

Reading and the Perception of Gender Roles

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### **Abstract**

Gender stereotypes continue to influence the way students learn in the classroom, specifically while they are reading educational resources. Although many texts in the classroom display modern gender roles, there are several resources that contain gender stereotypes that may alter a student's perception on gender. Using a qualitative study, the current study examined how students alter their perception on gender roles from various readings. Participants completed an interview and several questionnaires based on the readings they were given. Results suggest that reading does in fact change student's perceptions on gender stereotypes. The students are also able to determine the difference between traditional and modern gender roles. Implications of results are discussed.

### **Chapter1: Introduction**

This research study was an initial investigation of how reading affects students' perception on gender roles shown books and educational reading materials in middle school. Examining the relationship between gender stereotypes and reading is an essential area to research in education. Reading is an important part in instruction in middle school where students read a variety of texts and books. The majority of those reading materials, however, contain gender stereotypes causing males and females to alter their perceptions constantly. Year after year, starting at a young age, students are continually exposed to these roles. The purpose of this study was to discover how students respond to various reading resources and the way in which their perception changes. By recognizing these stereotypes and perceptions teachers can efficiently demonstrate gender equity in the classroom. Gathering the most recent information on gender stereotypes and its affect while reading will allow for teachers and students to recognize their perceptions and how it may effect their education.

#### ***Problem Statement***

Students are exposed to books that contain gender roles and stereotypes starting a young age. As they continue to grow and move higher in education, gender roles continue to be demonstrated in both educational and leisure reading; therefore, affecting the perception of what a specific gender should look like. Acknowledging the gender role associated in reading is significant for the students to understand as they continue to be exposed the rest of their education and beyond school. It is the responsibility of educators to recognize if it is affecting ones education and the best way to create a classroom that exhibits gender equality.

### ***Significance of the Problem***

Many students enter the classroom each year with new perceptions on what a specific gender should look like. Readings, of all different kinds, carry these stereotypes and roles year after year. Crisp and Hiller (2011) state, “A primary means of transmitting cultural values from one generation to the next is through the telling of stories and, in the United States, this commonly comes in the form of children’s literature” (Crisp & Hiller, 2011). As students progress to higher education, these books continue to alter a student’s perception on gender.

Many books and educational reading materials do portray gender stereotypes, there are, however, readings that represent gender neutrality. Brendler (2014) states, “We are seeing more fiction that appeals to both genders... these books usually have central characters of both genders” (Brendler, 2014). It is imperative for teachers to recognize that there are gender-neutral readings available for educational purposes. In my experience, I have seen multiple books in the classroom containing gender stereotypes that have been established for years. I would like to be sure that students are not affected by these books and have the opportunity to be exposed to gender-neutral texts. Through this research I hope to strengthen my understanding of this problem.

### ***Purpose of the Study***

Reading is not only apparent in English Language Arts, but it is also spread out amongst core classes, including mathematics, science and social studies. Since reading is vital to students on an every day basis, it is important to gauge their perceptions on multiple areas, including their take on gender roles. By incorporating multiple sources of reading, including educational resources, short stories and chapters from a novel, it will allow for both the teacher and students

to measure how it may affect or change their perception on gender roles. The readings will not only contain traditional gender stereotypes, but also encompass readings that break typical gender roles, along with gender-neutral readings. I plan to use these types of readings in order to expand the students thinking and become better aware of how gender roles are intertwined in readings. Also, to view their initial understandings of gender and gender stereotypes.

There is a lot of research surrounding gender stereotypes and gender in education. While this vital, it is also essential to investigate how reading can affect the perspectives and perceptions on gender roles and the affect it may have on his/her education. It is a goal for teachers to create equality in all aspects in the classroom, including gender equality. Constantinou (2008) states, “Re-addressing the gender issue and seeking ways to better understand the phenomenon is a crucial step toward educational equity” (Constantinou, 2008). It is necessary for further research done on this topic in order for this to happen. While it is valuable for students, it is also beneficial for educators when selecting texts for their students.

### ***Research Questions***

- How do various readings affect a student’s perception on gender roles and stereotypes?
- How do students view traditional gender roles?
- How do students view modern gender roles?

### ***Personal Rationale for this Study***

Prior to entering school, most children are exposed to traditional stereotypes ranging from the media, to exposure at home, and to reading books. Making frequent reflections and

discussions on books while also looking at how it may affect a person is extremely important for students to do after reading. Many students have different perspectives on what a specific gender should look like. It is important teachers to establish a learning community where it is equal for both females and males, which includes providing gender-neutral texts along side of the other reading materials in the classroom. Multiple subjects provide several opportunities for students to read and expand their understandings on not only stereotypical gender roles, but also how their perception may or may not change. I wanted to complete this research study so that when I have my own classroom I can provide a variety of readings that allow an environment containing gender equality.

### ***Study Approach***

I used a qualitative approach for my research study. Clark and Creswell (2010) define qualitative research as, "...a type of research in which the researcher studies a problem that calls for an exploration of a phenomenon; relies on the views of participants; asks broad, general question..."(Clark & Creswell, 2010). My research study used interviews, surveys and general observations in order to successfully gather data in order to answer my research questions.

In order to properly use the qualitative approach, I used the ethnography design to observe the cultural patterns involved in reading and gender roles. Clark and Creswell note that this design discusses the beliefs through analyzing and observing cultural patterns in the "everyday behaviors and attitudes of the group" (Clark & Creswell, 2010). Gender roles fall under cultural beliefs; therefore, this design will help me to successfully complete this research project.

The other part of my research study contained the autoethnography design. On an everyday basis, I made my own observations and reflections based on the participants' data and discussions made. The reason for pursuing this design is to understand a larger cultural issue (Clark & Creswell, 2010). Gender stereotypes in the classroom, specifically in readings, is a cultural issue because it is seen in multiple areas of the world in education.

### ***Summary***

As an educator, I believe it is crucial to provide students with an equal opportunity to learn and reflect on what they have studied. Since reading is such a vital part of education, it is important to understand what each reading entails and how it may affect the reader. Students often alter their perspective based on the gender stereotypes they are exposed to. Knobloch-Westerwick and Hoplamazian (2011) state, "...how people view themselves and others is shaped to a great extent by a person's sex and gender-typed socialization" (Knobloch-Westerwick & Hoplamazian, 2011). It is essential for teachers to be conscious of the reading materials they choose and understand what they are displaying to their students. Gender is a topic that has been and will be researched for a long time. Educators especially should continually research on this topic in order to provide an equal and effective education for both males and females.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Reviewing the literature related to my research topic is an important aspect in completing my study. It is essential to gather what other people have studied regarding the same topic. The purpose of the literature review is to critically examine sections of a published journal or work.

The first article that will be reviewed is a journal article titled, "Gendering the Self: Selective Magazine Reading and Reinforcement of Gender Conformity" by Silvia Knobloch-

Westerwick and Gregory J. Hoplamazian. This journal article describes the gender roles shown in the media and through magazine readings and also describes the effect it can have on the reader. The research problem stated in this article is based on theories including: gender schema theory, social role theory, and social- cognitive theory. Working with these theories, Knobloch-Westerwick and Hoplamazian (2011) question, "...whether biological sex and gender conformity predict selective exposure to gender-typed magazines and whether this exposure, in turn, reinforces gender conformity" (Knobloch-Westerwick & Hoplamazian, 2011). In other words, the purpose of this article is to determine if being a specific gender and encompassing the qualities of that gender emphasizes the choice of magazine reading, therefore, strengthening their masculinity or femininity.

Researching the relationship between gender conformity and readings is a trending topic to investigate. This topic continues to be an area of interest because it demonstrates the importance of gender and the way it may shape the person's life. The reason for reviewing this article is to enhance my knowledge on the importance of understanding gender and how it is portrayed in readings, including magazines. This research article examines how an individual's choice in media exposure and selective readings can determine their gender conformity. I will specifically focus on the connections to readings, for that relates to my topic.

Although this research article directs most of its focus on the media exposure and the affect it has on gender conformity, there is also a section that revolves around the affect it has from reading. The results from this particular research displayed that "...biological sex influences selective exposure to gender-typed magazines directly but also through an indirect effect via gender" (Knobloch-Westerwick & Hoplamazian, 2011). Therefore, specific genders select text based on their particular gender based on what the reading entails. This connects to

my research due to its relevance about gender conformity. Since I will be focusing on how reading changes student perceptions on gender roles, this article will help support that genders do vary their interests and perceptions of gender based on their reading selection. Also, this article gives an exceptional definition of what gender is and the importance it entails. Though there are parts to this article that do not relate to my study, there is a section that will help enhance my research study.

The next article that I reviewed relates to the previous, in that it is a research article that confronts the perception of gender. This research article is titled, “Gender Perceptions of Middle Schoolers: The Good and the Bad” by Karen R. Zittleman. This journal article describes how students perceive gender and their realization of its importance in their every day life. The research problem stated in this article discusses the importance of gender equity in the classroom due to the various gender stereotypes mentioned by the students in middle school. The author also claims that society has an affect on gender stereotypes. Zittleman (2007) states, “It is society’s emphasis on gender difference that creates separate values, beliefs and assumptions for girls and for boys” (Zittleman, 2007). In other words, the author is pointing out that society influences how individuals, specifically students, perceive gender. From that, the author wanted to offer explanations of how gender impacts the development of identity for an individual as well as their lives inside and outside of school (Zittleman, 2007).

Researching gender stereotypes and how they are perceived is a prevalent topic to examine. The reason it continues to be a popular topic is because it demonstrates the importance of understanding gender stereotypes and how it affects an individual. The reasons for reviewing this research article is to strengthen my own understanding of how gender stereotypes may affect a student’s perception and develop their identity. This research article examines the affect gender

stereotypes have in a broader concept. I will specifically focus on what stereotypes are brought up and how they affect the middle school students researched.

Just as the research article above discusses the perception of gender, this article does as well. Based off of the surveys given to each student where both genders were given questions about males and females, their results showed that gender, as Zittleman (2007) states, “plays an important role in the lives of middle school students...but more often limiting the academic and social development of females and males” (Zittleman, 2007). Therefore, stating that gender affects students on a daily basis, which creates a gap on their development in and out of school. This connects to my research due to its relevance with gender stereotypes. Since my topic involves how reading changes student perceptions on gender roles and stereotypes, this article will help support that there are gender stereotypes and they do in fact affect students. Although this research focuses on gender in a broader way, it still will help my research study.

The next article that will be reviewed relates to the previous as it discusses gender stereotypes. The article is titled, “Gender, Racial and Ethnic Misrepresentations in Children’s Books: A Comparative Look by Rebecca Harlin and Hani Morgan. This article discusses gender, racial and ethnic stereotypes portrayed in children’s books that may represent false information. The author’s purpose for writing this article is to inform readers of how often misrepresentations of a certain aspect are seen in children’s books. Another purpose is to show the impact that storytelling has amongst children. Harlin and Morgan (2009) state, “In many literate cultures, values and attitudes transmitted through storytelling, often involving the of children’s books (Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993; Roberts, Dean, & Holland, 2005 as cited by Harlin & Morgan, 2009). There are many stereotypes that are presented in books, this article focuses on more than one, but I will focus on the gender aspect as it relates to my study.

The research of gender stereotypes in children's books is a popular topic to investigate. The reason of its popularity is because it demonstrates how often gender roles are seen in books and how it can affect individuals who read them. The reason for reviewing this article is to enhance my understanding of gender and how it is portrayed in readings. This article examines misrepresentations of race, ethnicity and gender. I will specifically focus on the connection to gender, for that relates to my topic.

Although this article directs most of its focus on race and ethnicity, a portion of it revolves around gender, which is major part to my study. The results from this particular article discuss the impact gender stereotypes have on young learners and how it is the responsibility of educators to examine books prior to using them in the classroom to avoid misrepresentations. This connects to my research study because my study includes gender stereotypes and the affect it has on students. This article will help provide current facts on how gender is presented in books, which will benefit my study.

The next article that I will review relates to the previous article in that it discusses gender stereotypes. The research article is titled, "Telling Tales about Gender: A critical Analysis of Caldecott Medal-Winning Picturebooks, 1938-2011" by Thomas Crisp and Brittany Hiller. This journal article describes the impact and importance of gender roles demonstrated in children's books and how it affects the students reading them. In this article, Crisp and Hiller (2011) "Critically analyze depictions of "femininity" and "masculinity," biological sex, and gender in Caldecott Medal-winning picturebooks from 1938 to 2011" (Crisp & Hiller, 2011). In other words, the authors are looking to depict the gender stereotypes that are presented in children's books.

The topic of gender roles and stereotypes is a reoccurring subject to investigate. This theme continues to be an area of interest because it demonstrates the concern of the gender roles that are portrayed amongst several children's books. The reason for reviewing this article is to enhance my knowledge and critically examine the depictions of males and females and how they are represented in books. This research article examines award winning books and the gender stereotypes that are intertwined throughout each one.

Although this research article directs most of its focus on the stereotypes that are represented in the books, I will focus on not only that, but how it affects the student's perceptions. The results from this research describe how the impact of reading these books can have a huge impact on young readers (Crisp & Hiller, 2011). Males and females may view their specific gender in a positive or negative way due to these types of books. This connects to my research in more than one way. Since I am researching how reading affects student's perception of gender stereotypes, this article helps to support my research because of the many details it offers on gender stereotypes. Also, this article describes how it is essential for educators to realize that literature affects young students as they begin to critically examine literature on their own.

The next research article that I am going to review relates to the previous for it describes the importance of providing equity in the classroom. The article is titled, "Boys and Girls Together: A Case for Creating Gender-Friendly Middle School Classrooms" by David Kommer. This article describes how crucial is for educators to understand how gender stereotypes can shape young student's minds in a positive and negative way. It also expresses how vital it is for classrooms to be equal in many areas, including between genders. Middle school is a prominent time where students start to understand and shape their view on what gender is. Kommer (2006)

states, “As young people move into adolescence, they begin to explore gender roles”(Kommer, 2006). The purpose of this article is to relay how crucial it is for educators to understand the differences between genders as well as to provide equality throughout the classroom.

Equity in school is a popular topic of research, for it describes the current problems and ways to amend them in the classroom. The reason for reviewing this article is because of the section of my topic that discusses the importance of equality between genders in the classroom. Due to multiple readings containing traditional gender stereotypes, part of my topic examines how readings can affect student’s perceptions on gender roles, which may affect the equality in the classroom. Although this article explores gender equity as a whole, my focus will be more on reading selections and how it affects students.

Another article that I will review that connects to the previous article, for it describes gender equity, is titled, “Gender equality in education: Definitions and Measurements” by Ramya Subrahmanian. This research article acknowledges the problem at hand with gender inequality in the classroom. The need for participants and analytical rigor is required in order to form gender equality in the class (Subrahmanian, 2005). There are two goals that this author deems as crucial when looking at gender equity. Subrahmanian (2005) states, “These two goals are distinguished as *gender parity* goals [achieving equal participation of girls and boys in all forms of education based on their proportion in the relevant age-groups in the population] and *gender equality* goals...” (Subrahmanian, 2005). In other words, there needs to be equal participation between girls and boys in the class as well as the classroom as a whole.

Researching the need for gender equality in the classroom is a trending topic to investigate. The topic continues to be an area of interest because of the affect it has on students and the perception that it creates from the inequalities they see and read. The reason for

reviewing this article is to enhance my knowledge on gender inequality with more concrete facts, which will help me with my topic. The author reinforces the idea of knowing the students and paying closer attention to their behaviors in order to emphasize gender equality in the classroom (Subrahmanian, 2005). This article connects to my research study because its connection to creating gender equity in the class. Due to books containing gender stereotypes that may affect students thinking, it is important to gauge how those stories impact students. Although this research article focuses on gender equity as a whole in the class, it still will benefit my research study.

The final article that will be reviewed discusses contemporary and traditional books in the classroom. This article is titled, “Blurring Gender Lines in Readers’ Advisory for Young Adults” by Beth M. Brendler. This article presents past and present literacy behaviors in the classroom. It also discusses modern books, which creates an equal desire for both genders. Brendler (2014) states, “While those studies were enlightening and contributed much to the field of literacy, there have been societal changes over the last few decades that have affected gender beliefs” (Brendler, 2014). These new gender-neutral stories have created more equality in the classroom.

The progress in this area is a popular topic to research. Since it is a goal to continue to increase gender equality, more and more research is done in this particular area. The reason for reviewing this article is to enhance my knowledge on the improvements thus far in gender equality. This article examines particular texts that are gender-neutral, therefore, relating directly to my research study. This article connects to my study because throughout the different readings I will give to my participants, I will have contemporary gender-neutral texts in order to gauge

how they affect the student's perceptions. This article also discusses The Hunger Games, which will also be a part of my study.

### **Chapter 3: Study Design**

#### ***Methodology and Design***

I used a qualitative approach for my research study. Clark and Creswell (2010) define qualitative research as, "...a type of research in which the researcher studies a problem that calls for an exploration of a phenomenon; relies on the views of participants; asks broad, general question..." (Clark & Creswell, 2010). My research study used interviews, surveys and general observations in order to successfully gather data in order to answer my research questions.

In order to properly use the qualitative approach, I used the ethnography design to observe the cultural patterns involved in reading and gender roles. Clark and Creswell note that this design discusses the beliefs through analyzing and observing cultural patterns in the "everyday behaviors and attitudes of the group" (Clark & Creswell, 2010). Gender roles fall under cultural beliefs; therefore, this design will help me to successfully complete this research project.

The other part of my research study contained the autoethnography design. On an everyday basis, I made my own observations and reflections based on the participants' data and discussions made. The reason for pursuing this design is to understand a larger cultural issue (Clark & Creswell, 2010). Gender stereotypes in the classroom, specifically in readings, is a cultural issue because it is seen in multiple areas of the world in education.

### ***My Position as the Researcher***

I completed my undergraduate at Nazareth College in Elementary Inclusive Education grades 1-9 and English, where I received my General Education and Students with Disabilities certifications. After graduating, I have been in the process of earning my Master's degree in Literacy Birth-12 at The College at Brockport. While going to school for my Master's degree, I have also been substitute teaching, mostly at Brockport Middle School. During the months of November I was offered a long-term substitute teaching job in the Brockport Middle School in a 6<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts and Social Studies classroom for the rest of the school year. Although it is beneficial substitute teaching in multiple classrooms, being able to substitute teach in one classroom for an extensive amount of time has really been an awarding experience. As a long-term substitute it is your responsibility to lesson plan and collaborate with other teachers. I have also experienced team meetings and faculty meetings, which allowed me to gather and implement new ideas that I learned. Having the opportunity to experience a job as the main teacher in the classroom really allowed me to get a sense for my own future classroom. Through my experiences, I have learned a lot about the importance of literacy education. As a future educator, I plan to provide differentiation in the classroom while providing a literacy rich classroom.

### ***Research Questions***

This research will attempt to answer the following questions:

- How do various readings affect a student's perception on gender roles and stereotypes?

- How do students view traditional gender roles?
- How do students view modern gender roles?

### ***Participants and Setting***

This research study included three sixth grade students, one male and two females. The study also included me as the researcher. The students participating in my study were chosen based on teacher recommendation due to their participation in class. The research for this study was taken according to the student's schedule. Research was collected in the Middle School where all of the students attend.

#### **Kary (pseudo name)**

Kary is a female student in sixth grade that is a confident learner that participates daily in classroom discussions. She does well in her core classes and is responsible for always getting her homework completed in a timely manner. Kary can read independently and does well with writing. She would benefit from explaining her evidence in writing to support her initial claims. Kary has two sisters and lives with her mother and father. Her family is consistent in supporting her with her academics and extracurricular activities, such as dance and soccer. She is very social, and has a lot of friends.

#### **Kaylee (pseudo name)**

Kaylee is also very consistent in providing meaningful discussions during class. She is never hesitant to ask questions when she needs further clarification. She also is responsible for her work in and out of the classroom. Although Kaylee is an independent learner when it comes to reading and writing, she struggles with understanding writing prompts and needs them broken down. Kaylee lives with her mother, father and younger brother. Kaylee is also very social and is

always seen around her friends. Kaylee enjoys sports and is always looking to join sports related activities.

### **Jimmy (pseudo name)**

Jimmy is the male participant involved in this study. He is a humorous sixth grade student who enjoys participating in class. He always has his hand raised in order to ask questions or get involved with the discussions we are having in class. Jimmy has hearing impairments with speech and language. Although he has this diagnosis, it does not stop him from his urge to learn and understand during lessons. Jimmy would benefit from repeated directions having passages and questions read aloud to him. Jimmy lives with his mother, father, and two sisters. He also has another older sister that does not live with him. His family is very supportive of his academics and extracurricular activities. Jimmy has a huge passion for sports and enjoys participating in them whenever he gets the chance.

### ***Procedures of Study***

My research study was completed over a six-week period between December 2014 and January 2015. Throughout this time, I gave the students an opportunity to explore a variety of readings that allowed me to gauge their perceptions on gender roles and stereotypes. On the first day, I gave an introduction on gender stereotypes in order to understand their initial thoughts and to provide more of an explanation to the students. In order for me to obtain their initial thoughts, I gave each student an interview containing specific questions to the topic. Thereafter, I gave a different reading for them to read for each meeting. Some readings contained traditional gender stereotypes, some were gender neutral and others included contemporary gender roles seen in books like The Hunger Games. After they read, I gave them a ten question questionnaire to fill

out which will allowed them to dig deeper into their thinking of what gender roles are represented, if any, and how it changed their thinking. Depending on the reading, I also provided a comprehension check after each reading. Throughout each step of all the meetings, I gave clear directions in order to provoke critical thinking and engaging discussions. I also made my own reflections through journal entries on an everyday basis.

On the last week, I gave the same survey that was given the first week to see if views have changed or remained the same.

### *Criteria for Trustworthiness*

My research study is valid because I used persistent observations and reflections after each meeting. I was with the participants one to two days a week for thirty minutes for a total of six weeks. I also completed member checks through reflecting on an everyday basis. After reflecting, I realized if questions or instructions needed to be changed. I gave the students pseudonyms when reflecting and when reporting my research. Transferability was used as the participants and setting had been established based on teacher recommendations. The confidentiality of the students, their family, and their school was maintained throughout this study. Dependability was used, as the procedures and details of the study had been stated. Finally, confirm-ability was demonstrated in the study, as the data I collected and reflections I made were completed from the responses I got from the questionnaires and surveys. As their perceptions changed, I continued to alter my thoughts on ways to better educate and provide a classroom filled with equality, specifically gender equality.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Throughout my research study I had a few different forms of data collection. To start, I had an interview about the students initial thought process on gender stereotypes and what they think they are. With every meeting, I had some sort of reading for them to complete. In order to gauge their perception, I had a questionnaire survey after every reading that was collected for data. To make sure they understood the readings, I also had a comprehension check for them to complete. Throughout the study I also had reflection journal entries where I expressed my thoughts and understandings of their results where I noted if their perception had or had not changed. My data represented my questions stated above.

**Student Interviews**

The part of the research that demonstrated their initial perception on gender was the interview I administered during our first session. The purpose of the interview was to assess what they understood about gender stereotypes. The interview consisted of ten questions. These ten questions were not only asked during the first session, but also during the last. In order to get a clear understanding of how their perception changed, if any, the questions needed to be asked again. The charts on both interviews are included below:

**First Interview**

**Last Interview**

<p><i>Question 1</i>                  What are some traditional stereotypes of women:  <b>Kary:</b> Flowers, make-up, cooking  <b>Jimmy:</b> Likes make-up, cooking  <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>	<p><b>Kary:</b> They like skirts and dresses and cooking  <b>Jimmy:</b> Cooking, hunting, shopping, cleaning  <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>
<p><i>Question 2</i>                  What are some traditional stereotypes of men:  <b>Kary:</b> Video games, sports, trucks</p>	<p><b>Kary:</b> Sports, blue, green and orange  <b>Jimmy:</b> Hunting, building  <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>

<p><b>Jimmy:</b> Sports, video games  <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>	
<p><i>Question 3</i>          Have any stereotypes you've heard changed over time?:  <b>Kary:</b> Boys and girls like sports  <b>Jimmy:</b> Girls are not the only one in the kitchen  <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>	<p><b>Kary:</b> No  <b>Jimmy:</b> No  <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>
<p><i>Question 4</i>          What do you think are the responsibilities of the mother or woman in the household?:  <b>Kary:</b> Cooking  <b>Jimmy:</b> Cooking, cleaning  <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>	<p><b>Kary:</b> To cook or clean  <b>Jimmy:</b> They have to probably cook while the men are working.  <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>
<p><i>Question 5</i>          What do you think are the responsibilities of the father or main in the household?:  <b>Kary:</b> Building, fixing things  <b>Jimmy:</b> Work, bills  <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>	<p><b>Kary:</b> To build/fix things/ cook  <b>Jimmy:</b> They have to get the food and hunt  <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>
<p><i>Question 6</i>          What type of clothing do women wear? What about men?:  <b>Kary:</b> Women: jeans, sweatpants, dresses, skirts          Boys: jeans, sweatpants  <b>Jimmy:</b> Girls: dresses men: shirt/pants  <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>	<p><b>Kary:</b> Girls: skirts, dresses, pants, skirts, shorts          Boys: shirts, shorts  <b>Jimmy:</b> Women probably dresses and men jeans/t-shirt  <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>
<p><i>Question 7</i>          What sort of jobs do females usually have?:  <b>Kary:</b> Teacher  <b>Jimmy:</b> Lunch day, teacher  <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>	<p><b>Kary:</b> Teacher  <b>Jimmy:</b> Cleaning, cooking  <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>
<p><i>Question 8</i>          What about men?:  <b>Kary:</b> Engineer  <b>Jimmy:</b> Machines, garbage man  <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>	<p><b>Kary:</b> Engineer  <b>Jimmy:</b> Hunting, building  <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>
<p><i>Question 9</i>          How do books portray men and women?:  <b>Kary:</b> Men usually read about trucks or sports etc.          Girls might read about beauty.  <b>Jimmy:</b> The author could be a girl or guy  <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>	<p><b>Kary:</b> Women as girly boys as boyish  <b>Jimmy:</b> It can change their mind on things.  <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>
<p><i>Question 10</i>          Do you think reading can change your perception /thinking of gender roles?:  <b>Kary:</b> Yes.</p>	<p><b>Kary:</b> Yes because girls can do what boys can do.  <b>Jimmy:</b> Yes for me it can for different stereotypes like girls clean but girls can</p>

<p><b>Jimmy:</b> Yes, because to help me with different perceptions.  <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>	<p>hunt if they want to.  <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>
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Due to their concrete understanding of the word traditional in context with gender roles, the students mostly had the same answers for the first few questions of the survey when compared to the first survey given. Jimmy, however, altered his perception slightly with the traditional stereotypes of women by including “hunting” in his answer. His views on women were changed due to the readings. His perception expanded causing his view on traditional to change, adding more of a modern view on the more traditional answers he first put in the first interview.

When looking at the type of clothing, jobs and responsibilities the students think a woman and man should have, their answers stayed relatively the same. Though those answers remained the same, questions nine and ten did alter, which is a bigger portion of my research. The first time the students took this survey, their answers were not as confident as their last survey. Due to this subject being relatively new, it was a harder topic to grasp. As noted in the chart above, question nine asks how books portray men and women. When answering the question Kary stated “men usually read about trucks or sports, girls might read about beauty. With a misunderstanding of the question for the first survey, she changed her answer for the second survey stating, “women as girly and boys as boyish.” With the amount of readings and discussions, she was able to distinguish how some readings portray women and men, therefore, affecting her perception on the portrayal of both genders.

Similar to Kary, Jimmy also misread question number nine. When stating, “the author could be a girl or guy” in the first survey demonstrated that he did not understand the question. Throughout this research there were times I had to go back to the vocabulary to explain the word

portray. Since this was the first survey, this word may have been the reason he did not understand the question. While looking at his second interview, he states, “it can change their mind on things.” Though this is not an in depth comment, this student was able to demonstrate their comprehension of the question and display his understanding of how people view men and women and how it is portrayed in various readings.

Looking at question ten, both student one and two had a huge change in their answer from the first to second interview. When asked if they think reading can change their perception of gender roles they answered yes, not really giving any explanation on why or how. Looking at the second survey they were more specific in their answers. Kary stated, “Yes because girls can do what boys can do.” Kary is starting to see the inequality of the traditional texts and that there are traditional stereotypes made about girls and boys in readings. Meanwhile, Jimmy, in the second survey, stated, “yes for me it can for different stereotypes like girls clean but girls can hunt if they want to too.” Which was stated in his interview. Due to the various articles we read and the start to The Hunger Games, he noticed the change in his perception on gender roles while reading. Therefore demonstrating that reading can alter a person’s perception on gender stereotypes.

### *List of Stereotypes*

The research started with a lesson on what a gender stereotype is. The students worked together to come up with a list of gender stereotypes about both men and women based on their prior knowledge. This data was included so that I could receive their initial perception of both genders and what stereotypes they have heard before. The students generated this information, which allowed for them to understand and prepare their discussions for following steps of the

research. For stereotypes regarding girls they listed reading, plants/flowers, the color pink and purple and the importance of appearance. For the stereotypes about boys they listed sports such as baseball, boys liking videogames, and an interest in dark colors such as blue. While making this list, the students did not only focus on traditional stereotypes, they also labeled many of their answers with what both boys and girls are interested in. Some commonalities included horror movies, subjects including math and science, and gym class. This research demonstrates that the students were not only thinking of the traditional stereotypes they have heard before, but were also taking a more modern approach by naming gender neutral activities or objects. Although this topic was new for the students, they did an excellent job naming the roles that they have seen or heard before regarding gender.

### *Comprehension Checks*

The students were given a plethora of articles and readings during this research study. The students were expected to read the article they were given and answer comprehension questions based on the reading. Comprehension checks are defined, as Bastug (2014) states, “The ability to read and comprehend a text is considered one of the basic conditions for success in life. Effective readers are known to understand what they read and to learn better from texts” (Bastug, 2014 as cited by Van den Broek & Espin, 2012). Though I was not assessing the students whether or not they answered the questions correctly, I was, however, making sure they were able to understand the article.

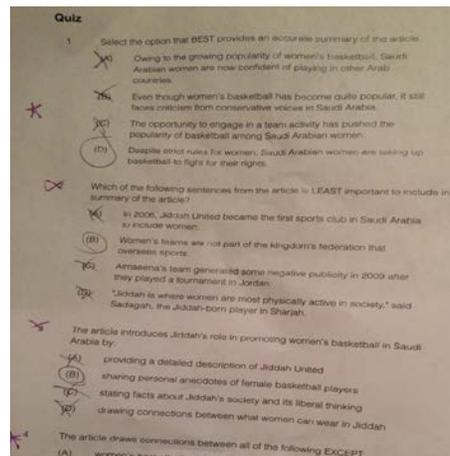
Most of the readings came from Newsela, an educational website that provides articles; they also offered comprehension quizzes after each article. These quizzes were used as comprehension checks for the students. In order for the students to have a meaningful discussion

on their perception of gender roles from the article, they needed to first understand what they read. Their answers demonstrated their comprehension of the article. By reviewing their comprehension checks, I was able to gauge what articles they did and did not understand. Using that information helped me choose the next article based on their interest level on the article and how difficult it was to read. Risko and Dalhouse (2010) state, “Assessments can transform instruction by providing timely information that captures students’ strengths, needs, and specific instructional history” (Risko & Dalhouse, 2010). Therefore, in order to decode their perception of gender roles after reading, I first needed to assess if they understood what they were reading.

While looking at the results of the comprehension checks based on the articles, all three students received the same score. When looking at the article given on the first day titled “Basketball keeps Saudi women active, but players must be activists too,” the students completed the comprehension quiz shortly after reading. The results of the four-question quiz demonstrated a two out of four score. Although the information provided in the article was interesting to the students, all of the students missed the same questions. Examining the questions that were marked incorrect, there were vocabulary words that perplexed the students when answering the questions. For example, the answer to the question “Which of the following sentences from the article is LEAST important to include in a summary of the article?” The correct answer stated, “Women’s teams are not part of the kingdom’s federation that oversees sports.” Federation is not a part of the student’s everyday vocabulary; therefore, the students did not answer the question. This, however, did not affect the student’s answers for the questionnaire, as mentioned above. Another vocabulary word that was difficult for the students in question number three was anecdotes. In fact, Kaylee underlined this word on her paper indicating that this was a challenging word. Figure 1.2 demonstrates this data below.

In order to get full results, researchers need to prepare the research in a way that will most benefit the students. By providing the comprehension checks, the students were able to gather the importance of the article and give a complete answer to the questions on the questionnaire.

Figure 1.1



### *Questionnaires:*

After each article or reading given to the students, the participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire. The questionnaire included the same questions for each reading given. The purpose of this questionnaire was to see if the student's perception of gender stereotypes altered after completing their reading. The questions asked provoked the students to concentrate on the stereotypes seen, whether traditional or modern. These five questions were added to the research study for the purpose of tracking their progression or change of thoughts on gender stereotypes found in readings in and out of the classroom setting.

Many Newsela articles were given to the participants throughout this case study. With each article the students were also given a questionnaire to complete. Looking at some of the

results of the questionnaires given, the students were able to pull out the specific type of gender stereotype being presented and understood the overall entirety of the article.

When looking at the article given titled, “With her eyes on her goals,” the students all were able to visualize how women were portrayed in the reading. They were able to point out that women, just like men, were able to be athletic and good at sports. Since there was not enough of a mention of men in the article they pointed out that men weren’t portrayed as anything. Both students who completed this questionnaire were able to recognize that this article was mostly about a girl named Louisa who loved and had a talent for soccer. Both students did not change their perspective from the reading because women are “*good at sport the same as boys*” and “*I know that girls can play sports too.*” They also both successfully pointed out that this article had neutral gender stereotypes.

Another questionnaire given to the students was based from the article titled, “Basketball keeps Saudi women active, but player must be activists too.” When looking at the results of the questionnaire, students were able to identify how women were portrayed. Kaylee stated, “They have to follow certain rules. Like they had to wear black dresses and cover their face.” Kary and Jimmy answered very similar to this statement showing that they understood how the women were portrayed. They also were able to comprehend that men had more freedom than women. All three participants stated that this reading did change their perspective on the role of men and women. For example, Kaylee stated, “Girls had to wear black and cover their face and men couldn’t see girls jog in sweat pants and could do more than girls.” Kary stated, “Girls usually like beauty. This makes everyone think differently.” Finally, Jimmy stated, “Because it does not matter if guys or girls play sports.” Though the students had different answers, they all described how their perspective altered from the reading. All of the students were able to differentiate that

this article was based on traditional gender stereotypes. This information is displayed in figure 1.2 below.

Figure 1.2

<p>“With her eyes on her goal”</p>	<p>“Basketball keeps Saudi women active, but players must be activists too”</p>
<p>Question1: How were women portrayed in this reading?                  Kary: Athletic. It’s showing girls can be good at sports too.                  Kaylee: A good way because it’s showing that women can be athletic too.                  Jimmy: Did not take questionnaire</p>	<p>Question1: How were women portrayed in this reading?                  Kary: They were portrayed by they have to wear loose black dresses, they can’t wear whatever they want.                  Kaylee: They had to follow certain rules. Like they had to wear black dresses and cover their face.                  Jimmy: In black dresses they had to cover their faces they are hidden from the world.</p>
<p>Question 2: How were men portrayed in this reading?                  Kary: Men weren’t really mentioned in the story.                  Kaylee: Men weren’t really mentioned in this article.                  Jimmy: Did not take questionnaire</p>	<p>Question 2: How were men portrayed in this reading?                  Kary: Men were viewed as good. They were the ones who can wear anything they wanted.                  Kaylee: The men were able to do more than women like men were allowed to drive and women weren’t.                  Jimmy: No men could do more than the girls.</p>
<p>Question 3: What was the article about?                  Kary: It is about a girl who loves to play soccer.                  Kaylee: About Louisa and her talent for soccer.                  Jimmy: Did not take questionnaire</p>	<p>Question 3: What was the article about?                  Kary: It was about girls and boys playing basketball.                  Kaylee: How girls had their own rules and how men had to follow their own rules.                  Jimmy: Basketball boys and girls.</p>
<p>Question 4: Did this change your perspective on the role of women or men? Why?                  Kary: No, I know that girls can play sports too.                  Kaylee: No, because women are good at sports the same as boys.                  Jimmy: Did not take questionnaire</p>	<p>Question 4: Did this change your perspective on the role of women or men? Why?                  Kary: Yes, girls usually like beauty. This makes everyone think differently.                  Kaylee: Yes, girls had to wear black and cover their faces, and men couldn’t see girls jog in sweat pants and could do more than girls.                  Jimmy: Yes, because it does not matter if guys or girls play sports.</p>
<p>Question 5: Does this article have gender stereotypes, no stereotypes or give a neutral view of gender roles?                  Kary: Neutral, Louisa likes to play soccer.</p>	<p>Question 5: Does this article have gender stereotypes, no stereotypes or give a neutral view of gender roles?                  Kary: It has gender stereotypes. This girl</p>

<p>Kaylee: Neutral, Louisa has an interest in soccer.</p> <p>Jimmy: Did not take questionnaire</p>	<p>shows everyone that girls can play sports.</p> <p>Kaylee: Yes, girls had to wear black and cover their faces. Men could do more.</p> <p>Jimmy: Yes they have to dress in black. Men have to wear nothing.</p>
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### *Reflections*

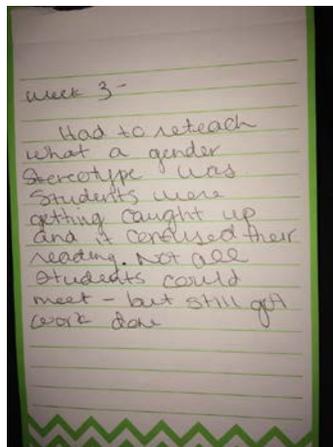
During this research study, reflections were made in order to track my thoughts and progressions for each session. Lambert, Sorensen and Elliott (2014) state, Hargreaves and Fullan (1992) described reflection as the “kind of writing about professional experience that can profitably be mined for the deeper meaning that constitutes new understanding of self-in-the-world” (Lambert Sorensen & Elliott, 2014). Through constant reflection, I focused on how the session went that day and what the students perceived based on the reading. Reflections were used as data collection in order for me to reflect on how the students were responding to each reading and how the students were changing their perception on gender roles, if any changes. The purpose of collecting my thoughts on how the session went was so that I could refocus a particular section of my research study and notice any limitation during the process.

Although data collection is a major and important part to the research process, reflecting on the student’s data results and the discussions that occur are just as crucial. I met with the students one to two times a week. After each meeting, I kept journal entries that reflected how the students responded to the various readings and tracked how their perceptions did or did not alter. Borg (2001) states, “Forms of reflective writing such as diaries and journals are widely acknowledged as important tools in promoting both the development and the understanding of teachers” (Borg, 2001). By adding reflections as a part of my study, I was able to decode not

only their thoughts, but also reflect on my own teaching. I reflected on the research questions I noted above which then guided me to understand and see what a gender equity classroom should look like.

These reflections allowed me to gauge student perceptions at a deeper level. Reflections should be done on a daily basis in the classroom. By creating these journal entries it will not only benefit teachers, but also the students. For example, one of my reflections acknowledged the necessity for me to step back and reteach some essential vocabulary words. All students needed a reminder of what constituted as a gender stereotype. Due to this reflection I was able to go back and give a better description of a gender stereotype for the next lesson. In addition to that, the students also struggled with the word perception. Reflecting on this reinforced me to go back and provide a definition that was sufficient for all three of the students. Figure 1.2 is demonstrated below that illustrates this particular situation.

Figure 1.3



### **Chapter 4: Findings**

The purpose of this study was to determine how reading in the classroom affects a student's perception on gender roles. Reading occurs frequently during a school day, so it is an important area to study. There are various reading materials presented to students every day in multiple classrooms. Many of those materials contain some type of gender role, whether they are traditional or modern. This is important for students to understand so they comprehend what a gender stereotype is and how it can be seen throughout the texts that are read in class.

#### ***Interviews reveal students' perception on gender roles and stereotypes and the effects on reading.***

When looking at the results of this interview, the students had a great understanding of the word traditional. Before working on this research topic, the students were not only hesitant on what gender stereotypes were, but also the different types of stereotypes that are portrayed. By working together on the list of stereotypes, they were able to grasp those traditional stereotypes they've heard throughout the years. They demonstrated this understanding through both the beginning and end interview.

The interviews given at the beginning and end of the research study reflected the students' perception on gender roles and stereotypes based on the readings done within the six weeks. In order to fully understand results, the participants needed to be asked the same questions. Those questions will help me monitor their perception and reflect on if their perception changed. From these interviews, I found that the sessions completed with the participants impacted their perception on gender roles and stereotypes.

The initial interview provided questions that were going to be the foundation for my research study. The questions I asked probed the students to dig deeper into their prior knowledge so that they could get a basis understanding of the topic they were going to partake in for the remainder of the study. The results of the initial interview not only prepared the participants for further sessions, but also gave me a starting point on where to begin with my study.

When asking the participants questions one and two surrounding traditional stereotypes of women and men, their answers portrayed their prior knowledge on the subject. With prompting, this finding demonstrates their initial perception on traditional gender stereotypes. Since this was the first session on the topic, the findings show that they were not fully ready to answer the question *have any stereotypes you've heard changed over time?* The participant's answers demonstrated little understanding of the question. In terms of what each gender wears, their responsibilities in the household and what they do for a living, I found that they had traditional ideologies on gender roles. This demonstrates their initial perception, which portrayed mainly traditional perspectives on gender roles. Like stated before, their answers for questions 9 and 10 surrounding perceptions on reading reflected their lack of comprehension of the topic and question. This finding enforced me to realize that more instruction needed to be completed in this area.

The second interview given at the end of the study reflected some changes in their perception. These findings help to answer my initial research question based on if the participant's perception changed from the readings given throughout the study. The findings for question one demonstrated change from one of the students. His stereotypes about women were altered from his first response. This finding directly shows that his perception on gender roles

changed because of the abundance of readings completed. The results for questions four through eight surrounding what each gender wears, their responsibilities at home, and what they do for a living did not change from their first interview. These findings illustrate that the articles and books read during the sessions did not affect their perception in this particular area.

When looking at the findings for the question surrounding how books portray men and women, only one student changed their perception. Responding with “*they can change their mind on things,*” Jimmy was able to gather what he knew about books and gender from our previous sessions and use that knowledge to reflect on the question during the second interview. The other student’s responded similarly to their first interview, demonstrating that their perception on gender did not alter. Reflecting on the findings for the last question on if reading can change a student’s perception, I was given insightful answers that portrayed a well-rounded answer in their second survey. Although they answered yes in their first interview, their answers for the second survey showed their complete understanding of how their perception changed. The participant stated, “*yes because girls can do what boys can do*” and “*yes for me it can for different stereotypes like girls clean but girls can hunt if they want too.*” Although some of their perceptions did not change in many of the interview questions, they did change according to this final research question.

***Students are able to distinguish readings as traditional stereotypes and its effect on their reading.***

A major part of my research consisted in the type of gender stereotypes the participants found while reading. This theme had a huge influence on my research study. While choosing articles for students to read, it was essential for me, the researcher, to choose both traditional and

modern texts. Since they were able to successfully define a traditional stereotype, it was important to see if they could discover them while reading. In traditional texts, as Leland and Harste (2013) state, "...they found male characters frequently described as imaginative, adventurous, or clever, female characters were more often characterized as naïve, cute, petite, an elegant princess, or an old spinster (p. 70). These findings are not surprising since studies of children's literature carried out in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s consistently found gender inequities" (Leland & Harste, 2013 as cited by Grauerholz & Pescosolio, 1989; Peterson & Lach, 1990; Ernst, 1995). While researching and discussing the articles with my participants, there were only a few that they stated had traditional stereotypes. When they were determining that it was a traditional text, they reflected back on the survey and list they created in order to answer the question. Together, we discussed which articles, which were only a few, contained traditional gender roles and why.

While finding the articles I was able to construct my own research about gender stereotypes. Though there are many that still affect a student's perception on gender roles, there are not as many educational articles that contain traditional stereotypes. Due to this, there were not as many traditional articles as there were modern articles. Though there were not as many, students were still able to point them out and talk about where they have seen them before in readings. For example, students mentioned that textbooks in the classroom had traditional stereotypes due to the time the book was written and what subject the reading was on. Even though more and more of the readings in school are becoming modern, it is still essential for students to be able to point out the traditional stereotypes that they encounter while reading.

Reviewing one of my initial research questions asking how students view traditional gender roles, I was surprised by the results. Though students were able to point out the traditional

roles based on their prior knowledge, they were very reluctant to associate that type of stereotype with what they believe to be true. Therefore, although they were able to successfully point out the stereotype being presented and identify their perception based on the reading, they did not change their mind on what they believed about gender because of what they read. From the start of the research, students were astonished by the stereotypes that are still portrayed through readings, yet were quick to demand equality from the misrepresented stereotypes they heard. Therefore, going into the research I had a different idea of what the results would look like for this question. After this research study, the data and research completed with the participants demonstrated that students view traditional stereotypes as uncommon and unrealistic to today's society.

Students often alter their perception on many areas in his or her life, including when they read in and out of school. Students often vary what they perceive based on their prior knowledge and perspective. With that said, the purpose of giving the interview before and after the research study allowed for me, as the researcher, to gauge how their perception was changing, if there was any change at all. This relates to my first research question because various readings were given to the students in order to track their perception on what they perceived about the gender stereotypes demonstrated in each article.

***Students are able to distinguish readings as modern stereotypes and its effect on their reading.***

While traditional texts are starting to become less and less uncommon, modern texts are starting to grow in number. Brendler (2014) states, "We are seeing more fiction that appeals to both genders. New offerings often combine action/ adventure with romance, paranormal, fantasy, and science fiction elements" (Brendler, 2014). Modern texts are commonly seen in and out of

school, making it easier for students to identify modern gender roles. Based on the results of the interviews and questionnaires completed by the students, there were more modern stereotypes found while reading, causing the participants to alter their perception on gender roles.

Specifically, the results display the changes in their perception, which are shown in the second survey listed in chapter three.

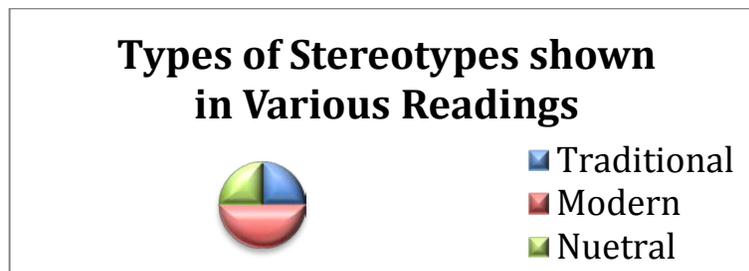
<p><i>Question 10</i> Do you think reading can change your perception /thinking of gender roles?: <b>Kary:</b> Yes. <b>Jimmy:</b> Yes, because to help me with different perceptions. <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>	<p><b>Kary:</b> Yes because girls can do what boys can do. <b>Jimmy:</b> Yes for me it can for different stereotypes like girls clean but girls can hunt if they want to. <b>Kaylee:</b> Did not take survey</p>
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While working with the three participants, there were many reading materials we covered that displayed either a modern or neutral stereotype on women and men. Many of the articles found showed the opposite gender taking on roles that the other would normally do. Reading those types of articles enhanced the importance of being able to determine the type of stereotype and how it can change a student’s perception. For example, there was an article that displayed modern stereotypes titled, “With her eyes on the goal.” This article displayed a girl who was interested in soccer. Straying away from the traditional stereotypes about girls, the students were able to change their perception on girls to come to the conclusion that this was article had neutral stereotypes about girls because both girls and boys play soccer.

Towards the end of the research the students started to read The Hunger Games. Right away they were able to gauge what type of stereotypes were presented. Since the participants had practice with articles prior to reading this book, they were already able to point out that this was going to contain modern/neutral stereotypes about women and men. Their questionnaire displayed their change in perception as they commented on certain qualities of the main

character, such as “brave, adventurous and a hunter.” These qualities demonstrate modern stereotypes because they show that girls and boys are on the same level, both being able to do the same things. They were able to point out the differences between the mother and Katniss due to the stereotypes that were presented about both characters. Their discussion displayed enthusiasm as they talked about why it contained modern stereotypes. To be able to point out the different gender stereotypes in readings is essential. They were able to track their change in perception and see how different readings can alter their thinking on various gender roles. Below is a pie chart that displays which readings were modern, neutral or traditional stereotypes. Two articles, The Hunger Games, and most of the books read in English Language Arts were seen to be modern. One article and the textbooks in multiple classrooms were seen to be traditional. Finally, three articles were seen to contain neutral stereotypes. They are separated by how the students perceived the stereotypes. As seen, modern and neutral stereotypes were displayed in the readings more than traditional shown in figure 1.3.

Figure 1.4



When reflecting on my research question asking how students view modern stereotypes, I was able to successfully answer this question based on my results during this study. The participants I worked with were able to connect more to the modern stereotypes presented in the articles and books. As a result to the data collected and sessions spent with the participants, students viewed modern gender stereotypes more commonly than traditional gender stereotypes.

Although the students were still able to notice a change in their perception on gender roles, they related and made more of a connection with the modern gender stereotypes they see in readings in and out of school.

### **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

The results that are shown above have demonstrated the research question completed during this study. This research study was based mainly on the question, which states: How do various readings affect a student's perception on gender roles and stereotypes? The results provided an answer to this research question during the six-week study. This qualitative research included themes that demonstrate the results of this study. The themes were incorporated in order to provide a clear and concise understanding of what was found while collecting the research needed. The themes that were presented based off of the first question included the perception of gender roles, their interest or lack thereof in the article, comprehension checks, and reflections. Other themes found included traditional and modern texts and an overview of the books read in the classroom.

The overall findings from this research study included insights on the differences between modern and traditional texts. The student's perception altered when discussing the definition of modern and traditional stereotypes in texts. The students were able to gauge the difference between both terms and successfully determine the type while reading various articles during each session. They were able to recognize that there are gender stereotypes within the educational texts they read during this research project. They also determined that most texts provided modern gender stereotypes, which altered their perception evident from the first survey they were given to complete. This qualitative study was broken into themes in order to successfully demonstrate the data collected.

When reflecting on not only the results of this study, but also the literature that was completed surrounding this topic, there were similarities found between both areas of research. Results obtained from this study also confirm findings of Kommer (2006) that relays how crucial it is for educators to understand the differences between genders as well as to provide equality throughout the classroom. The findings from the research study align with this article because the students were able to decipher the definition of a gender stereotypes and the importance it plays in the classroom through the educational texts that they are exposed to. Results obtained from this study also confirm findings of Brendler (2014) as she states, “While those studies were enlightening and contributed much to the field of literacy, there have been societal changes over the last few decades that have affected gender beliefs” (Brendler, 2014). The students that were involved in this research study were able to successfully identify the difference between modern and traditional gender stereotypes. They recognized that there were more modern educational texts, which is supported by the article by Brendler (2014).

While there is a lot of literature that supports the overall research topic, there is some literature that could be expanded based on the results that were found during my research. For example Crisp & Hiller (2011) look to depict the gender stereotypes that are presented in children’s books. Although there are many traditional gender stereotypes presented in children’s books, more and more modern texts are starting to become resources in elementary classrooms. The students that participated in the research study determined that the books and resources located in their English Language Arts classroom contain predominantly modern gender stereotypes. Therefore, though this research is correct in stating that many elementary children’s picture books contain traditional gender stereotypes, from my research study I found that classrooms are including more modern gender stereotype texts for their students.

After conducting this study I can say that it has influenced my own practice. I predicted that reading various books and educational articles alters a student's perception on gender stereotypes. After analyzing my data, I found that my hypothesis was correct. There were many areas surrounding this topic that I learned that are going to benefit me as a future educator. For instance, from the beginning of the study the students were unaware of the concrete definition of a gender stereotype. After teaching the students what a gender stereotype was, they were able to identify if they have seen any in the stories they have read. Educating students on gender stereotypes is important for teachers to do because these stereotypes surround them from an early age. By educating them, they will be able to differentiate the type of stereotype and the importance of gender equity in the classroom.

### **Limitations of the Study**

As a new teacher, I witness the constant busy schedules both teachers and students have on a daily basis. Often times, the plans made by the teachers are pushed back or revamped in order to meet the needs of all of the students in the classroom. Therefore, teachers need to be flexible in order for students to excel in the classroom. Not only are limitations present in the classroom, they were also shown in the research study. For example, due to extracurricular activities, or an overwhelmingly full home base room with one teacher, sometimes my students and I were unable to meet as we had planned. When students could not make particular meetings, it often hindered the data collected because it was inconsistent. Also, being that we met during home base period, it was often too loud for my students to concentrate on the readings they were given. This may have affected their comprehension of the article, which may have hindered their perception of gender stereotypes. One more limitation was time. The students started The Hunger Games, but due to the lack of time, they were unable to finish the

novel. As a future educator, I believe that it is important for educators to realize that even though there are limitations throughout each school day, they are still providing meaningful and valid instruction to their students. Teachers should be ready for the changes that are thrown their way and be prepared when a lesson does not go the way they envisioned, because that is the reality of teaching.

### **Future Research**

As a result of this study and some of the limitations presented, there is future research that needs to be explored. Since this study only had three participants, future studies could involve a larger sample group. This would be more comparable to a standard classroom with many students. The future study could incorporate more texts and educational resources. Also, the students could have time to finish The Hunger Games during this study, which would allow them to comprehend and further analyze the type of gender stereotypes represented in the novel. Another future study that could be implemented to this study could be longer introduction to what gender stereotypes are. Since there was limited time, the students may have benefited from more of an introduction at the beginning of the study.

I also took away from this research study that growth does not happen in a course of six weeks. This study could have had more results and an impact if it lasted long than six weeks. Since students often had a hard time remembering the exact definition of a gender stereotype and what the word portray meant, it was difficult to gather data in such a short amount of time. Often times I had to reteach those terms in order for the students to fully comprehend the readings and questionnaire they had to complete. By then end of the study, the students were finally starting to understand the differences between traditional and modern stereotypes and realizing that readings can affect a student's perception on gender roles. With more time, I would have had

more in depth results for this research study. Although more research may have been beneficial, it is important to see that changes were able to happen, even if they were minor.

### **Implications for Practice**

Looking at this study as a whole there are some implications for practice that can be taken away. Gender equity is essential in to the classroom. Educators need to provide students with gender-neutral texts and start to move away from the texts that only contain traditional gender stereotypes. Also, educators should incorporate the gradual release of responsibility with students. Differentiating instruction should also be used in the classroom. This includes differentiating the type of stories and resources used in the classroom. Despite the differences in gender, it is essential for students to learn an atmosphere with gender equity. Therefore, it is important to relate the research back to the participants' own classroom.

At the end of the research I focused on what the participants discussed with the articles and books, and refocused them back on their own classroom. Talking together we discussed the books that we have read so far in English Language Arts. Listed were the books The Lightning Thief and Bud, not Buddy One by one we went over whether they viewed the novel as modern or traditional. Looking at The Lightning Thief they labeled this as modern. Their reasoning was that there were girls fighting along with the boys in this adventurous story about Poseidon's son. The next book, Bud, not Buddy they labeled as traditional. When asked why, they mentioned that the story was mostly about a boy searching for his father and due to the time period there were not many neutral stereotypes displayed in the book. When asked what they noticed about the roles in the texts we read in class they noted that most were modern because girls can do anything that boys can do. They were able to use readings to change their perception of gender roles based on the text they read.

Reading is not only done in English Language Arts, reading is spread across the school in many different classrooms. Therefore, it is essential for students to be able to understand that there are various stereotypes spread amongst educational articles, books, and textbooks found in the classroom. These readings alter a student's perception about gender roles. During our discussion, the students commented on textbooks and the other reading materials they have encountered throughout their educational career. Though they had not thought about the gender roles and stereotypes while reading them, they were able to look back and comprehend that reading does change a student's perception on gender stereotypes.

### **Final Thoughts**

The findings of this study highlight importance of recognizing gender stereotypes in the readings in and out of school. This study demonstrated how essential it is for students to understand gender stereotypes and how they are incorporated in many educational texts. The overall importance of this study is for educators to recognize that their texts may influence and affect a student's perception on gender roles. Educators need to make sure that there are a variety of texts available for students to read making sure to create a gender equity classroom. The findings of this research can help teachers see the importance of the type of gender stereotype portrayed in readings and how it may or may not affect their current and future students.

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Appendix A: Interview

1. What are some traditional stereotypes about girls?

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2. What are some traditional stereotypes about boys?

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3. Have any stereotypes you've heard changed over time?

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4. What do you think are the responsibilities of the mother or woman in the household?

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5. What do you think are the responsibilities of the father or man in the household?

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6. What type of clothing do women wear? What about men?

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7. What sort of job do females usually have?

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8. What about men?

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9. How do books portray women and men?

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10. Do you think reading can change your perception/thinking of gender roles?

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\*Depending on student responses, new questions may form in addition to these questions.

## Appendix B: Comprehension Check

**Select the option that BEST provides an accurate summary of the article.**

A Owing to the growing popularity of women's basketball, Saudi Arabian women are now confident of playing in other Arab countries.

B Even though women's basketball has become quite popular, it still faces criticism from conservative voices in Saudi Arabia.

C The opportunity to engage in a team activity has pushed the popularity of basketball among Saudi Arabian women.

D Despite strict rules for women, Saudi Arabian women are taking up basketball to fight for their rights.

**Which of the following sentences from the article is LEAST important to include in a summary of the article?**

A In 2006, Jiddah United became the first sports club in Saudi Arabia to include women.

B Women's teams are not part of the kingdom's federation that oversees sports.

C Almaeena's team generated some negative publicity in 2009 after they played a tournament in Jordan.

D Hadeer Sadagah, 20, started playing eight years ago with Almaeena at Jiddah United.

**The article introduces Jiddah's role in promoting women's basketball in Saudi Arabia by:**

A providing a detailed description of Jiddah United

B sharing personal anecdotes of female basketball players

C stating facts about Jiddah's society and its liberal thinking

D drawing connections between clothing in Jiddah and the rest of Saudi Arabia

**The article draws connections between all of the following EXCEPT:**

A women's basketball and privately held competitions

B liberal thinking and the capital city of Saudi Arabia

C women's basketball and traditional clothes

D affluent women and playing sports

Appendix C: Questionnaire

1. How were women portrayed in this reading?

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2. How were men portrayed in this reading?

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3. What was the article about?

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4. Did this reading change your perspective on the role of women or men?

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Why or why not?

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5. Does this article have gender stereotypes, no stereotypes or give a neutral view challenge gender roles? Give examples.

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\*\*The comprehension check will be through quizzes or conversations based on the article or book they are reading