

Introduction

The focus of my topic is the discipleship that the younger generation appears to have towards Disney's "happily ever after" films, and the moral dilemma this poses. The hypothesis denotes that "Disney films negatively socialise children with unrealistic perceptions of a utopian world and stereotyped gender roles." This topic was developed from an interest in the enculturation of children in Western society today and how this may negatively differ from previous generations. The overexposure of children's media causes a continuity of damaging idolisation of distorted role models and the romanticised concept of the "happily ever after". The processes, effects and morality of this unrealistic socialisation will be examined.

The specific areas being investigated are continuity and change within the socialisation process, extent of the effects of sanitised socialisation and the skewed representations of life expectations, gender roles, conflict resolution and the "good vs. bad" dichotomy.

These areas will be explored through a triangulation of primary research methodologies: a focus group of children aged three to seven, an interview with social researcher and author Mark I. Pinsky, a content analysis of two Disney films and a questionnaire to gauge public opinion. This will be supplemented by extensive secondary research, mostly the publications of American social researchers who generally have a greater involvement in Disney related research as Disney is more focused in American culture, regardless of its wide spread effects.

The focus group of three young children presents a forum for ideas and values of the effected persons to be expressed and articulated, as well as allowing for determination between the values embedded in boys and girls as a cross cultural element to study. The interview with researcher Mark I. Pinsky enabled an exploration of the contribution of children's media to their development, the issues of morality or immorality within this and further insight into the specific messages being advertised. A content analysis was conducted on the films Cinderella (1950) and Mulan (1998) to observe the continuity and change in Disney's themes and ideologies over a 50 year period. This focuses particularly on the "happily ever after" theme, effecting children's perception of conflict resolution, and the "princess" theme by which children are taught unrealistic gender roles. It is through the correlation of these methodologies and general consensuses established through a public questionnaire that the effects of Disney as a socialisation agency will be discerned. This triangulation of

methodologies will ideally present me with an efficient base for determining the cross cultural nature of gender evident within Disney's films.

My topic relates to the Society and Culture course as persons, specifically young children, over time are being exposed to sanitised representations of society, creating "Disneyfied" perceptions of societies and environments. The media as in institution in the macro environment is enculturating the young children of western society and hence creating distorted perceptions of reality. Disney, as a widespread agent of socialisation is a force for continuity as it reinforces traditional and conservative mentifacts and values.