NICE GIRLS WHO FIGHT: PERFORMING THE ROLES OF SURVIVALIST, SEX OBJECT, AND SWEETHEART IN YOUNG ADULT NOVEL FILM ADAPTATIONS

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Abstract

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Mediated messages, particularly those featured in movies, are complicated because they meet the social demands of the audience, yet are created and distributed by agencies that push a prescriptive, heteronormative script. The mediated messages within young adult films are integral in shaping identity in adolescents because they are a particularly vulnerable, impressionable audience, as they are just developing sexual identities of their own. Currently, homosexuality, gay marriage, and other gender issues are at the forefront of social and political discussions, and have gained much more general acceptance by the public, which in turn, affects cinematic discourse. While messages regarding gender and sexuality are shifting to meet changing societal demands, messages and scripts do not actually stray far from traditional scripts in Young Adult films. My thesis will analyze three female characters from young adult novel film adaptations, which will highlight how new gender ideals are propagated. Specifically, this thesis will analyze Hermione Granger from the *Harry Potter* series, Katniss Everdeen from the *Hunger Games* trilogy,

and Beatrice ‘Tris’ Prior from the *Divergent* trilogy. The aforementioned films are heavily marketed as storylines that break away from the mold of traditional adventure stories, since each features an intelligent female protagonist in the role of a hero. However, each film actually follows the heteronormative script that it claims to break from. Queer Theory, informed largely by the theoretical constructs of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, will be used to explore the political meanings behind identity, language, and difference in sexuality and gender, because each film seems to be constructing new, paradoxical gender ideals for young adult women: beautiful yet approachable, strong yet submissive, rebellious yet loyal. These prescriptive ideals will be examined within the context of the larger social structure behind the messages, which will result in a critical discussion of film.

Keywords: Young Adult, film, Queer Theory, gender performance, sexuality, female protagonists, Harry Potter

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Chapter 1 – The First Steps

Introduction

In my nine years of teaching middle and high school reading, English, and Language Arts, I have witnessed many cultural shifts in terms of attitudes towards sexual orientation, gender identity, and literacy patterns. While teaching literacy comes with its share of struggles, never have there been so many adventure-driven and dystopian titles that have gotten my students excited and engaged in reading. Through reading comes a more diverse worldview, and my students are more accepting of gender fluidity and queerness today—yet, these same titles, in order to be accessible to young audiences, as well as their parents, still prescribe idealized gender roles. As a first-year teacher, I was discouraged by others to discuss anything regarding homosexuality, and it was very common to hear students call each other "fags" as an insult or refer to things that that they didn't like as "gay." It is difficult to say when, exactly, this shift occurred, but I can point to a few specific incidents that sparked change in the discourse. In 2010, in response to bullying problems, my school adopted a national anti-defamation league called *No Place for Hate*, in which every member of the student body was to pledge not only to abstain from bullying, but also not to discriminate or harass others based on sexual orientation. My school, like many others nationally, specifically included language about harassment towards homosexuals in response to the National Center for Disease Control statistics which suggested that over 25% of gay teens had attempted suicide, and 61% of LGBT students felt unsafe at school due to their sexual orientation (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Health, 2014). While individual schools are

important in shaping the social climate, popular culture also influenced students' attitudes and language regarding homosexuality and queerness. In 2008, the Think Before You Speak campaign, which featured teen celebrities such as Hillary Duff and Wanda Sykes, discussed the social inappropriateness and consequences of using words like "faggot" and "gay" as insults. While the shift was gradual, students would repeat the Public Service Announcement's catch phrase as a comeback to disparaging comments about sexual orientation: "think before you speak." While it is an informal assessment, I can say that general attitudes at my school towards queerness are much more positive and accepting.

Additionally, students seem to read for *fun* and the young adult genre is booming. According to the *Time* magazine, Young Adult book sales have increased by 150% since 2006 and jumped 4.9% in the first half of 2014 (Stampler, 2014, 2). Notably, of the total Young Adult book sales, parents purchased 52% of all novels sold (Stampler, 2014, 2). In the past almost-decade, the YA literature market has truly exploded, and books like Veronica Roth's Suzanne Collins' *Divergent,* Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight, Hunger Games,* and Sara Shepard's *Pretty Little Liars* are on the desks of nearly all of my students. Authors like John Green (of *A Fault in Our Stars*) are as widely known as famous actors and actresses. The YA buy-in is a phenomenon that did not exist when I first began teaching; in fact, very few of my students read for enjoyment.

My first year teaching, I taught an 8th grade reading intervention program designed for struggling readers, who began our course by taking a diagnostic test through the *STAR* reading software (Renaissance Learning), which was supposed to tell me what grade level each student was reading at. When I received the results, I was confused. My

most engaged reader in the class was labeled as reading at a fifth grade level, three years below where he should have been. Most students in my class were labeled a level 1 or a level 2, meaning that they were reading on the first or second grade level. Teaching eighth graders who were this far behind seemed like an insurmountable task. Worse yet, the required reading for the course was at their reading level, meaning my students were embarrassed to read what they perceived as being "baby books." I took them to the library to pick out books from the young adult section, and other than *Harry Potter*, the options were antiquated. My students did not want to read *Gulliver's Travels*, and worse yet, they didn't want to be pointed in the area of picture books. As a result, I had a room full of bored 14 year-olds who were either actually reading *My First Readers* or simply pretending to read a novel from the library that they could not actually comprehend.

The problematic reality was not exclusive to my classroom—teachers and students had to make the choice of being engaged with an age-appropriate text *or* relating to the storyline. While I still have struggling and reluctant readers in my classrooms (although I teach high school now), the Young Adult (YA) genre is truly booming and caters to various interests. According to *Publisher's Weekly*, the jump first began in 2004 when major bookstores, such as Borders and Barnes and Noble, removed the YA section from the children's section, taking away the stigma of reading them (Burnett, 2014). Based on the aforementioned discussion, the thesis reader is likely questioning the purpose of this research: if literacy rates are up and students have a more accepting, diverse view of the world, what is the issue? In order to meet social demands and parent approval, storylines are often sterilized or whitewashed. In order to gain the interest of

teens, characters have to be both relatable, smart, attractive, inspiring, moral, rebellious, and intriguing, creating a new gender ideal for young people to aspire to. Furthermore, as the novels are translated to film, further changes are made, both to meet a broader range of audiences, meet parent approval, and meet sales demands of movie studios. Clearly, moviemakers are in tune with the lucrative YA market, and Young Adult novel film adaptations that feature a strong, female protagonist have proved to be highly profitable. In fact, *Business Insider* reports the *Harry Potter* film franchise grossing over $15 billion at the box office (Aquino, 2011, p. 1). In fact, *Hunger Games* was the third largest grossing US film of all time, and attracted a largely young, female audience, similar to that of the *Twilight* movie series (Bowles, 2013, p. 2). As these novels are more commonly being adapted into films, the agencies that produce such films have control over discourse, and the gender performances within Young Adult film adaptations are deserving of discussion.

Queer sexualities in film have to gain approval from heteronormative audiences in order to achieve widespread commercial success; female queer performances are even more complicated because they have to not only gain the approval of heterosexual audiences and maintain approachability to young female moviegoers. In order to do so, they must be physically attractive enough to gain the gaze of male audience members while not being 'too queer' so that they appear to be relatable. The contradictions that exist in female empowerment / disempowerment within these films, in conjunction with the 'creative' editing and female sexualization taken by movie studios, are noticeable and noteworthy. Examining prescriptive gender and sexuality roles in young adult novel film

adaptations is relevant, because their messages are so far-reaching: nearly every young girl has seen these films, and relate strongly to the female characters. The messages of these films have become foundational to young female audiences, both in what they believe the ideal woman should be, and in their conceptions of their role in romantic relationships. As Giroux (2004) emphasizes, "symbolic and institutional forms of culture and power are mutually entangled in constructing diverse identities, modes of political agency, and the social world itself," and it is the responsibility of academics to point out the relationship between power, politics, and culture (p. 59). Specifically, media influence young audience members' attitudes on anything from dress, appearance, attitude, and even language. These high-grossing films are so entrenched in popular culture, that the female protagonists have become iconic to young audiences. The specific audiences these films target are deliberate and particularly vulnerable and impressionable, and the storylines, language, and images within each film are currently saturating the young adult market. While each film may have a refreshing exterior, many gender and sexuality discrepancies still exist just below the surface, which include the fact that each young woman protagonist is attractive, white, and extraordinary, in some ways. While the novels tend to challenge hegemonic discourse in certain ways in that they are somewhat progressive in that they include women who are sometimes physically aggressive, wild, and independent, film adaptations must appeal to a wider audience in order to maximize profits, and therefore, follow hegemonic discourse more closely than the novels from which they were adapted.

The Argument for this Project

Since the trend of adapting female-driven novels into film has increased in the last few years, the traditional portrayal of the protagonist in adventure novels has changed: no longer does the hero have to be a *he*. According to *Forbes,* "Nearly a quarter of the 200 top-grossing films worldwide tallied by Box Office Mojo have been directly adapted from books [. . .] Of those 47 titles, 17 started as Young Adult novels and earned a collective $14.4 billion at the box office" (Robenmend, 2015, p. 1). Despite the increase in production of young adult novel film adaptations, the Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism found that, "Among the 100 highest-grossing movies at last year's U.S. box office, the study reported, 28.4% of speaking characters were female. That's a drop from 32.8% three years ago, despite the box-office milestones achieved by female-dominated franchises" (Sperling, 2013, p. 3). Further, female protagonists in young adult films are more layered and rounded, moving away from being simply nice and pretty, or serving as a token sex object. Modern-day female protagonists are smart, dynamic, resourceful, physical, and flawed—in addition to being nice and pretty. On the surface, these films are progressive, giving the audience the false impression that the women projected on screen are empowered since they see women fighting—and fighting with conviction. Despite a surge in adolescent-driven films that feature a strong female character, such films still objectify women, but in a different way: the objectification is done in a more socially accepted form. Women are not passive, and they are not victims of their circumstances. Instead, these women are intelligent, resourceful, and have an active purpose. Often, a fighting woman is more feminized by being contrasted with a hyper-masculine character, which is a way to apply submissiveness. In other instances, a

fighting woman is a way for society to interpret aggressiveness in young women in the context of dating relationships. Further, the modern female protagonist's relationship with men both shows that they are 'different' from other girls, suggesting there is something inherently wrong with being female. Additionally, the love-interest storyline pushes the plots, promoting a heteronormative ideal.

While female protagonists' identity is shaped by their relationship with male counterparts, they are also measured against other females in a way that promotes certain forms of femininity and criticizes others. Archetypes such as "The Queen Bee" as illustrated in *Mean Girls* (Shimkin & Fey, 2004, "The Dumb but Charming Blonde" as illustrated in *Clueless* (Rudin & Lawrence, 1995) and *Legally Blonde* (Kidney & Platt, 2001), and "The Out-of-Touch, Old-Fashioned Mom" as illustrated in *She's the Man* (Ewing, Luchessi & Rosenberg, 2006), criticize specific feminine traits within the films propels a 'correct' form of femininity. Sexualized content and its effects on adolescent audiences are widely studied by both education and communication scholars (Somers & Tynan, 2008; Kunkel, Cope, & Biely, 1999; Hust, Brown, & L'Engle, 2008), yet many of the characters do not necessarily fit into the heteronormative, gender-prescriptive script mediated messages that were previously studied. My thesis will analyze three female characters from young adult novel film adaptations, which will demonstrate how new gender ideals are being generated and distributed to a young, female audience. Specifically, I will be discussing Hermione Granger (played by Emma Watson) from the *Harry Potter* series (Barron, Heyman, Rowling & Yates, 2001), Katniss Everdeen (played by Jennifer Lawrence) from *Hunger Games* (Jacobson, Kilik, & Ross, 2013) and Beatrice

'Tris' Prior (played by Shailene Woodley) from *Divergent* (Fisher, Wick, Shabazian, & Burger, 2014). Noticeably, each female character has similar characteristics: she is slender, but muscular, she is white and brunette, she is intelligent, she does not come from wealth, she is physically attractive, yet not overtly beautiful, and at some point, she changes her appearance. The aforementioned films are heavily marketed as movies that break away from the mold of traditionally male-led adventure stories, since each story (both in book and film version) features an intelligent female protagonist, inarguably showing each woman in the role of a hero. However, each film also follows a heteronormative script from which they claim to break. Each female character uses her physical beauty to meet end goals, while actively competing for the approval and gaze—in other words, in order to appeal to straight male audiences, women's physical performances allow men to gaze at her body passively and without shame or judgment (Mulvey, 1975, p. 714). In other words, men are able to look actively at women's bodies, and in effect, women are put into a submissive and passive role. Despite their accomplishments and strengths, each of these fictional women submit to the suggestion and leadership of a male. Queer Theory, as informed by Foucault and Butler, will be used as theoretical lenses in order to understand the gender performances within Young Adult novel film adaptations. This critique will offer and interrogate these narrative structures in detail through genre and narrative criticism. The next section will detail this approach.

Literature Review

Tenets of Queer Theory – From Foucault to Butler

While many lenses could be used to explore the gender performances within YA films, queer theory will be used to discuss heteronormativity and gender performances within young adult novel film adaptations, which will be largely informed by the works of Judith Butler and Michel Foucault. Before exploring the works of Butler and Foucault, a general overview of Queer theory and its role in the analysis will be provided. The YA film adaptations explore many issues, including feminism, identity construction, and adapting behaviors in order to meet societal expectations. However, Queer theory will be used because it focuses on 'othered' gendered performances and is not limited to gays and lesbians: "Queer is positionality rather than identity [. . . and] can be taken up by anyone who feels the result of sexual practices," (Sullivan, 2003, p. 44). Queer serves as an "umbrella term" for individuals who act out of the societal norm in terms of gender and sexuality (p. 44). However, Queer Theory also ignores differences of "class, race, age, and so on" which is why race and age is not an integral part of the discussion. Sullivan (2003) points out that culturally, men are labeled as queer when engaging in homosexual acts, whereas women are viewed as queer when they act masculine (p. 3). Therefore, the discussion of the YA heroines as 'queer' will focus largely on what will be identified as performing masculinity and should not be confused with being a lesbian or bisexual. While many commonly believe that Queer Theory strictly deals with homosexuality, the foundations of Queer theory are much more far-reaching: "Queer theory is at heart, about politics—things like identity, language and difference," (Wilchins, 2004, p. 5). Specifically, sexuality and gender are viewed as socially acceptable only when they fit within certain societal constructs, which includes

subscribing to heteronormative scripts: men pursue women, men sleep with women, and women submit to men. Other voices are silenced. In short, the issues that women face and the issues that homosexuals face are interrelated. Therefore, gender issues are gay issues, and vice versa. And yet, it is important to acknowledge that while race is an important talking point, due to the limited scope of this project, the main focus will be placed on gender performances and societal expectations regarding gender.

Butler will be used to discuss societal expectations of gender, prescriptive gender ideals, gender fluidity, power, and heteronormative dominance in discourse. Foucault, on the other hand, will be used to identify the role that the government has on society's attitudes and expectations towards sex, and how language is inherently political. These two theorists will be used in conjunction to examine the connection between heteronormative discourse and societal attitudes towards queerness. Queer theory will be used to support the idea that society is largely uncomfortable with female empowerment and gender fluidity. Although each character's sexuality is presumably heterosexual, in that each is involved in a romantic relationship with a male, their performances are often outside of the societal norm in that they, situationally, are aggressive, combative, and independent. While each female character rejects what are perceived as typically feminine traits, they are still sexualized for the benefit of male audiences. In these films, hyper-femininity is criticized, and romantic heteronormative storylines remind women that they cannot *be* men, which promotes submission and perpetuates the idea that to be female is to be inherently flawed.

Foucault, who greatly influenced of Queer theory's development, cannot be understood without understanding biopolitics, and conversely, biopolitics cannot be understood without understanding the general framework of government (1979, p. 22). According to Foucault, we are entering "the epoch of frugal government, which is invasive, intrusive" (1979, p. 28). Foucault defines liberalism as both unrealized utopia as well as any government exercises in rationalization (1979, p. 318). Foucault sees the state itself as both imperialistic and paternalistic that wishes to expand (1979, p. 187). His view of the state is highly negative and almost parasitic, asserting that the state, "will come to take over entirely that which is at the same time its other, its outside, its target, and its object, namely: civil society (Foucault, 1979, p. 187). While Foucault's view of government sounds highly negative, he also acknowledges the dangers of too little government, as in the instance of *Polizweissenschaft*, which was developed by the Germans in the 18th century, where "Not enough attention [was] being given to things, too much escapes control, too many domains lack rules and regulation, order and administration are lacking [. . .] the state's strength must be as large and as active as possible" (1979, p. 318). Ultimately, Foucault identifies the state as a technology of power that serves as a way to exert control over the people (1979, p. 322).

In Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (1988), he explains that sexual acts and sexual language used to be very open and very vulgar up until the 19th century (p. 8). The Victorian bourgeoisie adopted strictly prudent attitudes, and silence and secrecy around sex became the norm. This was a period of sexual repression and prohibition, which was enforced by law (1988, p. 9). Simultaneously, this was an era of great hypocrisy, in that

sex obviously didn't disappear, but "illegitimate sexualities" had to be acted out in brothels, and women who expressed sexual desires were deemed hysterical and banned to insane asylums (1988, p. 9). According to Foucault, modern society has not yet rid itself of Victorian attitudes towards sex that "imposed its triple edict of taboo, nonexistence, and silence," (1988, p. 10). The repressed attitudes have a "fundamental link between power, knowledge, and sexuality," which it will not be able to overcome unless laws are changed, prohibitions on sex are lifted, and speech discourse is altered entirely (Foucault, 1988, p. 10). Foucault argues that the right to speak about sex, "becomes legitimately associated with the honor of a political cause: sex is placed on the agenda for the future" (1988, p. 11). Therefore, politicians, or those in power, have what Foucault refers to as the speaker's benefit, and merely talking about sex is viewed as a transgression (Foucault, 1988, p. 12). According to Foucault, those who break sexual norms, either in language or act, place themselves "to a certain extent outside the reach of power, he upsets the establish law; he somehow anticipates the coming freedom" (1988, p. 12).

Foucault's ideas are key to understanding how power structures influence and control ideas about what constitutes socially acceptable sexuality and gender, both in language and action. Additionally, the ways in which sexual norms and gender norms are translated to film explain why female protagonists in have so many commonalities, to the point where certain character traits appear formulaic. While Foucault can be used to understand how power structures help to define what is considered ideal or acceptable forms of sexuality, the same structures also make a mockery of overly feminine or masculine men and women. Foucault's teachings also help to understand how

government surveillance and monitoring are used as tools to repress and control sexuality, in addition to suggesting that women's bodies need to be policed and altered. While Foucault's writings shed light on to how hegemonic discourse affects society's attitudes towards sexuality, many critics argue that he did not sufficiently address the impact of mass media or the role that pop culture has on American attitudes regarding sexuality. While the queered performances of female leads in young adult film adaptions break away, in some ways, from the heteronormative script, their performances do not stray *too* far away from what is considered normal.

Judith Butler, perhaps the most widely known contributor to Queer Theory, discusses that society's constructions of 'right' and 'wrong' forms of gender as being problematic (2006). According to Butler, prescriptive gender roles were constructed by society, and were used as a way to push a heteronormative agenda. Butler argues that sexuality and gender are fluid and situational, and that identities are multi-faceted, complex, and subject to change, depending on both the social construct as well as the role the individual is serving (2002, p. 36). Butler argued that constructs such as 'gay' and 'straight' as well as 'masculine' and 'feminine' resulted in binaries, which in turn, takes away from individual identity and individual control over the sexual self. As a result, the term 'queer' within theoretical exploration is used to address a wide range of sexualities and gender that break away from the heteronormative script, not necessarily homosexual scripts or discourse. This definition of 'queer' will be used to frame the position and practice of the thesis.

Butler (2002) argues that feminism should not idealize certain gender traits because doing so produces new forms of hierarchy and exclusion. Butler moves against gender binaries and argues that there are many different kinds of gender, just as there are many different kinds of sexuality. However, there is also a societal desire to ascribe value to certain feminine traits and de-value others, which results in an individual performing prescriptive or 'correct' gender. Butler also applies the idea of post structuralism to gender. Much like Foucault (1982), Butler states that it is impossible to escape social structures, and that ultimately, meaning behind gender and sexuality derives from culture. Despite social construction of prescriptive femininity (or masculinity), there is no single concept of what constitutes a woman.

Exploring sexual and gender issues connects with Butler's (2006) discussion of gender performance, since society commonly associates cross-dressing with 'doing' or performing a gender, as opposed to being a gender. Language is a system of meanings, and queer Theory focuses on the meanings of sexuality and gender. Specifically, Queer Theory strives to give voice and meaning to marginalized groups, since common language is privileged language. Queer Theory does not boil down issues to masculine and feminine or gay and straight, despite that these binaries are very common in society. Instead, Queer Theory moves against the notion of binaries and aims to give voice to all areas of sexuality and gender that fall outside of the heteronormative ideal.

Queer theory will be used as a theoretical foundation within this project to examine female leads in youth apocalyptic films because its foundations are based on feminist scholarship, but it also focuses on socially constructed gender ideals, gender

performance, and the heteronormative system of language. Queer theory will serve as a structure within this project in order to better understand how female characters in film influence young adult attitudes regarding gender ideals, gender performance, and sexual language and identity. Since the characters being examined are female and 'othered' queer theory will be applied in order to better understand how women and sexuality continue to be silenced and controlled, even in media that seemingly promotes women as being brazen and independent. This is important, because the female leads are contradictory in that they move away from the traditional, socially constructed heteronormative script in many ways. However, the female leads are often sanitized, sexualized, and subscribe to a new feminine ideal that adolescent viewers are expected to emulate. Queer theory will be applied to discuss both gender and sexuality, because each film seems to be constructing new, paradoxical gender ideals for young adult women: beautiful yet approachable, smart yet quiet, strong yet submissive, rebellious yet loyal. It is important to understand these prescriptive ideals in terms of identity formation as well as the larger social structure behind the messages, and how the feminine ideal is created in mass media. It is also important to discuss the mode in which the film was created, which will include a critical discussion of film. The mediated messages that are featured in young adult novel film adaptations are incredibly powerful to the shaping of identity in young adult women, because they are a particularly vulnerable, impressionable audience, since many are just starting to develop sexual identities themselves.

Gender, Violence & Sexuality in Queer Film

Williams (2001) applied feminist standpoint theory towards genre studies in film, specifically focusing on pornography, horror, and melodrama. Williams argues that every film, regardless of genre or intended audience, is political (p. 603). Williams focuses on these specific categories, because she believes each, in its own right, provokes feelings of disgust or repulsion from the audience. According to Williams, the reaction of disgust stems from "excesses we wish to exclude," (p. 602). In short, cinema reproduces reality, and therefore its ideology. According to Giroux (2001), film points to "[. . .] a terrain of pseudo-freedom located in an inner world of dreams, reinforced by the privatized experience of pleasure and joy offered through the twin seductions of escape and entertainment" (p. 584). Giroux describes how audience members use film to construct their own reality, which both include placing themselves inside the story and escaping their own reality. When these experiences gain a sense of legitimacy from audiences, it is problematic in that the inherent messages within movies "resonate and align under certain conditions with broader discourses, dominant ideologies, and existing material relations of power" (p. 593). Giroux explains that the process of reconstructing reality does not stop at the end of the film; rather, a film's messages, ideologies, and discourse are applied to the human condition itself. In this sense, cinema mirrors the language and attitudes of the world at large.

Politically charged films often have to 'mask' the critical messages they deliver in order to be marketable. According to Williams (2001) the most effective political films break down the traditional way of depicting reality. Against-the-grain films are among the most culturally significant films in cinema. However, explicitly political films adopt

the language and imagery of the ideological system, and therefore cannot effectively criticize the ideological framework. Therefore, movies that challenge hegemonic discourse, while remaining apolitical in its overt language and imagery, are the most important films to critically examine. Effective political films result from when filmmakers break away from narrative traditions, which comes from self-understanding, applying critical theory, and truth (Williams, 2001).

Kennedy (2014) discusses queer performances in film in terms of a homonormative script, in which gays and lesbians gain acceptance from a heterosexual audience, because they appear to be so 'normal' (p. 119). In other words, homosexuality is depicted in a very narrow lens, "diluting any kind of queer sensibility that might challenge the centrality of white, neoliberal, middle-class values" (Kennedy, 2014, p. 118). Making the lesbian 'visible' in mainstream media means washing over or diluting content that could be considered 'weird' or offensive about homosexuality, and in order to understand which lesbian performances are accepted, it is important to define what the 'normal' aspects of homonormativity are (Kennedy, 2014, 120). Foremost, whiteness plays a crucial role in homosexual mainstream performances. However, since 'whiteness' is so ingrained into mainstream media, that is easy to forget how the properties of whiteness are so commonly unseen, but used in a way to normalize the gay and lesbian experience (Kennedy, 2014, p. 120). Whiteness, in itself, "functions simultaneously as nothing (invisible) and everything (normal), coloring the way we think about knowledge, identity, our assumptions about agency, and the way we analyze and present our scholarship" (Kennedy, 2014, p. 120). White privilege, when applied to

homosexual performances in mainstream media, means that an individual is able to pass as 'normal' because their whiteness camouflages their homosexuality. Homonormativity means being white, middle class, having a stable relationship, and upholding traditional values in every way *except* being gay.

The homonormative performance is problematic, in that, in many ways, the success of these performances relies on making heterosexual audiences 'feel good' in the acceptance of homosexuality. The problematic nature of the performance in itself is that it is whitewashed and propels a 'right' and 'wrong' form of homosexuality. While one might argue that a whitewashed portrayal of homosexuals in film is better than the alternative—remaining invisible—the narrow scope in which gays and lesbians are portrayed are actually pushing a 'right' and 'wrong' form of homosexuality, which both creates new stereotypes and could misguide a wider range of acceptance in the future. According to Kennedy (2014), "Because the production and consumption of movies are rhetorical, social acts, they also serve to reproduce dominant ideologies like white homonormativity" (p. 122). Applying the idea of white homonormativity to queered performances in young adult apocalyptic films is important, because it is imperative to understand that their whiteness *allows* them to bend traditional gender performances in many ways, because being white means being invisible and being normal.

Stockton (2009) argues that 'queer' in no way relates to the idea of homosexuality in this sense, but rather the idea that children act and connect to the world in a way that does not relate to reproducing. Moreover, through imaginative play, children are (typically) able to bend gender, identity, and sexuality through fantasy and role-playing

(Stockton, 2009, p. 5). Through puberty, this fluidity and freedom is disrupted by parental projections that innocence means maintaining straightness (Stockton, 2009, p. 14). In this period of transformation, young adults are able to passively role-play and fantasize through fiction (Stockton, 2014, p. 51). Through fiction, young adults are able to lash out against authoritarian figures in the most extreme, forbidden, and unrestricted way: through violence and even murder (Stockton, 2014, p. 55).

According to Signorielli (2002), media consumption has a profound effect on young people's perceptions of the real world while also influencing adolescents' attitudes and actions. This statement could be extended, arguing that media affects views regarding sexuality and romantic relationships, and children are particularly influenced by such messages. Since gender and sexuality are integral parts of identity, in order to understand the theoretical framework of Queer Theory, it is important to first understand identity construction. Identity construction is centered on the idea of understanding towards symbolic interaction (Pascale, 2011, p. 18). Language, culture, and behavior all have inherent meaning, which is socially constructed. According to Burke (2009), people assign multiple identities to themselves. Every individual has multiple roles, and therefore, even individuals have multiple identities, which are situational and subject to change. Identity formation focuses primarily on how the individual self is defined by sexuality and gender. In addition to sexuality and gender, membership to different groups and organizations serves as an integral part of identity, both in terms of self-perception as well as in how they are perceived by others, because membership choices reflect a person's beliefs, core values, and preferences. In other words, social expectations and

roles are attached to groups and its members. Therefore, if someone identifies as homosexual, they are also subscribing to what social constructs associate with being homosexual. However, no individual has just one identity, rather identities are sum of our parts: therefore, if the aforementioned individual were a woman, her gender would affect how others perceive her sexuality. According to Van Zoonen (2013), people assume both individual and collective identities. As a result, "identity is something we *do,* rather than something that we *are*," (p. 41). According to van Zoonen, identity can be relatively flexible and is formed to fit specific social and cultural situations. Moreover, the lack of diversity in media and corporations shows a push "against multiplicity and towards the fixation of single identities," (p. 41).

Since, as previously stated, media has a profound effect on children's perceptions, worldviews, and beliefs, it is logical to assume that young adults' attitudes towards gender role expectations is highly influences by the media as well. When Young Adult According to Ayan and Cubucku (2009), film adaptations of novels, "change the order of the sequences or alter the written text into an illusionary scene. The changes made in the written form of the literary text intend to express the director's perception of the events adding to the text's meaning" (p. 51). Film adaptations are not just visual representations of the novel, they are the author's perception of what is the most important, what is the least important, and what needs to be changed in order to gain commercial success—rather, they are comprised of a "complex network of relations between its parts" (p. 52). Specifically, mainstream film directors, under the pressure of studios, must adhere to hegemonic discourse. Novels that are adapted to film, which are catered

specifically to the interests of this impressionable audience, create images of the beloved and admired heroine, they are in fact pushing a new gender ideal that young audience members accept as a 'correct' form of femininity, masculinity, and sexuality. Additionally, the lack of diversity in the media has an influence on discourse because the sexual identities are constructed based on such similar backgrounds and viewpoints.

The Rise of the Young Adult Novel & Its Influence on Young Female Readers

Sexuality is a common theme in Young Adult literature, because the topic of sex is so important in teen's lives. According to a survey conducted by the Center for Disease Control in 2013, 46.8% of high school students had engaged in sexual intercourse. Young people are faced with decisions, pressures, and face uncertainty regarding sexuality and often turn to the media when making decisions about sexuality. McKinley (2011) states that while the motivations regarding whether or not teens engage in sex, "Young Adult literature that deals explicitly with adolescent sexuality and that situates discussions of sexuality with a developmentally and socially relevant context can become a valuable source of information for teens," (p. 38). McKinley cites Judy Blume as one of the first authors to explore teen sexuality in her 1975 novel *Forever,* which actually is atypical from most sexual experiences illustrated in YA novels; specifically, the main character, Sybil, enjoys sex and does not obsess over the possible negative ramifications of sex. In other words, it does not serve as a cautionary tale to teens that are considering the possibility of engaging in sex themselves. In fact, Sybil decides to get an IUD put in, because she decides that she enjoys the physical act of sex very much, but does not want to suffer the possible ramifications of pregnancy. However, while

Forever was extremely popular, it was also at the top of banned book lists, and did not earn the approval of parents. Later popular YA novels that contained sexual content, such as Sandowsky's (2007) *Anatomy of a Boyfriend* explore the potential emotional consequences that physical relationships can have and serve as more of a cautionary tale (McKinley, 2011). The main character, Dom, engages in sex with her boyfriend, Wes, who soon loses interest in her. Dom blames Wes's disinterest in her on her weight gain, and associates her sexual attractiveness and sexual worth with her body. Such novels warn teens that premature sex will drive men away and ultimately lead to heartbreak.

According to Younger (2003), sexuality in Young Adult novels needs to be both present, so it appeals to its intended audience, and regulated, so that parents and teachers feel comfortable with their teen reading it: "Young Adult fictions frequently depict female sexuality as a threatening force. For young females in a patriarchal society, sexuality (particularly sexual desire) is often represented by educators, parents, and authors as a primitive, taboo drive that must be regulated," (p. 45). Younger argues that *Forever* showed a much more realistic, as opposed to romantic, portrayal of sex, and therefore was heavily censored and regulated. In *Forever,* Sybil loses her virginity, and in the process, gains sexual power and pleasure. Younger argues, however, that Sybil's obesity is noteworthy, however, body image and sexuality intersect: "heavy characters are all represented as sexually promiscuous, passive, and powerless, while thin characters appear responsible and powerful," (p. 47). Younger raises two very important points, in that parental approval is important in the acceptance of young adult novels, so it is important that the script does not stray too far from the archetype of the nice girl.

Moreover, the emphasis on the importance of an idealized body plays a large role in the worth of not 'real-life' women, but in the favorability of female characters.

Young Adult literature is appealing due to its many themes, but when translated to film, where wider audiences need to be reached, the messages and characters are often over-simplified and sanitized. Controversial scenes, topics, and gender performances are often altered, eliminated, or grazed over. While the focus of this thesis will be on the film adaptation of young adult novels, it is important to note that the original messages are often changed to meet heteronormative expectations, as well as to note that the elimination [or condensing] of such scenes and topics silences the female voice.

The Relationship Between Audience & Screen

Malin (2003) applies gender performance theory to film by focusing on the performative aspects of transsexual identity (p. 240). Malin cites Butler (1990) as a foundation to explain the 'crisis of masculinity' by relating the issue to the conflicting, subversive performances and the portrayal of Brandon Teena in *Boys Don't Cry* (Pierce, 1999). Malin's analysis of Teena illustrates Butler's point that sexuality, gender, and identity are naturally fluid, yet there are still cultural expectations about how gender roles are prescribed. Brandon Teena, a transgender man, exemplifies how ambiguous gender causes 'gender trouble' because Teena's undefined gender binaries defy societal expectations of gender and sex. In this specific instance, Brandon Teena's gender and sexual fluidity caused so much discomfort that, within the film, he was subsequently killed. By way of this example, film and television rarely portray a sexualized person or

character that does not fit into the heteronormative script (gay, bisexual, lesbian, transgendered), because it makes audiences uncomfortable. This directly aligns with Butler's assertions that gender roles are denoted by those in power, and the societal backlash that can occur when gender expectations are broken.

Movies serve as a mirror that reflects the views of politics, culture, and values of a society. Values shift, and cinema shifts along with it. Technology is one of the central driving forces in sparking change, both on a societal level, as well as within film itself. Hefner (2002) states that human beings are mortal and frail, and that people, "create technology in order to bring alternative worlds into being," (p. 655). Hefner (2002) states that films are able to serve as a "techno-mirror" (p. 653), meaning that the kind of technology that is presented in popular culture serves as a looking glass, which shows what people want, and who we are. According to Hefner, in film, the process and the product are inseparable.

Benjamin (1968) analyzed film from a Marxist perspective, stating that it is important to analyze how mediated messages are created and produced, in addition to analyzing the messages in terms of language and context. Marxists believe that capitalists own the means of production, and proletarians (the majority of society) sell their own wages to capitalists. To Marxists, the agenda of those in power infiltrates every aspect of culture, including media—this is referred to as hegemony. Since production companies create films, mediated messages are being created and distributed to those in power. According to Benjamin (1968), film is a mode of mass production, which does not place value on the artist, but rather on the voyeuristic experiences of the audience as well as the

agency itself. Benjamin argues that film becomes more about how characteristics of the film make an audience feel or think about themselves, as opposed to focusing on the uniqueness of a piece or the aesthetic value of the film. Benjamin relates the film watching experience to the allegory of the cave: the viewer is watching a reflection of a reflection, and the viewer still constructs his or her own reality as a result. Therefore, it is impossible to analyze film without acknowledging Marxism, or the power and class structures behind film.

Modleski (1979) applied gender issues to both how females are portrayed and the power structures that exist in the audience. Foremost, Modleski argues that mass culture reflects mass ideology, and therefore, mass culture is a tool for mass manipulation. Modleski argues that films that reflect mass ideology should be rejected because instead of creating for the purpose of artistic merit, mediated messages are simply being created for the purpose of pushing cultural norms. Specifically, romance films and novels both offer women an outlet to express their fears and propel heteronormative ideals. Horror movies, which focus on the grotesque, serve as an assault on the bourgeois culture, both because they do not aim to please the audience, and because they are adverse to contemporary tastes, as well as contemporary economy. *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Henkel & Hooper, 1974) is indicative of this theme, as well as almost every zombie film. However, when females are featured in horror movies, women serve as either the victim or the monster.

Mulvey (1975) argues that we live in a society of sexual imbalance, and in film viewership, the pleasure in looking has been split into a male / active and female / passive

dynamic. In the relationship between viewer and film, the audience co-constructs the meaning of the text, but is inherently passive. The audience views and watches, but does not *act* (p. 715). Mulvey argues that mass American culture is largely feminized, and that the audience is further feminized because the viewer is in a position of being passive and powerless. However, film does fulfill voyeuristic fantasies, allowing men to gaze at women unabashedly. According to Mulvey, the female on screen is styled to act out a male fantasy, and the actual presence of women in film works against a narrative storyline, because her job is to distract: "The presence of woman is an indispensable moment of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her visual presence tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow in action in moments of erotic contemplation," (1975, p. 715). In this sense, women in cinema both draw the audience in and alienate them from the narrative itself.

Stern (2013) expands on the idea of voyeurism, explaining that film and television serve as a private window into events, allowing the audience to gaze without inhibition, as well as live out (or vicariously through) the life of another. Stern specifically focuses on how certain television shows influence adolescent girls' self-identity development and construction. The majority of television shows that target a young adult female audience follow a heteronormative script, meaning the male is the active pursuer, and the female is passive and waits to be pursued. The female typically fits specific gender ideals, such as conventional beauty, intelligent, but submissive.

According to Stern (2013), the heteronormative scripts that saturate the television and film markets shape relationship attitudes and expectations. Even shows that feature

female characters that appear to be empowered, such as *My So Called Life* and *Felicity*, the female characters are driven by achieving the approval or gaze of a man, and ultimately their self-identity relies heavily on who they are—or would like to be—in a relationship with. This includes adjusting dress, appearance, attitude, and even language. The concepts of achieving self-empowerment while maintaining societal beauty standards, which are essentially constructed by men, are core aspects of Third Wave Feminism. Additionally, Stern takes a critical perspective, by explaining that it is not just what we consume that shapes identity and perspective, it's how we consume it. For example, many of the shows that were discussed aired on cable television, which implies a certain amount of money and privilege.

As previously stated, adults purchase over half of YA novels and have tremendous buying power within the YA market. According to *The New York Times*, who synthesized information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics between the years 2007-2013, determined that the most common book-buyers are educated, live in or around urban areas, wealthy, and white (Currid-Hackett, 2014). Privilege and power structures must be examined when studying female heroines from young adult novel film adaptations because they are reflected not only in the women on screen, but also in the audience members themselves. Each woman on screen is white, beautiful, thin, and makes an extreme physical transformation. While the storylines show young women overcoming their difficult backgrounds, their conventional beauty and whiteness are factors in their acceptance from the audience. Additionally, understanding the relationship between the audience member and cinema is important when discussing power imbalance,

submission, and accepted queer performances of young women in the media. Clearly, how the actors interact with each other gives additional insight into societal expectations towards relationships, gender ideologies, and political attitudes through hegemonic discourse. Additionally, the role of the audience is crucial to understanding the power structures between the viewer and characters, and the relationship is not linear: hegemonic discourse drives the script, but discourse can be altered by public attitudes. Public attitudes are commonly expressed through what is popular (pop culture). Character empowerment (or lack thereof) is illustrated in various ways, and since audiences are passive in their nature, their role into the construction of power is oftentimes underscored. Nonetheless, the audience's buying power factors into what messages are altered, added, or deleted from the original text.

Myths & Archetypes in Futuristic and Apocalyptic Films

Benjamin (2004), argued that youth apocalypse films typically revel in the malignant afflictions, transgressions, scatological eruptions, and ecstasies of young people. As a result of aesthetic techniques (disinterested realism / stylized surrealism), ontological tropes (the invasive commodification logic of synergistic media), and recent socio political developments facing youths," which differentiate such films from other teen movies (p. 2). In other words, youth apocalyptic films break from banal storylines of teen movies, are often perverse, and are disruptive in nature. Further, the films are much more stylized than prior teen blockbusters, often using shaky, handheld cameras, which are disorienting and chaotic. The visual style and mood of youth apocalyptic films are reflective of "The attitudes of their antiheroes, which alternate between hyper-ecstatic

and dryly disinterested, or what has been called ‘deadpan ennui’ or ‘dispassionate realism.’ Dispassionate realism manifests itself on screen as an eerie, aloof, but wry tone that doesn't recoil from abjection and violence,” (Benjamin, 2004, p. 4).

Dubrofsky and Ryalls (2014) asserted that a central aspect of modern dystopian Young Adult novels is the ideal of surveillance, or being watched at all times and judged (p. 37). Within each novel, government agencies keep an eye on movements and behaviors, making each female character act in an unauthentic way in order to survive. However, the performance is two-fold in that the female character is under *literal* surveillance in the storyline, but is under metaphorical surveillance by the audience members. Because of the unnatural setting, the unnaturalness is transposed to the physical appearance of the character herself, resulting in “altered bodies [marked as surgically altered or adorned with makeup and ornate clothing] are constructed as deviant” (Dubrofsky & Ryalls, 2014, p. 37). While the young women in the film adaptations are placed in highly unnatural circumstances where they are being closely watched, they each adapt their physical appearance in order to “produces a new ethic of whiteness and femininity, privileging the seemingly unconscious production of observable trustworthiness and earnestness of character”(p. 38).

The physical body plays an important role in youth apocalyptic films. Randell-Moon (2012) examined the role of the body in youth mediated messages where the woman is a spectacle. Randell-Moon noted that mid-1990’s feminist scholars (Gatens, 1996; Grosz, 1994; Horner & Keane, 2000) sought to dismantle historically and philosophically “somatophobia” ideals by arguing that the body is a part of the lived

experience. Such scholars argue that the idea of disembodiment in any sense is, in fact, dehumanizing and leads to further marginalization. Somatechnics focuses on the studies how the body plays a role in the production of knowledge, which essentially challenges and disrupts "the distinction between bodies and knowledge, bodies and technologized objects, and bodies and culture," (p. 266). Randell-Moon explains that once bodies are projected on screen, they are viewed as technologized objects, and therefore, the body and the screen are no longer viewed as separate entities. In other words, the purpose of the body is to be viewed and enjoyed by the audience, which in turn promote and propels assumptions of gender.

Randell-Moon (1990) states that television shows typically rely on storytelling, "through the narrative technique of character consistency. This technique involves exposing characters to change and risk in episodic stories whilst simultaneously sustaining an overall stability in character, tone, and format within the program" (p. 268). The technique of character consistency is based off of the Western emphasis on the importance of the inner self. On the contrary, postmodern film and television does not rely on character being discovered, rather character is made over time. In other words, identity is a process. Randell-Moon sites both *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Dollhouse* as examples of postmodern identity. Randell-Moon relates the idea of postmodern identity, which supports the idea that people have a variety of identities with the work of Judith Butler. Identity is not inherent or static; rather it is dynamic and developed over time. Specifically, Randell-Moon focuses is on Butler's notion that not only is identity a composite of our lived experiences, memories, and situational engagements, identity is

performative and often used to meet a specific need or situation. Randell-Moon supports both notions by citing a passage from Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990):

> [Butler] argues, "acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance" but "such acts, gestures, enactments, generally constructed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means" (p. 136).

Randell-Moon uses *Dollhouse* to support Butler's idea that identity is both composite and performative. In *Dollhouse*, wealthy clients purchase a manufactured person—or doll—for a specific purpose: friendship, love, or even revenge. After each client, the doll's memory is wiped clean, and then inserted with new memories and skills. While *Dollhouse* challenges many ideas about gender and identity, just as Butler does in gender troubles, many of the constructed identities that each doll is given plays into traditional gender discourse. Notably, each doll's only consistency within their identity is the body itself. When the body and identity become separated, as illustrated in *Dollhouse*, it is literally like a death, which aligns with the somatechnic beliefs that identity is a completely *embodied* process.

In youth apocalyptic films, the nice girl archetype has been pushed to the wayside for a nice-girl-with-an-edge (Behm-Morawitz and Mastro, 2008). Nice girls can use weapons in movies as a way to highlight the female physique and suggest that she has a bit of an edge to her. Wright (2012) examined the female body in sword and sorcery cinema from the 1980's and determined that the seemingly empowered females are simply acting as a sheep in wolf's clothing. Specifically, Wright examines women in *Conan the Destroyer* (Kestin & Laurentis, 1984) and *Red Sonja* (Ferry, 1985) in which

sword-wielding characters are seemingly "elevated from subsidiary role to become action heroines or malevolent forces" (p. 402) which relates with a broader, problematic representations of gender and the female body. Women are holding a weapon that is metaphorically phallic. Additionally, Wright sees the portrayal of muscled, sword-wielding women as problematic, because the female body is still serving a spectacle, just in a different way; by portraying women and muscular and physically threatening, this specific genre of film seemingly disrupts traditional gender roles, in that the woman is not passively looking for protection from an active man. However, Wright also notes that men in these movies are hyper-masculine, in order to compensate for the woman's lack of traditional femininity. Further, the nice-girl-with-an edge is traditionally developed into a more subdued version of her original self, after being 'tamed down' by her hyper-masculine counterpart.

Since the body and identity are interconnected, it is important to understand the role of the female body in youth apocalyptic films, both in terms of gender performance, the role of the audience, and prescriptive gender ideals. Youth apocalyptic films with strong female protagonists both move against and affirm the image of a subservient young woman, in that she is empowered and strong, but ultimately, that portrayal serves as a way for her to be objectified and gazed upon for male enjoyment. Additionally, these highly-surveilled women alter their appearances to varying degrees, yet rely on socially-approved gender constructs in order to emerge as the deserving hero. Since the Young Adult novel film adaptations are all set in the future or a far-away land and are fantasy-driven, the characters have more room to play with their appearances, yet

undeniably, the women in the novels are written as much more plain or physically attractive than the actress who was cast for them.

Beauty Standards in Young Adult Media

The feminine ideal is culturally constructed, affected by political and social norms, and therefore, is subject to change. Tasker and Negra (2007) state that modern femininity standards are constructed based on postfeminist ideals, and therefore, there is a "correct" form of heteronormative femininity**,** according to society. Tasker and Negra frame modern femininity within the constructs of mediated images, which are guided by postfeminist glamour relies on commercial beauty culture and the ideal feminine standard is a paradox: understated, sexualized, and girly. Sexualization, in this case, relates to appearance, language, and behavior. Postmodern feminine ideals are understood to mirror current tastes, which are dictated by the social and economic elite. Such ideals relate to postfeminist commercial beauty culture and reject behaviors and trends of the working class, even if an individual is lower or working class by birthright. Ideal postmodern feminist interpretations of femininity include a performance of naturalness, physical attractiveness, refinement of manners, and sexual appeal.

Since young adults are largely influenced by mediated messages, examining the effects of sexualized images on teens is widely studied. Kim, Sorsolli, Collins, and Zybergold (2007) conducted a content analysis over 25 of the most-watched primetime shows by adolescents and determined that sexual content occurs often, and is often gendered. While some of the programs, such as *Seventh Heaven* (Hampton, 1996), *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (Koch, 1996), *Dawson's Creek* (Williamson, 1998), and

Gilmore Girls (Sherman-Paladino, 2000) specifically targeted adolescent audiences, most of the most watched television programs are intended for adult audiences, such as *Friends* and *The Drew Carey Show.* Sexual content was described as sexual activity, which includes sexual talk, sexual suggestiveness, or sexual acts. Specifically, the codes revealed that boys and men were active and aggressive in pursuing sex, whereas female characters commonly objectified themselves. Furthermore, female characters were more likely to be judged negatively based on their sexual encounters. Kim et al. explain that the gendered scripts, as described, reinforce heterosexual interactions and relationships, in that men are sex-driven, and good girls are prudent and set boundaries when it comes to sex.

While sexual content refers to language and activity, sexualized clothing also has a profound effect on gender perception and attitudes. According to Thourlby (1978), ten decisions that people make based on clothing alone are, "education level, trustworthiness, social position, level of sophistication, economic background, social background, educational background, level of success, and moral character," (p. 2). In other words, clothes serve as symbols that suggest power, sexuality, class, and education. According to Owyong (2009), "clothes do much more than meet our physical and physiological needs. Clothes convey meanings in society beyond the superficial, enacting and even creating power relations between people" (p. 191).

Goodin, Denburg, Murnen, and Smolak (2011) focus on how sexiness in girls' clothing is associated with objectification. Objectification theory suggests that women are objects of male attention and gaze, which then in turn, leads women to self-objectify.

Since the study focuses on clothing made for pre-teen and young teen girls, it relates more specifically to the discussion of masculine and feminine clothing in that the intended audience for young adult television series is similar, thus the discussion of 'sexy' or hyper-feminized clothing is more relevant for this purpose. In this case, sexualized clothing is defined as "clothing that revealed or emphasized a sexualized body part, had characteristics associated with sexiness, and / or had sexually suggestive writing," (Goodin, Denburg, Murnen, & Smolak, 2011, p. 1). Child-like clothing was coded based on either modest, non-revealing cut or pattern, such as polka-dots.

Goodin, Denburgm, Murnen, and Smolak (2011) coded fifteen popular national girls' clothing stores and examined evidence for sexualization. The stores chosen include a mixture of higher end department stores, general department stores, discount stores, children's stores, and tween stores. In this case, sexualized clothing is defined as a garment that would draw attention to, enhance, or accentuate any part of the body, which in effect, is intended to elicit the physical or sexual interests of others. Specifically, "Sexualized body parts included the chest, waist, buttocks, and legs," (p. 5). Findings showed that 4% of all clothing was overtly sexualized, while 25.4% of all clothing was ambiguously sexualized, or contained both childlike and sexualized features. The highest instance of sexualized features was found in tween stores. Specifically, 72% of Abercrombie Kids' clothing was coded as either overtly sexual or ambiguously sexual. Goodin et al.'s coding for sexualized young adult clothing can be used to differentiate between characters who are overtly sexualized, somewhat sexualized, and asexual (or childlike).

Goodin et. al (2011) states that sexualized clothing has further implications as suggested by Cultivation theory, which suggests that repeated exposure to themes, ideas, and images over time causes an individual to assimilate the same themes, ideas, and images into their worldview. Since, Goodin et al. state that sexy clothing for girls is a way to attract the male gaze, their definition of sexy clothing implies that girls strive to meet a heterosexual ideal. Since the purpose of the research is to understand the relationship between sexual orientation and sexualization of female characters in young adult media, it is important to understand the semiotics of clothing in this regard.

Much like the discussion regarding audience acceptance of sexuality in Young Adult novels, clothing must toe the line between being somewhat provocative, but not slutty. The idea that a woman has to be mildly sexualized, but not overtly sexual is seen in many elements of young adult novel film adaptations, including in their clothing. While each woman undergoes a physical transformation in order to reflect an emotional transformation of the character, each female character strays from being overtly sexual. Rather, clothing is form-fitting but never overtly revealing, showing that each character has to balance being accessible, cute, empowering, and mildly sexy.

'Mean Girls' & Clueless Moms: Previous Analyses of Adaptations

White female archetypes, such as the Queen Bee, the subtly sexy tomboy, and the Clueless Mom all promote correct and incorrect forms of femininity. According to Berberry (2012), discursive disciplines affect women's views of power and gender. Terms such as lady-like and whore do not leave women room to negotiate their gender, take away social control, and limit behaviors and actions. Berberry focused on a college

sorority, where she found that despite being a women-only institution, language was driven by dominant discourse. Such language tended to promote heterosexuality and moved against feminist ideals. Berberry found that 'girl talk' in sororities normalizes dominant discourse, and labels are used to deter certain behaviors. The sorority women did not want to be bossy, slutty, bitchy, or controlling, and placed negative labels on women who did not meet gender expectations and ideals.

Many teen movies criticize other women to promote a superior form of femininity. In the case of *Mean Girls* (2004), the female gender was portrayed as largely negative: teenage girls are shown as ruthless, socially aggressive, manipulative, and mean (Behm-Morowitz and Mastro, 2008). Simultaneously, the concluding message asserts that teenage girls need to stop girl-on-girl rivalries and to avoid using words that are damaging to their gender, such as *bitch* and *slut.* Behm-Morowitz and Mastro explain that gender performances in teen movies are likely to shape adolescents' views regarding gender identity and proper gender roles, because developmentally, young adults are highly focused on developing their social selves and turn to media for direction.

According to Behm-Morowitz and Mastro (2008), classic teen films portray **female dominance as highly negative**: female dominant characters used their social dominance as a way to belittle and control others, whereas males are more apt to be portrayed as physically aggressive. However, in reality, males and females have similar socially and physically aggressive habits: 'social aggression is equally common among males, and that females some- times engage in physical aggression.' This indicates that male and female friendships may not be so different in terms of aggression"

(Behm-Morowitz & Mastro, 2008, p. 133). Further, female friendships have been shown to be more socially supportive and positive than males, and yet the film industry shows women as clique-oriented and disloyal. While *Mean Girls* is promoted as a 'different' teen movie that breaks the mold—and it does in many ways—the film confirms that there is something about the female gender that is inherently negative, and girls need to work towards self-improvement in order to better represent their gender.

Behm-Morowitz and Mastro (2008) conducted two studies that investigated gender roles in teen movies. In the first study, the participants evaluated the 20 highest-grossing teen movies between the years of 1995 and 2005. The study defines teen movies as a film that is both marketed to teens and stars teenage characters, and the storyline focuses predominantly on those characters. Through the use of coding, the authors argue that the glowingly sweet girl has been replaced by a new archetype, which more closely represents a nice girl who *will be mean if she has to*. Behm-Morowitz and Mastro's secondary study measured gender attitudes and beliefs of college students after watching teen movies (2008), which noted that participants were more likely to adopt the gendered beliefs of characters that they related to. Further, repeated exposure to teen films affected how males view female friendships. The more films that male audiences watched, the more likely they were to adopt a negative view of female friendships.

Pittman (2008) examines *She's the Man* (Ewing, Lucchesi, & Rosenberg, 2006), a teen genre film adaptation of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* as a film set up to defy gender identity expectations, but ultimately falls back onto gender stereotypes: "Early moments

of the film shape Viola as a sympathetic heroine who excels at soccer, deplores her mother's version of feminine identity, and remains safely and enthusiastically heterosexual," (2008, p. 126). Further, Viola resorts to catty behaviors in order to snub other forms of femininity. While Viola rejects her mother's construction of the feminine ideal, which lines up to that of June Cleaver, Viola in effect, adapts a *new* feminine ideal: a physically attractive "soccer-lover, tomboy, and well-adjusted straight girl," (Pittman, 2008, p. 126).

Viola's mother, Mrs. Hastings, depicts a version of femininity that is extremely exaggerated and unrealistic. Mrs. Hastings is shown in pearls, full skirt and crisp blouse, tending house, and cooking. According to Pittman (2008), Viola's outward rejection her mother's unrealistic depiction of womanhood are anti-woman in itself: the "caricatured opposition between mother and daughter bears all too-close a resemblance to the myths of mother-blame and separation typical of popular culture's construction of mothers," (p. 128). Mrs. Hastings' version of femininity is mocked and her opinion and influence are truly a non-factor in Viola's developing identity. Mrs. Hastings gender role is shown as ineffectual and she is invalidated as a character. *She's the Man* propels a certain gender ideal and makes another seem not just incorrect, but abhorrent. Pittman supports this notion by relaying a specific scene in the movie in which Viola's physical identity as a female is exaggerated by showing her in a long dress and beautiful, blowing hair, yet she never loses her sarcastic, witty, and no-nonsense attitude. During this scene, her ex-boyfriend asks why she can't 'just act like a girl,' which results in Viola slapping him. This suggests that female-ness is an insult, whereas Viola only inherited the "good"

feminine traits. While the character of Viola was constructed in attempts to break gender discourse, Byne's depiction of Viola and Sebastian only reaffirms new gender ideals and a specific gender ideology.

The conflicting expectations for women—to be beautiful, but not overdone; to be strong, but not emasculate the men around her; to be likable, but not manipulative; to be smart, but not a know-it-all—results in characters who somehow find balance between all these socially constructed binaries of what a perfect woman should be. These young adult post-apocalyptic films that prominently feature a young woman, are promoted as a 'different' kind of movie for teenagers, but in fact, these films feature familiar archetypes that promote a new kind of formulaic script that still adheres to a typical heteronormative ideal. Such films portray female aggressiveness not as cattiness, but as a warrior woman who should be gazed upon for male enjoyment. Heteronormative expectations**,** such as a boy-wins-girl storyline, a physical / beauty makeover, and criticism of other women are still standard features in not just teen movies, but teen apocalyptic movies that feature a strong female lead.

The Gender Makeover: Fixing the Woman

Bynes's makeover in *She's the Man* (Ewing, Lucchesi, & Rosenberg, 2006) is not unique, and in fact, is almost a requirement for most films with a strong or defiant female lead. Notably, the 'makeover' scene is not always voluntary. McDonald (2007) cites *Calamity Jane* (1953) as an early example of a gender makeover in popular television. Doris Day begins the movie as a tomboy, dressed in boots and a shotgun. According to McDonald, "Calam's basic deficiency is her ignorance of proper femininity, with her

youthfulness: as a tomboy, the character can be unlearned without seeming stupid," (p. 180). The 'makeover' of Calamity is almost strictly costume-based: she maintains her positive attitude, bravery, and energy: she simply is made better by cleaning up and wearing more feminine clothing. In many ways, the makeover—even if it was not conducted willingly—serves as a heroic transformation or right of passage while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of physical appearance to a woman's identity. In makeover scenes, a problem is identified with the female. She is either not pretty enough or not confident enough, or both. Through the makeover process**,** the female "changes" to become both more sexually desirable and fit into a more prescriptive gender ideal.

Strong Female Roles and their Relation to Male Characters

Man (1993) discusses gender, genre, and myth within Ridley Scott's *Thelma and Louise* (Gitlin & Scott, 1991). According to Man, the film addresses specific gender ideologies, including "the feminist, antifeminist, progressive, and reactionary," in addition to addressing the "classical Hollywood paradigm and its genres within their gendered lines of agency, spectacle, and spectatorship," (1993, p. 36). Specifically, Man argues that Thelma and Louise (Geena Davis & Susan Sarandon) are able to challenge certain gender myths because of their authenticity and because the storyline is not lost or overtaken by dominant male characters. However, such an assertion suggests that had there been dominant male characters, the effectiveness of Thelma and Louise would be lost, which is an inherently disempowering assertion. Further, Man asserts that *Thelma and Louise* had an immediate cultural influence by citing a Newsweek article about four

Chicago women who pointed their fingers like imaginary guns at a passing-by truck who cat-called them. Man describes such a reaction as an appropriation of "film's primary image of feminist rage when confronted by an obscene truck driver, snubbing feminine passivity and living the desire of *Thelma and Louis*e" (p. 37). While the sexist undertones and general political correctness of Man's analysis of Thelma and Louise, as well as the incident described in *Newsweek*, his frank analysis reveals a different kind of truth: feminism is associated with rage, but femininity is associated with passivity. Since neither of those is desirable, women must adapt an in-between or a more easily digestible version of feminism and subscribe to a more roughed-up version of femininity.

Man (1993) argues that films are not just works of art, but cultural events. In this sense, cinematic moments can become part of our own identity and our own culture. Man argues that Hollywood myths are malleable, and in effect, identity is also malleable. According to Man, the cultural impact of *Thelma and Louise* was so strong that everyday people, as illustrated in his example from *Newsweek*, were emulating the characters themselves. While *Thelma and Louise* "generates a complex process of recapitulation, transformation, and creation of new fantasies for spectator appropriation," it can also be argued that *Thelma and Louise* not only created a new myth, but a new idealized version of gender.

As previously argued, gender is fluid, societal expectations and tolerances change, along with the idealized version of femininity. Sexual identities and gender roles in film are apt to change and evolve, and levels of social acceptance are commonly reflected in film. Feminine ideals and expectations are not just reflected in her individual gender

performance, they are also reflected in her interpersonal relationships to other men, the type of men she that is attracted (or un-attracted) to, and her dynamics with other women.

Where's the Beefcake? Desirable and Undesirable Male Characters in Teen Film

Malin (2003) examines the biographical film of Andy Kaufmann, *Man on the Moon* (1999), which memorializes the often gender-bending comic. The cultural implications are significant, because it focuses on the performative aspects of his identity as well as his chaotic nature, identity ambiguity, gender disruption, as well as what his character implies about gender normativity. Malin argues that gender fluidity in men is less tolerated than gender fluidity in women, and therefore are less likely to appear within criticism in the media. Malin asserts that the film's depiction of Kaufmann's identity is indicative of masculine identity politics of the 1990's, where traditional white, dominant masculinity came somewhat unhinged. Malin attributes the unhinging of dominant, white masculinity to the Clinton era. According to Malin, not only did Clinton emulate class ambiguity, but he also depicted racial ambiguity. Malin stated that Clinton had such wide appeal to women and African Americans because he was seen as assertive, in control, and *manly.* In the Clinton administration, Bill was largely forgiven for his affair, while his wife received scrutiny for her lack of warmth, physical appearance, and drive. On a macro-societal level, Malin identifies this as the masculine crisis: masculinity was rewarded when it came to Bill and criticized when it came to Hillary. Malin relates the masculine crisis to Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, which argues that gender identity is fluid, yet in our heteronormative culture, there are still cultural distinctions between men and women.

Andy Kauffman is a complicated case study, because by completely submerging himself into the identity of his characters, he illustrated that identity—not just gender identity—is performative and fluid, drawing audiences to question whom the 'real' Andy Kauffman was. Malin argues that feminist and queer scholarship in essence, both challenged white masculinity, but also upset traditional "maleness," which turned to a different extreme: male bashing. Malin's argument is that masculinity—or male-ness-- is used as a tool to disempower others. Malin argues that a consequence of radical feminist scholarship is a backlash against traditional masculinity, which actually prescribes new gender roles to men: with this, even Arnold Schwarzenegger, the epitome of macho idealism, began picking up more gender ambiguous roles, such as an kindergarten policeman (*Kindergarten Cop* [Gross & Medjuck, 1990]) and a man who experiences pregnancy and childbirth (*Junior* [Camhe & Medjuck, 1994]). When the hyper-masculine ideal exhibits signs of sensitivity or weakness, it is seen as charming or even 'cute.' When an effeminate male shows sensitivity or weakness, he is more likely to be shown as a cuckold.

Teen movies often feature a sensitive, yet hyper-masculine male heartthrob, which largely drives the storyline. However, unlike the female leads, which are disempowered in their objectification of the male gaze, the strong female heroine is suddenly changed by or acts submissive towards the attractive, sensitive, and sometimes brooding male lead. According to Wang (2007), the sassy female lead is a way to make sense of female aggressiveness in dating relationships, and modern teen films often feature teen girls performing gender through aggressive behaviors (Wang, p. 623). Furthermore, such

storylines combine the two "seemingly contradictory concepts of love and violence into a visual presentation. These texts establish a new model of dating: Girls are pretty, willful, and aggressive, whereas boys are loving, tender, and fragile," which propels the invisible message that their violence is not just accepted, but considered attractive or glamorous (Wang, p. 624).

Methodology & Preview

Given the above literature, the question must be asked: what prescriptive gender roles are being performed by white, heterosexual female protagonists in young adult novel film adaptations, and how do these character portrayals relate to society's attitudes towards feminism and sexuality? Specifically, how do female protagonists in young adult film adaptations adopt or reject socially constructed gender ideals and the heteronormative system of language? In order to do so, a discursive critique will be employed, with each of the characters identified above interrogated through a lens informed by Queer Theory, Cultivation Theory, and Feminist Theory**.** Each female protagonist will be reviewed in separate chapters. Chapter Two will examine Hermione Granger (referred to from her on as Hermione) from the *Harry Potter* franchise (*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* [Heyman, 2001]; *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* [Heyman, 2002] ; *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* [Columbus, Heyman & Radcliffe, 2004] ; *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* [Heyman, 2005]; *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* [Heyman & Barron, 2007]; *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* [Heyman & Barron, 2009]; *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*

Part 1 [Heyman, Barron & Rowling, 2010] and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2* [Heyman, Barron & Rowling, 2011]). In order to examine a more fully developed character, I will analyze each of the *Harry Potter* films, specifically to examine the emphasis of appearance, the role of male attention on Hermione's character, and the watering down of her role in the storyline in the later movies. Chapter 3 will examine Katniss Everdeen (who from here on will be referred to as Katniss) from *The Hunger Games* franchise (*Hunger Games* [Jacobson & Klilk, 2012]; *Hunger Games: Catching Fire* [Jacobson & Klilk, 2013] *Hunger Games: Mocking Jay Part 1* [Jacobson & Klilk, 2014]), in which I will focus on Katniss's unwillingness to perform, how fame affected her character, and how her relationship with older women in the movie shows a strong relationship between sexuality and power. Finally, Chapter 4 will analyze Beatrice / Tris Prior (who from here on will be referred to as Tris) from *Divergent* (Burger & Fisher, 2014), *Insurgent* (Schwentke & Fisher, 2015), and *Allegiant* (Schwentke & Fisher, 2016). in which I will focus on body mutilation, changing for a love interest, and young adult sexual experimentation. Within each chapter, the series' protagonist will first be discussed in terms of individual gender performance. Gender performance discussions will include an analysis of dress, language, role, attitudes, and behaviors. Next, each character will be discussed in terms of relationship with others, which includes female comparison, romantic relationships, relationship to families, and friendships. The final chapter of the thesis will discuss emerging, prescriptive gender roles in young adult novel film adaptations, as well as future implications and conclusions.

Chapter 2: Katniss

The Hunger Games (2012-2015) was an instant and sustained blockbuster, making $2.9 billion in total box office receipts, for both domestic and international audiences (The Hunger Games). The central protagonist (Katniss Everdeen, played by Jennifer Lawrence), offers audiences – specifically younger female audience members – a character to admire, learn through, and emulate. Yet, this character's gender performances are problematic in that they prescribe a new gender ideal that is impossible for young women to reach. Katniss is sexually desirable, smart, loyal, beautiful, maternal, strong, selfless, independent, fierce, sassy, but ultimately, she is tamable and driven by the approval and affections of men.

This chapter will specifically explore the role that Katniss and other characters within the *Hunger Games* universe play in both reifying and challenging gender norms in the United States. This will be done by, first, offering a synopsis of the film. Next, previous research into the *Hunger Games* will be summarized for the purposes of this critique. Once completed, the remainder of the chapter will offer a critique of the various roles that Katniss Everdeen performs within the movies and what the implications of those roles might be.

Synopsis

The Hunger Game series, based on the book series by Suzanne Collins takes place in the future in the country of Panem (formerly North America) that was

divided into twelve distinct districts after an unknown apocalyptic event. Being highly mistreated by the Capitol, the districts started an unsuccessful rebellion 74 years prior. As punishment for this treason and as a public deterrent for future rebellions against the government, the Capitol hosted an annual competition in which a boy and a girl between the ages of 12-18, known as tributes, battled to be the sole survivor in a competition known as The Hunger Games. The series is centered on the heroine, Katniss Everdeen, who was from District 12, an impoverished coal-mining district. With her father having died years earlier, Katniss was placed in the role of hunting for food and providing for her grief-stricken mother and highly sensitive sister, Primrose.

In order to choose contestants for The Hunger Games, each district partakes in a lottery-like event called the choosing ceremony, which is led by a Capitol-appointed ambassador. During the choosing ceremony, the Games ambassador, Effie Trinket (Elizabeth Banks) called out the names of Peeta Mellark (Josh Hutcherson), the son of a baker who had long-standing romantic feelings for Katniss, along with Katniss' sister, Primrose. In order to save her sister, Katniss volunteered herself for the Games, and proved to be a formidable opponent during the training phases. Under the advice of her alcoholic mentor, Heymitch (played by Woody Harrelson), Katniss is advised that she needs to appear less harsh and become more likable in order to receive sponsors. Heymitch emphasized that sponsors, who have the ability to find supplies to contestants, are often the difference between life and death. Having survived the Games together, Katniss

and Peeta (despite Katniss having a boyfriend, Gale Hawthorne [played by Liam Helmsworth]), created the illusion that they are in love in order to force the Capitol to choose: they would either allow them both to win, or they would both eat a deadly berry called Nightlock as an act of protest of the Games. The Capitol, feeling cornered, allowed for both Katniss and Peeta to survive the Games. Furious, the Capitol Leader, President Snow (played by Donald Sutherland) forced the Games organizer to eat Nightlock as a punishment, and replaced him with Plutarch Heavensbee (played by Phillip Seymour Hoffman).

President Snow (Donald Sutherland) viewed Peeta and Katniss' actions as a dangerous act of rebellion, and as a means to stifle public unrest, has Katniss and Peeta tour the twelve districts as ambassadors to the Capitol. When it became clear that Katniss was viewed as a symbol for the rebellion, Snow ordered another Hunger Games, this time, featuring all previous victors. Unbeknownst to Katniss, a handful of her contestants along with the new director of the Games, Heavensbee (Philip Seymour Hoffman), rigged the games so that Katniss would not be killed. Katniss was rescued from the games and was flown away from the arena to the before-fabled District 13, where she was used to draw support from other districts to form a rebellion, under the leadership of President Coin (Julianne Moore). Amongst the chaos of transporting Katniss to District 13, Peeta was captured by the Capitol. While at the Capitol, Peeta was subjected to torture and mind-controlling techniques, which altered his personality and convinced him that Katniss is evil.

While he eventually is rescued from the Capitol, Peeta is emotionally unstable and tries to attack or kill Katniss on several occasions.

Motivated by the injustice she has witnessed at the hands of the Capitol, Katniss worked under the advice of rebellion leaders, President Coin (played by Julianne Moore) and Heavensbee (played by Phillip Seymour Hoffman), in order to kill President Snow. In her attempts to get to the Capitol and President Snow, Katniss witnessed an attack on Capitol children, in which Primrose was killed by an explosion. In her final conversation with President Snow, Katniss realized that President Coin—not President Snow—led the attack that killed her sister. Katniss became increasingly aware of President Coin's evil doings when she suggested that they hold another Hunger Games in which the Capitol children are tributes. Katniss agreed to her request for another Hunger Games, under the contingency that she was allowed to kill President Snow. President Coin agreed to Katniss' terms and arranged for a public execution. However, during the ceremony where Katniss is supposed to kill Snow, she instead shoots Coin through the heart with an arrow, leaving Snow to be mobbed by other angry citizens. The series concludes several years in the future, with Katniss rocking her baby as her husband, Peeta, played in a field with their other young child.

Previous research on Katniss and *The Hunger Games.*

Previous research conducted over *The Hunger Games* focused on four areas: gender, performance, and social class. Taber, Woloshyn, and Lane (2013)

conducted a study in which female readers, between fifth and seventh grade, partook in a three-part book club and gave reactions towards the plot and characters. The participants stated that they struggled to accept the nontraditional gender roles of Peeta and Katniss, often questioning the actions and character traits of each (Taber, Woloshyn & Lane, 2013, p. 1030). The participants were asked to associate various words for each character: for Katniss, the most common words used to describe her were 'smart,' 'outgoing,' and 'courageous.' When comparing Katniss to her younger sister, the participants characterized Primrose as 'sweet,' 'different,' 'little,' and as someone who likes to save animals. The participants viewed Katniss as a strong, independent, and unconcerned about physical appearance: "She acts like a, a boy but wasn't. She wasn't visually a boy. She hunted ...she didn't care what she looked like" (Taber, Woloshyn & Lane, 2013, p. 1032). Finally, the words they chose to characterize Peeta were 'baker,' 'loves Katniss,' and 'hides himself' (Taber, Woloshyn & Lane, 2013, p. 1030). The researchers found that the participants had a difficult time accepting non-traditional gender roles for all characters, but particularly for Peeta, pronouncing him as 'girly' and 'like a teddy bear' (Taber, Woloshyn & Lane, 2013, p. 1031). The researchers noted that the participants "faulted Peeta for his inability to fight, hunt, and protect Katniss physically. They condemned him for his lack of propensity toward violence and public proclamations of affection," and as a result, viewed Peeta as a hindrance to Katniss (Taber, Woloshyn & Lane, 2013, p. 1031). Additionally, the participants had a negative reaction to Katniss and Peeta's once-feigned relationship, stating that

it was a larger indicator that she was just using him and thought of him as just a friend (Taber, Woloshyn & Lane, 2013, p. 1032). Many were frustrated that she didn't pronounce her true love for Gale, who is much more 'manly' and handsome than Peeta.

Part of Katniss' mass appeal is that she appears to be natural. Dubrofsky and Ryalls (2014) argued that Katniss is perceived as an authentic and heroic character because she performs not-performing (p. 396). Dubrofsky and Ryalls (2014) stated that not-performing is desirable because it suggests that a character is "behaving in a natural-seeming manner is transposed onto the body in the film: altered bodies—bodies marked as surgically transformed or adorned with makeup and ornate clothing—are constructed as deviant, in opposition to Katniss' natural, unaltered white femininity" (p. 396). In this sense, *The Hunger Games* associates the trustworthiness of a character with femininity and whiteness (p. 396). The use of surveillance in the film cements Katniss' heroic nature because surveillance "verifies authenticity" in that if an individual appears to behave in a natural way, "[. . .] they are good participants whose actions can be trusted and whose intentions are clear since their real selves could not help but come forth" (Dubrofsky and Ryalls, 2014, p. 398). Since, in the case of Katniss, the surveillance revealed that Katniss is heroic and not-performing her naturalized, white femininity, whiteness and heroism are closely associated (Dubrofsky and Ryalls, 2014, p. 398). Katniss' character is consistent in that she behaved "instinctively and without artifice, exhibiting consistency across disparate spaces" (p. 398). According to Dubrofsky and Ryalls,

Katniss furthered her authenticity with her awkward and unnatural demeanor when placed in situations where she is supposed to 'perform' *un*naturalized femininity in front of audiences, showing that she is not capable of being artificial (p. 399). Through performing not-preforming, she established herself as a character who is incapable of acting with guile (p. 399).

Fisher (2012) argued that *The Hunger Games* commented on socioeconomic status and politics in a direct way, since Panem is the direct result of failed North American politics, and specifically, the failure of democracy (p. 27). According to Fisher, the Capitol criticizes capitalism itself, specifically in terms of how access to knowledge is often contingent on having a higher socioeconomic status. Fisher states that the 12 districts represent a cyber feudal society in which most of the districts operate on manual labor, while the Capitol has access to premier technologies (2012, p. 28). The Capitol is devoid of logos or branding, and yet, President Snow seemed to own everything, suggesting that The Capitol and commodities are ubiquitous (2012, p. 29). Fisher asserted that the stratified wealth and slim chance for upward movement represent the skewed American dream: the poorest young people seek celebrity and riches as a way to better their circumstances (2012, p. 29). While the districts are responsible for manufacturing goods, the only jobs in the Capitol are related to service—food, styling, and entertainment, creating the misconception that most people are living opulent, over-the-top lifestyles. In reality, most people lived in coal-mining or manufacturing districts and were struggling to survive. According to Fisher, "[. . .]

the Capitol's oppression of the districts is perhaps most obviously read in terms of colonial domination. In the Games, the colonized are forced to celebrate their own defeat and to acknowledge the unassailability of the colonizer's power" (2012, p. 32). The themes regarding suicide are essential in understanding the leverage of power because it denied the Capitol control over Katniss and Peeta's fates. Katniss and Peeta were largely fatalistic in the first films, believing that they are powerless and that a revolution is not possible. Instead, Gale proposed the only alternative to suicide or complying with the Capitol: he and Katniss could create a self-sufficient life by escaping to live a life in the woods, which Katniss rejected, because they would always be running and hiding (Fisher, 2012, p. 30). The above section will be used to connect to Foucault's (1988) notion that government is imperialistic, invasive, and expanding. While Katniss is strong in many ways, her influence over her choices is limited because of the society in which she lives and establishes the notion that Katniss is a commodity.

Guanio-Uluru (2015) argues that Katniss is a heroine that negotiates her "status relative to a traditionally masculine ideal," yet the film "interacts with the generic scripts such as those of romance and the boys' story (p. 209). Not only does Guanio-Uluru state that Katniss performs both masculine and the feminine, depending on the situation, she also spends "much of her time negotiating the predator / prey binary" (p. 209). While Guanio-Uluru asserts that Katniss performs the traditionally masculine ideal, she also tends to allow herself to be subjugated and controlled: "Katniss is coerced by the patriarchal structures of Panem society and by several male characters in the narrative

into performing emphasized femininity in order to increase her own chances of survival (p. 212). Katniss subscribes to the idea of "reinvention through dress" and "performs gender in order to enhance her appeal of Capitol viewers: [. . .] donning dresses and being cast as desirable through Peeta's confession of love through her" (p. 211). Over time, Katniss slowly loses control over the storyline, and the series' becomes more about Peeta, who serves as "[. . .] the series' main measure of good. His position is validated in terms of the narrative's progression, as his lifelong love for Katniss is finally rewarded: he gets the girl" (p. 211). While Katniss is sometimes viewed as powerful because she is a warrior, the films more often emphasize the "link between [how] beauty and power is tied to the figure of the sexually seductive heroine" (p. 213).

DeaVault (2012) argues that Katniss' transition throughout the film series undermines her character: "Given her violent bid for autonomy and independence throughout the trilogy, relating Katniss to the domestic sphere seems to do her a grave disservice by destroying the power of her 'other-ness'" (p. 198). DeaVault views Katniss as a character who subscribes to the values of whomever she is romantically attached to. At the beginning of her story arc, Katniss' character was more reminiscent of Gale's, whose "hunter prowess and warrior mindset reflects hegemonic masculinity." Peeta, on the other hand, influenced Katniss to perform a difference form of masculinity in that she began to "[. . .] incorporate aspects of the Sensitive New Man, which is modeled to her by Peeta, who represents the overall normative ideal [. . .] he is the morally better man, and eventually emerges victorious in the competition for Katniss' affection" (p. 197). Katniss' character development moves her from "performing as a lethal physical fighter

in tight control of emotion—a stereotypical masculine ideal—into performing the more sensitive role of wife and mother, [. . .which] offsets her performance of masculinity" (p. 198).

The above section will help inform the critique because it highlights how astute young adults are to societal gender expectations and gender performances. At a young age, girls described Peeta's gender performance as girly and incorrect, suggesting that he needed to become manlier in order to be a good match for Katniss. Specifically, the way in which Peeta adopted more 'manly' personae was by becoming disinterested as well as physically and verbally abusive towards Katniss, which will be later discussed. Additionally, the above literature explains the importance of appearing authentic and natural while performing gender as well as the role in which surveillance helps to affirm that a character is trustworthy and loyal. Additionally, the previous above section helps to explain how post-apocalyptic, futuristic movies provide avenues to examine and criticize our own government and economic systems, and how the government conditions behavior out of fear of punishment. Finally, the previous literature will be used to examine Katniss' transformation, both physically and emotionally. Katniss' transformations are multiple and drastic, sometimes prompted by necessity (survival) and sometimes prompted by love (both maternal and romantic).

Previous research examines gender performance that strays from hegemonic discourse, the association between likability and physical appearance and whiteness and the political and socioeconomic messages within the *Hunger Games* films.

While previous research focuses on how Katniss' physical appearance, in regards to naturalized femininity, creates a feminine ideal, Katniss' relationship towards other men and women in the films both promote and criticize certain feminine and masculine traits. The following critique will explore how Katniss, who is seems to defy expectations in terms of identity and gender in *The Hunger Games Trilogy*, often falls back on heteronormative storylines. The following sections will critique Katniss' performance of self as well as how others influence her choices and identity construction through five themes: Katniss as a Warrior, Katniss as Parent, Katniss as a Daughter, Katniss as a Partner, and Katniss as a Commodity[1].

Katniss as Parent

Throughout the films, Katniss is occasionally performing illegitimate gender performances as a way to provide for and comfort her younger sister, Primrose. According to Foucault (1988), secrecy regarding sex and sexual identity is the societal norm, especially when performing "illegitimate sexualities" (p. 9). Societally, sexuality and gender that strayed from the norm is oftentimes hidden out of fear of punishment or isolation (1988, p. 9). The audience's first impression of Katniss (*HG*) was soothing her younger sister, Primrose, after she has a nightmare about being chosen at the reaping: "Shh, shh, try to go to sleep. Just try, just try" (Jacobson & Klilk, 2012). Katniss performed a maternal role towards her younger

[1] Within the discussion, the films will be abbreviated as the following: *The Hunger Games* will be annotated as (*HG*); *The Hunger Games Catching Fire* will be annotated as (*CF*), *The Hunger Games Mockingjay Part 1* will be annotated as (*MJ1*) and *The Hunger Games Mockingjay Part 2* will be annotated as (*MJ2*).

sister in this moment by singing a song, stroking her sister's hair, and kissing her on the forehead. Her initially soft and nurturing characterization was contrasted in the following scene, in which Katniss prepared for a hunt. As she reached for her bow and arrow, the family cat hissed at her. Katniss' tone and facial expressions were serious, and her smile disappeared. Katniss snapped at the cat and warned, "I'll still cook you," which suggested that Katniss' softness for her sister both performed and forced (Jacobson & Klilk, 2012). Katniss' maternal and paternal performances are compartmentalized and separated, specifically in her interactions with her sister. The audience's first impressions of Katniss are contradictory, setting the stage for a queer, but contradictory, gender performance. On one hand, Katniss assumes a maternal role for Primrose, and on the other, she leaves her sister to go hunting—a role stereotypically reserved for men. Katniss lied to her sister about where she was going and what she was doing. Katniss' dishonesty about her true self reinforces the idea that Katniss' gender identity is something that needs to be hidden from others. Her family, who Katniss should be the most intimate with, are people that she is the most secretive with, in regards to her true gender identity. While Katniss' natural self, which is seen when she is isolated, can be viewed as queer—masculine, isolated, survivalist—the self she constructs in front of her sister is more traditional in the sense that she emulates a nurturing, comforting, and soft personae.

Since Katniss served as a parental figure to Primrose, her sister looked to her for guidance and comfort. Katniss' maternal performance can be connected to Butler's (1993) concept of 'play' in which she is forces to perform a specific narrative is driven by

societal constraints (p. 234). Butler (2006) states that, “The identification of women as ‘sex’ [. . .] is a conflation of the category of women with the ostensibly sexualized features of their bodies and, hence, a refusal to grant freedom and autonomy to women as it is purportedly enjoyed by men” (p. 27). Mulvey (1975) states that cinema provides a venue for men to gaze unabashedly at women on screen, promoting an active mail / passive female dynamic. Film is voyeuristic because it allows men to gaze at women’s bodies without feeling shame or guilt, which makes the female body a spectacle. Mulvey states that the narrative of women on screen works against the story itself, because the role of women in film is to distract and serve as a visual presence. The voyeuristic nature of film is problematic because a woman’s value is associated with her body and the enjoyment that her sexualized body brings to men. However, because Katniss is elusive with her sister as to the role she actually played in the family’s safety and sustenance, Primrose often focused on Katniss’ appearance. While Katniss helped to get Primrose ready for the reaping, Primrose said, “I wish I looked like you” (Jacobson & Klilk, 2012) as the camera pans across Katniss’ body, which distracted from the conversation. Disruptions in the plot line to gaze at Katniss’ sexualized body is problematic because it deemphasizes her identity performance and, instead, reminds the audience that her primary purpose is to be gazed upon. The deliberate sexualization of Katniss’ body communicates the idea that her freedom to explore queer identities is limited because one of her primary purposes is to be objectified sexually for the pleasure of men. While the audience was almost directed to objectify Katniss in this sense, there are plenty of other

opportunities to overtly gaze upon Katniss' sexualized body that may seem less obvious, such as in fight scenes, which will later be examined in "Katniss as a Warrior."

In the films, Katniss counterbalances her hyper-masculine performance as a warrior by also performing the role of a mother to the youngest contestant, Rue (Amandla Stenberg). Katniss' willingness to put her survivalist instincts aside in order to comfort and protect Rue, in the way a mother would, with Butler's (2006) argument that gender roles are constructed by society and are used as a way to push a heteronormative agenda (p. 35). Katniss had to play the role of a lethal weapon, willing to kill anyone who threatens her survival-- her protective, maternal role makes her softer, more feminine, and more relatable. When Rue dies in the movies, Katniss becomes emotionally raw in one of the first moments that the audience observes her letting her guard down completely, screamed at the cameras and vowed revenge (*HG*). In the *Hunger Games*, Katniss performed the role of a warrior, which required her to be strong, lethal, and physically intimidating. In order to un-queer Katniss the Warrior, she disrupts her predator performance to perform maternal and romantic roles associated with traditional heteronormative scripts. Katniss is placed in a position where she has to act completely out of her own self-interest, and Rue gives her greater purpose—she is again a protector, a provider, and someone who places their needs last. One of the ways that she was feminized was by showing that she is emotional, maternal, and vulnerable. Katniss' masculine performance is compartmentalized and constantly contrasted with a feminine or sexualized performance. By performing as a mother, Katniss' queer performance is underscored. While Rue was a "flat" character, she allowed opportunity for Katniss to

toe the line between masculine and feminine, yet still be likable and relatable; since Katniss was a mother figure to Rue, she could be soft, but not weak, and a killer, yet a noble one.

Katniss as a Daughter

Katniss, who is the biological daughter of Mrs. Everdeen and the daughter-figure to Effie Trinket, often mocked the behaviors of her mother figures, and yet, she is often guilty of performing similar behaviors to those that she criticizes. Butler (2006) states that women are inherently viewed as less-than, and identifies ideal gender performances as "normalization within the heterosexual matrix," in which men are dominant and women are subordinate (Butler, 2006, p. 37). According to Butler, society constructs gender in a way that creates a "[. . .] Power of language to subordinate and exclude women" (Butler, 2006, p. 36). Importantly, there are few, if any, words exchanged between Katniss and Mrs. Everdeen, and Mrs. Everdeen's presence is typically marked by her helplessly looking on as Katniss takes care of her other daughter, Primrose. During the scene where Katniss comforted Primrose before entering The Hunger Games, Katniss' mother watched the interaction from afar, almost catatonic. Katniss is already established as 'other' and 'different' from other women because she hunts and has survivalist instincts, whereas her sister and mother align with characteristics that are negatively associated with the female gender. Mrs. Everdeen, who is unconfident, voiceless, emotional, scared, and dependent, is the epitome of subordination. Katniss' tendency to dominate, control, and exclude Mrs. Everdeen can be interpreted as Katniss assuming the paternal role in the relationship.

In *HG*, several references are made throughout the film that Mrs. Everdeen is emotional—and often times, physically--detached from the family. Foucault argues that social and power structures, which are inherently masculine, control ideas regarding acceptable gender performance, both in language and action (Foucault, 1988, p. 11). As Foucault argues, people abide by gender norms out of fear of punishment, stating that disciplinary forces shape people's behaviors (p. 11). Noelle-Nuemann argues that people's self-censor their words and refrain from speaking freely out of fear of judgment or criticism, which is referred to as the spiral of silence (1974, p. 372). Katniss' mother rarely speaks and was often seen in the background, looking on at Katniss and Primrose interacting. Katniss' relationship with her mother was extremely strained, largely because Katniss is resentful and impatient with her mother's ineffectualness as a parent, often interrupting her mother or not allowing her to speak. In their last meeting before Katniss entered the Hunger Games, Katniss criticized her mother and told her how to act and behave: "You can't tune out again. No. You Can't. Not like when dad died. No matter what you feel, you have to be there for her. You're all she has. Don't cry" (Jacobson & Klilk, 2012). In this scene, Katniss' mother does not comfort her daughters. Instead, she looked on helplessly. Katniss' performance within her family structure is very masculine leaning: she is the disciplinary force and frequently silences her mother. In this same scene, Katniss suggested that her boyfriend, Gale, would have to take care of her family in her absence, rendering Primrose and Mrs. Everdeen incapable (Jacobson & Klilk, 2012). Although Katniss shows disdain for her mother's dependent and timid performances, she eventually emulates the very traits that she mocks; at the conclusion of

the films (as will be discussed in 'Katniss as a Partner'), Katniss became detached, submissive, and excluded in her own right (*MJ2*). Although a woman performing a paternal role can be viewed as queer, Katniss is later 'normalized' by playing a maternal role to other children and depending on men. Katniss' story is told as that of someone who rose to independence *despite* all the odds, and yet, it could easily be argued that had her mother been nurturing and assumed the typical maternal role, Katniss would likely not have assumed the traits that are associated with the masculine ideal: resourcefulness, strength, independence, and grit. While Mrs. Everdeen's consumption with grief is devalued and viewed as a weakness, Katniss' ability to ignore her grief and push forward is viewed as heroic.

Katniss' disdain towards Mrs. Everdeen suggests that stereotypical feminine traits, such as sensitivity, weakness, and emotional reactivity are highly undesirable traits. Pittman (2008) states that the "caricatured opposition between mother and daughter bears all too-close a resemblance to the myths of mother-blame and separation typical of popular culture's construction of mothers," (p. 128). Due to societal pressures, gender performances often become "normalized within the heterosexual matrix" (Butler, 2006, p. 27). As Foucault argues, people frequently act within the constructs of heteronormative behaviors out of fear of punishment (1995, p. 11). Throughout the film series, Katniss continued to be disdainful towards her mother who was emotionally preoccupied and did not put her children's needs before her own. As a result, Katniss frequently ignored and avoided her mother. In *MJ2*, Katniss was certain she would be killed in an assassination

attempt, and in what she assumed would be her final goodbye, Katniss made the intentional choice to have an emotional moment with Prim: Katniss hugged Primrose tightly and danced with her, meanwhile never interacting with her mother, who was standing in the background, watching (Jacobson & Klilk, 2015). Katniss' resentment and blame towards her mother is a form of punishment: in silencing her mother, she conditions her to change her behaviors. While Mrs. Everdeen's screen time was very limited, she proved to be a dynamic character in one of the final scenes of *MJ2*. Following the death of Primrose, Mrs. Everdeen tended to Katniss' wounds, and said, "Sit back. You're okay" (Jacobson & Klilk, 2015). Katniss looked at her and said the word "Mom," which concludes the scene. Notably, this is the first and only time that Katniss refers to her mother as 'Mom'—she typically ignores her entirely. In this scene, Katniss noticed and acknowledged her mother, effectively promoting the idea that women are not valuable unless they are putting others' emotional needs above their own while fulfilling their domestic obligations. Here, Mrs. Everdeen's gender performance was normalized because she finally fulfilled her primary role—that of a mother and caretaker. It is not until Mrs. Everdeen adapted her behaviors to meet Katniss' standards that she was accepted and acknowledged.

Effie, who serves as a mother figure to Katniss, is often mocked and belittled by Katniss, who largely views her as silly and weak. Effie's first appearance at the reaping ceremony is important because it conveys that Effie is trite and overdone, whereas Katniss is above superficiality and exhibits a kind of

naturalized femininity, which is not performed. According to Goodin, Denburg, Murnen, and Smolak (2011), hyper-feminized clothing suggests that a woman is actively trying to attract the male gaze and is striving to meet a heterosexual ideal. According to Tasker and Negra (2007) postfeminist ideal drive beauty standards: the ideal woman should be understated, natural, sexually appealing, and girly. Butler (2006) argues that promoting certain gender performances only results in new gender binaries (p. 35). Effie's artificial physical appearance and demeanor are in stark contrast to the tone of the rest of the scene, which portrayed somber faces, gray colors, poverty, and fear, it becomes apparent that Effie is also 'othered,' but not in a positive way. Effie's physical appearance is highly artificial, with glitter-dusted, platinum-dyed hair, which is accented with an enormous, magenta flower, which matches her bright lipstick, starched-collared gown, and hat, and high-heeled lace-up boots (Jacobson & Klilk, 2012). During her speech, Katniss and Gayle turn to each other and laugh at Effie's gender performance. To the audience and to characters in the show, Effie's performance is false and unnatural. Similarly to how she criticized her mother, Katniss mocked Effie's gender performance. Katniss' relationships with other women show 'correct' and 'incorrect' forms of femininity and highlight desirable and undesirable feminine traits. Katniss views Effie's over-the-top feminine performance is viewed as unnatural and desperate. Katniss, on the other hand, is viewed as more sexually desirable because she has the appearance of being sexually attractive, yet her beauty is often underplayed, to show that Katniss is natural and not trying too hard.

Whenever Katniss appears in a dressed up or 'done up' state, it is something that is forced upon her or is done in a performance situation. Although Katniss appears in some scenes where her outfits, makeup, and attitude closely mirror those of Effie's, she has the benefit of a makeover scene, which shows that the overtly girly personae is forced and not self-constructed. Like Effie, Katniss is playing a role to survive; yet hypocritically, Effie's survivalist tactics are undermined.

Katniss as a Commodity

When entering the Hunger Games, Katniss faces pressure to act as a commodity, in order to increase her chances of survival. "Katniss is put under pressure by several male characters to perform emphasized femininity and that male characters are not required in the same way to appear physically attractive to the audience, prevailing rather through displays of strength and physical prowess" (Connors, 2014, p. 150). In order to survive, Katniss must franchise on her sexuality and perform a more traditional, heteronormative role. Foucault (1988) links sexual prudence to the power structures that influence and control ideas about what defines socially acceptable sexuality and gender, both in language and action (p. 11). Leppert (2014, p. 133), views the makeover as a rite of passage, in which a girl moves from being oblivious to her sexual appeal to transforming—physically and literally—into a woman. When in District 12, Katniss is consistently seen in a variation of the same outfit: her clothing is non-revealing, consisting of drab colors. Katniss is seen in a fitted leather bomber jacket, a side braid, fitted riding pants, and knee high boots and minimal, if any, makeup. Therefore, her District 12 appearance could be considered her 'natural' clothing. When

placed into situations where performance is required, Katniss' attire changes, along with her behaviors, and notably, these changes are not done by her own accord. Katniss' initial makeover scene is at the hands of Cinna (played by Lenny Kravitz) for the Tribute Parade, where Hunger Games contestants are introduced to the public for the first time. Her makeover scene is significant because it is the first instance where Katniss is shown as a public commodity. Katniss is manufactured and controlled by the hands of the Capitol, which is not limited to just President Snow (played by Daniel Sutherland), but the people he employs. In *HG*, Cinna said, "I'm sorry that this happened to you. I'm going to help you in any way that I can" (Jacobson & Klilk, 2012). In his initial scene, Cinna is portrayed as someone who sees Katniss as a victim, needing to be cared for. When Katniss tells Cinna that he's just there to make her pretty, he explains that he's here to help her "Make an impression" in order to receive more sponsorships (Jacobson & Klilk, 2012). By 'make an impression' Cinna really meant that in order to be seen as valuable, Katniss must be viewed as desirable. Cinna's makeover scene is important because it suggests that she would not be able to survive as her true self, and instead, she must use her sexuality as a way to advance herself. Additionally, this scene pinpoints the moment in which Katniss realizes that her sexuality is a commodity. Because Cinna was in charge of the makeover, Katniss is able to both be sexual, without actually having to own her sexuality. Because Cinna pushed Katniss into wearing the sexy costume, consisting of a body-fitting pleather catsuit, a dramatic smokey eye, and voluminous hair, she was able to dismiss her sexualized and artificial feminine performance as not her own. Further, because she wore the outfit under the pretense that she *had* to in order to

survive, Katniss' sexualized performance was both understandable and sympathetic. Since she is not in control of the makeover, she is still perceived as performing natural femininity, while simultaneously providing another opportunity for male audience members to gaze at her body. The version of femininity that Katniss performs in her 'made-over state' closely resembles the female performance that she mocks in Effie, and yet, since her sexualized and artificial performance was situational, Katniss was able to maintain her performance of naturalized beauty and authenticity.

Katniss, when portrayed as a commodity, complicates her performance because it moves away from the notion that Katniss is independent and queer, and instead, someone who can be molded and shaped by those in power. According to Butler (1990), gender performances are situational and fluid (p. 127). Still, Katniss' tendency to be controlled by men is important to discuss because, as Stern (2013) states, the media, specifically when targeted towards young adults, have influence over adolescent girls' self-identity development and construction. Stern (2013) argues that it is increasingly common for media, specifically television and movies, to feature a female lead who appears to be empowered, but in truth, their identity is constructed largely around gaining the approval or gaze of a man, which often results in adjusting dress, appearance, attitude, and language (p. 419). Katniss was forced to alter her appearance and behavior in order to perform "whiteness and femininity, privileging the seemingly unconscious production of observable trustworthiness and earnestness of character" (Benjamin, 2004, p. 38). Heymitch (played by Woody Harrelson) reinforced the idea that if Katniss performed the role of a girlfriend, she will be more marketable and her chances of survival are greater.

When Katniss tried to reject the romantic storyline with Peeta that was being pushed upon her, Heymitch said, "He made you look desirable. Which in your case, can't hurt, sweetheart" (Jacobson & Klilk, 2012). In this scene, Heymitch emphasized that Katniss' as a sexual object was more valuable than her strength or prowess. While Katniss' initial performance was queer in that it moved away from a heteronormative storyline in many ways—independent, fierce, rough, and unconcerned about her appearance—she is pigeonholed into performing a traditional heteronormative relationship pattern. The idea that Katniss had to play into a heteronormative romantic storyline in order to be normalized is important because she literally has to earn the approval of sponsors to survive. Katniss was told that her natural self was not appealing, and in order to compensate for that, she must soften herself and show that she is lovable through her 'relationship' with Peeta. In order to survive, Katniss had to become a successful commodity.

When in the Capitol, Katniss is viewed as a commodity by President Snow. In *CF*, President Snow demanded that Katniss wear a wedding dress on the talk show, to play up her romantic relationship with Peeta (Jacobson & Klilk, 2013). Mulvey (1975) describes such interactions as scenes that "[. . .] freeze the flow in action in moments of erotic contemplation," (1975, p. 715). President Snow's character is controlling, colonial, and overly involved, emulating characteristics of a highly invasive government. According to Foucault, the state itself is both imperialistic and paternalistic that wishes to expand (1979, p. 187). Foucault argues that governments use punishment and discipline as a way to shape and control

people's behaviors (1988, p. 11). Because Snow epitomizes what negative, intrusive government represents, Katniss' heroic ascent is legitimized. Further, because Snow is controlling and powerful, he is able to assert control and dominance over Katniss, which minimizes her queer performance. President Snow tries to have control over Katniss by demanding she perform the role of a bride on television, in which he insisted that she wore a long, white dress with silver details and a full, princess-style skirt and diamond earrings. Snow's vision was symbolic of the ultimate feminine portrayal: a pure, virginal bride. When Katniss said that she was unhappy with the idea of being presented as a bride, Cinna altered Snow's design in a way that the skirt would light on fire when she spun, revealing a tight-fitting black corseted ball gown, equipped with mockingjay wings. While Cinna appeared to be the hero in this situation, he is still employed by the Capitol, he still represents the government, and he is still exerting control over Katniss' physical self. The dichotomous nature of dark versus light in this scene demonstrates the gender role demands placed on Katniss: she must be powerful in battle, intimidating to her teammates, likable to the public, sexy at moments, yet virginal. By having someone else in charge of her look, Katniss is allowed to play both virgin and vixen because it is overtly a performance. Katniss does not have to assume responsibility when shifting into virginal and sexual roles because the makeover was the choice of someone else. She is able to assert that her true self is tomboy-ish, natural, and authentic, whereas the forced makeovers provide avenues for her to perform identities that are sexually appealing to men. Although he is portrayed as an ally,

Cinna (who is employed by President Snow) continuously controls, critiques, and asks Katniss to alter her appearance in order to advance herself or to please others. While seemingly, Katniss is queering feminine stereotypes, in effect, her queerness is being minimalized by forcing her to perform feminine stereotypes.

While Katniss' sexual performances were initially forced upon her, Katniss eventually used her sexuality deliberately to gain control or power in situations. According to Foucault, there is a "fundamental link between power, knowledge, and sexuality" (p. 10). Butler explains that characters that do not fit into the heteronormative script makes others feel uncomfortable (Butler, 2006, p. 38). Mulvey (1975) argued that storylines are actively disrupted in film in order to provide for opportunity to look at women's bodies (p. 715). Over time, Katniss realizes that using her sexuality to promote and advance herself is necessary and a technique that she begins to employ in other situations. In *CF*, Finnick remarks on Katniss' performance during a training scene: "You look pretty terrifying in that getup. What happened to the little girl dresses?" in which Katniss replies, "I outgrew them" (Jacobson & Klilk, 2013). Finnick looks Katniss up and down, focusing on her breasts before replying, "Well, you certainly did" (Jacobson & Klilk, 2013). Finnick's interaction with Katniss shows that Katniss understands that she is viewed sexually, and perhaps that she even wore more sexualized clothing purposely, as a way to garner attention and advantages in the games. The males who surround Katniss acknowledge that her looks affect her perception. Unlike her previous outfits, where Katniss seemed oblivious to her sexuality, her interaction

with Finnick shows that she understands that she can benefit from her own sexuality—and unlike in her makeover scenes, she is the one taking control of her appearances. Previously, the audience's Katniss was passively sexualized, and in this scene, the audience is provided a cue to gaze upon her body. The aforementioned scene's main purpose was to stop the flow of action and to look at Katniss' newer, more sexualized performance. As the films progress, Katniss realizes that she must be marketable in order to survive. In order to be marketable, she must therefore be both sexualized, relatable, and datable.

Katniss as a Warrior

A large part of Katniss' queer identity is centered on her performance as a warrior, which also lends itself to Katniss performing as a sexual being. According to Wright (2012) weapon-wielding women in film serve as a sexualized spectacle (p. 401). Wright argued that women who fight in film are contradictory in nature: they disrupt traditional conventional gender roles because women are no longer passive in their narrative roles, but on screen, they are passive to the gaze of the audience member (p. 402). Throughout *HG*, the storyline is frequently interrupted with opportunities to gaze upon Katniss' body, which according to Mulvey (1975) is a way to put women in submissive positions (p. 715) that are disguised as action or fight scenes. While Katniss appears to be performing an active, masculine-leaning role, audiences are actively looking at her passivized, objectified body. Katniss is queer in many ways—she can be aggressive, violent, and is the family's provider—and yet, frequently sexualizing and 'normalizing' her gender performance minimizes her queerness. Katniss is often

sexualized or placed in maternal or romantic roles as a means to make audiences more comfortable with Katniss' masculine-leaning performances, but when examined more closely, even Katniss' role as a warrior is stereotypically feminized and even fetishized. By placing Katniss in the passive position of being watched for the purpose of pleasure, the audience understands that Katniss' queer performance is not all that queer: ultimately, she is a passive and sexualized young woman.

Katniss' sexual performance, maternal performance, and warrior performances are largely compartmentalized within the films. As Connor (2014), argued, "it is only though combining her performance of emphasized femininity with her ability to *also* display physical strength and hunter prowess (that is: to perform hegemonic masculinity) that Katniss prevails in the Games" (p. 150). Warrior women both challenge the "active/passive dichotomy" and subscribe to it because "their position is undermined by an emphasis on the body, relationships with male characters, and the demands of patriarchy" (Wright, 2012, p. 401). In subscribing to specific gender performances, new gender binaries are formed that Katniss must operate within (Butler, 2006, p. 35). Since an imbalance between the feminine / masculine dichotomy exists, narratives compensate for the disparity by pairing the warrior woman up against hyper-masculine men and / or overtly 'weak' women (Wright, 2012, p. 402). Heymitch serves as a hyper masculine foil to Katniss. Like many films that show the rise of a hero, Katniss has a mentor, Heymitch who guided her ascent. Heymitch was overtly sexist and condescending to Katniss, as previously described in his coaching of her behavior and dress. Heymitch consistently encouraged Katniss to "Give them a show" and followed

up his advice with the word ‘sweetheart’ (Jacobson & Klilk, 2012). Although Katniss has tremendous survival and hunting skills, as demonstrated in District 12 and her training scenes, Heymitch tries to stifle her aggressive instincts: “Go to higher ground. Find water. Water is your new best friend. Don’t jump off that pedestal too early” (Jacobson & Klik, 2012). In the first film, before Katniss starts to fully perform for the games, Heymitch mocks Katniss by sarcastically saying ““You are *so* brave” (Jacobson & Klilk, 2012). Heymitch is extraordinarily critical of Katniss’ authentic self, and pushes her to manufacture a love interest in Peeta (Jacobson & Klilk, 2012). Heymitch’s role is important to the film because he commands and changes Katniss, showing she is tamable and capable of submitting. While presented under the umbrella of having to survive, Heymitch successfully gets Katniss to change her appearance, fall into traditional dating patterns, and to water-down her queer performances. Heymitch consistently tries to de-emphasize Katniss’ masculine qualities and play up her feminine traits, which encourages the idea that there is something inherently right in heteronormativity, whereas her queerness is something that needs to be fixed.

During her performance as a warrior, Katniss must be aggressive, smart and maternal within the Games. Katniss’ limitations on gender performance are driven by fear, with the potential for death. Foucault (1995) states that people constrain and self-regulate behaviors out of fear of punishment (p. 11). Mulvey (1975) suggest that society is imbalanced sexually, and is constructed in a way that creates a dynamic where the masculine with active and the feminine with passive (p. 715). Although Katniss killed several people throughout the Games, surprisingly, she acted very passively:

Katniss did not actively pursue or hunt anyone, and instead, acted only out of self-defense. After jumping off the platform in the first Hunger Games, Katniss considered ignoring Heimlich's advice and running in the middle of the battle to grab a bow (Jacobson & Klilk, 2012). Instead, she watched Kato kill several helpless tributes immediately, grabbed a backpack, and ran towards the woods and hid in a tree, where her opponents waited for her at the bottom, stating that they would kill her when she came down. While Katniss killed some of her opponents by cutting down a Tracker Jacket hive, which are lethal bees that cause hallucinations, she did so out of self-defense and was physically detached from the murders—they were impersonal. In this sense, Katniss is adhering to the passive female role that Heymitch suggested. Katniss, who was portrayed as morally superior than many of the other contestants, still maintained her honor because the killing was both viewed as an act of survival. Katniss played The Hunger Games passively and defensively, in stark opposition to the Games' villain, Kato who ruthlessly snapped the neck of a child, sliced another child's throat, and was the mastermind behind killing Rue. Instead of actively hunting people, as her true nature would suggest, Katniss adopted Heimlich's strategy and attempted to destroy others' supplies, run, and hide. The only person who Katniss actively killed in the Hunger Games is the villain, Kato, where he acted as the aggressor and she reacted. Kato's ruthlessness is important to the storyline—since he killed the majority of the contestants, Katniss was placed in an ideal position where she never has to kill characters that were well-liked, and thus, escapes the Games morally unscathed. The idea of Katniss as a

warrior is largely a façade, and the warrior woman performance serves largely as an opportunity for her to be fetishized, controlled, and commoditized.

Katniss' performances in battle tend to be either highly masculine and survivalist or highly nurturing and maternal, but never at the same time. Wright (2012) argued that women in battle scenes provides opportunity to remove women from subsidiary roles and allows for audience voyeurism (p. 401). According to Goodin, Denburg, Murnen, and Smolak (2011), ideally, young adult women avoid being overly feminized or hyper-sexualized (p. 5). Butler states that it is impossible to escape social expectations regarding gender and sexuality performance are derived from power structures (2006, p. 34). In young adult films, overt female sexualization would not only be inappropriate for young viewers, but it would also take away from Katniss' virtuous nature. Therefore, other opportunities to view Katniss as a sexualized being must be both present and covert in order to emulate the feminine ideal. The feminine ideal, instead, shows a woman placed in mildly suggestive situations and clothing, so that she can be viewed as provocative, but not promiscuous. By playing the role of a warrior, Katniss is placed into the passive female dynamic, allowing for male audiences to actively look at her without feeling shame or embarrassment. As a warrior, any of Katniss' sexualized or inauthentic behavior is excused both because she is a soldier acting out of orders, and viewed as morally sound, because she passively survives and kills only out of self-defense.

Katniss as a Partner

In her performances as a romantic partner, Katniss often falls back on traditional heteronormative storylines in order to underscore her queerness. Butler (1993) states

that the force of heteronormativity limits gender experimentation (1993, p. 234). According to Guanio-Uluru (2015) gender performances are further constrained by the "[. . .] trope of a heterosexual romantic triangle works as a plot-structuring device. In this sense, romance as a genre "frames" or directs the narratives' discourse of gender (p. 209). Throughout the films, Katniss' affections move between Gale and Peeta. Katniss' indecisiveness between Gale and Peeta both creates jealousy among the men and portrays Katniss as a prize that can be won. At the beginning of the series, Katniss' love interest is Gale, who accompanied her on hunting trips--Gale is physically attractive and very masculine, did not speak very often, and was protective. In the first film, *HG*, Gale suggested that the two run off and live in the woods together. Katniss interrupted the fantasy and said, "We wouldn't make it five miles. You have your brothers and I have Prim" (Jacobson & Klilk, 2012). In this scene, Katniss' reasoning was logical and based on practicality (Jacobson & Klilk, 2012). On one hand, Katniss' performance in this scene alters from a heteronormative script: she is not driven by romantic notions and acts on logic instead. By stating she did not want to be a mother, Katniss queered herself by straying away from a maternal identity construction. However, Katniss' performance in this scene could also be interpreted as predictable and conventional in that she is perpetuating Gale's pursuit. By not accepting Gale's offer to run away and start a life together, the story allows itself to be shaped by a love triangle. Since Gale's lack of dialogue leaves the audience unable to fully connect or relate to him, the emotional disconnect allows Katniss to switch affections without being viewed as promiscuous or unfaithful.

The love triangle between Gale, Katniss, and Peeta is important in several ways. First, the heteronormative storyline creates interest, specifically for young, female viewers. Mulvey (1975) states that there is an imbalance between the masculine and feminine as well as the passive / active: film attempts to achieve that balance by placing women in subordinate or objectified positions (p. 715). Butler (2006) states that gender performances are fluid and situational (p. 35). Peeta's development was queer in many ways because his performance was very feminine-leaning in many ways: Taber, Woloshyn, and Lane (2013) described him as "domesticated, emotional, and cowardly" (p. 1030). By being paired with Peeta, a feminine-leaning man, Katniss was able, at times, to play a more masculine and queer role. When Katniss found Peeta in *HG*, he was hiding and painted like a rock, as she tended to his wounds (Jacobson & Klilk, 2012). Katniss goes out and hunts and gathers necessary supplies in order for Peeta to survive. In this situation, Katniss' performance was at times masculine and at times maternal, whereas Peeta's performance was feminine (passive, helpless, emotional). In this sense, Katniss' gender performance with Peeta was initially much more queered than her more traditional relationship with Gale. Whereas Katniss often saved Peeta, she regularly submitted to Gale, who she allowed to take care of her. By being paired with a man with more feminine-leaning qualities, Katniss had room to play with her own gender performance, which was often outside of the gender norm.

While, for a time, Katniss and Peeta seemingly disrupted gender roles within their relationship, Peeta underwent a series of character transformations that resulted in a shift in their dynamic: eventually, Peeta became more aggressive—and more specifically,

abusive towards Katniss-- and in turn, Katniss became more submissive. According to Wright (2012), over time, the female lead is developed into a more subdued version of her original self, after being 'tamed down' by her hyper-masculine counterpart (p. 315). . According to Murray, King & Crowe (2015) teen dating violence, or TDV, is any form of physical, emotional, sexual, or psychological abuse among teenagers in a romantic relationship" (p. 52). Teen dating violence is especially problematic because "an abusive relationship at such a young age sets the standard for future relationships" (p. 52). According to Foucault (1988), fear and disciplinary forces shape behaviors (p. 11). At the end of the film series, Katniss made the decision to settle down with Peeta, but importantly, it was not until he became emotionally abusive and unaffectionate towards her that Katniss showed interest. Following his abduction by the Capitol, Peeta's personality changed drastically: he insisted that Katniss was evil and a liar, and he even attempted to kill her. In *MJ* and *MJII*, Peeta's attitude shifted, and his change of heart resulted in Katniss actively trying to get Peeta's attention and affection for the first time in the series (Jacobson & Klilk, 2015). In *MJII*, Katniss is fixated on getting the 'old' Peeta back, which is problematic, because it suggests that it is her responsibility to change Peeta and places the responsibility of his violent outbursts back on her. Because Peeta is tumultuous and aggressive, Katniss counteracts her personality by becoming more subdued and affectionate, often times tempering Peeta's violent episodes by kissing him and telling him that she cares for him (Jacobson & Klilk, 2015). As Peeta developed into a more masculine and violent character, Katniss' behaviors became more submissive and feminine-leaning. While their relationship was queer at a time, their romantic

dynamic not only subscribed to heteronormative gender roles, their relationship also normalized—if not glamorized—dating violence.

Katniss' inconsistent gender performances are sometimes confusing, but explicable. While there are inconsistencies and flaws in Katniss' performance during this scene, Randell-Moon (2012) argues that postmodernism itself is disembodied, and in postmodern film, the emphasis is placed not on consistencies, but discovering one's identity over time (p. 268). Further, Randell-Moon (2012) asserts that over time, a characters is more apt to have "[. . .] character consistency. This technique involves exposing characters to change and risk in episodic stories whilst simultaneously sustaining an overall stability in character, tone, and format" (p. 268). According to Randell-Moon, postmodern film and television does not rely on character being discovered, rather character is made over time. In other words, identity is a process (2012, p. 269). While Katniss' identity shifts and is situational, her core identity is solid, in that she continually performs selflessness and loyalty. In *CF*, Peeta and Katniss are forced by the Capitol to play up their romantic relationship when touring the other districts, since their engagement was so well received by the public. Although the relationship with Katniss and Peeta is presented as a performance, the line is sometimes blurred. Sometimes, Peeta and Katniss' handholding and kissing seems authentic and sometimes it seems contrived. When with Peeta, Katniss plays the role of the protector and provider, but when at home, Katniss is more likely to be victimized. In *CF*, Katniss and Gale go hunting for wild turkey, when Katniss is overcome with flashbacks. Gale's response to Katniss is almost identical to how Katniss treated Peeta when she found him

wounded: “It’s okay, you’re safe. You’re with me” (Jacobson & Klilk, 2013). While Katniss’ affections seem to be fickle, as the film series progresses, her preferences become clearer. Gale, who has some substantial screen time in *CF*, is barely present in the later films. To affirm that her feelings towards Peeta are legitimate, final scene between Gale and Katniss underscores any feelings that Katniss may have once had for him. Katniss kissed Gale, and she was distant and emotionally detached. Gale can sense her change of heart and said, “What’s going on in your head? It’s like kissing someone who’s drunk. It doesn’t count” (Jacobson & Klilk, 2015). While the two do not exchange many words, they acknowledged that Katniss wants to be with Peeta after all. Although Katniss showed some character inconsistencies in her romantic preferences, according to Randell-Moon (2012), disembodiment and confusion are typical of postmodern film. Katniss, who swayed in her affections, ultimately made a decision that she wanted to be with Peeta. Once she realized her true feelings, she did not stray back to Gale, and eventually married Peeta, and thus, established character consistency.

Katniss’ decision to be with Peeta is problematic to YA audiences because not only does it romanticize the idea of abuse, it normalizes it. Further, their relationship suggests that queer female performances are ‘fixable.’ Kennedy (2014) argued that anyone who performs queer on film must adhere to a homonormative script, or appear to be normal, in order to gain acceptance from heterosexual audiences (p. 119). Kennedy argues that queerness must be diluted by normalness in order to not appear to disrupt or “[. . .] challenge the centrality of white, neoliberal, middle-class values” (Kennedy, 2014, 118). Making a queer woman visible means that the queer content itself must be diluted,

and one way of diluting queerness is with whiteness (Kennedy, 2014, 120). Homonormativity means being white, middle class, having a stable relationship, and upholding traditional values in every way *except* being gay (Kennedy, 2014, p. 122). Butler (2006) argues that gender expectations, which are created by society, are impossible to escape due to cultural pressure (p. 37). At the conclusion of *MJII*, Katniss is a completely watered-down version of her former self. While Katniss was constructed as a hunter, survivor, warrior and a victor, by the conclusion of the movies, all signs of edginess and masculinity have been sanitized. The final scene is set several years in the future. Katniss sat in the grass, as she wore a pastel floral dress, with her hair down, smiling and holding a baby. She watched her husband, Peeta, and her toddler play in a field of flowers, while her infant woke up from a bad dream. Katniss soothed the baby and said, "Shh shh shh. Did you have a nightmare? I have nightmares, too. One day I'll tell you about it. I'll tell you about how I survived it. I make a list of every good thing I've ever seen people do. It's like a game. I do it over and over" (Jacobson & Klilk, 2015). Katniss' demeanor and appearance were soft and sweet, and any semblance of masculinity or queerness was erased. Her physical position was seated and looking-on at her husband and child; at the culmination of the films, Katniss is not an active participant, but rather, an observer and is performing a subsidiary role. As a wife and mother, Katniss is finally seen as 'complete' and is living in domestic bliss. The fairy-tale ending of the film is significant because her entire identity is centered on being a wife and mother. Since Katniss is white, naturally pretty, has a boyfriend, and upholds the traditional values of a woman in playing the role of the mother, her queerness is acceptable to

heterosexual audiences, especially since she showed that her queerness was ‘fixable’ or ‘erasable.’ The problematic issue with sanitizing queerness is that it perpetuates sexual and gender binaries, narrowing the scope in which queerness can be not only performed, but commoditized. In this case, Katniss’ queerness was just a phase, and at the conclusion of the film, no longer an essential part of her identity.

Concluding Thoughts

Katniss’ gender performances are complicated because she is being sold as someone who appears to encompass strength and value, yet she allows her appearance and clothing to be created and manipulated by men. Because of her positive public reaction to the performance that Snow and Cinna created, Katniss, whose authentic self is centered around naturalized femininity, alters her gender performance in certain situations to gain attention, appear to be likable, and gain sponsorships that are necessary to survival. By softening her rugged, unapologetic performances with interruptions where Katniss seems softer, or even sexier, the audience is appeased. Since gender roles are denoted by those in power, and the societal backlash that can occur when gender expectations are broken, *The Hunger Games* intentionally provides scenes where Katniss falls into a traditional heteronormative script, where Katniss is objectified and whose value centers around how she looks and what she wears.

Katniss’ queer performances were apparent at the beginning of the films: she is unapologetic, doesn’t conform to gender expectations, provides for her family, and is untamed. As the movies progress, Katniss is coached to become more likable and to

water down her queer performance. Katniss became increasingly motivated by her romantic relationships and was more susceptible to be made over and controlled, often being placed in situations where she was sexualized, commoditized, and even victimized. While the *Hunger Games* series seems to have all the makings of a teen movie that defies expectations, ultimately, Katniss is watered down until she is completely 'normalized' and un-queered. Katniss is eventually often settles into traditional feminine norms and representations, where she is not defined by her skills or accomplishments, but is seen only as a wife and mother. Katniss' concluding moment is not that of an independent, strong, and wild, but instead, as a woman living a traditional, domestic life.

Chapter 3: Hermione

Harry Potter (2001-2011) made almost $8 billion in worldwide box office sales, with its final installment earning $1.34 billion dollars alone ("Harry Potter," 2011). While the series primarily chronicles Harry Potter's (played by Daniel Radcliffe) time at wizarding school, his two friends, Ron Weasley (played by Rupert Grint) and Hermione Granger (played by Emma Watson), accompany him throughout his journey. Hermione is a character that young girls admire because of her loyalty, no-nonsense attitude, and whip-sharp intellect. While Hermione's character seems to be refreshing and different, since she is not the love interest of the series' protagonist (Harry), Hermione's gender performance is quite complicated and worthy of discussion. Hermione intentionally 'others' herself from other women and is almost exclusively friends with boys. Hermione, who is characterized as smart and loyal, is also somewhat problematic in her gender performance.

This chapter will explore how Hermione both subscribes to and challenges Western gender norms in her performances within the *Harry Potter* films. The discussion will first provide a summary of the film series. Following, previous research over *Harry Potter* will be summarized and examined for the purpose of this critique. The remainder of the chapter will critique Hermione's gender performance within the films and will examine the implications of her performances.

Synopsis:

The *Harry Potter* series chronicles the young adult life of Harry Potter (Daniel Radcliffe), who was orphaned as an infant at the hands of the powerful dark wizard, Lord

Voldemort (played by Ralph Fiennes). Following the attack, Albus Dumbledore (Michael Gambon), a revered wizard and headmaster of the Hogwarts School of Wizardry and Witchcraft, sent Harry to live with his muggle (non-magical) Aunt and Uncle Dursley (played by Fiona Shaw and Richard Griffiths), who locked him in a cupboard beneath the stairs in attempts to stifle his magical powers. Unbeknownst to him, Harry is a hero among the wizarding world because, somehow, he survived Voldemort's death curse and wounded the Dark Lord so badly that he has been powerless and in hiding for more than a decade. On his eleventh birthday, Harry was invited to attend Hogwarts, in which he first learns about his extraordinary past and special powers. Harry was rescued from his home and sent to attend the wizarding school, where he soon connected with two friends: Ron (Rupert Grint), a red-haired goofball from a wizarding family, and Hermione (Emma Watson), a quick-witted, academically-driven muggle born, meaning that she is born to non-magical parents. As Harry begins his studies, Voldemort begins to gain strength and power. Harry, who has a special connection with The Dark Lord ever since his parents died, is told that he is the only person who can stop him from returning to power. The films chronicle each year that Harry spends at Hogwarts, and finally end with him leaving the school to destroy the Dark Lord once and for all.

Previous Research on Hermione:

While there is ample research on the *Harry Potter* series itself (Turner, 2016; Chanda & Kaustav, 2014; Hsu, Jacobs & Altmann, 2015; Apostolides, Meylahn, & Hervormde, 2014; Lacassagne, 2016), previous research on Hermione Granger's character is limited, primarily focused on her conformity, subordination to Harry, and as a

sometimes feminist-leaning figure (Kellner, 2010). Cherland (2009) states that Hermione's function in the novels is boiled down to being one of "Harry's Girls," which means performing a subservient role (p. 274). Cherland (2009) supports the idea that *Harry Potter* falls back on gender binaries by arguing that the "male / female binary is a culture fiction that Harry Potter helps to create and support [. . .] who belong on one side of the gender divide or the other. It is important to remember that the first part of the binary is marked as normal, as worthy, as most human. This binary helps to justify unequal power relations and out hierarchal social order" (p. 279). According to Cherland (2009), Hermione is subordinate and takes up "subject positions and the discourses that mark them as inferior" (p. 279).

Nylund (2007) examines how popular culture, which according to Cultural Studies, is the dominant culture, helps individuals to form their identities (p. 14). Nylund explores the *Harry Potter* series, which is produced by dominant culture and yet features characters from various subcultures, helps youth to form identities. Nylund sees *Harry Potter* as featuring characters from subcultural groups that "[. . .] can resist hegemonic forms of culture, creating their own oppositional identities and styles" (p. 16). However, Nyland focuses on Harry Potter as the 'queer' performer, who is unaccepted by his guardians and general society (p. 18). Nyland states that while media "[. . .] does induce individuals to conform to dominant culture, it can provide resources that create the potential context for self-empowerment" (p. 14). Nyland applied Queer Theory to the *Harry Potter* series because it "challenges the notions of fixed identities [. . .] marking one of the primary tenets of queer theory: the interrogation and dismantling of the

homo/heterosexual binary" (p. 18). By challenging the homo/heterosexual binary, the *Harry Potter* series attempts to disturb the norm (p. 18). Nyland connects *Harry Potter* to Foucault's work, claiming that although the series challenges sexual binaries, it is still "impossible to move entirely outside of heteronormativity" (p. 21). Further, despite challenging heteronormative performances, *Harry Potter* falls into what Foucault refers to as the limitations of sexual identity because of "[. . .] people's willingness to occupy medically constructed categories of identity—as 'reverse discourse'" (p. 21). Nyland suggests that viewing *Harry Potter* through the lens of cultural studies helps to avoid polarities: "From a cultural studies perspective, children are not passive victims of commercial manipulation nor are they completely free and creative consumers using media culture for their own empowerment" (p. 22).

Wolosky (2013) applied Foucault's concepts of agency, discipline, and education to *Harry Potter*. Wolosky applies to Foucalt's (1995) teachings to assert that Hogwarts encourages heteronormative behavior and acts as a paternal, disciplinary force (p. 288). The teachers at Hogwarts use discipline to supervise and control the student's actions as well as to punish the communication of dangerous ideas (p. 288). Notably, Hogwarts is a school that functions based on social and academic ranks, which are characterized according to the "pupil's progress, worth, character, application, cleanliness, and parents' fortune" (p. 288). Wolosky argues that Hogwarts does not just seek to educate students, it was also entrusted "to perform the feat of character forming" in a way that encouraged "imperialistic expansion [. . . and] new virtues, such as ambition and initiative, discipline and team spirit, readiness to take up responsibility and talent for leadership" (p. 289).

Wolosky connects Hogwarts to Foucault's view of government as both paternal and parasitic, in that Hogwarts normalized surveillance and judgment.

Cultural studies theorists suggest that audience members, including children, are not passive consumers of media. Instead, they actively negotiate the meanings of popular culture, and in fact, many kids read "against the grain of a media text and use it for their own purposes" (Kellner, 2010, p. 367). Kellner (2010) states that J.K. Rowling, the author of the *Harry Potter* series, has a tendency to create female characters, such as brainy girls and women headmaster, who superficially appear to be feminists (p. 367). Yet, within the novels, "the nuclear family structure is intensely traditional and patriarchal, and the books, of course, focus on a hero and not a heroine" (Kellner, 2010, p. 367). Kellner (2010) identifies the portrayal of women in *Harry Potter* as problematic because "women are mostly excluded from the public sphere and forced to remain at home, with all that implies. This subjection of women is a political act" (p. 371). Kellner (2010) states that the elevation of certain females in the novels and criticism of others "[. . .] stresses the fact that women can oppress other women" (p. 372). Kellner (2010) asserts that Rowling is, in many ways, ambivalent towards feminism, yet creates storylines and character dynamics that promote discussion for the feminist cause (p. 384).

Naim and Wyn (2015) examined the first of the *Harry Potter* films, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Heyman & Columbus, 2001), which they identified as coming-of-age narrative about girlhood and boyhood. Naim and Wyn cited *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* as significant because it "provide[s] a perspective on the

changing historical and political context of gendered identity construction in the new millennium" (p. 821). Harry Potter's coming-of-age is framed around a quest and elevating himself from a boyhood "focused on loss, deficit and disadvantage" (p. 822). Harry's quest is central to the narrative, and Hermione is someone who her classmates are "[. . .] bemused, rather than impressed by. In class, Hermione knows the answers but is ignored, Ron seems invisible to his teachers, and Harry is singled out as the 'new celebrity'" (p. 827). Hermione's intelligence is brought up frequently in the film, and is sometimes celebrated but more "frequently ridiculed and [. . .] caricatured by the majority of her peers and teachers" (p. 827). Naim and Wyn stated that Hermione's character serves as a warning to young women that their success" [. . .] comes at a price, whether as a threat to young men or in terms of heterosexual attractiveness and/or popularity. In Harry Potter, boys are celebrated and central, especially Harry, whose qualities outshine Hermione's" (p. 827).

According to Mandehlson (2001), Hermione Granger faces great adversity, due to her take-charge attitude in a patriarchal world, and lack of social standing due to being muggle-born, meaning that she comes from a non-wizarding family (p. 294). Hermione conforms to Hogwart's expectations by softening her personality and becoming an associate to Harry. Mandehlson notes that classism and nepotism comes into play throughout the *Harry Potter* series: Hermione struggles "against adversity and for acceptance [. . .] since Hermione's story is learning the necessary conformity to the new social milieu (p. 294). Hermione does not have the built-in rapport or social standing that Ron and Harry have, since she is the first person with magical abilities in her family and

her parents have no clout in the wizarding world. In effect, she does not understand the nuances that come with being accepted in the wizarding world, and therefore, will never be Harry's love interest. Instead, she plays the role of his assistant, despite her notable skills:

> Harry is set up as the gentleman scholar: he works hard enough that his natural talent will take him through, but he is never shown at the top of the class, as this, a position occupied by Hermione, is too showy for a gentleman. (Mandehlson, 2001, p. 295)

Mandehlson (2001) asserts that both Ron and Hermione tend to defer to Harry, and Harry hangs on to each because they are useful--Hermione offers intelligence and Ron is acculturated to the wizarding world because of his family (p. 299).

Although Draco Malfoy (played by Tom Felton) is presented as Harry's main source of competition, Mandehlson (2001) argues that, ironically, Harry's friendship dynamic mirrors that of Draco's entourage (p. 299). In both Harry and Draco's friend relationships, their friends are seen

> as courtiers, but because Hermione and Ron are nicer, and Harry less inclined to bully, it is easy to ignore the fact that the relationships are essentially the same. This is clearest in the first of the books in which Harry's friendship with Hermione is grudging and his willingness to humiliate her in public is no better than Malfoy's treatment of his acolytes (p. 299).

While both Ron and Hermione depend on Harry for social standing at Hogwarts, Hermione's dependence on Harry is more pronounced than Ron's because Ron has a long-standing of family attendance at Hogwarts, which includes siblings who attend at

the same time as him, whereas Hermione is socially accepted at Hogwarts for the sole reason that she is Harry's friend:

Some of this is entirely an issue of gender. Hermione is the bossy know-it-all girl and thus doomed to be disliked by her peers. She can be liked only by association, or when she chooses to conform, and will never be permitted to be anything other than a second in command. (Mandehlson, 2001, p. 300)

Hermione is not only an outsider in Hogwarts, she is an outsider in wizarding society, due to her non-pureblood (which could be read as "not-white" or mulatto) status. While Harry does not treat her especially well, she continues to cater to Harry because her friendship options are extremely limited.

Hermione, who self-describes as logical ("Actually, I'm highly logical, which allows me to look past extraneous detail and perceive clearly that which others overlook" [*HPDH1*]), is often portrayed as a character that is smart, and yet, quite often, her displays of logic are undermined or glossed over, specifically in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Heyman & Columbus, 2001). Howe (2002) focuses on Hermione as a logician, who is able to solve problems, yet not articulate her reasoning (p. 86). Specifically, Hermione is faced with the task of solving a math equation, while Harry Potter goes on without her to seek his revenge against Voldemort. In this scene, Hermione reveals the answer to the puzzle, without explaining her reasoning, and thus, forcing the reader to simply accept her solution as correct (Howe, 2002, p. 87). Hermione's contribution to Harry's heroic ascent is minimalized. Instead of acknowledging Hermione's achievement, the focus is placed on Harry Potter's encounter

with Voldemort, which was the climax of the movie. While Hermione was crucial to his success, her role in defeating Lord Voldemort was largely glazed over. Although characterized primarily by her wit and logic, Hermione's intelligence is often undermined.

While previous research addresses the complicated nature of Hermione as a character, including her subordination to Harry, the following discussion will elaborate on how Hermione's queer performances are watered down during her time at Hogwarts as well as how her storyline falls back on gender binaries and heteronormative plotlines. The subsequent analysis on Hermione will focus on her complex, and oftentimes hypocritical, gender performances, which sometimes emphasize how Hermione's intellect allows her to move beyond gender expectations, and at others, place Hermione playing a subservient role to other males in the films. The following analysis will explore Hermione's identity performances as well as how she is constructed by others: Hermione as the Brainy Sidekick, Hermione as the Mother Figure, Hermione as a Romantic Partner, and Hermione as the 'Other' Girl. Within the discussion, the films will be abbreviated as the following: *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Heyman & Columbus, 2001): *HPSS; Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (Heyman & Columbus, 2002): *HPCS*; *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (Heyman & Cuaron, 2004): *HPPA*; *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (Heyman & Newell, 2005): *HPGF*; *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (Heyman & Yates, 2007): *HPOP*; *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (Heyman & Yates, 2009): *HPHBP*; *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1*

(Heyman & Yates, 2010): *HPDH1*; *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2* (Heyman & Yates, 2011) *HPDH2*.

Hermione as the Brainy 'Sidekick'

Hermione's tendency to alter personality and behavior in order to soothe her male classmates' insecurities aligns with Butler's (2006) argument that gender roles are constructed by society and are used as a way to push a heteronormative agenda (p. 35). In Hermione's case, the heteronormative agenda means being quieter, and not intimidating her male peers. While Hermione has consistently been labeled as the smart girl throughout the *Harry Potter* films, her peers often view her cleverness as a way to assert her superiority. Hermione uses her intelligence for a variety of purposes including self-promotion, assisting friends, and maintaining her role as the resident know-it-all. Hermione's no-nonsense way of telling people they are doing something incorrectly is mocked by her peers, especially Harry and Ron, who viewed her intellectual showiness as a way from Hermione to highlight their own shortcomings: "She's a nightmare. No wonder she hasn't got any friends" (Heyman & Columbus, 2001). When provided the opportunity to tell an adult she was being mistreated by Ron and Harry, Hermione told a self-deprecating lie that falsely portrayed her male peers in a kind light: "It's my fault, Professor McGonogall. I went looking for trouble. I read about them and thought I could handle it. I was wrong. If it weren't for Harry and Ron, I would probably be dead" (Heyman & Columbus, 2001). In this scene, Hermione demonstrated that it is more important to her to be liked than it is to be smart. Hermione tempers her intelligence and straight-forwardness after being outcast by Ron and Harry. By tempering her

aggressiveness and confidence, Hermione effectually enforces traditional female gender roles: she is submissive to her male counterparts. Hermione's actions are significant in this scene because it shows intentional identity performance as well as submitting to Harry and Ron pushing her to temper her personality in order to protect her male friends' egos. This scene portrayed Hermione as a damsel in distress, who needed to be saved by the boys—when in reality, Ron and Harry's cruelty was the catalyst for the chain of events. Once Hermione is viewed as too smart and too bossy, she was 'put in her place' and thus, in a subservient role. Hermione's learned identity is to be quiet and unintimidating, while also promoting Harry's quest. In this sense, her identity exists only to promote her celebrity friend.

Hermione is harshly criticized for the same behaviors that are accepted from Harry and Ron, which has a clear effect on her choices. Malin (2003) identifies the hypocritical criticism of women for behaviors that are viewed as acceptable in men the masculine crisis: while traits that are viewed as masculine are praised and rewarded when demonstrated by men, women are frequently punished for exhibiting masculine behaviors (p. 240). Such is true in the *Harry Potter* series: while Harry's tendency to break the rules is lauded, when Hermione bends the rules even slightly, Professor McGonogall questioned her entire character:

I would have expected more rational behavior on your part, and I'm very disappointed.

Five points will be deducted from your house for your serious lack in judgment.

As for you boys: not very many first years could take on a fully-grown mountain

> troll and live to tell the tale. Five points will be awarded to each of you. (Heyman & Columbus, 2001)

Hermione's bravery is criticized and she is punished for breaking the rules, and yet, Ron and Harry's bravery was—literally—rewarded, thus reinforcing 'correct' forms of gender identity. Hermione was encouraged to water down her masculine-leaning performance and act in a way that made Harry comfortable. Within her first few days of school, Hermione learns that a girl can be brazenly smart or liked by her peers—but she cannot be both. As a result, Hermione chooses to be liked, and, thus, frequently waters down her intelligence.

Not only is Hermione submissive to her male friends, but she also proves herself to be 'useful' by using her talents to promote her friends' ambitions, and her gender performance is extremely limited due to societal expectations placed upon her. While Hermione's intelligence is often praised throughout the films, in instances where Hermione is viewed as overly smart or exhibiting her intelligence in a way that is too showy, she is mocked by others and is excluded socially. In order to be accepted and liked by Ron and Harry, Hermione uses her intelligence almost exclusively when it helps Harry's cause. Butler (2006) argues that there is societal pressure to ascribe value to certain feminine traits and de-value other, which results in a person performing a 'correct' form of gender (p. 36). Hermione's tendencies to play the role of assistant to her male peers also relate to Mulvey's (1975) idea that the world is sexually imbalanced, associating the male with active and the female as passive (p. 714). In this instance, Hermione's loyalty, 'coolness' and friendliness are revered, while her pride and overt

braininess are viewed as character flaws. By holding back when it comes to showing how smart she really is, Hermione effectively alters her personality to become more subservient and 'girly' because her confidence, leadership, and intellect challenge Ron and Harry's masculinity. Because both Harry and Hermione are coming of age in the film, it is especially important to examine how dominant discourse affects a character's identity formation. Significantly, Ron and Harry accept Hermione as a friend, but with contingencies; her identity performances must not hurt their egos. Butler (2002) describes this phenomenon as *masquerading*, or 'becoming' a gender (p. 95). When a person does not prescribe to gender binaries, in order to be viewed as socially acceptable, that individual has to put on a metaphorical mask and play a gender role in certain situations. Hermione masquerades as the loyal and selfless platonic friend whose identity is contingent on her relationship with males, and specifically, contingent to helping Harry.

Harry's ambitiousness and assertiveness are lauded, while Hermione is forced to temper her own ambitions and, instead, promote Harry's quest. Hermione's identity revolves around Harry's ambitions. Throughout the *Harry Potter* series, Harry consistently uses Hermione's skills and bravery to promote himself, which in effect, makes Hermione subservient to Harry. Butler (2002), argues that gender binaries are so prevalent in society because women are forced to act as the phallus to men (p. 61). Butler explains that women must adapt their own behaviors and personalities in order to be viewed as socially acceptable: "women must become precisely what men are not and, in their very lack, establish the essential function of men" (p. 61). In order to be accepted, Hermione must be useful to Harry, but not detract from his own gender

performance. As a result, Hermione's identity performance is that of Harry's brainy sidekick. Hermione's braininess is useful to Harry, whom he rewards with his friendship as a result, but her intelligence is also a source of annoyance to him. When Hermione finds a book for him, Harry exclaims, "Hermione, you're brilliant!" (Heyman & Yates, 2009), but when Hermione shows that she is the top student at performing spells, Harry and Ron roll their eyes and laugh at her showiness (Heyman & Columbus, 2001). Harry only approves of Hermione's intelligence when it is used within the context of promoting his heroic assent. Hermione's intellectual performance is tempered over time, and Hermione performs the role of the 'cool girl' more often than the role of the 'insufferable brain.' By masking her own intelligence in order to preserve Harry's ego, Hermione demonstrates learned normative gender traits and how to perform them.

Hermione's role as the brainy sidekick is especially prominent at the climax of the movies, which tend to require Hermione to figure something out so that Harry can defeat an enemy. As previously discussed, Roger (2002) pointed out that the first installment of *Harry Potter*, *HPSS*, Harry and Ron must work together to defeat Professor Quirrel and Lord Voldemort, but Hermione is forced to stay behind and solve a math equation, while Harry Potter gets to play the role of the hero and battles Voldemort by himself (p. 87). Howe (2002) states that Hermione's identity is dependent on her relationship to Harry (p. 87). Without Harry, Hermione cannot be heroic or loyal because Harry is the root cause of the action and conflict (Howe, 2002, p. 87). As previously addressed, Butler (2002) argues that a woman's main function is to be helpful to men (Butler, p. 61). Hermione set Harry up to be the hero, but she does so in a way where she

is constantly plays a secondary role to him and rarely received the attention or accolades she deserves. In the second film, *HPCS*. Hermione pieces together clues to reveal that the monster, the basilisk, is hiding within the pipes, and yet, she becomes paralyzed before she can share her discovery with Harry (Heyman & Columbus, 2002). Hermione wrote her revelation down in a book, which Harry discovered, allowed for him to take credit for defeating the snake and performing the role of the hero. Hermione's contribution to the overall story arc was minimized. During the climax of the third *Harry Potter* film, *HPPA*, like in HPCS, Hermione plays the role of Harry's assistant. Unlike in *HPCS*, Hermione actually joined in on the adventure itself (Heyman & Cuaron, 2004). Hermione was previously was given a necklace by Professor Dumbledore that would allow her to time travel back in time to save Buckbeak, a hippograff that was about to be executed, and Sirius Black (played by Gary Oldman), Harry's uncle who is about to be wrongfully imprisoned for killing Harry's parents. Despite Hermione's essential role in saving the lives of Buckbeak and Sirius, when given the opportunity, Harry did not bother to correct people's assumptions of what happened, essentially taking credit away from Hermione. Although Hermione was essential to his heroic ascent, Harry continually minimizes her contribution or fails to give her credit for her role in his successes. While Harry shows a pattern of withholding giving proper credit to Hermione and trivializing her contributions, Hermione continually places herself in a subservient role because she must remain useful to Harry. In these instances, (and many others), Hermione adapts her behavior to be the opposite of Harry's: modest, thoughtful, humble, and fair. Hermione's identity is attached to assisting Harry while remaining passive: her contributions are

noticeably behind-the-scenes, so as to not disrupt Harry's masculine performance. Hermione's main purpose is not to provide an alternative gender performance for young girls to emulate; instead, her main purpose is to be on the threshold of heroism while allowing Harry to realize his potential and achieve fame. Hermione's pattern of removing roadblocks for Harry, yet shying away from taking the credit for doing so, occurs frequently throughout the film series. Hermione's pattern of acting as Harry's sidekick shows that while Hermione may be an interesting and round character, she will never be a fully realized hero.

Hermione as a Romantic Partner

Since Ron, Hermione, and Harry were so young in first three films (eleven years old), romantic storylines do not develop until the fourth movie, *HPGF*, where Hermione is a teenager and becomes literally transformed into someone who is both desirable and datable (Heyman & Newell, 2005). McDonald (2007) asserts that the makeover process, or the act of drastically altering a woman's appearance to better fit societal beauty standards, serves as a bridge into adulthood, where there is heightened emphasis on connecting physical appearance to a woman's identity and worth (p. 180). Makeovers, in themselves, are problematic because they suggest that the woman is not pretty enough or not confident enough or both (p. 180). If film, and specifically within heteronormative scripts, single men are often ambivalent towards love or achieving coupledom, while single women are viewed as 'tragic' (King, 2014, p. 190). Single women in film often go into 'mourning' when their romantic affections are not realized (p. 198). Women who are not in heteronormative relationships commonly exhibit signs of melancholia or grief (p.

199). In *HPGF*, Hermione undergoes a makeover, in order to indicate that she is no longer a child. To kick off the Triwizard Tournament, Hogwarts hosted a Christmas ball, in which students were expected to attend with a date. Ron assumed that Hermione would be his default date and presented his proposal as if he pitied her: "Hermione you're a girl. It's one thing for a bloke to show up alone. For a girl, it's just sad" (Heyman & Newell, 2005). Here, Ron articulates a double standard when it comes to romantic relationships: women are viewed as flawed if they are not attached to a romantic partners, whereas men are not defined by their relationship status. When Hermione tells Ron that she already has a date, Ron was incredulous, stating, "Bloody hell. She's lying, right?" (Heyman & Newell, 2005). In this scene, Ron not only insults Hermione's likability and attractiveness; but, when rejected, he also questions her integrity and honesty. Hermione, who Ron and Harry rely on for her ingenuity, is viewed as someone who should be pitied because she does not receive romantic intentions from men. Despite her achievements, Hermione's worth is boiled down to whether or not men find her to be desirable. In order to meet Ron's standards, she has to alter her physical appearance to become more conventionally pretty; her makeover resulted in her hair being smoothed and pinned up, where she wore a pink ball gown that accentuated her cleavage, and was wearing makeup. Hermione's makeover shows her completely transformed from her standard outfit of loose wizarding robes and bushy hair. In Hermione's case, she needs to have her beauty accentuated in order to become more sexually desirable and noticed by Ron, thus subscribing to a prescriptive gender ideal. Hermione's makeover serves as a visual cue

that she is not just Harry and Ron's 'buddy' anymore, and that she is now a desirable and datable young woman.

In addition to a physical transformation, underwent an emotional transformation to prove that she possesses inherently feminine traits, which includes being sexually objectified. Wang (2007), points out that it is not uncommon for the female heroine to be disempowered and objectified by the male gaze (p. 623). Typically, independent female heroines suddenly change, becoming submissive towards their love interest (Wang, 2007, p. 623). Butler states that it is impossible to escape social structures and gender and sexuality performance are derived from culture (2006, p. 34). When Hermione engages in flirtatious behaviors with Viktor Krum (played by Stanislav Ianevski), Ron's personality shifts from critical to jealous and mean when Viktor kisses Hermione's hand, while she blushes and giggles: "Oh my! Did it just get hot in here?" (Heyman & Newell, 2005). Ron did not disguise his damaged ego, clearly wishing that he had realized Hermione's potential to be a great beauty earlier, and when Hermione approached Ron to talk, he insulted Hermione's judgment and character:

Ron: [Viktor's] from Durmstag! He's the enemy!

Hermione: The enemy? Wasn't it you wanting his autograph? Besides, the whole point of the tournament is the international magical cooperation. To make friends!

Ron: I think he's got a bit more than friendship on the mind. He's using you.

Hermione: How dare you! Besides, I can take care of myself.

Ron: Doubt it. He's way too old.

Hermione: What? That's what you think?

Ron: Yeah, that's what I think.

Hermione: You know what the solution is, then, don't you? Next time there's a ball, pluck up the courage to ask me before someone else does, and not as a last resort!

Ron: Well, that's completely off point!

Hermione: [crying]

Ron (to Harry): They just get scarier as they get older, don't they? (Heyman & Newell, 2005)

In her interaction with Ron, several things can be learned when examining how Hermione and Ron operate as romantic partners. Hermione, who is often labeled as 'different' or even better than other women (*HPPA*), ascribes to a traditional heteronormative dating script, where she is viewed as naïve, jealous, and emotional. Hermione showed submissiveness by not taking control over her romantic feelings with Ron and was frustrated with Ron's lack of aggressiveness in her pursuit. Additionally, Hermione challenged Ron's masculinity by suggesting he was a coward for not pursuing her quickly and aggressively. Ron and Hermione's romantic relationship typically falls back on gender binaries, is often driven by jealousy and drama, and conflict is not addressed in a healthy way. At the dance, Ron took his anger and jealousy out on Hermione in a way that was demeaning and insulting. Further, Ron insinuated that Hermione was naïve and needed his protection, suggested that no one else could possibly legitimately like her, and called her display of emotion 'scary.' When Ron noticed that other males were romantically interested in Hermione, he insulted her, in order to make her feel

disempowered. Ron reminded Hermione that she was not desirable and vocalized that if she acted on sexual feelings, she would be compromising her character. Prior to Viktor's pursuit of Hermione, Ron was able to assert control over Hermione by making her feel that she was unattractive. By rousing jealous feelings in Ron, Hermione was able to use her sexuality to gain what she wanted: attention and power. Hermione's gender performance in the context of her romantic relationships asserts that although she strays some gender norms in some ways (her intelligence makes her seem threatening or intimidating), she does not stray too far from what is considered 'normal' because she is driven by heteronormative storylines.

Within their relationship, Ron acts invasively and paternally, trying to control and stifle Hermione's sexuality. Foucault (1988) attributes the desire to stifle women's sexuality as a means for men to assert their control and power, since there is a "fundamental link between power, knowledge, and sexuality" (p. 10). Further, Hermione and Ron's romantic relationships is important because, as Signorielli (2002) explains, media consumption plays a critical role in how young people perceive the real world, and particularly shapes their attitudes and actions towards romantic relationships (p. 43). Since Hermione and Ron engage in a romantic relationship, and young people look to mediated images to emulate in their own relationships, it is important to examine the dynamics of Ron and Hermione's relationship and the gender performances within their relationship. The gender roles assigned to each within their romantic relationship are interesting because Ron uses his power and sexuality to assert control Hermione, a behavior that Hermione later emulates in her interactions towards Lavender. Prior to

Hermione, Ron, dated Lavender Brown in *HPHBP;* while he was clearly embarrassed of their relationship, often running away or hiding from her, Ron remained in the relationship for most of the movie and on numerous occasions slipped away to "snog" Lavender (Heyman & Yates, 2009). During Lavender and Ron's romance, Hermione gave Ron the silent treatment, glared at him, and rolled her eyes when she saw Ron and Lavender together; Ron, who was aware of Hermione's jealousy, did not modify his behaviors in Hermione's presence (Heyman & Yates, 2009). It was not until Ron accidentally ingested poison and was sent to the hospital that Hermione sat by Ron's side and held his hand. When Lavender entered the room and observed Hermione leaning in towards Ron and whispering in his ear, she said, "You only want to make up with him now that he's interesting" (Heyman & Yates, 2009). Rather than make her roommate feel at ease, Hermione responded by calling Lavender a "daft dimbo" (Heyman & Yates, 2009). Ron, who was still drugged and half-conscious, repeated "Hermione" over and over again as Lavender stood off to the side, humiliated. Hermione, who prided herself on her loyalty and her logic, was cruel towards Lavender and viewed earning Ron's affections as a game. Hermione's actions towards Lavender are especially problematic because she intruded on an existing relationship and made fun of Lavender's reaction when she became justifiably upset—a technique that was previously employed by Ron when she dated Viktor. Both Ron and Hermione use their romantic feelings to assert control over others. Ron used his physical relationship with Lavender to elicit a jealous response from Hermione, which he used as a way to gain control over her emotions. In this situation, Ron had power over Hermione, which he used to manipulate her feelings.

When Ron was incapacitated, Hermione was able to use similar behaviors as Ron to assert control over Lavender. While both Hermione and Ron used other people's sexuality as a way to establish control, Hermione was only able to be in the dominant position (the person controlling) when Ron was incapacitated. By using sexuality as a means to control, both Hermione and Ron establish that sexuality can be used in a romantic relationship as a means to exert power over another person.

Hermione and Ron's tumultuous and unhealthy relationship normalizes jealousy, meanness, and immaturity in young adult romances. Foucault (1995) uses the concept of 'docile bodies' to support his theory that bodies are shaped by disciplinary forces: "The body, according to this penalty, is caught up in a system of constraints and privations, obligations, and prohibitions [. . .]" (p. 11). Foucault also states that social and power structures control ideas about what constitutes socially acceptable sexuality and gender, both in language and action (Foucault, 1988, p. 11). By criticizing Hermione when she expresses frustration or anger in their relationship, Ron acts as a paternal force that dictates whether or not Hermione's gender performances are acceptable. When applying Lacanian theory to identity, Hook (2014) determined that "identification not on the basis of objects, but on the basis of the signifier" (p. 183). Noelle-Nuemann (1974) argues that people's self-censor their public attitudes and opinions out of "running the danger of isolating oneself" (p. 372). Noelle-Nuemann uses the 'spiral of silence,' which refers to the "pressure people feel to conceal their views when they think they are in the minority," (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, p. 372). Hermione's relationship and attraction towards Ron is complicated, if not confusing, because while Hermione is touted as smart, logical, and

loyal, her romantic relationship with Ron rarely emulates those qualities. In instances where Hermione and Ron fought, Ron almost always responded by calling Hermione a version of 'mad' 'scary' or 'insane': "You're a little scary sometimes, you know that? You're brilliant. But scary" (Heyman & Columbus, 2001); "She's absolutely stark raving mad" (Heyman & Columbus, 2002); "She's gone mental, hasn't she? I mean, not that she hasn't always been. But now it's out there for everyone to see" (Heyman & Cuaron, 2004). Several things should be noted from their pattern of Hermione's displaying emotion and the consequential insulting that results from Ron. Ron underplayed Hermione's identity performance as a logical thinker and intelligent girl by frequently attributing her emotional side to craziness—moreover, Hermione does not contest his assertion that she is 'mad.' Ron serves as an agency for discipline, who punishes Hermione through name-calling whenever she challenges him or becomes emotional. Because Hermione is called names and insulted when she expresses frustration with Ron's lack of emotional investment in her, she is taught not to challenge or defy her male partner, lest she will seem 'crazy.' By making Hermione associate emotiveness and criticism with 'craziness,' Ron shapes her behaviors to be more docile and submissive. Because Hermione does, over time, change her behavior by minimizing her emotional displays, she effectively accepts that Ron, the signifier, is correct in his assessment that she is 'mad.' Later in her story arc, Hermione avoids or ignores Ron, rather than articulate her feelings (*HPDH1*). By doing so, Hermione is suppressing her own opinions and views, out of fear she will be ridiculed or isolated by Ron.

Hermione as the 'Other' Girl

After learning that she must mask her intelligence to be socially accepted by Ron and Harry, Hermione makes a habit of asserting that she is not like the other girls. By pointing out how ridiculous other women are, Hermione suggests that there is something inherently wrong with being a woman. As Kellner (2010) argues, it is common for Hermione to put down other women, which results in further oppression (p. 372). Kellner (2010) sees the act of putting other women down as a way to be seen as comparatively better as a form of self-oppression: by placing more limitations on 'correct' and 'incorrect' feminine behaviors, Hermione places herself within gender binaries and self-oppresses. Butler (2006) argues that performing gender binaries, such as 'masculine' and 'feminine,' takes away from individual identity and individual control over the sexual self (p. 37). In the *Harry Potter* films, Hermione lacks any relationship of substance with other women. While Hermione lives with Parvarti Pratil (played by Shefali Chowdhury) and Lavender Brown (played by Jessie Cave), she is rarely seen interacting with the two, and as mentioned before, overtly mocks Lavender Brown's gender performance when she briefly dates Ron in *HPHBP* (Heyman & Yates, 2009). When Hermione sees Lavender giggling and playing with Ron's hair, she said, "Excuse me, I have to go vomit" (Heyman & Yates, 2009). Notably, Lavender's behavior when she is with Ron was not that dissimilar to how she acted when Viktor kissed her hand at the Yule Ball when she became giggly and gleeful. Throughout the film, Hermione rolled her eyes at Lavender, laughed at her, and even called her names. In the train car, Lavender is very overt in her advances towards Ron: in order to let him know she's interested, Lavender breathed on his car window, drew a heart with their initials, and

blew him a kiss. Hermione, who saw the heart on the window, rolls her eyes and becomes infuriated. Lavender is extremely forward with her feelings, as Ron describes, and is constantly pulling him away to 'snog' (Heyman & Yates, 2009). Lavender, who was viewed by Hermione as ridiculous, was a caricature of a lovesick girl, in which she lost control over her sexual self, expressing her affections towards Ron in a way that were over-the-top. Ron used his sexuality as a means to assert control over both Lavender and Hermione. Lavender was willing to be Ron's kissing buddy at his disposal (Heyman & Yates, 2009), even after he would ignore her or hide from her. Ron used his romantic relationship to manipulate Hermione, as well--Ron noticed that Hermione was upset when he was with Lavender, and played upon Hermione's jealousy to gain her affections. Hermione, who was called 'mad' and 'scary' by Ron when she showed overt emotion over a boy, took Ron's cue and called Lavender and calls her a "daft dimbo" when Lavender saw that Ron was romantically interested in Hermione (Heyman & Yates, 2009). By criticizing Lavender, Hermione subscribes to heteronormative dating standards, implying that Lavender is silly and morally inferior because she is unabashed in her sexual suggestiveness and actively pursues Ron. Further, Hermione's lack of communication and maturity in the matter encourages the idea that girls, by nature, cannot help themselves from engaging in catty and mean behaviors. Additionally, by being so critical of Lavender's lovesick performance and mocking her overt sexuality, Hermione limits herself to a gender role that is sexually subdued and submissive, resulting in self-oppression.

In addition to being critical of Lavender's gender performance, Hermione shows disdain towards other women in the films as well, particularly towards her Divinations teacher, Professor Trelawney (played by Emma Thompson). Butler (2002) warns that trying to establish what constitutes 'correct' and 'incorrect' femininity because it results in oppressive gender binaries (p. 34). By promoting and demoting certain gender performances, Hermione is actually creating new constructs that she must operate within. In *HPPA* Hermione is vocal about finding Divinations to be 'rubbish' because it is so subjective; for example, Hermione is not successful in the class, but Lavender and Pravarti are among Trelawney's top students (Heyman & Cuaron, 2004). Hermione referred to the class as a "waste of time" (Heyman & Cuaron, 2004). In order to justify her position, Hermione decided to set up Professor Trelawney by getting her to affirm a fake premonition that she concocted in order to highlight her ineptitude, telling Ron and Harry to "Watch!" (Heyman & Cuaron, 2004). Instead of playing into Hermione's fake premonition, Trelawney took her palm and read it: "My dear, for the first moment you stepped in my class, I sensed that you don't have the spirit for the noble art of divination. You see there [points to palm], you may be young in years, but the heart that beats beneath your bosom is shriveled as an old maid. Your soul is as dry as the pages of the books you so desperately cleave" (Heyman & Cuaron, 2004). Hermione, completely embarrassed, ran out of the room, crying. Hermione, who values logic and reasoning, abhors Divinations because it is based on intuition, subjectivity, and is much more abstract.

The *Harry Potter* series is mostly set at Hogwarts, which encourages heteronormative behavior and punishes performances that fall outside the social norms; the institution acts much in the way that Foucault describes Western government: as a paternal disciplinary force (Wolosky, 2015, p. 288). With the absence of parents, the teachers, and in some cases students, are left to perform parental roles. Hermione, who values education greatly, openly ridicules Professor Trelawney and attempts to undermine her authority and expertise. As Kellner (2010) stated, the subjugation of women in film is a political act (p. 373). Since Hermione cannot be the star of the class, she chose to lash out and humiliate Trelawney, similarly to how Ron and Harry humiliated her during class in *HPSS*. Hermione was placed in a rare position where she wasn't immediately successful at a class, and instead of working harder or approaching her professor for help, Hermione blamed and attacked. By rejecting Professor Trelawney and Divinations so vehemently, Hermione limited her own scope of knowledge, resulting in self-oppression. In this scene, Trelawney challenged Hermione's sense of power and identity by making her feel intellectually inferior. Hermione, seeing Professor Trelawney as a queer and submissive character, attempted to assert her power and control, only to be corrected and disciplined.

Effectually, Professor Trelawney pointed out that by criticizing other people's gender performances, Hermione was self-subordinating: Hermione, who openly rejected Divinations as a way to point out that she's not one of 'those' girls, makes herself look catty and trite in doing so.

Hermione's lack of strong female friendships throughout the film series is important because the opportunity for multiple female perspectives is very limited. While in real life, women tend to have more emotionally stable and satisfying female / female friendships that men have in male / male friendships, teen movies typically omit female friendship storylines or presents them in a way that "[. . .] talk[s] about the manipulative and mean behaviors committed by girls in female friendship circles" (Behm-Morawitz & Mastro, 2005, p. 132). As Butler stated, prescriptive gender roles were constructed by society, and were used as a way to push a heteronormative agenda; in this case, the heteronormative construct Hermione is performing within encourages unhealthy interactions with other women. Hermione was roommates with several girls in the film whom she does not appear to hang out with, and with the exception of the rare scene with lines, her roommates appear to be mostly background characters. As discussed earlier, Hermione's relationship with Lavender was highly negative at times, resulting in Hermione disrupting Lavender's romantic relationship with Ron and making fun of her emotionality over her consequential emotional outburst (Heyman & Yates, 2009). Presumably, Hermione spends a significant amount of time with her roommates, and yet, they seem to not interact. In the later movies, while Ginny (played by Bonnie Wright) is present around Hermione, rarely do the two characters engage in conversation or interact. Therefore, Ginny's main purpose in the film is not to serve as Hermione's friend, but as Harry's love interest. Also, importantly, Ginny is Ron's sister, so Hermione does not feel romantically challenged by her character. In order for Ginny's storyline to be successful, she needs to contribute to the heteronormative storyline, which entails

making Harry fall in love with her, not to promote “girl power” with Hermione. As a result, Ginny and Hermione’s storylines are largely fragmented from each other. Noticeably, the young, female perspective is greatly limited within the Harry Potter films because including those additional voices would detract from the films’ dominant male character, Harry.

Not only is Hermione ‘othered’ by her gender, she is also differentiated by race. Hermione is first labeled as a ‘mudblood,’ which is an extremely derogatory term for someone who is born from non-wizarding parents (Heyman & Columbus, 2002). hooks (2000) discussed that black women were a part of the contemporary feminist movement, but “[. . .] they were not the individuals who became the "stars" of the movement, who attracted the most attention [. . .]” (hooks, 2000, p. 3). hooks explains that there was inequality, based on race, within the feminist movement itself: “Even before race became a talked about issue in feminist circles it was clear to black women [, , ,] that they were never going to have equality within the existing white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” (2000, p. 4) As van Sterkenburg & Knoppers (2004) assert, individuals can challenge race or gender in mediated performances, but not both (p. 302). As a result, Hermione must, as Butler (2006) describes, perform a ‘correct’ form of gender (p. 36). Since Hermione is Caucasian, the discussion of race becomes convoluted: while an argument can be made that African American heroines must adapt either their gender or race performances in order to be viewed as socially acceptable, no YA film adaptations feature an African American female lead. As a result, the discussion of race is limited, and for this purpose, will focus on the idea that Hermione must perform a ‘correct’ form of race.

Since Hermione is both racially different and a woman, she faces challenges that her peers do not, forcing her to adapt her performances in order to be accepted by others. In *HPCS*, Hermione's race was addressed for the first time: Draco sneered at her and said, "No one asked for your opinion, you filthy little mudblood" (Heyman & Columbus, 2002). Draco's words are significant because he is attempting to silence her based on her racial makeup, which is associated with a lower class standing. Hermione is silenced throughout the film, as previously described in her relationship with Ron, because she is a woman, but she is also silenced and marginalized because of her lineage. Hermione's tendency to stifle aspects of her personality in order to gain Ron and Harry's friendships is more understandable in this context—Hermione is inherently viewed as an outsider because of her socially constructed race, and therefore, cannot challenge gender expectations. Since Hermione is discriminated against because of her race, she must be conscientious about her gender performance, which she has control over. As a result Hermione frequently downplays her race or downplays her female gender performance. In later films, such as *HPDH1*, Hermione takes pride in her status as a mudblood, reclaiming what the word means: "Mudblood and proud of it!" (Heyman & Yates, 2010), to which Ron discouraged her from using the word 'mudblood' because of its negative societal connotation. Towards the end of her story arc,, in *HPDH1* Hermione was faced with a difficult dilemma--if she wants to stay in the wizarding world, she had to choose to perform an "Obliviate" spell on her parents, and thus erasing her muggle lineage in an effort to fully assimilate into wizarding society (Heyman & Yates, 2010). By essentially rejecting her identities as a typical girl and as a mudblood, Hermione succumbs to the

societal expectations, both in terms of her race and gender. Since Hermione's racial background is seen as undesirable in the wizarding world, she chooses to fully immerse herself into wizarding culture. In this sense, Hermione completely erased her racial identity, thus performing a socially 'correct' form of race.

Hermione as the Mother Figure

Since nobody's parents are present at Hogwarts throughout the *Harry Potter* series, other characters step into the role of parental figures. According to Butler, people have a desire to conform to societal expectations, which ascribe value to certain feminine traits and de-value others, which results in an individual performing prescriptive or 'correct' gender. (2006, p. 36). Malin (2003) suggests that, while society is far less tolerant of gender fluidity in men, women who emulate specific certain masculine traits, including lack of warmth and presence of strong drive, are viewed as highly negative in women, which he identifies as the masculine crisis (p. 240). Foucault (1995) states that people constrain and self-regulate behaviors out of fear of punishment (p. 11). In order to maintain that she is not overly masculine, Hermione consistently assumes the role of the mother figure among her friends throughout the *Harry Potter* series. Her motherly role is perceived both positively and negatively ranging from nurturing to nagging. In the earlier *Harry Potter* films, Hermione's maternal performance is perceived as shrill and panicked. She is portrayed as a killjoy, constantly trying to keep Ron and Harry from getting in trouble, and in effect, is the person who tries to prevent them from having fun. For example, in *HPSS*, when Harry suggested that they go to a restricted area of the building, Hermione attempted to keep him from doing so: "We're not supposed to be

here. This is the third floor. It's forbidden!" (Heyman & Columbus, 2001). In her attempt to get Harry and Ron to follow the rules, she also served as the person who tried to keep the boys from going on an adventure. Further, by pointing out how dangerous the situation is, Hermione made Harry appear to be even braver. While she was viewed as the martyr, they were viewed as the thrill-seekers, the mischief-makers, and the people who got to have all the fun. Hermione's reluctance to participate in off-limits behavior is justified in many ways, however. As previously stated, when confronting by Professor McGonagall, a disciplinary force in *HPSS*, Ron and Harry were rewarded for bending the rules when Hermione was punished. Just as it is expected for Ron and Hermione to break the rules, as reflected in Professor McGonagall's 'boys will be boys' attitude, it was expected that Hermione play the role of the nurturer and caretaker. When placed in the role of the mother, coupled with her unfair treatment when she breaks the rules, Hermione simply does not have as much license to stray from expectations as her male peers.

Placing Hermione in a maternal role is crucial in Harry's character development because by trying to keep him from dangerous situations and panicking when he gets hurt, Hermione emphasizes Harry's masculinity. Butler argues that it is impossible to escape social structures—and specifically gender roles—and the meaning behind gender and sexuality derives from culture itself (2006, p. 12). Butler also (2002) states that women are placed in positions to serve as the phallus to men (p. 61). Mulvey (1975) suggest that society is imbalanced sexually, and is constructed in a way that creates a dynamic where the masculine with active and the feminine with passive (p. 715).

Mulvey describes the role of the audience as complicated, in that they are passive in that they watch and do not act, and yet, the audience actively co-constructs the meaning of the text and is free to gaze upon the images on the screen freely and without embarrassment (p. 715). While the dynamic of Hermione expressing concern and Harry ignoring her warnings is seen many times throughout the series, a prime example can be seen in *HPGF* (Heyman & Newell, 2005): Harry's forehead scar begins to hurt, which indicated that Voldemort was gaining strength. While Harry briefly considered telling Hermione, he opted to hide his condition from her when he imagined her acting hysterically and demanding that they tell the headmaster (Heyman & Newell, 2005). Hermione's anticipated response was that of someone who is panicked because of how dangerous Voldemort was. As a result, Harry performed the role of the hero, which means dealing with his fear by actively seeking Voldemort by himself. Hermione's character, in Harry's eyes, is to play the role of someone who passively worries or assists Harry with information she finds in books. The dynamic between Hermione and Harry in dangerous situations is interesting because Hermione is the only one who articulates fear of punishment. Since Harry is a boy, he does not have to face the same backlash of breaking rules or being adventurous. Hermione's protectiveness, in the example of seeking out Voldemort by himself, is viewed as brave, sacrificial, and selfless. Hermione's protectiveness, in the act of trying to prevent Harry from dangerous situations, is viewed and anxiety-producing and maternal. Hermione's maternal performance serves as a phallus to Harry's heroism because by pointing out how scared or tentative she felt, Hermione also highlighted how brave, reckless, and heroic Harry

was. While Hermione sometimes challenges the social structures she operates within, more often than not, she works within them, and performs maternal or subservient roles.

Hermione's maternal performance serves another important role: to make her appear softer, more feminine, and in effect, make her a more likable character. As described in Chapter 2, placing women in the heteronormative role of mother helps to downplay a character's queerness, which in effect, impacts a character's likability. Kennedy (2014) refers to the tendency to 'normalize' of queer performances as homonormativity (p. 118). In other words, if a character is queer in some ways, they must be diluted in others in order to pass as normal (p. 120). Butler (2006) states that while specific gender traits should not be valued or devalued, due to societal demands, individuals perform 'correct' forms of gender for various purposes (p. 37). However, as Butler (2006) suggests, when society idealizes certain gender traits and criticizes other, the effect is that a new kind of hierarchy and exclusion is formed. In the case of Hermione, her queerness exists in her drive and in her ambition. As a way to 'normalize' her, Hermione upholds the traditional values of a mother, which camouflages her queerness. Hermione as a nurturing, maternal figure is seen in many instances throughout the film series. For example, in *HPSS*, Harry took a terrible fall from his broom and wound up in the hospital for several days. When he awoke, Hermione was by his side, having cared for him for several days (Heyman & Columbus, 2001). Again, Hermione played the nurturing mother figure, following Harry's rescue of his classmates from the water in *HPGF*. Hermione greeted him as soon as he emerged from the water and placed a blanket around him: "Harry, you're alright! You're freezing, though!"

(Heyman & Newell, 2005). Hermione is 'warmed up' as a character in this sense, by being Harry and Ron's comforter and caretaker. By playing a maternal role, Hermione performed the 'ideal' gender: sensitive, warm, caring, and nice. Hermione's gender performance is complicated because in order to fit in with her friends, she must temper her masculine-leaning behaviors, which she counterbalances with her role as a girlfriend and mother. This is the case with Hermione: she is expected to be smart but not arrogant, pretty but not sexy, helpful but not intimidating, nurturing but not nagging, and be morally sound without being a killjoy. At the same time, as the nurturer and mother, she misses out on opportunities to play the hero and engage in adventures on the same level as her male peers.

Concluding Thoughts:

Hermione, who many young girls admire and wish to emulate for her tenacity and intelligence, is not without controversy. In her younger years, Hermione was vocal and frequently addressed Ron and Harry's inadequacies, as previously discussed. However, Hermione actively changed her gender performance in order to be accepted and viewed as likable. Although Hermione is initially portrayed as a clever and independent young woman, Hermione also played down her leadership qualities and intellectualism as a way to become accepted by her peers. Essentially, Hermione un-queered herself by watering down her masculine performances and adopting more subservient behaviors. Specifically, Hermione softened her performance to become much more subservient, specifically by playing the role of the girlfriend and mother-figure, thus allowing opportunities for Harry to shine and achieve heroic feats.

Hermione's romantic storyline focuses on her often dysfunctional relationship with Ron, who does not meet her intellectual or emotional needs. Hermione, is labeled as 'brilliant' throughout the films, is continuously called 'mad' or crazy by Ron, which she never argues against. Rather than be the hero herself, Hermione is the assistant to the hero. Further, Hermione minimized her logical and analytic tendencies once she became involved in a romantic relationship with Ron, who was emotionally and intellectually unsatisfying to her. However, in her dating relationship with Ron, Hermione allowed herself to be mocked and trivialized, and allowed herself to be portrayed as overly emotional and even crazy. While Hermione is far more talented than Ron, she remained in a relationship with him, even though she expressed frequently that he was inadequate. Further, Hermione emulated Ron's critical attitude of women by putting down other women's gender performances that differed from her own. Hermione criticized girls who were sexually aggressive, as well as women who made decisions that were more intuitive than analytical. Hermione's mockery of women and lack of female friendships both suggest that men are inherently better than men, as well as the idea that most women perform their gender incorrectly. Hermione's sharp criticism of other women suggests that there is something inherently wrong with gender performances that differ from her own. By projecting 'incorrect' traits in other women, Hermione self-oppresses by limiting how she can think and behave.

Hermione is a refreshing character in many ways because not only is she smarter than all the boys, but also her main purpose is not to serve as the male protagonist's love interest. While Hermione, unexpectedly, did not adapt the role of Harry's girlfriend, she

did adapt the role of Harry's sidekick and Harry's mom. Hermione was still subservient to Harry's needs and worked tirelessly to make sure that Harry was able to play the role of the hero. Harry values Hermione's intelligence only when it is of value to him, and yet he resents her braininess when it makes him feel inferior. In this sense, Hermione is problematic because, while she is initially developed as a character who is individualistic, fiercely smart, and unconcerned with other people's opinions, she quickly adapted her behavior; she tempered 'undesirable' traits and pushed her own needs and ambitions aside to make her male counterparts look better. Although Hermione's performance was initially queer, her performance shifted greatly to the point that Hermione eventually subscribed to traditional, heteronormative ideals and storylines.

Chapter 4: Tris

The *Divergent* film series (2014-2016) made just over $325 million in worldwide box office sales, with its latest episode, *Allegiant* grossing $66 million, while costing $110 million to make ("Divergent," 2016). The series focuses on Beatrice/Tris Prior (played by Shailene Woodley), who attempted to prevent a corrupt government from overtaking other factions: societal groups that are formed based on their personality traits and values. Tris, who was born into a faction that valued modesty and humility, Abnegation, made the decision to leave her family and join a new faction, Dauntless, that encourages its members to be aggressive, bold, and fearless. Although Tris is different from many female protagonists because she actively fights and takes risks, Tris' gender performance is problematic because the male character she is romantically interested in heavily influences her decisions, actions, and motivations. Further, her character's performance seems to be recycling the performances of characters that predated her, such as Katniss and Hermione, yet her character (and the film itself) comes across as formulaic and a disappointing replication of the previously critiqued characters.

The following discussion will explore how the *Divergent* series works to capitalize on the success of other young adult dystopian films. First, the discussion will provide a summary of the film series. Following, the discussion will address the lack of academic research over the *Divergent* series and offer possible implications. The remainder of the chapter will examine Tris' gender performance within the film series and analyze the significance of those performances.

Synopsis:

The *Divergent* series takes place in a post-war, futuristic Chicago, in which people are divided into factions, in attempt to create lasting peace following an eluded-to war. The series' heroine, Beatrice 'Tris' Prior (played by Shailene Woodley), was born into the Abnegation faction, which emphasizes simplicity, selflessness, and public service. Because of their selfless nature, the Abnegation faction runs the government. At the age of sixteen, all residents participate in a Choosing Ceremony where, after taking an aptitude test, they choose which of the five factions they would like to join. The Choosing Ceremony is important because if individuals join a faction that differs the one that they were born into, they will lose all contact and communication with their family. During her aptitude test, Beatrice is told that her results are inconclusive, but to never share that information with anybody, or her life would be in danger. At the Choosing Ceremony, Beatrice's brother, Caleb, (played by Ansel Elgort) chooses first, making the decision to leave Abnegation and join Erudite, which values knowledge and logic above all. Following, Beatrice decides to leave Abnegation as well for a faction called Dauntless, who serve as the soldiers and police, and are known for their bravery, wild nature, and toughness. In order to be fully accepted as a Dauntless, Beatrice changes her name to 'Tris' and undergoes a physical transformation during a boot camp-like initiation. Tris and the other initiates must pass a series of training exercises and tests, or they will be cast away to live as Factionless (society's outcasts; those who do not belong to any of the factions).

During the training process, Tris befriends Kristina (played by Zoe Kravitz), who was initially a member of the Candor faction, whose people value honesty and truthfulness. One of the leaders of the initiation ritual, Four (played by Theo James) coaches her along the way and becomes Tris' love interest and confidante. Four discovers, while running a virtual reality test called a "Sim" (short for "simulation") that Tris is "Divergent", meaning that she fits into multiple factions, viewed as highly dangerous. Knowing that her life is in danger, Four, who is also Divergent, teaches Tris how to navigate the Sim without gaining the attention of the Erudite, who would kill her.

When trying to figure out why the Erudite, led by Jeanine (played by Kate Winslet), are so interested in Dauntless, Four and Tris discover that the Erudite are injecting Dauntless with mind-controlling drugs in order to create robot-like Dauntless soldiers who can overthrow Abnegation. Erudite's goal was to take control over the government, but in order to do so, they would have to kill Divergents because their methods of control do not work on Divergents. Tris and Four join their faction in the train to Abnegation, realizing that they cannot let on that they are Divergent, or they would be killed. After the leaders of Dauntless realized that Tris was Divergent, Tris' mother, Natalie Prior, (played by Ashley Judd) rescued Tris, while the Erudite took her brother Caleb prisoner. In the process of trying to escape, Tris' mom was killed. Tris, vowing to stop Jeanine, found the Erudite control center, where Jeanine captured Four. Four's memory was erased and had since been programed to kill Tris. After physically fighting, Tris convinced Four

that he is not in a Sim and that she is real. The two worked together to force Jeanine to stop controlling the Dauntless, and were able to escape her headquarters. Following their escape, Tris and Four helped to destroy the faction system entirely, only to discover that there is an entire world, led by David (played by Jeff Daniels) beyond the walls they live in. Tris, who worked in conjunction with David, the leader beyond the wall, realized that in order to save the world, she must destroy David's system and go back to Chicago.

The current lack of academic literature exploring the *Divergent* series may point to one reality that is different from the previous two series discussed in this thesis: the *Divergent* films did not have the depth, critical acclaim, or commercial success of other franchises, causing many reviewers to label the series as a cheap knock-off. As Roger Ebert (2016) noted in his review of *Allegiant*, the melodramatic lines were so "overt" and the CGI special effects were so poorly constructed in "[. . .] this second-string Hunger Games wannabe" film, that audience members began heckling the screen at the premier during his viewing ("The Divergent Series," 2015). The *Los Angeles Times* film critic, Kenneth Turan, deemed that the plotline of "the perplexing saga" is "[. . .] more confusing than compelling," noting that even the film's director, Robert Schwenke, jumped ship following the film's release ("Confusing," 2016). Although the *Divergent* series is comprised of three novels, much in the style of the *Harry Potter* and *Hunger Games* series, *Allegiant* was to be the first installment of the two-part finale. Ebert (2016) stated that this move was clearly a "money-grab move of altering and stretching events," which ultimately left

viewers feeling cheated ("The Divergent Series," 2015). Recently, *Variety* magazine broke the news that due to disappointing box office sales of the third movie in the series, *Allegiant*, that the fourth and final chapter, *Ascendant* will instead be released as a television movie ("Divergent Finale," 2016). The absence of academic writing, but the abundance of negative film reviews over the *Divergent* series, suggests that the films lack richness and complexity.

This chapter will explore the argument that Tris' character, as presented in the films, is packaged as a queer character, but she perpetuates the existing heteronormative binary. While the *Divergent* films are not of high quality, they are useful in that the highlight the gender performances in which Tris rejects and subscribes to and rejects.

The following analysis will examine how Tris' identity is largely constructed by others, whether it be the government which controls the society in which she lives, or by her subordinate position that she takes within her romantic relationship. As a result, this chapter will examine Tris in the following ways: Tris' Physical Transformations, Tris as a Romantic Partner, Tris as a Warrior, and Tris as Divergent. This discussion will chronicle the first three films in the will-be four part series: *Divergent* (Burger & Fisher, 2014); *Insurgent* (Schwentke & Fisher, 2015); *Allegiant* (Schwentke & Fisher, 2016).

Tris' Physical Transformations

Tris' physical transformation was done in stages, and the first alterations to her appearance were not performed willingly and were performed out of fear.

According to Foucault (1988), people act within societal constructs out of fear of punishment, and people's behaviors are therefore shaped and controlled by those in power (p. 11). Butler (2002) describes the act of adapting language behaviors in order to meet heteronormative standards as masquerading gender (p. 95). Both of these discursive expressions are performed within Tris' reality. Prior to being a member of Dauntless, Tris was not allowed to look in the mirror or pay attention to her physical appearance—specifically, she wore her hair in a bun and all of her garments were gray and loose fitting. When she arrived at her new faction, Tris was told that she must abandon her old life completely and subscribe to Dauntless' physical ideals, which include wearing black, tight-fitting clothing, makeup, and having visible tattoos, or be put at risk of being outcast from society altogether (Burger & Fisher, 2014). Tris' initial physical transformation was not a decision she made willingly: after first arriving at Dauntless, other members physically ripped her old garments off of her (Burger & Fisher, 2014).

Because Tris is operating out of fear, she has no real control or influence over the identity that she performs: it is highly manufactured by both the government and by the male figures within her faction. Tris was not simply mocked for her garments – she was publically humiliated for wearing clothes that strayed from the societal ideal. Tris' changed appearance, which is more sexualized, supports Mulvey's (1975) assertion that women's role in film is to remain in the passive role of being looked at, which provides actively allows for the audience to sexualize her character. Tris' tendency to change and adapt how she presents herself is worthy of

discussion because she alters her appearance out of fear of humiliation and ostracization. Tris learned to alter her personae and clothing in response to fear of embarrassment and being outcast, which connects to Foucault's (1988) argument that people's actions and behavior are controlled and molded by those in power. Tris wanted to be immersed in Dauntless society more deeply in order to further secure her legitimacy and safety. The government's control over her physical appearance demonstrates that Tris allows others to construct her identity performance, which is subjugated and sexualized.

While Tris' initial physical transformations were performed out of fear, Tris began to willingly alter her looks as she began to gain more attention from her love interest, Four. Tris' makeover has a sense of permanency because her makeover process included getting a tattoo (Burger & Fisher, 2014). Butler (2006) argued that associating women as 'sex' translates to "[. . .] a refusal to grant freedom and autonomy to women as it is purportedly enjoyed by men" (Butler, 2006, p. 27). Leppert (2014) links the makeover scene in the YA film *Clueless* (Heckerline, 1995) to the active process of taking an "adorably clueless" teen who wears loose-fitting clothes and no makeup, and altering her style in a way that appeals to the opposite sex, while being encouraged to "play it cool" (p. 131). Tris' decision to get a tattoo is significant in the way it changed Four's perception of her: according to Mollegaard (2016), the act of getting a tattoo or body modification in film "exoticizes and eroticizes [the female] body," changing the way that a character views herself and the way men view her (p. 344). In the scene where Four sees Tris training, he

touches her new tattoo on her shoulder before giving her advice on how to fight and grabbed her by the waist (Burger & Fisher, 2014). Following, Four forcefully kissed Tris and began to remove her shirt (Burger & Fisher, 2014). Tris' tattoos were not just a superficial act-- the conversation around tattoos served as a catalyst in developing Tris and Four's physical relationship and provided opportunity to examine and touch each other's bodies. The scenes where Tris and Four show their tattoos serves as an excuse for the audience to look at their sexualized bodies. While arguably, Tris disrupted gender expectations by getting a tattoo, Tris does not actively control her appearance or identity at all—her decisions to change are either to gain autonomy in order to gain Four's approval. At initial inspection, Tris' physical appearance can be viewed as somewhat queer, in that she wears alternative-looking clothing, but Tris' subscription to the societal in which she lives is actually indicative of performing within the heteronormative matrix. Tris establishes that is no longer the tragically clueless and reserved girl, she is now someone who is sexy and edgy.

Tris as a Romantic Partner

While it is not uncommon for female protagonists in YA films to be involved in dysfunctional relationships, Tris' relationship with Four glamorizes violence in teen dating relationships. Murray, King & Crowe (2015) define teen dating violence, or TDV, as any form of physical, emotional, sexual, or psychological abusive among teenagers in a romantic relationship, noting that TDV is problematic because "an abusive relationship at such a young age sets the standard for future relationships" (p. 52). Teenagers often interpret "Surface aggression, in the form of coercive

behavior and physical violence, as demonstrative of greater intimacy" (p. 53). Foucault (1988) argues that social and power structures, which are inherently masculine, control language and action regarding acceptable gender performance, by instilling fear of punishment (Foucault, 1988, p. 11).

In the case of the *Divergent* series, TDV is used as a form of punishment in that Four's physical aggression used as a vehicle to manipulate and control Tris: In the first film, Four threw a knife that cut Tris' ear, punishing her for challenging a Dauntless training ritual (Burger & Fisher, 2014). Later, when Four was put under the control of mind-controlling serum, he attempted to shoot Tris, stab her, and engaged in a minutes-long physical fight with her, and in order to pull Four out of his violent state, Tris put a gun to her head and said, "It's me. It's me. I love you. It's me!" (Burger & Fisher, 2014). When popular young adult movies normalize teen dating violence, it makes TDV seem acceptable, and in some ways, promotes the idea that TDV shows that a couple is more serious about their relationship. In this specific case, her boyfriend's violent attack was immediately followed up with a profession of love. The romancing and normalization of dating violence in young adult films are troublesome because it glamorizes TDV, suggesting its presence show a sign of deeper love. Because teens look to mediated images to determine what is normal in dating relationships, the dynamic between Tris and Four is unsettling. Tris' submissiveness towards Four is both eroticized and associated with earning her male counterpart's approval and affection. Within their relationship, physical fighting is not only viewed as normal, it is viewed as a sign of devotion.

While it is common for protagonists in YA films to be sexualized, to some degree, Tris' character is an outlier to the genre in that she actually engaged in sexual acts with her romantic interest. According to Foucault (1988), power structures influence and control ideas about what defines socially acceptable sexuality and gender (p. 11). Mulvey (1975) describes breaking the narrative in order to sexualize and objectify women as a way to "[. . .] freeze the flow in action in moments of erotic contemplation" (1975, p. 715). Sterling (2003) argues that, in order to retain balance between masculine and feminine binaries, a fighting woman is characterized as more feminine by being contrasted with a much more overtly masculine character, which effectually, implies submissiveness (p. 3). These ideas help us better understand the discursive reality Tris finds herself in. During their initial sex scene in *Insurgent*, Tris seeks emotional validation from Four. After propelling a self-deprecating dialogue, Tris ultimately tells Four, "I'm not worth it," to which Four responded, "Look at me. I love you" (Schwentke & Fisher, 2015). In response, Tris took off her shirt, revealing her tattoos and body piercing. Tris' blatant sexualization and the lack of meaningful dialogue cannot be separated for the purpose of this discussion. In order to coyly distract from the heteronormative storyline, or to further normalize the film for audiences, the *Divergent* series provided more opportunities to sexualize and fetishize Tris. While on the surface, Tris could be viewed as queer in the sense that she is in control of her sexuality and did not adhere to social norms of sexual prudence, Tris' performance does not present as confident or empowered. Rather, she was in a moment of insecurity and

self-doubt. When she had sex with her boyfriend for the first time, making it seem as if she was using her sexuality as a way to maintain Four's interest and affections and to establish that she is submissive, in comparison to Four, who is the sexual aggressor. Further, the stunted dialogue and lack of action gave the appearance that the sex scene was being used a means of diverting attention away from the faltering film.

Tris as a Warrior

Tris frequently performs the role of a warrior, and her fight and sex scenes often overlap. According to Wright (2012), weapon-wielding women in film serve as a sexualized spectacle (p. 401). Mulvey argues that film attempts to achieve that balance by placing women in subordinate or objectified positions and films intentionally disrupts the plotline in order to look at the woman's body (p. 715). In the *Divergent* films, the fighting, engaging in sexual acts, and proclamations of love coincide—there is virtually no distinction between performing the warrior and performing the sex object. Following a fight scene where Tris successfully beat her opponent, Four approached her and said, "I wanted to say you looked good tonight" (Burger & Fisher, 2014). In the first *Divergent* film, Tris and Four frequently train together, which is where they first become physical with each other: in these scenes, Four often grabbed and kissed Tris (Burger & Fisher, 2014). As Tris became more immersed in her warrior role, Four became more sexually interested and domineering. Tris, who struggled with the idea of engaging in sex with Four, imagined him kissing her, holding her down, and pulling up her shirt (Burger &

Fisher, 2014). While this scene is her fantasy, the audience still sees the images of Four being forceful with Tris, and the gender norms of the sexually aggressive man and the sexually submissive woman are still being perpetuated. Four reinforced Tris' warrior woman gender performance as 'correct' by giving her romantic attention, which resulted in Tris immersing herself into that role more fully.

The *Divergent* films suggest that the masculine-leaning quality of physical aggression is acceptable in women only when she is paired with a more physically aggressive male. Further, it perpetuates the idea that women should self-objectify in order to receive romantic affections. In this sense, Tris' warrior performance subjugates her even further, since she frequently engages in fight scenes with the hopes of garnering male attention.

Tris as a Divergent

Since Tris is Divergent, meaning she encapsulates the traits of every faction, she is seemingly a perfect balance of every idealized trait: selfless, intelligent, honest, kind, and strong. Butler (2006) discussed that society's constructions of correct forms of gender as being problematic because prescriptive gender roles are socially constructed and used as a way to push a heteronormative agenda (p. 37). Butler (2002) identifies the act of altering language and behaviors in order to adhere to heteronormative standards as a phenomenon known as masquerading, or 'becoming' a gender (p. 95). While Tris is categorized as 'Divergent', Tris' performances are highly compartmentalized—they are not performed simultaneously, and instead, are performed conditionally, which aligns with Butler's notion that gender is fluid and

situational (2002). When in Abnegation, Tris was obedient to her parents, acted selflessly, dressed plainly, and works to serve others *Divergent* (Burger & Fisher, 2014). When Dauntless, Tris acted violently, became interested in dating, and engaged in risky behaviors, such as jumping off buildings (Burger & Fisher, 2014). When she was forced out of the faction system, Tris joined Amity and was critical of their way of life, subscribed to a domestic way of life, and looked to Four for decision-making (Schwentke & Fisher, 2015). When she left futuristic Chicago altogether, Tris was ambitious and emotionally distant from Four (Schwentke & Fisher, 2016). Rather than develop Tris into a character that consistently emulates selflessness, assertiveness and honesty, and convincingly sell Tris' 'perfect' gender performance, Tris is developed as a character who must alter her behavior situationally in order to constantly promote the 'correct' form of gender, depending on the situation. Tris' inconsistent performances and willingness to drastically alter her identity occur frequently and often without explanation. The demand to perform the ideal gender forces Tris to perform within binaries, which result in a loss of control over her identity.

In *Insurgent*, Tris is critical of other women's gender performance in order to inflate her own self-worth (Schwentke & Fisher, 2015). Prescriptive gender roles, which promote certain feminine traits and devalue others, thus limiting the constructs in which she can perform 'correct' gender (Butler, 2002, p. 34). According to Martinot and Redersdorff (2003), women criticize other out-of-group women in order to inflate their own self-worth: "[Women] criticize out-of-group women as way to dismiss members and maintain relevancy" (p. 348). Although

bravery it touted in the films, other traits are mocked, even though each is supposed to hold equal importance, which is seen in *Insurgent*. Tris and Four briefly lived among the Amity, led by the ultra-passive Johanna (played by Octavia Spencer), who primarily value happiness, peace, and harmony. While Tris maintains her bravery and physical aggressiveness, she undermines Amity's and Johanna's conflict avoidance and promotion of peacefulness. While living there, Tris is greeted with the phrase "Go with happiness," to which she complains, "I don't know how long I can do this peace and love thing" (Schwentke & Fisher, 2015). Directly after mocking Amity's peaceful way of life, Tris pulled a knife on Peter, an act that emphasizes that she was more Dauntless than Amity. In doing so, Tris perpetuates the idea that masculine traits, such as aggressiveness, are viewed as inherently superior to feminine traits, such as passivity. In theory, Tris is supposedly equal parts of every faction, but in practice, Tris clearly values heroism over pacifism. By limiting which gender performances are viewed as acceptable, Tris effectually narrows the parameters in which she can behave. Tris' criticism of other women's performances promotes the idea that certain gender performances are more legitimized and desirable than others.

Conclusion

While the *Divergent* series lacks the critical acclaim of other YA Films featured strong, female protagonists, there are striking similarities among the *Divergent, Harry Potter,* and *Hunger Games* films. Tris' character is worthy of discussion, not because of her depth or ingenuity as a character, but because she is

so clearly being replicated after a 'type' of girl: one who has strong familial ties, is protective, and is softened and ultimately defined, by her romantic relationships. While the analysis was viewed using Queer Theory as a lens, and there was an attempt to package Tris as a queer character in many ways—she dresses in alternative clothing, she is sexually active, she permanently alters her body, and she fights—she still perpetuates the existing heteronormative binary, especially in regards to her relationship with Four. Tris not only allowed for Four to physically hurt her, she made excuses for him. In this sense, Tris is both objectified and plays a subordinate role in her romantic relationship. The gender performances that are promoted in the *Divergent* films are not independence and intelligence—rather, she emulates codependence, self-objectification, conformity, and submissiveness.

With the label 'divergent,' Tris is presented as a hybrid character, or someone who emulates all factions equally. Yet, because her performances are compartmentalized and she openly criticizes certain factions, she promotes certain attributes while devaluing others. Importantly, Tris was actively constructed by the system, as revealed in the culmination of the films: she was intentionally created in order to destroy the faction system. Therefore, the anomaly was the system itself, not Tris: Tris does exactly what she was designed to do, which is to create a factionless society. When viewed through a Foucauldian lens, the fact that Tris' performance was not voluntary, but a response designed by an invasive government, shows how little control Tris actually had over her identity.

Chapter 5: Closing Thoughts

Gender Binaries

Although it is heartening in some ways to see young adult characters emerge and far more complicated and diverse roles become available to young women, Young Adult heroines are still forced to operate within socially acceptable gender binaries. Butler (2002) stated that elevating certain gender performances further limits control over identity because of the new prescriptive binaries that are constructed as a result (p. 37) With film characters like Hermione, Katniss, and Tris, it is easy to find satisfaction in the idea that a female lead does not have to be just pretty *or* smart, yet it is obvious that a new, prescriptive gender ideal within YA films is emerging. While complex female roles show progress in some ways, a new problem arises with the new prescriptive gender roles associated with young adult heroines: young women now have to be pretty *and* smart—as well as brave, morally sound, different from other girls, selfless, cool, loyal, and relatable. The binaries that young adult women in Young Adult movies operate within create an impossible standard for female audiences to reach.

The Role of Romance on Identity

Because young adults look to mediated messages to set the tone for what is 'normal' in relationships, the thematic 'taming' and un-queering of warrior women in YA films is crucial to this discussion. In each of the films, the queer aspects of the female protagonists were essentially erased and the storyline became not about female empowerment, but instead, the plot was centered on romance. Interestingly,

in the *Harry Potter* series and in the *Hunger Games* series, the female heroines, Hermione and Katniss, did not have boyfriends for the bulk of their story arcs. Rather the "build up" centered on whether or not the couple would eventually get together. Young Adult Dystopian Films are problematic in the sense that they both set up impossible ideals for women to live up to. The YA heroines discussed here are marketed as fiercely independent young women who perform aggressively and unexpectedly. In reality, these young women are submissive to their romantic partner or love interest, male characters in general, and those in positions of authority.

Constructing the Heroine – Race, Class, Identity, and Performance

Across the whole of the critique, each of the YA women were 'othered' or otherwise marginalized in some way, viewed as socially undesirable by their peers, love interests, or those they wished to impress. The concepts of 'othering' and 'overcoming one's birthright' have racial and societal implications that further complicate their gender performances. The worlds in which they lived, when viewed through a Foucauldian (1988) lens, show the government as controlling ideas and behaviors out of fear. Katniss came from a poor, coal mining district, Hermione was labeled a 'mudblood' because of her non-wizarding background, and Tris was called a 'stiff' because she was born into a faction that valued plainness and simplicity. Not only did the women need to operate within heteronormative binaries, they faced both class and racial challenges as well. A commonality among the films is that their societies were highly fragmented and a clear class system was already set in place.

Each character experienced a placement or ranking based on some sort of ritual based on choosing--Hermione: House Gryffindor; Katniss: The Hunger Games; Tris: Dauntless—which elevated them from the societies in which they grew up, suggesting that in order to become accepted, each had to remove herself from the society in which she grew up in order to be accepted into her new society.

Constructing the 'Warrior Woman'

While Katniss, Hermione, and Tris appear to exude physical strength and masculine-leaning tendencies, fight scenes are designed as a way to sexualize and look at women's bodies (Mulvey, 1975). Seemingly, warrior women are queer in that they do not rely on men to 'rescue' them. However, particularly in *Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, performing the role of the warrior disrupts the storyline and serves as an opportunity for the audience to look at the woman on screen's physique (Mulvey, 1975). In this sense, warrior women are objectified and sexualized under the guise of showing off the heroine's physical aptitude. Therefore, fight scenes are not designed to show off the women's physical prowess, but to provide opportunities to pacify and objectify the female body. Placing the YA film heroines in submissive roles is not exclusive to fight scenes. Importantly, each woman is paired with a hyper-masculine counterpart, whom she submits to or is controlled by. By showing that these women are still subordinate through the actions and behaviors of the males and those in power around them, gender roles are never truly disrupted.

The Un-Queering of YA Film Heroines

Moreover, while these characters are superficially queer in their gender performances in that they can be physically aggressive and are ambitious, each character operates within a traditional, heteronormative script, in which their romantic relationships become integral to their identity formation. Butler (2002) states that it is impossible to escape social expectations regarding gender and sexuality, and that legitimate gender and sexual performance are derived from power structures. Katniss, Hermione, and Tris, who were each labeled extraordinary in their own right, chose to alter both their appearance and personality in order to gain the approval of society and their romantic interest. Each film featured a makeover scene, in which the female heroine altered her physique in order to gain power, societal approval, and male attention. Since makeover scenes are a common thread in each of the films, it is important to think what message the act of altering one's looks propagates, since young audience members aspire to be like the female leads they see in YA films: even the most beautiful young women need to alter their behavior and looks in order to meet heteronormative beauty standards.

Limitations

While common themes arose when examining three YA film series that were adapted from novels, the scope of this critique is limited due to the sheer volume of novel adaptations. According to *LA Times*, the female-driven violent teen film, set in a futuristic or sci-fi background, are plentiful, including the *Twilight* series (2008-2012), *City of Bones* (2013), *Beautiful Creatures* (Garcia & LaGravenese, 2013), *The Chronicles of Narnia* series (2010-2015), and *Vampire Academy* (Murphy

& Waters, 2014), with more films currently in production ("Young Adults"). By extending the critique to other movies within the genre, it is likely that new themes would emerge and possible that some of the existing themes addressed could be challenged.

Further, since the critique did not include quantitative data, the analysis both cannot be replicated and is more subjective to personal bias. While cultural criticism is valuable when examining films because it illuminates common cultural concerns which reflect and shape values, the overall lens in which the movies were interpreted and viewed shaped my findings. Although the critique was backed by Queer Theory and the theoretical works of Butler, Foucault, and others, the context in which it was applied affected the overall lens in which the movies were interpreted and viewed. Had different research or theoretical constructs been applied to the study, it is possible that my findings would be much different.

Future research

As the Young Adult Dystopian Film genre continues to thrive, it is important to examine other themes within them, such as race and female politicians. While previous discussion drew on similarities among Hermione, Katniss, and Tris – all attractive, white young women – no young adult novel film adaptations feature a heroine who is a person of color. While Tris' best friend in the movie, Kristina (played by Zoe Kravitz), is black, she operates as the sidekick. Within the movie, she serves as Tris' cheerleader, and she is never developed beyond a flat character. Similarly, in *The Hunger Games*, Rue is a tertiary character, whose main purpose in

the film is to develop Katniss into a softer, more relatable person. Because my analysis discusses how Hermione, Katniss, and (to a degree) Tris are packaged as queer, they adhere to prescriptive gender roles and traditional beauty standards. The fact that their physical and class-oriented attributes are associated with whiteness is troubling and worthy of future discussion. Each, who appear to have to perform racial normativity because they are 'othered' in society are still cast with white women as the lead. While my critique touched on some racial themes, further insight can be gained by examining the relationships between race, silencing, power and status within the films.

While political themes are present within each of the Young Adult film, the previous discussion did not delve deep into the portrayal of women in political positions, but rather how governments create and control hegemonic discourse. In each of the films, a female politician is viewed as a secret, evil driving force: in the *Harry Potter* series, Delores Umbridge inserted herself into Hogwarts in order to propel a pureblood agenda. In the climax of *The Hunger Games* series, it was revealed that President Snow didn't encapsulate true evil---rather, Alma Coin (Julianne Moore) was responsible for Primrose's death. In the *Divergent* series, the evil president Jeanine, was replaced by an equally irresponsible and power-hungry Evelyn Johnson-Eaton (Naomi Watts). In the political environment in which we live, anti-woman rhetoric is normalized and often times expected. Importantly, each film is set in a world that is more technologically advanced than the world in which we live, and yet, misogynistic themes are still present and accepted. For future research,

it would be interesting to examine language and discourse within female political campaigns, and specifically the Clinton (2016) presidential campaign, to see if common themes are propelled regarding female politicians in YA films.

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