



# CREaTE

Canterbury Research and Theses Environment

Canterbury Christ Church University's repository of research outputs

<http://create.canterbury.ac.uk>

Please cite this publication as follows:

Kostas, M. (2016) Snow White in the Hellenic primary classrooms: children's responses to non-traditional gender discourses. *Gender and Education*. ISSN 0954-0253.

Link to official URL (if available):

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2016.1237619>

This version is made available in accordance with publishers' policies. All material made available by CReaTE is protected by intellectual property law, including copyright law. Any use made of the contents should comply with the relevant law.

Contact: [create.library@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:create.library@canterbury.ac.uk)



## **Snow White in Hellenic primary classrooms: children's responses to non-traditional gender discourses**

Dr Marios Kostas

School of Childhood and Education Sciences, Canterbury Christ Church University,  
Canterbury, Kent, UK

Dr. Marios Kostas,

Canterbury Christ Church University, School of Childhood and Education Sciences

North Holmes Road

Canterbury CT1 3DS

E-mail: [marios.kostas@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:marios.kostas@canterbury.ac.uk)

Dr. Marios Kostas is a Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood Education and Care at Canterbury Christ Church University. He received his doctorate in Social Psychology of Education from the UCL Institute of Education. His research interests include gender, sexuality and ethnicity. Theoretically and methodologically his work develops feminist post-structural, psychosocial and intersectional approaches to understanding subjectivity.

# **Snow White in Hellenic primary classrooms: children's responses to non-traditional gender discourses**

Marios Kostas<sup>1</sup>

Canterbury Christ Church University, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 3DS, UK

This paper sets out to investigate how children make sense of and negotiate non-traditional gender discourses promoted through the feminist version of the fairytale of Snow White. The research was based on work with 120 pupils aged 9-11 years old in two Athenian primary schools. The data was collected through semi-structured group interviews. The findings suggested that schoolchildren gave conflicting accounts in relation to gender discourses and identities. There is a strong indication that girls of this age are more prepared than boys to challenge traditional gender discourses.

**Keywords:** children; hegemonic masculinity; emphasised femininity; gender discourses; fairytales; Hellas.

## **Introduction**

Since the early 1960s, when feminists raised concerns about gender stereotypes in children's narratives, researchers have been particularly perturbed by the deleterious impact of the anachronistic representation of masculinity and femininity in children's literature on their perceptions of gender roles. Traditional folk tales such as Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty were at the epicentre of the analysis because they promoted gender biases in views of masculinity and femininity (Lieberman 1972).

The feminist response to traditional folktales was to provide alternative stories with female protagonists portrayed as physically powerful, dynamic, and autonomous (Barchers 1990). Since the early nineteenth century, a plethora of feminist fairy tales have been produced presenting strong heroines who subvert existing power structures and conventional

---

<sup>1</sup> Email:marios.kostas@canterbury.ac.uk

expectations (Zipes 1986). Most often ‘the aesthetics of these tales are ideological, for the structural reformation depends upon a non-sexist...world view that calls for a dramatic change in social practice’ (Zipes 1986, 13).

Nevertheless, research suggests that amending the content of children’s literature per se is not sufficient to alter children’s perceptions of gender roles (Barajas 2008), because this presupposes a passive learner/reader (Walkerdine 1990). In contrast, feminist post-structural scholarship positions readers as active producers of meanings. Pragmatically, although feminist fairy tales challenge normative gender discourses, the impact such stories have on pupils’ conception of gender cannot be presumed (Barajas 2008; Lemish 1998; Davies 1989).

The present study builds upon Davies’ (1989) ground-breaking research with pre-school children in Australia by amalgamating post-structuralist theory with Connell’s concepts of hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity in analysing primary-schoolchildren’s sense making of gender discourses in the Hellenic educational and cultural setting. In my research, participants (aged 9-11 years old) are exposed for the first time to a feminist version of Snow White in which typical gender roles are reversed. Children’s subjectivity, as it is manifested through their understanding of masculinity and femininity, is at the centre of the analysis. Children’s responses are particularly interesting for the Hellenic educational system through its practices reinforces traditional gender discourses (Kostas 2014). Thus, participants have not been exposed to gender egalitarian discourses through formal schooling.

My intention is to scrutinise how gender is discursively constituted and reconstituted by these children in a specific socio-cultural milieu at a specific time and not to make generalisations about gender in Hellenic primary schools. Nonetheless, the ‘discourses that children take up do not tend to circulate only in one city, and their usage is generally not peculiar to any one place’ (Davies and Kasama 2004, 8). Ergo, it could be argued that the

discourses available to these children in Athens do not vary notably from the discourses available to other children in Hellas. The findings unravel the ongoing entrapment of children in the hegemonic gender binary and demonstrate the influence of parents' educational level and some socio-economic parameters on children's ability to challenge normative gender discourses.

### **Background research**

The idea that children's sense-making in relation to texts is variable and paradoxical (both individually and collectively) fuelled a plethora of studies, which placed emphasis on children's responses to gender discourses. Scholars (e.g. Rice 2000; Yeoman 1999; Davies 1989) have been particularly interested in scrutinising the potential impact of children's exposure to feminist fairy tales on their understanding of gender. One of the most influential studies in this field was conducted by Bronwyn Davies (1989), who analysed pre-school children's responses to the feminist fairy tale 'The Paper Bag Princess'. Davies observed that in spite of the author's clearly discernible intention to construct a heroine, participants' strong preconceived understanding of the categories of masculine-feminine and prince-princess precluded a feminist hearing of the tale. The heroic female protagonist in the feminist tale challenged the gendered discourses that pupils widely accepted, and through which they gave meaning to the categories of male-female (Davies 1989). Analogous are the findings of Baker-Sperry's (2007) study that analysed children's responses to the tale of Cinderella. The researcher postulated that pupils' perceptions of gender roles were 'essential to the process of interpretation and the construction of meaning', for participants did not challenge the 'basic gendered assumptions embodied in many images and characterisations in the text, nor did they explore alternatives' (Baker-Sperry 2007, 721).

A body of research on children's sense making of gender discourses argues that although feminist stories 'provide an alternative to the sexist world' (Wason-Ellam 1997, 436) and encourage children to challenge traditional gender discourses (Kelly 2012), they are not often 'powerful enough to disrupt it' (Wason-Ellam 1997, 436). Children commonly interpret the narratives to make them fit into their existing ideas about gender roles (Frawley 2008; Anggard 2005; Wason-Ellam 1997; Trousdale 1995). A typical example of this is from Anggard (2005), who examined how pre-school children deployed gender discourses in producing their own narratives. Her findings indicated that although participants reproduced to a great extent traditional gender patterns, they displayed agency and challenged some traditional narratives and monolithic gender patterns presented in traditional fairy tales to fit their own purposes.

Conversely, other studies have postulated that long-term exposure to gender egalitarian discourses may be sufficient to alter children's understanding of gender. A recent study by Karniol and Gal-Disegni (2009) found that children who studied gender-fair textbooks for the school year expressed more gender egalitarian views than children who used gender-stereotyped textbooks. Analogous are the findings of Nhundu (2007), whose research examined Zimbabwean schoolgirls' views of gender-appropriate roles. Nhundu observed that girls exposed to stories of women succeeding in non-traditional occupations were able to disrupt the orthodox occupational gender binaries and permute their future career aspirations to gender atypical.

Children's sense making of gender discourses is influenced by various parameters including age, gender and the degree of previous exposure to non-traditional gender discourses. According to Yeoman (1999) and Trousdale (1995) previous exposure to non-traditional gender discourses exerts a catalytic influence on pupils' perceptions of

unconventional gender roles as well as their ability to produce their own gender egalitarian stories.

Scholars have also stressed that being a 'boy' or a 'girl' affects children's ability to challenge normative gender discourses (Angaard 2005; Bjorklund 2005; Davies 1989). Rice (2000), in particular, studied American sixth grade boys' and girls' responses to the Japanese folktale 'Three Strong Women'. Rice observed that unlike boys, who had taken up traditional gendered positions, 'a small shift from stereotypical positioning was signified by the girls, suggesting that the discourses available to the girls [had] enabled them to broaden their cultural definitions of gender' (Rice 2000, 230). Children's anxiety about losing gender qualities around which they construct their own gender identities circumscribes their ability to challenge traditional gender discourses (Arzipe 2001). According to Zachou (2005) and Westland (1993), boys tend to be more anxious than girls about their gender identity. In particular, boys in Westland's (1993, 244) research were less prepared than girls to disrupt gendered discourses 'because they had more to lose than gain from the changes'.

Age also plays a crucial role in children's understanding of gender discourses (Trautner et al. 2005). Trousdale & McMillan (2003) conducted a case study of a girl's responses to gender roles in one classic and three feminist fairy tales. The researchers interviewed the participant at two stages of her life, at the age of 8 and 12. At 8 years, the participant 'was remarkably forthcoming and sophisticated about gender constraints; at 12, however, she had obviously noted 'where and when women speak and are silent' (Trousdale & McMillan 2003, 24) and was unable to accept passive female protagonists, like Cinderella.

To recapitulate, gender research on children's responses to traditional and non-traditional gender discourses in fairy tales has highlighted that children are active producers of meanings (Angaard 2005; Davies 1989). In this context, texts are 'polysemous sites' (Lemish 1998, 148). Children's age (Trautner et al. 2005; Trousdale and MacMillan 2003) as

well as their gender (Bjorklund 2005; Westland 1993) and their previous exposure to non-traditional discursive practices play a crucial role in the production of meanings (Yeoman 1999; Trousdale 1995). The review of the literature highlights the gap pertaining to the influence of parents' socio-economic background and educational level on children's sense making of gender discourses. This study attempts to address this deficiency through the analysis of children's responses to the feminist fairy tale with reference to children's parents' educational level.

### **Doing gender in primary education: post-structuralist paradigm and Connell's theory of masculinities**

Since Davies' (1989) ground-breaking work more than two decades ago, a profusion of studies drawing on post-structuralism have situated gender as social and historical construction (Blaise 2005; Grieshaber 2004) constituted and reconstituted through discourses. Gender research in education informed by post-structuralist epistemology recognises the subjects as agentic and not as passive recipients of pre-determined meanings. Children use strategies to navigate discourses in Daedalian ways and participate actively in the process of their gender identity construction (Baker-Spurry 2007; Blaise 2005; Renold 2005; Davies 1993).

The post-structuralist paradigm provided a stronger stance from which gender was seen as something we 'do' and 're-do' through quotidian social and cultural practices. In this sense, gender is actualised through a series of repetitive acts/performances. Our gender performances take place within a dualistic framework of male/female that Butler (1990, 6) conceptualised with the term 'heterosexual matrix'. This matrix is perceived as a structure that amalgamates femininity and masculinity with heterosexuality. Under the sway of this institutionalised set of power relationships, gender transgressions are marginalised (Renold 2005). In particular, Blaise (2005) observed how a five-year old boy who showed an interest



in a highly feminised item was derided and disdained by his classmates. This is symptomatic of how children reinforce the heterosexual matrix, which regulates subjects' predilection and privileges some desires over others. The heterosexual matrix, thus, extends beyond sexual relationships to a whole spectrum of culturally institutionalised customs and practices such as wedding ceremonies and the nuclear family, which are epitomised in our culture and become subtle mechanisms of the heterosexual matrix. In this way, heterosexual relationships are positioned as natural within the social systems. The concept of the heterosexual matrix was particularly useful in my research for unveiling the significance of heteronormativity that regulates children's perceptions of gender.

In an attempt to explore and challenge existing gender relations, Connell (1987) placed emphasis on heterosexuality and its influence on the construction of gender. From this perspective, in every social system there is a dominant (hegemonic) and idealised form of masculinity and an apotheosised form of femininity that is considered as proper for men and women. This idealised form of masculinity (hegemonic masculinity) legitimates and normalises certain performances of men, and pathologises, marginalises, and subordinates any other expressions of masculinities or femininities (masculine and feminine subject positions) (Connell 1987). Alongside hegemonic masculinity, Connell (1987) postulated that there are other forms of masculinities (marginalised and subordinated), which according to the findings of a plethora of studies are constructed in oppressive ways (Thorne 1993). This is symptomatic of the fact that hegemonic masculinity is relational (Paechter 2012), which means that it is constructed in relation to and against an Other (emphasised femininity, marginalised and subordinated masculinities) (Connell 1995). Emphasised femininity, on the other hand, is a salient adjunct to hegemonic masculinity and 'is defined around compliance with this subordination and is oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men' (Connell 1987, 184-5). As such, it epitomises women's sociability, lack of technical

competence and acceptance of domesticity and motherhood (Connell 1987). Paechter (2010) postulated that emphasised femininity is constituted through the negation or absence of what is considered masculine characteristics. The concept of emphasised femininity can function as a mechanism that describes the subordination of femininity in society, in the sense that its purpose is to ensure that ‘females’ (as the subordinated group) remain subordinated to the hegemon group/hegemonic masculinity.

Scholars have extensively investigated hegemonic masculinity in primary schools with a focus on the pressures that boys experience to perform masculinity in certain ways (Kostas 2014; Renold 2005). Although hegemonic masculinity is ‘contingent’ (Paechter 2012), it is characterised by physical strength, aggression, toughness, resistance to authority and sport competitiveness, manifested especially through football (Kostas 2014; Swain 2000). Another expression of hegemonic masculinity is related to professional success in the labour market, which describes the ‘social definition of tasks into as either ‘men’s work’ or ‘women’s work’ and the definition of some kinds of work as more masculine than others’ (Carrigan et al. 1987, 94). Post-structuralism and Connell’s theory of masculinities have offered me valuable methodological and theoretical tools for exploring how children talked about gender and negotiated non-normative gender discourses.

### **The research project method**

My research drew heavily on Davies’ (1989) ‘seminal’ research by seeking to apply her ideas in the context of Hellas. I also utilised the post-structuralist theory of discourses and heterosexual matrix and Connell’s (1987) concepts of hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity for collecting and analysing my data.

I conducted research in two average-sized mixed-sex primary schools in Athens, capital city of Hellas. The two schools (school A and school B)<sup>2</sup> were situated in two diverse areas of the city. School A was in the centre of Athens, (Pagrati area), whereas school B was located in the suburbs (Ano Liosia). School A, a two storey building, was situated in a busy inner-city area amongst high-density housing area. The school consisted of 6 classes with a total of 141 students and 9 teachers. School B was larger for it was consisted of 8 classes with a total of 189 pupils and 11 teachers. It was situated in the suburbs of Athens in a low density housing area. The selection of the schools was based on the hypothesis that children in school A come from a middle class background whereas pupils in School B would come from a working class background including a large number of ethnic minority students, which would allow me to explore issues of gender, social class and ethnicity. Although ethnic minority students account for 10% of the total school population in Hellas (Triandafyllidou 2013), participants in both schools were characterised by a high degree of social and ethnic homogeneity that did not allow the study of these parameters. Additionally, both schools' catchment areas serve predominantly white 'middle class' families. An attempt was made, however, to explore the influence of parents' educational level on children's sense making of gender discourses. Nevertheless, it was observed that the students in these schools represented the same degree of diversity pertaining to student socio-economic status as the majority of other middle-class schools in Athens.

A selection had been made, prior to entering into the fieldwork, to focus exclusively on the third- and fourth-grade primary classrooms of each school, for according to Parsons (2004) upper elementary pupils (aged 8-14) have reached a sufficient level of maturity to challenge gendered discourses. In total, five classrooms were observed, two classes (one third-grade and one fourth-grade) in School A and three classes (two third-grade and one

---

<sup>2</sup> In the interest of securing children's anonymity I do not mention the schools' names.

fourth-grade classes) in school B. On average in each class there were 24 students. A total of 120 schoolchildren (aged 9-11 years old) participated in my study, 41 from school A (17 boys and 24 girls) and 79 from school B (33 boys and 46 girls).

For the purposes of my research, I selected the feminist version of Snow White (Zipes 1986). Unlike the classic version, the female protagonist in the feminist version is not a princess. In the narrative, Snow White is chased by an evil and egoistic queen, the monarch of a mythical dystopian kingdom where the story unfolds. Snow White is not a unitary being. In the commencement of the story, she is positioned as a diamond mine worker and an adept craftswoman. She is then positioned as victim of the queen. However, she repudiates this subject position as well as the positioning as a princess and becomes a free agent. Finally, Snow White positions herself as a heroine who speaks of the injustice and raises the people against the Queen of the Mountains and succeeds in abolishing the establishment.

In all classrooms I read the story to the pupils. The reading of the story took approximately 10-15 minutes. After reading the story, the group interviews took place with me asking some questions about the story and the characters. The group interviews were based on a semi-structured interview format, which aimed to investigate how children negotiate non-normative gender discourses. The interview questions were piloted first, using a sample of young children prior to implementation. I was very careful to clarify to all schoolchildren that this was not a test/examination for which they would get a grade. Although teachers remained in the classroom for the entire time, they were occupied with correcting pupils' homework, and they did not participate in the interview process. After the break we would continue the conversation for approximately another 40 minutes. During the group interviews, I asked questions and children took turns in giving their opinion, ensuring that all participants had a chance to express their views. As I was not allowed to record

participants' answers during the conversation<sup>3</sup>, I kept notes while children talked. I was able to record their responses with some verbatim quotes, and at the end of each day, all the notes were recorded with the greatest detail and filed. Although the use of a tape recorder would have facilitated the data collection process and would have offered perhaps richer data, my method enabled me to record some of the most important verbatim discussions and to keep detailed notes despite the complexity of the conversation.

The decision to rely on group interviews was made for pragmatic reasons. Group interviews enabled me to collect a reasonably wide range of pupils' views in a time-efficient manner and generated data that allowed me to understand the individual subjectivities as well as any contradictory accounts that the participants gave in relation to their views of gender (Lankshear 1993). Also, the group interviews encouraged interaction among participants, which enabled them to reconsider their own views and their own understanding of their experiences (Kitzinger 1995).

The analysis of the data collected during the fieldwork was based on a systematic and reflexive process. The analysis occurred after data was generated and was conducted using a priori thematic analysis (Strauss 1987). The initial codes were influenced by discursive understandings of gender. These categories were then expanded based on post-structural theorisation of gender and Connell's theory of masculinities and showed how children negotiated and made sense of the non-traditional discourses promoted in the feminist version of Snow White (Zipes 1987).

---

<sup>3</sup>The Hellenic Ministry of Education did not allow me to use a tape recorder during the interviews to ensure the children's anonymity and confidentiality.

## Results

### **Gender dualism: reproducing the binary construction of masculinity and femininity**

In the discussion of Snow White's unconventional occupational roles (jewellery maker and diamond mine worker) most children supported a highly polarised binary construction of masculinity and femininity. Similarly to Westland's (1993) findings, children's gender played a crucial role in their sense-making of non-traditional gender discourses. Most third- and fourth-grade boys, in particular, had identified femininity with weakness and as a result reproduced binaristic and polarised views vis-à-vis the gender division of labour.

**Theodore:** 'I didn't like that she [Snow White] was working in a mine. This is not a job for a woman because women are not as strong as men'.

The discourse of female weakness serves the purpose of maintaining patriarchal perceptions of gender roles in the labour market, according to which women's performance is not up to the stresses and strains of the marketplace. The binary of strong/weak was central in regulating boys' perceptions of masculinity and femininity, for the majority of them resisted the discourse of a physically strong woman and challenged Snow White's occupational roles (diamond-mine worker and jewellery maker). Most boys believed that a physically strong woman has sacrificed her femininity and resembles a man. As one of the boys noted, Snow White turns into a 'Snow Whiteman'.

**Antonis:** 'She was working out a lot and didn't look like a woman and the seven dwarfs called her Snow Whiteman'.

This 'metamorphosis' is associated with the palpable detrimental somatic effects that physical strength has on female bodies, which are merely commodities for the attraction of men. Historically, the cultural construction of femininity has been controlled by patriarchal perceptions, which position women's bodies as sites of objectification (Foucault, 1975).

Hence, a muscular female body is antithetic to the heterosexualisation of the female body and the production of femininity through corporeal discourses that operate in the context of normative heterosexual desirability (Renold 2005). Traditionally, female physical weakness epitomises female somatic beauty. Ergo, a physically strong female body transgresses from the ideals of normative femininity and subverts the heterosexual matrix. Previous studies have illustrated that while muscled men are seen as ideal, emphasised femininity deprecates muscled women and their sexuality is questioned (Curry et al. 2002). In parallel with this, Snow White, through her participation in a male dominated domain, poses a threat to hegemonic masculinity, for she undermines men's institutionalised hegemonic positioning in the production sphere and their traditional role as breadwinners.

The findings illustrate that most boys were lacking the discursive history of women executing strenuous activities and drew upon hegemonic patriarchal and heterosexual discourses for making sense of Snow Whites' occupational activities. The power of traditional narratives precluded feminist narratives from being heard. Snow White subverted boys' existing dualistic gender order and in order to identify themselves with the 'correct' gender they judged her against traditional images. Davies (1989, 29) refer to this process as a 'category maintenance work', which serves the purpose of reinforcing and maintaining the gender boundaries.

The analysis of boys' demographic characteristics revealed a strong synergy between the mother's professional status and schoolchildren's ability to challenge traditional gender discourses. Boys with mothers in paid employment, in particular, reproduced to a greater extent non-traditional gender discourses than those whose mothers did not actively participate in the labour market. This positive relationship was even stronger when the mother held a position which gave her agency or authority. However, Davies (1989) points out that 'it

would be a mistake to think of this relation as a causal one. If it were, the solution to all of our problems would simply be to have all women go out to work' (Davies 1989, 63).

Some highly polarised binaries (strong/weak, violent/submissive, and adventurous/unadventurous, around which masculinity and femininity are traditionally constructed) emerged when boys were asked to retell the tale, replacing Snow White with a male protagonist.

**Theodore:** '...he wouldn't make jewellery because this is not a job for men'.

In retelling the story, boys deployed hegemonic masculinity discourses according to which masculinity is associated with physical strength, bravery, and violence, for almost unanimously, they believed that a male protagonist would have killed the evil queen.

**Andreas:** 'If it was a man he would shout more and would kill the bad Queen'.

Most children reproduced the normative gender discourses of traditional fairy tales, in which a prince fights against evil powers in order to save himself or his beloved princess. This shift in the narrative, signified by the death of the queen, simply asserts male physical superiority, which also signifies the physical domination of women by men.

The perception of femininity as synonymous with weakness constitutes a socio-political and cultural remnant of patriarchy that has been cultivated and established in modern societies. Femininity is a fragile concept in the system of social values and is often defined by the characteristics that lack, or by the opposite attributes of masculinity (Connell 1987), for otherwise it would be a threat to hegemonic masculinity. The role of popular culture should also be considered in making sense of these findings, which demonstrate that femininities are constructed in opposition to masculinity (Paechter 2006). My findings highlight the dualistic synergy that exists between, and characterises the construction of, masculinity and femininity, a relationship 'in which the subordinate term is negated, rather than the two sides



being in equal balance' (Paechter 2006, 256). The association of masculinity with physical strength, aggression, and violence, and femininity with weakness, apathy, and submission, in most boys' perceptions reflects this construction.

Antithetical to boys, girls reproduced to a greater extent Snow White's subject positions in the narrative and especially her positioning as a mine worker.

**Maria:** 'I liked the fact that she was working in a diamond mine...Of course women can do such a demanding job.'

Most girls were able to challenge emphasised femininity and reproduced gender egalitarian discourses that positioned Snow White in a traditional male-dominated terrain. As previous studies have shown, girls have more to gain than lose by challenging emphasised femininity discourses (Westland 1993), for this way they claim power (Paechter 2006). In addition, girls' parents' educational level appeared to be higher than boys' parents' educational level, especially insofar as the mothers' educational level is concerned. Lastly, most girls' mothers were active agents in the labour market and in many instances their professional roles were accompanied by discursive practices that gave them agency or even authority.

Notwithstanding, there was not unanimity in girls' responses. A few girls reproduced traditional gender discourses and challenged Snow White's unconventional activities. One of them was Catherine who expressed the most normative views vis-à-vis gender roles. Drawing upon emphasised femininity discourses, Catherine challenged Snow White's positioning as a mine worker for this discursive position seemed to her atypical for a woman.

**Catherine:** 'Women do not dig in mines to find diamonds. They dig only in the garden to grow vegetables'.

In her perception, digging is appropriate for a woman, as she said that women dig in the garden to grow vegetables. Nevertheless, digging in a mine to unearth diamonds is

uncharacteristic for a woman, for traditionally diamond mines are male dominated domains. Although Catherine was presented with gender egalitarian discourses, she found it difficult to reproduce any alternative discourses that undermined her existing dualistic gender order.

Considering that Catherine's parents are well-educated<sup>4</sup> and that her mother's professional status gives her agency, one would have expected her (like the rest of the girls in the classroom who had mothers in paid employment) to be able to challenge emphasised femininity discourses in relation to female occupation roles. Her case is an indication that the synergy between mother's employment status and children's ability to challenge traditional gender discourses is not a causal one (Davies 1989). Understanding Catherine's views requires an examination of the family structures and dynamics of the relationship between her parents at home, as well as an analysis of the massive input of gendered discourses from television and other media/internet etc. As Fine (2010, 216) pointed out 'social structure, media and peers offer no shortage of information to children about masculinity and femininity'. This would illuminate the available gender discourses to her that shaped her views of gender roles. Alas, this was not possible for the purpose of this study.

### ***Don't bet on the princess***

In the classic version of the fairy tale, Snow White, a princess, gets married to a prince. Through this marriage, she substantiates her regal origin and acquires her own royal "kitchen". In the feminist version, however, Snow White refuses to become a princess and implores the queen to let her return to her friends in the diamond mine. At the end, as a truly free agent she chooses for herself; she disdains the regal title and the positioning as a princess; she escapes from the palace and returns to her friends in the diamond mine.

---

<sup>4</sup> Her mother is an English teacher and her father teaches physical education.

The responses from the discussion of Snow White's refusal to become a princess yielded striking results. In particular, girls almost unanimously supported Snow White's negation of the royal title, as they valued friendship, love, and freedom higher than the positioning as princess.

**Maria:** 'I wouldn't choose to become a Princess. I would choose my friends. Friends are very important'.

**Medea:** 'I do believe that she did the right thing. She didn't want to become a Princess because she was a hard-working woman and because she loved her friends'.

Unlike Westland's (1993) research, most boys did not identify with the prince, for they were almost unanimous in that they would have declined the royal title.

**Tassos:** 'No...because I would be alone and I would get bored'.

**Manos:** 'No...friendship is more important than money'

Conversely, two girls fervently criticised Snow White for her decision to reject the regal title.

**Catherine:** '...she was an idiot that's why she didn't become a princess'.

**Anna:** '...it was wrong. She should have become a princess'.

Provided that the discourse of princess is associated with the politics of female beauty and epitomises women's ultimate challenge to secure a man and a place in their own kitchen, it can be argued that Catherine and Anna were shoring up the heterosexual matrix. Blaise (2005, 77) has postulated that 'the importance of being pretty and the role it plays in creating femininities and masculinities provides another opportunity for locating girls within the heterosexual matrix'. The discourse of 'princess' prepares girls to enter into 'romantic heterosexuality', for it

'engage[s] with the production of girls' conscious and unconscious desires, prepares for and proffers a happy ever after situation in which the finding of the prince (the knight in

shining armour, ‘Mr. Right’) comes to seem like a solution to a set of overwhelming desires and problems’ (Walkerdine 1984, 163).

Unlike Davies’ (1989) research, most girls in my study challenged the discourse of princess despite Snow White’s identification with aristocracy in the classic tale, and idealisation of the discourse of princess has been reinforced through popular culture—especially Disney films. Nonetheless, when children were asked to retell the story with a male protagonist (‘Snow Whiteman’), almost unanimously they believed that he would have become a prince because:

**Theodore:** ‘... men are lazy’.

**Medea:** ‘...because men like power’.

**Antigone:** ‘...and they like to dominate’.

According to boys, materialism and lethargy are inherent properties of masculinity, thus being a prince makes life easier. Most girls, on the other hand, believed that a male protagonist would not have refused the regal title because in their perceptions masculinity was identified with authority and dominance. The authoritarian and dominant prince, as girls described him, departs from the idealised romantic prince that is epitomised in traditional folktales and transcends to a darker character, a Machiavellian prince.

The highly polarised binaries that regulated boys’ and girls’ perceptions of femininity and masculinity were also evident in the discussion of a male protagonist’s personality traits. Participants were almost unanimous that Snow Whiteman would have been stronger but less clever than Snow White.

**Andreas:** ‘If it was a man he would shout more and would kill the bad Queen’.

**Danae:** ‘Having more strength, he would pull down the door and made his way out of the castle’.

Drawing upon heroic masculinity discourses, pupils believed that a male protagonist would have altered the story drastically. In particular, the fairy tale would have been more

adventurous and violent. In Thanos's words, had Snow White been a man '...there would be more action in the story'.

The strong and dominant Prince, "The Snow Whiteman" as they called him, would have killed the queen in a demonstration of his superior physical strength and unparalleled martial skills. This deconstructs the binaristic approach to the discourse of the prince and princess in children's perceptions, for being a prince is much more powerful than being a princess. Children likely reproduced traditional gender discourses of princesses and princes found in classic fairy tales, which reinforces the discursive construction of heroic princes fighting against evil powers in order to save themselves or their beloved princesses. Fighting and violence constitute essential components of hegemonic masculinity (Renold 2005) through the perceived physicality, venturousness, and heroism that they involve. Hence, boys drew on hegemonic masculinity discourses for making sense of a male protagonist's role in the fairy tale. These associations of masculinity with authority and dominance uphold patriarchal power.

### ***Men don't cry***

Children's accounts of the farewell scene where 'one by one the seven little men kissed Snow White goodbye'... with ... 'tears in their eyes for she was their dearest friend...' (Zipes 1986, 75) demonstrate how fixed are the qualities that define normative masculinity. Pupils almost unanimously believed that men do not cry, for they had identified masculinity with imperviousness. Within the hegemonic masculine frame of social values and norms, sensitivity and crying can 'call a boy's gender and (hetero)sexual identity into question...' (Renold 2005, 75). Boys' responses highlight the subtleties involved in performing successful masculinity, which is discursively constructed around strength, imperviousness, and invulnerability.

**Tassos:** ‘Men do not cry, when we grow up we will not cry either’.

Failing to perform gender in accordance with the ideals of hegemonic masculinity in all aspects of their quotidian lives signifies the unsuccessful masculinity feared by many boys (Renold 2005).

Only a few girls believed that men as well as women can express emotions of melancholy and sadness through crying. However, some of them thought that men do not cry the same way as women (without tears) or they cry less often than women.

**Medea:** ‘Yes, they do but without tears though.’

**Athena:** ‘Girls are more sensitive than boys...Men cry internally and less often than women.’

**Cleopatra:** ‘Yes men do cry as often as women do’.

Although to a certain extent these girls reproduced non-traditional discourses of emotional masculinity, Athena and Medea emphasised that men do not express emotions the way women do (men cry less often than women or without tears). Cleopatra, on the other hand, was able to subvert normative discourses, which position femininity as emotional and weak by suggesting that men and women cry. On this occasion, Cleopatra opposed the ‘normalised feminine positioning’ and negated the ‘disempowerment that comes with it’ (Paechter 2006, 257).

### **Heroic femininity**

Snow White, in the feminist version of the fairy tale, experiences multiple subject positions, which emphasise her heroic character. The extent to which pupils were able to identify the quality of heroism irrespective of the character’s gender was central in the discussion with the pupils about Snow White’s heroic acts. The findings unveil some of the contradictions and complexities that children faced with taking up the position of heroine in the narrative.

Unlike participants in Davies's (1989) study, most pupils in my research were able to challenge the normative discourses that identify masculinity with heroism, and perceived Snow White as a heroine. In particular, third- and fourth-grade girls and fourth-grade boys from both schools, despite being unable to reproduce some of her unconventional positioning in the narrative, unanimously believed that Snow White is a heroine.

**Achilles:** 'She is a hero because she is smart, she didn't become a princess and she contradicted the Queen'.

**Cleopatra:** 'She is a hero because she was brave'.

Most third-grade boys, on the other hand, had associated heroism with acts of violence and as a result, the lack of discursive representations of physical fighting or killing in the narrative precluded most third-grade boys from perceiving Snow White as a heroine. This suggests that the discourses available to third-grade boys restricted their cultural definition of heroism.

Symptomatic of this is Nikolas response:

**Nikolas:** 'She is not a hero because she didn't kill anybody'.

Previous studies have highlighted the eminence of the discourse of fighting/violence (around which heroic masculinity is also constructed) in the construction of young hegemonic masculinities (Francis 1998; Renold 2005). Most third-grade boys' strong preconceived meanings about the categories of masculine-feminine and prince-princess as well as the identification of femininity with docility and weakness constricted their ability to perceive the quality of heroism irrespective of the character's gender. Hence, Snow White's agency in the narrative was inconsistent with their own understandings of proper gendered behaviour and heroic masculinity discourses, which exerted a catalytic influence on their perceptions of heroism.

It is very interesting that most third-grade boys negotiated differently than fourth-grade boys Snow White's positioning as a heroine in the narrative. Age difference may partly explain why the fourth-grade boys had a broader definition of heroism, which allowed them to perceive Snow White as a heroine. On the other hand, most girls challenged emphasised femininity discourses and recognised Snow White's heroic positioning in the narrative. By doing so, girls disembodied emphasised femininity and empowered themselves.

*...And they lived happily ever after*

In contrast to traditional folktales, the feminist version of Snow White doesn't end with a kiss and a "lived happily ever after" ending. Snow White does not get married to a handsome prince but she chooses to stay with her friends in the diamond mine. Based on this, I asked pupils to develop the story further and give an alternative ending.

Girls' accounts reveal the extent to which their views of gender were framed within the heterosexual matrix. In detail, most girls drew upon discourse of marriage for constructing an alternative ending to the fairy tale, for they described a wedding between Snow White and her prince/dream man.

**Maria:** 'Later, she met a Prince and they got married'.

The emphasis placed on the importance of romantic heterosexuality (as found in the discourses of the prince, princess, and matrimony) by most girls (Walkerdine 1984) highlights the role of 'idealised and compulsory heterosexuality' (Butler 1990) and of discourses of romance in regulating their imagination and the construction of their femininity. Not all girls, however, drew upon discourses of romantic heterosexuality. A few girls were able to challenge the discourse of matrimony. Medea was one of the girls that did not 'bet on the prince' and challenged the idealised discourses of romance and love traditionally reinforced through marriage, which are idealised and institutionalised in the Hellenic social



context of values.

**Medea:** ‘she lived with her friends and became very rich by selling the jewellery that she was making’.

A striking finding was that none of the girls made any references to motherhood, despite its strong interrelation with the discourse of matrimony and the significant meaning it bears in the patriarchal system of social values. This is very important provided that motherhood (a key element of being a woman) is idealised in the textbooks of the third and fourth grade that pupils use in schools (Kostas 2014). Although most girls had idealised romantic heterosexuality, they were able to disrupt the discourse of motherhood, a key component of emphasised femininity.

Antithetical to girls, boys did not draw upon the discourse of matrimony or romantic heterosexuality but reinforced the discourse of motherhood. Almost unanimously, boys believed that Snow White would get married at a later stage of life due to her strong desire to have children. Their responses did not demonstrate any significant identifications of masculinity with fatherhood and virility.

Children’s responses are symptomatic of the influence of the hegemonic heterosexual matrix in regulating their perceptions of successful masculinity and femininity. The role of the education system in reinforcing the hegemonic heterosexual matrix should also be highlighted, for previous studies have illustrated that heterosexuality and motherhood are idealised and epitomised in the textbooks of primary education (Kostas 2014). In addition, pupils’ accounts illustrate how the discourses of matrimony and motherhood and the heterosexual matrix work together to keep gender in its place. In parallel with this, the findings unravel the asymmetries in the ways in which the hegemonic heterosexual matrix regulates boys’ and girls’ perceptions of gender and sexuality. In particular, girls emphasised marriage as a romantic union, drawing on romantic heterosexual discourses of love, whereas

boys deployed the discourse of motherhood, and justified Snow White's decision to get married by the fact that she wanted to have children. The discourses of love and romance that most girls reproduced encourage women to conform and preserve constituents of emphasised femininity (such as submissiveness and emotionality), which are antithetic to the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity (imperviousness and domination). The binary romantic/unromantic reinforces women's positioning as romantically subordinate and men's positioning as unemotional and dominant.

Although in traditional fairy tales the couple 'lives happily ever after', in the discussion with the schoolchildren, I explored Snow Whites' roles and responsibilities after getting married to the prince. Interestingly, pupils gave conflicting accounts and their views differed by gender. Most boys expressed anachronistic views of family structures and females' roles and responsibilities in the domestic sphere, demonstrating acceptance of a normative positioning of women in the family. In particular, boys almost unanimously believed that Snow White's life would change drastically after getting married, for she would give up her professional life in the interest of her family and would take up her family role as a mother and wife.

**Christopher:** 'She wouldn't work; she would be busy at home'.

The association of femininity with domesticity was proposed even from the boys who suggested that Snow White would continue to work after her wedding, for they suggested that Snow White would continue to work from home. Hence, boys drew on hegemonic masculinity discourses, which position the father as the breadwinner and the economic supporter of the family.

The fact that most boys did not have mothers in paid employment may partly elucidate their views of gender roles in the family. In addition, what they said might have

been affected by the complex flow of the conversation, as it happened among the children, me as a researcher, and the story. It is possible that boys participated in a game of one-upping each other up in dominant masculinity. The role of the education system in reinforcing traditional family structures should also be considered, for in the textbooks of primary education, these family hierarchies align with the dominant representations of married women's positioning in the domestic sphere. In the anthologies in particular, married women are excluded from the labour market, and the home is presented as a woman's realm and the epitome of security and love (Kostas 2014).

Only a few boys were able to disrupt, to a certain extent, the normative discursive positioning of women in the family.

**Achilles:** 'In the mornings she would go to the diamond mine and in the afternoon she would return home to cook and play with the kids'

Achilles was one of the few boys who challenged female domesticity to a certain extent, for he positioned Snow White in the labour market in a traditional male dominated domain. However, at the same time, he emphasised the importance of motherhood and positioned Snow White in the domestic sphere as a nurturing mother and housewife.

Most girls, on the other hand, expressed more egalitarian views of gender, as they told me that Snow White would continue to work after getting married to the prince. Some girls also suggested that Snow White would work from home and sometimes would go to the diamond mine.

**Medea:** 'She would make jewellerys from home and she would go sometimes to the diamond mine to help her friends?.'

Only a few girls expressed the opinion that Snow White wouldn't work after getting married, for in their perception married women, especially princesses, do not have to work.

**Anna:** ‘She wouldn’t work...she would go to the mine to see her friends’.

**Catherine:** ‘She would become a princess and she would not have to work  
....because she would be very rich’.

Catherine and Anna supported traditional family structures and reinforced emphasised femininity discourses that position females in the domestic sphere. Both girls were consistently drawing upon emphasised femininity discourses for making sense of Snow White’s positionings in the narrative, which precluded a feminist hearing of the tale.

### **Discussion**

Although the feminist version of Snow White prompted children to challenge normative gender discourses, the pre-existing structures of traditional narratives remained extremely powerful and several times prevented a feminist hearing of the story by most children, especially boys. The findings indicate that texts are polysemous sites, allowing multiple readings and offering readers several possible positions. Boys and girls provided contradictory accounts of femininity and masculinity which had no consensus. These differing responses supported observations of conflicting subjectivities at the individual and group levels. In particular, pupils’ views of Snow White ranged from full acceptance to complete rejection of her roles/activities.

Most children idealised matrimony, motherhood, androphilia, and gynephilia as the only acceptable expressions of sexuality. These views reveal the extent to which the heterosexual matrix framed pupils’ views of gender. Constrained by dominant discourses of hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity, many children drew upon rigid gender binaries to make sense of gender. In an attempt to identify with the ‘correct’ gender, children challenged Snow White’s positionings in the narrative and engaged in ‘category maintenance work’ (Davies 1989, 29). Girls seemed more prepared than boys to challenge normative gender discourses, suggesting that the discourses available to girls enabled them to challenge

traditional gender discourses. Girls likely had more to gain than lose by doing so for by opposing emphasised femininity discourses they challenged the constraints imposed on them (Paechter 2006; Rice 2000). The findings also suggest that mothers' educational level and workforce role exert significant influence on children's agency and their role in constructing gender. In particular, it was noted that pupils with well-educated mothers who actively participated in paid employment had greater ability to disrupt normative gender discourses.

Despite the discernible parallelisms between my study and Davies' (1989) research, my study takes a new epistemic approach. First, the geographical, cultural and chronological parameters constitute critical points that differentiate my study from Davies'. Additionally, the literature suggests that children accept traditional gender dichotomies by the age of 5, 'so at this stage children are keen to demonstrate their awareness and knowledge of being the "right" gender' and then 'they begin to establish and refine these conceptual understandings' (Skelton et al. 2009, 189). A comparison of my findings with Davies' (1989) research shows that children's age does not necessarily affect their ability to disrupt traditional gender discourses even when they do not have the discursive history to do so. This is corroborated by the fact that although participants in my research were considerably older and had established a better sense of gender identity they were more prepared to participate in the disruption of discourses. The findings, therefore, offer valuable insight into children's subjectivities and the ways in which they deploy discourses of hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity in the production of meanings. This also emphasises the synergy that characterises the construction of masculinity and femininity upon which children draw for making sense of gender.

It should also be noted that the study of children's responses to non-traditional gender discourses has not been attempted previously in Hellenic primary education. My approach of sharing a feminist fairy tale in the Hellenic primary school context is a unique application of

an Australian study and constitutes feminist intervention. It offers valuable insight into children's sense making of non-normative gender discourses, and thus a similar approach could be employed by future researchers interested in examining children's negotiations of gendered discourses. These findings make a significant contribution to the existing Hellenic literature on gender identity construction in primary schools by shedding light on an under-researched field. Most importantly, it illuminates how children simultaneously are positioned within these discourses and engage with and negotiate these positions. Additionally, this analysis employed a post-structuralist paradigm to investigate how gender meanings are constituted and reconstituted through discourses in multiple and diverse ways and how these are related to broader social norms, hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity. Throughout the study, I attempted to understand children's perceptions, experiences and meanings of gender within the broader Hellenic social context. By keeping in mind the broader gender discourses and the structural and social dynamics of gender, I could understand the complexities of children's negotiation of gender discourses and how they position themselves in the hegemonic heterosexual matrix. As well, my study offers some valuable insights into the influence of social parameters on children's perceptions of gender roles. In particular, the findings revealed that pupils' gender, parents' educational level and mothers' employment status have a crucial effect on their sense making of gender discourses. My research showed that girls were better able than boys to challenge normative gender discourses. Furthermore, a causal relationship was found between a higher parents' educational level and a greater probability that children would be able to challenge normative constructions of gender. In essence, the higher the professional status of the mothers, the greater the possibility their children would reproduce gender egalitarian discourses.

The exclusion of parents' views of gender roles constitutes a significant limitation of the present study. An exploration of parents' perceptions of gender could provide useful data

that would enable a future researcher to better understand how children negotiate traditional and non-traditional gender discourses. In addition, the influence of ethnicity could be explored and analysed.

In conclusion, feminist fairy tales per se are not a panacea to alter children's perceptions of gender roles but can be a useful tool for pedagogues to present children with gender-egalitarian discourses because children can 'be taught to read critically' (Arizpe 2001, 36; Wasserberg 2012). Educators should encourage children to actively engage with such storylines and discuss gender-equality issues in the classroom (Davies and Banks 1992).

### **Acknowledgements**

Warm thanks to all the girls and boys, teachers and school heads who enabled this research to take place and discussed the results. Especial thanks to Prof. Jessica Ringrose

### **References**

- Anggard, E. 2005. "Barbie Princesses and Dinosaur Dragons: Narration as a Way of Doing Gender." *Gender Education* 17: 539-553.
- Arizpe, E. 2001. Responding to a 'Conquistadora': readers talk about gender in Mexican secondary schools. *Gender and Education* 13: 25-37.
- Barajas, K. E. 2008. Beyond stereotypes? Talking about gender in school book talk. *Ethnography and Education* 3: 129-144.
- Barchers, S. 1990. *Wise women: Folk and fairy tales from around the world*. Englewood, co: Libraries Unlimited.
- Blaise, M. 2005. *Playing it straight: Uncovering gender discourses in the early childhood classroom*. London: Routledge.
- Bjorklund, D. F. 2005. *Children's thinking: Cognitive development and individual difference*. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Butler, J. 1990. *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. London: Routledge.
- Carrigan, T. Connell B. & Lee L. 1987. Towards a new Sociology of masculinity, In H. Brod (eds). *The making of masculinities: The new men's studies*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Connell, R. W. 1987. *Gender and power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Connell, R. W. 1995. *Masculinities*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Curry, T. J. P. Arriagada, and B. Cornwell. 2002. Images of sport in popular non sport magazines: Power and performance versus pleasure and participation. *Sociological Perspectives* 45: 397-413.
- Davies, B. 1989. *Frogs, snails and feminist tales*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Davies, B. 1993. *Shards of glass: Children reading and writing beyond gendered identities*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Davies, B. and Kasama, H. 2004. *Gender in Japanese preschools: frogs and snails and feminist tales in Japan*. London: Hampton.
- Davies, B. and C. Banks. 1992. The gender trap: A feminist post-structuralist analysis of primary school children's talk about gender. *Curriculum Studies* 24: 1-25.
- Fine, C. 2010. *Delusions of gender: How our minds, society, and neurosexism create difference*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Foucault, Michel (1975). *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, New York: Random House.
- Francis, B. 1998. *Power plays: Primary school children's constructions of gender, power, and adult work*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.
- Frawley T. (2008). Gender schema and prejudicial recall: how children misremember, fabricate, and distort gendered picture book information. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education* 22: 291–303.
- Frosh, S. Phoenix, A. & Pattman, R. 2002. *Young masculinities: Understanding boys in contemporary society*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave.
- Grieshaber, S. 2004. *Rethinking parent and child conflict*. New York: Routledge.
- Kitzinger, J. 1994. The Methodology of focus groups: The importance of interaction between research participants. *Sociology of Health* 16: 103-21.
- Kostas, M. 2014. *Gender discourses and identities in the curriculum and classrooms of Hellenic primary schools*. PhD diss., UCL Institute of Education.
- Lankshear, A. J. 1993. The use of focus groups in a study of attitudes to student nurse assessment. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 18: 1986-89.
- Lemish, D. 1998. Spice girls' talk: A case study in the development of gendered identity. In *millennium girls: Today's girls around the world*, ed. Inness, S. A., 145-67. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.



- Lieberman, M. K. 1972. Some day my prince will come: Female acculturation through the fairy tale. *College English* 34: 383-395
- Nhundu T. J. 2007. Mitigating gender-typed occupational preferences of Zimbabwean primary school children: the use of biographical sketches and portrayals of female role models. *Sex Role* 56: 639–649.
- Paechter, C. 2006. Masculine femininities/feminine masculinities: power, identities and gender. *Gender and Education* 18: 253-263.
- Paechter, C. 2012. Tomboys and girly-girls: embodied femininities in primary schools. *Discourse* 31(2): 221-235
- Paechter, C. 2012. Bodies, identities and performances: Reconfiguring the language of gender and schooling. *Gender and Education* 24: 229-241.
- Parsons, L. T. 2004. Ella evolving: Cinderella stories and construction of gender-appropriate behaviour. *Children's Literature in Education* 35: 135-154.
- Renold, E. 2005. Girls, boys and junior sexualities: Exploring children's gender and sexual relations in the primary school. London: Routledge.
- Rice, P. S. 2000. Gendered readings of a traditional 'feminist' folktale by sixth-grade boys and girls. *Journal of Literacy Research* 32: 211-36.
- Skelton, C., B. Carrington, M. Francis, B. Hutchings, B. Read and I. Hall. 2009. Gender 'matters' in the primary classroom: Pupils' and teachers' perspectives. *British Educational Research Journal* 35: 187-204.
- Strauss, A. 1987. *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Swain, J. 2000. 'The money's good, the fame's good, the girls are good': the role of playground football in the construction of young boys' masculinity in a junior school. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 21: 95-109.
- Thorne, B. 1993. *Gender play: Girls and boys in school*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Trautner H. M., Ruble D. N., Cyphers L., Kirsten B., Behrendt R., Hartmann P. 2005. Rigidity and flexibility of gender stereotypes in childhood: developmental or differential? *Infant Child Development* 14: 365–381.
- Trousdale, A. 1995. I'd rather be normal: A young girl's responses to "feminist" fairy tales. *The New Advocate* 8: 167-82.
- Triandafyllidou, A. 2013. *Tolerance, Pluralism and Social Cohesion: Responding to the Challenges of the 21st Century in Europe*.

- [http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/20294/ACCEPT\\_PLURALISM\\_PB\\_2011\\_07\\_Greece\\_Education.pdf?sequence=1](http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/20294/ACCEPT_PLURALISM_PB_2011_07_Greece_Education.pdf?sequence=1) Martin James [accessed May 14, 2016]
- Wasserberg (2012) "Being it no matter what anyone else think about it:" Combating Gender Bias with Non-traditional Literature in an Urban Elementary Classroom", *Networks* an online journal for teacher research, Vol. 14, issue 1, pp.1-9 retrieved from <http://journals.library.wisc.edu/index.php/networks/issue/view/48>
- Walkerdine, V. 1984. Someday my prince will come. In *Gender and generation*, ed. McRobbie, A. and Nava, M., 162-84. London: Macmillan
- Walkerdine, V. 1990. *School girl Fictions*. London: Verso.
- Wason-Ellam, L. 1997. If only I was like Barbie. *Language Arts* 74: 430-37.
- Westland, E. 1993. Cinderella in the classroom: Children's responses to gender roles in fairy-tales. *Gender & Education* 5: 237-50.
- Yeoman, E. 1999. 'How does it get into my imagination?' Elementary school children's inter-textual knowledge and gendered storylines. *Gender and Education* 11: 427-40.
- Zachou, E. 2005. Ethnic and gender identities formation among Albanian immigrant children in a primary school in Greece. MA Diss., UCL Institute of Education.
- Zipes, J. 1986. *Don't bet on the prince: Contemporary feminist fairytales in North America and England*. Aldershot, England: Gower.