



The representations of masculinity and femininity in different accounts of the Peter Pan story: a discourse analysis.

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ABSTRACT

Weitzman et al (1972) ground breaking study on gender inequality in children's literature found that females were significantly underrepresented in titles and central roles. Children's literature reinforces the traditional role of the active, independent male and passive female (Gooden & Gooden, 2001). Previous research concerning gender inequality within children's literature has been heavily dominated by quantitative analysis. Therefore, the current research aimed to investigate the representations of masculinity and femininity in different accounts of the Peter Pan story, by using a discursively analytic approach.

The different accounts of the Peter Pan story which were analysed were as follows: the 1953 film 'Peter Pan', the 2015 film 'Pan', the ladybird classics edition of the 'Peter Pan book, the novel 'Tiger Lily by Jodi Lynn Anderson and the novel 'Peter and The Starcatchers' by Dave Barry. All accounts of the Peter Pan story were analysed using Potter and Wetherell's discourse analysis (1987) using the three analytical concepts of discourse analysis: interpretive repertoires, subject positions and ideological dilemmas. The epistemological position of the researcher was social constructionist (Burr, 2015).

The findings displayed that the positioning of women presented troubling conclusions regarding gender inequality. Male dominated power structures were established across all the texts and women were primarily located in roles of domesticity. Gender inequality is still a prevalent issue within children's literature.

KEY WORDS:	MASCULINITY	FEMININITY	CHILDREN'S LITERATURE	DISCOURSE ANALYSIS	GENDER INEQUALITY
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Introduction: Background Literature

Previous literature investigating gender and the underrepresentation of women in children's fiction has predominantly focused upon quantitative analysis (Hamilton et al, 2006; McCabe et al, 2011). Previous studies have provided little insight into the representation of males and females in books available to children throughout the twentieth century (McCabe et al, 2011). Studies within the field of literature continue to show an absence of women and girls in titles and central characters (Clark et al, 1993 and Hamilton et al, 2006 cited in McCabe et al, 2011). Furthermore, research has suggested that the disproportionate numbers of males in central roles will have implications for the ways children construct gender and 'may encourage them to accept the invisibility of women' (McCabe et al, 2011:199). However, previous research has predominantly focused on illustrated picture books when analysing gender stereotypes and the underrepresentation of women (Weitzman et al, 1972; Gooden & Gooden, 2001; Hamilton et al, 2006; McCabe et al, 2011). This research adopts a discursively analytic method to identify the representations of masculinity and femininity and the construction of gender within the texts. The current study aims to contribute a development in the findings concerning the representations of masculinity and femininity in constructs within society, specifically focusing on children's literature.

Social construction theory proposes that gender norms, roles and behaviours are constructed based on shared assumptions about reality. 'These constructions affect behaviour, cognitions and social interactions' (Blakemore et al, 2009:16). Social constructionists argue that our knowledge and understanding of the world becomes fabricated 'through daily interactions between people in the course of social life' (Burr, 2015:4). Social constructionists would argue that culture and society create genders roles based on shared assumptions about reality, a radical example of social constructionism is the notion that gender difference is socially constructed. These gender roles become gender stereotypes which are prescribed as the ideal or appropriate behaviour for men and women (*Brannon ch07*, no date). Meehan and Janik (1990 cited in *Brannon ch07*, no date:164) found that 'a specific cognitive process allows children (and adults) to maintain stereotypes once they have formed'. These stereotypes are beliefs and attitudes about masculinity and femininity which often refer to the psychological traits and characteristics associated with men and women (*Brannon ch07*, no date). Gender inequality is a political issue which lies within different social and cultural constructs such as literature. It is imperative to analyse the sources of where representations of gender inequality are embedded for social change to occur.

Gender inequality is a prominent political issue in society which has upheld the oppression of women due to embedded constructs that promote sexist ideologies. Sidanius & Pratto (1999, cited in Brandt, 2011:1413) proposed that sexist ideologies are '...hierarchy-enhancing legitimizing [sic] myths that justify the creation of inequality'. Sexist ideologies exacerbate and enhance the severity of gender inequality within society, which consequently reinforces patriarchal dominance (Brandt, 2011). Patriarchy is an ideological construct characterised by gender inequality between men and women, whereby women are oppressed and men hold the power over women (Crossley, 2005). Additionally, a patriarchal society refers to the male-dominated power structures within culture and society.

A patriarchal society refers to a society where men hold positions of power such as: head of the family (Crossley, 2005). Patriarchy has been central to many feminist theories, which suggest that the oppression of women is caused by the underlying bias of a patriarchal society (Crossley, 2005). Furthermore, hegemonic masculinity which is reinforced by patriarchy, refers to the gender role expectations which allow men's dominance over women (Donaldson, 1993; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2006). Hegemonic masculinity allows men to control women. The positioning of the male characters within literature highlights the hegemonic norm which is adopted by men to establish power and oppress women (Donaldson, 1993).

Gender inequality is a dominant political issue, the sources of where representations of gender inequality are embedded must be explored for social change to occur. The investigation into children's literature is vital as it is a tool used in teaching which influences children's knowledge and understanding of gender. Children's books have the potential to alter perceptions and change lives (Gooden & Gooden, 2001). Literature is fundamental for children's learning and recreation and can encourage children to learn about the lives of those who are different from themselves (Gooden & Gooden, 2001). Yet the literature depicts women as passive and worthless in comparison to men and portrays the notion that it is a '... man's world' (Gooden & Gooden, 2001:92). Furthermore, McCabe *et al* (2011:218) suggested that 'children's literature is a key source in reproducing and legitimising gender systems and gender inequality'. Weitzman *et al* (1972, cited in McCabe *et al*, 2011) conducted a ground-breaking study of children's literature which found that females were significantly underrepresented in titles and central roles. Furthermore, women are portrayed in traditional domestic roles and men are continually represented as the breadwinner (DeWitt *et al*, 2013; Fulcher *et al*, 2015).

Gender Schema Theory was developed by Bem (1983:603) which suggests that 'sex typing' derives from a child encoding and organising the information about the-self according to the attributes culture and society associate with boys and girls. Cognitive-developmental theory proposes that 'sex typing is mediated by the child's own cognitive processing' (Bem, 1983:603). Although, gender schema theory proposes that 'gender-schematic processing is itself derived from the sex-differentiated practices of the social community' (Bem, 1983:603). Therefore, children learn about gender through society's cultural definitions of femaleness and maleness, it is improbable that society would comment on how strong a little girl is or how nurturing a little boy is (Bem, 1983). Furthermore, gender schema theory proposes that children actively sort attributes and behaviours into masculine and feminine categories (Bem, 1983). Children match his or her preferences, attitudes and behaviours against the prototypes stored within their gender schema (Bem, 1983). Therefore, the categorisation of masculinity and femininity into explicit gender roles influences children's knowledge and understanding of gender.

Women are underrepresented in various kinds of media such as: children's fiction and television programmes (Steyer, 2014). Females being portrayed in traditional roles is still the norm which children are faced with daily (Steyer, 2014). Children's literature has been researched extensively as it provides valuable

insights into gender representation (McCabe et al, 2011). Children's books 'reinforce, legitimate, and reproduce a patriarchal gender system' (McCabe et al, 2011). Childhood is central to the development of gender identity and schemas, the differences between the presence of male and female characters in literature have implications for the ways children construct gender. 'Schemas are broad cognitive structures that organize [sic] and guide perception, they are often reinforced and difficult to change' (Bem, 1983 cited in McCabe et al, 2011:199). It takes consistent effort to combat the dominant cultural messages within books (Bem, 1983 cited in McCabe et al, 2011). The 'disproportionate numbers of males in central roles may encourage children to accept the invisibility of women and girls and to believe they are less important than men and boys' (McCabe et al, 2011:199). Piaget (1970, cited in Blakemore et al, 2009:17) 'believed that children create or construct their knowledge through their interactions with the physical and social world'. The patriarchal gender norms within society contribute to gender inequality and create a misconception for children's knowledge and understanding of gender.

Studies conducted within the field of children's literature and research have found that gender inequality is a prevalent issue (Gooden & Gooden, 2001; Anderson & Hamilton et al, 2006; McCabe *et al*, 2011). Books are one piece of identity formation that is distorted by children's prior understandings of gender (McCabe et al, 2011). Shaw 1998 (cited in Gooden & Gooden, 2001) suggested that gender roles are the behaviours that society teaches as acceptable for each gender. By consistently trying to define what gender is, society is influencing children's gender-related behaviour and making those who don't conform to these expectations, outsiders of a societal norm. These gender norms create a lack of freedom for children as their behaviours are limited by what society views as acceptable for boys and girls.

Gooden & Gooden (2001) found that stereotyping in children's books has detrimental effects on children's perception of women's roles. Davies (2001:49) found that many stories are still presenting the 'mundane gendered world of women in kitchen's'. The confinement within gender roles would suggest that gender difference is socially constructed. Previous research has found that the gender role portrayals of the traditional masculine character (e.g. brave) and the traditional feminine character (e.g. nurturing) 'may influence children's beliefs and ideas about gender, social behaviours, and norms' (Gerbner et al, 1980; Graves, 1999; Martin et al, 2002 cited in England et al, 2011:556).

Previous research has emphasised how children's literature has reinforced the traditional role of the active, independent male and passive female (Gooden & Gooden, 2001). Furthermore, Anderson & Hamilton (2005:145) studied gender stereotypes in children's picture books and found that boys tend to be portrayed as 'active leaders, and girls as passive followers'. Feminists have criticised fairy tales within children's literature as young girls are often represented as passive and only beautiful girls were associated with goodness (Gooden & Gooden, 2001). These stereotypes exclude individuals who don't conform to expectations within society, they may not see themselves as typically 'male' or 'female' which makes it challenging for them to overcome the gender-related behaviours associated with them. Children who deviate from gender constraints are

perceived as bizarre and encouraged to engage in gender specific behaviours (Bem, 1983; Davies, 2003).

Troller *et al* (2004:85) found that a 'highly masculine men and highly feminine women perform their gender roles based on traditional notions of what constitutes masculinity and femininity'. Kimmel (2000, cited in Toller *et al*, 2004:85) found that a high masculine performance requires that men be 'tough', 'in control' and 'aggressive'. In contrast, Wood (1993, cited in Troller *et al*, 2004:85) found that a successful high feminine performance requires that a woman must be 'nurturing', 'physically attractive' and 'passive'. Women are continually underrepresented and described as passive. These representations reinforce social status and gender hierarchies.

Inequality still exists throughout society as women are continually underrepresented in children's literature, media, educational software and video games, therefore it is clear that (Steyer, 2014). Children's literature is vital to child development, the sources of where representations of gender inequality are embedded must be explored for social change to occur.

This research aims to explore different accounts of the Peter Pan story in anticipation of discoveries regarding gender. The research aims to enhance the understanding of how masculinity and femininity is represented in children's literature. Furthermore, the research aims to contribute new findings to this research area by using discourse analysis; a method which has not been used previously. Specifically, the research aims to answer the following questions using Potter and Wetherell's (1987) discourse analysis:

1. How are gender roles and gender stereotypes presented in the texts?
2. Are power structures developed in a way which presents masculinity as superior?
3. Has the underrepresentation of female characters in children's literature improved since previous research?

The research focuses on different accounts of the Peter Pan story, Peter Pan has survived throughout popular culture and been retold numerous times. The original play by Sir James M. Barrie, based on the boy who never wanted to grow up was produced in 1904 and the most recent retelling of Peter Pan was produced in 2015. Although Peter Pan is represented as being gender fluid, there are parts of the narrative where he portrays typical masculine characteristics.

Method

Design

This research used a qualitative method to explore the discourse used within different accounts of the Peter Pan story. Qualitative research uses an open-ended, inductive research methodology which is concerned with theory generation and the exploration of meanings (Willig, 2013). Qualitative research begins 'to take you deeper into asking the bigger questions of life' by specifically focusing on experiences constructed within the social world (Smythe and Giddings, 2007:37). Wetherell *et al* (2001:1) suggested that discourse 'offers routes into the study of meanings' thus, Potter and Wetherell's (1987) discourse

analysis (DA) was used to identify the representations of gender and inequality embedded in different accounts of the Peter Pan story.

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is the study of talk and texts which uses a set of methods and theories for investigating language in use and social contexts (Wetherell et al, 2001). Discourse analysis 'focuses on inequality in society and the ways in which discourse is used to realize [sic] power and ideology' (van Dijk, 2010:283). Previous research within children's literature has focused on quantitative analysis. Whereas, the current research is discursively analytic in order to explore how the language and discourse embedded in the literature has been used; to identify representations of gender and inequality.

Edley (2001) used discourse analysis to analyse masculinity, he suggested that power is central to the social construction of masculinity. Furthermore, Foucault (1991:63) suggested that 'power is everywhere', manifested in discourse, knowledge and 'regimes of truth'. This research will use discourse analysis to address power structures and the positioning of masculinity. Additionally, this research will analyse how the underlying gender bias within discourse relates to the knowledge and construction of gender roles and gender stereotypes within society.

Potter and Wetherell's (1987) discourse analysis is concerned with how people use language to construct their social world. Potter and Wetherell (1987:9) suggested that language is 'inseparably involved with processes of thinking and reasoning'. Furthermore, Critical literacy theorists have suggested that texts are 'both explicit and implicit messages that promote specific ideologies' (Gee, 2000 cited in Hall and Piazza, 2008:32). Language used in texts is socially constructed in ways which can either '...empower or devalue individuals' (Gee, 2000 cited in Hall and Piazza, 2008:32). Thus, language was analysed in order to identify ideology and underlying gender bias within discourse. The study of language and discourse was chosen to identify representations of gender embedded within the texts.

Positionality

The epistemological position of the researcher was social constructionist (Burr, 2015). The researcher adapted a social constructionist perspective to explore how meaning has been discursively created (Burr, 2015). The researcher was particularly interested in the way gender norms, roles and behaviours have been created and maintained by society. The researcher also has a feminist perspective and strongly believes in equality especially with respect to females.

Materials

The corpus for the study was five different accounts of the Peter Pan story, the texts were chosen as they all presented different versions of the same story and all had a target audience of children. The five texts were chosen because they presented an overview of the whole Peter Pan story whereas other retellings of Peter Pan focused on a specific aspect of the story. The different accounts of the Peter Pan story which were analysed in this research are listed below:

- The 1953 film 'Peter Pan' produced by Walt Disney

- The 2015 film 'Pan' produced by Greg Berlanti, Sarah Schechter and Paul Webster
- The Ladybird Classics edition book 'Peter Pan' by Sir J.M. Barrie
- The novel 'Tiger Lily' by Jodi Lynn Anderson
- The novel 'Peter and The Starcatchers' by Dave Barry

A detailed synopsis of the texts can be found in appendix 1, due to copyright laws there is not any extracts of the books. However, transcripts of the two films which were used for analysis can be found in appendix 2 and 3.

Procedure

Following ethical approval (BPS, 2009) (see appendix 4) the five different accounts of the Peter Pan story were analysed using Pottering and Wetherell's (1987) discourse analysis. Discourse from the middle third chapters of the novels 'Tiger Lily' and 'Peter and The Starcatchers' (see appendix 1) was analysed. The Ladybird classics edition of 'Peter Pan' (see appendix 1) was a short story therefore, all seventy pages of the story was analysed to provide a valid analysis of gender within the novel. From the 1953 film 'Peter Pan' and the 2015 film 'Pan' (see appendix 1) analysis was taken for thirty minutes of the film, this commenced thirty minutes after the initial start of the film. The discourse analysed ensured that the storyline had been effectively established and provided the best sections for interpretation and conclusions of gender within the texts. All accounts of the Peter Pan story were analysed using Pottering and Wetherell's (1987) discourse analysis, interactions between the characters were analysed using the three analytical concepts of discourse analysis. The concepts used in analysis were interpretive repertoires, subject positions and ideological dilemmas.

The first concept was interpretive repertoires (IRS), Potter and Wetherell (1987:138) defined interpretive repertoires as 'basically a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterize [sic] and evaluate actions and events'. IRS are patterns in a data set such as metaphors and language (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). IRS are crucial as they allow us to '... understand the kinds of limitations that exist for the construction of self and other' (Edley, 2001:201). The IRS were vital as they assisted in understanding the underlying meaning within the discourse.

Subject positions (SP) was the second concept analysed, SP explore '...the way that ideology creates or constructs subjects by drawing people into particular positions or identities' (Edley, 2001:209). SP focus on how language has fundamental consequences for the sense of self and the world around them. Edley (2001:209) suggested that this is a '...by-product of particular ideological or discursive regimes'. SP recognised how characters adopted either a dominant or submissive position during their interactions. Additionally, SP addressed the ways male characters were positioned in comparison to female characters to uncover depictions of inequality.

Finally, the last analytical concept was ideological dilemmas (ID) created by Billig et al (1998 cited in Wetherell et al, 2001). ID are characterised by '... inconsistency, fragmentation and contradiction' which provide people with clear

indications to how they should think and act (Edley, 2001:203). Likewise, ID appeared as different ways of discussing the ‘...structuring effects of competing or contrary themes’ (Edley, 2001:204) which occurred together as conflicting positions in an ‘argumentative exchange’ (Edley, 2001:204).

Analysis and Discussion

Interpretive Repertoires

The interpretive repertoires across the narratives highlighted the differences between the representations of masculinity and femininity. The interpretive repertoires functioned as themes; females constructed in the role of domesticity, the female display of emotion and mothers as the primary caregiver.

The first interpretive repertoire constructed females in the role of domesticity, presenting women as subordinate to men. Analysis across the narratives revealed that women were continually portrayed in traditional domestic roles and men were continually represented as the breadwinner (DeWitt et al, 2013; Fulcher et al, 2015). A representation of this occurred in the Peter Pan novel when Peter was talking to the Lost Boys:

‘A mother to take care of us’.

This quote suggested that only the mother could take care of Peter and the Lost Boys and there was no mention of the father. In today’s western society women are ‘... disproportionately located in the most marginalized [sic] structures of economy’, being a carer is devalued as it is a lower paid job which is associated with coming from a lower education background (Damman et al, 2014:99). Consequently, femininity was constructed in a way which was concerned with taking on a maternal role (Anderson & Hamilton, 2005). Within Peter Pan, the woman was referred to as a ‘proud maiden’ suggesting that she was essentially there to take on domestic chores and ensure the household runs smoothly (Lindsey, 2005). Across the narratives, men were continually absent in the role of domestic chores which suggests that men are intrinsically superior to women and must be cared for by females. Thus, roles within the narratives were gender specific as female behaviours were restricted by what was deemed as socially acceptable (Durkin, 1985). None of the female characters across the texts had an occupation, this supports findings from previous research which has found that the traditional male breadwinner and female homemaker has been consistently portrayed in children’s literature (DeWitt et al, 2013). These findings have added to previous research as females are still portrayed in roles of domesticity.

Additionally, the second interpretive repertoire focused on the female display of emotion (Ficush et al, 2000). Emotion was prominent in the representation of femininity across the texts, females displayed outbursts of emotion by crying whereas men were ‘very hurt’ and ‘afraid’ and never expressed emotion in the form of crying. Females and mothers are constructed as being more emotional than males and fathers (Ficush et al, 2000). This was present in the novel Peter and The Starcatchers:

‘Grown men screamed’.

The emphasis on the lexicon ‘grown’ implies that it is uncharacteristic for men to be scared, whereas the women ‘cried like babies’. This is consistent with the findings from previous research which indicates that women are more likely to show outbursts of emotion and be perceived as more emotional than men. The

discourse presented the woman's behaviour as disproportionately emotional for the situation. Hysteria is often used to describe behaviour that seems excessive and out of control, during the Victorian era hysteria was considered a female disorder which was attributed to a malfunctioning uterus. In the 20th century, hysteria was applied to a psychological disorder generally observed only in women (Chodoff, 1982). Thus, the discourse presented the females emotion as hysterical, which through its lack of medical diagnosis has connotations of mass panic. Additionally, the lexicon 'babies' disempowers and devalues the female characters (Gee, 2000 cited in Hall and Piazza, 2008). Recreating these discourses within children's literature creates a misconception for children's understanding of gender as they will associate the expression of emotion with femininity. Behaviours are limited by what society views as acceptable and boys will believe it is wrong for them to display emotion. The discourse emphasised the strong-weak dimension within gender schematic processing as strong was never an attribute associated with girls and nurturance was never applied to boys (Bem, 1983). Thus, there are many areas within society in which equality has not yet been achieved.

The final interpretive repertoire positioned mothers as the primary caregiver. Leading female characters were positioned as the 'mother' and primary caregiver of the children, there was no mention of the father in relation to household chores or caring for the children.

Across the narratives there was an assumption that everyone would understand what a 'mother' was. This representation was present in Peter Pan 1953 when Peter was talking to the Lost Boys:

'I bring ya a mother to tell ya stories'.

Peter assumed that the Lost Boys understood what a 'mother' was and positioned her as the primary caregiver; with no mention of the father. Women spend more time on home production and care for children than men do (Coltrane, 2000; Van Dijk and Siegers, 1996 cited in Damman et al, 2014). Previous research has found that women are more 'nurturing' than men (Wood, 1993 cited in Troller et al, 2004); nurturing appeared to be a stereotype associated with femininity. Stereotypes are a representation of society as they reinforce social status and gender hierarchies. Cognitive processes allow children to maintain stereotypes once they have formed (Meehan and Janik, 1990 cited in *Brannon ch07*, no date). The representation of the traditional feminine character as 'nurturing' influences children's beliefs about gender, social behaviours and norms (Gerbner et al, 1980; Graves, 1999; Martin et al, 2002 cited in England et al, 2011). Females were significantly underrepresented and portrayed in stereotypical ways (Steyer, 2014). Stereotyping in children's literature leads to unjustified evaluations based on predetermined gender.

Furthermore, male characters were portrayed in superior and instrumental roles such as Peter: 'the leader' whereas the leading female characters were positioned as a 'mother'. Peter Pan displayed the underrepresentation of women:

'No said Peter, we haven't got any sisters or mothers to tell us stories and mend our clothes'.

Peter positioned himself as a domineering figure and highlights the oppression of women. The discourse indicated that only women were capable of reading stories and mending clothes, even though Peter could have done this. Peter positioned

himself in a superior role and highlighted the underrepresentation and passivity of women (Anderson & Hamilton, 2005). Further suggesting that men are intrinsically superior to women and women are subordinate to men. Childhood is integral to the development of gender identity and schemas, the differences between the presence of male and female characters in literature have implications for the ways children construct gender. Consequently, if children constantly observe the representations of father's as providers and females as mother figures, this will create a misconception for children's understanding of gender (McCabe et al, 2011). Furthermore, if children consistently observe males in leading and central roles this may encourage them to '...accept the invisibility of women and girls and ... believe they are less important than men and boys' (McCabe et al, 2011:199) thus, the implications of these findings are profound as it displays the patriarchal constructs which are still oppressing women.

Subject Positions

Subject positions functioned in a way which reinforced hegemonic masculinity (Donaldson, 1993), gender hierarchy (Foels and Pappas, 2004) and patriarchy. Across most the narratives male characters were positioned as a provider, protector and leader; asserting a masculine stereotype (Anderson & Hamilton, 2005). Whereas, female characters highlighted the subordinate role for women and were disempowered in femininity. The first subject position which reinforced hegemonic masculinity, occurred within Tiger Lily when the male character exerted his supremacy to disempower the female character when she offered to help:

'We all have roles, Tiger Lily. You are a woman and you have a role. I as a man have a role. We all have to be the best we can be at the roles we have. We can't decide to switch'.

This quote highlights that the male's response was domineering, belittling and oppressive (Donaldson, 1993). Hegemonic masculinity presents men as the holders of power, the male character disregarded Tiger Lily's statement and created an empowered position for himself by presenting the woman as weak and powerless (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2006). Hegemonic masculinity allowed the male character to benefit from control over the female character; subsequently reinforcing patriarchal dominance. Furthermore, the findings from this subject position portray the notion that there are certain gender roles and behaviours that men and women must conform to (Durkin, 1985; Gooden & Gooden, 2001). The power within the discourse lay with the male character, these findings are profound as they highlight the patriarchal constructs which are still oppressing women. These patriarchal gender norms within society contribute to gender inequality and create a misconception for children's knowledge and understanding of gender. The second subject position was the representation of male characters in a position of superiority. Within Pan 2015, Peter Pan referred to the love of Blackbeard's life as his possession.

'The love of Blackbeard's life and most prized possession'.

This quote highlights the demeaning characterisation of female characters, the woman was objectified. Gee (2000, cited in Hall and Piazza, 2008:32) proposed that '...the language used in texts is considered to be socially and culturally constructed in ways that can either empower or devalue individuals'.

Furthermore, the lexicon 'possession' suggests that women are objects, not subjects. Consequently, women are denied agency, and are seen from the outside as an object where consciousness, thoughts and feelings are utterly overlooked. This representation could be due to the societal and cultural power structures which have become normalised within society, this makes it difficult to recognise that the objectification of women is happening.

Another subject position positioned women as objects of a 'male gaze' (Mulvey, 1975 cited in Sassatelli, 2011:124). The discourse used to describe women consistently referred to appearance such as in Peter Pan where women were described as 'beautiful' and in Tiger Lily when the men commented on the woman's 'sleek frame', the discourse disempowered the woman and positioned her as an object, materialising man's conscious. Thus, the woman's '...appearance is coded for strong visual and erotic impact' (Mulvey, 1975 cited in Sassatelli, 2011:124). Furthermore, hegemonic masculinity defines the relationship towards women as derogatory and oppressive and suggests that '...women exist as potential sexual objects for men' and provide men with sexual validation (Donaldson, 1993). In contrast, in the Peter Pan novel the men were referred to as 'brave' and 'fighting men', this lexicon focuses on the power of masculinity and positions them as the leader. Men were positioned as the superior, powerful figure who were intrinsically superior to women. The discourse and positioning of women across the narratives reinforced gender hierarchies and are a representation of how women are subjugated by patriarchal ideologies. The implications of these findings are profound as they highlight that the positioning of women within children's literature portrays the inequality between men and women.

Finally, one retelling of Peter Pan was particularly interesting as there was an absence of female characters for most of the narrative. This was present in the novel Peter and The Starcatchers which was depicted by a male author. The absence of female characters was either due to the author's failure of imagination or failure to care, either way both are significant. The lack of engaging female characters was a choice which gave all positions of authority to men. Thus, creating a misogynistic and patriarchal society where women were left out of the societal structure. Previous research has continued to show an absence of '...women and girls in titles and as central characters' (Hamilton et al, 2006 cited in McCabe et al, 2011:198). The 'absence reflects symbolic annihilation because it denies existence to women and girls' by ignoring and underrepresenting them (Tuchman, 1978 cited in McCabe et al, 2011:198). Thus, children's books strengthen, legitimate and replicate the patriarchal gender system (McCabe et al, 2011).

These findings are a development from previous research as it establishes that the 'symbolic annihilation' of women and girls within children's literature still displays an overwhelming amount of inequality (McCabe et al, 2011:203). Women are still subjugated by patriarchal ideologies and portrayed as subordinate to men.

Ideological dilemmas

The first dilemma was companionship vs responsibility, the dilemma encompassed the restrictions associated with fatherhood and family structure. This was present in Peter Pan when Peter talked about the idea of fatherhood and the responsibility that comes with it but then on the other hand he did not want to grow up and have the responsibility associated with fatherhood:

‘Oh, no! exclaimed Peter. They would make me grow up! I want to stay a little boy always, and have fun’.

This quote represents how Peter was struggling between the dilemma of going home to be with Wendy and having the responsibility that comes with fatherhood and wanting to stay in Neverland where he does not have to ‘grow up’. This extended the notion of masculinity as it highlights the boundaries associated with masculinity and femininity. Peter was aware of the responsibility that came with fatherhood but he did not want to accept it. Thus, Peter was restricted by the behaviours and norms associated with masculinity (Shaw, 1998 cited in Gooden & Gooden, 2001).

Additionally, the second dilemma was emotional display vs masculine toughness. A high masculine performance requires men to be tough and in control (Troller et al, 2004) and it is unacceptable for them to admit defeat. This dilemma highlighted that strength, bravery, aggression, control and toughness were key characteristics associated with masculinity (Grant, 2004).

‘Peter was very hurt but he was too proud to show it’.

This quote suggests that it is unacceptable for males to show emotion, therefore, presenting a construction of masculinity. Peter continually refused to show emotion throughout the narrative as he was referred to as ‘menacing’ and ‘not a fool’. This resulted in the construction of the ‘tough’ male (Kimmel, 2000 cited in Troller et al, 2004) as he refused to display emotion in the fear of appearing a fool or coward; reinforcing the view that men are unable to admit defeat or show emotion (Ficush et al, 2000).

Discourse from Tiger Lily reinforced this dilemma as Peter was clearly afraid but he refused to show emotion in the fear of appearing a coward:

Peter: ‘afraid and pretending not to be’

This discourse highlighted that masculinity was not associated with expressing emotion (Ficush et al, 2000; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2006) Thus, gender equality is still embedded within children’s literature as it reinforces the tradition within society that it is unacceptable for males to admit weakness or display emotion (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2006; Martin and Doka, 2000). This finding reinforced the tradition within society that it is unacceptable for men to admit weakness, this is a new discovery which has not been recognised previously in children’s literature.

The final dilemma was lack of freedom for women, this was present in the text Tiger Lily:

‘I fell into the habit of looking after the boys...what else could I do...I started to clean up after them’.

This quote suggests that even if women aspire to have different career aspirations, the gender roles and patriarchal ideologies within society restricts them (Gooden & Gooden, 2001). Women aspired to be in primarily caring jobs and had little career aspirations; roles were gender specific (Durkin, 1985). The narratives portrayed men in roles such as builders whereas women were in

unpaid domestic roles (DeWitt et al, 2013). This demonstrates the lack of freedom for women as they were restricted by social script. Furthermore, the discourse highlighted Tiger Lily's bitterness towards her husband's retreat from family life. Her husband's response was heartless, instructing her that 'we all have roles... we can't decide to switch', insinuating that cleaning up after the children and caring for them was her primary purpose. Thus, the discourse highlights the degrading nature of domestic work as significance is placed upon the male character who is given the breadwinner status (DeWitt et al, 2013; Fulcher et al, 2015). These findings present troubling conclusions as there are many sectors in which equality has not yet been achieved (Steyer, 2014).

Conclusion

Previous research has predominantly focused on quantitative analysis of illustrated picture books when analysing gender stereotypes and the underrepresentation of women (Weitzman et al, 1972; Gooden & Gooden, 2001; Hamilton et al, 2006; McCabe et al, 2011). Thus, the present research was conducted to provide contemporary discoveries in relation to gender inequality within children's literature. The current research has contributed a development to the findings in this research area and provided an understanding of the representations of masculinity and femininity in children's literature.

Potter and Wetherell's (1987) discourse analysis has not been used within previous research on children's literature, hence the analysis expanded previous research. The research discovered that gender inequality was present within the positioning of masculinity and femininity. Whereas, previous research has focused on the underrepresentation and passivity of women as the source of gender inequality. However, the positioning of women presented far more troubling conclusions regarding gender inequality.

The study answered all three of the research questions. The positioning of masculinity and femininity highlighted that gender inequality is still a prevalent issue within children's literature. Male dominated power structures were established across all of the texts and women were primarily located in roles of domesticity. Furthermore, intriguing findings demonstrated that one text completely neglected the existence of females as they were absent from most of the narrative. Moreover, a new discovery was made which constructed masculinity with not showing emotion, this has not been found in previously in children's literature.

Although Weitzman et al's (1972) ground breaking study on children's literature was forty-five years ago, it appears that in literature as recent as 2015 gender inequality is still a prevalent issue. The current research has increased the awareness of gender inequality that is embedded within children's literature. Thus, further investigation is needed to encourage social change and gender inequality.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity within research is fundamental 'given that the researcher is intimately involved in both the process and product of the research' (Horsburgh, 2003 cited in Berger, 2015:221). Reflexivity enables the researcher to explore how the-self

influences the research and accounts for 'researchers values, beliefs, knowledge and biases' (Berger, 2015:221). Reflexivity allows the researcher to explore their '...experiences in order to lead to a new understanding and appreciation' (Boud et al, 1985 cited in Mann et al, 2009:5977). A reflexive position meant I was able to explore how personal experience of being a female mother could have swayed the research.

The current research idea was derived from personal experience of being a mother. When I have been reading books to my daughter, I have noticed the gender roles and representations of masculinity and femininity within the books. Reading books to children is essential for their development, it develops their language and listening skills. Reading books also stimulates children's imagination and understanding of the world. Furthermore, young girls identify with beloved characters and internalise the gendered messages that are conveyed in Disney's classics. This prompted my interest in the topic, I decided to focus on a popular Disney classic to investigate the representations of masculinity and femininity.

An awareness of the effect of my personal beliefs, values and biases helped me ensure that I remained unbiased when analysing the data to ensure that my personal beliefs did not command the analysis (Berger, 2015). I was apprehensive about conducting the research, Potter and Wetherell's (1987) discourse analysis was difficult to use within some of the data, especially the films. Nevertheless, with dedication and extensive research it was possible. Due to the findings from previous research, gender inequality within children's literature was assumed rather than expected. Still, the gender inequality depicted exceeded expectations and resulted in extraordinary findings.

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