

1990

The Image of the Adolescent Girl in Recommended Romantic Fiction for Young Adults, 1979-1989

Judy Elaine McClure
University of Northern Iowa

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Copyright ©1990 Judy Elaine McClure

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp>

Recommended Citation

McClure, Judy Elaine, "The Image of the Adolescent Girl in Recommended Romantic Fiction for Young Adults, 1979-1989" (1990). *Graduate Research Papers*. 3817.

<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/3817>

This Open Access Graduate Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Papers by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.

Offensive Materials Statement: Materials located in UNI ScholarWorks come from a broad range of sources and time periods. Some of these materials may contain offensive stereotypes, ideas, visuals, or language.

The Image of the Adolescent Girl in Recommended Romantic Fiction for Young Adults, 1979-1989

Find Additional Related Research in UNI ScholarWorks

To find related research in UNI ScholarWorks, go to the collection of [School Library Studies Graduate Research Papers](#) written by students in the [Division of School Library Studies](#), Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, at the University of Northern Iowa.

Abstract

The purpose of this content analysis was to investigate how realistically novelists portrayed the image of the teenage girl in fiction written for young adults. The researcher analyzed twenty-two books with copyrights from 1979 to 1989, novels identified in Booklist which had one additional review and were still in print at the time of the study. A checklist adapted from Offer's Self-Image Questionnaire was used in analyzing the psychological self, social self, sexual self, familial self, and coping self.

With the use of the checklist the following hypotheses were accepted:

1. The majority of the romantic fiction of the 1980's present a realistic view of the image of the teenage girl.
2. The majority of the romantic fiction present the image of the adolescent girl according to the Offer theory.
3. The majority of the female protagonists are in middle adolescence (15 - 16 years of age).

The Image of the Adolescent Girl in
Recommended Romantic Fiction
for Young Adults, 1979-1989

A Research Paper
Presented to the
Faculty of the Library Science Department

Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Judy Elaine McClure
July 15, 1990

Read and approved by
Leah Hiland

Elizabeth Martin

Accepted by Department
Elizabeth Martin

Date *July 18, 1990*

Abstract

The purpose of this content analysis was to investigate how realistically novelists portrayed the image of the teenage girl in fiction written for young adults. The researcher analyzed twenty-two books with copyrights from 1979 to 1989, novels identified in Booklist which had one additional review and were still in print at the time of the study. A checklist adapted from Offer's Self-Image Questionnaire was used in analyzing the psychological self, social self, sexual self, familial self, and coping self.

With the use of the checklist the following hypotheses were accepted:

1. The majority of the romantic fiction of the 1980's present a realistic view of the image of the teenage girl.
2. The majority of the romantic fiction present the image of the adolescent girl according to the Offer theory.
3. The majority of the female protagonists are in middle adolescence (15 - 16 years of age).

Table of Contents

	Page
List of Tables . . . . .	.iii
Chapter	
1. Introduction . . . . .	.1
Statement of Problem . . . . .	.3
Definitions . . . . .	.4
2. Literature Review . . . . .	.6
3. Methodology . . . . .	.14
4. Analysis of the Data . . . . .	.17
5. Conclusions, Recommendations, and Summary . . . . .	.24
Bibliography . . . . .	.27
Appendices . . . . .	.30
A. Bibliography of Titles Used in Analysis. . . . .	.31
B. Checklist . . . . .	.33

List of Tables

Table	Page
1. Number and Percent of Novels with Selected Characteristics.	19
2. Girls' Age in Novels.	21
3. Positive Characteristics Found in Ten or More Novels.	22

Chapter One

Introduction

Adolescence and young adult romance fiction are both relatively new phenomena. Adolescence is viewed as the stage of a child's psychological development where she or he learns to be independent. Recognition of the period, adolescence, came into being with the Industrial Revolution. At this time child labor began to be phased out, and adolescence as a period between childhood and adulthood had time to develop.

In agricultural societies which need many workers, most boys and girls are expected to become economically productive when they reach sexual maturity or even before. Such societies are common in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Adulthood begins early in these societies, and adolescence is brief or nonexistent. On the other hand, industrial societies usually have a surplus of workers. They can, therefore, delay the entry of young people into the labor force. In addition, the culture of industrial societies is far more complex than agricultural societies and takes far longer for a person to learn the necessary skills to reach adulthood. The laws in industrial societies do not permit people to assume full adult responsibilities before the late teens.

The term "young adult" was devised almost twenty years ago by the publishing industry as a sales device to make it more convenient to market books to those who bring books and adolescent-age children together and referred specifically to

materials intended for the adolescent market (Ramsdell, 1987). Most young adult novels have an underlying purpose -- that of helping the adolescent make the transition to adulthood. As a result, most young adult literature attempts to be a vehicle by which readers will gain insights and perspectives to better understand themselves, others, and the world around them. Young adult literature, often contemporary in setting, generally concerns itself with problems, feelings, relationships, and other aspects of the lives of teenagers. Because dating, crushes, falling in love, and sex are all important parts of adolescent life, it is natural that young adult literature, especially young adult romances should deal with these topics (Belden, 1987).

Types of young adult romances include contemporary, gothic, suspense, and historical. They can also be divided into those with formula and nonformula plot patterns. Formula romances are those stories that are written to highly specific guidelines. Settings, the ages of the protagonists, the topics covered, and the level of sensuality will be predetermined by the publisher. They will usually be innocent, upbeat, and provide a predictability of plots. On the other hand, nonformula romance plot patterns can vary tremendously. Subjects may be controversial, including such topics as homosexuality, rape, abuse, and alcoholism. Settings may be nontraditional, and sexual encounters may be somewhat explicit. The endings of nonformula romances may not always be happy (Ramsdell, 1987).

Traditional romances are novels in which the

protagonists are concerned about just meeting and talking to members of the opposite sex more than leaping into bed. They offer a newer look at male/female relationships. Many protagonists focus less on superficial aspects of appearance and more on internal quality of interrelationships. Sex roles are more balanced, with some active, assertive females and some insecure males. Some plots are heavy and serious, others light and humorous (Belden, 1987).

Adolescence is a separate, prolonged, and significant stage of development of this century, though it had its roots in the previous century. It is not surprising that young adult literature should also be a product of this century. Young adult literature came of age in the 1960s and 1970s. In those two decades young adult literature came to include the whole range of human experience (Russell, 1988).

Statement of the Problem

Ruth Stein (1976) did a brief survey of the image of the adolescent girl who was featured in fiction published between 1964 and 1974. Little has been written in this vein since that time. Whereas Ms. Stein's study focused on seventeen different categories of feelings and behaviors of youth provided by the Center for Youth Development and Research at the University of Minnesota, this study was more narrow in scope.

The purpose of this research was to do a content analysis of recommended romantic fiction for young adults from 1979 through 1989 for a better understanding of today's adolescent girl and to check if fiction was portraying the

adolescent girl realistically according to empirical research results.

What is the projected image of the adolescent girl as depicted in romantic fiction for young adults published from 1979 through 1989? Was the teenage girl portrayed according to the storm and stress theory or Offer's theory of image and behavior of the adolescent girl?

The researcher believes that young adults do read romantic fiction written for their age group and that authors write romantic fiction which portray the adolescent girl as she was in the 1980's. Based on these assumptions, the researcher believed that: (1) a majority (50 percent or more) of the romantic fiction would present a realistic view of the image of the teenage girl, (2) a majority of romantic fiction would present the image of the adolescent girl according to the Offer theory, and (3) a majority of the female protagonist would be in middle adolescence (15 - 16 years of age).

Definition of Terms

Adolescent, teenage, young adult, and youth are used in this study for persons ages 13 to 18.

Image, as used in this research, is the way in which a person is portrayed in words.

Young adult romances or romantic fiction for this research are the romances or love stories written especially for, and usually about, young adults or adolescents.

Recommended for this study means those books which have received two positive reviews in the literature and are still

in print.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

This review of the literature covers three aspects important to this study. It includes empirical research detailing the conflicting opinions on adolescent development, how girls may differ from boys in their development, and annotated bibliographies and reviews of literature to discover the projected image of the adolescent in the American novel.

There are two major opinions about the period called adolescence. One is that the period is one filled with major turmoil. This theory proposes that adolescents normally undergo significant disruption in their personality organization. This disruption leads to psychological disequilibrium, tumult, and mood swings. The typical adolescent fluctuates in the ability to function and manifests unpredictable behavior. Adolescents are viewed as needing to go through these crises in order to separate from their parents and develop their own identity (Erikson, 1950).

The turmoil or the storm and stress theory of adolescent development has held dominance among experts for over a century. It can be traced to the romantic writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in some of their descriptions of adolescent characters. An example of this is Goethe's The Sorrow of Young Werther:

Sorrow and discontent had taken deep root in Werther's soul and gradually imparted their character in his whole being. The harmony of his mind became completely disturbed; a perpetual

excitement and mental irritation, which weakened his natural powers, produced the saddest effects upon him... (Offer, Ostrov, and Howard, 1981, p. 84)

G. Stanley Hall in 1904 was the first to offer the stereotype of the development of self-concept during the adolescent years as occurring in a discontinuous manner. He stated that adolescent development most often has been conceptualized as stressful and as involving discontinuities in development (Russell, 1988). As a result, adolescence has been characterized as a period of storm and stress, a time for potential major changes (Erikson, 1968), and a time of upheaval.

The goal for the individual adolescent is to proceed sequentially through each of Erikson's eight age-related stages by resolving its characteristic social as well as emotional conflict. The task of adolescence is the resolution of the conflict between identity clarification and identity confusion (Ianni, 1989).

The opposite of this theory is that there is continuity and relative stability in adolescent self-concept development. For some, the changes (changing body size, altering relations toward parents and peers, and planning for future adulthood) and the adjustments that must be made to them are without doubt troublesome and strenuous. However, for most adolescents a relatively smooth and gradual transition seems to be normal (Dusek and Flaherty, 1981). Social and cultural influences are the determining factors in forming the character of the adolescent.

The basic contention of Coleman's focal theory of

adolescence is that developmental issues come into prominence at various ages and are dealt with as they appear, one issue at a time. The degree of upset an adolescent experiences depends on the number of issues being faced at a given time. The result is that for most adolescents the transition to adulthood is relatively smooth (Coleman, 1974).

Most adolescents are still expected by the general public to be in turmoil -- moody, ill at ease with their developing bodies and selves, and uncertain of how to deal with their new body images and sexuality. Studies by Daniel Offer indicate that most adolescents enter and complete the transition without significant emotional and social problems (Ianni, 1989).

Offer's study was based on how adolescents view themselves in order to shed light on the nature of the self in general. He does say that the "self" of adolescents may change from generation to generation, and it may be strongly influenced by the culture in which the teenagers have grown up (Offer, Ostrov, and Howard, 1981). It has been suggested that each era is marked by particular social problems that affect the growing adolescent. Contemporary Western society has had the problems of drugs, sexuality, authority, and family. Today's adolescents find themselves in a society characterized by complexity (Russell, 1988).

The adolescent period is especially problematic for girls because they receive conflicting messages about the goals they should pursue. In the school setting girls are expected to strive to achieve mastery in their work, yet they

also receive increasing pressure to develop traditional feminine qualities (Stake, De Ville, and Pennell, 1983).

Gisela Konapka (1976) has completed several research projects about adolescent girls. In her 1976 study dealing with the needs, concerns, and aspirations of adolescent girls, she found that marriage was still a goal, but the majority of teenage girls contemplated the possibility of combining marriage with a career. The changing cultural position of women has had a great impact on girls.

Research prepared by Brooks-Gunn and Petersen (1983) indicated that early maturation for adolescent girls has psychological and social costs which include lack of popularity, social poise, and greater internal turbulence but at the same time bringing with it greater prestige and self-confidence. For girls early maturity is ambiguous and confusing. On the other hand, retaining a child's body when others of the same age are proceeding toward maturity is equally disconcerting and problematic. Brooks-Gunn and Petersen used a variation of the Offer's Self-Image Questionnaire in their study to interview their subjects. They found that the perception of self is more unsatisfactory for girls than boys. Both Offer's and Petersen's scales deal with the psychological self, social self, sexual self, familial self, and the coping self.

Offer and Petersen found that girls have a less positive feeling about their bodies and physical development than boys. Adolescent girls describe themselves as sadder, lonelier, and more vulnerable than boys. They are more

sensitive to their internal world. In the area of self-control, girls state more often than do boys that they have fits of crying they cannot control. In the Social Self area the girls' work values and ethical values were higher than boys. Adolescent girls are less open to their sexuality than are boys. There was no significant differences in boys or girls with regard to the Familial Self. This illustrates the consistency of positive feelings toward family that exist in normal teenagers. Under the last category, the Coping Self, adolescent girls report more empathy, more feelings of shame and greater confusion (Offer, Ostrov, and Howard, 1981).

In an annotated bibliography of the American novel prepared by DeMarr and Bakerman (1986), several patterns depicting adolescence have emerged which tend to be true for both the major and minor characters. Seven areas of interest to both the authors and their adolescent characters were revealed: love and sexuality, family relationships, friendships, crises, social institutions and environment (setting), and fate. They not only categorized the novels by these seven areas of interest but also according to the setting or location of the novel, age of the main character, type of the novel, and tone of the novel.

Their study found that loving and being loved is absolutely essential to the development of a positive self-image. The authors of the novels studied in this annotated bibliography assessed the female adolescent's abilities to love and be loved as central to the character's growth and development. In a very significant number of novels, the

authors stress the theme that being loved is not enough, that knowing and valuing oneself is far more important to genuine maturity (DeMarr and Bakerman, 1986).

Another study of romance novels investigated the major problem concerns of young adults: personal problems, intrafamily problems, and interpersonal problems (Kundin, 1985). It was found that each book contained problem concerns of young adults.

Adolescents reading romance novels will find themselves able to identify with characters who are experiencing the problems they themselves are facing. The reader can appreciate these problems and learn from experiences of the character under a pleasant pretext of escape reading. Characterization is very important in love stories. If readers do not feel that they know the boy or girl as an individual, then they can not identify with them and consequently will not care whether the characters make it or not (Donelson and Nilsen, 1989).

They state that formula romances encourage a kind of wish-fulfillment that relates to the psychological ambivalence many young females feel about sexuality. On one hand, they want to be loved, but many of them are not ready for a sexual relationship and would be happy to have the dating and the cuddling without the complications of sex. Romance fiction is optimistic and wish-fulfilling, and its basic pattern resembles the real-life activities of adolescents. The feeling of self-respect and self-confidence the young hero gains in the course of the story is an

important element of romance fiction (Donelson and Nilsen, 1989).

Linda K. Christian-Smith's (1987) research centered around a span of four decades (1942 - 1982) which has significance for women and girls regarding domesticity, employment, and education opportunities. Three sets of codes identified as structuring the notion of femininity were: romance, beautification, and sexuality. Romance novels offer visions of what constitutes young womanhood. They speak to the concerns young woman have over their present and future lives.

Ruth Stein's (1976) From Happiness to Hopelessness: A Decade of Adolescent Girls analyzed the adolescent girl as presented in seventy books published between 1964 and 1974 specifically for the adolescent. She focused on categories provided by the Center for Youth Development and Research at the University of Minnesota. The categories included: (a) educational and work experience, concerns and interests, (b) career choices and goals, (c) self-concept, image and identity, (d) relationships and attitudes toward drugs and alcohol, (e) relationships and attitudes toward adults, (f) family, (g) friendships, peer relations, (h) attitude toward differences, tolerance, (i) sexuality, (j) social and political concerns, (k) attitude toward women's movement, (l) participation in organizations, (m) work with youth organizations, (n) special interests, (o) experience with juvenile justice system, (p) loneliness --alienation, and (q) values. She found that most heroines have negative images of

themselves. They are dissatisfied with their looks, bodies, characters and dispositions. She also found that they were jealous of friends, sisters, or other feminine characters; however, this conflict was usually resolved before the end of the story.

In general, Stein found that the heroines of the middle sixties tended toward introspection. They were concerned with their individual growth and personality development. In the late sixties more sophisticated books were being published which discussed teenage pregnancy openly. The seventies found adolescent girls in romantic fiction are openly having sex, using drugs, dropping out of school, running away, and suffering from mental illness. By the end of the period of Stein's 1976 study, stark realism and pessimistic conclusions had replaced the traditional happy endings found earlier.

The literature seems to point out that girls have more problems dealing with adolescence than do boys. But on the whole adolescence is a period of transition, of gradual steps in the development process. Novels are written realistically according to the literature. They deal with problem concerns of the adolescence. They are written so the teenager can relate to the character portrayed in the fiction.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This research employed a content analysis technique to assess the projected image of the adolescent girl in recommended romance fiction published from 1979 through 1989 intended for young adults.

Twenty-two books, two for each year, were examined in the study. Booklist was consulted for a list of romance fiction in each of the study's years. The books were checked to see if they were still in print, using Books in Print; if not, they were removed from the list. A second review was then sought for the remaining books through the Book Review Digest or Book Review Index. If none was located, the book was removed from the list. After this procedure, if more than two books remained for any one year, a random selection was done to choose the two for each year to be analyzed.

For each of the 22 books, the portrayal of the main female character was analyzed. If a book contained more than one main female character, both were analyzed. A checklist was used to determine the age level and the different characteristics of the adolescent girl protagonist. The Offer Self-Image Questionnaire, clustered into five dimensions, was adapted into a checklist to assess the characteristics. The researcher believed this instrument was the best suited to judge the image of the teenage girl of the 1980s because the sub-categories on the Offer's Self-Image Questionnaire seemed descriptive of the personality of an

individual. The researcher evaluated the characteristics of the protagonist by using the description of her in the narrative paragraphs and the way she reacted to events around her. The main character was deemed to have either positive or negative attributes if the majority of descriptions and actions was positive or negative. For example, if the protagonist lost her temper numerous times and could not control her emotions then it was considered to be a negative characteristic on the checklist. The questionnaire was made up as follows:

The Psychological Self

Scale 1: Impulse Control

Scale 2: Emotional Tone

Scale 3: Body and Self Image

The Social Self

Scale 4: Social Relationships

Scale 5: Morals

Scale 9: Vocational and Educational Goals

The Sexual Self

Scale 6: Sexual Attitudes

The Familial Self

Scale 7: Family Relationships

The Coping Self

Scale 8: Mastery of the External World

Scale 10: Psychopathology

Scale 11: Superior Adjustment.

(Offer, Ostrov, and Howard, 1981, p. 39)

An example of how one level of the Offer's Questionnaire was adapted to assess the protagonist follows:

Scale 2: Emotional Tone

Happy most of the time

Normally relaxed

Enjoys life

Tense most of the time

Feels inferior to most people

Feelings are easily hurt

Anxious most of the time

Feelings of loneliness

Feelings of sadness.

See Appendix B for the complete checklist with descriptive statements for each scale and whether a statement was considered a positive (+) or a negative (-) characteristic.

Chapter Four

Analysis of Data

The researcher had originally planned to read and analyze three novels for each of the years, 1979 through 1989, but found locating novels published in the early 1980's not possible. The researcher did analyze two novels for each of the years and was able to accept all three hypotheses about the age, image of the young adult girl, and whether the novels are realistic by tabulating each of the six areas of the inventory and calculating percentages.

For the first hypothesis to be accepted, the majority of the young adult romantic fiction of the 1980's had to present a realistic view of the image of the teenage girl. According to the literature, adolescents experience changes (changing body size, altering relations toward parents and peers, and planning for future adulthood), and the novels are generally concerned with problems, feelings, relationships, and other aspects of the lives of teenagers. After each statement on the checklist in Appendix B, the number of the novels in which each characteristic was found is listed (see Appendix A for "Bibliography of Titles Used in Analysis").

Kendra experienced changes in her feelings about boys in Remember Me to Harold Square. She said of the experience:

In fact, because of getting to know Frank, I understand boys better, and when I get back to school, I'm going to try to know some of the guys better as human beings. (Danziger, 1987, p 138)

Nikki in the Sounds of Silence was faced with the problem of whether her peers and her parents would accept her dating a

deaf boy. By the end of the novel when asked whether she wants to dance with this character (Blake) her response was do I ever.

Suddenly she didn't care if people were watching or not. She didn't care about anything except being with Blake. And she didn't care if the whole world knew about it either. (Levy, 1989, p 115)

Offer pointed out that teens have positive feelings toward family, and this was confirmed in the fiction that was published. Teenage girls having positive views of their family (see Table 1) were presented in 81.8% of the young adult novels. Each of the 22 novels concentrated on at least one of the changes or problems that adolescents experience in real life. Sylvia in Over the Hill at Fourteen was a model trying to establish contacts to enter a career in acting. Leslie in Summer Snow became involved with the wrong crowd while visiting her father, began using drugs, realized that she had a problem and sought help.

For the second hypothesis to be accepted, 50 percent or more romantic fiction of the 1980's had to present the image of the adolescent girl according to the Offer theory which was that teenage girls would have a positive image of themselves. The Offer Self-Image Questionnaire covers five main areas: Psychological Self, Social Self, Sexual Self, Familial Self, and Coping Self. Although an overall positive image was presented in the novels, in the category of the Coping Self the image was 50% positive and 50% was either negative (13.6%) or not found (36.4%). This section included the personality of the characters, how they dealt with the

external world, and their adjustment to life. The authors described the girls' adjustment to life and how they dealt with it but did not develop the psychopathology of their personalities. In the scale for Sexual Self, with the exception of the "attractive to the opposite sex" and "having a boyfriend is important" characteristics, the authors of young adult romance fiction did not write about sexual activities.

Table 1 shows the number and percentage of young adult romance novels which presented positive characteristics (Offer theory), negative characteristics or that characteristics were not found in the book in each of the sub-categories. The overall image was determined by adding

Table 1

Number and Percent of Novels with Selected Characteristics

Characteristics	Positive		Negative		Not Found	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Psychological Self						
Impulse Control	15	68.2	4	18.2	3	13.6
Emotional Tone	13	59.1	6	27.3	3	13.6
Body & Self Image	9	40.9	5	22.7	8	36.4
Social Self						
Social Relationships	13	59.1	5	22.7	4	18.2
Morals	15	68.2	2	9.1	5	22.7
Vocational-Educational Goals	16	72.7	1	4.6	5	22.7
Sexual Self						
Sexual Attitudes	17	77.3	1	4.5	4	18.2
Familial Self						
Family Relationship	18	81.8	4	18.2	0	.0
Coping Self						
Mastery of the External World	13	59.1	1	4.5	8	36.5
Psychopathology	4	18.2	8	36.4	10	45.4
Superior Adjustment	16	72.7	0	.0	6	27.3
Overall Image		61.6		15.3		23.1

the percentage for all categories and dividing by the number of categories.

Moving from Alaska to California, Joanne in Second Chances was behind the times in fashion. Another girl, Skye, ridiculed her hair and her clothes. Joanne remained calm and kept her temper, trying not to respond in kind. This is one example of Psychological Self.

Sexual Self was displayed in a positive manner in Up in Seth's Room. Finn wanted to be attractive to the opposite sex but did not want to have sex at her age. She stood by her convictions not to have sex. Whereas Billie in Love By Any Other Name was afraid that Bubba wanted to go further than she did, she did not know how to handle the situation.

One of the more negative novels was The Girl Who Wanted a Boy. Sibella wrote her thoughts in her diary because she had no friends with whom to share her feelings. Her mother and sister thought it abnormal that she had not had sex by the time she was 15. Sibella even contemplated suicide after the boy she liked left for Florida.

In all the sub-categories except "body and self-image" and "psychopathology", the percentage was 59.1 or greater with 13 or more books presenting a positive image. In the novel The Day the Senior Class Got Married, Lori looks forward to going to college and having a good future; Darien in I'll Always Remember You...Maybe is happy-go-lucky and well adjusted, and in Fantasy Summer Robin's feeling for her parents are described this way.

...genuinely loved her parents and enjoyed spending time with them. She'd probably miss them the

minute they left, but now she couldn't stop wishing they'd disappear on the spot. (Pfeffer, 1984, p 9)

The researcher found that there was only one girl main character in each of the 22 novels that were read. The majority, 50 percent or more, of the female protagonist had to be in middle adolescence (15-16 years of age) in order for the third hypothesis to be accepted. As shown in Table 2, 59.1% of the teenage girls were 15 to 16 years of age in the young adult romance novels analyzed.

Table 2
Girls' Age in Novels

Age Range	No. of Novels	% of Novels
13 - 14	4	18.2
15 - 16	13	59.1
17 - 18	4	18.2
Multiple Ranges	<u>1</u>	<u>4.5</u>
	22	100.0

This placed most of the teenage girls either in the sophomore or junior class in high school. They were enjoying dating, working on school newspapers, working as camp counselors and other activities in which high school students take part.

The character that did not fit into one category was Chelsea in Princess Ashley. The story opened with Chelsea, 15, entering her sophomore year in a new school and ended the summer before her senior year or when Chelsea was 17. Four characters fit in the category of 13 - 14 age group. They were just becoming aware of boys. As Kendra said in Remember Me to Harold Square:

...I want to have one as a boyfriend. But I'm not always sure how to act around boys. Sometimes they act like they're from another planet. (Danziger, 1987, p 25)

In the 17 - 18 category, the four characters were seniors in high school and planning their future which was college in the evaluated novels. Lori in The Day the Senior Class Got Married was planning on going to college and then getting married. After going through a mock marriage in the consumer economics class she realizes all the problems Rick and she would be facing and noticed flaws in Rick's character.

Several positive characteristics were found in 10 or more novels (see Appendix B). Table 3 displays a list of

Table 3

Positive Characteristics Found in Ten or More Novels

Characteristics	No. of Novels
Psychological Self	
Can control herself	10
Happy most of the time	14
Enjoys life	11
Social Self	
Feels good when with others	13
Makes friends easily	12
Enjoys parties	13
Wouldn't hurt anyone	10
Likes to help friends	12
Looks forward to future profession	11
Thinks about future work	11
Job well done gives pleasure	11
Sexual Self	
Attractive to the opposite sex	15
Having boyfriend is important	14
Familial Self	
Pride to parents	19
Can count on parents	13
Thinks parents get along most of the time	13
Feels parents are satisfied with her	13
Coping Self	
Superior student in school	11
Not afraid of a competitive society	13

these characteristics. "Pride to parents" and "attractive to opposite sex" were found in 19 and 15 of the novels, respectively. No negative characteristic was found in more than six novels. "Loses temper," "gets upset if others disapprove," "feels parents don't understand others," and "feels that someone will make fun of her" were found in six novels and "feels inferior to others," "anxious," "finds it hard to make friends," and "lies" were found in five of the novels.

Chapter Five

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Summary

Based on the analysis of the data, the researcher concluded that the authors of young adult romances write about the problems, feelings, relationships, and other aspects of the lives of teenagers realistically in most cases. The researcher also concluded that the writers intended their literature to be a vehicle for the readers to gain insights and perspectives to better understand themselves. Young adult romance fiction is written about 15 to 16 year olds because it is the median age of adolescence enabling the readers to place themselves in the protagonist's place.

The researcher found little difference between the 10 formula and the 12 nonformula romance fiction except that the plot varies in nonformula fiction and formula fiction plots are predictable. Both should be considered escapist fiction. The authors mainly concentrated on the Social Self and Familial Self in their novels. The majority of the novels contained families with two parents. A possible hypothesis might have been whether this was a realistic situation in the 1980's.

The researcher found that young adult romances during the 1980's failed to mention many of the negatives on the checklist, such as "feelings easily hurt," "violent if doesn't get own way," and "finds worrying about future will help it work out better." The researcher speculates that

this is because the authors want their romances to be upbeat.

The researcher was surprised that the novels did not display the characteristic that the adolescent girl "often thinks about sex." This is a normal characteristic of girls from the ages 13 to 18. In the literature review, Donelson and Nilsen were quoted as saying that formula romances encourage a kind of wish-fulfillment that relates to the psychological ambivalence many adolescent girls feel about sexuality. They want to be loved, but they are not ready for the sexual relationship and would be happy to have the dating and the cuddling without the complications of sex. Teenage girls, however, dream and talk about sex among themselves.

Another interesting point is that 17 out of the 22 books mentioned Social Relationship in either the positive "makes friends easily" (12) or the negative "finds it hard to make friends" (5). The researcher believes that young adult romances are mainly novels dealing with friendships and not sexual exploits.

If redoing this study the researcher would base the checklist on DeMarr and Bakerman's seven areas of interest: love and sexuality, family relationships, friendships, crises, social institutions and environment (setting), and fate. The romance fiction did not always fit into Offer's Self-Image Questionnaire; the author's description of the main character was not detailed enough to judge the Psychopathology or Superior Adjustment attributes of the character. Another consideration in replicating this study would be to narrow the range of publishing years. It was

extremely difficult to find the novels since they were originally published in paperback form and in most cases have been withdrawn from libraries.

Library media specialists should not look at romance reading as a worthless activity, but look at it as a way to motivate readers and to fight aliteracy. By accepting teenagers' reading choices and by talking to them about what they have read, they are provided with perspectives on life and love.

The purpose of this content analysis was to investigate how realistically novelists portrayed the image of the teenage girl in fiction written for young adults. The researcher analyzed 22 books with copyrights from 1979 to 1989, novels identified in Booklist and which had one additional review and were still in print at the time of the study. A checklist adapted from Offer's Self-Image Questionnaire was used in analyzing the Psychological Self, Social Self, Sexual Self, Familial Self, and Coping Self.

With the use of the checklist the following hypotheses were accepted:

1. The majority of the romantic fiction of the 1980's would present a realistic view of the image of the teenage girl.
2. The majority of the romantic fiction would present the image of the adolescent girl according to the Offer theory.
3. The majority of the female protagonists would be in middle adolescence (15 - 16 years of age).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baskin, Barbara, Betty Carter, and Karen Harris. "The Search for Values: Young Adults and the Literary Experience." Library Trends 37 (Summer 1988): 63-79.
- Belden, Elizabeth and Judith M. Beckman. "The Many Sides of Young Romance." English Journal 76 (December 1987): 75-77.
- Blos, Peter. The Adolescent Passage. New York: International Universities Press, 1979.
- Brooks-Gunn, Jeanne and Anne C. Petersen, eds. Girls at Puberty. New York: Plenum Press, 1983.
- Coleman, J.S. Youth: Transition to Adulthood. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.
- Christian-Smith, Linda K. "Gender, Popular Culture, and Curriculum." Curriculum Inquiry 17 (Winter 1987): 365-406.
- Collins, John K. and Dorelle S. Propert. "A Developmental Study of Body Recognition in Adolescent Girls." Adolescence 18 (Winter 1983): 767-774.
- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Reed Larsen. Being Adolescent: Conflict and Growth in the Teenage Years. New York: Basic Books, 1984.
- Dalsimer, Katherine. Female Adolescence: Psychoanalytic Reflection on Works of Literature. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.
- DeMarr, Mary Jean and Jane S. Bakerman. The Adolescent in the American Novel Since 1960. New York: Ungar Publishing, 1986.
- Donelson, Kenneth L. and Alleen Pace Nilsen. Literature for Today's Young Adult. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1989.
- Douvan, Elizabeth and Joseph Adelson. The Adolescent Experience. New York: John Wiley, 1966.
- Dusek, Jerome B. and John F. Flaherty. "The Development of the Self-Concept During the Adolescent Years." In Monograph of the Society of Research in Child Development, Vol. 46. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

- Eicher, Joanne B. and Eleanor A. Kelley. A Longitudinal Study of High School Girls' Friendship Patterns, Social Class and Clothing. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, Agricultural Experiment Station, February 1974.
- Erikson, Erik H. Childhood and Society. New York: W.W. Norton, 1950.
- Identity, Youth And Crisis. New York: W.W. Norton, 1968.
- Grinder, Robert E. Adolescence. 2nd ed. New York: John Wiley, 1978.
- Hansen, James C. and Peter E. Maynard. Youth: Self-concept and Behavior. Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill Publishing, 1973.
- Ianni, Francis A.J. The Search for Structure. New York: The Free Press, 1989.
- Jensen, Larry Cyril. Adolescence: Theories, Research, Applications. St. Paul: West Publishing, 1985.
- Johnson, Tony W. "Achieving Self-Discipline through Literature." The Educational Forum 50 (Fall 1985): 47-55.
- Konopka, Gisela. Young Girls: a Portrait of Adolescence. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976.
- Kundin, Susan G. "Romance versus Reality: A Look at YA Romantic Fiction." Top of the News 4 (Summer 1985): 361-368.
- Mills, Claudia. "The Image of Work in Adolescent Fiction." Journal of Youth Services in Libraries 2 (Fall 1988): 76-83.
- Offer, Daniel, Eric Ostrov, and Kenneth I. Howard. The Adolescent: A Psychological Self-Portrait. New York: Basic Books, 1981.
- Ramsdell, Kristin. Happily Ever After: A Guide to Reading Interests. Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1987.
- Rogers, D. The Psychology of Adolescence. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1972.
- Russell, Daniel A. "The Common Experience of Adolescence: A Requisite for the Development of Young Adult Literature." Journal of Youth Services in Libraries 2 (Fall 1988): 58-63.

- Shestowsky, Brenda J. "Ego Identity Development and Obesity in Adolescent Girls." Adolescence 18 (Fall 1983): 551-559.
- Stake, Jayne E., Cathy J. De Ville, and Christine L. Pennell. "The Effects of Assertive Training on the Performance Self-Esteem of Adolescent Girls." Journal of Youth and Adolescence 12 (December 1983): 435-442.
- Stein, Ruth. "From Happiness to Hopelessness: A Decade of Adolescent Girls." Arizona English Bulletin: Adolescence Literature Revisited After Four Years 18 (April 1976): 144-150.
- Storz, Nancy S. "Body Image of Obese Adolescent Girls in a High School and Clinical Setting." Adolescence 17 (Fall 1982): 667-672.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Bibliography of Titles Used in Analysis

1. Callan, Jamie. Over the Hill at Fourteen. New York: Signet Vista, 1982.
2. Conford, Ellen. We Interrupt This Semester for an Important Bulletin. New York: Scholastic, 1979.
3. Danziger, Paula. Remember Me to Harold Square. New York: Dell Publishing, 1987.
4. Danziger, Paula. There's a Bat in Bunk Five. New York: Dell Publishing, 1980.
5. Foley, June. It's No Crush, I'm in Love! New York: Dell Publishing, 1982.
6. Foley, June. Love By Any Other Name. New York: Dell Publishing, 1983.
7. Goudge, Ellen. Smart Enough to Know. New York: Dell Publishing, 1984.
8. Levinson, Nancy. Second Chances. New York: Bantam Books, 1985.
9. Levy, Marilyn. Sounds of Silence. New York: Fawcett Juniper, 1989.
10. Levy, Marilyn. Summer Snow. New York: Fawcett Juniper, 1986.
11. Mazer, Norma Fox. Up In Seth's Room. New York: Dell Publishing, 1979.
12. Miklowitz, Gloria D. The Day the Senior Class Got Married. New York: Dell Publishing, 1983.
13. Peck, Richard. Princess Ashley. New York: Dell Publishing, 1987.
14. Pevsner, Stella. Cute Is a Four Letter Word. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1980.
15. Pevsner, Stella. I'll Always Remember You...Maybe. New York: Clarion Books, 1981.
16. Pfeffer, Susan Beth. Fantasy Summer. New York: Berkley/Pacer, 1984.
17. Pfeffer, Susan Beth. Wanting It All. New York: Berkley Books, 1985.

18. Schultz, Marion. Tracy Harmon: Love Specialist. New York: Fawcett Juniper, 1989.
19. Sharmat, Marjorie. I Think I'm Falling in Love. New York: Dell Publishing, 1986.
20. Thesman, Jean. Was It Something I Said. New York: Avon/Flare, 1988.
21. Zable, Rona S. Love in the Laundromat. New York: Bantam Books, 1988.
22. Zindel, Paul. The Girl Who Wanted a Boy. New York: Bantam Books, 1981.

APPENDIX B

CHECKLIST

Criteria for evaluating images of adolescent girls in
romance novels.

AUTHOR _____

TITLE _____

PUBLISHER, DATE _____

SUMMARY:

Age of main character:

_____13 - 14

_____15 - 16

_____17 - 18

PSYCHOLOGICAL SELF

I. IMPULSE CONTROL

- ___ - Holds grudges (19,20)
- ___ - Loses temper (1,4,11,14,15,17)
- ___ - Can't control fits of crying/laughing
- ___ + Can take criticism (1,2,5,9,16)
- ___ - Violent if doesn't get own way
- ___ + Can remain calm under pressure (8,16,18,19,21)
- ___ + Keeps temper (2,5,7,8,12,18,19,20,21)
- ___ - Feels something constantly (10,17)
- ___ + Can control herself (1,5,6,7,8,15,18,20,21,22)

II. EMOTIONAL TONE

- ___ - Tense most of the time (6,7,10,17)
- ___ - Feels inferior to others (6,7,17,20,22)
- ___ + Happy most of the time (1,2,3,5,8,11,12,13,14,16,18,19,
20,21)
- ___ - Feelings easily hurt
- ___ + Relaxed under normal circumstances (1,3,14,16,18,19)
- ___ - Anxious (4,6,7,13,17)
- ___ - Feels very lonely (5,7,8,22)
- ___ + Enjoys life (1,2,5,11,12,13,14,15,16,18,20)
- ___ + Enjoys a good joke, even when sad (20)
- ___ - Frequently feels sad (4,10,15,22)

III. BODY AND SELF IMAGE

- ___ + Changes to body gives satisfaction (4)

- Worries about health
- + Future looks bright (1,14,16,17)
- + Proud of body (1,2,4,6,9,17,18)
- Imitates people (9,10,14)
- Not happy as she is (10,17,20,22)
- Feels ugly and unattractive (7,22)
- + Feels strong and healthy (15,18,19)

SOCIAL SELF

IV. SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Feels out of place at parties (7,15)
- Feels unliked (22)
- Finds it hard to make friends (1,5,8,17,22)
- + Doesn't mind being corrected
- Prefers being alone
- Gets upset if others disapprove (6,9,12,17,20,21)
- + Feels good when with others (2,4,8,9,10,11,12,13,15,16,18,19,21)
- + Makes friends easily (2,3,4,9,11,12,13,15,16,18,19,21)
- + Enjoys parties (1,2,9,11,12,13,15,16,17,18,19,20,21)

V. MORALS

- + Wouldn't hurt anyone (2,4,6,7,8,9,16,18,21,22)
- Gets even when done wrong (19)
- Blames others for own mistake
- Lies (1,10,11,17,20)
- Doesn't care how actions affect others
- + Sportsmanship is important (2,3,7,15,16,21)
- + Likes to help friends (2,3,6,7,10,14,15,16,18,19,20,21)
- + Doesn't confide in others (6,10,17)
- + Eye for an Eye doesn't apply (2,20)
- + Doesn't associate with those who hit below the belt

VI. VOCATIONAL-EDUCATIONAL GOALS

- Feels working is too much responsibility
- Feels only stupid people work (13)
- + Looks forward to future profession (1,2,4,7,8,12,16,17,19,21,22)
- Rather sit around and loaf
- + Thinks about future work (1,2,4,7,8,9,12,16,17,21,22)
- Rather be supported than work
- + Job well done gives pleasure (1,2,4,6,7,8,16,19,20,21,22)
- + Can learn from others (2,4,6,8,16,20,21)
- + Feels like a leader (4,9,15,18,19,21)
- School and studying mean little (1)

SEXUAL SELF

VII. SEXUAL ATTITUDES

- Boring to opposite sex (7,22)

- + Handles sex warily (6)
- Likes dirty jokes
- + Attractive to the opposite sex (1,2,4,6,9,10,11,12,13,15,16,17,18,19,21)
- + Doesn't attend sexy shows (22)
- Sexually behind
- Thinking or talking about sex is frightening (6,22)
- Sexual experience gives pleasure
- + Having boyfriend is important (1,2,4,6,7,8,11,12,15,16,17,18,20,21)
- + Often thinks about sex

FAMILIAL SELF

VIII. FAMILY RELATIONSHIP

- + Pride to parents (1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9,10,12,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22)
- Parents against her (13)
- Disappointing to parents (6,22)
- Feels father is no good
- Can't understand parents (6,10,11,13)
- + Can count on parents (1,5,7,8,9,10,14,15,16,18,19,20,21)
- + Thinks parents get along most of the time (1,2,3,6,7,8,9,13,15,16,18,19,20)
- + Feels that parents are right even if angry
- + Wants her family to be like hers now
- + Takes part in making family decisions
- + Feels parents are patient (7,8,14,15,18,19,20,21)
- Feels parents don't understand others (1,6,11,13,15,17)
- Feels she is a bother at home (6)
- Likes one parent more than other (4,13,22)
- Feels parents are ashamed of her (22)
- Stays away from home most of the time
- Carries a grudge against parents (10,11,12,13)
- + Feels parents are satisfied with her (2,3,4,7,8,9,10,12,16,18,19,20,21)
- Feels mother is no good (13,22)

COPING SELF

IX. MASTERY OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD

- + Feels world is an exciting place to live (1,4,7,8,15,16,18,21)
- + Can learn almost anything (8,9,12,16,17,21,22)
- + Feels she does as good a job as the next person (1,4,15,16,19,20,21)
- Just sits around wishing for something if she wants it
- + Does it if she decides to do it (1,6,7,9,11,20,21)
- Finds life an endless series of problems (10,12,20,22)
- + Feels that she is able to make decisions (1,4,7,8,9,11,16,20,21)
- Feels she has no talent at all (6)
- Fears growing up (1)
- Repeats things continuously to be sure that she is right

X. PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

- Feels that someone will make fun of her (6,7,8,20,21,22)
- Feels confused most of the time (10,12)
- Blames herself when she is not at fault (6)
- + Feels that size of sex organs is normal
- Feels ashamed of herself
- Feels empty emotionally most of the time (10,15,22)
- Feels that she would rather die than go on living
- + Feels people do not take advantage of her (1,18)
- Unable to get things done
- + Can tell real from the fantastic (1,15,16)
- Feels strange entering new places
- Hears strange noises
- + Doesn't have many fears (16,18,19)
- + Doesn't feel harmed if someone doesn't like her (16,18,19)

XI. SUPERIOR ADJUSTMENT

- Would not be able to make it if alone (10)
- Doesn't put things in order and make sense out of them
- + Feels sad when something happens to a friend (2,4,8,9,10,16,18)
- + Superior student in school (5,7,8,9,12,14,15,17,18,21,22)
- + Not afraid of a competitive society (1,4,7,9,12,14,15,16,18,19,20,21,22)
- Finds it difficult to establish new friendships (7,8,15,22)
- Working closely with others doesn't give her pleasure
- + Finds out as much as possible about new situations (21)
- Finds out how to avoid failing, after failing once
- Feels will not be able to handle responsibilities (20)
- + Doesn't rehearse an upcoming event
- Doesn't enjoy solving difficult problems
- Finds worrying about future will help it work out better
- + Dealing with new subjects a challenge (4,8,9,16,19,21)