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Abstract

Children today are expected to work seamlessly in a group dynamic in efforts toward a common goal. Children's literature in the 21st century may not reflect this characteristic, especially in regards to equality of gendered characters. This research examined the presence of equity among characters in the 21st century children's fairy tales, exhibited by collaboration in both mixed and same-gendered relationships. The researcher approached the literature in a qualitative manner, coding the text using a constant comparative method, while also describing the nuances of character relationships in regards to collaboration. Findings revealed that while gender equity was exhibited through examples of collaboration in retellings, it was demonstrated more frequently by the autonomy achieved by protagonists able to successfully resolve conflicts presented in the text, and subtly among characters sharing equity regardless of gender or station.

PRINCESSES PERSEVERE:
SEEKING REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER EQUITY
IN MODERN FAIRY TALES

A Graduate Research Paper

Submitted to the

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Erin Becker McConnell

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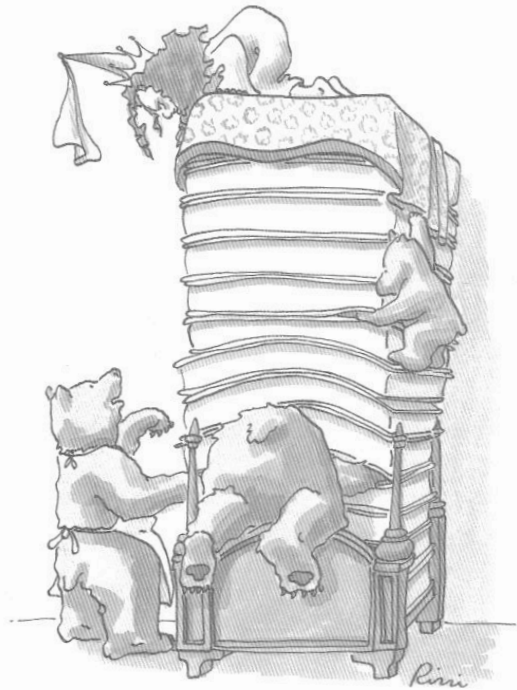Date Approved   Head, Department of Curriculum and Instruction

ABSTRACT

Children today are expected to work seamlessly in a group dynamic in efforts toward a common goal. Children's literature in the 21st century may not reflect this characteristic, especially in regards to equality of gendered characters. This research examined the presence of equity among characters in the 21st century children's fairy tales, exhibited by collaboration in both mixed and same-gendered relationships. The researcher approached the literature in a qualitative manner, coding the text using a constant comparative method, while also describing the nuances of character relationships in regards to collaboration. Findings revealed that while gender equity was exhibited through examples of collaboration in retellings, it was demonstrated more frequently by the autonomy achieved by protagonists able to successfully resolve conflicts presented in the text, and subtly among characters sharing equity regardless of gender or station.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Oh, don't mind us, we're just gathering peas for our porridge."

(Rini, 2003)

Whether the princess invited the Three Bears or not, they are crossing the boundary from one fairy tale to another. It is this blurring of boundaries that has been a hallmark of the evolution of the fairy tale genre. While the cartoon above created for *The New Yorker* melds plots and characters from different traditional tales, contemporary retellings (feminist re-visions and fractured fairy tales) and images have played more with gender role reversals, subverting the teller's point of view, and reflecting modern social constructs (Parsons, 2004).

Fairy tales are didactic by nature (Ashliman, 2004; Zipes, 2000). Hence, whatever version is received teaches the lessons and morals intended for the listener/reader to attain in the society it was told or written. In *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre*, Jack Zipes (2006b) explains further how fairy tales do the work of *civilizing* the culture in which they are written. This civilizing process is "intimately tied to the manner in which human beings [seek] to articulate their thoughts and feelings about everyday life, crucial information about conflicts, and possible solutions to these conflicts" (p. 130). Another aspect of the continued relevance of fairy tales is the idea that they are the magic mirror of our *true* selves, yet Cristina Bacchilega (1997) warns that "as with all mirrors, though, refraction and the shaping presence of a frame mediate the fairy tale's reflection" (p. 28). This is to say that the perception of what is seen in the mirror can vary based on the views (refraction) and prior knowledge (presence of a frame) of the beholder. Due to the limited prior knowledge and bias of children, fairy tales intended for them should reflect the truest self that society is asking them to portray so that they might have the clearest perception of those expectations. As children are taught at home and in schools to demonstrate lifelong skills related to integrity, teamwork, and being a productive member of a society (e.g., charactercounts.org), the literature they read should show strong examples of those attributes. This research will examine the presence of equity among characters in 21st century children's fairy tales, exhibited by collaboration in both mixed and same gendered relationships.

Progression and Purpose of Fairy Tales

Although the words folktale and fairy tale are often used interchangeably, they are not synonymous terms. Folktales refer to all stories created by a group to perform a

specific function, then preserved by repeated telling in the oral tradition. Within folktales there are several genres, including myths, legends, fables, and fairy tales (Ashliman, 2004). According to Zipes (1999), it is the inducement of wonder that separates the fairy tale from other forms of folktales. This is attained by the presence of marvelous objects, astonishing feats, and supernatural occurrences—in a sense, magic. In addition, Warner (1994) asserts that it is in fact "metamorphosis which defines the fairy tale" (p. xx), even more than the genre defining characteristics which include fairies, moral objective, ambiguity of the teller, and the expectation of a happy ending.

The oral wonder tale was developed individually by each village and community in Europe and North America that it served, origins of which date to before Christianity (Zipes, 2000; Zipes, 2006b). Each style was constructed to reflect the beliefs, customs, laws and mores defined within that culture. This reflection is not generally a mirror image of the society, rather a desired image created by the storyteller. Early peasants told tales of lower class persons rising up by marriage or magic to give hope of what is possible for those fortunate enough to read the signs. "In the oral wonder tale we are to wonder about the workings of the universe where anything can happen at any time, and these happy or fortuitous events are never to be explained. Nor do the characters demand an explanation—they are opportunistic." (Zipes, 1999, p. 5). In this sense being opportunistic does not have a bad connotation, it is implied that only fools fail to take advantage of chances afforded them.

Zipes (2000) articulated that as the oral tradition progressed to written form (mostly in Latin) from the tenth century onward, the genre of literary fairy tale emerged. He goes on to say that motifs, characters, and plots continued to have a basis in the oral

tradition, but morphed to meet the new reading public, including the aristocrats, middle class, and clergy. The voices of peasants that defined the oral wonder tale remained, but less prominently, as part of this transformation, even though the audience had greatly changed (Zipes, 2000; Zipes, 2006b). Due to the privilege of education that men enjoyed, the earliest scribes were almost strictly men. This caused many collections to be tinged with obvious masculine tones, often scripted to favor male fantasies, even if the tale-teller was a woman. Articulations of peasants and women became submerged as part of the illiterate population in the Middle Ages. "One could say that the literary appropriation of the oral wonder tales served the hegemonic interests of males within the upper classes of particular communities and societies, and to a great extent, this is true" (Zipes, 1999, p. 7). A consolation is that by scribing these oral tales, the values of the peasants and women were preserved, even if only marginally.

As literate people read the variety of magic tales that had been transcribed, the obvious progression moved towards original literary tales. Well-educated upper class men began to write stories of miracles and transformations "illustrating a particular didactic point that the writer wished to express in an entertaining matter" (Zipes, 2000, p. xxi), intending for them to be read by adults who could read and write; not intended for children. Before the fairy tale could develop fully into a genre with distinct structures and motifs, these early tales often employed a frame story—a story within a story. In the fourteenth century Biccaccio and Chaucer borrowed from the traditions of oral wonder tales using the frame story; Giovan Francesco Straparola and Giambattista Basile doing the same in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, respectively. Earlier writers were constricted to sacred themes due to the clerical domination of hand-written literary

reproduction, but Straparola and Basile were not limited due to the wide-spread use of the movable type printing press. This freed them to include tales that "are often bawdy, irreverent, erotic, cruel, frank, and unpredictable" (Zipes, 2000, p. xxi), and for the first time ending in tragedy.

While fairies were finding their way into British works such as Sir Edmund Spenser's *The Fairie Queene* (1590-1596) and William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (as well as other works of the bard), it was the female writers of the upper class in France who coined the phrase "fairy tale" at the end of the seventeenth century. *Contes de fées* refer to stories that often (but not always) included fairies, but also to designate "that the seat of power in their tales…lies with omnipotent women" (Zipes, 2000, p. xxii). Writers such as Mme. d'Aulnoy and Mme. De Murat were influenced by, and imitated, Straparola and Basile, yet injected fresh discourses on subjects important to women of the court, including love, tenderness, and control of destiny (Zipes, 2006b).

It had become *en vogue* to write fairy tales to share in the salons of France, but Charles Perrault purposely set about making the literary fairy tale a genre that stands alone. His innovative collection *Histoires ous contes du temps passéé* of 1697 contained seminal tales such as "Cinderella," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Sleeping Beauty," "Blue Beard," and "The Fairies" (Zipes, 1999). Fairy tales gained even greater acceptance as a form with the translation of *The Thousand and One Nights* from 1704 to1717 from Arabic by Antoine Galland, which is also known as *The Arabian Nights*. Reprints of abridged versions of the French fairy tales appeared in chapbooks such as *Bibliothèque Bleue* (Blue Book). This inexpensive and portable form of printing often included multiple versions, some with simpler language that made them easy for children and

nonliterates to understand when read to them. Chapbooks, combined with Archbishop Fénelon's didactic fairy tales written to make the Dauphin's (heir to the throne of France) education more enjoyable, was the beginning of acceptance of fairy tales published for children. *Magasin des Enfants* (1756) by Mme. Le Prince de Beaumont was extremely popular with children, including tales such as "Beauty and the Beast" and other moralistic fairy tales (Zipes, 1999).

At the turn of the nineteenth century there was concern over how appropriate the fairy tale was for proper children. The Brothers Grimm (Jacob and Wilhelm) revised *Kinder- und Hausmärchen (Children's and Household Tales, 1812-15)*, "cleansing their narratives of erotic and bawdy passages" (Zipes, 2000, p. xxv), yet still not finding great popularity among the middle class who were put off by the fantastic elements. The prejudice subsided during the 1820s and 1830s when their tales (gathered from existing German Stories, not original tales) were published in multiple editions for particular audiences. Most editions contained "Cinderella," "Snow White," "Sleeping Beauty," and "Little Red Riding Hood." "Since they all underlined morals in keeping with the Protestant ethic and a patriarchal notion of sex roles, the book was bound to be a success" (Zipes, 2000, p. xxvi)

Acceptance continued to grow as "adults themselves became more tolerant of fantasy literature and realized that it would not pervert the minds of their children" (Zipes, 2000, p. xxvi). Hans Christian Anderson combined Christian views with humor, drawing on folklore while creating original plots to find great success as a writer of children's fairy tales. Publishing four collections from 1835 to1872, he was the first to have his tales translated from Danish into other languages during his lifetime; he wrote

"The Ugly Duckling," "The Little Mermaid," "The Princess and the Pea," and "Thumbelina"(Zipes, 2000).

As to be expected with any established genre, anthologies began to be collected towards the end of the nineteenth century. One of the best known compilations is Andrew Lang's *The Blue Fairy Book*, which contained some of the most famous tales written, was published in London in 1889. It was followed by *The Red Fairy Book*, then *The Green Fairy Book*, and so on with the *Yellow, Brown, Rose, Violet*, etc. (Lieberman,, 1986). Other anthologies continued to be published, repeatedly capitalizing on the most popular stories, perpetuating the stereotypes of traditional fairy tales based on a handful of titles. A canon of classics developed, which included: "Cinderella," "Sleeping Beauty," "Little Red Riding Hood," "Snow White," "Rumpelstiltskin," "Rapunzel," "Puss-in-Boots," "The Princess and the Pea," "Beauty and the Beast," "The Ugly Duckling," and "The Little Mermaid" (Zipes, 2000). It is this canon that, according to Zipes (2006b), has been "reprinted and reproduced in multiple forms and entered into cultural discursive practices in diverse ways so that they became almost 'mythicized' as natural stories, as second nature" (p. 1).

Modernization of the Fairy Tale Canon

While other countries throughout the world were just beginning to gather the folklore of their culture, Europe and North America moved into the twentieth century poised to rewrite the canon of fairy tales to speak to the burgeoning Industrial Age public. Prominent original fairy tales were already taking form in this modern era, from *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll in 1865, to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum in 1900, to *Peter Pan* by James Barrie in 1904. It was only a matter of time before this

literary genre translated to motion pictures, with Walt Disney drawing from the canon in 1937 with the first animated feature, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.* Although other fairy tales had been borrowed for early filmmaking, it was the Technicolor used by Disney that captured audiences. He was also the first to combine the motion picture with related merchandise in the form of books and toys, thereby creating a brand name for his representations of fairy tales. His formula of adding "delightful humor and pristine fun" for the whole middle-class family was replicated for the Disney versions of *Pinocchio* 1940, *Cinderella* 1950, and *Sleeping Beauty* 1959, within his lifetime (Zipes, 2000, p. xxx). The formula continues to be used today in Walt Disney productions, even amidst the technology of computer animation.

There is great criticism over the values that "Disneyfied" features instill in the viewing audience. The didactic point of view contends that he upholds the teaching of good overcoming evil, yet overemphasizing the maternal evil of wicked queens and stepmothers in the questionable absence of father figures. His obvious "emphasis on female attire and physical beauty" (Tatar, 1992, p. 138) has created a massive feminist backlash in response to the acculturation of girls growing up with false expectations of romance and distorted self-images. Children absorb the messages contained in the version he/she is familiar with, which for most Western children is the Disney version (through film or books) due to the mass distribution. "Among other things, these tales present a picture of sexual roles, behavior and psychology, and a way of predicting outcome or fate according to sex, which is important because of the intense interest that children take in endings" (Lieberman, 1986, p. 187). In most popular versions of fairy tales, including the Disney adaptations, there are obvious limitations placed on female characters by virtue of

gender, and by extension unreasonable expectations of male success (by virtue of class, magic, or virility). Children can learn that these messages are true unless an opposing viewpoint is presented to them.

Proponents of the belief that fairy tales are not didactic instead offer that they create scenarios for children to role-play internal struggles as part of maturing to adulthood (Cashdan, 1999). This is based on the psychoanalytic theory pioneered by Freud and expanded by Bruno Bettelheim in regard to children's application of meaning through fairy tales. In *The Uses of Enchantment*, Bettelheim (1977) explores how children strive to create meaning in their lives. He states, "a child needs to understand what is going on within his conscious self so that he can also cope with that which goes on in his unconscious" (p. 7), and that fairy tales offer opportunities for understanding due to the complex problems presented, including: "overcoming narcissistic disappointments, oedipal dilemmas, sibling rivalry…relinquish[ing] childhood dependencies, gaining a feeling of selfhood and of self-worth, and a sense of moral obligation" (p. 6). He also contends that there are underlying themes of psychosexual conflict such as penis envy and castration anxiety which reach children on the unconscious and conscious level (Cashdan, 1999).

Throughout the twentieth century and into the 21st, the audience of readers has greatly changed, and with that values have changed. The Feminist Movement created a surge of fairy tale revisions that reversed or questioned the traditional gender roles of males and females, often empowering women with control of their destinies and releasing them from the submission of a man's domination. "The result has been a remarkable production of nonsexist fairy tales for children and adults, as well as theoretical works

that explore the underlying implications of gender roles in fairy tales" (Zipes, 1999, p. 25). Feminist fairy tales have led the way to fractured fairy tales, which often are told from a new perspective (e.g., Scieszka's *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs by A. Wolf*), and more inclusively, postmodern fairy tales, which are revisions based on social issues beyond, and including, feminism (e.g., Carter's "The Donkey Prince").

Since the literary fairy tale has always been a malleable genre, it is inevitable that classics will continue to be revised and fractured. Multiple versions of the canon offer new points of conflict and power depending on the interests of the teller. These postmodern fairy tales are able to "retell(s) history, values, and gendered figurations" (Bacchilega, 1997, p. 24), in a way that is appealing to the modern audience. Both fractured fairy tales and postmodern fairy tales work to demonstrate equality to the reader, however there may be a lack of new character relationships that relate to modern children. In the 21st century, children are going to find themselves growing into increasingly global relationships which will require them to communicate seamlessly in any place or situation. This is why it is important for the contemporary literature they read—specifically fairy tales in this case—to represent positive interactions through collaboration to help them to be successful in life.

Problem Statement

21st century fairy tales may not mirror societal mores placed on children to exhibit good character in relationships with others through collaboration, regardless of gender identity.

Research Question

1. How do modern fairy tales present examples of current social mores and gender roles?

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to seek evidence of gender equity among characters in 21st century children's fairy tales, exhibited by themes that describe equitable character portrayal.

Assumptions

The researcher expects to find materials that do mirror societal mores, as well as materials that do not mirror societal mores in regards to exhibiting good character through collaboration.

Limitations

1. The researcher will limit the search to children's picture books in the fairy tale genre published from the year 2000 to 2009.

2. The researcher may be limited by the availability of all resources sought.

3. The researcher will limit the format to books in print.

Definitions

cautionary tale: "a narrative in prose or verse, that depicts the negative, often tragic

consequences of inappropriate conduct" (Ashliman, 2004, p. 181) (*ant.)*

exemplary tale.

chapbook: "printed material sold by traveling peddlers from the sixteenth to nineteenth

century…a typical chapbook was about six by four inches and contained about 24

stitched pages"; some were less pages (Latrobe, Brodie, & White, 2002, p. 34)

collective unconscious: "similar experiences of humans over countless generations…

which has somehow become embedded in the psyche of all humans" (Ashliman,

2004, p. 144)

didactic tale: most combine elements of both a cautionary tale and an exemplary tale

(Ashliman, 2004, p. 181) *see cautionary tale and exemplary tale.*

Disneyfied: "saccharine, sexist, and illusionary stereotypes of the Disney-culture

industry" (Zipes, 1999, p. 25)

exemplary tale: "a story emphasizing the positive outcome of good behavior"

(Ashliman, 2004, p. 181) (*ant.) cautionary tale.*

fairy tale: 1. folk fairy tale: "a story that includes such supernatural characters as fairies,

fairy godmothers, witches, ogres, trolls, giants, or wizards"; "a product of the oral

tradition **2.** literary fairy tale: "contains the characteristics of the folk fairy tale,

but is the original creation of one author" (Latrobe, Brodie, & White, 2002, p. 70)

folktale: "any timeless story that developed within the oral tradition and, therefore,

represents the cumulative authorship of many storytellers;" includes fairy tales,

fables, myths, legends, tall tales, and elaborate framework stories (Latrobe,

Brodie, & White, 2002, p. 76)

fractured tale: "a traditional tale retold with twists in such story elements as characters,

plot, point of view, and setting" (Latrobe, Brodie, & White, 2002, p. 79)

framework story: "a single story or collection of stories enclosed within a frame story

that serves as a narrative setting. The plots of the framework and the internal

story may or may not be integrated." (Latrobe, Brodie, & White, 2002, p. 81)

hegemonic: "the prominent influence of one state over others" (Jost, 1993, p. 629)

literary fairy tale: *see fairy tale*

omnipotent: "having unlimited universal power, authority, or force" (Jost, 1993, p. 952)

scribe: "a writer or journalist;" transcribing from oral to written (Jost, 1993, p. 1226)

wonder tale: synonym for magic tale in the "oral storytelling tradition;" "existed

throughout Europe in many different forms during the medieval period" (Zipes,

2000, p. xvi)

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

"Although fairy tales are certainly not solely responsible for the acculturation of children, they are an integral part of the complex layering of cultural stories and influences that affirm and perpetuate cultural norms" (Parsons, 2004, p. 135). Gender-biased portrayals of characters in fairy tales have perpetuated stereotypes of female and male roles set by patriarchal societies who have passed down the canon of accepted tales within the genre. With 50 strong years of feminist discourse on fairy tales, much has been written in response to the stereotypes sustained over the past 300-plus years. While an understanding of the past feminist study in the field was imperative, the researcher focused on examining the presence of equity between characters in children's fairy tales exhibited by collaboration in both mixed and same-gendered relationships, limited to books published since 2000. Three areas of research have emerged relative to this study: feminist perspective on the transformation of the genre, definition and function of rewritten fairy tales, and the presence of collaboration in fairy tales.

In the quest for equality, the Women's Movement caused much analysis of how literature affects the readers' perception of social roles, and in response created a body of work from the feminist perspective both analyzing and rewriting fairy tales. The first waves of this response have been best characterized by Kay Stone (1986):

> The earliest feminists saw women as artificially separated from and wrongly considered unequal to men; the next generation of writers insisted that women were naturally separate from men and rightly superior; and many recent writers consider both women and men as naturally separate but potentially equal—if men shape up. (p. 234)

Criticism from the feminist perspective in the 21st century has been far less critical of

men as a sex, instead focusing on the construct of gender from a social stance.

Feminist Perspective on the Transformation of the Genre

Parsons (2004) disagreed with prior work stating that fairy tales are no longer

important to children, responding with "this dismissive attitude underestimates the

pervasive power of the tales" (p. 135). First, Parsons discussed the influence of messages

in the traditional fairy tales, then defined feminist re-visions as a tool to explain the

importance of having multiple versions of a tale to "challenge dominant ideology" (p.

136). Based on related research, she completed a textual analysis of four Cinderella

stories (2 traditional and 2 modern), finding that multiple discourses must be available to

children so that they can have a variety of positions to perceive their world from,

therefore providing jumping-off points for girls and boys to create meaning in their

perception of self.

Choosing another member of the fairy tale canon, "Snow White," as her vehicle

of feminist criticism, Joosen (2004) asserted that tenets of fairy tale criticism have been

mirrored by the retellings of those tales. In a close reading of Garrison Keillor's short

story "My Stepmother, Myself," she finds that his work can be read as a response to the

feminist perspective of the late 20th century, or that it can be read as a parody of feminist

criticism, specifically emancipatory feminism which exposed sexist points of view in

literature and "has often been reproached both by men and women for its radical critique"

(p. 12). According to Joosen, either reading of Keillor's work is considered feminist in

that it adds to the ongoing debate.

Pervasive stereotypes of the oppressive and objectifying role of beauty ideals in fairy tales caused Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz (2003) to conduct an extensive critical and textual analysis of the Brothers Grimm fairy tales. They examined both the number of times beauty is mentioned throughout Grimm's body of work, as well as the frequency and timing of reproductions of those stories. "This study represents one of the few attempts to analyze long-term changes in children's literature and the only one to offer a historical analysis of the reproduction of a beauty ideal in fairy tales" (p. 715).

After excluding stories without humans, only rhymes (similar to Mother Goose), short descriptions, and those that were translated to English after 1900, the researchers analyzed 168 stories. All tales were coded for mentions of "beautiful, pretty, fairest, or handsome" (p. 715) by Baker-Sperry, with two reliability groupings coding a subset of 20 tales. Further coding included links between beauty and goodness, and beauty and danger. Qualitative analysis was used to find patterns and themes relating beauty to economic privilege, race, goodness, and danger. The findings show that mention of female beauty is five times higher than male attractiveness, with younger females mentioned most. Patterns revealed through the descriptive analysis include stereotypes such as beauty is goodness, and beauty is rewarded, but a lack of beauty is punished.

To determine recurrence rates, the researchers consulted several resources to document the frequency each tale had been reproduced as a book or film from 1857 to 2000. This data was cross-referenced with the beauty data to determine if the reproduction rate correlated with the mentions of beauty, which it did. The top five reproduced tales were "Cinderella," "Snow White," "Sleeping Beauty," "Little Red Riding Hood," and "Hansel and Gretel" with the first three especially fixated on beauty.

It was conclusive that the number of times a story gets reproduced was directly related to the number of mentions of beauty or physical appearance. Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz (2003) "suggest that this emphasis on a feminine beauty ideal may operate as a normative social control for girls and women" (p. 723), and that as a social control it could relate to women choosing to avoid activities that make them appear less attractive. This could also be creating competition among women regarding physical appearance, which diminishes the likeliness of women mobilizing together. Clearly, the researchers found that the feminine beauty ideal is pervasive in popular children's fairy tales.

<div align="center">Definition and Function of Rewritten Fairy Tales</div>

Definitions for the many variations of rewritten fairy tales have evolved over time, however a review of the literature has revealed the most commonly accepted terminology currently in use. Trites (1997) was definitive in her explanation of a feminist children's novel as one "in which the main character is empowered regardless of gender" (p. 4). She went on to explain that for it to be truly feminist work, it must offer voice (often first-person) to the protagonist so that he/she has agency over decisions that propel the plot of the story. Parsons (2004) adds that the most recent phrase used to refer to this sub-genre is feminist re-vision, which includes the above characteristics, as well as subjectivity, autonomy and power.

Much to the chagrin of feminists, there is another form of rewritten fairy tales attempting to be subversive to the patriarchal narratives and gender stereotypes, referred to as fractured fairy tales. Written mainly for children, fractured fairy tales challenge ideologies, but only at the "representational or story level of the text" (Cranny-Francis, 1990, p. 205). These shallow changes include generic gender role reversals and

transforming passive female characters into strong protagonists, which "do not necessarily result in feminist texts" according to Crew (2002, p. 82). An analysis of this sub-genre by Cummins (1997) from a non-feminist criteria defines a fractured fairy tale as "a classic folk or fairy tale rewritten with tongue-in-cheek or as a spoof using twists and spins on the story's features; text and visual references poke fun at the original, resulting in a witty, clever, and entertaining tale" (p. 51).

In her work on fairy tale re-visions, Crew (2002) built on prior feminist dogma relating the changing discourse of fairy tales that challenge patriarchal ideologies to their empowerment to affect social constructs of gender roles for children. Crew (2002) saw the need for an explicit characterization of feminist re-visions, illustrated by Donna Jo Napoli's use of changing narrative conventions, gendered relationships, and overturning patriarchal values to "redefine fairy tale protagonists, creating complex fully realized characters with whom readers may relate to more closely than to their counterparts in traditional tales" (p. 83). Through textual analysis, Crew examined Napoli's feminist re-visions from 1992 to 1999, finding overwhelming instances of the author's ability to retell traditional tales encoded with feminist values. In summary, Crew offered further questions for the reader to consider when discussing feminist re-visions, with careful thought used before labeling a retelling as feminist.

Joosen (2005) chose Jane Yolen's *Sleeping Ugly* as a case study connecting the didactic potential of fairy tales with feminist ideology. She asserted that children have the ability to gain a level of literary theory by understanding the discourses available in a re-vision if compared to the traditional text. By giving them a new perspective on an old tale, gender roles defined by patriarchal ideologies can be reconsidered more fully by

children, thereby creating a level of literary theory in the reader. Joosen analyzed the text of *Sleeping Ugly* in comparison to "Sleeping Beauty" and lesser-known traditional tales to illustrate how a well-written re-vision has the power to undo generic feminist reading of a text. "By teaching how to read against a text, Yolen's story at the same time asserts and undermines its feminist didactic message" (p. 137).

Feminist researchers (e.g., Cranny-Francis, 1990; Crew, 2002) of the genre have criticized, fractured fairy tales, however Cummins (1997) contends that this well-received sub-genre is a delight to young readers. She traces the roots of the phrase to the Rocky and Bullwinkle cartoon series of animated spoofs titled "Fractured Fairy Tales." Cummins defined the ways a tale can be fractured as: time or place, play on names, altering point of view, reversing standard elements, or giving a specific cultural flavor. She continues with a list of fractured fairy tales that she believes to be "*good* fracturing, in that they are well written, sustain a strong sense of story, and the humor is not adult in sensibility" (p. 50). In response to her questions of the popularity and proliferation of these tales she reminds the reader of the enjoyment in poking fun at familiar tales, ultimately finding that fractured fairy tales offer the comic relief of children's literature.

<center>Presence of Collaboration in Fairy Tales</center>

If collaboration exists in the fairy tale world, criticism of the genre has hardly noticed. Aside from one study on collaboration in *Grimms' Fairy Tales* (Mendelson, 1997) there has been little discourse on the subject. Mendelson believed that there was a "double standard for collaborative interaction" (p. 112) in the tales, which caused him to wonder if it upholds the idea that women working together is threatening. Using a comparative method of the text, the researcher labeled types of collaboration for males

(limited or suspect collaborations, fraternal bonds, and true collaboration), then sought

female representations of those categories within the tales. While Mendelson found

several examples of male collaboration, his findings for female collaborations were rare,

and likely to be qualified in some way (e.g., female characters undifferentiated in skills,

unlike male groupings with individuals bringing unique skills to the work together).

According to Mendelson's definition, "collaboration …is at work in tales that display

joint effort by two or more characters toward a common goal" (p. 118), the examples of

female collaboration he found were tainted (evil women's groups) in their motive, or

failed to act cooperatively.

Mendelson (1997) considered that the absence of scholarship on female

collaboration in fairy tales is because the topic is in absence, rather than a presence (such

as flagrant patriarchal stereotypes), it has simply gone unnoticed. He then ponders why

there is such inequity if women collaborating was not threatening in the time Grimms'

tales were written.

Summary

Working for the greater good has been a hallmark of a democraticed—*civilized*—

society. The resounding agreement among scholars that fairy tales have the power to

perpetuate cultural norms starkly contrasts the study (and presence) of collaboration in

fairy tales. Children in 21st century Western cultures are expected to fulfill the task of

acting collaboratively in school, and later in work, yet examples of this behavior in fairy

tales is limited. Feminist criticism of fairy tales have illustrated gender inequalities, while

feminist re-visions have worked to create a fresh discourse on cultural norms present in

fairy tales. However, there is an obvious gap in the study of collaboration in relation to

gender equity. While Mendelson (1997) worked to reveal the inequity of male and female collaboration in the original Grimm's tales, this study will bring his work to the 21st century. Gender equity, exhibited by collaboration of mixed and same-gendered groups in 21st century fairy tales is where this textual analysis begins.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

Building on the review of the related literature, specifically Mendelson (1997), this research examined the presence of equity among characters in 21st century children's fairy tales, exhibited by collaboration in both mixed and same-gendered relationships. Previous research has failed to produce connections between modern rewritings of fairy tales and whether or not they reinforce the social norms of the time in which they are written.

Qualitative content analysis allowed the researcher to perceive themes and patterns "in a subjective but scientific manner" (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 1). According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), qualitative content analysis is defined as "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (p. 1278). According to Zhang and Wildemuth (as cited in Wildemuth, 2009) in this method of research, the unit of analysis used for comparison is the individual themes identified by coding. As the population was coded, themes emerged in a recursive manner, requiring previously coded text to be analyzed further against the emerging themes. The constant comparative method allowed coding to evolve through the process of data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This form of qualitative analysis was appropriate for this study because there has been little prior work on this particular topic, therefore there were no established themes to seek.

A limitation of qualitative research is the trustworthiness of the results, and by extension, the researcher conducting the study. Unlike quantitative research, validity

checks cannot be as simple as frequency or percentages. Lacity and Janson (1994) acknowledge that "interpretivist validity checks are largely based on the acceptance of the scientific community. If fellow scholars find meaning in the research, it is deemed valid and worthwhile" (p. 149). As those means of validation are not available until the study is complete, the researcher conscientiously monitored emerging coding and reapplied to previously coded texts during the study. It was assumed that the researcher would act in a non-biased manner while coding and describing the data collected throughout the study.

<div align="center">Procedure</div>

The population used in this study included fairy tale picture books published from 2000 through 2009. Books were chosen from fairy tales listed in the *Wilson Children's Core Collection* available online. A search in the database by subject headings using fairy tales as the search term yielded 234 titles from the required publication date span. Each title was investigated to define picture books exclusively using the parameters of unpaged books, or those containing approximately 32 pages (industry standard for printing picture books) if pagination was noted in the entry, revealing 130 books. The population was further narrowed from 130 to 50 titles by examining the *OCLC Worldcat Database* for the titles most frequently owned by OCLC member libraries among the list of books published. These criteria removed any bias on the behalf of the researcher in the choosing of books. As details regarding the format and content of the study sample became available to the researcher, the following were excluded: books not written or translated to English, board books and other simple retellings, texts with illustrations containing ambiguous gender, pop-up books, short collections of fairy tale retellings, and books not

including a fairy tale genre plotline. Because it was possible that the researcher would be unable to obtain all books chosen, the researcher maintained an alternative list of possible books to substitute as needed. Six books were found to not meet the criteria of the study after coding began, therefore 56 books were read in total.

As books were obtained by the researcher coding began. Initial patterns referenced themes of working together, common goals, and identifying types of collaboration (if the text allowed for it), with other codes emerging as the work progressed. The qualitative analysis was designed to define the common goal, explain how the text created meaning in regards to collaboration, and explicate the gendered relationships presented in the text. Unanticipated topics continued to emerge requiring descriptive analysis, which encouraged the researcher to "move back and forth between concept development and data collection" (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

Following the inductive content analysis, the researcher assessed and combined coding categories, then drew conclusions from the coded and descriptive data.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Using qualitative content analysis, the researcher coded 50 fairy tale picture books printed from 2000 to 2009, identifying exhibitions of collaboration among characters in both mixed and same-gendered relationships, seeking equity among characters. The books chosen for analysis are listed in Appendix A.

Techniques Employed

In a spreadsheet listing all books meeting the criteria, codes were initially defined by the following categories: Common Goals, Types of Collaboration, Gendered Relationships, and Feminist Re-Vision. The last category, Feminist Re-Vision, allowed for discourse on whether the character(s) had agency over decisions that propelled the plot, as well as instances of realized autonomy.

As coding began, negative collaborations were revealed most frequently (e.g., evil stepsisters), and soon became the norm in this analysis. Although it was to be expected based on the work of Mendelson (1997), the emergence of this pattern caused the researcher to consider a fifth category: Independence. Books that showed a strong feminist re-vision but lacked positive collaboration were highlighted for the merits of showing equity between characters through realized autonomy. Coding done prior to this consideration was reevaluated with this category in mind.

While not strong enough to be considered a category, notes were made as to whether the fairy tale was an original story or a retelling (when the information was available to the researcher). The element of originality showed most frequency in books

that presented either positive collaboration or independence of a main character. However, some original tales upheld traditional fairy tale relationships.

Books chosen for discussion included retellings that either exemplified modern gendered relationships or endorsed conventional gender roles. Traditional fairy tales that were essentially a newly illustrated version, or a version told from the perspective of a non-Western culture's tradition did not offer substantial themes related to this study, therefore not generating enough material for the researcher to discuss. Original and fractured fairy tales that landed in the median between modern and traditional gender relationships also warranted little attention, and are therefore not discussed.

Coded and descriptive data exposed related themes including the presence of positive collaboration among characters, independent characters that realized autonomy, equity between characters throughout the book, and original tales and fractures that upheld traditional inequitable gender relationships. The themes that suggested gender equity of particular interest to this study were positive collaboration among characters, independent characters realizing autonomy, and equity among characters regardless of gender or social station.

Positive Collaboration Among Characters

Four out of five fairy tales that showed a positive collaboration among characters maintained a singular protagonist, allowing collaborators to assist the main character in the journey forward. The final book discussed exemplifies equality through collaboration as the two narrators maintain an egalitarian relationship as they negotiate how to tell a fairy tale together.

The Boy Who Loved Words by Roni Schotter (2006) and *Princess Grace* by Mary Hoffman (2009) are examples of original stories with characters propelled by the assistance of multiple collaborators. In *The Boy Who Loved Words*, Selig is torn by what to do with his passion for words, especially when classmates label him an oddball. In a dream, a genie tells him he must find the purpose for his passion, setting him on a journey to discover what to do with all of the words he gathers. A pacing poet aided his realization that as a Wordsworth (his other nickname) his mission was to offer his found words to others. When he helps a baker sell his goods with *scrumptious* and *luscious*, and calms bickering neighbors "after he cast *hush*, *harmony*, and *chum* in their direction," (p. 24) Selig finds love and returns home content with the knowledge that he is responsible for people delighting in the perfect word when they need it. Through mutual needs being met, this book illustrates a form of positive collaboration.

Hoffman (2009) presents unconditional collaboration in *Princess Grace*, an un-fairy tale for modern girls. Grace's determination to be chosen as a princess to ride on the float in the community parade forces her to question how princesses dress, and therefore what they do so that her grandmother can make the costume. Guided by her teacher, Grace delves into the depth and nuances of several princess stories, both real and fantasy, finding that she "felt less and less like being the pink and floaty kind of princess" (p. 16) once she discovered the adventures to be had as an African princess. In the end her Nana is willing to make a pink fairy tale princess dress or Kente cloth robes, telling Grace that she must decide "what sort of princess [she wants] to be" (p. 19). The absolute support of characters in her life empowers Grace to choose the strong Gambian princess as opposed to the more popular, expected fairy tale.

Adelita and Esperanza in *Adelita: A Mexican Cinderella Story* by Tomie De Paola (2002) have a relationship built on Ezperanza's role as a caregiver to the family, which she maintains even when Adelita becomes an adult. Although they are not tied by blood, both are bound as equally powerless women in the household of the stepmother. When Esperanza (as the fairy godmother archetype) presents the opportunity for Adelita to go to the fiesta, both women prosper from the turn of events that follow. Javier, the son of a ranch owner, looks for his *Cenicienta* the following day, finding her quickly when Adelita cleverly hangs her shawl out the window to draw him to the house. When Javier and Adelita are married, Esperanza goes with them to continue helping the family.

Selig, Grace and Adelita experience same-gendered collaborations in their narratives, while only two books in the study group show equity in mixed-gender collaborations. *The Apple-Pip Princess* by Jane Ray (2008) and *Once Upon a Cool Motorcycle Dude* by Kevin O'Malley (2005) are both original fairy tales that successfully present a mixed-gender relationship driven by more than the fantasy of marrying above your station.

Serenity is one of three princesses in *The Apple-Pip Princess* asked to prove to their widower father their ability to rule when he is gone. Her sisters, Suzanna and Miranda, choose to prove their metal by ordering the people to build tall towers, demonstrating how important each of them is by their proximity to the sky. The sisters are foolish, selfish, and difficult, but do not connive against one another (or Serenity) to obtain power. Serenity turns to a box of treasures gathered by her mother as a girl, including an apple pip (seed), raindrops, and rainbows among other things to endeavor to bring heart and life back to the kingdom. Planting the apple seed creates a domino effect

throughout the kingdom, drawing people to bring other fruit, nut, and olive seeds to be planted and tended as a community. Joseph, a village boy, quietly joins Serenity, working beside her in the fields, encouraging her when she despairs that the plants will not grow in time to convince the king that Serenity should succeed him on the throne. Joseph calmly responds, "We must just be patient" (p. 19). Their patience is rewarded when plants blossom overnight, transforming the land and convincing the king that Serenity is fit to rule the kingdom. The king, Serenity, and Joseph celebrate with a picnic under a tree, and are soon joined by the other sisters tired of being alone in their towers.

In contrast to the quiet collaboration of Serenity and Joseph, *Once Upon a Cool Motorcycle Dude* introduces two unnamed narrators with a lot to say from the start. A boy and girl are assigned the task of telling their favorite fairy tale. Since they cannot agree they collaborate to make one up. The girl begins by introducing a saccharine princess who loves ponies--she has eight, including one named Buttercup (much to the boy's chagrin). An oaphy giant steals one pony after another. The theft brings Princess Tenderheart to endless tears when Buttercup is the only one left and she has nobody to protect him. Enter the boy and his "really cool muscle dude" (p. 10) to the rescue. This motorcycle mercenary agrees to protect Buttercup, but with the boy narrating at this point, the giant has become grotesque and "he needs eight ponies to make a tasty pony stew and he only has seven" (p. 12). After repeated earth-shaking battles between the giant and the dude, the boy ends the story because his dude has grown rich from the princess' gold thread payments for protection, so, end of story. The girl is angered by his underestimation of a princess' ability, morphing her into Princess Warrior and "tells the dude to make his own thread" (p. 20). The exchange continues back and forth until both

narrators agree that the dude and the princess can both be heroes. In the end the girl still finishes in the fairy tale tradition by saying that the dude was actually a prince and they get married and have a baby—which the boy fights to the finish. Even though the relationship between the narrators is volatile, the boy and girl are able to reach common ground while maintaining their own identities and point of view. This interaction exemplifies the process of learning how to collaborate with others, which is a social expectation of the intended audience in the 21st century.

<div align="center">Beyond Fracturing: Independent Characters Realizing Autonomy</div>

Lisa Campbell Ernst employs the use of known fairy tale characters and motifs in *Goldilocks Returns* (2000) and *The Gingerbread Girl* (2006), venturing to answer what might happen if characters could repent for past wrongdoing and learn from other known characters' mistakes. These fractured fairy tales offer twists on the original tales, which are entertaining, but do not subvert gender stereotypes in a meaningful way. Specifically, in Ernst's version Goldilocks is a late-fifties woman who decorates the bears' cottage in stereotypical pom-pom fringe, plastic seat covers, and frilly drapes. However, a few independent characters are able to go beyond the surface of fractured fairy tales and realize their own power to exercise autonomy, without the assistance of collaborators. In the nine books discussed, autonomy is shown by a character's ability to act on personal independence, especially when confronted by an antagonist or difficult situation. These have been further classified as individuals who progress by cunning and relentlessness, ingenuity and magic, and the bravado of self-actualization.

One group of independent characters includes those who excel by cunning and relentlessness and are able to capitalize on an opportunity when it is presented. The title

character in *Good Enough to Eat* by Brock Cole (2007) rises from street beggar to a wealthy traveler when she cleverly spoils the town's plan to sacrifice her to an awful ogre. Through verbal acuity and the desire to turn the tables in her favor, she convinces the ogre that she is good enough to eat, splitting him open with a sword when he swallows her whole. Her character exercises autonomy at the point when the means to do so are presented to her.

Princess Pigsty by Cornelia Funke (2007) is an original tale about Princess Isabella, who decides one day that she will not put up with the constant primping and coddling because "It's boring, boring boring!" (p. 6). When her father sends her to the kitchen to teach her a lesson for refusing to put on a dress and have her hair curled, she is thrilled to be busy with the many tasks to be done; likewise when he sends her to the pigsty. In the end the king relents to let her choose what kind of princess she will be, so long as she wears her crown sometimes. Isabella might be stubborn, but this trait proves to be in her favor as her resolve amends her father's ideal of a pretty princess, granting her further autonomy.

An arranged marriage is thwarted in *The Storytelling Princess* by Rafe Martin (2001) when the prince and princess refuse. The well-read prince will marry her, but only if she can tell a story he has never heard the ending of, and she will only marry for love. When she is washed overboard at sea and arrives hungry and alone on the shores of his land, she heeds the proclamation of the king to be rewarded for telling a new story to the prince. Finding that he has heard all of the stories she knows, she tells him the story of how she arrived there, carefully hiding the fact that it is her own story. In the process he finds someone who can tell a story he does not know, and she falls in love with the

prince. The princess is resourceful and each of her decisions propels the plot, illustrating her self-sufficiency, which is not diminished by the fact that she lives happily ever after.

The Brave Little Seamstress by Mary Pope Osborne (2002) and *The Hinky-Pink* by Megan McDonald (2008) are retellings of old stories in which the original tailor has been gender-swapped with a seamstress. However, these are more than just surface fractures of old tales as both present characters that make decisions that propel the plot forward, even when obstacles are put in their ways. *The Brave Little Seamstress* uses courage and wit to meet the tasks set by the king who has the misperception that she is a threat to the kingdom. When tipped off by a kind knight of the king's plan to banish her for posing as a warrior when she is clearly just a little seamstress, she again outwits the king and lives happily ever after as the new queen. But only after asking the knight to marry her, of course.

Anabel, the seamstress in *The Hinky-Pink*, does not have visions of bravery, instead "dreamed of the day she'd make a dress fit for a princess. A dress that would dance the tarantella" (p. 3). When the princess needs a new dress for the Butterfly Ball in one week, Anabel is whisked to a castle room filled with fabric for her to use. However, a hinky-pink steals her covers at night, causing sleepless stitches that look horrible. Mag, the nursemaid who brought Anabel to the castle, brings advice from the Wise Woman to make a bed for the hinky-pink and it will leave her alone to sleep at night. Determined to try anything, the seamstress eventually finds the perfect bed (in a thimble) and whips up a beautiful dress for the princess. The opportunity and advice are presented by Mag, but unlike Esperanza in *Adelita: A Mexican Cinderella Story,* her motives are vague as to whether she helps Anabel because they have a common bond or to ensure that her

employer gets what she desires. *The Hinky-Pink* does not have charming princes making overtures or fairy godmothers offering fantastic adventures to drive the plot, just the satisfaction Anabel has in making a dress that will dance the tarantella. She is a character secure in the limits of her power, yet strives to meet her own expectations to the fullest.

A traditional tale, *The Bearskinner* retold by Laura Amy Schlitz (2007)*,* and two original tales, *The Red Wolf* by Margaret Shannon (2002), and *The Magic Nesting Doll* by Jacqueline K. Ogburn (2000) introduce independent characters that combine their ingenuity with magic brought to them, overcoming the adversity they face. Magic, in a figurative sense, is the collaborator in each of these tales.

The homeless soldier challenged by a bargain with the devil in *The Bearskinner* is charged with tramping seven years with the skin of a bear to cover him, forbidden to wash (or pray to God), yet has an endless pocket of coins and gems to spend at will. His fortune is all that allows him to be near people as he becomes grotesque over time. As the devil planned, the soldier reaches the depths of despair, but refuses to call the Lord's name. Instead he finds that he can give his fortune away, asking only that others pray for him in return. Hope buoys him to maintain his righteous path to defeat the devil, "'Your soul is your own,' as if the words tasted bitter to him" (p. 22), and earn lifelong fortune and happiness. It is his perseverence to overcome the situation he entered into out of desperation that shows autonomy on the part of the soldier.

The Red Wolf is born from the statement "knit what you want" (p. 4), which accompanies the trunk of yarn delivered to Princess Roselupin (red-wolf). She is locked in a tall tower when the trunk of yarn arrives on her seventh birthday. Her father is pleased because it will keep her busy making scarves while she is protected from the wild

world outside her window. Instead she knits a wolf suit, and once worn magically becomes a giant red wolf able to break free of the tower, running and jumping across the forest. When she unravels and is returned to a "taller… stonier" (p. 25) tower for safekeeping, Princess Roselupin cleverly knits a mouse suit of pajamas for her father to wear, leaving the reader to believe that in the end Princess Roselupin knows how to get what she wants.

Katya takes it upon herself to break the spell cast by the Grand Vizier on the Tsarevitch in *The Magic Nesting Doll*. He has been turned to ice, creating a "winter without thaw" (p. 4). She has saved the magic of her grandmother's nesting doll for an important mission, calling on the bear, wolf, and firebird inside to weaken the spell on the Tsarevitch through successive attempts. When her magic runs out and he is still not awake, she steels herself for a journey to find wizards who can complete her task of breaking the spell. With a heavy heart she kisses him goodbye only to find that her lips have awoken him from the spell. Katya's fortitude shows her strength of character independent of magic.

Princess Rosamond of Colchester in *The Well at the End of the World* by Robert D. San Souci (2004) exemplifies a fully self-actualized character in a modern version of a traditional fairy tale. San Souci maintains the traditional setting, but begins by introducing the equitable distribution of power between the king and his daughter—he's nice, she has a head for matters of the state—until her father is lonely. The king's new wife, Lady Zantippa, and daughter, Zenobia, scheme to discredit Rosamond, instigating her choice to live with her aunt to make less trouble. When he falls ill, Rosamond seeks the water from the well at the end of the world to heal him. Her journey introduces

several gatekeepers to test her infallible integrity, granting her the cure for her father, wealth, and beauty. The stepsister attempts to earn wealth and beauty by the same path, but is greeted by what she deserves, and returns "so repulsive that the hedge drew aside in disgust" (p. 28). When a marriage proposal is sent from Prince Egbert of Farnaway to the Princess of Colchester, the stepmother and stepsister work in cahoots to conceal the ugliness of Zenobia until the wedding can be performed. Upon discovering this Rosamond is outraged, stating, "I'm not interested in marrying someone I haven't met, but I won't let them deceive him in my place" (p. 30), arriving just in time to prevent their evil plans from coming to fruition. Although Rosamond is a very independent character, she does fall in love and eventually marry Prince Egbert. Since he is as good at running a kingdom as her father is, Rosamond "wound up helping them both keep accounts balanced and drawbridges in working order."

Equity Among Characters Regardless of Gender or Station

Three books in the study do not have strong collaboration or independent characters, yet stand out for their representations of equity amongst characters, regardless of gendered relationships or station in the society presented. This theme is exhibited by equal importance of all vocations and members of a village, removal of the good versus evil aspect of a traditional giant tale, and the ability for a young character in a fairy tale to witness the story of another character without imposing her interests as the plot progresses.

The Secret-Keeper by Kate Coombs (2006) is an original fairy tale about Kalli, the woman charged with keeping the secrets of all of the people of her village. When the darkness of their secrets makes her ill, the mayor brings everyone together to tell her

good secrets—their wants, good deeds, proud attributes, and truths—which makes her feel well again. The last secret (and his first ever) to be told is by the potter's son as he whispers, "I love the secret-keeper" (p. 21). The villagers' secrets, dark and bright, are treated with equal importance without judgment.

Otto is a gentle giant that only wants his pet hen back from Jack in *The Giant and the Beanstalk* by Diane Stanley (2004). Although he is an independent character, Otto's decisions do not propel the plot, therefore he does not exhibit true autonomy. He is simply following Jack, who stole the hen, to exchange for his beloved pet cow that he sold. Along the way Otto runs into several nursery rhyme Jacks and their families, hardly concerned by the kind flower-crowned giant as they send him in the right direction. Jack Sprat's wife offers "Not far at all. But can't we give you something to nibble on? A nice steak and butter sandwich, perhaps?" (p. 16). In the end, it is evident that everyone the giant meets is nice to him, and happy to help him find the boy Jack that he is looking for. It is the respectful exchanges in the narrative that reveal the equity amongst characters.

Pinocchio the Boy: Or Incognito in Collodi by Lane Smith (2002) picks up Pinocchio's story as the Blue Fairy grants his wish to become a real boy—except she forgets to tell him. When he awakens to find that Geppetto is sick from their journey in the fish belly, Pinocchio decides to go out and get him some chicken soup to feel better. Along the way he meets Hershabel, a girl who is perplexed by his behavior and continues with him through town just to see what he will do next, exclaiming "This kid needs help!" (p. 13). When he is repeatedly unsuccessful at working as a puppet to earn money he begins to lose heart, rejoicing when he hears Geppetto on the news looking for him. Still, Hershabel has not collaborated to help him, but stays with him until he gets home

safe. At home they find the Blue Fairy there with chicken soup, and by coincidence she is Hershabel's mother. Everybody celebrates with an evening of ice-skating. Neither Pinocchio or Hershabel are independent characters or great collaborators, but they don't stand in each other's way either, creating an equal friendship between a boy and a girl.

New Tales, Old Themes

Not all books selected for the study bore themes relevant to the study. Several are funny or cute, or offer a refreshing culture shift from the traditional Western version. However, three uphold negative traditional themes as either original or fractured fairy tales. A reissue of a traditional text (such as with a new illustrator) cannot be faulted for teaching the lessons of the time it was originally scribed, but new versions should acknowledge a modern audience.

Sleeping Bobby by Will and Mary Pope Osborne (2005) and *Snoring Beauty* by Bruce Hale (2008) disappointed by offering little change to the gender stereotypes of the original "Sleeping Beauty," and offering less autonomy to leading characters. The gender swap in *Sleeping Bobby* seems promising, especially considering how Mary Pope Osborne treats the title characters in *Kate and the Beanstalk* (2000) and *The Brave Little Seamstress* (2002). The princess on horseback sets out to seek her fortune, rides for a time, arrives as the bramble hedge parts to reveal the castle as the curse is ending, kisses Prince Bob, and then they are married. Aside from the silly names of quirky characters and a slight change of circumstances in the curse, *Snoring Beauty* does little to turn the "prince rescues princess" motif on its head—unless a snoring princess who is still rescued by a prince counts. It is cute and funny, but does little to impart a sense of equality or autonomy in fairy tales.

The original tale *Buttons* by Brock Cole (2000) is so successful at reproducing outdated gender stereotyping as a 21st century fairy tale, perhaps it is meant to be a satire. The father is old, fat, and daft, with a witty wife who asks her daughters' advice on how they could possibly replace the buttons from his britches since they popped off into the fire. Each of the girls' plans are weak to begin with. This becomes moot for the two oldest when they are both distracted by the prospect of marriage. The third daughter is most dismayed by the fact that her strategy to "run in the meadows along the river, and [I will] hold my apron out so that if any buttons should fall from the sky, I will catch them before they get lost in the tall grass" (p. 6) is not working. It is no surprise that when a cowherd suggests to her to look under the old oak tree the following day she is gullible enough to do it, and (big surprise), finds buttons falling from the branches. She is the hero, repaying the cowherd for his good advice by agreeing to marry him, "and they kissed rapturously" (p. 27).

Summary

Noting gendered character relationships revealing common goals through varying types of collaboration drove the process of coding. Analysis included observation of characters realizing agency over the decisions made that pushed the plot forward, indicating the presence of feminist re-vision. As examples of autonomy surfaced, yet few instances of collaboration were shown, it became imperative to define, and recode for, the common characteristic of strong independent characters, regardless of gender.

Both original fairy tales and modern retellings were present in each of the anticipated (positive collaboration among characters) and unexpected themes

(independent characters realizing autonomy, equitable character relationships throughout, and tales that upheld traditional inequitable gender relationships) that emerged.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to seek evidence of equity among characters in 21st

century children's fairy tales, exhibited by themes that describe equitable character

portrayal. Emerging themes were positive collaboration among characters, independent

characters realizing autonomy, and equity among characters regardless of gender or

station. Although children are expected to act collaboratively in school, and eventually

work situations, examples of that behavior were not found to be dominant in the study by

Mendelson (1997). Based on his examination of *Grimms' Fairy Tales*, examples of

female collaboration were rare, generally involving negative relationships formed to

perform unsavory deeds. This study sought to build on Mendelson's findings, choosing

fairy tale picture books published in the 21st century, agreeing with scholars such as

Cranny-Francis (1990) and Crew (2002) who have asserted that fairy tales have the

power to perpetuate cultural norms, such as collaboration. To evaluate equity the

researcher referred to definitions of feminist re-visions in Parsons' (2004) work,

compared to definitions of fractured fairy tales in the work of Cranny-Francis (1990),

Crew (2002), and Cummins' (1997).

Gender equity, exhibited by collaboration of mixed and same-gendered groups in

21st century fairy tales is where the textual analysis began. Through coding, recoding, and

descriptive analysis of the 50 most frequently owned (according to Worldcat) fairy tale

picture books published from 2000-2009, these are the conclusions found by the

researcher. Illustrations were not analyzed in this study.

Conclusions

Only five books in the study are classified as exhibiting positive examples of collaboration. There are several possible reasons. Many of the books in the study sample were newly published/illustrated versions of the traditional fairy tale canon, or versions from Non-Western cultures that strive to present the text as it is most commonly known in that culture.

It is also possible that there have been other fairy tale picture books published in that time frame, but because of low frequency of ownership, they were not analyzed in this study. However, if they have low ownership, they are less likely to be read. This makes it difficult for them to perpetuate the social norm of collaboration effectively. Another aspect to consider is the picture book format. It may be that several authors are writing fairy tales showing equitable collaboration, but perhaps they are novels aimed at older students or an adult audience. The researcher maintains that it is the picture book audience that would most likely accept the message of equitable collaboration, as older students have already begun to accept or deny social mores.

Books that presented equity among characters regardless of gender or station were entertaining to read, quietly revealing themselves since books without a strong protagonist have a slower pace and fewer peaks in the plot. An unexpected result of the study was the emergence of characters that have realized autonomy and personal strength. These characters are significant due to their ability to generate and execute resolution to their own conflict(s). Traditional tellings often rely on magic or persons of higher station to rescue the protagonist. Original and retold stories surfaced in the study sample that have characters able to use cunning, ingenuity, and wit to fuel their

determination to resolve the conflict(s) presented in the story, thereby realizing

autonomy. Of the nine examples cited in that section of the findings, only one protagonist

is a male character, however this does not indicate inequality of gender roles amongst

autonomous characters. Instead it reveals the ability for the story to be gender

neutralized, and therefore showing gender equality in characters realizing power. With

creative adjustment to the details of any of those nine stories, the protagonist could be

either male or female and still implement resolution of the conflict effectively, thereby

illustrating a feminist re-vision. The prevalence of strong female characters can be

attributed to a backlash of the study of weak female characters creating gender inequality

in traditional tellings, with modern tellings compensating for the work done in that aspect

of the genre over the past 50 years.

There were three books (not traditional tellings) that were greatly disappointing in

their ability show collaboration, autonomy, or equity of any kind among characters. Their

presence among the books that met the library ownership criterion suggests that outdated

gender stereotypes continue to be purchased and read with frequency.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that librarians consider the gender

equity of the fairy tales they buy to avoid spending money on just another "prettier"

version from the canon. To facilitate this behavior in librarians, book reviewers need to

accurately describe the version of a fairy tale that is being presented in new publications.

Evaluations should clearly state whether a text is a retelling or an original story. It would

help librarians greatly if reviewers also classified whether a story is a traditional version

or has been greatly altered. An altered text should further be defined as to whether it falls

into one of the following categories: fractured fairy tale (one or more elements of the story twisted to entertain the reader in a new way); feminist re-vision (protagonist character experiencing autonomy in decisions made that propel the plot, regardless of gender); or outdated (retold or original story manifesting traditional gender stereotypes). It should not be assumed that because a tale has been reworked that it successfully represents a more equitable relationship than the traditional version.

The research shows that children learn from the relationships presented in the books they read. Perhaps this research should be/has been extended to the movies intended for family audiences. An analysis of autonomy and equity of gendered relationships in 21st century fairy tale movies would be a valuable future study to extend beyond the existing body of work related to *Disneyfied* tales.

The didactic nature of fairy tales demands that study of the genre go on, providing they continue to be published. Fairy tales will continue to perpetuate cultural norms of the time that they are told (or published in this case), therefore the stories disseminated will demand regular study to ensure that positive gains in the representation of gender equity are maintained over time.

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Zipes, J. (2006b). *Why fairy tales stick: The evolution and relevance of a genre.* New York: Routledge.

APPENDIX A
BOOKS USED IN TEXTUAL ANALYSIS:
ORDERED BY FREQUENCY OF WORLDCAT OWNERSHIP*

Title	OCLC Holdings
Fleischman, P. *Glass Slipper, Gold Sandal: A Worldwide Cinderella.* Henry Holt, 2007.	3810
Coombs, K. *The Secret-keeper.* Atheneum Books, 2006.	2779
Gerstein, M. *Carolinda Clatter!* Roaring Brook Press, 2005.	2199
Yolen, J. *The Perfect Wizard: Hans Christian Andersen.* Dutton Children's Books, 2004. [excluded as a biography of a fairy tale author]	1961
Osborne, M. P. *Kate and the Beanstalk.* Atheneum Books, 2000.	1770
Cole, B. *Buttons.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000.	1737
Hamilton, V. *The Girl Who Spun Gold.* Blu Sky Press, 2000.	1649
De Paola, T. *Adelita: A Mexican Cinderella Story.* G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2002.	1454
Napoli, D.J. *Albert.* Silver Whistle Books, 2001.	1420
Pinkney, J. *Little Red Riding Hood.* Little, Brown, 2007.	1378
Sierra, J. *The Gift of the Crocodile: A Cinderella Story.* Simon & Schuster, 2000.	1368
Ernst, L. C. *The Gingerbread Girl.* Dutton, 2006.	1318
O'Malley, K. *Once Upon a Cool Motorcycle Dude.* Walker & Company, 2005.	1284
Craft, K. *Cinderella.* Sea Star Books, 2000.	1276
LaRochelle, D. *The End.* Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007.	1272
Sweet, M. *Carmine: A Little More Red.* Houghton Mifflin, 2005.	1249
McClintock, B. *Cinderella.* Scholastic Press, 2005.	1237
Smith, L. *Pinocchio, The Boy: Or Incognito in Collodi.* Viking, 2002.	1232
Funke, C. *Princess Pigsty.* Scholastic, 2007.	1199
Kloske, G. *Once Upon a Time, the End: (Asleep in 60 Seconds).* Atheneum Books, 2005. [excluded as a collection of brief retellings]	1147
Ernst, L. C. *Goldilocks Returns.* Simon & Schuster, 2000.	1138
De Paola, T. *Pascual and the Kitchen Angels.* G. P. Putnam, 2004.	1115
Stanley, D. *The Giant and the Beanstalk.* Harper Collins Publishers, 2004.	1096
Cole, B. *Good Enough to Eat.* Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.	1079
Pinkney, J. *The Nightingale.* Phyllis Fogelman Books, 2002.	1072
Osborne, M. P. *The Brave Little Seamstress.* Atheneum Books, 2002.	1069
D'Amico, C. *Ella the Elegant Elephant.* Arthur A. Levine Books, 2004.	1042
San Souci, R. *Little Gold Star: A Spanish American Cinderella Tale.* Harper Collins, 2000.	1031
McDonald, M. *The Hinky-pink.* Atheneum Books, 2008.	1017
Poole, A. L. *The Pea Blossom.* Holiday House, 2005.	1008
Eilenberg, M. *Beauty and the Beast.* Candlewick Press, 2006.	1005
Nesbit, E. *Jack and the Beanstalk.* Candlewick Press, 2006.	1004

Juan, A. *The Night Eater*. Arthur A. Levine, 2004.	1001
Schotter, R. *The Boy Who Loved Words*. Schwartz & Wade Books, 2006.	998
Osborne, W. *Sleeping Bobby*. Atheneum Books, 2005.	974
Hughes, S. *Ella's Big Chance: A Jazz-Age Cinderella*. Simon & Schuster, 2004.	952
Sperring, M. *The Fairytale Cake*. Scholastic, 2005. [excluded as a simplistic telling]	944
Martin, R. *The Storytelling Princess*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2001.	927
Hale, B. *Snoring Beauty*. Harcourt, 2008.	905
Catalanotto, P. *Ivan the Terrier*. Atheneum Books, 2007.	900
Schlitz, L. A. *The Bearskinner: A Tale of the Brothers Grimm*. Candlewick Press, 2007.	899
Hayes, J. *Little Gold Star: A Cinderella Cuento*. Cinco Punto Press, 2000.	897
Ogburn, J. K. *The Magic Nesting Doll*. Dial Books, 2000.	897
Ray, J. *The Apple-pip Princess*. Candlewick Press, 2007.	896
Ziefert, H. *Little Red Riding Hood*. Viking, 2000. [excluded as an Early Reader simplification of the traditional telling]	868
Ahlberg, A. *Previously*. Candlewick Press, 2007.	845
Shannon, M. *The Red Wolf*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002.	841
San Souci, R. D. *The Well at the End of the World*. Chronicle Books, 2004.	837
Burns, K. *Mansa Musa: The Lion of Mali*. Harcourt, 2001. [excluded as folklore of a people rather than a fairy tale]	830
Jeffers, S. *The Nutcracker*. Harper Collins, 2007.	826
Daly, N. *Pretty Salma: A Red Riding Hood Story From Africa*. Clarion Books, 2007.	824
Coburn, J. R. *Domitila: A Cinderella tale from the Mexican Tradition*. Shen's Books, 2000.	806
Grey, M. *Ginger Bear*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2007.	798
Watt, M. *Chester's Back!* Kids Can Press, 2008. [excluded as a story not actually containing a fairy tale genre plotline]	779
Isadora, R. *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2007.	778
Hoffman, M. *Princess Grace*. Dial Books, 2008.	773

Titles is gray were excluded from study when it was realized they did not meet the criteria outlined in Chapter 3.

* As recorded in November 2009