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Gender Roles in Disney's fairy tales

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně a uvedl jsem v ní veškerou literaturu a ostatní informační zdroje, které jsem použil.

V Olomouci dne 20. 6. 2023 …………………… Ondřej Šváb

Abstract

This bachelor's thesis provides a comprehensive overview of gender roles and stereotypes in Disney fairy tales and examines their possible influence on children's gender identity development. The theoretical part explores gender role socialization processes, considering various gender socialization theories and their interplay with societal, cultural, and interpersonal factors. In addition, the prevalent gender roles in fairy tales are discussed.

The practical part of this thesis focuses on the portrayal of gender roles in specifically chosen Disney fairy tales. The aim is to deduce their potential impact on children's gender identity development and also illustrate the differences in their depiction throughout time. The analysis is based on a dataset of three selected fairy tales chosen to demonstrate the evolution of gender roles in Disney fairy tales over time. It was found that traditional gender roles are present in older Disney fairy tales, as well as progressive ones that force equality between the genders in the most recent adaptations of the fairy tale. These results demonstrated progress in Disney's depiction of gender roles. They suggested that gender roles in society and our perception of them have undergone significant changes in the last eighty years since media such as Disney fairy tales mirror expectations prevalent in society.

Table of Contents

Introduction

The primary purpose of this thesis is to provide a detailed overview of gender roles and gender stereotypes present in Disney fairy tales. Gender and gender roles are in modern society frequently resonating topics, reflecting ongoing discussions and debates about equality, identity, and social expectations. As societal norms continue to evolve, it becomes increasingly imperative to critically examine and understand the influence of various cultural influences, including popular media, on forming gender roles and stereotypes. This thesis will explore how Disney fairy tales shape and reinforce gender roles and stereotypes. It will also explore how gender roles and stereotypes may negatively or positively influence the development of children's gender roles.

In the theoretical part, an in-depth examination of gender role socialization will be provided, which will help to understand through which processes gender roles and stereotypes develop in children. To achieve this, various gender socialization theories will be taken into account. By considering these gender socialization theories and other factors that affect the socialization process, will be explored the complex interplay of societal, cultural, and interpersonal factors that contribute to the formation and internalization of gender norms. Furthermore, gender roles prevalent in fairy tales will be discussed.

The practical part will focus on the portrayal of gender roles and gender-related behaviour in Disney fairy tales and will also discuss the possible influence of these gender roles on gender identity development in children. The basis for drawing these conclusions will be defined in the theoretical part. The dataset for this analysis consists of three selected fairy tales. These fairy tales were selected with certain rules and should also depict how gender roles portrayed in Disney fairy tales evolve throughout time.

1. Gender vs. sex

In order to further study gender roles and gender stereotypes, it is imperative to differentiate between the terms "sex" and "gender". According to PRYZGODA and CHRISLER (2000), the terms "sex" and "gender" are misleading. In daily life, they are both used in the same way. On questionnaires, and other forms of official paperwork, we are required to provide our accurate gender or sex, and we do not have any significant issue with that because this type of distinction mostly refers to the biological concept of being male or female. PRYZGODA and CHRISLER (2000) also stated that even psychologists, especially in older publications, use terms such as "sex" and "gender" interchangeably. From this point of view, we can probably consider them to be synonyms. (Pryzgoda and Chrisler 2000 p. 553-554).

However, it is not that simple. Although the terms sex and gender are often confused or assimilated, we are talking about two different concepts from the point of view of modern psychology and sociology. Gender is usually defined as a social construction created by humans. Sex tends to be a more biological concept. (Blackstone 2003 p. 335).

Sex can be determined based on the appearance of the genitalia at birth or based on chromosomal analysis before birth. Males have an X and a Y chromosome, whereas females have two X chromosomes. (West and Zimmerman 1987 p. 127).

Gender, on the other hand, is a learned trait that is based on one's gender identity and learned gender role (Wienclaw, 2011, p. 33). WIENCLAW continues by stating that gender could also be a "construct that is interpreted by members of a society through the ongoing social interactions that individuals have with each other" (Wienclaw, 2011, p. 33). For this statement, she uses the approach presented in West and Zimmerman's publication "Gender and Society" (1987), called" Doing Gender", where it is basically stated that gender is a human concept that depends on everyone constantly creating or simply said "doing" gender (West and Zimmerman 1987 p. 127-151).

LINDSEY (2015) supports these approaches and sees gender as an acquired status since it must be learnt, whereas sex is a given status that a person is born with. The term "gender" refers to the social, cultural, and psychological characteristics that, in the social environment, are associated with males and females. (Lindsey, 2015, p. 4).

She also adds that the ambiguity around the terms sex and gender has diminished as gender concerns become more prevalent. In modern sociology, how gender is defined and stereotyped is more commonly referred to as gender roles and gender stereotypes than as "sex roles" or "sex stereotypes". (Lindsey, 2015, p. 4-5).

Even though many different resources are using the words "gender" and "sex" interchangeably for the purpose of this thesis and for further exploration of gender roles and stereotypes, the modern approach will be used. The term "sex" will be understood as a biological concept, whereas the term "gender" will label learned traits and behaviours through the process of socialization.

2. Gender roles and stereotypes

A gender role, according to Dictionary.com, "is a way of appearing and behaving that meets cultural expectations based on an individual's gender" (biological gender). Gender roles have changed and evolved throughout history and accordingly to the society to which they belong. Despite these adjustments, however, the reality is that community still has norms for how men and women should behave, even though we are more open to exceptions nowadays. (Wienclaw 2001 p. 33)

2.1. Biology and gender roles

Even though we have successfully distinguished gender as a concept created by humans from sex which is a status that is given to us according to our biological features, it does not mean that biology does not play any role in assigning gender roles. Biology influences gender and some of the subsequent actions and behaviours associated with gender. For instance, as much as a man would desire to experience childbirth firsthand, the truth is that he simply cannot. (Wienclaw, 2011, p. 34)

LINDSEY (2015) noted that there is a diverse view among psychologists, sociologists and biologists as to which gender roles are biologically given and which are learned. She also suggested that according to several theories, there are some biologically determined gender roles. Most of these gender roles are caused by different hormone levels between males and females. As an example, she talks about the fact that males are more likely to be aggressive in certain situations due to their higher levels of testosterone. Speaking of females, another example could be hormone level changes that lead to a phenomenon called maternal instinct. This phenomenon creates a stronger bond between mother and child and could be a significant determinant of why females are more likely to rear children. However, we should take into account that rearing children is probably a combination of biological gender roles and learned gender roles through socialization (Lindsey, 2015, p. 28-34).

2.2. Culture and gender roles

A comparison of different cultures can also provide support for the argument that (non-biological) gender is just a created and learned concept and should be distinguished from biological sex. Behaviours appropriate for each gender vary from culture to culture. In many cultures, women are considered to be stronger and are expected to do heavy work. (Coon 2001, p. 365-366).

In modern European and Western cultures, gender roles are oriented in some way. Males are usually taught to be tough, quick, brave and dominant, and females to be caring, sensitive and family-oriented. (Wienclaw, 2011, p. 34).

As Ruth A. WIENCLAW explained in The Sociology Reference Guide: Gender Roles & Equality (2011, p. 34), "These gender roles are culturally bound." She uses the example of the Tchambuli culture, an ethnic group in New Guinea. In this culture, gender roles for males and females are the exact opposite of those we are familiar with. Males are submissive, and females are dominant. (Wienclaw, 2011, p. 34).

COON (2001) adds an example of Russia, where approximately 75 per cent of medical doctors are women, but at the same time, he states that in every culture is, gender identity "closely tied to cultural definitions of masculinity and feminity". (Coon 2001 p. 365-366)

2.3. Gender stereotypes

Another significant term that must be dealt with is the term "gender stereotype". While gender roles and gender stereotypes are related concepts and are sometimes used interchangeably, there are some key differences between them.

As mentioned above, gender roles refer to the expectations and responsibilities that society places on individuals based on their gender. These expectations may include behaviours, attitudes, and activities that are considered appropriate for men and women. On the other hand, gender stereotypes, according to PLESKOVÁ (2005), can be described as "stereotypical views, prejudices, and ideas about "appropriate" and "natural" behaviour, and generally judging individuals based on their gender without deeply considering what is inherent to them and what they have acquired through upbringing, their individual abilities, ideas about life, and so on" (Plesková, 2005, p.5). These

stereotypes may be positive or negative and can impact how people are perceived and treated in society.

2.4. Summary of chapter 2

Gender roles mean how our culture expects us to act, speak and behave ourselves based on our assigned biological sex. Some of these gender roles are biologically given or influenced, for instance, by different hormone levels of each sex. The cross-cultural differences in appropriate gender roles for both sexes, on the other hand, suggest that the majority of gender roles tend to be learned through the socialization process rather than biologically assigned. The reason for this is that, from a biological perspective, all people are equal. Therefore, gender roles are likely to be equal regardless of culture.

3. Theories of gender socialization

Socialization is a long-lasting process in which we learn how to become successful members of society. A person, during his or her lifetime, goes through many different kinds of socialization (family socialization, school socialization, political socialization etc.). According to STOCKARD (1999), gender socialization starts early and is connected to children's realization of self. Children are able to quickly accept the concept that there are two main gender categories - males and females and that they are part of one of these groups. Most often, this is because they are treated in certain ways by the social environment to which they belong. Biological "sex" is assigned gender roles because, in every culture, there is a set of gender roles associated with specific sexes. (Stockard, 1999, p. 215).

Gender socialization, according to LINDSEY (2015), can then be classified as a "process by which individuals learn the cultural behaviour of femininity or masculinity that is associated with the biological sex of female or male" (Lindsey, 2015, p. 65).

Gender socialization theories and approaches can differ based on different resources. LINDSEY (2015), for instance, uses four theories to explain gender socialization: social learning theory, cognitive development theory, gender schema theory and social cognitive theory (Lindsey 2015, p. 69-77).

In contrast, STOCKARD (1999) talks about six different approaches to gender socialization: Biology and gender socialization, social learning theory, cognitive development theory, gender schemas and cognitive learning theories, peer group interactions and the culture of childhood and psychoanalytic theory (Stockard 1999 p. 216-223).

For the purposes of this thesis, we will use the distinction made by Jennifer Kretchmar in her publication in The Sociology Reference Guide: Gender Roles & Equality (2011, p. 41-51). According to this distinction, there are four theories of gender socialization: social learning theory, cognitive development theory, gender schema theory and psychoanalytic theory.

3.1. Social learning theory

Social learning theory is based on the principle of stimulus and response. Children are influenced by the response of their surrounding society (mainly parents, teachers etc.). Through these responses from society, whether positive or negative, to particular activities, children adopt gender roles that are appropriate for them from the point of view of that society. (Stockard 1999 p. 217).

According to KRETCHMAR, a boy who plays with dolls could be ignored by his father, so he stops playing with dolls to meet his lack of attention (Kretchmar 2011 p. 44).

LINDSEY (2015), in her publication, applies slightly different terminology while describing this theory. She does not use the terms "stimulus" and "response" directly. Rather than using this principle, she refers to rewards and punishments. Children are "punished" or "rewarded" depending on whether the behaviour was or wasn't appropriate to the gender role that is widely accepted in society. The appropriateness of gender roles depends on the expectations of the environment. Families may have different expectations about gender roles than, for example, a teacher. Accordingly, punishments and rewards for certain behaviours can differ (Lindsey 2015, p. 70)

3.2. Cognitive development theory

Cognitive development theory directly opposes the social learning theory discussed above. It was introduced by American psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg (1927-1987), and its origins can be found in the works of Jean Piaget (1896-1980) and his theory of cognitive development. Piaget's theory suggests that children's intelligence, thinking, and interactions develop as they grow. He also stated that children's maturity and perception of the world are formed through their interactions with the environment. This development is divided into stages (Lindsey 2015, p. 72). Children's perception of a social situation at each cognitive stage determines their behaviour (Piaget, 1950, 1954).

As KOHLBERG applies Piaget's theory to gender development, he adds that the child's cognitive development level influences their perception of gender roles (Stockard 1999 p. 218). He also provides three different age-labelled stages of the cognitive development of gender roles:

a. **Gender labelling (by age 3)**
- Children can label their own gender and the gender of other people
- Perception of gender is fluid and can be misinterpreted because it is dependent on visible features (a girl with short hair can for example be considered a male).
- Children do not understand that gender is permanent.

b. **Gender stability (by age 5)**
- Children understand that gender is consistent throughout time. They know they will become male or female when they grow up.
- Gender perception is still not completely consistent.

c. **Gender constancy (by age 7)**
- The children understand that sex is a permanent condition that cannot be altered by certain behaviours, clothes or by the length of hair. Cuncic (2020).

Based on Kohlberg's theory, we can find many different studies and research that support his approach. One of the most famous supporting studies on this subject was made by Spencer K. Thompson (see appendices 1 and 2).

3.3. Gender schema theory

Sandra Bem introduced gender schema theory in 1981 as a response or subset to a cognitive theory presented by Kohlberg (mentioned above). Gender schema theory is based on the idea that a child who is able to understand the cultural definitions of gender forms his own gender schema. This gender schema is created through the process of acquiring traits and personalities that are significant for a particular gender in a given society. (Wharton, 2005, p. 34).

Creating a gender schema helps children process and organize new information about the world (especially gender-related information), as well as helps them assimilate and organize their perceptions. As a result, children use their gender schema to interpret new information or situations and make decisions. Bem (1981) adds that developing a gender schema depends on the cognitive level and ability to identify gender accurately. Children are not able to develop gender schemas until the age of 2 or 3. This age, according to

cognitive theory, is connected to gaining deeper gender knowledge (Lindsey, 2015, p. 72-73).

Bem (1993) stated that modern society tends to be "gender polarized". This means that children believe that "what is acceptable or appropriate for females is not acceptable or appropriate for males (and vice versa)" (Wharton, 2005, p. 34). Secondly, she stated that gender schemas are androcentric, which is the belief that males are superior to females. Society may not accept males who exhibit feminine behaviour as well as females who exhibit masculine behaviour (Wharton, 2005, p. 34).

3.4.Psychoanalytic theory

Psychoanalytic theory (sometimes also called "identification theory") differs from the "learning" theories mentioned above. The theory suggests that some aspects of gender identity are influenced by unconscious psychological processes, not learned through observation and imitation. (Wharton, 2005, p. 35).

Its roots can be found in the psychoanalytic approach of Sigmund Freud, but the first and most significant author who used this approach to talk about gender socialization and gender role development was Nancy Chodorow (1978).

Chodorow, in her publication "The Reproduction of Mothering" (1978), points out that in modern society, the first person who typically takes the most care of an infant is the mother. On the other hand, in most cases, fathers spend a relatively small amount of time caring for their newborns. As a result, the first gender roles and gender behaviours that a baby encounters are usually feminine. This suggests that it is more difficult for a boy to create his own gender identity because he has to reject femininity, lose his bond with his mother and create his own sense of masculinity. (Kretchmar 2011, p. 44).

STOCKARD (1999) adds that boys usually do not know what masculinity means, and they understand masculinity as non-feminine behaviour (Stockard 1999 p. 222).

3.5. Summary of chapter 3

Gender socialization is a process through which we learn culturally appropriate and expected gender roles and gender behaviour - Shortly what it means to be feminine or masculine. Several factors affect gender role socialization, including cultural, racial, and social influences. Four major theories of gender role socialization are social learning theory, cognitive development theory, gender schema theory and psychoanalytic theory. Depending on the author and the resource, the distinction between theories and the number of theories may differ. This implies that gender socialization is a complex and inconsistent process and all of these theories give us different perspectives on how gender roles are formed throughout child development. This complexity suggests that we should take into account different perspectives/theories and the links between them to get an overall idea of how gender identity is formed.

4. The agents of gender socialization

The agents of gender socialization are basically people, things, and institutions that have a considerable influence on determining a child's gender identity. There is a broad field of gender socialization agents. The most prominent ones are family, school, peers, toys and media. The importance and impact of individual agents can differ according to society and its norms.

PARENTS
    Parent-child interactions
    Role models
    Reinforcement
    Approval/disapproval

PEER RELATIONS
    Peer interactions
    Popularity/rejection
    Social cognition
    Friendships

MEDIA
    Television
    Print media
    Movies
    Music television

SCHOOL
    Teachers
    Curriculum
    Instructional methods
    Textbooks/readers

CHILD'S SELF-CONCEPT
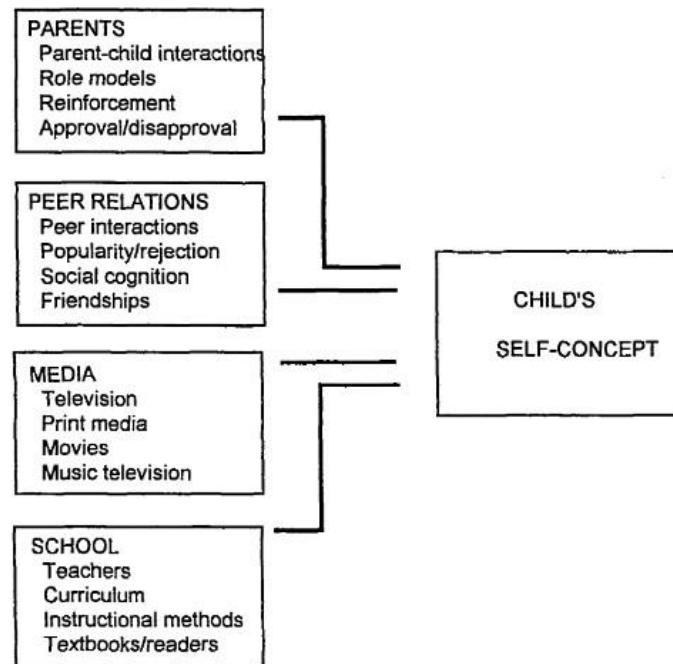
Picture 2. – Influences on a child's self concept (Witt 2000, Vol. 162, pp. 1).

4.1. Parents and family

Family is the most significant factor in socializing a child, not only in terms of gender socialization but also when it comes to socialization in general. It is the family that shapes a child's personality, identity, and sense of self-worth. It is from their families that children acquire their first values and attitudes, including their view of gender (Lindsey, 2015, p. 79).

LINDSEY(2015) stated that parents start their gender-related behaviour toward their children even before the child is born. This behaviour is based on the biological distinction between male and female that is made, thanks to modern technologies, long before birth. This distinction is based mainly on the shape of the genitalia of the unborn

baby/infant. As a result of this distinction, children are assigned appropriate pronouns and names. It also heavily influences how their parents treat them. This means, for example, that a mother may take part in more strenuous physical activities if she is carrying a male. This is because boys are stereotyped to be stronger and more robust than females. (Lindsey, 2015, p.79).

WHARTON (2005) adds that parents perceive a child's sex as a valid source of information, and they behave accordingly to it. They assign their expectations of behaviour and form the child's identity based only on this biological information, even though male and female infants are not different from each other (except from a biological point of view - genitals). Parental influences and gender-related behaviour separate them (Wharton, 2005, p. 123).

4.1.1. Toys, colours and clothing

As it is already mentioned above, parents start their gender-related behaviour before the child is born. In most cases, parents decorate a child's room based on the baby's sex. This means that they, for example, use colours that are considered suitable for a particular sex (e.g. pink for girls/blue for boys). Other prepared things are gender-specific too. It is common for parents to prepare or receive clothing with gender-specific colours, symbols, or patterns. (Lindsey, 2015, p.79).

Toys for girls and boys also differ significantly. Toys for boys support action, masculinity and logical and critical thinking (action figures, trucks, cars, sports equipment, tools and weapons). In contrast, girls often receive toys designed to create classical feminine gender-stereotyped roles (i.e. dolls, clothes, cosmetics, tea sets). These toys for girls support the stereotyped role of a woman as a housewife and caretaker, and many young girls are persuaded that professions such as pilot or soldier are strictly for men. (Kretchmar 2011 p. 35-36).

KRETCHMAR also pointed out that not all of the toys are specifically gendered, but LINDSEY (2015) argues that even these toys that used to be neutral are often gendered nowadays. As an example, she talks about similar building blocks for boys and girls that are coloured and distinguished into gender-specific sets. How gender-specific the environment depends on parents' expectations and their own fixed gender roles because

parents decide which things, colours, and clothes are appropriate for each gender, and this deduction is based only on their own understanding of gender (Lindsey, 2015, p.82).

4.1.2. Same-sex parents

Classical heterosexual parents are typically strongly gendered. Women become mothers and teach the child feminine gender roles, and men become fathers and teach the child masculine gender roles. A child that grows up in a same-sex family should probably lack the gender roles of the opposite-sex parent, but different research claim that there are no significant differences in gender role development between children from heterosexual families and children from same-sex families. LINDSEY (2015) stated that "the quality of the relationship between parents is more critical for children than the sexual orientation of the parents" (Lindsey, 2015, p. 274). Same-sex parents are often highly child-focused. According to WHARTON (2005), this may be due to the difficulty of having children in same-sex families and the fact that parents truly wish to have children (Wharton, 2005, p. 142).

4.2. Peers

Parents and family are crucial for gender role development in early childhood, but peer influence becomes more significant as children enter middle childhood. Even though resources commenting on peer influences on gender identity development are inconsistent, most of them agree that peer gender socialization starts at three years of age and is largely sex/gender-segregated. (Wharton, 2005, p. 130), (Lindsey, 2015, p. 83-84), (Kretchmar, 2011, p. 48); and (Hanish and Fabes, 2014, p.1-5).

Gender segregation means that children primarily choose same-sex peers to spend time with, and their gender roles develop accordingly to it. This segregation occurs because children usually choose peers with similar play styles. The fact that boys spend most of the time with other boys and girls spend most of the time with other girls causes their experiences, skills, and interests to differ. It also helps to create gender stereotypes and extend the gap between masculine and feminine behaviours because activities are often sex-labelled (e.g. Only boys are allowed to enter the fortress). This gender segregation usually lasts until adolescence, when gender roles become more flexible (Hanish and Fabes 2014, p.1-5).

4.2.1. Activities and games

As previously mentioned, play style, games, and activities are the main reasons children choose same-sex peers. There are significant differences between activities usually performed by boys and activities preferred by girls. Boys usually play in larger groups and in larger places. Their bond with other same-sex playmates tends to be looser and less intimate. Their activities are rougher and more active and tend to praise skills like competition and physical strength. Girls, on the other hand, play in smaller groups and form closer and tighter relationships with one or two girls. Their activities are focused more on cooperation, social skills or speaking. (Kretchmar 2011 p. 48).

SCHWARZ (2017) mentioned that boys usually have a higher status during middle childhood than girls. Boys are also usually less tolerant of gender exceptions (gender non-conformity) than girls. Other boys often reject boys who express more feminine qualities or just do not express enough masculinity, while girls often support them. (Schwarz, 2017, p. 29).

Girls, on the other hand, can enter boys' environments if they are considered masculine enough to spend time with boys. For girls, it is easier to cross gender roles and boundaries and join other gender's activities, and they face significantly less pressure from other children to behave according to their gender roles. Boys very rarely join activities considered feminine because they are more strictly judged by other peers and also parents. (Wharton, 2005, p. 130).

LINDSEY (2015) adds that even though boys have higher status in middle childhood than girls, they may face more disadvantages because they learn social skills, cooperation and intimacy later than girls, and these skills are more valuable in modern society than physical strength (Lindsey, 2015, p.84).

4.3. School

How big an impact the school system has on the development of gender roles and gender identity is questionable. First of all, it has to be mentioned that the majority of children attend school with their peers. Therefore, the peer gender socialization mentioned in the previous subchapter still persists. Secondly, the influence of the school itself on gender role development varies depending on each particular school and also on each specific school system to which the child belongs. What can be said is that in our modern society,

the attitude towards gender roles in education has become more gender-egalitarian (equality of gender). This approach can be seen in modern textbooks where women, for example, appear in positions interchangeably with men (jobs, sports, housework). It might also involve eliminating prejudices connected to specific subjects (e.g., boys are better at math). Individual teachers can also affect these prejudices and gender equality through their efforts to create gender-neutral lessons (e.g. selecting the right character in role-play and selecting appropriate stories to read). (Lindsey, 2015, p. 356-357).

On the other hand, LINDSEY (2015) further stated that teachers often fail in their endeavour to treat girls and boys similarly because they teach them accordingly to their own learned gender roles and expectations (Lindsey, 2015, p. 86).

4.4. Media

Media is a term used to describe various forms of mass communication, such as television, the internet, books, movies, advertisements, music, and video games. These mediums have a significant impact on how people perceive the world. Gender stereotypes presented in the media from a young age play a crucial role in a child's gender socialization. How these types of media influence gender role socialization and especially how fairy tales influence forming of a child's gender roles and stereotypes are further discussed in the following chapters.

Analyses of media content consistently show that women are underrepresented and portrayed in stereotypical and traditional roles on TV. There are two or three times more men than women in prime-time dramatic programming, and women tend to be younger than men as well. Women on television are also less aggressive, take more orders, and have fewer job opportunities than men. There is a misconception on television that women are unable to balance careers, marriage, homemaking, and raising children. It is more likely that women will be victimized, seen in romantic and family contexts, and will be cast in traditionally feminine roles on television. Female inferiority is reinforced by these discrepancies between male and female portrayals. Even though women outnumber men in some occupations in the real world, men outnumber women on TV. Conversely, television media tends to present male characters as being more mature, influential, and virile than their female counterparts. As well, female characters are shown to be employed outside of the home at a lower rate than male characters, who are usually shown in high-

status, traditionally masculine fields like law, medicine, and law enforcement. In contrast, married women on TV are often portrayed as being less career-oriented, with only three out of every ten of them shown as having a job. This disparity reinforces the notion in society that women, especially those who are married, should prioritize their familial responsibilities over their professional aspirations (Signorielli, 1990, p. 51-52).

4.4.1. Television and gender role socialization

The impact of television on the gender socialization of young children is significant as they may spend a considerable portion of their day watching it. Empirical evidence has demonstrated a strong correlation between traditional and stereotypical gender perspectives and excessive TV viewing. As young children tend to accept what they see on television as fact, it has a dominant role in establishing behavioural standards and communicating social expectations. Consequently, television is the most influential medium for shaping the attitudes of children, providing them with role models and instructing them on gender and sexuality, regardless of their gender or race. Children as young as two years old copy what they see on TV, with imitation increasing through elementary school. TV encourages modelling and gender stereotypes. This is consistent with social learning theory, which strongly supports the idea of children learning through observation and modelling. Notably, boys tend to identify with physically strong characters, while girls are drawn to portrayals of beauty and royalty, such as models and princesses. Pre-adolescent cartoons, in particular, exhibit a gender disparity, with male characters outnumbering their female counterparts by a ratio of 10 to 1. Additionally, female characters in these cartoons are often portrayed in traditional family roles and are physically attractive and sexualized. Television also influences self-image, with boys being portrayed as more significant than girls, primarily due to the large number of male characters in comparison to female characters. However, there exists a trend in television programming that deviates from traditional gender stereotypes, with leading female characters depicted as heroic, intelligent, and adventurous. Nonetheless, the representation of female characters in such programs still often exhibits some sexualization. Finally, when racial factors are taken into account, it seems white boys tend to benefit most from television programming for children when it comes to bolstering their self-esteem (Lindsey, 2015, p. 87).

4.5. Summary of chapter 4

Many factors, including genes, hormones, and brain structure, influence the process of gender socialization. The agents of gender socialization, such as parents, schools, teachers, peers, and the media, all contribute to one's environment. The development of gender roles and stereotypes depends on how strictly this environment is gendered. A child's age can also affect which of these agents of socialization is more important to the development of gender identity. Infants are influenced mainly by parents' expectations of a particular gender, and children in middle childhood may be influenced mainly by peers, teachers and the media.

5. Fairy tales

Fairy tales are a popular form of literature that has been around for centuries. They are often used as a way to teach children about morals, values, and the world around them. However, fairy tales have also been criticized for perpetuating gender stereotypes and influencing the development of gender roles in children.

Prior to the presentation and analysis of Disney's fairy tales, it is essential to establish an effective definition of the fairy tale genre. This literary genre has been cherished for centuries, captivating audiences of all ages through its enchanting settings, mystical characters, and moral messages. Fairy tales can be found in various cultures worldwide. Given the breadth of this genre, there exists a diversity of definitions that vary depending on the author, with no single definition applying universally. Some authors, such as ZIPES (2000), are even inclined to say that fairy tales cannot be classified as a genre. Nonetheless, while there is a lack of consensus on the precise definition of fairy tales, there are certain fundamental features that most definitions share (Zipes 2000, p. xv).

One of the brief definitions of the fairy tale is Carpenter and Prichard's stated in The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature: "Fairy stories or fairy tales [are] narratives, set in the distant past, of events that would be impossible in the real world. They often include magical happenings and the appearance of fairies, but the supernatural does not always feature in them, and the heroes and heroines are usually mortal human beings." (Carpenter and Prichard 1984, p. 177).

A different definition from Carpenter and Prichard's is provided by BOTTIGHEIMER (2009), who states that although fairy tale motifs, structures, and happy endings are important, they are not all that define fairy tales. According to her, there are more factors that shape the fairy tale genre. She stated that the "overall plot trajectory of individual tales in conjunction with those fairy tale elements all brought together within a "compact" narrative" (Bottigheimer 2009, p. 9), is what creates the modern fairy tale.

BOTTIGHIMER (2009) continues with another difficulty in fairy tale classification as a genre and its definition. This difficulty involves the problematic distinction between folk tales and fairy tales. ZIPES (2000) mentioned that confusion between these two terms is "so great that most literary critics continually confound the oral folk tale with the literary fairy tale and vice versa" (Zipes 2000, p. xv). BOTTIGHIMER (2009) described folk

tales as linear, with familiar characters such as peasants, lawyers, and preachers, and often involve marital strife and unhappy endings. They deal with familiar aspects of human life, such as the propensity to dream of wealth and success, and are easy to follow and remember. In contrast, fairy tales are a specific type of folk tale. They are more complex and involve magical or supernatural elements, usually with a focus on a central character who overcomes obstacles and finds happiness or success in the end. Fairy tales often feature elements like enchanted objects, talking animals, and mythical creatures, while folk tales can cover a much wider range of themes and motifs (Bottigheimer 2009, p. 3-9). The inconsistency of terminology among experts is quite significant, and tales can be further distinguished according to the form (oral or written) and other aspects. But as ZIPES (2000) stated, "the average reader is not aware of the distinction between the oral and literary traditions or even cares about it." (Zipes 2000, p. xv).

Since it is not the main purpose of this thesis, the definition and distinction made by BOTTIGHIMER (2009) is clear enough for us to understand the basic problem surrounding this topic and the fairy tales in this thesis will be classified according to it.

5.1. Female and male roles in fairy tales

A key attribute of female characters in fairy tales is their physical appearance, which is often linked to their chance of future happiness. Good female characters are often submissive and wait for a prince to control their destiny. It is common for women to participate in beauty contests, which reinforce the message that young appearances and meek personalities are the most valuable qualities. There is often envy for beauty in many tales, and beauty also guarantees success and happiness for the main heroine. (Pawłowska, 2021, p.6).

 On the other hand, unattractive women are often portrayed as evil or untrustworthy. Older women and lazy girls are usually depicted as sinister, evil, and determined to exploit the heroine. (Neikirk 2009, p. 38-39).

LINDSEY (2015) agrees and adds that princesses typically marry a man that rescues them. In many classic fairy tales, such as "Cinderella," "Snow White," and "Sleeping Beauty," love and marriage are often seen as a way for the main heroine to escape suffering and live "happily ever after" (Lindsey, 2015, p. 207-208).

In addition, NEIKIRK(2009) points out that despite numerous advancements in gender equality in recent decades and numerous rights gained by women, a new trend emerged in fairy tales that increased the emphasis on female beauty. In spite of new fairy tales suggesting women in more independent roles, they still reflected narrow standards of beauty. This sends the message that women can succeed independently, but only if they meet the criteria of physical beauty (Neikirk 2009, p. 38-39).

The importance of appearance is not only prevalent when talking about female characters in fairy tales. Physical beauty is important for the main male characters as well. In conventional fairy tales, a beautiful princess is typically portrayed as marrying a handsome prince or hero. However, for male characters, their appearance is not a defining attribute of their persona. Instead, they are depicted as courageous, daring, and capable of conquering any obstacle, be it a monster, dragon, or curse. They are presented as rescuers and fighters unbeatable in battle. (Cekiso, 2013, p. 201-203).

Female characters are sometimes adventurous in fairy tales as well. However, they usually sooner or later face an unbeatable obstacle and have to wait or suffer until rescued by a prince or hero. Furthermore, the male protagonists appear to suffer less than their female counterparts (Jorgensen, 2018, p. 338-343).

Another distinction between male and female characters in fairy tales is their societal standing. Male characters are often depicted as leaders who govern the kingdom or hold positions deemed appropriate for their masculinity. Females are often depicted as mothers or maids. This can be observed in the classic fairy tale by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," where the dwarfs work in the mine while Snow White is allowed to stay only if she performs household chores such as cooking, cleaning, and making beds. (Grimms, 1812).

6. Summary of theoretical part

The first two chapters deal with the general classification of the term "gender" and its separation from biologically determined "sex" and also with the problematic of "gender roles" and" gender stereotypes", including definitions and classification of relevant terminology.

The third chapter deals with the term "gender socialization", which is a process by which the child acquires gender roles and gender stereotypes. The classification of gender socialization theories described in the third chapter is built on the division introduced by Jennifer Kretchmar in her publication in The Sociology Reference Guide: Gender Roles & Equality (2011, p. 41-51). According to her, there are four theories of gender socialization: Social learning theory, Cognitive development theory, Gender schema theory and Psychoanalytic theory.

Social learning theory is based on the principle of "stimulus" and" response "(sometimes also called the principle of "reward" and "punishment"). According to this theory, learned gender roles are influenced by the response of society to children's gender-related behaviour.

Cognitive development theory proposes that children's understanding of gender roles and identity evolves as their cognitive abilities develop. They progress through stages of gender identity, stability, and constancy, gaining a deeper comprehension of gender and conforming to societal expectations.

Gender schema theory, proposed by Sandra Bem, states that children develop gender schemas that organize their understanding of gender. These schemas are shaped by societal norms and influence how children perceive themselves and others. New information about gender-related behaviour is then processed and organized by these gender schemas.

Psychoanalytic theory suggests that children's gender identity is shaped by unconscious desires (also called unconscious psychological processes) and early experiences. By resolving conflicts related to their feelings towards their opposite-sex parent, children internalize societal expectations of masculinity or femininity.

The fourth chapter presents us with agents of gender role socialization. These agents are the most significant in teaching children how to conform to gender roles. They shape the development of gender identity and provide models of behaviour for children to imitate. These agents include parents, teachers, peers, and the media.

The last chapter focuses mainly on fairy tales, providing a brief history and definition of the genre. Moreover, it describes the typical roles of a female and a male in fairy tales. Discusses the importance of beauty, the connection of certain physical attributes to behaviour, as well as classical diversification of societal standing. This chapter helps to better understand gender stereotypes prevalent in the majority of classical fairy tales, which is crucial for fairy tale analyses in the following practical part of this thesis.

7. Depiction of gender roles in Disney's fairy tales

The aim of the practical part is to analyse gender roles and gender-related behaviour in classical Disney fairy tales. The results of the analysis will enable a deeper understanding of how gender roles are portrayed and perpetuated through these fairy tales. This, in turn, can provide insights into how gender roles are represented in popular culture today.

7.1. Research objectives

This research will focus on three main objectives

- To examine the prevalence and characteristics of gender roles in classical Disney fairy tales.

- To investigate the possible impact of classical Disney fairy tales on children's perceptions of gender roles and identity.

- To analyse changes in gender role portrayal in classical Disney fairy tales over time.

7.2. Research procedure

The fairy tales were chosen according to the rules and demands set by the author of this thesis. The aim was to choose fairy tales that were all based on European folk tales and were first published in the 19th century. The second demand was to pick fairy tales animated in the classical Disney 2D animated style. According to these criteria, it was decided to choose the first fully animated Disney movie (Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs), released in 1937 and the last Disney movie fulfilling these requirements (The Princess and the Frog), released in 2009. These rules should help to provide consistent results. The decision to select these particular fairy tales should offer insight into the portrayal of gender roles and gender developments throughout the years.

The third fairy tale (Little Mermaid - 1989) was chosen solely on the basis of the author's personal preferences. It had to meet both demands. The aim was to choose a fairy tale with a release date of at least 20 years away from the release year of both previously

chosen movies. This should contribute positively to the complexity and reliability of results and also help to complete the picture of the development of gender roles depicted in Disney adaptations of these classic fairy tales.

The first part of the analysis involved watching fairy tales and making notes about the gender-related behaviour of individual characters. This data was then used to create a report that highlighted the most prominent gender roles present in these fairy tales. It was also used to create an in-depth portrayal of the behaviour of each prominent character featured.

The second part of the analysis involved classifying the overall approach to gender roles in each movie. This overall approach was based derived from the compiled portrayal of characters. The second part of the analysis further contains possible negative and positive influences of gender-related behaviour observed in the analysed fairy tales.

Negative influences refer to instances where fairy tales reinforce traditional gender stereotypes or present limited and restrictive gender roles. This could include the portrayal of female characters as unrealistically beautiful, passive, helpless, or solely focused on finding love. In contrast, male characters are depicted as strong, dominant and unbeatable.

On the other hand, the analysis also examined the possible positive influences of gender-related behaviour observed in fairy tales. This includes narratives that challenge or subvert traditional gender roles, promote gender equality, or provide diverse and empowering representations of gender.

By examining both the negative and positive influences of gender-related behaviour in the fairy tales analysed, the analysis provides a nuanced understanding of how these narratives may influence children's perceptions of gender roles. The deductions are derived from the theoretical part of this thesis (specifically chapters 4 and 5).

Finally, from the analyses of all three fairy tales from different time periods, emerged clear image changes in gender role portrayal in classical Disney fairy tales over time.

7.3. The Walt Disney studios

The establishment of the Walt Disney Company by brothers Walt and Roy O. Disney in October 1923 marked a significant milestone in the history of animated entertainment aimed at children and families. "Steamboat Willie," the first Mickey Mouse cartoon, was

released in November 1928. It was an early example of synchronized sound in animation, showcasing Disney's animators' creativity and innovation and catapulting the company into commercial success. Disney released its first feature-length animated film, Snow White, in December 1937, which became the highest-grossing film of the year. The success of "Snow White" established Disney as the premier animation studio and set the standard for future animated films. In July 1955, the first Walt Disney Company amusement park, Disneyland, opened. The company began its own cable network, the "Disney Channel", in April 1983. In July 1995, Disney acquired Capital Cities (an American media company), adding huge media assets to its empire. In May 2006, Disney merged with Pixar Animation Studios. Additionally, Disney Company acquired The Muppets, Marvel Entertainment, Lucasfilm and many other smaller studios. This expansion, along with amusement parks and merchandise, has allowed the company to become one of the biggest media conglomerates in the world. Throughout history, Disney company was the subject of different controversies. The controversies concerned stereotypical representations of women in Disney animated movies (choosing romance over careers, lack of individuality, etc.), or they were racially motivated (Schmidt, 2020, p. 1877-1878).

8. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937)

The story of Snow White is a well-known fairy tale that has been passed down through generations and adapted into various forms of media. Snow White's origins can be traced back to different sources and variations. Similar to numerous fairy tales, Snow White likely originated from oral storytelling and folklore. Stories featuring elements identical to Snow White's plot and themes can be found in different cultures around the world. The most well-known version of Snow White comes from the Brothers Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, who collected and published folk tales in the 19th century. The Grimm Brothers published their Snow White version in 1812 as part of a book entitled Grimms' Fairy Tales (originally Children's and Household Tales). This book also included other famous fairy tales such as Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty or The Frog Prince. Some of these fairy tales were recreated by Walt Disney and became known worldwide in the 20th century. According to most scholars, Grimms' version contributed significantly to popularizing Snow White and sustaining its status in Western literature. Over time, the Snow White story has been adapted and reimagined in various media, including theatre, literature, film, and television. It was Walt Disney's animated movie "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," released in 1937, which fueled widespread popularity and recognition for the Snow White story and made it more widely known than ever before. The Disney adaptation played a significant role in shaping modern Snow White perception and imagery. (Gidwitz, 2013).

Before analysing the gender roles in Walt Disney's "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," it's imperative to clarify that this thesis focuses solely on the original 1937 Disney adaptation. No other versions or adaptations of Snow White from Disney Studios, except the 1937 version, will be considered in this study. In the process of conducting research, however, information about the new Disney version of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs that is scheduled to be released in 2024 was discovered. This upcoming adaptation will feature real actors, and the gender roles depicted in this version may differ from the analysed version released in 1937.

It is also important to note that the gender roles portrayed in "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" by Disney are rooted in traditional fairy tale conventions and reflect the social norms that prevailed at the time of the film's release in 1937. These gender roles perpetuate the notion of women as delicate, dependent, and confined to domestic duties.

8.1. The portrayal of female characters in Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

8.1.1. Snow White

Snow White, as portrayed in the Disney adaptation of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," is a central character also known as the "first Disney princess". Her domain features are innocence, beauty and kindness. Her primary goal is to escape her wicked stepmother, the Queen, and find her true love. Love symbolizes the key to how to overcome severe adversity and the way how to live happily ever after. ("Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", 1937)

In terms of appearance, Snow White is depicted as a fair-skinned young woman with dark hair, rosy cheeks, red lips and a red bow in her hair (see appendix 3). Even though she is depicted as a young woman, she still seems to be older than the Snow White depicted in the Brothers Grimm's original adaptation, where she is only 14 years old. Disney's version of Snow White popularized this image, and it is now seen as the classic image of the fairy tale character. Her physical beauty is emphasized as a desirable trait, reflecting societal ideals of femininity. This portrayal aligns with conventional attractiveness standards and reinforces traditional gender norms associated with women. ("Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", 1937)

Snow White's character traits are primarily centred around her domestic role and nurturing nature. Snow White is depicted as a gentle and caring individual who takes care of household chores and takes care of the seven dwarfs (as seen at 38:45-38:53 of the movie, where Snow White offers to keep the house clean and also promises to "wash, sew, sweep and cook") ("Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", 1937). She is also depicted doing these chores even before the dwarfs come home and the next day when they leave for work). It is in accordance with gendered expectations placed on women in traditionally assigned roles that they fulfil traditional domestic responsibilities, such as cooking, cleaning, and organizing.

Snow White also demonstrates female passivity qualities. She is portrayed as submissive and obedient, depending on others, especially male characters, for her safety. As an example, she relies upon a prince to rescue her from her apparent constant lethargy. This reinforces traditional gender roles and stereotypes that suggest men should be protectors and women should be passive and submissive. Additionally, she also seems to be naive

and trusting, so it is easy for her to get into obstacles that she is unable to solve without the men's help. In essence, this is the plot twist of the fairy tale since Snow White eats a poisoned apple from a strange, old and ugly woman (her transformed stepmother). Furthermore, Snow White also demonstrates kindness and nurturing towards animals and the dwarfs, highlighting traditional gender roles that emphasize women's caregiving abilities. ("Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", 1937).

8.1.2. The evil queen

The Evil Queen, also known as the Wicked Queen, is a central antagonist in the Disney adaptation of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs."

The Evil Queen is depicted as a ruling and commanding figure, often seen wearing opulent garments and a crown (see appendix 4). Her appearance signifies power, authority, and a desire for external validation. A key characteristic of the Evil Queen's character is her intense jealousy and obsession with maintaining her status as the "fairest of them all." This obsession stems from the magic mirror's proclamation that Snow White, her stepdaughter, is prettier than her. The Evil Queen's preoccupation with physical beauty reflects societal pressures placed on women to uphold idealized standards of appearance and maintain youthful attractiveness. ("Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", 1937) .

Her effort to eliminate or kill Snow White in order to become the most beautiful woman on earth reveals how power-hungry and determined she is, as well as how important this status is for her. She uses tricky methods, such as transforming into an old hag ("Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", 1937, 49:00-52:00) and offering a poisoned apple to Snow White which was already mentioned before. In the end, she fails, and her own vanity is her downfall. Her obsession with her own beauty is her undoing and serves as a warning against vanity and pride. This portrayal reinforces negative stereotypes about women in positions of power, depicting them as conniving, ruthless, and driven by personal vendettas. ("Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", 1937).

This portrayal of the Evil Queen perpetuates the idea that women must rely on their physical appearance to achieve power and authority. It also reinforces the notion that women in positions of power are primarily seen as objects of beauty rather than respected for their skill and knowledge.

8.2. The portrayal of male characters in Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

8.2.1. The Seven Dwarfs

The seven dwarfs are named Doc, Grumpy, Happy, Sleepy, Bashful, Sneezy, and Dopey. They are lovable, hardworking, and tiny individuals who live together in a cosy cottage deep in the woods.

There are a lot of different personalities among the dwarfs that make the group work well together. In the movie, Doc is depicted as a leader and decision-maker, guiding the other dwarfs. Grumpy, as his name suggests, initially resents Snow White's presence but ultimately shows a soft side and grows fond of her. Bashful is shy and timid, while Happy is always cheerful and optimistic. Sleepy is, as his name implies, always tired, while Dopey is the youngest and most naïve of the group. Lastly, Sneezy sneezes often and is the most sensitive of the group. ("Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", 1937).

In terms of gender roles, the dwarfs are portrayed in a way that aligns with traditional masculinity expectations. They are depicted as rugged workers engaged in physically demanding tasks such as mining and labour-intensive chores. Their occupation emphasizes strength, perseverance, and manual labour, often associated with traditional male gender roles. Also, as seen in the movie, they cannot keep their house clean. It is a complete mess when Snow White enters the cottage and finds it covered in layers of dust and spiderwebs. ("Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", 1937, 16:00-21:00). Later, they are sent by Snow White to wash because they are not used to it regularly, and they are portrayed as very filthy and neglected. By saying things such as "a fine bunch of water lilies, you turned out to be," Grumpy strongly opposes and mocks the other dwarfs who chose to obey Snow White and take a bath, suggesting that in his view ", true" men never wash or smell nice, as this is considered womanish ("Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", 1937, 45:08), Overall, Dwarfs are seen to be in need of someone to care for them and take care of their home. The consequence is that it reinforces the gender stereotype that men are not self-sufficient and are not responsible for housework because that is a function usually performed by women. ("Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", 1937).

While dwarfs exhibit masculinity qualities, they also display tender and nurturing characteristics. The way they interact with Snow White shows how compassionate and caring they are. They welcome Snow White into their home, provide shelter and support,

and ultimately become her protectors. By showing men as nurturing caregivers, this portrayal challenges rigid gender stereotypes.

It's worth noting that while dwarfs embody certain characteristics that may align with traditional gender roles, their portrayal is not limited to strict stereotypes. In a nutshell, they are a blend of traditional gender roles associated with male labour and strength, as well as offering a range of emotions, vulnerabilities, and individuality, adding complexity to their characters.

8.2.2. The prince

The prince in this movie is a symbol of hope and strength - always ready to help Snow White when she needs it. He is shown as a heroic and honourable figure who is willing to risk his own life to save her from the hands of the evil queen. Due to the limited screen time, his character is flat and plain. He represents solely positive characteristics and has no weaknesses. On the other hand, the prince's role in the story is still crucial, as he provides a means for Snow White to escape her cruel fate and live happily ever after.

Speaking of gender roles, the prince represents traditional masculine traits. He is handsome, courageous, confident, and assertive (see appendix 5). These characteristics correspond to cultural expectations of men as powerful, heroic individuals who protect others. These traits are reflected in the prince's actions as he travels through the forest and overcomes obstacles to find and save Snow White. As soon as Snow White meets the prince at the beginning of the movie, she immediately becomes attracted to him. From then on, she describes him as the love of her life who will immediately satisfy her needs and will help her live a happy life free from obstacles or suffering for the rest of their lives. This could be seen, for example, in the song that Snow White signs when the dwarfs leave for work just minutes before the evil queen with the poisoned apple appears. She sings, "Some day my prince will come. Some day we'll meet again. And away to his castle, we'll go to be happy forever I know." ("Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", 1937, 1:08:53-1:09:09).

The prince's role in the story emphasizes male autonomy and authority. He becomes the catalyst for Snow White's rescue, symbolizing the traditional narrative of a prince rescuing a damsel in distress. This reinforces the idea that women are dependent on men

and unable to stand on their own. This is a common trope in fairy tales and reinforces damaging gender stereotypes.

8.2.3. The huntsman

The huntsman is a servant of the Evil Queen. He is given the task of taking Snow White into the forest and killing her as a result of the Queen's jealousy. However, when faced with the young princess's innocence and beauty, the huntsman cannot bring himself to obey the Queen's command. In an act of mercy, he lets her go, and Snow White is able to escape into the forest. The huntsman is ultimately spared from the Queen's wrath, as she is more focused on finding Snow White and exacting revenge. ("Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", 1937)

The huntsman's internal conflict is an essential element in the story. His decision not to hurt Snow White demonstrates kindness and empathy, both typically associated with femininity. This demonstrates a challenge to established gender roles. It suggests that males can have these abilities as well and that traditional gender roles are not always reflective of a person's ability.

Furthermore, the huntsman's actions can be interpreted as a representation of male autonomy and freedom. Rather than blindly accepting the Evil Queen's instructions, he asserts independence and takes a decision that is in line with his own values and beliefs. By doing so, the huntsman demonstrates his individualism and emphasises that people of any gender can fight injustice and make their own decisions.

8.3. Summary of analyses of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

The main and most important motif of this fairy tale is beauty. Physical appearance is presented as the most significant value of the woman, and the whole plot is set about the envious ageing evil queen who is not able to bear the fact that her stepdaughter is prettier than her because, in her eyes, beauty is seen as something that defies the worth and power of a woman.

Male protagonists also depict traditional gender roles and masculine behaviour. Dwarfs are doing hard and physically demanding work in the mine, traditionally referred to as men's work. They are also depicted as filthy and unable to take care of themselves and need a woman to keep their house clean. The prince does not have a name and lacks

screen time, but he still is the most important character because he overcomes every obstacle and saves the helpless Snow White. He does not possess any weaknesses or negative personality traits.

The movie overall pushes the idea that women can only be happy if they get married to a strong and handsome male that will take care of them.

8.3.1. The possible influence of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs on children gender identity development

As already mentioned, most of the characters in Disney's adaptation of "Snow White and the seven dwarfs" reinforce traditional gender roles. These gender roles may be harmful to shaping children's gender identity. For instance, children, due to the depiction of Snow White as a passive and domesticated character, may internalize the idea that girls should be nurturing, submissive, and reliant on others for protection and guidance. This can contribute to the formation of gender stereotypes and expectations, shaping how children perceive themselves and others. Children also often identify with characters they relate to or admire. This identification can reinforce gender-specific behaviours and attributes, as children may strive to emulate the traits associated with their gender role model.

The emphasis that is put on an appearance and the depiction of Snow White's beauty as a desirable trait can impact children's perception of beauty standards. This can lead to unrealistic expectations among kids and may lead to poor self-esteem or body image issues. It can also lead to the internalization of harmful gender stereotypes, particularly for young girls.

Negative influences of traditional gender roles are not only harming young girls but can also influence gender development in boys. Snow White and the seven dwarfs display a limited and plain male emotional range. This ultimately leads to boys growing up with a narrow view of what it means to be male. This can lead to boys feeling obligated to be strong and stoic and not being able to express themselves emotionally.

Another possible influence that is present in the majority of fairy tales, not only Snow White, is the romanticized relationship between Snow White and the prince that may shape children's expectations of romantic relationships. This may lead to an unrealistic view of what a romantic relationship should look like or how it should be conducted.

Additionally, a "happy ever after" ending may also create a sense of entitlement in children by implying that everything will work out as expected.

9. The Little Mermaid (1989)

In terms of the origin of the Little Mermaid story, is history a bit clearer than in the case of Snow White, whose versions differ across Europe. The Little Mermaid story was introduced by Hans Christian Andersen in his collection of fairy tales for children called "Fairy Tales Told for Children. First collection" published in 1837 in Copenhagen, Denmark. Andersen was inspired by various folklore and mythological elements. Andersen's story was adapted into a Disney film in 1989 and has since become a beloved story around the world. It has also inspired a range of other works, including ballets, operas, and plays.

"The Little Mermaid's" original story is a perfect example of how fairy tales can change and mean different things depending on when and how they're told. Hans Christian Andersen's original story is mainly about heartbreak, sacrifice, and the harsh truth that love does not always work out and ends tragically. But then Disney came along in 1989 and gave us a more child-friendly, optimistic, and fantastical narrative. It just serves to show how these stories can be moulded and adapted to fit different audiences and times. (Smith, 2022).

Before delving into the analysis of gender roles in Disney's 1989 animated fairy tale: "The Little Mermaid," it is essential to acknowledge the existence of other versions of this beloved fairy tale. Over the years, "The Little Mermaid" has been presented in different mediums, including literature or the theatre. Disney itself later released, for example, the second movie called The Little Mermaid II: Return to the Sea, which focuses on Ariel's daughter. The animated television series "The Little Mermaid" (1992-1994) was also released by Disney and provided a platform for ongoing storytelling in the underwater kingdom. The series delved into Ariel's adventures, showcasing her independence and determination while further developing her relationships with family and friends. In addition, information has been discovered about the new Disney version, which is played by real-life actors and was released on 26th May 2023. However, for the purpose of this thesis, the focus will primarily be on the 1989 animated film directed by Ron Clements and John Musker, and any other of these versions will not be taken into account. This is due to the fact that the gender roles presented in other versions may be different from the ones presented in the version analysed for this thesis.

It is also important to note that the gender roles portrayed in the "Little Mermaid" by Disney are rooted in traditional fairy tale conventions and reflect the social norms that prevailed at the time of the film's release in 1989.

9.1. The portrayal of female characters in The Little Mermaid

9.1.1. Ariel

The main protagonist of the fairy tale is Ariel, the fourth Disney princess. She is a vibrant and adventurous young mermaid who longs for something more than her underwater world. She possesses a deep curiosity about the human world, collecting human artefacts and exploring shipwrecks. She is helped by her friends Flounder and Sebastian in her attempts to break free from her home boundaries and explore the world above. Despite her curiosity, Ariel's father, King Triton, forbids her from interacting with humans. However, she actively disobeys her father's rules and ventures into dangerous situations. ("The Little Mermaid", 1989).

In terms of gender roles, Ariel, on the one hand, challenges the typical stereotypes and expectations about gender and the role women play in society, but on the other hand, she also reinforces many of them. She is a courageous young woman who possesses a strong sense of independence and a desire to explore the human world. This curiosity and hunger for adventure challenge the notion that women should not venture beyond their domestic roles.

She also often takes risks and, unlike Snow White, for example, is able to overcome obstacles by herself. This can be seen at the beginning of the movie when Ariel and her fish friend Flounder successfully escape the angry shark ("The Little Mermaid", 1989, 7:52-8:45). Another time, she takes the situation into her own hands and fights stereotypes is when she rescues Prince Eric from drowning. This heroic act is not commonly seen in traditional fairy tales such as Snow White or sleeping beauty, where female characters are usually saved by a prince who does not need any help and overcomes every obstacle. By doing so, she shows her strength and breaks the gender roles that are often reinforced in traditional stories. Moreover, it shows that women are capable of taking charge and rescuing themselves. This act makes a strong statement that women can be independent and empowered. This risky behaviour and a strong desire to achieve her dreams, on the other hand, lead her to make emotional, naive and thoughtless decisions such as signing an unfair deal with the "sea witch" Ursula. ("The Little Mermaid", 1989).

Ariel's portrayal also includes elements that align with traditional gender stereotypes. For instance, her pursuit of romantic love and her willingness to make sacrifices for it can be seen as conforming to the traditional narrative that women should prioritize relationships and be willing to sacrifice their own identities or carriers for love. Additionally, Ariel's physical appearance conforms to traditional beauty standards. She possesses long flowing red hair, a slim figure, and delicate features (see appendix 6) that are often associated with societal expectations of femininity and attractiveness. While her physical attributes contribute to her character's appeal, they can also reinforce the idea that a woman's worth lies in her appearance. Both of these stereotypes can be observed in the scene where Ariel exchanges her voice for human legs with Ursula. Just before it happens, Ursula tries to persuade Ariel that she is a woman and that she will never need her voice to talk. She sings a song saying, "Men up there don't like a lot of blabber. They think a girl who gossips is a bore. Yes, on land, it's much preferred for ladies not to say a word" ("The Little Mermaid", 1989,43:20-43:50). And also adds that Ariel will still remain beautiful which is enough for women to be successful. Ariel is unconvinced and later learns that her voice is, in fact, a powerful asset. Ursula's words serve to reinforce the idea that women should be seen and not heard ("The Little Mermaid", 1989)

9.1.2. Ursula

Ursula, often called a "sea witch", is the primary antagonist of "The Little Mermaid,". Ursula's physical appearance is striking and symbolic. She is portrayed as a larger, more authoritative person with exaggerated features and a rich, strong voice (see appendix 7). Her dark and frightening character can be seen through her purple and black colour scheme. Another notable aspect of Ursula's character is her command over dark magic. She possesses an array of supernatural powers, including the ability to transform herself and others, control oceanic forces, and manipulate situations to her advantage. Her main ambition or desire is to rule the underwater kingdom. She presents herself as a confident and charismatic person, convincing innocent victims into her arms using charm and persuasive tactics. Her dishonesty is clear in her interactions with Ariel, whom she offers the possibility of turning into a human in return for her voice. (Disney's Little Mermaid, 1989 - Disney+ version).

Speaking of gender roles and stereotypes, Ursula's over-sexualization is a perfect example. Her physical attributes and suggestive movements emphasize her sexuality

rather than her intelligence. This could be seen, for instance, in her opulent appearance. Or in the scene where she emphasizes the importance of body language and downplays the importance of voice in a woman's life ("The Little Mermaid", 1989, 42:30-43:50). This portrayal reduces her to a sexualized object, reinforcing the stereotype that women's worth lies primarily in their physical appeal and attractiveness. This goes along with the other thing, and that is how Ursula's physical appearance is portrayed in relation to beauty standards. While she breaks away from conventional norms with her original body type, the film still depicts her as physically unattractive. This can inadvertently reinforce the stereotype that a woman's worth is determined by her appearance and attractiveness. By contrasting Ursula's appearance with Ariel's youthful beauty, the movie may suggest that being attractive equates to being morally good. This supports the stereotype depicted in many classic fairy tales that villain female protagonists are often depicted as ugly, fat or old women, usually with magical powers (witches). This type of representation is damaging to women as it reinforces the idea that physical beauty is a measure of a woman's worth. It sends a message to women that they must conform to a narrow standard of beauty in order to be accepted and valued

On the other hand, throughout the movie, there is not any mention of Ursula being unsatisfied with her appearance. What else, according to her look and behaviour, she is really confident in her body and takes care of herself wearing things like make-up, distinctive lipstick and painted nails. She also wears clothes that show her curves and celebrates her beauty in a way that can be seen as empowered. She is also not envious of Ariel's look because her main interest is to gain power over the Sea Kingdom. This suggests that she is confident, powerful, and ambitious and challenges the idea that women should be meek or submissive. Her manipulation tactics and ability to manipulate others demonstrate her intelligence and strategic thinking, showing that women can be just as intelligent and sophisticated as their male counterparts. ("The Little Mermaid", 1989).

9.2. The portrayal of male characters in The Little Mermaid
9.2.1. Prince Eric

In "The Little Mermaid," Prince Eric is a brave and courageous figure. He is introduced as a brave and noble man who represents qualities that are commonly associated with masculinity. He is portrayed as an accomplished sailor, displaying strength, athleticism, and ship leadership. These features align with the stereotype of a male hero, emphasising physical strength and bravery as distinguishing characteristics. As well as the prince from Snow White's fairy tale, he has only positive qualities. Unlike him, he has a name and is given more screen time in the movie. This results in the fact that his character is deeper and more complex.

Prince Eric fits stereotypes of male attractiveness. He is charming, with sculpted features and a tall, muscular physique (see appendix 8). This is consistent with the media's idealised norms of male beauty, supporting the impression that physical appearance is an essential part of the male character. ("The Little Mermaid", 1989).

While Prince Eric's character largely conforms to traditional gender roles, it is worth noting that he also exhibits some progressive traits. He demonstrates compassion, kindness, and a willingness to challenge societal expectations. This is depicted at the beginning of the movie, where he risks his life to save his dog friend Max. However, Prince Eric is not one of those heroes who can easily surpass every obstacle without difficulty. Even though he is strong and brave, he also shows a vulnerability that is often associated with femininity. Despite killing Ursula at the end of the movie and saving Ariel and her father, he nearly dies twice during the movie and needs help from others, once from Ariel in the beginning ("The Little Mermaid", 1989, 24:15-26:00) and once from Ariel's friends at the very end ("The Little Mermaid", 1989), 1:12:20-1:12:35). This shows that, despite his strength and courage, he is not invincible and still needs help from others. This helps to demonstrate that, regardless of gender, everyone needs help from time to time.

9.2.2. King Triton

King Triton is the powerful ruler of the sea kingdom and the father of Ariel and her sister. His significant traits are authority, strength and a quick temper. He is depicted as a mighty and imposing figure, commanding respect from his daughters and other characters. In terms of appearance, King Triton is depicted with a muscular physique and regal presence. He is often seen wearing a flowing royal robe adorned with intricate details and vibrant colours, symbolizing his status as the ruler of the underwater kingdom. He also has a large trident in his hand, which symbolizes his power. His long white hair and long white beard further add to his majestic appearance. This portrayal aligns with the traditional image of male leadership and dominance. It highlights characteristics often associated with masculinity, such as physical strength and governance ability. His position as a ruler also reinforces the stereotype that men are naturally suited to power-demanding and higher positions than women. ("The Little Mermaid", 1989).

While he represents many traditional gender roles about masculinity and patriarchal authority, he also undergoes important personal growth and perspective shifts, especially in his relationship with his daughter Ariel. On the one hand, King Triton embodies the role of a protective patriarch. He sees it as his responsibility to guide and safeguard his daughter, reflecting the societal expectation of fathers as authority figures within the family. This is consistent with traditional gender roles that place men in the role of protectors and decision-makers. Their relationship with Ariel is full of conflict because he stands for his conservative views and is attached to his underwater kingdom's values. However, this stems from the fact that he feels deep love, care and vulnerability for his daughters. Later in the movie, Ariel's father is willing to make a huge sacrifice to save her from the consequences of her decisions and show her how much he loves her. At the end of the story, he learns to understand and appreciate Ariel's desires and choices, ultimately supporting her in pursuing her dreams and demonstrating an important shift .in his views of women. He eventually comes to realize that a woman's autonomy and capacity to make her own decisions is something to be respected and accepted. King Triton's relationship with Ariel can also be viewed as a representation of the conflicts that can arise when individuals challenge or deviate from established gender roles and societal expectations. Ariel's desire to explore the human world and her independence contrasts with the expectations placed upon her as a princess and daughter. They both learn the value of compromise, understanding, and acceptance. The tension between them

ultimately leads to the breakdown of gendered constraints and the development of their relationship.

9.2.3. Flounder, Sebastian and Scuttle

Flounder, Sebastian and Scuttle are three of Ariel's animal friends. Flounder is a fish and Ariel's best friend. Sebastian is a crab who acts as Ariel's mentor. Scuttle is a seagull who provides knowledge about human objects. They all help Ariel on her journey to discover her true identity and find true love with Prince Eric. While they are non-human characters, they may not be explicitly associated with them, and they also provide a more open interpretation of their gender. According to their voice actors, we can assume that in this interpretation, they are all considered to be males, and their gender roles are fluid, containing female as well as male characteristics. Due to this fact, analysts of gender roles and stereotypes may be difficult. They represent different aspects of human behaviour, and many of their activities often add comedy features to the movie, making the story more enjoyable to watch. They are also very significant to the story and contribute largely to the overall narrative. ("The Little Mermaid", 1989).

Flounder is a small, cute and colourful fish with rounded features and stands for the role of supporting character who adds depth to a story. He also often provides comic relief through his nervous and anxious behaviour. His gender role is not defined specifically since he is a fish. However, if it is assumed that he is a male, it must be mentioned that he possesses some of the signs often connected and stereotyped to femininity. His character traits are passiveness, emotional sensitivity, vulnerability, cuteness or softness. He can be seen as a counterbalance to Ariel's adventurous and headstrong personality. While Flounder's character traits and appearance may reflect certain gendered expectations, it is important to note that these portrayals are not exclusive to a specific gender. Flounder's good qualities, such as loyalty, kindness, a good heart and friendship, transcend gender stereotypes and can be appreciated by anyone. ("The Little Mermaid", 1989).

Scuttle's personality is characterized by humour, eccentricity, and exaggeration. He often provides comic relief through his misunderstanding of human objects and his attempts to interpret them for Ariel. In terms of gender roles, he does not possess any strong or specific gender roles that could be tied to masculinity or femininity. ("The Little Mermaid", 1989).

As one of these three animals, Sebastian represents traditional male gender roles most clearly and directly. He is responsible and has a distinguished posture and a strong voice. While not explicitly tied to gender roles, these attributes contribute to his portrayal as a mature and wise figure. Sebastian's knowledge of the underwater world and his efforts to guide and protect Ariel align with traditional expectations of male authority figures. ("The Little Mermaid", 1989)

9.3. Summary of analyses of The Little Mermaid

In "The Little Mermaid," the portrayal of gender roles is complex and exhibits both progressive and traditional elements. Characters are more complex, and some of them embody personal growth, which contributes to the believability of the characters.

Ariel's character is portrayed as strong, independent and adventurous, challenging traditional gender roles. She also often disobeys her father's rules and takes risks, showcasing her ability to overcome obstacles. However, her ultimate goal of finding love and getting married reinforces gender stereotypes. In the end, she gives up her identity and freedom in order to get her happily ever after.

Ursula, the primary antagonist, embodies over-sexualization and the stereotype that women's value lies primarily in their appearance. The contrast between Ursula's appearance and Ariel's youthful beauty suggests that being attractive equates to being morally good, which supports the stereotype that villainous female characters are often depicted as unattractive.

Among the male characters, Prince Eric is given much more space, allowing him to get closer to the audience. He embodies traditional qualities associated with masculinity, such as bravery, athleticism, and leadership. He also shows that he has some weaknesses and needs help occasionally, which differentiates him from the image of a perfect flawless hero.

Positivity can also be seen in the development of King Triton, Ariel's father. He is portrayed as a strong patriarchal leader at the beginning of the movie, but at the end, she eventually realizes the importance of supporting Ariel's dreams and shifts his perspective of women and stops seeing them as helpless and weak.

9.3.1. The possible influence of The Little Mermaid on children's gender identity development

By analysis of Disney's version of The Little Mermaid, it was revealed that this adaptation contains some progressive and some traditional gender roles. These gender roles can simultaneously have both beneficial and harmful influences on children's perception of gender.

The positive influence of this adaptation includes the empowerment of the female protagonist, Ariel, who is brave and adventurous. This can influence the self-perception of young women and encourage them to break free from traditional gender expectations.

Equally, for young men may be beneficial the depiction of the fact that the prince and hero of the movie can, besides traditional masculine qualities such as bravery, strength, and leadership, also have weaknesses and express nurturing emotions. This can help young men learn to express their emotions and be more comfortable embracing their own vulnerability.

However, the negative influence that stems from traditional depictions of gender roles is still prevalent. Importance and a narrow definition of beauty are still present, and as was previously, this focus on beauty can reinforce unrealistic beauty standards and potentially lead to body dissatisfaction and self-esteem issues, particularly for young girls who may internalize these ideals.

The depiction of the main villain further supports negative beauty standards by creating negative prejudices about women who do not conform to conventional beauty standards. It is important to encourage children to challenge these stereotypes and recognize that a person's worth should not be judged based on their appearance.

Similarly, this adaptation presents unrealistic expectations about relationships, love, and personal fulfilment that were already emphasized in "Snow White and the seven dwarfs." Children who internalize these narratives might develop unrealistic expectations about gender roles and dynamics in their own lives, potentially leading to disappointment or dissatisfaction.

Additionally, Ariel's willingness to be obedient and make a sacrifice for a man is rewarded, which reinforces the idea that women should prioritize romantic relationships over personal aspirations. This can lead young women to believe that they should

prioritize male figures in their lives and put their own identities aside. It can also lead to the perception that men should be in control of relationships and that women should be subservient.

10. The Princess and the Frog (2009)

"The Princess and the Frog" diverges significantly from the original fairy tale it is based on, "The Frog King" by the Brothers Grimm, originally published in 1812. In this original version, the princess is portrayed as spoiled, while the male characters are depicted as virtuous. She likes to play with her golden ball, which she accidentally loses. A Frog Prince finds it and offers it to her if she becomes his constant companion. She agrees, but she quickly forgets about her promise when she gets her ball back and tries to escape. The frog catches up to the princess and demands she fulfil her promise. She does not have a choice and unwillingly shares her food with the frog and allows him to sleep in her bed. Unable to bear this anymore, the princess throws the frog against the wall, turning him into a handsome prince.

The English translation by Edgar Taylor altered the ending slightly, where the princess sleeps with the frog on her pillow for three nights before he transforms into a prince. It is likely that the popular association with a transformative kiss originated from this translation.

Over time, the story has been adapted and retold in various cultures and literary works. Based on these earlier versions, Disney's animated film "The Princess and the Frog", released in 2009, adds its own elements and sets the story in New Orleans. This new version of the story emphasizes the importance of female friendship and mutual support. It also shows how stories we tell can be updated and reimagined to reflect modern values and beliefs. (Winkle 2014).

10.1. The portrayal of female characters in The Princess and the Frog

10.1.1. Tiana

Disney's adaptation of the fairy tale "The Princess and the Frog" introduces Tiana as a hardworking young woman living in New Orleans in the 1920s. Her main ambition is to open her own restaurant, inspired by the fond memories she had of her father's gumbo cooking. Tiana embodies perseverance, dedication, and independence, often working multiple jobs to save money to achieve her dream. ("The Princess and the Frog", 2009).

Regarding gender roles, Tiana challenges many gender roles seen in classical fairy tales. She is portrayed as a strong, independent and skilled individual who can take of herself without the help of anybody else. She excels in many "male-dominated" fields and is capable of being a successful chef and leader of her own business. Tiana's ambition to own and operate her own restaurant further highlights her pursuit of a career outside the home, breaking the societal norms that restricted women to domestic roles during that time.

Even though it is not the main focus of this thesis, it is worth mentioning that she is a carrier-oriented woman in the 1920s, which is an unusual depiction that fights gender roles prevalent in the USA in the 1920s, but she is also portrayed as an Afro-American. The differences or racial segregation are not directly stressed in the movie, but they can be found in the background, and they are important because they serve as the reason why Tiana can't afford her own restaurant. Her family, especially her dad, is depicted as a hardworking low-wage worker, and even the place where they live at the beginning of the movie is dramatically different from the home of Tiana's white friend Charlotte La Bouff. This shows how strong her character portrayal is. Not only she has to fight societal expectations that are put on her as a woman, but she also has to overcome the fact that her dreams are limited due to her racial and economic background. ("The Princess and the Frog", 2009).

However, despite her independence and ambition, Tiana also experiences moments where traditional gender roles are emphasized. In terms of appearance, it must be mentioned that beauty does not play such a significant role in the story as in Snow White or other traditional fairy tales. However, Tiana is still depicted as a young and attractive lady (see appendix 9) with a conventional body type who ends up marrying a handsome prince and living happily ever after. This skeleton of the traditional fairy tale remains unchanged, as well as the fact that both the main protagonists meet certain standards of beauty. On the other hand, an important thing must be added, and that is that Tiana begins to appreciate Prince Naveen's personality and falls in love with him regardless of his appearance, just as Naveen does. This demonstrates that true beauty lies beyond physical attributes.

Additionally, when Tiana meets Prince Naveen, she initially sees him as a method to achieve the dream of her own restaurant. This image is consistent with the conventional fairy tale theme of a princess seeking rescue or relying on the help of a prince. Tiana's

character, however, grows significantly as the novel continues, and she resists this cliché by actively working with Naveen as equals, sharing tasks and conquering hurdles together.

Despite portraying a character that simultaneously defies and conforms to established gender stereotypes, she shares a modern and meaningful message. Tiana's character emphasizes personal growth and fulfilment. Throughout the film, she learns valuable lessons about the importance of balancing work and personal life, as well as the significance of relationships and self-discovery.

10.1.2. Charlotte LA Bouff

Charlotte La Bouff, Tiana's best friend, is a wealthy and privileged young woman. Her character represents a direct contrast to Tiana's, including her attitude, life goals and economic background. Charlotte stands for a classical princess embodying qualities such as kindness, desire for happiness and dreaming of finding true love and living happily ever after. ("The Princess and the Frog", 2009).

At first glance, it may appear that Charlotte adheres primarily to traditional expectations. She embodies the concept of a damsel in distress who idealizes finding her prince charming. Lottie dreams of marrying a wealthy prince and living a fairy tale romance. She also strongly relies on her appearance. It follows in line with traditional fairy tale narratives where women often appear passively dependent on a prince for fulfilment and love. ("The Princess and the Frog", 2009).

However, Charlotte has a strong personality and stands up for herself when she needs to. She is willing to break away from traditional stereotypes and fight for her own happiness, showing that she is not as passive as it may seem. Charlotte exhibits confidence, assertiveness, and spirited nature, which sets her apart from the stereotypical princess. She actively pursues her dreams and, even though she comes from a privileged background, genuinely cares about the well-being and happiness of those around her, including Tiana. Despite their differences in background and ambitions, Charlotte remains a supportive and loyal friend to Tiana throughout the story. The importance of their relationship to her is evident when she leaves Prince Naveen to her best friend and blesses their love, even though she first intended to marry him ("The Princess and the

Frog", 2009, 1:23:43-1:24:02). Regardless of differences in path or ambition, their friendship demonstrates the idea that women can uplift and support each other.

10.1.3. Eudora

Eudora, Tiana's mother, is depicted as a loving, supportive character. She represents the strength, resilience, and grace of an African-American woman living in 1920s New Orleans. Her portrayal emphasizes the nurturing and guiding role that mothers play in their children's lives. ("The Princess and the Frog", 2009).

She represents traditional gender roles, as seen in her relationship with her husband James. While he holds the position of a breadwinner, she emphasizes the importance of partnership. Simultaneously, she takes an active role in the household, managing the finances and taking care of the children. She believes that both partners should be equally involved in the decision-making processes and works to ensure a balance of power in the relationship. ("The Princess and the Frog", 2009).

She also supports Tiana's ambition to own her own restaurant and encourages her to pursue her dreams outside of traditional gender expectations. Eudora recognizes Tiana's talent and passion for cooking and nurtures her abilities. ("The Princess and the Frog", 2009),

Furthermore, Eudora's character also highlights the importance of balancing work and personal life. While supporting Tiana's dreams, she also encourages her daughter to appreciate family and maintain a healthy work-life balance. This portrayal reflects the ongoing struggle faced by many women in juggling multiple roles and responsibilities.

10.1.4. Mama Odie

A wise and enigmatic character, Mama Odie serves as a spiritual guide and mentor to Tiana and Prince Naveen. She is a voodoo priestess residing in the mystical Bayou of New Orleans, and her portrayal carries rich cultural and spiritual significance.

Her character is quite plain and does not represent many gender roles or development despite her limited screen time. However, she possesses one significant shift in gender roles. She is the first old woman that can use dark magic and spells and use them for good purposes and is not depicted as a villain as it is usually depicted in classical fairy tales. She reflects the opposite of the main villain Dr. Facilier.

10.2. The portrayal of male characters in The Princess and the Frog

10.2.1. Prince Naveen

Prince Naveen is a charismatic young character that comes from the fictional land of Maldonia. He is visiting New Orleans looking for a rich bride because his parents cut him off from money, and this is the only way how to live his carefree life without finding a job. He quickly meets and charms the beautiful and wealthy Charlotte La Bouff, who is eager to help him. However, the evil voodoo witch, Dr. Facilier, has other plans for Prince Naveen and tricks him into becoming a frog. After this transformation, Naveen undergoes interesting personal development. ("The Princess and the Frog", 2009).

Naveen is first introduced as a traditional "prince charming" (see appendix 10). He is portrayed as handsome, charismatic and funny. His goal is to live a carefree life free of any responsibilities. Based on the way he is introduced in the movie, his character may be similar to those in typical fairy tales, where princes rescue princesses or have romantic interests in them, but he soon reveals qualities such as laziness and irresponsibility that differentiate him from this role. Throughout the movie, he continues to grow and challenge typical gender roles and stereotypes. ("The Princess and the Frog", 2009).

The whole idea of a poor prince looking for a wealthy wife to save him puts him in the position of a "damsel in distress." which is a position usually occupied by females. Also, it is worth noting that he basically represents the role of a "gold digger". This is because he asks a woman to marry him purely based on her wealth rather than love or other qualities. This completely reverses traditional gender roles because the usual stereotype prevalent in movies or in society is a woman looking for a wealthy husband. ("The Princess and the Frog", 2009).

As another departure from traditional gender roles in fairy tales, it is he who gets into trouble and asks for assistance after he is transformed into the frog since he cannot overcome obstacles on his own and needs to be saved. When he meets Tiana, the film's protagonist, he relies on her to fulfil the kiss that breaks the spell. This shows how the male character is not always the strongest, independent hero of the story. Naveen eventually learns the importance of empathy and compassion and gains an appreciation for hard work and responsibility. He collaborates with Tiana and takes on shared responsibilities. Through Naveen's development of empathy and a deeper understanding

of others' struggles, his growth transcends traditional gender roles. ("The Princess and the Frog", 2009).

Additionally, it is worth noting that even though the gender roles are flipped, and the responsibility and heroines are put mostly on Tiana, it does not put her in the role of a sole saviour. Instead of this, the movies emphasize the importance of teamwork and equality in the relationship. At the end of the story, neither Naveen nor Tiana is portrayed as a hero that is more important than the other; both of them are seen as equals because they are the two main characters in the movie and are both needed to achieve their goal.

10.2.2. Dr. Facilier

Dr. Facilier, also known as the Shadow Man, is the main antagonist of the movie. He is a voodoo witch doctor who uses dark magic to manipulate and control people. He has the ability to summon and control the spirits of the dead, allowing him to bend reality to his will. He is determined to use these powers to achieve his goal of becoming wealthy and powerful. ("The Princess and the Frog", 2009)

The analysis of gender roles that he portrays is not as clear as it was in the case of the evil queen in Snow White or Ursula in The Little Mermaid. His character does not directly challenge or subvert traditional gender roles. One of the clearest and most significant differences is that, unlike both of the previously analysed villains, he is a middle-aged male that can control and use dark magic, a trait traditionally attributed to older women (witches). This depiction that he challenges originates from old folk tales where women were often associated with witchcraft. This subversion of traditional gender roles allows him to stand out and makes him an unconventional villain.

Another thing worth mentioning is the clothes that he wears. His clothes are a mix of traditional Gothic and Victorian styles (see appendix 11), emphasizing his status as an outsider. By playing with gender roles and rejecting traditional clothing, he creates a unique identity that sets him apart and makes him more memorable. His clothes, on the other hand, cannot be assigned to any gender. This "non-binary" fashion statement allows him to express himself freely without the pressure of conforming to the norms of society. His style is bold and daring, and it allows him to stand out in a crowd.

He primarily focuses on his villainous nature and manipulation of others rather than challenging or aligning with traditional gender roles. His portrayal of a negative character

is created to avoid stereotyping certain personality and appearance characteristics as evil. This was seen in the previously analysed fairy tales (e.g. overweight or ugly = Evil and bad, older women = witch). Also, by avoiding traditional gender roles, his villainy is more representative of evil rather than a specific gender or appearance. This helps to break down the idea of a "perfect" hero and a "perfect" villain. He is a villain in his own right, and not because of his gender or appearance.

10.2.3. Lawrence

Lawrence Fenner is a character in the film which serves as a secondary antagonist and accomplice to the main antagonist. He is depicted as a subordinate figure who unquestionably follows the orders of those in power (in this case, Prince Naveen and later Dr. Facilier). These characteristics can be seen as challenging to traditional gender roles because women are usually depicted as passive and obedient. However, it is important to note that Lawrence's character is not entirely satisfied with his subordinate role. He desires recognition, power, and agency, lacking in his current position. Despite his seemingly loyal nature, Lawrence is willing to take advantage of any situation that benefits him. He is also willing to betray those who trust him when it is more profitable to do so. This is indicative of the traditional notion of masculinity, which emphasizes strength, power, and dominance. His behaviour reinforces the idea that men must be able to do whatever it takes to get ahead, even if it means betraying those close to them. ("The Princess and the Frog", 2009).

10.2.4. Louis and Ray

Luis and Ray are lovable characters that add fun elements to the story and also contribute significantly to the narrative. Their gender roles cannot be strictly specified since they are animals, and only by their voice actor can it be assumed that they are both males. They both show great courage and a determination to help each other in the face of danger. They do not conform to specific gender-related behaviours, showcasing that heroic traits are not limited by gender expectations. Ray demonstrates that despite his small size and physical weakness, he is capable of achieving great things. Louis, despite being a large and dangerous crocodile, proves that he is extremely sensitive, kind and has a strong interest in music. While not central to the exploration of gender roles, their characters convey an essential message that positively influences children, regardless of their gender. ("The Princess and the Frog", 2009).

10.3.   Summary of analyses of The Princess and the Frog

In conclusion, the analysis of gender roles in "The Princess and the Frog" reveals a complex and progressive portrayal of characters that, in most cases, challenge traditional gender roles. The film emphasizes personal growth, fulfilment and balance in life.

Tiana, the film's protagonist, defies societal norms by being a strong, independent, and ambitious woman pursuing her dreams, breaking barriers in male-dominated fields and challenging limitations imposed by her gender and racial or economic background. Tiana, as the first of the analysed princesses, has a career-based goal and does not seek a man or does not need to be rescued by anyone. She is determined and strictly follows the path in order to achieve what she wants.

Her plans are crossed by Prince Naveen, a character that is far beyond of imagination of the perfect classical hero. He is lazy, selfish and self-centred. Later he becomes a "damsel in distress" and relies on Tiana's assistance. He undergoes significant personal growth and learns to emphasize work and collaboration. Tiana teaches him to be a better person, and he realizes that he is not perfect. At the end of the movie, Naveen becomes more mature and responsible, and he teaches Tiana how to enjoy more than just a career.

Dr. Facilier, the main antagonist, does not directly challenge gender roles. His character successfully avoids linking certain female or male mental or physical traits to evil. His character stands apart from the usual stereotypes of the villain. This allows us to appreciate his character without any preconceived notions of gender roles. Furthermore, it sends a strong message about not judging people based on their gender.

10.3.1. The possible influence of The Princess and the frog on children's gender identity development

The progressivity of gender roles depicted in Princess and the Frog in many fields can share a positive influence on children's gender role development.

The Portrayal of Tiana, the main protagonist, inspires and empowers young women to balance their personal life and career. Tiana's character also showcases a balance between traditionally feminine and masculine qualities showing that the two are not mutually exclusive. She shows that women can be successful in both areas without sacrificing one for the other.

The other characters, led by Prince Naveen, follow a similar progressive trend and avoid associating negative qualities with a particular gender. This may positively influence young viewers and show them that gender does not pre-define or dictate certain behaviours.

The movie also does not have a single hero. It refuses to put one gender ahead and label it a hero. Instead, it celebrates the power of friendship, collaboration, empathy, and mutual support, regardless of gender.

In spite of all this, the film still romanticizes love and relationships in an unrealistic manner, but at least it conveys the message that in relationships, both sexes should be treated equally and assist one another in growing.

Another harmful influence that still persists is that the main protagonists still meet conventional standards of beauty. Even though beauty is not critical for their love, their depiction can still have a negative impact on children's self-esteem. Children may start to think that if they do not fit the same beauty standard as their role models, they will not be attractive or successful.

11.   Results and summary of the practical part

The practical part of this thesis involved the analysis of three selected Disney fairy tales: Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937), The Little Mermaid (1989), and The Princess and the Frog (2009). The main objective was to examine the portrayal of gender roles and gender-related behaviour in these fairy tales and to understand their potential influence on children's perceptions of gender roles and identity.

After analysing several fairy tales, it's clear that older Disney stories tend to conform to traditional and stereotypical gender roles. Female characters are often shown as submissive and dependent on males, while male characters are portrayed as self-sufficient and flawless. Additionally, beauty is often prioritized in fairy tales, leading to the promotion of harmful and unattainable beauty standards.

Traditional gender roles may have a strong negative influence on gender identity development. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy or low self-esteem in all genders. Children can feel restricted or encouraged to act in certain ways based on gender stereotypes depicted in their environment, which can be unhealthy.

Disney's recent adaptations of classic fairy tales, such as The Princess and the Frog (2009), promote gender equality by challenging traditional gender roles. This empowers children with a more inclusive and balanced narrative. This progress allows children to form their own expectations about gender and encourages the thought that they are not limited by their gender.

These differences in gender depiction in older and newer adaptations suggest extensive development in this area. From this fact, it can be assumed that this development aligns with the development of gender roles and gender expectations in society since the media reflect the expectations of society. In the same way that Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937) depicted gender roles prevalent in society at the time of its release, The Princess and the Frog (2009) shows that gender roles and expectations in society are changing and that this is reflected in film and literature. This is a positive sign of progress towards a more equal society. This indicates a thought that gender roles will probably continue developing. There is a possibility that in the future, our contemporary fairy tales will be criticised in the same manner as traditional fairy tales are criticized now. Our

society must continue to push for the equality of all genders in order to eliminate harmful gender stereotypes.

Finally, it must be noted that all analysed fairy tales share a certain negative portrayal of gender roles. One of the most important points is the limited representation of diverse gender identities in fairy tales, which may reinforce a binary understanding of gender and exclude individuals who identify with genders other than male or female. Leaving out this information prevents more inclusive understandings of gender. This same issue is connected to the limited presence of same-sex relationships. This can impact children's understanding of diverse sexual orientations and limit their exposure to alternative relationships. These topics resonate strongly in modern society and there are many opinions and points of view on how to address them. The complexity of this problem is far beyond the scope of this thesis and should be considered as a future study subject.

Conclusion

The theoretical part dealt with crucial terminology regarding gender and gender roles and stereotypes. This was imperative before delving deeper into gender role problematics. "Gender" was classified as a sociological concept created by humans and separated from biologically determined "sex". The theoretical part has further shed light on how gender socialization theories, namely Social learning theory, Cognitive development theory, Gender schema theory and Psychoanalytic theory help to explain how gender roles are developed and maintained in modern society. It has highlighted the significance of early socialization experiences, media influence, and social norms in shaping children's perceptions of gender and their subsequent development of gender identity.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives into the analysis of Disney fairy tales, the ways in which these narratives reinforce or challenge gender roles and stereotypes were explored and explained. The practical part of this thesis focused on the portrayal of gender roles and gender-related behaviour in Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937), The Little Mermaid (1989), and The Princess and the Frog (2009). It provides a general overview of gender roles in classical Disney fairy tales.

The findings of this study highlighted the presence of traditional and progressive gender roles in examined fairy tales and provided an in-depth portrayal of the gender-related behaviour of the main protagonists. The analysis also identified possible negative and positive influences of the observed gender-related behaviour. As evident from the results, the depiction of gender roles may significantly impact children's perception of gender and gender-related expectations. Therefore, it is essential to recognize the importance of consciously creating stories that promote gender equality and healthy gender roles. This could provide children with positive models of behaviour, allowing them to develop more realistic expectations of the roles of men and women in society.

Additionally, the practical part has shown a positive trend in depicting gender roles. The modern Disney adaptation features a more balanced portrayal of female characters who are resilient, independent, and strong-willed than older adaptations that emphasize traditional gender roles. This reflects the gradual shift in society's attitude towards gender roles. Gender equality is increasingly being promoted and accepted in modern culture, which is evident in the changing depiction of female characters in Disney films.

In the end, it must be noted that this thesis successfully examined gender roles in Disney fairy tales, their impact on children's perceptions of gender, and analysed changes over time. The findings contribute to understanding media's influence on gender identity and highlight the need for inclusive narratives. The results, however, are only valid for the fairy tales analysed in this research due to the relatively small dataset size. To be able to make any firm generalizations, the scope of research must be expanded to include all Disney fairy tales in order to provide a more complete picture. Also, to prove that the influences of the depiction of gender roles deduced according to a theoretical basis really affect children's perception of gender, the long-term exposure to Disney fairy tales on children's perceptions of gender roles and identity must be studied. This may include observing participants over time to examine how their attitudes and behaviours related to gender develop and change as they grow older. Both of these possible studies are far beyond the possibilities of this thesis.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Thompson's tests

THOMPSON (1975) in his study took 66 children as participants and divided them into 3 age-related groups (24-25 months, 30-31 months and 36-37 months of age). Each of these groups contained 11 males and 11 females coming from similar family and social conditions. The infants were subjected to a series of tests to test their ability to "apply various gender labels to the appropriate sexes, their capacity to place themselves in their own gender category, and their usage of labels to guide preference behavior" (Thompson 1975 p. 339)

Based on the results of all of these tests, it is concluded that perception of gender and the ability to label gender correctly develop with age (Thompson 1975 p. 342-343).

Appendix 2 - Results of Thompson's tests

TABLE 1

TEST RESULTS

	AVERAGE SCORES (% CORRECT ON TEST)			AVERAGE ACROSS AGES
	24 Months	30 Months	36 Months	
1. Identify own picture	82	100	100	94
2. Receptive Language Test	87	97	98	94
3. Gender Label Identification Test (nouns)	76	83	90	83
4. Sex Role Stereotype Test	61	78	86	75
5. Self-Sort Test	55	75	95	75
6. Gender Label Identification Test (pronouns)	50	75	88	71
7. Labeled-Picture Preference Test (evaluative adj., "good")	58	70	79	69
8. Verbal Gender Questions	44	70	76	63
9. Labeled-Picture Preference Test (gender adj., same-sex)	52	57	78	62
10. Auditory Gender Label Preference Test*	36	32	54	41
Average	60	74	84	73

* Percentage of children who pushed the same-sex button more than the opposite-sex button.

Picture 2. – Results of Thompson's tests (Thompson 1975 p. 343).

Appendix 3 - The portrayal of Snow White

Picture 3. - The portrayal of Snow White ("Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", 1937)

Appendix 4 - The portrayal of an evil queen

Picture 4. - The portrayal of an evil queen ("Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", 1937)

Appendix 5 - The prince's portrayal in Snow White and the seven dwarfs

Picture 5 - The prince's portrayal in Snow White and the seven dwarfs ("Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", 1937)

Appendix 6 - The portrayal of Ariel

Picture 6. - The portrayal of Ariel ("The Little Mermaid", 1989)

Appendix 7 - The portrayal of Ursula

Picture 7. - The portrayal of Ursula ("The Little Mermaid", 1989)

Appendix 8 - The portrayal of Prince Eric

Picture 8. - The portrayal of Prince Eric ("The Little Mermaid", 1989)

Appendix 9 - The portrayal of Tiana

Picture 9. - The portrayal of Tiana ("The Princess and the Frog", 2009)

Appendix 10 - The portrayal of Prince Naveen

Picture 10. - The portrayal of Prince Naveen ("The Princess and the Frog", 2009)

Appendix 11 -The portrayal of Dr. Facilier

Picture 11. - The portrayal of Dr. Facilier ("The Princess and the Frog", 2009)

Annotation

Jméno a příjmení:	Ondřej Šváb
Katedra nebo ústav:	Ústav cizích jazyků
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Josef Nevařil Ph.D.
Rok obhajoby:	2023

Název práce:	Genderové role v Disney pohádkách
Název práce v angličtině:	Gender Roles in Disney's fairy tales
Anotace práce:	Tato bakalářská práce poskytuje komplexní přehled genderových rolích a stereotypů v pohádkách od Disney. Teoretická část zkoumá procesy socializace genderových rolí a zohledňuje různé teorie genderové socializace. Praktická část této práce se zaměřuje na zobrazení genderových rolí v Disney pohádkách. Cílem je taktéž vyvození jejich potenciálního vlivu na vývoj genderové identity dětí a demonstrace rozdílů v jejich vyzobrazení v průběhu času.
Klíčová slova:	Gender, genderové role, genderové stereotypy, genderová socializace, pohádky, pohádky od Disneyho.
Anotace práce v angličtině	This bachelor's thesis provides a comprehensive overview of gender roles and stereotypes in Disney fairy tales. The theoretical part explores gender role socialization processes, considering various gender socialization theories. The practical part of this thesis focuses on the portrayal of gender roles in Disney fairy tales. The aim is to deduce their potential impact on

	children's gender identity development and also illustrate the differences in their depiction throughout time.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	Gender, gender roles, gender stereotypes, gender socialization, fairy tales, Disney fairy tales,
Přílohy vázané v práci:	Appendix 1 - Thompson's tests Appendix 2 - Results of Thompson's tests Appendix 3 - The portrayal of Snow White Appendix 4 - The portrayal of an evil queen Appendix 5 - The prince's portrayal in Snow White and the seven dwarfs Appendix 6 - The portrayal of Ariel Appendix 7 - The portrayal of Ursula Appendix 9 - The portrayal of Tiana Appendix 10 - The portrayal of Prince Naveen Appendix 11 -The portrayal of Dr. Facilier
Rozsah práce:	74
Jazyk práce:	AJ