

THE ROMANTICISM OF TEEN DATING VIOLENCE:
THE *TWILIGHT* SERIES AS A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Despite the fact that girls ages 16-24 are the *most* at risk age group for dating violence (Rennison and Welchans 2000), very little attention is given to the issue. Rhode Island is the only state that requires any education on teen dating violence (Tucker 2008). One way to understand violence is through the way media sources, namely film and books, romanticize relationship violence for adults (Beres 1999). Unfortunately, now the same is true for media impacting youth. I examined the wildly popular young adult literature sensation, the *Twilight* series by Stephenie Meyer, for evidence of the romanticism of teen dating violence. Through content analysis, I noted the unhealthy relationship themes of violence, obsessive behavior, controlling behavior and suicide, all included within the context of a love relationship, that pervade the four popular novels. In the four novels, *Twilight*, *New Moon*, *Eclipse* and *Breaking Dawn*, there were 172 examples of unhealthy relationship behavior. Considering the popularity of the novels, which held the number 1-4 positions for best selling books in 2009 ("Top 100 Books of 2008" 2009), and \$350 million in sales for the first film adaptation alone (Grossman 2009), there is an extensive impact on the target audience, teenagers and young adults. In conclusion, I identify the potential negative influence of the romanticism of violence for youth, considering the high rates of victimization and little education they receive on the subject.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	2
INTRODUCTION.....	4
Youth Relationship Violence.....	4
Adult Intimate Partner Violence in Films and Literature.....	5
Dating Violence in Popular Culture.....	6
The <i>Twilight</i> Series as a Case Study.....	6
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
The Characteristics of Teen Dating Violence.....	8
The Invisibility of Teen Dating Violence.....	10
Love, Violence and Media.....	11
The Concept of “Romance” in Media.....	11
News Media Coverage of Intimate Partner Violence.....	12
Popular Culture and Relationship Violence.....	14
<i>Twilight</i> as Anti-Feminist Literature.....	16
METHODOLOGY.....	17
Methodology Part I: Untwisting Twilight- Identifying Unhealthy Behavior Patterns.....	18
Methodology Part II: Tracking <i>Twilight</i> ’s Specific Instances of Violence.....	19
Methodology Part III: Trailing <i>Twilight</i> - An Exploration of the Media.....	20
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS.....	20
Agency and Domination in the <i>Twilight</i> Series:	
Seen through the absence of Bella’s voice.....	20
Reflections of Popular Culture: How teens may perceive (and act on) <i>Twilight</i>	23
RESULTS.....	25
Methodology Part I Results.....	25
<i>Twilight</i> Results.....	25
<i>New Moon</i> Results.....	26
<i>Eclipse</i> Results.....	26
<i>Breaking Dawn</i> Results.....	27
Methodology Part II Results.....	28
Methodology Part III Results.....	29
CONCLUSION.....	32
WORKS CITED.....	35
APPENDIX A.....	38
APPENDIX B.....	40
APPENDIX C.....	41

INTRODUCTION

While a substantial amount of sociological research examines the causes and context of domestic violence, this research focuses primarily on adults in abusive situations. There is far less critical discussion of teen dating violence, despite the fact that young women between the ages of 16 and 24 are the *most at-risk* age group for relationship violence (Rennison and Welchans 2000). While the behaviors themselves of an abusive partner do not vary much between adult and youth, the limited experience and lack of education about relationships place youth victims in a particularly isolated situation.

Youth Relationship Violence

In October of 2008, Rhode Island became the first state to require education on relationship violence for youth in high school curricula. The Lindsay Ann Burke Act was passed after a young woman was killed by her high school boyfriend. To date only one other state, Texas, has any requirements on dating violence education (Tucker 2008).

According to the Family Violence Prevention Fund, “Approximately one in three adolescent girls in the United States is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner – a figure that far exceeds victimization rates for other types of violence affecting youth” (“Facts on Teens and Dating Violence” 2009). Despite the known prevalence of youth dating violence, however, there has been little advancement to increase education on the subject. Such violence has been almost entirely absent from public dialogue, except for references in media. Because there is a lack of education on the subject, the exposure that youth have to this topic is limited to popular culture—namely music, literature and film.

For the following essay, *youth relationship violence* (also “*teen dating violence*”) is defined as the emotional, physical, verbal or sexual abuse in the romantic relationships of those between the ages of 12 and 24. *Domestic violence* (also “*intimate partner violence*”) is the emotional, physical, verbal

or sexual abuse in a relationship. For the purpose of this essay, domestic violence refers only to adult relationships (parties are over the age of 24).

Adult Intimate Partner Violence in Films and Literature

The lack of widespread awareness and open discourse on relationship violence means the issue is often understood in the context that media sources present it in. This can be extremely problematic, as films and literature tend to romanticize violence in a relationship. The abusive partner may be the hero or the victim may be portrayed as loving or forgiving to take him back into her life. Looking critically at popular films and literature reveals many examples of adult intimate partner violence portrayed romantically. *Gone with the Wind* exhibits marital rape, yet is esteemed as a classic romance; *A Streetcar Named Desire* has two heroines, sisters, both of whom cater to the will of the abusive Stanley. The all too familiar image of Stanley falling to his knees and calling heart-wrenchingly to his wife, Stella, is in fact following an incident where he has hurt her, while she is pregnant, and she has fled to a neighbor for safety. Stella returns to him.

Even the 2005 action flick, *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, had a scene of extreme, albeit far-fetched, violence between a married couple. This case may have been alleviated by the fact that both husband and wife were assassins, ordered to kill each other, but the violent altercation ends in a sexual interlude, and the fight itself is understood as being romantic in nature.

Similarly, literature has a tendency to romanticize behaviors such as obsessive love and suicide. *Wuthering Heights* and *Romeo and Juliet*, even *Anna Karenina* and *The Awakening*, all exhibit female characters that sacrifice everything for love and either commit suicide or experience an untimely death as a direct result.

From classic literature to modern day action films, we see a pattern in which violence in a relationship is seen as a piece of a romantic tryst or relationship. While this interweaving of

tragedy and romance is not a new facet of literature or media, it is one that should be viewed critically. Until recently, these examples have portrayed adult relationships, even marriage relationships, and were mainly intended for an adult audience.

Dating Violence in Popular Culture

Unfortunately, now the same is true for youth media. At the heart of the matter of the romanticism of youth relationship violence in popular cultures is the fact that most teenagers are not receiving any other information about relationships. Without education on unhealthy relationships, and without experience in relationships, youth may be internalizing unhealthy examples as what relationships are supposed to be.

In February of 2009, recording artists Rihanna and her 19-year-old boyfriend, Chris Brown, were involved in a violent altercation; Rihanna was hospitalized for weeks. Extensive news coverage followed the incident, along with the pictures of 21-year-old Rihanna's bruised and swollen face. This one incident initiated some discussion of youth dating violence nationwide. Unfortunately, a lack of education on the subject is leading teens to draw their own very inaccurate conclusions about relationship violence. A survey of 200 Boston teens by the Boston Public Health Commission discovered the following concerning the incident between Rihanna and her boyfriend: 44% said fighting was a normal part of a relationship; 52% said both individuals were to blame for the incident, despite knowing at the time that Rihanna had been beaten badly enough to require hospital treatment; 53% said the media were treating Chris Brown unfairly ("Public Health Commission Surveys Youth on Dating Violence" 2009).

The *Twilight* Series as a Case Study

Today, youth finally have a perfect example of youth relationship violence. Unfortunately, the example is a series of books sending all the wrong messages. This essay examines the popular young adult literature sensation, the *Twilight* saga, by Stephenie Meyer, for

evidence of the romanticization of teen dating violence. Through content analysis, I note the unhealthy relationship themes, all included within the context of a love relationship, that pervade the four popular novels.

And “popular” is hardly the word for this gothic romance sensation that has overtaken popular culture in the U.S. and internationally. Edward and Bella are household names, and their epic love a household topic. As of November 2009, Stephenie Meyer had sold 45 million books in the U.S. and another 40 million internationally. Her books spent 235 weeks on the New York *Times* best-seller list, 136 of which were in the number one spot. The film based on the first book, *Twilight*, made \$350 million (Grossman 2009). *Forbes.com* listed the “World’s 100 Most Powerful Celebrities” in 2009, naming Stephenie Meyer as number twenty-six (Miller, Pomerantz and Rose 2009). *USA Today* listed the 2008 one hundred top-selling books, with places one to four going to *Twilight*, *New Moon*, *Breaking Dawn*, and *Eclipse*, respectively (“Top 100 Books of 2008” 2009).

The unendingly popular *Twilight* series by Stephenie Meyer tells the story of ill-fated love between a human girl and her vampire boyfriend. This romance, however, is ridden with themes of barely controlled violence, suicidal thoughts and threats, controlling behavior and obsession. The qualities of the relationship between Bella and Edward fall clearly into the realm of an unhealthy relationship, yet Edward is ever increasingly idolized by teenage girls.

Bella does not love Edward in spite of his violent behaviors and thoughts, but rather because of them. His intensity is what draws her to him, and their relationship is seemingly sustained by the volatility of his love for her. Considering what we know of youth relationship violence, its prevalence and consequences and the lack of education on the subject, the example set by Bella and Edward is a primary source of information for youth. Unfortunately, without

real discussions on the topic, young women do not recognize that Bella is in an abusive relationship, and instead covet Edward's love for her.

The *romanticization of violence* referred to in this essay means that a piece of literature, film or another text in popular culture is portraying a violent relationship in a romantic light. It is not simply the presence of violence in a romantic relationship. Rather it refers to examples where the violence itself is seen as a part of the romance. *Unhealthy behavior* is defined for the purpose of this paper as stalking behavior, obsessive behavior, controlling behavior, condescending behavior and talk of death and suicide.

Youth dating violence was named in research as early as 1986, but at the time comprehensive studies were rejected, as many deemed them irrelevant (O'Keefe 1986). In order to answer my central research question, how the *Twilight* series by Stephenie Meyer romanticize youth relationship violence, an understanding of related literature on the subject was necessary.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Characteristics of Teen Dating Violence

In the Bureau of Justice Statistics' "Special Report on Intimate Partner Violence", the National Crime Victimization Survey was used to explore the dynamics of intimate partner violence, including factors such as location, race, gender, and age. Considering the age category of victims of partner violence between 1993 and 1998, women ages 16 to 24 were found to have the highest rates of relationship violence - 19.6 per 1000 women (Rennison and Welchans 2000).

Youth relationship violence, however, is not a new social problem. Though it lacks widespread discourse today, research on the subject extends back farther than we might expect. Sociological studies on teen dating violence, identified in that specific of language, began appearing almost thirty years ago. One study on dating violence, consisting of a survey of 256 high school students in a California school district, was conducted in the 1982-83 school year.

According to the authors, a much broader survey had been planned, but school districts cited the material as “too personal, potentially controversial, or basically useless because remediation would be impossible” and refused the researchers entry to the district (O’Keefe, Brockopp and Chew 1986: 465). The study, limited to one school, revealed the need for expanded research, discovering that 35.5 percent of the students had experienced some form of abuse in romantic relationships (O’Keefe, Brockopp and Chew 1986). The authors of the study advocated that this finding should help dispel the myth that violence only occurs in adult relationships (O’Keefe, Brockopp and Chew 1986).

While studies of teen dating violence such as the one described above can be found as early as the 1980s, these studies were sporadic and had little breadth or scope (Carlson 2003). A more recent study stated that prior to August 2001, “no representative epidemiologic studies of lifetime prevalence of physical and sexual dating violence experienced by adolescents have been conducted to provide a reliable estimate of the scope of the problem” (Carlson 2003: 359).

In a publication on teen dating violence for the Harvard Women’s Law Journal, Christine Carlson (2003) points to the circular reasoning behind a lack of recognition and awareness of the social issue. According to her, the lack of evidence indicates that there is no need to research teen dating violence; without any research, there is no support that the issue even exists. Carlson also believes that prominent myths lessen society’s response to the issue, such as the thought that teen dating violence doesn’t exist or isn’t as severe as adult intimate partner violence, or that teen relationships are nothing more than “puppy love” (359).

These misconceptions couldn’t be farther from the truth. The rate of violence among adolescents, whether within a relationship or not, is startling. Carlson’s essay also explores how the dynamics of teen dating violence compare to adult intimate partner violence. According to Carlson, the cycle and symptoms of abuse are the same. Carlson (2003) believes, however, that

these relationships may prove even more dangerous for young women. Carlson points to a number of reasons why this could occur, including exaggerated gender stereotypes that teens conform to, belief that boyfriends should “control” their girlfriends, a young woman’s lack of understanding or awareness, and her lack of experience.

Rather than use observation to identify the characteristics of youth relationships, a 2009 study interviewed teenagers themselves about their perceptions teen dating violence. Seven focus groups were conducted, with 52 boys and girls living in Washington, DC. The study identified four major themes from these focus groups (Guzman *et al.* 2009). The first theme stated, “Teens have developed novel ways to describe romantic relationships”, meaning that youth use different words to indicate the intensity or seriousness of a relationship, and they share in an understanding of these words’ connotations. A second theme found that teens do essentially know what constitutes a healthy relationship. The third theme, however, found that despite this knowledge, teenagers’ own relationships do not meet the ‘healthy relationship’ guidelines that they themselves described. The fourth theme established that teens see their relationships as the same as adults (Guzman *et al.* 2009). When reviewing these concepts in relation to this case study on the *Twilight* series, the critical items are that teens believe they understand what constitutes a healthy relationship, yet they struggle to establish healthy relationships in their own lives.

The Invisibility of Teen Dating Violence

A prominent theme that emerged in a review of the literature was the use of words such as “hidden” or “invisible” when writing about youth relationship violence. For example, three articles’ titles convey this problem, including “Teen Dating Violence: The Hidden Epidemic”, “Invisible Victims: Holding the Educational System Liable for Teen Dating Violence at School”, and “An Invisible Problem: Everyday Violence against Girls in Schools” all refer to the ambiguity of this social issue (Sousa 1999; Carlson 2003; Klein 2006). While the articles differ

slightly in content, where Klein explores gender in school shootings and Carlson offers a broad overview of societal responses to the problem, the general admission here is that teen dating violence is a vastly overlooked problem.

The conclusion of Carlson's study suggests specific solutions to teen dating violence, with each suggestion founded on the notion of increasing awareness and decreasing the invisibility of the problem. Carlson (2003) suggests that all middle and high schools educate students on dating violence, that anti-harassment policies extend to include dating violence, schools train staff and faculty on signs and dangers, school districts ask for community involvement to raise awareness, and schools talk to parents and educate them on dating violence.

Love, Violence and Media

The Concept of "Romance" in Media

Three topics align in this essay- the concepts of dating violence, romance and media. The interaction of these concepts is the foundation of my research. Having reviewed teen dating violence, I now move on to romance and media. In a 2006 dissertation on love in contemporary media, Stephanie Griffin identified the various types of romantic love that are found in film. This study is useful when examining the romanticization of youth relationship violence because it gives concrete ideas of what constitutes romance and love in media portrayals.

Certain archetypes can be identified in portrayals of romance. There is the "Seeker", which is searching for true love or "enjoying the sexual infatuation of early relationships" (Griffin 2006: iii). "Fairy tale" love occurs when couples overcome obstacles to find each other or be together. "Mature" love occurs in long-term companions, when partners are comfortable in their relationship. In the *Twilight* series' four novels, we see all of these archetypes played out in the relationship between Bella and Edward. Griffin (2006) also points to two cultural ideals for long term love, one being "Romantic" and based on emotional and physical responses, and the

second “Companionate”, built on closeness and friendship. Again, the relationship between Bella and Edward could be considered either, depending on where in the series you choose to examine it. Because this relationship falls into so many categories of love, it is possible that, within its readership, it appeals to all of its audiences’ concepts of love. This conclusion may help explain the dedication to the series found in *Twilight* fans.

News Media Coverage of Intimate Partner Violence

This understanding of the love archetypes found in media, and specifically applying these concepts to *Twilight*, helps in understanding the delicate interaction of love and violence in the series. However, the media’s exploration of love must be understood in relation to the exploration of domestic violence. While the difference between news media and social media must be considered, it is the gaps in news media reporting that allow for social media to present inaccurate representations of violence, and have people accept it as the truth. In a 2002 study on news media reporting of intimate partner violence in Washington state, coverage by 40 newspapers in 1998 were examined for their descriptions of domestic violence (Bullock and Cubert 2002). An overall trend noted in this analysis was that coverage made these incidents of intimate partner violence seem isolated and as though they were happening to the ‘other’. According to Bullock and Cubert, police officers aligned with a “just the facts” description, which tend to overlook the nature of the relationship (490). By only relaying who, what and where, the officers’ reports neglected the ‘why’- the underlying, long-term abuse that was the cause of this particular incident.

Bullock and Cubert (2002) also criticize journalists’ approaches to domestic violence coverage, noting that their framing of the incident made those involved seem different from those reading the articles. Both victims and perpetrators were described by their ethnic and

social background, and any past criminal or drug behavior was noted. In this way, domestic violence is portrayed as something that happens far away, to someone else.

In addition to neglecting key information in descriptions of incidents of violence, researchers have noted the lack of discussion of the social context of domestic violence when reporting it in news media (Wozniak 2007). Bullock and Cubert (2002) refer to past research on the subject matter, which consistently finds bias on the part of journalists and officers influencing the descriptions of intimate partner violence in media. A substantial amount of past literature on the topic comes from the work of Marian Meyers in her 1997 book, *News Coverage of Violence Against Women*. Meyers (1997) utilized in-depth interviews with professionals in the field of domestic violence to understand how the new media is portraying gendered violence. For example, this study looks critically at the language used to describe intimate partner violence, such as the difference between “victim” and “survivor” (Meyers 1997: 8).

These studies by Meyers, Bullock and Cubert all contribute to a dissertation written more recently in 2007, which explores the lack of context given to newspaper reporting of intimate partner violence. Jessica Wozniak finds that newspaper journalists are inaccurately conveying domestic violence simply by ignoring the broad social context of the crime and focusing on the forensics (2007). This study found that newspapers give the impression that this kind of violence occurs in isolated incidents, that it is uncommon. Wozniak points to a 2002 report from the U.S. Department of Justice, which found that 11% of all murder victims are killed by an intimate partner. Wozniak also emphasizes this practice of isolating domestic violence through media by referring to Meyers’ study, which found that news media sources portray the perpetrator as ill or “as a monster” (2007: 14). According to Wozniak, the high profile case of Laci Peterson’s murder by her husband, Scott Peterson, supported Meyers’ idea. By explicitly describing the gruesome murder, which involved dismemberment and the death of an 8 month old fetus, the

media isolated this incident as something inhuman (Wozniak 2007). Meyers' concept of the 'monster' perpetrator and the example of Laci Peterson lend support to questioning the *Twilight* series. If the general public views a violent individual as a monster, and therefore disregards the possibility of domestic violence in his or her own life, then perhaps young women-being told that Edward is in fact a monster- will also disregard the potential for dating violence in their relationships.

Wozniak (2007) also refers to Websdale's 1998 study on media and crime reporting, which stated,

The press rarely tells readers that the typical perpetrator of homicide-suicides are men [yet] such simple details inform the public about the gendered edge to these types of killings and could therefore serve as a powerful educational tool regarding violence against women (Wozniak 2007: 6).

According to Wozniak, news media sources are failing not only to report with precision and context the incident of intimate partner violence, but also losing the chance to increase awareness of the issue by informing the public of domestic violence cycles and causes (2007).

Popular Culture and Relationship Violence

While extensive literature informs us on the subjects of media, intimate partner violence and romance, only one article to date notes how all three interact. A 1999 paper titled "Beauty and the Beast: The romanticization of abuse in popular culture" by Laura Beres, prompts consideration of how media portrayals of unhealthy relationship patterns romanticize violence. This study was of particular use when beginning a case study on the *Twilight* series, because it too looked critically at the joining of romance and violence in popular media. More specifically, the study explores how violence is portrayed as a part of romantic behavior, therefore romanticizing the violence itself. Beres (1999) states that her study was based on an interest in examining "the romantic portrayal of controlling behaviour, and the subtle depictions of power differences, which perhaps is merely the romanticization of gender difference within a patriarchal structure"

(192). These differences in power, analyzed as a lack of agency in the *Twilight* case study, were looked at in Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

There are a number of important differences between Beres' study and my own. Beres approaches the topic through critical pedagogy, as opposed to my sociological lens. Also, she considered films while the bulk of my research is novels. However, many of her conclusions, on the subtext and influence of romanticized domestic violence, are applicable to my review of romanticized teen dating violence.

Beres (1999) rejects the abused woman as a helpless victim or passive individual. Rather, she advocates that abused women, "...are actively engaged in attempting to understand and improve their situations. My concern is that they find popular cultural texts that may reinforce, rather than challenge, their positions within abusive relationships" (195). Beres does not believe these examples of romantic violence will increase a person's willingness to enter into an unhealthy relationship necessarily, but that it will impact those women already in unhealthy relationships. While this may be true of adult relationships, there is a potential difference to account for with youth. Beres writes that those "already in resistance to the notion of being controlled" (1999: 195) will not suddenly become vulnerable to violence. Carlson (2003) believed that teenagers and youth may be particularly vulnerable to violence because of a lack of awareness and education, among other reasons, which could mean that the viewing of romanticized violence does influence their decision-making in relationships.

An exciting correlation between Laura Beres' (1999) study and my own is the discussion of vampirism in romanticized violence. She analyzes Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, and writes that the "first scene between Mina and Dracula shows a romance developing between them, but also highlights Dracula's power, which he uses to attract Mina" (Beres 1999: 203). The similarities to the characters of Edward and Bella are clear in Beres' description of the *Dracula* film. Beres

notes, “the most memorable, significant and romantic aspects are when Dracula controls Mina by saying ‘See me, see me now’ and when he turns Mina into a vampire.” (1999: 204). In the fourth book of the *Twilight* series, *Breaking Dawn*, Bella is dying, and the only way to save her is to turn her into a vampire, which Edward himself does. These relations of power, seen in the utter dominance of male over female, vampire over human, are mirrored in the *Twilight* series. Again, as in the discussion of news media above, we have to wonder if the description of the dominant (the abuser) as a “monster” makes readers and viewers feel distant from this form of violence. The “monster” is the other, something unknown and that they don’t have to worry about in their own daily lives. As Beres concludes, the central message of *Dracula* that abused women may adopt is, “love never dies, love forgives all things and love sometimes means pain and death.” (1999: 205).

Twilight as Anti-Feminist Literature

While most of the media surrounding the *Twilight* saga is positive media- intended to promote and sell the series- there have been a number of blog entries and one article published in *Ms. Magazine* that offer a more critical approach to the series. Carmen Siering wrote an article in 2009 titled “Taking a Bite out of Twilight”, which examined the anti-feminist themes of the novels and the lack of a powerful female character. As fans of the series quickly divided in “Team Edward” and “Team Jacob”, a response to the tenuous love triangle of the series, Siering questioned, “Why not Team Bella?” (2009: 51). Siering finds the message abstinence of the main couple (Edward and Bella) to be “overt, with Edward as the keeper of the couple’s purity.” (2009: 51). Siering also concludes, “Maybe it’s difficult for Edward to see Bella as an equal because Bella has almost no personality” and points to Stephenie Meyer’s own admission that this was purposeful, so readers could feel as if they are Bella (2009: 51).

Online blog posts have examined the character of Bella as well. One such post on “Salon.com” noted the absence of strength in the main character of Bella.

Otherwise directionless and unsure of herself, Bella’s only distinguishing trait is her clumsiness...But Bella is not really the point of the *Twilight* series; she’s more of a place holder than a character. She is purposely made as featureless and ordinary as possible in order to render her a vacant, flexible skin into which the reader can insert herself and thereby vicariously enjoy Edward’s chilly charms. (Miller 2008)

Christine Seifert (2008) of *Bitch Magazine* notes that “abstinence has never been sexier” than it is with *Twilight*. However, Seifert notes, the abstinence theme is somewhat thwarted by Bella’s “1950s housewife” persona. On their honeymoon, Bella and Edward have sex for the first time in the series. In the morning, Bella wakes up to a ruined bed and bruised body. The abstinence message is lost, Seifert claims, in this violent sexual interlude (2008).

Understanding these anti-feminist themes is helpful when exploring the violent themes in the series, not only because they overlap in many ways. The series needs to be understood as a whole, considering all of the potential influences. This means a thorough understanding of the violence, the pale lead female, the anti-feminist messages, the lack of education on teen dating violence, and the potential impact it has due to its popularity - seen in the incredible sales of books, films and related merchandise.

METHODOLOGY

In this case analysis of the *Twilight* series by Stephenie Meyer, all four novels are examined for signs of the presence of an abusive relationship. Content analysis was selected as the type of methodology through which to track abuse. Through this type of analysis, the particular behaviors that work to romanticize violence for readers can be recorded. The content analysis was completed in three parts. The first piece of research was to examine the frequency at which unhealthy behaviors occur in the series. To complete this part of the methodology, I read the four novels-*Twilight*, *New Moon*, *Eclipse*, and *Breaking Dawn*- and marked the incidents

with color-coded notes to track the occurrences of each type of behavior. The second part was to note how extensive the unhealthy behaviors were in the four books. This means that instead of a number of incidents (as seen in the first methodology), specific examples of violence were identified. I recorded whether any warning signs of domestic violence, as determined by the National Domestic Violence Hotline, mirror how Edward and Bella behave. By exploring the specific behavioral issues as well as the frequency, both the breadth and depth of relationship violence can be seen. The final part of my methodology was to trace the media influence of Twilight through advertising, blogs, associated media and the theatrical trailers for three films.

Methodology Part I: Untwisting Twilight- Identifying Unhealthy Behavior Patterns

The general patterns of unhealthy behavior were categorized in six groups: “Obsession, Admiration, Awe, Inadequacy”, “Controlling Behavior”, “Warning of Danger/Talk of Death or Suicide”, “Feelings of Fear”, “Stalking or Condescending Behavior” and “Endangerment, Injuries, Covering Up Injuries”. The reasons that these concepts were grouped together are explained below. Essentially, by tallying when a behavior or thought falls into one of these categories, the prevalence of unhealthy themes in the novels is seen.

The obsessive and volatile nature of the relationship between Bella and Edward is at the heart of what young women find appealing. Therefore, I found it essential to track the mention of obsession, feelings that Bella has of inadequacy, and feelings of awe or reverence that Bella has for Edward. The second category, controlling behavior, includes instances when Edward decides where Bella is going or what she is doing, or when he intimidates her, for example, by driving too fast. “Feelings of fear” are specifically instances where Bella explicitly states that she feels fear because of Edward. The fifth category is slightly broader, including occurrences of Edward following Bella or committing a behavior defined as stalking. Edward justifies following Bella by saying that she always gets herself into trouble or gets hurt, and so he only follows her

for protection. Because this is his reasoning, I found it appropriate to include other examples of Edward acting condescendingly towards Bella. This includes belittling her, ‘put-downs’, or language and actions that treat Bella as though she is a child, including physically carrying her, writing her a lullaby, and asking family members to babysit her. The final category, “endangerment, injuries, covering up injuries” was one I determined was needed once I began tracking the first five. I began to notice a series of incidents when Bella puts herself in danger, is injured, or lies to friends and family to cover up injuries sustained by Edward or as a result of their relationship. In order to track these categories of violence, I assigned each category a color of sticky note, and marked the pages accordingly.

Unhealthy Behavior Categories:

- Obsession, Admiration, Awe, Inadequacy
- Controlling Behavior
- Warnings of Danger/Talk of Death or Suicide
- Feelings of Fear
- Stalking/Condescending Behavior
- Endangerment/Injuries/Covering Up Injuries

Methodology Part II: Tracking *Twilight*'s Specific Instances of Violence

The purpose of the second part of the methodology was to track specific examples of unhealthy behaviors. I began with a list of warning signs from a domestic violence advocacy/awareness organization. For the purpose of this study, I chose the National Domestic Violence Hotline’s list of warning signs, as it is thorough and specifically names behaviors that fit into unhealthy relationship patterns. This list of warning signs included the subcategories of emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse (“What is domestic violence”). Using these lists as a guideline, I recorded quotes from the novels of specific instances of abuse or the indication of abuse. There were a total of forty-five specific behaviors outlined in these four lists. If a behavior is found anywhere in the four books, a specific example of when this occurred was

noted. The behaviors vary in severity, from “punching, choking” to “calling names” or even “scared you by driving recklessly”. These varying behaviors help qualify the behaviors noted in the first part of methodology, to give specific examples instead of generalized numbers of instances.

Methodology Part III: Trailing *Twilight*- An Exploration of the Media

For the final approach of examining romanticized violence, I explored the surrounding media in the *Twilight* series. In reviewing the two films based on the series, theatrical trailers for three films (the third film will be released in June 2010), as well as how the books are advertised, I noted what qualities of the storyline were highlighted to sell the story to a young audience. Essentially, I wanted to understand whether the books and films were advertised as romance or fantasy, and how the violent aspects of the story were portrayed. In viewing the films, I recorded all of the spoken dialogue or depicted actions that could fall under any of the unhealthy behavior patterns identified above. For additional media sources, I examined the author’s official website; bookstores’ advertisements of the series; and merchandise derived from the series.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Agency and Domination in the *Twilight* Series: Seen through the absence of Bella’s voice

Jane Addams’ theoretical frameworks examined the concept of agency. Addams saw the individual as a being that acts with will, desire and sometimes power, to become a social entity (Lengermann and Brantley 1998: 85). In their examination of the writings of Addams, Patricia Lengermann and Jill Brantley find that she moves away from traditional sociological thought, and is distinct from them, “in her refusal to portray the individual as socially determined” (85). The concept of agency and power, as opposed to constraint, are relevant when applied to the *Twilight* series. Agency in this series can be understood through Bella’s lack of agency. She is

given very few choices in the entire series, and only three choices that merit any real consequentiality.

The first is to choose love, yet here she is restricted to two characters, men who place her amid conflict and in physical danger, even unwanted physical attention, to try to win her love. The second choice that Bella has is to either continue or terminate her pregnancy. While this may be the highest point in the entire series in terms of Bella exercising agency, she herself does not see this as a choice. Bella immediately determines that she will continue the pregnancy. Bella exerts agency only when Edward decides the pregnancy is too dangerous, and means to force her to terminate it. Bella cannot physically protect herself from Edward- his physical domination over Bella is a major premise of the novels-and so she enlists the help of his sister, a vampire equal to him in strength, to 'protect' her and the baby *from* him (*Breaking Dawn* 138). For this period of the novel, about two hundred pages, the story is no longer told from Bella's point of view. Rather, it changes to Jacob's observations. It is interesting that in one of the critical and rare decisions actually made by Bella during the novels, her viewpoint and reasoning behind this decision are missing. Again, agency is lost simply by the absence of Bella's voice.

The third choice she is given concerns the end of her life. While most of this essay builds upon the themes of an unhealthy relationship, it is still shocking to note that Bella's story does reach her death. Granted, Bella continues to exist after this point, but her physical body is transformed, her human self is gone. "Bella" herself, as the audience has come to know her, ceases to exist half-way through the fourth book (*Breaking Dawn* 353). This in itself is a choice that Bella makes, by choosing her alternative life as a vampire. She in fact spends time in the first three books convincing Edward that he should be the one to change—understood as kill—her.

Bella's lack of voice and decision-making in the novels can also be explained in part by another concept of Jane Addams', that of *auctoritas*, or "the right of the speaker to make oneself

heard” (Lengermann and Brantley 1998: 66). Addams understood *auctoritas* as the key to affecting change, as the act of engaging in, rather than observing, the decisions being made nearby. Bella seems to lack *auctoritas* entirely until the fourth novel. Again it is her death, her transformation, that finally lends her the confidence and strength she needs to feel equal to Edward, to feel as though she does have a right to participate. Once she is like the others, Bella’s type of actions change dramatically, from demure and deferring to Edward, to assertive and strong. Bella for the first three and a half novels, prior to her ‘death’, is wrecked by insecurity. While we could hope that this change in Bella in the fourth book is positive, its coincidence with her death lends unhopeful thoughts as to the merit of her newfound power.

Feminist sociological thought also offers the concept of dominant and subordinate to understand power dynamics between people or groups of people (Ritzer 2007: 195). Domination occurs in a relationship when “one party...succeeds in making the other party the subordinate, an instrument of the dominant’s will, and refuses to recognize the subordinate’s independent subjectivity” (Ritzer 2007: 195). In the *Twilight* series, we see this concept in Bella’s subjected point of view even as a narrator, her lack of personality, and really her lack of interest in anything beyond Edward. Furthermore, Bella is never described from anyone’s point of view but her own. As a reader, one never quite learns what Bella looks like, except through her own self-doubt about how she pales in comparison to Edward. Edward emerges as a dominant character, an overwhelming and mythical power, who exerts very real patterns of control over Bella. While reading the novels themselves certainly reveals Bella’s lack of personality, an absence of voice or vitality, others have commented on this as well. In her *Ms. Magazine* article on the anti-feminist themes presented in the *Twilight* series, Carmen Siering (2009) wrote that Bella lacks any development as a character. Stephenie Meyer herself, author of the series, gives some insight into Bella’s blankness. In her “Frequently asked questions” page on her official website, the

question was posed, ““What does Bella look like?” Meyer responded, “I left out a detailed description of Bella in the book so that the reader could more easily step into her shoes” (“Frequently Asked Questions”). The fact that the novels are written from a first-person point of view certainly helps with this. While normally this strategy of an author could be understood, in the given context of unhealthy relationship patterns, and of Bella as a blank and undeveloped character, the thought of all these young women and teenage girls ‘stepping into her shoes’ is nothing short of alarming.

Reflections of Popular Culture:
How teens may perceive (and act on) *Twilight*

Jane Addams herself points to the power of popular literature; exploring the concept of the social ethic, she writes,

Literature, too, portrays an equally absorbing though better adjusted desire to know all kinds of life. The popular books are the novels, dealing with life under all possible conditions, and they are widely read not only because they are entertaining, but also because they in a measure satisfy an unformulated belief that to see farther, to know all sorts of men, in an indefinite way, is a preparation for better social judgment-for the remedying of life skills. (Addams 1915: 8).

We can understand that teenagers and youth are engaging with popular literature in the way that Addams describes, and therefore are learning “social judgment” based on the knowledge acquired in that literature. In their desire to know about relationships, young adults accept the books as a reflection of society, and anticipate that their relationships should mirror what they have read. However, Addams also points to the potential failures of learning through literature.

All these hints and glimpses of a large and more satisfying democracy which literature and our own hopes supply, have a tendency to slip away from us and to leave us sadly unguided and perplexed when we attempt to act upon them. (1915: 13).

In the case study of the *Twilight* series, the glimpse into relationships is overshadowed by the occurrences of violence found within four novels. Just as teenagers and young readers search for some social context and understanding of relationships, this series presents an unacceptable

introduction into what constitutes a relationship. Addams writes that when we attempt to understand morals in society, but are left unguided but for literature, “we suffer from the strain and indecision of believing one hypothesis and acting upon another” (1915: 13). In this, young readers do not receive enough guidance outside of popular novels, which could include a curriculum on dating violence in school, to learn what appropriate relationship dynamics are.

This concept of strain that Addams mentions, the indecision and duality that readers may develop in reading popular novels, is similar to the concept of the *bifurcated consciousness* that theorist Dorothy Smith developed. According to Smith, as social beings we establish a line of distinction between “personal, lived and reflected-on experience” and the “established types available in the social stock of knowledge” (Ritzer 2007: 213). Rather than reflect on their own lives and relationships, it is possible that teenagers are mirroring popular culture, understanding and accepting it as the “social stock of knowledge”. The established types of relationships, because they aren’t understood through education are, by default, learned in a more social context through social media. Teenagers see what a relationship ‘should’ be, and it is possible they may begin shaping their personal lives in an attempt to reach that which society-understood as popular culture-says constitutes a relationship.

Dorothy Smith developed a second theory of use in exploring the *Twilight* series, that of the *local actualities of lived experience* and *texts* (Ritzer 2007). This theory finds that *relations of ruling*, which are the “intricately connected social activities that attempt to control human social production”, such as education or government, influence the *local actualities of lived experience* through the creation of *texts* (Ritzer 2007: 209). The local actualities are “the places where actual people act and live their lives”, essentially our daily life and the actions we take (Ritzer 2007: 209). Texts are “written documents issues out of the relations of ruling, having the power to organize relations of production in the every life” (Ritzer 2007: 209). In the case of the *Twilight*

series, the relations of ruling are the media, which are creating texts through popular culture items such as these books. Because teenagers aren't granted access to education on relationships, these texts are structuring their understanding of social life. Due to the lack of official texts, such as a textbook on healthy versus unhealthy relationships, an understanding of relationships that informs daily life must come from someplace else- for example, *Twilight*.

RESULTS

Results of Methodology Part I: Untwisting Twilight- Identifying Unhealthy Behavior Patterns

Twilight Results

In the first book of the series, *Twilight*, Stephenie Meyer introduces us to Bella, an average American girl who has never fallen in love before. Bella meets the beautiful Edward, and learns that he and his family are a coven of vampires who have chosen a “vegetarian” lifestyle of drinking animal blood, but not humans’ blood. The two fall in love almost immediately, and Bella states after their first date, “About three things I was absolutely positive. First, Edward was a vampire. Second, there was part of him—and I didn’t know how potent that part might be—that thirsted for my blood. And third, I was unconditionally and irrevocably in love with him.” (Meyer 2005: 195). This excerpt is an example of the first category of violence that I tracked, “Obsession, Admiration, Awe, Inadequacy”. In the first book, I recorded sixteen examples in this category. For the second category, “Controlling Behavior”, I tracked nine examples, including Edward driving so fast that Bella is afraid. There were twelve examples of the third category, “Warnings of danger and talk of death and suicide”. When they begin dating, Edward is angry at Bella for not telling anyone she is with him. When she asks why, he states, “To give me some small incentive to bring you back.” (Meyer 2005: 214). The fourth category counted every time Bella noted that she felt fear because of something Edward said or did. There were twelve examples of this as well. The fifth category, “Stalking or Condescending Behavior” had

eight examples. The sixth category, in which Bella endangers herself or is injured, had four examples. One example of this was her response to his warnings about telling someone she is with him. She purposely doesn't tell anyone in case Edward does kill her, because she doesn't want him to get into trouble (Meyer 2005: 255). There were a total of **sixty-one examples of violence** in these six categories in the first novel. See Appendix B for an overview of this methodology.

New Moon Results

The second novel of the series yielded **forty-nine examples of violence**. Most notable in *New Moon* is the almost total absence of incidents in the middle third of the book. This absence aligns with the time period that Edward is absent, having left Bella alone for what he claims is her own good. In response to his abandonment, Bella becomes a self-proclaimed adrenaline-junkie. When she puts herself in danger, she begins hallucinating Edward's voice telling her to stop, to be safe. In this novel, Bella begins riding motorcycles and jumping from cliffs in efforts to feel close to Edward. When Bella and Edward are finally reunited, she forgives him instantly, saying "I would rather he killed me now than move one inch from where I was" (Meyer 2006: 489), and their relationship begins where it left off- with her admiring his every move. Another point of interest is the complete lack of Bella's "feelings of fear" in this novel. In fact, after the first novel, Bella does not feel afraid of Edward again in the series until after they are married in the fourth book. Appendix B lists the total counts for all categories in *New Moon*.

Eclipse Results

The third novel of the series, *Eclipse*, had a total of **fifty-one examples of violence**. The numbers for each category, found in Appendix B, stayed relatively close to the numbers found in the first two novels. One exception is again "feelings of fear"- Bella does not feel afraid of Edward once. Another exception is the increase in "Stalking or Condescending Behavior." In

this book, Edward becomes very protective of Bella, and forbids her from seeing her best male friend. Jacob, Edward attests, is too dangerous for Bella to be around. Bella objects, but continues to ask permission of Edward to see Jacob, and does not protest much when Edward physically bars her from leaving her home to go visit Jacob on numerous occasions. When Bella finally does break away from Edward to see Jacob, she discovers him driving directly behind her on her way home (Meyer 2007: 131). See Appendix C for other specific examples of unhealthy relationship patterns.

Breaking Dawn Results

The fourth novel in the series, *Breaking Dawn*, shows a marked difference from the first three. To begin with, I purposefully only tracked violence in the first half of the novel (pages 1-353). This is because on page 353, Bella dies. In a way, this death is not permanent. Edward “saves” Bella, transforming her into a vampire, after her human body dies in childbirth. This gruesome scene depicts a half-human, half-vampire child literally tearing its way out of Bella’s body. The baby breaks two of Bella’s ribs and her pelvic bone during pregnancy, and breaks her spine in labor. Bella, however, loves the child, and is willing to die to bring the baby to term. Edward does nothing to hide the fact that he abhors this decision, and would force her to abort the baby at the first opportunity. While I only counted one incident of Bella fearing Edward, this incident lasts for over two hundred pages of the novel, in which she has Edward’s sister as a bodyguard, to protect her from Edward forcing her to have an abortion. While Bella’s death in the story is presented as a second life, as something that Bella herself chooses, the fact that her human self ceases to exist cannot be overlooked or understated. There are **a total of 181 instances of unhealthy behaviors in the series**, and they culminate in this death of Bella. Her fragile, clumsy self is gone, along with her insecurities. She is replaced by a powerful, confident vampire, still Bella, but altered. She finally feels that she is equal to Edward. At this point in the

series, I no longer track relationship violence because it stopped occurring. With Bella as an equal, the obsession, inadequacy, stalking, dominant behaviors of Edward completely disappear.

Results of Methodology Part II: Tracking *Twilight's* Specific Instances of Violence

For the second part of methodology, a list of warning signs of an abusive relationship from the National Domestic Violence Hotline were used as guidance for tracking specific instances of violence in the series. There were a total of 45 warning signs, divided into four sub-categories. Those categories were for an emotionally abusive relationship, physically abusive relationship, sexually abusive relationship, and then questions you should ask yourself to determine if your relationship might be abusive (“Am I in an abusive relationship?”). While conducting this research, I noted that many of the warning signs are similar, such as “humiliates you” or “embarrasses you,” and in these cases, I listed both when that type of behavior occurred. Out of these 45 behaviors, I found that 31 occurred in the *Twilight* series’ four novels. These examples, listed as excerpts from the books, can be found in Appendix C.

While there were numerous examples from the categories of emotional and physical abuse, as well as the specific behaviors one should question in a relationship, there were very few examples of sexual abuse. However, that does not mean that sexuality is not an important aspect of domination in the relationship. Rather, these few examples reveal a great deal about Edward’s degree of control. Bella is actively interested in having sex from early on in their relationship, but Edward refuses because he says he would lose control of his strength in sex, and likely kill her (Meyer 2007 *Eclipse*: 187)¹. When they do have sex, it is only once they are married. What is most shocking- not just for this section of methodology, but perhaps out of the entire study- is the description of Bella the morning after they have sex. Bella awakens covered in bruises. The

¹ The American Sociological Association citation formatting requires only author, year of publication and page number. Due to the rapid changes between the four *Twilight* novels in this section, I include the title of the novel as well to avoid confusion.

pillows are torn to pieces and feathers are everywhere (Meyer 2008 *Breaking Dawn*: 89). The next time they have sex, Bella's nightgown is shredded and the headboard of the bed was broken to pieces by Edward (Meyer 2008 *Breaking Dawn*: 109). These examples of very aggressive behavior during sex depict a scene more akin to rape than consensual sex. Bella tries to cover her bruises to keep Edward from feeling guilty (Meyer 2008 *Breaking Dawn* 89).

The behaviors found based on the lists of emotional and physical abuse are much more positive in message. In one instance, Edward disables Bella's car so that she cannot go see her best friend, a male who openly admits he loves Bella (Meyer 2007 *Eclipse*: 62). In many cases, Edward drives at speeds that make Bella uncomfortable and nervous (Meyer 2005 *Twilight*: 181). In one circumstance, Edward pushes Bella in an effort to protect her from his suddenly violent brother. Bella crashes into a table, shattering glass, and cutting her arm from wrist to elbow (Meyer 2006 *New Moon*: 28-29). Later she tells her father that she had tripped (Meyer 2006 *New Moon*: 47). At one point, Bella's close friend warns her about Edward's controlling behavior, saying, "Is he your warden, now, too? You know I saw this story on the news last week about controlling, abusive teenage relationships and--" (Meyer 2007 *Eclipse*: 224). Bella cuts him off and tells him to leave. These examples constitute five of the sixteen excerpts provided in Appendix C.

Results of Methodology Part III: Trailing *Twilight*- An Exploration of the Media

For the third piece of methodology in this analysis, I explored the media related to the *Twilight* saga. In addition to looking at Stephenie Meyer's official website, I reviewed the three theatrical trailers for the films, the two films, and bookstores' descriptions of the novels. The goal behind these viewings was to determine the selling points of the series, to understand what message it is that media sources are projecting to teenagers and youth to encourage them to buy the books and films. I found the theme of the publicity of *Twilight* to mirror my first two

methodologies' tracking of violence. The first theatrical trailer- for *Twilight*, the film- highlights the danger that Bella faces in dating Edward, and the excitement of the mystery that is surrounding him ("Twilight Videos: Trailer"). The trailer for *New Moon* presents a Bella whose life is diminished entirely by the absence of Edward. She struggles to function without him ("Twilight Saga: *New Moon*: Videos: Trailer"). The third trailer, for *Eclipse*- which is set to release in June 2010- focuses on the love triangle between Bella, Edward and Jacob. In this trailer, it is Jacob's voice asking Edward if he has considered that Jacob might be better for Bella ("Twilight Saga: *Eclipse*: Videos: Theatrical Trailer"). The absence of Bella's voice in the trailer is a reflection of the books, that Bella lacks agency and choice in these life decisions.

The two films that have been released are based on the first two books, *Twilight* and *New Moon*, respectively. These films closely mirror the storyline of the books, but certain language of the film clearly sensationalizes the unhealthy behaviors of the relationship. In one scene, Edward carries Bella through the forest to a secluded area. The dialogue then reads:

Edward Cullen: I'm the world's most dangerous predator, Bella. Every thing about me invites you in. My voice, my face, even my smell. As if I would need any of that... as if you could out run me... as if you could fight me off. I'm designed to kill.

Isabella Swan: I don't care.

Edward Cullen: I've killed people before.

Isabella Swan: It doesn't matter.

Edward Cullen: I wanted to kill you at first. I've never wanted a human's blood so much, before.

Isabella Swan: I trust you.

Edward Cullen: Don't. (Hardwicke 2008).

There is similarly alarming dialogue found in the second film, *New Moon*. When breaking up with Bella, Edward says "You're just not good for me", and Bella replies, "I'm not good enough for you." (Weitz 2009). Edward says nothing in response, letting Bella believe this is true.

My exploration of online bookstores' descriptions of the first novel did not yield any more positive messages for youth. The focus remains on danger, the potential for violence, and

the obsessive nature of Bella and Edward's love. Three online book descriptions emphasize these messages distinctly. Amazon.com advertises *Twilight* with the description,

As Shakespeare knew, love burns high when thwarted by obstacles. In *Twilight*, an exquisite fantasy by Stephenie Meyer, readers discover a pair of lovers who are supremely star-crossed. Bella adores beautiful Edward, and he returns her love. But Edward is having a hard time controlling the blood lust she arouses in him, because--he's a vampire. At any moment, the intensity of their passion could drive him to kill her, and he agonizes over the danger. But, Bella would rather be dead than part from Edward, so she risks her life to stay near him, and the novel burns with the erotic tension of their dangerous and necessarily chaste relationship. ("Review: *Twilight*")

Borders.com describes *Twilight* as,

Isabella Swan's move to Forks, a small, perpetually rainy town in Washington, could have been the most boring move she ever made. But once she meets the mysterious and alluring Edward Cullen, Isabella's life takes a thrilling and terrifying turn. Up until now, Edward has managed to keep his vampire identity a secret in the small community he lives in, but now nobody is safe, especially Isabella, the person Edward holds most dear. The lovers find themselves balanced precariously on the point of a knife -- between desire and danger. Deeply romantic and extraordinarily suspenseful, *Twilight* captures the struggle between defying our instincts and satisfying our desires. This is a love story with bite. ("About the book: *Twilight*")

Finally, Target.com describes the book as,

Seventeen-year-olds Bella Swan and Edward Cullen are enmeshed in an intense, hungry love that leaves them both destroyed, yet passionately longing for more. Bella's scent and very being excites Edward, a vampire who, along with his family, abstains from feasting on humans. After a difficult start, the two become inseparable, learning more and more about each other as the days pass, all the while knowing that with every thrilling moment might end with Bella's death. The beautiful, evergreen landscape of Washington state's Olympic Peninsula permeates this gripping, fast-paced drama as it torpedoes through the notions of family, relationships, and sacrificing everything imaginable for true love. ("Description: *Twilight*")

All of these descriptions, the theatrical trailers, and the two released films, **present a pattern of intertwining danger and love**. Another description on Borders.com exhibits Bella's experience as a "terrifying romantic turn". The Amazon.com description highlights multiple examples of the unhealthy relationship patterns of the book, referring to the "blood lust" that Bella "arouses" in Edward. The third description from Target.com finds Bella, "sacrificing everything

imaginable for true love”. These descriptions of the novels are targeting young women- the central audience for the entire series- by promising a combination of violence and romance. They are selling the gothic love of the novel, and encouraging youth to partake in understanding this storyline without any social context for understanding relationships.

CONCLUSION

Edward and Bella present an incredible opportunity for youth to learn about relationships. Given the correct social context, a textbook description of a healthy relationship versus an unhealthy one, youth could read and enjoy the *Twilight* saga without the potential for the romanticism of violence. However, romanticized violence, as Laura Beres (1999) attests in her exploration of *Dracula* and *Beauty and the Beast*, presents a particular problem when considering the impact it may have on women in abusive relationships. According to Christine Carlson’s 2003 study, youth have a particular vulnerability to relationship violence because of their lack of experience. A series of experts agree that intimate partner violence is misrepresented in the media, and many others criticize the lack of public discourse on dating violence. These factors, considered alongside the results of this study on the prevalence of violent themes in the *Twilight* series, reveal a need for increased discourse both on teen dating violence and on the themes found in these books.

Sociological theory helps in understanding why Bella’s lack of agency is so critical in exploring young adults’ perceptions of the central character. Identifying with a subordinate female character-particularly one in an abusive relationship- is an unhealthy practice for teenagers reading the books. Jane Addams’ concepts of popular literature, and an analysis of the series as a *text* informing the local actualities of teenagers’ lives, all help to discern the potential negative impacts that the series can have on youth understandings of relationships.

In conducting this content analysis, I determined certain limitations of my research. Due to time constrictions, I was unable to fully explore Bella's relationship with Jacob Black, the third party to a heated love triangle in the novels. While the extent of unhealthy behaviors between Jacob and Bella is not to the degree of Edward and Bella, some were evident as I read the series. In the third novel, *Eclipse*, Jacob openly admits his love for Bella. When she chooses Edward, he threatens to let himself be killed in an impending battle with vampires. He says he will try to live only if she convinces him that she could love him, by asking him to kiss her. Bella says, "I knew he would take advantage of the situation. I expected it. I held very still—my eyes closed, my fingers curled into fists at my sides—as his hands caught my face and his lips found mine with an eagerness that was not far from violence" (*Eclipse* 526). There are similar examples through the series, not occurring as often as with Edward, but still alarming in their unquestioned presence in Bella's life. A second gap in research is the perception that teenagers themselves have of the series. A study on this age groups' obsession with Edward and Bella would be very informative about the influence the series has on relationship behaviors for youth.

In the findings for my case study of the *Twilight* series, hundreds of examples of violence and obsession produce a body of unhealthy relationship patterns that romanticize violence for young readers. Media representations of the series, as well as advertisements of the series, emphasize these negative behaviors as selling points of the storyline. The *Twilight* saga actively romanticizes youth relationship violence by incorporating unhealthy relationship patterns into a love relationship.

A potential continuance this study would be a survey of teenagers' definitions of violence and romance, and what constitutes a healthy relationship. Focus groups of teenagers who have read the four novels, with discussions about the *Twilight* saga and unhealthy relationships in general, might offer the most insight into the impact of this popular series. The

study could also explore specifically how youth react to the relationship between Bella and Edward- what they are attracted to about the couple. While I would never advocate that these books be banned from schools or any teenager or young adult dissuaded from reading them, I would, based on this study, advocate that parents and students alike begin dialogues about the series. Most importantly, the *Twilight* series should generate discussion about healthy relationships versus unhealthy relationships, and how to recognize signs and patterns of abuse.

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Appendix A
Methodology II:
“Tracking *Twilight*’s Specific Instances of Violence”

“National Domestic Violence Hotline”
Warning Signs for an Abusive Relationship

You may be in an emotionally abusive relationship if your partner:

- Calls you names, insults you or continually criticizes you.
- Does not trust you and acts jealous or possessive.
- Tries to isolate you from family or friends.
- Monitors where you go, who you call and who you spend time with.
- Does not want you to work.
- Controls finances or refuses to share money.
- Punishes you by withholding affection.
- Expects you to ask permission.
- Threatens to hurt you, the children, your family or your pets.
- Humiliates you in any way.

You may be in a physically abusive relationship if your partner has ever:

- Damaged property when angry (thrown objects, punched walls, kicked doors, etc.).
- Pushed, slapped, bitten, kicked or choked you.
- Abandoned you in a dangerous or unfamiliar place.
- Scared you by driving recklessly.
- Used a weapon to threaten or hurt you.
- Forced you to leave your home.
- Trapped you in your home or kept you from leaving.
- Prevented you from calling police or seeking medical attention.
- Hurt your children.
- Used physical force in sexual situations.

You may be in a sexually abusive relationship if your partner:

- Views women as objects and believes in rigid gender roles.
- Accuses you of cheating or is often jealous of your outside relationships.
- Wants you to dress in a sexual way.
- Insults you in sexual ways or calls you sexual names.
- Has ever forced or manipulated you into having sex or performing sexual acts.
- Held you down during sex.
- Demanded sex when you were sick, tired or after beating you.
- Hurt you with weapons or objects during sex.
- Involved other people in sexual activities with you.
- Ignored your feelings regarding sex.

Appendix A
Methodology II:
“Tracking *Twilight*’s Specific Instances of Violence”

Does your partner:

- Embarrass you with put-downs?
- Look at you or act in ways that scare you?
- Control what you do, who you see or talk to or where you go?
- Stop you from seeing your friends or family members?
- Take your money or Social Security check, make you ask for money or refuse to give you money?
- Make all of the decisions?
- Tell you that you’re a bad parent or threaten to take away or hurt your children?
- Prevent you from working or attending school?
- Act like the abuse is no big deal, it’s your fault, or even deny doing it?
- Destroy your property or threaten to kill your pets?
- Intimidate you with guns, knives or other weapons?
- Shove you, slap you, choke you, or hit you?
- Force you to try and drop charges?
- Threaten to commit suicide?
- Threaten to kill you?

Appendix B
Methodology I Results
“Untwisting Twilight- Identifying Unhealthy Behavior Patterns”

	Twilight [Total: 61]	New Moon [Total: 49]	Eclipse [Total: 50]	Breaking Dawn p. 1-353 [Total: 21]
Obsession, Admiration, Awe, Inadequacy (purple)	16	18	9	5
Controlling Behavior (green)	9	10	12	3
Talk of Danger, Death or Suicide (orange)	12	12	13	6
Feelings of Fear (yellow)	12	0	0	1
Stalking/ Condescending Behavior (pink)	8	3	14	0
Endangers Self/Injured/Covers Up Injury (blue)	4	6	2	6

Appendix C
Methodology II:
“Tracking *Twilight*’s Specific Instances of Violence”
Results

Behavior	Book	Page No.	Quote
Expects you to ask permission	Eclipse	p. 224	“‘I’ll ask,’ I said doubtfully. He made a noise in the back of his throat. ‘Is he your warden, now, too? You know I saw this story on the news last week about controlling, abusive teenage relationships and--’ ‘Okay!’ I cut him off, and then shoved his arm. ‘Time for the werewolf to get out!’ He grinned. ‘Bye, Bells. Be sure you ask <i>permission</i> .’”
Pushes, slaps, bites, kicks or chokes you	New Moon	p. 28-29	“He threw himself at me, flinging me back across the table. It fell, as I did, scattering the cake and the presents, the flowers and the plates. I landed in a mess of shattered crystal...Beyond the shock, there was also pain. I’d tumbled down to the floor by the piano, with my arms thrown out instinctively to catch my fall, into the jagged shards of glass. Only now did I feel the searing, stinging pain that ran from my wrist to the crease inside my elbow.” [Later, Bella’s father asks her about the injury, and she replies, “I tripped. It’s nothing.” (p. 47)]
Controls where you go or who you see Damages your property when angry Stops you from seeing friends	Eclipse	p. 62	“I had an hour probably. I could make a quick run down to La Push and be back before Edward realized I had gone... Like any fugitive, I couldn’t help looking over my shoulder a few times while I jogged to my truck... And then a small motion in my peripheral vision made me jump. ‘Gah!’ I gasped in shock when I saw that I was not alone in the cab. Edward sat very still, a faint bright spot in the darkness, only his hands moving as he turned a mysterious black object around and around. He stared at the object as he spoke... ‘I’ll put your car back together in time for school, in case you’d like to drive yourself,’ he assured me after a minute.”
Threatens to commit suicide	New Moon	p. 18	“‘I don’t envy him the <i>girl</i> - just the ease of the suicide...you humans have it so easy!’ ... ‘It’s something I had to think about once...’ ‘Well, I wasn’t going to live without you.’ He rolled his eyes as if that fact were childishly obvious. ‘But I

			wasn't sure how to <i>do</i> it..."
Looks at you or act in ways that scare you	Breaking Dawn	p. 131	"I would wait somewhere else for his mood to pass. I couldn't talk to this icy, focused Edward who honestly frightened me a little."
Abandons you in dangerous of unfamiliar places	New Moon	p. 73	"He was gone. With shaky legs, ignoring the fact that my action was useless, I followed him into the forest...I had to keep moving. If I stopped looking for him, it was over. Love, life, meaning...over."
Ignores your feelings regarding sex Criticizes you Embarrasses you	Eclipse	p. 187	" 'Don't be ridiculous, Bella,' he said, disapproval strong in his voice--clearly, he understood what I meant. 'I was just trying to illustrate the benefits of the bed you don't seem to like. Don't get carried away.' "
Monitors where you go	Eclipse	p. 131	" It came out of nowhere. One minute there was nothing but bright highway in my rearview mirror. The next minute, the sun was glinting off a silver Volvo right on my tail...I considered pulling over. But I was too much of a coward to face him right away...Chicken, through and through, I drove straight to Angela's without once meeting the gaze I could feel burning a hole in my mirror."
Keeps you from leaving your home Does not trust you, acts jealous and possessive Isolates you from family or friends	Eclipse	p. 28	"His face changed while I spoke turning heard again, statue-like. 'You know it's out of the question for you to be around a werewolf unprotected, Bella...Do you want us to start a war?' 'Of course not!' 'Then there's really no point in discussing the matter further.'"
Forces you to leave your home Makes all of	Twilight	p. 383-84	" 'I'm not leaving Charlie!' I yelled. He ignored me completely... 'Does anyone want to hear my plan?' 'No,' Edward growled... " 'I <i>demand</i> that you take me home.' I tried to sound firm..."

the decisions			He didn't look up. When he spoke, his voice sounded worn. 'You're leaving tonight, whether the tracker sees or not... You have fifteen minutes. Do you hear me?' "
Humiliates you in any way	Eclipse	p. 275	"I tilted by head back and glared at him, embarrassment making me lash out, belligerent. 'I'm not <i>that girl</i> , Edward... People don't just get married at eighteen! Not smart people, not responsible, mature people! I wasn't going to be that girl! That's not who I am..."
Intimidates you with weapons	Eclipse	p. 447	"'Bella, I could kill you,' he whispered. 'I don't think you could.' Edward's eyes tightened. He lifted his hand from my face and reached quickly behind himself for something I couldn't see. There was a muffled snapping sound, and the bed quivered beneath us. Something dark was in his hand; he held it up for my curious examination. It was a metal flower, one of the roses that adorned the wrought iron posts and canopy of his bed frame. His hand closed for a brief second, his fingers contracting gently, and then it opened again. Without a word, he offered me the crushed, uneven lump of black metal."
Threatens to take away or hurt your children	Breaking Dawn	p. 133	"I'd gotten it wrong before. He didn't care about the baby at all. He wanted to <i>hurt</i> him. The beautiful picture in my head shifted abruptly, changed into something dark. My pretty baby crying, my weak arms not enough to protect him."
Acts like the abuse is your fault	Twilight	p. 190	" 'I don't want to hear that you feel that way.' His voice was low but urgent. His words cut me. 'It's wrong. It's not safe. I'm dangerous, Bella --please, grasp that.'"
Hurts you during sex Uses physical force in sexual situations	Breaking Dawn	p. 89	"Under the dusting of feathers, large purplish bruises were beginning to blossom across the pale skin of my arm. My eyes followed the trail they made up to my shoulder, and then down across my ribs... So lightly that he was barely touching me, Edward placed his hand against the bruises on my arm, one at a time, matching his long fingers to the patterns."
Scares you by driving recklessly	Twilight	p. 181	"I looked away from his face for the first time, trying to find words. I happened to notice the speedometer. 'Holy crow!' I shouted. 'Slow down!' 'What's wrong?' He was startled. But the car didn't

			<p>decelerate.</p> <p>'You're going a hundred miles an hour!' I was still shouting. I shot a panicky glance out the window...'Are you trying to kill us?' I demanded."</p>
Controls finances	Eclipse	p. 440	<p>" 'You know what I want.'</p> <p>'<i>Matrimony</i>.' I made it sound like a dirty word.</p> <p>'Yes.' He smiled a wide smile. 'To start with.'</p> <p>The shock spoiled my carefully composed expression.</p> <p>'There's more?'</p> <p>'Well,' he said, and his face was calculating. 'If you're my wife, then what's mine is yours...like tuition money. So there would be no problem with Dartmouth.'"</p>
Punishes you by withholding affection	Eclipse	p. 358	<p>"I should have waited till we were alone somewhere, maybe with the rest of his family. And nothing breakable close by-- like windows...cars...school buildings. His face brought back all my fear and then some. Through his expression was past the fear now-- it was pure fury that was suddenly plain on his features."</p>
Threatens to hurt you	Twilight	p. 272	<p>"His eyes flashed up to mine. 'I was appalled. I couldn't believe I had put us in danger after all, put myself in your power--you of all people. As if I needed another reason to kill you.'"</p>
Believes in rigid gender roles	Eclipse	p. 451	<p>""How did this happen?' I grumbled. 'I thought I was holding my own tonight--for once--and now, all of a sudden--'</p> <p>'You're engaged,' he finished.'"</p>