

GENDER ROLES IN RUMPELSTILSKIN:  
A CHANGING PICTURE?

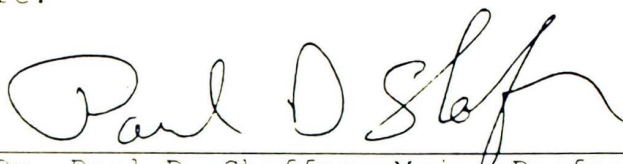
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KATJA R. PINKSTON



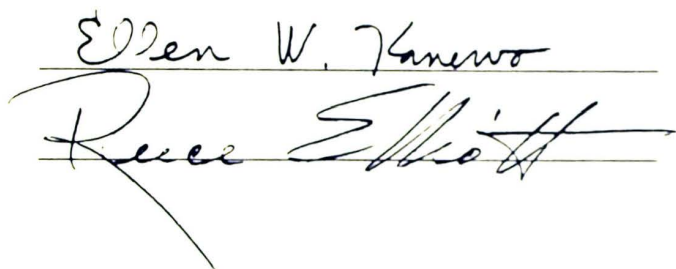
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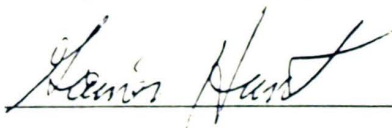


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GENDER ROLES IN RUMPELSTILTSKIN:

A CHANGING PICTURE?

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

Austin Peay State University

Katja R. Pinkston

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband

Bobby Ray Pinkston, Jr

whose support was invaluable.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my professors, Dr. Paul D. Shaffer, Dr. Ellen W. Kanervo, and Dr. Reece Elliott, for their guidance and patience. The assistance and encouragement I received from my professors throughout my studies have made a lasting impression on me, and words cannot express my gratefulness. My special thanks go to my husband, Ray. Without his understanding, helpfulness, and patience I would have never been able to earn my degree.

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## ABSTRACT

This research explored the stereotypical depiction of women in the 1965 and 1986 versions of Rumpelstiltskin and their influences on children's gender-role perceptions. A content analysis found that the heroine was more likely to be depicted in stereotypical traits and roles in the older version compared to the newer film. Differences were not statistically significant. The second part of this research involved 82 fourth graders. Group one (n=32) watched the 1965 film, whereas group two (n=29) saw the newer version before filling out the questionnaire. The control group (n=21) filled out the questionnaire only. Significant statistical differences were found when the groups were compared. Children in the 1965 group were more likely to supply the stereotypical answers concerning the genders' behaviors and traits. No statistical difference was found for division of labor and between boys' and girls' responses. This research concludes that stereotypical portrayal of the genders in the media is instrumental in developing and affecting children's gender schemata.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

Fairy tales are part of our cultural heritage and have been called a mirror of society. They reflect values and ways of living in times past, but, at the same time, they also reveal universal emotions and experiences (Sutherland & Arbuthnot, 1986). While the love for stories is an omnipresent passion (Danilewitz, 1991), in fairy tales the story line is simple and direct, while images are colorful and graphic (O'Connor, 1989). Consequently, fairy tales are easy to memorize and remain with us long past our own childhood.

Interdisciplinary research into fairy tales and folktales has included theories on identifying the origins of folktales and revealing methodologies and typologies in folklore (Kamenetsky, 1992; Kelley, 1994). According to Kamenetsky (1992), Andrew Lang's comparative studies, written around the turn of the century, were aimed at encompassing folktales on a worldwide basis and searching for customs, rituals, and folk beliefs. Furthermore, Kamenetsky notes that studies in the symbolic and literary interpretation of fairy tales written by Hedwig von Beit (1952-1956) as well as by Max Luethi (1964) have expanded the research perspectives (p. 275-278).

Also, fairy tales have been the focus of psychological



interpretations. Following the footsteps of Freud and Jung, Bruno Bettelheim (1977) developed the classical book on the Freudian interpretation of fairy tales, arguing for society's and, especially, children's need for fairy tales to aid childhood socialization and enculturation.

Nevertheless, fairy tales have not only been of interest to folklorists, pedagogics, sociologists, and psychologists, but in the past two decades the feminist movement has brought a new consciousness regarding women's roles in literature and film (Roehrich, 1986; Kamenetsky, 1992). The feminist approach to fairy tales can be distinguished between two approaches (Kamenetsky, 1992). Swiss psychologist Dr. Marie-Louise von Franz (1993) has focused on the Jungian interpretation of fairy tales for many years by identifying women as archetypes or as gender specific symbols with positive as well as negative connotations. The second approach is represented by researchers who point to the stereotypical gender connotations in fairy tales (e.g., Bottigheimer, 1986; Tatar, 1987).

The need for investigating the stereotypical portrayal of women in fairy tales lies, in part, in the prevalence and fondness for fairy tales. Children are the primary audience for fairy tales, and they still view tales, especially

Grimms' fairy tales, as more satisfying than any other form of children's literature (Wardetzky, 1990; Danilewitz, 1991; Strayer, 1995). However, a change in medium from storybook to filmed adaptations has also taken place. The filmed versions of fairy tales have been very successful (Kelley, 1994; Trousdale, 1989; Molloy, 1988). Walt Disney, for instance, has been a household word since it released Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs in 1937, Cinderella in 1950, and Sleeping Beauty in 1959, and all of these filmed adaptations have been reissued repeatedly (Thomas & Johnston, 1981). At the same time, other producers have been inspired to adapt the Grimms' tales. Not only do cartoon characters bring the fairy tales to life, but theatrical adaptations as well as life-feature films are available to audiences.

While the filmed versions breathe color, life, and humor into the fairy tale characters, they may not, however, free the image of repressed and passive womanhood. Stereotypical portrayal of women in the media is of great concern because of the media's role in affecting our perceptions (Golombok & Fivush, 1994; Signorielli, 1989). Strongly held perceptions about culturally appropriate behaviors of females and males not only perpetuate prejudice and the expectancy of distinct behavioral differences based upon a person's gender, but can also limit our personal



development (Golombok & Fivush, 1994).

The conceptual framework for this study is based on the gender schema theory. In essence, a gender schema, or network of associations, is conceptually similar to a gender stereotype (Golombok & Fivush, 1994). Boys and girls are expected to acquire gender-specific skills, self-concepts, and personality attributes at an early age. Children learn to process information by invoking their network of gender-related associations to evaluate and assimilate new information (Bem, 1981). This information is not only derived from family or peers, but also from media content which is a likely source for constructing schemata (Wright et al., 1995; Golombok & Fivush, 1994).

This research comprises two phases. First, it focuses on the stereotypical portrayal of the heroine in the live-feature fairy tale adaptation of Rumpelstiltskin produced in 1965 by Kid Rhino versus the 1986 version produced by The Cannon Group. The juxtaposition of these two versions allows comparison to what extent the stereotypical role of the main character has changed and renders cognizance of the gains and losses of women's portrayal in fairy tale adaptations during the past 21 years.

Both versions depict one female character, the miller's daughter, in the leading role. The heroine is portrayed as

an ordinary young woman who lives with her father. When she finds herself in a predicament, the leading male character, a gnome called Rumpelstiltskin, helps her. The heroine promises him her first child, but ultimately changes her mind. Finally, the gnome offers her the chance to keep her child if she can guess his name.

The content analysis of this study concentrates on the female character, as it is the heroine who is most likely portrayed in a passive and submissive manner; therefore, it is she who offers the traditional feminine role model to children.

The research question that is put forward is whether the portrayal of the heroine is shown in a less stereotypical manner in Rumpelstiltskin produced in 1986 than in the 1965 version. This study expects to find support for the subsequent hypothesis.

H<sub>1</sub>: The live-feature children's film Rumpelstiltskin produced in 1965 by Kid Rhino is more likely to portray the female heroine in a stereotypical role compared to The Cannon Group's 1986 live-feature version of Rumpelstiltskin.

Nevertheless, of equal or perhaps even greater importance is examining the effects of stereotypes in fairy tales on children's perceptions and in the formation of gender schemata. The second phase of this research focuses

therefore on learning whether children's perceptions of sex-role stereotypes differ after being exposed to the 1965 and the 1986 versions of Rumpelstiltskin.

While studies (e.g., Greenberg, 1989; Baker, 1990) have looked at gender-typical portrayal of females in films, the role of filmed fairy tales in affecting children's formation of gender schemata has received very little attention. Thus, this study seeks to expand our knowledge regarding the following questions. Are children's perceptions of gender roles influenced after having watched a fairy tale? Are children's responses toward sex-role stereotypes different after they have been exposed to the 1965 version compared to the 1986 version? Is there a difference between boys' and girls' responses?

Undoubtedly, it is important to investigate if and to what extent fairy tale versions affect children's learning about gender roles. Paramount is the question whether the 1986 version perpetuates children's perceptions of sex-role stereotypes to the same extent as the older version. As it is being predicted that Kid Rhino's version will be more likely to portray the heroine in stereotypical roles, this study examines also the following hypothesis and its specific components.

H<sub>2</sub>: Children will be more likely to reveal



stereotypical attitudes toward women after having watched Kid Rhino's 1965 version of Rumpelstiltskin compared to The Cannon Group's 1986 version.

A. It is predicted that children will be more likely to give stereotypical responses toward male and female traits after having viewed Kid Rhino's version when asked about which gender they associate with (1) gentleness, (2) aggressiveness/assertiveness, (3) emotionality/weakness, (4) dominance/autocracy, and (5) protectiveness/strongness.

B. It is predicted that children will be more likely to give stereotypical responses toward male and female division of labor after having viewed Kid Rhino's version compared to those children who have watched The Cannon Group's version.

The first hypothesis was investigated by examining the miller's daughter's portrayal in stereotypical roles in a content analysis of the two fairy tale versions. The second hypothesis involved a study that examined children's responses after exposure to either the 1965 or the 1986 version.



## CHAPTER II

### Literature Review

As feminists have criticized the Grimm Brothers' fairy tales, it must be remembered that the filmed fairy tale versions of Rumpelstiltskin by Kid Rhino and The Cannon Group were also adapted from the Grimm Brothers' collection of fairy tales. Therefore, the filmed versions may incorporate sex-role stereotypes, even the latter one which was produced in the 1980s, because of the sacred text approach, meaning, adapting literature to film as closely as possible. It is therefore important to discuss briefly the Grimm Brothers' loyalty to tradition.

The so-called Oelenberg manuscripts, which are original drafts of fairy tales prepared by the Grimm Brothers around 1810, were discovered in Alsace in 1920. Many of the fairy tales in the Oelenberg manuscripts were already well-known, as they had been published in the nineteenth century in the various editions of Grimms' Children and Household Tales (Weishaupt, 1985).

Consequently, the manuscripts have served as a basis of comparison. By comparing the Grimms' original drafts of fairy tales with those in the published editions, it can be detected to what extent the brothers altered the texts (Peppard, 1971). Findings suggest that the brothers edited and stylistically embellished the tales they had collected

for many years (Tatar, 1987; Ellis, 1983). Therefore, scholars propose that the Grimms' concept of loyalty to tradition referred to keeping only the basic substance of the tales (Kamenetsky, 1992).

Although the Grimm Brothers posited in the preface of the 1819 edition that they faithfully reproduced in their printed text the voice of the German folk-story teller (Kamenetsky, 1992), Ellis (1983) suggests in a detailed study that the brothers altered the texts, at times even rewriting the originally collected tales and injecting their own values and biases. In accordance with this view, Bottigheimer (1986) argues that, seen in the context of the time, the Grimms' fairy tales offered an innocent, yet suitable medium for transmitting and enforcing the norm of the silent woman in readers and listeners.

Consequently, it must be considered that the brothers may have recreated, consciously or unconsciously, the tales in accordance with the values and norms of the patriarchal society of the nineteenth century. Also, the cultural background and personality of the storyteller influenced the way he or she presented any given tale to the Grimm Brothers (Tatar, 1987). Fairy tales are therefore seen as stories that "continually modernize themselves and replace older cultural features with more recent ones" (Roehrich, 1986, p.

4). Thus, it is difficult, if not impossible, to proclaim a fairy tale as its original version at any given time in history.

Nevertheless, feminist researchers may have focused too much on the tales as a homogeneous whole, thereby looking at the similarities in stereotypical content and ignoring those fairy tales like The Twelve Brothers that do not reinforce submissive womanhood as do Cinderella or Sleeping Beauty (Thum, 1993).

Studies, however, point to the Cinderella-style fairy tales as having served to acculturate women into traditional roles (Zipes, 1988). In an analysis of 80 fairy tales, no differences were found in terms of helpfulness, cruelty and evilness/goodness between males and females, although males were shown to be significantly more independent and obedient than females (Bierhoff-Alfermann, Brandt, & Dittel, 1982). Furthermore, descriptions of the females' physical appearance were common, thereby emphasizing the desirability of female beauty. On the other hand, females were less often described in terms of the intellectual and the instrumental domain than males.

Likewise, Dowling's The Cinderella Complex (1981) implies that the repressed female character in popular fairy tales reinforces restrictive images of girlhood and



womanhood. Thus, the Cinderella-style tales contribute to women's negative self-image and to the limited definitions of their identities, as fairy tales present a world where women's prime reason for existence lies in their relationship with men (O'Connor, 1989).

One important counter-influence to this trend of thinking has been research that supports Bettelheim's (1977) claim on the meaningfulness and thought-provoking effect of fairy tales. Crain, D'Alessio, McIntyre, and Smoke (1983) found that those children who had heard or seen a fairy tale played in a very subdued and self-absorbing manner and "seemed lost in their own thoughts" (p. 13).

Likewise, after conducting a study with 21 third graders, Bearse (1992) found that children consciously and unconsciously incorporated fairy tale elements into their own stories, after they had heard fairy tales. Howarth (1989) noted that acting out fairy tales enabled children to explore their developing inner selves. Fairy tales not only appear to awaken the feeling of participation with other human beings in children, but they also nourish children's courage to broaden their horizons and to tackle challenges successfully (Danilewitz, 1991).

Furthermore, the immoral and wicked side of human character is revealed in fairy tales. Thus, fairy tales



also teach children that evil acts result in negative consequences, as children learn that the "greedy, selfish, proud, and unfriendly" (Howarth, 1989, p. 62) have to pay the consequences for their actions. Contrary to some of the findings by Bierhoff-Alfermann et. al (1982), O'Connor (1989) argues that these negative role models are usually women who are depicted as evil stepmothers, queens, or witches.

Nevertheless, after conducting a qualitative study with three eight-year-old girls, Trousdale (1989) concluded that televised or filmed adaptations of fairy tales may provide children with positive and cognitively engaging experiences, in particular, if the viewing is accompanied by discussion. Research suggests that girls generally reject the frilly female image in fairy tales, while boys, in particular, are most comfortable with the traditional role models in fairy tales; however, the figure of the pretty, submissive princess predominated in girls' pictures (Westland, 1993).

### The Formation of Gender Schemata

Influenced by stories, observations, and experiences, children make their own attempts to understand their environment. They form schemata, which are categories or concepts that help them to organize the world (Fagot & Leinbach, 1989). Schemata provide frameworks for

understanding future experiences. They function as a cognitive as well as an anticipatory structure that represent organized knowledge about a given stimulus and that guide our perceptions. Luke (1985) explains that schemata act upon data, as "we 'slot' information into available schematic categories in order to construct plausible and comprehensible interpretations" (p. 95). Therefore, gender schemata and sex stereotypes are conceptually similar (Golombok & Fivush, 1994).

The gender schema theory combines cognitive-developmental theory and the social learning theory (Bem, 1981). It proposes that the process of sex-typing is derived from gender-based schematic processing by making sex-linked associations based on the ready availability of one's gender schema. The cognitive structure of gender schemata is not innate, but acquired through the sex-specific attributes that are associated with masculinity and femininity in one's environment. In reference to the formation of gender schemata in children, Bem (1981) explains,

As children learn the contents of the society's gender schema, they learn which attributes are to be linked with their own sex and, hence, with themselves. This does not simply entail learning where each sex is

supposed to stand on each dimension or attribute - that boys are to be strong and girls weak, for example - but involves the deeper lesson that the dimensions themselves are differentially applicable to the two sexes. Thus the strong-weak dimension itself is absent from the schema that is to be applied to girls just as the dimension of nurturance is implicitly omitted from the schema that is to be applied to boys. (p. 355).

The gender schema theory defines that gender knowledge is multidimensional. As knowledge is organized, humans make clear links to female-related and male-related components (Golombok & Fivush, 1994). Martin, Wood, and Little (1990) explain associative links in gender stereotypes in the manner of a component model of stereotypes. This model divides gender-related components into the categories of within-component and across-component associations.

The multidimensional components associate femininity and masculinity with at least four main components: behaviors, occupations, traits, and roles. Humans associate gender-related versions of these four components depending on the gender of a person. By knowing someone's gender, we make inferences about that person's behavior, occupation, traits, and appearance. Similarly, by knowing one characteristic about a person in one category (e.g.,

interests, hobbies, occupation), we make inferences within the same category. For instance, if we know that a person is interested in cooking, we infer that the same person is likely to be interested in sewing based on the gender concepts of masculinity and femininity.

Besides the within-component links humans make, Martin et al. (1990) also suggest that humans make between-component links. Knowing one characteristic about a person in one category leads us to infer other characteristics about that person in other categories. We not only make links within categories but also across categories.

Golombok and Fivush (1994), who refer to between-component also as across-component associations, describe it as such:

Across-component associations link behaviors from different categories of knowledge. For example, "likes to cook," a female-related behavior, is associated with "being nurturant," a female-related trait, and with "mothering," a female-related role. These links within and across components allow us to make predictions. Knowing one thing about a person leads to inferring other things, both within the same category and across categories. In this way, the structure of gender schemas provides a great deal of predictability given very little information. (p. 101).



During the formation of children's gender schemata, stereotypical responses vary with regard to age levels. According to a literature review on gender schema effects, Ruble and Stangor (1986) report that by age five, children are aware of sex-role violations. It is not until the ages of five to seven, however, that children attain gender constancy, meaning, the consistent labeling of oneself and others as male or female. Children aged five to seven show an increase in stereotyping when responding to forced choice between female and male; however, when children are also given the "both/neither" response option, stereotypical responses decrease after this age level (Ruble & Stangor, 1986).

Furthermore, Martin et al. (1990) found that preschool children rely almost exclusively on the gender-related labels they have formed to predict gender-typed behaviors and activities of an individual, regardless of counterstereotypic information given. Also, Martin et al. found that only around the age of eight will children be able to draw complex inferences within and across components when they make predictions about same-sex as well as other-sex characters.

Thus, the gender schema theory is a means for understanding how children learn the contents of their

society's gender schemata and link attributes with the sexes (Bem, 1981). The process in which children acquire beliefs about their gender identity may be complex; yet, research has shown that from an early age, children construct beliefs about differences between males and females, thus supporting the gender schema theory (e.g., Liben & Signorella, 1980; Ruble & Stangor, 1986).

### The Role of Television in Gender Stereotyping

While children are still fascinated with reading and hearing fairy tales, it is also important to remember that in today's media oriented world, children are more likely to turn to the televised fairy tale adaptations. The pervasive medium of television is likely to play a role in the formation of gender schemata. Viewers, including those who are cognitively and experientially immature, derive meaning from television content based on previously acquired knowledge; this knowledge includes experience with television's portrayal of characters and situations (Luke, 1985).

Studying the perceptions of judged factuality and social realism of television shows in children aged five and seven, Wright, Huston, Reitz, and Piemyat (1994) found that children indicated that fictional programs were not real, but younger children were less aware that fictional

characters did not retain their roles in real life or that fictional programs were rehearsed. In a similar study, Wright et al. (1995) investigated the formation of role schemata by examining to what extent second and fifth graders distinguished between real life occupations and those shown on television. Results suggest that those children who viewed television as socially realistic, incorporated television messages into their schemata and aspirations.

Moreover, Austin, Roberts, and Nass (1990) tested the effects of family communication and parental mediation of television content on third, sixth, and ninth graders. The results rebut a hypodermic needle scenario, in which children absorb media content as a sponge. Nevertheless, if relevant information from real-life is absent, "television may provide unique social information, which children may accept more readily" (p. 562).

This also points to the significance of investigating the manner in which women are portrayed on television. The mass media, in particular, television, serve as a major source of learning about gender roles and gender-typical behavior (Levy, 1990; Lafky, Duffy, Steinmaus, & Berkowitz, 1996). Content analyses that investigated the stereotypical portrayal of the genders on television and film have



therefore been an ongoing concern to researchers.

Mellen (1973) notes that films of the 1950s and the 1960s marked marriage as being the ultimate goal for women. After comparing eight films from the 1940s to eight films produced in the 1960s, Turner (1981) attests that businesswomen possessed many traits associated with masculinity; yet, their success in business had an adverse effect on interpersonal relationships. In a study that analyzed education-centered television series from 1948 to 1988, Mayerle and Rarick (1989) suggest that males were more frequently shown in domineering roles and in positions of power than females.

Furthermore, the content analysis of 116 prime-time television programs found that women remained underrepresented and were shown in fewer decisional, political, and operational actions (Vande Berg & Streckfuss, 1992). After examining gender-role portrayals from the perspective of Hollywood's dominant ideology, Levy (1990) attests that the female stereotype functioned as a means for rewarding women "for accepting, rather than challenging, their traditional roles and the status quo" (p. 73).

Also, in a recent content analysis that investigated sex-role stereotyping in occupational roles and the behavior of music-video characters in 182 MTV music videos, Seidman

(1992) found that females as well as males were depicted in sex-typed occupations. Males were still shown as more domineering, aggressive, violent, victimized, and adventuresome than females, while females were more likely to be portrayed as dependent, nurturing, and fearful than males.

The process of forming gender identity is complex; nevertheless, the manner in which females and males are depicted on television is of great importance because children, in particular, derive meaning about the world around them also from television content (e.g., Luke, 1985; Signorielli, 1989). Several studies have therefore focused on examining the link between the media's stereotypical portrayal of males and females and gender role perception.

Applying the high impact image (drench) and the frequent viewing (drip, drip) theories on television's effect on sex-role stereotyping, Reep and Dambrot (1989) propose that the theories may interact and support each other. The findings suggest that the gender of the viewer may affect that person's perception of the characters, indicating that judgments are made based on personal traits or gender.

Moreover, Ruble and Stangor (1986) attest that children form beliefs about the differences between females and males

at an early age and that material that is linked to one sex is remembered more easily by children of that sex. A study by Liben and Signorella (1993) provides further evidence that children from kindergarten through grade three have greater difficulty in remembering gender-related information that is counterstereotypic. Even children who were given stimulus labels that simplified the encoding task of nontraditional material showed response biases.

In addition, Huston, Greer, Wright, Welch, and Ross (1984) analyzed the comprehension of masculine and feminine television content and formal production features (i.e., action, music, and camera techniques) of children from grades one to six. Findings suggest that children understood the sex-typed connotations of televised formal features even at a subtle level. The authors (Huston et al., 1984) attribute children's knowledge of sex-typed connotations to the "experience with television programs, particularly those designed for children" (p. 715). Some researchers explain the formation of children's beliefs in terms of the magic window dimension, with children seeing television as a magic window that presents truthful pictures of the world (Potter, 1986).

Moreover, Signorielli (1989) suggests that the messages on television may contribute to more sexist views of women,



and Signorielli and Lears (1992) found evidence that children's perceptions about sex-typed chores were positively related to television viewing. A study by Thompson and Zerbino (1994) gives insight into what 89 children, ages four to nine, learned about gender roles from cartoons. Findings indicate that (1) more behaviors were attributed to male characters, (2) male characters' behaviors were described as violent and active, and (3) most children perceived male and female characters in stereotypical ways. As females are mostly shown in traditional roles in the media (e.g., Vande Berg & Streckfuss, 1992), television reinforces sex-role stereotypes (Morgan, 1982).

### Stereotypes in Filmed Fairy Tales

Although empirical research into the stereotypical portrayal of women in fairy tales has only received limited attention, studies (O'Connor, 1989) suggest that female fairy tale characters are mostly depicted as victims. Feminists argue that the passive heroine offers a narrow and damaging role model for young people (Stone, 1984), and that the stereotypical images of women are also portrayed in the televised or filmed fairy tale adaptations (e.g., Zipes, 1988; Westland, 1993). These stereotypical images show males as being dominant, active, adventurous and

independent, as having courage, and as the rescuer and protector of females. Female characters, on the other hand, are depicted as submissive, less intellectual, passive, and industrious (Kelley, 1994; O'Connor, 1989).

Furthermore, in the popular Cinderella-style fairy tales, the adolescent female's extraordinary beauty is equated to goodness and kindness, whereas adult women, especially those women who are powerful, are shown as cruel, wicked, jealous, and hostile (O'Connor, 1989).

Yet, it appears that the Cinderella-style fairy tales, in particular, enjoy popularity among children and adults. In a study that investigated 40 children's and 30 female adults' familiarity with, and liking for fairy tales, Strayer (1995) found that Cinderella was the first-place choice for children and adults. Interestingly, for children three other fairy tales, Sleeping Beauty, Beauty and the Beast, and Goldilocks, shared the top rank with Cinderella, whereas for adult females, Cinderella clearly ranked highest, followed by Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Sleeping Beauty, and Rapunzel.

Although very little empirical research has been devoted to investigating the amount of stereotypical images in the televised or filmed fairy tale adaptations, Leadbeater and Wilson (1993) juxtaposed Hans Christian

Andersen's story The Little Sea Maid (1837) and Disney's video The Little Mermaid (1989). The findings suggest that the adolescent princess has evolved with changing views of women's roles; however, the filmed adaptation does not challenge the status quo.

In addition, a similar study in which Kelley (1994) juxtaposed Disney's film Cinderella (1950) and the Hollywood movie Pretty Woman (1990) revealed that gender stereotypes persist, with males being portrayed in dominant and active roles, whereas the females' purpose was to be beautiful, submissive, and industrious. According to Kelley, both films reiterate that "men are human beings; women are females" (p. 92).

Consequently, critics disparage Disney's commercialization as a shallow substitute for genuine cultural heritage (Molloy, 1988) and that Disney "must be criticized for his portrayal of a cloying fantasy world filled with cute little beings existing among pretty flowers and singing animals" (Stone, 1975, p. 44). Other critics charge that Disney Americanized the Grimms' texts (Zipes, 1988). While in the Grimms' tales the male figure, albeit being a representation of a patriarchal society, remains unnamed and is essential only for the tale's happy ending, Disney's versions elevate the male rulers to dominant roles



and virile power (Zipes, 1988).

Nonetheless, studies point out that some improvement has been achieved in decreasing stereotypical gender portrayals. Vande Berg and Streckfuss (1992) note that more women were presented on television and that they were nearly as likely as males to be employed as professionals on prime-time television in the late 1980s.

Likewise, in a content analysis over a 15-year period, Bretl and Cantor (1988) conclude that there is a trend toward more equal representation of the sexes in televised commercials. Examining the portrayal of women in the American cinema over the last 60 years, Levy (1990) points at the declining of stereotypical treatment in film which is attributed to an increasing number of female stars and film producers.

The present study was conducted to expand our knowledge about whether or not and to what extent filmed fairy tales portray the female heroine in a stereotypical role by juxtaposing an older and a newer version of Rumpelstiltskin. Based on the literature cited, this paper predicts that the live-action fairy tale adaptation of Rumpelstiltskin produced in 1965 will show the heroine in a more traditional and gender-typed manner than the live-action adaptation produced in 1986. Also, this study explores the relation

between viewing the older or the newer version of the adapted fairy tale and gender role conceptions among children.

# CHAPTER III

## Methodology

### Definition of Terms

Content Analysis. This research defined stereotypical role by looking at how the miller's daughter was portrayed in each version. Stereotypical roles were examined by focusing on the amount of feminine attributes in both versions. As mentioned previously, these attributes incorporate depicting female characters as more submissive, passive, emotional, or dependent than males (Kelley, 1994; O'Connor, 1989; Durkin, 1985).

First, the portrayal of the miller's daughter as being weak and passive was examined by looking at the character's following orders, expressing fear or worry, and asking for help or advice. The variable of following orders describes behavior and/or verbal acknowledgement in which the heroine followed instructions, requests, rules, or orders by other characters. For instance, orders like, "Go and spin gold," or instructions such as, "Do this and then I will come back," with the miller's daughter following these orders were counted in this category.

Showing fear or worry was defined by focusing on scenes in which the female character was depicted with a fearful facial expression, such as eyes wide open, or a fearful body gesture, such as walking backwards. Thus, scenes in which



the heroine exclaimed to be frightened or screams in fear were included. Counted in this category were also expressions that showed that she was worried about a particular situation, an upcoming event, or about another character; for example, exclamations that include the referents "I'm worried that," or "I'm afraid that" were counted in this category. Asking for help and advice was operationalized by focusing on the heroine's communication acts in which she asked explicitly for help in exclamations or questions such as "Help me!" or "Could you show me how to do that?," or asked for advice with questions such as "What shall I do?."

Second, this paper analyzed to what extent the miller's daughter showed emotions by focusing on the amount of crying or expressing sadness. This included depicting the character in tears or displaying a sad facial expression as well as verbal expressions such as "I'm sad" or "I'm disappointed." The category of showing happiness was defined as depicting the heroine as laughing, singing/humming a melody, or dancing in happiness. This category also encompassed statements such as "I'm happy," or "I'm glad."

Third, it was investigated to what extent the miller's daughter would be portrayed in domestic (housekeeping)

roles. This research focused on examining the portrayal of the heroine as being industrious and doing housekeeping tasks, including cleaning, dusting, or washing the dishes, and fetching, preparing, cooking, or serving foods/drinks.

Fourth, the number of times the heroine was shown as care-giving or in a mother role was analyzed. This included the character's expressing of affection by kissing, hugging, or caressing animals or other characters as well as by the motherly scolding of other characters. Scolding others included statements such as, "I can't believe that you did that," or, "You always make a mess and get me in trouble."

The following mapping sentence helps to illustrate the definition of this hypothesis in its scope.

---

Figure 1. Mapping Sentence of First Hypothesis.

*The heroine will more likely be depicted in a stereotypical role by being portrayed as*

A. Weak/Passive	B. Emotional	C. Housekeeping	D. Mother Role
1. Follow orders	1. Crying	1. Cleaning	1. Scolding
2. Showing fear	2. Happiness	2. Meals	2. Caressing
3. Asking for help			

*in Kid Rhino's 1965 version than in The Cannon Group's 1986 version.*

---

Experiment. The second phase aimed at investigating to what extent children revealed preconceived and oversimplified impressions of the female gender after being exposed to either one of the two versions. Durkin (1985) attests that cognitive structures and categorizations are formed that facilitate the simplification of our social environment; that is, cognitive guidelines help to anticipate the properties of other people. Therefore, sex-role stereotypes are defined as generalized beliefs about the appropriate attributes of women and men. The gender of the respondent will also be used as an independent variable to determine whether girls and boys reveal different stereotypical attitudes toward females.

The term stereotypical attitudes was operationalized by focusing on what Durkin (1985) terms traditional sex-roles that are believed to characterize females and males. These stereotypical feminine characteristics include seeing women as more dependent, passive, weak and as viewing females as being more emotional than males. Stereotypical attitudes were also measured in terms of the proper division of labor between females and males. Femininity was expected to be significantly correlated to home orientation, meaning, viewing females in nurturing (domesticity) roles. Therefore, being a wife and mother should be perceived more



frequently as being a female role by those children who have viewed the Kid Rhino version. Conversely, males were predicted to be more likely seen as independent, assertive, and as protectors of females.

The mapping sentence depicted in Figure 2 summarizes the definition of the second hypothesis in detail.

---

Figure 2. Mapping Sentence of Second Hypothesis.

*Respondents reveal more stereotypical attitudes in terms of:*

A. Traits	and	B. Division of Labor
1. Gentleness		1. Housework
2. Aggressiveness/assertiveness		2. Mother role
3. Emotionality/weakness		
4. Dominance/autocracy		
5. Protectiveness/strongness		

*after having watched Kid Rhino's 1965 version compared to those respondents who have watched The Cannon Group's 1986 version.*

---

### Coding Instrument

Previous content analyses by Bierhoff-Alfermann et al. (1982) and O'Connor (1989) were used as a basis for examining stereotypical roles in both fairy tale adaptations. A coding instrument was developed to aid the analysis, consisting of a list that described specific

stereotypical behaviors and roles. It included the following categories. Weakness and passivity of the heroine were examined by focusing on the character being portrayed as following orders by other characters, being fearful and expressing worries, and as asking other characters for help or advice. Emotionality was observed by focusing on the categories of crying or showing sadness as well as expressing happiness. Domestic roles were examined by focusing on housekeeping tasks, including the categories of cleaning and preparing or serving meals. Mother roles were analyzed by concentrating on scolding other characters (including animals) and on the heroine's expressing of affection, which included hugging, kissing, and caressing other characters.

### Procedure for Content Analysis

Kid Rhino's 1965 version as well as The Cannon Group's 1986 version of Rumpelstiltskin were available on videotape. The fairy tale Rumpelstiltskin was chosen for the following reasons. First, fairy tales like Rumpelstiltskin are classic fairy tales that are still read or watched by many children, often more than one time. Both the printed and the videotape versions are widely available for purchase. Second, for the purpose of juxtaposing, a newer version of a classic fairy tale, such as the one produced by The Cannon

Group, had to be used. While theatrical productions and operas of the classic fairy tale exist (Danilewitz, 1991), the live-action feature films target the younger audience specifically. Third, the images in both versions are easy to understand, graphic, and entertaining. They remain with us long past our childhood.

A timer was used to indicate the precise video timing that had elapsed. The running times for the 1965 and the 1986 versions are approximately 72 minutes and 84 minutes respectively. The same procedure was followed for both fairy tale adaptations. Each portrayal of the miller's daughter in one of the stereotypical roles was counted as a separate event.

Specifically, if the heroine was shown cleaning, for instance, the scene was counted as one event; however, if there was a change in scenes, followed by depicting the miller's daughter in the previously coded behavior or act, the repeated scene was counted as another event. In other words, if the miller's daughter was interrupted or stopped cleaning because the camera focused on another character or scene and then the focal point was again the heroine who was depicted as cleaning the floor, it was counted again as a second event. During the first viewing, the videotape was stopped every two minutes by the researchers to allow coding



of all content categories. During the second and third viewing, the videotape was played without pauses. Previously recorded codings were evaluated and, if necessary, adjustments were made.

### Intercoder Reliability

The author of this study served as a rater; in addition, two independent coders (one female and one male) volunteered as raters for the study. The two coders were instructed in the use of the coding instruments. Also, the training involved viewing another fairy tale, Cinderella, produced by Walt Disney, and completing the coding instruments. Each of the three raters rated both the 1965 and the 1986 fairy tale adaptations of Rumpelstiltskin.

For the 1965 version, intercoder reliability estimates for the categories of following orders, showing fear or worry, and asking for help/advice were .98, .98, and .96 respectively. Reliability for the categories of crying/sadness and expressing happiness were .92 and .97, cleaning and preparing/serving meals were 1.00 and 1.00, and scolding others and kissing/caressing were 1.00 and .96.

Intercoder reliability estimates were also calculated for the 1986 version. Reliability estimates for the categories of following orders, showing fear or worry, and asking for help/advice were .90, .92, and .90 respectively.

Reliability for the categories of crying/sadness and expressing happiness were .91 and .95, cleaning and preparing/serving meals were 1.00 and 1.00, and scolding others and kissing/caressing were .90 and .93.

### Participants

For the second part of this study, the experiment, subjects were 82 fourth graders (45 girls and 37 boys). Fourth graders were chosen because studies have indicated that children of that age still enjoy fairy tales, but are also old enough to respond to a questionnaire (Westland, 1993). Furthermore, as previously noted, only around the age of eight will children be able to draw complex inferences within and across components when they make predictions about same-sex as well as other-sex characters (Martin et al., 1990). The sample was drawn from a predominantly white, socio-economically mixed elementary school located in south-western Kentucky. Parents were given a consent statement. Only those children who volunteered to participate and whose parents had signed the permission slips were included in the study.

### Experimental Design

A pilot study was conducted in September 1997. Seven fourth graders filled out the questionnaire to test whether the measurement instrument was adequately designed.

The research design for this study was that of a posttest-only control group design. The experimental treatment for group one consisted of showing Kid Rhino's 1965 version, whereas group two watched The Cannon Group's 1986 version. The third group served as a control group and did not receive any experimental treatment, but filled out the measurement instrument only. The two groups who had watched either one of the fairy tale adaptations filled out the measurement instrument after the treatment.

The posttest-only control group design was chosen because of the possibility of subject sensitization to the posttest by controlling instrumentation and testing. First, if different questionnaires had been used, changes may have occurred due to the asking of different questions. Second, and most importantly, the measurement instrument consisted of simple, easy to comprehend questions. Thus, children may have remembered the questions from the pretest and supplied the same answers to be consistent or simply because of the familiarity with the measurement instrument.

### **Material and Instruments**

Kid Rhino's 1965 version and The Cannon Group's 1986 versions were used as independent variables to measure changes in stereotypical attitudes depending on the time the videotape was produced. A questionnaire served as an



instrument to measure stereotypical attitudes. The pilot study assured that all items and response options were understandable to and meaningful for children in that age group.

The content of the questionnaire consisted of eight questions that were the same for each group. The first question asked children to indicate whether they were boys or girls. Subsequent questions were mainly derived from the Sex Stereotype Measure developed by Williams, Bennett, and Best (1975) as well as Signorella's (1985) Gender-Stereotyped Attitude Scale for Children (GASC). Four of the statements were formulated to reflect stereotypical attitudes or beliefs about women, whereas the other three statements were designed in reversed format to check for consistency in attitudinal responses.

Each question was followed by three categories that measured stereotypical responses (men, women, both men and women). The last category, "both men and women," was chosen to measure children's responses that were classified as low in stereotyping of attitudes. According to Signorella's (1985) GASC, children were able to use the "both" category correctly, and the pilot study, as mentioned above, confirmed this proposition. The items rated were children's sex-role attitudes on traits and on the division of labor.

The questions formulated were easy to comprehend and designed to measure the traits of gentleness, aggressiveness, emotionality/weakness, dominance/autocracy, and protectiveness/strongness. Division of labor was measured by asking whom of the sexes they would associate with housekeeping and parenting roles. A sample of the questionnaire is enclosed in the appendix.

### Procedure for Experiment

The procedure employed in this research was in part drawn from the study by Mayes and Valentine (1979). Subjects of this study were randomly assigned to three groups. As mentioned above, two groups were treatment groups, whereas the third group served as a control group. Subjects were either assigned to watch the 1965 version or the 1986 version of Rumpelstiltskin. Each treatment group received the same set of instructions. Group one (n=32, including 16 girls and 16 boys) was led into a room to watch Kid Rhino's version on videotape. The second treatment group (n=29; 17 girls, 12 boys) watched The Cannon Group's 1986 version.

Immediately following the end of each videotape, each group was asked not to discuss the film with their classmates. The treatment groups were handed out the questionnaire. It was stressed to the children that this

was not a test to measure what they remembered from the videotape, but a method for determining their attitudes and opinions about male and female characteristics. They were asked to mark on top of the questionnaire whether they were boys or girls. For each question, children were asked to indicate their answers by circling one of the three responses (men, women, both men and women) which were written underneath each question. The control group (n=21; 12 girls; 9 boys) filled out the same questionnaire that was given to the two treatment groups in a separate room.



## CHAPTER IV

### Findings

#### Content Analysis

The 1965 and the 1986 versions of Rumpelstiltskin were used as units of analysis. Table 1 depicts the overall frequencies and percentages for the variables that were analyzed.

Table 1

#### Frequencies and Percentages for Content Analysis

Variables	1965 (%)		1986 (%)		Total (%)	
Weakness/Passivity	56	(61.5)	35	(38.5)	91	(100)
Following Orders	22		13		35	
Showing Fear/Worry	25		16		41	
Asking for Help	9		6		15	
Emotionality	44	(59.5)	30	(40.5)	74	(100)
Crying	16		7		23	
Showing Happiness	28		23		51	
Housework	5	(71.5)	2	(28.5)	7	(100)
Cleaning	0		0		0	
Preparing Meal	5		2		7	
Mother Roles	19	(59.4)	13	(40.6)	32	(100)
Scolding	9		3		12	
Caressing/Kissing	10		10		20	

Note. Chi square results = 0.497 ( $p < .05$ , 3df, one-tailed = 6.25).

The data in Table 1 were collapsed to reflect traits

or characteristics that are typically associated with the female gender. Specifically, the category of weakness and passivity includes the variables of following orders, showing fear or worry, and asking for help. Emotionality consists of the incidents in which the miller's daughter was depicted as crying or expressing happiness. Housekeeping roles include the variables of cleaning and preparing or serving meals, while mother roles reflect the variables of caressing or kissing and scolding others.

Findings indicate that differences in the stereotypical portrayal of the heroine were observed when the older and the newer versions were compared. In general, percentages show that the 1965 version was more likely than the 1986 to depict the miller's daughter in stereotypical behaviors. Chi square results indicate that this difference was not statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level.

Nevertheless, the heroine was consistently more likely to be depicted as weak and passive in the older version (61.5%), as the categories of following orders, showing fear or worry, and asking for help illustrate.

Furthermore, she was observed to be more likely to cry or show happiness in the 1965 edition (59.5%). A clear difference can be seen when the category of housework is examined. The miller's daughter was over two-thirds more

likely to prepare or serve meals in the 1965 version (71.5%) compared to the latest version; however, the heroine was not found cleaning in either film.

Lastly, the main character was also more likely to be depicted in mother roles in the 1965 edition (59.4%), when both categories of scolding and caressing are evaluated. Upon closer examination of the categories it also appears that the heroine was more likely to scold in the older film, whereas no differences between the two versions were found in the category of caressing, with both frequencies amounting to 10.

### Experiment

Examination of the data was accomplished by counting the frequencies indicated on the questionnaires for each group and calculating percentages. Then, chi squares were computed for each of the seven questions that the children answered.

Table 2 depicts the overall frequencies and percentages that were calculated for each question. The 1965 group consisted of 32 children and therefore 32 responses were analyzed, while the control group and the 1986 group consisted of a total of 21 children and 29 children, respectively.



Table 2

Overall Frequencies and Percentages of Responses for  
Stereotypical Female Characteristics

QUESTION	GROUP	RESPONSE OPTIONS		
		Men	Women	Both
Who is gentle <sup>1</sup>	1965	1 (3.1%)	22 (68.8%)	9 (28.1%)
	Control	0 (0%)	10 (47.6%)	11 (52.3%)
	1986	0 (0%)	13 (44.8%)	16 (55.2%)
Who cries a lot <sup>2</sup>	1965	0 (0%)	29 (90.6%)	3 (9.4%)
	Control	1 (4.8%)	11 (52.4%)	9 (42.9%)
	1986	0 (0%)	16 (55.2%)	13 (44.8%)
Who does the housework <sup>3</sup>	1965	0 (0%)	28 (87.5%)	4 (12.5%)
	Control	0 (0%)	9 (42.9%)	12 (57.1%)
	1986	1 (3.4%)	22 (75.9%)	6 (20.7%)
Who takes care of the children <sup>4</sup>	1965	0 (0%)	13 (40.6%)	19 (59.4%)
	Control	0 (0%)	4 (19%)	17 (81%)
	1986	0 (0%)	14 (48.3%)	15 (51.7%)

Note. 1965 group: n = 32. Control group: n = 21. 1986 group: n = 29. Chi square results ( $p < .05$ ; 2df, one-tailed = 4.60) comparing 1965 group with control group: <sup>1</sup>3.16, <sup>2</sup>11.08, <sup>3</sup>15.6, <sup>4</sup>3.19. Chi square results ( $p < .05$ ) comparing 1986 group with

control group: <sup>1</sup>0.03, <sup>2</sup>0.39, <sup>3</sup>6.95, <sup>4</sup>5.72. Chi square results ( $p < .05$ ) comparing 1965 group with 1986 group: <sup>1</sup>4.85, <sup>2</sup>14.7, <sup>3</sup>1.12, <sup>4</sup>0.4.

Overall, findings of Table 2 indicate that children in the 1965 group were more likely to respond in a stereotypical manner than children in the other two groups. Thus, children who had watched the 1965 version were more likely to view gentleness as a characteristic that they would associate with females (68.8%) instead of with males (3.1%) or with both genders (28.1%).

On the other hand, the 1986 group (55.2%) as well as the control group (52.3%) were slightly more likely to respond that both men and women were gentle. When the results of the different groups in the category of gentleness are compared, however, the chi square tests show that only the juxtaposition of the 1965 and the 1986 groups yielded statistically significant differences.

Moreover, children in all groups were more likely to respond that women cried a lot. A clear difference can be observed when the percentages of the three groups are compared. Those children who had watched the older version were by far more likely (90.6%) than children in the control group (52.4%) and in the 1986 group (55.2%) to choose the response option of "women" for this category.

On the other hand, the percentages also indicate that

children in the control group and the 1986 group responded in a very similar manner. Chi square test results confirmed that a statistically significant difference in the category of crying can be established when the 1965 group is compared with the control group and when 1965 group is compared with the 1986 group.

The last two questions in Table 2 pertain to the division of labor. Children who watched the older film as well as children who saw the newer version were more likely to indicate that women do the housework (87.5% and 75.9%, respectively).

In the control group, however, more than half of the children (57.1%) indicated that both men and women did the housework, while most children (81%) in that group believed that both genders took care of the children. Interestingly, more children in the 1965 group (59.4%) than in the 1986 group (51.7%) marked the "both men and women" option. No significant statistical difference was established for this category, except when the 1986 group was compared to the control group.

The following table, Table 3, depicts the remaining questions to which children responded. These questions are more readily associated with males than with females.



Table 3

Overall Frequencies and Percentages of Responses for  
Stereotypical Male Characteristics

QUESTION	GROUP	RESPONSE OPTIONS		
		Men	Women	Both
Who gets into fights <sup>1</sup>	1965	18 (56.3%)	1 (3.1%)	13 (40.6%)
	Control	3 (14.3%)	0 (0%)	18 (85.7%)
	1986	8 (27.6%)	2 (6.9%)	19 (65.5%)
Who makes most of the rules <sup>2</sup>	1965	25 (78.1%)	2 (6.3%)	5 (15.6%)
	Control	4 (19%)	5 (23.8%)	12 (57.1%)
	1986	14 (48.3%)	6 (20.7%)	9 (31%)
Who protects others <sup>3</sup>	1965	23 (71.9%)	2 (6.3%)	7 (21.9%)
	Control	4 (19%)	0 (0%)	17 (81%)
	1986	15 (51.7%)	0 (0%)	14 (48.3%)

Note. 1965 group:  $n = 32$ . Control group:  $n = 21$ . 1986 group:  $n = 29$ . Chi square results ( $p < .05$ ;  $2df$ , one-tailed = 4.60) comparing 1965 group with control group: <sup>1</sup>15.38, <sup>2</sup>27.66, <sup>3</sup>24.84. Chi square results ( $p < .05$ ) comparing 1986 group with control group: <sup>1</sup>2.17, <sup>2</sup>6.22, <sup>3</sup>7.08. Chi square results ( $p < .05$ ) comparing 1965 group with 1986 group: <sup>1</sup>5.73, <sup>2</sup>7.14, <sup>3</sup>5.0.

Table 3 illustrates that children who watched the 1965 film were more likely to respond in a stereotypical manner

than children in the other groups. The most striking difference in answers becomes apparent when the significance levels in Table 3 are examined. After comparing the 1965 group with the control group high significance levels were computed.

Thus, it appears that a statistically significant difference in stereotypical responses was most pronounced when these two groups were compared. Also, significance was obtained for all comparisons, except for the question "Who gets into fights?" when the 1986 group was compared with the control group.

While the children who had seen the older version were more likely (56.3%) to attribute fighting to men, the control group as well as the 1986 group was more likely to choose the category of "both men and women." In the control group, this category, especially, predominated as the response option (85.7%), followed by "men" (14.3%) and "women" (0%). Children in all groups were least inclined to mark "women" as their answer; however, children in the control group were the only ones who did not choose this response option at all for the first question.

For the second question in Table 3, the 1965 group was again more likely (78.1%) to mark the stereotypical male response option on their questionnaire, compared to the 1986

group (48.3%) and the control group (19%).

An interesting difference can be seen when the response option of "women" is considered. Only 6.3% of children who watched the older version marked "women" as their response for the second question. On the other hand, 20.7% of the group who watched the newer version, and 23.8% of children in the control group believed that women made most of the rules.

Most fourth graders in the control group (57.1%) marked, however, the least stereotypical response option of "both men and women." Only 31% of children in the 1986 group and 15.6% of children in the 1965 group selected this option.

The last question in Table 3 asked whom of the genders would protect others. Again, the majority of children (71.9%) who had seen the 1965 film circled the stereotypical response of "men." In distinct contrast, most fourth graders (81%) who had not seen a film selected the neutral response, while nearly half of the children (48.3%) in the 1986 group circled this option.

Just as in the first question in Table 3, however, none of the children in the control group indicated that women would protect others. Similarly, none of the children who saw the 1986 film selected "women." Likewise, more than

half of the children in both groups who watched the films were more likely to give the stereotypical answer, compared to 19% of children in the control group.

Whereas Table 2 and Table 3 illustrated the overall responses of all children, the following two tables depict the responses by boys compared to girls. Table 4 illustrates the responses that boys and girls gave when they answered questions that are stereotypically associated with females, whereas Table 5 will show the responses that boys and girls marked when they answered the questions that are typically associated with males.

Therefore, the questions that are addressed in Table 4 are: (1) Who is gentle? (2) Who cries a lot? (3) Who does the housework? and (4) Who takes care of the children?

The data for these four questions that pertained to gender-typical female characteristics were collapsed to render a better comparison between the girls' and boys' responses in each group. On the left, Table 4 shows the different treatment groups, that is, the 1965 group, the control group, and the 1986 group. This is then followed by the three response options (men, women, both men and women), which is further broken down into the categories of boys and girls to render comparison between boys' and girls' responses.



Table 4

Frequencies and Percentages of Boys' and Girls' Responses  
for Stereotypical Female Characteristics

GROUP	RESPONSE OPTIONS					
	Men		Women		Both	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1965 <sup>1</sup>	1 (1.6%)	0 (0%)	43 (67.2%)	49 (76.6%)	20 (31.3%)	15 (23.4%)
Control <sup>2</sup>	0 (0%)	1 (2.1%)	14 (38.9%)	20 (41.7%)	22 (61.1%)	27 (56.3%)
1986 <sup>3</sup>	0 (0%)	1 (1.5%)	25 (52.1%)	40 (58.8%)	23 (47.9%)	27 (39.7%)

Note. 1965 group:  $n = 32$  (16 boys, 16 girls). Control group:  $n = 21$  (9 boys, 12 girls). 1986 group:  $n = 29$  (12 boys, 17 girls). Chi square results ( $p < .05$ ;  $2df$ , one-tailed = 4.60) comparing boys and girls of 1965 group: <sup>1</sup>1.37. Chi square results comparing boys and girls of control group: <sup>2</sup>0.31. Chi square results comparing boys and girls of 1986 group: <sup>3</sup>0.83.

Table 4 illustrates that boys and girls in the three groups gave different answers; yet, it also shows that within each group, boys and girls selected similar answers. Both, girls and boys, in the 1965 group were least likely to circle "men" for the four questions that are stereotypical female behaviors or characteristics. Girls in the 1965 group were slightly more stereotypical in their response, by choosing the answer "women," (76.6%), compared to boys (67.2%). Conversely, more boys (31.3%) selected the last

option than girls (23.4%).

Similar results can be detected in the control and the 1986 groups. Although one girl in each group chose "men" as an answer, slightly more girls (41.7%) than boys (38.9%) in the control group gave the stereotypical response. Also, in the control group, more boys (61.1%) than girls (56.3%) selected the neutral option.

Likewise, in the 1986 group, more girls (58.8%) than boys (52.1%) circled the stereotypical response of "women." Just as in the other groups, more boys (47.9%) than girls (39.7%) in the 1986 group chose the last option.

Chi squares were calculated for each group to detect whether boys and girls had supplied significant different answers. While the percentages indicate slight variations, no significance was established at the  $p < .05$  level.

The last table, Table 5, depicts frequencies and percentages of boys' and girls' responses for the remaining three questions that are stereotypically associated with males. These questions were: (1) Who gets into fights? (2) Who makes most of the rules? and (3) Who protects others? Again, the data that were gathered for the three questions were collapsed to present differences between the genders' responses in each group more clearly.

Table 5

Frequencies and Percentages of Boys' and Girls' Responses  
for Stereotypical Male Characteristics

GROUP	RESPONSE OPTIONS					
	Men		Women		Both	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1965 <sup>1</sup>	36 (75%)	30 (62.5%)	1 (2.1%)	4 (8.3%)	11 (22.9%)	14 (29.2%)
Control <sup>2</sup>	3 (11.1%)	8 (22.2%)	4 (14.8%)	1 (2.8%)	20 (74.1%)	27 (75%)
1986 <sup>3</sup>	14 (38.9%)	23 (45.1%)	3 (8.3%)	5 (9.8%)	19 (52.8%)	23 (45.1%)

Note. 1965 group:  $n = 32$  (16 boys, 16 girls). Control group:  $n = 21$  (9 boys, 12 girls). 1986 group:  $n = 29$  (12 boys, 17 girls). Chi square results ( $p < .05$ ;  $2df$ , one-tailed = 4.60) comparing boys and girls of 1965 group: <sup>1</sup>3.73. Chi square results comparing boys and girls of control group: <sup>2</sup>5.65. Chi square results comparing boys and girls of 1986 group: <sup>3</sup>0.5.

Just like Table 4, Table 5 shows that, in general, boys and girls in each group gave similar responses. Even though both boys and girls who saw the 1965 film were more inclined to provide the stereotypical answer, Table 5 illustrates that boys were more likely (75%) than girls (62.5%) to circle "men" as their reply. Boys, however, were less likely (2.1%) than girls (8.3%) to select "women," when asked questions concerning stereotypical male characteristics. More girls (29.2%) than boys (22.9%)

marked the last option.

Unlike the 1965 group, boys in the control group were less likely (11.1%) to associate males with the questions asked than girls (22.2%). In fact, more boys marked the response "women" (14.8%) for stereotypical male characteristics than "men" (11.1%). Girls in the control group were least likely (2.8%) to select "women" as the answer. About an equal percentage of boys ((74.1%) and girls (75%) in the control group believed that both men and women was the best answer.

Similar to the control group, more girls (45.1%) than boys (38.9%) in the 1986 group provided the stereotypical answer; however, slightly more girls (9.8%) than boys (8.3%) also marked "women" on their questionnaire. Nevertheless, more boys (52.8%) than girls (45.1%) who watched the 1986 version selected the "both" option.

Chi square results were computed to detect whether responses between boys and girls within each group showed a statistically significant difference. Whereas no significance between the genders' responses was found for the stereotypical female characteristics, for the stereotypical male characteristics, one significance at the  $p < .05$  level was calculated when the answers of boys and girls in the 1986 control group were compared. Upon closer



examination of the calculation, it became apparent that the significance of 5.65 stemmed from the vast differences in responses between boys and girls for the second response option. Four of the nine boys in the control group selected "women" for stereotypical male characteristics, compared to only one of the 12 girls. For the other two groups, no statistically significant difference between the genders' responses was established.

## CHAPTER V

### Discussion

The first part of this study investigated to what extent an older version of a popular fairy tale would differ from a newer edition in terms of stereotypical portrayal of the female main character. Based on previous content analyses (e.g., Levy, 1990; Mayerle & Rarick, 1989) that analyzed film productions of previous decades and films of the 1980s, this research predicted that the 1965 adaptation of Rumpelstiltskin would more likely depict the heroine in stereotypical roles than the 1986 version. This hypothesis could not be supported.

Although the content analysis showed that the miller's daughter was more likely to be shown as weak and passive, emotional, doing housework, and playing mother roles in the 1965 film compared to the newer version, this difference was not statistically significant.

Nevertheless, the frequencies disclosed that the heroine was nearly twice as likely to follow orders in the older film and one-third more likely to ask for help and to show fear than in the 1986 version. Also, she was slightly more apt to show happiness and two times as likely to cry, prepare meals, and scold another character in the 1965 film. The only category in which an equal amount of incidents was observed in both versions was caressing or kissing others.

Hence, the findings of the content analysis are comparable to studies (e.g., Levy, 1990; Mayerle & Rarick, 1989) that have shown that films produced in the 1950s or 1960s depict women in more stereotypical roles, even though, as pointed out already, differences were not statistically significant.

Nevertheless, not only frequencies and percentages point toward a more stereotypical portrayal of the heroine in the 1965 version, but in the 1986 film, the heroine was much more outspoken and independent than in the older version. For instance, even though problem solving was not analyzed in the content analysis, the miller's daughter in the older version relied solely on the help of male characters to find the name. In the newer version, the heroine and her maid solved the problem, without any male guidance.

A difference was also observed in the representation of the genders. The heroine was the only main female character in the 1965 version, besides a few female characters that were depicted for a very brief time only and that had no bearing on the story. In the newer version other female characters, such as a strong and ruthless queen and the heroine's maid, were depicted frequently and their actions became a central part of the story.

While the first part of this study investigated what messages the fairy tales "send," the second part of this study analyzed if and to what extent fairy tale versions that were produced in different decades would affect children's perceptions of gender-role stereotypes. It was predicted that those children who watched Kid Rhino's version would be more likely to reveal stereotypical attitudes toward gender-appropriate behaviors and roles compared to fourth graders who had seen the 1986 film.

Specifically, the second hypothesis stated that children would be more likely to give stereotypical responses toward male and female traits after having watched the older version compared to the newer film. Also, the second hypothesis incorporated that children who had seen the 1965 version would be more likely than children who had watched the 1986 film to give stereotypical responses toward male and female division of labor.

The questionnaire that children filled out contained seven questions, four of which pertained to stereotypical female characteristics, i.e., gentleness, emotionality/weakness, doing housework, and taking care of children. The remaining three questions were reversed and pertained therefore to stereotypical male characteristics, i.e., aggressiveness/assertiveness, dominance/autocracy, and



protectiveness/strongness.

A significant statistical difference in responses between the 1986 and the 1965 groups was observed after calculating chi squares. Of the four questions that checked for stereotypical female characteristics, two questions, "Who is gentle?" and "Who cries a lot?" showed a significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level between the 1965 and the 1986 groups. For the remaining two questions that pertained to the stereotypical division of labor between the genders, "Who does the housework?" and "Who takes care of the children?" no significant difference in responses was observed. For the three questions that are more readily associated with men than with women, however, a significant difference between the responses of children who had watched the older versus the newer version was found.

Thus, the second hypothesis was supported, except for the two questions that pertained to the division of labor. All questions that applied to gender-typical male and female traits showed a statistically significant difference in responses for children who had watched the 1965 versus the 1986 adaptations.

When the content analysis is examined, it becomes apparent that frequencies that pertained to the division of labor, that is, housework and mother roles, were less

frequently observed in both versions than incidents that applied to stereotypical traits, such as female passivity and emotionality. In both versions, the heroine was not shown cleaning, and the same frequency in both films was also observed in the category of caressing. Therefore, the similarity in answers of children who had watched either version to the questions of housework and child care may reflect the similarity in frequencies pertaining to housework and mother roles that were observed in the content analysis. The lower response frequencies in these two categories, however, may also reflect changing societal attitudes by viewing housework and child care no longer as a primary female realm.

It must be noted, however, that even though a statistical significance at the  $p < .05$  level for the categories of division of labor was not found between the children who had watched either version of Rumpelstiltskin, the vast majority of children in both treatment groups (87.5% for the 1965 group; 75.9% for the 1986 group) indicated that women do the housework, compared to 42.9% in the control group. On the other hand, slightly more children who had seen the older version (59.4%) marked that both genders take care of the children, compared to 51.7% of children in the 1986 group. The majority of children in the

control group (81%) selected the "both" option.

A similar pattern can be detected upon examination of the remaining questions. More than half of the children in the control group selected the "both" response for six out of the seven questions. It appears that children who had not seen either fairy tale were less likely to attribute stereotypical characteristics to either gender and therefore selected the last option. This is in clear contrast to the groups who had watched the fairy tale.

Hence, a different picture emerges when the responses of the control group are compared to the two treatment groups. From the seven questions, statistically significant differences were computed for five questions when the control groups' answers were compared to that of the 1965 group. The questions pertaining to traditional male characteristics elicited a particularly high statistical significance. In addition, four questions showed a statistically significant difference after juxtaposing the 1986 group to the control group.

Therefore, the data collected seem to confirm the preposition by Martin et al. (1990) who argue that children around the age of eight will be able to draw complex inferences both within and between components when they make predictions about the genders. Gender schema theorists argue

that components of gender knowledge include behaviors, roles, occupations, and traits (Golombok & Fivush, 1994). Thus, older children will be able to make associations between components, such as seeing a woman taking care of a child (a role) and predicting that the woman is gentle (a female-related trait), or that she likes to cook (a female-related behavior).

Consequently, children who had seen either film may have responded more stereotypically than children in the control group because they made inferences between components. For instance, even though the miller's daughter was not depicted as cleaning and only prepared or served meals at a low frequency in both versions, a great majority of children in the treatment groups indicated that women do the housework. It is possible that fourth graders who had seen either fairy tale in which the heroine was likely to be depicted in stereotypical female traits, such as crying or asking for help, made gender-typical associations pertaining to stereotypical female roles, such as housekeeping.

Of course, knowledge about gender-appropriate behavior and making associations between components is not limited to female characteristics. Children at that age are able to make inferences about both genders. Interestingly, fourth graders who had seen a film in which the main character



succumbed to her gender-appropriate roles, behaviors, and traits were also more likely to indicate that men get more into fights, make most rules, and protect others compared to children in the control group.

It is questionable whether children in the control group were aschematic regarding gender stereotypes, in particular, when it is considered that around 50% of the children in the control group responded stereotypically for three questions. These three questions pertained to all stereotypical female characteristics, except for the question concerning child care. The data seem to confirm the gender schema theory in that humans develop stereotyped notions of women and men at a young age. Children develop schemata which guide their choices of gender-appropriate behaviors and which encompass information in relation to either gender (Fagot & Leinbach, 1989).

Nonetheless, when the questions that applied to stereotypical male characteristics are examined, it becomes clear that the children in the control group did not confirm the culture's definitions of masculinity and femininity. In fact, more children (23.8%) in the control group believed that women made most of the rules, compared to children (19%) who gave the gender-typical response of "men." More than half of the children in the control group (57.1%)

believed that both genders made rules, while more than 80% of the fourth graders in that group marked the "both" option for the two remaining questions that concerned male characteristics. Also, most children in the control group (81%) believed that both genders take care of the children.

As previously mentioned, children are not born with gender schemata, but develop them in response to stimuli from the environment to process gender-typical information. The data suggest that children who did not watch either film relied solely on their cognitive availability of gender-related knowledge, attitudes, or beliefs (Bem, 1981). It appears therefore that stereotypical male characteristics are no longer the solitary domain of males, but that the environment has taught children that females can also exhibit traditional male characteristics.

On the other hand, only about half of the children in the control group selected the "both" option when they answered the questions relating to stereotypical female characteristics. It appears that children in the control group were still less likely to attribute traditional female behaviors or roles as characteristics that both genders may hold. The female stereotype may not be as constrained as the male one. As Golombok and Fivush (1994) put it aptly, "females in our culture can engage in many cross-gender

activities with little penalty, but males are not able to cross gender lines quite so easily" (p. 110).

When differences in responses between boys and girls are examined, however, it appears that girls were slightly more stereotypical in their responses than boys. One exception was the frequencies pertaining to stereotypical male characteristics for the 1965 group, as more boys (75%) than girls (62.5%) supplied the stereotypical answer. For all categories that checked for stereotypical female characteristics, boys were consistently more likely to select the neutral response than girls, while girls in the 1965 and the control groups were slightly more likely to mark the "both" option for stereotypical male characteristics.

Also, percentages indicate that girls in all groups selected the neutral option slightly more frequently when questions related to male compared to female characteristics. On the other hand, boys in the 1986 group were slightly more apt to mark the "both" option compared to girls in that group.

Chi square results indicate that only one statistical significant difference between the genders' responses was found when the responses of boys and girls in the control group were analyzed. This difference, however, relates only

to questions concerning traditional male characteristics. Hence, the data are largely inconclusive as to whether there is a difference in responses between boys and girls, except for the slight variations just mentioned. This also means, of course, that both genders alike accounted for the differences in stereotypical responses when the individual groups were compared.

The overall pattern of the present results show at least partial support for the media's influence on gender role conceptions. It can be concluded that exposing children to a stereotypical film, such as fairy tale adaptations, may significantly alter children's perception on appropriate female and male roles and behaviors. The findings are therefore consistent with research (Wright et al., 1995; Huston et al., 1984; Liben & Signorella, 1993; Signorielli & Lears, 1992) that investigated the link between television's messages and its influences on children's perceptions.

Theorists and social critics have argued that, besides peers and family, it is television which provides children with social information (Wright et al., 1995). Even though fairy tale settings are not only uncommon but also nonexistent and many characters, such as Rumpelstiltskin, are imaginary in fairy tales, it seems that the



stereotypical fairy tale world affected fourth graders' gender role perceptions.

Considering that studies (Crain et al., 1983; Danilewitz, 1991; Bearse, 1992) suggest that fairy tales appear to hold children's attention and have thought-provoking effects on children, fairy tales, in particular, may play an important role in influencing children's perceptions about culturally appropriate female and male differences. The data exemplify Zipes' (1988) assertion that, "the Grimms' tales, either in their translated literal editions or in multifarious adaptations, play a crucial role in the socialization of children over much of the modern world" (p. 110), in its most poignant sense.

Hence, it appears that gender-typical information, as provided in filmed fairy tale adaptations, may be processed on the basis of gender-linked associations that constitute gender schemata. As organized structures of information that aid in assigning meaning to everyday experiences and guide information processing, schemata bridge internal data that were developed based on previous experiences and external data, such as provided by media messages (Bem, 1981).

Filmed fairy tales, albeit having received little attention in empirical research, may in particular provide

stereotypical portrayals of the genders, as they are adapted to the original Grimms' stories that reflect the typical patriarchal structures of society. Furthermore, it must also be remembered that children are not only the primary audience for fairy tales, but that children also enjoy the written texts (Wardetzky, 1990; Danilewitz, 1991; Strayer, 1995) as well as the filmed adaptations (Trousedale, 1989; Kelley, 1994). Considering that "the use of cartoon formats, fantasy themes, or children as characters in commercials targeted at children, more closely 'fits' their knowledge of the real and of imaginary 'possible worlds'" (Luke, 1985, p. 97), filmed fairy tale adaptations are of particular concern.

Continued research in this area is pivotal. To determine to what extent the results of the study are reliable, a repetition of this research is needed. Also, a larger sample of filmed fairy tale adaptations, including Walt Disney productions that were produced in the 1930s and 1950s, may yield different results. The need for analyzing more filmed fairy tales is paramount, as the older Walt Disney adaptations, in particular, are still reproduced and sold worldwide.

Furthermore, it would not only be of interest to draw a larger sample of filmed fairy tales and code the portrayals

of the genders, but future studies may change the experimental design and incorporate pretests as well as posttests to measure changes in the subjects' levels of gender stereotyping. Additionally, an interesting extension of this research would be to juxtapose a stereotypical Cinderella-type fairy tale with a less stereotypical tale such as The Twelve Brothers and measure children's perceptions of gender-appropriate behaviors, traits, or roles.

Fairy tales are part of our cultural heritage and are likely to remain so for generations to come. Their magic worlds inspire our fantasy and imagination. Arguably, a girl's wish to wear a "princess" costume and become a Cinderella for just one day may have originated after a girl has heard or watched a fairy tale. It is a world in which dreams come true, evil is punished and the good are rewarded. But it is also a world that reinforces submissive womanhood and virile autocracy.

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## **APPENDIXES**

## INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

A study will be conducted on 29 October at Jackson Elementary School.

The purpose of this study is to find out how 4th graders perceive differences after having watched the 1965 version of Kid Rhino's "Rumpelstiltskin" compared to The Cannon Group's 1986 version of "Rumpelstiltskin."

After watching the film, each child will fill out a multiple-choice questionnaire, consisting of 7 questions. THE RESPONSES OF YOUR CHILD ARE CONFIDENTIAL. At no time will your child be identified nor will anyone other than the researcher, Katja R. Pinkston, have access to the responses. THERE ARE NO POTENTIAL HAZARDS OR RISKS WHICH MAY OCCUR FROM PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH.

The demographic information collected will consist of the gender of the child. This information will be used only for the purpose of analysis. Participation is completely voluntary, and you are free to terminate your child's participation at any time without any penalty.

The entire scope of the project will be explained fully upon completion.

Please feel free to contact Katja R. Pinkston at 431-5536 if you have further inquiries about the procedure.

Thank you for your cooperation.

\*\*\*\*\*

To be signed by student: I understand that a study will be conducted at my school. I will watch a film and afterwards fill out a questionnaire with 7 questions. I understand that I am not required to participate and that I can decide not to participate at any time without any penalty.

DATE

STUDENT'S SIGNATURE

To be filled out by parent:

I agree to let my child (Print Child's Name) \_\_\_\_\_ participate in the present study being conducted under the supervision of a faculty member of the Department of Speech, Communication and Theatre at Austin Peay State University. I have been informed, either orally or in writing or both, about the procedures to be followed and whether or not any discomforts may be involved. The investigator has offered to answer any further inquiries as I may have regarding the procedures. I understand that I am free to terminate the participation of my child at any time without penalty or prejudice and to have all data obtained from my child withdrawn from the study and destroyed.

DATE

PARENT'S NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

please circle **ONE** answer for each question:

I am a:              Boy                      Girl

1. Who is gentle?

Men                      Women                      Both men and women

2. Who gets into fights?

Men                      Women                      Both men and women

3. Who does the housework?

Men                      Women                      Both men and women

4. Who cries a lot?

Men                      Women                      Both men and women

5. Who makes most of the rules?

Men                      Women                      Both men and women

6. Who protects others?

Men                      Women                      Both men and women

7. Who takes care of the children?

Men                      Women                      Both men and women





## VITA

Katja R. Pinkston was born in Bad Brueckenau, Germany, on August 30, 1967. She worked as a library technician in Wildflecken, Germany, from 1984 to 1993. In 1989, she began her studies of English-German and received a Certificate of English-German translation from Cambridge University in 1993.

After moving to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1994, she became a student at Park College in Parkville, Missouri. She obtained an Associate of Arts degree in May 1995 and a Bachelor of Arts degree in liberal studies with concentrations in English and Communication Arts the following year. In August 1996, she entered Austin Peay State University, Tennessee, and earned a Master of Arts degree in Speech, Communication and Theatre in May 1998.

Please direct questions or comments about this study to the following address:

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