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Screams, Vampires, Werewolves and Autographs:  
An Exploration of the Twilight Phenomenon

by  
Emily Reynolds

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

Department of Mass Communications

Brigham Young University

August 2009

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Emily Reynolds

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Emily Reynolds in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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## ABSTRACT

### Screams, Vampires, Werewolves and Autographs: An exploration of the Twilight Phenomenon

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The purpose of this thesis is to examine the pop culture phenomenon of *Twilight*. Using a qualitative method of grounded theory, meanings and constructs were developed from the data. Data was gathered at three events centered around the release of the *Twilight* the film adaptation, and the release of the fourth and final book in the *Twilight* saga. A survey was administered to willing participants. After the surveys were gathered they were read and then coded. After the coding process a follow up interview was conducted with ten nominated and willing *Twilight* fans. The results had theoretical roots in uses and gratifications theory as well as parasocial theory.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have had several people in my life during this process of writing a thesis, who have offered unwavering support that I would like to thank.

My sister Kristen is the reason any of it began. I told her my research idea and she told me I was brilliant. She went with me to Comic Con and the book signing concert. She assisted and encouraged me when I got overwhelmed collecting my data, and she kept me from abandoning it. This particular thesis would never have happened if it was not for her support in the beginning stages. I am also grateful to the rest of my family and offering me their support, my Dad specifically for telling me he knew I could do it.

My roommates this year also helped me greatly. Two of them, Ashley Cook and Jessica Powell drove me to Denver for the Talent Tour. They assisted me in collecting data at the release of the film.. Jennifer Heckmann was supportive and helpful as well.

There are other friends who kept track of my progress. They hoped for my success and offered their help where they could. I really am grateful to them as well.

I would also like to thank my committee for guiding me through the process. I started a little backward, but they helped me make it work. I would especially like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Callahan. Many times he praised my efforts and encouraged me to keep pushing until I finished. He devoted much of his time to helping me and I am grateful for it.

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## INTRODUCTION

### *Background*

Within the history of film, there have been many adaptations of books created and put on the big screen, bringing life to the imaginations of many beloved authors. At times audiences are ignorant of the literary origins of the film their viewing, other times they are acutely aware and are evaluating how close the film compares to the book.

Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo* are all well known, beloved classics. They all have also been adapted to the screen multiple times and are often eagerly anticipated. Yet, as much as fans have shown an interest in these individual works, it pales in comparison to the response and eagerness generated when a popular series is chosen to be adapted for the screen.

Heightened anticipation usually accompanies the adaptation of a popular series; this may be due to the opportunity that exists with multiple books to develop stronger attachments to the characters. These books typically involve the same characters and build upon their experiences and development, and readers become develop a stronger attachment to these characters. For whatever reason, the book to film experience for a popular book series in a few examples has generated an unprecedented response. *Lord of the Rings* was one of the first of this trend. It generated a large following (Seiler, 2003). Another widely popular series that took the big screen and became a standard of pop culture was *Harry Potter* ("Harry Potter mania", 2005). Fans invested in the series of *Harry Potter*, dressing up at book releases and film releases alike. They hosted and attended parties to celebrate anything related to *Harry Potter*. It was a phenomenon. A

few years later, another series came into the pop culture scene that many call the next *Harry Potter* (Memmott, 2008), some saying it has eclipsed Rowling's series in its popularity. This series is the *Twilight* series.

In October 2005, a book was published by Little, Brown and Company. This novel was written by an unknown author, Stephenie Meyer, and was entitled *Twilight*. *Twilight* tells the story of a girl who moves to a small town where she meets a boy unlike any other she has ever known. She rapidly falls in love with this boy only to find that he is a vampire. The perils that entangle their romance heighten the pace of this story, making it a must read, as fans of the book claim (Blog post, Epinions.com, 2009).

Ignorance of Meyer's identity did not last long. Her debut novel, *Twilight*, had reached #5 on the *New York Times* Best Seller list by November. Meyer was quick to duplicate her success with a sequel. *New Moon* soon followed with its release in August 2006 and debuted at the #5 position on the *New York Times* Best Seller List for Children's Chapter Books and by its second week it rose to #1 (Official Stephenie Meyer Website). In the second installment Meyer complicated the romance of Edward and Bella by bringing Jacob Black into Bella's life, creating a love triangle. Readers were enthralled and called for more.

Continuing the momentum, Meyer continued writing adventures of Bella, Edward, and Jacob. One year after the release of *New Moon*, the third book, *Eclipse* was published. It too made the *New York Times* Best Seller List. The fan base for the books had grown exponentially demanding the continuation of the series. Readers were becoming increasingly invested in the characters. This was demonstrated as the love

triangle divided readers into two teams. There was Team Edward and Team Jacob and each was committed to their hero, eager to see what their fate would be in the final installment of the series.

In August 2008 the fourth and final part of the *Twilight* saga was released and sold 1.3 million copies the first day alone. Vampire themed release parties were hosted by bookstores all over the U.S. to celebrate the occasion. Some fans camped out days in advance to secure their place in line to purchase *Breaking Dawn*.

Meyer's success is not limited to the number of copies sold for her books or number of fansites dedicated to her works. She has been recognized by numerous organizations and given various awards. The awards for *Twilight* and Meyer both are the following: TIME's List of 'People Who Mattered' in 2008, USA Today's 'Author of the Year' 2008, MSN's 'Most Influential Women' 2008, *New York Times* Editor's Choice, Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year, Amazon.com "Best Book of the Decade...So Far," Teen People "Hot List" pick, American Library Association "Top Ten Best Book for Young Adults," "Top Ten Books for Reluctant Readers," *Twilight* has been translated into 20 languages, and is a *New York Times* Best Seller. ("Bio," 2009).

Recognizing the appeal that the *Twilight* series held for readers, Summit Entertainment optioned for the movie rights in 2007. The release date for the film adaptation was November 21, 2008. Excitement for the film was rivaled only by the enthusiasm held by fans for the novels that inspired it ("*Twilight* fans hopes," 2008). The production company and all those on board to bring *Twilight* to life grossly underestimated the strength of what the response would be to the making of the film.

Reactions were so strong and positive that Summit held a unique tour throughout the nation. This was named the *Twilight* Talent Tour in which cast members appeared at various Hot Topics, a popular franchise found in malls, to meet fans for a signing and Q & A. All of the selected locations sold out.

Fans' of Meyer and the *Twilight* series are committed to their interest. A Google search of fansites reports over 6,660,000 results. Meyer's book signing/concert tour sold out in all four of the cities chosen. *Twilight* paraphernalia is sold by several different vendors, including the Hot Topics which hosted the *Twilight* Talent Tour.

Fans insatiable appetite for *Twilight* the series is proving to be just as ravenous for the movie version. In interviews, the director, Catherine Hardwicke, often speaks of the countless numbers of fans who came to the movie set. Hardwicke said that their presence gave them all motivation to move forward with their best efforts. (Comic Con Q & A Panel, Catherine Hardwicke, July 24, 2008).

Fans were very vocal during the casting process as well, desperately wanting the "perfect Edward and the perfect Bella" (MTV Comic Con Interview with Meyer, July 24, 2008). As these fans waited for the film, they depended on the weekly news feeds of MTV and other media to report progress of the film and to tell of any public appearances of the cast members. MTV called their weekly update *Twilight* Tuesdays. These news reports began in April and were ongoing through the release of the film.

When the film was finally released, many theaters had multiple screenings and the majority, if not all were sold out all over the country opening night. *Twilight* fans then

returned to watch the film again and again and again, making *Twilight* a box office smash.

### *Contribution*

It is easy to observe the expanse of the reach of *Twilight*; it is spread across the world. Fans are desperate to meet the actors and to find anything related to the film or the books. This attitude is as some onlookers would call it, an obsession. It has become a phenomenon worthy of closer inspection.

With fans declaring their love for the fictional characters, they are also dedicating fan sites to these characters (“*Twilight* Series fansites,” 2009). This implies that they have potentially formed attachments to these characters. The interest and commitment displayed by such a large group of people makes *Twilight* an interesting pop culture phenomenon that would make a contribution to the field of communications.

The purpose of this thesis will be to investigate the *Twilight* phenomenon and to find constructs within it. This will be explored through qualitative measures; it will extend to three gatherings of *Twilighters* in three different cities all in different states. Surveys and interviews will be administered to find insights into the motivations and investments of *Twilight* fans. As the data is evaluated, research will look for patterns of behavior and attitudes in an attempt to explain what is happening within this phenomenon.

### Outline of the Study

This thesis discusses the framework of the study, including a review of the literature, the research design and methodology, along with the structure for analysis. The second part is the results of the first part. The purpose of the second part is to reveal the constructs of the *Twilight* phenomenon found within the data set.

The second chapter consists of a brief literature review of general media effects and previous examples of other pop culture phenomena. Due to the nature of grounded theory it does not allow for much theoretical framing of the study. The intent of grounded theory is to let the data emerge and then link the patterns to theoretical bases.

The intent of this literature review is to give an increased understanding of general theories of media effects. It also provides a contextual understanding of the application of these theories to media consumers; or the general population, as we all in some degree consume media.

The method for this particular study will be outlined in Chapter 3. The operationalization is chosen and explained. After which the research design is related as well as a description of the subjects participating in the study. Finally, the procedure for data analysis is detailed and justified.

The fourth chapter discusses the results of the coding of the surveys. Themes and categories are established and justified. These themes are those that emerged from the data, true to the grounded theory approach. Included in the discussion of the results is the analysis of what the reports reveal about the participants. There are correlations or



relationships and groups of participants that were more likely to report attachments to the characters.

As patterns have been found in the data, meanings have been constructed. Through evaluating these results connections have been made to theory. The fifth chapter will discuss the ties that have been found and offer justification for those connections in existing literature.

Following the results will be chapters that discuss observations made through the data collection process. These observations were not derived solely from the results of the surveys; however, during the data collection process participants discussed their personal involvement with *Twilight* with the researcher as they were filling out the survey. This discussion accounts for the difference in the motivations for attending such an event. It also discusses the implication that participants are imposing relationships they have formed to the literary characters onto the actors.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of literature will first look at the effects of literature in an attempt to understand how a work of literature can be the source of a pop culture phenomenon. Grounded theory is not designed to guide research and neither is this literature review. It is merely intended to justify the research design. This will contribute later in the study to the construction of meanings within the *Twilight* phenomenon. This review will begin with an examination of research focused on media effects and will then progress to the theory of Uses and Gratifications.

There was a study that specifically looked at the effect literature had on the lives of the women that were reading romance novels. Long (2007), was looking to find what the motivations might be for reading romance novels. In her investigation she examined romantic relationship expectations, as well as romantic relationship satisfaction.

Long (2007), found that women most frequently reported that they read romance novels to escape and relax. She also found that reading romance novels served to substitute for relationships and also predicted less satisfaction in romantic relationships. Within the group of women who already possessed love relationship expectations, reading romance novels actually led to an increase in relationship expectation. The last correlation Long reported was that for those women who had high relationship expectations, reading novels led to a decreased relationship satisfaction.

Hakemulder (2008), looked at the importance of reading and what specific qualities and what effects are relevant to the individual readers and also to their community. Hakemulder offered literary communication to illustrate information design

and style aspects as a source of inspiration to those working to build their skills of communication. He also asserted that literature has the power to solve major societal problems.

USA Today ran an article on High School Musical a week before the sequel was to hit the air. The objective of this article was to discuss HSM as a pop culture phenomenon. It began by describing the unexpected and overwhelming success that HSM had and began searching for some rationale. In their efforts they interviewed teenagers, actors, and movie producers. Some of these attributed HSM's success to the "positive message for kids, teens and parents everywhere" ("Can HSM," 2007, p. 9). Neil Meron producer of Hairspray said the following: "It keys into the popularity of music and dance that's sweeping the country..." ("Can HSM," 2007, p. 11). The exploration continues as the focus turns to the marketing appeal. Baylor Wakefield in discussing the involvement and appeal of HSM to teenagers was quoted in saying, "Almost all of their spending dollars are discretionary, and music is one of the most important parts of their discretionary income. It's a key social element" ("Can HSM," 2007, p. 28). The author concluded by offering statistics that show the millions of copies of albums sold nationally and internationally as well as the growth in the viewers of HSM.

Blumler & Katz, (1974), found that with the progression of media tools, people are now empowered to serve as a gatekeeper for their own exposure to the media. Their gatekeeping strategies are dictated by different needs they have when they consume media and what needs they anticipate can be filled by their consumption. These

motivations determine the frequency and tools of the media that they use. Blumler and Katz established five areas of gratification in media texts. These five were escape, social interaction, identify, inform and educate, and then entertain.

The tenets of Uses and Gratifications that were most particularly relevant were: People are goal directed in their behavior, they are active media users, and they are aware of their needs and select media to gratify these needs. Uncertainty theory postulates that individuals are uncomfortable with uncertainty and will use active, interactive or passive strategies to reduce uncertainty. It proposes that communication tools are utilized to reduce uncertainty and achieve the goal of relationship development (Blumler & Katz, 1974).

“Parasocial interaction is a one-sided relationship that television viewers establish with media characters,” (Rubin & McHugh, 1987, p. 280). Rubin discussed the nature of parasocial relationships, and what behavioral tendencies lead to the development of these relationships. Rubin’s research was based on the evaluation of television viewers and the affinities developed with the characters they watch.

Parasocial Relationships are one-sided relationships formed by media consumers to those personas viewed through mediated experience. A bond of intimacy is developed with media personalities in which the consumer shares mediated experiences and develops familiarity and predictability about a character or actor. A consumer can come to know a persona in a similar way that they know their chosen friends, “through direct observation and interpretation of his appearance, his gestures and voice, his conversation and conduct in a variety of situations” (Horton & Wohl, 1956, p. 26).

As said by Rubin (1987), parasocial interaction is the various mediated experiences that form the foundation of a parasocial relationship. It might consist of a television viewer watching an episode or a person spending time on their computer participating in a role play. These are intimate experiences that build the relationship that resembles a friendship existing between a media persona and a viewer. Bonds of intimacy are formed with these personas through shared experiences existing only through viewing over time. Over time, familiarity and predictability of a character increases and in effect increases the reliability of that character.

One study was done evaluating parasocial relationships developed by those who read romance novels conducted by Burnett & Beto & Reinhardt, (2000). Researchers categorized the results into three groups: general comments about romance novel readers; comments regarding the existence of parasocial relationships; and comments describing the influence romance novels have had on the participants' lives.

The comments about romance novel readers discussed their favorite romance novels, where and when they read the romance novels. They discussed the reactions of their significant others to their reading of the romance novels. Readers also expressed their motivations for reading which included: relaxation, loneliness, entertainment, escape, and filling a romantic void in their own life.

They then grouped the comments that were evidence of the existence of parasocial relationships. Expressing how they can relate to the heroine or how much they longed to date the hero. Also, there were comments that indicated how similar

participants react to situations as they see done in the novels they read (Burnett & Beto & Reinhardt, 2000).

To measure the influence of the novels, readers were also asked if they gained any knowledge from these books and if they applied anything from these. Some indicated that they learned a lot about relationships from reading about them in these novels. They compared their conflict management skills to those displayed in the book. For some readers reading these novels affected their personal experiences with intimacy (Burnett & Beto & Reinhardt, 2000).

Implied motivations for engaging in parasocial relationships, based on the research are associated with wish fulfillment. It might also be attributed to habitual exposure and is not necessarily premeditated. Another factor can be attributed to loneliness. From the literature on both uses and gratifications and parasocial interaction we know there are a variety of factors and a combination of factors that influence a media consumer's inclination to engage in a parasocial interaction.

#### *Literature Justification for the Study*

Potential for the media effect of literature was seen in reviewing the current literature. It is an indicator of the power of literature, which has already been displayed in the spread of *Twilight*. The power of literature in the lives of readers was explored in a couple of studies. These articles display that it had the power to effect a general perception of the world and social norms. Particularly in the exploration of the romance novel consumers, there were reports that problem solving skills and relationship

expectations were greatly influenced by what they read in those novels and the practices of the characters in them.

In looking at the article which discusses the popularity of *High School Musical*, it was insightful to see the way in which the author derived targets and meanings to attribute to the unexpected success of *HSM*. This exploration showed the far reaches of a pop culture phenomenon as well as establishing a standard. This examination of HSM offers a guide for the examination of a pop culture phenomenon. From what has been discussed, the examination of *Twilight* and its fans will look to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What meanings are constructed within the social phenomenon of Twilight?

RQ2: What meanings in the data can be linked theoretically through grounded theory?

## METHOD

This chapter provides the structure for the research study. It outlines the measure for the construct of exploring this pop culture phenomenon, *Twilight*. The chosen methodology is a qualitative measure utilizing grounded theory. After offering a justification for these measures a description will be given of those participating in the study and the process of analysis for the information reported by participants.

### *Justification for Qualitative*

This study will gain insight and understanding into the *Twilight* phenomenon and more specifically the people that are creating and participating in this phenomenon. It is designed to be exploratory in nature as a means to gain that understanding. With these particular objectives it is more useful and appropriate to take a qualitative approach as opposed to quantitative. Quantitative is more predictive in nature and collects empirical data and aims to test hypothesis. Qualitative research is a field of inquiry that aims to gather in-depth understanding of human behavior, it investigates the why and how of decision making, not just what, where and when (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 4).

As the foundation for this study is based on observation of human behavior associated with all things *Twilight*, it qualifies for a qualitative approach. While being developed the research design was left open ended, observations from my personal experience with *Twilight* fans showed indications of the formation of attachments to the literary characters. For this reason the surveys had questions intended to examine these attachments specifically and look at the motivations and levels of attraction. There were also questions targeted to gain contextual understanding of the behaviors of *Twilight*



readers to supplement the evaluation of attraction. This allowed for data to contradict the hypothesis that within the phenomenon attachments resembling relationships was taking place. For this reason, grounded theory was chosen as the best methodology in exploring the behaviors and attitudes of fans of *Twilight*.

Origins for this study began with my observations that *Twilight* had become a phenomenon. These observations were derived mostly from my personal experiences. I have read *Twilight* and enjoyed the books, but I found in speaking with other people that their experience was on a different level than I had experienced. This was validated by what I viewed in the media, highlighting the popularity of the series and fans devotion. From conversations I had I found that some readers were expressing attachments to the characters and were mentally putting themselves in the place of some of the characters. These observations led me to the desire to gain an understanding of what was happening and why it was happening.

The research design began when the panel of *Twilight* was announced for Comic Con. The structure for this undertaking was loose in the first stages. It was undetermined what would be found, but the initial hypothesis was that *Twilight* fans were forming relationships to the characters, displaying a high level of attachment and attraction. Even with this direction, it was still important to provide room for error or for other sources of motivation and characteristics to emerge. With these needs, the best methodology to explore to meet the differing needs is grounded theory.

### *Grounded Theory*

“Despite the name, grounded theory is not a specific theory. Instead, grounded theory is a way of organizing research to lead to the development of theory” (Reinard, 2008). Grounded theory design is intended to give more latitude in the evaluation of social phenomena than are allowed within a quantitative construct. It requires repeatedly returning to the field and back to the work again (Reinard, 2008). According to Gortner and Schultz (1995), the scientific canons of grounded theory include, “significance, theory-observation, compatibility, generalizability, consistency, reproducibility, precision, and verification.” Social phenomena is a difficult construct to operationalize as a researcher is not sure what there is to find and is setting out to explore the elements and nature of the phenomena. The intent is not necessarily to measure one particular dimension of the phenomenon, if it were, quantitative methods would be more appropriate. As *Twilight* is generally accepted a social phenomena it makes the utilization of grounded theory the most appropriate choice.

Grounded theory data collection begins with the first bits of data. This is critical to this particular methodology as analysis is gradual and builds upon itself. Within grounded theory any data gathered determined what efforts were made to move forward and in which direction. This sequence of data collection enables the researcher to “process and capture” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 6) all relevant issues to incorporate them into the next set of data.

When a researcher begins their grounded theory study, they bring to the study preconceived ideas about what to expect from the phenomenon they intend to study.

Based on their knowledge they choose subjects to study. It is important for a researcher to observe and sample within the environment of the phenomenon. Through the process of observation and coding, consistency directs the development of theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 9).

As the data is gathered, through investigation and observation, comparative incidents are indicators of phenomena and help the theorist label basic units of theory. Of course not all concepts found within the data collected become categories or basic units of theory, there are always outliers in any study. Comparisons with high levels of similarity become the cornerstones of a study; this is the grouping of concepts. This happens through an ongoing coding process. These consistent incidents qualify as a category when the concept is developed, “in terms of its properties and dimensions of the phenomenon it represents, conditions which give rise to it, the action/interaction by which it is expressed, and the consequences it produces” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 8).

As the data collection process continues and categories are formed, founded on patterns and variations, the process must also be analyzed. It should be broken into “stages, phases or steps” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 10). As the process of analysis continues generative questions evolve. During all of these stages of analysis, the following is found to be true: “hypotheses about relationships among categories should be developed as much as possible during the research” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 11).

There are two types of coding utilized in grounded theory. The first is open coding, which breaks down the data by comparing all incidents: events, setting, interactions, behavior, etc. The second coding is in vivo coding in which all the

categories developed are then connected to the “core category” which is the central phenomenon of the study (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 219). Essentially, all these stages and processes are dependent on each other and develop as the themes emerge from the data. It is an exploratory methodology.

Coding requires that a codebook be written first. It provides the structure of consistency in the investigation. It also serves to provide definitions of emergent categories. The codebook provides the standards for developing the categories and organizing incidents that are reoccurring within the data.

Grounded theory is the best methodology to utilize in this study as it offers the chance to explore the phenomenon and then readjust the scope of the research questions when needed. A review of the literature revealed that in every parasocial study there was a survey or questionnaire given to participants. Many of these questionnaires were followed up with interviews. As this is an examination of a social phenomenon it makes the application of grounded theory ideal.

### *Research Design*

A list of questions was written to develop a survey. These surveys were conducted at major events for both the *Twilight* film and books. Specifically these events are: Comic Con in San Diego, the *Breaking Dawn* midnight release party at the Borders in Provo, UT, and the book signing/concert series for *Breaking Dawn* in Seattle.

One hundred surveys were administered at each event, resulting in three hundred surveys total. Surveys consisted of open ended questions designed to measure the nature

of attachments made to the characters, the actors and the author, Meyer. In writing the questions for the survey the parasocial interaction scale was used as a reference. Surveys were distributed at events surrounding the release of the final book, *Breaking Dawn*, or the movie *Twilight*.

After the surveys were collected and coded, categories were then defined. Based on the patterns within these categories, more focused questions were written. These questions were used to conduct a set of brief interviews with *Twilight* fans to delve deeper into the *Twilight* phenomenon to compare their responses to see if they are consistent with the results found in the surveys.

In searching for meaningful constructs within the *Twilight* phenomenon, a survey with open ended questions was administered. The open ended nature of the questions offered guidance to participants without limiting their interpretation of the question. More specifically, if they were to misinterpret what the question was asking, in most cases the context of their understanding was still attained through their short answer response. Also, some participants were inclined to elaborate on any given point they felt strongly about, i.e., a character or an actor, etc, the design of the questions allowed for that. The design of the survey was intended to offer these opportunities to gain insights of the involvement and motives of a Twilighter.

### *Subjects*

Participants for this examination met the following criteria: Possessing an awareness of the novels in the *Twilight* Saga written by Meyer. The subjects displayed

their excitement and involvement for the novels and the movie adaptation of *Twilight* by choosing to attend events that are centered on *Twilight*.

Two of the three events had the author present. Comic Con, the first event, had Meyer in attendance, as well as the actors cast to portray the main characters. The other event with Meyer present was the book signing/concert series in Seattle.

As those in attendance had taken time to travel to these events and wait in very long lines, they had already displayed a level of commitment that qualified them as subjects for this study. These efforts are a reflection of their desire to create experiences with *Twilight* and increase their level of familiarity.

Most of the participants recruited for this study were adult females. There were all ages of females in attendance at these events. Some men were there, but these men were usually there to support a woman in their life whether it was a father escorting their daughter or a husband or boyfriend along with the woman they love. These men were willing to participate and there are about ten surveys come from such men. Specific statistics can not be reported about the subjects as personal information was not requested. Personal information was not requested in order to maintain anonymity and to satisfy IRB requirements.

By choosing to pay for tickets to *Twilight* events and traveling to these events, these fans will have exhibited behavior that reaches a level of engagement that goes beyond normal fans. This implies the potential of having relationships with one or more of the characters/cast members or with the author Meyer.

One group of these subjects is specifically those in attendance at San Diego's Comic-con convention. Of course those participating in the study were at Comic-con for the *Twilight* panel.

Another group consists of those who were in attendance at the midnight release of the fourth and final book, *Breaking Dawn*, at Borders located in Provo, UT. This particular Borders is #1 in the world for *Twilight* sales, according to the manager of the location.

The final group surveyed was those who attended the book signing/concert series for *Breaking Dawn* in Seattle, WA. Meyer was there to sign books for all those in attendance.

The final group observed and analyzed is the interviewees, a group of Twilighters. These fans were not targeted at an event. Those who participated in the follow up interviews were nominated by friends or had chosen to volunteer based on a call for interviewees willing to discuss *Twilight*. There was one repeat of a participant from both Comic-con and another from the book signing in Seattle. The questions asked in the interview will reflect the themes and patterns that were found in the data.

Trustworthiness of the study is accomplished through saturation. Multiple venues were utilized in this study. Different parts of the country with different groups of fans served as subjects. 300 surveys were administered and after they were coded, in depth interviews were conducted to validate the reliability of the meanings derived from the data.

### *Data Analysis*

In order to analyze the data the first step was to gain familiarity with the data that was collected. In the process of becoming familiar it was necessary to read through all of the surveys to observe what themes emerged from the data consistently.

After the surveys were read and patterns were identified, a codebook was written. A codesheet was developed based on the incidents most similar and which were the most common occurrence reported by participants within the body of surveys. The codebook groups together the questions referred to for measuring each category. Each survey was then coded based on what incidents and behaviors were being reported enough to call them a category.

At this point questions were then written for the follow up interviews and were designed to probe a little deeper into the phenomenon. These interviews were then transcribed and the codesheet was the same for reporting the information that was gathered in the interviews as it was for the surveys.

So, for the methodology, it has been established that the qualitative, exploratory nature of grounded theory would be best for the purposes of this research. A survey based on the personal experience and observations of the researcher, combined with the model of the parasocial interaction scale, was written and administered at three events. All of these events were selected as they were centered on either the release of the film *Twilight* or the final book in the *Twilight* series. Subjects qualified for the study by being in attendance at one of the chosen events.



Analysis for the study consisted of reading the surveys and then coding them to establish patterns and categories. After the results had been grouped together, or classified as an outlier, a set of questions were written for follow up interviews and 10 Twilighers participated in these interviews. The purpose of the interviews was to test the categories established from the survey results.

Ultimately, the codes found in the data were used to further illuminate current theories and models. In this particular study of a pop culture phenomenon, the field of media effects is anticipated to be added upon.

## RESULTS

In the process of data collection there were two forms administered, the first form of data collection was an open ended survey, the second form were follow up interviews. There were 10 follow up interviews conducted. As described in the method section, the interview questions were written based on themes that had emerged while coding the 300 surveys.

As the patterns were found while coding the surveys, and because there is a larger quantity of surveys than interviews, the surveys will be the more frequently reported group. Interviews were designed to validate the data revealed from the surveys. Aside from a complete lack of inspiration in creative outlets, the interview responses were in line with what was found in the surveys. As the results are discussed, interview responses will always be specified with a precursory statement such as, “one interviewee said...” otherwise it can be assumed that a reported response comes from the body of surveys.

Within this discussion of the results there are several different themes or patterns that are explained. Based off of the application of the above method, the following categories emerged from the three hundred open ended surveys. There are eight of these categories and they are: attraction, relatability of the character, acceptance of the actor, uncertainty reduction, tangible manifestations of the characters, integrations of the characters into their life, creative outlets inspired by *Twilight*, and the frequency of behavior focused on *Twilight*.

These categories are the meanings sought after in research question 1: What meanings are constructed within the social phenomenon of Twilight? These categories are an answer to this research question. At the same time, these categories are not isolated to just research question 1, the patterns are also indicators of parasocial interaction, which is the focus of the second research question: What meanings in the data can be linked theoretically through grounded theory?

Each category or theme will have its own analysis that will include examples from the surveys that offer justification and support for the assertions made about each category. As each category or construct is analyzed, these reports will be addressing the second research question.

### *Attraction*

Attraction is one emergent theme found in the surveys. This specifically refers to the nature of the attachment. There are three categories for attraction according to parasocial theory. These three categories are social, physical, and task attraction. When the theory says attraction it is referring to the draw character holds for the reader or participant.

If they are experiencing a social attraction, that refers to their estimation of likeability, or relatability or personality traits that they find amiable. For example, one might say that “Alice is their favorite character....because she is funny and spunky and caring...” this refers to her amiability. However, if someone is expressing that the source of their attachment is because of physical attraction they might say something like

“Edward is my favorite character because he is hot!” This refers exclusively to their physical attraction. Task attraction is referring to the abilities which a character possesses that are admirable. An example of this might be, “Jasper is my favorite character because he can control people’s emotions.”

It is important to note that in the survey participants were limited by the questions in the amount of how many characters they were to write about. The first question asked, “Who is your favorite character?” The second, “Why is that your favorite character?” third, “Do you feel like you can relate to the experience of your favorite character?” And another question later asks, “If you were a character in the book who would you be romantically involved with?” While there were a significant number of participants that volunteered more than one favorite character, the majority chose one character to describe. In some situations a respondent would report their favorite character and their potential romantic interest as the same character. In others they would switch characters.

One difficulty in coding arose with some participants’ inconsistency in their answers. It was not uncommon for a respondent to report one character as their favorite and then report another character to be their romantic interest. The problem arose when they would switch back and forth in their character reference in later follow up questions that were focused on measuring the relationship with the favorite character. In most instances the switch was detectable, but it did affect the measure of attraction and relationship correlation.

### *Social*

Social attraction refers to the attraction of a person toward the object because of personality traits that are found to be desirable or amiable. These types of attraction can be rooted in both romantic and platonic relationships. The scope however, is specific to being rooted in a personality. These traits might include likability, sensitivity, liveliness, excitement, etc.

While looking through the surveys there were many repeated examples of social attraction. There were some traits applied to many favorite characters. There were also correlations between their favorite character and the social attraction they felt toward that character.

Among all the results coded within the surveys there were certain characters that were mentioned more often than other characters in the books. There were certain characters that were almost always listed based on a foundation of social attraction. The most common favorite “social” character was Alice. As reported, many felt like she would be “fun” to be around. They liked her “spunky” personality and loved the friendship she offered Bella. They also described her as “caring” for those in her life and many admired her for her “event planning” skills.

Bella was another character that was reported as being a favorite character based on a level of social attraction that she held for readers. Bella, more than Alice, was reported as being “relatable” and “down to earth”. Where it seemed that Alice was the friend that readers wanted to have, they felt like they could see themselves acting similar to Bella.

It is interesting to note that Bella is the main character of the series. The style of writing from the book is in first person, it is a narrative with one brief exception in the last book. While writing the fourth novel in the *Twilight* saga, Meyer broke this novel into three books. The first and third book, like the rest of the series was told from Bella's perspective. However, in the second book of *Breaking Dawn*, she changed to writing a narrative of Jacob Black's experience.

Seeing as the series is dominantly written from Bella's perspective it is interesting that the readers reported attractions that would be the attractions that Bella has toward those same characters in the book. They relate to Bella, they want to be friends with Alice and they would be romantically involved Edward, or as a smaller number reported, Jacob. These are the relationships that Bella has with these respective characters. For those respondents who wrote that they related to Bella, they invariably reported these similar attractions to the respective characters.

Another common occurrence that is noteworthy is among those participants who reported Alice as being their favorite character. Reported relatability and desire for friendship varied among respondents, usually those who related to Alice did not also report wanting to be her friend or admiring her spunkiness and vice versa. It is interesting that those participants who reported Alice as their favorite character displayed a similar pattern as did those who reported Bella. They kept certain characters matched for the most part. In the novels Alice is best friend to Bella, while she is also the closest sibling to Edward and is described as soul mate to Jasper. They would report Alice as their favorite character and express a romantic interest in her love interest from the book, Jasper. This was not a constant; however, a significant number did also report having a

desire for a romantic relationship with Edward. The grouping of the characters is still consistent in that they always kept the strongest relationships from the book coupled together in their desired relationships.

As for Jacob, as mentioned earlier, Jacob has a portion of the fourth novel told from his perspective, he is part of a love triangle focused toward Bella and rivaling Edward. In the fourth novel he finds a new love interest and is no longer an obstacle to the romance between Edward and Bella. The love triangle begins in the second book, for some readers the development of the triangle was a great frustration. Loyalty had been formed to Edward for many readers, but there was another group that preferred Jacob as the love interest for Bella. After the release of the third book *Eclipse* and the conflict of the triangle was at its climax, marketing exploited the division in loyalties toward both Edward and Jacob. Press on applications with “Team Edward” and “Team Jacob” for t-shirts was distributed with a special edition of *Eclipse*. Loyalties for either hero ran deep and that was reflected in the responses on the surveys.

For those who preferred Edward and Bella together, there was a small portion that reported desiring the friendship of Jacob Black. There were those who had developed an aversion to Jacob Black, but for those who desired his friendship, they were exhibiting the nature of attachments held by Bella.

### *Physical*

Physical attraction refers specifically to the attraction that is rooted in romantic and physical attraction. Examples of this particular form of attraction would be handsome, dreamy, perfect, hot, etc. These all refer to exterior qualities and appearance.

While coding the data those reported as being desired for a romantic relationship were with rare exception reported as having physically attractive characteristics. Also, aside from a handful of exceptions, only the male characters were referred to as a subject for physical attraction and desired for romantic relationships.

It was evident that there was one character that stood out above the rest in being reported as physically attractive. This character is Edward. He is the hero of the Twilight saga. Many people attribute the success of the books themselves to the draw that Edward has for women. Meyer describes this character as being more perfect than a “male model” and being the typification of “perfection” having a “dazzling affect” on those around him. As he is a vampire he is described as being designed to lure his prey. He is equipped by having an alluring scent, an almost “musical” voice and of course the perfect physique. Fans of the book attribute the draw of Edward to more than just his physical attractiveness, but they do openly acknowledge that they are physically attracted to the fictional character, Edward Cullen.

One participant in justifying her choice of Edward as her favorite character said, “Because I would leave my husband for someone like that.” Many used words like, “dreamy”, “perfect”, “hot” and “handsome” to describe Edward. These statements were often given a matter of fact, or of course context, ie. “duh” “of course”, using exclamation marks and others signals for emphasis. Two participants explicitly expressed a desire to be intimate with Edward.

The second most common character reported as being physically attractive was, intuitively, Jacob Black. Some described him as a “bad boy” others said that he too was “hot” and other physically descriptive attractions. Unlike Edward, many of the



participants reported a social attraction or more specifically a desire for the friendship of Jacob as well as expressing a desire for a romantic relationship with Jacob.

Both relationships were not expressed as desired in the same survey necessarily, though that did happen occasionally. For the majority of respondents those attractions were separated in their mind. In the interviews, one interviewee reported that she preferred Jacob for Bella because he was a best friend to Bella as well as a love interest. He offered her both. That dual attraction of Jacob Black was consistently reported among participants.

The third most common character desired for a romantic relationship was Jasper. Jasper as mentioned above is the character that is a soul mate to the beloved character of Alice. Jasper is not as well liked as Alice per se. He is not described as being socially attractive, but it was interesting to see a correlation for every surveyee that reported having a desire for a romantic relationship with Jasper also reported having a social attraction to Alice. Jasper is however also valued among readers on a task attraction level.

Another interesting distinction is in the groupings of the physical attraction. It is present in the social and in the task attraction as well, however it is most evident in the realm of physical attraction. The groupings are that of the vampires and the werewolves (or shape shifters), the other vampires are listed as potential love interests, Emmett, Jasper, Carlisle whereas the supporting werewolf characters are not described as being desired for a romantic relationship.

### *Task*

Task attraction is attraction that is rooted in the abilities or accomplishments of the subject of attraction. Examples of this sort of attraction might be intelligence, caring, protective, calming, etc. The Twilight saga is rooted in conflict, much of this conflict is a physical conflict and the abilities of characters are highly valued in these novels.

Task attraction was the most difficult category of attraction to code for in the analysis of surveys. The line between social and task attraction is not as distinct as it is between social and physical attraction, making it necessary to set standards for the code.

Meyer while developing her characters gave each of them unique characteristics that were exclusive to their possessor. It is a novel that intermingles the ordinary with the supernatural and the characters abilities vary based on their placement in these worlds. Obviously the vampires are described as being exceptionally beautiful and as having the faces of angels in renaissance paintings. They are virtually indestructible; they are immortal and have extraordinary strength. These are general characteristics of vampires in the literary world. However, Meyer takes their powers a step further; giving some of these vampires special powers unique even in the world of the supernatural.

These unique powers are significant to the character development of their possessors. Often when describing the reasoning for their character preference respondents attributed it to their abilities.

Jasper was the most frequent example of task attraction that was reflective directly of his unique ability. Almost every time a surveyee would speak of Jasper, they would indicate valuing his ability to “control emotions” or to “calm”. Many would like

to have that same power. Of course, as mentioned above respondents also reported having physical attraction toward Jasper.

Readers reported having an attraction to the depth of Carlisle's compassion. He is described by Meyer as having an extraordinary level of compassion for others. Readers admire this quality in him as well as his leadership of his family. Esme is Carlisle's wife and is similarly valued for her ability to love others. They both have a nurturing element that is recognized by readers and is reported as being a characteristic that participants would like to emulate.

Alice does have the unique ability to see the future and Edward can read minds which are highly valued in the world of vampires, but more often they were praised for the social attraction, that they held for readers. It is interesting that in the novels their powers are valued most highly amid the vampire world but that those are not as valued by the readers, at least according to the surveys.

They did however report attraction to abilities of both Alice and Edward that border on social attraction. Many would report that they valued Alice's event planning skills, her sense of fashion. Edward is attractive for being "protective" for the "love he has for Bella" and for his "caring" nature.

Bella is not really admired for task attraction except in her ability to put herself on the line for those she loves. Jacob Black is also mentioned in task attraction. He is like Edward in the way that he is valued for being a "protector" of Bella and for being "caring".

While looking through the data certain patterns emerged. Participants were not asked to categorize the form of their attraction to their favorite character. They were

asked why that was their favorite character. As different forms of attraction were expressed it became evident that surveyees were exhibiting parasocial behavior on the level of attraction. Participants were ignorant as to the concept of parasocial behavior, much less the idea that they were reporting different levels of attraction.

While coding the data, it was observed that participants' responses mirrored the relationships that existed in the books. There were outliers of course, but for the most part these readers appeared to have a cultivated perception of the characters they were discussing. Friendships and sibling preferences, and romances were maintained mirrored by the readers personal preferences. As mentioned above it appears that many readers are really putting themselves in the place of Bella, from whose perspective the books are written.

There were four characters that were preferred consistently in the survey results: Edward was favorite most often, after Edward it would be a tie between Alice and Jacob and then Bella.

The levels of attraction for each of these characters had patterns. For Bella, many related to her or wanted to be her friend, or expressed social attraction. With Alice, aside from a few respondents, she was not chosen based on physical attraction, she was valued for her personality and her abilities, aka, social and task attraction.

Edward was most often described as being perfect or desired because of physical attraction and also some task attraction. He was commonly valued for his level of social attraction, that was not absent from respondents. They did view him as sensitive and kind, but more often they reported that he was "dreamy", and "hot" among other descriptive terms. Edward was also favored because of his abilities, these abilities

extended to his ability to love Bella, and protect her. Surprisingly, it was not often reported that he was favored because of his ability to read minds, though; to some readers they may have felt that was inclusive in the description, “perfect”.

Jacob was also described as being “hot” but he was also described as being “a bad boy” or an “a good friend “or “caring” etc. The roots of favor extended to all the different levels of attraction. This was unique even for the other three most commonly favored characters. Alice and Bella were not reported as physically attractive. (Though Alice did have a few exceptions, this was by male participants.) Bella was valued for being “down to earth” and “relatable”.

Survey results indicate that readers are attracted to the literary characters in all of the categories of parasocial interaction. As respondents further expressed a desire to have both platonic and romantic relationships with literary characters from the books, their survey responses indicated that parasocial relationships are being formed.

#### *Relatability of the character*

Relatability refers to the ability of the participant, reader or viewer, to relate to the experiences or personality to the character in the book. In other words it is through shared experiences that the reader can connect to a character, they perceive themselves to share similarities on some level.

As for the level of being able to relate to the characters, actors, or author responses varied among participants. There were those who expressed that they felt like they could relate to emotional experiences of the characters. Most of them would express

that they could relate to the feeling of “being in love” and even more than that, loving somebody they “shouldn’t” love.

There were other experiences and feelings reportedly shared by readers, but there were those who said that they did not feel like they could relate. Among that group were some who adamantly distinguished that they kept the book and reality separate. Others said that they “read to escape” and that they did not relate to the characters.

Within the survey questions were asked that were specifically designed to measure the level of relatability of the participants with each of the following: the literary characters, the actors cast to play the literary characters and also with Meyer, the author. These questions were: “How much do you relate to the experience of (your favorite character)?” “Do you think you would get along (with the actor playing your favorite character)?” “Do you think you would get along with Stephenie Meyer?” “Do you feel like you know Stephenie Meyer now that you’ve read so many of her works?”

#### *Literary character*

A variety of responses emerged as patterns while coding for relatability to the literary characters. The most common patterns were: relate to love, relating to those teenager feelings, and feelings of ordinariness, wanting to help others, relating to fun and light heartedness. Also, a smaller group reported they could relate to being “selfish” in love. With each of these patterns, there were of course associations with particular literary characters.

For the most part participants reported relating “to Bella because she is normal and human.” Through speaking with participants and coding their survey responses it is indicated that this particular element has a powerful draw for readers to the book. Many women consider themselves ordinary and wish that the wonderful, seemingly perfect guy would pick them out of a crowd and love them despite their seemingly ordinary state. It was expressed over and over again, woman love that Bella is ordinary and that extraordinary, vampire, perfect Edward still chooses her and loves her, though he could have any girl. They also related to her awkward teenage feelings, and the joy of first love.

Edward held a similar level of relatability for readers in that he loved someone he “shouldn’t”. Also, in the book, Edward says that his love for Bella makes him “selfish” in fact it’s the name of a chapter in the third book Eclipse, Meyer emphasized this feeling in Edward and many readers related to that feeling. That was virtually the limit of the patterns of relating to Edward, however there was a group of participants that related to his “caring nature” and his strong “sense of morality”.

Jacob is a unique character. Jacob is the underdog of the love triangle. As described earlier, there was a divide in fans as to their acceptance, admiration, or dislike for Jacob, it varies. It was his role of the underdog that participants related to though, they expressed that they understood how it felt to “love someone you know you will never have”. However, there is another side of Jacob that readers disliked while others embraced it and related to it. Those who did not like this side of Jacob called it being a “jerk”, while those who appreciated it called him “easy going”, or “fun loving”. It was

interesting to see the different ways that his personality was perceived and the direct correlation with an individual readers personal disposition.

Alice was described as “spunky” and being “there for others” always caring. It has already been noted that these were sources for social attraction to Alice, however, these characteristics were also characteristics that people felt that they could relate to. Readers also expressed being able to relate to the “jokester” nature of Emmett and related to Carlisle’s “compassion”. Again, it is interesting that these were the characteristics that they also described as being a draw to the character. This is reflective of human nature, in general people like people similar to themselves, this carries into literature as well it seems.

At this stage of relating to the literary characters it is common that participants might express that they feel sorry for the characters suffering within the book though it is fictional. This implies that as they have related to the experiences or feelings of the respective character that they engaged on a level where they can imagine what it would be like to have the experience being told in the story, implying that they are to a degree visualizing them in the position of the character.

### *Actor*

In measuring the degree to which respondents related to the actors a hindrance in the survey came in that the question did not solicit that information directly. It appeared on the survey that some participants were a little confused by the inquiry as to whether they thought they would get along with the actor. Prior to that question the survey probes to see the level of familiarity that the readers have with the actor. “Do you know much



about (the actor playing your favorite character)? Or “Do you think (the actor playing your favorite character) can become (your favorite character)?”

There was a direct correlation with those respondents who indicated that they had a vast knowledge of the actor playing their favorite character. For those who did know about the actor and had expressed that they were accepting them to play that role, those respondents also expressed an enthusiastic affirmative that they anticipated they would get along with that actor. The reverse proved to be true, though the sentiment was not a strong negative. For those who indicated general ignorance toward the actor, these respondents gave half hearted “sure I guess” responses.

*Stephenie Meyer*

Measuring relatability of readers to the author Meyer had a similar short coming as with measuring for the actors. The questions were slightly different. The survey did ask, “Do you think you would get along with Stephenie Meyer?” but that question was preceded by “Do you feel like you know Stephenie Meyer now that you’ve read so many of her works?”

There were three responses to the “Do you feel like you know...” question: “yes, I have an insight as to how her mind works” “no, I just know her writing style, not her” or “I don’t know” or a question mark. There was a little bit of variation in the form those responses came in, but those were the patterns.

When responding the later question, “Do you think you would get along...” There were variations of five responses. Again there were “no” “yes” and “possibly” answers, but there were two other very interesting responses that were expressed repeatedly.

One response was that they felt like they could relate to the experience of Meyer being a wife and mother who stayed at home. They reported being inspired by her work that she managed to create the work she did within her situation. This response was also volunteered in several interview responses.

The second interesting response was expressing a common belief. There were several respondents who said that they thought they would get along with Meyer because, “we are both LDS”. A group of fans feel that they can relate to Meyer because of their shared religion.

Relatability is an interesting concept to measure in what it reveals about the reader. The characteristics and circumstances that readers relate to is a good indication of why they read and where they are engaging.

#### *Acceptance of actor*

Acceptance of actors is measuring the degree to which the surveyee is willing to accept the actor to as someone qualified to play their favorite character. This acceptance extends to the general appearance of the actor as resembling the character from the books. Acceptance also indicates that the participant believes that the actor can embody the characteristics that give life to the characters from the book.

Questions asked to measure the acceptance of the actor cast to play the role of a participant’s favorite character were the following: “What are your feelings about the making of the movie?” “How well do you think the movie was cast?” “What do you think about the actor playing your favorite character?” “Are they much like you had imagined” “What do you think of the trailer and the movie clip they have shown?” “Do you think

the actor can become ( your favorite character)?" "Do you think you would get along with the actor?" All of these questions were utilized in this respect as they helped paint an overall picture of the participants' feelings on the movie and their feelings of acceptance of the film in general. To gain more specific insight into their feelings toward the actors the two most relevant questions were: "How do you feel about the actor..." And "Do you know much about the actor?"

*Desired relationship*

While coding a correlation was revealed in the data. This is a correlation of the type of relationship the participant holds with their favorite character and the degree to which they were willing to accept the casted actor to portray their favorite character emerged. Those who had attachments to their favorite character rooted in social attraction were more readily willing to accept the actor cast to portray their favorite character. Though, typically, participants generally had acquired less knowledge about the actor if it was based on social attraction.

For example those who had reported Alice to be their favorite character based on Alice's "spunky" and "friendly" "outgoing" personality said of Ashley Greene that they think she is "perfect" "just like I'd imagined". Alice is also a supporting character, which may have also been to Ashley's advantage in being more readily accepted. Also, Ashley was not involved much in the promotional efforts of Summit. Not being seen much in the trailer and not having much other exposure she remained below the radar. The context of her exposure and acceptance is interesting to note, of course causality can not be determined and is beyond the scope of this study.

In comparing the level of acceptance for Ashley Greene as Alice compared to Kristen Stewart as Bella, it gives greater salience to the suggestion that it is correlated to exposure and the prominence of the character to the story. Kristen Stewart was not as widely accepted as Ashley. There was no opposition posed to Ashley, however, there were plenty who reported that Kristen seemed "too strong to play Bella" or that "she doesn't quite look like what I imagined" "she's too pretty" or "I don't like Kristen". She

did not have all negative responses, some said that “they love her!” or “that she looks just like Bella should” or that “she is made for the part”. The differing reception distinguishes the acceptance of Ashley, playing the part of a supporting character as opposed to Kristen Stewart who is playing the main character. Kristen Stewart of course was in the trailers released, and was touring and promoting *Twilight* in many different venues and mediums. General knowledge of Kristen was more commonly acknowledged by participants.

Where Ashley and Kristen are similar is that they are favorite characters based on a social attraction. Kristen as Bella did have a greater acceptance rate than her co-star Rob Pattinson. This supports the observation that characters favored on a level of social attraction were more readily accepted than those rooted in physical or romantic attraction. Reflecting on the data about relatability it showed that participants reported relating to Bella more than they did Alice. It is possible that participants want a Bella that is similar to what they perceive themselves to be like.

In romantic relationships the acceptance was much harder to attain for the actors. In examining the group that favored Jacob, fans were divided. Of course, Jacob is the underdog of the love triangle and does not have as strong a following as Edward fans, but Jacob fans are devoted. Some criticized him saying he “doesn’t look like Jacob” or expressing that another actor would have gotten the part instead. The majority surprisingly approved of Taylor Lautner. Many referred to him as “Shark Boy” though, which is a character that he had already played. It appeared that a portion of the surveyees had become familiarized with Taylor Lautner in a positive way and before he

was cast. It appears that this positive association helped him. Taylor, though not a large role in the first film, *Twilight*, played a big role in part of the promotion. It is appropriate considering the role fans know he will have in the sequels. However, he was out there promoting and he embraced his fans. Fans of Lautner were very loyal, when the question arose as to whether Lautner would be able to bulk up enough to play the part of Jacob in the sequel, fans were livid. They took an active role in expressing their support of Lautner, lobbying for him to be kept on as Jacob in the sequels.

Participants had an unexpected resistance to Jasper. As he is a supportive character it was anticipated that fans would have a more passive attitude toward him. Alice is a supportive character as well; however, there was no resistance to Ashley. It supports the observation that having an attachment rooted in physical attraction in a large way determines to what degree the actor will be accepted. Those participants who reported thinking “he is not attractive enough” “he is not my Jasper” also reported not having much knowledge about Jackson Rathbone, the actor. For the smaller group that thought “he looks exactly like Jasper is supposed to look” “perfect” they too reported have a general ignorance of Rathbone the actor. Familiarity did not factor in his case, which is unique to all of these examples.

The casting for Edward had the most volatile reaction from fans. Some thought Rob Pattinson would be perfect but many were demanding a recast. From the surveys it is shown that Edward is the biggest draw for the readers represented by the surveys. Every participant that named Edward as their favorite character expressed a desire to have a romantic relationship with him. Every participant also attributed their favor to

physical attraction, it was always complimented with task or social attraction as well, but there was always physical attraction. When Rob Pattinson accepted the role of Edward he received masses of hate mail. It may be that anyone cast would have had the same reception. There was a significant group of surveys that reflected the attitude shared in the surveys, “he’s horrible” “not Edward” “too ugly to be Edward”.

A majority of fans at the point of being surveyed, especially at Comic Con, had warmed up to Pattinson as Edward and they detailed their experience. “At first I didn’t like him, but now I love him”. “I thought they could have cast Edward better, but I’m getting use to Rob”. Those that told of a transition also reported having acquired knowledge about Pattinson. The data reveals that as familiarity increased so did acceptance for Pattison.

The most enthusiastic supporters of Rob were at Comic Con, this was also the case for Taylor Lautner. It is interesting to note that some were not as supportive of Kristen Stewart at Comic Con. The surveys from Comic Con are unique in this respect from the surveys taken at Borders and at the book signing. The difference implies that the presence of the actors affected the reception of the actors.

As the respondents describe their investment in the film adaptation of *Twilight* it reveals that they are engaging. Fans are not exhibiting passive behavior, they are very participatory. They express fears of the film, fears that the book will be misrepresented. They expressed concerns over the actors, displaying the strength of the attachments formed to the literary characters.

An obstacle for the analysis of acceptance lies in the inconsistency of respondents. As mentioned in the attraction section, respondents would in some cases report one character as their favorite character and another as the character that they would favor for a romantic relationship. In the subsequent questions focused toward their favorite character, it was not uncommon for them to switch the literary character described as the favorite.

It was perceptible when this change happened for the most part. The shift usually was detectable as the root of attraction shifted as well. If a participant made a change in the favorite character they were describing, the change typically went from naming a character that they were socially attracted to and then later on referring to the character they expressed a desire to have a romantic relationship with.

### *Uncertainty Reduction*

Uncertainty Reduction is a concept in communications theory that describes the process that persons go through to gain familiarity with the object of their search. In terms of this study it refers specifically to the effort a fan puts into become better acquainted with an, actor, or cast member. Uncertainty reduction can come from watching interviews or any media coverage of the actor. This search of media of course extends to magazines and internet searches. With IMDB a fan can get a summation of the career of any given actor. If an actor has appeared in any other films a fan might choose to watch that actor in their other work. This can give them an idea of what to expect.



Uncertainty reduction is rooted in the anxiety that people feel in general when they do not know what to expect. In examining the surveys, responses indicated that many fans felt anxiety about *Twilight* being adapted to the screen. They also indicated that they felt anxiety for many of the actors that were cast to bring the literary characters to life that fans have formed attachments to.

When measuring for the process of uncertainty reduction the following questions were used to solicit the relevant information: “Are you a member of any online fan bases?” “How often do you check Stephenie Meyer’s website for updates?” “What else do you look at to keep updated on the books and the movie?” “Do you know much about (the actor cast to play your favorite character)?” Questions directed toward Meyer specifically were: “Have you met any of the cast or Stephenie Meyer before?” “Do you feel like you know Stephenie Meyer now that you’ve read so many of her works?”

### *Literary Character*

Fans of *Twilight* admitted in their surveys that they would re-read the books multiple times. As fans read and reread they gain greater understanding of a literary character. Increased understanding comes with increased exposure. As they reread they come to understand character development more and increase predictability, they also have the direction for the plot and know what to expect. It is not the intent of this particular measure to imply that the only motivation for rereading to increase uncertainty reduction, merely to explain that this is an effect of reading and rereading any work of literature. Survey analysis showed that participants were reporting the practice of rereading the books.

Another means to reduce uncertainty of literary characters is in online discussions, or fan sites. These sites and discussion forums are dedicated to discussing the development of the literary characters and feelings toward different characters as well as theories for the development of these characters. The most commonly frequented websites among those persons taking the survey were: *Twilight Moms*, *His golden eyes*, *Twilight lexicon*, and Stephenie Meyer's website.

Meyer has done book signing tours and made other public appearances at which she has done question and answer sessions. This was observed in action at both Comic Con and the Book signing tour/concert series. Attendees were able to ask Meyer questions about her writing and the characters. Questions asked about character development, or inquired for contextual understanding for events in the book, etc. All questions asked were intended to learn more about Meyer's writing style and plans as well as the plotline and character development of the beloved *Twilight* saga.

The need or desire for discussing, theorizing about *Twilight* characters, in looking at the data appears to be insatiable for devoted fans. Many confess that they spend "too much time" thinking about *Twilight* and that they go to fan sites "daily, sometimes 2 or 3 times a day".

#### *Actor*

Measuring uncertainty reduction for the actors had better questions in the survey to help get relevant reporting from the participants. Aside from a few outliers that were only attending the event to be with friends along with the other few persons who relied on their friends for updates, participants reported that they look online at different websites

regularly. They look at the movie website as well as Meyer's website to keep updated on the movie.

As mentioned earlier in the acceptance section, surveyees mostly had taken the time to research the actors that were cast for the film adaptation. Of course, as was also observed there appeared to be a correlation between the level of attraction with the favorite character and their proactive search for information about the given actor.

We saw that knowledge of Ashley Greene and Jackson Rathbone was not highly sought after, according to survey results. Greene and Rathbone were supporting characters, not central characters. The distinction between these two actors was in the warmth of their acceptance by audiences and in the reported attraction for each character. For Greene, her fans liked Alice based on social attraction, whereas with Rathbone there was pressure to be a source of physical attraction. Fans reported an expectation that he would have that same physical attraction that Jasper had been in the book. Another commonality that Greene and Rathbone share that appears significant is that they did not participate in many of the promotional events or interviews.

Central characters to the plot had a larger hurdle to overcome. As the characters with the most description and development in the books, these characters had a firmer presence in the mind of readers. Possibly, the image of what these characters would like was more solidified in the minds of readers than their supportive counterparts. At any rate, Edward and Bella had the strongest reaction to their casting. Jacob was a difficult part to cast as well, but even the reaction to Lautner paled comparatively to Stewart or worse, Pattinson.

From the results discussed there is the implication that Pattinson had to develop a strong physical attraction for fans. He was not what many had “imagined” and it was hard for them to get past that. With increased exposure and exhibiting likeable qualities in interviews and public appearances, Pattinson began to win over the *Twilight* fans. It is interesting that Stewart’s appearances seemed to have the opposite affect. Many related to Bella and thought Kristen and thought her “too pretty” and not “ordinary” enough. This anxiety reflects that it may have been more difficult for fans to feel that they could relate to Kristen as they could with Bella. Also, with Stewart’s perceived persona through increased exposure, some felt that it did not match the personality that Bella was supposed to possess.

These correlations revealed are not sufficient to determine causality, but they do imply that for fans to accept the actor as the character, they need to be able to engage with them. Also, it appears that they also need to develop similar levels of attraction to the actors with which they have directed to the literary characters. With the distinction between the central and supportive characters this indicates that there are levels of exposure that the reader is already accustomed to. As they are accustomed to less description and development of Alice and Jasper than Edward and Bella, the expectation for uncertainty reduction appears to reflect the expectation a reader would have developed while reading.

*Stephenie Meyer*

In designing the questions for this study the intent was to investigate attachments to the author Meyer in addition to the actors and literary characters. The objective was to

discern where there attachments lay the strongest, hoping to better establish where the stronger loyalties and attachments lie.

Investigation of Meyer is a bit beyond the scope of this study, however, as the information is available, it gives a contextual understanding that can serve for comparative analysis to fortify observations made about attachments and uncertainty reduction as involves the literary characters and the actors cast to play them.

Questions designed to investigate familiarity with Meyer again were: “How often do you check Meyer’s website for updates?” and “Do you feel like you know Stephenie Meyer now that you’ve read so many of her works?”

Most participants were frequent visitors of Meyer’s website. With the exception of a few outliers everyone reported at least checking Meyer’s website at a minimum of “once every few weeks”. The majority reported more regular visits, “2 to 3 times a day”. Meyer’s website offers limited biographical information along with current projects that Meyer is working on. The website also has the background story of Meyer’s experience in writing each novel. There are tabs available with information about the respective *Twilight* books as well as her other work, *The Host*. Quotes, photos, anecdotes and synopsis are available for each of these books, as well as a playlist of songs that inspired Meyer while writing.

With this window into the workings of Meyer’s mind and insight into her inspiration it allows many to “have the same taste in music and books” it gives them enough knowledge to gain familiarity. Many reported relating to her personal family circumstances, “I’m also a stay at home Mom” and “we are both LDS” which shows they extent of their knowledge of her as person and lifestyle and religion even.

Seeking after Meyer became eclipsed by fans desire to become familiar with the actors. Looking at the progression of the surveys and combining that with follow up interviews it becomes evident that the focus for *Twilight* is migrating from Meyer to the actors. Meyer is falling further and further below the radar.

A potential justification for this shift is that prior to the film and casting even, Meyer was the only tangible link to the books and the characters of *Twilight*, that is no longer the case and may be a source of the shift. One point that is consistent in the reported results is that audience members like to know what to expect, but are more likely in their expectations are scaled with the importance of the object of uncertainty reduction.

#### *Tangible manifestations of the characters*

As participants report their level of engagement with the book it is clear that they are really invested in the book and in the world that Meyer has created. They have reported having attraction toward the characters. In other volunteered responses they express other mediums of connecting to the book. Sources of connection vary widely, in coding the theme that emerged was that readers loved the characters and the world of *Twilight* so much, they wanted it to be real. This was displayed as they shared their various connections, some of them are a stretch, and others are more intuitive.

In describing their connections it was communicated that some participants were seeking tangible manifestations of the characters, setting and other associations with the books. These persons were bringing part of *Twilight* to life by making efforts to meet Meyer or members of the cast. This group also attends events centered on *Twilight*.

Others would travel to locations from the book. Many participants reported looking to their own experience and personal surroundings to bring the characters and setting to life.

Subjects participating in the survey were chosen because they were already exhibiting examples of this behavior just by being in attendance where surveys were administered. Clearly, *Twilight* was important on some level to attendees and at two of the three events there would be a person, a tangible association with the book. At Comic Con, Meyer, Pattinson, Steward, and Lautner along with fellow actors were in attendance at Comic Con and participated in a panel with an open Q & A. There was also the promise of an autograph signing session. With the book signing/concert series in Seattle, Meyer would also be there along with one musician that had had songs that served as inspiration to Meyer in writing.

In designing the survey preparations to investigate motivations for attending these events were accounted for. Along with that, it was even anticipated that some attendees would have also trekked to settings from the book. Questions were written to inquire further into these efforts, but when coding the data other experiences or habits were volunteered that displayed this desire for tangible manifestations had a further reach than anticipate.

Questions originally intended to measure for events and locations were the following: “How far did you travel to this event?” “Does coming here make the characters more real to you?” “Have there been any other events for the books or for the movie that you have attended?” “Have you gone to any of the locations in the book like Forks or La Push?” “Or did you travel to the set of the film?” “Have you met any of the cast or Stephenie Meyer before?”

The objective was to see if these excursions were a priority or habitual of attendees. Distance traveled was hoped to be an indicator of commitment and effort, but in coding the data it was displayed that the question was not an adequate measure to prove that hypothesis. There were some who had traveled significant distances to each event; a limitation is that not everyone in attendance was surveyed at any event. Another short coming is that some attendees lived within hours of traveling distance to the event, it is impossible to know if they would have traveled further, this makes it difficult to determine motivations. Did proximity determine their decision to attend? Or was it motivated by their love of *Twilight*? It is reasonable to assume that is a combination of the two, there were those within traveling distance that indicated they would have “crossed oceans” to be there, but it is not sufficient to make an assertion. Fortunately, the open ended questions facilitated the revelation of other habits or connections that participants were making.

### *People*

It was a common finding to see that respondents saw themselves as one of the characters and related to them and their experience. Similarly an interesting development is that they have imposed the literary characters on people among their own acquaintance, or the other way around, where they are imposing a person from their acquaintance into their concept of a literary character from the book. Participants reported things like, “Oh I know a Jacob” or “I dated a guy that was just like Edward” or something like, “My friend is such an Alice!”



Another significant habit expressed by a group of surveyees is their tendency to impose their concept of the literary character on strangers. An example of this is, “Sometimes when I’m in a crowd I pick out people that remind me of the characters.” “Sometimes I see a person and I think things like, oh she looks like Alice.” Etc.

This active seeking is evidence of a strong level of engagement with the book and the characters in it. It goes beyond just reading and enjoying, or even relating to a character in a book. This is bringing life to the characters and finding a subject to embody the character; this implies that a strong attachment exists.

### *Locations*

Traveling to the location that provides the setting for a popular book is not necessarily an uncommon occurrence with any well liked book. Many people will go to estates used in filming Jane Austen films, or they will get their picture taken at platform 9 3/4s from *Harry Potter*. Of course, being the destination of any travels is an indication of popularity and an indicator of engagement.

The limitation is that this is not necessarily unique to the *Twilight* phenomenon. However, a distinction is that while often a picture in front of a location is an effect of proximity. In other words it may become a destination because you will be near that location in your travels anyway. Forks and La Push are not near anything of any significance in Washington State. It is over an hour drive and includes a ferry ride to get there from Seattle. In reading results it is indicated that the objective of a these trips to Forks are more of a mecca than an excursion motivated by proximity. It was easiest to measure the intent among those surveyed in Provo, UT as they were not really within

easy traveling distance of any location. A group reported that they had been to Forks and La Push, others reported that they would if they could and another group that they were planning their trip soon.

It is difficult to measure in the survey group at the book signing in Seattle as they were in closest proximity. A respondent revealed that they had planned for a group to go spend the night in Forks after the book signing in Seattle. Most people surveyed in Seattle reported that they had traveled to Forks and La Push. This group didn't seem to feel a need to go to any other locations like Jacksonville or Phoenix. They were satisfied with Forks.

Similarly, a significant number of those surveyed in San Diego at Comic Con reported that they had gone to Phoenix which is the city that Bella moved from in the beginning of *Twilight* and is also the location of the climax of the conflict in that book as well. One participant revealed that she and her friends "even went to the ballet studio". Unlike the group of surveyees in Seattle, there were groups that expressed a desire to go see Forks and others more specific plans to travel there in the near future.

One respondent communicated that not only had they gone to the two major towns that provided the setting of the book, however, I was surprised when this person said that they traveled to a location in Alaska that is just mentioned. No part of the book is actually set in Denali, Alaska, but this fan made the effort to go anyway.

Aside from traveling to specific locations participants spoke of the associations they make in their environment to what they sense is typical the setting of the book. "I think of *Twilight* whenever it rains" "I live in a place that's like Forks, lots of trees, very green." "We live in a small town like Forks where everyone knows each other."

### *Actors*

Only one of the events in which surveys were administered were the actors present. This event was Comic Con, where the actors for Bella, Edward, Jacob and the actors playing the villains were present. Meyer and the director of the film, Catherine Hardwicke was also present. As mentioned before it was advertised that the actors would be available for an autograph signing. Unfortunately for fans, that was canceled as organizers realized they had grossly underestimated that number of fans that were there at Comic Con for *Twilight*. There was the consolation, however, of the open Q & A.

For those who went to Comic Con they were there because they wanted to see the actors and potentially have the chance to meet them. When responding to the question, “Does coming here make the characters more real to you?” They generally responded that it did, with the exception of a few that seemed confused by the question. This response that it did make the characters more real is in line with the observations of uncertainty reduction and is evidence that they are seeking tangible manifestations in their life of the fictional characters.

Also, referring back to the data of the acceptance of Rob Pattinson as adequate to portray Edward Cullen, the group of those surveyed at Comic Con had an interesting response in their acceptance of Pattinson. During the panel the director, Hardwicke told of Pattinson’s participation in the soundtrack for the film. It was revealed that Pattinson, like Edward plays the piano proficiently and composes his own music. Fans were ecstatic at this similarity. Familiarity was increased, many were warmed over by Pattinson thinking that he did embody some characteristics of Edward Cullen well

enough. A few were not impressed and had an adverse reaction. This group wrote the most about their thoughts on Pattinson, they shared of their transition, while others enthusiastically gushed “he is EDWARD!”

It is important to note that respondents reported finding these tangible manifestations in these various areas. They were actively incorporating the characters, and the setting into their lives in ways that had not been anticipated. Questions that generated this information were: “Have you ever imagined yourself as a character in the books?” “How do you keep the characters alive in your mind when you’re not reading the books?” These questions were not written in an effort to gain these insights, but fortunately the open ended nature facilitated them sharing that information and provided the evidence that fans are seeking.

#### *Integration of the characters into their life*

In observing the active nature in which fans are seeking out tangible manifestations it was observed that fans are integrating *Twilight* into their lives. Integration is looking to see in what ways participants are making the characters from the books a part of their daily life.

Integration happens in a variety of ways and many have been touched on already. These include relating to the experience or feelings of any given character, and seeking out tangible manifestations of characters and settings.

Questions designed to encourage reports of examples of integration in participants personal lives were: “Do you ever imagine your own adventures in Forks?” “Have you ever imagined yourself as a character in the books?” “Would you say that the Cullens or

the La Push boys or the Swans are a part of your life?” “How do you keep the characters alive in your mind when you’re not reading the books?”

As responses to these questions were being coded, as with frequency measures, there was a level of self monitoring perceived to be taking place in the responses. The detection lay in the inconsistency of their responses. For those reporting inconsistently, these were established by changes in the level of enthusiasm. As some participants reported with marked enthusiasm and then later responded to more probing questions concerning frequency or integration and then they would tone down their enthusiasm and appear disinterested. It was most noticeable when they would waiver in either section, having enthusiasm in communicating their habits of frequency and then toning down their enthusiasm when it came to questions of integration. Or the same could be true the other way around, where they would appear disinterested in reporting frequency but not when expressing the ways they integrate *Twilight* into their lives. This observation is in contrast to the very small group among surveys from all three events in which they lacked enthusiasm in any point of the survey and didn’t appear to invest or relate to the characters.

This particular analysis is different from the others in that there were not necessarily groups of participants that were integrating the characters into their lives. This particular analysis proved to have the most individualistic methods. The most common manner of integrating the characters into their lives was done by participants who reported “finding characters in the crowd” that look like the literary characters. Or it can extend to associating some of their friends with the literary characters, or current and former love interests from their own personal life.

It may go beyond associations with people though, some participants reported that they feel like they are in the books, "...whenever it rains" or when they are in a "really green area". Some have even taken to naming their pets after the names of the Cullen's. In fact there is a house of chickens named for each member of the Cullen family.

An interesting outlier was a participant who said that she was reminded of the books when she drives her "Volvo" to her school on "Isabella Rd" etc. This level of engagement is unique to the *Twilight* phenomenon. Another distinct integration was reported by a girl who said that she liked ride her four wheeler because when she rides she "feels like a werewolf" and also when she rides in the forest. It is assumed that she is relating to the rush of adrenaline that comes with that speed.

From the data it reveals a dynamic of the nature of the *Twilight* phenomenon in that reading about the characters, their relationships, their personal development, their challenges, their triumphs is not enough. Fans revealed that they were so engaged in this world that they longed to be a part of it, and would subsequently find ways to bring it to life in the small ways that they could manage.

#### *Creative outlets inspired by Twilight*

Another interesting nature of the *Twilight* phenomenon is found in the reports of inspiration for creative outlets of Twilighters. A margin of participants communicated that *Twilight* had inspired them in their own personal creative avenues or that they knew someone that had been inspired by them.

For many, the inspiration comes from Meyer, the author. There are stay-at-home Mothers who see Meyer as they do themselves and feel that they can share her

potential to do something significant with their time. In a few of the follow up interviews specifically, two interviewees revealed that they had an interest in writing and had begun their own personal efforts in writing.

Others have begun writing their own adventures in Forks for fan fiction. Fan fiction is built upon the setting, characters and context of the *Twilight* world. This has been done with *Harry Potter* before and many surveyees reported that they like to write their own fan fiction for *Twilight*.

At Comic Con participants spoke of the podcasts that they listen to online to “keep the characters alive in their minds when you’re not reading”. A band was referred to which calls itself the Bella Cullen Project. Some have taken to writing songs about *Twilight*. YouTube is well stocked with songs written specifically about *Twilight*. There are compositions of what some imagine Bella’s lullaby to sound like.

For many find inspiration from the *Twilight* books, and fans speak of emulating characteristics they admire in the literary characters of the books. It is interesting to see that it goes further to inspire fans in their own personal creative outlets. This is a reflection of a form of integration as well and displays a level of engagement that is characteristic of parasocial behavior.

#### *Frequency of behavior focused on Twilight*

Frequency is another category that is referring to the amount of time participants are spending occupied with *Twilight* on some level. Time spent is measured dependent

on what scale the surveyee places themselves on: hours per day, hours or days per week, per month, etc. It is dependent on what information they volunteer.

It is referring to the number of times a day they are on the internet looking up fan sites, information on the actors cast for the movie, chatting with friends, reading, daydreaming. Virtually any activity that is centered on *Twilight* is subject to be measured.

Several questions were designed to measure the amount of time invested in thinking about *Twilight*. This extended to various mediums such as daydreaming, chatting, reading, internet surfing i.e. fan sites, blogs and websites. Questions asked focused toward this measure were: “How much time do you spend thinking about the characters in these books?” “Do you ever imagine your own adventures in Forks?” “Have you ever imagined yourself as a character in the books?” “How do you keep the characters alive in your mind when you’re not reading the books?” “Are you a member of any online fan bases?” “How often do you check Stephenie Meyer’s website for updates?” “What else do you do to keep updated on the books and the movie?” “Do you know much about (the actor playing your favorite character)?”

A shortcoming and strength of the survey lies in the openendedness of the questions. It gives room for respondents to elaborate as much as information as they feel inclined to share. However, the questions are not necessarily focused enough to get the information desired, they might leave something out because they have not been guided well enough to solicit that information. For example, the questions, “Are you a member of any online fan bases?” or “How often do you check Stephenie Meyer’s website for updates?” do not indicate to the participant that information about any other Google



searches or online discussion boards or any other venue for research or discussion might be welcome. Also, there are not any questions that would lead a participant to tell of the amount of time they spend discussing *Twilight* with their friends and acquaintances. Fortunately, Twilighters volunteered plenty of information, but it does make it harder to categorize.

As the coding process was taking place there were several mediums reported in the results consistently. These recurring themes were the following: reading, thinking, internet surfing, and discussion. Reading includes the time spent reading and re-reading the books. Thinking includes daydreaming, and imaging potential stories for the literary characters. Internet Surfing consists of all searches and blogs participated in by Twilighters. That also includes time spent on fan sites and Meyer's website. Discussion encompasses all forums of discussing *Twilight*, whether it is with a random stranger, a close acquaintance, or a fellow online Twilighter.

While coding the data it became clear that some respondents were self-monitoring in their answer of the questions. They evidently feared the appearance of being too consumed with *Twilight*, especially as the questions were encouraging them to quantify their fixation. In some respondents it was fairly easy to detect. Detection was based off the consistency of the actors and their responses to interrogative questions.

### *Reading*

Reading was an interesting response. Participants used the amount of time they spent reading to either to emphasize their fixation with *Twilight* or, on the other hand other participants used the amount of time they spent reading the books as a means to

place a cap on the time they spend thinking of *Twilight*. The first positive response is heard in the following example: when responding to the question asking, “How do you keep the characters alive in your mind when you’re not reading the books?” Ironically, even though this contradicts the question, several answered that they would, “re-read the books”. A response intending to put a cap on the amount of time they spend thinking of *Twilight* was given in response to the same question, “Nothing, I only think about them when reading.”

Measuring the time spent reading the books was done with the intention to measure repeat readers. One of the interviewees reported that she lost count of how many times she had read the *Twilight* books in the last year, she did estimate over twenty times. Keep in mind she meant the series. It is a reflection of their involvement in the novels that they keep immersing themselves in that world, implying that they miss the characters when they are not reading.

### *Thinking*

Several questions in the survey were written with the intention of encouraging participants to share how much their thoughts were focused on *Twilight*. These questions were those that asked about daydreaming, imagining their own adventures in Forks, thinking about the characters, etc.

This particular category “thinking” was of the greatest significance to the study. Unfortunately, while coding, it was observed that this section had the highest level of perceived self-monitoring. While participants may have begun their survey readily choosing their favorite characters and describing the relationships they would desire to

have with them, some curbed their enthusiasm as they began to speak of how much time they spent “thinking” about the characters, or “imagining” etc. Some would report very shortly, “I don’t” “I’m not a weirdo”. It is likely that they perceived as the objective of the measurement and did not wish to appear too invested. This is a reflection of perceived social norms that they felt the need to adhere to even with complete anonymity. Later in the survey inconsistencies would arise when some of these same respondents would report utilizing a number of various fan sites, this contradicts their earlier claim that they do not “think” about the characters.

An interesting group of participants were more candid with the information they volunteered. What is interesting about this particular group is that they were self monitoring themselves as well. They expressed awareness that the time they spent “thinking” about the characters was not socially acceptable. Examples of this sort of report would be the following, “24/7 (not joking)” or “too much time I’m sure” etc. Perhaps this group was liberated by the anonymity, or they are less bound by social expectations.

Majority of respondents were eager and willing to express their personal investment in *Twilight*. This group readily elaborated on how much time they spend thinking about all things *Twilight*, the characters, the setting, imagining their own adventures in Forks, or anything related.

### *Internet Surfing*

A Google search for *Twilight* fan sites conducted on February 18, 2009 reported 6,660,000 results. Searching the number of groups on facebook the same day reported

over 500 groups devoted to *Twilight*. Obviously, there is an adequate supply for any *Twilight* fan to meet their need for information about *Twilight*, or to discuss *Twilight*.

These questions were, as mentioned above, at times reported in contradiction with the “thinking” questions. It is fortunate for the study that participants did not appear to feel as embarrassed or threatened by discussing their fan site affiliations. As mentioned above there are many obscure options for fans to express their love of *Twilight* and to keep updated on any news, however, there were a few fan sites that were repeatedly frequented by participants.

For the group that calls themselves *Twilight* Moms, that is because they have their own website. This website has several different headings for: news, Stephenie’s books, *Twilight*MOMS, uncategorized, and Breaking Dawn Quote of the Day. It has links to all news related to *Twilight* films, books, anything from the media. There are interview videos uploaded on the site.

*Twilight*teens was another popular website. This website has a forum along with *Twilight* news articles. There is also a role play forum as well for the *Twilight* characters. There are heading for: home, about, characters, t-shirts, contests, news, contact, and photo galleries.

Meyer’s website also was reported as a being checked by many on a daily basis. It is perhaps the most informative of the *Twilight* website, it has information that comes directly from Meyer, it offers all the inside information that she has access to. It always posts links to articles, interviews or any other newsworthy *Twilight* features available on line. There are many pages for her site: Home, Bio, *Twilight* Series, The Host, Other Projects, Calendar, Movies, Books and Gear. The home page offers news about any of

Meyer's work or anything associated with it. On occasion, Meyer will post a note to the home page as well. On the Bio page, Meyer offers general personal information about herself and her professional life as well. The *Twilight* Series page is broken down by each book offering: FAQ, Movie, Reviews, Playlist, Forks, Cullen Cars, Outtakes, International information.

From the data the fan site with the highest traffic is the *Twilight* Lexicon. The main appeal for the *Twilight* Lexicon is perhaps the discussion forums. In the forums a member can pose questions from different books and anyone can choose to respond. The Lexicon also provides links to other *Twilight* inspired projects, whether those be fanfiction, or bands inspired by the books.

Participants' responses to open ended questions revealed significant indicators of parasocial interaction. Participants were reporting different levels of attraction with various characters from the book. As they were revealing their sources of attraction to these characters, many participants were reporting that they were able to relate to the characters. Participants also expressed desired relationships with their favorite literary characters and later reported the degree to which they accepted the actor cast to embody their favorite literary character.

Other interesting patterns found in the data were an inclination to seek out tangible manifestations of the book in their lives. In a similar vein they reported integrating the characters or the setting into their daily life. Some had been inspired in their individual creative outlets, but many reported frequently participating in behavior that was centered on anything related to *Twilight*.

## THEORETICAL CONNECTIONS

As these different patterns have emerged in the data, there are behaviors exhibited that have a common thread which are rooted in theory. Of course in looking at media consumption through the lens of motivations and behaviors, uses and gratifications theory is an applicable theory. Now that the data has had the opportunity to speak, behaviors indicative of parasocial interaction have been displayed in many of the emergent categories, this study has proven to have theoretical connections in media effects: uses and gratifications theory and parasocial interaction theory.

Parasocial relationships are one-sided relationships formed by media consumers to those personas viewed through mediated experience. A bond of intimacy is developed with media personalities in which the consumer shares mediated experiences and develops familiarity and predictability about a character or actor (Horton & Wohl, 1956, p. 26). Responses to this survey offer evidence that these relationships are contributing largely to the phenomenon.

The field of parasocial interaction is limited and still developing. The scope is continually expanding from looking just at the relationship of media consumer to TV personality, to the examination of romance novels (Burnett, 2000), to characters in role playing games (Lewis, 2007), to politicians (Hendrickson, 2007). Despite this expanse of scope it is still one-sided and it is mediated. Fortunately, the body of literature that exists does include most of the mediums examined in this study. While, these novels might extend to more than just the romance genre, they are certainly popular for the romance element in them. Burnett's work offers a justification for looking at the novels as a

medium, while more traditional parasocial research justifies looking at the relationships formed to the actors.

Parasocial relationships are categorized as a media effect; however there is another level of this effect that is being sought after in the media through the use of parasocial relationships. In an article written by Moyer-Gus, the persuasive effects of education-entertainment are discussed. First it writes of the potential for reactance and then uses a theoretical framework to discuss the potential for counteracting these reactance tendencies (Moyer-Gus, 2008). They refer to PSI often in their propositions as a means to counteract the natural tendencies of reactance.

Parasocial theory has its origins in the field of psychology and many researchers maintain that focus for their exploration of this media effect. Different studies have targeted different groups from the lonely, to young females, to those with low self-esteem. Many of them are working to find characteristics that are indicative of those media consumers with an increased disposition to form these parasocial relationships. The general demographic of *Twilight* fans meet some of the psychological predictors, which is interesting to note. Young females are more prone to form parasocial relationships. Of course, in this survey no personal information was collected so it is impossible to measure for these predictors.

Studies have shown that parasocial interaction is a functional alternative to interpersonal relationships, particularly cultivated by the lonely and the elderly. This was indicated in the results of a study, conducted specifically to examine this group, the lonely and the elderly. This was done by looking at the parasocial interaction scale,

perceived importance, interpersonal attraction scale, and looking at the length of time subjects viewed their favorite performer (Wang, & Fink, & Cai, 2008).

Researchers found that parasocial interaction is related strongly to social and task attraction towards the media personality and to importance of relationship development with the personality. Media relationship can be seen as functional alternatives to interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal and mediated relationships appear to follow a similar process of development. Results confirm the importance of social attraction, and attraction often results from experiencing rewarding interaction with others. Viewers are more interested in TV personalities who are attractive social or work partners than the physically attractive. Relationship development with a media persona is not a matter of sheer exposure duration, but a function of attraction that leads to parasocial interaction (Rubin & McHugh, 1987). The three levels of attraction discussed in the results section are indicative of parasocial relationships. The existence of these attractions is evidence that parasocial interaction is happening within the *Twilight* phenomena.

Wang, Fink, and Cai (2008) investigated how unfulfilled interpersonal needs are met by mediated communication, specifically through parasocial interaction. Emotional (family and romantic), social, chronic, situational, and transient loneliness are differentiated. Different types of loneliness are expected to predict different uses of parasocial interaction, with gender serving as a moderator of these effects. As the group of participants for this study was almost 100% female, it makes it difficult to make assumptions about the different levels of interaction that are happening. However, the overwhelming number of women as opposed to men in attendance and participation is an



indicator that the appeal is stronger for women than it is for men. At least it is an indication that they are engaging with either the characters, actors, or author more so than men, which may be rooted in a predisposition that is gender related.

These same researchers found that social loneliness was negatively related to the use of parasocial interaction (Wang & Fink & Cai, 2008). However they did find that gender interacted with family, romantic, and chronic loneliness in predicting parasocial interaction. For women, greater family loneliness served as a predictor of greater parasocial interaction, whereas for men the effect was the opposite. They found genders to again have opposite reactions when exploring greater chronic loneliness which led to more parasocial interaction for men, and for women the effect was negative. Finally, for men, greater romantic loneliness was associated with less parasocial interaction, whereas for women this relationship was slightly positive. They used the terms of the uses and gratifications perspective to interpret the findings. This might lead to an increase in reading or viewing to fill a void, which would be in line with the results of the surveys.

Adult attachment style was found to be predictive of interpersonal engagement with fictional media personas in ways that are congruent to patterns that emerge in real life relationships. In order to measure these attachments, researchers administered a questionnaire study. Results indicated that subjects preoccupied attachment style among college women with increased idealization of a favorite female character's behavior and physical appearance. Also, these subjects displayed and acted upon a desire to look like a favorite female character (Greenwood & Pietromonaco & Long, 2008). This may explain why so many of the respondents reported Alice or Bella as being their favorite character,

and why they focused on relatability of a chosen character. It implies that they may have been reading and engaging based on different motives than those forming romantic attachments.

The objective of another study was to consider the effect that the perceived relationship with a celebrity would have on a person with a low self-esteem. Researchers assumed that the lack of rejection indicative of a one-sided relationship with a celebrity would be beneficial for those persons with low self-esteem (Derrick, & Gabriel, & Tippin, 2008). It was also expected that for those persons with low self-esteem that are forming attachments to celebrities that these persons would be drawn to celebrities in which they felt they could identify. This theory refers to the implications of finding ones ideal self in a celebrity and celebrating them for embodying their ideal self. Though, these participants were able to identify with a celebrity, those who engaged in parasocial relationships were not expected to attain the same benefits of those engaging in real relationships, despite low self-esteem (Greenwood, & Pietromonaco, & Long, 2008).

Thinking about their favorite celebrities made participants feel more similar to those celebrities that, in turn, made them feel more similar to their ideal selves. Researchers concluded from their results that the current research demonstrates that parasocial relationships can have self-enhancing benefits for low self-esteem people that they do not receive in real relationships (Greenwood, & Pietromonaco, & Long, 2008).

Greenwood (2008), also worked to investigate psychological predictors of media preferences by examining various indicators of psychosocial functioning: self esteem,

social anxiety, attachment anxiety/avoidance, negative affect, effortful control. This was done within the context of two specific forms of media involvement. The two were parasocial interaction with media characters and transportation into media programs.

Tangibility of parasocial relationships to the media consumers that are viewing them has been investigated by several researchers. They have approached this question of tangibility through different research questions. One research question is searching for a correlation of fondness of a character and their level tangibility. There is also a group that is looking at this tangibility and associating that with an affinity for celebrity gossip. One other example of this vein of research is the study which examines the effect of a break up of the parasocial and the level that this break up is internalized by a media consumer.

Gardner (2008) designed a study with the intent to determine the correlation between fondnesses, or love felt toward favorite television characters as opposed to other characters within the same context. Researchers were looking to find that the strength of an attachment to a character would increase the perception of their reality to the viewer. Researchers conducted two studies to measure this. They named a favorite television character and the show that character was in. Then they nominated a secondary character from the same show. Some participants were given their survey directed to their feelings about their favorite character and some were given a survey focused on the secondary character.

The second study was based on the premise that the presence of other people effect, (parallel effects), our behavior. Researchers wanted to explore this idea

experimenting with the images of favorite and secondary characters from TV shows. The results found that the level of affection of a perceiver for a target played a role in anthropomorphism. Fictional characters whether they were represented as a cartoon or by an actor were experienced more real to the extent that they were liked (Gardner, 2008).

With a widespread interest in celebrity gossip, De Backer and colleagues, Neilssen and Vyncke and Braeckman and McAndrew, (2007) conducted a study to find sources of motivation. The Parasocial Hypothesis sees celebrity gossip as a way in which they perceive a celebrity to be within their own personal social network. In examining attachments with the actors, this was perception was not observed in the surveys. The questions of the survey did not solicit this response, however, they did report that they felt like they would get along with the actors.

There are also the studies that measure the degree to which parasocial relationships have been formed in a particular media outlet to a particular group of media consumers. Rubin & Pearse (1990) took 328 daytime soap opera viewers and measured for: the role of motives, attitudes, and audience activity in explaining the affective, cognitive, and behavioral involvement. The role of the media consumer was examined through a uses and gratifications lens but the measure of degree of involvement was more particularly focusing on parasocial behaviors.

In their results they found with the exception of viewing to pass the time, more salient viewing motivations, perceived realism, viewing intention, and attention were associated with parasocial interaction. The second pattern was that viewing served as a

social utility (Rubin & Pearse, 1987). This second pattern was not discussed in the results of the constructs of the *Twilight* phenomena, but is in the discussion section. There were groups of participants that communicated they were present at events for social purposes. Again, the questions in the survey did not solicit responses that would reveal this information. The survey had limitations.

Limitations also exist within the field of study for parasocial relationships and interaction. It has spread to discuss media effects and psychological factors. It has also investigated relevant applications for the benefits and uses of parasocial relationships. The body of literature does not exclusively discuss all meanings constructed in this study examining the *Twilight* phenomenon.

Within the body of literature there has been enough research to establish definitions and standards for parasocial behavior. From the review of literature there are resemblances found in the behavior exhibited by *Twilight* fans. However, there are meanings that should be added to the standards of parasocial interaction. I propose that these standards include the practice of integrating characters or actors into an individual's life. This would also include the seeking out of tangible manifestations of characters, settings or actors in an individual's life. Along with this idea of integration and seeking out tangible manifestations is also the creative inspiration that comes from characters and actors and the author as demonstrated in the results. When a reader or viewer participates in writing literature or music, painting or any other outlet based on what they have consumed in the media, this is a form of parasocial interaction.

Observations made during the process of data collection are shared in the discussion section. Based on the observations made by myself, the researcher, another contribution to parasocial theory will be made. This observation is that many *Twilight* fans were found to be imposing their existing parasocial relationships formed to the literary characters onto the actors cast to portray them. This will be elaborated on in the next section.

## DISCUSSION

In observing attendees at events and conversing with them general observations were made by the researcher. These general observations held their own patterns but are not represented in the survey or interview responses. These observations add to the discussion of meaning sought after in research question 1. What meanings are constructed within the social phenomenon of *Twilight*? In the following discussion, this question will be answered in addition to those meanings recognized from the body of surveys which were discussed in the results chapter.

During the data collection process, it was evident that fans of *Twilight* at these respective events love to talk about *Twilight*. It was fortunate for the research process as participants did not require great efforts of persuasion for participation in the study. Unfortunately, a limitation of the study is that the questions were not tailored to ask specifically how much of their time participants spend discussing *Twilight*.

It was information that was volunteered by many of the surveyees and it was also observed in conversation of the researcher and the participant. Many reported that they talked about *Twilight* with their friends every time that they got together. For *Twilight* Moms they had to set aside part of their day and budget the time for it, otherwise their duties would go neglected. For those participants who were younger and utilized the many different technologies for communication, they reported that they were able to chat with their friends about *Twilight* constantly.

For some participants they reported that their interpersonal conversations were the only medium they used to keep up to date on all things *Twilight*. There was usually a

source, or an opinion leader for a group that would serve as a reference for all the new news.

It is interesting to note that surveyees reported high frequency of conversations centered around *Twilight*. However, in interviews conducted later, participants elaborated that the frequency of these conversations died down. There was a pattern of peaks and valleys. Prior to the release of the final book participants were so full of excitement and were so consumed with their excitement they found themselves discussing it frequently. Even after its release it the developments and conclusion of the final book had to be discussed. Then there was a lull. Reportedly, there was a group of fans that were disappointed by the last book. For this reason their passion tamed. For a small group, their interest level diminished.

Another peak was reported to surround the release of the film adaptation of *Twilight*, this gave fans something to discuss. With each trailer release, or each new clip shown from the movie, hours of watching, re- watching and discussion followed widely among participants. Of course they would discuss the potential of the movie, how they felt about the actors, the setting they were using and how promising it looked. How it would compare to the book or the lack of ability to even compare was a concern for many, reportedly.

### *Levels of engagement*

In conversing with participants at events it provided context to the experience of the attendees. The survey itself did not ask questions that asked about motivations for coming to an event. These questions also were remiss in asking who they came with to



an event. While seeking out the participants and asking for their participation an exchange always occurred. Some participants were more eager to converse than others, which imply some things about their level of engagement.

At Comic Con the majority of the surveys were conducted after the panel had taken place. A few participants had been interviewed in line before the panel, but the rest were sought out in the hallway outside of the exhibit hall with all of the booths. In targeting *Twilighters*, there was a degree of profiling that occurred. If there was a group made up mostly of girls they were approached and asked, “Are you by any chance here for *Twilight*?” Researchers were always successful in targeting *Twilighters*, especially as many of them were wearing hand made *Twilight* t-shirts. Most often the group would enthusiastically respond, “yes!” some participants were a little hesitant and questioning in their response, implying a why with their yes.

Once a “yes” was given then the dialogue usually proceeded with the following questions, “what did you think?” and then the question, “would you be willing to take a survey about *Twilight*?” most were more than happy to, others were tired and communicated a mild reluctance in their body language. On occasion some would say, “What if I haven’t read the books?” or they might say, “I’m just here with her. I haven’t read the books.” Or “I’m just here with her I’m not obsessed.”

Festivities for the midnight release of *Breaking Dawn*, the last of the *Twilight* series began at six on the August 1, 2008, at the Provo Borders location. There they gave wristbands to assign your place in line. There were those who camped out days in advance to get their place at the beginning of the line. For their efforts, the first one hundred persons in line were targeted for participating in the survey. These persons were

approached at about 11:30 at night. Many of them had been in line for a while and were really exhausted. The time had an interesting effect among those approached for the survey. When approaching potential participants they were not recruited individually. In a general invitation the request was made, “Hey, I was just wondering if while you’re waiting if you might be willing to participate in a survey about *Twilight*?” Most were willing, some would ask, “What it was for?” some declined because they were too tired. However, the majority were so enthusiastic about the book and *Twilight* in general that not only were they willing to take the survey but they would gush more about their favorite characters, what they thought was going to happen in the next book or their feelings that they had toward the actors.

Seattle was the least successful event for the administration and collection of surveys. At previous events the greatest success was found while targeting attendees waiting in line. It was more efficient in approaching participants and tracking surveys. Unfortunately, the line to enter the event was admitted into the event sooner than anticipated and surveys had already been administered so these surveys got rushed and not finished. The approach to participants was much the same as at other events, however there was one interesting difference. Researchers were being sought out and surveys requested, although another interesting detail was that some participants would ask, “Can I keep this?” and when they were told that the survey needed to be returned in a few instances they handed back the survey and said, “Then I don’t want to take it.”

While the information volunteered in conversations at the time of the administration of the survey was not a formal part of the data collection, it revealed interesting insights about attendees. The context of attendees and their attitudes toward

the event revealed different motivations and levels of engagement that could be broken down into three tiers.

### *Social*

“I’m just here with her.” “They made me come,” are responses that were indicative of social motivation. They were not there for *Twilight*. It was the general assumption of the researcher that this would be the case with all attendees. It proved to be a false assumption.

It is of course possible for these persons to have been exerting some self monitoring as they were around their friends, maybe they do not wish to present themselves as invested as they are. Even with that possibility, it is reasonable to take their word on it. As some of them had not even read the books but were in attendance this does validate that they were in attendance to be with friends, or with their significant other, or to act as a chaperone. Girlfriends had dragged their boyfriends along with them and mothers, fathers and grandparents were indulging an obsessive habit and friends were there because of moral support, or to just get in on the action. All of these attendees had social motivations.

### *Hobby*

“What if I’m not obsessed?” was a clarification sought more often than was expected. Researchers to a degree made the generalization that anyone who attended these events would be a dedicated fan of *Twilight*. But as they were not engaging to the characters deeply, they were on a different tier. For those who were there to just

participate, and take it all in, they were there for a similar reason to the social group.

These attendees read the books and were entertained by them to the point that they would like to discuss it with their friends and check for updates, but they were maintaining a distance from the world of *Twilight*.

### *Invested*

“Of course, I love *Twilight*” or “Well so long as I can talk about Edward.” For the rest of the attendees they were at any of the three events because of a love of *Twilight*, the books, the characters, vampires, any or all of it. It wasn’t enough for them to answer the questions on the survey and then submit it. These women would talk about *Twilight* and their responses as they were filling them out, then afterward they had to know what the survey was designed for. Many of them would ask when the results would be made available so that they could read them.

These attendees were the reason that anyone was in attendance. This was the group that researchers anticipated finding at the events. These women exhibit the behaviors and patterns discussed in the results section. Whether they did not want to go alone, or they were just so invested that they had to drag others along with them, they were invested and they are the reason that any of the other attendees, social and hobby bothered to attend as well.

Imposition of parasocial relationships from literary character to actor

Prior to the research design of this project, from personal experience in conversations about *Twilight* and also, the response to the casting and filming of *Twilight* it seemed that there was something unique taking place. Fans were forming strong

attachments to the actors before they saw them embody the characters. Intrigued this lead to the viewing of interviews with the cast members that were starting to report that fans were already giving them the “Cullen” treatment, the Cullens are the literary characters.

At this point there was sufficient evidence that parasocial relationships might be forming with the actors, clearly they had been formed with the literary characters. As the fans were treating the actors as if they were the Cullens the theory was developing that perhaps people were imposing the parasocial relationships that they had formed with the literary characters onto the actors that were cast to portray them in the film adaptation.

In the actual data collection process, attachments were observed that supported this theory. The exhibit hall H at the San Diego was full of *Twilight* fans that screamed virtually through the entire panel, especially anytime that Rob Pattinson or Taylor Lautner spoke. During the open q & a two girls began their question by saying something to the effect of ‘Rob I just had to come up with an excuse to talk to you...’ One woman got up and introduced herself as a *Twilight* Mom that was there with her teenage daughter and then proceeded to ask, “Rob and Taylor we all need to know, boxers or briefs?” Clearly, these women were to some degree imposing the attachments formed to Edward and Jacob and imposing those on Rob and Taylor.

In interviews some of the actors have indicated that they have perceived that the strong response that fans are having to them. They have realized that the strong attachments are a reflection of their love of the literary characters. In one interview Rob Pattinson said of fans, “There appears to be a disconnect....”

A week prior to the release of the film *Twilight* key actors from the cast toured the country visiting malls for autograph signings. An attempt was made to do data collection at the Denver signing with Lautner, Lefevre, and Gathegi. The mall had a policy against surveys, so the only means of data collection was making observations and recording the reaction from the crowd and conversations with attendees. One middle aged woman said of her experience at the signing, “It’s totally worth it, Jacob looked so good tonight, I’m usually an Edward girl but Jacob looked so good tonight, I will definitely be dreaming of him tonight.” Once the trio of actors took the stage for a Q & A they were inaudible over the relentless screaming of the crowd.

With these personal experiences and observations at events and reports from the actors, there is evidence to support the theory that *Twilight* fans are imposing the attachments they have formed with the literary characters to the actors. Meaning that they are associating the same feelings and attitudes they hold for the literary character and holding the actor to the same feelings, attitudes and expectations.

Participants offered context of their affinity for the books when they were asked to participate in a survey. Some expressed hesitancy as they didn’t feel qualified, or others warmly agreed to participate in anything that would let them talk about *Twilight*. These responses were consistent enough to lead to different categorizations of motivations to be at the event. These motives were founded in being social, having it as a hobby, but the majority of participants and attendees are invested in the books and the characters. Also, in both their verbal and written responses, participants were indicating that they were imposing the relationships they had developed toward the literary

characters and putting those onto the actors who were cast to play those same characters in the film.

## CONCLUSION

### *Summary*

An exploration of the *Twilight* phenomenon was undertaken. The exploration took place at three events with surveys and one event limited to observation. Researchers spoke with hundreds of *Twilight* fans at the event along with a few of the central figures. At the book signing in Seattle, when told that a thesis was being written on her fans, Meyer replied, “Oh that should be interesting.” In Denver at the *Twilight* Talent Tour, Lefevre after signing hundreds of autographs said, “We’re going on fan energy now, they keep us pumped!”

Surveys were distributed at events focused on *Twilight*. The purpose of these surveys was to explore the *Twilight* phenomenon. The questions for the survey were written through the lens of uses and gratifications and more specifically, parasocial interaction. Parasocial interaction refers to the one-sided relationship that a media consumer can form toward any persona in the media.

In a review of the existing literature of parasocial interaction, it was shown that this field is still growing and the standards for this construct are being formed. Within the literature psychological roots were examined as predictors of persons with a disposition to form parasocial relationships. Self-esteem was one particular area of study. It was also utilized for a more general media effect in that parasocial relationships were utilized to generate trust or acceptance from media consumers. There were also the areas of application, in which researchers measured to what degree parasocial interaction was taking place in specific circumstances, ie, romance novels, role play, etc.



In coding and analyzing the surveys and follow up interviews there were blank number of patterns that were most prevalent in the data. There were the three levels of parasocial attraction: social, physical and task. Also, there was relatibility to the literary characters, the actors and to the author Meyer. Next there was acceptance of an actor portraying a favorite character and the correlation with the type of relationship desired to have toward the favorite character. Uncertainty reduction was sought out for the literary characters, the actors and Meyer. Twilighters were also expressing that they were seeking out tangible manifestations of the characters in the books, as well as integrating the characters into their lives. A small group of fans told of their respective creative outlets that had been inspired by *Twilight* or by Meyer. Finally, research measured the frequency of behavior focused *Twilight*.

### *Limitations*

There were some limitations of the study in the coding. One particular problem was that of consistency. The first few questions on the survey ask who is the participants' favorite character was and then later it asks who they would be romantically involved with. For the most part it was detectable when they made the switch as the change usually went from discussing a male character to a female character.

Another limitation exists in the measuring of relatibility to the actors. The question does not solicit that information directly. Prior to that question the survey probes to see the level of familiarity that the readers have with the actor. "Do you know much about (the actor playing your favorite character)? Or "Do you think (the actor

playing your favorite character) can become (your favorite character)?" There data emerged; it was not designed to acquire it.

The same limitation exists in measuring relatability of readers to the author Meyer. The questions were slightly different, "Do you think you would get along with Stephenie Meyer?" but it that question was preceded by "Do you feel like you know Stephenie Meyer now that you've read so many of her works?" Again, responses volunteered evidence of relatability.

A shortcoming and a strength of the survey lies in the openendedness of the questions. This openendedness gives room for respondents to elaborate as much as information as they feel inclined to share. Unfortunately, the questions are not necessarily focused to get the information desired. If not prompted to volunteer some integration or creative outlet, etc, a participant might exhibit that behavior but not report it. Fortunately, *Twilighters* volunteered plenty of information, but it does make it harder to categorize.

There are correlations reported in this analysis, however they are not sufficient to determine causality. Also, it is a limitation in not knowing to what degree these relationships are unique to the *Twilight* phenomenon. Obviously they are true of the *Twilight* phenomenon, but it is not a comparative study. It does not necessarily give this phenomenon an identity that stands apart from another widely popular series such as Harry Potter.

### *Further Research*

A suggestion for future study would be to look at comparative phenomenon's, such as *Harry Potter* or *Lord of the Rings*. This would add to the examination of the *Twilight* phenomenon in seeing what ways it is distinguished from other popular literary works turned to film. This study offers a good starting point for other, more specific queries, which would require quantitative methods and statistical analysis.

From the responses to the surveys administered, as well as the interviews conducted there is evidence that those *Twilighters* are exhibiting parasocial behavior indicative of parasocial relationships. There of course different levels of this interaction. The first group of participants, the lowest level is those who were in attendance just to be engaged in what their friends were doing, almost like moral support, but more for the experience. The next level is that of a hobby, it is something fun for a group of women to talk about and something they can get into and discuss. For others the ultimate level is attained, they are engaging in parasocial behaviors indicative of an existing relationship.

Patterns from the surveys reveal an interesting correlation that is in contradiction with previous parasocial studies. In this study the results indicate that the narrative of these books is a contributing factor to fans developing such a strong attachment to the characters. Previous parasocial studies indicate that parasocial relationships were more likely to be cultivated when they were shared in third person. It would be interesting to measure for this specific correlation in a future study.



## APPENDIX A: SURVEY

**They will be asked any of the following questions:**

Which of the characters is your favorite?

Why is that your favorite character?

How much do you feel you can relate to the experience of (character)?

Are there any characters that you would like to be friends with?

If you were a character in the book, who would you be romantically involved with?

How much time do you spend thinking about the characters in these books?

Do you ever imagine your own adventures in Forks?

Have you ever imagined yourself as a character in the books?

Would you say that the Cullens or the La Push boys or the Swans are a part of your life?

How do you keep the characters alive in your mind when you're not reading the books?

How far did you travel to attend this event?

What are your feelings about the making of the movie?

How well do you think the movie was cast?

What do you think about the actor playing your favorite character?

Are they much like what you had imagined?

What do you think of the trailer and the movie clip they have shown?

Are you a member of any online fan bases?

Does coming here make the characters more real to you?

How often do you check Stephanie Meyer's website for updates?

What else do you look at to keep updated on the books and the movie?

Which do you think you will prefer the book or the movie?

Have there been any other events for the books or for the movie that you have attended?

Have you gone to any of the locations in the book like Forks or La Push?

Or did you travel to the set of the film?

Do you think ( actor) can become (your fav character)?

Do you know much about (actor)?

Do you think you would get along with (actor)?

Have you met any of the cast or Stephanie Meyer before?

Do you feel like you know Stephanie Meyer now that you've read so many of her works?

Do you think you would get along with Stephanie Meyer?

## APPENIDIX B: FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW

### Interview Questions

Tell me what draws you to the Twilight series.

How often do you find yourself seeking out people, places or other tangible associations tot the books and in what ways?

Can you tell me about the amount of time you spend thinking of all things Twilight?  
(This would include, internet surfing, daydreaming, reading, discussing, etc)

When you are reading or watching Twilight, do you connect to the characters and in what ways do you connect? (ie, friendship, attraction, admiration, etc.)

What are your feelings about the film adaptation of Twilight?

Throughout the research people have been telling of being inspired by the Twilight series. Have you been inspired to create anything from your experience with Twilight? (ie, painting poetry, music, writing, etc)

## APPENDIX C: CODEBOOK

<b>Social Attraction</b>	<b>Physical Attraction</b>	<b>Task Attraction</b>
Personality traits: friendly, nice, smart, spunky, loyal, sincere, honorable, moral, etc.	Physical attraction: handsome, beautiful, dreamy, dazzling, hot, etc.	What they can do, abilities: Caring, compassionate, loving, see the future, read minds, control people's emotions, sacrifice, etc.

**How far did they travel to the event? What is the event? Do they volunteer any personal information?**

**Correlation between favorite character and relationship they would seek-friendship or platonic**

Who is their favorite character?

What is the dominant area of attraction that they are reporting?

When asked "Are there any characters that you would like to be friends with?" do they report their favorite character? Or When asked "If you were a character in the book, who would you be romantically involved with?" do they report their favorite character?

**Thoughts generated about the book or characters: frequency and type of relationship**

What type of relationship do they report desiring with their favorite character?

"How much time do you spend thinking about the characters in these books?" "Do you ever imagine your own adventures in Forks?" "Have you ever imagined yourself as a character in the books?" "Would you say that the Cullens or the La Push boys or the Swans are a part of your life?" "How do you keep the characters alive in your mind when you're not reading the books?" "Are you a member of any online fan bases?" "How often do you check Stephenie Meyer's website for updates?" "What else do you do to keep updated on the books and the movie?"

**Type of relationship desired with favorite character and their acceptance of the actor as portraying their favorite character**

What relationship do they report desiring with their favorite character?



“What are your feelings about the making of the movie?” “How well do you think the movie was cast?” “What do you think about the actor playing your favorite character?” “Are they much like you had imagined?” “What do you think of the trailer and the clip they have shown?” “Do you think the actor can become your favorite character?” “Do you know much about the actor?”

### **Are they integrating the characters into their life?**

“How much time do you spend thinking about the books?” “Do you ever imagine your adventures in Forks?” “Have you ever imagined yourself as a character in the books?” “Would you say that the Cullens or the La Push boys or the Swans are a part of your life?” “How do you keep the characters alive in your mind when you’re not reading the books?” “Does coming here make the characters more real to you”

### **Correlation between the type of relationship desired and their acquired knowledge of the actor**

What is the type of relationship reported with the favorite character?

“Do you know much about the actor?” “Do you think you would get along with the actor?”

### **Uncertainty Reduction. How much knowledge are they seeking :**

<b>Literary Character</b>	<b>Actor</b>	<b>Stephenie Meyer</b>
“Are you a member of any online fan bases?” “How often do you check Stephenie Meyer’s website for updates?” “What else do you do to keep updated on the books and the movie?”	“What else do you look at to keep updated on the books and the movie?” “Do you know much about the actor?”	“Are you a member of any online fan bases?” “How often do you check Stephenie Meyer’s website for updates?”

### **Friendship**

<b>Literary Character</b>	<b>Actor</b>	<b>Stephenie Meyer</b>
Social attraction “Are there any character that you would like to be friends with?”	“Do you think you would get along with the actor?”	“Do you would get along with Stephenie Meyer?”

### **Are they seeking tangible manifestations of the characters or setting of Twilight?**

“How much do you feel like you can relate to the experience of your favorite character?” “Do you ever imagine your own adventures in Forks?” “Have you ever imagined yourself

as a character in the books?” “Would you say that the Cullens or the La Push boys or the Swans are a part of your life?” “How do you keep the characters alive in your mind when you’re not reading the books?” “How far did you travel to attend this event?” “Does coming here make the characters more real to you?” “Have there been any other events for the books or for the movie that you have attended?” “Have you gone to any of the location in the book like Forks or La Push?” “Or did you travel to the set of the film?”

## APPENDIX D: CODESHEET

Social Attraction	Physical Attraction	Task Attraction

How far did they travel to the event? What is the event? Do they volunteer any personal information?

Correlation between favorite character and relationship they would seek-friendship or platonic

Thoughts generated about the book or characters: frequency and type of relationship

Type of relationship desired with favorite character and their acceptance of the actor as portraying their favorite character

Are they integrating the characters into their life?

Correlation between the type of relationship desired and their acquired knowledge of the actor

Uncertainty Reduction. How much knowledge are they seeking :

Literary Character	Actor	Stephenie Meyer

## Friendship

Literary Character	Actor	Stephenie Meyer

Are they seeking tangible manifestations of the characters or setting of Twilight?

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