

Exploring Gender Representation in Traditional and Non-traditional Fairytales



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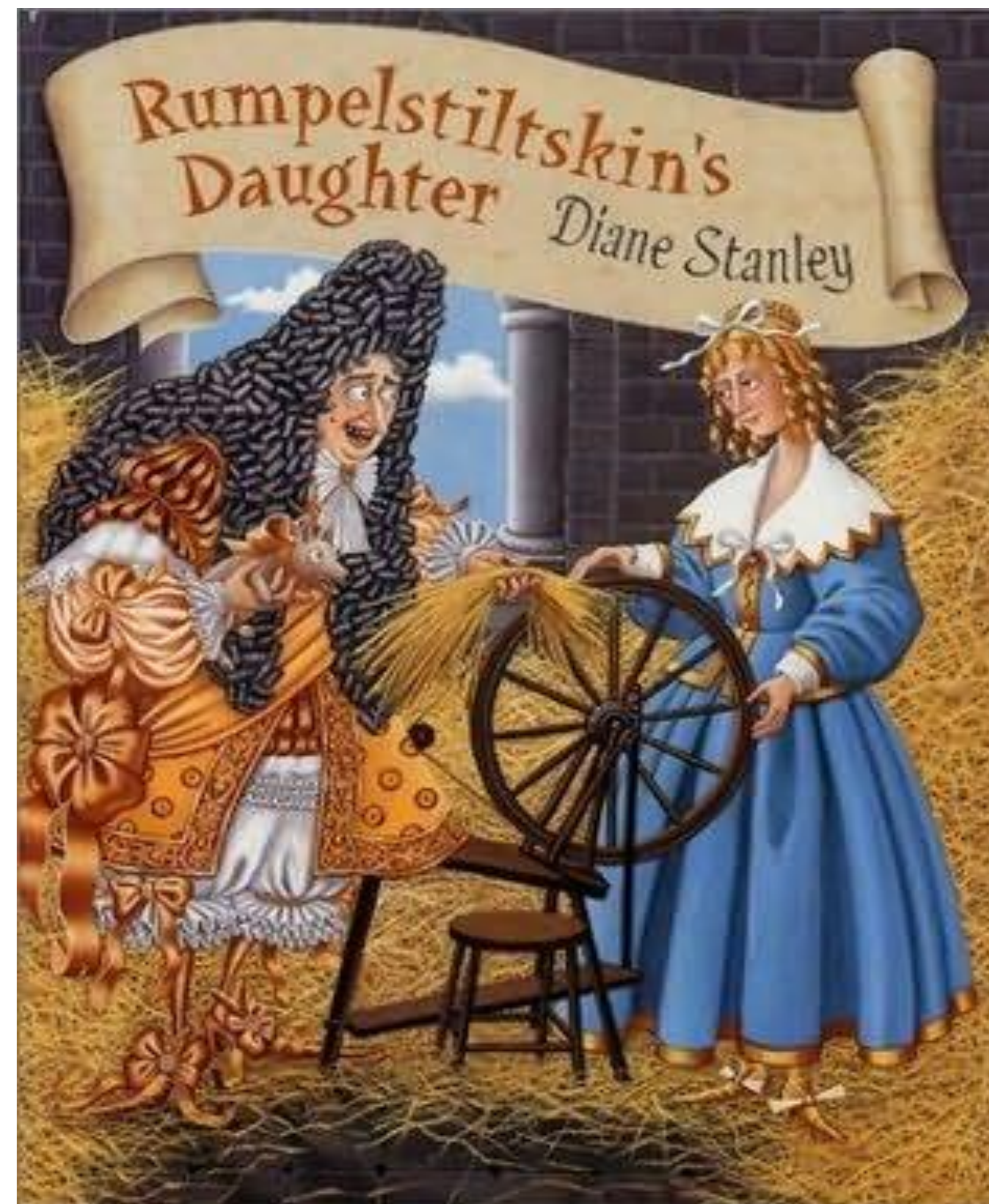
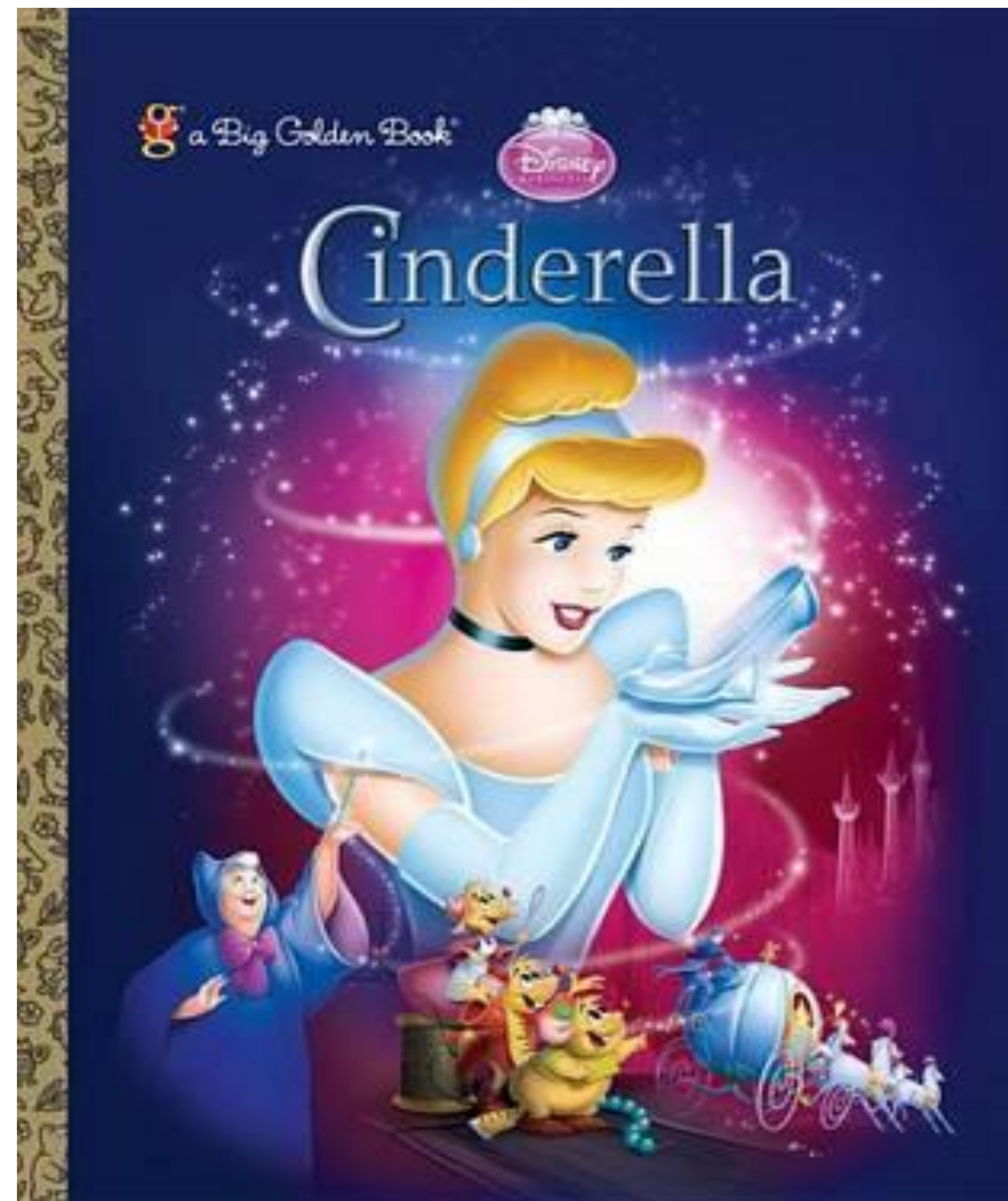
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Abstract

Recently, researchers have recognized the importance of assessing multiple domains (e.g. appearance, activities, occupation, & traits) when studying the development of gender constructs (Miller, Lurye, Zosuls, and Ruble, 2009) as well as gathering children's gender responses to traditional fairytale gender roles (Rice, 2000). The purpose of the proposed research project is to gain better understanding of stereotypical gender role impact on young learners by combining these studies to determine whether children's responses to traditional and non-traditional fairytales differ between and among boys and girls and/or across multiple domains. Introducing non-traditional text will provide female main characters that we hypothesize will challenge traditional female roles found in common fairy tales. This research project will aim to promote non-traditional fairy tales as recommended text to better serve a realistic stance on the female gender role of story book characters. As long as the word weakness has a synonym of feminine in the thesaurus, change and awareness will be of necessity.

Methods

- Around twenty students will individually read Cinderella (a traditional fairytale) and Rumpelstiltskin's Daughter (a non-traditional fairytale).
- Researchers will provide a series of open-ended questions to explore the differences between the two main characters.
- Questions will be derived from the Gender Accessibility Measure (GAM, Miller et al., 2006) that ask participants to name the qualities that female and male characters possess.
- Researchers will conduct two focus groups, one boy's and one girl's following each story, in order to gather increase understanding of how boys and girls spontaneously represent gender
- Children will be grouped by gender as theoretical predictions have proposed that boys and girls think differently about same-gender and opposite gender targets (Miller et al., 2009).



Analysis

- Gathering qualitative data utilizing grounded theory.
- Focus groups will be audio-recorded and transcribed for accuracy
- Consistent with grounded theory, both analytic induction and the constant-comparison method (Krathwol, 1998) will be utilized to analyze the data
- Open-coding to develop general categories of children's responses,
- Focused coding (Charmaz, 2006) based on domains (activities, appearance, interpersonal, biological characteristics, social roles, and traits) to analyze for syntheses and larger explanations.
- Two independent raters will code the data from verbatim transcriptions
- Inter-rater reliability will be calculated using standard reliability measures.
- Frequency across stereotype domains by gender will be counted and reported.

Progression

The researcher aims to enhance awareness of gender stereotypes while offering additional female characters in the non-traditional fairy tales that depict a more realistic view of the female gender. This study is meant to be an opportunity for children to convey their personal thoughts about certain literature and develop critical literacy skills they can apply to subsequent literature. Though researchers have no pre-conceived theories about what the results will reveal, prior research indicates that the stereotypical female has influence. The research will provide initial insight into such influence. This study also provides an initial examination or pilot study, which the student researcher hopes to refine and replicate during his two student teaching experiences in the Fall of 2013 and Spring of 2014. Finally, this study will add to the literature base regarding the impact of gender stereotypes in children's literature by examining how children represent gender in response to traditional and non-traditional fairytales, and how these representations are different or similar between and among boys and girls across stereotype domains.