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From tales of enchantment to tales of empowerment:
Finding women's voices through fairy tale narratives

by
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and Postdoctoral Studies as partial fulfillment
of a collaborative M.A degree in
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Abstract

Research suggests that fairy tales permeate society and affect subjective identity through old and new versions that serve to domesticate desire. While some researchers suggest that fairy tales have negative effects on how women construct their lives, others claim that women resist or subvert their restrictive meanings and gender roles. From a cultural studies perspective, this case study investigates the perceived impact of fairy tales on subjectivity, as well as on past and present life choices. Feminist, poststructuralist, and psychoanalytic analyses uncover how subjective identities may be produced and resisted through cultural influences like fairy tales. Thematic analysis of group discussions and written responses by mature women show that fairy tales are instrumental in forming subjective identities and influencing the life choices of participants. The findings of this study indicate that some participants perceive fairy tales to be influential in constituting the life stories that they were able to imagine, while group discussions and written responses of other participants also demonstrate possible influences of fairy tales in their lives. This research may help educators understand how this process occurs in order to create programs that effectively resist or subvert messages internalized in this way.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction & Literature Review

Once Upon a Time...

Whether long ago, yesterday, or today, the conventional framework of brief narrative stories told from a third person perspective and denuded of 'real world' content allows fairy tale¹ messages to be utilized in multiple contexts and for various purposes. From the mythic promises in fairy tale narratives with "magic [that] fulfills multiple desires"(Bacchilega, 1997, p. 5), children learn to position themselves within discursive practices that formulate the levels of 'desire, power and powerlessness' acceptable in the social surround (Davies, 1993). In this way, popular fairy tale narratives contribute to the discourses by which subjective identities are fashioned as these 'tales of enchantment' inform women that 'good girls' are always rewarded for their obedience and subservience. Rescued from lives of ignominy, drudgery, and/or abuse through marriage to a handsome young man or prince, female readers can rest assured that life will now proceed in a 'happily-ever-after' fashion.

Mature women with experience and savoir faire tend to imagine that fairy tale narratives have been replaced by more realistic ways of dealing with the world. Personal contact with women in various contexts and associations, however, has brought me to the realization that some women may still be searching for their 'prince' long past the time for youthful fancy. Feeling that I was impervious to such persuasions, I wondered why mature women might 'buy into' motifs that customarily depict women as weak, passive, self-sacrificing, or decorative. As I researched further, however, I could not easily discount the compelling power of such myths and began to wonder if there were other storylines to follow. As my questions multiplied, I wondered whether all women were constituted by fairy tale storylines or if some managed to subvert the myths as they fashioned

¹ The fairy tale belongs to folk literature and is part of the oral tradition. In its written form the fairy tale tends to be a narrative in prose about the fortunes and misfortunes of a hero or heroine who, having experienced various adventures of a more or less supernatural kind, lives happily ever after. Magic, charms, disguise and spells are some of the major ingredients of such stories, which are often subtle in their interpretation of human nature and psychology (Cuddon, 1991, p. 325).

uncommon life stories? It became apparent that the only way to resolve this quandary was through research to discover whether and how fairy tales imposed dangerous precedents and impossible goals that some women were unable or unwilling to resist. My quest uncovered a prolific array of literature and research on the subject that further attests to the ongoing fascination of fairy tale magic.

The fascination for and evolution of tales of magic came to pass because, as Bottigheimer (1987) claims, people are natural tale-tellers and simple story formats tend to develop into more elaborate models. Intrigued by the historical and social conditions that produced fairy tales, Bottigheimer analyzes the content of specific tales to explicate the "social and moral vision which Grimms' Tales presents to all its readers, youthful and mature" (p. 23). In her opinion, fairy tales provide a "simple instrument for socialization that could easily be turned to psychosocial, economic, and political purposes" (p. 21). Employing simple language to promote societal values and individual caution, literary versions of the tales became standard fare in European educational reading programs around 1850 to indoctrinate white upper-class children into socially acceptable models of behaving, thinking, and being (Bottigheimer, 1987). From this small beginning, the fairy tale industry has expanded to encompass a great variety of manifestations that include music, movies, theme parks, cruise ships, and even clothing lines. But can such tales still manage to mislead the individual into fashioning a life story in their image? And if so, how do these tales convince individuals to submerge their lives and identities within such magical mirrors?

Tannen (1990) maintains that "girls and boys grow up in different worlds of words" (p. 43). She bases this assertion upon the fact that children learn the art of speaking and conversing from family, friends, and social contexts that treat children differently based on the gender assigned at birth. Signified by sex and constrained by linguistically determined and informed expectations, children learn to self-regulate their behavior, mannerisms, and even their speech as they construct the boundaries of their subjectivity to gain acceptance within their social milieu (Tannen, 1990). Beginning with words and continuing with stories then, children learn to negotiate the expectations and limits placed upon them by family and society as they traverse their way through childhood.

And in just this way, the very words that build magical kingdoms also serve to constrain the subjectivities that can be constructed from its models. For many researchers, the subjectivities constructed from such models serve to limit the lives and world views that can be imagined. As Spender (1980) contends, the first step in seizing control of who individuals may become hinges upon changing language to reflect meanings defined and rendered positive by lived experiences "for the problem lies not in the words but in the semantic rule which governs their positive or negative connotations" (p. 29). Such changes are unlikely to occur unless the individual becomes aware of the mechanisms by which s/he has been convinced to embrace and thus live out prescribed gender models.

To understand how social subjects are produced and re-produce themselves through the reading of texts, this study endeavored to investigate the relationship between the production of subjectivities and the "specific conditions of consumption" by which subjects "read" and "mis-read" particular kinds of texts (Johnson, 1983). With the ability to remember and to use language, human subjects employ the codes and frames established by their specific cultural heritage to read, write, and speak the self and personal world-view into being. Besides constructing and limiting reality then, the rules for language production aid in understanding the world and allow individuals to organize and interact with their culture, community, and significant others (Bruner, 1986; Kerby, 1991; Spender, 1980). While words help to ascribe meaning in a world that otherwise would dissolve into the incomprehensible, language creates a whole new set of problems for the human subject for words are never value-free. Derrida (1976) suggests that language is a system of differences because concepts have no fixed meanings and thus the meaning of words that refer to spoken or written images must constantly be deferred until the specific context is understood. Hence, words acquire meaning from social institutions and from human agents who not only use socially-inscribed words but also change the meanings so ascribed through specific usage. As Weedon (1997) puts it, "language ...offers us various discursive positions, including modes of femininity and masculinity, through which we can consciously live our lives" (p. 25).

Gaining a sense of self from the language and stories heard as children, the individual so designated forms a 'Self' as those self-same words and narratives become part of the subjective identity that is maintained as an adult. Research shows that the images and gender roles found in fairy tales invite women to assume gender identities that may delimit their possible future options (Bacchilega, 1997, Barchers, 1988; Blackwell, 1987; Bottigheimer, 1987; Davies, 1989, 1993; Waelti Walters, 1979; Warner, 1994; Zipes, 1986, 1988, 1991, 1994, 1997). On the other hand, more recent research on fairy tales reveals that female participants may, in fact, utilize motifs and stereotypes in the tales to subvert traditional expectations (Comtois, 1995; Gordon, 1997; Philipp, 1995; Willoughby, 1995). Because language and texts are the primary means of gaining access to the power structures in Western culture, "ideological apparatuses" like education establish cultural actions and interactions that serve to structure the way to think about the self (Smith, 1987, p. 19). With the production of culture traditionally at the discretion of specialists situated within educational institutions, contributions from the average person in society or from marginalized groups comprised of women or minorities have seldom been given due consideration. Hence, although women's involvement in education has improved greatly over the past century, women have remained at the lower end of the educational spectrum so that the "power and authority in the educational process are [still] the prerogatives of men" (Smith, 1987, p. 29). To enhance a public education system in which accountability tends to disregard the lived experiences of students, this study aims to investigate whether "the words of marginalized people, transformed in writing, in stories, and in cultural performance...might help us consider both more complicated and more personal conceptions of critical literacy and liberation education" (Heller, 1997, p. 20).

Statement of the Problem: Why Fairy Tale Narratives and Women?

Once there were words that announced a tale of mythic promise that would beguile readers/listeners with "magic... understood as wish fulfillment: sudden riches, an advantageous marriage for an impoverished heroine or hero, or unlimited food" (Bottigheimer, 1987, p. 9). But the simple plots and happily-ever-after endings typical of fairy tales serve to conceal embedded social and moral imperatives that act as the models and goals deemed acceptable for individuals of

any age (Bottigheimer, 1987; Zipes, 1994). Portrayed as the prize to be won or the obstacle to be overcome, women seldom play an active role despite being positioned as the central characters in fairy tales (Bottigheimer, 1987; Luthi, 1976; Zipes, 1994). For some feminist researchers therefore (Blackwell, 1987; Rowe, 1979; Waelti-Walters, 1979), the genre serves to construct role models that damage representations of women in society. Dubbed "a harmful, cross-cultural, educative story...that shows women to be passive, opportunistic, and cruel" (Kramarae & Treichler, 1985. p. 149), do fairy tales serve a patriarchal agenda that convinces women to accept consummate fables about the way things will or should transpire? And with options for women in society still limited, is it possible that women continue to utilize motifs from tales of enchantment in their various formats as an escape from their less-than-ideal lived realities (Christian-Smith, 1993; Modleski, 1992; Radford, 1992; Radway, 1991)? What makes these tales so compelling that some women continue searching for their own perfect fairy tale endings well into their senior years?

Incorporating elements from recent studies (Comtois, 1995; Gordon, 1997, Philipp, 1996, Willoughby, 1995), I sought to uncover the relations that exist between women's experiences with fairy tale narratives and their perceptions of fairy tale effects on their lives. As a woman, educator, daughter, sister, parent, and friend to women of all ages, I believe that tales that enchant, but fail to deliver, can be replaced by tales that empower and actively assist as women fashion new versions of themselves.

Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions in relation to the constitutive role of fairy tale narratives in women's lives and subjectivities:

1. What do mature women say or remember about the presence of fairy tales in their early lives, and the relationship of fairy tales to their individual construction of personal life stories?
2. What meanings do women attribute to three versions of a fairy tale read/viewed in the present?
3. When given the opportunity to write themselves into a fairy tale in the present, what patterns emerge that may be said to relate to fairy tale effects in participants' lives?

Literature Review

The age-old fascination and power of the fairy tale is clearly evident from the longevity of the tales and the proliferation of literature dealing with the subject. This study sought to determine how representations of women in fairy tale narratives affect the lives of mature women in Canadian society. This requires investigating the constitutive role of fairy tale discourse/texts in socially constructing female desire and feminine gender roles in the ongoing process of self-narration by which women speak and write themselves into being. Most research on the subject tends to concede that fairy tales are a powerful ingredient in the self-narration by which children internalize norms, manners, gender roles, and desires imposed by socio-cultural frameworks (Bettelheim, 1989; Bottigheimer, 1987; Davies, 1989, 1991; Zipes, 1991, 1988, 1994, 1997). As well, few studies doubt the impact and transformative nature of fairy tales on life stories (Bettelheim, 1989; Bottigheimer, 1987; Davies, 1989, 1991; Zipes, 1997). On the other hand, only a few researchers have tackled the more difficult task of documenting this phenomenon among adult participants and those studies employed a therapeutic, problem-solving, or developmental perspective (Comtois, 1995; Gordon, 1996; Philipp, 1995; Willoughby, 1995). In addition, although research often points to the stability of motifs and plots, it seldom admits the possibility of change. Hence, my quest was to investigate how narratives like fairy tales might be disrupted or changed and whether women do this already in the process of creating a life story.

The Power of Fairy Tale Narratives

Fairy tales employ simple language and repetitive formats to forge an indelible impression upon our unconscious minds that persists whether we resist or conform to its motifs (Bacchilega, 1997; Bottigheimer, 1987; Warner, 1994; Zipes, 1997). While fairy tale narratives came from the classical tradition of myths and epic fantasies, they were designed to entertain or teach listeners in local settings using fragments of stories that spoke to the concerns and traditions of the common folk. Their appropriation within a literary format, however, provided the framework to instruct or engage a larger population of readers in the prevailing socio-cultural standards (Bacchilega, 1997; Bottigheimer, 1987; Zipes, 1997). Penned by aristocratic women to entertain the court prior to

formal publication, the literary fairy tale genre familiar to the English-speaking Western reader actually originated in the French salons during the seventeenth century. From a small collection compiled and edited by Charles Perrault in 1697, both these tales and more comprehensive series of fairy tales were published later by German writers during the 18th and 19th centuries including the series begun by the brothers Grimm in 1812 (Bottigheimer, 1987; Zipes, 1994). Written originally for adult readers, European fairy tales were refined to the point of becoming standard reading material for "schooling...upper-class children" almost two centuries ago (Zipes, 1991, p. 21). While literature from various positions and disciplines attests to our endless fascination with the genre, researchers from mythology tend to discount them as entertaining stories in which "on the way to the happy ending, typical mythological motifs occur" (Campbell, 1988, p. 168). Feminist researchers, on the other hand, often consider fairy tales to be the source of negative images, role models, and stereotypes that construct 'woman' as passive victim or adornment unable to correct her situation on her own (Waelti-Walters, 1979). If these narratives constitute the basis for subjective identity formation, do they serve to prescribe the kinds of worlds that women imagine are possible in their particular situations and set women up for misconceptions that may lead to disillusion and subjugation?

From observation of young children, Bettelheim (1989) discusses the importance of fairy tales for educating the emotions of children. In his opinion, fairy tales may be critical tools in providing children with meaning in life for the stories contain valuable lessons in forming relationships, dealing with anxieties, and providing models for behaving in the world. Bettelheim claims that fairy stories supply an entertaining and imaginative vehicle to promote healthy development of children by fostering intellectual growth, emotional clarification, and appreciation that life may be difficult but not impossible to handle. He states that fairy tales teach self-confidence through a non-threatening medium, allowing children to develop the self-efficacy needed to solve problems without negative consequences. In language and ideas geared to children's level of processing, "the fairy tale is therapeutic because the patient finds his [sic] own solutions, through contemplating what the story seems to imply about him and his inner conflicts at this moment in his

life" (p. 25). Incorporating optimism, culturally-specific characters, normalized human failings, and solvable problems (albeit by symbol and magic), fairy tales impart significant symbols and narrative structures which the mind utilizes to create meaning. Within his psychoanalytic model, Bettelheim (1989) claims the fairy tale represents a therapeutic tool that speaks to the child's unconscious while providing fantasies of comfort that sustain growth.

Although fairy tales may socialize children and support therapeutic goals, Zipes (1988) questions the claim that 'tales of enchantment' perform better than other forms of narrative in this regard. To preserve genuine interactions "between the tale and the child and between the adult and the child" (p. 61), Zipes lends his support to psychoanalytic practices that more closely align with the underlying project undertaken by Freud. Analytic theory should, therefore, endeavor to apply the dialectical method devised by Freud to account for the social and historical location of both the tales and the reader. Moreover, research should consider the emancipatory elements available within the tales "to make full use of the utopian and fantastic projections of folk and fairy tales" (Zipes, 1988, p. 72). In his opinion, therefore, research should concentrate on increasing "awareness of how fairy tales function to maintain the present arrangements, how they might be rearranged or reutilised to counter the destructive tendencies of male-dominated values" (Zipes, 1986. P. 4).

From oral tales that inspired hope for a better life, literary tales were redesigned to play a significant role in socializing and promoting Christian, capitalist, and/or bourgeois standards (Zipes, 1991). Using 'paradigmatic patterns' to impart ideology, published fairy tales assumed the function of moral imperatives to induce conformity and to sanction exclusion of those who were seen to deviate in custom, belief, or action. Aligning "women...to the potentially uncontrollable natural instincts" (p. 22), fairy tales promote beauty, kindness, obedience, silence, and charm for heroines while portraying heroes as smart, ambitious, courageous, and worldly-wise (Zipes, 1991). Deriving their fantastic power from a likeness to mythology, Zipes (1994) contends that "commodified literary fairy tales...seduce us into...scripts that may appear to be our stories but have more to do with our taming and domestication than anything else" (p. 47). By altering women's role in tales

like Rumpelstiltskin, for example, the Grimm brothers effectively deposed women from an occupation that had traditionally afforded them recognition and financial security. While feminists have recouped some of those losses (Zipes, 1994), only a new strain of fairy tales and critical investigation of the historical production of literary tales may serve to contradict and subvert the dominant paradigms of Western society (Zipes, 1991). Hence, he claims that

As children, we all hear fairy tales and read our lives into them. But we also want to see and realize our lives as virtual fairy tales even as we grow older. We never abandon fairy tales (Zipes, 1997. p. 1).

In the estimation of Zipes (1997), fairy tales occupy an important position in the formation of self-identities, permeating culture by setting and prescribing the criteria for attaining goals, desires, and happiness in life. Examining the connections between oral storytelling, fairy tales, and the passing on of culture, Zipes maintains that modern fairy tales have managed to standardize Christian and patriarchal ideals as paradigmatic models for children and adults as well. Unlike the original versions where happily-ever-after could be achieved despite one's situation in life, Zipes contends that commodification of fairy tale motifs by the 'culture industry' was intended to exploit our desire for happiness by promoting an agenda featuring mundane expectations and unrealistic role models. He maintains, however, that there are "many sites and signs of resistance inside the culture industry and on its margins" (Zipes, 1997, p. 9).

Possible Effects of Fairy Tales on Women's Lives.

While storytelling may be intrinsic to the well-being of everyone, Warner (1994) maintains that stories are especially important as women learn about the world and imagine alternatives. Despite criticism from those promoting patriarchal values as well as feminist agendas, Warner claims that fairy tales epitomize the voice of the imagination through which women may express their desires and dissatisfactions with the world. With "speechlessness as the weapon of last resort" (p. xxi), the expected happy endings often indicate a much larger story for women that gives promise of how things might change for the better (Warner, 1994). Such sentiments resonate with research on women's attraction to romance fiction through which Radway (1991) sought to

understand why women continue to devour stories that, in fact, bear some resemblance to fairy tales. Like Warner, Radway found that liking for such stories revealed participants' rebellion or independence from a life of service to family concerns, thus providing a means to cope with oppressive family situations and exemplifying female readers' desire to participate in a large, exclusively female community. Findings such as these indicate that there are multiple determinants, as well as internal contradictions, underlying women's responses to narrative which further research might begin to explicate (Radway, 1991).

In her research, Blackwell (1987) searches for the female authorial voice in fairy tales where women seem to be active agents who can assume power. Tales of this sort could "break the spell of silence for the mediating female voice, ... unite teller with the told, and ... reinstate the wise woman as a character of positive, rather than merely negative, strengths" (p. 165). Ignored in literary research and the publishing industry, 'fractured' tales that disrupt narrative motifs and paradigmatic gender roles may provide women with alternative storylines to follow. Restricted by language that serves to narrow available options, women will overcome oppressive storylines only when they learn to create personal narratives in their own words, according to Blackwell (1987).

Critical analyses of popular narratives enjoyed by women in studies by Modleski, Radway, and Radford, actively resist reifying patriarchal notions of high and low cultural forms, according to Irons (1992). Since narrative achieves popularity by appealing to our investment in 'archetypes and myths', critiques of the popular may be absolutely necessary to interrogate the world and fiction that surrounds us. Thus, critical perspectives on a genre that resembles the fairy tale (romance fiction) may serve to empower women from Radford's position, provide an antidote to phallogentric expectations as Modleski claims, or represent the anti-romance according to Fiedler (Irons, 1992).

In fact, women appear to be central to fairy tales in ways that surpass their role as readers. While Luthi (1976) wonders why the principle characters in fairy tales are female, Zipes (1994) suggests that the "majority of the writers and tellers of [oral] fairy tales were women" in the first place (p. 22). Although male figures are seldom named in popular fairy tales, however, "at the focal point in the fairy tale stands man" (Luthi, 1976, p. 137). Because the literary tales were written and

published by male authors like Anderson, Perrault, and the Grimm brothers, women's voices are seldom evident in traditional fairy tales despite the fact that published versions were often voiced by women initially. Whether fairy tales were formulated by or for women, identifying the narrative voice is crucial to analyzing the meanings and images inherent in tales that promote "radically different moral expectations for girls and boys" (Bottigheimer, 1987, p. 168). And due to their constitutive role in socializing individuals, gender-specific differences in constituting subjectivities through fairy tale narratives warrants further investigation (Bottigheimer, 1987; Zipes, 1994).

To counter the tendency within popular fairy tale narratives to offer a training manual for stereotypical female roles, Barchers (1988) searches for tales with active, take-charge females. Dissecting traditional storylines in a curriculum unit with students, Barchers demonstrates how fairy tale themes and motifs permeate all popular media. Such a unit allows students to become aware of sexism and stereotypes in other genres and mediums in order to question and begin to subvert the standard motifs (Barchers, 1988). In a similar vein, Mei (1990) questions whether tales like "Cinderella" counsel women to accept defeat. In her estimation, other readings of classic fairy tale motifs are possible and viable for the "Cinderella" tale embodies a contradiction that romanticizes women's subordination but promotes her ability to rise above difficult conditions and impossible situations. Female novelists have, therefore, "appropriated, reshaped, and ... disrupted" the pattern, rewriting myth with "a growing female self-consciousness ... of a marginal social group" (p. 30) to show how symbols can be polyphonic and readers' practices resistant, chaotic, and unconstrained by narrative structure (Mei, 1990).

In a phenomenological framework, Comtois (1995) investigates the implications and meanings adult women (25-35) attribute to fairy tales and to stereotypes of women in the tales. The findings show that fairy tales are problem-creating rather than problem-solving for women, especially when women's lives are discrepant from the ideal in the tales. Most of the participants claim that there were definitely negative effects possible from reading fairy tales to children due to the violence and gender stereotypes in the tales. Realizing that fairy tales were only one of the influences responsible for their self-perceptions and gender role definition, however, participants

state that they would still read fairy tales to their children even though the tales present ideals that may be unattainable. Although it seems that the tales may create problems for women, participants show that the fantasy elements encourage hope that problems are not insurmountable and can be resisted through discourse (Comtois, 1995).

Using a case study approach, Philipp (1995) helps uncover female participants' perceptions and memories of fairy tale themes to determine if transformative learning in an adult upgrading class can alter these views. While all twelve participants gain greater understanding of issues pertaining to themselves as women in society during the sessions, only the university educated women achieve insight into issues that pertain to women in general. Despite the pervasive influence of fairy tales on women's socialization, self-view, and perceptions of other women, Philipp finds that fairy tale themes in a consciousness-raising class facilitate transformative learning with 'sudden insight' securing the greatest effect on the women who participated in the research (1995).

Willoughby's (1995) study serves to compare how women perceived self, world, future, and preferred self before and after reconstructing a fairy tale. The women in Willoughby's research demonstrate that they had changed in at least one perceptual category after the reconstruction exercise. Emerging themes indicate that participants gained a greater appreciation for their strengths from the experience and welcomed the opportunity "to participate in self discovery and share their voice with others" (p. 129). Results such as these support a project that aims to find internal dissenting voices that resist and subvert gender stereotypes and role models (Willoughby, 1995).

In her qualitative study of women in mid-life transition, Gordon (1995) claims that participants saw themselves "as being on a journey into their own selfhood" (p. 70). Because heroes and heroines chosen by the women embodied positive characteristics needed in mid-life, the transitional phase for mature women might be enhanced by helping women understand that the qualities they admire in others may be ones that they already possess. Thus, the results of Gordon's research highlight the power of storytelling and myth in the quest for 'meaning and self-actualization', while demonstrating the generative power of reading, symbolizing, and narrativization.

It appears that women already subvert the motifs in fairy tales but are unconscious of the potential of this symbolizing activity (Gordon, 1995).

This review of the literature on fairy tales and the effects of fairy tales on women's lives reveals three important points. Fairy tales provide narrative models to assist the individual in working through developmental issues (Bettelheim, 1989) and in forming a subjective identity (Bottigheimer, 1987; Zipes, 1988). However, while fairy tales reproduce discourses that are constraining (Bacchilega, 1997; Barchers, 1988; Blackwell, 1987; Bottigheimer, 1987; Warner, 1994; Zipes, 1988), fairy tale narratives exert a deep and ongoing fascination over readers of all ages that cannot fail to have some kind of positive or negative influence on the lived narratives that can be imagined (Bacchilega, 1997; Barchers, 1988; Bettelheim, 1989; Blackwell, 1987; Bottigheimer, 1987; Warner, 1994; Zipes, 1988).

Constituting the Self through Language and Stories

Theorists like Bruner (1987) and Kerby (1991) argue that we develop our sense of having a unique self and construct that self from the narratives or stories intrinsic to our social, historical, and cultural situations. Thus, the prevailing cultural ideology composed of embedded social messages and mental structures provides a framework that organizes and gives meaning to the multitude of data constantly being received by our senses. From language and codes that precede our entry into socially-constructed narrative structures (Weedon, 1987), we begin to construct our personal narrative or 'story' of who we take ourselves to be (Bruner, 1987; Kerby, 1991). While our stories seldom correspond exactly to happenings in our lives, they represent our personal interpretations, internalizations or self-fulfilling prophecies about the stories we should, could, or would live (White & Epston, 1990). And, as Zipes (1997), Bottigheimer (1987), and Bacchilega (1997) indicate, these prevailing narratives by which we speak and write the 'Self' into being appear to embody elements of the classic 'fairy tale' narrative.

For Maxine Greene (1994), it is through acquiring language that “we begin transmuting perceived shapes and presences into symbolic forms, we become participants in that world” (p. 17). Access to language provides the means to interpret experience through symbols or signs whose meanings have been “made available by the culture for making sense of things and other human beings, for defining our situations as we live” (p. 17). As we internalize constructed meanings therefore, they acquire the appearance of having always existed, of being “objective characteristics of an objectively existent world” (p. 18). Acquiring language allows women to read and respond to “the power of imaginative literature” so that they can “assume new standpoints on what they take for granted...see them, not as givens, but as constituted by human beings and changeable by human beings” (p. 24). Greene states that education must continue “to transform teaching practice, to revise teaching materials, and to invent new approaches” to bring about emancipatory reflection upon literature to illuminate “the world women live” (p. 24). In this way, women may begin to resist the power of dominant paradigms by which they socially construct themselves along the lines of essential femininity (Greene, 1994).

Creating stories about experiences facilitates “a sense of continuity and meaning...[that] is relied upon for the ordering of daily lives and for the interpretation of further experiences,” according to White and Epston (1990, p. 10). In fact, according to Bruner (1987), we literally become the stories that we create “for language constructs what it narrates, not only semantically but also pragmatically and stylistically” (p. 17). Like Bruner (1987, 1990), White and Epston (1990) contend that narrative serves an organizing function that lends meaning to life itself. Reading and writing of texts aids individual interpretation and revision of problems encountered in daily life. Thus, narration helps uncover alternative solutions/stories as the individual actively participates “in the shaping of lives and relationships” (p. 13). Reconstructing personal narratives “promotes the formalization, legitimation, and continuity of local popular knowledges, the independent authority of persons, and the creation of a context for the emergence of new discoveries and possibilities” (White & Epston, 1990, p. 35).

According to Davies and Harre (2000), the discursive production of multiple selves involves

four specific processes² that arise as the individual develops “a theory of the self” understood to be “historically continuous and unitary” (p. 2). In the interest of replacing the problematic “concept of role in developing a social psychology of selfhood”, Davis and Harre (2000) claim that it is through conversation that individuals adopt ‘positions’ that represent the various and often contradictory ‘selves’ produced through discursive practices (p. 1). Consequently, individuals assume positions within narrative discourses in accord with the social expectations or roles embedded in the interaction, their particular historical background and expectations of life, and the peculiar combinations of these factors that arise within the interaction itself. Thus, “the constitutive force of discursive practices” rests in the ability to offer individual subjective positions (p.2). In this way, each individual is afforded the means to negotiate new positions as s/he collaboratively creates the ‘self’ and other selves anew in each conversation (Davies & Harre, 2000).

In a writing workshop for women in the Tenderloin area of San Francisco, Heller (1997) discovered that the “underlying principles of liberation education and critical literacy” (p. 16) functioned in a manner that surpassed hypothetical prediction. Heller (1997) gained an understanding of the many benefits that may accrue to participants from practical application of theoretical concepts in a setting where marginalized women, who seldom have power over life circumstances, were accorded a modicum of control. In this workshop, participants wrote and shared life stories that precipitated “mirror stories” while “boosting identity and self-esteem, raising consciousness and political awareness, sharing information and resources, building an internal community, building skills as writers...and supporting each other to take action in the world” (p. 17). Through discourse, participants from an impoverished area of a large city learned to position themselves as valuable members of the community and worthy of being celebrated by others. Such

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1. Learning of the categories which include some people and exclude others, e.g. male/female, father/daughter; 2. Participating in various discursive practices through which meanings are allocated to those categories. These include the story lines through which different subject positions are elaborated; 3. Positioning of oneself in terms of the categories and story lines. This involves imaginatively positioning oneself as if one belongs in one category and not in the other (e.g. as girl and not boy, or good girl and not bad girl); 4. Recognition of oneself as having the characteristics that locate oneself as a member of various sub classes of dichotomous categories and not of others (Davies and Harre, 2000. p. 2)

validation led some participants to acquire "more explicitly social, political, and educational" achievements (Heller, 1997. p. 18).

Language, Power and Subjectivity in Learning

The acquisition of language affects the stories about who and what we can become, providing the material to create meaning from unconscious associations. Deriving both our sense of self and concept of meanings from the language and the stories that we hear in the first place (Bruner, 1986; Kerby, 1991; Spender, 1980; Tannen, 1996), our exposure to fairy tale narratives as children affects the meanings derived and the subjective identity formed (Bacchilega, 1997; Bettelheim, 1989; Bottigheimer, 1987; Warner, 1994; Zipes, 1997). Providing the means to socialize and educate the individual according to codes that carry socially sanctioned, common-sense meanings (Bacchilega, 1997; Bottigheimer, 1987; Warner, 1994; Zipes, 1997), the latent content of fairy tales has been accused of promoting stereotyped feminine gender roles, impossible standards, and negative images of women that prescribe the kinds of worlds that can be imagined (Bottigheimer, 1987; Waelti-Walters, 1979; Zipes, 1997).

Before entering the formal educational system at the age of 5 or 6, we have already developed unconscious associations that filter awareness and determine what we will attend to in the perceptual sphere (Goleman, 1985). Hence, many of our normal routines and reactions may be directed by schemas and learned sequences incorporated into our unconscious minds. Studying the psycho-social construction of reality, Goleman presents theoretical and actual data to illustrate the benefits and dangers of self-deceit, for he believes like "Elie Wiesel ... [that] only the bringing into awareness of the painful past can inoculate against its repetition" (Goleman, 1985, p. 244). Like Goleman (1985), I feel that if we can understand the stories "that frame our experience, we [may be] a bit freer to expand our margins" (p. 25).

As de Lauretis (1984) claims, subjectivity cannot be a position that remains static in the face of changing ideas, values, or external events. The ongoing processing of individual 'experience' is a function of the subjective interaction of the individual with the "practices, discourses, and

institutions that lend significance (value, meaning, and affect) to the events of the world" (p. 159).

In her opinion, women are always 'becoming woman' through political, theoretical and self-analytical practices that serve to signify women's social existence and historical experience—through semiotic and cultural codes produced by women themselves (de Lauretis, 1984).

Cognitive psychology may have lost its 'mind' and meaning-making direction through its pursuit of the information processing model of human intelligence, according to Bruner (1990). Unable to deal with ambiguity or metaphor, such a model ignores the fact that the "symbolic systems that individuals used in constructing meaning were systems that were already in place, already 'there', deeply entrenched in culture and language" (p. 11). Because culture determines the symbolic importance and meaning assigned to human behavior while language use and acquisition are linked intrinsically to culture, it is through language that meaning is shared and rendered of consequence within that culture. Therefore, Bruner (1990) claims that "it is culture and the search for meaning that is the shaping hand, biology that is the constraint, and ... culture even has it in its power to loosen that constraint" (p. 23). As Bruner (1996) claims, the ability to narrate experience is necessary not only to acquire knowledge of the world but also to understand and respond to "human desires, intentions, beliefs, and conflicts" (p. 177). Thus, research on intersubjectivity reveals that the process of learning to 'read other minds' continues over the lifetime of the individual. Along with other areas of research into 'theories of mind,' 'metacognition,' and 'collaborative learning,' Bruner (1996) proposes that folk pedagogy must consider how "subjectively held beliefs are turned into viable theories about the world and its facts" (p. 60). Through intersubjective conventions, commonly known facts are held to be true or fact "independent of individual belief" (p. 60). In addition, pedagogy must also provide a link between intersubjective knowledge and culture or "reliable knowledge from the past" to formulate "a more integrated theory of teaching-and-learning" (Bruner, 1996, p. 65).

Summary of the Literature

To summarize the literature reviewed in this section, I have prepared Table 1 (Summary of Themes in the Literature) in which I present findings from the research on the effects of language, narrative, and fairy tales on individual development. Researchers within Group A generally agree that narratives or stories serve to construct the inner realities of individuals and have an impact on their life stories and subjectivities. Researchers within Group B agree that multi-faceted subjective identities are not only spoken into existence through narrative forms, but that dominant paradigms can be resisted through analysis and interpretation. Researchers from Group C suggest that fairy tale narratives play an important role in the creation of lived narratives and subjectivities, thus that they impact individual life stories. And, while some researchers like Rowe (1979) and Waelti Walters (1979) from Group D believe that fairy tales have few redeemable qualities, other fairy tale researchers feel that the messages in the tales can be changed and may have transformative properties (Groups E, F, G). In addition, theorists placed in Group E and F tend to suggest that fairy tales can be used to subvert traditional expectations. As researchers in Group G suggest, studies that utilize fairy tales with female participants possess meta-cognitive potential in that such work can help women gain insight into their personal development and ongoing identity formation.

Table 1: Summary of Themes in the Literature.

Researchers who agree with some of the ideas:	Themes suggested in literature:
<u>Group A:</u> Bacchilega, Bettelheim, Bottigheimer, Bruner, Comtois, Davies, Davies & Harre, Gordon, Greene, Heller, Johnson, Kerby, Philipp, Spender, Tannen, Warner, White & Epston, Willoughby, Zipes <u>Group B:</u> Bruner, Davies, de Lauretis, Greene, Johnson <u>Group C:</u> Bacchilega, Bettelheim, Bottigheimer, Comtois, Davies, Philipp, Warner, Willoughby, Zipes <u>Group D:</u> Bacchilega, Barchers, Blackwell, Bottigheimer, Comtois, Davies, Kramarae & Treichler, Luthi, Philipp, Row, Waelti-Walters, Zipes <u>Group E:</u> Bacchilega, Barchers, Blackwell, Bottigheimer, Comtois, Davies, Philipp, Warner, Willoughby, Zipes <u>Group F:</u> Christian-Smith, Davies, Mei, Modleski, Radford, Radway, Warner, Zipes <u>Group G:</u> Comtois, Gordon, Philipp, Willoughby	A) Narrative/language: 1. intrinsic to ongoing construction of self and personal identities within social, cultural, and historical contexts; 2. assigns symbolic importance/meaning to human behavior; 3. use and acquisition links culture and shared meanings; 4. facilitates sense of continuity/meaning; 5. become the stories that name or define existence B) Subjective identities: 1. are created through language and limited by discourses; 2. are multifaceted and contradictory ; 3. can resist power of dominant paradigms through analysis of discourses C) Fairy tale narratives: 1. impact upon and transform life stories; 2. instruct readers in prevailing socio-cultural standards; 3. speak to the unconscious, supply fantasies that sustain growth; 4. influence formation of self-identities, permeate culture; 5. can be analyzed to change their effects on lived narratives; 6 feature themes, motifs that permeate all media D) Negative influences of fairy tales for women: 1. promote patriarchal role models and stereotypes; 2. women named but man occupies central position in tales; 3. construct woman as passive victim; 4. set impossible standards and create negative images of women; 5. women diminished by narrative refusal to accept female autonomy as normal E) Research on fairy tales posits: 1. awareness of sexism/stereotypes helps to question/subvert motifs; 2. disrupting narrative motifs/gender roles allows alternative storylines; 3. personal narratives in own words overcome oppressive storylines; 4. identifying narrative voice may uncover meanings/images in tales; 5. stereotypes and personal limitations can be overcome through work with fairy tales F) Research on fairy tales/romance fiction suggests: 1. multiple readings are possible/viable; 2. expected happy endings show how things can change for the better; 3. emancipatory elements are available within the tales/romance fiction; 4. elements in the tales can be used to subvert traditional expectations G) Recent research on fairy tales finds: 1. other influences impact upon self-perception and gender role definition; 2. fairy tales create problems for women whose lives differ from ideal; 3. creative power of reading, symbolizing, and narrativization is evident; 5. participants gain understanding of their position as women in society, fantasy elements encourage hope; 6. fairy tales can facilitate transformative learning, self discovery

When I began this project, I was not aware of the wealth of literature available or of the sheer fascination for the topic of fairy tales. Positioning myself as a pragmatist, I had little respect for the lack of realism and limited freedom available in fairy tale formats. After reviewing the literature, however, I could not help but wonder at the myriad of fairy tale motifs that I noticed in popular culture at every turn—from music to literature and even advertising slogans. I began to realize that fairy tale influences were not only prevalent in multiple forms within the social fabric but also that they had become so natural and numerous that they were difficult to recognize or separate from the verbal array. Thus, my questions continued to proliferate and I found that mentioning my topic never failed to generate speculation and interest from other people. While the research on fairy tales continues to speculate on the part they play in subjective identity formation, researchers seldom doubt their constitutive role in influencing individuals according to mythical concepts and motifs that are never obvious (Zipes, 1994). If the fairy tale seduces as Bacchilega (1997) claims, then how does it achieve this and 'whose desire' does it represent? To explore the connection between narrative and desire in order to re-read fairy tales from a different perspective, it may be necessary to analyze them to change the effects they have on our lives (Bacchilega, 1997).

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical Framework, Methodology, & Analysis of the Study

Theoretical FrameworkQualitative Methodology in a Cultural Studies Framework

Research from a qualitative perspective often follows an idiographic approach in which inductive reasoning proceeds from the individual to the general, although nomothetic elements that deal with abstract, universal, or general ideas may be used in the development of models to explain the data extracted (Alasuutari, 1995). In qualitative analysis, moreover, the researcher is not concerned with statistical relationships but concentrates on organizing and clarifying the observations in order to interpret the findings according to the theoretical perspectives employed. Hence, the two phases of qualitative research, the production of observations and the interpretation of the findings, depend upon the theoretical framework that directs the inquiry (Alasuutari, 1995). To study subjective identity formation and the perceived impact of fairy tales upon the life stories of mature women then, qualitative methodologies are not only appropriate but also necessary because the "strength of qualitative research is the depth of data generated" (Kreps, Herndon, & Arneson, 1993, p. 8.). Therefore, employing this methodology to research the impact of fairy tales may help to understand "the type and parameters of influence" that the genre has on the individual in the process of "organizing meaning" (Comtois, 1995, pp. 65-66).

The theoretical framework for this study derives from a cultural studies (CS) perspective, while the data collection methodology emanates from what Alasuutari (1995) terms "collective subjectivity - that is, a way of life or outlook adopted by a community or a social class" (p. 25). Hence, this research was designed to study women from a particular group within society and, moreover, to do so within a bounded system that exemplifies case study methodology. Drawing on the experiences of mature women from a particular seniors' centre, this case study attempts to discover the role played by fairy tale narratives in the subjective identity formation of this particular group of female participants and the effects of symbolizing experiences on identity positionings. According to Creswell (1998), a "bounded system is bounded by time and place, and it is the case

being studied—a program, an event, an activity, or individuals” (p. 61). The case consists of a single program, the research study itself, in a within-site study informed by multiple sources of data. The data includes transcribed audio-tapes of group sessions and several types of written responses from participants.

Qualitative research attempts to derive meanings that arise as the individual subject negotiates her/his way through the everyday world of language, perceptions, and experiences that are "socially construed through and through" (Alasuutari, 1995, p. 27). Meanings and theories about meanings tend to proceed from the research itself, therefore, developing and changing over the course of the study as data is collected and analyzed. Hence, the methods used and the questions that direct the inquiry are designed to be flexible and open-ended in preparation for, and expectation of, possible surprises or changes in direction that may occur in the course of conducting the study. With questions of interest from personal assumptions, supported by the literature reviewed, that fairy tales play a role in constituting women's lives and subjective identities, I began this study with no hard and fast hypothesis to prove or preconceived list of questions and codes to search for in the data. For this reason, I conducted open-ended discussions during group sessions, while the response sheets (see Appendix 5) and fairy tale rewrite sheet (see Appendix 6) were provided simply as guidelines for participants to follow. Each woman could choose, therefore, to respond to a question, fairy tale, element of the fairy tales read, or style of fairy tale to write according to her own wishes. Thus, I attempted to make the research process a collaborative effort by involving the participants in the decision-making process within the confines of the study as it was designed. Eschewing normative theory, research from a CS perspective attempts "to study the social construction of desires and the cultural background of normative rules" (p. 33). Meaning may be ascribed to the findings of CS research, therefore, but will not be considered "self-evident meanings, interpretations and identities" that apply in all similar situations (Alasuutari, 1995, p. 37).

Feminist Poststructuralism to Transcend the Tales

Weedon (1987) conceptualizes feminism as a politics that aims to transform the power relations inherent in the patriarchal structure of society. Because the importance of women in

society is derived from male norms, women's concerns seldom receive priority unless there is a direct effect on male interests. To counter patriarchal claims that women are 'naturally' equipped to perform social functions because they are women, feminism needs "a theory of subjectivity, of conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions" to explain the mechanics of oppression (p. 3). With societal expectations in place prior to birth, children learn to conform to socially-determined norms as they negotiate the contradictory and conflicting messages about who and what they may become. Poststructuralism focuses on "the theory of language, subjectivity and power for knowledge production" while providing a "useful, productive framework for understanding the mechanisms of power in our society and the possibilities of change" (p. 10). Drawing from diverse theorists, feminist poststructuralism (FPS) suggests that history, language, meaning, and subjectivity, as well as questions particular to feminism and the analysis of discourse, are crucial in understanding and changing the situations of women in society.

Since language provides the boundaries for constructing subjectivities that can never be "unified nor fixed" (Weedon, 1987, p. 21), subjectivities and meanings can only be determined by the social and institutional context of the text. FPS must therefore consider context if it hopes to uncover the power inherent in language and texts. Counting objectivity an illusion that neglects the subjective components of research, FPS embraces different accounts of reality and their social implications. To study the conflicting discourses that constitute us as conscious, thinking subjects, therefore, requires theories that question and subvert the established canon (Weedon, 1987). Hence, it may be possible to effect subjective changes through re-speaking and re-writing ourselves into being if language and subjectivity consist of historically and culturally situated discourses open to the influence of the prevailing discursive fields. With different political interests constantly competing for status and power, the individual most certainly plays an active role in negotiating what is offered within the constraints of the discourses available. FPS allows the possibility of explicating the basis for our experiences but acknowledges the difficulties inherent in attempting to change the system (Weedon, 1987).

Reading feminist tales to preschool children allowed Davies (1989) to investigate the social construction of gender through discourses that position the child as distinctively male or female. She claims that acquiring the means to speak the self into existence limits the selves that can be constructed from discourses available within individual cultural and social locations. The identities fashioned are, however, multifaceted and contradictory like the "forms of desire and of power and powerlessness" (p. 4) that permeate both language and culture. If fairy tales are organizing devices that children use to interpret their "positionings in the social world" (p. 44), Davies (1989) claims that we must devise new tales so that children can transcend the limits of the prevailing gender dichotomies.

However, recognizing and understanding what the unconscious knows and directs us to perform appears to present a considerable challenge to the conscious mind (Goleman, 1985). Thorough investigation of this problem, therefore, necessitates using different strategies to access multiple perspectives and levels of analysis in the ongoing process of speaking and writing the self into being. As Davies (1993) comments:

A poststructuralist analysis does not invent a new structure to replace the old, but provides insights into the discursive mechanisms which hold existing structures in place. Those insights allow a different relationship to structure, a recognition of it as something which is not absolute, which can be acted upon by individuals and by collectivities. While its constitutive power must be recognized, the possibility that it can also be laughed out of existence, played with, disrupted, or used to manufacture new possibilities, can also be recognized (p. 198).

Feminist poststructural analysis may provide the means to uncover the role of fairy tales in constituting the subjectivities of mature women and how those discourses can be resisted or used to transform lived narratives.

Methodology

This study uses qualitative methodology within a theoretical framework that incorporates ideas from cultural studies and feminist poststructuralism. When I refer to participants in this

section, I include the women who agreed to participate in the research, as well as the Gatekeeper and myself as researcher at times. Three versions of one popular fairytale were used in this research.

Selection of Fairytales for this Study

With a range of variables inherent in fairy tales themselves compounded by differences in the array of collections from which to choose, it is important to limit the extent of possible factors that might complicate analysis of data from four to seven participants multiplied by four pieces of writing. For this reason, I chose variations of one well-known classic fairytale throughout:

Grimms' Grimmest (1957) version of "Cinderella," called "Aschenputtel," for the traditional tale in session two, a modern, commodified movie of the tale produced by Soria, Trench, & Tennant (1998) entitled, Ever After: A Cinderella Tale, in session three, and Donoghue's (1997) alternative version of the "Cinderella" tale, "The Tale of the Shoe," in session four. Thus, while the versions of the "Cinderella" tale chosen certainly have differences in format, motifs, representations, symbols, and story structure, the basic narrative elements of the tale itself remained essentially constant.

Thus, there are similarities and differences in the three versions of the "Cinderella" tale utilized in this study. Using different versions of one tale has, I believe, rendered analysis of the data obtained from personal reflections more manageable by limiting the number of narrative variables to be considered. On the other hand, the differences found in these versions may have helped participants to recognize some of the underlying messages promoted by more popular versions while serving to indicate which versions participants had encountered in the past.

Access to Research Participants

Participation in this study was limited to adult women in the Ottawa area aged twenty-five years or older because the data I desired to investigate is embedded in stories through which women have solved problems, adapted to changing circumstances, and revised self-narratives to suit changing life situations. Previous studies focused on young or middle-aged women, with high school (or higher) education and financially stable employed or professional positions. I designed this research to study women in more marginal social positions; that is, women in less financially

secure situations, with or without high school (or higher) education, to give voice to women who are seldom studied, understood, or heard. With this in mind, I attempted to organize flexible, loosely-structured group sessions for six to eight women in several local Community Service Centres within the city of Ottawa. After contacting various service providers, it became apparent that this might prove to be a difficult, if not impossible, task. While staff members seemed enthusiastic about the project, supervisory staff within the Centres expressed concern that the research might complicate the delivery of services. In addition, few organizations had space available for such a study given the number of programs that they were already running for their clientele. An associate, who was a member of a seniors' centre in the city of Ottawa, suggested that conducting the study with a group of senior women might serve to furnish a venue for the research project.

After approaching the Director³ of her Seniors Recreation Centre,⁴ this associate⁵ informed me that there was space available and interest in a study to be carried out in the Centre. Thus, I arranged to meet with the Director who offered to provide a meeting room and time slot to conduct the study. Moreover, the Director indicated that the Centre would provide refreshments for participants as well. Following this meeting, female members of the Centre were contacted by the Gatekeeper to discover if they were willing to attend an information session for a study on the effects of fairy tales on women's lives. I continued my efforts to attract participants from other outreach community programs in the city but I was unable to organize an information session because there was no easy solution to transportation problems for participants who resided far from the Centre. Hence, five senior members of the Centre and three younger women who were not members learned of the study by word of mouth and agreed to come to the pre-session as possible participants. I decided at this point to proceed with the study providing these eight women, who had already implied an interest in participating, attended the pre-session and subsequently agreed to participate in the research.

³ The Director of the Seniors Recreation Centre will be referred to as the Director thenceforth.

⁴ The Seniors Recreation Centre (pseudonym) will be referred to as the Centre thenceforth.

⁵ This associate became the gatekeeper of the project and will be referred to as the Gatekeeper thenceforth.

The participants in this study were a more diverse group of women than I envisioned originally — from two different age groups with dissimilar socio-historical backgrounds, positions, and income levels. Although recent studies had utilized fairy tales with adult women, I wondered how this research would fare with older women. According to Thomas (1997), myths and folktales provide a useful and highly effective means to impart knowledge and insight that helps older women deal with issues related to aging. Such stories address issues in a manner that interacts on an emotional level, allowing senior women to continue to grow emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically in a healthy manner. As she states, “those who are to reach wisdom and peace, the mega-goal of age, must venture on an internal heroine’s or hero’s journey” (p. viii). Thomas (1997) collected stories about aging from many cultures to use in her practice of psychotherapy in order to help female clients explore the “tasks or pathways toward meaning and fulfillment in old age” (p. xi). These tasks include: accepting the reality of an end to life, exploring how we have lived our lives, discovering our inner natures, dealing with hidden aspects of our personalities, and integrating these tasks. From this perspective, it appears essential that older women survey their life stories and use this activity to “draw meaning and wisdom” (Thomas, 1997, p. 279).

Participants in the Study

The pre-session afforded all participants an opportunity to introduce ourselves on an individual basis and to explain why each individual had chosen to participate. In addition, I supplied historical information on fairy tales, a brief explanation of the background of the study, and specific details regarding the length and structure of the research sessions. Thus, I described what each woman would be expected to contribute, informed the women of their right to withdraw at any time, and provided an explanation of the consent form to be signed by those who agreed to participate in the study. While participants were given the option to consider their involvement in the study prior to the start of the research, all eight women agreed to participate, chose an alias, and helped choose a date for the first meeting. At the first group session, however, only seven women submitted their signed consent forms to begin the study. The aliases chosen by those who continued were as follows: Alternate, Empress, Hazel, Junie, Rosa, Sunshine, and Tzipora. The

Gatekeeper, who helped with administration and organization of the sessions, chose to call herself Agnes for the duration of the research.

Because of the range in ages of the women who agreed to participate, I decided simply to indicate participant ages as either junior female participants between 25 and 50 years of age or senior female participants over the age of 50. Based on this distinction, five participants were senior while two participants fell into the junior age range. Four of the five senior women were retired while the youngest of this group was still gainfully employed. On the other hand, the two junior women indicated that they did not work at paying jobs full time or have a career at the time of the study. These women implied that they were still raising young children. The relationship patterns of the participants were diverse as well. Two participants indicated that they were presently in married relationships (1 junior and 1 senior), two had never married but had had many relationships (1 senior and 1 junior), two were divorced and had raised children as single parents for at least part of the formative years of their children (both senior), and one senior woman claimed that she had never married or been involved in a long-term relationship.

Participants were informed that they were under no obligation to continue their participation in the research beyond the point at which they felt that it no longer met their needs. During the sessions, they were reminded that the response sheets provided a guideline only and that they could answer briefly, completely, or not at all according to their comfort level. Although only four participants completed all of the written responses, the contributions of each participant will be included and analyzed to the extent that they voluntarily participated in the research. Each participant will be introduced more fully in chapter three through discussion of the social, historical, and cultural data gleaned from their written and spoken responses. In addition, the social historical location of both the researcher and the gatekeeper will be included in order to consider more comprehensively the human factors influencing the responses garnered from participants. Written responses completed by the seven women who agreed to participate in the research were as follows: seven Brief Life Histories, six Reading Responses to the first fairy tale, four Reading Responses to the second fairy tale, five Reading Responses to the third tale, and five Fairy Tale Rewrites.

In quantitative research such figures would be alarming indeed, but in qualitative research with a case study design, analysis proceeds from the individual meanings to more general interpretations. Hence, the problem of variable data submission within cases presents a challenge that can be handled in the way that data is analyzed. I used three strategies to analyze the rich verbal and written data derived from this study. In the first place, the data were analyzed within individual cases using descriptive analysis of the socio-historical conditions for each participant and considering patterns of responses applicable to individual cases. In this type of analysis, I asked how the social historical conditions might have set the stage for later life choices and whether or not exposure to (or lack of exposure to) fairy tales might have influenced these choices. This was followed by a cross-case analysis performed, for the most part, on the four cases in which all responses were completed, although responses from other participants were included when supplied by the remaining participants. Analysis in this section consisted of comparing the socio-historical factors across cases and considering how early life experiences that were sometimes similar but also widely disparate were used by participants to produce lived narratives and to form subjective identities. Finally, the data were analyzed for patterns of responses in relation to the Personal Positions taken by participants as compared to their personal Contexts and to their personal Responses to the fairy tales read/viewed in the sessions and fairy tale discourses in general. Here too I considered how personal positions and responses articulated by participants were used to explain or illuminate aspects of their individual identities or lived narratives.

Group Sessions & Session Outlines

To set the mood for the level of disclosure desired, each session began with a check-in in which participants mentioned any concerns about the research or simply talked about their personal situations, plans, or ideas. This was followed by informal discussion of the preceding session and/or fairytale read in that session, if indeed a fairytale was read. The pre-session helped to set the tone for the formal research sessions as an informal gathering to learn from each other as we began the process with self-introductions followed by sharing experiences and personal points of view. In the pre-session as well, I explained the ethical concerns (see Appendix 1), collected signed consent

forms (see Appendix 2), and outlined the expectations to which participants would agree by committing to continue the project. Further session dates were arranged as participants helped themselves to refreshments provided by the Centre.

After the brief check-in, session one introduced participants to the rationale and procedures involved in the research. During this session, standard fairy tale formats and motifs were presented to participants followed by discussion of representations, symbols, and story structures inherent in and occasioned by fairy tale narratives. Informal discussion during the session led participants to consider their initial engagement with fairy tales that occasioned interesting comments, insights, and stories. To determine the historical conditions of the participants' initial engagement with fairy tales, each participant was then asked to complete a brief life history writing exercise in session one (see Appendix 3). This information provided background data for discursive analysis of the participants' engagement with fairytales both in the past and from the research sessions.

Sessions two, three, and four followed a similar format but included reading or viewing three versions of one fairy tale. Grimms' (1957) version of the "Cinderella" tale, called "Aschenputtel", was read in session two with participants sharing both the reading and their insights or reactions to the fairy tale material presented earlier, and to the fairy tale itself. In session three, we viewed the commodified fairy tale video, Ever After (Soria, Trench, & Tennant, 1998), but the length of the video precluded discussion of representations, symbols, and story structures in this version of the "Cinderella" tale until the following week. During session four, an alternative version of the Cinderella story, The Tale of the Shoe by Donoghue (1997) was read and discussed in comparison to the two previous tales. Group discussions centered on the elements and stereotypes in the tales, as well as on personal responses to the versions of the tale used in the research. Intrinsic to the discussions was the question of what, in fact, makes fairy tales so compelling. Finally, participants were asked to write and reflect on insights gained in the session (see Reading Response Sheets, Appendix 5). Each two hour session included a 15 minute break with refreshments provided by the Centre. To assist participants in writing and reflecting, they were each given copies of the Reading Response Sheets to record insights gained in the reading or group

discussion, and to include their perceptions of how fairy tale narratives may have influenced their life choices (see Appendix 5).

The final session featured a discussion period followed by an explanation of the fairy tale re-write sheets provided to participants (see Appendix 6). To complete the research project, participants composed their own personal fairy tale using story structures, representations, and symbols from the tales read or viewed previously and incorporating elements of their own lives as the basis of the storyline. In addition, participants were asked to complete a brief checklist to evaluate the workshop and to comment on any perceived changes in their attitudes or sense of empowerment (see Appendix 7). As well, participants were invited to include personal evaluations and comments on the organization and delivery of the study to inform the design of future studies of this type.

Data for the Study

The primary data for this research project consisted of written responses, beginning with a Brief Life History (see Appendix 3) completed by each participant to assess the social and historical conditions of their initial engagement with fairy tales as children. Modeled after a similar form (Philipp, 1995), I revised the question and answer format, grouping questions by theme (i.e. home, family, education, etc.) to elicit answers in a narrative style and to provide participants the choice of answering only questions that were of importance to them. In addition to details of family and social influences during their early years, the instrument included questions relating to each woman's engagement with fantasy and make-believe, childhood activities, and fairy tales heard or read to them in childhood. For convenience, participants were invited to answer on the form itself (Appendix 3.) The Reading Response sheets (see Appendix 5) used in sessions two to four were designed to encourage narrative statements in regards to participants' perceptions of the fairy tales read/viewed in these sessions. Participants were asked to comment on the elements or motifs used in the tale, their feelings or reactions to the tale, and their opinions as to whether tales like this may have influenced their life stories or choices. In the final session, the Fairy Tale Re-Write response

sheets (see Appendix 7) reviewed the format of fairy tales and provided space to write their reconstructed fairy tale.

It was my intention to devote sufficient time for participants to complete their written responses during each session and this did occur for the brief life history during session one. However, in session two, it became apparent that two-hour sessions did not allow sufficient time for a check-in, discussion of last week's material, fairy tale reading and further discussion, as well as completion of written responses. After discussing the problem, participants opted to complete all subsequent responses at home rather than forego any elements of the planned sessions. When the movie was viewed in week three, the length of the video required that we forego all discussion except for a brief exchange when we paused for a refreshment break. Even so, the session lasted longer than the two hours allotted. Fortunately, all participants present were able to finish watching the video that day. Attendance at the sessions was fairly constant with four participants able to attend all five sessions and the pre-session, while three participants missed one or two sessions due to other commitments. The implications of participant attendance at the sessions will be discussed more fully later.

Four of the sessions were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Because the length of the video precluded discussion during session three, the session did not warrant being audiotaped. Sessions were audiotaped to capture the data from discussions before and after reading the fairy tales. These data will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Analysis of the study

Integral to analysis of the codes and frames people use in building and articulating their world views, according to Johnson (1983), are the tools used to uncover the collective set of attitudes, values, or basic beliefs within which the conditions of production, circulation and consumption of cultural products are constituted. "Discursive analysis exposes these structures and locates the discourse within wider historical, cultural and social relations" (Sardar & Van Loon, 1997, p. 14). 'Text-based studies' delve into the structures of narrative to examine discourse,

elementary forms of cultural theory, and the “subjective and cultural forms which it realises and makes available” (Johnson, 1983, p. 58). Discourse analysis of reading/writing attempts to understand the way that texts intersect with readers' subjectivities in the “discursive self-production of subjects, especially in the form of histories and memories” (Johnson, 1983, p. 70).

In a case study approach, analysis begins by “making a detailed description of the case and its setting” (Creswell, 1998, p. 153). From this material, the researcher proceeds with ‘categorical aggregation’ that entails a search for meanings relevant to the issue in question from the descriptive data. These meanings or categories are then collapsed into 5 or 6 corresponding themes or patterns of response. The researcher can then investigate one example from which to derive meanings rather than considering multiple sources, a process called ‘direct interpretation’. In effect, this entails “a process of pulling the data apart and putting them back together in more meaningful ways” (p. 154). Finally, the themes or patterns are discussed in regard to general trends (if any) and/or compared/contrasted to theories or literature on the phenomenon.

Analysis Procedures

To analyze data obtained from this study, I began by reading over transcribed interactions and written responses received from the participants, jotting notes in the margins, and considering how best to reduce the data to a manageable level. After struggling to code data by hand, it occurred to me that computer analysis might help organize and reduce the data to a manageable level because the data had already been transcribed into a word processing program and could easily be transferred to such a program. HyperResearch 2.00 (HR) is a relatively uncomplicated Hypercard-based Macintosh/PC program that allows coded data to be organized, stored, retrieved, and analyzed in computer files. The HR program allows data to be entered as ‘text only’ files directly from a word processing program like Microsoft Word, after which the user can encode (or categorize) data for analysis using codes that have been created either before or during analysis. In HR, source files refer to text or media files from the particular study, a case is a unit of analysis determined by the researcher, and codes are the names given to selected fragments of data. As well, annotations that represent reflections on the segment or explications of the reason for including the text in the

category can be entered. Thus, HR provides a method for locating, counting, and retrieving coded data, listing each coded entry by case, code, frequency, type of source file, reference (numerical reference in the source file), and the name of the source file. The program offers code mapping and code selection functions and reports can be generated by case or by code.

According to Kelle (1997), computer programs that code and retrieve research data serve as an aid in the analysis process, operating as an index-creating program that organizes data and retrieves certain portions for further analysis and comparison. With such a program, data can be compared across cases since the researcher can “retrieve all text segments that follow each other in a certain sequence” (p. 3). Researchers may begin with preconceived codes or build categories by scanning and marking the words of participants using ‘common-sense knowledge’ or ‘in vivo codes’ to code the material. Thus, the researcher begins “to construct ‘meaningful patterns of facts’ by looking for structures in the data” (p. 7), structuring the data into ‘common-sense’ or theoretical codes and then comparing text passages systematically. The use of computer programs in qualitative analysis may form “the building blocks of an emerging theory” or provide “an intelligent archiving (‘code-and-retrieve’) system” in which the researcher performs the final analysis (Kelle, 1997, p. 7).

A crucial element of analysis is the framework upon which coding is built for the relevant data. I coded participant responses according to my personal impressions about ideas articulated by participants and then reduced or revised the codes as I continued to review the data. Many of the categories refer to personal positions (Positions) taken by participants which emerged from the individual written responses of participants, and from verbal interactions during group sessions. By Personal Positions, I mean expressions of belief or action enacted by the participants through language responses to the fairy tales. Positions were coded under a general category that I called PP: Personal Positions with subcategories coded as: Fantasy/Illusions, Contradictions, Disenchantment, Domination, Doubt, Enthusiasm, Fairy Tale/Life Story Parallels, Fairy Tale/Stories/Fantasy, Initiative/Choices, Insecurity, Insight/Reflexivity, Life Expectations. Some of these codes were also used to analyze themes under the general category that I called Fairy Tale

Discourses (Discourses), especially data coded as Fairy Tale/Life Story Parallels and Fairy Tales/Stories/Fantasy. Definitions of all codes can be found in Appendix 8: Definitions of Terms and Codes and they are functionally utilized in the analysis and interpretation of participant responses found in Chapter 5. To provide a means of referencing the articulations of participants, I coded the data according to the type of data furnished and to show where the quotation originated. Thus, BLH stands for brief life histories, FTRR for fairy tale reading responses, GDR for group discussion responses, FTRW for fairy tale re-writes, and ER for final evaluation responses. As well, four codes refer to social, historical, and cultural factors (Contexts) that affected the lived realities of the women who participated, which I coded as Family, Home, & Childhood, Education & Training, Models & Relationships, and Society, Culture, & Religion.

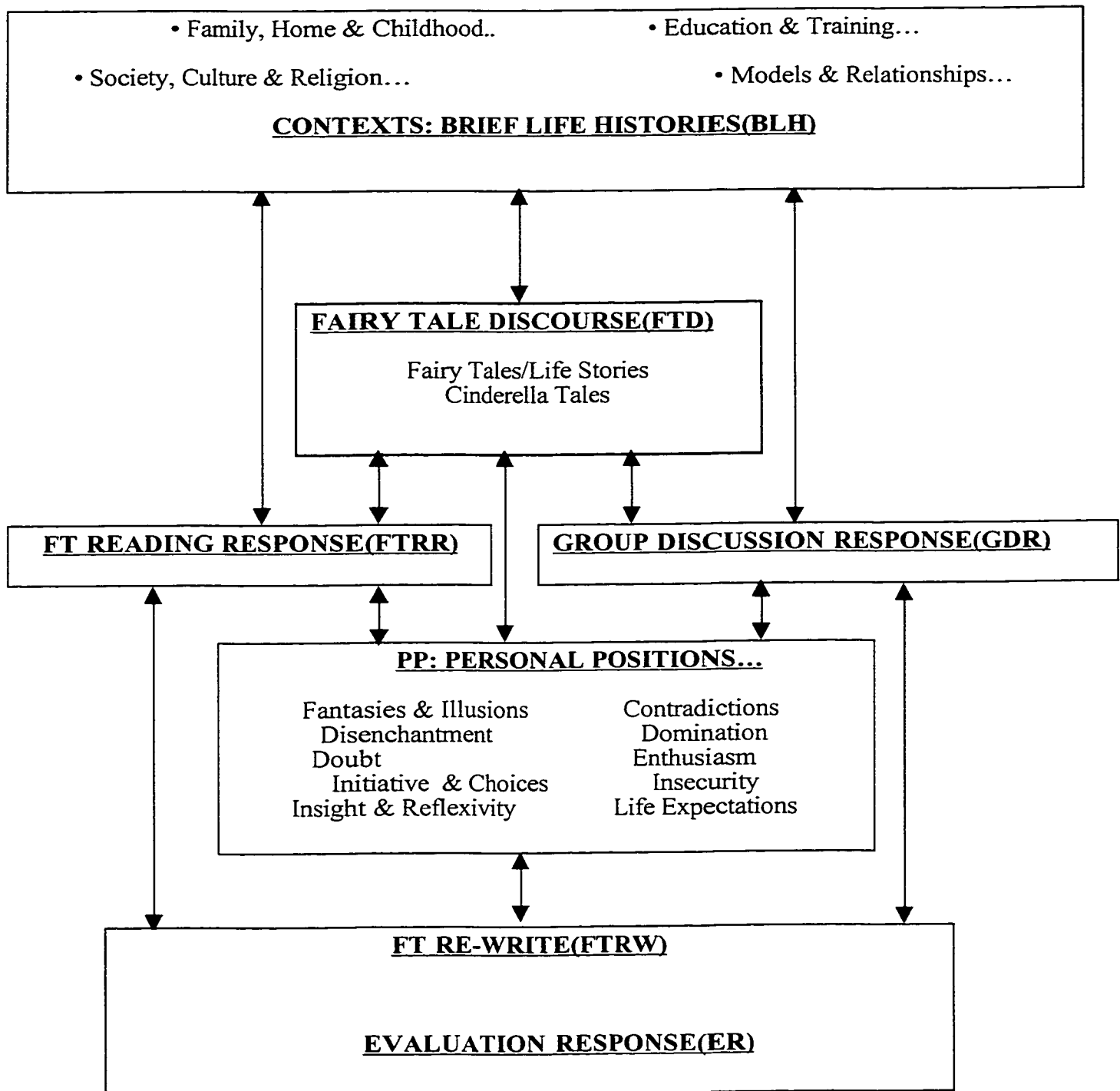
In this study, case refers to the participants of the study (7 participants = 7 cases) while the source material consists of text files transcribed from discussion group session tapes and from the written responses supplied by the participants; brief life histories, reading responses, fairy tale re-writes, and final evaluation responses. To begin coding with HR, I opened a new study file, entered case names using the aliases of the participants, and imported the source files. I soon realized that the source files that I had compiled for written responses would not be adequate for referencing until they were reduced to files that contained data for individual participants only. With this change completed, coding proceeded in the following manner: files for each participant were read several times searching for relevant excerpts and creating codes that interpreted the key intention of the quotation. It was necessary to reduce the number of codes at times, a process that entails collapsing or combining codes that are similar. Proceeding in this manner, the number of categories were reduced to 23 codes: five codes that refer to the different types of data for reference purposes, one general category for personal positions, and 17 codes that emerged from the data and categorize the responses. The list of codes and reports by case and code were printed from time to time to ascertain whether or not changes were needed in the structure of the code files or to the name of the code assigned. This served to eliminate data that were extraneous by providing a hard copy of the results that allowed me to check the coding process and the annotations entered to date.

While the list of codes is illustrated in the code diagram below, definitions of each code and a brief explanation of the criteria used can be found in Appendix: 8.

From this perspective, the themes suggested in the literature were compared with those that arose ‘in vivo’ from the research data in a process of revising, reviewing, and re-coding that continued until general categories emerged under which the codes extracted from the data seemed to fit. By this process, I eventually collapsed the general categories used in coding to Contexts, Discourse, and Positions. By Contexts, I mean the social, historical, and cultural factors articulated by participants' in their brief life histories, and augmented by data from the group discussion and written responses of participants. Discourse refers to “language which is understood as utterance and thus involves subjects who speak and write ...[and] might include any modes of utterance as a part of social practice” (Cuddon, 1991, 249). The general category, Positions, refers to the personal position(s) articulated by individual participants in accord with the social, historical and cultural contexts by which their personal identities (who they take themselves to be) have been constituted. These general categories characterize three sets of codes that emerged from the data in this study from the retrospective life histories written by participants, as well as from their written responses to the material presented, and the group discussions that occurred over the course of the research. The Code Diagram (Figure 1 below) shows the types of responses (general categories underlined) with the related patterns of responses (codes), and illustrates the relations between the categories and codes from my perspective. In chapter 3, I describe the Contexts of participants, and compare the Contexts across all participants using data from the brief life histories, the reading responses and fairy tale re-writes, as well as the words of participants from group discussions.

Code Diagram.

Figure 1 Code Diagram showing relations between categories and patterns of responses.



Summary of Participant Responses

In a case study approach, frequency counts of participant responses may be completed but are not necessarily central to analysis of the data. From this perspective, the fact that a participant responds in a particular way, or avoids responding in some cases, can be as illuminating for certain codes or categories as a great number of responses to other codes. The use of codes and categories in this study served as a means to retrieve and analyze the positions of participants, as well as to characterize certain types of participant responses. Discussion, therefore, will focus on the actual words (or silences) of the participants and how these words relate to the themes and categories to provide insight into the perceptions and/or positions of the women who participated. Frequency counts will be cited in the analysis chapters, therefore, only when this information serves to illuminate participant responses, or lack of response. In the following, I provide a brief summary of participant responses after Table 2, Frequency Counts of Codes, to illustrate the types and frequencies of responses provided by participants.

Table 2: Frequency Counts of Codes.

Frequency Counts of Codes	Alternate	Empress	Hazel	Junie	Rosa	Sunshine	Tzipora
BLH: Life History	7	8	8	12	8	9	7
ER: Evaluation Response	3	3	3	3	3		8
FTRR: FT Reading Response		8	10	8	12	4	7
FTRW: FT Re-Write	X	1	1	1	1		1
GDR: Group Discussion Response	87	43	88	80	10	19	102
Fantasies/Illusions...	17	19	17	11	3	1	16
Contradictions...	15	3	1	4	3	1	6
Disenchantment...	2	2	2	2		3	6
Domination...	2	6	5	3	1		2
Doubt...	7			1	1		2
Enthusiasm...	4	1	5	6			7
Fairy Tales/Life Story Parallels?		1	1	1	4		2
Fairy Tales, Stories, & Fantasy	29	22	32	27	22	15	45
Initiative/Choices...	5		1	1			1
Insecurity..?		4				1	1
Insight/Reflexivity..	17	7	9	11	3	1	29
Life Expectations...	4	1	2	2	2		3

Alternate did not submit written reading responses for any of the tales or complete the final fairy tale rewrite, however, because she claimed that she had run out of time. Over the five weeks of the research, she participated in all but the final session but could find no time to complete her written responses on the tales. As a former political reporter (writer), is it possible that she had difficulty with the task of writing about fairy tales – I mean did she feel the exercise was beneath her dignity, somehow frivolous, or too dangerous and threatening for a serious writer? Or was she unable to deal with contradictions in her positions for, while she states that she may not be in the right place, she participated fully in the discussions but could not bring herself to write responses to the tales? On the other hand, is it possible that writing responses to fairy tale readings would have lent credibility to proceedings that she feels are of no importance to herself as a woman who never married and thus, in her estimation, never followed the fairy tale patterns? These questions can never be answered of course but like Tzipora who feels it is ‘her role’ to apologize for negative feelings, questioning is ‘my role,’ or so I believe.

Junie, Hazel, Rosa, and Tzipora completed all reading responses, the fairy tale re-writes and final evaluations. Empress completed two reading responses, the final fairy tale re-write but did not complete the reading response to the second tale because she was unable to attend the session in which the video was viewed. As this paper shows, however, the contributions of all participants whether completely or partially completed was greatly appreciated and most insightful. Sunshine completed the first reading response in the sessions that she attended, but was in the process of completing her high school equivalency and thus her participation was interrupted before the project was completed. Because her comments during group interactions were few and often related to her father or daughter but not to herself, it occurred to me that Sunshine may have been at a stage in her life when she needed to consider her next moves. Her comment about Rapunzel who was locked in the tower gave the impression that her life had become oppressive for she mentions “being a uhh a new mother here it’s like, ooh, all of a sudden you’re enclosed” (GDR; 13367, 13520; Session1.txt). Is it possible that her desire for “Aschenputtel to run away from her stepmother and two sisters” resonates with aspects of her own life from which she would have liked to escape

(FTRR; 4948, 5326; Sunshine.txt)? On the other hand, as a young woman with heavy responsibilities trying to complete her education, it is certainly understandable that she might have had to forego completing the research project.

Some members of the group were very vocal within group interactions. As Table 2, Frequency Counts for Codes indicates, Alternate, Hazel, Junie, and Tzipora had the most frequent coding for GDR: Group Discussion Responses. Empress had fewer codes for group interactions but her articulations were often lengthy and fairly informative. During the group sessions, Rosa spoke infrequently and often so low that her voice was often overpowered by other more forceful voices (or by white noise on the tape). However her written responses and interpretations of elements in the tales were generally thoughtfully conceived and extended in a far different direction from those of other participants. I wondered therefore if it was possible that she found that voicing her ideas was a hurdle but written responses were her forte. With a mother who was so strong-willed and manipulative, is it possible that the eldest child who was deposed by an outsider and siblings in quick succession somehow lost her voice as a child? It is perhaps significant that in her fairy tale re-write her heroine does not speak. On the other hand, participants who were more vocal seldom showed the same verbosity in written responses. Taped sessions were therefore an essential component of this research and in future endeavors of this kind, I would provide opportunity for both kinds of responses on a more equitable basis.

Analysis of Themes in Participant Data

Chapter 4 compares the descriptive data from the brief life histories completed by participants to their articulations on the fairy tales read in the study. According to Ristock and Pennell (1996), "the constant comparative method proceeds by placing together various statements having some interesting commonality and gradually developing a category for analysis" (p. 87). This method of analysis lends itself to a study that aims to uncover multiple and conflicting discourses that constitute subjectivity and personal life stories. Used in conjunction with feminist poststructural analysis that considers subjectivity, discourse, and power by questioning the production and constitution of knowledge, it may be possible "to invent alternatives both to

dominant assumptions and to the researcher's own interpretations" (Ristock & Pennell, 1996. p. 95). Used in the research process itself and in the analysis procedure as well, these methods might illustrate the tell-tale tracks of fairy tale influences in the lives of participants while showing how such influences have been resisted in the lived narratives of these women now or in the past. From research on the effects of fairy tales in women's lives, therefore, it may be possible to re-speak and re-write fairy tale narratives that empower and give credit to women's voices.

To interpret the themes that emerged from the data, I sought first of all to understand the positions of the participants based on the Contexts that have affected and continue to impact the lives of each participant. In the previous chapter, the Contexts that positioned participants, and in which participants positioned themselves, were described and analyzed individually. Table 4, Data from Brief Life Histories (see Appendix 10) provides a concise summary of the information requested and what each participant chose to include. As well, the cross-case analysis compared and analyzed these contexts across the seven cases in preparation for further analysis of the personal positions (Positions) articulated by participants. In addition to the BLH then, this analysis considers categories derived from participants' reading responses to the reading of three versions of one fairy tale during the sessions (FTRR), group discussions following each reading (GDR), and the final fairy tale rewrites submitted by participants (FTRW). As well, the final evaluations of the research completed by participants (ER) will be discussed and compared with the preceding material. Because participants were not required to submit responses in order to attend sessions, some participants did not elect to complete all segments of the data as the research study was designed. Hence, discussion of themes will focus on the four participants who did complete all of the responses but consider contributions from the remaining three participants according to their individual submissions and responses.

To clarify certain points and aid in refining and structuring the categories more precisely, however, I sought additional literature on narrative theory. Locating articles by Gover (2000) and Davies & Harre (2000), I found the needed connections that helped organize the data. In The Narrative Emergence of Identity, Gover (2000) explains that, in sociocultural theory:

mental phenomena...are understood as constituted by (that is, not merely influenced by) their cultural, historical, and social contexts, contexts which themselves are deeply and fundamentally human. This view offers a means of analyzing the basic dimensionality of narrative...[and] foregrounds the ways in which narrative language practices, in particular the pragmatic functions of story telling, constitute the ongoing construction of personal identities in their social, cultural, and historical contexts” (p. 1).

Hence, narrative and identity are not separate phenomena but “serve to mutually constitute one another” with neither existing in isolation from the other (p. 2). Gover (2000) suggests “narrative and identity emerge from the confluence of five integrated dimensions” that include: time (present/past), artifacts (language/signs/symbols), affect (emotion), activity (social practices), and self-reflexiveness (speaking from the position of an I in the here-and-now about an I who occupies another time and place) (p. 3).

In their article, Positioning: The Discursive Production of Selves, Davies and Harre (2000) explain that

Positioning...is the discursive practice whereby selves are located in conversation as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines – this can entail interactive positioning in which what one person says positions another...and reflexive positioning in which one positions oneself ... (not necessarily intentional) One lives one’s life in terms of one’s ongoingly produced self, whoever might be responsible for its production (p.2)

Thus, the development of ‘who we take ourselves to be’ involves four processes that include: learning categories that include/exclude, participating in discursive practices, positioning oneself within categories and storylines, and recognizing oneself as belonging to one category and not to others.

From this perspective, the themes suggested in the literature were compared with those that arose ‘in vivo’ from the research data, and this process of revising, reviewing, and re-coding continued until general categories emerged under which the codes extracted from the data seemed to

fit. Thus, I was able to collapse the general categories used in coding to Context, Discourse, and Position (for definitions see Appendix 8). By Contexts, I mean the social, historical, and cultural factors articulated by participants' in their brief life histories, and augmented by data from the group discussion and written responses of participants. Discourse refers to "language which is understood as utterance and thus involves subjects who speak and write ...[and] might include any modes of utterance as a part of social practice" (Cuddon, 1991, 249). The general category, Positions, refers to the personal position(s) articulated by individual participants in accord with the social, historical and cultural contexts by which their personal identities (who they take themselves to be) have been constituted. These general categories characterize three sets of codes that emerged from the data in this study from the retrospective life histories written by participants, as well as from their written responses to the material presented, and the group discussions that occurred over the course of the research project.

Analysis of Themes in Relation to Fairy Tale Discourses

Elements of Fairy and Folk Tales.

There are a number of common elements that characterize literary fairy tale narratives. Originating from oral tales told around the fire, they are generally brief narratives told from a third person perspective with "neither name nor location nor a particular region" (Bottigheimer, 1987). Hence, these tales were designed to apply (and to be told) to any reader contemplating the possibility of escape from life situations that seldom resemble those portrayed in the tales themselves. Simple language and plots rendered the tales easy to understand by even those with little education. Often constructed to instruct or relay cautions to listeners, fairy tales offered wish fulfillment, righted wrongs, punished those who veered from moral behavior, and often resulted in rewards or financial gain according to the social, historical, and cultural locations of both tale tellers and tale readers. Similarities in tales told across diverse cultures seems to indicate that there were similar concerns and situations inspiring those who devised or disseminated the tales, while the longevity of certain tales attests to their fascination and ability to convince succeeding generations of the validity of their messages.

From a model delineating fairy tale characteristics proposed by Barchers (1988), I have reduced the elements of fairy tale narratives to the following four defining characteristics. These general characteristics were presented to participants in session one and included on the reading response sheets as an aid in responding to the tales read/viewed in the research (see Appendix 5). Participants were asked to consider these elements in their reflections on the particular tales read/viewed in the research and their responses indicate varying degrees of engagement with these elements in the three versions of “Cinderella” presented. These four characteristics, and their application to versions of the “Cinderella” tale, are used to analyze and interpret data from the reading responses and fairy tale re-writes in relation to Discourses in Chapter 4. The analysis that follows presents and describes the four elements, and presents the views found in the literature and my personal analysis of these elements in the “Cinderella” tale(s). At the end of this discussion, I provide Table 3, Elements in Four Versions of the “Cinderella” Tale, that compares elements from the three versions used in this study to the most commonly-known versions by Perrault and Disney, according to researchers like Fohr, (1991) and Zipes, (1997, 1999).

Characteristics of Fairy Tales for Thematic Analysis.

Character Development. Generally there is only a minimum of information provided about the characters. Stereotypes are common, such as the beautiful princess, the handsome prince, and an evil antagonist. At times the characters are not even given names. They are described simply as the daughter, son, prince, princess, mother, father, or evil witch. Characters are, for the most part, good or evil, strong or weak, beautiful or ugly (Barchers, 1988). According to Bottigheimer (1987), fairy tales are constructed to maintain the status quo especially for women who are often portrayed as “sweet, marriageable and often suffering” (p. 20). Tatar (1987) claims that tales like “Cinderella” portray stepmothers as evil, mothers and daughters as rivals, and maternal characters as tyrants. On the other hand, fathers are often shown to be benign or unnatural in different versions of the “Cinderella” tale while princes are shown to be bland and featureless (Tatar, 1987; Warner, 1994). While the female character is named “Cinderella,” few other characters are named in most versions of the tale, a convention that, for some researchers, indicates that the tale was designed to speak to

women in particular (Luthi, 1976, Tatar, 1987; Zipes, 1988). For Zipes (1988), princesses are generally passive, patient, soft-spoken, while “Cinderella” is presented as sweet, gentle and diligent and, when properly dressed, she is a fashion queen. Thus, heroines are pictured as young, beautiful, and obedient but other female characters are often demonized, especially older women and maternal figures (Bottigheimer, 1987; Tatar, 1987; Warner, 1994; Zipes, 1988). Mei (1990) claims that “Cinderella” is less submissive in the Grimms’ version with “her practical plan of class climbing and romantic love” (p. 19). In the opinion of Warner (1994), tales like “Cinderella” often focus on other women “as the agents of her suffering” (p. 201) with Disney versions naturalizing female, maternal malignancy the most.

Stylistic Elements. The simple style of fairy/folk tales is the element that makes the tales appealing to the writer/reader. Only words necessary to the flow of the tale are included with a generally short and simple story length. Tales often begin with ‘Once upon a time’ and the time of the tale may or may not be indicated, in fact, time may even stand still in certain tales. As well, the setting often receives little description and, while a castle or forest may be included, few details are provided (Barchers, 1988). Such conventions allow any reader to feel that there may be hope for a better life for the lack of detail allows the individual to imagine that the tale applies to her/his own life. Traditional fairy/folk tales usually have a happy ending, which includes the solution to the problem and often includes marriage of the male and female main characters (Barchers, 1988). On the other hand, fairy tales end with the marriage of the hero and heroine but seldom show the outcome of that union or prove that they do indeed live happily ever after. This tradition, however, serves to offer respite from the misery of lives that offer little more than despair (Warner, 1994). Indeed, the misery of the heroine or hero is often caused or occasioned by the misery of her/his family, and this not only mitigates against the lack of realistic portrayals of family life but also accounts for the fascination with fairy tales, according to Warner (1994).

Thematic Elements. This is the main idea of a tale and is often hardest to articulate at first. In traditional tales, it is usually one of journey, rescue, quest, and/or conquest. Often tasks must be performed while on a journey or quest. Adventure is important to the fairy/folk tale format for the

action gives the tale its interest, is intertwined with and carries the theme, and builds quickly to a climax (Barchers, 1988). Some versions of the “Cinderella” tale include themes of rescue and, depending on the version, it is usually the female heroine who needs to be rescued. And in the most popular (or prevailing) versions, “Cinderella” often seems to passively wait for rescue while obediently complying with her tormenters and praying for divine intervention of some kind. In fact, she is quietly passive-aggressive in the opinion of Mei (1990) for she does not reveal her identity to the prince or the fact that she has the other shoe to her family until the royal messenger comes to call. While the prince might be considered to be on a quest to find a bride, this is almost secondary to the search for rescue and social respectability for “Cinderella.” Warner (1994) posits that the quest of fairy tales can be attributed to the desire for a heritage that is better, richer, or more noble than that encountered in real life. As well, the patriarchal standard of subordination and domestication for women is subverted by the individualism that is woven into the plot since this invariably encourages “in women (and underprivileged people in general) a sense of individual dignity and an urge for self-realization” (Mei, 1990. p. 25). Hence, “the Cinderella theme is essentially ambiguous and dialogic, with a constant tension built on the desire/self-denial, passion/reason dichotomy” (Mei, 1990, p. 28). According to Tatar (1987), themes of retaliation permeate fairy tales and are not missing from the “Cinderella” tale, at least in the version published by the Grimm brothers. Thus, “scenes of victimization and retaliation...[are] the very stuff of the narrative” (Tatar, 1987, p. 185).

Magic and Symbolic Elements. The presence of characters with magical powers often distinguishes fairy tales from folk tales. Although this generalization is not consistent, the role of magic is important to the conflict or resolution of the plot (Barchers, 1988). Symbolic elements often promote particular ideas in vogue at the time. Hence, Bottigheimer claims that fairy tales like “Cinderella” employ the idea of “ashes from hearth fires provide the mark and metaphor of degradation for two fairy tale heroines, Allerleirauh and Cinderella” (p. 29). In Grimm’s “Aschenputtel,” the magical elements are found in nature, trees and doves, and conjuring amounts to internal wish-fulfillment by the heroine, while in Perrault’s “Cinderella,” it is the fairy

godmother who does the conjuring that produces clothing and the means to attend the prince's parties. From the perspective of Bettelheim (1989), "the imagery of fairy tales helps children better than anything else in their most difficult and yet most important and satisfying task: achieving a more mature consciousness to civilize the chaotic pressures of their unconscious" (p. 23). On this position, magic and symbols serve as narrative devices that assist with developmental and existential challenges and problems encountered by children and that, once ensconced in the unconscious, continue to operate throughout life. In the opinion of Zipes (1999), magic is used in literary fairy tales to overcome oppression and to convey a sense of wonder, but "these happy or fortuitous events are never to be explained" for that is how they arouse a sense for "the magical condition of life" (p. 5). Moreover, "their configurations and symbols were already marked by a sociopolitical perception and had entered into a specific institutionalized discourse" (Zipes, 1988, p. 7).

Elements in the Fairy Tales used in this Study.

Three versions of one fairy tale were used in this study, "Aschenputtel" from Grimm's Grimmet (Dockray, 1997), a recently produced video of the "Cinderella" tale in session two, Ever After: A Cinderella Story (Soria, Trench, & Tennant, 1998) in session three, and "The Tale of the Shoe" from Kissing the Witch: Old Tales in New Skins, (Donoghue, 1997) in session four. With a range of variables inherent in fairy tales themselves compounded by differences in the array of collections from which to choose, it is important to limit the extent of possible factors that might complicate analysis of data from four to seven participants multiplied by four pieces of writing. Thus, while the versions of the "Cinderella" tale chosen certainly have differences in format, motifs, representations, symbols, and story structure, the basic narrative elements of the tale itself remained essentially constant.

The basic elements of the "Cinderella" story have often been reduced to a "rags-to-riches romance" as the cover of the movie, Pretty Woman (Milchan & Ruether, n.d.) describes this modern version of the tale. According to Fohr (1991), "One often hears the phrase 'Cinderella story' applied to some person's life, but never 'Snow White story' or 'Sleeping Beauty story.'" (p. 109). He claims that there are two variants of the "Cinderella" tale: the "Aschenputtel"

version based on the idea of an “Ash girl” who is mistreated by her family but marries a prince in the end, and “Allerleirauh” in which a young girl employs a cloak or clothing made of fur as an aid to escape a distasteful alliance (usually with the father). The version that has received widest recognition in Western culture, however, is the “Cinderella” version published by Perrault that serves “as the basis of the Walt Disney film” (p. 110). Mei (1990) claims that there are two essential features of the “Cinderella” tale, an ill-treated heroine and recognition by means of a shoe (p. 2). The common elements of the Perrault/Walt Disney versions of the “Cinderella” tale and those of the three versions used in this research are listed below in the table, Elements in Four Versions of the “Cinderella” Tale. The common elements in these four versions include the following - a young girl’s mother dies, she is ill-treated by others (or by herself) and given (or takes on) impossible tasks, she gets dressed up almost, or in fact, through magical or uncommon means, she goes to a ball held to find a bride for the prince. As well, each of these tales concludes with a suggestion of a ‘happily-ever-after’ life.

There are differences in the tales, however, that can be found in the means used to achieve each particular happy ending, and in the happy endings achieved as well. Using the Perrault/Walt Disney versions as the point of comparison because they represent the best-known versions (Fohr, 1991; Warner, 1994; Zipes, 1999), it is possible to discern the inconsistencies that reside in the versions used in this research. In Grimm’s version, the ash girl’s father does not die but does very little to ameliorate the adverse conditions of her life or to provide aid for the only daughter born of his deceased wife. In this version as well, there is no fairy godmother who magically assists the young girl but a magical twig that grows into a tree and helps her attend the ball. Animal helpers and the deceased mother also provide help for the ill-treated heroine in Grimm’s version. The modern version of the tale, Ever After, aligns closely with the Perrault/Walt Disney versions since the father dies soon after marrying a woman with two daughters. Other elements, however, distance this version for the heroine is portrayed as active, intelligent, and self-sufficient, unlike the Perrault/Walt Disney heroines who are shown to be sweet, innocent, and obedient. In Ever After, moreover, the heroine openly resists and quarrels with her stepmother and stepsisters. In the end,

however, she forgives and accepts the prince who has rejected and repudiated her in front of the whole community. The last tale, “The Tale of the Shoe,” exhibits the widest divergence from the original tale since it is told in the first person with a heroine who claims that she chose to punish herself as a means of expiating her grief at the loss of her mother. Although an older woman appears, she is not portrayed as a fairy godmother but a kind helper and wise counselor. And although she goes to the ball, she does not accept the offer of marriage from the prince but decides to remain with the older woman.

Table 3 shows the similarities and differences in the three versions of the “Cinderella” tale utilized in this study, as well as the elements of the popular versions. Using different versions of one tale renders analysis of the data obtained from personal reflections more manageable by limiting the number of narrative variables to be considered. As well, comparing three versions may provide a point of comparison for some of the underlying messages inherent in more well-known versions, while serving to indicate which versions participants had encountered in the past through their responses to elements that were not as they remembered. The elements in the versions read/viewed in this research and themes that emerged in participant responses to the tales will be discussed and analyzed in detail in chapter 4.

Table 3 Fairy Tale Elements in Four Versions of the “Cinderella” Tale

Elements in popular versions of “Cinderella” by Perrault* & Disney*.	Elements of the tale in Grimm’s version, “Aschenputtel”	Elements in 20 th Century Fox’s version, <u>Ever After: A Cinderella Story</u>	Elements of the tale in Donaghue’s version, “The Tale of the Shoe”
Young girl is motherless at birth or early childhood, seen as innocent, sweet, and gracious, self-sacrificing and obedient.	Young girl’s mother dies, tells her to be pious and good and she will be taken care of by God. Mother will help from heaven.	Young girl’s mother is dead at beginning of movie, raised by father and servants to be independent and self-sufficient.	Young girl’s mother dies
Father marries woman with one or two daughters but he does not take care of his daughter.	Father marries a woman with two daughters fair and beautiful of face but evil-minded and ugly at heart.	Father remarries woman with two daughters but then dies soon after the marriage.	No father involved and no stepmother but older woman appears suddenly.
Young girl is ill-treated, degraded to perform meanest work, homeless or partly homeless.	Stepmother & stepsisters treat girl poorly, take away clothes, confined to hearth, assign impossible tasks.	Stepmother & stepsisters treat girl poorly, confine her to hearth, assign impossible tasks.	She treats herself poorly and gives herself impossible tasks to perform.
Girl bears her ill-treatment and debasement patiently and without rancor. She helps those who persecute her, passes tests and trials.	Father brings back a gift of a twig for Cinderella when he travels but does not ameliorate conditions for Cinderella.	Girl does as she is told but does not always bear her situation with patience. She actively resists and questions her lot.	Older woman appears and helps her to stop punishing herself.
Passive naïveté/suffering as saving power. C. obeys calls on animal helpers, prays for help, waits for deliverance.	The gift – a hazel twig – is planted on mother’s grave. Twig is watered by girl’s tears and prayers, grows into a wish-fulfilling tree.	Girl grows up to be capable and independent – solves problems on her own for herself and others..	Older woman dresses her for ball and takes her there.
She is helped to achieve better life by fairy godmother.	C. is helped to achieve better life by doves, tree (mother’s intervention).	C. & P. meet, have series of adventures, he thinks she is a princess.	Older woman picks her up and asks if she has had enough.
C. attends ball three times dressed more elegantly each time. Dress and shoes supplied by fairy godmother	After completing tasks, stepmother refuses to let her go but is able to go to prince’s ball with clothes provided by tree and doves.	Parents of the Prince have a ball to announce his engagement. Cinderella wants to go, stepmother refuses to let her.	She returns the second night and dances with the prince but returns with older woman.
C. meets prince at ball and is found to be the most beautiful or accomplished of them all. She vanishes at midnight.	Cinderella runs away from ball 3 times at midnight, last time leaves one shoe behind.	Servants, younger sister help C. to go to ball, P. learns her true identity, she runs away, he agrees to marry his parents’ choice	C. goes to the ball 3rd time, dances, prince asks to marry her. C. considers offer, decides this is not the future that she wants.
Prince searches for her with shoe left behind, finds her & marries her.	P. looks for maiden who fits shoe. Sisters mutilate feet to fit shoe. Shoe fits C. who produces its mate.	Stepmother sells C. to money lender but she manages to escape. P. comes to rescue too late.	She runs back to the older woman and leaves her shoe behind.
C. gains financial security, social status, ‘happily ever after’ ending. Tormenters are punished or not according to version.	C. & P. marry & live happily ever after. Sisters punished (eyes pecked out by doves).	P. & C. marry & live happily ever after stepmother & 1 sister sent to work in laundry. Other sister marries well too.	C. goes home with the older woman, throws the other shoe away (so she can never be found?), they live happily ever after.

C. Cinderella, P. Prince

* (according to Fohr, 1991; Warner, 1994; Zipes, 1999)

CHAPTER 3

Contexts of the Participants and Cross-Case Analysis

Social, Historical, And Cultural Contexts of the Participants

All seven participants completed the brief life history exercise (see Appendix 3) that was part of the first session of the research project. Included were questions concerning the participants' families, homes, family life, education, childhood activities, and long-term relationships, as well as questions relating to make-believe, fantasy, fairy tales, and how these processes and forms have affected their lives and present situations. Data from the written life histories serve to illuminate the social, historical, and cultural contexts (Contexts) that influenced the early life experiences of the participants, providing insight as well to their early experiences with fairy tales. Specifically, data from this exercise were intended to provide information on the early life experiences of each participant to understand the lived context in which they first heard/read fairy tales. In this way, it may be possible to ascertain some of the underlying factors that affect women's gender roles and positions in relation to fairy tales. As Zipes (1986) suggests,

one of the major contributions of the feminist critique still pertains to the power relations of domination in capitalist societies and their reinforcement by a special arrangement within child-rearing and the family and the sexual division of labour. Children are conditioned to assume and accept arbitrary sex roles. These socially conditioned roles prepare females to become passive, self-denying, obedient, and self-sacrificial (to name some of the negative qualities) as well as nurturing, caring, and responsible in personal situations (the more positive qualities) (p. 3).

Beginning with Researcher Notes (RN) that I wrote during the pre-session, this chapter discusses data from the Brief Life Histories written by the participants in session one. In addition, data from the discussion groups that relates to Contexts has been included since this information often filled in details missing from the written material in the brief life histories. And because qualitative research considers all aspects of the research process to be important in discussing and analyzing the data gleaned from the research process, in this section I will also briefly discuss

myself as the researcher and the gatekeeper who helped organize and thus contributed to the research study. According to Ristock and Pennell (1996), research as empowerment posits that “revealing who one is and how one’s location shapes the research process [and] including oneself in what is being studied ... makes it possible for us to collaboratively redefine our identities” (p. 13). Finally, while in-depth analysis of the factors mentioned in this chapter will come in a later chapter, I will include some initial comments and interpretations on the data supplied by participants following each description.

While only four participants completed all of the reading responses and final fairytale rewrite, I have included all participants in this descriptive analysis since the information that they supplied and withheld, both in their written responses and in the discussion groups, can certainly help in understanding the phenomenon under investigation. The participants have been listed in alphabetical order according to the aliases chosen in the pre-session, irrespective of their inclusion in the junior (junior female participant) or senior (senior female participant) age categories. All names and identifying data supplied by participants in this study, except that of the researcher, have been suppressed to maintain anonymity. Quotations from participants have been referenced using numerical references and names of source file according the categories used in HR, while material included from researcher notes is cited as (RN, reference no.). Because HR does not distinguish between text files that derive from spoken or written data, I also indicate whether the quotation derives from spoken data in group discussion sessions (GDR), or written data from Brief Life Histories (BLH), Fairy Tale Reading Responses (FTRR), Fairy Tale Rewrites (FTRW), or final evaluation responses (ER). Should this account be read by the participants, who will no doubt recognize themselves and each other, I sincerely hope that I have interpreted their voices and lives with dignity and justice. My heartfelt appreciation for the contributions of participants will, I trust, be evident in the manner of my reporting as I have tried to keep the words their own as far as possible. Quotations from participants have been reproduced exactly as spoken or written by the women in the study as far as possible, with occasional changes of pronoun or word tense in square brackets to indicate my changes. Words in round brackets are those of the participants, while most

abbreviations, capitalizations, or lack of same, and different spellings, etc. have been retained throughout. Table 4, Data from Brief Life Histories (Appendix 9) provides a concise summary of the information requested and what each participant chose to include. I also thank Grace (alias), who attended the pre-session but opted not to return⁶, for her interest and participation that afternoon. In accord with my belief in the priority of those who inform the research process, I begin this account with the individuals without whom this study could not have taken place, the participants themselves.

Alternate

Born in Northern Ireland, Alternate represented herself as not only coming from a "different culture" but also as the oldest woman of the group, indeed she continually reminded us of these 'facts' during group discussions. In the pre-session, she introduced herself as 'a retired reporter' who "traveled in her youth and had a checkered career" (RN, 2). Although she has written and published, she stated that "it is isolating to write" (RN, 2). Hence, she came to the pre-session because she wants to write.

In her BLH, she states that she is the youngest of 5 boys and 4 girls born into a farming family located among "other small mixed farmers in pretty countryside" (BLH; 541, 719; Alternate.txt). As she puts it, "the house was always crowded ... and there was always a scramble to claim your 'place'" (BLH; 1208, 1707; Alternate.txt). Although she did not marry, her life story included romantic relationships, travel, and a career as a political reporter. As a youngster of five or six, she claims that she walked a mile and a half to a church-sponsored school in town and went on to complete three years of high school. As an adult, however, she continued to take "extra courses, academic and otherwise [for] Education never ends!!" (BLH; 1968, 2560; Alternate.txt). Growing up with such a large family made for 'tumultuous' and busy days' for, in a family engaged in farming, children were expected to contribute to the workload. Alternate wrote that she cleaned

⁶ Participants were recruited by personal contact and it seems that some of the women may have misunderstood the nature of the project for the idea of writing and publishing was mentioned a number of times as the reason for attending the pre-session. When I explained that this was a research project, all but one opted to continue.

eggs, washed dishes, made beds and swept the bedrooms; all jobs that she hated and managed to neglect in order to read. While relatives lived on farms or were in business in the area, they were seldom seen, probably as a result of the busy concerns of family and farm life. In her estimation, her father was the head of household but “Mother was the strength” (BLH; 1208, 1707; Alternate.txt). Despite her claim that the girls were “the smart ones”, she does not seem to question the fact that her brothers, who left school at 14 and 16 years of age, “became the rich ones [for that was simply a] Sign of the times” (BLH; 1968, 2560; Alternate.txt).

In relation to questions on fairy tales, make-believe and fantasy, Alternate stated that she “was constantly cited examples of their existence...tales of fairies and the devil & we believed them all” (BLH; 4760, 5201; Alternate.txt). Such a response seems hardly surprising for, as Alternate claims, long-held beliefs in Ireland include “the banshee [who] always gave notice of an impending death” and other myths of a similar nature (BLH; 4760, 5201; Alternate.txt). While she does not believe in these mythical characters anymore, she may still accept that miracles are possible. Turbulence and fighting were a constant feature of homelife for, although they “played board games, ‘Simon Says’, etc. in the kitchen...these usually ended with quarrels & slaps from the older siblings!!” (BLH; 3383, 4111; Alternate.txt). With no TV, very little radio, and “movies only on special occasions” in her early years, she did have access to imaginative games with neighbour children (BLH; 3301, 4111; Alternate.txt). And she always managed to find a spot to “read voraciously, children’s stories, then classics, then modern novels” (BLH; 3383, 4111; Alternate.txt), but found the fairy tales that her sister read by candlelight to be quite scary indeed.

Alternate stated in the group sessions that she was not sure if she should participate in this research because her “life has been so different from those of you who have married and had families and separated and so on and so forth” (GDR; 8409, 11469; Session1.txt). Although her life has not been “happier or more miserable,” with “5 brothers and a father ... in the house, [she] didn’t grow up with any great illusions about men, um, [she] saw their seamy side” (GDR; 8409, 11469; Session1.txt). While her memories of childhood were not good, she appreciates now that there were opportunities to learn to look after herself, especially with parents who were not

traditional. As she puts it, her parents did not expect their daughters to marry and settle down, in fact they “were being taught to be, uh, independent and self-supporting, I guess...” (GDR; 8409, 11469; Session1.txt). Hence, her life has “not been around children and fairy tales...it was a career and travel and meeting interesting people” (GDR; 8409, 11469; Session1.txt). However, she was not sure if her decisions were a result of parental expectations or not for she supposes that “the right man would have turned all that around. In the procession apparently there wasn’t the right one” (GDR; 8409, 11469; Session1.txt). And while she feels that she “probably got what [she] wanted...in the long run it doesn’t turn out to be any better or any worse than anything else...” (GDR; 8409, 11469; Session1.txt).

Brought up with fairy stories, Alternate stated that she “didn’t grow up I suppose with any, um, great liking for fairy stories” (GDR; 8409, 11469; Session1.txt). In the tales her sister read by candlelight “there were gremlins and things happening in the forest and goodness [they] were surrounded by orchards and trees (GDR; 8409, 11469; Session1.txt). As for “the glass slipper and the Prince Charming, well, I mean, if they were all like those 6 men in the house, forget it!” (GDR; 8409, 11469; Session1.txt). Thus her life “has not been around children and fairy tales” and Alternate most likely feels that fairy tales had no effect on her life story since she did not follow the format to marry a prince and have children (GDR; 8409, 11469; Session1.txt). Her life “has been around some romantic notions,” however, the ‘right’ man did not appear to change her opinion of “the house with lace curtains and the picket fence and the babies and what not” (GDR; 8409, 11469; Session1.txt). On the other hand, she reiterated a number of times that she “didn’t have the joy that you have in children” which suggests that she may have some doubts about her choices (GDR; 11508, 11576; Session1.txt).

As the oldest member of the research group, Alternate appears to have repeated some of her earlier rebellions as the youngest member of her family who had to fight for her place among nine siblings. After stating in the first session that she did not know if she belonged in the research group, she opted to continue and attended all sessions, except for the last one which occurred close to the time of her departure for Ireland. However, she chose not to complete the written reading

responses for the study and while the FTRW frequency count shows an entry for Alternate, her entry states: “I leave on Sunday for a trip to Ireland. I’m afraid time has run out on me & I cannot complete this task” (ER; 7478, 7583; Alternate.txt). Nevertheless, she was an active participant in the weekly sessions with a frequency count of 87 for group discussion responses (GDR). Often questioning or resisting the opinions of other women in the group, her GDR contributions during the four discussion group sessions attended were surpassed in frequency by only two other participants. In her final evaluation, she states that the sessions were too long, although she found them interesting, and that sessions could be improved by “stick[ing] to the subject” (ER; 8275, 8356; Alternate.txt). Choosing Alternate as her alias may, therefore, speak volumes since it seems that she did indeed provide an alternate voice in the research.

Empress

In the pre-session, Empress introduced herself as a single mother who has never married. Falling into the junior category, she claimed that she was not working at present but had worked at various jobs in the past. She adds that she has a university education but right now she is in the process of defining boundaries for herself. She came to the research pre-session because ‘creative things are best’ (RN, 7).

From brief comments in her BLH, Empress claimed that school was one of the few places where she felt appreciated and received approval as a child. In her early years, her family moved frequently within the city of Ottawa, and at four years of age to a foreign country and culture (Geneva, Switzerland) and back again. In fact, she “lived in 8 different homes” as a child (BLH; 537, 934; Empress.txt). Although she lived with both parents until their divorce when she was 13 years of age, there was little stability in her homelife with a family that moved often and “was very dysfunctional” (BLH; 1422, 1649; Empress.txt). Thus, she claims that she “grew up without boundaries...feeling unwanted, unloved and unworthy” (BLH; 1422, 1649; Empress.txt). As the oldest child in her family, she had three younger siblings, two sisters and brother, but “never wanted to be home or felt at home” (BLH; 537, 934; Empress.txt). She also mentions a half sister

and an adopted brother, most likely from the remarriages of her parents. Having obtained a university degree in Psychology, Empress writes that her brother has a BA in commerce and one of her sisters is completing a degree in sociology. Higher education seems to be a theme in her family, possibly influenced by the fact that her father, who she describes as “a traditional chauvinist patriarch,” has a BA degree in commerce (BLH; 3034, 3309; Empress.txt). Describing her mother as a “traditional, religious, people pleaser,” Empress states that she “became a compassionate people pleaser” (BLH; 3034, 3309; Empress.txt). In regards to fantasy characters, Empress claims that she believed that “there were beings that live on other planets or in other universes” (BLH; 3834, 3917; Empress.txt). However, Empress claims that she never played make-believe games and does not “recall being read fairy tales in [her] childhood” (BLH; 4174, 4642; Empress.txt). On the other hand, she writes that she indulged in “wishful thinking that someday [she] would meet ‘Mr. Perfect’ and [she] would live happily ever after” (BLH; 3490, 3629; Empress.txt). Despite her hopes and desires, however, she has “been in 3 long-term relationships with men who were emotionally unavailable. These relationships were controlling and emotionally/verbally abusive” (BLH; 4489, 4642; Empress.txt).

Like Alternate, Empress was more forthcoming in the group sessions than she was in writing her BLH. Unlike Alternate, however, much of her discussion consisted of talking about members of her family, providing information about herself almost entirely in comparison to her relations with them and their relations with each other. Hoping her daughter might do better than she had managed, Empress says her mother always encouraged her to ‘go for it’ even though she could not do it herself. Her mother was not encouraged to get an education beyond business college but “the intelligence came from my mother’s side of the family, even though she didn’t have a career” (GDR; 17277, 19161; Session1.txt). Although her mother did not work outside the home, it is not difficult to understand why Empress felt homeless as a child with her mother confined to the hospital because “pregnancy basically made her bedridden” (GDR; 17277, 19161; Session1.txt). Her mother was “a very beautiful woman” and her “father ... was gonna make a lot of money,” (GDR; 17277, 19161; Session1.txt). Educated and employed in a field that ensured

a high income, Empress claims that her father was an abusive, tyrannical husband who did not allow his wife to “pursue career” and jeopardized her health in order to have a son (GDR; 17277, 19161; Session1.txt). Thus, Empress describes her parents’ marriage as a “Cinderella” tale that “hit her in a negative way” for their relationship seems to have left her fearful of commitment (GDR; 15435, 17240; Session1.txt).

In the group discussions, Empress mentions that despite her parents’ marriage break-down, she managed to “convince [herself] that not everybody in the world was like my parents and there was still a Prince Charming out there somewhere. It just happened that [her] father was a toad, but he wasn’t, you know... not all men were toads, just him” (GDR; 5898, 6245; Session2.txt). While she does not remember hearing fairy tales, Empress recalls hearing a myth in Geneva that showed women to be much smarter than men in her opinion. She relates the tale thus,

and the myth goes, that there was soldiers coming, it was in part of France, there were soldiers coming and there was an older woman cooking vegetable soup. And these soldiers had made it past the army of men so what she did is, she took the pot and she tipped it over. The sold[iers]...the enemy was coming up the hill and she scalded them all to death. So I figured it just meant that women were sort-of craftier than men, they were a little bit smarter than men if, you know, good thing there was a woman standing at the top of the hill otherwise everybody would have been defeated. (GDR; 15435, 17240; Session1.txt).

From such a myth came “a holiday, like Halloween, when kids get dressed up and they go out and get candy, but over there they get marzipan...like a chocolate cast-iron pot with all the vegetables and fruits in it” (GDR; 15435, 17240; Session1.txt). While this story might not fit some definitions of the fairy tale model, since there are no fairies or visible magic in the tale, it fulfills other criteria of the genre by providing a narrative structure in which an older woman overcomes impossible odds and triumphs in a hopeless situation through the use of a magical transformative intervention. Thus, a tale for children may have helped constitute her subjectivity, especially with an abusive father in the picture. As Empress states, “Cinderella in my life was my mother’s life and ...I saw what it was and I hated men” (GDR; 15435, 17240; Session1.txt). While she grew up

desiring committed relationships, she was afraid to relinquish control or to allow anyone to approach her position on top of that hill she had built in her imagination.

Empress came from an abusive family situation in which her mother literally played out the Cinderella theme by marrying a man who resembled a prince in his ability to make money and take care of her financially. However, the expectation of love and happily ever after did not happen for her mother because the prince was also a tyrant who controlled her life and even her body. For Empress then, this was a story that was fraught with danger and she avoided the happily ever after by refusing to marry the men with whom she became involved. This, however, did not protect her from controlling relationships or keep the wolves from her door. Although she does not remember fairy tales being read to her, she does recall a myth heard in Geneva about women using their wits and outsmarting the enemy. I believe that this myth had an influence on a young girl whose perceived enemy resided in her home; that is, whose father abused her mother and left an indelible impression on his first-born daughter that made her afraid of commitment or trust.

Hazel

Hazel introduced herself in the pre-session as a writer who has published a financial book. Growing up with an older brother and a younger brother, she stated that, in her case, “family life was very traditional” (RN, 6). Hazel worked for the government in finance but was somewhat of a “loner, shy, quiet” (RN, 6). While she enjoys writing poetry and children’s stories and would like to publish books of this genre, she has actually published a book that was turned down originally and deals with financial counselling, money management needs, and budgeting. After getting involved in a group called Ottawa Independent Writers, her book eventually went “to the top of the publishing industry” (RN, 6) and she has a contract for a second book now. Once you have published, she claims, you can join the Writer’s Union of Canada but not before. In order to write, she counsels, “don’t try to put the story in your head, you have to compromise” (RN, 6).

In her BLH, Hazel wrote that she grew up in a residential neighbourhood in the city where she “hung out with the children that lived in the same neighbourhood and went to the same

schools” and “lived in the same house until ... seventeen years of age” (BLH; 535, 1112; Hazel.txt). Her words suggest that her life was stable and even possibly confining at times. In fact, her two brothers “grew up protecting [her]”, even forcing their friends to let her play hockey “or they would fight them” (BLH; 535, 1112; Hazel.txt). When the war broke out she was age of five years old. At this time, her “father went to the second world war” and was gone for five years (BLH; 1597, 2021; Hazel.txt). As well, she became ill soon after he left and was in the hospital for a year. While this indicates that she may have had two serious psychological or emotional upsets at a young age, her matter-of-fact manner of reporting the absence of her father and her year-long hospitalization suggests that she has accepted those early separations, at least on a conscious level. When she returned home, however, her “mother was very protective of [her]” and, according to Hazel, may have influenced her brothers to treat her the same way (BLH; 1597, 2021; Hazel.txt). Indeed, the fact that they still treat her this way is a source of humour in her family still. After graduating from high school, she continued going to school (university and college) until her mid-forties. Passing this love of higher education on to her daughter and son, she states that, like her, they “work during the day and go to school at night” (BLH; 2279, 2572; Hazel.txt). Because her parents came from different religious faiths, she attended a Catholic school at the elementary level and a public high school. Attending church in both faiths, she describes herself as “a child of Mary (catholic) [who] helped at Sunday school and belonged to CGIT (protestant)” (BLH; 3392, 4300; Hazel.txt).

As a child she claims that she had no extended family because her parents were of different religions, a fact that relatives on both sides were unwilling to accommodate but which resulted in greater closeness among her and her brothers from her perspective. Childhood activities included swimming in summer, as well as “sit[ting] around the radio and listen[ing] to stories, The Shadow, the green hornet, batman & robin, etc.” (BLH; 3392, 4300; Hazel.txt). When her chores were done “on Sat. morning,” she was allowed to go to the movies with her brothers “to see Jean Autry or Roy Rogers and cartoons etc.” (BLH; 3392, 4300; Hazel.txt). However, she writes that she also “had to wash the dishes” and feels that her brothers “were given more freedom than [she]. They

could go out of the neighbourhood” while she could not “go anywhere without one of them tagging along” (BLH; 3392, 4300; Hazel.txt). From Hazel’s perception, no one read stories to her and the only stories that she remembers reading were her brothers’ action and adventure books. To understand “when fairy tales, children’s stories became so important to [her]”, Hazel recalls that “when [she] was about 10 this aunt came into [her] life and she gave [her] a book called ‘A Child’s Garden of Verses’ by Robert Louis Stephenson and [she] devoured it” (GDR; 5968, 8385; Session1.txt). This book is still in the family passed on to her two children and, because she read the poems to them, they are teaching the verses to their children now. When her son was old enough to go to the show, she would gather his friends and take them to the children’s movies so that she “could see them all too. And I still do that, I still go to all the children’s movies and, um, get the books and I love them” (GDR; 5968, 8385; Session1.txt). However, Hazel claims that her “life doesn’t revolve around the Cinderella type theme ... on a conscious level”, but she still thinks she “got something out of children’s stories through Robert Louis Stephenson” (GDR; 5968, 8385; Session1.txt).

Hazel says that she “wasn’t a really healthy child” and was protected by her mother and brothers (GDR; 5968, 8385; Session1.txt). She does not remember fairy tales being read to her as a child but she recalls a book of children’s verse that was given to her by an aunt, the first aunt with whom she had contact because of the marriage of her parents. As a young girl, she read books belonging to her brothers but there were none that belonged to Hazel herself until she received this book from her aunt. And while her mother protected her as a child, she was not given the freedom that her brothers had, so that protection seemed to amount to domination and restriction of her life choices. Although Hazel’s memory does not point to a strong fairy tale influence in her life, analysis of her reading responses and life story rewrite may show that there were indeed traces of fairy tales influencing or at work in her life story.

Junie

In her introduction during the pre-session, Junie mentioned that she is from Northern Ontario where there is “a different way of life” (RN, 5). Stating that she “raised a large family on her own”, Junie gives the impression that she is a hard-working and practical woman with few illusions (RN, 5). Her answers were often blunt, whether written or spoken, and included few embellishments or explanations. Compared to the other participants, Junie was conscientious about attending sessions and completing her responses quickly and thoroughly. Junie did not often contribute to group discussions beyond the check-in but when she did her comments were plain-spoken, relevant, and illuminating.

Junie explains in her BLH that her father built houses and thus they often moved after he had finished building the house that they lived in at the time. Because he had not built another one for them to live in, however, they lived in various types of dwellings from tents, log cabins, and trailers to icehouses, rooms, and rented houses in the meantime. Leaving home at the age of 18 to work, she rented a room and eventually secured an apartment for herself, but had to accommodate her recently separated mother who moved in soon afterwards, an event that she did not seem to welcome. Living with her parents and two brothers as a child, she states that there were often many other relatives who lived with them as well. Although she had no sister, her relationship with a female cousin who lived nearby approximates that kind of relationship for Junie states that they “fight like sisters and love like sisters” (BLH; 2268, 2885; Junie.txt). With such a network of family around all the time, Junie claims that she “was surrounded by people who loved [her] and usually had access to animals and forest or gardens” (BLH; 2268, 2885; Junie.txt). However, she also claims that “as a family, even though we were numerous, we were forced to go along with current myths or to be outsiders” (FTRR; 2112, 25443; Junie.txt). On the other hand, “each family member made its own choices and was encouraged to be honest with itself” (FTRR; 2112, 25443; Junie.txt). In her opinion, there were benefits to being sent to Sunday School because her “parents were lovey-dovey on Sunday after [they] got home, besides the ladies at church fussed

over” her and she was allowed to play with her cousin on the way home (BLH; 7582, 8033; Junie.txt).

A key individual in her life, Junie describes her mother as “a business woman – partner with my dad. She did firing, books, banking. Dad was a carpenter a boat-captain, cook, etc.” (BLH; 558, 1843; Junie.txt). Moreover, her “Mom was a ‘working woman’ and was misogynist toward mere ‘housewives’” (BLH; 4755, 4824; Junie.txt). On the other hand, Junie describes her father, who was also an important figure in her formative years, as the ‘nurturer’ who was responsible for passing on the traditions of the family. These traditions included “hospitality – independence – loyalty to family & friends – bugle on N. Y. eve – booze to cope to celebrate – civic involvement – aid to confused youth – political awareness – welcome to stranger – ‘Pass it on’” (BLH; 7207, 7419; Junie.txt). While she elaborates on few of these ‘traditions’, she did explain that her “father had a philosophy – Pass-it-on - he helped people in trouble for nothing and told them to help someone else on the way” (BLH; 2960, 4555; Junie.txt). As the youngest child and a female, Junie states that “as children [her older brothers] had more freedom, were encouraged to adventure, played hockey, [her] father drove the team to other towns. They had trucks, guns & holsters, bikes. Money was spent on the boys” (BLH; 2960, 4555; Junie.txt). In addition, her father made a point “of introducing [her] to interesting women he knew” for he wanted to ensure that she had models (BLH; 2960, 4555; Junie.txt). Hence, her brothers were provided with material benefits while she was afforded role models but few monetary rewards, as the youngest female child.

As a child, Junie did not begin attending a village school (3 rooms) until the age of seven because they had “moved to a roadside business in bush,” and her mother kept her home until then. A child who loved nature and freedom, this did not displease Junie and when she did finally attend school she reports that she “got the strap almost immediately because [she] punched D. R. for meanly tripping [her]” (BLH; 4891, 5910; Junie.txt). While she loved to read and did well in school as a result of the library at the back of the room, she “did not like the lack of freedom or authoritarianism & politics. [She] learned phoniness in school” (BLH; 4891, 5910; Junie.txt). In her response to the last fairy tale, she claims that “societal expectations were magnified by the

school system. The authoritarianism of schools discouraged in general creative problem solving or creative play” (FTRR; 21112, 25443; Junie.txt). Nevertheless, she continued her education and went on to Teacher’s College, returning to complete her B.A. and B.Ed. in 1990. Although her parents did not complete high school (her mother had grade 10 and her father grade 8), they were self-educated and self-motivated learners, a trait that has been passed on to Junie’s children as well. Indeed, her oldest brother joined the military and “achieved the height of brass for non-degree persons. He was an instructor a leader” (BLH; 4891, 5910; Junie.txt). It appears that education was a priority in her family and that children were expected to contribute to family life through chores while keeping up on current affairs through newspaper and radio News shows. With no TV, electricity, or running water, reading appears to have been an important activity for her “Dad ordered series of classics and Lane Grey westerns. [Her] Mom read current novels – The Whiteoaks of Jalna, Lady Chatterley, Yerby, etc. Dad read mainly non-fiction except for how-to humour and poetry which he read to [her]” (BLH; 6471, 7095; Junie.txt).

As an adult, Junie states that she was involved “in a long term passionate relationship late teens – early 20’s” but has been separated 23 years (BLH; 11346, 11656; Junie.txt). Becoming a “single parent by choice with 7 kids – not all by choice,” she moved from “a beautiful home in city neighbourhood” where she lived with her husband and children to a “duplex on an enclosed cul-de-sac...with bush nearby for kids” (BLH; 558, 1843; Junie.txt). As Junie writes later, “marriage was destructive to [her] personality. Societal expectations were magnified by the school system” (FTRR; 21112, 25443; Junie.txt). Hence, she feels that

there is a trend today to judge single parents and the poor, (too often they are the same group). A child who is flooded with middle class images, with talk of DisneyLand, Turkeys tends to be ashamed of the family’s vegetarianism, recycled furnishings, homemade pizza party. This undermines the family’s self-confidence, pride in resourcefulness

Love does not have to be administered to children by two individuals distinctly recognizable as one male, one female with different and clearly discernible roles. (Persons are not roles) (FTRR; 21112, 25443; Junie.txt).

Thus, while she assumed at first that fairy tales had not been part of her life story, Junie states emphatically that “they certainly were and the more I thought about it, the more - they were a part of my expectations of life (laughs) and I got disappointed (laughs)” (GDR; 1279, 2199; Session1.txt). In fact, she claims that she “just stopped recently waiting for uh, uh the father of [her] children to, uh, act decent” (GDR; 1279, 2199; Session1.txt). While this theme will be explored more fully in the chapter five, it seems that, for a practical woman who is a “do-it-yourselfer” by her own admission, fairy tales were a factor in her lived narrative (BLH; 2956, 4555; Junie.txt). Growing up in a large extended, loving family with a “different” way of life and limited outside influences, Junie can now see in retrospect that there were myths that helped constitute her subjective identity, and yet she feels

a little confused on a few things. Like [she] think[s she’s] too cynical to read this fairy tale stuff. And it seems to [her], there are fairy tales told today to children in school and that these different versions of these fairy tales manipulate people and... Are children manipulated in school? So you can see [she’s...she’s] having some puzzles here (GDR; 39338, 39679; Session2.txt).

Rosa

By way of introduction, Rosa claims that she was “the oldest of seven children, the first of the ‘domino’. Three boys followed and [she] was displaced” (RN, 4). To account for her interest in the research project, Rosa says that “as for magic, it is an experience of life, especially the interior life of story, and adventure is part of the tales, but removed” (RN, 4). While she was a member of a religious convent formerly, she is working in a home for the aged at this point in her life story.

The youngest of the senior women, Rosa writes in her brief life history that she grew up in “a farm house. big, brick – high ceilinged & quite cold in winter” situated near “a big pasture with ponds for the livestock; cows, sheep, sometimes horses - work horses” (BLH; 535, 1213; Rosa.txt). Attending a “one-room country school” from grade one to eight, she enjoyed school

“in great washes – as a tide,” especially in the afternoon when the teacher read stories (BLH; 2945, 3511; Rosa.txt). As she writes, “this was the quietest time – during the day – just one voice reading, another kind of ebb and flow” (BLH; 2945, 3411; Rosa.txt). Their life on the farm, however, was rather isolated from the outside world aside from school or church functions. Living with her parents and an uncle before attending school, “weeks might go by & we would not see anyone outside the family members – except for Sunday morning drive into village for Mass & ‘drop in’ visit at my mother’s parents just outside the village” (BLH; 535, 1213; Rosa.txt).

As the oldest child with three brothers and three sisters who were born after she started school, Rosa was “bumped out of a comfortable ‘first-born’ position in the household” by a young girl who came to them from the Children’s Aid (BLH; 1700, 2686; Rosa.txt). Her memories of “childhood and family life [were]: tumult,” which seems to indicate that with so many children and a busy farm life, there was little time for quiet or reflection (BLH; 4332, 5665; Rosa.txt). Although all children had chores and duties “as they came able,” she remembers playing pretend games of cowboys and Indians with her siblings “on Sunday Afternoons & during the year when not working with chores etc.” (BLH; 5845, 5984; Rosa.txt). And in the evening they “played outside well past dark, pillow fights – feathers all over the yard in the morning! – huge fox and goose games in winter” (BLH; 4332, 5665; Rosa.txt). When she found some ‘time alone’, however, she read books and read to the others as well.

Before getting “electricity & a G.E. TV in 1954, late summer,” the family “listened to the radio in the evenings – Saturday morning Children’s programming” (BLH; 4332, 5665; Rosa.txt). In addition to games with her siblings as well as household chores and duties on the farm, religion seems to have played a significant role in Rosa’s life as a child. Because her mother “was – still is a ‘strong-willed’ woman”, the whole family was required to take part as “Mom said the rosary, with everyone down on their knees including Uncle Johnnie until his arthritis was too incapacitating” (BLH; 4332, 5665; Rosa.txt). At times, this ritual would take place “with Mom in tears because dad & mom had ‘disagreements with loud words’,” a scenario that would always prompt an apology from her father (BLH; 4332, 5665; Rosa.txt).

Rosa helped her mother bake bread “twice a week through the 1950’s” and the cardinal rule was that she was not to step on any bread-crumbs that fell on the floor for “it was somehow ‘sacrilegious!’” (BLH; 4332, 5665; Rosa.txt). When the weather was “particularly stormy” moreover, her mother “would bless the house with holy water invoking protection with prayers – [they] all felt more cared for, as [she] remembers the feeling – ‘like those in heaven really care about us.’” (BLH; 4332, 5665; Rosa.txt). Rosa claims that she has “not ever been in a long term relationship or married” (BLH; 7420, 7482; Rosa.txt). As she explains in session one, she has “always been – never really lived out the sense that I was waiting – waiting to marry” (GDR; 4353, 5535; Session1.txt). Possibly because of such influences, Rosa states that she was “more inclined to think along [the lines of] becoming a nun and [she] did try that for some while” (GDR; 4353, 5535; Session1.txt).

In regards to fairy tale influences, Rosa states in her BLH that

we were introduced to fairy tales and fables during that reading period after lunch at school. This is crucial to the ‘heard’ or listened for narrative – for that sense of gathering in, or understanding of the personal connections we craft with our lives, whether clumsy or awkward or grace-filled and ‘just exactly right’ for the moment. (BLH; 6604, 7315; Rosa.txt).

Rosa does not identify, therefore, with the young lady or princess waiting to be rescued by marriage to a young man or prince because “the fairy tale that, um, or the other way of living that appealed to [her] was the story of a person who could always count on being safe in [her] journey” (GDR; 4353, 5535; Session1.txt). And as a child she “felt like an ugly duckling type – like maybe there was more-to-come & to be patient – it just took time” (BLH; 6604, 7315; Rosa.txt). Hence she feels that she is “wondering how alive fairy tales are for [her];” that is, how effective fairy tale influences are in her life. However, her comments seem to indicate that they may indeed have been influential in constituting her subjectivity and affecting her life choices (GDR; 4353, 5535; Session1.txt).

Sunshine

In the pre-session, Sunshine introduced herself as “a volunteer in a community centre” (RN, 8). She also mentioned that she has a four year old handicapped child and would like to become a kindergarten teacher when she finishes her high school equivalency. Sunshine did not elaborate on her reasons for attending the pre-session but her association with and respect for another participant may have been a factor in her decision to participate in the research sessions. In fact, her only means of attending the sessions depended upon transportation provided by another participant.

In her BLH, Sunshine states that her parents divorced when she was eight years old and she lived with her father and younger brother after their separation. Both parents have remarried so that she has half sisters from her mother’s second marriage and has had a succession of stepmothers from her father’s subsequent marriages (four times she claims). It seems that she had very little security as a child growing up in a home that seldom remained stationary. She writes that she “always lived in a house in the city. Yes, [her] family lived in ten different homes” (BLH; 531, 708; Sunshine.txt). She attended a Catholic grade school until grade 5 and then was placed in a public school by her father. Thus, she did not attend the same school system throughout her childhood. She is currently completing her high school diploma at the Adult High School.

Sunshine states that she has been married for over six years and that her and her husband have a handicapped daughter. She writes that

the relationship was similar to a Cinderella story. Now I feel as if it is falling down around me. Not knowing what or who I am in life. I feel that I was a good wife and mother, every thing that I was taught to be. (BLH; 3669, 3961; Sunshine.txt)

After completing the BLH and attending the first three sessions of the research study, Sunshine only completed one of the fairy tale response sheets and did not return to complete the final response sheets or the fairy tale rewrite. Her written responses tended to contain very little detail other than the bare facts. Although she contributed to group discussions, her remarks revolved upon her father’s remarriages and the difficulties of getting along with so many stepmothers. As

the mother of a handicapped child and a young woman completing her high school diploma, her participation in the research may have occurred at a time in her life when she was unprepared to consider influences that may have helped her to arrive at her present situation. Her main concerns in discussing fairy tales pertained to selecting appropriate fairy tales to read to her daughter, and what fairy tales were read to her in her childhood.

Sunshine could not remember hearing fairy tales as a child, nor could her mother remember, and this “shows you that fairy tales meant really nothing to me if [she] couldn’t remember” (GDR; 1103, 1478; Session2.txt). On the other hand, she describes her married relationship as “similar to a Cinderella story” that now seems to be less than the ‘happily ever after’ scenario that the tale promises (BLH; 3669, 3961; Sunshine.txt). In her BLH, Sunshine writes that her mother read “Cinderella, Princess and the Pea, and Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs” to her as a child (BLH; 3463, 3562; Sunshine.txt). During session one discussion, Sunshine mentions “Rapunzel’, the lady locked in the tower” (GDR; 113634, 13980; Session1.txt) during her check-in and “The Ugly Duckling” (GDR; 14528, 14571; Session1.txt) in discussing tales suitable for her daughter. From such remarks, it appears that fairy tales may have been a factor in her life or, at the very least, may have provided a means of taking stock of her life and seeking solutions to problems related to her daughter. Further analysis may tease out some of these dynamics.

Tzipora

To introduce herself in the pre-session, Tzipora mentions that she has “brought up two children alone” (RN, 4). She states that she “didn’t read fairy tales until she had children, when [she] read to her children - also watched movies with [her] children” (RN, 3). Because her children informed her that fairy tales “were garbage, [she] wants to see where they got this idea from,” which explains her reason to participate in the research project (RN, 3). Tzipora also points out that she “is still waiting for her prince” (RN, 3).

Tzipora claims that she lived with her parents and one older brother in a family headed by her mother. Because her father was an immigrant of Romanian nationality, Tzipora asserts that he

was “fortunate to have a ‘Canadian’ wife” (BLH; 1852, 2943; Tzipora.txt) and thus she was “the only child among [her] friends who had a Canadian-born Mother” (BLH; 539, 1363; Tzipora.txt). Like Hazel, her life was affected by the Second World War but not in the same way because, as she points out, “after the war the Jews were released from their repression” (BLH; 539, 1363; Tzipora.txt). They lived in a small apartment above a hardware store, but when she was “about 5 [they] lived in [her] grandmothers home in Toronto (about 1937). It was a financially bad time for [her family]” (BLH; 539, 1363; Tzipora.txt). It was around 1937 that the Second World War was beginning to have an effect on countries allied with Britain, like Canada. The ending of the war may have helped alleviate the hard times for her family, in addition to alleviating conditions for Jewish people, for when she moved back to Ottawa again, she says that her family owned and operated a grocery store/restaurant for the next 17 years. Eventually buying a duplex and renting the downstairs, her family had no books in the house but Tzipora writes that she lived “2 doors from a movie theatre and [she] saw every movie that was ever made” (BLH; 539, 1363; Tzipora.txt).

While there were problems with her family, according to Tzipora, “the good part of [her] childhood was fish[ing] Sun. mornings with [her] Dad & his cronies” (BLH; 4989, 5537; Tzipora.txt). However, when she reached puberty this came to an end because her “Dad was uncomfortable with [her]” at that point (BLH; 4989, 5537; Tzipora.txt). Her parents were ‘hard-working’ and industrious but it seems that “they both had tempers & took out their frustrations on the kids” (BLH; 1852, 2943; Tzipora.txt). Tzipora states that she “was abused till [she] was 21” (BLH; 1852, 2943; Tzipora.txt) and she recalls “a lot of yelling & hitting & punishment & fear” (BLH; 3204, 4158; Tzipora.txt). From her perspective, her “parents believed a girl didn’t need an education – she just needed to get married & live happily ever after” (BLH; 1852, 2943; Tzipora.txt). Told that she could only be successful if she was married, “[Tzipora] dated a lot of boys between 16 and 22. [Her] Mother nagged [her] to get married” (BLH; 1852, 2943; Tzipora.txt). Therefore, Tzipora was encouraged to complete her education at the High School of Commerce in secretarial skills, while her brother was probably encouraged and supported on his way to becoming a lawyer. In addition, Tzipora claims that her parents did not follow the traditions

of the Jewish faith for “they did not follow the dietary laws [and] were dishonest about ‘keeping Kosher’...[going] to synagogue only once a year” (BLH; 4989, 5537; Tzipora.txt). While there are “many ‘levels’ & ‘degrees’” of the Jewish religion, her family’s history of religious practice has turned problematic since her daughter “has turned ultra orthodox & has moved to Israel with her husband and 3 children” (BLH; 4989, 5537; Tzipora.txt).

Acknowledging that “a higher education would have helped [her] plan [her] future. [For she has] lived from day to day,” it is hardly surprising that she may have turned to fairy tales to make her situation seem more tenable (BLH; 3204, 4158; Tzipora.txt). As she states in session one, “I feel that I was brought up by...with Cinderella, uhh, dreams. I married at what I consider late in life – 23 – mother was pulling out her hair by then” (GDR; 2803, 3632; Session1.txt). And so, she married after working briefly at the City of Ottawa Water Works Dept. as a secretary and had her first child two years later. By the fourth year of her marriage, however, she “went for counselling & now at 66 [she’s] still going” (BLH; 1852, 2943; Tzipora.txt). Tzipora states that she found her marriage of fourteen years to be “a major mistake” from which she has only started to recover in the past year. Moreover, she feels that she might “revert back to her ‘subservient’ ways if ever [she] met a man [she] was physically attracted to” (BLH; 1852, 2943; Tzipora.txt). About five years after her marriage ended, her first born son died at the age of 17 in a bicycle accident. According to Tzipora, it took her “20 yrs to recognize that she was fortunate to have had a son for 17 yrs” (BLH; 6433, 6836; Tzipora.txt). Now an avid sailor, she states that she thinks most men are weak and dependent and thought of herself “the same way until recently” (BLH; 6433, 6936; Tzipora.txt). On the other hand, she now has three male friends with whom she sails but who have other commitments and she finds this arrangement satisfying and trouble-free.

While she ‘knew’ that she was a fairy tale reader, Tzipora does not recall actually reading fairy tales but spent a great deal of time at the movie theatre that was just down the street. In her opinion, movies were the ‘tales’ that helped form her sense of self and desires. From her experiences as a child and the expectations of those individuals whose actions were crucial to her survival, she learned that she was only valuable as long as she followed strict guidelines of their

devising. Thus, while it was not fairy tales in the literal sense that served to constitute her subjectivity, it seems that fairy tale motifs in movies that depicted Roy Rogers sweeping Dale Evans off her feet and fairy tale gender roles were implicated in her disappointment with her lived narrative. She feels that she is finally learning to value herself above the opinions of others, although she writes that she still has “hopes that some day [she’ll] meet a man who would ‘treasure’ [her] & [she’d] have companion/friend who [she] could trust. Someday, when [she] grows up” (BLH; 5719, 5866; Tzipora.txt). But that is another story for another day....

Jane (researcher)

In the pre-session introduction, I informed the participants of the events that sparked my interest in the topic of fairy tales in the lives of women. As a woman who had married despite knowing that the chances of compatibility were slim at best, I was determined to do it all myself when the marriage ended. With only minimal support from my ex-husband, I raised three children as I ran two businesses and managed other family business as well. When that situation was no longer tenable, I returned to full time study to complete my university degree while helping my children do the same thing. As I approached the completion of my M.Ed., I realized with a shock that I had unwittingly taken it all upon myself “Just like Henny Penny!” In fact, a conversation with my younger sister who had done much the same thing provided the incentive to delve deeper into this matter. Having grown up with few illusions about the hard realities of life, no great liking for fairy tales, and no faith in ‘happily ever after’, I could not help but wonder how it happened that I had bought into the myths and fashioned my life after tales that I could scarcely abide reading. This was a question, therefore, that I had to attempt to answer.

While my personal position on the matter of fairy tales in women’s lives will/has no doubt become apparent through the writing of this paper, I would like to add a few clarifications at this point. I feel that subjectivity is discursively produced through social, historical, and cultural contexts that are in turn produced through discourses at many levels. Thus, there are no absolutes and no means to prove whether fairy tales constitute subjectivities that in turn constitute fairy tales,

and so on. Because we create who we think we are from culturally available discourses – the stories that we are told – from parents, friends, lovers, or fairy tales, I believe that fairy tales certainly form a part of these discursive practices and thus cannot fail to influence our lives and identity formation. And over the course of this research, I have been continually amazed at the barrage of fairy tale motifs found in everyday usage – in music, stories, movies, advertising, art, and so on. Like many of the participants in this study, I do not recall anyone reading fairy tales to me but I certainly have not forgotten the messages that they promoted and I resisted.

Agnes (gatekeeper)

In qualitative research, a gatekeeper capable of gaining access to a venue for the study is often a valuable component of the project. Agnes served not only as the gatekeeper but also as the instigator for considering the Centre as a possible site for the study. She was instrumental as well in recruiting women who might be interested in the study through her membership in the Centre. In her introduction, Agnes stated that she has experience as a coordinator, manager, and counselor, skills that were certainly visible during this project for she helped organize the sessions, often taking care of the mundane details. Agnes did not participate fully in the sessions but her comments and clarifications sparked discussion at times. Her presence, therefore, generally enhanced the discussions and occasionally disrupted the status quo, which proved edifying and benefited the course of the proceedings.

Cross-Case Comparison of Contexts

While most researchers agree that fairy tales never lose their appeal or fascination, this applies only providing individuals have access to fairy tales in the first place. To investigate the construction of subjective identity and the effects of fairy tale discourses upon the lives of participants, the factors to be considered include the social, historical, and cultural contexts

(Contexts) in which each participant found herself⁷. Integral to the consideration of fairy tale influences on individuals then are external factors in the life of each person that include the influences of family, home life, and childhood activities; education and training; models and relationships; as well as society, culture, and religion. In addition, under the category of society, culture, and religion, I consider the influences of gender biases and stereotypes, domination, as well as whether fairy tales, stories and fantasy were available to the individual are factors likely to have importance in the type and parameters of fairy tale influences. These are factors that set the stage for an individual to adopt a personal position that she calls her Self or ‘the person she perceives herself to be’ and from which she acts in, and interacts with, the world around her.

To interpret participant data, therefore, I sought first of all to understand the positions of the participants based on the Contexts that have affected and continue to impact the lives of each participant. In the preceding section, the Contexts that positioned participants, and in which participants positioned themselves, were described and analyzed individually. Cross-case analysis compares these Contexts across the seven cases and analyzes them in preparation for thematic analysis of the personal positions (Positions) articulated by participants in chapter 4. While it is impossible to know all the factors that influence an individual or that constitute subjectivity, the brief life histories completed by each participant in this research can serve as a starting point in this regard. In addition to the brief life histories then, this comparison considers categories derived from group discussions that often revealed additional information that was not always supplied in the BLH. As well, participants’ reading responses to the reading of three versions of one fairy tale during the sessions, the final fairy tale rewrites submitted by participants, and the final evaluations of the research completed by participants will be discussed and compared with the preceding material. These factors are discussed across cases but in less detail than was offered in the previous section. Because participants were not required to submit responses in order to attend sessions, some participants did not elect to complete all segments of the data as the research study was

⁷ Because the participants in this research project were all female, I will use third person, feminine pronouns throughout in reference to participants of this study.

designed. Hence, discussion of Contexts will focus on the four participants who did complete all the responses but will also consider contributions from the remaining three participants according to their individual submissions and responses.

Family, Home Life, and Childhood Activities

The influences of family, home, and childhood factors upon participants in this study were widely divergent. Two senior participants were raised by families who made their living off the land – Rosa grew up on a farm in Ontario and Alternate hailed from an Irish farming family. As well both of these women came from large families, Rosa was the first of seven children while Alternate was the last of nine children. For these two women, home life was fairly stable but busy and chaotic with families who made their living from the land. While these women did not choose the same paths in constructing their lived narratives, neither did they choose to follow the traditional route for women of marriage and raising children. Rosa chose to follow a life of quiet harmony and security in a religious order for some time, and Alternate chose to seek out adventure in a life that included romance, travel, and career. As the oldest daughter in a family in which her ‘strong-willed’ mother used religion and myth to dominate the family, Rosa’s chores most likely included assisting in the care of her younger siblings in addition to reading to them and baking bread for the family as she mentions. Her choice to follow a religious life where her position in the order would not be pre-empted by new or younger novitiates, as it was by younger siblings and a foster child, seems hardly surprising. Moreover, she would be under the protection of the Church so that her personal needs would be taken care of at all times. As the youngest child, on the other hand, Alternate had to fight for her place in the family and felt that she was always being ‘thumped’ by older siblings. Her choice to follow a path of independence and adventure with no children or married partner to restrict her choices seems entirely logical given the circumstances of her early experiences. This was especially true in light of the fact that her parents encouraged her and her sisters to be self-sufficient and ambitious.

Also a senior participant, Junie's early years were spent in Northern Ontario where her family moved from rural to urban homes of various descriptions, and often with few conveniences, because her father was a builder who often sold homes out from under the family. Despite frequent moves, however, Junie claims that her extended family provided safety and traditions that "controlled the family style" (BLH; 558, 1843; Junie.txt). And while her father provided nurturing and introduced her to role models to emulate, Junie's mother was in fact his business partner who took care of the books and business routines, and seems to have been a rival for Junie. Although Junie claims that she was "surrounded by people who loved [her]" (BLH; 2268, 2885; Junie.txt) and was made a fuss of by members of the Church, she writes that she "was often alone in bush" where she constantly engaged in ongoing "stories in [her]head," for extended periods of time (BLH; 8215, 9370; Junie.txt). It seems possible, therefore, that Junie may have received special consideration and attention from family and community, but also suffered some isolation, as the youngest and possibly more protected girl-child.

Two other senior women were born during the Depression and grew up in a city environment through the Second World War and its aftermath. However Hazel lived in the same house in Ottawa for seventeen years, while Tzipora's family moved to Toronto to live with her grandmother for a few years when times were hard, and then moved back to Ottawa to run a grocery store and restaurant. Encountering some rough times as children, Hazel mentions that her father went off to war and she landed in the hospital for a year, while Tzipora tells how the tempers of her parents resulted in "yelling & hitting & punishment & fear" in her recollections (BLH; 3204, 4158, Tzipora.txt). Hence, the dynamics in their families were very different for, while Hazel was protected to the point of being stifled, Tzipora learned that if "she had a thought of [her] own [she] would be punished & nothing good would ever happen to her" (FTRR; 10663, 11290, Tzipora.txt). Because her mother was the stronger individual within the family, Hazel found it difficult to escape her mother's protective gaze, while her father helped her to get into a line of work that was more to her liking. Tzipora's mother was in charge as well because her hard-working immigrant father "was fortunate to have a Canadian wife" (BLH; 1852, 2943, Tzipora.txt). Moreover, while

Tzipora's mother encouraged her to date many young men in order to find a husband early, Hazel's mother was opposed to her marriage to the young man that she fancied.

For the two junior women in the group, there were similarities in their family and home situations, as well as differences. Empress spent part of her childhood in Switzerland and the balance in the city of Ottawa, while Sunshine spent her life in Ottawa but moved frequently, living in ten different homes over the course of her youth. Both Empress and Sunshine came from families that had separated and divorced but, while Sunshine lived with her father, Empress lived with her mother after the separation. As the oldest children in their respective families, both women suffered from the parental break-up in similar ways but for different reasons. While Sunshine encountered a succession of stepmothers who seldom took an interest in her or provided continuity, Empress faced a family life that was uncomfortable and unstable for those involved. Stating that she "was thrown out in her teens," she grew up feeling homeless and unwanted as a result (GDR; 15678, 15705; Session2.txt). Moreover their life stories followed very different paths for, although each has one child, Sunshine has been married for over six years while Empress has never married and doubts that she ever will because her parents' problems gave her "a bit too much fear" (GDR; 15435, 17240; Session1.txt).

Childhood activities reported by the senior women were often very similar for they grew up in an era when TV was only available in limited supply and then with fewer programs. For most senior participants as well, family life required that all family members contribute to the family enterprise, especially for those who lived in rural areas. Hence for Rosa and Alternate, children were expected to share the load of family chores on the farm while Junie writes that, as children, they were assigned chores in the home to help a family involved in business and survival in a rugged environment. Life, for these women, was often so busy with chores and duties that reading and listening to radio were often the leisure activities of choice, with reading rated highest since it was possible to hide from the hurly-burly "often neglecting ... chores," as Alternate admits (BLH; 3383, 4111; Alternate.txt).

On the other hand, Hazel and Tzipora lived in a city environment with access to more amenities but perhaps lacking some of the cohesiveness that characterizes families that work together. Childhood activities for Hazel consisted of playing with friends from school and hanging out with her brothers' friends, while Tzipora recalls spending a great deal of time at the movies, possibly to escape the negativity at home. However, childhood experiences for the junior women were generally far different because they grew up with TV as an integral part of life. While Sunshine "didn't watch much TV...[but recalls] watching Sesame Street Poke a Dot Door and Hammy Hamster," she had far more exposure to the media than the senior women encountered (BLH; 4117, 4610; Sunshine.txt). Empress mentions little about childhood activities of any kind, stating only that she was "involved in a lot of sports, traveled a lot and was exposed to many different cultures" (BLH; 3034, 3309; Empress.txt). Like other women in the group, she may have forgotten or suppressed information on childhood activities, along with more troublesome memories, or feels that there is nothing of interest to recall or discuss. While she also states that she "did not play 'make believe' games," she did engage her imagination in contemplating a 'prince' who would rescue her from a situation that she found intolerable (BLH; 3490, 3629; Empress.txt).

Early family life then, for the women involved in the study, was often fraught with the harsh realities of early separations or financial difficulties incurred while the families were trying to survive in harsh times or surroundings. As well, many of the women refer to mothers who were dominant in the family, in the cases of the senior women, or single and struggling, in the case of the junior women. Although their situations were often very dissimilar, many of the women speak of difficult family situations that sometimes included mistreatment by parents or siblings, over protection by family members, isolation by chance or environment, and/or being ignored or deposed by younger siblings, parents, or other family members. Childhood activities for the senior women generally involved elements of fantasy or imaginative play, while the junior women seem to avoid or repress any mention of such activities. Their responses, however, suggest the possibility that flights of fancy may be implicit in ideas like Sunshine's 'man under the bed' or Empress' prince-ly rescue.

Hence, it seems that most of the women engaged in activities that involved their imagination like reading, movies or television, and/or creative play to ameliorate the conditions of their lives.

Education and Training

Education and training factors in participants' lives were also widely discrepant although most had some post-secondary education. With three years high school, Alternate pursued a career as a political reporter and kept taking courses both "academic and otherwise" (BLH; 1968, 2560; Alternate.txt). Hazel did not complete high school but trained as a radio technician and then returned to college and university, taking courses until she was in her forties. Junie not only had access to a career with her teaching certificate but incentive to complete her BA and B.Ed. degree, which she did in 1990. And with a family that emphasized civic involvement and awareness of the political and societal scene, it is not surprising that Junie chose to become a single parent when her marriage did not turn out as expected.

On the other hand, Rosa chose a more sheltered route in a religious order and returned to college at a later date to acquire an occupation when the cloistered life no longer met her needs. Tzipora completed her education at the High School of Commerce in a secretarial program and worked in that field for a time. However, she attributes the fact that she has lived from day to day to her parents' disbelief that "a girl needed an education," (BLH; 1852, 2943; Tzipora.txt). For Empress, education represented a means to ensure that she would never be at the mercy of 'a heartless tyrant' again. Attaining her BA in psychology, however, did not translate into a career and she is still trying to resolve the contradictions in her life. As the youngest participant, Sunshine is currently completing her high school equivalency and seems to be searching for goals to mend a life that once resembled 'a Cinderella story.'

Thus, for the women in this study, the interpretive community represented a means to an end that was not always accessible to some of the women in the senior group until they returned to school as adults to achieve goals not possible at a younger age. This was often due to the fact that, for many of the women, especially those in the senior group, there were often few opportunities

available to them because of their gender and position in the family. As a result, although they had access to education and training, these often did not allow the women to opt for a career of choice without substantial sacrifice of other life options. Hence, the women often viewed their choices as being between life styles that included partnership and children or a single state with a career or vocation. Educational choices for the junior women, on the other hand, were not as clear-cut and prescribed, but economic factors and family expectations still offered few options for female children, a fact that also served to limit their choices in life. As Sunshine puts it, she married and tried to be "every thing that [she] was taught to be" (BLH; 3669, 3961; Sunshine.txt).

Models and Relationships

The influences of role models and relationships in the lives of participants are factors certain to affect the constitution of subjectivities. As Alternate mentions, her father was the head of the household but her mother provided the strength in the family. Because her parents were not pushing their female children towards marriage and children, she credits them with fostering the independence and self-supportiveness that has allowed her to follow a life that few women her age could consider – a life free from children and the responsibilities of a family.

For Empress however, her father qualifies as the kind of model that she wanted to avoid because he oppressed her mother with his determination to have a boy, and with priorities of career and money that left little time for family. On the other hand, her mother was influential because she 'always encouraged' her to seek a better life than she had taken on herself. Although her mother "had a lot of dreams," Empress says that her mother was not able to pursue her goals until more recent times but now "she's actually starting to do things that she enjoys" (GDR; 17277, 19161; Session1.txt). For Sunshine, however, significant role models were either absent or unavailable because her father was seldom around, her mother had relinquished custody of her, and the succession of stepmothers seldom showed much interest in her as a child. As she mentions, only "the third one, cause she was as good as my mother in things that I needed when I was hitting puberty" (GDR; 20411, 20523; Session2.txt).

From Hazel's perspective, her mother served as an important model because of her protection of Hazel who had ill health as a child. As she states in her fairy tale rewrite, "Hazel was totally dominated by her mother and lived a very restrictive life" (FTRW; 19298, 26520; Hazel.txt). For Junie however, it was her father who upheld traditions that made family life more inclusive and vibrant, and made a point of introducing her to interesting women because he wanted her to have female role models. On the other hand, her mother took care of the family business transactions and appeared, from Junie's perspective, to be "misogynist toward mere 'housewives'" (BLH; 4755, 4824; Junie.txt). Junie suggests that she holds different ideals and appears less than pleased when her mother moves in with her after separating from her father. Thus, not long after she acquired an apartment of her own that afforded an escape from parental supervision and provided a stable and comfortable home base for Junie, the woman who she describes as her rival arrives to possibly alienate her from her father.

Rosa also reported that her mother was known for her strong-will and ability to wield considerable influence. Unlike Empress's mother whose pregnancies rendered her bedridden, Rosa's mother had six children over a span of thirteen years while maintaining her control over family life. Tzipora also had a powerful mother who 'nagged her' to get married and likely denigrated her desire for higher education as unnecessary for a girl destined for married life.

From the perceptions of the women in this study therefore, the role models available to them were often intimately linked to those provided by their strong-willed mothers, whether these were the models that they wanted to emulate or to resist. And it appears from their comments that many of the senior women attempted to resist the models presented by the strong women in their lives, for they often pursued different lived narratives or rejected the life choices available. Fathers, however, were often perceived as either nurturant, rule-makers or less intrusive, ineffective paternal symbols in early family life. In the estimation of the junior women on the other hand, their mothers were either absent and unsympathetic, or overburdened and ill-treated, while their fathers assumed much more influential roles in their lives and/or life choices. Despite their rejection or disapproval of the strong women who affected their lives, however, it appears that many of the senior women may have

replicated the qualities discernible in their descriptions of their mothers within their own subjective identities. Hence, they have become strong in their own right although not always in the same contexts.

Society, Culture, and Religion

As one form of societal and cultural influences, religious influences also played a role in forming the subjective identity of some participants. Hazel's parents were of different religions and she was raised in both Catholic and Protestant traditions. She does not indicate how that may have affected her present reality however. Tzipora claims that, because her family was Jewish but did not follow the traditions, she has still not solved her religious contradictions. In addition, she hints that the Second World War influenced her life for "after the war Jews were released from their repression" (BLH; 539, 1363; Tzipora.txt).

For Junie, on the other hand, religion seemed to be a "good thing because [her] parents were lovey-dovey on Sunday after [they] got home," she was "fussed over" by the church ladies, and she had time to play with her close cousin after the service (BLH; 7582, 8033; Junie.txt). For Rosa, religion had special significance because her mother insisted on religious practices that all family members were expected to observe. Hence, saying the rosary on their knees, blessing the house during violent storms, and never stepping on bread crumbs that fell on the floor were rituals that made them feel "like those in heaven really cared" (BLH; 4332, 5665; Rosa.txt). At a younger age, attending church held special significance since the family seldom saw "anyone outside the family members" at any other time (BLH; 535, 1213; Rosa.txt). The remaining participants did not allude specifically to religious influences in their lives.

The influences of society and culture also include such factors as who was actually the head of the household and who gets power or is suppressed within a society or culture. Alternate stated that her father was the head of the household because "that's the way it was 70 years ago" (BLH; 1208, 1707; Alternate.txt). While Alternate claims that the women in her family were more intelligent than the men, she points out that "the boys became the rich ones. Sign of the times"

(BLH; 1968, 2560; Alternate.txt). Given more freedom, according to Alternate and Hazel, and more money and opportunity, according to Junie and Tzipora, it appears that boys definitely had advantages over girls according to the senior women in this study. Such influences were not ameliorated in the lives of junior participants however, for Sunshine writes that her brother had fewer chores to perform, while Empress mentions her father's determination to have a son despite the dangers of pregnancy on the health of his wife and mother to his three daughters.

For the women in this study, religious and societal factors determined where their loyalties should be directed and who in fact had power over their lives within the family. As participants showed in their responses, religious influences restricted their lives while societal factors allowed male family members to have special privileges. Allied to these influences are factors that include gender biases and stereotypes, domination, as well as the influences of fairy tales, stories and fantasies, all of which relate to the external ideational influences affecting subjective identity formation in participants' lives.

Gender Biases and Stereotypes.

Most of the women who participated in this study agree with Alternate's claim that "the boys were treated better than the girls. They were given more freedom, probably because they were earning sooner & also 'that's the way it was' in those days" (BLH; 3383, 4111; Alternate.txt). Hence, biases and stereotypes, especially gender biases, were alive and well in the lives of participants. Some participants resisted this by following the leaders and, as Empress states, doing "all the boy's things. I played hockey, I was a tomboy" (GDR; 15435, 17240; Session1.txt). For other participants, however, this was not considered an option. Although Tzipora claims that she was "treated ... like 'one of the boys'" by her many boyfriends, in the end she bowed to the pressure and "married a good looking man" (GDR; 2803, 3632; Session1.txt).

While gender biases determined the level of women's education and aspirations acceptable in society, stereotypes about the kinds of lives they could lead also influenced the formation of subjective identity. Many followed role models like Empress whose mother was "a traditional, religious, people pleaser ...[and she] became a compassionate people pleaser, " (BLH; 3034, 3309;

Empress.txt) or like Alternate whose “mother was the Strength” and she became strongly independent (BLH; 1208, 1707; Alternate.txt). Others resisted the models, like Junie who rejected her mother’s critical attitude towards ‘mere housewives,’ but she became independent, self-supportive, and a life-long learner much like her mother who took care of the family business.

Such biases also affected their perspectives on societal institutions like marriage, which was seen as problematic for participants so that some women opted to forego it altogether, as Alternate, Rosa, and Empress hinted. And for those that married, the institution often did not measure up to their ideals. Sunshine illustrates this when she writes that she feels “it is falling down around her” (BLH; 3463, 3562; Sunshine.txt). Likewise, Hazel states that she is currently married to her second husband but has “a poor opinion of men [who] are self centered and egotistical” (BLH; 5936, 6166; Hazel.txt). Junie remarks that “marriage was destructive to [her] personality,” (GDR; 21112, 25443; Junie.txt), while Tzipora writes “this (marriage) was a major mistake” (BLH; 1852, 2943; Tzipora.txt).

Thus there were societal influences in the form of gender biases and stereotypes at work in the subjective identities and life choices that both senior and junior participants were able to formulate. While these factors limited the options available, they also served to inspire the women to resist the models available to them. Despite their resistance, however, it appears that most of the women incorporated aspects of the conventional models available, sometimes with the idea that they might change the outcomes to suit their desires. For most of the women, however, this was not possible and they became disillusioned with societal expectations that promised women who were “good and did all the right things...would be rewarded and live happily ever after,” as Empress writes (ER; 15854, 15982; Empress.txt).

Domination.

Such influences indicate that domination also affected subjective identity formation in participants, especially in the form of male domination that was an accepted part of the ‘way it was,’ as Alternate states. Alternate explains that she never married for she “didn’t grow up with any great illusions about men” and she was “taught to be independent and self-supporting,.” However

she is not sure if this accounts for her single state, and indeed she feels “the right man would have turned all that around” (GDR; 8409, 11469; Session1.txt). Other participants attempted to correct male domination by remaining single only to find that “relationships [with men] were controlling and emotionally/verbally abusive,” as Empress wrote (BLH; 4489, 4642, Empress.txt).

On the other hand, Hazel claims that she was dominated by her mother who would not allow her to “go anywhere without one of them [her brothers] tagging along” (BLH; 3392, 4300; Hazel.txt). In fact her mother tried to convince her to marry “the son of a friend of hers” because she “was impressed by his family’s wealth and position in society” (FTRW; 19298, 26520; Hazel.txt). In Junie’s case, domination occurred at school where she “got the strap almost immediately” for defending herself (BLH; 4891, 5910; Junie.txt). Likewise, Rosa mentions the power her mother wielded over family members as they said “the rosary with Mom in tears” (BLH; 4332, 5665; Rosa.txt), while Tzipora mentions her parents’ tempers that were vented on her brother and herself until she reached the age of 21. In addition, Tzipora alludes to the effects of societal domination of certain religious and/or cultural groups in her statement that life improved after the war when “Jews were released from their repression” (BLH; 539, 1363; Tzipora.txt).

Thus, participants also indicate that they were influenced by individuals who dominated their lives and influenced their life choices. In some cases, domination emanated from societal institutions that replicate what society deems acceptable in the social surround. Because this often took the form of male or gender domination, it is hardly surprising that the women in this study may have turned to fairy tales and stories to ameliorate the conditions of their lived realities.

Fairy Tales, Stories, and Fantasy.

Like the preceding external factors, the influence of fairy tales, stories, and fantasy on subjective identity formation cannot be discounted for, as many researchers posit, individuals construct their subjective identity from the stories that they hear as they learn to speak and write themselves into being. Research claims as well that stories affect subjectivity and lived narratives whether individuals resist or conform and often work most effectively when people are unaware of the source of the messages transmitted. Thus, while few of the participants actually recall anyone

reading fairy tales to them, most would agree that the tales affected their life expectations and identities.

Tzipora states, “I knew I was a fairy tale reader” (GDR; 2336, 2917; Session2.txt), but she does not recall reading or hearing fairy tales as a child. Recalling a poem that her father told her about a frog that met an unhappy fate, she claims that she was brought up with “Cinderella, uhh, dreams” of marriage to a ‘good-looking man’ who would rescue her from a life she found equally unhappy. However, these dreams were not realized in her life for, although she married an attractive man, they did not live happily ever after and she “had many disappointments” (GDR; 2803, 3632; Session1.txt). For Empress, Cinderella typified her “mother’s life and it hit [her] in a negative way” making her “afraid of commitment so [she] had to be in control” (GDR; 15435, 17240; Session1.txt). Similarly Hazel does not recall hearing or reading fairy tales in her youth, but remembers reading her brothers’ adventure and comic books. Nevertheless, she loves “children’s stories and...and fairy tales” (GDR; 5968, 8385; Session1.txt) and, given a book of children’s poetry by Robert Louis Stevenson at the age of ten, she “devoured it” (GDR; 5968, 8385; Session1.txt). As an adult, she began to collect children’s books, reading them to her children and taking them to see the movies when they were young. Although her life does not “revolve around the Cinderella type theme,” (GDR; 5968, 8385; Session1.txt) she has been married twice despite her opinion that men will “put a wife down if she show[s] success” (BLH; 5936, 6166; Hazel.txt).

Sunshine writes that her marriage was like a classic “Cinderella” story but claims that “fairy tales really meant nothing to me” (GDR; 1055, 1611; Session2.txt). And Junie writes that “fairy tales are something...that adults like and children indulge the adults by listening to them,” but admits that fairy tales affected her life and “were part of her expectations of life” (GDR; 1279, 2199; Session1.txt). For her part, Alternate mentions that an older sister read ‘creepy’ fairy tales to hers when she was young but she feels that they had no effect on her lived narrative for she did not choose the prince and children. But is it not possible that she chose her life style because she did not buy into the fairy tale myth? As she comments in a group session, she finds it difficult to

believe that “the girl from...the peasant class marries the prince anymore today than she did in those days” (GDR; 41820, 41961; Session4.txt).

It seems that fairy tales were perceived to be an important factor in the lived narratives of most participants in the study. And even those who protest that fairy tales were of no consequence appear to demonstrate by the force of their denials that the tales may wield much more influence than they care to admit. While it is not clear at this point whether fairy tales were indeed such an influence in their lives or simply a means of explaining, through the metaphorical use of fairy tale imperatives, why they made certain choices in the past. Because fairy tales reside in the cultural and social substance of Western society, however, it is certainly possible that they did indeed influence the potential life stories that participants imagined were desirable and achievable. On the other hand, fairy tales like Cinderella may provide the means, at this time in their life, of accounting for life choices that were made in their youth that allows participants to understand past situations and options more clearly. As psychoanalytic theory posits, interpretation of human action requires trying “to find out what we have meant by what we have said, what obscure desires, what strange beliefs -- yet beliefs and desires for all that -- give both cause and sense, or reason for, our more-or-less intentional doings” (Cavell, 1993, p. 74).

Discussion of Findings

As the preceding descriptive analysis and cross-case comparison show, there were multiple influences in the lives of the participants in this study that constituted their subjective identities and affected their lived narratives. Certainly the family composition, occupation, and situation exerted a strong influence on the lives that could be imagined, while their respective positions in family life as the oldest, youngest, or only female child cannot be considered unimportant. Coming from similar family situations, the women in this study grew up with families who were hard-working but economically strained at times. As well, all of the participants, but one, were positioned as either the oldest or youngest female child in their respective families. Although only the junior women came from single parent families, most of the senior women alluded to fathers who were dominated by

their more powerful mothers. And while their families were of various sizes and compositions, all of the women had at least one brother who received special attention or privileges. Religious, societal, and cultural factors also played a significant role in the aspirations and desires that participants considered achievable and were able to realize as well. Some of the women refer to specific religious practices that constrained their lives in certain ways and all participants claim that they encountered societal and cultural influences, whether through school, movies, television, and stories, that affected their subjective identities. Factors like domination and gender biases with which the women had to contend also affected their lived narratives and subjective identities, and still influence their lives in the present. While few women recall actually hearing or reading fairy tales in their childhood, many of the women agree that fairy tale discourses influenced their life stories in particular ways. Even for those who disagree, however, it seems that there may have been influences, whether positive or negative, from fairy tale discourses visible in their life stories.

Chapter 4 analyzes the personal positions and themes that emerged from participants' life stories, fairy tale reading responses, group discussion interactions, and fairy tale rewrites to further illuminate the possibility of fairy tale influences in the lives of female readers. As well, I utilize the structure and elements that characterize fairy tales and the analysis of the versions of the Cinderella tale used in this research discussed in chapter 2 to analyze participants responses to fairy tale discourses. As the preceding discussion shows, the Contexts of the women were diverse making it difficult to find themes applicable to all seven cases, although there were correspondences among participants. Early life experiences for the women in this study generally included family situations fraught with hardship and hard work. As female children, participants were expected to contribute to family life without the privileges and educational benefits accorded to their male siblings. Moreover, societal and family expectations seldom admitted the possibility of life choices for women between a family or a career. In chapter 4 therefore, patterns of responses pertinent to the personal positions of individual participants will be discussed in regards to the individual life stories of participants and compared to other cases in the study. Finally, the data will be contrasted with

the discourses of fairy tales to ascertain whether or not there are patterns or themes that suggest the influence of fairy tale effects in the lives of participants.

CHAPTER 4

Thematic Analysis of Positions and Discourses

Thematic Analysis of Personal Positions

In this chapter, data from the brief life histories completed by participants is compared to their reflections on the impact of fairy tales from group discussions, as well as to their reading responses to the fairy tales read in the sessions and to their fairy tale rewrite. In this way, it is possible to compare the Contexts of early exposure to fairy tales with the expressed and lived realities of storylines which include and depend upon elements of hope and desire in the fantasies or writing of the participants in this study. In the section that follows, each theme has been contrasted with other patterns of response to illustrate the multiple and contrasting nature of the production of subjective identities that are always being produced/co-produced through discourses. While these positions may be remnants of positions taken in the past that participants are unwilling/unable to relinquish in the present, it seems unlikely that factors with the power to affect their lives in the past will lose the ability to impact their present life stories and positions. Given the thick data amassed over the course of the study, my analysis deals with specific examples of themes that emerged, however I was unable to discuss every instance within the constraints of this paper.

Themes for analysis and comparison

The purpose of this case study was to answer the following questions in regards to the constitutive role of fairy tale narratives in women's lives:

1. What do mature women say or remember about the presence of fairy tales in their early lives, and the relationship of fairy tales to their individual construction of personal life stories?
2. What meanings do women attribute to three versions of a fairy tale read/viewed in the present?
3. When given the opportunity to write themselves into a fairy tale in the present, what patterns emerge that may be said to relate to fairy tale effects in their lives?

While there was no hard-and-fast hypothesis⁸ directing this study nor predetermined list of codes to search for in the data, the questions above emerged from personal tentative assumptions and questions about the role of fairy tales in women's lives and subjectivities. From the theories, research, and information available in the literature, I prepared Table 1, Summary of Themes in the Literature (p. 17) to indicate the positions of researchers who inform this study. Thus, the research questions helped in categorizing and analyzing the data in light of the literature that informed my original inquiry. This section discusses themes that emerged as the 17 codes were collapsed into patterns of responses that characterize the personal positions articulated by individuals and the group as a whole through the verbal and written data offered by participants. Discussion of these patterns will be illustrated by quotations from the data in which these themes become visible — group discussions, reading responses to the tales read in the sessions, and fairy tale rewrites and evaluations of the research. I want to point out that my interpretations of participants' words represent my personal conjectures about their reflections and comments within the context of this research and the material being discussed at the time.

Analysis of Themes in Relation to Participant Positions.

Subsequent to the discussion of Contexts that situated participants, the personal positions (Positions) by which participants situate themselves will be dealt with first by considering the patterns of response or themes that emerged in response to the fairy tales read/viewed in the study. From the perspective of Davies and Harre (2000), the adoption of a personal position means that "one lives one's life in terms of one's ongoingly produced self, whoever might be responsible for its production" (p. 2). Since the data for this study derives from ongoing discussion and personal responses to fairy tales discourses and fairy tale narratives, patterns of response that emerged in regards to fairy tales and fairy tale discourses are discussed in the section, Analysis of Discourses. Data informing discussion of discourse themes derives from participants who completed fairy tale reading responses (FTRR) and the fairy tale re-write (FTRW) for the most part. Themes are not

⁸ Any statement, proposition or assumption that serves as a tentative explanation of certain facts. A hypothesis is always presented so as to be amenable to empirical test and then either supported or rejected by the evidence. (Reber, 1985. Dictionary of Psychology, New York, NY: Penguin)

discussed in alphabetical order for certain patterns of response have been grouped according to their close relation to each other, a convention that I trust makes this narrative about fairy tale narratives easier to follow.

Positions and Themes Articulated by Participants

This section deals with the perceived personal positions (Positions) articulated by participants in relation to their formation of subjective identity and perception of the effects of fairy tales on their life stories. As I reviewed the data, it became evident in the words and reactions of the women that there were patterns of responses indicating positions that participants had taken in relation to the effects of fairy tales in their lives. Using data coded under the codes or patterns of responses called Personal Positions (PP), this discussion will show that there were corresponding positions taken by participants but none that might be applied to all cases involved in the research. This section considers themes coded as Fantasy/Illusions, Contradictions, Disenchantment, Domination, Doubt, Enthusiasm, Initiative/Choices, Insecurity, Insight/Reflexivity, and Life Expectations.

Contradictions Vs Enthusiasm.

The theme for Contradictions, which I define as denial of facts or statements, to be at variance or in conflict with, refers to coded instances in which participants appear to avoid issues that are uncomfortable for them or that contradict earlier comments or positions taken. For some participants, the question of whether or not fairy tales affected their lives or subjective identities occasioned internal contradictions, possibly because such an idea was alien to their personal conceptions of themselves as an adult in society. Junie stated that she found it “somewhat confusing when you say we’re going to talk about fairy tales because [she doesn’t] remember fairy tales being a big part of...of [her] background” (GDR; 1105, 1260; Session1.txt). After thinking about it, however, she realized that they were part of her expectations of life. Likewise, Hazel claims that she “never heard of, or read fairy tales as a child” (BLH; 5423, 5832; Hazel.txt). But she states that she loves “children’s stories and – and fairy tales,” (GDR; 5968, 8385; Session1.txt)

collects them and read them as an adult, passing them on to her children and grandchildren. And while Empress states that she never heard fairy tales as a child, she describes her mother's life as like that of "Cinderella" and then likens her present life to a "Cinderella" tale as well. While these women do not recall reading or hearing fairy tales as children, they seem to know the stories well enough to approve or disapprove of fairy tales. Moreover, it seems likely that most of the women had heard or read a version of the "Cinderella" tale at some point for there was substantial discussion regarding discrepancies from the tale as they understood it. Is it possible, therefore, that the "Cinderella" tale is so ingrained in Western culture that these women came to know the story whether they had actually heard/read it or not? Or did participants actually read or view fairy tales in their early lives without actually remembering the circumstances?

Other participants seem to have encountered contradictions in the subject of the study itself. For instance, Alternate stated in session one that she might be in the wrong place but then came to all sessions but the final one. She also stated that she wanted to write but handed in only her brief life history and final evaluation, completing neither the reading responses nor the fairy tale rewrite (although the frequency counts shows a response for Alternate, her response was an excuse for not submitting her fairy tale re-write). She did participate in the group discussions, however, often providing a dissenting voice in the discourse in opposition to other participants. A former writer/reporter, was her refusal to submit written responses a means of refusing to validate the subject of study by means of the written word? Could the avoidance of written responses, and the claim that fairy tales were not to her liking, be indicative of a belief that fairy tales did not apply to her 'different life,' or a preference for voicing her opinion verbally? As the oldest participant in the group, I wondered as well if this did not fit with her conception of herself as the 'Alternate' or dissenting voice, a position not dissimilar to her position in her family as the youngest member who was always 'picked on' but never became compliant.

Articulations coded as Enthusiasm, or strong positive emotion for aspects of participants' present life situations, the subject of fairy tales, or aspects of the tales read/viewed in the research, appeared throughout the project and were coded at least once for all but one of the participants.

Thus, Hazel announces that she ‘loves’ children’s stories and fairy tales in session one and claims that “people will read into things what they want to [read]” (FTRR; 7586, 8444; Hazel.txt). Although she excuses behavior in male characters that other participants find objectionable, she deplores the fact that people “try to excuse their bad behavior” (FTRR; 7586, 8444; Hazel.txt). Critical of men who do not support their wives, Hazel’s enthusiasm for the first fairy tale seems to hinge upon her presumption that the father supports his wife instead of his daughter. However other participants, like Tzipora, found the father’s behavior objectionable for the very same reason. Alternate expressed enthusiasm for instances of female initiative or for women who subverted the models of passivity and subservience. When the heroine took any kind of action in the first fairy tale even though it might not be recognized as such by today’s standards, Alternate claims that “she was learning to assert herself and stand up for herself” (GDR; 40701, 40852; Session2.txt). Besides liking the ugly sisters in “Cinderella” then, Alternate also admired the stepmother in the second tale, who she describes as “marvellous” and the heroine who she thinks of as a “quite striking young girl” (GDR; 40294, 40960; Session4.txt). While Tzipora also found instances of female autonomy and self-sufficiency worthy of enthusiasm, Hazel feels that “the stepmother was grasping and evil” (FTRR; 10886, 11513; Hazel.txt). Although Tzipora enjoyed the scene in the video where the heroine “climbed up a tree (or whatever) to escape the bandits” (GDR; 14648, 14968; Tzipora.txt), Hazel rebukes the actions of the stepsister as “just greedy as she didn’t have the ability to manipulate people” (FTRR; 10886, 11513; Hazel.txt). However, Rosa found the magical elements in fairy tales to be her inspiration. In her response to *Ever After* (Soria, Trench, & Tennant, 1998), she writes about “a really nice quality to the Leonardo da Vinci ...that’s almost magical” (GDR; 59862, 59951; Session4.txt). On the other hand, Empress was enthusiastic about the feminist quality in the third tale “that rejects the traditional subordination of women to men through the institution of marriage” (FTRR; 9522, 9768; Empress.txt). For Junie, the most enjoyable part of the fairy tale read/viewed included elements of “nature (the force of life) – the twig taking root, the company and support of birds” (GDR; 13589, 14099; Junie.txt) in “Aschenputtel” and “animals...gypsies portrayed as good for a change” (GDR; 16926, 17288,

Junie.txt) in Ever After (Soria, Trench, & Tennant, 1998). Despite the contradictions experienced from fairy tale research, participants became enthusiastic about aspects of fairy tale narratives that align with subjective positions and desires that often originated in their early life experiences – for autonomy (Alternate and Tzipora), unqualified male support (Hazel), equality with men (Empress), and magical solutions (Rosa).

Fantasies & Illusions Vs. Doubt & Insecurity.

The code for Fantasies/Illusions refers to support or denial of false beliefs, something wrongly believed to exist and/or predisposition or prejudice. Data fragments under this code indicate participants' acceptance of particular narrative structures. These structures stipulate that women construct their lives according to accepted storylines and gender stereotypes, many of which are implicit in fairy tale narratives. Although Alternate did not buy into "the glass slipper and [wait for her]... Prince Charming," she still believes that meeting the right man would have turned that around (GDR; 8409, 11469; Session1.txt). Whereas she "liked the ugly sisters... in the Cinderella tale," (GDR; 12638, 12738, Session1.txt) it seems that she says this because she "had sisters who were more ugly" (GDR; 40294, 40646, Session4.txt). Empress did not give up the illusion "that [she] would be rewarded with success, security and love" if she "was good and did all of the right things" despite the unhappiness in her early life and relationships that were 'verbally and emotionally abusive' (ER; 15854, 15982; Empress.txt). While Hazel claims to have few illusions about fairy tale outcomes in life, she tends to make excuses for male behavior that is self-serving despite her critical attitude towards men in general. Hence, she writes "I don't think the father was bad, he was pulled in different ways by the people he loved. As a man he took the easy way out and supported his wife without trying to get to the truth of the matter" (FTRR; 7586, 8444; Hazel.txt). On the other hand, she seldom gives the benefit of the doubt to women and finds women "don't stick together... they're in competition with each other" (GDR; 46692, 46878). In tales where women show negative qualities however, Hazel shows no mercy in her criticism of female characters for she writes "the stepmother and stepsister had no redeeming qualities" following the video (FTRR; 10224, 10698; Hazel.txt). Does this indicate that she has a double

standard that condones behavior in men but deplors the same behavior in women? In Junie's opinion, however, the fault does not lie in women but in the fairy tale narrative that does "not develop a sense of solidarity. It is ugly and divisive, may even hint that one ought to be content working incessantly and wearing shabby clothes" (FTRR; 14568, 15774; Junie.txt). While she has relinquished her desire to fulfill the stereotype of 'superwife, supermom, super citizen,' she wants to write to "Carleton Romance...to get the formula for their books...to sneak in some other things into that formula...and maybe [she] can save a few women" (GDR; 24043, 27391; Session4.txt). Nevertheless, she seems to buy into some stereotypes of women for she claims "these things with women... they often talk too much and do little" (GDR; 11053, 11325; Session4.txt). Does she feel that her experience may help other women avoid similar disappointments, I wonder? And if this is so then why does she support the myths by participating in weddings still? If she has truly given up the image of 'superwoman' then why is she intent on saving other women?

Positions coded as Doubt and/or Insecurity relate closely to contradictions but differ enough to warrant a separate code. Statements coded as Doubt/Skepticism and Insecurity indicate comments that seem to suggest that a participant has not resolved feelings of doubt or insecurity in their life choices or lived narratives. At times these positions were evident in the comments made by participants but sometimes they only became visible through fairy tale responses or comparisons. Because Alternate encountered contradictions with her perceived identity, possibly occasioned by her participation in a study on fairy tales, she experiences doubt as to whether she belongs in the group in the first place. In session one, therefore, she mentions several times that she is not sure that she "understands any of this" and wonders if she is "in the right place" (GDR; 8409, 11469; Session1.txt). Although she claims that her life has been different because she did not choose the 'prince and children', she also reiterates that she "didn't have the joy that you have in children" (GDR; 11623, 11865; Session1.txt). I wondered if this might indicate that Alternate was experiencing doubt or insecurity in her choices to some extent? Empress writes that she never 'felt at home' in her youth and grew up feeling homeless and insecure in relationships as a result.

However, she also mentions that she felt insecure in relationships unless she was in control, which raises the question of whether she was insecure or afraid of commitment. Rosa records that she felt “like an ugly duckling type” in her youth, and “the princess with her hands cut off & in the wilderness” as a young adult, which indicates that she too felt doubtful of her worth and possibly insecure about her choices in life (BLH; 6604, 7315; Rosa.txt). According to Tzipora, despite the changes in her self concept, she feels that she “would revert back to [her] old ‘subservient’ ways” in relationships still. As well, Sunshine appears to compare herself to “Rapunzel, the lady locked in the tower” during session one, indicating the possibility of feeling entrapped by life choices that she describes as like a “Cinderella” type story in the beginning (GDR; 13634, 13980; Session1.txt). And so, creating subjective identities that include and depend upon stories and narrative structures like illusions, participants produce and reproduce elements of these stories and illusions that may, in turn, produce doubt and insecurity in their lived narratives.

Models & Relationships Vs Domination.

Perceived personal positions of participants on women, men, and relationships, coded as Models/Relationships, were widely divergent with some senior women seeming to be more tolerant in their attitudes than junior women in some respects. By tolerant, I mean that the ideas expressed sometimes were more accepting of diverse relationship models and less allied towards clearly demarcated gender roles. Similar to Mei’s (1990) assessment of Cinderella as an active heroine, therefore, Alternate claims that “Cinderella” was “way ahead of the feminist movement...she was learning to assert herself and stand up for herself” (GDR; 40702, 40852; Session2.txt). Hazel appears to agree with, or adopt, this position when she writes “although Aschenputtel accepted her condition she did seize on an escape when it presented itself and fought for her rights” (FTRR; 7586, 8444; Hazel.txt). On the other hand, while discussing negative portrayals of women in public life, Alternate insisted that this was not always the case and that “if you examine it there’ll be examples for men too ...feminists forget that” (GDR; 43549, 43636; Session2.txt). Thus she extends tolerance towards women with limited options who try to help themselves in any way, but not to ‘feminists’ who criticize the status quo. Disputing the idea that men suffer similar negative

press, Empress contends that a woman will be mocked because “she doesn’t look like the beauty queen, like the model that’s right up there” (GDR; 42108, 42364; Session2.txt). Deploing the self-mutilation of the sisters in “Aschenputtel” therefore, Empress feels that this tale exemplifies women’s subservience and “the extremes that women would go to secure a suitor. It reinforced just how much of women’s worth is wrapped up in their physical appearances” (FTRR; 6020, 6288; Empress.txt). Conversely, Tzipora feels that the “Aschenputtel” tale shows that “mothers do not always give good advice – sometimes daughters are ‘blinded’ by their own actions & ‘maimed’ following their mothers instructions. Mothers can be selfish, mercenary & foolish” (FTRR; 9094, 9642; Tzipora.txt). And while Sunshine asks why anyone would “cut off parts of their feet to marry a prince” (FTRR; 6821, 7512; Sunshine.txt), Junie declares that the first tale “is ugly and divisive” for women (FTRR; 14568, 15774; Junie.txt). To be sure some of the women found positive aspects in the heroine of the first tale, while others voiced concern about the portrayal of all women in this version of the “Cinderella” tale. Detecting only positive elements in the first tale, however, Rosa writes that the video Ever After (Soria et al, 1998) shows “the harrowing sense of the ‘restricted power’ of female power vitally given voice” in the portrayal of the stepmother (FTRR; 15762, 16339; Rosa.txt). Hence, positions on women in the tales were not related to the age of the participant for tolerance depends on experiences and context rather than age. It appears that participants uncovered different interpretations of the women in the tales based on their individual experiences in life and emanating from the different contexts that had constituted their subjective identities.

At times, the discussions also turned towards issues dealing with patriarchy and/or men in relation to women and to the fairy tales read in the study. Despite Hazel’s poor opinion of men, her point of view seems to apply only to their ‘bad’ behavior to wives, for she was quick to excuse such behavior towards children as she did for “Aschenputtel’s” father. On the other hand, Junie claims that getting the strap at school right away showed how “Patriarchy asserted!” itself and she was “a good dooby after that” (BLH; 4891, 4824; Junie.txt). In other words, Junie had learned that defending herself against bullies did not fit the patriarchal image of ‘good doobies,’ which she

never defines but I take to mean ‘good little girls,’ and followed the role expected of her after that. Nevertheless, she had expectations about relationships with men that left her ‘waiting’ for decent treatment from her ex-husband for years. And yet, she writes that she would still like male company occasionally on her own terms. For Tzipora, the fact that she feels that “men are evil” makes her feel ‘bad’ because “it sounds so negative so, uhh, sour grapes’ (GDR; 37783, 37881; 37957, 38181; Session4.txt). While she thinks of “most men as weak & dependent,” she felt the same way about herself until recently BLH; 6433, 6836; Tzipora.txt).

The positions of participants in regards to relationships and domination, coded as Domination, were also very different with some women indicating again that their ideas do not follow the more conservative line. For women like Tzipora and Hazel, issues of domination in their early years influenced their positions on relationships as well. In Tzipora’s case, her parents expected her to marry and insinuated that was the only occupation of any value for women, hence education beyond secretarial skills was of no value. In Hazel’s case, her mother protected her and urged her to marry the son of a wealthy friend. This suggestion however, only served to convince Hazel to rush into marriage with a man that she hardly knew in order to escape her mother’s dominance. This backfired when the young couple needed a place to stay and had to accept living arrangements with Hazel’s parents for some time. In Alternate’s case, her parents did not have traditional expectations that “their daughters would marry...[they] were being taught to be uh independent and self-supporting” (BLH; 8409, 11469; Session1.txt). While she did not marry and have children, she did have romantic relationships and presumes that the “right man would have turned all that around...in the procession apparently there wasn’t the right one” (GDR; 8409, 11469; Session1.txt). As the oldest member of the group, Alternate appears to have independent views on relationships, at least for ‘traditional’ relationships involving marriage and children.

In a family dominated by her father, Empress vowed to escape “the wrath of another heartless patriarch as long as she lived” (FTRW; 11553, 14814; Empress.txt). Nevertheless, Empress “convince[d] [her]self that not everybody in the world was like my parents and there was still a Prince Charming out there somewhere” (GDR; 5898, 6245; Session2.txt). From the

perspective of Hazel, however, family relationships should be reciprocal for “being the child of a mother or father doesn’t give you any special rights, it’s the relationship that makes it right” (GDR; 21535, 21787; Session2.txt). In a similar vein, Junie states that she “support[s] and encourage[s] more unique, independent rituals of relationship then and now” although she still conforms to the rituals of weddings for the sake of friendship and drama (FTRR; 14568, 15774; Junie.txt). Tzipora worries about reverting to her subservient self in a physical relationship with a man but she now has friendships with women and men based on mutual interests. Thus she claims that she has finally “learned that she could not change other people to what she wanted, and she did not want to change herself to be like them” (FTRW; 22181, 24603; Tzipora.txt). The youngest participant and still involved in a relationship that may not be all that she expected, Sunshine does not, or cannot yet, speculate on possible solutions to remedy the situation. In fact, she simply stopped coming to the sessions after submitting only one of the reading responses, while her verbal contributions to the discussions were rather disjointed with many unfinished sentences and incomplete thoughts to which she never referred again. Perhaps the level of self-scrutiny in the research discouraged her from completing her commitment because she was not quite ready or able to deal with certain issues. While there are indications that this might be the case, it was not possible to ascertain for there was way to establish further communication of any kind despite a phone call inviting her to return.

Disenchantment Vs Initiative, Insight & Reflexivity.

By response patterns coded as Disenchantment, I mean being free from enchantment and thus refer to comments by participants that indicate or allude to feelings of disappointment in lived events/choices or failure to achieve their expectations in life. Expressions of disillusion and/or disappointment came almost from the beginning of the research study. Although Empress admired her mother, she did not want to emulate her life for she “saw what it was and [she] hated men” (GDR; 15435, 17240; Session1.txt). And thus she states that she “learned from Cinderella but it may have given [her] a bit too much fear” (GDR; 15435, 17240; Session1.txt). While Hazel’s life does not revolve upon the “Cinderella” theme, she is disappointed in men for “when push comes

to shove they are self centered and egotistical. They want to be the centre of attention and will put a wife down if she shows success” (BLH; 5936, 6166; Hazel.txt). Both Junie and Tzipora mention that they had expectations in life and were disappointed by the way things turned out. Just as Tzipora has only recently learned to let go of her anger, Junie “just stopped recently waiting for uh, uh, the father of [her] children to act decent” (GDR; 1279, 2199; Session1.txt). Even Sunshine states that she feels that life is not going the way she imagined it would although she was “a good wife and mother, every thing that I was taught to be” (BLH; 3669, 3562; Sunshine.txt). Although Alternate did not mention disappointment, she says that she had no illusions about men but she never had ‘the joy’ of children, indicating that she may regret some of her choices for she has “just spent time with two little 4 year old boys” (GDR; 11623, 11865; Session1.txt). Likewise, Rosa does not allude to disappointment but likens herself to “a princess with her hands cut off & in the wilderness” as a young adult and still looks in the mirror and asks ‘can this be real?’ of the scowling face there (BLH; 6604, 7315; Rosa.txt). Although she does not discuss the reasons for leaving the convent where she was a ‘nun for a while,’ this comment seems to indicate that she may have been somewhat lost and ‘handless’ when she made her choices in the first place as a young woman. Does this mean that she felt that she had limited choices as a young woman? And what does she mean by likening herself to “an ugly duckling type” as a child (BLH; 6604, 7315; Rosa.txt)? Might this indicate that she felt awkward, like a swan raised as a duckling and spurned because ‘he’ was different, as the first-born child displaced by younger siblings and a foster girl? Opting for the security and protection of convent life, was Rosa disenchanted with such a life because it did not meet her expectations for some reason?

By articulations coded as Insight/Reflexivity, I refer to patterns of response indicating that participants have gained a better understanding of their personal positions and their own responsibility for creating those subjective positions. By the code for Initiative/Choices, I mean that participants positioned themselves as able to initiate things and make choices in their life situations. Hence, Alternate stated at various times that she now realizes the value in some of her experiences as a child, and that her siblings were not simply being mean for “those squabbles taught [her]

things” (GDR; 9309, 9753; Session1.txt). Moreover, Alternate announced over several sessions that she had booked a trip home to visit her family, changed doctors, took her name off a seniors’ list, made contact with a friend from whom she had not heard for some time, and made arrangements for her funeral. These were things that she had intended to do “that took a long time to do, to get around to doing that, and getting things settled with these people” (GDR; 20467, 20775; Session4.txt). Hence it certainly seems that she accomplished some things that had been on her agenda over the four weeks that she attended. While these accomplishments may have nothing to do with the research or fairy tales in any way, it is also possible that her commitment to attend the sessions, which she did until the session before her date of departure, may have inspired her to tackle these tasks as well. As well, Empress stated that she had been working on setting boundaries for some time before the research and that she had “learned a lot in the past couple of weeks” (GDR; 31207, 31358; Session5.txt). For Hazel, the research brought “out a lot of [her] past in the forefront and [she’s] realizing all of the good things in [her] life” (GDR; 3003, 3203; Session2.txt). While Junie expressed reservations on the value of the research, her responses indicate that she may have derived some benefits from portions of the study. Thus, she “learned stuff while doing” the brief life history (BLH; 11346, 11654; Junie.txt) but does not “feel personally more connected to fairy tales than [she] did at the beginning of our study” (FTRR; 21341, 22637; Junie.txt). Rosa writes that the “screen play was a vital mover in the revelation and restoration of what really is of moment today: our social distress and diminishment as persons” (FTRR; 16985, 17294; Rosa.txt). Hence, for Rosa, the research served to bring to mind “obligations and how [she’s] living in, at this time under this, with [her] obligations to others and circumstances in [her] life” (GDR; 5288, 5565; Session1.txt). Tzipora claims that the research has “put everything in order” and that she has connected with “a friend ...after 20 years ...these are good things that are happening. The changes are good...remembrance is good. It makes it easier” (GDR; 2336, 2917; Session2.txt). Even though her reactions to some of the tales surprised her at times and she “feel[s] guilty sometimes”, she also claims that she is starting to feel that she has the right to live for herself and she “need[s] to live for [her]” (GDR; 38867, 39632; Session4.txt).

Therefore, while participants have experienced disappointments in their lives, there seems to be some benefits to be gained from the activity of reviewing life histories and considering the effects of narrative elements in stories like fairy tales, at least it was for the women in this study.

Life Expectations Vs Fantasy & Fairy Tale Narratives.

At some point in the research, all participants showed in some fashion that they had life expectations that appeared integral to their perceptions of their subjective identities. Articulations coded as Life Expectations refer to personal positions that include looking forward, anticipation, or expectations from life. At times these comments were expressed in relation to the effects of fairy tales on their life stories. Both Junie and Tzipora claimed in the first group discussion that fairy tales were implicated in their life expectations, although Junie later writes that she would not “call [her] life a fairy tale. Or [her] expectations fairy tale-like” (FTRR; 21484, 21554; Junie.txt). Junie also mentions that she “just stopped recently waiting for, uh – uh, the father of [her] children to act decent” (GDR; 1431, 1583; Session1.txt). Claiming that she was brought up with “Cinderella dreams,” Tzipora “married a good looking man” at the age of 23 “but he was not a Prince Charming and, uh, [she] also had many disappointments” (GDR; 2858, 3190; Session1.txt). Rosa explains, on the other hand, that she “never really lived out the sense that [she] was waiting – waiting to marry. [She] was more inclined to think along the lines of becoming a nun and I did try that for some while” (GDR; 4353, 4535; Session1.txt). It was notable as well that Rosa describes her expectations in terms of fairy tales that ‘magically’ provided all that was needed which may explain her interest in a vocation that was cloistered and provided all that she needed for her material existence. Such a life may not have provided all that she needed on other levels for she did not remain in that vocation, although she does not explain her reasons for leaving. On the other hand, Hazel states that fairy stories did not affect her life expectations for she “wasn’t exposed to these stories” (FTRR; 16424, 17376; Hazel.txt). However, her statement that she considers men to be weak and self centered seems to indicate that her expectations were not met in her life story. And Empress expresses her expectations in the form of self-doubt for “she felt that no man would ever want her because she had not conformed to social norms” (FTRW; 11553, 14814; Empress.txt).

Likewise Alternate declares that she had no use for the “glass slipper and the Prince Charming...if they were all like those 6 men in the house,” and thus her life has not been “around children and fairy tales. Um it has been around some romantic notions” (GDR; 10463, 11469; Session1.txt).

Coded as FT/Stories/Fantasy, this code considers ‘make-believe’ play and wishful thinking by participants in the past or in the present, as well as fairy tale access and belief in fantasy characters as a child that may or may not continue into their adult lived narratives. Although few of the women remember hearing fairy tales or agree that they were influential in constituting their subjective identities, their positions regarding fairy tales, stories, and fantasy reveal a great deal about the production of subjective identities through elements of hope and desire.

As a child, Alternate “played ‘house,’ ‘doctor’ & all the others with neighbour’s girl” (BLH; 4293, 4554; Alternate.txt). Growing up in a rural Irish farm setting, she was “constantly cited examples of [the] existence” of ghosts, fairies, and fantasy creatures of all kinds (BLH; 4760, 5201; Alternate.txt). Fairy tales, as she remembers them, were ‘pretty creepy’ with nasty creatures in the forests. Because her home was surrounded by orchards and wooded areas, she did not care much for such tales as a child. Empress claims that she does not remember anyone reading fairy tales to her and she “did not play ‘make-believe’ games. I had wishful thinking that someday I would meet ‘Mr. Perfect’ and I would live happily ever after” (BLH; 3429, 3629; Empress.txt). She believed, however, in “beings that lived on other planets or in other universes” (BLH; 3834, 3917, Empress.txt) and describes her life in terms of fairy tale characters like “Hanzel and Gretel” as a child and “Snow White” as young adult (BLH; 4174, 4383; Empress.txt). She also claims that she imagined that there was a “Prince Charming out there somewhere” who might rescue her from a situation that she found untenable (BLH; 5898, 6245; Session2.txt). During group discussions, Empress mentions that she heard a myth as a young girl about a woman who outwitted enemy invaders when the army of men could do no more. Hence it seems that Empress had access to at least one narrative that spoke to her desire to ameliorate her life and overcome the conflict that surrounded her as a child.

Hazel does not remember “playing make believe games” but believes “one can have anything one wants but not everything” (BLH; 4479, 4796; Hazel.txt). She also writes that she is “not a wishful thinker but [she does] enjoy day dreaming” (BLH; 4479, 4796; Hazel.txt). Hence, she sees wishful thinking as qualitatively different from day dreaming of becoming a ‘great singer’ although she says that she cannot sing. Nor does she recall believing in fantasy creatures as a child but she does not “disbelieve in ghosts, fairies and witches” as an adult which suggests that such beliefs may indeed proceed from childhood imaginings (BLH; 4999, 5168; Hazel.txt). In addition, she recalls being ‘afraid of the dark’ after watching a scary movie as a child indicating that she might well have believed in fantasy characters for she must have been afraid of something. While she writes that she “never heard of, or read fairy tales as a child,” she collected such stories, read them to her children and still loves to watch them with her grandchildren (BLH; 5423, 5832; Hazel.txt). Hazel mentions that the only stories that she read before the age of ten were her brothers’ adventure books and comic books. Is it possible that she developed a passion for children’s tales from her inability to access imaginative stories as a child, a fact that only became apparent when she received a book of poetry at the age of ten? Was it because of the gift of a book of children’s poetry from a beloved aunt that sparked her imagination and created the desire for such stories? Or is it possible that she heard of such stories but lacked the opportunity to read them herself until she was much older?

For Junie, “make-believe” was a constant with or without other children and the “adventures often continued for days, weeks. [She] pictured their stories in [her] head, I guess I was author - god” (BLH; 8215, 8839; Junie.txt). Moreover, she claims that “fairies are real, they live in their own dimension and are not often interested in humans” (BLH; 9576, 10070; Junie.txt). As an adult she “could not, would not, wishful think” (BLH; 8842, 9370; Junie.txt) but believes “ghosts are possible” which indicates that wishful thinking is not entirely foreign to her adult identity (BLH; 9576, 10070; Junie.txt). While she does not remember fairy stories being read to her, she writes that she “read [her]self and actually misread Cinderella and [she] thought she had a fairy-godmother who rescued her when she needed a vehicle and clothes” (BLH; 10329, 11239;

Junie.txt). And though she feels that school was detrimental to her because of the authoritarian atmosphere, she reveled in the fact that her classroom had a library for she loved to read as a child. In addition, her father purchased series of books for the family to read which ensured that she had access to a variety of reading materials.

Rosa states that she “did believe in ghosts & fairies and the ‘Boogie Man’. [She] certainly believed & still do[es] retain the certainty – of guardian angels & angels = good girls who care” (BLH; 6188, 6348; Rosa.txt). Moreover, she loves magic and believes “still in the efficacy of ‘seeing’ the magical closeness of anything for ‘its’ ability to change or impart the nature of truth to reality: Magic makes things more real, astonishing & essentially Here for you” (BLH; 11141, 11764; Rosa.txt). From this perspective, Rosa claims that her favorite moment in the fairy tale, “Aschenputtel,” is the part where the twig “magically in response to her tears” answered her prayers and was able to fulfill her desires (BLH; 1141, 11764; Rosa.txt). As Rosa mentioned in her BLH, fairy tales appear to embody her hopes and desires to be taken care of and magically provided with all that she needs in life. Indeed, she compares fairy tales to “the voice of our mothers; good loved teachers” (FTRR; 28922, 29818; Rosa.txt).

While Sunshine feels that fairy tales “meant really nothing to me” and writes only that she played games with friends before the age of eight years (GDR; 1374, 1478; Session2.txt). As for imaginary characters, she mentions a “man who lived under [her] bed” but does not elaborate as to the identity or origin of this character (BLH; 3070, 3205; Sunshine.txt). Who was this imaginary man under the bed that she feeds so that he “would not bother [her]” (BLH; 3070, 3205; Sunshine.txt) – was he friend or foe and how might he bother her? Despite the fact that she does not remember hearing fairy tales and had to ask her mother, she characterizes her marriage as like a “Cinderella” tale and compares her situation to that of “Rapunzel” in session one. Since these statements came prior to the reading of fairy tales in the study, it seems that she must have heard or seen at least these two fairy tales in her lifetime.

Tzipora offered no written response to the sections on make-believe and fantasy characters in her BLH but seems to indicate that she has not abandoned wishful thinking entirely for she still

hopes to “meet a man who would ‘treasure’ [her]... someday, when [she] grows up” (BLH; 5719, 5866; Tzipora.txt). As well, she mentions that she was “brought up by...with Cinderella, uhh, dreams” and proceeded to marry a good-looking man who was no “Prince Charming” (GDR; 2809, 3632; Session1.txt). In her first reading response, Tzipora writes that she would “love to have a makeover with a lovely hairdo, a complete new wardrobe, and a magic wand to tidy [her] apt. & completely furnish it” (FTRR; 9833, 10194; Tzipora.txt). As a child, however, she writes that she spent a great deal of time at the movies that were just down the street and that the “movies were [her] ‘tales’” (ER; 26364, 27947; Tzipora.txt).

Discussion of Positions Articulated by Participants.

As the preceding discussion of positions illustrates, there were multiple and contradictory positions adopted by the women who participated in the research. From details provided in their brief life histories and responses to the fairy tales read/viewed in the sessions, however, it appears that fairy tales may have been influential in participants’ lives whether or not they were conscious of the effects and despite their inability to remember reading, or hearing, the tales. Hence, although few of the women recall hearing or reading fairy tales as children, the patterns of responses tell a different story. By contrasting patterns of responses that emerged from the data, it is possible to uncover influences that are not always visible within individual categories. Moreover, contrasting patterns of response highlight the multiple discourses by which participants produced/co-produced their respective positions. Participants experienced contradictions in relation to participating in research on fairy tales, whether this occurred because of their decision to participate or as a result of the possibility that fairy tales may have influenced their life stories. On the other hand, it seems that fairy tales served a useful function in communicating doubt and insecurity about their lives or subjective identities, for some participants at least.

As well, illusory narrative structures often occasioned negative reactions in participants, but this only occurred when these illusions contradicted personal positions that participants were unwilling to relinquish. While Alternate rejected the illusion that women might be rescued by magic and male intervention, she shows enthusiasm for initiative of almost any kind in female fairy

tale characters. Indeed, Alternate tends to admire the female characters who were maligned by other participants but objects to criticism of male characters. On the other hand, Hazel accepts the father's neglect of his children in favour of his wife, while both Tzipora and Junie find this behavior horrific and unnatural. Rosa's enthusiasm for magic was offset by Alternate's disdain for solutions that posit intervention by other than human enterprise, just as Alternate's critique of feminism contrasted with Empress's enthusiasm for feminist subversions of the status quo. Although Junie objected to the illusory elements within fairy tales, she enjoys the natural and romantic elements of the tales, like "the fact that the prince chose 'not to play the field'" and valued the relationship above family concerns (FTRR; 135889, 14099; Junie.txt). Romantic elements were also of special interest for Tzipora, which was evident in her horror at the callous treatment of the prince who "loved Cindy when she was dressed as a person of position" but turned on her when he learned her true origins (FTRR; 13847, 15166; Tzipora.txt).

The positions of participants on women, men and relationships were as diverse as their backgrounds and life experiences. But despite the domination and less-than-perfect relationships that characterized their lives, many of the women imagined that a perfect relationship still might be possible and held on to desires of finding someone who would 'treasure' them, as Tzipora mentions. While some women held fast to stereotyped views of women, one that views the actions of characters like the stepmother as entirely 'evil' for example, others found elements of hope in the fact that "Cinderella" was not passive but actively used the means at her disposal to improve her fate. The theme of disenchantment with lived realities was certainly an important aspect of the research, but with insight and reflexivity, many participants realized that many disappointments were now long past and that life was now becoming a celebration as Tzipora intimates. It is possible, although by no means certain therefore, that fairy tales affected their lived narratives, and even created some of the contradictions that were expressed, whether or not they were aware of such influences.

Fairy tales are shared myths that permeate culture and are generally known whether the actual tales have been heard or, if heard, consciously remembered by individuals. Within the

confines of a particular culture then, these shared myths become the metaphors that operate "by prompting us to see one thing as another, or in a certain light" (Cavell, 1993, p. 96). According to Cavell (1993), "the stories that we tell ourselves about the events of our lives play a critical role in their effects on us now. So may new stories free us from old patterns" (p. 94). Although there is no sure means of discovering whether fairy tales affect lived narratives or not, the very fact of their existence in social, historical, and cultural space suggests that they form part of the shared reality of individuals and may therefore influence the lives that can be imagined, and hence created or re-created. As Cavell (1993) comments, "the very fact of acting as if a certain story were true, itself begins in the mind of the agent to lend some credence to the idea that it is true" (p. 188). On this basis, the fact that participants imagine that fairy tales formed part of their lived narrative begins to make the assumption true in their own minds, whether it is true or not in reality. On the other hand, if a participant denies this possibility does that mean that fairy tales had no influence or that the individual desires it to be untrue and construes it so in her own mind? If knowledge "accrues through a process of dialogue" that is intimately linked to desire, language, and thought (Cavell, 1993, p. 232), tales ingrained in the cultural fabric are likely to affect that shared reality whether as metaphors to explain life choices or causes of behavior in their own right. As psychoanalytic theory suggests, individuals utilize beliefs and perceptions about the self and the power of the self as a means of constituting subjectivity and lived narratives. While children use imaginative play to escape or ameliorate their present situations, adults employ "phantasy" as a substitute for reality that may be difficult to bear. For Cavell (1993), "phantasy is typically born of anxiety" (p. 187) that may have its beginnings in wishes that cannot be fulfilled, hence aggressively uncovering hidden wishes and repressed desires may help the individual to accommodate the reality of less than ideal life situations.

Thematic Analysis of Fairy Tale Discourses

In this section of the chapter, I employ the common elements that characterize fairy tales to organize themes that emerged from participant responses in regards to fairy tale elements found in

the three versions of the Cinderella tale used in this research. As discussed in chapter 2, these elements include Stylistic Elements, Character Development, Thematic Elements, and Magic and Symbolic Elements that are distinctive to both folk and fairy tale stories, and bear a strong resemblance to mythology. In addition, fairy tales generally include elements of magic, fairies, and courtly life that are seldom included in folk tales. Moreover, fairy tales differ from mythology since the tales are often voiced in language that speaks to, and derives from, the common people who most likely created them in the first place. The tales often include changes in fortune and circumstance that would also be of greater import to individuals from lower social positions. Deriving these elements from the literature on fairy tales (Barchers, 1988; Bettelheim, 1989; Bottigheimer, 1987; Luthi, 1976; Mei, 1990; Tatar, 1987; Warner, 1994; Zipes, 1988), I combined elements that were similar to align with patterns of responses that emerged from group discussions and fairy tale reading responses completed by participants. Thus, participant responses, both verbal and written, demonstrated that the women in the study had distinct reactions to the Stylistic Elements, Character Development, Thematic Elements, and Magic and Symbolic Elements of the versions of "Cinderella" used in this research.

Participant Responses to Fairy Tale Discourses.

In this discussion of the group interactions and fairy tale reading responses, I analyze patterns of responses that emerged according to the individual tales that were read/viewed in the sessions by considering how participants responded to the narrative elements of the tales in question. From such insights, it may be possible to gain a perspective into the effects of tales that hint at "the possibility of achieving autonomy and a happy life so that the individual could elaborate meaning out of the antagonistic relationship between self and society" (Zipes, 1988, p. 63). Such an undertaking means taking into consideration the underlying themes of tales that were not concerned originally with 'harmony' but with transforming power relations within society and culture to "portray either the possibilities for social participation or the reasons for social conflict" (Zipes, 1988, p. 65). Because the fantasy elements of folk tales offered "imaginative play and free exploration" that were antithetical to capitalist and Protestant ideals of individualism, they were

banned within bourgeois societies in the past for fear of their effects on those without the power to resist such messages (Zipes, 1988, p. 69). These prohibitions were removed upon publication of sanitized literary versions designed to promote societal values and to compensate both children and adults for the social repression of their imaginations. It is possible to recover the power of fairy and folk tales as a means “to realize greater pleasure and freedom in society,” through critical dialogue that uncovers hidden meanings and aids “individual development” (Zipes, 1988, p. 71).

Three versions of the “Cinderella” tale were read/viewed in this research. These versions are described in chapter 2 and compared to narrative elements in Table 3 (p. 50) to “Cinderella” versions published by Perrault and Disney in which the heroine’s goodness and patience results in help from a fairy godmother to attend the ball (Fohr, 1991; Warner, 1994; Zipes, 1999). According to Bottigheimer (1987), Disney’s version presents “a cloyingly pretty and passive heroine [who] contrasts with old and ugly female schemers,” (p. 43). Often considered an older and more traditional version of the “Cinderella” tale, “Aschenputtel” was the first tale read in the sessions. Published by the Grimm brothers in 1857, this tale was described as more violent than the women remembered hearing in the past. Discussion of this tale also showed that this tale disturbed some participants because “the father, virtually absent, shoulders no share of the responsibility for his children’s fates” (Bottigheimer, 1987, p. 24). The video, *Ever After* (Soria, Trench, & Tennant, 1998), had only recently been released and few participants, including myself, had seen this modern version of the Cinderella tale. This tale presents a contemporary rendition of the version made popular by Perrault, although the script suggests that it hales from the version passed on to, and published by, the Grimm brothers since it includes them as characters in the opening scenes. The alternative tale, “The Tale of the Shoe,” was also a recently published version that participants would not have encountered unless specifically looking for this type of tale. This tale subverts the usual fairy tale motifs in a number of ways since it is told in the first person and has no socially accepted magical elements. There is, however, an underlying current in the tale that suggests that there may be a magical quality to the belief in love between women that allows women to overcome grief and loss to a far greater extent than may be possible in other kinds of relationships. In this

version, the heroine is not a victim of abuse but chooses to clean and to wear shabby clothes after the death of her mother to express her sense of loss and to atone for her imagined faults. The tale suggests that such anguish cannot be assuaged by marriage and financial gain but only by a special kind of love that accepts and supports unconditionally. By using versions with very different narrative features, it was hoped that discrepancies in the tales might stimulate discussion around elements that are not normally considered part of fairy tale discourse. As will be shown, these types of interactions did take place and similar components are visible in the written reading responses submitted by participants as well. By introducing contradictions and discrepancies, therefore, I sought to encourage interactive discourse so that participants could reclaim fairy tale discourses that meet their needs and desires. Hence, their fairy tale re-writes are important to this analysis and discussion as well to consider elements of traditional fairy tale discourses in comparison to the actual tales written by participants.

Fairy tale discourses, therefore, include the reading of fairy tales in the sessions and the ongoing discussions of fairy tales, as well as the reading responses and fairy tale re-writes submitted by participants over the course of the research project. Group discussions of the tales ranged over fertile ground because the tales chosen were vastly different from versions of the “Cinderella” tale that participants appear to have encountered in the past. The data under discussion in this section falls under the general categories of FTRR: Fairy Tale Reading Responses and FTRW: Fairy Tale Re-Writes for the most part. In addition, data coded as GDR: Group Discussion Responses has also been included, for the interactions of participants often illuminated their perceptions and responses to the tales and fairy tales in general. Themes are discussed in relation to the elements of fairy tales outlined previously; that is, according to character development, stylistic elements, thematic elements, and magic/symbolic elements in regards to three versions of the “Cinderella” tale. Hence, discussion of themes that emerged will center on participants’ reading responses to the fairytales presented, both in their written responses and comments made during group discussions, as well as their submissions (or not) of a fairy tale rewrite of their life stories and comments included in their final evaluations.

Stylistic Elements – Violence, Tradition, Fairy Tale Elements

Stylistic elements include setting, voice, time, beginning, ending, length, and universal applications of the tales. While the reading response sheets provided space to consider these elements in formulating their responses, participants were not required to fill in these elements and so some elements were not discussed or mentioned in their reading responses. I thought that consideration of the formal narrative elements might assist participants in helping to organize their written or oral reactions to the tale read/viewed in the session.

Discussion of the first tale, “Aschenputtel,” centered first of all on the atmosphere of violence of the tale for it surpassed anything the participants had encountered in fairy tales in the past. Sunshine states that “Aschenputtel was a little more violent then I thought it would be” (FTRR; 6821, 7512; Sunshine.txt). As well, Tzipora mentions that, in the version that she remembers, “the two sisters weren’t ...punished by ...blindness... Pretty...it would be pretty, uhh” (GDR; 8568, 8714; Tzipora.txt). She does not finish her thought and it almost seems as if she has been rendered speechless, as if there is no word that captures her feelings of horror adequately, and her disjointed speech gives much the same impression. Both Junie and Sunshine were appalled as well at the idea that the stepsisters would “cut off parts of their feet to marry a prince” (FTRR; 6821, 7512; Sunshine.txt). Sunshine feels that fairy tale stories “might influence your lifestyle if you have no thought or understanding of right or wrong” but questions the reasoning behind mutilation to gain a comfortable situation (FTRR; 6821, 7512; Sunshine.txt). However, she feels that the sisters “received their just reward for all their bad doing to Aschenputtel” (FTRR; 6184, 6352; Sunshine.txt). Junie feels that the story ferments female competition and is worried “about the 2 young women who maimed themselves in order to come across” (GDR; 45014, 45144; Session2.txt). Thus, these two women had very different positions on justice and retribution for, while Sunshine feels that the sisters were justifiably punished for their ill-treatment of “Aschenputtel,” Junie suggests that the young women may have been misguided but were punished far beyond the severity of their just deserts. Likewise, Empress feels agony for the measures to which women have subjected themselves in order to secure a love match.

On the other hand, Rosa poses a question that needs to be asked, for when the “false sisters... ‘gave over’ their eyesight to the doves, the story says ‘because of their wickedness and falsehood’? Must it be this way? Who feels better? & Who is repulsed?” (FTRR; 7949, 10049; Rosa.txt). Hence, Rosa asks why such severe retribution is meted out and who stands to benefit from this punishment. From her questions, it seems that she questions whether such punishment benefits the heroine of the tale in any way, or benefits the social doctrine that demands severe consequences for the losers of any conflict. On the other hand, Tzipora writes that “the Father & Stepmother should have been punished for they were selfish & cruel adults & did not live up to their obligations as parents” (FTRR; 7295, 8625; Tzipora.txt). Therefore, for the women in this study, the first tale posed serious questions in regards to the fact that, in this narrative, mutilation and violence are presented as part of the logic of crisis resolution. It appears then, that participants question the suggestion within the tale that violence may be a necessary component of life for women and that, in fact, a woman must be willing to accept a certain amount of violence to live and to be a woman in society.

According to Tzipora, in the first tale “the Voice knew every detail of the story & stated only the facts & did not voice an opinion” (FTRR; 7295, 8625; Tzipora.txt). Hence, she does not notice that the narrator colours the narrative with words like “pious and good” for the heroine and “evil-minded and ugly” for the stepsisters. Rosa writes that the voice is “third person narration style – leaves room for listener to engage personally” (FTRR; 7949, 10049; Rosa.txt). Empress describes this tale as simple, with no specific time, universal setting, and an adventure – quest theme, most of which Hazel reiterates in her response to “Aschenputtel.” On this basis, participants tend to agree that the first tale employs the fairy tale stylistic formats to impart its message of social betterment for “an orphaned girl left with a cruel & unfair stepmother,” according to Tzipora (FTRR; 1628, 12721; Tzipora.txt).

While Hazel writes that the second tale follows the traditional style of fairy tale formats, Rosa suggests that the tale is situated in “real time (historical)...gives us more of what we the receiving public of movie-goers are familiar with” (FTRR; 15291, 15661; Rosa.txt). Tzipora

agrees with Rosa that this tale “did not follow the Traditional structure of a fairy tale. The length was neither short nor simple. It was a 2 hour movie with many plots and sub-plots. Because Leonardo da Vinci was part of the story, the time had to be between 1480 & 1519. The setting was in a small kingdom somewhere in Europe” (FTRR; 11628, 12721; Tzipora.txt).

In regards to “The Tale of the Shoe”, Empress claims that the tale follows traditional fairy tale formats but “the ending is not traditional, the non-traditional ending validates same-sex relationships” (FTRR; 8489, 8609; Empress.txt). Hence she feels that this tale reflects “the variety of relationships existing in society today” while it “rejects the traditional subordination of women to men through the institution of marriage” (FTRR; 8799, 9054; 9522, 9768; Empress.txt). Because the heroine in this tale decides that she does not want to accede to “the long procession of years, palatial day by moonless night” (Donaghue, 1997, p. 7). Thus, Empress believes that the story offers an liberated conception of relationships, while Hazel believes that this tale allows the reader “to come to her own conclusions on what the story is about” (FTRR; 14813, 15218; Hazel.txt). For Rosa, this tale has an ending that provides “the seeing of material goods & status and glory for what it is and she in effect renounces the ‘old’ story and meets the new uniting power within” (FTRR; 16808, 17720; Rosa.txt). In other words, Rosa feels that the tale subverts the idea that the “Cinderella” tales usually promote, that ‘pious and good’ poor girls will be rewarded by marrying a prince. Hence, the third tale subverts both the fairy tale formats and the message promoted by most versions of the “Cinderella” tale.

In summary then, the women in this study perceive that formal narratives offer a range of possibilities to the challenge of creating one life story in relation to another. Moreover, the options that are available serve to offer imaginative possibilities for women in negotiating the conflicts of their own lives.

Character Development – Good, Bad, and Ugly

Character development is seldom a feature of fairy tale narratives and usually includes stock characters, almost never named and either good/bad, beautiful/ugly, etc. Moreover, characters who are most often named in fairy tales are generally the principal female character of the story.

Characters were discussed or included in reading responses only when they were notable in some fashion. The conduct of the father in the first tale occasioned considerable discussion because the versions previously encountered had written the father out of the tales through his early death, which suggests that participants had most likely read or heard the versions by Perrault or Disney. On the other hand, the behavior of the prince in the second tale was the subject of discussion for some participants who felt that he had acted dishonorably after the heroine had saved his life. Moreover, the stepmother's portrayal warranted comment for her portrayal of a woman in the 17th Century who had been left to care for an estate and children, not all of whom were her own. The heroine in the movie was seen to be active and self-sufficient, while the stepsisters were neither ugly nor totally mean-spirited. The last tale with its alternative interpretation of the "Cinderella" story also occasioned discussion of the heroine who not only chose her situation but opted to forego the generally accepted happy ending of marriage to the prince in order to formulate her own definition of happiness.

While Alternate was dismayed by the callous manner in which the father sided with the stepmother against his own daughter, she suggests that "he wasn't an evil man he was just a...yeah, a doormat" (GDR; 5756, 8832; Session2.txt). She goes on to say that "he's like a bad man in this..." but wonders if there has been "a misprint 'cause it...it ought, not a misprint, but it comes out of context, don't you think?" (GDR; 9163, 9488; Session2.txt). Stating in her BLH that she had no illusions about men, Alternate seems to experience some difficulty reconciling the image of the father in this tale with her personal experience of fathers, or of fairy tales. Hence, it appears that she does not want to believe that the father can be 'evil' but finds that she cannot reconcile her opinion with the interpretations of other participants in the group. And so she wonders if there might be a misprint or some kind of mistake in the writing or publishing of the tale for that is not what she wants to believe of fathers, or of fairy tales. Her contradictory comments seem to indicate that indeed she has idealized fantasies of paternity, at least as far as fairy tales are concerned. Tzipora also reacts strongly to the actions and lack of support demonstrated by the father, exclaiming that the father should have died. Horrified at the lack of fatherly concern

portrayed in the first fairy tale, Tzipora writes that the first tale “showed ‘fathers’ as inconsiderate, thoughtless boobs & that women can be cruel” (FTRR; 9094, 9642; Tzipora.txt). As I understand it, she suggests that fathers who do not fulfill their obligations to care for their children and are unaware of their responsibilities are ‘boobs’ which I take to mean ‘bumbling idiots.’ However, women who mistreat their own or other peoples’ children are unforgivable or downright ‘cruel.’ Tzipora does recommend that both the father and stepmother should be punished for their treatment of “Aschenputtel” however, which indicates that she does not negate the father’s responsibility in the treatment of his daughter.

On the other hand, Alternate feels that the heroine shows spunk in the first tale, for “Aschenputtel” took action as far as she was able under the circumstances. In her opinion, “Aschenputtel” was “way ahead of the feminist movement...she was learning to assert herself and stand up for herself...because she took some action...in the fairy tale” (GDR; 40702, 4092; Session2.txt). For Alternate, this tale speaks of the possibilities of overcoming oppression through actions, however small, that serve to ameliorate the situation in some way. Empress writes that she felt pain for the harm that women do to themselves in order to secure an advantageous match, which this tale exemplifies in the stepsisters. However, the tale does not ultimately reward the stepsisters for their self-mutilation because they are blinded for their treatment of the heroine. From her position, the tale “entices us to believe that good wins out over evil” (FTRR; 6020, 6228; Empress.txt), suggesting that she believes this kind of message may be erroneous. Likewise, Tzipora appears to have similar sentiments when she remarks, “and that’s a lot of garbage too...if you don’t mind my saying ...you know, the bad are not punished” (GDR; 34083, 36278; Session2.txt). Thus, two women who experienced some form of abuse in their life histories, of themselves or of others, suggest that they feel abusive individuals are not always punished and they refuse to believe that the ‘bad are punished’ as fairy tales contend.

For Hazel, the stepmother and stepsister in Ever After (Soria, Trench, & Tennant, 1998) had “no redeeming qualities” and that “being abandoned by the death of her husband is no justification for stern behavior towards Danielle” (FTRR; 10224, 10698; Hazel.txt). While she

justifies the behavior of a father who sides with his wife against his daughter in the first tale, she allows no mitigating circumstances for the stepmother who is thrust into the role of looking after her dead husband's estate and orphan daughter. Considering the struggle between Hazel and her 'protective' mother that she hints at in her written and verbal responses, it seems that Hazel has come to feel that women may be duplicitous and even malicious in their dealings with other women. It is possible that she has had other hurtful encounters with women that have not improved or erased her unrewarding relationship with her mother or altered her opinions of women.

Alternate enjoyed watching the video, Ever After (Soria et al, 1998), even though she "didn't get a lot out of it" because she "is too much of an unromantic" and not "13 again." At the same time, she claims that she found "the ugly sisters weren't ugly...[and] the stepmother was marvelous" (GDR; 40294, 40646; Session4.txt). Although she feels that Danielle is a pro-active heroine who "could stick up for herself, find ways around her problem" (GDR; 40999, 41059; Session4.txt), she does not "think...the girl from...the peasant class marries the prince anymore today than she did in those days" (GDR; 40820, 41961; Session4.txt).

From the responses of participants to questions and discussion about character development in the tales, it appears that the provocations of character offered by the versions considered in this research serve to reveal aspects of women's subjective realities. In the first place, their responses suggest that participants may sympathize, and even identify with, individuals of the masculine gender. Is it possible, therefore, that Alternate's objection to male portrayals in the tales stems from cross gender identification in fact? In addition, participants were able to use characters in the tales to problem solve about real conflicts that they were experiencing in their contemporary lives. Hence, Tzipora's remark about the fact that wrongs may never be made right may serve to allay some of her conflicts about past relationships that were unequal and hurtful. Finally, the characters were used by the women to provoke condemnation of the illusory worlds on display in the tales. On this basis, Empress condemns the idea that 'good wins out over evil' for she feels that such ideas do not translate into the reality of everyday existence. Hence, the good, bad, and ugly aspects of

character portrayal in the fairy tales presented produce responses that allowed participants to discover aspects of their identities that may have been hidden previously.

Thematic Elements – Relationships, Revenge, Romance & Myths

Themes in fairy tales often involve motifs that include quest, rescue, retaliation, better life, or social respectability for the hero or heroine of the tale. This element was often the topic of discussion as participants found it difficult to understand the main idea of tales like “Aschenputtel” without comprehension of the social and historical contexts of the tale.

Responding to the first tale, Empress commented that she “believed that [she] would be rewarded with success, security and love” if she was good, most likely because of themes of this type in society (FTRR; 6988, 7115; Empress.txt). For the last tale, she states that “this tale does not place conditions on love...it allows love to exist between two human beings regardless of gender or age” (FTRR; 9522, 9768; Empress.txt). While Hazel claims that “bad treatment will not suppress good. If badness (?) is supported it will spread, as will goodness” (FTRR; 7585, 8444, Hazel.txt), she refused to see the father as ‘bad’ despite his treatment of “Aschenputtel” by chopping the tree down and calling her his nasty little Cinderella.

In the opinion of Junie, the first tale had little to recommend it since it “may even hint that one ought to be content working incessantly and wearing shabby clothes, enduring insults from peers and neglect from authority” (FTRR; 14568, 15774; Junie.txt). Hence, there are themes in this tale that Junie finds might be detrimental to individuals in society. Based on other responses that she wrote, I believe that she means detrimental to women for although she “tried to be superwife, supermom, super citizen [she] burned out” (FTRR; 14568, 15774; Junie.txt). However, she would “still like a prince or at least a comely toad 3x a week and he gets his own coffee, and knocks before entering my space” (FTRR; 14568, 15774; Junie.txt). Thus, Junie perceives tales that promote female subordination to be objectionable and shows that she would not settle for a relationship that does not fulfill her personal requirements and current life style. Hence, she wants a lover who comes when she decides ‘three times a week,’ serves himself, and does not take her for granted but ‘knocks before entering.’ In Junie’s estimation as well, “the element of revenge

instead of forgiveness is not comfortable” in the tale of “Aschenputtel” (FTRR; 12794, 13172; Junie.txt). She questions the “intent of the tale teller” for the tale seems to counsel taking abuse in order to “win a prince’s devotion” (FTRR; 12794, 13172; Junie.txt). While she likes the natural and romantic elements of the tale, she finds that it promotes divisiveness as well as “riches and power” (FTRR; 13363, 14099; Junie.txt). Nor does she agree with the rituals of marriage promoted in the tales where “one gets (as a woman) the flush of youth, beauty and desirability celebrated (like a virgin) in an astounding gown and valuable accessories for one awesome occasion involving a prince (THE WEDDING)” (FTRR; 14568, 15774; Junie.txt). While she has “for friendship and [her] own love of drama, participated in weddings with all the ‘buttons and bows...’ several times,” she attributes this to the “influence of the culture on [her]” (FTRR; 14568, 15774; Junie.txt). From such a contradiction, it appears that Junie may in fact be repressing her own attachments to the ceremonies and implications that are intricately allied with such events. That is, by attributing her attendance at weddings to cultural influences, is she denying her ‘love of drama’ and personal investment in the institution of marriage as a means of guarding against further disappointments like those she has experienced in the past? For Junie, therefore, it is possible that tales such as these seem antithetical to the feminist ideals that she holds dear and fears her daughters have not absorbed, an idea that may explain her resistance to fairy tales in the first place.

On a similar tack, Rosa writes that the first fairy tale “attempts to demonstrate the consequences of our ‘behaviours’ as opposed to our beliefs: but may subtly reinforce these beliefs: rewarding the ‘good’ – punishing the ‘bad’” (FTRR, 7949, 10049; Rosa.txt). Thus, the tale may subvert its own message that behaviors will be held accountable for, from her position the ‘bad’ parents are not punished but the stepsisters, who punish themselves, are punished again. From Rosa’s perspective, the first tale “may impart personal importance – how it only implies – that we miss the whole point when we hear this story as a means of waiting for our prince to rescue us; it doesn’t even imply this – rather the prince is a reward for the unsung: unnoticed: finally rewarded good daughter (or son in other stories) – in other words, our true worth will out” (FTRR; 12231, 13964; Rosa.txt). From this perspective, Rosa means that the “Cinderella” tale ‘only implies’ or

suggests that the reward for being good may include marriage but that it actually proposes that individuals will be recognized finally for the good deeds and fine work that they do throughout their lifetime. Such a message provides a measure of hope for the first-born daughter displaced by younger siblings and possibly never noticed for her valuable contribution to the family welfare.

For her part, Tzipora feels that the second tale illustrates that women should stop carrying men and let them “travel on their own” (FTRR; 13847, 15166; Tzipora.txt). Because Tzipora strongly objected to the prince’s rejection of Danielle in the second tale, she comments, “how do I know that it was happily ever after. I don’t think it was. When he turned on her that crushed me, that fixed me” (GDR; 36472, 36969; Session4.txt). Thus, Tzipora indicates that this tale may remind her of happenings in her own life in which significant others ‘turned on her’ as well. Refusing to carry, not only the individuals in question, but the guilt of their rejection may serve to allow Tzipora to relinquish conflicts that she was unable to resolve previously.

The purpose of the second tale in Rosa’s opinion, Ever After (Soria et al, 1998), “was a vital mover in the revelation and restoration of what really is of moment today: our social distress and diminishment as persons” (FTRR; 16808, 17720; Rosa.txt). Thus, Rosa intimates that this movie uncovers and reestablishes the importance of aspects of modern society that need to be addressed. I believe that she refers to the imperatives by big business and mega-governments to reduce responsibility for social programs and to decrease the concern for individuals within society. Hence, she finds that the tale speaks of coming into our own and finding the person that we truly want to be. This surely indicates that she has no trouble using the discourse and motifs in fairy tales to address issues in her own life. On the third tale, Rosa writes that the problem resides in “the existential distress and aloneness and fragmentation that seeks to know what is somehow intimated within us- seemingly beyond our capacity to grasp - we seem to need help from another – to make this connection to peace & joy and wholeness” (FTRR; 18056, 19480; Rosa.txt). In other words, Rosa feels that the theme in this tale relates to the meaning of existence and finding the wherewithal to achieve life goals. In her opinion, this requires the assistance of another person/people to achieve harmony; that is, partners or close relationships to complete or fill the

loneliness of struggling alone against all manner of obstacles. And yet, Rosa states that she has never had a long-term relationship, which she sees as marriage, in her life time. Is she referring to other kinds of relationships, possibly close friendships, family, or partners in some sense that do not fit the model proposed in fairy tales?

Responding to the video, Ever After (Soria et al, 1998), Junie found the tale entertaining but “felt a bit threatened” by the myths and wonders if she has been “sold a bill of goods” (FTRR; 17479, 18177; Junie.txt). This tale represented an appeal to emotion that left Junie feeling wary about what the tale was promoting. I cannot help but wonder if this tale somehow resembles the story that she tells of the time that

somebody drove up in front of the house I was living ...living alone in a house with my children. Just drove up and they said we’ve delivered your...your van Mrs. V. And uh, I went out and looked and there was a red...a red van, perfect thing for a single woman with a pile of kids, you know take them to things, and I thought ‘oh their father has bought a van so that we can have a decent life’... that would make sense in a way, but of course it was the wrong house...but I’d been waiting for something like that for a long time up until a month (laughs) ago and I hit ground at 50. (GDR; 1279, 2199; Session1.txt)

Well, I would have taken it, I mean he had keys in his hand and everything and I forget what happened there in between. Like...I really believed it was mine but ah, I forget what the stage was...maybe when the signing came, it was wrong name or something. But (laughs) so I...yeah that’s just one story... (GDR; 2262, 2566; Session1.txt).

Such a poignant tale reveals Junie's deep investment in wanting to be nurtured through gifts that would make her life easier and thus happier. From her pauses and nervous laughter, it is also evident how vital these desires are for her subjective identity but also how active they are in her fantasy life. Hence, it appears that Junie believes in myths, for instance that the “father of [her] children [would] act decent,” and feels that this movie presents similar myths (GDR; 1279, 2199; Session1.txt).

However, the alternative tale left Junie feeling unsatisfied for she felt that “it was affected and not literary i.e. pleasurable to read for its own sake” (FTRR; 21217, 25443; Junie.txt). Although she feels that fairy tales ‘impose myths’ on people, she did not care for the tale that proposed other options and relationships that differ from those traditionally acceptable in society. It does not appear, however, that this means that she rejects homosexual relationships for she states that “love does not have to be administered to children by two individuals distinctly recognizable as one male, one female with different and clearly discernable roles” (FTRR; 21112, 25443, Junie.txt). Is it therefore unacceptable that fairy tales should present such a realistic point of view and spoil fantasies that she rejects in her life but still desires to hold onto at some level?

In regards to “The Tale of the Shoe”, Alternate states a number of times that she did not notice a possible suggestion that this “Cinderella” opts for a lesbian/gay alliance. Indeed, she suggests that the girl is young and “there’s nothing to say that this is the end, she’s just going to a ball. She doesn’t realize, [she] think[s], that this is her last opportunity and [she doesn’t] think that is necessarily true” (GDR; 53041, 53247; Session4.txt). With little difficulty responding to the tales or offering her opinions on the characters or plot sequences, Alternate states “it never occurred to me, I ... I thought it...it...it’s quite definitely open to interpretation in any, umm... But why would it come up, homosexual, without making it...mind you, I never picked it up...I never picked it up” (GDR; 50090, 51390; Session4.txt). Although the tale never explicitly states the reality of such an alliance, Alternate was the only participants who did not ‘pick it up.’ Does this reveal that she may have overlooked the signs available in the tale to avoid the knowledge that was plainly visible to other women in the group. Hence, she seems to have difficulty with the idea that a fairy tale might include relationships that differ from the usual heterosexual models that are normally promoted. Indeed, she asks shortly after if this tale was meant for children. Thus, despite her protestations that fairy tales were of no import to her subjectivity, reactions of this kind indicate that they may in fact form part of her expectations in life for she obviously has expectations about the kinds of relationships that can be offered within narrative forms.

On the other hand, Hazel discusses what she feels are emancipatory elements in “The Tale of the Shoe”. She writes, “the elements used forces the reader to think, as they are used metaphorically as opposed to actual ...this effect was used to force the reader into using her own mind and come to her own conclusions on what the story is about” (FTRR; 14813, 15218; Hazel.txt). Although she uses the word ‘force,’ I believe that she means that the author does not prescribe the interpretations that can be derived from the tale but leaves interpretation open and purposely ambiguous for the reader to constitute. And as other members of the group demonstrate, the tale not only did not ‘force them to think’ but some women literally refused to acknowledge elements of the tale that did not meet their expectations. Thus, it appears that the tale that did not meet the expectations of fairy tale formats and motifs created a dilemma for participants who felt that they had been cheated of their ‘traditional’ happy ending of a romantic attachment of the heterosexual variety. There were, however, other benefits from this tale as Tzipora demonstrates in her response.

While Tzipora claims that she did not like the last tale, this tale proved to be “an eye-opener” for her because the author “put the mixed cookies on a plate & offered them. No apology or explanation. Take it or leave it” (FTRR; 16846, 20396; Tzipora.txt). In other words, she feels that Donaghue (1997) did not care to write a particular kind of tale to enchant readers but simply presented her particular interpretation as a plate of ‘mixed cookies’ that she could eat or not as she chose. The author’s disregard for public opinion proved to be liberating for Tzipora who was raised to try to please others. And thus reading fairy tales such as “The Tale of the Shoe” has possibly demonstrated that it is possible to simply be herself without worrying about the opinions of others. And possibly through tales such as this one, Tzipora has begun to truly find her voice and decide that it is what she wants in life that is important in the long run.

Thus, participants’ reactions to thematic elements in these versions of the “Cinderella” tale serve to uncover their subjective investments in regards to relationships, revenge, romance, and myths. Themes in the first tale created resistance in many participants who felt, like Empress claims, that being ‘good’ or accommodating may not always reap the rewards that are promised.

This was a key theme for many participants for, as Rosa suggests, rewards for behavior may be totally subjective and somewhat arbitrary. Thus, she feels that the "Cinderella" tale does not recommend 'waiting' to be recognized for good behavior because that recognition is accorded for being the very best according to the skills and abilities of the individual. Allied to this idea is the fact that revenge may never be realized and have no place in the equation, for the worth of the individual will be accorded its due reward or punishment according to Rosa. For her part, Junie objected to the idea that individuals, and especially women, should allow themselves to be placed in subordinate positions by authority figures who mistreat and denigrate them. From the perspectives of both Junie and Empress, ideal relationships incorporate unconditional love and mutual regard for the other individual. On the other hand, many of the women deplore the romantic myths promoted by the tales read/viewed because they may have been disappointed by romance like Junie and Tzipora. And yet most participants reacted strongly to the last tale that offered an alternative type of romantic attraction for they were not willing to admit the possibility that fairy tales might suggest other endings instead of the traditional heterosexual arrangements usually on offer.

Magic and Symbolic Elements in Conflict Resolution.

Magic and symbolic elements in fairy tales are important to conflict resolution and promote ideologies. Moreover, these elements provide insight to the hopes and desires that hold sway still in the lives of participants. Empress claims that she wished for "Mr. Perfect" as a child who would rescue her from a life that held little joy or encouragement. In her fairy tale responses, Empress only mentions "the older woman appearing to be something of a fairy godmother" (FTRR; 7459, 7974; Empress.txt). In her fairy tale re-write, she incorporates no magical elements except for 'praying for God to find her a way out of this hell...[and] God did answer her prayers' with another "quite defective prince" (FTRW; 11553, 14814; Empress.txt). This form of conflict resolution relates closely to the way that magic is used in some fairy tales; that is, an outside force or magic that solves the problems for the heroine as in the Perrault and Disney versions of "Cinderella." Although Empress does not allude to religious influences in her written or verbal responses, therefore, such a statement suggests that she does indeed have an investment in a

beneficent force that cares enough to send someone to save her from situations that she feels unable to correct on her own. However, the fact that the individual turns out to be 'defective' also hints at an underlying caution that beneficent forces may not be all-knowing for, in the end, she realizes that she must find the inner resources to solve her problems on her own.

Hazel does not “disbelieve in ghosts, fairies and witches” and does not engage in wishful thinking but day dreams about being a singer or helping people. In her fairy tale reading responses, she mentions magical elements sparsely and with little attention to detail. For instance in the second tale she mentions “the twig from the tree and an undiminishing faith in future justice” for magical elements (FTRR; 8799, 9761; Hazel.txt). The twig, however, was an element from the first fairy tale and for some reason she mentions this a few times in connection with the second tale. There may have been a similar element in the second tale that resembled the twig, however, that stayed in her consciousness. And in her fairy tale re-write, Hazel includes no magical elements except for “a book called ...the first gift she had ever received from someone other than her parents and she treasured and guarded it with great determination” (FTRW; 19298, 26520; Hazel.txt). Thus, while Hazel may eschew including magical elements, she certainly imbues children's books of poetry and fairy tales with a magical quality that she feels she can only access in this way. Does this indicate that she fears revealing pent-up fantasies for fear of losing her hard-won respect? With her passion for poetry and daydreams of singing, it does not seem possible somehow that she has no investment in magic as her responses suggest.

For Junie, the natural elements are the magical elements that she enjoys most. In the first tale, she writes about “the twig taking root, the company & support of the birds” (FTRR; 13363, 14099; Junie.txt). However, she also mentions that she engaged in wishful thinking often in her childhood and still imagines “a prince or a comely toad” occasionally although she tempers this desire with the comment that “this is a joke” to suggest that she does not seriously engage in such frivolous fantasies (FTRR; 14568, 15774; Junie.txt). Moreover, her investment in the romantic elements in the tales and her claim that 'fairies are real' certainly denote that magic and fantasy play an essential role in her subjective reality. In her accounts of make-believe play she describes

elaborate games that she played and claims the 'her' fairy tale " as child, the 'spoiled' princess whose caregivers-attendants were indulgent and entertaining. [her] mother was the wicked step-mother who interfered between [her] father & [her]" (BLH; 10330, 11239; Junie.txt). Thus, it seems that Junie had an active imagination in which magic played an essential role in conflict resolution, for such a statement suggests that this type of fantasy served to help her deal with the ongoing conflict that permeates her discussions that mention her mother.

Rosa writes of the "impacting/intertwining influences at play...producing extraordinary results" in the first tale (FTRR; 7949, 10049; Rosa.txt). Hence she means the natural elements that take on 'magical powers' to produce interventions in the lives of fairy tale characters. In the second tale, she mentions that there are 'magical' beings "the artist/inventor Leonardo da Vinci" as well as the "meeting & correcting of their fortunes (hero/heroine) – 'wishes' and social needs to be met in each other" (FTRR; 13334, 14822; Rosa.txt). Thus, Rosa discovers magic in the commonplace elements that may harken back to her mother's insistence upon the mystical qualities inherent in bread crumbs for instance. Indeed, she also imputes magical qualities to human interactions, "the personal connections we craft with our lives" (BLH; 6604; 7315; Rosa.txt). Magic for Rosa, therefore, implies mythical powers that invoke protection or human connections that are enchanted and kindly.

Tzipora seldom refers to magical elements in the tales and did not complete the sections on fantasy on her brief life history. She does mention that she still has wishful thinking for she still imagines meeting a man who would 'treasure her' someday. Although she seldom mentions magic, she writes that she would like a magical transformation in one of her reading responses. Is it possible that her seeming avoidance of magic stems from a lack of trust in allowing herself to express her desires for fear that they may reveal too much? And if magic serves to resolve conflict, are Tzipora's conflicts too deeply embedded or dangerous for her to successfully deal with them at this time?

Hence, it seems that for some of the women, magic and symbolic elements in the tales provide a means to resolve conflicts in their lived realities, as Rosa and Junie demonstrate in their

responses. On the other hand, participants like Empress and Tzipora may find that their conflicts are too deeply embedded or unthinkable at this time, and thus they avoid discussing or including magic in their responses or fairy tale re-writes. Psychoanalytic theory posits that bringing hidden desires to light can be dangerous if the individual is not yet ready to deal with repressed conflicts for, with conscious knowledge comes the realization that the past cannot be solved as past. Repression allows the individual to operate as if she might reformulate the past, through fantasy, in the present. As Cavell (1993) writes,

think of Cinderella, consciously daydreaming of her prince. This carries in its wake thoughts of rescue, of turning the tables on her sisters, of winning her father's total love, thoughts which may be neither repressed nor conscious, generating a gaiety that she cannot explain...but unconsciousness of a different sort enters the picture when the imaginative process is defensive in nature, for then it begins to mask and isolate the initial anxiety against which the phantasy was a protection, sealing off the initial desires, increasingly putting them beyond recognition, and falsifying other aspects in the process (p. 189).

Dealing with anxiety can be a frightening process and acknowledging hidden wishes can be anxiety producing, hence it may be better to avoid the realization than bring a wish to the surface that may require that they be relinquished for more appropriate desires in the present.

Life Stories & Fairy Tale Re-Writes

In her fairy tale re-write, Empress reproduces many elements of her life story that were included in her BLH. And while she begins her tale with "Once upon a time" she does not end with "happily ever after." The 'beautiful blue-eyed blond-haired girl' in Empress's story is not named in her story, nor are any other characters in her tale. Despite her use of what may be considered a stereotypical description of the heroine, 'beautiful blue-eyed blond-haired girl,' it is not clear if that is her intent or simply a means of placing herself in the tale. She uses the passive voice in her tale and the heroine of Empress's tale is both passive and active at times throughout the tale. Like her own life story, the heroine comes from a background that includes a patriarchal father. The "blue-eyed blond girl" also uses relationships as the means to escape the 'place she

calls Hell' but these relationships were fraught with abuse and, like Empress, the heroine "became a single mother". After two 'defective prince' the heroine opts to live alone for a short time and "discovered that being alone was not so bad after all" but she still could not resist the attraction of relationships. Hence, the heroine was soon involved in another relationship that followed the same 'pattern' and "she had finally learned that there are no princes and no happily ever afters. Life is about learning. Relationships require constant work and attention. We cannot love others until we first learn to love ourselves." Thus, Empress states towards the end of her fairy tale rewrite that the heroine is learning to accept herself and wants to have relationships based on mutual acceptance. Empress writes that "the blue-eyed, blond woman finally met a man whom she is working on a relationship with. She is being her true self whether he accepts her or not." While she may have doubts about her self-worth still, she is trying to establish boundaries and "to live for [her]self." Having "learned the word no," the heroine of Empress's tale is on a journey to travel beyond the prescribed Cinderella tale where she will "be loved for who she really is and not for what she looks like or what she does for people. She is neither a princess nor is she perfect. She is simply being the best woman she can be with or without a man." Hence, for Empress it seems, it was possible to review her life story within a fairy tale framework and imagine herself as empowered to improve on past choices. (FTRW; 11553, 14814; Empress.txt)

In her fairy tale rewrite, Hazel claims that the heroine whom she calls Hazel "was totally dominated by her mother and lived a very restricted life" (FTRW; 19298, 26520; Hazel.txt). Her story also begins with "Once upon a time..." and uses the third person voice. While Hazel names her heroine and it is often the case in fairy tales that female heroines are named, she also names other characters in her tale unlike fairy tale motifs. Hazel's fairy tale re-write includes many elements that resemble her BLH. The heroine, Hazel, has 2 parents who each come from different religions, Catholic and Protestant. As well, the father goes to war and the heroine becomes ill and is hospitalized. Hazel also mentions that the heroine's mother "never read books or had them in the house. Hazel's brothers owned and read the Hardy Boys and comic books, as result these were the books that Hazel read." Moreover, the heroine's mother was protective and felt that the heroine did

not need an education to marry and raise children. However, at the age of ten, “her mother’s sister gave her a book ...and she treasured and guarded it with great determination.” In fact, her mother discouraged boys from dating her and “tried to impress on Hazel that she didn’t need a formal education to clean house and look after a husband and children” (FTRW; 19298, 26520; Hazel.txt). To escape the influence of her mother, Hazel married a man whom she “didn’t love” because “he was going to be posted to Germany... [to] get away from her mother and get to travel to foreign ports” (FTRW; 19298, 26520; Hazel.txt). Like many fairy tales, Hazel does not end her tale with ‘happily ever after’ but it is positive and might well be construed as much the same thing. Although this marriage ended and other disasters occurred, the heroine’s journey ends with “Hazel disillusioned and alone once more, [but] she is a successful published writer and lives for her children of whom she is very proud” (FTRW; 19298, 26520; Hazel.txt). Thus, Hazel incorporated some stylistic elements of fairy tale narration in her tale, but chose not to follow others, making the tale entirely her own and successfully utilizing the exercise as a means to empower herself, not only to write her own story, but to end it on a positive note.

Junie composed a story that bears some resemblance to her life story but she alters the tale considerably in her fairy tale rewrite. Beginning her tale with ‘Once upon a time’ she does not end with ‘happily ever after.’ And like fairy tale formats, Junie names the heroine with a name that could be considered fairytale-like, which is often symbolic of natural elements. In her tale, the heroine’s mother appears to be a negative character who Junie describes as “mean...false, loud.” This relationship resembles that of Junie with her own mother to some extent for she resented the necessity to allow her mother to move in after leaving her father. Similar to Junie’s own life story, Buttercup marries but unlike Junie has no children with her husband because of “his bottle of false joy.” However, Buttercup meets a salesman and has a son by this other man. Thus, unlike Junie’s own life, her fairy tale heroine has only one child and then like Junie, the marriage dissolves and Buttercup raises her child alone. As Junie writes in the last reading response,

believing in myself caused difficulties in my marriage. My own inability to live under the dark cloud of resentment and lack of forgiveness led me to strike out on my own with my

children for everyday life. The ‘wicked stepfather’ made my life as difficult as possibly could. He wanted to get even because I named the lack of success in our relationship. I feared him and was downtrodden (FTRR; 21112, 25443; Junie.txt).

Despite hard times, however, Junie claims that Buttercup emerges from her quest to find that “the shadows in Buttercup’s heart could at last be exposed to light in the company of her good friend, her own son” (FTRW; 27231, 29268; Junie.txt). Therefore, there are elements of revision and reconstruction evident in the responses and fairy tale rewrite completed by Junie as well.

Rosa’s fairy tale rewrite shows elements that reveal only a few aspects of her life story but allow her to re-write portions of her lived narrative to her own satisfaction. Rosa starts her story with “In those days...” which is a variation of the usual beginning words. The heroine of Rosa’s story is not named nor are any other characters in the tale. However, her tale begins with sadness and loss including the death of her mother, much like the “Cinderella” tale. Thus, the heroine took care of her three younger brothers and is responsible for household chores. Like Rosa then, the heroine had three younger brothers and household chores. Taking her younger brother down to the water, she meets the lady in the rainbow who asks why she is silent. She writes, “this place will bring you joy and your tears and terrors of the night will cease. For here, even at night and in times of storm, we do not change. And wait to greet you.” In her fairy tale rewrite therefore, she ends her tale with a lady who becomes “the colours of the rainbow” indicating that she may be on a quest to find out who that stranger staring at her in the mirror was truly meant to be (FTRW; 24265, 26329; Rosa.txt).

Tzipora’s tale of the shy little girl begins with “Once upon a time” in a story that follows Tzipora’s life story fairly closely. While only the heroine is named in the tale, she calls the heroine Tzipora and for all other characters she uses generic names (mother, man) and fantasy characters of her own devising. In fact, her tale shows elements of tales like The Wizard of Oz and Alice in Wonderland. Like Alice, Tzipora saw the world in which “people had big smiles, but said bad things & pinched her cheeks until she cried.” And like Dorothy in Oz, the heroine “met other people who frightened her, they roared like lions, some were hollow & empty like tin cans, some

were spineless & fell apart & blew away like straw.” And like Tzipora herself, the heroine “met a man who told her he was a Prince. He would be in charge of her castle, he would teach her how to dress, when to speak & who to speak to, he would pay all the bills & spend all the money. When Tzipora tried to change to please him he decided he found someone else who had more money & much more experience & he went off to live in her castle.” Tzipora claims that the heroine made the same mistakes over & over again, [but] she finally learned that she could not change other people to what she wanted, and she didn’t want to change herself to be like them. So she decided to take a long look in a magic mirror & found she liked herself just the way she is. Her friends like her just the way she is and the ones that want to change her or roar when they talk to her, they are no longer her friends.

Incorporating a quest motif then, there are elements of hope and revelation in Tzipora’s fairy tale re-write suggesting that the exercise served as a means to search for the means to re-write and re-speak herself into being. Thus, she writes, “and if truth were known, she is living in a castle way in the clouds, she is a very lucky lady & is living happily ever after....” (FTRW; 22181, 24603; Tzipora.txt). Thus, Tzipora ends her tale with a heroine who finds happiness through learning to like herself.

As the foregoing discussion illustrates, the participants in this study were able to utilize the elements and motifs in fairy tales to rewrite a personal fairy tale that incorporates elements of their own life and allows them to position themselves as empowered. Each participant used stylistic elements of their own choosing from fairy tales that were widely diverse and, although at times the rewritten tales resembled well-known fairy tales, as in the case of Tzipora, in other cases I could not attribute the fairy tale re-writes to particular tales in any reliable manner. To illustrate this diversity, I have provided copies of the tales written by participants in Appendix 10. Thus, although the tales read/viewed in this research were versions of one popular fairy tale, the tales completed by the women in the study were not modeled on this tale in most cases. In fact, none of the women wrote themselves into a tale in which a poor, ill-treated girl marries into money, is rescued (or waits for rescue) by a more powerful individual, or in which one item (like a shoe) serves as the means of

redemption. In this exercise, therefore, participants were able to consider elements of their own life stories consciously and reconstruct or revise their lived narrative to suit their own desires and present realities. Based on their responses to the final evaluation, it seems that such an exercise may be not only revealing but rewarding and empowering. As Hazel states, the research helped put her "life story into focus...this was a great experience in sharing" (ER; 27629, 28023; Hazel.txt). And Rosa writes that "It is amazing how real our experiences become when given such an opportunity to explore and examine our riches in common. this has been a good experience for me - helpful with my current concerns and commitments I am living through" (ER; 28992, 31124; Rosa.txt). Tzipora comments that, because of the research she believes that she will now "analyze not just fairy tales" but everything she reads and how she views herself as well (ER; 25967, 27947; Tzipora.txt).

Discussion of Findings in Relation to Conceptual Framework

Fairy Tales Affect Life Stories?

To discover whether or not participants feel that fairy tale stories or discourses affected their subjective identities and life stories, it is important to reflect on their personal responses, both written and verbal, to uncover ambiguities or contradictions within their present positions in light of their responses to the fairy tales presented. It is also possible to consider their reflections on the research written in their final evaluations to discover whether they believe that they have gained insight from the ongoing fairy tale discourses that have occurred over the course of the study.

In her final evaluation, Empress writes that she "grew up believing that if [she] was good and did all the right things that [she] would be rewarded and live happily ever after" (ER; 15854, 15982; Empress.txt). In her recollections, she feels that no-one read fairy tales to her as a child but she appears to know and utilize motifs from fairy tales in her lived narrative. While she feels that she has more insight into "how much brainwashing is transmitted through fairy tales," it is not clear whether this will actually translate into actions that may improve present and future relationships, for relationships seem to mean so much to her (ER; 15590, 15584; Empress.txt).

Empress is working on setting boundaries in her life and says that she is learning the “word no. Profoundly...” and thus she has learned a great deal in the past few weeks and over the past year (GDR; 31207, 32100; Session5.txt).

In her fairy tale reading responses, Hazel writes that “people will read into things what they want to. If they are basically good, they will get good out of what they see and read. On the other hand, some people will try to use any excuse to excuse their bad behavior rather than accept responsibility for their actions” (FTRR; 7586, 8444; Hazel.txt). Completing all three reading responses and the fairy tale rewrite, Hazel feels that people will try to excuse their actions just as she makes excuses for the father’s bad behavior with “Aschenputtel”. And yet she feels that excuses cannot be tolerated for the stepmother and sister in the Ever After tale. In her response to the third tale, she comments that “[she] believe[s] people have the right to express their views (as long as they don’t hurt anyone else) that is ok” (FTRR; 16338, 17467; Hazel.txt). While she seems to have widened her view somewhat in ‘allowing’ others to express theirs, she remains rather unbending in relation to her opinions on women. And so Hazel’s responses to the fairy tales read/viewed in this research attest to her position for, while she excuses behavior in fathers that other participants found inexcusable, she remains adamant in her evaluations of women who do not support other women. Moreover, parents and children “have to give respect and... have to earn it” through honest interactions (GDR; 22477, 22531; Session2.txt). While she felt that fairy tales had no effect on her life in the beginning, she feels that she learned a great deal from the research and has been able to reconsider influences in her life in a clearer light. Thus, in her final evaluation, she writes that she now has “more insight into the story behind the tale” and does not feel that she needs to justify her life story as she did in the past (ER; 27361, 27491; Hazel.txt). Hence, she “found that the workshop put [her] life into focus,” and “[she] was able to pick out highlights and ignore all the justification that [she] would have felt [were] necessary in the past” (ER; 27629, 28023; Hazel.txt).

Junie feels that life may be an obstacle course, as she mentions in a group session, she seems to be comfortable and assertive in voicing her positions in the group setting. In response to

the second tale, Junie comments that “it certainly is possible to subvert, to manipulate through knowledge of human nature and needs, together with using current ‘trends’ in order to achieve (selfish) evil ends” (FTRR; 18646, 19432; Junie.txt). However, “a wise human-lover would educate one’s self in current trends, human nature, etc. and with honesty accompany as far as possible another (a seeker) (a learner) (a friend) on his/her journey” (FTRR; 18646, 19432; Junie.txt). Hence, she seems to have translated her disappointment in the way things turned out in her life into a feeling that societal expectations have somehow “forced [individuals] to go along with current myths or to be outsiders” in society (FTRR; 21112, 25443; Junie.txt). While Junie comments that she has no greater understanding of fairy tales than she had before the research, her responses indicate that she may have gained some insight from the research. She wrote in her BLH, “I tried to be a super wife and failed. I tried to be supermom and learned is not possible, I forgive me. Thanks for reading this, I had fun and learned stuff while doing it” (BLH; 11346, 11656; Junie.txt). While she takes courses and does research for fun, she “doesn’t like the idea of using tales to manipulate (consciously or otherwise). Stories are for enhancing daily life and the will to carry on.” However, she subverts the discourse of fairy tales in her fairy tale rewrite to incorporate elements of hope in an outcome of reconciliation that includes finding true friendship in “her own son” (FTRW; 27231, 29268; Junie.txt). Although she stated that she did not care for the final tale and her comments after that reading discuss other issues in her life story which may or may not have been stimulated by that fairy tale reading. Hence, she states, “because of my unhappiness I sought the companionship of other women and reaffirmed the feminine in myself, the story-telling, listener, supportive qualities which were not manipulated by friends” FTRR; 21112, 25443; Junie.txt).

A soft spoken woman, Rosa’s voice was often difficult or impossible to distinguish on the tape above the background noises of the room or of the tape recorder itself. Moreover, Rosa writes in her fairy tale re-write about “a young maiden who did not speak” (FTRW; 24265, 26329; Rosa.txt). Does this young woman refer to Rosa herself, perhaps at a younger age when she found speaking her own ideas or desires to be even more difficult than she does now? As well, the movie

Ever After (Soria, Trench, & Tennant, 1998) “was a vital mover in the revelation and restoration of what really is of moment today: our social distress and diminishment as persons” (FTRR; 16808, 17720; Rosa.txt). From her perspective, stories nurtured a realization of the fact that life can be magical “and how not to be only scared but courageous in the face of the unknown; and, paradoxically, how everything good took its own sweet time to arrive on the scene” (ER; 28922, 31124, Rosa.txt). In her opinion, fairy tales represent a microcosm of the world as it is supposed to be and “our responsibility to be who & what we are called to be” (FTRR; 16808, 17720; Rosa.txt).

Sunshine completed only one reading response but there are indications that she may very well have realized some initial insights in her comment that fairy tales “entice individual reader to assume particular social roles, models of behavior” (FTRR; 6821, 7512; Sunshine.txt). As well, she wonders why “anyone would want to cut off parts of their feet to marry a prince?” (FTRR; 6821, 7512; Sunshine.txt). Speculation upon further insights would however prove little and only serve to create a possible fairy tale in itself.

While she was disillusioned by the first two tales, Tzipora found the last tale to be the most distasteful for its realism and honesty but admits that “they probably lived happily ever after” (FTRR; 16845, 20396, Tzipora.txt). She attributes her reactions to the fact that she was trained “to be good & listen to my elders... to be ‘submissive’ & not to voice an opinion or question an adult’s actions” (FTRR; 10663, 11290; Tzipora.txt). Angry that she was encouraged to be passive, she is learning to listen to her own voice now and “to like herself just the way she is” (FTRW; 22181, 24603; Tzipora.txt). In her final evaluation, Tzipora writes “the workshop has taught me to analyze not just fairy tales, but everything I now read & how I perceive myself in this world of mine. I’ve had to read ‘The Shoe’ 3 times & block out what others have said & THINK FOR MYSELF. This is quite a change for me” (ER; 25967, 26223; Tzipora.txt). Believing that her value “was in someone else's control,” Tzipora now feels that “it is easier to be honest and true to [her]self than to be a good actor” (ER; 26364, 27947; Tzipora.txt). While she is sure that no one read fairy tales to her, she read them to her daughter “thinking that they were ‘tales’ & that if she

was good & ate mashed sweet potatoes, she would meet her prince. Movies were [her] tales & they were a big influence in [her] growing up” (ER; 26364, 27947; Tzipora.txt). For Tzipora then, fairy tales were influential in her life and she perceives that this study helped her to realize this and that she can create her own story in her own way now.

Research Questions

The first question directing this study asks what mature women say or remember about the presence of fairy tales in their early lives, and the relationship of fairy tales to their individual construction of personal life stories. While few participants remember hearing fairy tales in their early lives, there were only two participants who felt certain that fairy tales had no effect on their construction of personal life stories. Alternate felt that because she did not opt for the ‘prince and children’ that fairy tales had not affected her life story. According to Empress, fairy tales were not read to her and she did not reproduce the motifs in fairy tales for she also did not marry. Because her mother’s life resembled a “Cinderella” tale gone bad, she was afraid of commitment and the institution of marriage. However, her life story shows that it was not the institution but the choice of individuals involved in relationships that made the difference. At this time, she is involved in a relationship that shows promise of fulfilling her hopes and dreams, and finally she has learned a valuable lesson for “she is being true to herself whether he accepts her or not” (FTRW; 7478, 7583; Empress.txt). And because Hazel did not have access to fairy tales as a child, she also believes that her life story was not influenced by fairy tale narratives. On the other hand, Hazel loves and collects children’s stories and fairy tales as an adult and still enjoys reading and viewing tales of enchantment. Rosa heard fairy tales in school but feels that her life was not affected by the generally accepted motifs in tales like “Cinderella,” for she did not follow the traditional route of marriage and children that such tales promote. She also writes that

the stories told us after lunch during our elementary school days fostered a mighty sense of the magical nature of life ... and I know we are ‘interior’ creatures/creations & we need to tell out of ourselves: our stories of how we came to be in this or that set of circumstances at

this or that time on our journey. That we need speak of these subterranean feelings into and through the forests, into and through the villages: all the places we meet ourselves in the path (ER; 28922, 31124; Rosa.txt).

While she mentions the fairy tale in which all material needs are magically produced and available, she also proposes that tales like “Cinderella” speak of ‘coming into [her] own’ and being recognized as a valuable and unique individual, a “sky walker on the earth” (ER; 28922, 31124; Rosa.txt). Tzipora comments that no one read fairy tales to her as a child but she was raised with “Cinderella” type dreams. Her fairy tales were the movies that she watched near her home. She “cried when Roy Rogers got Dale Evans at the end of every story. [She] envied Sonja Heeney with her beautiful costumes, & wished [she] could skate & be a hero & knew it could never be for me” (ER; 26364, 27947; Tzipora.txt). Thus she believed that she “had to settle” for other people’s evaluations of her, but “this exercise has helped to purge [her] of these negative thoughts [and made her] aware of what the psychiatrist has been trying to tell [her] for over a year” (ER; 26364, 27947; Tzipora.txt).

My second question asks what meanings women attribute to three versions of a fairy tale read/viewed in the present. As chapter four illustrates, the women in this study attribute meanings to the fairy tales read/viewed in this research that were closely related to the social, historical, and cultural contexts of their lived narratives. Briefly, there was considerable surprise generated from the reading of the first tale. Most participants were disturbed by the violence in the tale and at the behavior of the father of the heroine. Some participants felt that the punishment of the stepsisters was fitting but for Empress, Rosa, Junie, and Tzipora this aspect of the tale was seen as highly questionable. There were elements of the second tale that also were questioned by participants for they felt that the behavior of the prince might prove problematic within the ‘happily ever after’ paradigm. As well, some participants wondered at the heroine’s acceptance of the prince after his abominable behavior. Most participants applauded the heroine’s initiative and practicality and at least two participants thought that the stepmother was a ‘marvellous’ representation of women’s

marginal position in society then and now. The third tale caused considerable consternation among participants who felt that the tale did not deliver the traditional happy ending. However, some participants enjoyed elements of the tale that supported different models of relationships and open-ended interpretations.

Question three relates to the process of re-writing life stories within fairy tale narratives. When given the opportunity to write themselves into a fairy tale in the present, do mature women incorporate patterns in their narratives that relate to the effects of fairy tale narratives in their lives? As the discussion of the fairy tales re-written by the participants shows, there were elements of their life stories incorporated into their tales as well as patterns that related to fairy tale effects in their lives. Most participants began their tales with "once upon a time" and many ended with elements that were positive enough to be considered happy endings. All but one participant avoided using names for other characters, and one participant did not name any characters at all. Most participants used some form of a journey or quest motif in their tales. For some participants there were elements in their tales that may well have been related to fairy tale effects in their lives. For example Empress calls upon a more powerful entity to help her escape her unhappy situation a number of times in her tale, as fairy tale heroines like "Cinderella" do in some versions. And in Tzipora's tale, there were certainly metaphors that resemble tales like "The Wizard of Oz" which may indicate that fairy tales had influenced her ways of seeing the world and certain people in it. Junie's tale may also contain fairy tale influences for she describes her heroine as pleasant while the mother in the tale is depicted in a distinctively negative manner, much like the portrayal of stepmothers that prevails in many fairy tales like "Cinderella" and "Snow White." Moreover, Rosa does not use the same patterns but certainly employs magical elements in her tale to aid in the resolution of the existential dilemma posed in her tale. On the other hand, Hazel who claims that she did not have access to fairy tales as a child and only read them as an adult to her children includes few patterns in her fairy tale that might relate to the effects of fairy tale narratives in her life. Does this mean that fairy tales have/had no effect on her life story now or in the past, or that the influences are buried deep in her unconscious so that she cannot access them now? While this question can likely never

be answered definitively, it seems apparent that some participants are able and do use patterns that relate to fairy tale effects on their rewritten fairy tales at the very least.

CHAPTER 5

Contribution of this Study to the Field of Education

Because subjectivity is produced through social practices, the purpose of engaging in the study of culture resides in our desire "to abstract, describe and reconstitute in concrete studies the social forms through which human beings 'live', become conscious, [and] sustain themselves subjectively" (Johnson, 1983, p. 24). In a Cultural Studies framework, it is necessary to consider the individual moments or components in the production of subjectivities, what Johnson describes as the "circuit of production, circulation and consumption of cultural products" (p. 27). While the social conditions that initiated the production of fairy tales has been studied by many researchers (Bacchilega, 1997; Bottigheimer, 1987; Luthi, 1976; Zipes, 1991, 1994, 1997), the uses and interpretations of these texts can only be determined by the social positions of the reader/user, not by the structure of the text itself, nor by the intentions of the authors/creators. To analyze the 'specific conditions of consumption' by which subjects 'read' and attribute significance to fairy tale texts, it is important to consider the unequal divisions of power and resources that influence how the individual reads and produces a Self within the cultural milieu and available texts. Discursive analysis of participants' life histories, reflections on fairy tale narratives, and re-written fairy tale narratives provide insight into the social discourses, meanings, representations, and relations intrinsic to, produced by, or ingested from fairy tales through which participants were produced, reproduced themselves and contributed further to the conditions of production (Johnson, 1983).

Analyzing the Stories

Poststructuralist theory draws on semiology and discursive analysis to investigate personal storylines and dominant discourses inscribed by our cultural and historical location in society (Davies, 1993). In addition, poststructuralist analysis allows us to disrupt the storylines and subvert the messages, thereby making it possible to change culturally-sanctioned stories embraced at the personal level (Davies, 1993). Drawing on recent studies by Comtois (1995) and Philipp (1996), this research sought to uncover how women are produced and re-produce themselves through

particular kinds of texts. Through inquiry into the conditions through which women read and make meaning of their lives, I hoped to gain insight into the ways that women perceive and use narrative/stories, consciously or unconsciously, in configuring and reconfiguring their lives. Using poststructuralist analysis to analyze written discourse then, this research found that the subjectivities of women may be constituted by fairy tale narratives, whether they resist or subvert culturally-imposed, gender-specific subjective identities, and that this can be uncovered through research that uses writing sessions for women. In a qualitatively designed study, discursive analysis of the life stories of adult women serves as a tool to tease out the tell-tale tracks of fairy tale influences and determine how we can learn to effectively resist or subvert messages internalized in this way. As one researcher states, this requires "the courageous vision and energy to cultivate a newly fertile ground of psychic and cultural experience from which will grow fairy tales for human beings of the future" (Rowe, 1979, p. 253). From the findings of this research, it appears that the courage to complete this kind of awareness may be possible through interactive sharing and discussion of cultural influences like fairy tales in projects of a similar nature.

Recommendations for Further Study

From the findings of this study, I feel that I would structure future research in this area with emphasis on creating a somewhat more directed interaction process to compare with the totally unstructured study just completed. Although interactions were dynamic and revealing, from this research, there were areas that I felt could have been more fully explored. From the evaluations of the participants, it appears that the number of sessions were not sufficient to adequately explore the nature of the subject of fairy tales. Like the participants, I feel that five sessions were simply not adequate for research on narrative structures for there were many ideas that could not be included within such a short time frame.

Many of my recommendations relate to ideas that I feel would have enhanced the process. Hence, I would ensure that tapes were reviewed between sessions to provide an opportunity to revisit ideas in subsequent sessions, to elicit more detail, or to clarify points in depth. While I gave

participants a book to make notes in for this project, I would consider using journals in future research so that participants can write their reflections between sessions. In this project, I provided participants with response sheets to complete at home which approximates the journal writing process, however in future research I would have participants answer write their responses in a journal format and use the response sheets as an aid in answering or recording their responses. As Rosa suggested, I feel that incorporating a time slot for participants to share their written responses completed on past readings/viewings might well have enhanced the interactions and provided incentive to complete responses in a timely fashion. And I agree with Comtois (1995) that, "the paucity of qualitative studies in which participants are directly asked to give their opinion or to reflect on their feelings about fairy tales indicates the need for this type of research" (p. 251). From my perspective, this study represents a valuable contribution to that body of knowledge.

Significance of this Research

This study expands on the findings of recent research into the effects of fairy tales on women's lived narratives (Comtois, 1996; Gordon, 1996, Philipp, 1996, Willoughby, 1996). To understand the ongoing construction of individual subjective identity through narration using cultural artifacts like fairy tales, this study investigates the meanings that mature women attribute to three different versions of one popular classical fairy tale in order to discover if emancipatory elements in fairy tales can be discovered through discursive practices using group interactions and written responses by participants. As the discussion shows, participants were able to use the elements in fairy tales to deal with conflicts and to solve problems, as Gordon (1995) suggests, in their present realities through reading responses to three versions of one popular fairy tale. Although at times the discussion and responses to the tales by participants may indicate that fairy tales might be 'problem-creating' for women, like the women in Comtois' (1995) study, most of the women in this study appear to be able to resolve such problems to some extent through interaction with the group. Like Willoughby's (1995) reconstructive exercise and Phillip's transformative learning study, participants in this study were able to revise themselves and/or their life stories

based on fairy tale narratives and by rewriting fairy tale narratives. Of equal importance, however, is the fact that seven women with ages ranging from 28 to 73 took time out of their busy lives to participate in a study dealing with fairy tales. Thus, seven mature women agreed to begin the project and five completed most of the responses which attests to the fascination of the genre from my perspective. Moreover, from the perspective of the participants, some women felt that fairy tales had influenced their subjective identities and/or life stories, while the responses of other women seem to suggest that there may have been fairy tale influences in their lives as well. Whether these narrative influences take the form of helping women create stories or serve as metaphors to explain their lived realities, there seems to be no doubt that fairy tales were influential in either case. And although the stories that prevail in the cultural environment may provide negative influences, it is also evident from this study that these influences can be resisted and subverted by the individual and by the interpretive community.

Because fairy tales are a pervasive influence in Western society (Bacchilega, 1997; Bottigheimer, 1987; Luthi, 1976; Warner, 1994; Zipes, 1991, 1994, 1997), this study is of significance for educators who need to understand “narrative as both a mode of thought and expression of a culture’s world view” (Bruner, 1996, xiv). In the push for excellence in schooling, it is important that the idea of narrative meaning-making not be lost from view because of the emphasis on computational skill and rote learning. As Bruner (1996) states, “a child should ‘know,’ have a ‘feel’ for, the myths, histories, folktales, conventional stories of his or her culture (or cultures). They frame and nourish an identity” (p. 41). The culture of education, therefore, needs to understand how to create narrative consciousness that provides the individual with the imaginative resources to construct a life story and identity that in turn enhances the culture(s) and society that surrounds her/him. This study not only informs educators about the influences of powerful narratives in the cultural fabric but also shows how individuals disrupt traditional expectations within fairy tales through discursive practices. As well, the ongoing production of multiple selves that can be seen from the data gathered supports Bruner’s contention that narrative meaning-making must not be lost in the shuffle, for

A system of education must help those growing up in a culture to find an identity within that culture. Without it, they stumble in their effort after meaning. It is only in the narrative mode that one can construct an identity and find a place in one's culture. Schools must cultivate it, nurture it, cease taking it for granted ... education is not simply a matter of applying "learning theories" to the classroom or using the results of subject-centered "achievement testing." It is a complex pursuit of fitting a culture to the needs of its members and of fitting its members and their ways of knowing to the needs of the culture. (Bruner, 1996, p. 42-43)

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Appendix 1

Advertisement to recruit research participants

Once Upon A Time, women could build castles in the air with words...

Now they are re-writing the tales ...

Finding women's voices through fairy tale narratives

Do you have a story to tell?

As part of my research project into the effects of fairy tales on women's lives, I am looking for 8 women over 25 years of age as participants.

Participants will be asked to attend 5 sessions at _____ Facility, from X:00 to XX:00 (2 hours each session) between April, 1999 to June, 1999. During these sessions, participants will write a brief life history, read and write their reflections on traditional, popular culture and alternative versions of the classic fairy tale, Cinderella, and re-write a fairy tale combining fairy tale elements with their personal life experiences. To participate in this project, complete the registration form available from _____ and place in the box located at _____. Further information may be obtained by attending the information session on _____(date) or by calling Jane Zigman at the number listed below. Refreshments will be served compliments of _____ Centre. Come and participate in this worthwhile learning and sharing experience!

Title: From tales of enchantment to tales of empowerment: Finding women's voices in fairy tale narratives.

Principal Investigator: Jane Zigman, M.Ed., M.A. (Ed) candidate

Affiliation: Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Contact No.: 562-5800 ext. 4150 or 739-7845

Appendix 2

Consent Form for Research Project

**From Tales of Enchantment to Tales of Empowerment:
Finding Women's Voices in Fairy Tale Narratives.**

Researcher: Jane Zigman, M.Ed., M.A. candidate

Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Telephone: 562-5800 ext. 4150

It is important that participants understand and agree to take part in educational research. You are not required to participate in this study and may withdraw from the study at any time. As well, you may refuse to participate or to answer questions at any time without penalty.

The purpose of this research is to study the effects of fairy tales upon women's lives in forming their identities. Participants will be asked to attend 5 workshop sessions at ____ Facility, from X:00 to XX:00 (2 hours each session) between April, 1999 to June, 1999. The workshop sessions are designed for 2 purposes: first, to help me (the researcher) understand more about the ways in which women create meaning through fairy tale narratives; and second, to enable women to express themselves creatively through writing in response to some popular versions of fairytales. In the workshop sessions, participants will be asked: to write a brief life-history, to listen to or view 3 fairy tales and to share their views on these tales. In the final session, participants will be asked to re-write a fairy tale combining fairy tale elements with personal life experiences and to evaluate the workshop. Written responses will be used for research purposes only and kept confidential. If you agree to participate, please print your name in the space provided, choose an alias, and sign below.

I, _____, wish to participate in the study, From tales of enchantment to tales of empowerment: Finding women's voices in fairy tale narratives, conducted by Jane Zigman of the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa. I agree to share personal information even though I am aware that the process may produce negative emotions. I understand that the researcher will try to reduce negative situations and that she will keep the information I share in strict confidence. I agree to keep information shared by other participants confidential as well. I understand that I may withdraw from the research at any time. The alias that I will use in this project is _____.

Information or complaints about this project can be directed to the Ethics Committee (562-5800, ext. 4057). For further information, contact Jane Zigman, 562-5800, ext. 4150 or Professor Judith Robertson, 562-5800, ext. 4111. You may keep one copy of this consent form.

Participant (please sign): _____ Date: _____

Researcher _____ Date: _____

Thesis Director _____ Date: _____

Appendix 3
Brief Life History

Alias _____

I would like to know something about you as a person beginning with data from your childhood. Tell me about the type of home(s) you lived in (house, apartment, etc.) Describe the neighbourhood and community where you lived as a child (were there businesses nearby, or only private homes)? Did you live in a city, small community, or rural area? Did your family live in more than one place during your childhood? Tell how many and describe what you remember best about each location.

Tell me about your family. Did both parents live with you? How many brothers and sisters? Who was the oldest, youngest, middle child etc. Who else lived with you? (e.g., grandparents, etc.) Were there other relatives who lived nearby (aunts, uncles, cousins)? Who was the head of your family? Please give examples of why you say this. What types of occupations did your parents have (inside or outside the home)? How has your early family life affected your present lifestyle?

Describe the types of schools you attended as a child. Did you enjoy school? Tell why or why not. Please tell the level of schooling reached by: your parents, brothers and sisters, yourself. As an adult how has this affected the way your life is today?

Try to give an idea of the kind of childhood and family life you had and how you feel about it. (For example: did you watch much TV as a child? What shows did you watch? Did you read or go to movies? What sports or recreational activities were you involved in as a child? Did anyone ever tell you a story as a child, was there a time for conversation with parents, friends, other family? Who did you play with and what type of games did you play? Did you have chores, what were they? Were all children treated the same in your family and give examples. Did your family have traditions (ethnic, religious, cultural) that were an essential part of family life? What were they, how did they affect family life and how did you feel about them? How do you feel that these experiences might have affected your life today?

Did you play "make believe" games alone or with friends? Please describe these and give examples. What kinds of wishful thinking do you engage in as an adult? Give examples.

Did you believe in ghosts, fairies, and witches as a child? Were there other fantasy characters that you imagined or believed in? Please describe these and give examples. Do you still feel the same?

If you could describe your life as a fairy tale which fairy tale would best describe your childhood? your life as a young adult? your present situation?

Which age group are you in? (circle) 25 - 50 years

50+ years

Have you ever been in a long-term relationship or married? Please describe that relationship briefly.

Please use the reverse side of these papers if needed. Thanks.

(adapted from Philipp, 1996. Appendix B-1, pp. 330-332.)

Appendix 4 Fairy Tale Research Session Outlines

Pre-session: Introduction to the Research, Participant Expectations, & Ethics.

<u>Length</u>	<u>Content</u>	<u>Materials</u>
60 min.	Self introductions: Researcher and participants Informal Discussion: Reasons for research on fairy tales and narrative in identity formation, ethical concerns, format of sessions, and what will be expected of participants.	
15 min.	Refreshment Break	
45 min.	Feedback and questions from participants. Explanation of Informed Consent.	Informed Consent

Session 1: Ethics, Brief Life History, and Introduction to Fairy Tales

<u>Length</u>	<u>Content</u>	<u>Materials</u>
45 min.	Signing of Informed Consent forms. Brief life-history writing exercise.	Informed Consent Life History Guideline
15 min.	Refreshment Break	
60 min.	Introduction to fairy tales as a story-telling tool. Fairy tale survey, discussion of format, motifs, and representations in traditional fairy tales.	Fairy Tale Quiz & Elements: A/B

Session 2: Traditional Fairy Tales

<u>Length</u>	<u>Content</u>	<u>Materials</u>
60 min.	Discussion of the choice of Cinderella for this project and the effects of fairy tales: What makes them so compelling? Reading and discussion of traditional version of Cinderella fairy tale.	Grimms' version of Cinderella
15 min.	Refreshment Break	
45 min.	Writing and reflecting on insights gained in session 2	Reading Response

Session 3: Commodified Fairy Tales

<u>Length</u>	<u>Content</u>	<u>Materials</u>
60 min.	Preview and discuss commodified fairy tale video. Discussion of representations in these fairy tales. How do they compare to the original versions?	A popular culture version of <u>Cinderella</u> (i.e. <u>Pretty Woman</u>)
15 min.	Refreshment Break	
45 min.	Writing and reflecting on insights gained in session 3	Reading Response

Session 4: Alternative/Feminist Fairy Tales

<u>Length</u>	<u>Content</u>	<u>Materials</u>
60 min.	Read and discuss alternative/feminist fairy tales. Discussion of representations/formats in alternative fairy tales. Describe how these kinds of tales disrupt the norm or reinforce the status quo.	Donoghue's version of <u>Cinderella</u> (<u>The Tale of the Shoe</u>)
15 min.	Refreshment Break	
45 min.	Writing and reflecting on insights gained in session 4	Reading Response

Session 5: Re-writing Life Story as a Fairy Tale

<u>Length</u>	<u>Content</u>	<u>Materials</u>
60 min.	Re-writing life story as a personal fairy tale accompanied by discussion and reading of portions among participants (their choice).	
15 min.	Refreshment Break	Checklist
45 min.	Checklist evaluation and final comments by participants.	Evaluation

Appendix 5

Reading Response Sheets

Reading Response Sheets

Alias _____

Session: _____

Title of tale: _____

Fairy Tale Survey and Elements

Were the following elements/structures included in the fairy tale or alternative tale chosen? How might these elements affect the reader? Record your reflections in the space provided. You may use the back of the sheet if necessary.

Story Length: _____**Time:** _____**Setting:** _____**Style:** _____**Action:** _____**Magical elements:** _____**Theme:** What was the problem in the tale? How was the problem solved?**Endings:** _____**Female Heroine** _____**Male Hero** _____

Other Main Characters/Animals: _____

Voice _____

Reading Response Sheets

Alias _____

Session: _____

Title of tale: _____

Elements of Fairy Tales and Personal Reflections

Record your personal reflections on the tale read/viewed today. Use the back of this paper if you require more space.

A. Does this tale follow the traditional elements of fairy tales discussed earlier (setting, heroine, hero, other main characters, animals, theme/problem, resolution of the problem, etc.)? How do the elements used/not used affect you as a reader? Was this effect intended by the tale teller?

B. How did you feel about the fairy tale that was read/viewed and discussed in this session? What was your favourite moment of reading or viewing this tale? Explain why this might be.

C. What are your impressions of the tale? What reactions do you think the tale attempts to induce in the reader? Was this tale designed to teach or to entice the individual reader to assume particular cultural or social roles, models of behaviour, or values? Is it possible to resist or subvert messages promoted in such an appealing fashion? Why or why not? Do you feel that fairy tales like this have influenced or might influence your life story? Explain.

Appendix 6

Folk and Fairy Tale Elements

Elements of Fairy and Folk Tales

1. Story Length: Generally short and simple.
2. Time: Tales often begin with "Once upon a time...". The time of the tale may or may not be indicated, and indeed time may even stand still, as in "Briar Rose."
3. Characters: Generally there is only a minimum of information provided about the characters. Stereotypes are common, such as the beautiful princess, the handsome prince, and an evil antagonist. At times the characters are not even given names. They are described simply as the daughter, son, prince, princess, mother, father, or evil witch. characters are generally either good or evil, strong or weak, beautiful or ugly.
4. Setting: The setting often receives little description. It may include a castle or forest. Few details are provided.
5. Style: The simple style of fairy/folk tales is what makes it appealing to the early writer. Only words necessary to the flow of the tale are included.
6. Action: Adventure is important to a fairy/folk tale. The action gives the tale its interest, is intertwined with and carries the theme, and builds quickly to a climax.
7. Theme: This is the main idea of a tale and is often hardest to articulate at first. In traditional tales, it is usually one of journey, rescue, quest, and/or conquest. Often tasks must be performed while on a journey or quest.
8. Magic: The presence of characters who have magical powers often distinguishes fairy tales from folk tales. Although this generalization is not consistent, the role of magic is important to the conflict or resolution of the plot.
9. Endings: Nearly all traditional fairy/folk tales have a happy ending, which includes the solution to the problem and often includes marriage of the male and female heroes.

(Adapted from Barchers, 1988)

Appendix 7

Checklist Evaluation and Final Comments

Alias _____

I am interested in your feelings about this workshop. Please answer the following questions by circling the word that best describes your evaluation.

Did you find this writing workshop worthwhile? Very Somewhat Not at all

How would you rate the instruction? Good Average Poor

Do you feel that you learned from this workshop? Yes, a lot Enough Not that much

Do you feel that the sessions were Too long? Long enough? Not long enough?

Do you feel that the number of sessions were Too many? About right? Too few?

How do you think that the workshop could have been improved? _____

Has this writing workshop had a positive or negative effect on how you perceive fairy tales?

Do you feel that fairy tales may have affected your life story? In what ways? If not, why do you think that they had no effect?

Appendix 8

Definitions of Terms and Codes

Definitions of Terms and Codes used in Paper and in Analysis

Affect - (v.t.) produce effect on; move; touch the feelings of; pretend

Bias - predisposition or prejudice (have a bias towards); distortion of statistical result by neglected factor

Conversation - “a structured set of speech-acts, that is as sayings and doings of types defined by reference to their social (illocutionary) force... unfolds through the joint action of participants as they make (or attempt to make) their own and each other’s actions socially determinate” (Davies, 2000. p. 1)

Discourse -

an institutionalized use of language and language-like sign systems...[that] can occur at the disciplinary, the political, the cultural and the small group level...[or] develop around a specific topic ... a multi-faceted public process through which meanings are progressively and dynamically achieved (Davies, 2000, 1-2)

Discursive practice is “all the ways in which people actively produce social and psychological realities” (Davies, 2000. p.1).

The constitutive force of each discursive practice lies in its provision of subject positions. A subject position incorporates both a conceptual repertoire and a location for persons within the structure of rights for those that use that repertoire. Once having taken up a particular position as one’s own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, story lines, and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned. At least a possibility of notional choice is inevitably involved because there are many and contradictory discursive practices that each person could engage in. Among the products of discursive practices are the very persons who engage in them (Davies, 2000. p. 2).

Domination - have a commanding influence over; be the most influential or conspicuous (Oxford)

The poststructuralist research paradigm “recognizes both the constitutive force of discourse, and in particular of discursive practices and at the same time recognizes that people are capable of exercising choice in relation to those practices (Davies, 2000. p. 2)

Emancipatory - liberating,, free from social or political constraints.

Effect - (n.) result or consequence of action etc, state of being operative; (v. t.) to bring about, accomplish, cause to occur

Illusion - False belief; something wrongly believed to exist; deceptive appearance

Influence - action invisibly exercised (on); thing or person exercising this; exert influence on, affect.

Multiplicities of ‘self’

our acquisition or development of our own sense and of how the world is to be interpreted from the perspective of who we take ourselves to be, involves”:

- H) Learning the categories which include some people and exclude others...
- Participating in various discursive practices through which meanings are allocated to those categories...[and] include story lines through which different subject positions are elaborated;
 - Positioning of self in terms of the categories and story lines. This involves imaginatively positioning oneself as if one belongs in one category and not in the other...;
 - Recognition of oneself as having the characteristics that locate oneself as a member of various sub classes of dichotomous categories and not of others... entails emotional commitment to the category membership and development of a moral system organized around the belonging.
 - All four processes arise in relation to a theory of the self embodied in pronoun grammar in which a person understands themselves as historically continuous and unitary ...[with] contradictory positions as problematic, as something to be remedied... (Davies, 2000. p. 2)

Myth - traditional narrative usually involving supernatural or fancied persons etc. and embodying popular ideas on natural or social phenomena etc.; imaginary person or thing; widely held but false notion

Positioning

the discursive practice whereby selves are located in conversation as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines – this can entail interactive positioning in which what one person says positions another...and reflexive positioning in which one positions oneself ... (not necessarily intentional) One lives one's life in terms of one's ongoingly produced self, whoever might be responsible for its production (Davies, 2000. p.2).

Stereotype: unduly fixed mental impression; conventional idea or opinion or character etc.; formalize, make typical or conventional

Reference Codes (and abbreviations) Used:

Brief Life History (BLH) - refers to data from participants' brief life histories.

Final Evaluation Responses (ER) - participant responses to the study articulated in final evaluations.

Fairy Tale Reading Responses (FTRR) - Written participant responses to fairy tales read in sessions.

Fairy Tale Re-Write (FTRW) - Fairy tales written by participants that include elements from their life stories.

Group Discussion Response (GDR) - Articulations and interactions by participants during group sessions.

Definitions of Codes Used in Analysis

Contexts: a general code that refers to the social, historical and cultural factors articulated by participants' in their brief life histories for the most part. Sub-codes under this category include:

Education & Training: the level of education achieved by family members and/or by participants.

Family Home & Childhood: factors that include parents, siblings, home stability, type and range of activities that participants had access to as children.

Models & Relationships - Articulations that refer to influential models and/or relationships.

Society, Culture & Religion - Articulations that point to the influence of society, culture or religion.

Personal Positions (Positions) - this code refers to the individual positions articulated by each participant in accord with the social, historical and cultural contexts by which their personal identity (who they take themselves to be) has been constituted. Personal positions articulations, whether verbal or written, have been coded as:

Fantasies & Illusions - Supports or denies false beliefs, something wrongly believed to exist &/or predisposition or prejudice, gender biases.

Contradictions - Denial of facts, statements, be at variance or conflict with.

Disenchantment - Being free from enchantment, illusions (stems from disappointment?).

Domination – Evidence of domination (power over) in life story.

Doubt – Evidence of doubt or uncertainty in articulations.

Enthusiasm - Intense feelings or interest, great eagerness.

Fairy Tale/Life Story Parallels – Evident parallels between fairy tale re-writes and life stories.

Fairy Tale & Stories: Evidence of exposure fairy tales and stories in articulations.

Initiative & Choices? – Evidence of ability to initiate things, make choices.

Insecurity – Evidence of feelings of insecurity, that life is not safe or dependable.

Insight & Reflexivity - Insight, reflexivity (subject's action on herself) in comments, writing.

Life Expectations - Evidence of looking forward, anticipation, hopes or expectations from life.

Appendix 9

Data from Brief Life Histories

Data requested from Brief Life Histories (BLH): Social, Historical, and Cultural Context (CSHC)

BLH Data Requested	Alternate	Empress	Hazel	Junie	Rosa	Sunshine	Tzipora
Homes lived in, neighbourhood, area?	• Rural, farm in Northern Ireland • Lived in same house until left home	• Ottawa, Geneva, back to Ottawa • Three major moves in first 8 years.	• Urban neighbourhood in city • Same house until age of 17	• Rural and urban in N. Ontario • Moved often as father sold houses he built. • Often lived in temporary dwellings (tents, ice houses, etc.) until new house was built.	• Rural farm house • Sounds like picture post card • Same house until left home	• Lived with father after parents divorced at 8 yr. of age. • Moved 10 times within city of Ottawa	• Small apartment over hardware store. • Age of 5 lived with grandmother in Toronto (hard times). • After war moved back to Ottawa and bought duplex.
Family, parents, siblings, extended family, head of household, occupations of parents:	• Lived with both parents • Youngest – 5 brothers, 3 sisters • Large family, relatives in area but seldom seem	• Lived with both parents • Parents divorced when she was 13 • Oldest – 2 sisters and 1 brother	• Lived with both parents except when father in service • 2 brothers – 1 older, 1 younger	• Lived with both parents • Youngest - 2 older brothers	• Lived with both parents • Oldest – 3 brothers and 3 sisters	• Lived with father and brother • Oldest – 5 sisters and 1 brother	• Lived with both parents • One older brother
Schools attended, education attained by participant and/or family?	• School in town affiliated with church • 3 years high school • Took courses as an adult • Brothers left school early and became rich while girls were smart but not able to achieve the same.	• Started school in Geneva. • Completed BA in Psychology. • Her father has BA commerce, mother 1 year Business College, brother has BA in commerce and sister is completing degree in sociology	• Attended RC schools at elementary level • Attended high school in the public system	• Village school until grade 8 • Graduated from Teacher's College • Returned to get BA, BEd. • Parents: Mom grade 10, Dad grade 8	• One-room country school until grade 8 • Parents grade 8 level • Brothers graduated from university, 2 sisters also university grads • * Herself and youngest sister completed college	• Attended Catholic grade school until grade 5 and then transferred to a public school when parents divorced. • She is finishing her grade 12 diploma at the Adult High School	• attended school in Ottawa public system • High School of Commerce

Data from Brief Life Histories

Data requested from Brief Life Histories (BLH): Social, Historical, and Cultural Context (CSHC)

BLH Data Requested	Alternate	Empress	Hazel	Junie	Rosa	Sunshine	Tzipora
Childhood and family life: How participants felt about it?	• life was busy, tumultuous • large family, had to claim her place, do her chores. • played games with older siblings, usually ended as quarrels • also played with neighbour child, read books (no TV), movies on special occasions	• family was dysfunctional, grew up without boundaries • played sports, traveled, exposed to many cultures • little information on games or activities as a young child.	• early life: ill health, father went to war • no TV, listened to radio stories, movies on Sat. • chores at home • mother protective of her, brothers followed lead • Catholic • Protestant religious influences • played with neighbour/school friends	• if chores done and she was 'good' – able to go to movies • family dinners & discussions • guides, picnics with friends • no TV, running water, or electricity • read books, newspapers • Church on Sunday – fussed over by ladies at church	• sense of tumult • seldom saw anyone outside family • strong religious tone to family life • all children helped with work on farm • played games in evening with siblings • read alone and to siblings • listened to radio, later on TV in evenings	• lived with father & succession of stepmothers • had more chores than her brother • not much TV, she says her father told her stories • swimming lessons • played with neighbour child	• fishing on Sun. mornings with her father • great deal of yelling & hitting • lived near movie theatre and went to movies often • no response to childhood activities section
Make-believe and wishful thinking as a child, adult?	• played 'house' 'doctor' & all the others with neighbour girl • reading, drawing	• did not play 'make-believe' games • wished for Mr. Perfect so she would live happily ever after	• doesn't remember playing make-believe games • not a wishful thinker but enjoys day dreaming	• "make-believe" a constant with brother, cousins, friends • pretended she was a doctor, captain, leader of pack	• "cowboys & Indians: from the movies, & later T.V"	• "I played game with friends under the age of eight"	• still hopes to meet man who will treasure her
Belief in ghosts, fairies, fantasy characters?	• constantly cited examples of their existence • Irish banshee, devil, giant's graves • old neighbour told the tales • still believes in miracles	• believed there were beings who lived on another planet or in other universes	• did not believe in ghosts, etc. in her opinion • afraid of dark after scary movie	• "fairies are real" • feels they have their own dimension • never met witch but believes ghosts are possible	• believed in ghosts, fairies, & boogie man • still believes in guardian angels	• "the man that lived under my bed. I would put plate of food on the floor to feed him so him would not bother me."	• she did not answer this part

Data from Brief Life Histories

Data requested from Brief Life Histories (BLH): Social, Historical, and Cultural Context (CSHC)

BLH Data Requested	Alternate	Empress	Hazel	Junie	Rosa	Sunshine	Tzipora
Fairy tales read/heard in childhood?	• sister read fairy tales by candlelight • creepy, scary tales	• does not recall anyone reading fairy tales to her as a child • myth of old woman while in Switzerland (marzipan)	• never heard of or read fairy tales as a child • received "Child's Garden of Verses" at 10 years old and devoured it • previously only had brother's books • collects fairy tales and read to children	• does not recall anyone reading fairy stories to her • she read them herself and misread Cinderella	• introduced to fairy tales during quiet reading time at school • read to younger siblings (does not say if they were fairy tales)	• does not remember the fairy tales that were read • mother says that she read Princess and the Pea, Cinderella	• she knew she was a fairy tale reader • no one read fairy tales to her • 'movies' were her tales
Long-term relationships?	• answers "No" to this question on BLH • never married • many relationships but none long-term	• lived with boyfriend but never married • 3 long-term relationships • afraid of commitment? • controlling, abusive	• married to second husband at present • poor opinion of men – self-centered and egotistical	• long term passionate relationship late teens – early 20's • divorced • raised 7 children alone	• never married • no long-term relationships • religious order for some time	• married 6 years • describes as Cinderella story but now feels that it is falling down around her.	• married for 14 years, divorced • when she separated her son dies in an accident • raised daughter alone

Appendix 10

Fairy Tale Re-Writes

Empress' Tale

Once upon a time there was a beautiful blue-eyed, blond-haired girl who feared that she was bad inside. She lived in a home devoid of love and kindness. She named this dwelling "HELL". She vowed to become a lawyer one day so that she and her siblings could escape this hell and find their own "EDEN". She feared the obese, bearded tyrant who ran this hell. She vowed that she would get an education and a good job so that she would never have to endure the wrath of another heartless patriarch as long as she lived. Independence would be her salvation.

Well, as the years passed, she could no longer endure this hell, so she left home and set out to find her own home with the young man she was dating at the time. She moved with the young man because she did not think she would be able to afford a home all by herself. Deep down inside I believe she was really afraid of being alone. Well as it turned out, the man didn't work or cook or clean or do much of anything besides womanize and play his guitar. The blue-eyed, blond girl discovered that not only could she do it all alone but she was also taking care of more than just herself.

She eventually tired of the physical, emotional, and financial abuse. Once again she found herself praying for God to find her a way out of this hell. Sure enough, God did answer her prayers and once again she found herself in love with a quite defective prince. All was bliss for a while until the arrival of their newborn baby. This is when the prince turned into an inebriated toad. Once again the blue-eyed, blond girl found herself making her way out of this hell. This time she found the strength to leave all on her own.

So now this blue-eyed, blond girl had become a single mother. For the first time in her life she discovered that being alone was not so bad after all. She was able to care for herself and her child. She studied hard and earned a university degree. She took long hot baths and painted her toes. She laughed with her girlfriends and cried tears of joy. She finally had some privacy and peace. Her heart was filled with joy but once again she began to feel that loneliness creeping in. She would look in the mirror and ask herself what was wrong with her. Why wasn't she married like all of her friends? Secretly, she felt that no man would ever want her because she had not conformed to social norms. And so her loneliness grew and grew until one day she fell in love again with another defective prince.

This relationship did not last either. In fact, it turned out to be the most abusive relationship of all. She was not bitter though because at last she could see her pattern. She had finally learned that in the real world there are no princes and no happily ever afters. Life is about learning. Relationships require constant work and attention. We cannot love others until we first learn how to love ourselves.

The blue-eyed, blond woman finally met a man whom she is working on a relationship with. She is being her true self whether he accepts her or not. She finally wants to be loved for who she really is and not for what she looks like or what she does for people. She is neither a princess nor is she perfect. She is simply being the best woman she can be with or without a man.

Hazel's Tale

Once Upon A Time

Once upon a time there lived a girl by the name of Hazel. Her father, Mike, came from a rich catholic family and was well educated. Her mother, Viola, was born into a poor protestant family and had very little education. Although they were from different backgrounds they were in love and eloped.

Because Mike and Viola married against their parents wishes they were both ostracized. As well as having no extended family to rely on for support, they married in the first years of the depression. Although times were tough for them, Hazel's father was able to work a few days a week. This work brought in enough money for the family to live on.

Over the next nine years they had five children. Two of the children didn't live to see their first birthdays, but the other three children thrived. Dan was the eldest, next came Hazel and then Keith. There was three years between each of the children.

When Hazel was five years old the second world war broke out. In January of 1940 Hazel's father left for Europe and was gone for five and a half years. In July of 1940 Hazel got sick and had to spend the next year in hospital. When Hazel came home her mother was very protective of Hazel and made sure that she got plenty of rest. Her brothers were told that she was 'delicate' and had to be looked after. Hazel's brothers took this matter very serious and watched over Hazel with fierce determination.

Having very little education herself, Viola never read books or had them in the house. Hazel's brothers owned and read the Hardy Boys and comic books, as result these were the books that Hazel read. Having no extended family Hazel and her brothers never received any gifts from outside the immediate family. Although she received gifts from her parents they were only given on special occasions such as birthdays or Christmas. Being a practical woman, Hazel's mother always gave Hazel gifts of a practical nature. Although Hazel would never say anything about it, she was hurt when her friends showed off gifts they had received from aunts, uncles and grandparents. When she was alone she felt very lonely and cried as she felt that something was missing out of her life and she couldn't understand what it was.

Hazel was about eight years old when her mothers sisters and brothers started to come to the house for visits. With Mike gone to war and Viola's family coming around to visit her, Mike's family also appeared on the scene. They wanted to make sure Mike's children were looked after and received a good catholic education.

When Hazel was ten years old, her mother's sister gave her a book called A Child's Garden of Verses by Robert Louis Stevenson. It was the first gift she had ever received from someone other than her parents and she treasured and guarded it with great determination.

Hazel was totally dominated by her mother and lived a very restricted life. Her mother would not allow her to go anywhere on her own. When her father returned home from the war in June of 1945 Hazel thought her life would improve and she would have more freedom, but as her mother was the matriarch of the family the status quo remained.

When Hazel reached her teen years, her brothers watched over her to the point where any boys that may have been interested in dating were discouraged from pursuing her. When Hazel started high school her mother insisted that she take up typing and shorthand. Hazel wanted to take academic subjects as she wanted to go to university but her mother would not allow her to follow her wishes.

Viola was a woman of her time and tried to impress on Hazel that she didn't need a formal education to clean house and look after a husband and children.

At the age of sixteen Hazel was totally frustrated with the way her life was going and appealed to her father. She told him that she didn't want to be a secretary and marry some man so that she could have his children and look after his home. One day her father came and asked her if she would like to be a Radio Technician. She would have to go to school to take radio theory and learn morse code. Her father told her that he had a friend in National Defense who would accept her on a pilot project, that the government had set up, if she was interested. Hazel was in grade eleven but she jumped at the chance and left school to follow a dream. She passed all her courses and was sent to a radio station where she thrived.

Hazel was eighteen years of age when she started to go out with Joe. He was the first man in her life and although she didn't love him she enjoyed his attentions. Hazel's mother was furious and did everything in her power to breakup this relationship. Viola introduced Hazel to the son of a friend of hers. Although he was thirty years old and Hazel was only eighteen Viola tried to convince Hazel that they should marry. His family was rich and Viola was impressed by his family's wealth and position in society.

Hazel was horrified at this pressure and rebelled. Joe had been pressuring Hazel to marry him. He was going to be posted to Germany in the fall and wanted her to go with him as his wife. Although Hazel didn't love Joe she consented to marry him. She decided that this would be a great deal as she would get away from her mother and get to travel to foreign ports. They were married in June and Hazel turned nineteen in July.

This would have been a happy ever after story except that once Joe married Hazel his posting was canceled. Hazel had forgotten that when she accepted her job in the government she had signed a paper saying that she would not leave the country without permission from the government. The type of work she was doing was classified as top secret and the government would not give her clearance to leave the country. To be sure that there would be no problems the government canceled Joe's transfer to Germany.

Hazel's mother told Joe that they could live at the family home and save money to buy their own home. Joe accepted the deal and Hazel was trapped not only by her mother but by a man she didn't love. Eventually Joe and Hazel moved into their own home. Hazel's life didn't improve with this move as Joe turned out to be very controlling. He wouldn't let Hazel work or go to school. He would call her several time a day from work and demanded to know everything she did or thought. If she tried to go anywhere without him he would make terrible accusations against her. Eventually Hazel closed in on herself and lived like a zombie without feeling or thought.

Hazel stayed with Joe for eighteen years and had two children by him. At thirty-seven years of age Hazel left Joe. She got herself a job and went back to school to finish her education. For the next fifteen years Hazel had a successful life. She had a responsible and well paying job as well as wonderful life with a man that she loved very much.

Hazel was fifty five when once again her life took a turn for the worse. The next four years brought one horror upon another. Although these atrocities left Hazel disillusioned and alone once more, she is a successful published writer and lives for her children of whom she is very proud.

The End

Junie's Tale

Buttercup's Journey

Once upon the time there was a good friend. Everyone who knew Buttercup was fascinated by her joyful spirit and honest sharing of feelings. All feelings but her black feelings. The black feeling she kept secret in a special place in her heart. Her mother in particular saw the shadow of the dark, feelings in her daughter's eyes and she was afraid of the shadows which accused her of false joy from a bottle and brutal honesty.

She tried to force Buttercup to expose her darkness which had found a place in her soul/heart. Mother mean. Buttercup cheerful, friendly.

It came to pass that Buttercup was the age to marry.

One of her friends had a brother who needed a wife and that family welcomed Buttercup as a pleasant bride.

Buttercup's mother celebrated in her false, loud way.

This man liked to have Buttercup in his house, cheerfully cooking, decorating and there were no children. the man needed Buttercup to hold him until his bottle of false joy took his mind away. this was difficult for Buttercup and the dark space in her soul grew larger with each selfish act of the young husband. Of course, no child was conceived in the marriage.

Finally Buttercup was lonely for warmth and friendship. She became joyful again on visits with a traveling salesman. The joy in their friendship resulted in a child. The cuckolded husband in his fear hated Buttercup now, he set about trying to kill himself with booze. A good friend of Buttercup's took her in with her child.

The child was tall and straight, gentle, talented and a scholar. Buttercup joyfully saw the child grow and that joy almost filled Buttercup once-battered heart. When her son played some murky games with other teenagers Buttercup retained her joyful spirit and eventually the young man emerged from his misadventures and discussed with his loving mother the experiences of the darkness possible in human hearts. The shadows in Buttercup's heart at last could be exposed to light in the company of her good friend, her own son.

Rosa's Tale

Rosa's Story:

In those days, in that country far from home, there lived a young maiden who did not speak. Her father was among those sent to guard the farthest reaches of the new land. In the little house where her mother had died with the fever that had ravaged their village, she looked after her three little brothers. There was much sadness and little laughter in the village and many souls were longing to join their loved ones. Even her little brother was ailing still.

On fine mornings, after the fire was lit and the pan of bread was set for their evening meal, she would carry him down to the river's edge to watch the otters play. And sometimes, when her chores were done for the day, the four children would hurry to the river, for they could hear the splashing joy of spirits among the rocks.

There came a morning when the two children sent their two brothers off to the village school and, together they went down to the water's edge to fill up a bucket of water from the spring that flowed into the river at that place above where the otters would play. A rainbow arced its bridge across the tumble of play and mist. And the maiden heard a voice speak: "Why are you silent child? come and join us. This place will bring you joy and your tears and terrors of the night will cease. For here, even at night and in times of storm, we do not change. And wait to greet you."

The maiden looked and saw beyond the rainbow a lady of golden hair and smiling face, whose eyes were like her mother's. "O mother, is it you?" she cried out. And that first sound of hers was like a sobbing clearing itself from her very heart. Then her little brother leapt up and shouted and danced around her. "Yes, yes. It sounds just like her laugh, the water is like our mother is laughing! I remember, I remember."

The lady became the colours of the rainbow that girded the mist, and the maiden and her little brother became glad and threw flowers into the water. For both the otters and the playing spirits were as good as the words the golden lady spoke. Over the years, many people came to drink from the spring water and speak with the maiden and her brothers. Many were the sore hearts and ailing spirits that were made well and whole again.