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## Look Who's Talking Now: Representation of Female Characters in Children's Chapter Books

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Look Who's Talking Now:  
Representation of Female Characters in Children's Chapter Books

Senior Project submitted to  
The Division of Science, Mathematics, and Computing  
of Bard College

by  
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## **Abstract**

Literature is an aspect of a child's environment that can influence a child's gender development. Throughout the twentieth century, female characters have been underrepresented in comparison to male characters in award-winning children's picture books. Based on past research, the aim of the current study was to investigate the representation of female characters in contemporary and popular children's chapter books. A content analysis was conducted for 22 New York Times Middle Grade bestsellers, including 9 female protagonist books and 13 male protagonist books. Character counts and dialogue counts were coded for each book. Male characters outnumbered female characters with a ratio of 1.4:1. Male characters spoke more than female characters with a ratio of 1.7:1. Female characters were represented significantly less than 50% of the time and spoke significantly less than 50% of the time. Also, female characters spoke significantly less than was expected when accounting for their lower character counts. Female characters and male characters were represented more equally in character counts and dialogue counts in female protagonist books than male protagonist books. The current study confirms the conclusions of past research that female characters are underrepresented, as well as demonstrating that female characters are also underrepresented in dialogue. These findings indicate a continuing problem of gender inequality in children's literature.

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## Literature Review: Gender Development

*“Children are surrounded with environmental input about gender from family, peers, and the media.” (Fagot & Leinbach, 1989, p.663)*

Gender is a prominent aspect of a child’s life starting from birth and through the rest of life. “Is it a boy or a girl?” is typically the first question an expecting parent receives. Children are outfitted in particular clothing and given particular toys that help designate their gender. Young boys are expected to behave a certain way and young girls are expected to behave another certain way. Children often receive this information through interactions with their environment, even by just reading a book. Throughout development, children grow to understand sex and gender, their own gender identity, how women and men should act, and how gender influences their own lives. Past as well as current research and theories help to describe children’s gender development.

### Background on Gender Development

There is a distinction between sex and gender, one is biologically derived and one is culturally derived. When a newborn infant is brought into the world, the infant’s *sex* is determined by the biological anatomy. The infant is either female or male dependent on genitalia, sex chromosomes, and sex hormones. If the infant has a penis, their sex is male and if the infant has a vagina, their sex is female. Social, cultural, and psychological aspects determine a child’s gender. Typically, *gender* refers to socialized traits and behaviors. Certain traits are associated with femininity or masculinity, and are thus associated with females and males (Pryzgoda, 2000). Several articles referenced throughout this paper were published in the mid-to-late twentieth century and used the term “sex” where more contemporary articles would use the term “gender”. The term gender will be used throughout the duration of this paper.

Children's gender development begins at a young age. The first step in gender development is *gender identification, labeling or discrimination*, in which children can accurately identify whether a person is a girl or a boy, a woman or a man (Etaugh, Grinnel, & Etaugh, 1989; Leinbach & Fagot, 1986; Fagot, Leinbach, & Hagan, 1986; Thompson, 1975). In an early study, at 24 months old, children could correctly label and discriminate between the gender of female and male images. At 36 months old, children could accurately answer questions about their own gender, such as "are you a boy or a girl?" or "are you going to be a mommy or a daddy?" Therefore, children could accurately identify the gender of others and identify their own gender by the age of 36 months (Thompson, 1975). Other research confirms that children can label and discriminate between genders as young as 24 months old (Leinbach & Fagot, 1986). Accuracy on gender identification improves with age. The older a child is, the more accurate they are at labeling and discriminating between genders (Etaugh et al., 1989; Fagot et al., 1986; Thompson, 1975).

Development of gender identification is often correlated with the development of *gender typing* or *gender-typical behavior*, in which children have a preference for activities and items that are associated with their own gender (Brown, 1956; Etaugh & Liss, 1992; Fagot et al., 1986; Martin & Little, 1990; Patterson, 2012; Thompson, 1975). In an early study, children at three years old demonstrated a preference for gender-typical objects. Boys were more likely to select images associated with boys, while girls were more likely to select images associated with girls, demonstrating a preference for their own gender (Thompson, 1975). Similarly, in a more recent study, children who passed a gender discrimination task were more likely to play with peers of the same gender than children who did not pass a gender discrimination task. After participation in a gender discrimination task, children's play sessions were coded for the gender of their



playmates. Of the children who passed the gender discrimination task, boys were more likely to play with boy peers, while girls were more likely to play with girl peers. Girls who passed the gender discrimination task demonstrated little to no aggression in the play session in comparison to girls who did not pass the discrimination task. Since aggression is considered a stereotypical male characteristic, this indicates that girls' play behavior aligned with their own gender. Therefore, children demonstrated gender typing in both their choice of playmates and play behavior (Fagot et al., 1986).

Gender typing is particularly salient in children's selection of different toys. In an early study, boys aged five to six years old were more likely to choose stereotypical boy toys, such as a tractor, a toy gun, and a train engine. Girls aged five to six years old, were more likely to choose stereotypical girl toys, such as a doll, dishes, and a high chair (Brown, 1956). Recent research replicates these findings, even suggesting that children have preference for toys with a stereotypical color. Boys were more likely to choose blue toys, while girls were more likely to choose pink toys (Weisgram, Fulcher, & Dinella, 2014; Wong & Hines, 2015). Furthermore, Etaugh & Liss (1992) found that children were more likely to want toys that were gender-typical from their parents as presents. Boys were more likely to request boy toys than girls, while girls were more likely to request girl toys than boys. Participants who received gender-typical toys were more likely to engage in gender-typical play activities and play with more same-gender peers than participants who did not receive gender-typical toys. However, girls preferred stereotypical masculine toys more than boys preferred stereotypical feminine toys. That is, boys were stricter in their preferences for gender-typical toys than girls. These findings suggest that boys are more rigid in gender typing than girls (Brown, 1956; Etaugh & Liss, 1992; Turner & Hinde, 1993; Wong & Hines, 2015).

The acquisition of gender identification is also correlated with the knowledge of gender stereotypes (Fagot, Leinbach, & O'Boyle, 1992; Martin & Little, 1990). *Gender stereotypes* are beliefs about women and men based on their specific gender, such as personality traits or physical characteristics (Blakemore et al., 2009). Fagot et al. (1992) found that children who passed a gender-labeling task were more likely to have high scores on a gender-stereotyping task. For the gender-stereotyping tasks, participants were shown stereotypical images and had to categorize them as either feminine or masculine. For example, a stereotypical masculine image could be a hammer or angry face, while a stereotypical feminine image could be a broom or heart. By the age of three, children were aware of gender stereotypes and could accurately associate stereotypical images with women and men (Fagot et al., 1992). Knowledge about stereotypes and stereotypical thinking arises around the age of 3 or 4 years of age and remains present throughout childhood (Banse, Gawronski, Rebetez, Gutt, & Morton, 2009; Bigler & Liben, 2007; Fagot et al., 1992).

Gender stereotypes usually consist of beliefs about men and women's specific *gender roles*, in which certain traits or characteristics are deemed socially appropriate and acceptable for certain genders. Traditional gender stereotypes characterize women as submissive, nurturing, and motherly and men as powerful, strong, and aggressive (Best, 2001). Another traditional gender stereotype characterizes women as the homemaker and men as the breadwinner (Eagly & Steffen, 1984). The man's role is to enter the workforce to acquire an income, while the woman's role is to stay at home and take care of the children and house. When women do enter the workforce, it is considered subordinate to the work of men. In one study, adult participants read descriptions about women and men who were employed full-time, were homemakers, or were given no description. After reading the descriptions, participants evaluated the women and

men in the descriptions on inferred likelihood of employment (when no description was given) and inferred job status. Participants inferred that men were more likely to be employed full-time in comparison to women, while women were more likely to be homemakers than men.

Participants also inferred that men were more likely to maintain high-status jobs with higher salaries in comparison to women, while women were more likely to maintain low-status jobs with lower salaries in comparison to men (Eagly & Steffen, 1984). Recent research suggests that these stereotypes have become more flexible, but that they are still present in participants' view of women and men (Bridges, Etaugh, Barness-Farrell, 2002; Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004).

Children, like adults, are aware of stereotypical gender roles, particularly within occupations. (Liben, Bigler, & Krogh, 2002; Liben, Bigler, & Krogh, 2001). In one study, children six to twelve years old demonstrated stereotypical beliefs about occupation status. Both girls and boys gave higher status ratings to familiar stereotypical masculine jobs, such as doctor or business executive, than stereotypical feminine jobs, such as nurse or teacher. This was found for novel occupations, as well. Children were shown non-familiar jobs, such as a ginner or clipster. Children gave higher status ratings to the novel jobs when performed by a man than when performed by a woman. Gender differences were found in the participants' responses. Gaps between status ratings were larger for boys than girls. That is, both boys and girls gave higher status ratings to familiar masculine jobs than familiar feminine jobs. However, the difference for boys' responses was larger than girls' responses. This was found for job interest, as well. Boys showed greater interest in masculine jobs, while girls showed greater interest in feminine jobs. Both boys and girls had interest in masculine jobs, but boys had little interest in

feminine jobs (Liben et al., 2001). Similarly to the findings on gender typing, boys also appear to be more rigid in stereotypical thinking towards occupations than girls.

Although gender development begins in the preschool years, the process does not end there. In middle childhood, between the ages of 8 to 12 years old, children continue to learn about gender. In regards to gender typing, research suggests that boys spend more time in gender-typical activities and with same-gender peers, while girls are more flexible in their activities and peer groups (McHale, Kim, Whiteman, & Crouter, 2004). In regards to gender stereotypes, some research suggests that as a child grows, they are more likely to believe that a boy can play with girl toys or that women can hold stereotypically male jobs, like a doctor (Carter & Patterson, 1982). Banse et al. (2009) found that children increase in stereotypical flexibility as they grow older, particularly from 5 years of age to 11 years of age. Other research suggests that as a child grows, they understand that women and men *can* hold occupations characteristic of the other gender, but that they feel women and men *should not* hold those occupations. That is, although children may become more flexible in their beliefs of what women or men are capable of, they become more rigid in their beliefs of what women and men should actually do (Liben et al., 2001).

During the developmental stage of middle childhood, children are attending school, making friendships, and engaging in peer groups. School is an important aspect of a child's environment that can influence gender development, in part due to the large amount of time children spend there. Girls and boys are frequently encouraged to pursue different and stereotypical extra-curricular activities, such as drama for girls and sports for boys (Blakemore et al., 2009). Within the classroom, teachers treat girls and boys differently. For instance, one study found that girls received less attention from teachers than boys. Also, boys were encouraged to

speak out without raising their hands, while girls were encouraged to keep quiet and follow the rules (Sadker, Sadker, Fox, & Salata, 1994). These actions reproduce gender stereotypes surrounding behavior, such that boys are talkative and rambunctious, while girls are quiet and dainty. During this time period, stereotypes also emerge surrounding school subjects, such as the stereotype that boys excel at math and science and girls excel at reading and writing (Cvencek, Meltzoff, & Greenwald, 2011). During middle childhood, large differences emerge between expectations for girls and boys' actions and behaviors. Children continue to incorporate gender typing and gender stereotypes into their lives. Therefore, children's gender development is not static during middle childhood.

In sum, children's gender development begins with the basic understanding of gender identification and proceeds into gender typing, and the knowledge of gender roles and gender stereotypes. Beginning at a young age, children can label and discriminate between genders and begin to display a preference for gender-typical toys, peers, and behaviors. Children also demonstrate knowledge of gender roles and gender stereotypes, such that men and women have certain traits and characteristics based on their gender. In middle childhood, children's gender development continues. Nuances in children's gender development emerge, particularly between girls and boys. For instance, research suggests that boys' gender development is more rigid than girls' gender development. How and why children's development of gender unfolds in this way can be explained by past as well as current gender theories.

### **Gender Development Theory**

**Social Theoretic Approach.** Psychology gender theories have generally taken two approaches. First, there is the *social theoretic approach*. This approach includes psychoanalytic theory and social learning theory. These theories both focus on the socialization of the child's

gender through their environment. Girls and boys learn how to be girls and boys throughout their childhood (Fagot, 1995). *Psychoanalytic theory*, developed by Sigmund Freud, emphasizes the child's relationship with their mother and father. Development begins similarly for young girls and young boys. Children enter the oral and anal stage and both girls and boys closely identify with their mother because she is the prominent caretaker. During the phallic stage, development begins to diverge. Boys develop erotic feelings and focus their attraction on their mother, known as the Oedipus complex, leading to a fear of their father and fear of castration. To resolve this, boys identify with the aggressors, the father, because he represents what the boy would like to become. During this stage, girls recognize that they do not have a penis, resulting in resentment towards the mother, known as penis envy. To resolve this, girls develop a want to become a mother, and again come to identify with their own mother. Children thus eventually identify with their same-sex parent and enter the latent stage. It is important to note that Freud stated that these stages occur on the unconscious level (Freud, 1927, 1964). Critiques of the psychoanalytic theory argue that there is little empirical research to support the theory. Freud's theory was mostly based on anecdotes and interviews (Bem, 1983). When psychoanalytic theory was initially developed, however, it was groundbreaking. Before Freud, very few psychologists had focused specifically on the development of gender within childhood.

*Social learning theory* emphasizes the child's knowledge of gender-appropriate behaviors through reinforcements and punishments. Similarly to psychoanalytic theory, the environment plays a large role in the child's gender development in social learning theory. Children learn how to behave in accordance with their gender by being rewarded or punished. Parents, teachers, and others reinforce the child's gender through clothing, toys, and speech. For example, a mother may encourage her daughter to play with a doll, which would teach the child to associate with

femininity and other girls. Children then observe adults and imitate the appropriate behaviors for each gender (Bem, 1983; Blakemore et al., 2009). Social learning theory applies psychology theories, such as reinforcement and punishment, to the concept of gender. Critiques, however, of the social learning theory argue that the child is perceived as a passive object. The theory states that a child has no agency and is only molded by their surrounding environment (Bem, 1983).

**Cognitive Theoretic Approach.** Second, there is the *cognitive theoretic approach*. This approach includes cognitive developmental theories and constructivist theories. These theories focus on the child's agency within the construction of their understanding of gender. The *cognitive developmental theory*, developed by Lawrence Kohlberg, emphasizes the child's cognition, which is separated into three stages. First, there is gender identity, in which the child can label whether they are a girl or a boy. Second, there is gender stability, in which the child understands that gender is stable over time. Once a child can identify as a girl or a boy, they understand that they will eventually become a woman or a man. Lastly, there is gender constancy, or gender consistency, in which the child understands that their gender is constant, despite superficial or physical changes. For instance, even if a girl has short hair, a stereotypical male trait, she is still a girl (Bem, 1983; Blakemore et al., 2009; Fagot, 1986; Kohlberg, 1966; Martin, Ruble, & Szkrybalo, 2002). Critiques of the cognitive developmental theory argue that Kohlberg's theory ignores the influences of the environment. The theory states that children have innate stages of development that must be sequentially achieved without any regard to outside effects (Bem, 1983). Cognitive developmental theory, however, helped initiate cognitive theories on gender development that focused on the child's thoughts.

**Gender Schema Theory.** One of the most prominent psychology gender theories to be developed is *gender schema theory (GST)*, which is considered a constructivist theory within the

larger category of cognitive theoretic approaches. Introduced by Bem (1981, 1983) and Martin & Halverson (1981), the theory emphasizes the child's creation of their gender schema in their process of becoming gendered. According to Signorella (1987), *gender schemas* consist of the child's knowledge or beliefs toward gender, including a child's own gender traits. The schema can be thought of as a model or set of theories that helps the child process information, interpret experiences, regulate behavior, and make inferences about gender (Bem, 1983; Martin & Halverson, 1981). GST incorporates aspects of both social theoretic approaches and cognitive theoretic approaches (Bem, 1983). Similarly to cognitive theoretic approaches, GST emphasizes the role of the child's agency and the child's cognitions. Similarly to social theoretic approaches, GST incorporates the environment into the child's gender development. GST also emphasizes mediating cognitive processes, such as schema-directed memory, in the child's gender development (Martin et al., 2002).

The first step in the development of a gender schema is gender identification. Children must be able to accurately label and discriminate between the genders. As discussed earlier, children learn through socialization the differences between girls and boys and women and men. During this stage, children begin to understand what is appropriate for each gender from their environment, including parents, media, and school. The environment's focus on gender demonstrates to children that gender is an important and distinct trait (Fagot & Leinbach, 1989; Liben & Bigler, 2015; Martin et al., 2002).

Once children accomplish gender identification, they place themselves within a gender category. Categorizations allow for ease of information processing and assist in the child's construction of their self-identity. In regards to gender, children create a female category and a male category (Martin & Halverson, 1981). A child's gender category is considered their in-



group, while the other gender category is considered the out-group. Members within a child's in-group model appropriate behaviors for the child. As children grow older, their knowledge of appropriate behavior and actions for their gender category increases (Martin & Halverson, 1981). For example, a young girl would place herself in the female category, her in-group, while the male category would be the out-group. The young girl would continue to learn from the women within her in-group on how to behave and act in accordance with the gender categorization (Busey & Bandura, 1999; Martin et al., 2002).

A gender schema guides children's perceptions and helps them to interpret and organize information in regards to gender. Children find and incorporate novel information into their established gender schema (Bem, 1983; Martin et al., 2002). According to Bem (1983) schematic cognitive processing can be selective, only interpreting novel information that is in gender schematic-terms. This can lead to the reproduction of gender typing and gender-typical information. For example, once a young girl learned what is associated with femininity and masculinity, she would assimilate novel information into schematic-relevant terms, even if it were not specifically associated with gender. For example, aprons would be placed within the female category because they were associated with other feminine traits, such as cooking. Hammers would be placed within the male category because they were associated with other masculine traits, such as working. Therefore, the girl is reproducing gender stereotypes by viewing novel information in gender schematic-terms. Also, the more salient gender is for a child, the more likely they are to categorize new information by gender (Bigler & Liben, 1990; Signorella, 1987).

The emphasis on the reproduction of gender-typical information can influence children's memory, as well. For example, a young girl would interact with an object presented to her based

on her gender schema. If the girl were presented with a doll, she would have to decide if it was an appropriate toy to play with based on her knowledge of her gender category. If the girl were gender schematic, the girl would understand that the doll is associated with girls and would decide that it was an appropriate toy to play with. If the girl were presented with a truck, however, she would understand that the truck is associated with boys and would decide it was not an appropriate toy to play with. The girl would approach and remember the gender appropriate object and avoid and forget the non-gender appropriate object, creating a schema-directed memory. The information in the gender schema influences the memories the child creates. If the girl were *gender aschematic*, the girl would make the decision to play with the doll or truck based on her own preference (Martin & Halverson, 1981). Therefore, the girl's gender-typical behavior is perpetuated through her interactions with the environment and use of her gender schema (Blakemore et al., 2009).

As demonstrated, GST portrays a child that is surrounded by gender typing and gender stereotypes. Particularly for girls, increased gender typing and gender stereotypes can have negative effects, such as low self-esteem and high anxiety (Liben & Bigler, 1987). However, it is possible to raise gender aschematic children (Bem, 1983). According to Bem (1983), certain behaviors, actions, and objects are appropriate for women, and certain behaviors, actions, and objects are appropriate for men. Society has placed a large focus on the dichotomy of gender. Gender has been traditionally viewed as a binary, where an individual must either be female or male. Children learn that any novel information or experience must be placed within this binary (Liben & Bigler, 2015). Bem (1983) argues that children would be less likely to demonstrate gender typing or gender stereotypes if parents raised their child aschematically. For example, parents could counteract gender stereotypes and perform a variety of roles in the house, not just

the gender stereotypical roles. Men could cook and clean, while women could mow the lawn (Liben & Bigler, 2015). In fact, research suggests that aschematic interventions can lead to a reduction in children's gender typing or gender stereotypes. Bigler & Liben (1990) found that children who underwent an intervention on occupations held lower stereotypical beliefs about occupations. Participants' stereotypical beliefs on occupations were assessed before and after the intervention. The intervention consisted of a weekly 20-minute lesson on different occupations that taught children a strategy to decide who can perform which occupations separate from gender. This strategy successfully reduced the children's gender stereotypical beliefs about occupations (Bigler & Liben, 1990).

In sum, past as well as current theories on children's gender development reveals how children learn about gender. GST presents one of the most prominent theories, in part due to its integration of both social theoretic approaches and cognitive theoretic approaches. Although GST is not as influential as it was when first developed, the theory's concepts are still relevant to the understanding of a child's gender development. The theory states that children use cognitive resources to create schemas that then allow them to interpret and process new information and experiences in gender-schematic terms. Also, children regulate their behavior to align with their schema. Gender schemas and a strong focus on gender differences often lead to gender typing and gender stereotypes. Strict beliefs about the appropriate behavior and actions for different genders perpetuate gender inequality. Instead, children should learn that gender does not have to limit their behaviors or actions. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge ways that gender inequality and gender stereotypes can be avoided.

## Literature and Gender Development

As an aspect of a child's environment, literature can affect children's knowledge and beliefs about gender (Ashton, 1983; Flerx, Fidler, & Rogers, 1976; Paterson & Lach, 1990; Segel, 1986; Trepanier-Street & Romatowski, 1999). Children's literature is highly influential in children's socialization. Books help a child to understand the world beyond their immediate surroundings (Paterson & Lach, 1990; Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada, & Ross, 1972). Books also offer examples of what is deemed culturally appropriate and valuable and children learn what is expected of them as they mature. Literature, therefore, can be important in gender development (Weitzman et al, 1972).

Children's literature can influence children's gender-typical behavior (Ashton, 1983). One study found that after the presentation of a gender stereotypical picture book, children were more likely to exhibit gender typing with toys. Preschool children were either read a picture book with a child of the same gender playing with a stereotypical toy or a non-stereotypical toy. Before and after the picture books session, participants were given the opportunity to play with two male-stereotypical toys, two female-stereotypical toys, or two neutral toys. Both girls and boys exposed to the non-stereotypical story engaged with non-stereotypical toys more than same-gender participants exposed to the stereotypical story. The picture book manipulation had a greater effect on girls than boys. That is, girls were more likely to alter which toy they engaged with than boys after the picture book session (Ashton, 1983). Again, this finding suggests that boys are more rigid in their ideas of gender than girls.

Presentation of a non-stereotypical story can also influence children's stereotypical thinking and responses (Flerx et al., 1976; Trepanier-Street & Romatowski, 1999). When exposed to gender non-stereotypical picture books for an extended period of time, preschool

children had less stereotypical beliefs on work activities and play activities. Before and after the picture book session, participants were tested on their stereotypical beliefs using a doll technique. Participants were given female and male dolls and had to indicate which doll was the answer to a variety of questions (i.e. “who will grow up to be a daddy?”) (Flerx et al., 1976). A similar result was found for children’s beliefs about occupations (Trepanier-Street & Romatowski, 1999). Preschool children were exposed to gender non-stereotypical books over a two-month period. Children also participated in gender non-stereotypical activities related to the books they were reading. Before and after the intervention, participants were given a gender role inventory. After exposure to gender non-stereotypical books and activities, children were more likely to respond that both men and women could perform a variety of occupations in comparison to before the intervention (Trepanier-Street & Romatowski, 1999).

If children’s literature is representing female characters and male characters in stereotypical ways, this can be detrimental for the children reading these books. Exposure to gender stereotypical picture books can lead to increased gender stereotypical behavior and thinking. Girls can develop low self-esteem, high anxiety, and a warped sense of ability due to gender stereotypical depictions of female characters (Liben & Bigler, 1987; Paterson & Lach, 1990; Segal, 1986). The books that children read do have an impact on their development. Depicting female characters and male characters in stereotypical ways can promote gender schematic processing, reinforcing gender inequality and gender stereotypes. However, exposure to gender non-stereotypical picture books can lead to decreased gender stereotypical behaviors and thinking. Depicting female characters and male characters equally and in non-stereotypical ways can help promote gender aschematic processing, reinforcing gender equality. Children’s literature can therefore be a powerful influence on children’s gender development.

### **Literature Review: Children's Literature**

*“Children...are bound to receive the impression that girls are not as important because no one has bothered to write books about them.” (Weitzman et al., 1972, p.1129)*

Children are exposed to books beginning at a young age. Girls and boys are read picture books by their parents, begin to read chapter books in school, and eventually read for pleasure on their own. According to a study by Scholastic (2014), 91% of parents said their child was read a book aloud at home before 6 years of age. Also, 51% of children aged 6 to 17 years old were currently reading a book for fun, while 20% just finished a book at the time of the study.

Children aged 6 to 11 years old who considered themselves frequent readers (reading for fun 5 to 7 times a week) read an average of 43.4 books a year (Scholastic, 2014). Literature, therefore, surrounds children throughout their childhood. Since literature is so prolific, it is necessary to investigate the content of children's books. What ideas are children exposed to in children's books? Specifically, what ideas about gender are children being exposed to in children's books?

#### **Content Analysis of Children's Literature**

Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, researchers began investigating the representation of female characters in children's literature. Studies focused on the presence of female characters in comparison to male characters. These studies concluded that children's picture books during the twentieth century underrepresented female characters in comparison to male characters. In children's picture books, there were more male characters represented than female characters (Collins, Ingoldsby, & Dellman, 1984; Davis, 1984; Dougherty & Engel, 1987; Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus, & Young, 2006; Heintz, 1987; McDonald, 1989; Nilsen, 1971; Tepper & Cassidy, 1999; Turner-Bowker, 1996; Weitzman et al., 1972). With both young girls and young boys reading children's books, the underrepresentation of female characters is an important issue. Male characters outnumbering female characters within children's books

reinforce gender inequality. This concern led to an explosion of research on the topic in the mid-to-late twentieth century. Most research used a quantitative coding system to investigate the representation of female characters in children's literature.

A groundbreaking study by Weitzman et al. (1972) helped to introduce the representation of female characters in children's literature to the field of empirical research. Eighteen Caldecott Medal winners and honor books published from 1967 to 1971 were coded for character counts and illustration counts. The Caldecott Medal is one of the most prestigious medals awarded to a children's picture book every year. The authors counted the number of female characters and male characters depicted within the books' title, text, and illustrations. Overall, it was concluded that female characters were almost entirely absent from children's picture books during this time period. Female characters were highly underrepresented within the books' titles, characters, text, and illustrations in comparison to male characters. The ratio of male characters in illustrations to female characters in illustrations was a staggering 11:1. The ratio of males in titles to females in titles was 8:1. The ratio of male central characters to female central characters was 3.5:1 (Weitzman et al., 1972). The content analysis conducted by Weitzman et al. (1972) set the standard for future research, particularly with the use of quantitative coding systems.

In the later half of the twentieth century, female characters were still underrepresented in children's literature, but the disparity between female characters and male characters was not as drastic in comparison to earlier findings (Collins et al., 1984; Creany, 1995; Dougherty & Engel, 1987; Gooden & Gooden, 2001; Heintz, 1987; Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993; McCabe, Fairchild, Grauerholz, Pescosolido, & Tope, 2011; Oskamp, Kaufman, & Wolterbeek, 1996). Collins et al. (1984) found that female characters had increased in relation to male characters in Caldecott Medal winners and honor books. By replicating the coding system introduced by

Weitzman et al. (1972), the authors focused on 17 different categories for female character counts and male character counts, such as female in title, male in title, females in illustrations, and males in illustrations. Sixteen Caldecott Medal winners and honor books from 1979 to 1982 were coded. For example, the ratio of males in titles to females in titles had decreased from 8:1 to 2:1 and the ratio of male central characters to female central characters had decreased from 3.5:1 to 1.7:1. (Collins et al., 1984).

A study with a large sample of picture books throughout the entire twentieth century found that the representation of female characters in comparison to male characters had risen and fallen over time, but that overall female characters remained underrepresented (McCabe et al., 2011). Character counts were conducted for 5,618 Caldecott Medal winners, Little Golden Books, and books on the Children's Catalog published from 1900 to 2000. Little Golden Books are a popular and inexpensive book series that are sold in a variety of locations, making them highly accessible to consumers. The Children's Catalog is an extensive list of children's books published during the twentieth century. By investigating books published throughout the entire twentieth century and including books that may have been analyzed in previous studies, McCabe et al. (2011) produced a comprehensive and exhaustive content analysis of picture books. Female characters continued to be underrepresented in children's picture books throughout the twentieth century. Consistent with earlier studies, male characters outnumbered female characters in various categories. For example, the ratio of males in titles to females in titles was 1.9:1. The ratio of male central characters to female central characters was 1.6:1 (McCabe et al., 2011).

Some research has investigated other forms of representation as well. These studies still used quantitative coding systems, but examined forms of representation beyond character counts. By analyzing other forms of representation, these studies revealed more nuanced findings on



gender inequality and gender stereotypes in children's literature. Two studies found that male characters performed more activities, specifically more male stereotypical activities, than female characters (Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993; Heintz, 1987). Kortenhaus & Demarest (1993) coded Caldecott Medal winners and non-award winning books published from 1940 to 1980 for character counts and character activity. Activities were divided into two categories, a stereotypical male category, instrumental independent, and a stereotypical female category, passive dependent. Female characters were still underrepresented in comparison to male characters. Also, male characters outnumbered female characters in every activity category. Specifically, the ratio of male characters to female characters in the instrumental independent category was 3:1. That is, male characters performed more instrumental independent activities than female characters, such as playing ball, helping others, or solving a problem. Female characters performed more female stereotypical activities than male characters, such as helping with housework, watching others play, or needing help (Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993).

Similarly, Crabb & Marciano (2011) found that female characters and male characters were shown using stereotypical artifacts in children's picture books. Illustrations in 85 Caldecott Medal winners and honor books from 1990 to 2009 were coded for use of household artifacts or production artifacts. Household artifacts were objects used for cooking, cleaning, or other domestic activities. Production artifacts were objects used for manufacturing, construction, or other labor activities. Both female characters and male characters were depicted with stereotypical artifacts in children's books illustrations. Female characters were shown with household artifacts, such as bowls, forks, or sewing machines, more than male characters. Male characters were shown with production artifacts, such as cars, fishing nets, or tools, more than female characters. Interestingly, these results did not shift due to when the picture books were

published. That is, characters were shown using stereotypical artifacts whether the books were published in the 1990's or early 2000's (Crabb & Marciano, 2011).

One study found that although male characters still outnumbered female characters, female characters and male characters used equal amounts of emotional language (Tepper & Cassidy, 1999). The use of emotional language was coded in 178 picture books. The authors analyzed language within 11 emotional categories. The emotions included interest, enjoyment-joy, anger, fear-anxiety, and like-love. The authors hypothesized that female characters would use more stereotypical feminine emotional words, such as like-love or fear-anxiety words, and male characters would use more stereotypical masculine emotional words, such as interest or enjoyment-joy. Female characters were still underrepresented in comparison to male characters. When controlled for unequal representation, though, both male characters and female characters used emotional words equally. Male characters used like-love and fear-anxiety emotion words just as often as female characters. Likewise, female characters used interest and enjoyment-joy emotion words just as often as male characters. Regardless of the equal use of emotional language, the authors emphasized that male characters continued to outnumber female characters (Tepper & Cassidy, 1999).

Quantitative coding systems can reveal important information on the representation of female characters in children's literature. The gender disparity is made shockingly clear by simply counting female characters and male characters. Counting other forms of representation, such as stereotypical activities, artifacts, or emotional language, reveal other ways that female characters can be subject to gender inequality or gender stereotypes. Research indicates that male characters are represented more than female characters in children's book titles, characters, and illustrations. Although the representation of female characters has increased throughout the

twentieth century, content analyses revealed that they continue to be underrepresented in comparison to male characters.

### **Girl Books Versus Boy Books**

For over two centuries, children's literature has been gendered, which creates a division between books that are meant for girls and books that are meant for boys. Beginning in the eighteenth century, children's literature became a marketable commodity. Since then, publishers have specifically sold books based on gender. Traditionally, boy books feature a male protagonist and girl books feature a female protagonist, both with gender stereotypical topics and plots. Boy books have continued to feature pirates, dinosaurs, and science fiction, while girl books have continued to feature helpless princesses, household chores, and romance (Segal, 1986).

The distinction between gendered books does not necessarily stop children from reading books meant for the other gender. Typically, girls are more likely to read girl books and boys are more likely to read boy books. However, girls do read boy books as well as girl books. In the eyes of publishers, boy books sell more copies than girl books because more children, both girls and boys, are reading them (Segal, 1986). Furthermore, boys tend to read less than girls (Coles & Hall, 2002). Boy books, therefore, are a way to increase reading for boys. Research suggests that the more motivated boys are to read, the more likely they are to read boy books or neutral books (McGeown, 2015). Even in the classroom, teacher curriculum relies more on boy books since these will be read and enjoyed by all students, while also encouraging boys to read (Segal, 1986). This has helped lead to an over abundance of male protagonist books throughout the twentieth century, which was demonstrated by Weitzman et al. (1972) and others.

As discussed earlier, boys are more rigid in gender typing than girls (Brown, 1956; Etaugh & Liss, 1992; Turner & Hinde, 1993; Wong & Hines, 2015). This finding applies to book preference as well. For instance, one study found that girls and boys were more interested in stories that featured a protagonist of their own gender. That is, girls preferred stories with girls and boys preferred stories with boys. Although girls found boy protagonist stories less interesting than girl protagonist stories, this difference was less pronounced. Boys, however, had little interest in girl protagonist stories (Bleakley, Westerberg, & Hopkins, 1988). In addition to boys not having interest in stories with female protagonists, another study found that interest continued to decrease with age. Older boys were more likely to dislike girl stories than younger boys (Connor & Serbin, 1978). This finding could be due to two possible reasons. First, perhaps boys' interest in boy books becomes more pronounced with age. As boys grow older, they want to read more books with male protagonists. Second, perhaps boys' interest in boy books becomes more pronounced with age because there is a larger distinction between girl books and boy books for older children. That is, boys read books with male protagonists because these books are already more abundant for an older age group. As suggested by Bleakley et al. (1988), this may be due to the fact that boy books outnumber girl books in the children's book market. Not only are there more children's books with male protagonists, children will more often find interest in these books than children's books with female protagonists.

The distinction between girl books and boy books continues to be problematic. Since books are designated for different genders, these books can portray different representations of female characters and male characters. Children's books with male protagonists depict female characters in a passive and insignificant way (Segal, 1986). If these are the types of books that young boys *and* young girls are reading, both are receiving stereotypical representations of

female characters. As discussed, depicting female characters and male characters in certain ways can reinforce gender inequality and gender stereotypes for children. However, perhaps books with female protagonists depict female characters in a more equal way, but these books are just less prolific than male protagonist books.

## Rationale and Hypotheses

*“It’s also important to consider the kinds of worlds these [female characters] inhabit, who rules these worlds, who has the power – and even who gets to open their mouths.”*  
(Guo, 2016)

The literature on the representation of female characters in children’s literature is extensive, but not completely comprehensive. There are still opportunities for continued research. Past research suggests that female characters have been underrepresented in comparison to male characters in children’s literature. However, the research has focused on award-winning picture books within the twentieth century. Contemporary children’s books, popular children’s books, and children’s books for older children have almost completely been ignored. Also, past research has not explored dialogue as a form of representation. The aim of the current study is to advance the literature and investigate the representation of female characters in contemporary and popular children’s chapter books.

### Rationale

**Contemporary Children’s Books.** Most studies have focused on children’s books within the twentieth century, not extending into the twenty-first century. The ideas surrounding gender have shifted throughout the twentieth century and to the present day. Historically, women have been perceived as subordinate to men. During the twentieth century, gender inequality became a prominent issue. Feminism and women’s rights movements fought for female empowerment and equal representation in the labor force, politics, media, and other institutions. The shift of female representation in children’s literature may reflect the changes in the broader social context (Clark, Guilmain, Saucier, & Tavarz, 2003; DeWitt, Cready, & Seward, 2013; McCabe et al., 2011). In fact, research suggests that female character representation in children’s books was more equal to male character representation during the decades of feminist

movements (McCabe et al., 2011). The first wave feminist movement occurred in the 1910's to 1920's and the second wave feminist movement occurred in the late 1960's to the 1980's. Between the periods of first wave feminism and second wave feminism from the 1930's to 1960's, the disparity between female characters and male characters was most drastic in children's picture books. At the beginning and end of the century during feminist movements, however, the disparity between female characters and male characters was least drastic in children's books (Clark et al., 2003; McCabe et al., 2011). For example, the ratio of male central characters to female central characters was 1.2:1 in the 1910's. Then the ratio rose to 2.3:1 in the 1950's, and fell again to 1.4:1 in the 1980's (McCabe et al., 2011). Therefore, broader social contexts may have an influence on the representation of female characters in children's literature.

Within the twenty-first century, women have continued to fight for female empowerment and equal representation in all aspects of society. As women struggle to be perceived as equal to men, the representation of female characters might also be becoming more equal to male characters in children's literature. Research suggests that the disparity between female characters and male characters has improved in recent years (Creany, 1995; Gooden & Gooden, 2001; Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993; Oskamp et al., 1996). If broader social contexts surrounding gender have shifted since previous studies, an updated study could capture this change and add to the literature.

**Popular Children's Books.** Most studies have focused on award-winning picture books, specifically Caldecott Medal winners and honor books. Only two studies have focused on the representation of female characters in popular books (Hamilton et al., 2006; Tepper & Cassidy, 1999). Hamilton et al. (2006) investigated 200 popular children's picture books from 1995 to 2002. The book list incorporated picture books from bestseller lists, such as The New York

Times and Amazon (Hamilton et al., 2006). Although Caldecott Medal winners and honor books represent the best picture books of that year, they are a specific and narrow selection of books. Only one book is awarded the Caldecott Medal every year, with one or two honor books, disregarding a vast selection of books that were published as well. Also, award-winning books represent what adults think children should be reading. Popular books, however, represent what children are choosing to read on their own, so it is vital to focus on them.

**Chapter Books.** The vast majority of studies in this body of literature investigated picture books. Only two studies have focused on non-picture books (Hillman, 1974; Kinman & Henderson, 1985). Picture books, whether award-winning or popular books, are only meant for a specific demographic of young preschoolers. The literature is ignoring a large demographic of older children. Older children, specifically aged 8 to 12 years old, are beginning to read on their own and read for pleasure. They are choosing their own books to read and deciding what they find interesting. Furthermore, older children, not just preschoolers, are influenced by examples of gender inequality in their environment. Kinman & Henderson (1985) found that female characters were underrepresented in comparison to male characters in children's chapter books. The representation of female characters, therefore, is not just an issue in children's picture books, but is also an issue in children's chapter books.

**Female Protagonist Books Versus Male Protagonist Books.** Past research has never specifically compared female protagonist books (girl books) and male protagonist books (boy books). Research suggests that there is a distinction between girl books and boy books. As discussed earlier, girl books and boy books have different themes and plots. Also, girls and boys read boy books, while girls are more likely to read girl books than boys (Bleakley et al., 1988; Connor & Serbin, 1978; Segal, 1986). Although research has investigated the representation of



female characters and male characters, no studies have explored if there is a difference of these representations within girl books and boy books. Female characters may be represented differently in female protagonist books than in male protagonist books. Perhaps male protagonist books over represent male characters in comparison to female protagonist books. If girls, as well as boys, are reading male protagonist books, this could expose the readers to the gender inequality and gender stereotypes.

**Female Author Books Versus Male Author Books.** Past research has found varying results on the relationship between author gender and the representation of female characters in children's literature (Heintz, 1987; Hamilton et al., 2006; Kolbe & LaVoie, 1981). Most research suggests that there is no significant relationship between author gender and protagonist gender (Heintz, 1987; Kolbe & LaVoie, 1981). However, more recent research suggests that there is a relationship between author gender and protagonist gender. Hamilton et al. (2006) found that male authors were more likely to write books with male protagonists and male characters. Female authors were equally likely to write books with female characters and male characters. In addition, there were more male authors than female authors, helping to explain the underrepresentation of female characters (Hamilton et al., 2006). If there are more male authors and they are writing books with more male characters, children's books will thus have more male characters than female characters. Author gender, therefore, could be a possible explanation for the underrepresentation of female characters.

**Coding System.** Most studies have investigated the representation of female characters through character counts. By counting the number of female characters mentioned in titles, text, and illustrations, it was concluded that female characters were underrepresented in comparison to male characters (Collins et al., 1984; Davis, 1984; Dougherty & Engel, 1987; Hamilton et al.,

2006; Heintz, 1987; McDonald, 1989; Nilsen, 1971; Tepper & Cassidy, 1999; Turner-Bowker, 1996; Weitzman et al., 1972). Representation of female characters presents itself in a variety of ways, though. Even if there is an equal amount of female characters and male characters present within a book, the behaviors, actions, or language used may depict gender stereotypes. Dialogue could be an aspect where female characters are underrepresented in comparison to male characters. Although female characters may be present, they may never speak.

Preliminary research by Fought & Eisenhauer (cited by Guo, 2016) found that female characters spoke less than male characters in some of the most renowned Disney princess animated movies. Male characters spoke more than female characters in *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*, *Pocahontas*, and *Mulan*. Specifically, male characters spoke 68% of the time in *The Little Mermaid*, 76% of the time in *Pocahontas*, and 77% of the time in *Mulan*. Despite these three movies featuring strong female protagonists, male characters have more dialogue than female characters. The authors coded the movies by counting dialogue from female characters and male characters. The authors of this preliminary research suggest that male characters are the default character. When a small or secondary character is introduced, it is often male, leading to more male character dialogue (Guo, 2016). Although this data is from children's Disney movies, the concept can still be translated to children's literature. If female character dialogue is underrepresented in children's movies, it could also be underrepresented in children's literature. This indicates a large problem within all of children's media, in which female characters are represented, but they remain silent.

### **The Current Study**

Do female characters continue to be underrepresented in contemporary books? What about chapter books for older children? Are female characters underrepresented within character

dialogue? Is there a difference between female protagonist (FP) books and male protagonist (MP) books? What about female author (FA) books and male author (MA) books? The current study attempted to advance the literature to investigate the representation of female characters in contemporary and popular children's chapter books. A content analysis was conducted for 22 children's chapter books, gathered from the New York Times Middle Grade Bestseller list. There were 9 FP books and 13 MP books. A quantitative coding system was conducted that recorded character count and dialogue count for female characters and male characters.

### **Hypotheses**

Based on the literature on the underrepresentation of female characters in children's literature, five main hypotheses were tested.

**Hypotheses 1: Character Count.** Hypothesis 1 stated that there would be more male characters than female characters across all 22 books. Research clearly indicates that female characters are underrepresented in comparison to male characters in children's picture books. It was hypothesized that this would also be found in contemporary and popular children's chapter books.

#### **Hypothesis 2: Dialogue Count.**

*Hypothesis 2.1: Dialogue Count With Protagonist.* Hypothesis 2.1 stated that there would be more male character dialogue than female character dialogue across all 22 books. Since research indicates the underrepresentation of female characters in comparison to male characters, it was hypothesized that female characters would also speak less than male characters.

*Hypothesis 2.2: Dialogue Count Without the Protagonist.* Hypothesis 2.2 stated that by excluding the protagonist, there would still be more male character dialogue than female character dialogue across all 22 books. If male characters spoke more than female characters, it

was hypothesized that this would also be found without the protagonist. Also, research indicates that male characters are viewed as the default character. Even if a book features a female protagonist, it was hypothesized that most of the secondary characters would be male characters. Therefore, secondary male characters would speak more than secondary female characters.

**Hypothesis 3: Protagonist Dialogue.** Hypothesis 3 stated that male protagonists would have more dialogue than female protagonists. Similarly to hypothesis 2.1, it was hypothesized that male characters would speak more than female characters. Therefore, male protagonists would also speak more than female protagonists. This hypothesis focused exclusively on the protagonist dialogue, controlling for the secondary character dialogue.

**Hypothesis 4: FP Books Versus MP Books.**

*Hypothesis 4.1: FP Books Versus MP Books With Protagonist.* Hypothesis 4.1 stated that FP books would exhibit more equality than MP books in both (1) character count and (2) dialogue count. That is, the FP books would have a more equal representation of female characters and male characters than MP books. It was hypothesized that MP books would feature more male characters than female characters. Therefore, there would be more disparity between female characters and male characters in MP books than FP books.

*Hypothesis 4.2: FP Books Versus MP Books Without Protagonist.* Hypothesis 4.2 stated that by excluding the protagonist, there would be more disparity between female character dialogue and male character dialogue in FP books than MP books. Similarly to hypothesis 2.2, it was hypothesized that male secondary characters would outnumber female secondary characters, due to the default of male characters. Without the female protagonist dialogue in FP books, it was hypothesized that the difference between female character dialogue and male character dialogue would be *less* equal. Without the male protagonist dialogue in MP books, it was

hypothesized that the difference between female character dialogue and male character dialogue would be *more* equal. Therefore, there would be more disparity between secondary female character dialogue and secondary male character dialogue in FP books than MP books.

**Hypothesis 5: FA Books Versus MA Books.** Hypothesis 5 stated that FA books would exhibit more equality than MA books in both (1) character count and (2) dialogue count. That is, the FA books would have a more equal representation of female characters and male characters than MA books. Similarly to hypothesis 4.1, it was hypothesized that MA books would feature more male characters than female characters. Therefore, there would be more of a disparity between female characters and male characters in MA books than FA books.

## Method

### Materials

**Book List.** The initial book list consisted of 42 children's chapter books. All books were New York Times Middle Grade bestsellers or Newbery Medal winners or honor books from 2015. After excluding 20 books, the final book list consisted of 22 children's chapter books with 9 female protagonist (FP) books and 13 male protagonist (MP) books (see Appendix A for final book list). To be included in the book list, books had to be fiction novels designated for 8 to 12 year old readers. Also, books had to have a singular female or male child protagonist, due to the interest in comparing FP books and MP books.

Rules and limitations were used to exclude books from the book list for two main reasons. First, it was to reduce the large number of books that were bestsellers throughout 2015. Second, it was to focus on a specific group of fiction chapter books with a singular female or male child protagonist. Books excluded from the book list were non-fiction ( $n = 11$ ), were movie novelizations ( $n = 5$ ), had multiple main characters of different genders ( $n = 2$ ), or were e-book chapters ( $n = 2$ ) (see Appendix B for book list exclusions). The final book list was considered to be a representative sample of contemporary and popular fiction children's chapter books from 2015. Books were researched on Amazon.com to determine if they would be included or excluded from the final books list. Protagonist gender and book genre (fiction or non-fiction) was discernable from each book description on the website. Books were gathered through purchase on Amazon.com, a local bookstore, or were borrowed from a local library.

**Book Selection.** The goal of the book list was to represent children's chapter books that 8 to 12 year old readers were currently reading. It was thus vital to capture the most popular children's chapter books of the last year. The New York Times Bestseller lists are the most

prestigious and highly regarded bestseller lists currently published (Rocha, 2004). The New York Times produces weekly bestseller lists in a variety of genres. The books are based on sales that are reported by vendors ranging from independent bookstores, large chain stores, online retailers, and newsstands. The lists are considered representative of all book sales nationwide (NYT, 2015). Therefore, the New York Times Bestseller lists are an accurate and reliable source for a selection of popular children's chapter books for 2015.

The New York Times Middle Grade Bestseller list began in 2012, when the Children's Chapter Book Bestseller list was divided into Young Adult and Middle Grade. In August 2015, the Middle Grade list was then divided again into Middle Grade Hardcover and Middle Grade Paperback. In the current study, The New York Times Middle Grade Bestseller list from January to August 2015, and then the New York Times Middle Grade Hardcover Bestseller list from August to December 2015 was used. Only books from the hardcover list, not the paperback list, were included to capture the most newly released books. All books on the paperback list were already released titles that had appeared on previous bestseller lists, making their inclusion redundant. The Middle Grade lists are published every week and have ten slots. Books were selected from lists from the first week of every month, so the book list comprised of a total of twelve bestseller lists. Only books from the first week of every month were included since several books remain on the list from week to week, resulting in little change throughout the month. Books that were Newbery Medal winners or honor books from 2015 were also included in the book list. However these books were already on the New York Times Middle Grade Bestseller lists or were excluded because they were non-fiction.

## **Procedure**

A quantitative counting coding system was used to investigate representation of female characters and male characters through character count and dialogue count. Each book was read in its entirety. The coding system consisted of two parts. The first part was a character count of how many female characters and male characters were represented. The second part was a dialogue count of how many times female characters and male characters spoke. Data was collected on a coding system sheet (see Appendix C for a blank coding sheet) where title, author, character count, and dialogue count was recorded. The coding system was conceived by reading three randomly selected books from the book list. This preliminary investigation allowed for an understanding of the books' writing styles, plot, and style. Based on the preliminary investigation, it was determined that dialogue was an important and prolific aspect of the books to code. Books were read and coded in a random order, alternating between FP books and MP books. Since there were more MP books than FP books on the book list, the last four books read and coded were all MP books.

**Character Categories.** Characters were divided into seven categories: protagonist (female/male), secondary female child, secondary male child, parent/guardian female, parent/guardian male, secondary female adult, secondary male adult. All characters in the books were divided into these categories. The protagonist was defined as the main character in the book and was either female or male. Secondary child characters were defined as all non-adult and non-protagonist characters, such as friends or siblings. Parent/guardian characters were defined as the mother, father, or other guardian of the protagonist. Secondary adult characters were defined as all non-child and non-parent/guardian characters, such as teachers or friends' parents.



In several books, the protagonist's parents were not present or would pass away during the duration of the book. If the parents were present and spoke at all during the duration of the book, they were counted in the parent/guardian character category, even if another character acted as the protagonist's guardian later in the book. If the parents were not present and did not speak at all during the duration of the book, that character category was left blank or another guardian was counted in that character category (e.g. grandmother or grandfather). For example, in *Public School Superhero*, the protagonist's guardian was the grandmother since the parents had either passed away or were not present. The grandmother was thus counted in the parent/guardian character category. Secondary characters under the age of 18, if it was indicated or made clear through descriptive cues, were placed in the secondary child character categories. Secondary characters over the age of 18, if it was indicated or made clear through descriptive cues, were placed in the secondary adult character categories.

**Character Count.** For character count, every character that spoke dialogue was counted. All characters were counted as either female or male and tallied within one of the character categories. Characters were determined as either female or male based on pronoun use, language, and descriptive cues. For example, if a character was referred to as "she" or "her", they were counted as a female character. Only clearly gendered characters were counted. All gendered characters that spoke dialogue were counted, even if they were non-human. This included animals, ghosts, robots, and a sword.

**Dialogue Count.** For dialogue count, every utterance of dialogue was counted. To qualify as dialogue, the utterance had to be within quotation marks (e.g. "Hello, how are you today?"). This included very simple utterances, such as "uh oh" or "uh-huh". Every time a character spoke an utterance of dialogue it was counted as either female or male and tallied

within one of the character categories. Dialogue was counted even if it was a repeated utterance of dialogue (e.g. if the same scene was told from a different perspective). Dialogue was counted for the character that spoke the dialogue. For example, if the protagonist spoke, a tally would be placed within the protagonist category. Only dialogue spoken by a clearly gendered character was counted (see Appendix D for an example coding sheet).

Each paragraph of dialogue counted as one utterance of dialogue. It frequently occurred that multiple separate utterances were present in a paragraph of dialogue. A character's dialogue could be divided, so it appeared as multiple instances of dialogue (e.g. "Hello," she said. "How are you today?"). In this example, although these are two distinct utterances that exist between separate quotation marks, they would be coded as one utterance of dialogue because they are within a single paragraph. Group dialogue was coded for each character only if the characters that spoke the dialogue were clearly identified and gendered (e.g. "Yes!" said James, Sally, and Sam). In this example, the dialogue would be counted for James, Sally, and Sam. Words that appeared in quotation marks that were not dialogue were not coded (e.g. titles of books or movies).

In *Out of My Mind*, the protagonist had cerebral palsy and could not speak. In the beginning of the book, the protagonist received a computer that spoke for her. The protagonist used buttons on the computer to select different words and phrases to create sentences. These utterances of computer dialogue were within quotation marks and were counted as protagonist dialogue. In three books, *Flora and Ulysses*, *House of Robots*, and *Public School Superhero*, there were drawings similar to those in a comic book or graphic novel. Dialogue in drawings was coded only if a speech bubble was used to clearly indicate the character that was speaking.

In two books, *The Crossover* and *Wonder*, in all or part of the book quotation marks were not used to indicate dialogue. In *The Crossover*, dialogue was indicated through italics, alternating lines of italics and non-italics, or the use of clearly identifying the character that was speaking (e.g. “he said”, “she said”, etc.). Dialogue in *The Crossover* was still coded, but only if dialogue was clearly indicated from one of the three ways above. In one section of *Wonder*, dialogue was indicated through alternating lines or the use of clearly identifying the character that was speaking. Dialogue in this section of *Wonder* was still coded, but only if the dialogue was clearly indicated through one of the two ways above.

## Results

Data was entered and analyzed using SPSS for protagonist gender, author gender, total female character count and total male character count, and total female dialogue count and total male dialogue count. Data was also entered for character count and dialogue count for each character category (e.g. protagonist). New variables were created as needed throughout analyses. A p-value of 0.05 was used for all statistical tests.

### Descriptive Statistics

There were 22 books coded in total. Out of the 22 total books, 9 were female protagonist (FP) books and 13 were male protagonist (MP) books (see Table 1.1 for descriptive statistics for FP books and MP books). A chi-square goodness of fit revealed that the observed frequency of FP books and MP books was not significantly different from the expected frequency of 50% (11 FP books, 11 MP books),  $\chi^2(1, n = 22) = 0.72, p = 0.39, \phi = 0.18$ . The amount of FP books and MP books was not significantly different from the expected equal amount in each group.

**Table 1.1** *Female and Male Character Counts and Dialogue Counts for FP Books and MP Books*

	Character Count		Dialogue Count	
	Female <i>M (SD)</i>	Male <i>M (SD)</i>	Female <i>M (SD)</i>	Male <i>M (SD)</i>
<b>FP Books</b>	12.33 (7.28)	12.11 (10.86)	453.55 (308.44)	330.33 (248.40)
<b>MP Books</b>	13.85 (9.54)	22.08 (13.88)	332.62 (252.11)	888.15 (518.52)

Also, out of the 22 total books, 10 were female author (FA) books and 10 were male author (MA) books (see Table 1.2 for descriptive statistics for FA books and MA books). Two

books were excluded in analyses regarding author gender because they were co-authored by a female author and a male author.

**Table 1.2** *Female and Male Character Counts and Dialogue Counts for FA Books and MA Books*

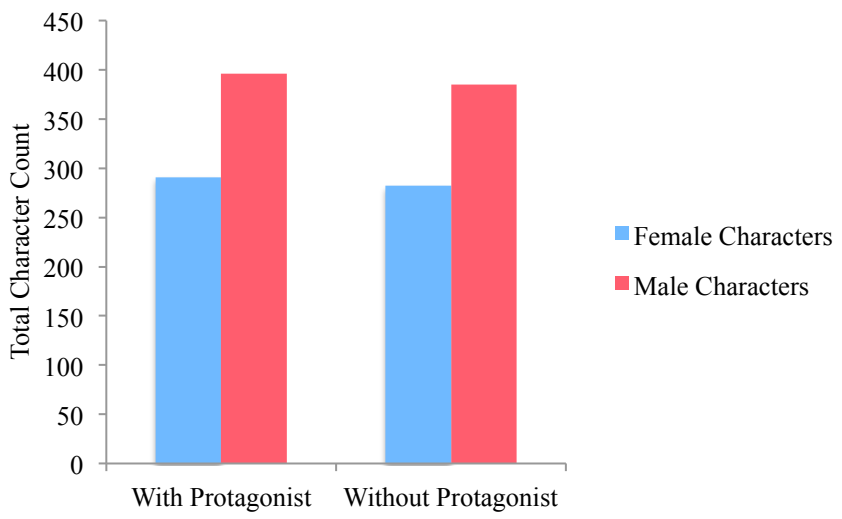
	Character Count		Dialogue Count	
	Female <i>M (SD)</i>	Male <i>M (SD)</i>	Female <i>M (SD)</i>	Male <i>M (SD)</i>
<b>FA Books</b>	13.50 (7.17)	14.70 (9.12)	504.90 (253.60)	551.10 (333.92)
<b>MA Books</b>	14.30 (10.12)	24.70 (14.52)	327.90 (259.70)	900.20 (559.01)

Across all 22 books, there were 687 total characters. Female characters ( $n = 291$ ) consisted of 42% of the total character count. Male characters ( $n = 396$ ) consisted of 58% of the total character count. Thus the ratio of male characters to female characters was 1.4:1. Across all 22 books, there were 22,925 total utterances of character dialogue. Female character dialogue ( $n = 8,406$ ) consisted of 37% of the total dialogue count. Male character dialogue ( $n = 14,519$ ) consisted of 63% of the total dialogue count. Thus the ratio of male character dialogue to female character dialogue was 1.7:1.

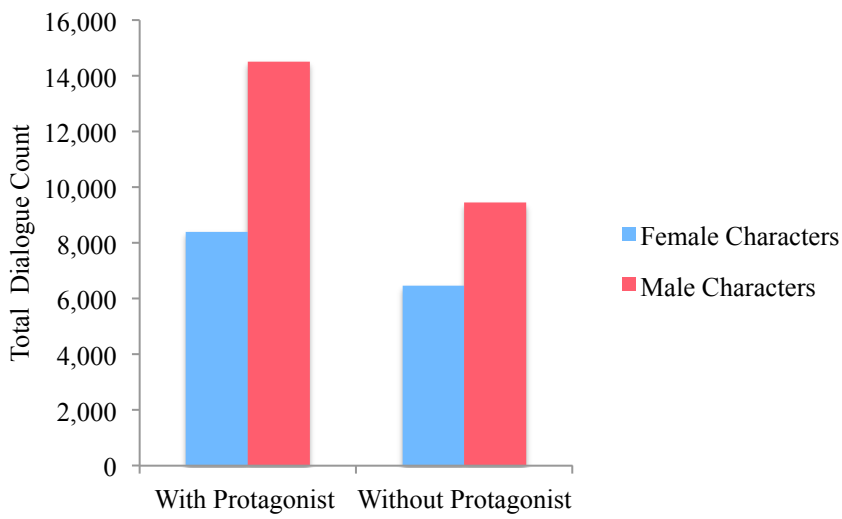
Excluding the protagonists there were 665 total characters across all 22 books. Female characters ( $n = 282$ ) consisted of 42% of the total character count without the protagonist. Male characters ( $n = 383$ ) consisted of 58% of the total character count without the protagonist (see Figure 1.1 for total character count with protagonist and without protagonist). Thus, the ratio of secondary male characters to secondary female characters was 1.4:1. Excluding the protagonist, there were 15,909 total utterances of character dialogue across all 22 books. Female character

dialogue (n = 6,463) consisted of 41% of the total dialogue count without the protagonist. Male character dialogue (n = 9,446) consisted of 59% of the total dialogue count without the protagonist (see Figure 1.2 for total dialogue count with protagonist and without protagonist). Thus, the ratio of secondary male character dialogue to secondary female character dialogue was 1.5:1.

**Figure 1.1** *Total Character Count for Female and Male Characters with Protagonist and Without Protagonist*



**Figure 1.2** *Total Dialogue Count for Female and Male Characters with Protagonist and Without Protagonist*



## Hypotheses Results

**Hypothesis 1: Character Count.** Hypothesis 1 stated that there would be more male characters than female characters across all 22 books. To test this hypothesis, a chi-square test was conducted to compare the observed character count to the expected character count. Observed character count was the total female character count and total male character count for all 22 books. Expected character count was 50% of the total character count for all books. That is, female characters and male characters should each be represented 50% of the time. A chi-square goodness of fit revealed that characters were more likely to be male characters ( $n = 396$ ) than female characters ( $n = 291$ ),  $\chi^2(1, n = 22) = 16.04, p < 0.01, \phi = 0.85$ . Male characters and female characters were not represented equally. Male characters were represented more than female characters across all 22 books.

### **Hypothesis 2: Dialogue Count.**

*Hypothesis 2.1: Dialogue Count With Protagonist.* Hypothesis 2.1 stated that there would be more male character dialogue than female character dialogue across all 22 books. To test this hypothesis, a chi-square test was conducted to compare the observed dialogue count to the expected dialogue count. First, a chi-square goodness of fit was conducted to compare the observed dialogue count to the expected dialogue count of 50% of the total dialogue count. A chi-square goodness of fit revealed that dialogue is more likely to be from a male character ( $n = 14,519$ ) than from a female character ( $n = 8,406$ ),  $\chi^2(1, n = 22) = 1630.04, p < 0.01, \phi = 8.61$ . Male characters and female characters did not speak an equal amount. Male characters spoke more than female characters across all 22 books.

Second, a chi-square goodness of fit was conducted to compare the observed dialogue count to the weighted expected dialogue count. In these analyses, the expected female character

dialogue was calculated to be 42% of the total dialogue count and expected male character dialogue was calculated to be 58% of the total dialogue count, instead of 50%. That is, female characters consisted of 42% of the total character count and male characters consisted of 58% of the total character count. If characters spoke relative to the character count, female character dialogue would consist of 42% of the total dialogue count ( $n = 9,628.5$ ) and male character dialogue would consist of 58% of the total dialogue count ( $n = 13,296.5$ ). A chi-square goodness of fit revealed that with the weighted expected dialogue count, dialogue was still more likely to come from a male character ( $n = 14,519$ ) than from a female character ( $n = 8,406$ ),  $\chi^2 (1, n = 22) = 267.64, p < 0.01, \varphi = 3.49$ . Male characters and female characters did not speak 42% and 58% of the time, respectively. Male characters spoke more than the expected amount, while female characters spoke less than the expected amount.

*Hypothesis 2.2: Dialogue Count Without the Protagonist.* Hypothesis 2.2 stated that by excluding the protagonist, there would still be more male character dialogue than female character dialogue across all 22 books. To test this hypothesis, a chi-square test was conducted to compare the observed dialogue count to the expected dialogue count without the protagonist, similar to hypothesis 2.1. First, a chi-square goodness of fit was conducted to compare the observed dialogue count to the expected dialogue count of 50% of the total dialogue count without the protagonist. A chi-square goodness of fit revealed that without the protagonist, dialogue was more likely to come from a male character ( $n = 9,446$ ) than a female character ( $n = 6,463$ ),  $\chi^2 (1, n = 22) = 559.32, p < 0.01, \varphi = 5.04$ . Secondary male characters and secondary female characters did not speak an equal amount without the protagonist. Even excluding the protagonist, male characters spoke more than female characters across all 22 books.



Second, a chi-square goodness of fit was conducted to compare the observed dialogue count to the weighted expected dialogue count. If characters spoke relative to the character count, female character dialogue would consist of 42% of the total dialogue count without the protagonist ( $n = 6,681.78$ ) and male character dialogue would consist of 58% of the total dialogue count without the protagonist ( $n = 9,227.22$ ), similarly to hypothesis 2.1. A chi-square goodness of fit revealed that with the weighted expected dialogue count without the protagonist, dialogue was still more likely to come from a male character ( $n = 9,446$ ) than a female character ( $n = 6,463$ ),  $\chi^2 (1, n = 22) = 12.35, p < 0.01, \phi = 0.75$ . Male characters and female characters did not speak 42% and 58% of the time without the protagonist, respectively. Secondary male characters spoke more than the expected amount, while secondary female characters spoke less than the expected amount.

**Hypothesis 3: Protagonist Dialogue.** Hypothesis 3 stated that male protagonists would have more dialogue than female protagonists. To test this hypothesis, a t-test was conducted to compare the means of protagonist dialogue for FP books and MP books. An independent samples t-test revealed that there was no significant difference between the amount of female protagonist dialogue ( $M = 215.89, SD = 137.78$ ) and male protagonist dialogue ( $M = 390.23, SD = 253.78$ ), although it was approaching significance,  $t (21) = -1.87, p = 0.08, d = 0.85$ . Male protagonists did speak more than female protagonists, but the difference was not significant. Female protagonists and male protagonists spoke a relatively equal amount in both FP books and MP books.

#### **Hypothesis 4: FP Books Versus MP Books.**

*Hypothesis 4.1: FP Books Versus MP Books With Protagonist.* Hypothesis 4.1 stated that FP books would exhibit more equality than MP books in both (1) character count and (2)

dialogue count. These results were analyzed by comparing the difference score between total female character count and total male character count, and the difference score between total female dialogue count and total male dialogue count. To test this, two new variables were created. First, the difference score between female characters and male characters was calculated by subtracting the total male character count from the total female character count. Second, the difference score between female character dialogue and male character dialogue was calculated by subtracting the total male dialogue count from the total female dialogue count. Therefore, in these analyses a negative value indicated a larger amount of male characters or a larger amount of male character dialogue. Also, a value of zero indicated that there was an equal amount of female characters and male characters or female character dialogue and male character dialogue.

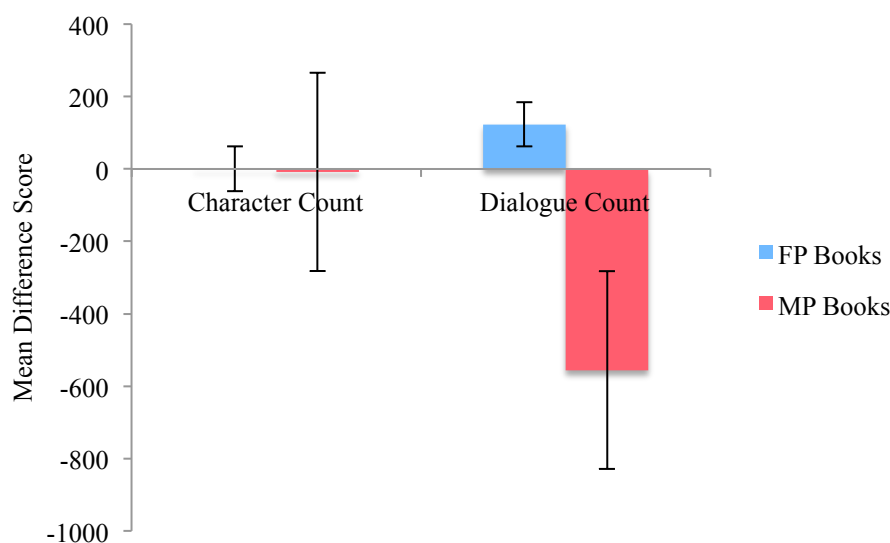
1. A t-test was conducted to compare the character difference score for FP books and MP books. An independent samples t-test revealed that there was a significant difference between the character difference score for FP books ( $M = 0.22$ ,  $SD = 8.42$ ) and MP books ( $M = -8.23$ ,  $SD = 9.03$ ),  $t(21) = 2.22$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ,  $d = 0.98$ . FP books had more female characters and MP books had more male characters, as indicated by the positive mean and negative mean, respectively. However, the difference was greater in MP books than in FP books.

Two t-tests were conducted to analyze if the mean character difference score for FP books and the mean character difference score for MP books was statistically different from zero. A value of zero indicated an equal amount of female characters and male characters. A single sample t-test revealed that the mean character difference score for FP books ( $M = 0.22$ ,  $SD = 8.42$ ) was not statistically different from zero,  $t(8) = 0.08$ ,  $p = 0.94$ ,  $d = 0.06$ . Another single sample t-test revealed that the mean character difference score for MP books ( $M = -8.23$ ,  $SD = 9.04$ ) was statically different from zero,  $t(12) = -3.28$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ,  $d = -1.89$ . The difference

between female characters and male characters was statistically different from zero for MP books, but not for FP books. Female characters and male characters were represented more equally in FP books than MP books.

2. A t-test was conducted to compare the dialogue difference score for FP books and MP books. An independent samples t-test revealed that there was a significant difference between the dialogue difference score for FP books ( $M = 123.22$ ,  $SD = 65.76$ ) and MP books ( $M = -555.54$ ,  $SD = 340.23$ ),  $t(21) = 5.37$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $d = 2.77$ . FP books had more female character dialogue and MP books had more male character dialogue, as indicated by the positive mean and negative mean, respectively. However, the difference was greater in MP books than in FP books (see Figure 2.1 for mean difference score for female and male character count and dialogue count for FP books and MP books).

**Figure 2.1** Mean Difference Score for Female and Male Character Count and Dialogue Count for FP Books and MP Books



Two t-tests were conducted to analyze if the mean dialogue difference score for FP books and the mean dialogue difference score for MP books was statistically different from zero. A value of zero indicated an equal amount of female character dialogue and male character

dialogue. A single sample t-test revealed that the mean dialogue difference score for FP books ( $M = 123.33$ ,  $SD = 197.28$ ) was not statistically different from zero,  $t(8) = 1.87$ ,  $p = 0.10$ ,  $d = 1.32$ . Another single sample t-test revealed that the mean dialogue difference score for MP books ( $M = -555.54$ ,  $SD = 340.23$ ) was statically different from zero,  $t(12) = -5.89$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = -3.40$ . The difference between female character dialogue and male character dialogue was statistically different from zero for MP books, but not for FP books. Female characters and male characters spoke a more equal amount in FP books than MP books.

*Hypothesis 4.2: FP Books Versus MP Books Without Protagonist.* Hypothesis 4.2 stated that by excluding the protagonist, there would be more disparity between female character dialogue and male character dialogue in FP books than MP books. That is, MP books would exhibit more equality in character dialogue than FP books without the protagonist. To test this hypothesis, three new variables were created. First, the total female character dialogue without the protagonist was calculated. For FP books, this excluded all dialogue by the female protagonist. For MP books, this was the same number as total female dialogue count, since there was no female protagonist dialogue to exclude. Second, the total male character dialogue without the protagonist was calculated. For MP books, this excluded all dialogue by the male protagonist. For FP books, this was the same number as total male dialogue count, since there was no male protagonist dialogue to exclude. Third, the difference score between female character dialogue without the protagonist and male character dialogue without the protagonist was calculated, by subtracting total male dialogue count without the protagonist from total female dialogue count without the protagonist. Therefore, in these analyses a negative value indicated a larger amount of male character dialogue. Also, a value of zero indicated that there was an equal amount of female character dialogue and male character dialogue.

A t-test was conducted to compare the dialogue difference score without the protagonist for FP books and MP books. An independent samples t-test revealed that there was no significant difference between the dialogue difference score without the protagonist in FP books ( $M = -92.67$ ,  $SD = 222.34$ ) and MP books ( $M = -165.31$ ,  $SD = 160.58$ ),  $t(21) = 0.89$ ,  $p = 0.38$ ,  $d = 0.37$ . Both FP books and MP books represented more male character dialogue than female character dialogue, as indicated by the negative means, but the difference between the groups was not significant. There was no difference between the dialogue difference score without the protagonist in FP books and MP books.

Two t-tests were conducted to analyze if the mean dialogue difference score for FP books and the mean dialogue difference score for MP books was statistically different from zero. A value of zero indicated an equal amount of female character dialogue and male character dialogue. A single sample t-test revealed that the mean dialogue difference score for FP books without the protagonist ( $M = -92.67$ ,  $SD = 222.34$ ) was not statistically different from zero,  $t(8) = -1.25$ ,  $p = 0.25$ ,  $d = -0.88$ . Another single sample t-test revealed that the mean dialogue difference score for MP books ( $M = -165.31$ ,  $SD = 160.58$ ) was statically different from zero,  $t(12) = -3.71$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ,  $d = -2.14$ . There was no statistical difference between the dialogue difference score without the protagonist between FP books and MP books. However, the difference between female character dialogue and male character dialogue was statistically different from zero for MP books, but not for FP books. That is, FP books and MP books did not significantly differ from each other, but MP books did significantly differ from zero.

**Hypothesis 5: FA Books Versus MA Books.** Hypothesis 5 stated that FA books would exhibit more equality than MA books in both (1) character count and (2) dialogue count. To test this hypothesis, the same two variables, character difference score and dialogue difference score,

were used from hypothesis 4.1. Therefore, in these analyses a negative value indicated a larger amount of male characters or a larger amount of male character dialogue. Two books were co-authored by a female author and a male author, so those two books were excluded from these analyses.

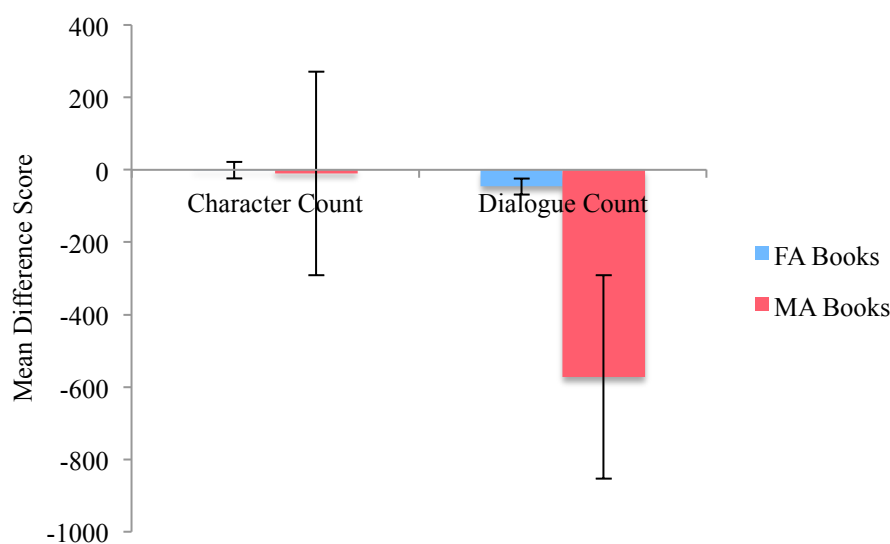
1. A t-test was conducted to compare the character difference score for FA books and MA books. An independent samples t-test revealed that there was a significant difference between the character difference score for FA books ( $M = -1.2$ ,  $SD = 6.56$ ) and MA books ( $M = -10.40$ ,  $SD = 9.69$ ),  $t(19) = 2.49$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ,  $d = 1.11$ . Both FA books and MA books represented more male characters than female characters, as indicated by the negative means. However, the difference was greater in MA books than in FA books.

Two t-tests were conducted to analyze if the mean character difference score for FA books and the mean character difference score for MA books was statistically different from zero. A value of zero indicated an equal amount of female characters and male characters. A single sample t-test revealed that the mean character difference score for FA books ( $M = -1.2$ ,  $SD = 6.56$ ) was not statistically different from zero,  $t(9) = -0.58$ ,  $p = 0.58$ ,  $d = -0.39$ . Another single sample t-test revealed that the mean character difference score for MA books ( $M = -10.40$ ,  $SD = 9.69$ ) was statically different from zero,  $t(9) = -3.40$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ,  $d = -2.27$ . The difference between female characters and male characters was statistically different from zero for MA books, but not for FA books. Female characters and male characters were represented more equally in FA books than in MA books.

2. A t-test was conducted to compare the dialogue difference score for FA books and MA books. An independent samples t-test revealed that there was a significant difference between the dialogue difference score for FA books ( $M = -46.20$ ,  $SD = 377.54$ ) and MA books ( $M = -572.30$ ,

$SD = 375.22$ ),  $t(19) = 3.13$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $d = 1.40$ . Both FA books and MA books had more male character dialogue than female character dialogue, as indicated by the negative means. However, the difference was greater in MA books than in FA books (see Figure 2.2 for mean difference score for female and male character count and dialogue count for FA books and MA books).

**Figure 2.2** Mean Difference Score for Female and Male Character Count and Dialogue Count for FA Books and MA Books



Two t-tests were conducted to analyze if the mean dialogue difference score for FA books and the mean dialogue difference score for MA books was statistically different from zero. A value of zero indicated an equal amount of female and male character dialogue. A single sample t-test revealed that the mean dialogue difference score for FA books ( $M = -46.20$ ,  $SD = 377.54$ ) was not statistically different from zero,  $t(9) = -0.39$ ,  $p = 0.71$ ,  $d = -0.26$ . Another single sample t-test revealed that the mean difference score for MA books ( $M = -572.30$ ,  $SD = 375.22$ ) was statically different from zero,  $t(9) = -4.82$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $d = -3.21$ . The difference between female character dialogue and male character dialogue was statistically different from zero for MA books, but not for FA books. Female characters and male characters spoke a more equal amount in FA books than MA books.

## Exploratory Results

Through analyzing the data, new exploratory hypotheses arose that were of interest. These analyses were included as well.

### **FP Books Versus MP Books.**

*Character Count.* Two t-tests were conducted to compare total female character count and total male character count for FP books and MP books. This was to explore if the underrepresentation of female characters was due to the difference between FP books and MP books. An independent samples t-test revealed that there was no significant difference between female character counts in FP books ( $M = 12.33$ ,  $SD = 7.28$ ) and MP books ( $M = 13.85$ ,  $SD = 9.54$ ),  $t(21) = -0.40$ ,  $p = 0.69$ ,  $d = 0.18$ . Another independent samples t-test revealed that there was no significant difference between male character counts in FP books ( $M = 12.11$ ,  $SD = 10.86$ ) and MP books ( $M = 22.08$ ,  $SD = 13.88$ ), although it was approaching significance,  $t(21) = -1.80$ ,  $p = 0.09$ ,  $d = 0.80$ . Although male characters were represented more in MP books than in FP books, the difference was not significant. Female characters and male characters were represented relatively equally in both FP books and MP books.

*Dialogue Count.* Two t-tests were conducted to compare total female dialogue count and total male dialogue count for FP books and MP books. This was to explore if the underrepresentation of female character dialogue was due to the difference between FP books and MP books. An independent samples t-test revealed that there was no significant difference between female dialogue count in FP books ( $M = 453.56$ ,  $SD = 308.44$ ) and MP books ( $M = 332.62$ ,  $SD = 252.11$ ),  $t(21) = 1.01$ ,  $p = 0.32$ ,  $d = 0.43$ . Another independent samples t-test revealed that there was a significant difference between male dialogue count in FP books ( $M = 330.33$ ,  $SD = 248.40$ ) and MP books ( $M = 888.15$ ,  $SD = 518.52$ ) and in  $t(21) = -2.98$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ,  $d$



= 1.37. Female characters spoke a relatively equal amount in FP books and MP books. Male characters, though, spoke significantly more in MP books than in FP books.

### **FA Books Versus MA Books.**

*Character Count.* Two t-tests were conducted to compare total female character count and total male character count for FA books and MA books. This was to explore if the underrepresentation of female characters was due to the difference between FA books and MA books. An independent samples t-test revealed that there was no significant difference between total female character count for FA books ( $M = 13.50$ ,  $SD = 7.16$ ) and MA books ( $M = 14.30$ ,  $SD = 10.12$ ),  $t(19) = -0.20$ ,  $p = 0.84$ ,  $d = 0.09$ . Another independent samples t-test revealed that there was no significant difference between total male character count for FA books ( $M = 14.7$ ,  $SD = 9.11$ ) and MA books ( $M = 24.70$ ,  $SD = 14.52$ ), although it was approaching significance,  $t(19) = -1.84$ ,  $p = 0.08$ ,  $d = 0.83$ . Although male characters were represented more in MA books than in FA books, the difference was not significant. Female characters and male characters were represented relatively equally in both FA books and MA books.

*Dialogue Count.* Two t-tests were conducted to compare total female dialogue count and total male dialogue count for FA books and MA books. This was to explore if the underrepresentation of female character dialogue was due to the difference between FA books and MA books. An independent samples t-test revealed that there was no significant difference between total female dialogue count for FA books ( $M = 504.90$ ,  $SD = 253.60$ ) and MA books ( $M = 327.90$ ,  $SD = 259.70$ ),  $t(19) = 1.54$ ,  $p = 0.14$ ,  $d = 0.69$ . Another independent samples t-test revealed that there was no significant difference between total male dialogue count for FA books ( $M = 551.10$ ,  $SD = 333.92$ ) and MA books ( $M = 900.20$ ,  $SD = 559.01$ ),  $t(19) = -1.695$ ,  $p = 0.11$ ,

$d = 0.76$ . Female characters and male characters spoke a relatively equal amount in both FA books and MA books.

*Protagonist Gender.* Protagonist gender was analyzed for FA books and MA books. To test this, a chi-square test was conducted to compare protagonist gender and author gender. A chi-square test of independence revealed that there was a significant relationship between author gender and protagonist gender,  $\chi^2(1, n = 20) = 5.49, p = 0.02, V = 0.52$ . Male authors were more likely to write books with male protagonists ( $n = 9$ ) than female authors ( $n = 4$ ). Also, female authors were more likely to write books with female protagonists ( $n = 6$ ) than male authors ( $n = 1$ ).

## Discussion

*“The messages conveyed through representation of males and females in books contribute to children’s ideas of what it means to be a boy, girl, man, or woman.”*  
(McCabe et al., 2011, p. 218)

The aim of the current study was to investigate the representation of female characters in children’s chapter books. Past research suggests that female characters were underrepresented in children’s picture books throughout the twentieth century in comparison to male characters. In the current study, the focus on character count and dialogue count in contemporary and popular children’s chapter books was an attempt to advance the literature on this subject.

### Representation of Female Characters

The main hypothesis was that female characters would be underrepresented in character count and dialogue count in comparison to male characters. Results supported this hypothesis. Female characters and male characters were not equally represented in character count across all books. Male characters outnumbered female characters by a ratio of 1.4:1. This ratio reflects findings demonstrated by past research. Collins et al. (1984) found that the ratio of male central characters to female central characters was 1.7:1 in children’s picture books. McCabe et al. (2011) found that the ratio of male central characters to female central characters was 1.6:1 in children’s picture books. In the current study, female characters therefore continued to be underrepresented in comparison to male characters in popular children’s chapter books from 2015.

Female characters and male characters were not equally represented in dialogue count across all books either. Male characters spoke more than female characters by a ratio of 1.7:1. Not only did male characters speak more than female characters, they spoke more than was expected when accounting for their higher character counts. Male characters consisted of 58% of

the total character count, but still spoke more than this expected amount. Female characters, conversely, only consisted of 42% of the total character count, but still spoke less than this expected amount. Male characters were more “chatty”, while female characters were more silent. Past research has not investigated this form of representation. By investigating character dialogue, the current study demonstrated another form of female character underrepresentation beyond character count. Not only were female characters represented less often than male characters, female characters also spoke less often than male characters.

It was hypothesized that male protagonists would speak more than female protagonists. These analyses specifically compared female protagonists to male protagonists, excluding all secondary characters. Although the results did not support this hypothesis, it still demonstrates the overall trend of the underrepresentation of female characters. It also demonstrates the importance of the protagonist. There was no significant difference between male protagonist dialogue and female protagonist dialogue, but it was approaching significance. Male protagonists did tend to speak more than female protagonists. Although a female protagonist may be the main character in a female protagonist (FP) book, she would most likely speak less than a male protagonist counterpart in a male protagonist (MP) book. Furthermore, when the protagonist was excluded from the analyses, the ratio of male character dialogue to female character dialogue actually decreased from 1.7:1 to 1.5:1. That is, female secondary characters and male secondary characters were speaking a relatively equal amount, and gender was not necessarily an important predictor for dialogue in secondary characters. Therefore, the amount of protagonist dialogue, whether female or male, had a profound influence on the gender inequality in character dialogue.

It was hypothesized that FP books and female author (FA) books would display more equality in character count and dialogue count in comparison to MP books and male author

(MA) books, respectively. The results supported these hypotheses. Books with female protagonists or books written by female authors had less disparity between character counts and dialogue counts than books with male protagonists or books written by male authors. Typically, but not always, the books demonstrated character counts and dialogue counts representative of the protagonist gender or author gender. For instance, MP books and MA books on average represented more male characters than female characters. 92.3% of MP books represented more male characters than female characters, while 90% of MA books represented more male characters than female characters. Both MP books and MA books *always* had more male dialogue than female dialogue, such that every single MP book and MA book had male characters speaking more than female characters. For instance, *Frank Einstein and the Electro-Finger*, an MP and MA book, represented 5 total female characters and 12 total male characters with 36 total utterances of female character dialogue and 551 total utterances of male character dialogue. In this book, male characters spoke a shocking 94% of the time (see Appendix A for final book list). MP books and MA books, therefore, frequently *underrepresented* female characters in character count and dialogue count.

FP books on average did represent more female characters and female character dialogue than male characters or male character dialogue, although the difference was less distinct. About 67% of FP books represented more female characters than male characters, while 78% of FP books represented more female character dialogue than male character dialogue. For instance, *Fish in a Tree*, an FP and FA book, represented 16 total female characters and 9 total male characters with 805 total utterances of female character dialogue and 645 total utterances of male character dialogue. Although female characters spoke 55% of the time, this is almost equal and much lower than the previous example with 94% of male character dialogue.

FA books, however, did not represent more female characters or female character dialogue than male characters or male character dialogue. Interestingly, only 40% of FA books represented more female characters than male characters, while 50% of FA books represented more female character dialogue than male character dialogue. This may be due to the fact that female authors are more likely to write MP books than male authors are to write FP books. That is, female authors are writing male characters with male character dialogue, while male authors are rarely writing female characters with female character dialogue. For instance, *The Copper Gauntlet*, an MP and FA book, represented 14 total female characters and 21 total male characters with 333 total utterances of female character dialogue and 1117 total utterances of male character dialogue. In this book, male characters spoke 77% of the time. Even though a female author wrote this book, it still represented more male character dialogue than female character dialogue. FP books therefore frequently *over*represented female characters in character count and dialogue count, while FA books frequently *under*represented female characters in character count and dialogue count. Both FP books and FA books, however, are more equal in their representation of female characters and male characters than MP books and MA books.

Exploratory results revealed that the underrepresentation of female characters was not necessarily due to the differences in protagonist gender or author gender, though. Character counts and dialogue counts did not significantly differ between most categories of books. The only significant difference was for male character dialogue between FP books and MP books, such that male characters spoke significantly more in MP books than FP books. Although MP books may represent the same amount of female character dialogue as FP books, the male character dialogue still dominated in MP books in comparison to FP books. While FP books and FA books were more equal in the representation of female characters in comparison to MP books

and MA books, female characters were still underrepresented in character count and dialogue count across all books.

The underrepresentation of female characters could be due to the fact that children's literature has and continues to represent gender inequality. Past research suggests that female characters were underrepresented in children's literature throughout the twentieth century, despite varying improvements over time. It appears that the representation of female characters and male characters has become more equal, but has not reached the level of complete equality. Children's literature could be an isolated realm of gender inequality, or it could be reflective of broader social contexts surrounding gender inequality. Sexism and gender inequality is a prominent social issue that leads to prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination against women based on their gender. Publishers, authors, or even readers could explicitly or implicitly hold sexist views towards women, leading to fewer children's books with speaking female characters. Furthermore, there could be a higher demand for MP books or books with male characters than FP books or books with female characters, leading to gender inequality. Historically, as discussed earlier, book publishers and classrooms have focused on "boy books" to sell more books—since girls tend to read boy books, as well as girl books—and encourage boys to read. If MP books or books with male characters sell more copies because they are read by both boys and girls, these books will continue to be written and published.

### **Limitations**

**Book List.** The book list consisted of 22 children's chapter books that were New York Times bestsellers in 2015. However, a large amount of children's chapter books are published yearly, so a selection of 22 books from one year may lead to a non-representative sample of the large amount of popular children's chapter books that are available. A larger sample of books

that were bestsellers over multiple years could have created a broader and more representative selection of books. The book list used in the current study, however, was chosen for several reasons. First, one person performed the coding. The book list had to consist of a reasonable amount of books to read within the time frame of the project. Second, books frequently appeared on the bestseller list for multiple months or years. Including New York Times Bestseller lists for several years would have been redundant. Therefore, the book list was an attempt to create a representative sample of books given these constraints.

The goal of the book list was to represent the popular books that children were currently reading by selecting books from the New York Times Bestseller lists. There are two main limitations to using the New York Times Bestseller. First, it is difficult to ensure that these are the books that children are actually reading. To create the lists, The New York Times sends forms to booksellers with pre-selected books that editors believe are going to sell well. Booksellers then have to fill out these forms and write in books that are not pre-selected. Some critics argue that this method allows “under-dog” bestsellers to be ignored (Rocha, 2004). Furthermore, the bestseller lists only account for books that are sold through certain distributors. The bestseller lists do not account for children sharing books between themselves or books they borrow from a library. These methods might be how children are getting the books that they are reading, making the books children are purchasing different than the books they are actually reading. Also, the book list consisted of chapter books meant for 8 to 12 year old readers. At this age, parents and guardians are probably purchasing the books for their children. Children may also read books that are given to them by teachers in their school classrooms. Instead of the books representing what children are choosing, it might actually be what adults are choosing for their children. According to Scholastic (2014), 91% of children aged 6 to 17 years old said their



favorite books were the ones they picked out for themselves. The books on bestseller lists are not necessarily books that children pick out for themselves and are, therefore, not necessarily books that they read and enjoy.

Second, there is no information on the number of books that are actually sold. It cannot be determined if some books are substantially more or less popular than others. Also, some books remain on the bestseller list for months or years, while some only remain on the list for one week. Despite this difference, all 22 books were weighed equally. That is, more popular books were not coded differently than less popular books. The New York Times Bestseller list, however, is the most reliable and reputable bestseller list that is currently available due to the large sample and the high circulation of the paper (Rocha, 2004). These lists are one of the most accurate ways to determine bestselling books. Therefore, the bestseller lists were determined to be representative of popular children's chapter books given these constraints.

**Coding System.** A quantitative coding system was used to investigate the representation of female characters and male characters through character count and dialogue count. During data collection, challenges arose that highlighted limitations in the coding system. First, character gender and character dialogue were not always clearly identified. Characters would not always be identified as female or male and it was not always stated who was speaking certain utterances of dialogue. Frequently, the gender of a character would be made clear later in the book, so the earlier dialogue would have to be re-coded, which could have led to confusion and mistakes. Second, the length of dialogue was not coded, only the occurrence of an utterance of dialogue. All dialogue, no matter the length, was weighted equally. If a character only spoke one word, it was coded similarly to if a character spoke a whole paragraph. Each paragraph of

dialogue was coded, however. That is, if a character spoke a long monologue that was broken up into several separate paragraphs, each of those paragraphs would be coded separately.

Furthermore, the content analysis did not include a qualitative investigation of children's chapter books. A qualitative coding system could investigate nuanced forms of gender inequality by analyzing *how* female characters were underrepresented, not just *if* female characters were underrepresented. By relying on character counts and dialogue counts, the coding system may have overlooked certain instances of gender inequality or gender stereotypes. Specifically, there were three aspects of qualitative information observed in the books that were not captured by the coding system. First, the roles characters portrayed were not analyzed. Were female characters and male characters portrayed in stereotypical gender roles? Second, the content of character dialogue was not analyzed. Did female character dialogue and male character dialogue exhibit specific gender stereotypes? Third, the books' topics and plots were not analyzed. Were FP books typically focused on stereotypical female topics and were MP books typically focused on stereotypic male topics?

Examples of these three types of qualitative information were noted during data collection. First, stereotypical gender roles were present in the books. *The Princess in Black* and *The Princess in Black and the Perfect Princess Party*, both FP books, featured a princess, a stereotypical female role. The princess also had an alter ego, the "Princess in Black", who fought monsters to keep her kingdom safe. Although these two books featured a stereotypical female princess role, they also complicated that stereotype by having the princess in a crime-fighting heroine role. *The Sword of Summer* and *The Copper Gauntlet*, both MP books, featured a male protagonist who had a special fantastical destiny. Magnus Chase in *The Sword of Summer* learned he was the son of a Norse God and was the only one who could retrieve the Sword of

Summer and stop total war. Callum Hunt, a magician in *The Copper Gauntlet* learned that his soul was actually that of an evil magician, and only he could stop the evil magician from killing others. The protagonists in these two books embody the stereotype of the male hero. The stereotypical hero role must accept the large responsibility to protect the world from impending doom. The hero role reproduces gender stereotypes that boys and men must be saviors.

In another example of gendered character roles, non-human characters were frequently gendered male. For instance, *House of Robots*, an MP book, featured dozens of robots who were almost all portrayed as male. The only female robot was one programmed to act like a teenage girl that constantly read teen magazines. In *The Sword of Summer*, the Sword of Summer was also portrayed as male and named “Jack.” *The One and Only Ivan* was the only book that had a non-human protagonist (a male gorilla named Ivan) and it was a MP book. The tendency to gender non-human characters as male may be “leftover” from the protagonist gender. For example, the sword Jack may be male because *The Sword of Summer* is an MP book and thus features more male characters. Or perhaps non-human characters are present more in MP books than FP books. Or perhaps this pattern demonstrates that male characters are viewed as the default character. When gender is not specified or as salient, such as in non-human characters, the tendency is for these characters to automatically be male.

Second, stereotypical character dialogue was present in the books. *The Fourteenth Goldfish*, an FP book, featured a single-working mother. In the book, the protagonist’s grandfather discovered a reverse-aging process and lived in the body of a 14-year-old teenager. The grandfather frequently commented on the mother’s style choices, stating that she should not go to work dressed in certain clothing or with a certain hairstyle (p. 14). In this instance, the male character attempted to dictate the female character’s clothing choice through dialogue. This

statement reflects gender stereotypes that men control women's bodies. *Serafina and the Black Cloak*, another FP book, was set in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and featured a more old-fashioned social context surrounding gender. When the female protagonist put on a beautiful, "feminine and soft" red dress, she stated that it made her feel like "a *real* girl" (p. 226). This statement also reflects gender stereotypes that in order to be a girl, one must behave in a certain feminine way. In *Public School Superhero*, an MP book, the male protagonist stated that he must be the "man of the house" since his dad passed away (p. 248). Although the boy was only in middle school and his grandmother was actually the head of the household, the protagonist felt the pressure to take on this duty. Similarly to *Serafina and the Black Cloak*, this statement reflects gender stereotypes that boys must behave in a certain way and take on "manly" responsibilities.

Third, all books featured varying topics and plots. FP books featured, but were not limited to, parent death and custody issues, dyslexia, squirrels with super powers, children of famous Disney villains, cerebral palsy, princesses, and mystery. MP books featured, but were not limited to, magicians, imaginary friends, basketball, science, ghosts, robots, Viking mythology, and pranks. Despite this wide range of topics, there were noticeable patterns between FP books and MP books. For instance, the books with the most disparate representation of female characters and male characters appeared to feature gender stereotypical topics and plots. The FP book with the most disparate character count in the female direction (with more female characters than male characters) was *The Princess in Black and the Perfect Princess Party*, which featured princesses throwing a princess birthday party. The FP book with the most disparate dialogue count in the female direction was *Out of My Mind*, which featured a girl with cerebral palsy attempting to fit in at her school and demonstrate her intelligence. Both of these topics can be considered female stereotypical, whether it is princesses or overcoming hardships.

The MP book with the most disparate character count and dialogue count in the male direction was the same book, *The Sword of Summer*, as discussed earlier. This topic is a highly male stereotypical, featuring mythology and the male protagonist in the hero role.

Also, 33% of the FP books featured a protagonist with some sort of developmental or physical delay or disorder (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder in *Counting by 7s*, dyslexia in *Fish in a Tree*, and cerebral palsy in *Out of my Mind*), while only 7.7% of MP books did (genetic facial abnormality in *Wonder*). It appears that FP books featured a heavy topic more than MP books. Interestingly, 32% of all books featured a parent death that was a significant or an important element in the book's plot, and 86% of those books were MP books while only 14% were FP books. In this instance, it appears that MP books featured a heavy topic more than FP books. Perhaps, a disability or disorder may be considered more of a girl topic, while death may be considered more of a boy topic. However, it is difficult to determine the reasons behind these patterns since the topics and plots of the books were so varied.

Although the coding system used in the current study did not investigate these types of qualitative information, it was chosen for several reasons. First, it reflected previous research on this body of literature. Past research focused on character counts, and the coding system was created to replicate and advance this body of literature. Second, the current study was particularly interested in the representation of female characters. Focusing on character count and dialogue count provided the data needed to determine whether female characters and male characters were represented equally. Therefore, the quantitative coding system was the method deemed most effective to help answer the research question and gather the data that the current study was investigating.

## **Implications**

Despite the current study's limitations, the findings have important implications for this field of research, children's gender development, and for the broader social context surrounding gender. The current study found that female characters were underrepresented, particularly through character dialogue. Female characters were outnumbered by male characters and spoke less than male characters. The current study advances the literature by using an established method, but also taking it further. Although multiple studies have done a content analysis on the representation of female characters in children's literature, very few or no studies have investigated contemporary or popular children's chapter books. Furthermore, the current study investigated a form of representation that had not been included before in quantitative coding systems, character dialogue. Therefore, the findings present updated empirical research on the underrepresentation of female characters in children's literature.

Children's literature is an aspect of a child's environment that can shape how they understand gender. The information provided by female characters and male characters in children's literature helps build children's gender schemas. Children then use this knowledge to interpret and process new information (Bem, 1981, 1983; Martin & Halverson, 1981). At the age when children are reading chapter books, children are still grappling with their own understanding of gender. Children are developing concepts of what is appropriate for men and women, as well as strengthening or weakening their association with different gender categories. Children's gender development is not static during this time, but still flexible to novel information (Banse et al., 2009; Cvencek et al., 2011; McHale, Kim, Whiteman, & Crouter, 2004). Literature can thus have a powerful influence during this developmental period. If female characters are underrepresented in a chapter book, young girls and young boys will incorporate

that information into their gender schemas. Without equal representation of female characters and male characters, children will believe that women and girls are not as valuable, powerful, or complex as men and boys. This perpetuates sexist stereotypes that men are the dominant gender, while women are the subordinate gender. However, literature also can influence children's ideas of gender in a positive way. Equal representation of female characters and male characters in children's chapter books can help reduce gender stereotypes and teach girls that they are just as valuable, powerful, or complex as boys.

Within the broader social context, gender inequality exists in a variety of institutions. Women are discriminated against through explicit and implicit ways in the workforce, politics, and everyday life. Sexist stereotypes and prejudice reinforce the claim that women are subordinate to men. Women face challenges that men do not have to face, including sexual violence, the pay gap, and restrictions on healthcare. Also, women continue to be underrepresented in certain areas of work, such as STEM fields or government elected offices. It only makes sense that the larger social context is reflected in children's literature. If the "real world" portrays women as less represented and thus less important than men, a fictional world in a children's book would also portray female characters as less represented and less important than male characters. In order to change the underrepresentation of female characters in children's literature, gender inequality also has to change in our society.

### **Future Directions**

The underrepresentation of female characters in children's literature continues to be an issue that requires attention and research. Subsequent investigations could take several paths to explore this issue. First, future directions could focus on comparing different age groups and different types of books or media. Most past research has focused on children's picture books for

preschoolers and the current study focused on children's chapter books for 8 to 12 year old children. It would be interesting to explore whether these findings would also present themselves in young adult books or adult books. Are female characters underrepresented in similar ways as picture books and chapter books? Also, a comprehensive study with books from the twenty-first century is needed. Although the current study investigated books from 2015, this was only one year, and past research has mostly focused on books from the twentieth century. Fiction books do not have to be the only focus, as well. The goal of the current study was to specifically focus on fiction books so non-fiction books were excluded. Children do, however, frequently interact with non-fiction books, such as textbooks or memoirs. Children are exposed to several forms of media outside of literature, such as television, movies, videogames, and the internet. It would be interesting to explore the representation of female characters in certain videogames or iPhone games, especially since these have grown in popularity in recent years.

Second, future directions could focus on literature from different cultures or languages. Most past research and the current study focused on English language books published in the United States. How would these compare to children's literature from perhaps more or less egalitarian cultures? For example, would female characters and male characters be represented equally in countries such as Sweden or Denmark that are known for socialist and egalitarian practices? What about countries such as Saudi Arabia that are known for more gender inequality? A cross-cultural study could compare different countries to explore if the representation of female characters reflects the broader social contexts surrounding gender equality.

Third, future directions could focus on more fluid representations of gender. Gender has traditionally been considered a dichotomous concept. A human is either a male or a female.



However, not all individuals fall on this binary. Recently, gender is considered a spectrum. Individuals can identify anywhere along that spectrum as either more masculine, more feminine, or somewhere in the middle. It would be interesting to explore whether children's literature is representing gender outside of the traditional binary.

Lastly, future directions could focus on different coding systems. As discussed, most past research and the current study used quantitative coding systems. Future investigations could expand quantitative coding systems, or focus on qualitative coding systems. Specifically in regards to dialogue, there are several ways to further investigate how character dialogue might differ across character gender. First, there is length of dialogue. Perhaps female characters and male characters have different utterance lengths. Male characters may speak more overall, but female characters may have longer dialogue utterances. Second, there are qualitative measures of dialogue, such as dialogue sophistication. Perhaps female characters and male characters have different levels of speech sophistication. Or perhaps female characters ask more questions, while male characters make more statements.

## **Conclusion**

The current study reinforces the importance of empirically investigating the representation of female characters in comparison to male characters in children's literature. However, there are still several areas for future directions in hopes that this topic will continue to be discussed and investigated. Acknowledging that gender inequality and gender stereotypes are present in children's literature is the first step in creating a solution. Children need to be able to receive fair and unbiased examples of gender equality in the books they are reading. Without these examples, children are destined to develop and reproduce gender inequality and gender stereotypes. Female characters must be equally represented in comparison to male characters

within dialogue and other aspects. Girls, specifically, deserve to read about female characters that valued, powerful, complex, and just like them. Children's chapter books should feature a wide range of gendered characters with both female protagonists and male protagonists. Only when a child's environment features gender equality will children understand that their gender does not have to dictate their behavior, actions, or lives.

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### Appendix A: Final Book List

\* Indicates Newbery Medal winner or honor book from 2015

\*\* Indicates Newbery Medal winner or honor book from before 2015

#### Female Protagonist Books

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
1	<i>Counting by 7s</i>	Holly Goldberg Sloan	2013	Puffin Books
2	<i>Fish in a Tree</i>	Lynda Mullaly Hunt	2015	Nancy Paulsen Books
3	<i>Flora and Ulysses**</i>	Kate DiCamillo	2013	Candlewick
4	<i>The Fourteenth Goldfish</i>	Jennifer L. Holm	2014	Random House Books for Young Readers
5	<i>The Isle of the Lost</i>	Melissa de la Cruz	2015	Disney Hyperion
6	<i>Out of My Mind</i>	Sharon M. Draper	2010	Atheneum Books for Young Readers
7	<i>The Princess in Black</i>	Shannon Hale and Dean Hale	2014	Candlewick
8	<i>The Princess in Black and the Perfect Princess Party</i>	Shannon Hale and Dean Hale	2015	Candlewick
9	<i>Serafina and the Black Cloak</i>	Robert Beatty	2015	Disney Hyperion

### Appendix A: Final Book List (continued)

\* Indicates Newbery Medal winner or honor book from 2015

\*\* Indicates Newbery Medal winner or honor book from before 2015

#### Male Protagonist Books

	Title	Author	Year	Publisher
1	<i>The Copper Gauntlet</i>	Holly Black and Cassandra Clare	2015	Scholastic Press
2	<i>Crenshaw</i>	Katherine Applegate	2015	Nancy Paulsen Books
3	<i>The Crossover*</i>	Kwame Alexander	2014	HMH Books for Young Readers
4	<i>Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library</i>	Chris Grabenstein	2013	Random House Books for Young Readers
5	<i>Frank Einstein and the Electro-Finger</i>	Jon Scieszka	2015	Amulet Books
8	<i>The Graveyard Book**</i>	Neil Gaiman	2009	HarperCollins
7	<i>House of Robots</i>	James Patterson and Chris Grabenstein	2015	Jimmy Patterson
8	<i>The Marvels</i>	Brian Selznick	2015	Scholastic Press
9	<i>The One and Only Ivan**</i>	Katherine Applegate	2012	HarperCollins
10	<i>Public School Superhero</i>	James Patterson and Chris Tebbetts	2015	Jimmy Patterson
11	<i>The Sword of Summer</i>	Rick Riordan	2015	Disney Hyperion
12	<i>The Terrible Two</i>	Mac Barnett and Jory John	2015	Amulet Books
13	<i>Wonder</i>	R.J. Palacio	2012	Knopf Books for Young Readers

## Appendix B: Book List Exclusions

\* Indicates Newbery Medal winner or honor book from 2015

\*\* Indicates Newbery Medal winner or honor book from before 2015

### Non-Fiction (memoir, history, etc.)

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>
1	<i>The Boys in the Boat</i>	Daniel James Brown
2	<i>Brown Girl Dreaming*</i>	Jaqueline Woodson
3	<i>The Care and Keeping of You</i>	Valorie Schaefer
4	<i>The Contract</i>	Derek Jeter
5	<i>El Deafo*</i>	Cece Bell
6	<i>Hitler's Last Days</i>	Bill O'Reilly
7	<i>I am Malala</i>	Malala Yousafzai
8	<i>It's Your World</i>	Chelsea Clinton
9	<i>Kid President's Guide to Being Awesome</i>	Brad Montague and Robby Novak
10	<i>Percy Jackson's Greek Gods</i>	Rick Riordan
11	<i>Rad American Women A-Z</i>	Kate Schatz

### Appendix B: Book List Exclusions (continued)

\* Indicates Newbery Medal winner or honor book from 2015

\*\* Indicates Newbery Medal winner or honor book from before 2015

#### Novelization

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>
1	<i>Descendants</i>	Rico Green
2	<i>Inside Out</i>	N/A
3	<i>Mal's Diary</i>	N/A
4	<i>Mal's Spell Book</i>	N/A
5	<i>Minions: The Junior Novel</i>	N/A

#### Multiple Main Characters of Different Genders

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>
1	<i>A Long Walk to the Water</i>	Linda Sue Park
2	<i>The Story of Diva and Flea</i>	Mo Willems

#### E-Book Chapters

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>
1	<i>Auggie &amp; Me</i>	R.J. Palacio
2	<i>Pluto</i>	R.J. Palacio

### Appendix C: Coding System Sheet

**Title:**

**Author:**

Character Category	Character Count	Dialogue Count
Protagonist (male/female)		
Secondary female child		
Secondary male child		
Parent/guardian female		
Parent/guardian male		
Secondary female adult		
Secondary male adult		

**Total female characters:**

**Total male characters:**

**Total female dialogue:**

**Total male dialogue:**

### Appendix D: Example Coding System Sheet

1/7/16

1716.0

Title: *Counting by 7s*  
Author: *Holly Goldberg Sloan*

Character Category	Character Count	Dialogue Count	
Protagonist (male/female) <i>Willow Chance</i>	1	106	106
Secondary female child	1	35	35
Secondary male child	1	32	32
Parent/guardian female	1	4	4
Parent/guardian male	1	3	3
Secondary female adult	1	64	64
Secondary male adult	1	115	115

Total female characters: 16  
 Total male characters: 9  
 Total female dialogue: 209  
 Total male dialogue: 150