

Do Gender Role Stereotypes exist in children's fairy tale stories?

I am currently working on a piece of sociological coursework which requires me to explore the relationship between children's fairy tale stories and gendered roles.

From birth biological differences exist between males and females. Sociologists refer to this as sex differences. As we grow older these differences between males and females involve more than biology; they are gendered. Gendered roles are learned. They guide us to behave and perform in ways which fulfill our gender role stereotype. This is achieved via the process of socialisation.

When talking in relation to the nature vs. nurture debate, sociologists believe that our gender roles are nurtured by our parents, societal expectations and media influences.

The main aim of my coursework is to find out if gender role stereotypes exist in children's fairy tale stories. I aim to do this by looking at the ways in which fairytale images transform into guided behaviours.

My additional aims in which I will investigate include:

- Being able to find out what messages fairytale stories send to youngsters from a sociological point of view.

I have decided to investigate gender role socialisation because I am extremely interested in the role played by society in the development of this. Furthermore, I would like to find out what makes these stereotypes so common and how fairy tale stories portray gender roles in relation to the images it presents to young children. Sociological research also concerns the roots of gender role within society. Therefore, it would make sense to see how these sociologists have expressed their views on this specific topic. For example, Teya Cherland is a sociologist who researched the topic of gender role stereotyping in fairytale stories and, she made it clear that the insecurities evolving around many young children is growing as they watch and read more and more fairytales. Sociologists believe that we aren't born to be boys and girls; we learn our gender roles as we grow older. This is a very sentimental point because in my coursework I want to explore gender role stereotyping from a Nature vs. Nurture perspective.

My Secondary Sources

I have decided to focus on some secondary sources in order to find out what other sociologists think about my chosen topic. The following sources will help me to gather some crucial information to help me meet my overall aim which is to find out if gender role stereotypes exist in children's fairytale stories. I also want to understand this topic from a sociological point of view and therefore, I will also be using these sources to find out if what I have discovered pairs up to other sociologist's discoveries.

My first results came from an article called Ecclectical. The article was written by a sociologist called Teya Cherland and was publicised in April 2006. In it, Teya explained that young boys and girls hide themselves away from reality because fairytales make them feel insecure of the true beauty that exists within them. Other than this, she outlined that boys and girls find it hard to distinguish reality from the so-called "dream world" that they visualise from watching T.V. She said, ***"Children's literature plays a key role in shaping a child's perception of those around her/him and the world they live in."*** She then carried on saying ***"it is vital to understand how they view real life"*** This made it clear, her belief was that fairytale stories deliver wrong messages to young kids and make them feel a certain way which can build on their insecurities. This links in with my aim because in my coursework I want to involve some sociological processes and this article brings up the issue of the Nature vs. Nurture debate and helps me to find a way how to link young children's influences into my query.

My second source came from an article titled "Sex Roles". This particular article was written by Angela M. Gooden and was publicised In July 2001. In the article it was outlined that children's books are served as a socializing tool that passed to the next generation. To explain, in her article she said the following, ***"Children's books have the potential of altering perceptions and possibly helping to change lives"*** This relates back to my investigation because the article explains the fact that children are influenced by societies teachings and, one of my smaller aims are to be able to find out if children are influenced by the images they see and the things they hear when watching fairytales.

My third and last source came from a text called Gender identities. This text was written by a sociologist named Ruth and the year of its publication was 2006(April 21st) Ruth investigated on different sociologists own thoughts about gender role and found out that according to the 1990s, boys and girls are directed to different subjects from an early age. She found that from some people stick to the idea that, Teachers pay more attention to boys than girl in the classroom and that the term "girl power" Ignores continuing structures of inequality. Much of her information supported the idea that the way in which boys and girls are brought up affects they way they feel about "gender role stereotyping" when their older. The following quote was mentioned in the article. ***"Murdock (1949) and Parsons (1955), who were functionalists, both thought that women and men had inbuilt differences that made women more suitable to be carers and men to be breadwinners."*** This links in with my investigation because in order to find out whether gender role stereotypes exist in children's fairytale stories, I need to understand the true meaning of the term "gender role" and how society portrays it which

is provided for me in this source. Overall, all of my chosen sources have enhanced my understanding on my chosen ton topic. I am now able to use this information to help me t answer and evaluate my essay title.