplant he so desperately needs, Izzie removes the device keeping his heart beating so that he will get worse and move up the transplant list. Another man is above him on the list waiting for this one heart, and only seventeen seconds separates his entry into the program and Denny. Seventeen seconds is all that makes this man more qualified for the new heart. Desperate to save him, crying and screaming, Izzie convinces Denny to let her do this to him so his heart will get worse and he will need the new heart and move him up the donor list. Izzie cries twice and screams twice through the course of this episode, “17 Seconds” (2006). Hysteria here is defined by me as the body language of the character. Izzie represents she is hysterical by crying, having big arm movements around her head, wringing her hands, bouncing up and down, and being almost inconsolable. This is a common stereotype of women, not just in media, but it is important to identify it in this fictional character by her body language and actions.

To say this behavior is breaking a few rules would be an understatement, and Denny even tells her that he does not want Izzie to give up her career for him, but there is no consoling or reasoning with her. Throughout the course of the evening, Izzie gets the other interns involved in her harebrained scheme to make him worse, even having to shock him back to life a couple of times. She almost kills the man she claims to love, that she is giving everything up for, a man she has known for a couple of weeks and only within the walls of the hospital. When he thinks that he is dying, he proposes to Izzie. The overly attached woman gets him stabilized, and gets him the heart he needs, only to go back to his hospital room and offer him the chance to take the proposal back. They exchange deep and somewhat harsh words of what they mean to each other and Izzie is engaged. While preparing for the prom that she is required to attend for the Chief's niece, Denny dies leaving Izzie a broken mess curled up next to his corpse on the hospital bed. The scene is very moving as her friends try to help her, but it is almost crazy to feel so attached to these characters we have only seen a few times throughout the season and are supposed to be madly in love and getting married. It's a fairy tale in the hospital with all of the rash decisions and illogical moments in tact. Finally consoled, Izzie leaves the room and walks right up to the Chief and Dr. Bailey to tell them the whole plan was her idea and that she quits the program.

Izzie is the perfect example of a stereotype of woman that persists not only on this series but throughout all of drama, art, and literature. Women are hysterical and overemotional. They do not think with their brains but with their hearts. When Izzie is not fawning over Denny, she is constantly talking about the emotional turmoil and upheaval she is trying to sort out between her friends. Where Izzie goes drama seems to

follow. Unlike Bella, who could also be described as seeing things only with her heart, for a time Izzie has goals, hopes, and dreams. She is a successful intern completing complex procedures and working well with the other doctors. She does not identify herself solely through her relationship. Throughout the season she has an on again off again relationship with a fellow intern, but even that relationship does not define her character and who she is. She is a strong, independent doctor who uses her body and her mind to get what she wants. In season one (“No Man’s Land,” 2005), Izzie reveals that she posed as an underwear model to pay for her college debt. She does not define herself through her body but did use it as a necessary tool, but even then she gets very worked up and upset about having to defend her previous behavior. Izzie Stevens furthers stereotypes of women by being a likable character with the illusion of power and strength, but as soon as the going gets tough she slips into the stereotype of the nurturing, overprotective, too attached woman that loses all sense for love and heart.

Content Analysis – Meredith Grey – The Slut

Caroline Myss (2007) defines the Femme Fatale and Don Juan as:

a sexual and a financial archetype, and either comes from or is drawn to money and power. Seducing men with money and power and for the sake of personal control and survival is a classic part of this archetype, although the Femme Fatale is not looking for a home in the suburbs and the pleasures of family life. ... Like the Femme Fatale, the Don Juan archetype can make us aware of falling into sex role clichés, misusing the power of romantic attraction and pursuit. (2007)

The lead and namesake for the series *Grey’s Anatomy* is Dr. Meredith Grey, another intern that often acts as the narrator of the show, and a Femme Fatale or slut archetype.

Meredith is a bit of a mess as far as characters go. She comes from a single parent home and grew up with her mother. She has severe abandonment issues from her father leaving and does not get along well with her mother who now has Alzheimer's Disease. She lives in her mother's old house, since her mother is now in a nursing home, and is trying to maintain a normal life with her colleagues and friends, which is exceptionally difficult when you find out that your one night stand is an attending surgeon at the hospital where you are beginning your internship (Rhimes, 2005). It gets even more complicated when his wife shows up and he decides to leave Meredith to try and sort things out with her. Meredith finds solace in her friends, and the many men she picks up at the bar, or her fellow interns.

Meredith is trying to put together the broken pieces of her life by looking for love in all the wrong places. After she breaks up with Derek Shepherd, the attending neurosurgeon the interns affectionately call McDreamy, Meredith slips from one bad one-night stand to another. One of encounters ends up following her to work with an erection that will not leave and they find out later he has a tumor on his spine. Derek and all of the other doctors at Seattle Grace learn about Meredith's convoluted sex life from this encounter, but it is not as bad as when she sleeps with her roommate and fellow intern, George. Izzie tells everyone that Meredith broke George because not only did Meredith knowingly sleep with someone that had been obviously and very publicly in love with her, in the middle of their romp Meredith started crying about the father she never knew and had just seen for the first time in years ("What Have I Done to Deserve This," 2006). George, who had finally thought it was his lucky day, is completely devastated by how much she has hurt him. Meredith decides to give up sex and become celibate, which she

tells Addison, Derek's wife, and Derek about as she sits knitting at the bar. Since they are all friends now, she explains that she's knitting to socialize but she will not drink because everything gets fuzzy and before she knows it she is having sex with inappropriate men, a total of three that the audience sees, but Alex, George, and Izzie comment on the quantity of her escapades. Pretty soon her friends, Izzie and George, have turned against her because of her behavior, and soon even Derek calls her a slut and ends their friendship when he finds her sleeping with their mutual vet. "You don't get to call me a whore," Meredith tells him as she tries to explain trying to put everything back together after he left ("Damage Case," 2006). Two episodes later, Derek and Meredith are having sex in a room off of the dance floor/nurses' station at the prom.

Sexually promiscuous women have often been a major part in literature and film. Westerns often showcased a whore with a heart of gold teaching lessons to the filthy rich society woman everybody wanted. These women are often looked at as some sort of discrepancy. Although Meredith is the lead character and someone the audience is supposed to sympathize with, she is villainized for her promiscuity. Most of the other characters turn against her and call her a slut behind her back, though one does state that he does not have a problem with her "scratching an itch." Meredith's behavior is somewhat justified by the way she defends herself and does not seem to acknowledge that what she has been doing is wrong or hurtful, until she hurts George. This attitude is almost complacent when talking about sex as commonplace, especially from someone whose behavior in relationships and regarding the frequency of her partners is erratic to say the least. Sexual libertinism is not a new concept among women, but should it be applauded by some, as in the episode with the man who had the erection that would not

go away, or looked down on, such as when people start calling her a whore? How much sex is too much? And if a man had been having that much sex would this even be an issue? Meredith Grey is a complex character with problems and depth to her emotions that often times go unnoticed by the show because of their focus on little things such as her physical relationships. Once again, an opportunity was missed to show a free and liberated woman with a sense of moderation and balance.

Content Analysis – Addison Montgomery-Shepherd – A Balanced Woman

With all of these negative images, I was left wondering if there were any positive images for females to admire and see as good examples. I was surprised as anyone when I really started paying attention to the show and a character I had hated really portrayed someone in a realistic light: Dr. Addison Montgomery-Shepherd, neonatal surgeon, obstetrician-gynecologist, and the wife of Derek Shepherd. For this purpose, I have labeled her the “balanced” woman which I identify as someone who is an accurate representation of women without any caricatures or stereotypes attached.

The first time I watched the series, Addison was one of my least favorite characters. She was the person who broke up the beautiful couple Derek and Meredith. In walks this glamorous redhead to steal back Prince Charming from our lovely leading lady. As I watched the season again for the purpose of this research, Addison showed her depth as a character.

Addison is more than just the villain in this tale. She wants to get back together with her husband and is constantly fighting for his attention. “The only people that don’t know Derek loves Meredith are Derek and Meredith” (17 seconds, 2006). How can anyone compete with a husband who left his wife after finding out she cheated on him

with his best friend, then fell in love with a beautiful and charming twenty something at a bar? Meredith and Derek are the illusion of the perfect relationship Addison thought she had and wants back. She tries to capture Derek's eye by working with him, bringing him coffee, being supportive of his job and his emotions, leaving her home in New York City to live with him in a trailer in the woods, and doing anything she can think of to try to get Derek to notice her. Derek decides to stay with her, but she can see in his eyes that he is distant. Addison rides the ferryboat with him one morning and looks up at him from the deck, but he is completely oblivious and in another world. She takes in Meredith Grey's old dog and even tries to give Meredith hope on a day when a lot of deaths plague the hospital, like an accepting friend that is trying to make amends after a fight ("Superstition," 2006).

Addison's longing and sadness comes to a head the day she takes the dog out for a walk and wipes herself with poison ivy on accident. Dr. Bailey is visiting the hospital and gives her a consult while listening to Addison cry about how she is getting what she deserves for cheating on her husband. Addison shows depth, remorse, guilt, and contemplation as she sits in the stirrups and watches her world crumble around her. During the process of her revelation, she cries twice and screams at Bailey twice. Later, Derek comes in to check on her and Addison asks if she has now repaid her debt to society. Both of them laugh and Bailey smiles outside their room because it unexpectedly seems like a bright day for all of them. A few episodes later, Derek and Addison are having trouble being intimate, and after Derek fights with Meredith that afternoon and lets some of his feelings for her go, he is able to please his wife and find

passion with her in a moment of spontaneity. Addison practically beams with gratitude at his sudden change (“What Have I Done to Deserve This,” 2006).

But the best thing about Dr. Addison Montgomery-Shepherd is her depth as a character. Like Izzie Stevens in the beginning, she does not identify herself through her relationship. Yes, she is trying to make it work, but that does not change who she is: A world-class neonatal surgeon. She works hard to save lives and help families have babies. She pushes the interns to learn about her specialty and patient care. Addison was the one who left the impossible case with Izzie to try and help her learn (“Owner of a Lonely Heart,” 2005), and this was before any of the problems with Denny. Addison knew that Izzie got too attached and tried to help her in a way no one else seemed to be able to, and no one else understood because the Chief had done the same thing to Addison years ago.

Addison has been through the grinder with the ups and downs, the deceit and the lies that have filled her life with her absent husband, cheating lover, and thriving career. Unlike all of the other women chronicled in this study, she represents a balance of emotion, compassion, heart, depth, intelligence, and grace. Addison Montgomery-Shepherd is an excellent role model to both children and adults about honor, grace, nobility, and strength.

Conclusion

These analyses illustrate five very different women from different backgrounds and with different agendas. From the child growing into a woman with her relationship, the doctor trying to succeed in a man’s world while maintaining her femininity, a woman trying to balance her heart with her career, an intern trying to find herself, and a wife

trying to regain her husband while staying true to herself. All of these women have a story to tell and an example to give, good or bad, and sometimes a little bit of both. In the next chapter, I will compare some of the similarities and differences between the characters' personalities and representations then make some final assertions about the need for media literacy education.

CHAPTER V

REFLECTIONS

This study has covered various material to give you an idea of the types of messages that are present for girls. Some of the messages are directed at young adult girls ages 12-18 while others tailor to a larger audience of both males and females of greater ages. Both of *Twilight* and *Grey's Anatomy* are consumed by people of all ages. These messages, along with countless others across the news and entertainment industries, must be analyzed to determine possible messages viewers could glean from them. Through this study, we have established who these characters are on the whole, the roles they played within their respective worlds, and the objectives they complete in the plot progression of the story. We have identified both classic representations of women as hysterical, to the archetypes of the damsel in distress and the Femme Fatale, back to newer representations of things like “the bitch.” By utilizing media literacy education, students would be equipped with the tools to evaluate these media in critical ways like have been witnessed here. Now, we will take the time to analyze the messages these characters give through their depictions of “model” behavior, compare the two works, and determine whether or not they will be deemed anti-feminist according to the operational definition developed earlier.

Characters in *Grey's Anatomy*, an adult prime-time drama, do not always

illustrate positive role models of experiences for viewers. Bailey, a strong and accomplished female, is swept aside when she is affected by the bodily function of motherhood. Izzie, a compassionate and caring soul, gets carried away with her emotions and is unstoppable in her heart's desire, to the detriment of herself and others, even the death of her fiancé. Meredith is broken and damaged, drowning her sorrows in alcohol and one-night stands. The quantity of her sexuality calls her entire person into question, though many good lessons could be gained from her observation of others around her. However, all of these women are successful medical practitioners, a career that had been previously dominated by males. It's also to be noted how characters like Izzie and Bella combine female stereotypes of caring, compassion, and domestic maintenance, yet they still are strong and independent in their choices to do this. This shows the complexity within these characters, but it is important to note that narrow and static evaluations or classifications do sometimes take place. With media literacy education, perhaps consumers of media would be able to take the good with the bad instead of just attaching one label to an individual. These elements are important to note, but they are not the majority of what is represented in the series.

Each of these flawed characters represents flaws in ourselves. If we recognize these things, we can use their mistakes as catharsis to grow ourselves, but the connections must be made through critical evaluation and understanding. People must be taught how to take these images with a grain of salt, or a bit of understanding and evaluation to understand the complexity of these characters. Although I did say that there are positive representations, and strength within the social role of occupations within *Grey's Anatomy* and responsibility in *Twilight*, these images take a back seat to the overall depiction of

the character, and at times their professional roles, goals, and strength is ignored to pursue the dramatic plots. Although there is a line between entertainment and reality, that does not mean that someone can and/or should exaggerate women into unfair examples of the “weaker” sex. Balanced characters do exist and make for refreshing and comforting drama. Addison is complex, as all of the characters are, but without the exaggerations. Just because Bailey is strong does not mean she has to sacrifice her femininity and just because Izzie is emotional does not mean she would give up everything in a fit of hysteria. Balance is key in understanding all of these women, and in portraying them fairly. This is why we need media literacy education.

Without media literacy education, we are letting our children play with a very dangerous toy without first reading the directions. Examples and ideals are set up for these young adults through what they read, see, and immerse themselves in. Without the proper tools, idealistic and unhealthy relationships become the norm. If Meredith is looked down on for having sex, maybe someone could gather that they should not express themselves sexually. After all, Bella Swan found a chaste boyfriend to sweep her off into the sunset. These exaggerations gain the weight in society to become norms and expectations of one another in both men and women.

Throughout chapter two I mentioned that positive role models were needed for young adults in relation to sexuality, personal development, gender stereotyping, etc. Keeping these ideas in mind, I want to compare *Twilight* and *Grey's Anatomy* treatment of first person narrative, physical appearance of the characters, and overall plot dynamics in relation to the relationships of the characters. Meredith Grey and Bella Swan both provide streams of consciousness throughout their stories. Meredith does have a more

adult perspective playing a twenty something student and intern. Her commentary is more centered on her worldview while Bella focuses on the present emotions she is feeling. I think the ideas Meredith provides are definitive of her character, saying “There’s no such thing as a grown up” (2005) for example, but they are more about the world at large. This gives viewers ideas about the world rather than just the individual character. Yes, viewers have the opportunity to agree or disagree with these statements, however, the themes created through her commentary and reinforced through each respective episode and recapped at the end of the episode, further pushing home an idea set forth by the author of the series or episode. Bella also gives ideas about the world through her actions. Sometimes she is responsible, self-sacrificing, and giving while others times she is foolish and headstrong. Her world becomes completely filled with Edward, leaving little room for social commentary outside of her need to maintain and identify herself through her relationship.

This does provide a message to readers about relationships, love, and independence. Without a critical eye, it is easy to slip into unhealthy relationships or seeing only a small part of a work as a virtue or vice and neglect the rest. Both of these works have destructive ideas about relationships: Bella’s lack of self and surrounding herself with an at times abusive boyfriend, Meredith and Addison being subjected to a roller coaster from her on again off again boyfriend, and Izzie’s attachment to a patient and lover resulting in her sacrificing her career and his life for a chance to be together. These sometimes ridiculous caricatures and representations of love could be interpreted as an example to follow for someone who is not critically evaluating all of the behavior solely to achieve the Prince Charming motif.

For a final piece of comparison, I would like to look at the physical representations of these characters. Bella is a relatively plain girl with brown hair, but overall the reader gets very little description of the character. Meyer (2008) states on her website that this was so the reader could feel more in the place of Bella, or as she says, “step into her shoes.” Ironically, the author and narrator spend a good portion of the book commenting on the beauty of Edward, so image and body issues are still present in this work. As mentioned previously, Rimes did not have images in her head for the actors she chose to represent her characters. The cast of *Grey’s Anatomy* is a good looking bunch, but there is variety in both their race and body type representations. The Chief is a balding African American man while Bailey is a short, overweight African American female. Aside from that, all of the other actors are thin, tall, and extremely beautiful. For doctors, they do not look tired or overworked. Addison is often seen in stilettos. And naturally, their hair and make-up is flawless. The differences between creating an almost realistic representation of a character through self-insert fiction and the known idealisms in the Hollywood market are interesting juxtaposed against each other. Messages of body image, both visual and written, are present in these works and need to be understood when evaluating media for role models within character representations and messages put forth by media.

This study has showcased some good and bad examples within complex characters. Although not directly anti-feminist, neither of these series promotes equality in the way described by people like bell hooks. Keeping in mind the operational definition of feminism I developed, I would like to take a look at the female characters in relation to this definition. Individual choice is an important part of feminism so that it

does not force anyone into an unwanted role, such as the case with Bella Swan as willful damsel in distress. Bella put herself in the situation to be rescued; however, Bella does not consider what is best for herself, not only in terms of putting herself in danger for a self-sacrificing act, but thinking of her life without Edward.

When asked if she thought Bella was an anti-feminist hero Stephenie Meyer (2008) stated on her website :

the foundation of feminism is this: being able to choose. The core of anti-feminism is, conversely, telling a woman she can't do something solely because she's a woman—taking any choice away from her specifically because of her gender. ... If she and he are going to be on a healthy relationship footing, she can't age too far beyond him. Also, marriage is really an insignificant commitment compared to giving up your mortality, so it's funny to me that some people are hung up on one and not the other. Is eighteen too young to give up your mortality? For me, any age is too young for that. For Bella, it was what she really wanted for her life, and it wasn't a phase she was going to grow out of. So I don't have issues with her choice. She's a strong person who goes after what she wants with persistence and determination.

Here Meyer describes feminism as choices women make. Did Bella make her own choice? Yes. However, her complete devotion to her boyfriend, her constant need to be saved, and her inability to drive the plot, in my opinion, outweigh the few times she foolishly tries to save everyone by making rash decisions and the choice to give up her mortality. Feminism is about more than being allowed to make a choice. Feminism is about being equal. Bella is not equal to the superheroes around her, not even in

personality, and is unable to separate herself as an individual from her boyfriend. Nor does she think critically about her choices or goals. Lastly, her relationship is an issue of concern. Stringer (1997) says, “The universal struggles related to sexuality include maintaining one’s own identity in intimate relationships,” (86). She has no goals outside of her relationship, and none of the women in the series have jobs or identities outside of their relationships. Yes, a couple of them have outside interests that are attached to their character, but first and foremost they are wives and mothers who do not work and are perfectly happy with the status quo.

Are the stars of *Grey’s Anatomy* anti-feminist according to the operational definition I developed earlier? Not entirely. Each of these characters demonstrates lives outside of their relationships. At times are they treated differently because they are women? Yes, but this is more a societal norm construct than providing a message of what a woman can or cannot do. With the definition of feminism as the ability to stand-alone and make choices, each of these women do that. Meredith is trying to get over her relationship with Derek, and eventually they end up back together, but Meredith does not give up her friends or her sometimes-unstable personality. However, her nature to not think critically but jump head long into situations does set a poor example and could be characterized by her being a woman. No one complains about the men’s promiscuity, for example, or when a man rushes in to save someone they are considered brave. Meredith walks a fine line between being anti-feminist, but although not overtly so, I do believe she is a bad role model. Izzie stays connected with patients, but is a person and a doctor first. She even gives up her career, not for Denny but for herself and her recognition that she cannot go back to this place. Izzie is feminist, but again makes poor choices without

critical thinking and thus demonstrates how compassion, if taken too far, can be a detrimental quality. Bailey is a doctor and a mother, both of them come first to her, and neither one of them defines her alone even though other characters want to refuse to recognize some parts while others only acknowledge one aspect. Victim to her surroundings and trying to break through a glass ceiling, Bailey is a feminist and a good role model, though a little rough around the edges. Addison is a wife, surgeon, friend, and human. She is a real person in her virtues and vices, like all of the characters, but does not act in the caricature manner of the others. She thinks critically and is a good balance between compassion and drive, even if she is flawed. Addison is a feminist, and a good role model if you look at how she is trying to repair her marriage and make a life within the hospital and not the cheating on her husband part. However feminist this show may be in their representations of equal opportunity, there are lax moments that need to be addressed.

I have been rather hard on the media throughout this study. There are positive female characters in young adult literature and media. I am including a short list of positive representations of females in both literature and television, but this by no means is comprehensive of the works available and made entirely by my opinion through my personal evaluations. The list of television and book, both individual and series, includes:

- *The Harry Potter Series* by J.K. Rowling
- *Nobody's Princess* and *Nobody's Prize* by Esther Friesner
- *The Wrinkle in Time Series* by Madeleine L'Engle
- *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Patterson

- *The House of Night Series* by P.C. and Kristin Cast
- *Degrassi: The Next Generation* (TV series)
- *Star Trek: The Next Generation Series* (TV and Book series)
- *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine Series* (TV and Book Series)
- *Star Trek: Voyager* (TV and Book Series)
- *Stargate Series* (TV Series)
- *Ella Enchanted* by Gail Carson Levine
- *The Female Man* by Joanna Russ

Each of these works has either a female protagonist or a female lead that is portrayed in a balanced manner. Although they make mistakes, on most occasions characters can be found that are deep, well represented, strong, powerful women that think critically and are treated as equal and as powerful as the men in the story, even at times more necessary for their deductive skills. The problem that arises with all literature is being able to sort the strong aspects of representation from the weak aspects. This is where the importance of media literacy education comes into play.

Through critical evaluation of the media, we have established that there are good and bad messages out there, messages that need to be evaluated and addressed, like in this study. But simply telling kids this is not enough. We must equip them with the tools to evaluate the media, the messages, and themselves so that they can distinguish unhealthy behavior touted as virtue and make the decisions for themselves. McBrien (2005) points out, “Without instruction, news viewers and readers tend to accept news stories at face value; they read them as reality” (p. 29). Pungente, Duncan, and Anderson (2005) reaffirm this idea by pointing out “the media construct versions of reality. Media

messages come with observations, attitudes, and interpretations already built in, ideological and value messages already built in, and social implications stemming from media” (p. 151). But how can we do this? Critical evaluation of media in classrooms, across content curriculum, would allow students to evaluate messages for validity and see how things such as camera angles, lighting, and music help reinforce the mood of a scene or encourage an emotional response.

The next step is to have students create their own media. Schwarz (2005) stated in “Obstacles, Challenges, and Potential: Envisioning the Future” that:

media production enables a deeper student understanding of how the media work and how they do (how different media use their own “languages,” to inform, persuade, and entertain—to connect to people). Media production also enables students to express points of view that have not been common in the mass media monopolies and in new ways that are exciting to many students. (p. 238)

Through creation the students learn and retain how media is made and can thus critically evaluate the techniques used for a specific purpose to get a certain reaction out of the audience. In the case of the *Twilight* book, English classes could evaluate the content of similar stories and discuss, through things like narrative and character studies, the scope of the characters, their plot, and the devices used to portray a certain image. Having students participate in creative writing exercises would help them understand writer devices and connect the story with themselves and real world applications.

Finally, all of these elements need to be centered on the child’s ability to apply these skills to his or her own life. “Instead of trying to avoid what may lead to identification, we must pay closer attention to the interdependence of academic learning

and social identity development. Then perhaps we can reflect more deeply on the kinds of people our students are becoming” (Wortham, 2003).

Media literacy education would give students and adults the necessary tools to understand that they can be anything they want, regardless of what anyone says. If they choose to be stay at home moms there is nothing wrong with that so long as they maintain their own, separate identity. If they want to be career women, there is nothing wrong with that so long as they find time for themselves. In all things, moderation is necessary. Slowly but surely we are getting there as a society, but until people stand up to those who try to take away our power and make women seem unimportant without a relationship, none of these advancements will make a difference. Without connecting with our students and teaching them these real world lessons they will be lost without practical knowledge to help them develop critical thinking and evaluation skills. “When the growth of the whole human being is at the heart of the educational enterprise, teaching, learning and leadership are intertwined as community members collaborate in the reciprocal raising of levels of consciousness” (Beattie, 2002). We have to start now with the people that hold our futures in their hands.

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VITA

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Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION APPLICATIONS: *TWILIGHT* AND *GREY'S ANATOMY* AS ANTI-FEMINIST MEDIA

Major Field: Teaching, Learning, & Leadership

Biographical:

Education: I graduated high school at the age of 15. In May 2004, I completed my Associates of Arts degree from Rose State College. I Received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Oklahoma State in 2007. Finally, completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Teaching, Learning, & Leadership at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in July, 2009.

Experience: Published under pseudonym Gabriella DeMuro in *Lucrezia Magazine*. Copy editor for Edisense, an academic journal company based in India January 2008-present. Administrative assistant 2007-2008 for Oklahoma State Department of Residential Life. Secretary and Public Relations Officer for Oklahoma State University Amateur Radio Club 2004-2006. Tutored a young boy with Asperger's Syndrome 2001-2003.

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Scope and Method of Study: This study is a content analysis of two forms of current media: *The New York Times* bestselling book *Twilight* and the Emmy award winning series *Grey's Anatomy*. The female characters in both formats are analyzed using a feminist lens and a focus on social role development as the characters are incorporated into the plot.

Findings and Conclusions: The findings of this study are that there are negative images of females in media that could be bad examples to young girls. Several TV tropes were identified as characters, including the damsel in distress, the bitch, the hysterical woman, and the slut. Although one character was a moderate archetypal character, overall there were more negative than positive images. Media literacy education implications include the need for schools to incorporate these elements into the curriculum in order to help students evaluate media in a healthy way.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Gretchen Schwarz
