Picturebooks:  
A Looking Glass for Examining Gender with Children  
by  
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Abstract

This project focuses on the need for raising gender awareness in primary classrooms through critical literacy in order to counteract the long-term effects of repeated gender bias or stereotypical messages. In the literature review I consider gender, feminist and pedagogical theories; discuss the importance of a poststructuralist/dialogic approach to deconstruct gender bias and stereotypes encountered in primary classrooms; and reviews four decades of research that examine the gendered nature of Caldecott Award winning picturebooks. I created a tool, *A Guide to Expose Gendered Messages in Picturebooks*, to help teachers discover gendered messages in picturebooks and to prepare teachers for addressing gender issues with children in primary classrooms. Following a description of the tool is the analyses of three Canadian picturebooks, that have been recognised as Governor General Award finalists in the category of Children’s Literature – Illustrations, for gendered messages: *Julia, Child* (Maclear & Morstad, 2014), *Miss Mousie’s Blind Date* (Beiser & Berman, 2012) and *Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin* (Uegaki & Leng, 2014). The analyses of the gendered messages in the three picturebooks provide examples for how teachers can guide classroom discussions towards discovering gender stereotypes and gender bias with children. Finally, in the reflection section I discuss how theories, concepts and personal experiences contributed to the production of this resource.
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It goes without saying that my husband, Steve, deserves my greatest gratitude for not only believing in me, encouraging me, and editing for me but for understanding what this accomplishment meant to me, and ensuring that I had everything I needed to make it happen. A true feminist, indeed. And thanks also go to my kids, Oliver and Keaton, without whom I would not have anyone to read bedtime stories with that make me shake my head with disbelief! It is my favourite time of day.
Thank you to my Dad, who never doubted it could, and should be done, and for all of his and Kelly’s help with the boys when I wondered how I was going to manage it all!

I also need to thank Georgette Walker for suggesting we follow through with a Master of Education after all.
Dedication

Dedicated to my mom,

Trudy Elaine Parks, CPA,

a true believer in the power of education,

who was about to embark on her own Master’s adventure but never got the chance to start.
Chapter 1

Why Gender?

While I have always considered myself a feminist, I never had a true understanding of what it meant beyond the narrow view that women have the right to fair and equal opportunities. I also did not understand how my passions would come together to unveil the significance of gender in my life, causing me to closely examine what I now believe to be society’s greatest current social justice issue. The matter of gender and its many implications were made aware to me through the intersection of parenthood, my career as a primary teacher, the picturebooks I share with the children in my life and a course examining diverse voices in education. I now understand that being a feminist means working to create greater balances of power, regardless of one’s gender, class, race or ability so that everyone has equal opportunities. Engaging in the process of completing my Master of Education degree has propelled me to become a greater advocate for those whose stories are not told and those who are the most vulnerable. Where I feel I am most able to instigate change is within my classroom, my school and my local community.

In this chapter I discuss the elements that instigated my interest in gender issues and clarify the specific aspects of gender I address in my project. I then explore how gender is addressed in both curriculum theory at large and, specifically, the primary curricular documents for the province of British Columbia. A discussion of the absence of critical literacy from British Columbia’s curricular documents is followed by an explanation of why awareness of the issues of gender in the classroom is vital to teachers’ practice.

Motherhood

Becoming a mother was a transformative experience for me both personally and professionally. Before my pregnancies, I had naively imagined I would have a boy and a girl and
that the ‘balance’ would eliminate any sexism or equality issues that may arise as both children 
would be exposed to the likes and dislikes, and what I then believed to be the traits specific to the 
other gender. Imagine my surprise when I had two boys! Suddenly I was out of my comfort 
zone. I realized these beautiful babies were firmly placed at one end of the gender spectrum 
clearly labeled ‘BOY’ and that this polarity contained trucks, motorbikes and the expectation of 
masculine attitudes and behaviours, none of which I was intimately familiar with. My eyes were 
opened to a whole new perspective on the issue of gender, a perspective that disrupted my 
understanding of feminism and gender. I worried that although my husband and I believe in 
equality, the daily messages bombarding western society might be a stronger influence than the 
ones communicated to our children at home. I wanted to instil in my children skills and values 
such as confidence, open-mindedness and courage to deflect the pressures of conformity and 
cynicism.

Like any parent, I have big dreams for my children. I wish for them to grow up with an 
appreciation and understanding of the diversity of humanity, the equality of all regardless of 
gender and to have limitless options for their future. I want my sons to understand that it is vital 
for well rounded human beings to openly display traits of empathy, caring and nurturing. I want 
them to know that these traits do not signify weakness or vulnerability but in fact strength, 
honour and humility. I wish for them to be confident and comfortable being themselves without 
fear of judgement or reprisal, and to recognise that every person deserves the same. I quickly 
recognized how my role as a parent was much greater than simply keeping my children safe and 
happy, and that I needed to be informed.

Teacherhood

Recognizing the influence of societal expectations on my family, I further realized how 
gender issues are also affecting all children in our school system and that overall, gender is not
an issue raised or represented in today’s British Columbia curriculum. Through my research, I came to understand the existence of a hidden curriculum at work, silently shaping children’s gender identities and perpetuating sex roles that encourage patriarchy and sexism. I have also realized that as a primary educator, I can and need to address these issues in my classroom.

I take great pride in being a primary teacher. I love being surrounded by the energy, imagination and wonder of children. I enjoy building relationships and fostering inquiry. I love sharing great books and talking about how words move us and pictures speak to us in ways that are unique for everyone. Most importantly, I want my students, like my own children, to be confident, creative and thoughtful human beings. In her study of gender identity in children’s writing, Kanaris (1999) wrote that, “the classroom is one of the most significant places where children learn socially acceptable behaviour, including gender-appropriate behaviour” (p. 254). As a teacher, I want to open children’s minds to the world of possibilities available to them and help my students see greater opportunity beyond the limitations set by society.

For the Love of the Picturebook

As a primary teacher I have been able to share my love and passion for picturebooks in the classroom but having my own children allowed me to engage with picturebooks in a more intimate way. However, I quickly realized that the majority of books I was sharing with my sons were male-centered with adventurous boys leading the way or getting into mischief and kind, nurturing mothers who demonstrated understanding of their sons’ need to behave like animals with a soft smile and doe-like eyes. Regardless of whether the book was considered a classic or postmodern selection, gendered stereotypes were evident throughout. I began to wonder about the information my children were absorbing either implicitly or explicitly. Would they begin to accept that mothers wear aprons daily and do not often seem to have a job outside of the home? How would they rationalize this information with me and my own profession? Would they
possibly start acting aggressively or try riskier behaviours such as the ones modelled by the male characters in picturebooks? Would they develop a restricted view of how grown men should behave? I realized I needed to learn more about gender: what it is, how does it work, how does it affect our perceptions and our identities, and what could I do about it? Knowing and understanding more about gender would help me to be both a better parent and teacher.

**Gender and Education Research**

A wide range of gender issues has been explored in education. Researchers have closely examined the differences in girls’ and boys’ academic achievements (Coulter, 2012; Hammersley, 2001; Monkman & Hoffman, 2013; Pollard, 2013; Sadker & Zittleman, 2013; Skelton, 2006), the feminisation of the educational system (Arnot & Mac an Gaill, 2006; Martino, 2006; Martino & Kehler, 2006; Skelton, 2006), and the effects of gender on students’ writing and how language helps to shape gender identity (Jones & Myhill, 2007; Kanaris, 1999; Peterson, 2001). Sadker and Zittleman (2013) state that “gender is a demographic that binds all schools and challenges all educators” (p. 107) as it crosses international lines of ethnicity, social class and economic status. Indeed, researchers have found that internationally, poor literacy levels and poverty are most common among poor women of colour privileging white, middle-classed males (Davies & Saltmarsh, 2006, pp. 238-239). However, it is important to acknowledge that gender issues affect all children to varying degrees regardless of gender or class because “gender bias short-circuits both boys and girls and both move forward when gender restrictions are removed” (Sadker & Zittleman, 2013, p. 107).

**Gender and the child.**

While awareness of gender is important for people of all ages, research findings indicate that gender is especially important to address with young children. The issue of gender is of significant concern when working with young children as they are constantly constructing gender
schemata in order to make sense of the world around them and understand their place in that world (Frawley, 2008). The information children select, filter, categorize, and store in the filing system of the brain contributes to their identity and growing understanding of the world in which they seek to belong (Frawley, 2008). Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada and Ross (1972) state that “by the time the child enters kindergarten, he or she is able to make sex role distinctions and express sex role preferences” (p. 1125), thus children have firmly established gender positionings when they enter the primary classroom. Children’s early gender identities not only dictate how children themselves behave but also how children expect others to behave in order to sustain heteronormativity. Raising awareness of the power of gender norms and societal conformity in the early stages of children’s lives can help to soften the harm done by “sexist materials that strengthen children’s biases” (Shau & Scott, 1984, as cited in Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus & Young, 2006, p. 757). The earlier children understand they can take control of the messages they see, the greater the potential for limiting gender constraints.

**The language of gender.**

Attention to language and how it is used is critical when engaging in issues of gender with children. Language commonly used in schools works to solidify gender notions of boys and girls and creates a binary, insinuating that students must fit into either one category or the other (Sadker & Zittleman, 2013 as cited in Banks, 2013). These binaries are divided not only into the sexes of male and female, but also into stereotypical behaviours believed to be attributed to the sexes such as adventurous, tough and fearless masculinity and quiet, invisible and weak femininity (Frawley, 2008). Sadker and Zittleman (2013) explain that “use of masculine terms and pronouns, ranging from our forefathers, mankind, businessman to the generic he, denies the full participation and recognition of women” (p. 114). Commonly used resources in classrooms
such as picturebooks, can perpetuate these gender-role stereotypes and reinforce a hidden curriculum of patriarchy.

When looking at the power of language on gender identity, it is not only the vocabulary which is used, but also the way in which people speak with each other. Freire (2013) discusses the importance of dialogue as a means of actively constructing our understanding of the world around us (pp. 157-160). When thinking about gender discourse in the classroom, it is prudent to engage in Freire’s (2013) philosophy of dialogue as a “horizontal relationship” in order to lead to “mutual trust” (p. 159). A relationship built on trust is the foundation from which teachers and students can engage in discussions around identity and the self.

**Gender bias and stereotypes in picturebooks.**

Salisbury and Styles (2012) explain that the scholarly study of picturebooks is evenly split between those in the field of art and design, and theorists within the field of education. For the purpose of this project, I examined both fields in an attempt to create an account of how the hidden gendered messages in picturebooks influence children’s gender identities and what educators can do to mitigate the effects of exposure to picturebooks with gender bias.

The examination of picturebooks for gender laden content is not a new area of scholarly or pedagogical investigation. During the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s a “new awareness of children’s books … acknowledged their importance in forming ideas and ideals for a lifetime” (Roberts, 1984, p. 17) and researchers began to investigate the state of gender bias in children’s literature. As feminist theory began to seep into everyday consciousness, studies emerged that examined the treatment of females in the context of children’s literature. Research examining bias in picturebooks is of great importance to the welfare of young children for many reasons. Firstly, as reported by Gooden and Gooden (2001), Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus and Young (2006), Patt and McBride (1993), and Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada and Ross (1972), the
lack of strong female characters in picturebooks gives girls the appearance of being invisible whereas the frequent appearance of males in traditional roles presents boys as “fighters, adventures and rescuers ... known to be aggressive, argumentative and competitive” (Sadker & Zittleman, 2013, p. 113). Secondly, research also suggests that the influx of stereotypical sex roles at this influential time in the lives of children denies girls the freedom to see limitless potential in their life choices, restricting females to stereotypical roles such as that of housewives or caregivers. Sadker and Zittleman (2013) found that when fathers, who tend to be absent from most picturebooks, are present they tend to be “stoic, hands-off parents, rarely seen hugging or feeding their children” (p. 112), messages that can impact and limit the potential boys see for themselves. Furthermore, the prevalence of the male/female binary represented by characters in picturebooks reinforces biological sex identity and ignores the fact that gender exists on a continuum. Not all people identify as simply male or female meaning that not all children are being fairly represented, nor is everyone given the same opportunity to see themselves reflected in the picturebooks shared in classrooms.

The majority of research conducted on gender and children’s literature has examined American award-winning picturebooks. The Caldecott Award-winners are some of the most commonly used picturebooks in North American institutions as these books are considered the “very best” (Weitzman et al., 1972, p. 1127) picturebooks on the market. Since these selections are purchased en masse by librarians, teachers and parents, they also have the close attention of large numbers of children. Studies have shown that over the last four decades Caldecott winners increasingly have strong female characters. However, these advancements have yet to place females on equal footing with the occurrence of male characters in text or illustrations. As such, Caldecott Award-winners form a sort of literary cannon in the primary classroom that reinforces social norms within a hidden curriculum.
Gender’s Curricular Implications

Attention has been paid to the issue of gender in larger curricular conversations both directly and indirectly and on an international scale. Looking at curriculum in a Canadian context, Chambers (2003) notes that, “curriculum in Canada, as institutional texts and practices, reinforces normative definitions of gender ... thus Canadian curriculum has a great deal in common with curriculum internationally” (p. 223). When curriculum theory is viewed through a reconceptualist lens, the issue of gender appears in discussions of hidden curriculum, otherness and use of language. Where it is not specifically discussed, connections can be made and insight gained between gender and curriculum theory. For example, in his discussion of “complicated conversations ... in which interlocutors are speaking not only among themselves but ... to the selves they have been, are in the process of becoming, and someday may become” (Pinar, 2011, p. 43), Pinar encourages those engaged with curriculum to investigate the process of self-reflection. Self-reflection is indeed a valuable practice in many areas of curriculum studies but in particular, it is important to unravelling gender stereotypes and finding a place from which to begin discussions. Recognizing gender in its many forms through curriculum is a positive step towards more completely acknowledging the many voices that have been ignored.

Gender’s hidden curriculum.

Hidden curriculum, a term coined by Philip W. Jackson (1990), is defined as “a set of norms, customs, beliefs and language forms that are manifested in the structure and functioning of an institution” (Hernandez, Gayolas & Sanchez, 2013, p. 89). Hernandez et al. (2013) write that the “hidden curriculum of gender ... contains and defines the cultural conditions of personal development by determining ... sexual roles, tasks and personal and social expectations” (p. 90). Without turning a critical eye to gender stereotypes encouraged in schools, Hernandez et al. (2013) suggest that “educational institutes, classrooms, texts and sexist practices [remain]
invisible to women which place them in a position full of prejudices on the alleged inferiority of women compared to men” (p. 91). Conversely, these same prejudices also place expectations on males to play the role of aggressor and dominant figure, not only within the confines of the classroom but also in society at large perpetuating powerful hegemonic masculinities and upholding the heterosexual matrix. Both of these concepts are further explained in Chapter 2.

**The British Columbian curricula.**

British Columbia is currently undergoing a significant revisioning of the provincial curriculum. While no current dates are set for implementation, the K-9 draft curriculum will be posted during the summer of 2015 (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013b, Next Steps) and educators are invited to implement the curriculum if they choose. The goal of the new curriculum is to achieve a “more flexible curriculum that prescribes less and enables more, for both teachers and students and [is] a system focused on the core competencies, skills and knowledge that students need to succeed in the 21st century” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013b, Transforming BC’s Curriculum, para. 2).

**Gender in British Columbia’s curriculum.**

Neither do British Columbia’s current curriculum documents nor the new draft documents address the issue of gender directly in the primary grades. However, under the subject of Physical and Health Education the new draft curriculum “includes concepts and content on individual identities, including sexual orientation, gender, values, and beliefs” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013b, Curriculum Drafts, Physical and Health Education, What’s New, para. 1), with the focus on *identity* rather than *gender* in the primary grades. For example, the concept of identity is addressed in Kindergarten and Grade 1 under Physical and Health Education’s Big Ideas in that “becoming aware of who we are helps us develop a positive identity” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013b, Curriculum Drafts, Physical and
Health Education, K-1, Big Ideas, para. 5). The new English Language Arts documents contain the following identity component spanning Kindergarten to Grade 2: “engaging with story and text, shapes and reflects our identity and develops our understanding of self and others” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013b, Curriculum Drafts, English Language Arts, K-2, Big Ideas, para. 3). Lastly, content in the Positive Personal and Cultural Core Competencies also addresses the benefits of understanding identity. Gender is included as a cultural identifier in the competency profile explaining that confident, satisfied and contributing members of society “understand that their relationships and cultural contexts help to shape who they are” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013a, para. 3).

In my opinion, all of the examples above, given the new curriculum’s mandate to “prescribe less and enable more,” provide space for educators to explore gender with primary students with the intent of developing greater understanding of each person’s individual identity and place in the world (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013b, Transforming BC’s Curriculum, para. 2). Such pedagogy follows Jackson’s (1990) belief that teachers need to avoid narrowly focusing on the promotion of socially acceptable behaviour and academic performance, and “transmit knowledge devoid of gender stereotypes; to teach students a non-sexist education and achieve the personal growth of individuals as free persons” (Hernandez, 2013, p. 91). It is important that gender is better understood in order that it is included in the primary curriculum so that teachers are provided with direction for including gender issues in classrooms, and the notion that gender refers to sex identity can begin to be undone.

The overarching issue with gender and its influence on curriculum are the creation of power imbalances. These imbalances are felt within teacher/administrator relationships, the valuing or devaluing of subject areas, the impact on student academic performance, and as addressed in this project, children’s identity. Addressing gender using a critical lens and encouraging children to
see beyond biological sex and gender stereotypes can begin to change attitudes, increase awareness and encourage a reduction of power imbalances for greater equality.

**Critical literacy in British Columbia’s primary curriculum.**

Whereas the current, soon to be phased out, curriculum documents provide a nod to the inclusion of critical literacy in the primary grades by way of an achievement indicator under the *Reading and Viewing* section of the Grades 3 through 7 Language Arts documents, the proposed draft does not make any mention the need for critical literacy. Instead, there is a prevalence of the need for ‘critical thinking’ throughout the overviews of the new English Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, Mathematics, Arts Education and Core Competencies documents (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013b, Curriculum Drafts). Luke (2012) describes ‘critical thinking’ or ‘critical reading’ as an approach to uncover author bias or to decipher the meaning of text by examining the “interaction of background knowledge and textual message” (p. 6). Such an approach, however, often neglects the crucial critical literacy elements of examining how the texts themselves are engaged in political power struggles or how certain texts can “serve cultural and social class-based interests (Luke, 1988 as cited in Luke, 2012, p. 6). Furthermore, the act of critical thinking does not necessarily lead to taking action or promoting social justice which Lewison, Flint and Sluys (2002) describe as one of the four components of true critical literacy.

When examined closely, a few minor provisions or ways to interpret the new curriculum are evident when looking at the Curricular Competencies for Social Studies in Grades 1 through 3 that may ‘enable more’ critical literacy in the primary classroom. For example, in the Curricular Competencies it is stated that, “Students will develop competencies needed to be active, informed citizens” by “us[ing] Social Studies inquiry processes … [to] ask questions, gather,
interpret and analyze ideas, and communicate findings and decisions;” to “ask questions and make inferences about the content and features of different types of sources;” and to “recognize that there may be different perspectives on people, places, issues, and events in their lives” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2013b, Curricular Drafts, Social Studies, Learning Standards, Curricular Competencies, para. 1). The lack of explicit mention of critical literacy could be viewed in two ways. Firstly, the broad nature of these ‘competencies’ can be interpreted as giving a slight nod to or simply scratching the surface of systemic social justice issues. Or secondly, perhaps the lack of explicit direction for educators to engage in critical literacy pedagogies could be viewed as enacting a poststructuralist approach where the government are treating educators as equals and enabling them to engage with the curriculum in such a way that educators themselves are able to create the curriculum in their classrooms with students and without borders. The realities and implications of such changes will play out in classrooms across British Columbia in the years to come.

Until such a time, this explicit lack of promoting critical literacy as an important component to young children’s education poses potential problems for educators who wish to follow a research-based, critical literacy pedagogy. Rather than having curriculum documents to refer to as evidence of the importance of such skills, educators will need to become skilled at manipulating the ‘flexibility’ of the draft curriculum documents which according to the authors, will allow for teaching the necessary skills for literate, functioning members of society. For those educators who understand the need for critical literacy skills through education or professional development it may be possible to make connections between the broad curricular competencies and pedagogy. However, inexperienced teachers or others who have not had exposure to the benefits or need for critical literacy are unlikely to include it in their own practices as it is not encouraged, explained or promoted in the proposed curriculum.
Raising the Level of Awareness

Many educators are guilty of what researchers term “‘gender blindness’ [that] makes it difficult ... to see how sexism influences virtually every aspect of how we teach and learn” (Sadker & Zittleman, 2013, p. 107). Skelton (2006) found that even ‘feminist teachers’ who are trying to avoid gender biased behaviours still act based on “gendered assumptions and expectations [that are] deeply embedded in the psyche” (p. 140). Davies and Saltmarsh (2006) explain that such assumptions render educators oblivious to students’ performance in all areas of literacy. Recognizing one’s own beliefs and behaviour, perceptions of gender, and personal gender positioning is an important first step to investigating gender in the classroom.

Like Frawley (2008), I have come to believe that “schools should become places where all gender stereotypes are challenged rather than perpetuated – places where students and teachers can together examine, discuss and have meaningful discussions that debunk gender stereotypes” (p. 302). I want to share my understandings with peers and colleagues so that the underlying power struggles are addressed in our schools and with students to develop a greater understanding of gender, identity and the power of discourse. I want to reflect my new understandings of feminism and gender in my career. I hope to encourage and inspire other educators to take up gender in their classrooms and work with me to instigate societal change for the future of our students and children.

Conclusion

Chapter 1 served as an introduction to the importance of raising awareness of gendered messages within the medium of picturebooks. I began by outlining the path that brought me to my own awareness of gender, its impact on my sons and the children I teach, and continued with a brief description of how research has explored gender and education. Next, I explained how gender has been explored in curriculum theory as well as how gender and critical literacy are
represented in British Columbia’s current curricular documents as well as the province’s transition to a new curriculum. Lastly, I discussed the need for increased gender awareness by those within the education system so that gender is addressed with children in ways that encourage awareness, understanding, curiosity and critical literacy to best serve today’s child.

Overview of Project

This project consists of four chapters. As described above, in the first chapter I outlined the need for educators to be aware of the influence gender has in the lives of children and why it is important to mitigate its effects through critical literacy. In Chapter 2, the literature review, I describe the theoretical framework and conceptual applications that concern gender and children’s development, and review the research on the significance of the picturebook and its role in children’s developing gender identities. Chapter 3 includes my adapted resource for educators, *A Guide to Expose Gendered Messages in Picturebooks*, as well as my analysis of three Canadian picturebooks using the resource to identify gendered messages within children’s literature. Lastly, in Chapter 4 I make connections between the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and my adapted tool, and I reflect on how the tool can enhance both my personal practice and that of other educators. Ultimately, I wish to bring discussion of gender into the classroom so that educators and children can work together to “create a classroom that fosters a critical consciousness about gender” in order to contravene “gender inequities and ultimately improve the lives of girls and women, boys and men” (Blaise, 2005, pp. 187-189).
Chapter 2

Literature Review

As discussed in Chapter 1, gender is a vastly complex issue both within society at large and within the field of education. I explained how I am looking at gender through a feminist lens, and rather than focusing on issues of equality or gender identity, my overall objective is to develop awareness of the stereotyped images children see in the picturebooks they engage with independently or through their interactions with classroom teachers. My goal is to raise awareness within the educator and in turn the students so that gender bias is recognized, questioned and addressed by an educated generation that recognizes they have the power to alter current realities in today’s society’s power structures.

In this chapter, I identify the theoretical frameworks that contribute to my understanding of a framework for determining the gender bias in picturebooks. Firstly, I discuss a number of theories that have shaped Western society’s understanding of gender throughout history and that provide future direction for better understanding and honouring gender. Next, I review two other important theories that relate to children, their development and learning processes, and which contribute to how gender is and continues to be understood by greater society. Finally, I discuss the importance of the picturebook, its structure, the ways picturebooks influence children and how research has demonstrated a need for concern regarding the gender bias nature of award winning picturebooks.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Many theories have shaped the lens through which I have examined gender education and the picturebook. Foremost is the outstanding work performed over the course of six decades in feminist, gender and masculinities theories. Most influential to my thinking are the works of Bronwyn Davies, Mindy Blaise and R. W. Connell who moved feminism’s focus on gender from
the realms of equality and liberation to “uncovering the gendered nature of school knowledge/curriculum (Bernstein, 1978) and revealing its role in shaping girls’ and boys’ identities and aspirations” (Dillabough, 2001, p. 13). These works of these theorists are enhanced by Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory. Indeed, the tenents of Vygotsky’s theory are foundational to pedagogical practice and can be applied to every facet of education as it exists today.

**Gender theory.**

Alongside other important social justice issues such as poverty and racism, gender is acknowledged as a topic that is vital to address during the primary years to avoid limiting children’s creativity, freedom and potential. However, recognition of gender bias in the primary classroom is a somewhat invisible issue (Blaise, 2013). Through misconceptions and misunderstandings of the definition of gender, teachers often assume that addressing gender in their classrooms means acknowledging issues of sexual orientation. Fearful of bringing talk of ‘sex’ into the classroom, most teachers tend to avoid the issue altogether further perpetuating a hidden curriculum of hegemonic masculinity and sexist attitudes.

When defining the concept of ‘gender’ it is important to distinguish the actual meaning from other often confused terms such as the following: *gender assignment* is “the perception of others based on physical characteristics” (Paechter, 2001, p. 47); *gender role* is “a set of behavioural prescriptions or proscriptions for individuals who have been assigned a particular gender” (Paechter, 2001, p. 47), and *sex* refers solely to the “biological makeup of a person’s reproductive anatomy” (Sex and Gender Distinction, 2015, Introduction, para.2). Numerous people and organizations continue to define ‘sex’ as either strictly male or female as based on sexual organs. However this narrow definition neglects to include the variations of sexual organs people may have or to consider that a person’s genitalia may not match with his/her hard wiring.
of how he/she thinks and feels. Essentially, *gender* is a person’s own understanding and feeling about her/his location on the continuum of gender at any given moment in time. That is, an individual’s gender is a constantly shifting entity that is performed in certain ways depending upon the situation one finds themselves in and in accordance with the historical, cultural, social and psychological appropriate constructed gender roles (Banks, 2013; Dillabough, 2013; MacNaughton, 2006; Paechter, 2001; Pollard, 2013). For example, MacNaughton’s (2006) research on sex role behaviours revealed how children engaged in both [male or female behaviours] or “variations, whichever works best for them at the time” (p. 130).

**Queer theory.**

In the past, the term ‘queer’ has been used to define people living on the borders of societal norms and most often indicating subversive sexual practices or homosexuality (Talburt, 2007). Today, use of the word “‘queer’ is intended to invoke a past of bigotry and hatred [but more importantly] to rewrite a present that affirms a variety of non-normative expressions of sexuality and genders” (Talburt, 2007, p. 63). Talburt (2007) defines queer theory as “less a systematic method or framework than a collection of approaches to questioning normative assumptions about sex, gender and sexuality” (p. 63). Blaise (2005) furthers this explanation in relation to the primary classroom by explaining “queer theory does not mean teaching about sex or same-sex sexuality [however], it provides an alternative perspective that is helpful for challenging generally accepted notions of gender” (p. 184). To use Rosenblatt’s (1986) term, “assimilating” queer theory in pedagogy encourages students to be able to be aware of heterosexual discourses around them and grow to recognize how such discourses dictate what “children consider to be normal and right behaviours” (Blaise, 2005, p. 184). Practicing queer theory means using the word ‘queer’ as a verb rather a noun or adjective, as in ‘queering’ the way we think about something to see other possibilities for meaning.
Application of queer theory has begun to take greater roots in the study of gender and education as queer theory closely aligns itself with poststructuralism (Talburt, 2007). The two theories are similar in that they support the concepts of identity as “unstable, relational and changing” (Talburt, 2007, p. 64) and support gender as a “performance” (Blaise, 2005, p. 22) rather than a construction. Combining queer theory with gender pedagogy is important because “examining the process of normalization,” Mayo (2013) explains, “provides all people with a way to critically engage cultural, political and educational messages about gender and sexuality” (p. 162).

**Hegemonic masculinities.**

Hegemonic masculinities, or the “dominant form of masculinity that regulates and subordinates other patterns of masculinity and femininity” (Blaise, 2005, p. 21), is a pervasive concept that is heavily targeted by queer theorists. The word ‘hegemonic’ itself indicates control, leadership and authority (Connell, 2006a) while use of the plural ‘masculinities’ refers to the various ways in which masculinity is performed within a given setting and culture (Connell, 2006b; Francis, 2001). Scholars agree that the construction of hegemonic masculinities is in direct relation to women and other less dominate forms of masculinity and is undisputedly heterosexual (Blaise, 2005; Connell, 2006a; Skelton, 2001). The role of hegemonic masculinities is not to define the sex role of males in society, however it guides society’s understanding of what a man ought to be (Blaise, 2005). Indeed, Blaise writes how trying to achieve the masculine ideal is an impossible task as the entire notion is simply a social construct rather than a reality. She describes how there is no such thing as hegemonic femininities as the gendered order does not allow for females to be dominant over other genders. Instead there is “emphasised femininity which is defined around the compliance with subordination and is oriented around accommodating the interests and desires of men” (Blaise, 2005, p. 21).
As with any concept, there are criticisms of hegemonic masculinities. The first criticism concerns the issue of binaries and the restriction language places upon meaning. The terms ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ are most often used to describe male and female qualities, respectively. Therefore, the binaries that gender scholars are trying to dismantle of male/female or boy/girl are instead being reinforced. Francis (2001) recognizes this problematic issue by stating that, “if we look at gender as a concept that rests in a continuum, surely literature discussing masculinity and femininity needs to as well” (pp. 12-13). I believe using the plural ‘masculinities’ to illustrate the variety of masculinities that exist acknowledges that there is not a single form of masculinity which then further transcribes to femininity as well.

Secondly, as it is popular to use a poststructuralist lens when considering issues of gender, some scholars believe a contradiction exists when considering hegemonic masculinity. Poststructuralism maintains that power cannot be held by one group alone yet the concept of hegemonic masculinity by definition conveys that those displaying the most masculine of traits hold power over other genders (Skelton, 2001, p. 175). This argument is akin to criticisms of using poststructural theory to strengthen the feminist movement and that poststructuralism may have the power to dismantle the theory entirely. I have come to understand that like gender and its perpetual shift in accordance to a person’s situation at any moment, so too shifts the balance of power. While it is understood that hegemonic masculinities place the most power with the dominant male form, depending on the situation, other genders hold various amounts of power as well. The power distribution depends on numerous other factors including who is involved in the situation, the relationship between the people involved or the nature of the situation itself. This ever fluctuating distribution of power amongst invested parties conforms to feminist poststructuralist theory’s stance that power is shared amongst genders, it is just that the power is
not distributed equally. Therefore, I believe the theory of hegemonic masculinities is firmly grounded in gender theory and relates to poststructuralist theory.

Much of Blaise’s (2005) work focuses on the impact that hegemonic masculinities constructed in primary classrooms impart on children’s evolving sense of gender. She explains how in the culture of a classroom, hegemonic masculinities take shape via the children and their understanding of what it means to be a boy or conversely, a girl. Drawing on her research conducted in early childhood classrooms, Blaise (2005) shows how dominant and subordinate positions are actively constructed by children as they perform their gender within institutionalized practices that reaffirm “boys’ dominance over girls” (p. 21). This construction of positioning is referred to by Blaise (2005) as the “heterosexual matrix,” a grid “that regulates gender and gender relations so that heterosexuality becomes the ‘normal’, right and only way to be” (p. 22).

**Heterosexual matrix.**

The term ‘heterosexual matrix’ was originally coined by renowned feminist and queer theorist Judith Butler (1990). Shortly after publishing the use of the term ‘heterosexual matrix,’ Butler found the term problematic as is it promoted a static metaphor or reified the grid for gender and she wanted to change it lest it “gain[ed] iconic status” (Atkinson & DePalma, 2009, p. 18). Butler redefined the term to ‘heterosexual hegemony’ which she believes is “open to rearticulation, which has a kind of malleability” (Butler, Osborne & Segal, 1994, p. 4 as cited in Atkinson & DePalma, 2009, p. 18). Nonetheless, the term has become “widely used as a powerful tool for framing theoretical understandings of the social world within feminist and queer theory analysis” (Atkinson & DePalma, 2009, p. 18).

The important point of the concept of heterosexual hegemony is that heterosexuality is exceptionally powerful, “pervasive, ...compulsory... [and] enforced” (Blaise, 2005, p. 22) within
Western society. Regardless of how one identifies oneself, that identity is held up against heterosexuality and judged as either ‘normal’ or ‘other.’ The notion of “heteronormativity operates in relation to both [the] presence and absence [of consent]” (Atkinson & DePalma, 2009, p. 20). For example, Blaise (2005) shows how heterosexuality is normalized daily in primary classrooms when “teachers read stories during group time, they rarely question whether the adult female and male character in the book are married ... it is simply assumed they are” (p. 22). This example emphasizes how in these situations, the presence of consent is implied because the teacher, or power figure, does not question the relationship between the characters, and therefore it is assumed by lack of consent that heterosexual hegemony is at play within the text.

Highlighting her understanding of the heterosexual matrix, Blaise (2005) explains that the “heterosexual matrix functions to link hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity in a coherent gendered discourse, and the reward is finding love with the opposite sex” (p. 59). She notes that taking a critical stance against heterosexual hegemony is not to “attack” heterosexuality but instead to shine a critical light on the prevalent heterosexual discourses that go uncontested in greater society and impose control over women and other marginalized groups. Scholars like Blaise (2005) encourage a dismantling of such a matrix as “the concept of genderedness becomes meaningless in the absence of heterosexuality as an institution” (pp. 59-60). Atkinson and DePalma (2009) suggest that perhaps teachers can guide students towards ‘unbelieving’ the matrix by queering the concept of heterosexuality in order to bring about change. Atkinson and DePalma invite educators to join Butler (2006) in the collective struggle where ‘unbelieving’ the matrix “would have to make room for an alternative agency [and] a creative deployment of power” (p. 533 as cited in Atkinson & DePalma, 2009, p. 20) where children can recreate a new, more democratic reality.
Feminism.

It is impossible, and indeed ignorant, to investigate issues of gender in education without viewing the various aspects of gender through a feminist lens. Marshall and Young (2006) describe feminist research as a “political act and, one that can make a difference in education” (p. 63). Today’s developing understanding of gender in education has been greatly informed by the many contributions of feminist scholars and feminist theory. Feminist theory has evolved over decades from that of the suffragette movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to equality in the 1960s and 1970s and most recently to issues of greater cultural inclusion including race, economics and gender issues. Through the evolution of feminism a number of different beliefs have developed and evolved including radical feminism, eco feminism and standpoint feminism. Below I discuss those schools of feminist thought that are most closely connected to my exploration of gender and the picturebook.

The suffragette movement, as witnessed in the western world, was responsible for bringing about anti-discrimination changes to legislation. These changes, such as securing the vote for women, “made it possible for individuals and collectives to see the gendered nature of the structures they lived and worked in” (Davies, 1993, p. xvi), thus creating a new discourse for people to share ideas, philosophies and theories in the greater public. The people of this movement were instrumental to the concept of feminism, thus also to gender theory, and what it means to be a person in today’s society.

Liberal feminists emerged in the 1960s and were focused on equality, or the parity of females and males. Educational researchers using a liberal feminist approach often “framed research questions in the immediate school environment, such as identifying the paucity of illustrations and problems that show competent women” (Marshall & Young, 2006, p. 67). This approach solidified the notion of masculine and feminine polarities and had a “tendency to leave
boys out and focus on the problems as faced by girls” (Davies, 1993, p. x). In social and educational research prior to the 1970s liberal feminists tended to promote the belief that gender was a static entity, placed at opposing poles of masculine or feminine and learned through modelling, observation and immersion in gender-stereotyped messages, a phenomenon known as social constructionist theory (Hammersley, 2001).

As feminism moved in to the later 1970s and 1980s, it was contested that the voice with which feminists were speaking was predominantly one of white, able-bodied, middle-class women. This critical acknowledgment cast a wider view of the issues faced by people from different races, classes and gendered positions. The understanding of the need to address the ‘other within the other’ was paramount to this greater socially conscious feminist thought that asked who is being heard and whose voice is being left out. In addition, there was a call to recognize that oppression happens within the group (Francis, 2001).

**Feminist poststructuralism.**

To contest issues that have been problematic to the feminist movements of the past, today’s feminists often take a poststructuralist approach. Poststructuralist theory is a “radical framework for understanding the relation between persons and their social world and for conceptualizing change” (Davies, 1989, p. xi). Blaise (2005), a pivotal researcher in the field of children and gender education, explains how “poststructuralism becomes feminist when matters of gender and a commitment to change are of central concern” (p. 15). This focus is a departure from previous feminist thought regarding education because poststructuralist theory, unlike social constructivist theories, acknowledges that individuals’ genders are not static or “limited by one’s reproductive sexual capacity” (Davies, 1989, p. 12) and people choose for themselves where they fit along the gender continuum. This tenet, which is in direct contrast to feminist thought that believed gender
was a social construction, has brought us to today’s broader understanding of gender as fluid and tied to places and cultures (MacNaughton, 2006).

Poststructuralism is further fitting for feminist research because it “brings with it an emphasis in the role of language” (Paechter, 2001, p. 42). Francis (2001) discusses the importance of discourse analysis in the field of gender in education because “it has proved an effective method with which to reveal the gendered assumptions and motivations underlying people’s talk, and the impact of such discourses on people’s power positions” (p. 67). Foucault, a founder of poststructural thought, focused explicitly on power as being “relational, as operating in a network-like fashion throughout the social world, inscribed in our social formations, the language we use and the ways we move” (Paechter, 2001, p. 43). It is the desire for power that makes humans behave the way they do because “power is pleasurable” (Paechter, 2001, p. 46). Humans feel better when they are in control and feel safe. Children are no different.

However, Foucault also wrote that where there is power there is resistance (Paechter, 2001, p. 43), and the feminist movement is not immune. As mentioned earlier, many schools of thought exist within the feminist movement and these voices often collide and disagree on the main role of feminism. As well, a misguided feminist backlash is happening today from those who believe feminism is outdated and unnecessary and that equality has been achieved (Sampert, 2012). It is this complexity of power/resistance relations that lead some to criticize the strength of poststructuralist theory as it relates to feminism.

If poststructural theory is to be taken literally and as many believe Foucault meant it, then theoretically the theory itself has the capability of dismantling feminism entirely. For example, when considering how Foucault places great importance on discourse, and recognizing that “discourses are intimately involved with power relations” (Paechter, 2001, p. 42) along with the understanding that discourses are perceived as reality or ‘truths,’ then it is inevitable that the
truth, in this case the feminist discourse, holds power (p. 43). If the intent of poststructuralist theory is to deconstruct power relations, then it is also possible that feminism in its entirety could be deconstructed and rendered useless (Paechter, 2001). While I understand how the dismantlement of feminism can be comprehended as a possibility, I believe that as feminism evolves, so too does the balance of power within the feminist discourse. Therefore, like the case of hegemonic masculinities, power is shared within a group in various measures and not held by one group alone. Thus, it is unlikely that feminism could be dismantled. I chose to apply feminist poststructural theory as the foundation for my approach to investigating gender in picturebooks within the primary classroom because my purpose of raising gender awareness is to engender change.

In addition to gender theories it is also useful to look at other theories in order to broaden the importance of engaging children in a discussion on gender in schools. Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory and Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of reading provide insight into how children construct and understand gender relations as well as how they may perceive and perpetuate gender bias found in some picturebooks.

**Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory.**

Developed by Vygotsky in the 1920s and 1930s, sociocultural theory, which originates from both linguistic and psychological disciplines, explains how peoples’ development is influenced by the surrounding people and culture in which they live (Cherry, 2015). Smagorinsky (2013) writes that Vygotsky’s ideas are relevant in particular “for the modern-day K-8 English speaking classroom” (p. 193) because following Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory encourages the fostering of differences and promotes respect, achievement and feelings of worth (p. 202). When considering gender and primary education in particular, sociocultural theory provides educators with a basis for acknowledging how children in Western society are
influenced by hegemonic masculinities and for recognizing that this influence must be taken into account when working to address change with primary aged children.

Various facets of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory should be acted upon by teachers who are committed to addressing issues of gender bias. Firstly, Vygotsky’s understanding of how “people’s thinking shapes their physical and symbolic worlds and [how] their engagement with those worlds in turn shapes how they (and others) think” (Smagorinsky, 2007, p. 62) can guide educators in how to best instruct students. Taking into account the experiences of individuals and respecting each student’s ever shifting position in the world are fundamental starting points for engaging students in creating changes to the status quo. Furthermore, people’s thinking is tied to their emotions. Vygotsky explained that art, such as picturebooks, “produce(s) intelligent emotions” (Smagorinsky, 2013, p. 195). Understanding this concept means that teachers can use picturebooks to not only uncover gender stereotypes but also, more importantly, to consider notions of gender and elevate students’ “ability to think with greater clarity about the human experience” (Smagorinsky, 2013, p. 194).

Secondly, Vygotsky was “passionate about the need to eliminate feelings of inferiority” (Smagorinsky, 2013, p. 195), a sentiment close to the heart of every feminist. It is imperative that teachers strive to not only help reshape society’s notions of gender through the eyes of children but also through their own. Creating classroom cultures that acknowledge, accept and encourage diversity can begin the difficult work of unraveling the current hegemonic tapestry that confines and restricts children’s potential.

Lastly, Vygotsky believed that speech is vital to human’s social construction of identity. Gender theory aligns with sociocultural theory in that both theories recognize how our identities are not constructed purely by exterior social forces but rather through interactions with others. Vygotsky believed people use speech to not only express themselves but also to confirm and
construct new ideas (Smagorinsky, 2007). Smagorinsky (2013) stresses that “stretching ideas past their breaking point as a way of either expending an idea as far as possible or experimenting with ideas that may not pan out” is a way to “work thorough ideas” (p. 194). Using speech as a “tool” as Vygotsky suggested (Smagorinsky, 2007, p. 64) enables students and teachers to work together to investigate, discover, deconstruct and reshape stereotypes and gender norms.

**Dialogic teaching and learning.**

Following from Vygotsky’s idea that speech is important to constructing identities is the powerful practice of dialogic teaching for dialogic learning. Just as teachers need to examine their own gender positions, children also need time to investigate and reframe their understanding of gender and the practice of dialogic talk can facilitate such exploration. The idea of dialogic teaching is that rather than the teacher transmitting information through monologue, students are encouraged to participate in a “joint inquiry” where they “talk their way into meaning” (Barnes, 1976, 2008 as cited in Edwards-Groves, Anstey & Bull, 2013, p. 5) Such thinking is a shift from past practice where teachers tended to engage in one-way talk that followed the pattern of asking a question, allowing students to respond and then evaluating the response (Edwards-Groves et al., 2013). Reninger and Rehark (2009) describe this method of classroom talk in a t-s-t-s-t-s-t pattern where the ‘t’ represents the teacher and the ‘s’ represents the students. Here, each student’s contribution is mediated by the teacher, not allowing for free flowing discussion or student-to-student interactions. Such conversations would likely be aimed in a pre-determined direction with little room for individual opinions or questions from the students (Reninger & Rehark, 2009). Conversely, a discussion in a classroom that encourages dialogic talk might look more like this: s-s-s-t-s-s-s-s-t-s-s-s. This pattern of talk allows for authentic interaction, where students can contribute without needing permission and ask questions of each other to construct deeper meaning (Reninger & Rehark, 2009). Edwards-
Groves et al. (2013) write that dialogic learning promotes critical thinking, and encourages higher order thinking skills while also increasing literacy skills such as reading and writing and they also refer to Scott (2009 as cited in Edward-Groves et al., 2013) who found that neurological research suggests dialogic talk is especially beneficial in the early years as it “functions to assist brain development” (p. 11).

The work of Bahktin and Friere also highlight the importance of classroom talk. Inspired by Bahktin’s concept of dialogism, dialogic teaching follows the idea that talk is a never-ending process of synthesis where dialogue is informed by both past and current interactions, much like the process of reading in Rosenblatt’s transactional theory (Edwards-Groves et al., 2013). Reninger and Rehark (2009) explain that Bahktin understood how “the combined action of listening to others’ perspectives and responding to those perspectives is the mechanism that provokes new understanding” (p. 270). Friere’s (1987) work is also recognized as an influence in dialogic teaching practice as he contended that “dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it” (Hermann-Wilmarth, 2010, p. 189).

In classrooms, teachers must create an environment that encourages dialogic talk for optimal learning to take place. In order to practice successful dialogic pedagogy educators must be knowledgeable of the elements of dialogic talk. Teachers need to be comfortable and understand how to perform their role of facilitator and mediator, allowing students time to talk and reflect so that teachers do not revert to the traditional practice of monologic talk (Edwards-Groves et al., 2013). Another important aspect in a dialogic space is the creation of mutual understanding among all members that discussions are safe, supportive spaces for people to share, listen and ask questions that help propel understanding forward. Researchers agree that creating an environment for exploratory classroom talk includes setting ground rules (Edward-Groves et al, 2013; Reninger & Rehark, 2009). Edwards-Groves et al. (2013) suggest three
guiding principles for teachers beginning to embark on dialogic talk in their classrooms:
determining what a discussion is, sharing strategies to encourage talk, and following an inquiry
based pedagogy. Reninger and Rehark (2009) share their research subject’s adapted set of rules
laid out in child-friendly language: a) share your thinking (use words such as ‘I think,’ ‘because,’
maybe,’ ‘what if’); b) back-up your opinions with reasons and/or evidence from the text; c) feel
free to challenge ideas or to disagree with an idea; d) change your mind if new ideas change your
thinking; e) ask each other questions; f) listen to each other so you can build on; g) look at the
people in the group; h) ‘jump in’ the conversation of there is space; and i) invite others into the
conversation (p. 237). Creating a framework for participants to engage in contributes to building
trust and assuring that all participants will be considered equal regardless of their ability or
viewpoint. It also allows for a truly reciprocal and exploratory dialogue to happen within a
collective that is supportive and accepting of its contributors (Edwards-Groves et al., 2013).

Elwood and Mitchell (2012) describe Bakhtin’s belief that “everyday dialogue is a site of
contestation, an arena in which people grapple with complexities, ambiguities and the moral
dilemmas of social life” (p. 5). The ability to address political issues in dialogue is also central to
the creation of democracies – structures that depend on people talking and questioning rather
than complying and following orders (Edwards-Groves et al., 2013). When considering using
dialogic talk to explore “controversial or belief-challenging topics” such as gender stereotypes,
Hermann-Wilmarth (2010) suggests that “opportunity to practice dialogue in a relatively safe
classroom community, including those issues that have traditionally caused resistance or silence,
could inform how students approach those topics in [society]” (p. 197). Providing children with
the opportunity to talk about issues that are generally taboo “creates potential” (Hermann-
Wilmarth, 2010, p. 197) for agency to create social change and “achieve social justice or
Hermann-Wilmarth (2010) recognized the benefits of using texts “as an entry point” to “carve out a space for dialogue” in classrooms as books can easily stimulate children’s thinking (p. 188). When considering using texts to encourage discussion of gender bias it is important to remember that everyone has a gendered position that is to be valued and respected because it belongs to that person. The object of investigating gender bias in picturebooks is not to try and shift a person’s identity but to unveil the power within the images and texts we read that work to shape people’s identities. When opening dialogue to discuss gender issues with children it is useful to think about Hermann-Wilmarth’s (2010) approach that helps “students understand that they are being asked to think about how their assumptions or beliefs affect other people, and that they are not being asked to radically alter those beliefs” (p. 189). Understanding that one’s beliefs are respected can avoid any “resistance [that] will inhibit any possible change” (Hermann-Wilmarth, 2010, p. 189).

**Rosenblatt’s transactional theory.**

When considering using picturebooks for any purpose in classrooms including introducing classroom talk, educators need to be well-versed in Rosenblatt’s transactional theory. Rosenblatt’s theory about the reading of literature was informed by the work of pragmatists such as Dewey who believed that people play a reciprocal role in their perceptions as opposed to the “stimulus and response” theory that was popular prior to Einsteinium thought (Karolides, 1999, p. 160). Through her own work as a college professor, Rosenblatt recognized that the personal experiences of students shaped their individual understanding of each text they read (Karolides, 1999). Reflecting on what she witnessed, Rosenblatt intuited that when reading, people adopt either a predominantly efferent or aesthetic stance (Karolides, 1999) depending on the desired outcome. When the reader’s stance is to gain factual information or to take “the public, lexical aspects of meaning” (Rosenblatt, 1986, p. 124) as it is understood by most people, such as
reading instructions or directions, then the reader adopts a “‘predominantly efferent’ stance” (p. 124). When reading from a predominantly aesthetic stance, the reader directs “attention to what is being lived through in relation to the text during the reading event” (Rosenblatt, 1986, p. 124) or is tuned in to the private feelings experienced while reading. “Someone else can read a text efferently for us ... [but] no one can read a text aesthetically for us” (Rosenblatt, 1986, p. 125). These two ways of connecting with text exist on a continuum and it is most common for readers’ stance to fluctuate during a reading event (Karolides, 1999, p. 165).

Further to her theory of how readers transact with text is Rosenblatt’s understanding of how the information conveyed through “signs” (Karolides, 1999, p. 162) is understood by the reader. Rosenblatt (1986) quotes Vygotsky’s belief that the meaning of a sign is “the sum of all the psychological events aroused in our consciousness by that word” (p. 123). Thus, a reader’s experience with signs is an important aspect to the study of gender and education because as discussed by Rosenblatt, readers exist within a social context when engaging with text and that social context holds a “socially produced language presented by the family and society” (Karolides, 1999, p. 162). For example, when engaging with picturebooks children bring their gendered perceptions to the reading and their understandings of gender can be reinforced by the gendered messages of the book.

Each time a reader encounters a text the event is unique because each reading event happens at a “particular time, under particular circumstances, in a particular social and cultural setting” (Rosenblatt, 1985, p. 100 as cited in Pantaleo, 2013, p. 126). Rosenblatt (1986) calls each transaction between reader and text a ‘poem’ and the evolving meaning, understanding and feelings the reader experiences are never the same even when the person rereads a text. The reader reflects, interprets, evaluates, analyses and critiques the text bringing new understandings,
new perspectives and new questions forward during and after each reading event happens (Pantaleo, 2013, p. 126).

Another key element in Rosenblatt’s (1986) transactional theory is how readers pay “selective attention” (p. 123) to the text, meaning that depending on the event, a reader promotes “some elements into the center of attention and pushes others into the back ground or ignores them” altogether (Karolides, 1999, p. 164). Davies (1993) and Frawley (2008) concluded in their studies that rather than accept female characters’ role as a dominate character in shared picture books, children may “misremember or distort gender-inconsistent information to make it conform to their gender schema” (Frawley, 2008, p. 292). In such cases, children are attending to only the signs that make sense to them and disregarding information that disrupts the social language they adhere to (Frawley, 2008). This ability to attend to information that registers only with one’s experience illustrates Rosenblatt’s idea that regardless of the author’s intent, readers will interpret a text according to their own experience (Karolides, 1999, p. 163). I believe that introducing dialogic talk and encouraging critical literacy skills in order that children are exposed to a range of perspectives and alternatives can aid in the shift of set schemas. Helping children see that there are different ways to view the world can begin to break down the barriers that reinforce set schemas and encourage greater fluidity in possibilities.

Embracing Rosenblatt’s transactional theory, teachers can aim to avoid narrow readings of texts by facilitating environments where students are able to compare interpretations and apply criteria that allow for “self-criticism and increased reading ability” while “return[ing] to the text” (Karolides, 1999, p. 163). Creating these types of transactional events can help teachers “explore the iceberg” (Pantaleo, 2013, p. 125) of response and get to the heart of gendered stereotypes as understood by children. Rosenblatt was committed to improve the literacy of students through her “value of democracy for human beings and the importance of preserving and improving our
democratic way of life” (Karolides, 1999, p. 160). Attending to gender bias and hegemonic masculinities as they exist in picturebooks is one way to continue Rosenblatt’s cause by instilling the art of critical literacy for the promotion of greater democracy.

**Picturebooks**

**History of the picturebook and gender.**

Picturebooks originated in the Victorian era and were intended as tools for adults to promote socially appropriate behaviour in boys and girls. Examples of books aimed at boys and girls that featured both text and illustrations began to surface in the 15th century after the invention of the printing press. While Salisbury and Styles (2012) give William Blake credit for being the first author to successfully “experiment with the symbiotic relationship between word and image” (pp. 12-13), Maurice Sendak explains that Randolph Caldecott is “generally acknowledged as the father of the modern picturebook” for “devis[ing] an ingenious juxtaposition of picture and word, a counterpoint that had never happened before” (as cited in Salisbury & Styles, 2012, p. 16).

In her dissertation on the role of gender in Victorian picturebooks, Sveen (2005) explained how the themes of the first wave of picturebooks were idealistic and educational in order to openly “instruct and present moral values as well as to entertain” (p. 37). Sveen (2005) described a “strict division between books for girls and boys” (p. 30) in contrast to contemporary children’s literature that is grounded in “problem-oriented realism” (p. 37) and is for the most part, open to readers of any gender.

Following with the social context of the times “the traditional view of the male work role appeared to be accepted by the majority of authors writing children’s literature [and therefore] ... traditional values were encouraged and valued by all and thus the lack of female representation
was never challenged” (Gooden & Gooden, 2001, p. 89). Gooden and Gooden (2001) reported that although studies conducted through the 1990’s revealed that over the decades female characters increased in number “stereotyped images of females were still substantial in number” (p. 97). These type of stereotyped messages “have an unconscionable influence in attitude formation or on the perpetuation of attitudes that should be altered or at least mitigated” (Schwarcz, 1991, p. 10) and therefore deserve the attention of educators when reading with young children.

**The picturebook and the child.**

Picturebooks are integral to the fabric of childhood in many cultures and according to numerous researchers the messages portrayed by these texts affect a child’s personality traits, self worth, ambition and understanding of societal values (Dougherty & Engel, 1987; Gooden & Gooden 2001; Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada & Ross, 1972). Weitzman et al. (1972) warn that not only are picturebooks a reflection of cultural values but also they are “important instrument[s] for persuading children to accept those values” (p. 1126). This view of the picturebook is shared by Joseph Schwarcz (1991), a renowned proponent of the art of the picturebook who also believed that the picturebook is important to children because a book can evoke every emotion. He further explained that “good authors and artists reflect ... various facets of childhood on levels comprehensible, consciously or unconsciously, to children; they reflect the perpetual, ever reoccurring process of seeking a balance between conflict and harmony that the human personality is in need of” (Schwarcz & Schwarcz, 1991, pp. 6-7). Schwart’s understanding of the picturebook as vital to the human experience is significant to the developing child as well as the study of gender in education because engaging with picturebooks can open a child’s horizons and encourage a deeper understanding of their world and relationships (p. 11).
Although today’s picturebooks are not necessarily designed strictly with children in mind, children compose the greatest audience of this format. The picturebook is accessible and intriguing with extraordinary visual appeal. Picturebooks can be enjoyed independently by the youngest of children and one does not need to know how to read the verbal text to enjoy the pictures and infer the story. Researchers have found that young children attend to the illustrations in picturebooks more readily than they do to the text and that they “perceive the art on the page as meaningful text” understanding that they need to read the artwork “to fully understand the story” (Martens, Martens, Doyle, Loomis & Aghalarov, 2012, p. 285).

**The picturebook’s cautionary tale.**

Many researchers write about the importance of carefully selecting picturebooks when intending to share them with children. Hunt (1999) states, “no text however simple, can ever be innocent, or devoid of ideology, that is free of concerns of gender, race, class and so on” (as cited in Sveen, 2005, p. 30). Primary educators need to think critically about both the explicit and implicit messages conveyed through picturebooks that are shared with children, in particular those messages of gender biased sex roles. Schwarcz (1991) explained that:

> The prevalent danger inherent in the genres of the [picture] books [sic] ... is their power to inculcate stereotypes. By accumulative implication, they convey a sense of prefabricated, didactic uniformity .... When trivial conformity takes over, it turns into indoctrinary; it exerts mental pressures. It tends to eliminate ambiguity and open-endedness .... It stunts the growth of the individual and does not strengthen progressive attitudes. (p. 10)

In 1979, Bracken and Wigutowoff catalogued and published a list of titles that were highly recommended, recommended, recommended with some reservations, or not recommended at all based on the extent of gender stereotyped content. Such categorization has been popular for helping educators and librarians to introduce literature that is “nonexist or role free” (Bracken &
Wigutoff, 1979, p. vii). Davies (1989), in her foundational study on pre-school children and gender, explored children’s reactions to feminist stories and identified two categories of feminist picturebooks (p. 47). The first type of feminist picturebook presents the gender stereotyped subtext as text. Davies found that books that portray gender stereotypes in this way are often uninteresting to children as the books tend to present adult realities which does not allow for the children to place themselves in the book. The second category of feminist picturebooks Davies identified demonstrates gender relations as a subtext. This category of feminist text allow the “metaphors through which children have come to understand becoming male or female” to shift “such that a new kind of narrative is made possible” (Davies, 1989, p. 47).

However, attempting to surround children in purely feminist texts has been shown to not be powerful enough to dissuade children of hegemonic masculinities (Davies, 1989; Frawley, 2008). Further, I believe this approach to be too narrow in focus and to miss the point of the gender issue altogether. The purpose of raising awareness of gender imbalances as portrayed in picturebooks is not simply to strike a balance in the sexes of the characters introduced to children but rather to reveal the extent of control played by gender in our day-to-day lives whether we are male, female or somewhere in between.

**The meaning is in the synergy.**

One of the reasons the picturebook is such an important format of children’s literature to examine when discussing children and gender is because of the “synergy” that exists between the modes of images and text (Sipe, 1998). Sipe (1998) defines synergy as “a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects” (p. 99). In this case, the synergy is created by the complex relationship that happens in the reader’s mind when meaning is made using information from both the text and the pictures. The illustrations and the text represent “two sign systems ... [that] express meaning” differently (Martinez & Harmon, 2012, pp. 323-333). Readers engaging
with picturebooks simultaneously engage with these signs in a dual thinking process where they are constantly “oscillating” (Sipe, 1998, p. 103) between the images and the verbal text. When moving between the image and written language “‘new meanings are produced,’ because we interpret the text in terms of the pictures and the pictures in terms of the text in a potentially never-ending sequence” (Sipe, 1998, p. 102). This process is known as the “semiotic concept of ‘transmediation’” and “is complicated and subtle” (Sipe, 1998, p. 97), not unlike gender itself. Thus, it is important for educators to understand the concept of transmediation when using picturebooks with children so that the complexities of the process are acknowledged, honoured and considered.

Images, illustrations and the text have different strengths within the picturebook format and are processed differently in the brain. “Words are better able to convey temporal information that moves readers forward in time, while images can best convey spatial information and are also particularly effective in evoking emotions” (Keifer as cited in Martinez & Harmon, 2012, p. 324). Sipe (1998) writes that it is “the different ways in which we experience language and visual art that have important implications for the ways in which we try to relate the words and pictures in a picture book” (p. 100). The reader is propelled forward by the text, wanting to know what happens next while simultaneously wanting to linger or “gaze on” the image (Sipe, 1998, p. 100). This tension creates an oscillation of the reader’s attention requiring “complex referential connections” (Sipe, 1998, p. 101). Thus the reader “constructs integrated meaning” (Sipe, 1998, p. 101) by using the pictures to support and extend the text and by using the text to draw further meaning from the illustrations.

Regardless of the relationship between the text and pictures, whether the two work together congruently to confirm meaning or contradict each other in a deviant relationship, it is most important to understand what happens in readers’ minds. In relation to gender, biased
illustrations and biased language can lead to the construction and reinforcement of gender stereotypes. Understanding the transmediation process and recognizing biased content within a picturebook can help guide educators to begin the process of deconstructing dangerous messages and work towards creating new realities.

**Analyzing Caldecott award winning picturebooks for gendered messages.**

Many studies from the last four decades have used the Caldecott Medal winners as a source for gathering data to analyze possible gender bias in picturebooks. Perhaps the most celebrated prize awarded to picturebooks in the United States, Caldecott Medal books “reflect our adult values and at the same time influence the formation of early childhood values” (Nilsen, 1971, p. 919). Each year, one picturebook receives this coveted award while a few other noticeable selections are recognized as Caldecott Honor books. These awards recognize the author/illustrator Randolph Caldecott whose work was very popular during the 19th century (Salisbury & Styles, 2012). As stated in Chapter 1, Caldecott Medal books are considered the “very best” (Weitzman et al., 1972, p. 1127) of children’s picturebooks with respect to illustrations and as such have tremendous amounts of influence in the world of children’s literature. These books are identified by many librarians, teachers and parents as must-haves for their collections giving these books a predominant place in the eyes of children as well as providing financial reward for publishers (Crisp & Hiller, 2011; Weitzman et al., 1972). This influence has inspired many scholars to focus on this particular group of children’s books for their gender bias research. The following comprises a selected literature review of studies that have examined the gender bias of Caldecott award winning books over last four decades with one article per decade.
In 1972 a group of feminist sociologists, Lenore J. Weitzman, Deborah Eifler, Elizabeth Hokada and Catherine Ross conducted one of the first studies to determine the state of sex role socialization in picturebooks for preschool children. The 200 titles examined by these scholars did not just focus on Caldecott and Honor books although they “concentrated their intensive analysis on the winners and runners-up for [1965-1970]” (Weitzman et al, 1972, p. 1127). Weitzman et al. (1972) also examined Newbery Award winners, Little Golden Books and “prescribed behaviour or etiquette books” (p. 1127) to include more affordable books that were accessible to a wider audience. To date, their article is the most cited and their study is the most influential on the topic of gender bias in picturebooks. Their work is recognized for the way in which it “influenced publishing practices from the founding of feminist publishing companies … to the revising of conventional publishers, award committees, authors, parents and teachers” (Clark, Lennon & Morris, 1993, p. 71).

Weitzman et al. (1972) found that in Caldecott winning books from 1938 to 1970 “not one woman … had a job or profession” (p. 1141). The authors were outraged because at that time in history, “40% of women are [sic] in the labor force, and close to 30 million women work [therefore] it is absurd to find that women in picturebooks remain only as mothers and wives” (Weitzman et al., 1972, p. 1141). According to Weitzman et al., within the Caldecott books the ratio of men to women represented in illustrations is 11:1 and the ratio of men to women and appearing in the titles is 8:3. At that time in history this dismal accounting for girls in the literature meant that “children scanning the list of titles of what have been designated as the very best children’s books” may develop “the impression that girls are not very important because no one has bothered to write books about them” (Weitzman et al., 1972, p. 1129). In the collection of books, girls are depicted in only those activities that involve “loving, watching and helping” (Weitzman et al., 1972, p. 1130) while dressed in clothes that are inappropriate for play, unlike
the active males within the same books. The researchers also describe girls as being “pictured as pretty dolls who are not meant to do anything but be admired and bring pleasure” with a “constant smile [that] teaches that women are meant to please, to make others smile and be happy” (Weitzman et al., 1972, p. 1137).

Although this article was the precursor for gender bias research, it is important to consider its historical and theoretical context. Feminist theory of the time restricted gender to be either male or female leaving out those individuals who may identify in the grey area of gender. Gender awareness by today’s standards, while still misogynistic, accepts that children may identify on the spectrum of gender rather than having to choose a binary. Weitzman et al. (1972) examined the issue of gender stereotyping through the narrow lens of a liberal feminist point of view. In this regard, they looked for equality for women both in numbers as well as the roles they play in society. The authors’ stance reflects only the binary positions of female and male rather than today’s increasing understanding of a gender spectrum. The insistence on sex role binaries demonstrates that although the researchers wanted to see the sex role stereotypes diminished, they seemed to believe a person must choose a biological sex group with which to belong.

However, as a result of their work, Weitzman et al. (1972) encouraged authors, illustrators and publishers to offer “more positive images of women’s potential” and “a less rigid definition of male roles by encouraging boys to express their emotions as well as their intellect” (p. 1147). They stated that picturebooks should “encourage the imagination and creativity of all children” and meet the “growing demand for both girls and boys to have a real opportunity to fulfill their human potential” (Weitzman et al., 1972, p. 1148).

In the following decades, several people have voiced criticisms of the research by Weitzman et al. (1972). Segal (1982) suggested that the feminist sociologists’ work, although
important, took a radical feminist stand and that the researchers “read into their data the expected conclusion or that they were conditioned culturally to perceive maleness as the norm” (p. 31). Segal believed that while collecting data by counting the number of males in illustrations, Weitzman et al. included gender neutral images of characters that did not have any solid evidence to which sex they belonged rather than including a neutral option. This possible misrepresentation may have led to some of the researchers’ conclusions about the invisibility of females in children’s literature.

A study conducted by Dougherty and Engel (1987) also examined Caldecott Medal recipients. They analyzed Caldecott winners of the 1980s and compared their findings to studies from the 1970s including the research by Weitzman et al. (1972). Dougherty and Engel (1987) chose to use the Caldecott books as their source for data because they too believed that “even though they may not be representative of all that is published, as a group they may be a stronger socializing influence than any other identifiable group of books” (p. 394). The authors used a comparatively more rigid approach towards counting characters according to their gender than Weitzman et al. (1972). Dougherty and Engel counted a character as male or female if its sex is alluded to in the text. This approach is particularly necessary when counting anthropomorphized animal characters. When looking at the Caldecott sample from 1981-1985 a dramatic shift was evident in character counts; females are represented as main characters 43% of the time in contrast to their 28% representation during the period from 1975-1980 (p. 395). The authors also noted how the depiction of female characters in illustrations increased from 27% in the 1976-1980 samples to 37% in samples from 1981-1985 (p. 395). Thus, Dougherty and Engel (1987) suggested that the Caldecott winners of the 1980s represent “a shift towards sex equality ad provide some changing sex characteristics and roles” (p. 398).
The study by Dougherty and Engel (1987) is worth noting for a number of reasons. Firstly, the authors explain that while gathering their data they use similar criteria to that used by Weitzman et al. (1972) in that they counted male and female characters in terms of representation in text and in illustrations. However, they tabulated each of these statistics separately to account for the age and development of the children. Dougherty and Engel wanted to see whether a child who was able to read the text would encounter a greater number of males a child who was able to use only the illustrations to decipher meaning. To accomplish this goal, the authors used guidelines used by Engel in an earlier study that explored how “the total number of male and female images a child receives from a book may be more influential on the child's developing concepts of sex roles than just the number of different characters” (Engel, 1981 as cited in Dougherty & Engel, 1987, p. 395).

Secondly, Dougherty and Engel (1987) recognized the influence of time on subsequent studies using the same data and suggested that, “judging the characters as to sex and roles depends somewhat on the viewpoints of the society and the researcher” (p. 396). They noted that what was once considered a gender characteristic has changed from what other researchers might have considered using dress and hairstyles as clues. In their conclusion, Dougherty and Engel (1987) suggested that their study is a last look at this particular group of books noting that “changing views make comparisons of results questionable if not impossible” (p. 398).

Finally, the authors noted the need for “careful selection when planning to share literature with young children, the goal being to provide freedom and opportunity in sex role development” (Dougherty & Engel, 1987, p. 398), a view that today is controversial in the field of gender and education.

Clark, Lennon and Morris (1993) also used Caldecott Medal winners to conduct a study of gendered images “to determine whether the social action that Weitzman helped to spark has had
a significant ‘liberalizing’ effect on the depiction of male and female characters in prize winning books” (p. 228). They added a new perspective on the topic by comparing the results to the “winners and runners-up in the Coretta Scott King Competition which honors Black illustrators of picturebooks” (Clark et al., 1993, p. 228). This broadened view is more contemporary than its predecessors and shows a greater concern with broader issues of social justice, in particular that of race.

Clark et al. (1993) specified their units of analysis to avoid the mistakes of Weitzman et al. (1972) and to reach more accurate statistics from the Caldecott books. They measured the number of instances females appeared as the main character and as a secondary character, in illustrations in human and animal form, as well as the characters’ behavioural traits such as dependence, cooperativeness and competitiveness (Clark et al., 1993).

Clark et al. (1993) found that the Caldecott committee began to more heavily weigh the content of the books considered for the award than in the past and this shift is helping to stem the issue of gender bias. Their data revealed that “in all cases, change has been in a less stereotyped direction” (Clark et al., 1993, p. 237) and that behavioural traits such as “independence, competitiveness, explorativeness, aggressiveness and emotionality [are] statistically significant” (p. 237), becoming more even between the sexes. One telling example that illustrated improvement was the change in the percentage of females who demonstrated nurturing behaviour from 57% in the late 1960s to 36% in the late 1980s (p. 239). Statistics such as these show progress in reducing gender bias in favour of increasing female characters and their visibility. However, although the authors noted a trend towards greater equality in Caldecott award-winning picturebooks, equality had yet to be reached.

Crisp and Hiller (2011) conducted a comprehensive critical analysis of the “depiction of ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity,’ biological sex, and gender in Caldecott Medal-winning
picturebooks from 1938–2011” (p. 18). The authors examined 74 Caldecott winners from “the inception of the award through the current award-year” (Crisp & Hiller, 2011, p. 19) and looked at each book through a contemporary lens, rather than “within the cultural milieu in which they were produced and disseminated” (p. 20). This modern view enabled the authors to discuss “an exploration of the ways in which explicitly gendered characters construct for readers what it means and look like to be ‘male’ or ‘female’” (Crisp & Hiller, 2011, p. 20) by reinforcing gender role stereotypes.

Crisp and Hiller (2011) re-examined previous studies and “problematized” (p. 199) the heavy reliance of past researchers on visual information for insight into the assignment of character gender. Instead, using only Caldecott winners, the authors “read and analysed the books independently before comparing results” (Crisp & Hiller, 2011, p. 201) and then cross-referenced the text as well as illustrations to confirm characters’ gender or consider a character neuter without text verification. Using their data, Crisp and Hiller were able to determine the percentages of female or male characters in Caldecott Award-winners. When discussing neuter characters in their article, Crisp and Hiller use the word ‘hir’ as a hybrid of him/her demonstrating their understanding and application of gender theory to their research. This approach avoids making assumptions about how a character may be perceived by a reader and does not rely on “normative constructions or personal understandings” (Crisp & Hiller, 2011, p. 199).

Crisp and Hiller (2011) found the same gender bias as other researchers have over the decades in that female characters are seen to be passive and “in the background” (p. 21), and males display “explorative and active behaviors” (p. 21). They noted that most of the previous studies focus mainly on the plight of the female and “fail to address depictions of male-identified characters” (Crisp & Hiller, 2011, p. 24). Crisp and Hiller’s attention to the gender spectrum
firmly puts their research in the present in regards to today’s approach to gender studies – not only does the plight of women need to be addressed but also that of the male. “We believe that roles offered to males also merit critical attention: privileging a particular representation and single construction of ‘masculinity’ marginalizes those who cannot or do not fit that gender performance” (Crisp & Hiller, 2011, p. 24). This “construction of masculinity comes at the expense of the myriad of other ways of being male embodied in everyday life by self-identifying males” (Crisp & Hiller, 2011, p. 25) and works to perpetuate hegemonic masculinities rather than help in deconstructing the status quo. Overall, Crisp and Hiller (2011) found that 17 (23%) of the “74 Caldecott Medal winners from 1938-2011 ... were identified as having female lead characters” while “thirty-nine texts (53%) [have] male leading characters” (p. 203). The authors point out that there are more than double male to female lead characters in these books which “provides readers that self-identify as male at least double the opportunities allotted to other gender-identities to locate images that mirror their self-identity in Caldecott Medal-winning picturebooks” (Crisp & Hiller, 2011, p. 203). Furthermore, Crisp and Hiller note that when examining the gender of Caldecott Award-winning authors and illustrators there is further gender disparity with males again being in greater numbers than females except for a brief period in the 1960s during the women’s movement when women authors outnumbered men.

The findings of this study showed a change in the binary approach to sex roles in the gender bias literature from studies of the past. However, due to the inclusion of 74 of the Caldecott winners in a single group, it is difficult to determine whether or not there are fewer stereotypes in the Caldecott winning books over time (Crisp & Hiller, 2011). Crisp and Hiller (2011) stated that “looking across this set of popular and influential books reveals problematic constructions are still prominent and not merely limited to depictions in early winners” (p. 27), but no statistical data were provided for readers. The authors caution that continued gender-
biased representations “have the power to lower self-esteem and increase feelings of ‘invisibility’ for readers of all genders who don’t fit the binary” (Crisp & Hiller, 2011, p. 27).

In conclusion, while improvements have been made that would, no doubt, impress the liberal feminists of the 1970, these advancements have yet to provide the same opportunity for all readers to find equal representations of themselves in the books most often read aloud. Educators need to consider the development of all children across the gender spectrum and engage students in conversations that highlight how gender roles can be redesigned and fluid, allowing individuals to behave according to their emotions and desires, rather than socially constructed binaries.

**Critical Literacy**

To best help children recognize gender bias in any format of text, educators need to teach students how to become critically literate when taking in information. Critical literacy is a practice that aims to “critique and transform ... dominant ideologies, cultures and economies, and institutions and political systems” (Luke, 2010, p. 5). Practicing and engaging in critical literacy in primary classrooms involves using language and literature to help students discover dominant discourses and power relationships, and to understand ways in which texts can shape and position our places in the world (Luke, 2012). Such exposure and peeling back the layers of various texts can illustrate to students that literature is “not neutral and is often used to advantage one group at the cost of another” (Lee & Runyan, 2011, p. 90). Napoli (2002) worries that not educating children of textual bias will not only prevent students from being unable to recognizing bias, but also encourage the ignorance or denial of any values or standpoints other than those implicitly projected. Thus, “students will internalize these values to such an extent that they become a lens through which they understand their world” (Napoli, 2002, p. 37). Exposing students to critical
literacy allows for “new ways of knowing and acting upon the world” (Luke, 2012, p. 5), ways that can lead to greater democracy and the possibility of freedom for all.

Critical pedagogies draw upon many theories including poststructuralism and Freire’s (1972) belief that educational practices should take a dialogical approach that accounts for the learners’ “lives and cultures” as opposed to the traditional ‘empty vessel’ model where teachers hold the power and the knowledge, imparting it onto students when the teacher sees fit (Luke, 2012, p. 5). Instead, adopting critical literacy practices encourages educators to become the learners’ “partner” in a quest for “mutual humanization” (Lee & Runyan, 2011, p. 89). When engaging with students in critically literate ways, educators can empower students to become “teachers of their understandings and experiences” and “inventers of the curriculum” (Luke, 2012, p. 7), which in turn allows for teachers to also become learners, redefining the hierarchical relationship in the classroom (Behrman, 2006). Critical literacy pedagogy also draws on Rosenblatt’s transactional theory where readers’ personal response is an important element when engaging with texts and when applied critically, can influence in the “moral and intellectual construction of the self” (Luke, 2012, p. 6).

Lewison, Flint and Sluys (2002) reviewed the literature on critical literacy and constructed a four dimensional framework from their findings that outlines ways educators can bring the practice into classrooms. The four dimensions are as follows: disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple points of view, focussing on sociopolitical issues, and taking action and promoting social justice (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 382). Firstly, disrupting the commonplace involves “interrogating texts” (Lewison, et al., 2002, p. 383) to find language that promotes or disrupts hegemonic discourses and analyzing how these discourses work to shape a reader’s position. Secondly, the authors describe how interrogating multiple points of view can enable readers to question whose voices are being heard and whose voices are excluded (p. 383).
Discovering the voice of the speaker allows for contradictory voices to be discovered, heard and made visible (p. 383). Thirdly, Lewison et al. (2002) explain how focussing on sociopolitical issues takes students out of their personal realms and into the larger sociopolitical systems where they are members (p. 383). This new perspective enables students to “redefine literacy as a form of cultural citizenship” and learn how to use language to participate more fully in daily politics and society at large (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 383). Lastly, Lewison et al. (2002) describe taking action and promoting social justice as “engaging in ‘praxis’” (p. 384). Praxis is Freire’s (1972) word meaning to reflect and take action “upon the world in order to transform it” (as cited in Lewison et al., 2012, p. 384). Further, the last dimension encourages students to analyse how language is used to control discourses and to challenge and redefine cultural boarders.

Conclusion

With a solid foundation of theory to support classroom practice educators can create liberating, engaging classrooms that foster agency for greater gender understanding and that develop gender-literate children.

Gender theorists such as Blaise (2005, 2013) explain the contextualized nature of people acting out their gender. These behaviours are often dictated by pressure to conform to the heterosexual matrix and are further constrained by hegemonic masculinities that encourage power imbalances. Liberal feminists of the 1960s and 1970s concerned themselves with the negative effects of these pressures on females alone. Today’s gender theorist understands that it is just as important to consider how the heterosexual matrix and hegemonic masculinities affect everyone, regardless of where they identify along the gender spectrum. As described previously, my particular interest in approaches to gender and education concern how, as both a mother and a teacher, I can address gender inequities with children, rather than focusing on boys or girls respectively.
Schwarcz and Schwarcz (1991) write that the “illustrated children’s book is no doubt the most vigorous and promising” media to best support, stimulate and guide the “whole range of the child’s personality” (p. 4). I believe educators can best illustrate and communicate issues of gender to young children and foster a critical eye that can be applied to any media for a lifetime of deeper understanding and insight by reading and discussing picturebooks. The picturebook is a natural choice for teachers who wish to engage children in dialogue about important topics that relate to children’s lives and development.

To best facilitate critical literacy through picturebooks educators need to participate in a modern pedagogical approach that centers on the student as active participants rather than passive consumers (Edwards-Groves et al., 2013, p. 4). Allowing for discussions through use of dialogic teaching presents students with the opportunity to take greater control over their learning and develop deeper understanding of their relationship to the social world.

In Chapter 3 I introduce a tool for teachers to use to assess gender bias in picturebooks they intend to use in their classrooms. I analyze three award winning Canadian picturebooks using the tool in order to demonstrate how teachers can use the criteria as well as explore the state of gender bias within these three Governor General award-winning books. My intention is to give teachers a window into the often hidden gendered messages picturebooks can conceal as “attending to the presentation of gender roles when selecting and introducing children to books ... can work to decrease stereotypic gender attitudes in young people” (Trepanier-Street & Romatowski, 1999 as cited in Crisp & Hiller, 2011, p. 209).
Chapter 3

Canadian Picturebook Analysis

In Chapter 2 I discussed how several researchers have examined gender bias in Caldecott winning books. In Canada, we have multiple awards for children’s literature that recognize a wide variety of literature including science fiction, non-fiction and picturebooks for both their text and illustrations. The most prestigious of these awards are the Governor General’s Literary Awards for excellence in Canadian literature. The Governor General’s Literary Awards are awarded in seven categories to books that are published in Canada with the intent of “support[ing] professional literary artists and arts organizations involved in fostering and promoting Canadian literary arts” (Canada Council of the Arts, Governor General’s Literary Award, para. 5). The winning authors receive a $25,000 prize with the publisher receiving a further $3,000 for promotional activities. Books recognized as finalists receive a $1,000 award.

To begin, I highlight the goal of determining the level of gender biased or stereotyped messages in picturebooks and discuss why I believe it is important for teachers to be aware of the often veiled, but critically influential, gendered messages in these texts. I then share the tool I adopted and the ways in which I adapted it to help teachers examine picturebooks for gendered messages. Subsequently, I illustrate the use of the tool by analyzing three Governor General’s Literary Award-winning Canadian picturebooks: *Julia, Child* (2014), written by Kyo Maclear and illustrated by Julie Morstad, *Miss Mousie’s Blind Date* (2012) written by Tim Beiser and illustrated by Rachel Berman, and *Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin* (2014) written by Cheiri Uegaki and illustrated by Qin Leng.

**Gendered Messages: A Filter for Exposure**

In my opinion, the goal of determining the gendered state of a picturebook is not to determine whether a book should be used at all but rather to determine the points of discussion
necessary to uncover and examine the way gendered messages exist in familiar formats. Certainly, if a picturebook contains harmful or inappropriate content it should not be shared with children. However, in light of the evidence that many picturebooks, including those receiving awards for excellence, tend to portray gendered messages that can be influential on a child’s developing identity, then teachers need to use a variety of picturebooks, including those with gendered messages to enhance children’s critical literacy skills.

As I explained in Chapter 1, after researching the extent of gendered messages in Caldecott Award-winning picturebooks for an assignment in one of my graduate courses I decided to dedicate my project to creating a tool that teachers could use to determine the gendered messages in the picturebooks they use in their classrooms. Further research led me to four examples of guides that evaluate children’s literature for bias including Mendoza and Reese’s (2001) guide that encourages “reading against the grain” or using race theory to find books that show “positive images of people from groups that have been marginalized” (p. 19). Another valuable source from Charlotte Huck’s *Children's Literature: A Guide* (McGraw Hill, 2010) and located on the accompanying website offers evaluation guides for a range of literature including but not limited to picturebooks, modern fantasy and poetry. I also discovered Derman-Sparks’ (2013) *Updated Guide for Selecting Anti-Bias Children's Books*. Derman-Sparks (2013) has adapted an original guide published both in book and pamphlet form by the *Council on Interracial Books for Children* in 1980 (para. 1). Closest to my focus of gendered messages was Snyder’s (2013) inquiry project investigating gender bias and stereotyping in picturebooks. Of the four guides I examined, Derman-Sparks’s was the most thorough and thought provoking.

Derman-Sparks is a renowned anti-bias educator whose own children inspired her “lifelong commitment to building a more just society for all people” (Derman-Sparks, 2013, para. 25). Her anti-bias guide includes examples of how to look for racism, ableism, classism, and sexism
and as such provides thoughtful questions to use to examine children’s literature. I found Derman-Sparks’s guide accessible and practical while addressing the “five areas most frequently scrutinized” as outlined by the Council on Interracial Books for Children: characterization, language and terminology, historical accuracy, cultural authenticity and illustrations (Zimet, 1981, p. 601).

To compose my tool, I extracted the points of Derman-Sparks’s guide most suited to determining gender bias or gender stereotypes and formatted the information in a table. These aspects included becoming familiar with the background of the author and/or illustrator, examining the illustrations, setting, the relationships and lifestyles of the characters, and critically reading the text for evidence of gender bias or gender stereotyped language. I further adapted Derman-Sparks’s guide by including additional questions that were raised during my research as well as providing examples to help clarify situations where gendered messages may be present. For example I included the following: Are the characters attributed values according to their body shape or wardrobe? Who is missing from the story? What toys are the child characters playing with? Do females depend on males for help or success? How do the characters behave towards each other? Do female characters portray only nurturing behaviours? Are children allowed to be independent but adult characters comply with traditional sex roles?

Furthermore, the purpose of my tool for determining gendered messages is different from the intent promoted by Derman-Sparks. The Updated Guide for Selecting Anti-Bias Children's Books is meant as a tool to help people build an anti-biased library. Derman-Sparks (2013) recommends omitting stories that contain biased messages when choosing the books to share with children, writing that, “every book needs to be accurate, caring, and respectful” (para. 20). I, on the other hand, encourage the use of as many picturebooks as possible to stimulate discussion and empower children to become critical readers for themselves. Gendered messages
exist in many forms; thus, exposing children to as many books as possible can provide students with opportunities to compare and contrast those messages and to make greater sense of the myriad of ways gender is constructed.

Table 1: A Guide to Expose Gendered Messages in Picturebooks, found on the following pages, is the tool I adapted for the purpose of recognizing gender bias or gender stereotypes in picturebooks.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literary Element</th>
<th>Questions to Ask</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Author**  
*What does the author’s biography tell readers about the book?* | Does the author self-identify as male or female?  
Is the author writing from the perspective of a gender different to the author’s own?  
What qualifies the author to write about the subject? | - A male assumes a female voice  
-A female assumes a male voice  
-A member of the LGBTQ community writes a story about same sex families |
| **Illustrator**  
*What does the illustrator’s biography tell readers about the book?* | Does the illustrator self-identify as male or female?  
Does the illustrator respectfully represent the people of the story?  
Has the illustrator followed the author’s script literally or is there interpretation in their illustrations? | - Females are all depicted as thin and beautiful or unimportant  
-Males are depicted as strong and handsome or unimportant  
-Facial expressions and body language are true to the text |
| **Illustrations**  
*Do the illustrations contain gender stereotypes or promote gender bias?* | How are the character’s personalities portrayed by their body types?  
How are the characters dressed? Are the females dressed in dresses? Are the males in dress clothes or casual clothes?  
Are all of the female’s clothes overtly feminine? Are the male’s clothes overtly masculine?  
Do boy’s clothes give evidence of rough play or uncleanliness?  
How are the adult bodies portrayed?  
What sort of toys are child characters playing with?  
Are there token characters present to give the appearance of inclusion? | - Confident, independent girls and women are ‘manlike’  
-Caring or sensitive male characters are shown as weak or unattractive  
-LGBTQ people are invisible or sexual predators  
-Women wear aprons or are not seen working outside of the home  
-Females are portrayed as sexy or dowdy  
- Males are strong or weak  
-Boys wear sporty clothes |
Do the images go beyond oversimplification and offer genuine insights into the lifestyles of the characters?

Are the images accurate?

Do the illustrations represent a spectrum of genders?

Do the characters represent real people with a variety of interests and occupations?

Do the characters represent a variety of ages?

Are the different age groups limited to one sex (i.e., the children are all female while the adults are both men and women?)

Who is missing?

Are the characters all the same age?

Are the main characters all the same sex?

Do the family units all consist of a mother, father, a boy and a girl?

-Men wear ties, suits, tuxedos, uniforms or other outfits that designate a job or importance

-Female characters are playing with dolls or playing house

-Male characters are outside, playing sports or roughhousing

-Men are absent or are not engaged with children characters

-Secondary female characters have jobs outside of the home

-Stay at home or unemployed fathers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lifestyle</th>
<th>Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Does it appear appropriate or desirable to gain status by demeaning others?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Does the setting reflect current life or past assumptions about life?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are negative value judgements implied about ways of life that differ from the social norm?</td>
<td>Is the setting explained in a way that brings attention to inequalities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are characters that do not portray dominant gendered traits pitied, disrespected or treated poorly?</td>
<td>-Stories set in the past depict females as caregivers and males as wage earners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are characters shown as trying to change themselves or their family in order to be accepted by a dominate group?</td>
<td>-Characters disguise themselves to avoid ridicule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Characters are made fun of because of their identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Character Relationships**
*Do the relationships enhance or hinder characters’ personalities or abilities?* | **Are traditionally dominant groups placed in powerful positions in the story?**
Are males the central figures with female characters in supporting roles?
Are girls/women or LGBTQ people in need of help from boys/men?
Are females’ achievements based on their own abilities and intelligence or because of their appearance or the assistance of a male character?
Do female characters solely exhibit caring and/or nurturing traits to male characters?
Do male characters solely exhibit aggressive, macho or masculine traits towards female characters? | -All authority figures are male
-Boys tease girls
-Females try to heal or soothe males
-Boys are in competition with each other
-Females achieve greater value when in heterosexual relationships
-Males are perceived as desirable by the female characters |
| **Vocabulary**
*Does the text offer a fair representation of the characters and the story line?* | Does the book contain sexist words such as brotherhood, fireman, policeman, forefathers, chairman, etc?
Do any words demean or render people invisible because of their identities?
Does the text contain words that elevate the position of men over women?
Does the text contain active words to describe males and passive words to describe females? | -The word ‘gay’ is used to describe something or someone that is not cool
-Girls are described as ‘tomboys’
-Boys do, girls watch |
| **Overall message**
*Does the book perpetuate negative gendered messages?* | Who is missing?
Are the main characters all the same sex?
Do the family units all consist of a mother, father, a boy and a girl?
Does the book promote individuality and uniqueness as positive qualities?
Are female and male characters presented as equals?
What is the author’s prevalent message? | -Same sex parent families
-Transgender children or adults
-The book is all girls or all boys
-Characters are valued for their abilities
-Female characters are successful based on their own merit |
Analyzing Canadian Picturebooks for Gendered Messages

The three books I analyzed have been recognized in the category ‘Children’s Literature-Illustration’ which is consistent with my focus on the artwork in children’s picturebooks. I chose these books in particular as they have all been acknowledged as Governor General Award finalists in the last two years and they are in circulation at the school library where I teach. The three picturebooks examined below are as follows: Julia, Child (2014), written by Kyo Maclear and illustrated by Julie Morstad, a Governor General Literary Award Finalist, 2014; Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin (2014), by Cheiri Uegaki and illustrated by Qin Leng, another Governor General Literary Award Finalist, 2014; and Miss Mousie’s Blind Date (2012), by Tim Beiser and illustrated by Rachel Berman, a Governor General Literary Award Finalist, 2013.

Julia, Child.

Julia, Child is a beautifully illustrated picturebook recommended by the publisher for children of all ages and by book reviewers for children aged three to nine (Children’s Literature Comprehensive Database, n.d., Julia, Child, Book Detail). The book received high praise and has been the recipient of many awards and nominations including the following: a finalist for the Governor General Literary Award, 2014; nominated by CBC Bookies Awards, 2015; winner of The Small Type Award for Children’s Books We Really Like, 2014; winner of the Gourmand World Cookbook Award for Best Illustrations, 2015; and listed as one of 20 new classics by the Huffington Post for 2015 (Kyo Maclear Kids, n.d., Julia, Child, Praise and Reviews). A reviewer for Midwest Book Review wrote, “Julia, Child is a magnificent story with French flavored illustrations and style, that conveys a timeless moral: To savor the moments of life, remember to become a child again, and to always share the best bites and bits with kindness” (Children’s Book Watch, n.d., Picturebook Shelf, Julia, Child) while a reviewer for the Huffington Post wrote, “Julie Morstad can do no wrong, and mixed with Maclear’s musings on
who these women might have been as girls, Julia, Child cooks up some real magic” (Kyo Maclear Kids, n.d., Julia, Child, Praise and Reviews).

**Author and illustrator biographies.**

The author, Kyo Maclear, born in the United Kingdom to a British father and Japanese mother, was raised in Canada from the age of four (Kyo Maclear Kids, n.d., About section, para. 1). Maclear holds an Honors B.A. in Fine Art and Art History, an M.A. in Cultural Studies from the University of Toronto, and is currently working on completing her doctoral thesis at York University (Kyo Maclear, n.d., About section, para. 2). Maclear writes children’s books, adult fiction and widely-published essays from her home in Toronto. When writing her first children’s book, *Spork* (2010), for her first born child, Maclear says that she was inspired to celebrate her child’s mixed race heritage (Kyo Maclear Kids, n.d., About section, para. 2). *Julia, Child* is Maclear’s fourth published children’s book.

Vancouver, BC illustrator Julie Morstad has become widely recognized for her beautiful and imaginative work that has graced the pages of her own picturebooks and those of other authors, such as Maclear. Morstad has also created book covers for novels, album covers and animated music videos as well as independent art pieces, fabrics and wallpapers (Good Reads, 2015, Julie Morstad section, para. 1). Using a variety of media including ink, gauche, watercolour, collage and Photoshop, Morstad’s work lends itself well to children’s picturebooks as her images are airy, light and whimsical with well placed colour to create emphasis and life. Since 2007, seven picturebooks illustrated by Morstad have been recognized with numerous awards, honours and prizes including three Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Awards, two Christie Harris Illustrated Children’s Literature Prizes, four Alcuin Society Awards for Excellence in Book Design in Canada, a Pigskin Peters Award, a Cybil Award, two Amelia Frances Howard-
Gibbon Illustrator's Awards, and two Governor's General Finalist recognitions (Children's Literature Comprehensive Database, n.d., Julie Morstad, Books That Have Won Awards).

Synopsis.

The picturebook by Maclear and Morstad tells an imagining of the childhood of famed chef and personality, Julia Child. With an appreciation for Child’s zest for life, Maclear conveys the wonderment of childhood and lack of appreciation for the little things by adults who are portrayed as too busy to enjoy life. Main characters Julia and her sidekick Simca work to create recipes for “growing young” that will “fix things” for the grownups that no longer have the “proper ingredients” to have a “marvellous time” (Maclear, unpaginated). When their attempt at feeding adults goes sideways because the adults are “too hungry... for the fun they had forgotten and the games they no longer played” (Maclear, unpaginated), Julia and Simca work to create a final recipe that will remind the “mindless and muddled” (Maclear, unpaginated) grown-ups how kinder, gentler and “a little more generous” (Maclear, unpaginated). Morstad’s award winning illustrations are rendered in ink, gouache paint and Photoshop.

Illustrations.

Characters.

Following the criteria in Table 1 above, I began my analysis by looking at the illustrations and examined what the artwork conveys to the reader about the characters of the story. In particular I looked for stereotypes or gender biased images that may portray characters as belonging to a polarity on the gender spectrum, for the purpose of tokenism or signs of respectful representation. First, I examined visual depiction of the main characters, Julia and Simca. Both girls are wide eyed, very slight in frame, neat and tidy and young in age, anywhere from age seven to ten. Julia wears jeans rolled above the ankles, a peach t-shirt, flats and a silk scarf for a French flair while at times choosing to get around on roller skates. Her curly brown hair is
cropped above the shoulders and she is often found wearing a white apron while working in the kitchen. Throughout the story Julia appears confident, thoughtful and observant.

Simca wears a short pink dress fitted at the waist with pleats, puffed short sleeves and baby blue trim, buttons and scalloped collar. Her long blond hair is worn in a pigtail with bangs, and her face is framed with large, round glasses. Simca is also seen wearing an apron when busy in the kitchen and she accessorizes her look with black, high-top sneakers and at times, a green cardigan. Simca, too, appears to be confident and observant while exhibiting slightly more feminine traits than Julia.

As the main characters of the story, Julie and Simca engage a great deal of the reader’s focus, imparting a large portion of the gendered information to readers. Their attractive, clean and quietly thoughtful appearance combined with a love for the culinary arts can be interpreted as stereotypical sex role bias. While both characters exhibit a few gender neutral traits by way of sneakers, cropped hair and jeans, the participation of the girls in the traditional role of food preparation and as the ones who recognize the need to help the adults become emotionally in touch with themselves play heavily into traditional female stereotypes. The illustrations can be interpreted as these two girls having the insight and ability to cure and sooth the “befuddled” (Maclear, unpaginated) adult souls as guided by their feminine intuition. Further, the images continue to reinforce stereotypes for ways in which young girls are supposed to behave – quiet, polite and performing servitude for others.

Compared to Julia and Simca’s subtle stereotypes, the other characters in the book demonstrate outright stereotyped sex roles. In the beginning of the story, readers see a multitude of grownups drawn in black ink without any colour wearing vintage styles suggestive of the 1940s. The illustrations of men show disdainful, moustached chefs, distinguished men in overcoats and bowties, business-type dressed males in suits and ties carrying briefcases, painters
in overalls with ladders and cans of beige paint, a uniformed delivery person carrying a large stack of parcels, and a hairy lumberjack with a five o’clock shadow. All of these men have short-cropped hair and jobs, are depicted with their hands in their pockets and do not interact with others. The overall impression is that these men are useful, important and busy.

Meanwhile, the adult women are also shown to be very busy, although they do not appear to be as important. Whereas the men appear to carry their jobs around with them in the form of a briefcase, paint brush or packages, the adult women are not depicted as having jobs except of the domestic variety. Make-up free women wearing baggy or loose coats over dresses with knee-length hems are seen hunched and dragging young children, pushing prams or weighed down with groceries. Young, slim, straight-backed women wear fitted, feminine clothing and display long eyelashes and full lips while carrying clutches and sporting styled hair dos, appear in one illustration. A ballerina with a high, tight bun and full tutu and another woman exhibiting movie star qualities in a polka-dot halter-topped dress appear in another. Lastly, in contrast to the other women, a tiny, hunched, elderly woman wearing slacks, a sleeveless shirt and using a cane appears in one illustration but does not seem to be invited to the meal. All of the women, seven in total, except the ballerina in her ribbon-laced ballet shoes and the elderly woman wearing flats, are wearing high heels.

Granted, these oversimplified illustrations of the adults in the book are meant to demonstrate the adult tendency to become “wary and worried, hectic and hurried” (Maclear, unpaginated), a state that the protagonists are working to avoid for themselves. As a whole, the colourless adults appear worn down and miserable, with narrowed eyes and no visible smiles. The only colour belongs to the children, the endless flowers, and the ingredients the girls use to concoct their French inspired cuisine. By the end of the story, after Julia and Simca have rescued the adults by “Mastering the Art of Childhood” (Maclear, unpaginated), the adults are depicted with some
colour to demonstrate their recollection of how to have fun and be generous with each other. The women remain either dowdy or glamorous, although there are smiles on their faces and colourful patterns in their outfits, while curiously, three of the four men demonstrate not only a renewed joy for life and an appreciation for flowers and petit gâteaux but also appear to soften in demeanour and wardrobe. One man, however, remains unchanged and continues to be greedy, eating an entire tray of petit gâteaux while still in a suit and tie. This transition is interesting when examining gendered messages as it appears the male characters make the greatest progress towards becoming better, kinder people thanks to the work of Julia and Simca. I find this message to be very perplexing as it is unclear why the males in the book would be more affected by the young girls’ recipe for youth than the adult females. Perhaps the females become prettier in order to continue conforming to social ideals when they are happy? Meanwhile, the men are able to relax and loosen up, appearing not to consider what other people think, indicating that hegemonic masculinity is playing a role in dictating how the characters can behave. The one male who does not appear to remember the joy of childhood perpetuates the stereotype that unlike females, males are likely to be naughty and mischievous regardless of female influence.

**Who is missing?**

It is interesting to examine who is missing from this story both in text and illustrations. Most noticeably absent are boys. The only male characters in the book appear to be over the age of 25. There is one other child drawn into the illustration of the adults rushing around, that of a small girl being dragged by her mother and leaving a trail of yellow flowers behind her. The colourful girl is making eye contact with Julia as though to say, “How have they forgotten the important lessons from childhood?” which leads me to ask why this character could not have been a boy? On Maclear’s (n.d.) website she conveys that the book *Julia, Child* was partly inspired by her “two (slow-moving) sons, who both love gâteaux and stories in which children
are shown to be infinitely wiser than the befuddled grown-ups raising them” (About section, para. 1) and yet no characters reflect boys’ childhood experiences alongside the female protagonists. While the fact that the protagonists are female is encouraging for statistics when weighing the equality of main characters’ sexes in award winning books, the fact that no boys are included at all is quite a curious oversight.

Furthermore, although the book is filled with adults, none of them appear to belong to Julia or Simca or to be at all concerned about the young girls yielding carving knives and working over hot stoves. To whom do Julia and Simca belong? What are the examples they see at home that represent the continuum of gender or are their home lives as binary as the rest of the colourless characters? Are there boys in the girls’ lives from whom they can learn from or do only female children exist in their universe? There are many questions left waiting to be answered by characters that do not appear in Julia, Child.

**Accurate representation.**

When scanning the illustrations for accuracy, such as fair representations of both sexes, one could note that the beautifully composed illustrations represent people correctly, in proper proportion and a variety of ages. Upon closer investigation however, one could argue that these representations do not respectfully represent the continuum of gender. Women are portrayed as polarities and are youthful and attractive or old and dowdy, identities maintained throughout the book regardless of the positive effect of the girls’ perfect recipe. The men as a group are treated differently, initially appearing cold and removed and becoming softer, gentler and kinder as demonstrated by a flush in their cheeks and a flock of butterflies fluttering around their heads by the end of the story. Without a variety of women represented in Julia, Child the book runs the risk of being interpreted as limiting girls’ potential to either a matronly existence or that of high-maintenance glamorous up-keep. The message to males is that they have greater options and will
grow up to be in charge with the option to be relaxed and joyful or remain greedy and still successful.

**Setting.**

There is cause for confusion when analyzing the setting of *Julia, Child* using the illustrations and background for gender information. The fashions worn by the main characters make them look as though they could be children of today with a passion for vintage roller skates and wooden crates for seating. However, the adults are meant to convey another time in history. As the story is inspired by the childhood of Julia Child, who was born in 1912 (Julia Child, 2015, para. 1), it could be that the author and illustrator are trying to portray life as it was in a bygone era. However, the real Julia Child would have been much older that the protagonists by 1940 leading me to assume that the fashions worn by the adults are a design feature meant to create a vintage atmosphere that perhaps unconsciously further promotes gender stereotypes rather than portrays historical accuracy.

**Relationships.**

Only a few relationships exist in *Julia, Child* to be examined for examples of gender bias. The most obvious relationship exists between the two girls, Julia and Simca. Julia, as the title character, is indeed the central character but the girls work closely together to help the adults overcome their sad existence. The text conveys they do have disagreements over the “little things” (Maclear, unpaginated) such as whether to use a wooden spoon or whisk for a recipe but they never argue over the “larger things” (Maclear, unpaginated) like the fact that “you can never use too much butter” (Maclear, unpaginated). This interaction can be interpreted as perpetuating stereotypical behaviour expected of girls in that females are prone to minor tiffs with their friends but they are able to solve the problems non-violently and without the exchange of harsh words.
The main message is that girls are better able to control their emotions and to deal with conflict, again promoting a stereotype about how girls should behave.

Perhaps the most curious aspect of relationships in this book are those between the children and the adults. Julia and Simca have a depth of understanding beyond their young years that the transition to adulthood can bring about a change, for the worse, in point of view. Thus, the girls watch the adults from afar, observing their daily toil and recognizing that instead, they want to forever cook “happily together: the oldest children in the world” (Maclear, unpaginated). Not once do the girls interact with the adults they are striving to save except to observe or provide delicacies from a distance. The girls try to heal the adults and do so through socially promoted nurturing and caring behaviours that appear to be more effective on the males than the females.

Although not written in the text as is the girls’ relationship, relationships between the inked adults are also depicted in the book. Heterosexual couples walk together but do not appear to engage with each other. At the table enjoying the feast they have been offered, a young man is depicted as coyly offering to share a baguette with the attractive young woman seated to his right while the delivery person is shown with his arm around the man to his left in a celebratory manner. Overall, these images enforce Butler’s (2006) heterosexual hegemony where only the heterosexual relationships are noticed. Although Morstad includes the image of two men sitting beside each other, one with an arm around the other, it is likely that most young readers will allow their ingrained gender perceptions to interpret the gesture as being one of friendship rather than a homosexual relationship, as concluded by Frawley (2008). Thus, the overall message created by the illustrations is about the normalcy of heterosexual relationships.

**Lifestyle.**

As the characters are portrayed as living in the 1940s, it is somewhat easy to draw the assumption that, as was the acceptable way of the time, heterosexual couples and families are the
norm. No obvious value judgements are placed on ways of life and the inclusion of a man’s arm placed on another man’s shoulders shows that possibilities at play for lifestyles that go against social norms. No characters are seen to be actively trying to change themselves to fit into a hegemonic group. The lack of interaction or communication between the men and women could be perceived as disrespect toward women, however the women do not appear to be seeking interaction with the men either.

**Text.**

**Vocabulary.**

A review by the National Reading Campaign proclaims, “Maclear’s lyrical text imbues the rich sophistication many would ascribe to French culture. Words like marvelous, savory, and morsel, and baking terms like pinch, dash, and compote make it a delicious read-aloud” (Kyo Maclear Kids, n.d., Julia, Child, Praise and Review section). Analyzing the vocabulary through a gendered lens reveals few concerning findings. Maclear appears to make a conscious effort to not refer to the protagonists as ‘girls’ but rather as ‘friends’ or ‘children.’ The avoidance of the word ‘girl’ all but once to describe Julia and Simca creates a more gender neutral feel through the text than is obvious through the illustrations. The book features a balance of feminine and masculine words to describe food or the behaviour of children such as sweet and beastly, delicate and rowdy. No loaded words such as ‘businessman’ or ‘delivery man’ are used in the text although these labels could be indirectly attached to the adult males. Overall, the vocabulary of the text provides a gender neutral palate for readers.

**Overall message.**

Upon first glance, Maclear’s story of two friends who set out to remind adults of the joy of childhood is beautiful, enjoyable and engaging and it is easy to see how it has garnered so much praise in the world of children’s literature. However, a closer examination through a gendered
lens that is further narrowed by feminist, poststructuralist and hegemonic theories reveals a gender bias across the story that should not be ignored when sharing the book with children. Although Morstad’s beautiful illustrations are sure to capture and delight the eye of the reader, it would serve the audience well to use a critical eye and ask questions about the story the artwork conveys about society’s hegemonic hierarchies.

The story line itself, although written in gender neural language, tells a different tale through the illustrations. While the adults are encouraged to behave more like children rather than rushing and worrying their lives away, it becomes clear that the most acceptable way to behave like a child is to be “a little less beastly and a little more generous” (Maclear, unpaginated). The notion of ‘beastly’ behaviour as unacceptable can perhaps be understood by all, but the fact that the only children represented in the book are girls, one may wonder if the message is that in order to behave like a female child one must be generous, kind and giving. As children are likely to be the main consumer of this picturebook, it is important to address the hidden subtext within this book, and encourage discussion around the stereotypes in regards to expectations of children’s behaviour.

Overall, when examining the combined effects of the text and illustrations, the findings appear to be similar to those found by Weitzman et al. (1972), Dougherty and Engel (1987), Clark et al. (1993) and Crisp and Hiller (2011) in their study of Caldecott winning books. Although the main characters are confident females who set out to solve a problem, they are doomed to a life of maintaining a glamorous appearance as young women before they become frumpy, mothers and old women, female stereotypes at their worst. Furthermore, children who identify as male have no characters in which to see themselves portrayed. Although one illustration shows men embracing, overall the adult characters are portrayed within a mostly heterosexual storyline further limiting children’s options for both their behaviour and their
relationships. Without question, this book would serve well as a piece of literature for a class discussion around gender stereotypes.

**Miss Mousie’s blind date**

*Miss Mousie’s Blind Date*, the second children’s book written by Tim Beiser and illustrated by Rachel Berman, was published by Tundra Books in 2012. Although Tundra Books recommends *Miss Mousie’s Blind Date* for three to seven-year-old children, most reviewers tend to suggest a slightly older audience to upwards of nine years (Kirkus Review, 2012). Beiser’s *Miss Mousie’s Blind Date* was named a finalist for a 2013 Governor General’s Award in Children’s Literature for Illustrations. Reviews are mixed for the book with most of the criticism aimed at the portrayal of Miss Mousie as an overweight, insecure mouse. Although Allen (2012), writing for *CM Magazine*, notes that “constant references to Miss Mousie’s being ‘fat’ and, therefore, unlovable, or ‘a cause for laughter,’ is unnerving” (para. 2), he does recommend the book as it “inspires discussion” (para. 4). On the Good Reads website under Community Reviews, many readers echo Allen’s (2013) sentiments with comments such as “a hateful story about self-degradation and settling for love” (Chiasson, 2014, para. 2); “a lovely story about how being fat is something to be ashamed of and fat people can only love fat people” (Caroline, 2013, para. 1); and “teaching children that we have to define ourselves by what other people say about us seems wrong” (BookCupid, 2012, para. 1). A reviewer for *Publisher’s Weekly* (2012) writes that although “Berman draws Miss Mousie's long gowns and dainty furnishings with tender care, and Beiser never cheats on rhyme or meter ... the story gets its biggest laughs from making fun of Miss Mousie's weight and the mole's poor eyesight” and thus “far from a compassionate portrait of disability, *Miss Mousie’s Blind Date* is] an inexplicable lapse in judgment” (para. 1). However, not all reviewers were as disenchanted with the picturebook. For example, a reviewer for the *Quill & Quire* found *Miss Mousie’s Blind Date* to be “an utterly charming book”
A reviewer for *Kirkus Magazine* wrote “Beiser’s sprightly text has warmth, heart and a valuable lesson ... Wonderful” (Kirkus Review, 2012). Sienna (2012), a five year old reviewer stated that, “kids should read [Miss Mousie’s Blind Date] because it’s a little bit sad but mostly happy” and, “it’s important to be yourself and know that people will always like you even if they’re [sic] fat or wear glasses like the mouse and mole did” (para. 7).

**Author and illustrator biographies.**

Tim Beiser, the pen name used by author J. Timothy Hunt when writing children’s books, lives and writes between Toronto and France (J. Timothy Hunt, 2014, para. 1). Beiser lived in New York for 16 years working “as a playwright and science fiction short-story writer” after earning a bachelor’s degree in Economics and later a B.A.A. in Journalism from Ryerson University (Tim Beiser, n.d.). Currently, besides writing children’s literature, Beiser continues his career as a freelance magazine writer (Tim Beiser, n.d.).

Rachel Berman was born in New Orleans and worked internationally for over 30 years as a professional artist before passing away in Victoria, British Columbia in May 2014 (Rachel Berman, n.d., para. 2). For her collaborations with Beiser, Berman worked “in watercolour and gouache on rag” (*Kirkus Review*, 2012) to create illustrations “full of character and personality” that are reminiscent of Beatrix Potter books with the “classic muted colour scheme style reminiscent of *Frog and Toad*” (*Quill & Quire*, n.d.). This fun, whimsical style showed Berman’s “light side” and was a departure from her work shown over the course of 11 years at the Ingram Gallery in Toronto (Rachel Berman, n.d., para. 3). Berman’s oil paintings depicting solemn-looking people have been likened to Leonard Cohen poetry and described as “mysterious” or “enigmatic canvases ... filled with emotion and nuance” (Jordan, 2003, para. 1) whereas the fun illustrations in *Miss Mousie’s Blind Date* are full of detail with “a lot to look at in each image” and “add visual support to the story being told” (Allen, 2012, para. 1). Beiser
describes Berman as “one of the world’s few true geniuses” (Rachel Berman, n.d., para. 5) while Berman described herself as “a quiet observer of life, a thinker and a humanist” (Globe Life, 2014, para. 1).

**Synopsis.**

*Miss Mousie’s Blind Date* is the tale of a mouse, drawn in by thoughts of springtime romance, who is rejected by a handsome rat and finds herself invited on a date with a mystery man. Ashamed of her “tubby, chubby body” (Beiser, 2013, unpaginated) after being belittled by the dashing rat, Miss Mousie decides to disguise herself for her date to protect her identity and perhaps, also her heart. When she finds herself face-to-face with a blind mole that owns the local deli, sporting a rat’s moustache and fake black hair, she realizes that it is indeed best to be herself and surround herself with others who do the same.

**Illustrations.**

**Characters.**

Once again following the criteria in Table 1, I began the analysis of *Miss Mousie’s Blind Date* by examining the illustrations for gender bias. Clearly, Miss Mousie herself is the protagonist of the story and readers first meet her in the deli where she is dressed conservatively in a long, loose skirt topped by a belted jacket and accessorized with a straw hat and flat brogues. Her small purse is brown and the colour of the rest of her ensemble is muted and neutral. Her age is indiscriminate as she appears neither young nor old, and her body is amply pear shaped. At home, Miss Mousie is depicted wearing a red polka dotted dress with a full skirt and long sleeves that is covered by a crisp white apron. In her final outfit, Miss Mousie disguises her “plain and fat” (Beiser, unpaginated) self in a gown she makes of a tablecloth, tea towels, bells and shells topped with a “crown of snails and veils to cover up her face” (Beiser, unpaginated) for her mystery date.
The conservative nature of Miss Mousie’s outfits conveys her personality as a neat, modest and somewhat shy female. While her clothes are not overtly feminine, her wardrobe of dresses and aprons clearly communicate that Miss Mousie is a woman. As pointed out by Roberts (1981), women in picturebooks are often depicted wearing aprons in the home, giving the impression that domestic work is the norm for women. This example of Miss Mousie wearing an apron provides support for Schwarcz’s (1991) caution about how picturebooks can perpetuate stereotypes and indoctrinate readers with narrow sex roles. The purpose of Miss Mousie’s final outlandish outfit is to disguise her body so that her mystery date will not see her body or, “One look at me, and he will flee” (Beiser, unpaginated). This message is most disconcerting when considered through a feminist lens as Miss Mousie’s shame about her size and desire to hide her body perpetuate body image issues prevalent in today’s society.

At the beginning of the story readers are also introduced to Matt LeBatt, the water rat, the “guy who turned [Miss Mousie’s] knees to jello” (Beiser, unpaginated). Matt is eating lunch at the deli and his portly body is dressed in a French inspired outfit of striped shirt, pants, neck scarf and beret. Matt appears confident, casual and a little aloof without being overtly masculine. His age is also difficult to determine but it is clear he is neither a teenager nor elderly.

The third character introduced in the picturebook is the owner of the deli and Miss Mousie’s mystery man, the mole. Mole wears dress shirts and pants with bowties and an apron while working, and adds a vest, dinner jacket and beret to court Miss Mousie. Depending on readers’ experiences, the apron worn by the mole can be read in a number of ways. As the mole is the owner of the deli the apron could be viewed as a sign of proprietorship. However, textual and illustrative clues convey the apron to symbolize servitude and therefore a lesser status, as does the apron worn by Miss Mousie. While working in the deli, the mole is rudely instructed by Matt LeBatt to “come fill my coffee cup” (Beiser, unpaginated). The mole immediately obeys,
demonstrating his role as servant to the demanding rat and confirming his emasculation. Mole has “a tubby belly” (Beiser, unpaginated) and appears to lack confidence in his appearance as he adds a moustache and wig and removes his glasses to more closely resemble the handsome Matt LeBatt when trying to impress Miss Mousie.

Seven, apparently male, other characters appear in only one illustration to witness Miss Mousie in her disguise on the way to her blind date. These characters are also animals dressed in “sumptuous clothing” (Rachel Berman, n.d., para. 17) including overcoats, vests, ties and hats. No characters seem to be present for the purpose of tokenism. It is difficult to examine the accuracy of the images for respectful representation because the characters are animals, although certainly no character is portrayed in an offensive manner.

**Who is missing?**

It is easy to see who is missing from *Miss Mousie’s Blind Date* when analyzing for gender bias. Firstly, no characters other than Miss Mousie are identified as women in the story. Therefore, Miss Mousie is the sole character for those children identifying as female to identify with. Secondly, the book features no children for young readers to identify with leaving them to identify with the roles played by the adults in the book. Lastly, the heterosexual matrix is perpetuated through the two male characters in the book in that both males are portrayed as potential romantic partners for Miss Mousie.

**Setting.**

*Miss Mousie’s Blind Date* appears to be set in the distant past according to the fashions worn and the furnishings of the deli and characters’ homes, such as a carpet beater which the blind mole offers to Miss Mousie as a seat. The reason for this setting is not clear although the traditional pattern of socially acceptable male/female relationships is supported by such a setting. Reminiscent of Beatrix Potter and the Frog and Toad stories, Berman’s beautiful illustrations
create an atmosphere of simpler times and support traditional relationships as being the norm
(Quill & Quire, n.d.).

**Relationships.**

Miss Mousie has relationships with both the rat and the mole that may portray gendered messages to young readers. Firstly, in her interaction with Matt LeBatt, Miss Mousie is enamoured, coy and eventually mortified when the rat not only ignores her attempts at catching his attention but also calls her fat for all to hear (Beiser, unpaginated). This brief encounter sends Miss Mousie to her burrow where “she hid ... for a day” and possibly “forever after” (Beiser, unpaginated) giving power to the traditionally dominate macho male. Certainly these events are not an empowering message for females yet they highlight how hegemonic power held by males has the appearance of being able to effect the happiness of females.

In her relationship with the mole, Miss Mousie’s first description of him is as “droll” (Beiser, unpaginated) and she pays him no attention. However when she discovers it was the mole who had invited her on a date at his house Miss Mousie quickly realizes that the mole has gone to great lengths to disguise himself in order to appear as handsome as Matt LeBatt. Miss Mousie finds the situation hilarious and appears flattered at his efforts to impress her as she has done the same to impress her mystery suitor. While it is important that the story resolves Miss Mousie’s feelings of inferiority, perhaps the negative reviewers are justified to criticize the moral of this tale. Miss Mousie’s happiness appears to depend on whether or not she has a male suitor. The message that a female’s happiness is dependent upon the adoration of males, whether she is attracted to them or not, can be demoralizing and is inappropriate for young girls.

The relationship between the two main male characters of ‘handsome’ rat and ‘tubby’ mole highlights a contrast that plays into hegemonic masculinities. Matt LeBatt is portrayed as the dominate male who, due to his dashing appearance, receives the attention of females while the
Mole is a background character who is not perceived as handsome and therefore, does not make Miss Mousie’s “little legs [go] weak” (Beiser, unpaginated). Matt LeBatt’s rudeness to the mole when ordering in the deli communicates that the handsome rat recognizes his power over the less attractive mole as well as over Miss Mousie. This polarized representation of the male sex works to reinforce hegemonic masculinities for children as well as strengthen the heterosexual matrix by perpetuating the notion that desired males are heterosexual males. It is interesting to note that although Matt LeBatt is, on first appearances, taken to be heterosexual as he is the love interest of a female, no evidence supports this assumption. No clues are provided about Matt LeBatt’s sexual orientation, a point worthy of discussion because the representation of an un-heterosexual male as the most powerful character supports the theory of hegemonic masculinities. For example, if a homosexual, LeBatt is portrayed as the dominant male conveying that it is possible for less commonly dominate forms of masculinity to be hegemonic depending on the situation.

**Lifestyle.**

The lifestyle portrayed in the story further perpetuates gender bias. Matt LeBatt’s attitude towards both Miss Mousie and the mole portrays negative value judgements on the characters because of their appearances which indicates that only attractive beings are worthy of positive attention. Both Miss Mousie and the mole are disrespected and treated poorly as they do not meet the standards necessary to be dominant figures in their respective genders according to societal expectations. Through their desire to disguise themselves in the hopes of appearing less fat or unappealing, the characters of Miss Mousie and the mole go to great lengths to hide their true selves and alter their appearance to the meet the criteria as set by the dominant rat. Neither the text nor the illustrations provide any indication that such an attitude is unacceptable.
Text.

Vocabulary.

Multiple examples of language use in *Miss Mousie’s Blind Date* contribute to the gender bias of the story. Firstly is the title attributed to Miss Mousie herself. Before a reader even engages with the text, the pronoun ‘Miss’ places importance on the marital status of her character emphasising that she is single. Secondly the recurring judgements of both Miss Mousie and the mole’s body type communicates their larger size lowers their worth, a belief that the characters appear to believe themselves. Words such as ‘fat,’ ‘chubby,’ and ‘tubby,’ are used repeatedly to describe Miss Mousie and the mole and never as terms of affection. Although in the illustrations Matt LeBatt is the same size as the mole, no mention is made of his size being detrimental to his social standing. Lastly, the only contribution to the text from the seven flat characters are “loud shouts and cheers and whistles” in response to Miss Mousie’s “clever gown” (Beiser, unpaginated). This interaction of a group of males shouting at a lone female could be construed as aggressive or at the very least impolite. No mention is made of the group making any positive remarks about Miss Mousie’s appearance. These examples, when examined for gender bias, clearly demonstrate the elevation of dominant males over a female as well as a less dominant male.

Overall message.

The tale of Miss Mousie and her foray into romance has many gendered messages with mixed benefits. Indeed, stereotyped images of women as swooning, love-struck and emotional beings that wear aprons while at home have the potential to be limiting to young people who identify as female. Similarly, male characters depicting thoughtless, judgemental and heartless qualities have the potential to teach those who identify as male that it is acceptable to wield power over those who are do not fit into hegemonic masculinities and to do so without regret.
The departing message of the book could be that adhering to imbalanced power structures due to a person’s perceived gender role is an acceptable way to view and behave in the world. The possibility of such messages being perceived by young readers requires that Miss Mousie’s Blind Date be shared with an awareness of gender bias and with room for discussion. It is essential that the actions of the characters in Miss Mousie’s Blind Date are investigated and analyzed for reflection and recognition of gender bias in picturebooks.

_Hana Hashimoto, sixth violin._

Published in 2014 by Kids Can Press, _Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin_ by Cheiri Uegaki and Qin Leng is a beautiful book that has received significant recognition both within and outside of Canada. Not only has the picturebook been shortlisted for the Maine State Chickadee Award, the Christie Harris Illustrated Children's Literature Prize, the First & Best List of the Toronto Public Library as well as being finalist for the Governor General's Literary Award in Children's Literature Illustration, but also it has won eight other awards in 2014 and 2015 (Kids Can Press, 2015, Chieri Uegaki, Awards). These accolades include the Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature, the Top Children's Books of 2014, the Top 2014 Mighty Girl Books For Younger Readers, the OLA Best Bet List for Children, the Notable Books for a Global Society (NBGS) List, the Ezra Jack Keats Book Award for New Writers, the USBBY Outstanding International Books and lastly the Cooperative Children's Book Center Choices award (Kids Can Press, 2015, Chieri Uegaki, Awards).

Reviewers convey only positive comments about _Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin_. A reviewer for _Publishers Weekly_ (2014) proclaims “Hana’s clever triumph is testament to her inventiveness, perceptiveness and dedication” (_Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin_) and a reviewer for _Resource Links Reviews_ (Mitchell, 2015) writes that “having confidence that you can do anything you put your mind to” and “not letting others make you doubt yourself” are the main messages from the
book (para. 1). Other complimentary comments include the following: “Uegaki’s narrative and Leng’s pleasing illustrations... seamlessly incorporate details of both Japanese and North American life” (Kirkus Reviews, 2015, para. 1); and “Uegaki's lyricism can be found in each and every page” and “her prose is equally matched by Leng's ... understated yet powerful...drawings [that]capture the beauty and simplicity that come with Hana's love of music” (Iaizzo, 2014).

Author and illustrator biographies.

_Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin_ is the third picturebook written by Japanese-Canadian author, Chieri Uegaki (Kids Can Press, 2015, Chieri Uegaki). Uegaki was born in British Columbia and grew up in Vancouver where she started writing at the young age of seven. Years after receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Creative Writing and not writing professionally, Uegaki took a course in Writing for Children through Simon Fraser University and was encouraged to “take writing for children seriously” (Book Week, n.d., Chieri Uegaki, para. 4). After being shortlisted twice in writing competitions for her first picturebook, _Suki’s Kimono_, (2005) Uegaki was discovered by Kids Can Press Publishing house and began her career as a children’s author (Kids Can Press, 2015, Chieri Uegaki).

Born in China, illustrator Qin Leng moved to Canada at the age of five after spending the first four years of her life in France with her artist parents (Annick Press, n.d., para. 1). Heavily influenced by her father’s work, Leng decided to become a professional artist at the age of 20 after giving up on a career in biology. Enrolling at Concordia University’s School of Cinema where she studied Film Animation, Leng embarked on her successful career that includes producing her own films which have been nominated both at film festivals both within Canada and internationally (Annick Press, n.d., para. 3). Leng’s ink and digital colour artwork appears in numerous children’s books published by over a dozen publishers, as well as pieces for the Save the Children and UNICEF charities (Shannon Associates, n.d., para. 1). With an interest for
drawing “cute little things” because the “proportions of a small child are just adorable” Leng decided to focus her talents “on the children books market” and her work has been very well received (Sfia, 2013, para. 4).

**Synopsis.**

*Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin* is the story of young Hana who, inspired by her grandfather, who played Second Violin in a Japanese symphony orchestra, decides that after a mere three lessons she is going to play her own violin at her school’s talent show. Laughed at by her brothers who “flee the house with covered ears, complaining about the horrible noise” (Uegaki, unpaginated), Hana is not discouraged and practices daily for whomever will listen including the family dog or a picture of her grandfather. The night of the talent show, Hana is called to the stage where she is to be the sixth violin performance of the evening. After a deep breath to calm her nerves, Hana resolves to do her best, just like her grandfather had told her. The young girl uses her violin to play the sounds she had practiced such as falling rain on a paper umbrella, buzzing bees, a lowing cow, squeaking mice, and croaking frogs before taking a “great big bow” (Uegaki, unpaginated). At home after the show, Hana’s brothers ask her to play their favourite sounds from her performance and the whole family laughs and delights at Hana’s talent.

**Illustrations.**

**Characters.**

Hana, the protagonist of the story, is a young Japanese girl between the ages of five and nine. She is small and clean, with a short, unfussy bob haircut and bangs. Throughout the story Hana wears three outfits. The first consists of a baggy, long-sleeve red t-shirt and denim shorts with white slouchy socks and leather laced shoes that frequently appear undone. Her second outfit is a pair of white pajamas with a loose t-shirt and shorts. Lastly, the outfit Hana wears to perform in her school’s talent show is a blue, long sleeved turtleneck worn under a red, mid-thigh
length shift dress with the same slouchy socks and leather shoes. All three outfits are simple, plain and with the exception of the dress, gender neutral, not unlike Hana herself.

The rest of the characters are people with close relationships to Hana including her parents, brothers and grandfather and her best friend, Jas. Hana’s mother and father always appear together whether it is at home washing dishes, eating or smiling at their daughter from the audience, camera in hand, during her performance. Hana’s slim, make-up free mother wears her hair long, and pulled back loosely in a ponytail with bangs like her daughter. She wears a white t-shirt, purple cardigan and ankle length grey pants with flat slip-on shoes. Hana’s father is tall and slim with neat, short hair and wears a casual outfit consisting of an untucked, unbuttoned collared shirt under a blue sweater with long dark grey pants, white socks and slippers. While washing dishes together, Hana’s mother wears a pink apron as her father dries the dishes with a dish towel, a female gender stereotype countered with an uncommon portrayal of male domesticity.

Hana’s teasing brothers appear slightly older than her and throughout the book the two boys are often active, whether climbing trees, running from Hana’s violin practice or laughing loudly as she plays their requests at the dining room table. The boys look similar in appearance with one wearing a white t-shirt with blue sleeves, shorts, and skater shoes with a shaggy haircut while the other, slightly bigger boy is clothed in a blue t-shirt, shorts, and running shoes and has a spiky hair do. Two illustrations show the boys still; firstly, when like Hana, the boys sit quietly and contentedly listening to their grandfather play the violin while on holiday in Japan, and secondly when Hana takes the stage to perform. Although the boys are described as “melting into their seats” at this point in the story, it is unclear whether they are embarrassed for Hana or by Hana.
Ojiichan, Hana’s grandfather, is depicted with thick, somewhat shaggy grey hair, a bushy moustache and goatee. He wears a beige v-neck sweater over an unbuttoned collared shirt with dark grey pants and either slippers or brown leather shoes and is most often depicted playing his violin. Hana’s grandfather is shown as a caring individual in an illustration where he stoops to embrace his granddaughter, and overall he conveys a masculinity that is different from most hegemonic forms because not only is he depicted as nurturing but also as an artist.

Lastly is Hana’s best friend, Jas whom readers meet very briefly at the concert as Hana searches the audiences for faces she knows. Jas appears to be the same age as Hana and is seen encouraging her friend by giving her the two thumbs up gesture from the audience. Wearing a blue, short sleeved dress, Jas has shoulder length brown hair. It is worth mentioning that Jas is situated in a large audience composed of people of all sizes, ages, genders and nationalities.

No characters appear to be present for the mere sake of inclusion nor are the images overly simplified. Readers can gain a good sense of the characters’ lives, culture and behaviour through Leng’s detailed illustrations that respectfully represent all of the characters.

**Who is missing?**

When analyzing *Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin* through a gendered lens to look for missing representation, the first observation is a lack of depiction of families that differ from the traditional mother, father and 2.5 children template. One may also question the absence of a partner for Hana’s grandfather in Japan. It is interesting to note that in contrast to Weitzman et al.’s (1972) findings that showed fathers are commonly absent from nurturing or domestic duties in picturebooks, Hana’s father appears in all illustrations alongside Hana’s mother, including when doing the dishes.
Setting.

The settings for the story include Hana’s home, which resembles modern day North America, the home of her grandfather in Japan where Hana sleeps on tatami mats with a “cool buckwheat pillow” (Uegaki, unpaginated), and the stage for the talent show. Placing the story in the present allows for the possibility that non-traditional gender roles are acceptable.

Relationships.

The most powerful relationship in Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin is between Hana and her grandfather. Not only is Hana inspired to learn how to play the violin like her grandfather but also she finds the courage to play the violin in her own unique way based on the feelings invoked in her by her grandfather’s playing. For example, Hana recalls the way her grandfather’s playing could “coax her awake as gently as sunshine” or be so “soothing that sleep would fall over her like a blanket” (Uegaki, unpaginated). Both of these descriptions contribute to the love and ease of the relationship between Hana and her Ojiichan and demonstrate the grandfather’s nurturing behaviour.

Another strong relationship exists between Hana and her brothers. It is this relationship that demonstrates the strongest traditional gender roles in the story. At first the brothers tease Hana and laugh at her “like monkeys in a tree” when she announces that she will play her violin in the talent show (Uegaki, unpaginated). Hana does not retaliate or defend herself against their harsh judgement that she will “be a disaster” (Uegaki, unpaginated). Instead she simply takes her violin into the house to practice. The behaviours of both the boys and Hana fall in line with the traditional behaviours of children as outlined by Clark et al. (1993) where boys are noisy and aggressive and girls are quiet and passive. However, at the end of the story the brothers redeem themselves by showing support and encouraging Hana to play the violin in her unique way, conveying that although they can be silly, they can also demonstrate respect for their sister.
Although the relationship between Hana and her parents is less fleshed out in the story than between her brothers and grandfather, it appears to be supportive and caring. When Hana wants to begin violin lessons, her parents agree. Both parents are attentive when Hana practices for them at home. When Hana plays at the talent show, both parents are in attendance to support and encourage her. This relationship conveys a positive and encouraging message in that fathers can be contributing members to family life and the nurturing of their children.

**Lifestyle.**

*Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin* is mostly absent of negative messages telling readers how to behave in ways that demean others, the exception being the unkind teasing Hana experiences from her brothers. Hana chooses to rise to the challenge and believe in her abilities on her own accord and does so without the help of anyone else. The adult male characters do not ascribe to traditional male roles in that the father is visibly contributing to the raising of the family’s children and the grandfather is an artist. In no ways are these roles disrespected or pitied.

**Text.**

**Vocabulary.**

*Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin* does not contain any biased or sexist vocabulary. The book contains no examples of characters using demeaning words to belittle or embarrass others based on identity and no words can be construed to elevate men’s position over the women of the story.

**Overall message.**

The story of Hana and her violin is free of glaring gender biases or sex role stereotypes. Uegaki and Leng have created a picturebook with a quietly confident female protagonist who is surrounded by a loving family including men who interact with children. While it is not completely devoid of issues worth talking about such as the unkind behaviour of the brothers towards Hana at the beginning of the story and the fact that the mother is wearing an apron, *Hana*
*Hashimoto, Sixth Violin* is a beautiful story that provides characters for most students to recognise themselves in both for today and into their futures.

**Conclusions**

In this chapter I have strived to highlight the value of using picturebooks, even those with gendered messages, to spark discussions that uncover the hidden nature of gender bias and gender stereotypes in this familiar and cherished children’s medium. *A Guide to Expose Gendered Messages in Picturebooks* is the tool that I adapted from Derman-Sparks’s (2013) *Updated Guide to Selecting Anti-Biased Children’s Books* in order to help analyze Canadian Children’s Literature finalist picturebooks for gender bias and gender stereotypes.

In Chapter 4 I link the theories and literature reviewed in Chapter 2 to *A Guide to Expose Gendered Messages in Picturebooks*, make suggestions to guide teachers’ practice and reflect on the experience that has brought me my new understandings of gender and education.
Chapter 4

Reflection

Childhood decides everything...

Jean Paul Sartre

Completing a Master of Education degree had never been on my ‘to do’ list. Yet, in the 14 years since proudly receiving my Bachelor of Education I have been profoundly struck by the leadership, expertise and professionalism of many teachers I have encountered and greatly admired. When I think about the common features of these teachers, beyond a passion for teaching, it is often the completion of further education that has contributed to these professionals becoming masters of their craft and in turn, helping others develop as educators. Over the last few years I have become more aware of colleagues completing their Master degree and I began to wonder, why not me? The opportunity presented itself when a colleague encouraged me to apply along with her to a graduate program. Although in the eighth month of my second pregnancy and regardless of the role I was about to embark on as a parent, I knew that completing a Master of Education degree was something that I had to do. I also recognized on a very personal level that I wanted to seize the opportunity to complete the graduate degree that my mother never had the opportunity to start. She had been accepted to complete a Master of Leadership degree shortly before losing her life to cancer in 2001. I know she would be very proud.

According to Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory, we are all products of our experiences. I am made up of stories that have impacted the way I see the world and the way the world sees me. It is no different for the students I teach. My new found understanding of gender as a social construct has played a monumental role in my interpretation of myself that has caused me to reflect on my role as a mother and as a teacher of the young. My behaviours in the world and in
the classroom serve as a model for children and encourage the behaviours they exhibit. I have learned there is a different approach I must embrace to bring about the changes I want to see in children today. Connell (2006b) outlines three levels where social research, such as that involving gender, is useful: “increasing understanding, solving practical problems and guiding long-term change” (p. 26). Using these three platforms, I know that it is possible for me to affect change both in my classroom and in my family so that equity is promoted among students, and children can “learn to behave in ways that support gender equity in society” (Pollard, 2013 as cited in Banks, 2013, p. 150).

In this chapter I reflect on the events that lead me to embark on the Master of Education program and the learnings I have gained that frame my project. I also discuss possible next steps in the continuation of my career and my final thoughts on completing the degree.

**My Graduate Degree Experience**

Throughout the process of completing my degree I have been overwhelmed at the magnitude of information informing the broad field of education. By completing my Bachelor of Education program I believe I developed the foundational abilities to stand at the front of a classroom and impart the curriculum. However, now I have become obsessed with pedagogical theory. I am abashed to say that up to this point in my teaching career, neither theory nor research played a significant role in shaping my practice and I believe that my shift to following epistemological research is the most significant change I have experienced during the past 22 months. I have been pleased by the discovery that some of my current classroom practices that were based on instinct are also supported by research as being beneficial to children. While the range of new information has been stimulating, and I want to learn more about almost every area affecting education, I settled on my final topic, gender and the picturebook, within weeks of beginning my program.
My Topic: Gendered Messages

I feel fortunate that, regardless of my naiveté upon beginning the program, I was expertly guided to choose courses that I would otherwise not have. Such is the case with EDCI 523 Diverse Voices and Visions where I was first introduced to Friere’s (2013) Pedagogy of Oppressed and a broader notion of the definition of ‘culture.’ I found myself shifting from a comfortable pedagogical place to one where I began asking, “Who is missing?” and taking more of an epistemological stance. During this course I was introduced to the broad topic of gender in education and I was immediately engaged. My second son was five months old and my awareness of the gendered messages in picturebooks was heightened. I wrote my first literature review on research examining gender in picturebooks and as well as being impressed by the amount of work that has been conducted, I was awed by the findings that pointed out the gendered nature of children’s literature. After this initial exposure to gender-related educational issues, each course I took afforded me with opportunities to engage in a deeper exploration of the wide-ranging impact gender plays in the lives of children. In the following section, I outline the coursework, research, theories and concepts that shaped my project.

Gender’s presence in reading/viewing and writing/representing.

Teaching Grades 1 and 2 means that I am often working with children on the cusp of beginning to read and write. I find the process of watching students grow and develop as literate beings to be immensely exciting and I relish the opportunity to participate in such a life-changing event. The greatest knowledge I have gained through examining the literacy practices of reading and writing through my coursework was the acknowledgement that a great deal of children’s literacy achievements are affected by external forces such as socio-economics and experience with and exposure to text (Allington et al., 2010; Hebers et al., 2012; Rosenblatt, 1986). Understanding the importance of outside factors, such as cultural identity, is important to my
project because it highlights the need to recognize each student as an individual in order to best promote the acquisition of effective literacy skills.

I was also very interested in research that explained the ways children use language to shape their gender identities through writing. For example, in her research on children’s narrative writing Peterson (2001) discovered that “characters in girls’ narrative writing demonstrated more emotion and more prosocial behaviours (helping, sharing, empathizing) whereas characters in boys’ narrative writing exhibited more aggressive behaviour and engaged in more high-intensity, dangerous actions” (p. 451). Furthermore, Kanaris (1999) found that “boys use more ‘I’ statements in their writing” (p. 259), a strategy that places the boys at the center of their own writing. In contrast, girls tended to use “third person references to distance themselves from the action and to position themselves as observers in their own narratives” (Kanaris, 1999, p. 259). These patterns are constructed from a young age, then rehearsed, tested and reframed within the socially accepted binaries of male and female both in talk and in text. Knowledge of gendered speech patterns has influenced my understanding of the hidden ways in which gender is consistently present and influential in children’s literacy practices, highlighting the need for awareness of teachers, students and families. I understood the need to be vigilant for recognizing gendered speech patterns when reading picturebooks with children as these texts can contain similar gendered messages not obvious to the average reader.

Lastly, I was profoundly inspired by Louise Rosenblatt (1986) whose work examines the process of reading and the effect on readers with the goal of affecting social change. Rosenblatt’s transactional theory overlaps gender theory in that the recognition of the child as a unique and valued individual reflects the spectrum of gender possibilities and the need to respect and support each person’s literacy growth. Furthermore, Rosenblatt’s understanding of the complex nature between the reader and sign systems is integral to the intent of my project. As
each reader’s perspective is influenced by his/her unique social context, the need for discussion to share these diverse perspectives is paramount for the possibility of exploring and accepting different ways of knowing. Exposure to the ideas and perspectives of others allows for the reflection, questioning and shifting of beliefs, processes that are necessary to dislodge the power of hegemonic masculinities and the heterosexual matrix.

**Gender pedagogy.**

During the course EDCI 549 *Gender & Pedagogy*, I began my own work looking inwards at the lifetime of experiences that have shaped my own gender identity. This reflection raised my awareness of the social and cultural influences experienced by humans as they grow and develop into social beings. Reflecting on my own gender story, how I position myself as a person, a professional and a parent, was invaluable for paving the path to my understanding of gender. Many theories work in conjunction to build a framework for gender pedagogy, and reading the works of Blaise (2005, 2013), Connell (2006a, 2006b), Davies (1989, 1993) and MacNaughton (2006) have greatly shaped my understanding of gender theory. In particular, Blaise (2005, 2013), Davies (1989, 1993) and MacNaughton (2006), who worked with children in early educational settings to closely examine how gender is constructed in these environments enabled me to envision how I might address gender in my own classroom. Connell’s (2006a, 2006b) theories of masculinities enabled me to connect the concerns I have for my sons’ gender-wellbeing with my pedagogy and see beyond liberal feminism to recognize the effects of gender bias and stereotypes on all people.

**Research methods.**

My coursework examining research methods in the area of Language Arts was critical to my understanding of how to read a text and listen to student talk for insight into gendered messages. In particular, during EDCI 590 *Interpretation and Analysis of Language Arts Research* I learned
about critical content analysis and critical discourse analysis, which further developed my understanding of the need to examine both text and talk for evidence of power imbalances and gender inequities. I was able to use my knowledge of these research methods to frame the construction of my adapted tool, *A Guide to Expose Gendered Messages in Picturebooks* and illuminate ways in which I can facilitate discussions of gender, sex roles and self-identity in a primary classroom. Furthermore, I can also use critical content analysis and critical discourse analysis to teach students how to critically examine not only picturebooks but also the messages portrayed in today’s media.

**Using critical literacy to deconstruct gendered messages.**

According to researchers, the messages portrayed in picturebooks affect a child’s personality traits, self worth, ambition and understanding of societal values (Dougherty & Engel, 1987; Gooden & Gooden, 2001; Weitzman et al., 1972). Critical literacy is perhaps the best way to address messages imbedded within “institutional texts” (Chambers, 2003, p. 223). In particular, the sharing of picturebooks in classrooms provides a platform for discussion and a space to develop a critical eye.

In summary, my initial coursework in *Diverse Voices* set me on the path of examining gender in education and each following course further shaped the construction of my final project. In the remaining portion of this chapter I discuss how I plan to move forward with my new knowledge and inform my practice.

**Next Steps**

Through the process of raising my own awareness of gender I have become immersed and fascinated by the seemingly endless gender discussions that happen daily around me. News stories of sexist dress codes, the perpetuation of rape culture, celebrities sharing their stories of transgendered identities, and ongoing body issues perpetuated by the media are reported daily.
Perhaps most surprisingly to me is the fact that when I engage others in discussions on these gender topics there is a noticeable absence of awareness of or education on these issues. I believe that current society is ready to address gender issues and make significant, positive change. Just as with dialogic talk in the classroom, I hope that engaging in conversations about the issues that happen around us will help to generate greater awareness and motivate change.

To promote discussion and raise greater awareness regarding gender issues, I plan to present my findings in a professional development workshop on *Gender in the Primary Classroom* for local school districts. The workshop will outline why attention to gender is important to address when working with young children and practical ways, such as the use of my tool, *A Guide to Expose Gendered Messages in Picturebooks*, to address gender in the classroom. I also intend to use my knowledge to help guide my school towards making gender-fair policy that is respectful and inclusive, promoting the social justice that all students deserve.

Finally, and closest to my heart, I intend to educate my children on how to critically observe and question the pervasive gendered messages that exist in the books they read and encounter through various other media. I realize I cannot raise my children in a bubble, nor do I wish to do so, but I need to help them develop the skills to reflect on their experiences, filter information for themselves and question norms presented in their favourite picturebooks and beyond.

**Implications for pedagogy.**

Teachers’ own reflection is, I believe, the most critical component to successfully addressing gender in primary classrooms. Without the often uncomfortable inward gaze at our own assumptions about gender, teachers should be cautious about entering the exceptionally personal realm of gender. Even in the best student-centered environments, the teacher is required to behave as a model. Without a genuine understanding and acceptance of the myriad of gender identities students inhabit, great harm can be done to a child’s developing identities and negative
stereotypes inadvertently reinforced. It is vital that educators educate themselves on gender theory, investigate their own gender identity and feelings about gender in general before embarking on a gendered journey with young children.

Perhaps a benefit to the lack of specific curriculum inclusion of gender in the primary grades is the possibility that educators can take up the topic of gender across the curriculum. Addressing gender issues through picturebooks is merely one way to address inequity within education. Examining gender in the curricular areas of science and math for example, can provide powerful examples of how hegemonic masculinities have shaped whose contributions have been traditionally valued and whose stories have not been told. Similar examples could be examined in social studies by looking within communities for examples of past or present inequities. Activities such as determining the balance of men and women in positions of power, identifying occupations that are no longer seen as gender specific, and meeting people who break sex role stereotypes such as male nurses or female police officers, for example. As gender affects every aspect of people’s lives it is easy to incorporate its inclusion within every aspect of the classroom.

**Recommendations for Research**

The most obvious recommendations I can make for future research are to continue to the work begun by Weitzmann et al. (1972) and examine new children’s literature for gendered messages. This work is needed for various reasons. Firstly, updated research will help to monitor the progress, or lack of, made in gender equity of children’s books with respect to language used and reduced bias or stereotypes. Secondly, research will continue to evolve with society bringing new and more modern approaches to the issue of gender such as the work of Crisp and Hiller (2011) who contributed a greater examination of masculinities to a previously feminist approach. Additionally, there is a profound need for a similar examination of gendered
messages in Canadian picturebooks. To my knowledge, no academic research examining gender has been conducted on Canadian literature, certainly not to the extent of the Caldecott research, and this gap is indeed a loss for Canadian educators.

**Final Thoughts**

In conclusion, all children deserves the best future society can afford them; a future without limited potential, regardless of their sex or gender. I believe the public education system should be forefront in the will to create such a future and educators must be aware of the opportunity to help shape it. Opening one’s mind to the notion that it is possible to show children how to critically evaluate society’s constructed options for creating a person’s unique identity can liberate not only the child but also the educator from predetermined gendered destinies.

I believe that in order to reduce or eliminate the gendered messages children receive from books shared at school that teachers need to “be familiar with the books they choose” (Zimet, 1981, p. 601). I am not advocating that teachers screen and remove picturebooks with heavily stereotyped messages from the hands of children but instead teachers need to ensure and allow for classroom talk to help readers develop the skills necessary to determine gender bias for themselves. All picturebooks can be useful in the hands of thoughtful educators.

Performing a gender analysis on three Canadian award winning picturebooks was an illuminating experience for me. While I should not have assumed that Canadian picturebooks would be devoid of gender bias or gendered stereotypes, I would not have accurately seen the extent of hidden messages that exist in these picturebooks that I previously perceived as innocuous. In particular, I understood Nilsen’s (1971) reference to the “cult of the apron” (p. 918) when I saw that each of the Canadian books analyzed depicts a woman wearing an apron while in the house. Interestingly, in two of the three analyzed books, an apron is not referred to in the text suggesting that the illustrators added the aprons. Recognizing that I myself would not
have understood the depth of the gendered messages communicated through these three picturebooks before analyzing them carefully, I am utterly convinced that my tool can be useful to other teachers as well.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the potential flaws in my analysis. My readings of the picturebooks are from an adult’s point of view, *my* point of view and not that of a child. As noted by Crisp and Hiller (2011), “to assume that adults can determine how children might respond to a text often limits the range of possible interpretations” and “assumes that a child’s understanding of the world cannot include people who do not fit normative constructions of gender” (pp. 199-200). Acknowledging this point stresses the need for discussion about each text for two reasons; so that each person’s interpretation can be acknowledged and discussed, and so that students share control of the discussion in a true dialogue. Secondly, I am very aware that I fit within Sadker and Zittleman’s (2013) definition of a feminist teacher who, although aware of the need to change my pedagogy in order to reduce the effects of gendered messages on students, still behaves according to deeply held beliefs in my psyche. Pollard (2013) states that ingrained socially constructed attitudes are often challenging for educators as “sometimes teachers are not aware of the messages they convey through their attitudes, comments or behaviours towards various groups of students” (p. 150). I myself have not completely acknowledged my gendered attitudes and perceptions, and I understand that I need to carefully consider my word choice and the ways in which I choose to handle gendered situations that arise in my classroom. Teachers need to engage repeatedly over the course of their career in the practice of self-examination in order to maintain forward moving progress. I have a new, more meaningful, understanding of what it means to be a teacher and my practice is forever changed.
References


