GENDER STEREOTYPES BY PRESENTING A FEMALE PROTAGONIST PORTRAYED IN THE "NEIL BURGER'S DIVERGENT (2014)" MOVIE

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Abstract: This study examines the positive portrayal of a female protagonist in the Divergent movie directed by Neil Burger and how it opposes gender stereotypes. The data include dialogues and images which were selected through conducting note-taking and screen-capturing. The primary source of this study was the Divergent movie by Neil Burger. The secondary source of this study was previous studies in relevance to the movie. This study used Ronald Barthe's semiotic model to analyze the selected data consisting of the concept of denotation, connotation, and myth as the key analysis based on the perspective of radical feminism. This study reveals that the Divergent movie opposes conservative gender stereotypes by portraying Tris as physically dauntless, stable, powerful, capable, and a natural leader, than as weak and submissive. The findings suggest that the film opposes the stereotype that women are weak and emotional, unable to take risks or handle dangerous situations. This claims that Tris is shown as a masculinized leader.
Keywords: *Divergent movie; female protagonist; gender stereotypes; radical feminism; semiotic model.*

INTRODUCTION

Gender stereotypes significantly encompass cultural values based on the expectation of society regarding traits, roles, and characteristics of males and females (Eagly et al., 2020). This cultural phenomenon contributes to perceptions and presumptions that reinforce society's treatment of individuals centered on their gender identity (Rudman and Glick 2018). Therefore, such stereotypes certainly gain so much attention as they are grained as societal norms.

Gender stereotypes are perpetuated and occurred in various ways in everyday life. To illustrate, gender stereotypes constructively play a significant role in affecting the career paths and opportunities of individuals in society (Blau and Kahn, 2017). Males are expected to possess such a prosperous career in gaining wages compared to females who are expected to become a wife and take care of children at home. Another illustration, gender stereotypes have an impact on forming parental expectations and traits which lead to being differently treated as males and females (Endendijk et al., 2017). Adhering to

these social practices of gender stereotypes in everyday life confirms the reinforcement of gender inequality and discrimination towards multiple aspects of life.

The prevalence of gender stereotypes has been propagated through various media, including feature films and television programs. Men are consistently shown as leading and decisive which strengthens gender stereotypes regarding power and masculinity. While women are frequently portrayed as submissive and leaning toward men in popular media which lead to traditional gender roles and discrimination (Connor et al., 2017). This contributes to outcomes of the number of women's depictions regarding gender stereotypes in media, constructing the perceptions towards such stereotypes in society.

Studies have shown a significant correlation between the perpetuation of media regarding gender stereotypes in society. An analysis of revealing gender stereotypes in *The Intern* movie through audience response suggested that the audience discern the integration of gender stereotypes and its transformative change

(Trisnawati et al., 2021). Another study in *Enola Holmes's* movie reveals the emergence of gender stereotypes including both femininity and masculinity (Azis and Sunra, 2022). A study entangling the first *Frozen* movie emphasized the portrayal of Elsa as an empowered and self-reliant heroin (Streiff and Dundes, 2017). An analysis of Disney movies such as *Sleeping Beauty, Snow White, Cinderella, Tangled, Aladdin,* and *Beauty and the Beast* depicts the construction of stereotypical gender roles through female images (Priya, 2022).

Latest studies on gender stereotypes have also been conducted by implicating television programs. An analysis of unveiling the effects of gender stereotypes on children through a television program showed that such stereotypes can increase students' endorsement more than motivation levels, perceptions, and performance (Wille et al., 2018). Another study suggested that gender stereotypes are found in most popular preschoolers' television programs and confirmed that such stereotypes can affect children's perceptions, especially of girls (Biddle, 2017). An analysis of gender stereotypes also found in television advertisements in Ukraine that most women are depicted as nurses, households, caretakers, servants, and finery for dominant men (Kitsa and Mudra, 2019).

Studies on gender stereotypes in feature films and television programs highlight the significance of challenging gender stereotypes to promote equal rights and justifications in wide-ranging societal contexts. Addressing this, the research object of this paper implicates a feature film concerning such stereotypes portrayed in the movie.

In a nutshell, out of a multitude of movies, *Divergent* is considered to critique the prevalence of gender stereotypes through the lens of feminism. The movie, which was released in 2014, was directed by Neil Burger as an adaptation of a novel of the same title by Veronica Roth. This movie depicts a dystopian society in which humans are divided into five factions in line with their dominant personality traits: Dauntless (brave), Erudite (intellectual), Abnegation (selfless), Candor (honest), and Amity (peaceful). At age 16, every child must take a test to determine their faction, or else risk becoming factionless or homeless. The protagonist, Beatrice, discovers that she is a Divergent, meaning she possesses qualities of multiple factions and is considered a threat to the strict social order maintained by the Erudites. To avoid detection, Beatrice decides to join the Dauntless faction, where she meets Four, another Divergent. Together, Tris and Four fight against the oppressive Erudite regime and are involved in various riots that ultimately lead to becoming factionless and losing their beloved ones.

The *Divergent* movie has also been the object of several previous studies from various perspectives. Some studies examined the *Divergent* movie through the lens of Marxism perspective that reveal the portrayal of class struggle (Hartoadi, 2017), coming-of-age narratives (Landovská, 2022), exploitation (Fadhila 2019), conversational maxims (Pradani and Sembodo, 2021), and Gricean maxim (Utami, 2017); some others focused on pragmatics indicating the emergence of Illocutionary acts (Ameliza, 2020; Dianty, 2017), love expression (Pratiwi and Fauziati, 2021), and violating maxim (Wuri et al., 2022); a few lead to translation strategies (Evilia, 2020), and visual elements of the movie (Seilatuw et al., 2020); and some more explored the depiction of family communication patterns confirming the dominance of patriarchy and negative feminine characterization (Mullis, 2017), gender roles claiming the main character shown as a masculinized leader (Silva and Alegre, 2016), social identity formation including self-comparison and self-categorization (Handini, 2017), eco-criticism as the structural functional order of society covering mechanical and organic solidarity as social systems (Wijanarko, 2015), and defense mechanism undergone by Tris consisting of moral and realistic anxiety (Fatmawati and Purwanto, 2020).

Studies on the *Divergent* movie explored numerous aspects of the movie from many perspectives and each study has diverse focus and correlated research findings. Meanwhile, this paper belongs to a literature study entangling the *Divergent* movie in the portrayal of gender stereotypes due to the lack of specific studies concerning such a topic. This paper focused on revealing different forms of gender stereotypes from the lens of radical feminism faced by the main character, Tris, and how she challenges such stereotypes in society.

Revealing gender stereotypes in the depiction of the female protagonist in the *Divergent* movie significantly contributes to education. By examining how the movie represents radical feminist values through its characters and narrative, educators can gain insights into how to teach radical feminist values to students. This analysis can help educators identify key concepts,

such as resistance to hegemonic power structures and the promotion of gender equality that can be integrated into their curricula. By incorporating media analysis into the classroom, educators can provide students with a critical lens through which to view popular culture and develop a deeper understanding of social issues. Additionally, by examining the representation of women in media, educators can empower students to become more aware of the power dynamics that shape their everyday lives.

METHOD
This study is literary research involving a critical qualitative method. Critical qualitative methodology is a research approach that examines power, oppression, and social justice, emphasizing the importance of reflexivity and a commitment to social change for promoting equity and justice (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). The research involved the *Divergent* movie as the material object and gender stereotypes as the formal object. Types of data implicated in this research consisted of dialogues and screen-capturing. From the collected data, several scenes were selected based on their potential to reveal hegemonic and gender stereotypes representations through the lens of radical feminism. The approach used in this study is the semiotic model of Ronald Barthes, a theoretical framework that explores how meaning is constructed through signs and symbols in cultural products which lead to denotative and connotative signs (Fiske, 2017). Specifically, the analysis of this study focused on identifying denotative, connotative, and mythological elements within the scenes. The findings of this study elaborate the understanding of how gender stereotypes are interpreted based on deriving denotative meanings, connotative meanings, and myths or ideologies in society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
In this section, the authors discuss the various meanings contained in scenes portraying gender stereotypes by surgically interpreting meanings that have been analyzed based on denotative, connotative, and mythical elements.

Scene 1
The dialogue at 00:25:08 between Tris; and her friend, Peter; one of the leaders in Dauntless, Eric; confirms the existence of gender stereotypes.

Eric : "Someone's gotta go first. Who's
it gonna be?"
Tris : "Me." (takes off her cardigan)
Peter : "Yeah, stiff, take it off!"
"Put it back on!"

The denotative meaning of the above scene shows that Tris volunteers to be the first jumper among all boys and girls. They all need to find out what is down there since it obliges them to jump without being informed in the first place. This determines how solid they intend to be one of the Dauntless members. However, Peter mocks Tris for her action.

Based on the above denotative interpretation, the action of Tris attempting to be the first jumper leads to the embodiment of courage and a female leader in which she is depicted as a woman with higher guts than men to be willing to risk her life only for having a recognition to be one of the Dauntless members. Conforming to this, Peter looks down on Tris attempting to take such action because he sees Tris as a weak girl with no courage of risking her life. This is considered discrimination for stereotyping Tris's actions towards girls being seen as weak and not brave enough to be the first one.

The mythical element in this scene leads to the perception or ideology toward women in society. At the time Peter mocks Tris, everyone has nothing to say to defend her action. This implies that they believe that physical strengths contribute to determining masculinity and imply that women are weaker than men, while not all women are weaker. This stereotype leads to women's inequality and discrimination in society.

Scene 2
The dialogue at 00:30:02 contains a one-sided conversation implying such an issue.

Tris : (changes her clothes)
The man : "Nice legs, stiff." (stares and smiles at Tris)

The above scene tells the denotative meaning that Tris and all boys and girls at the dorm of Dauntless camp are changing their clothes to be prepared for joining the first training. The dorm has no difference that boys and girls are in the same room and bathrooms. This requires them to use the same room together as roommates.

Based on scene 2, the connotative meaning implies that the group of people who are mostly boys can see Tris's body parts while changing. The action leads to the implication that the boys

pay attention to girls' physical appearances, make comments about them, and become sexually interested in Tris as a girl. Instead of taking this action as a joke, it is considered a stereotype.

The myth in this scene indicates the action which contributes to the objectification of women as sexual centers or objects. It is considered as discrimination and harassment towards the woman that their physical appearance is mainly seen than their abilities in society.

Scene 3
The following dialogue between Tris and one of her male friends, Peter, occurs at 00:35:47.

Tris	:	(stares at factionless)
Peter	:	Check it out, stiff. That's gonna be your new family.

In this scene, the denotative meaning implies Tris being mocked by Peter for not being able to show enough abilities during the training. To be one of the Dauntless members, everyone has to get enough grades that are valued during each training. If not, those who don't have such grades will be expelled from the camp and will end up being factionless.

Scene 3 indicates the connotative meaning that Peter looks down on Tris in terms of passing the test of being one of Dauntless's members. Peter is only saying such things because he considers himself, as a boy, to be more capable than Tris, as a girl, even though it has not happened yet.

This leads to an ideology that men feel superior to women as they mostly see women having fewer qualifications than them in society. This contributes to a negative belief in terms of discrimination for undervaluing women for their abilities and taking the same chance as men.

Scene 4
The below dialogue at 00:46:49 occurs between Tris, one of the leaders and coaches in Dauntless, Eric, and Four, during the "knife-throwing training.

Eric	:	"One thing you will learn here is that orders are not optional." (prepares to throw the knife)
Tris	:	"Stop." "Anyone can stand in front of a target. It doesn't prove anything."
Eric	:	"Then it should be easy for you to take his place." "Same rules apply." (Sighs)

"Oh, come on, Four. You can get closer than that."

Four	:	"You want me to give her a little trim?"
Eric	:	"Points for bravery, stiff. Not as many as you just lost for opening your mouth." "Now watch yourself."

The denotative meaning based on the above scene tells that Tris becomes the target of knife-throwing training for pausing what Eric was going to do to one of her friends. Being ordered by Eric, Four who is his colleague, helps him to throw the knife toward Tris as a punishment.

From the dialogue, we can conclude that the connotative meaning contained in this scene implies a rebelling action by Tris for saving one of her friends from being punished. Tris is more than brave to do such action in defending her friend by risking her life as being an object of knife-throwing training. in this case, Eric underestimates Tris by believing that she will never be able to face such a life-threatening test during the training.

According to this scene, the ideology is considered to be a stereotype where men consider women to be weak and not able to tackle dangerous things, while not every woman is emotionally proven by the above scene. This stereotype strengthens the expectations that have been conventionally entangled with women in society.

Scene 5
The dialogue at 00:52:30 occurs during a fight between Tris and Peter.

Peter	:	Look like you're about to cry. Might take it easy on you if you cry.
Tris	:	(becomes ready to fight)

The dialogue shows a denotative meaning that Tris and Peter are physically fighting in a ring in front of everybody. This fight contributes to their grades as the main requirement to determine their lives. During the fight, Peter keeps beating Tris as if he wants to kill her. Watching this happening to her, she can no longer fight back and Peter wins the fight.

In scene 5, Peter's action contains a connotative meaning implying that Peter is quite competitive to win the fight as he shows his strengths and aggressiveness which are more dominant than Tris's. During the fight, Tris is

seen as weaker than Peter which would make everyone may think that Peter will win from the beginning of the fight. In this case, Peter always underestimates and looks down on her.

The ideology or myth that can be found in scene 5 is that such action shows the intention of men to show their superiority towards women. This leads to the ideology of men are supposed to be more dominant and powerful than women in society which contributes to harmful stereotypes.

Scene 6
The dialogue at 01:19:56 between Tris and one of the bodyguards occurs in Erudite.

| Tris | : | (walks down the stairs) |
| The bodyguard | : | "I need you to come with me." |

The denotative meaning in the above scene indicates that Tris is being dragged by two bodyguards once she is about to go back to Dauntless. This scene tells that Tris is visiting her brother, Caleb, to inform him that she wants to go back to the Abnegation faction since she is threatened by the fact that she is divergent.

In this scene, the connotative meaning leads to coercion due to the depiction implying Tris with no consent being dragged by the bodyguards. The reason why the bodyguards do such an action may lead them to the possibility that Tris can't fight back to protect herself during the action. This leads to the thought that, as men, the bodyguards consider themselves stronger than Tris.

The ideology in scene 6 is quite similar to scene 4 as it contributes to the stereotype that men see women as weaker compared to them and have a lack of self-defense in society.

Scene 7
At 01:48:51, the dialogue occurs during 4 sets of gunpoints.

Eric	:	"Say goodbye, asshole."
Tris	:	"Goodbye."
Four	:	"Move and you die!" (points a gun on Eric's partner)
Eric	:	"The stiff?" (chuckles) "Two stiffs. Two dead stiffs."
Eric's partner	:	"You can't let a single Divergent slip through." (points a gun on Tris) "This is what happens."
Eric	:	"She's not gonna shoot

me."

| Tris | : | "Think you might be overestimating my character." |

The above dialogue refers to a denotative meaning that Four and Tris are caught as divergent which causes 4 sets of gun points toward each of them. In the movie, every divergent is considered a threat to the Erudite faction system. This case leads to concern from the Erudite members due to their ability to think openly. In this case, Tris and Four are protecting each other from the riots during the process of corrupting the erudite system that continues to kill innocent people in Abnegation.

The connotative meaning contained in scene 8 refers to a feeling of relief from Eric by stating that "she's not gonna shoot me". Eric thinks that Tris is emotional and afraid of taking risks by shooting somebody. Eric thinks that Tris is not able to even protect himself but she's trying to protect Four. This is considered a stereotype when it comes to a twisted turn of events.

The mythological element contains in the above scene confirms the existence of gender stereotypes that men think women are more risk-averse than men. This leads to injustice treatment of individuals based on different gender. This action is influenced by an expanded range of factors besides gender, including personality and cultural expectations in society.

Scene 8
The dialogue at 01:59:06 occurs in the Dauntless camp between Tris and Peter.

Tris	:	Against the wall. Against the wall! How are you awake?
Peter	:	Because I'm smarter than you. And they need me.
Tris	:	Where are they controlling it from?
Peter	:	"Why would I tell you that? It's not like you're gonna shoot me."
Tris	:	"Why do people keep saying that?" (gunshot)
Peter	:	(screams) (groans)
Tris	:	"Where are they controlling it from?"

The above dialogue contains a denotative meaning of Tris pointing a gun at Peter that she

needs to gain information about where the controller locates at. However, Peter still looks down on her even though she's having a gun to threaten him. It ends up that Tris shoots Peter for keep stating things that don't make sense if she will not shoot him.

This indicates a connotative meaning of the possibility of Tris using the gun and shooting somebody which people keep questioning as they are doubtful. In this case, Peter has the same assumption as Eric about Tris's intention to shoot somebody. Both Peter and Eric think that Tris is more emotional and risk-averse than them in facing dangerous things to protect herself.

It brings to the idea or ideology of gender stereotypes that is similar to scene 8 implying injustice treatment of individuals for having lack of courage to take risks.

Scene 9

Figure 1. *Jeanine feeling threatened*

The figure is from a scene at 02:05:29 with a denotative meaning about a shootout between Four, Tris, and the Erudite members protecting Jeanine, a vicious leader of Erudite. Jeanine is the mastermind behind a ruthless mission aimed at killing to protect the Erudite system for controlling the government.

The connotative meaning of scene 11 implies the implication of Jeanine's concerns about Four being awakened. Four was under control by Jeanine through the Erudite system which makes people unconsciously take actions by the orders. Jeanine is panicking during the riots that Tris and Four make to fail the mission and delete all data. This is considered a stereotype when Jeanine starts panicking once Four is awake more than Tris can beat Four.

The myth or ideological element indicates that women are seen as weaker and have fewer skills in fighting than men. It shows that not only men have such beliefs but also women. This measures that men are more dominant than women in terms of being physically strong as seen through masculinity.

Scene 10

Figure 2. *Tris and her opponent having a physical combat*

This figure shows a scene at 00:37:32 that continues a denotative meaning of Tris and her female opponent physically fighting in a ring in front of everybody. People are watching until one of them gets to give up due to physical strength. In this case, Tris is defeated by her female opponent and she ends up being wounded.

The connotative meaning of this action by both girls, Tris and her opponent refers to a rare depiction of women physically fighting that contains a clear illustration of woman's strengths. This implies that women are capable of doing physical combat compared to men.

The mythical element of this scene refers to an implication of women being placed as woman-masculinity. Women entangled in physical combat have a lack of representation in media which may alter people's perceptions in society. In this case, this action challenges the existence of gender stereotypes in which women can't do physical combat.

Scene 11

Figure 3. *Tris smacking a boxing ring*

The above figure from the scene at 00:41:26 denotative meaning shows Tris smacking a boxing ring when nobody is noticing but Four. Tris is attempting to train her physical ability to gain a higher grade to pass the test. In this case, Tris keeps practicing physical exercise to be stronger than she was.

The connotative meaning of scene 14 implies that Tris has anxiety about being one of the weakest among her friends. She does not agree to be left behind by her friends when it comes to the grading phase. In this case, Tris is trying her best to gain a higher grade than she had. This is considered a stereotype as Tris attempts to build

muscles to be stronger.

The myth contained in scene 14 refers to the ideology of women doing a physical exercise such as smacking the boxing ring as it's supposed to be men in society. This is seen as a form of the stereotype that contributes to the injustice treatment of individuals towards gender when it comes to showing what women are capable of in terms of becoming stronger than weaker.

Scene 12
At 00:58:41, the dialogue occurs between Tris and Four during a war game preparation.

Four	:	"This is high enough."
Tris	:	"No, we need to go higher."
		"You all right?"
		"You're afraid of heights."
Four	:	"Everyone's afraid of something."
Tris	:	"I didn't think you were afraid of anything."
Four	:	(grunts)
		"Come on, Tris."
		"Really?"
		"Are you even human?"

The above dialogue contains a denotative meaning that Tris and Four are preparing for a war game. To win the game, they have to grab a yellow flag that they have to find out first. Attempting to find it, they are climbing a game ride to estimate the location of the flag. Tris was the one who have the intention to attempt this strategy which then Four continues it.

The connotative meaning of this scene indicates that Tris and Four are risking their life for climbing a game ride that is high enough. From the dialogue, this claims that Four is afraid of heights. As a woman, Tris, who has more courage than Four in climbing the game ride, is considered a stereotype. In this scene, Four who is panicking about getting a little too high start questing how brave Tris is as a woman as he states "a human" as the sign.

The ideology of scene 14 refers to a stereotype that sees men hardly have something they are afraid of. Men are mostly seen as individuals with various of courage compared to women. This scene perpetuates that, as a woman, Tris is resolutely dauntless until she represents what society calls something uncommon compared to what men generally being named.

Scene 13

Figure 4. *Tris and Four walking from a height*

The denotative meaning of the above scene indicates that Four is helping Tris to train her in preparing for the final test. They are manifesting to be in each other's minds escaping from multiple calamities as a simulation to the real test. Walking on a rope from a height is a part of it.

The connotative meaning contained in scene 15 refers to the emotional intelligence of Four and Tris in tackling all sudden hindrances during the stimulation. They have the understanding of taking action fast so that it can help them keep their real identity as divergent. This leads to a stereotype that Tris can face these obstacles as a form of being capable to do it like a man.

The mythological element in scene 15 challenges the stereotype that men mostly have more courage compared to women and that women cannot do what men do in society.

Scene 14

Figure 5. *Tris and her mom use guns*

The denotative meaning of the above scene indicates Tris and her mom using guns to protect themselves from Dauntless members who are under stimulation. In this scene, the movie portrays a heroic action between a mother and a daughter for working together and protecting each other.

The connotative meaning contained in scene 15 refers to the embodiment of Tris and her mom being capable of using guns to protect themselves This implies that Tris has gained more abilities to operate a gun, and her mom's skill is also remained. In this scene, a stereotype shows in which Tris and her mom make good use of guns during the riots after Tris and Four have been revealed to be divergent. In addition, in this scene, Tris also kills one of her friends, Will, who

is under stimulation by the Erudite system.

The mythological element in scene 16 indicates a stereotype that women are seen to have less skill in using guns compared to men. This generates people's assumption that women are weaker or less capable than men who need protection.

Scene 15
The dialogue at 01:57:39 occurs between Tris, Caleb, and their father's colleague, Marcus, during a discussion to make a strategy.

Caleb	:	"Why are Dauntless fighting for Erudite?"
		"They don't know what they're doing."
Tris	:	"They're under simulation."
		"We need to wake 'em up."
		"I need to get into Dauntless."
Marcus	:	"It's not gonna happen."
Tris	:	"I can get us in there."

The above dialogue contains a denotative meaning that Tris, Caleb, their Dad, and Marcus are on the same team to fail the Erudite system in killing innocent people. They are working together as a team to get into the Dauntless camp where the controller is located. In this scene, Tris contributes a lot to building a strategy for bringing them there.

The connotative meaning of scene 17 implies that Tris becomes a leader in directing those three men, including her father, brother, and Marcus. This shows an action of a woman with a leadership ability amid men in this scene. Tris is emotionally and physically prepared for succeeding in this mission.

The myth or idea of the stereotype portrayed here refers to people's perception of leaders who are mostly men compared to women. This stereotype contributes to women's discrimination, which can decrease women's opportunities to chase a career in society. In addition, this stereotype is seen as a form of assuming that women are irrational and too emotional compared to men in that they don't deserve to be a leader in society.

This study suggests that the *Divergent* movie critiques the emergence of gender stereotypes in the form of liberal feminism. The main female protagonist, Tris, is portrayed to possess more masculinity than feminine traits. This confirms the movie's portrayal of a female protagonist as a physically capable leader.

The theory used in this study is a semiotic model by Ronald Barthes in examining the *Divergent* movie in the form of a radical feminist perspective. Drawing from the research findings, the *Divergent* movie depicts the representation of gender stereotypes in the main female protagonist to preside over masculinity than femininity traits. This correlates with the lens of radical feminism as it challenges patriarchy within society.

This study supports an analysis conducted by (Silva and Alegre, 2016), in which the *Divergent* movie portrays the main character, Tris, as a masculinized leader opposing the existence of gender roles in society.

CONCLUSION
The *Divergent* movie challenges gender stereotypes by presenting a strong female protagonist, Tris, who opposes norms and societal expectations. Through many scenes, Tris is depicted as physically dauntless, stable, powerful, capable, and a natural leader, in which she refutes conservative stereotypes towards gender that portray women as weak and submissive. The movie showcases, Tris, fighting, using guns, and leading men to succeed in a mission, all of which oppose gender stereotypes and propose appropriate representations of women. This leads to the representation of Tris as she holds more masculinity than femininity traits in the movie. The movie illustrates how media can oppose gender norms and support gender equality by portraying women in non-conservative roles.

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