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THE SOCIALIZATION OF GENDER: AN ANALYSIS OF THE
INFLUENCE OF MEDIA ON GENDER DEVELOPMENT AND
STEREOTYPES

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*To all those people who,
even for a second,
believed in me.*

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Abstract

Gender behaviors of men and women are established and created through the environment and social groups like parents, teachers and peers which they learn from the society, in a conscious or unconscious way. The social interactions between individuals generate the so-called social-order. The socialization of individuals occurs, mainly through observational learning. Children internalize behaviors, beliefs and practices of the society in which they grow up. Another fundamental agent influencing the socialization of gender is the Media Industry. Media, such as television, play a central role in the creation and development of gender identities and, subsequently, gender stereotypes. The gender role biased and gender stereotypes portrayed by the television can have an impact on the perception of male and female roles in society.

Keywords: symbolic construction of social order, gender development, children's development, peers, family, media, gender stereotypes, Disney princesses

Preface

“When you meet a human being, the first distinction you make is “male or female”? And you are accustomed to make the distinction with unhesitating certainty.”

-S. Freud

Since the beginning of time, social interactions have been understood as a public activity dominated by men and hence, requiring typically masculine characteristics. Women and public life were considered two separate spheres, mutually excluding one another. Men belonged to the public sphere, controlling the social interactions between individuals, while women were identified with the private one, taking care of families and the domestic life. The social context in which individual developed their social skills was characterized, and still is, by a biological determinism linked a gender differentiation. From the 1970's there has been a change in the trends concerning women in the public sphere. There has been an increment in the presence of women in different settings of social life, starting from managerial positions up to the “big screen”. Studies about differences between men and women did not underline anymore, as it previously happened, the inferiority and incapability of women but, instead, unlighted the different approaches of the two genders when taking into consideration the way in which they engage with others.

This work aims to analyze the influence of, and the perspective change in, the media industry in the development of gender expectations and their influence in the affirmation of gender stereotypes. The dissertation will be divided into three chapters; *Chapter one* will analyze the concepts of sex, sexuality and gender. After having determined what gender is, and how this definition affects the social differentiation of tasks between the two sexes, the socialization of gender will be taken into consideration. In regard to this setting social-interactive factors as well as cognitive-motivational ones will be serve as central idea for understanding the socialization process. Furthermore, theories about biological factors as important variables for determining social behaviors and norms will be addressed. This first chapter concludes with the exploration of Sandra Bem's work on the interdependence between gender identity and gender stratification.

After having traced this theoretical framework the work will continue in *Chapter two* with the investigation of gender-related variations in children's development of social attitudes towards society. Leaper, in investigating the process of individuals' socialization, identifies four main actors influencing the social-learning course. The Media Industry will be focus point of this chapter and of further considerations about children's learning of reality. Parental supervision as well as the General Aggression Model (GML) will be analyzed. This chapter becomes the core of the development of the thesis on the influence of Media on gender development. Television is a fundamental medium for social interactions, thus it exercises a pressure, both positive and negative, on the socialization process. Participation becomes a central aspect in the relation between television and young audience. Positive effects on the participation process can be encountered in presence of a strong parental supervision. Parental involvement in the use of media promotes positive effects of media and mitigates negative ones. When taking into consideration the negative face of Media, the first element that comes to mind is the mystification and stereotyping of images of reality. These images can be represented on a racial basis in regards of both ethnicity and gender. While the former is not of interest in this research, the latter is the focus point of this work. Throughout *Chapter two* different theories on the influence of media on gender stereotypes are explored. Moreover, the theoretical framework is empowered by the review of the main studies conducted in such field, namely Thompson and Zerbinos (1995) and England et al. (2011). If on one hand the former takes into consideration cartoons broadcasted by different TV channels, on the other, the latter analyzes the *Disney Princesses line*.

Furthermore, *Chapter four* will carry out research study conducted in order to test the relevance of findings of Thompson and Zerbinos (1995). The study will consist on the analysis of six popular television cartoons, broadcasted between 1969 and 2013, in regard to their portrayal of gender stereotypes. The method used for this research will be the one of a coded content analysis. After having determined the theoretical framework, twenty-four episodes will be coded.

Finally, in the *Conclusions* a review of the different theories of the thesis and gender considerations about the topic of Media's influence on gender-typed stereotypes will be carried out, in light of the findings of Thompson and Zerbinos research, England et al. study of Disney princesses and the research study conducted in this work.

Chapter one

Sex, Sexuality and Gender

“Is it really about the X or Y chromosome?”

-T. W. Larqueur

Gender inequalities exist in most parts of the world, from Japan to France, from the United States of America to Mozambique. It is no secret that women around the world often face frighten political, economic and social challenges.

The public sphere has been ignoring women as relevant subjects for a long time. During the last two decades, gender issues penetrated into different aspects of reality, influencing practice, theory and global consequences (Jackson & Sorensen, 1999). Women’s role in society has changed in the last few decades. Before the 1970’s women were seen as wives who were supposed to take care of household chores. They were limited from the responsibility of earning money for the family. There was no “pink” representation in any sphere having to deal with public life. Women’s experience of inequality has changed worldwide since the 1970’s, however it remains unequivocal and substantial (Gallagher, 2014). The nature of the discriminations the women experience in different environments of their lives is linked to the misunderstood concepts of sex, gender and sexuality. Gender expectations and behaviors have created a profound and challenging division of roles. The hierarchal division of power between men and women has shaped societies and their social order.

For the purpose of tracing a clearer picture of the issue addressed, we have to make a careful distinction between these three core concepts- i.e., sex, sexuality and gender. Everything related to the physical and anatomical characteristics of a human being is understood as sex. Sex relates to the biological differences between men and women. It is almost clear that there are some differences between male and female brains (Hoag 2008). Sex is the totality of the innate characteristics of an individual. When talking about sexuality the picture shifts from a biologically determined framework to a socially constructed one. In fact, in addressing the concept of sexuality it must be

kept in mind that the term is not related to chromosomes, but to the identity, lifestyle and community engagement of an individual. That is to say, it is the sexual behavior and sexual practice of a human being. The last and most interesting concept is gender. Gender is considered to be a pervasive social and cognitive construct that permeates self-concept development across the life span (Cole et al., 2001). Gender refers to the expectations, social behaviors and way of thinking of men and women in societies. Thus, it is strongly connected to the concept of differentiation of tasks. Gender refers to socially learned behavior and expectations that distinguish between masculinity and femininity (Peterson & Runyan, 1994). The socially constructed nature of masculinity and femininity defines gender as the socially imposed division of the sexes and hence the “locus of the oppression of women” (Rubin, 1973). Rubin argues that there is a “system of sex/gender¹”, which builds up a social order in which women are disadvantaged. Thus, in understanding the concept of gender it must be taken into consideration the sociological perspective according to which one simple and easy word, historically linked to the biological nature of human being- male, female-, addresses the construction of a social order. It includes the different expectations that individuals themselves and society hold in regard to the appropriate behavior and roles of men and women. At first, it was thought that sex determined gender. It soon became clear that such hypothesis gave ground to the separation of identities and spheres. It created the idea of gender roles- social practices. According to this division of “tasks”, men belong to the public sphere of life, undertaking social responsibilities such as economic and political ones, while women were segregated in their house, taking care of children and households, becoming private objects of their husbands. The division of labour created strong stereotypes according to which women could not be part of the political and working life.

The socialization of gender

Subsequently to the explanation of the basic differences between the concepts of sex, sexuality and gender, it is opportune to explore the process of gender socialization. The socialization of an individual and his/her learning of the culture can be divide into two phases. The

¹ The Traffic in Women: Notes on the “Political Economy” of Sex (1975)

first one, called primary socialization, occurs during infancy and childhood. In the course of this stage, children are capable of making perceptual distinctions between gender-linked physical attributes (Grusec, 2007), start learning gender labeling, and finally, yet importantly, start demonstrating knowledge of their own gender identity. The second phase, known as secondary socialization, takes place during the later childhood. It is during this period that the children creates its own self-identity, and starts understanding social roles. Here, it is appropriate to integrate the basic concepts of the Role-learning theory², according to which people become social by learning social roles, which are treated as social facts. The children internalizes social practices throughout observational learning. Their beliefs, social behaviors and general ideas about gender and gender roles are mostly influenced by their parents, peers and teachers. Television is another crucial contributor for the creation of gender role portrayals. Thus, gendered behaviors of men and women are established and created through the environment and social groups like parents, teachers and peer which they learn from society, in a conscious or unconscious way (Ahmed et al., 2014).

In analyzing children's gender development, diverse factors must be taken into account. First of all, social-structural factors which address the division of labor and the prevalence of patriarchy in larger societies. Second of all, social-interactive factors must be taken into consideration. The latter affect the opportunities, incentives and experiences that the children will have access to. The third category of factors influencing gender development are the cognitive-motivational ones, which shape the way in which children interpret and act in the environment where they grow up. Fourth and final group includes biological factors which address physical differences between the two sexes and their relevance in carrying out certain roles and tasks. Furthermore, biological factors comprise sex-related hormonal influences and their eventual alteration of the nervous system. The first, and most important approach is the social-structural³ one. It examines how the status and power of an individual in a society shapes his/her personal conditions. Additionally, it addresses the social obligations that institutionalized roles impose on individuals' behavior. This approach does not take into consideration only gender as social-status

² see also: Social learning theory (Bondura et al., 1975)

³ The social-structural approach considers how people's relative status and power in society shape their personal circumstances; this perspective also addresses the constraints that these institutionalized roles impose on individuals' behavior. In addition to gender, other important social-status factors include ethnicity, race, economic class, and sexual orientation (Leaper et al., 2000) .

factor, indeed it includes the study of the ethnicity, race, economic class and sexuality of an individual. The social–structural perspective is also compatible with a feminist analysis that emphasizes the impact of gender inequalities in power existing at home, in the labor force, and in political institutions (Wood & Eagly, 2002). Before moving to the second approach, the social-interactive⁴ one, two interesting theories must be addressed, which could help in the understanding of this second stage. Social cognitive theory and sociocultural theory emphasize the fundamental role of social interactions and daily activities for a children’s learning of culture. It is important to stress the fact that “the particular skills and orientations that children develop are rooted in the specific historical and cultural activities of the community in which children and their companions interact” (Rogoff, 1990). Thus, this concept can be understood at a global level, but must be reported at a local one, differentiating between the analyzed societies. Another important factor addressed is the selectiveness of opportunities that girls and boys systematically experience, which could be interpreted as forms of gender discrimination (Leaper, 2000). The methodical repetition of such practices over time can contribute to the development of gender roles in society and to different gender expectations, behaviors and way of thinking and interacting with peers. Once the children acquires a gender self-concept, he or she tends to form a social identity of his/her-self (Harris, 1995). When talking about cognitive-motivational factors influencing gender development, social identity theories must be addressed. They study the linkages between membership in a specific group and in-group biases. Numerous researches on this topic document that children tend to search for gender-typed environments that affirm their gender-typed expectation and behaviors- i.e toys, sports, objects. Children’s in-group biases are further reflected in their preferences for same-gender peers and avoidance of other-gender peers (Martin et al., 2002). Even though individuals at a young age internalize group norms linked to gender-types, boys and girls may have interests which are in conflict with peer group’s norms. For example, an adolescent boy may enjoy dancing despite his friends consider such discipline feminine. In such a case, he may decide to play down his athletic accomplishment or otherwise risk being ostracized (Guillet, Sarrazin, & Fontayne, 2000). The socialization process has different degrees of impact on children depending on the influence that such group exercises on the individual- i.e. status and power. Members of high- status

⁴ The social-interactive theory (SIT) examines the different opportunities that girls and boys systematically experience and interprets them as forms of gender discrimination (Leaper, 2000). As they are repeated over and over again during the course of childhood, gender-typed practices contribute to the development of gender differences in expectations, values, preferences, and skills (Leaper, 2000).

groups are usually more invested in maintaining group boundaries than members of low-status groups (Markell, 2001). Furthermore, boys are more likely than girls to maintain group boundaries and to preserve social roles (Leaper, 1994). According to the latter statement, cognitive-motivational factors are more rigid for boys rather than for girls. Additionally, individuals of high-status groups are valued more than those of low-status ones. With regard to gender, masculine-stereotyped attributes (e.g., independence and assertiveness) tend to be valued more than feminine-stereotyped attributes (e.g., nurturance and compassion) in highly male-dominated societies (Hofstede, 2000). The last pattern of analysis for the development of gender is the one concerning the biological factors. They can influence individuals in societies in which there is a clearer division of labour between men and women, and in which women are strictly related to the nursing and infant care performances. In the last decades, the weakening of gender roles has changed the way in which biological differences affect women lives. Women have gained control over their jobs and performances. Moreover researchers have investigated how gendered hormones could influence individuals' development (Berenbaum, 1998).

“Biology is destiny.”

-S. Freud

In regards to biological factors affecting gender development, a digression on the role of observed sex differences is appropriate. There are, strong and weak forms of arguments about the responsibility of biology for the observed differences between men and women (Halpern, 1992). Although biological differences are tangible, an important component for gender development is the influence of environmental factors. The term biological factors includes all the hormones and lateralization of brain function that could be partly responsible for shaping gender behavior and for creating gender differences. Hormones can be accountable for the biological predisposition towards masculinity or femininity during the prenatal period. Moreover hormones, such as testosterone, may be altered by specific social experiences during puberty. Brain lateralization on the other hand refers to the organization of the brain, which could be reflected in a differentiation of brain functioning between men and women. The latter phenomenon may be the theoretical explanation

for the male success at spatial and mathematic skills and for the female tendencies to success in field such as writing and memorizing.

After having analyzed biological factors possibly responsible for gender-typed behaviors and practices, it is opportune to explore Kohlberg's Cognitive Developmental Theory. According to the American psychologist, children's understanding of gender and gender-typed stereotypes- i.e. cognitive factors, may contribute the the acquisition of gender roles. The theory develops throughout three different stages during which children acquire their own identity. In the first stage, gender identity, children categorize themselves as males or females. During the second and third stage, children enforce their self-categorization by rewards for behaving in gender-consistent ways. Although we should not see gender-typed behaviors before gender constancy is completely reached (age 6), gender-typed toys and activities start shaping such practices much earlier.

Symbolic construction of social order

“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends, the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere.”

-E. Roosevelt

In order to complete the theoretical framework of gender identity development, the interdependence between gender identity and gender stratification must be taken into consideration . In the field of organization of a social order, one of the most notable works is the one of Sandra Bem. She beings with consideration of the effects of culture on the studied society, that is to say the consequences of hidden assumptions about how the individuals of such society should look, think, feel and act. These assumptions are embedded in cultural discourses, social institutions, and

individual psyches, so that in generation after generation, specific patterns of thought, behavior are invisibly, but systematically reproduced (Bem, 1981). In formulation the Gender schema theory⁵, Bem theorizes three different “assumption lenses” : Gender polarization, Androcentrism and Biological essentialism. The former refers to the different natural aspects both psychological and sexual of women and men. These differences between the two sexes have a massive impact on the organizing principle for social interactions in society. The second one, theorizes the notion of males superiority over female and it entails a normative standard which negatively judges women. According to this judgment males and male experiences are greater than females ones. The latter - biological essentialism, severs to legitimize the first two assumption lenses. It portrays them as an inevitable product of essential biological differences between males and females. Moreover, Bem explains two processes considered critical for a “successful” socialization, thus a correct gender acquisition. The first one is concerned with the effect that institutionalized social practices of societies have on individuals’ daily lives. The second one takes into consideration the implicit lessons of societies toward individuals. These lessons are what Bem calls “metamessages”. They serve as instruments for the diffusion of significant factors and behaviors in a culture.

Bem’s theory of social constructions sees gender identity as more of a process rather than an outcome. That is to say, behavior comes first and identity flows from behavior. The self-concept of gender identity is strictly tighten with social norms and practices of a culture. Meaningful cultural experiences and customs are created by a process of negotiation and interaction between individuals. According to the theory of symbolic constructionism of social order, social identities are created and developed by active human beings interacting with one another. In order to be possible, these interactions must be prevailed by normative and structural circumstances. Shaping cultural and behavioral practices with an androcentric lens, affects the role of women and produces a discrepancy in the representation of males and females in different spheres of society .

Having traced the theoretical framework for the understanding of development of gender identity, the study will proceed with the examination of the relations between children and different agents of society. Moreover, the focus will be posed on the influence that the Media Industry exercises on children and on their idea of societal portraits and stereotypes.

⁵ Gender Schema Theory (GST), was first developed by Sandra Bem in 1981 and later expanded by Carol Martin and Charles Halverson in 1983. According to gender schema theory, once children have formed a basic gender identity they start to develop gender schemas. *Gender schemas* are based on children's interactions and observations of others, their environment, and the culture. These gender schemas are used to organize and direct the child's behavior based on his or her society's gender norms and expectations related to the child's gender.

Chapter two

Socialization of gender-related variations in children's development

The self-concept of adolescents is considered to be a multidimensional construct that becomes increasingly differentiated as individuals progress from childhood to adulthood (Crain, 1996). Identification influences the development of adolescent males' and females' sense of self-identity. One of the main transition tasks for all adolescents is identity formation (Brown and Huang, 1995). Individual difference in self-concept is considered an important construct within education because of the interaction affective and cognitive dimensions of students' behavior and learning (Bandura, 1997). Low self-concepts, low educational aspirations, external locus of control and negative attitudes to school are considered to be interrelated (Butler, 2000).

There is a general agreement that parents, peers and teachers provide information and feedback that shape the formation of adolescents' self-concept, behaviors and beliefs (Harter, 1999). A large scale study demonstrated that the development of self-concept was significantly influenced by teachers and in-class peers feedback (Hay and Ashman, 1997). Furthermore, parental support directly and indirectly influences individuals' later educational achievement and psychological well-being (Midgett et al., 2002). Parents and families are considered crucial for the development of the self-concept of the an individual and thus, to the formation of his/her own identity (Hay et al., 1998). Parent and peer relationships significantly predict the influence preadolescents' general identity (Hattie, 1992). Looking at parental influences on children's and adolescents' self-concept formation, it stands out that parents exert different influences of their sons than on their daughters (Margolin et al., 1988). In fact, males' self-concept are generally more affected by authoritarian parental control, while females' are more positively affected by intimacy with fathers. Additionally, boys' self-concept is largely affected by the level of autonomy, whereas girls' one is mostly related to parental support and cooperation (Dekovic and Meeus, 1997). One claim in favor of such assumptions is that parents provide different feedback and messages to sons than to daughters, having higher expectations on their sons' academic progress than their daughters' (Butler, 1987). In light of what previously stated, parents are more generally satisfied with their daughter's achievement even when they believed that she could do more (Butler, 1987).

Parent relationships are more important for males' emotional stability rather than for females (Grecas and Schwalbe, 1986). Parental influence plays a major role in children's lives. Parents have a fundamental role in teaching the gender-appropriate behavior through reward or punishment. Gender identity derives from the imitation of parental role-models (Leaper, 2002). As suggested by the Social Learning Theory⁶, babies and children learn behaviors and meanings through social interaction and internalize the expectations of those around them. Ann Oakley, in a study conducted in 1972, identifies the way in which the socialization of society shapes the behavior of individuals at young ages. There are four different phases: the manipulation, in which mothers dress their children in gender-specific clothes, the canalization, where children earn specific gender toys and games, the verbal appellation, where parents adopt different forms of verbal expression according to their children's gender and finally, yet importantly, the differentiation of activities proposed to the children. Parents must communicate their attitudes in a way in which their children can learn them (Leaper & Bigler, 2004). Moreover, parents are the first agents to have control over babies and children play behaviors and preferences. They are usually prone to purchase gendered-stereotyped toys (Leaper, 2002). Fathers are more likely than mothers to have traditional gender attitudes and are also more likely to encourage gender-typed play (Lytton & Romney, 1991). Another important aspect to address in regards to the parental role-modeling, is the one concerning the division of labor in the house. As previously stated, children learn correct social behaviors through imitation, thus children's own attitudes about gender-typed household chores may be influenced by the role models that parents present to them. Parents typically allocate child care and cleaning to daughters, and consign maintenance work to sons (Antill et al. 1996). Hence, children's and adolescents participation in household chores can be viewed as training for later role and status differences in adulthood (Wood & Eagly, 2002).

Stereotypes are one of the factors influencing children ideas about gender-appropriate behaviors and expectations. Another agent affecting this stereotyping process is the school. When taking into consideration the school, it must be considered both the influence and role of teachers and the environment. The school occupies an outstanding role in the gender-role socialization. In regard to this, it is necessary to make an *excursus* and analyze the hidden curriculum of education. That is

⁶ Social Learning theory (SLT) posits that people learn from others, via observation, imitation and modeling. Most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling, that is to say from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed and on later occasions this coded information serves as guide for action (Bandura, 1977).

to say, by promoting gendered-stereotyped assumptions about feminine behavior through teacher expectations, timetabling, career advice and textbook content, the education environment can influence children and adolescents' concept of gender. Teachers exercise an important influence on children's behavior and can have an impact on their gender-typed expectations. Moreover, they can moderate the salience of gender in children's daily lives and thereby have an impact on the development of gender-related self-concepts and attitudes (Bigler, 1995). As observed teachers, as well as parents, tend to be more tolerant towards cross-gender-typed play behavior among girls than boys (Serbin et al., 1979). Thus, the school covers a vital role in the development of children's behaviors and attitudes. In addition to teacher, sport coaches have a significant impact on gender stereotyping by influencing boys and girls athletic development. In fact, they are able to set social norms in the sport culture. These norms can create discrepancies between the two sexes. Many coaches enforce conformity in their male players through the use of misogynistic and homophobic comments (Schissel, 2000). When taking into consideration the American society it is observable that sports are one of the main components for social interactions for adolescents during middle school, high school and college.

“Peers and media are more effective than parents in gender development.”

-Katz

Human beings can be classified as social animals possessing a fundamental need to belong to others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). A relevant part of personality is characterized by inter-individual differences in how people act towards others and how they think and feel about others and about themselves in relation to others (James, 1890). Personality would probably have less relevance if there were no social relationships (Penke et al., 2007). Thus, there is a tight relation between the social environment and the behaviors, feeling and thoughts of individuals (James, 1890). Identities are not entirely created by individuals alone, but negotiated in social interaction processes between individuals (Hogan and Roberts, 2004). Peers are a pervasive aspect of the social life of an individual. With the term “peer” it is intended a broad range of people who surround us in

our daily lives from early childhood, until old age. It is essential to account for the social context that we are embedded to globally understand personality development, and eventually gender development (Leary and Baumeister, 2000). Group socialization theory⁷ (Harris, 1995) takes into consideration the role of peers in the socialization process. This approach posits that as children advance in age, outside-the-home socialization, that take place in peer groups, becomes an increasingly important determinant of the individuals' personality development (Harris, 1995). In line with this theoretical approach, different studies have claimed that during adolescence, peers rather than parents become the dominant influence of identity development (Kaplan, 1993). In regards to peers, some authors have explored the claim that girls tend to have higher levels of attachment to peers than do boys, who are generally more attached to their parents (Walker and Green, 1986).

In order to have a clearer understanding of the influence of peers on individuals' self-development, a further distinction must be computed. It is essential to distinguish between social group processes, such as the one stated in Harris (1995) socialization theory, and specific dyadic relationship experiences within groups⁸. Dyadic peer relationships can be defined as relatively stable interaction patterns of at two people that provide the fundamental for reciprocal interpersonal expectations (Hinde, 1979). Although dyads peer relationships are important in the socialization process of an individual, research suggests that groups have a stronger socializing influence than dyads (see Harris, 1995). Therefore, it is pertinent to note that researchers found out that boys are more likely than girls to belong to established peer groups, whereas girls are more apt to play in dyads or unstable peer groups (Benenson et al., 1997). Thus, socialization in stable peer groups may be more pervasive for boys than girls, and this may contribute to stronger conformity pressures on boys during childhood. The prominent importance of peers in the socialization of individuals' is dictated by their capability to influence different elements of the children life. For example, peers

⁷ Group socialization (GS) theory posits that within a children's peer groups the psychological characteristics a children is born with become permanently modified by the environment (Harris, 1995). The same-age and -sex groups in the elementary school years provide greatest influence, with peer pressure at its height. Adolescent peer groups are next in influence. The process by which children develop into adulthood are genetic transmission, direct genetic influence - that is to say behaviors of other people, including parents, caused by genetic traits-, socialization by peer groups and the influence by parents peer groups on children peer groups. (Bold et al., 1999).

⁸ e.g. Personality and Social Relationships (PERSOC), Back et al., 2011. This theory is based on the the assumption that different insights are not exclusive and that a unified framework of personality-social relationships interplay needs to account for all of them. Additionally, it stresses the importance of social behaviors and interpersonal perceptions as mediating social interaction processes. PERSOC is bard on four principles, namely (1) the disposition principle, (2)the interaction principle, (3) the behavior and perception principle and the (4) processes principle.

are the most important influences on children's gender-typed play. Children are more likely to play with a gender-neutral toy—or even a cross-gender-typed toy—after having observed a same-gender model (Bussey & Perry, 1982). Peers generally disapprove of cross-gender-typed behavior (Martin, 1989), and children quickly infer what their peers consider acceptable and unacceptable. These expectations become internalized as personal standards that guide children's behavior (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

Mass Media as agents of socialization

“70% of what we know comes from Hollywood.”

-U. Eco

A key part of human development is the creation of a unique identity— a distinctive set of attributes, beliefs, desires and principles that individuals think distinguishes them from others— as well as group identity (Fearon, 1999). Identity formation is a particularly salient task for teens (Erikson, 1968), a time also characterized by considerable media use. The media with which children and youth identify can become incorporated into their personal and social identities (Warburton, 2012b), for good or ill. Mass media—newspapers, magazines, comic books, radio, video games, movies, and especially television—present a very different form of socialization than any other, because they offer no opportunity for interaction. Television is an influence on children from a very young age and affects their cognitive and social development (Wright et al., 2001). In today's society, media have become a powerful tool for influencing our daily lives. They play a very important and vital role in the process of learning of young children from a very early age (William, 1981). Mass Media can have power to dictate how we learn about what is going on in the world, as well as how to appropriately interact with one another. The socialization of individuals, which is defined as a “continuing process whereby an individual acquires a personal identity and learns the norms, values, behavior, and social skills appropriate to his or her social position”, is no longer

constrained to the influence of family, peers and other people in children's immediate surroundings. Since the 1950s, the socialization process has been dramatically influenced by the explosion of mass media. Electronic media, such as television, provide a variety of new learning opportunities for children. They broaden the range of events and situations children can experience.

Although the Internet has become a unique medium for the exchange of information and opinions, due to its incredible accessibility, the television remains the most powerful intermediate for streams' trade. Television is undoubtedly the media with greatest socialization effects, both negative and positive. The entangling aspect when studying the relation between children and television, is that of participation. While watching programs, children have the feeling of interacting, but they are not. Such phenomenon can be seen as a disadvantage of television as socializer, because although it satisfies social needs to some extent, it does not foster actual social skills, which allow them to engage with peers. Another interesting facet to analyze is the one in which television is understood as a learning tool. Children can learn through watching television. Some things they learn are beneficial and others are not. They can learn about the world; they learn more from television than from facts. In fact, children undertake what they learn in TV programs as a mere representation of reality. Children at young age cannot separate fiction from reality, they cannot see the difference between internal and external experiences. They may think that characters and toys are real and alive (Baker & Ball, 1969). As they interpret what they see as the actual environment in which they live, they can easily absorb the stereotypes and misleading information transmitted by television broadcasts. Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that, unlike Chip Douglas from the movie "Cable Guy," most children are not raised exclusively by television, without support from parents, teachers and other caregivers. As with a food diet, it is important to consider issues such as amount, content, and age- appropriateness when it comes to a media diet (Warburton, 2012). If on one hand, the time children and adolescents spend on watching TV in the U.S. has significantly increased in the last decade, up to an average of 7 and a half hours a day (Rideout et al., 2010), on the other, it is indispensable to explore the relation between media influence on children and the involvement of parents in media use. Parental involvement in media use can act as a protective factor that promotes positive effects of media and mitigates negative effects (Gentile et al., 2012). Parental involvement can be of three types: active mediation, restrictive monitoring, and covieing. The former consists in an explicative approach where parents discuss with their children the media content. Active monitoring predicts several positive outcomes, such as enhanced learning from television (Valkenburg et al., 1998) and skepticism toward televised

news (Austin, 1992). Moreover, it has been linked with the reduction of negative effects of advertising (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2005), news (Buijzen et al., 2007), and violent media content (Nathanson, 2004). The second type of parental involvement, restrictive monitoring, deals with the imposition by parents of rules regulating media content and media time usage. Restrictions on time use yields both lower media consumption (Atkin et al., 1991) and better school performance (Gentile et al., 2004). Rules about the media content instead, may mitigate the violence of images and boost anti violent attitudes (Anderson et al., 2007). The latter nature of parental control over media, considers watching television as a moment of share between parents and children. Coviewing has both positive and negative effect on children. If on one hand, enhances children's learning (Salmon, 1997), on the other the vision of violent television can intensify media violence effects (Cantor, 2000). Having understood the central role that parental supervision on media use plays on children's approach, it is worrying to know that only 46% of children in the U.S. have rules concerning the use of media (Rideout et al., 2010). A valuable theoretical framework for the understanding of the role of media in the socialization process is the General Learning Model (GLM), derived from the General Aggression Model (Anderson et al., 2002)⁹. This learning model takes into consideration both short-term and long-term media effects. The GLM describes processes through which personal characteristics and environmental stimuli affect social behaviors in short-term contexts. It also shows how long-term attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral tendencies are formed through repeated exposure to various types of social encounters, including media use (Anderson et al., 2015). The GML assumes that media exposure influences internal variables, which in turn lead to leaning processes, thus behaviors. First of all, the model differentiates between personal and situational input variables. The former refer to attitudes, beliefs, behavioral tendencies, emotions, goals and previous experiences. These are contemplated as consistent over time and situation. On the other hand, the latter category of variables are characteristics of the surrounding environment of the individual, such as media, objects, the environment or other people. They can be consistent to some degree, or vary over time. According to the model, learning is a result of a complex combination of situational and personal input variables. Social behaviors and the internal state of the individual are, in fact, influenced by both variables. The learning aspect of the model can be

⁹ The General Aggression Model (GAM) provides a comprehensive and integrative social-cognitive framework for understanding violence and aggression in current times. GAM emphasizes three critical stages in understanding a single episodic cycle of aggression: (1) person and situation inputs, (2) present internal states (i.e., cognition, arousal, affect, including brain activity), and (3) outcomes of appraisal and decision-making processes. A feedback loop can influence future cycles of aggression, which can produce a violence escalation cycle (Anderson et al., 2008).

understood as a process through which personal predispositions are modified by those situational influences, e.g. aggressive video games. The reaction of the individual can be determined by the input variables, which influence his/her internal state, and occurs through three routes. The first path analyzes how media affect a person's level of arousal, stimulating positive or negative reactions. Thus, normal appraisal and decision-making processes can result in either impulsive or thoughtful actions of many types, prosocial and antisocial. In turn, that action influences the current social situation, essentially starting a new social episode. For instance, playing a prosocial video game primes prosocial cognitions and increases positive affect (Saleem et al., 2012)¹⁰. Differently, playing a violent video game may increase negative and aggressive affect. The second route is, indeed, affect. It could be of two types: prosocial or antisocial. In this case all the input variable which can impact mood and emotion, generating aggressive or positive thoughts are considered. A consequence of the influenced internal state of a person may lead to respective behavioral acts. Thus, the GLM shifts from short-term to long-term. The influence of cognitive variables, which includes thoughts, beliefs, attributions, attitudes or expectations, can be understood as a learning trial. Cognitive variables include cognitive constructs, cognitive-emotional constructs and emotional constructs. The former include perceptual schemata¹¹, beliefs and behavioral scripts. For example, long-term exposure to media violence leads to the development of a hostile attribution bias, a tendency to perceive other people's harmful actions as hostile rather than accidental (Anderson et al., 2007). Violent media use also increases beliefs that aggression is an appropriate response (Möller & Krahe, 2009). Moreover, cognitive-emotional are an interesting starting point for the analysis of the creation of stereotypes and gender-related attitudes. For example, long-term media violence exposure is associated with proviolence attitudes (Funk et al., 2004). The latter includes conditioned emotions and affective traits. High exposure to media violence leads to desensitization and reduced empathy towards violence victims (Carnagey et al., 2007). Thus, individuals learn behaviors and beliefs from social interactions, engaging with individuals (real) or with mass media (fictional). As for any interaction, the effects are strongly determined by the nature and content of it.

¹⁰ see also: A theoretical model of the effects and consequences of playing video games (Buckley et al., 2006)

¹¹ Structured internal representation of an object or image acquired through perception. It shapes the way of thinking and communicating with others. Furthermore it influences the way in which an individual classify sand reacts to others (Oxford reference, 2015)

Stereotypes and mystified images of reality derived from Media content

“Stereotypes are sets of socially shared beliefs about traits that are characteristic of members of a social category.”

-G.Greenwald

As stated above, one of the main components through which gender development arouses is Media exposure. Media can have both a positive and negative effect on the socialization process. Children engage with peers, parents and teacher, establishing real interactions. While sitting on their sofa, watching their favorite cartoon, children create a different kind of interaction, a fictional one. In this case, they can learn social norms, beliefs and behaviors through images. The television, together with the other Mass Media, can be understood as a learning tool for the socialization of individuals. Because children can learn from TV, a special attention must be posed on the images broadcasted by cartoons, children’s movies and programs. Cartoons, as well as movies, are a necessary source of fun for children and they also have an educational aspect. Innocent display of cartoons may give different subtle messages including positive and negative ones.

“All television is educational; the only question is: what is teaching?”

-N. Johnson

Often, male and female characters are shaped according to societal stereotypes, mirroring models of society. Stereotypes can be of many kinds; Ethnical, as well as gender-related. If on one hand, several studies have found that the mainstream media juxtapose African American characters with social problems such as welfare, crime, poverty, drugs and violence (Abraham, 2003), on the other, issues about the way in which women have been portrayed on television has received

considerable attention from research. Gender discrimination is seen everywhere from the public spheres of life to the most private ones, as family life. Like other elements of an individual's world schema, gender (as well as race) stereotypes are influenced by what an individual observes across contexts. From a social-cognitive ¹² view, stereotypes are a part of a person's schema about a social category (Fiske et al., 1991). Social-cognitive models explain how observations of media can influence an individuals' understanding of the social world (Bandura, 1986). Specifically, media are considered to diffuse symbolic models¹³, throughout images, that influence an observer's behavior. These models can be real, as in the case of programs' presenters and host, or fictional as in the case of cartoons and movies characters. Media is a powerful socializing agent that provides initial or reinforcing information to create cognitive structures and associations between social groups and certain shared characteristics (Entman et al., 2000). The process of socialization, according to Downs (1985), starts through the regular viewing of television program from very early age in childhood that could be responsible for shaping and modeling the individuals' interpretation and perception towards social values, norms and stereotypes regarding gender. The repeated exposure to such images, may created associative links between individuals and stereotypic characteristics. Eventually these associations become automatized; when the social group category is activated, the associated stereotypes are automatically activated as well (Dixon et al., 2007). Children's idea about sexuality and gender starts to develop within the family and it is eventually influenced and shaped by external factors. Apart from the family, one of the most effective factors in children's internalization of gender stereotypes is Media (Katz, 1986). Moreover, Katz (1986) affirms that while peers have more power over present gender preferences, Media affect future expectations. Researches conducted on cartoons, as well as programs and commercials, show the under-representation of women and female characters, as their lower status occupations and weaker dominance of the scene. It is possible that television is the mere representation of societies' ideas, beliefs and traditions. Television can be seen as the extension of people's common, ordinary

¹² The social-cognitive theory is a theoretical perspective in which learning by observing others is the focus of study. It is grounded on several basic assumptions. (1) people learn from observing others. Individuals can acquire new behaviors and knowledge by observing a *model*. (2) learning should be understate as an internal process that may or may not lead to a behavior. (3) people set goals for themselves and direct their behavior accordingly, thus they are motivated to accomplish those goals. (4) behavior eventually becomes self-regulated. (5) reinforcement and punishment have indirect (rather than direct) effects on learning and behavior. People form expectations about the likely consequences of future responses based on how current responses are reinforced or punished (Hurst, 2015).

¹³ A model is an individual who performs a specific behavior form, or transmits a beliefs to, others. In this case the others, as a public, are considered observers. These models can be of two types: (1) *live models*, from which individuals learn behaviors observable in real life, e.g teachers, parents, peers. (2) *Symbolic models*, which are real or fictional characters portrayed in mass media of different kinds, including movies, cartoons, books.

feelings and interests (William, 1992). That is to say, gender discrimination on television can be understood as a disease of a cultural syndrome. In analyzing the most famous fairy tales and children's stories it is possible to trace a strong role differentiation in which the woman appears as the weak character in need of help and the man as the hero running to save her. *Ergo*, children's book and movies portray the traditional gender role's based behaviors. Media content can promote the dominant ideology in society, such as patriarchal values¹⁴, aiming to maintain existing social roles. Children's beliefs, social behaviors and general thoughts about gender and gender roles in society are usually molded and shaped by the gender role portrayals in the animated cartoons (Martin et al., 2002). The more children are exposed to media, the more they they become likely to develop stereotypical beliefs about race and gender roles (Ahmed et al., 2013). Because children do not know the difference between fiction and reality, they internalize gender-based stereotypes attached o cartoon movie characters. Gender representation in children's programming deserves attention because children begin watching television at a very early age and spend considerable time doing so (Hapkiewicz, 1979). Gender portrayals in the media are cause for concern because of the importance of Media in the socialization process for children an adults (Signorelli, 1990). Children tend to imitate same-gender characters rather than opposite-gender ones (Courtney et al., 1983), thus the Media plays an important role in modeling gender-specific behaviors and expectations (Remafedi, 1990). Furthermore, gender portrayed role images may be interpreted as "normal" by children and become connected with their concepts of socially acceptable behavior and morality (Thompson and Zerbinos, 1995). Consequently, according to constructivist approaches¹⁵, gendered content presented by Media may impact children's gender role acquisition (Klein et al., 2000).

“Children's television has always been male dominated¹⁶.”

-D. Poltrack

¹⁴ Patriarchal ideology is proved to be one of the main cause of discrimination against women (Meyers, 1997)

¹⁵ Constructivist approach proposes that children develop beliefs about the world based on they interpretation of observation and experiences (Martin et al., 2002), and therefore viewing stereotyped or egalitarian depictions of gender role will influence children's ideas about gender (Graves, 1999).

¹⁶ Oliver and Green (2001) suggest that animated content for children is often targeted toward one gender, and that children are well aware of the gender classification of such media.

When analyzing cartoons, the difference in terms of number and representation of male and female characters is immediate. According to a report published in 1981, 75% of characters in children's TV programs and shows are male, while 21% are female (Barcus, 1981). The most important research about gender representation in children's cartoon has been carried out by Teresa Thompson and Eugenia Zerbinos. Their study took into examination more than one-hundred-seventy episodes of forty-one different cartoons. As emerged from data analysis, the number of males among protagonists was more than females by one third, while the number of other male character was nearly one fifth more than females (Thompson and Zerbinos, 1995). In relation to this study, it was also analyzed the outcome of children who recognized a greater number of gender stereotyping in cartoons. These individuals had similarly gendered expectations for themselves and others. Moreover, the findings of the research indicated notable discrepancies between the prominence of male over female characters and the difference in portrayals of such characters. It is important to understand that both male and female characters are often represented according to gender-based stereotypes. The difference is that, while male characters are reported as strong, dominant and assertive, female ones are usually weak, fearful and submissive. There are several explanations for these divergences in images. First of all, according to data analysis, cartoons are mostly viewed by boys. The number of male viewers between the age of two and eleven exceeds females in Saturday mornings. If a program is successful it should be attractive for boys since they do not watch programs including female protagonists, while girls watch programs including male protagonists¹⁷ (Thompson & Zerbinos, 1995). Thus, not only male characters exceed by far the number of female ones, they are also portrayed in a much greater variety of roles, occupying more important positions in terms of occupations in cartoon movies. Female characters were seen as housewife-mother, girlfriend, grandmother, aunt, villain's daughter, maid, nanny, nurse, teacher, secretary, waitress, singer, movie star, TV reporter, circus performer and witch (Levinson, 1975). Television's portrayal of the sexes in cartoons does not accurately mirror real world events, but it does reflect real world values concerning traditions gender-role assumptions (Levinson, 1975). Furthermore, female characters are more likely to be younger and married compared to male ones. Male characters are usually more skilled and able to express ideas than females. On the contrary, female characters are shown as more compassionate and in need of protection. Gender-based stereotypes of women always follow the ones of men. That is to say, they are side characters of

¹⁷ see also: Peers influence

men. They are busy with ordinary things and wait for their “prince” to save them (Green and Oliver, 2001). To males are usually assigned major roles, falling into a higher socioeconomic class. Females well-being and stability is portrayed as a consequence of males occupation and social engagement. If it is true that both genders fall into societal stereotypes, the problem is that while male ones are exalted and glorified, women ones emphasize the dependence upon the other gender. Whereas males emphasize achievements, females accentuate personal relationships.

Masculine characteristics	(1) willingness to explore, (2) physical strength, (3) assertion, (4) unemotional, (5) independent, (6) athletic, (7) brave, (8) leader and (9) fearless.
Feminine characteristics	(1) physical appearance, (2) submissive, (3) emotional, (4) sensitive, (5) nurturing, (6) tentative, (7) helpful (8) troublesome, (9) fearful, and (10) victim

Table 1 - Codes the main characteristics of male and female protagonists in cartoon movies.

As shown in *Table 1*¹⁸, characteristics attached to male and female protagonists are coded¹⁹ according to behaviors of society. They are, naturally, the conventional characteristics of females and males. Likewise, characters and themes which are portrayed in media, usually become a part of social practices in real life (Peterson and Kelly, 1986). Hence, if on one hand society influences images reported by the Media, on the other television impacts and influences expectations and real life practices. The way in which male and female characters are represented in the media, usually mould the way of thinking of children and affect their process of socialization and behaviors towards society (Ahmed et al., 2014). *Table 2*²⁰, reaffirms what previously stated, showing numerical differences in the appearance of female and male characters. It shows that 90% of male characters are portrayed as strong and brave, while only 10% of female characters are presented in such way. Differently is when the parameter taken into account is sexuality and attractiveness. The ratio of female to male characters is 70% to 30%. Female characters are usually portrayed as

¹⁸ England et al., 2011.

¹⁹ A coded content analysis is an approach used to identify and record each gendered behavior or characteristic depicted in films. This method enables to gather quantitative information about the types of behavior portrayed in cartoon movies, and how often these behaviors are depicted. Furthermore, coded content analysis give a clear idea of how these behaviors are connected to the character’s gender (England et al., 2011).

²⁰ Findings based on a research conducted on Cartoon Network programs from January to June 2013. (Ahmed et al., 2014)

beautiful, smart, with ideal prettiness in feminine characteristics. These include pale skin tones, small waist, delicate limbs, full breast, long hair and beautiful eyes (Wiserna, 2001). Correspondingly, not only the body and attire is attractive, but also the body language of most of the characters shows the sexual appeal towards the male characters (Ahmed et al., 2014).

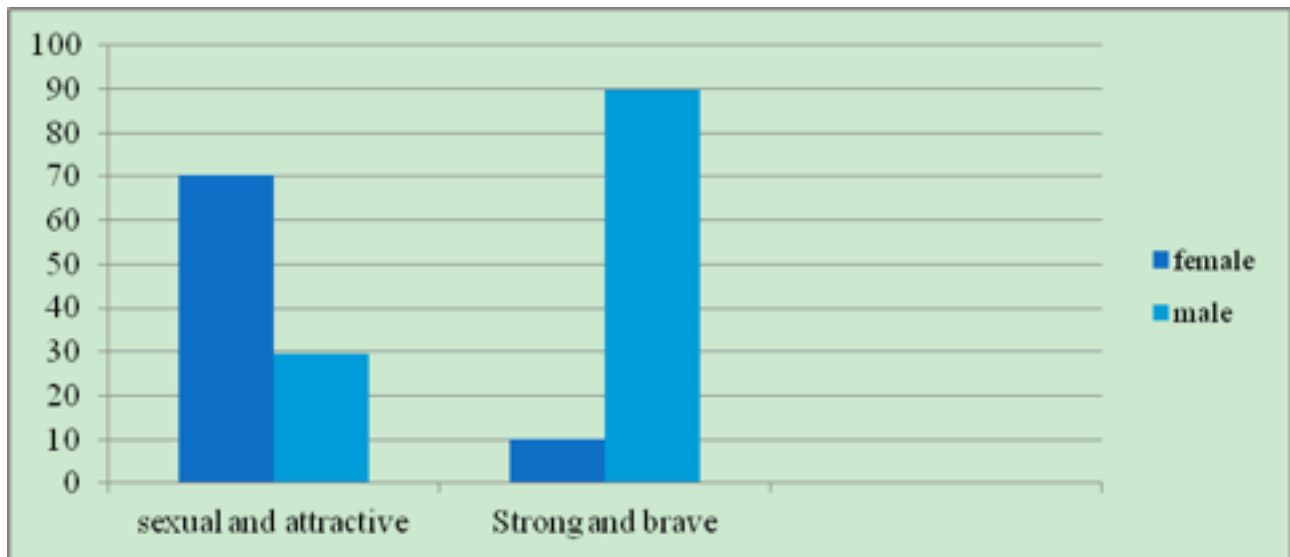


Table 2 - Ratio appearance indicators of female to male characters

Another variable that must be taken into account for gender-stereotyping concerns the genres of television cartoon movies. A content analysis conducted by Leaper et al. (2002) appraised four genres : traditional adventure, nontraditional adventure, educational and comedy. The research showed that although all television programs had highly stereotyped messages, they varied according to genre. The ones that portrayed the most gendered stereotypical characters were the adventure cartoons. Divergently, the educational ones were found to be the less gender stereotypical. Additionally, researches have proved that boys' and girls' choices of television programs strongly differ. If it is true that girls generally prefer watching cartoon movies with emotional and romantic content, boys choose the ones with violent contents. These choices are related to the different emotions and ideas lined to genders. Furthermore, parents play an important role in orienting such feelings and behaviors. In fact, they tend to discourage boys from displaying sadness and fear and girls fro displaying anger and aggression (Block, 1973). It is arguable that reactions, feelings and inclinations showed in cartoon movies are a blatant representation of stereotyped emotions of the family and, to extend it to a higher level, of society. Females should be

more likely to report enjoyment of entertainment that is likely to elicit female appropriate emotions, e.g. romance, whereas males should be more likely than females to report enjoyment of entrainment that is likely to elicit male appropriate feelings, e.g. violence (Oliver and Green, 2001).

An additional problem related to gender concerns inter-sexual transformation. Inter-sexual transformation refers to the phenomenon of males turning into females and vice-versa. These transformations may cause anxiety and tensions in children's development of self-identity. One of the most glaring representations of it, is the Japanese manga *Ranma 1/2*²¹. For the protagonist being male is the norm and being female, just like being a pig or panda, is a characteristic like others which symbolizes a difference. Moreover, being a female is coded as being more humiliating than being a panda or a pig (Napier, 2008). Interesting to see is how female Ranma is weaker than her's male *alter-ego*. Being a girl represents a dishonor for Ranma's family. As well as inter-sexual transformation, also asexual cartoons²² may generate confusion and uncertainty among the young audience. Although asexuality in cartoon movies is seen as a positive approach, it can produce problems for children in the understanding of their gender. Children start developing ideas about their own gender around the age of two (Ersoy, 2009), thus the asexuality of model characters may cause confusions. The negative aspect of such technique can be understood in terms of deviation of socio-cultural beliefs and real identification in society (Holtzman, 1984).

Pre- and post -1980 differences

Of major interest in the study of gender stereotypes in Media content, is the time framework. Such expression is intended to explain the development of the environment and the evolution of society in its practices and beliefs. Because external factors influence the development of gender identity, a mutant reality shapes societal beliefs and behaviors. The imaginary glass-ceiling conditioning the role of women in society and preventing them to enter the public spheres of

²¹ *Ranma 1/2* is a cartoon broadcasted between 1987 and 1996, in which the main character, Ranma Saotome transforms between male and female due to a curse. Such transformations are out of Ranma's will.

²² One of the most prominent examples falling into this category of cartoons is the British series *Teletubbies*, broadcasted between 1997 and 2001

life has started to undertake a different direction from the 1970's, when there has been a change in the trends concerning women and society. There has been an increment in the presence of women among leadership positions in both public and managerial offices. Studies about differences between men and women did not underline anymore, as it previously happened, the inferiority and incapability of women in the leadership field, but, instead, unlighted the different approaches of women and men when holding offices in both economic and political spheres. In alignment with the second waive of feminist movement, gender consciousness has aroused. This perspective change has had effects in the way in which gender stereotypes were portrayed on television. Although the gender portrayals were still stereotypical, after the 1980s, there has been a substantial change in the representation of female characters and on their role in terms of male-female interdependence. While male characters started to be presented as more intelligent in dealing, female characters were portrayed in a more assertive and indecent way. Rather than being problem creators, female characters started to be problem solvers. Paralleled to such representation, they began to be presented as stronger and hardier. Female characters commenced to actively take part in action situations. Emotions, affection, mentations and sensitiveness were substituted with leadership and bravery. All these changes indicate a significant development of the portrayal of the female characters, away from gender-role stereotypes (Thompson and Zerbinos, 1995). Differences emerged between genders both in terms of importance or prominence of the characters and in terms of their presentation (Thompson and Zerbinos, 1995). In light of what stated above, male characters were presented in a slightly different manner. They started to provide routine services; They talked significantly more than they used to do. If there has been a change of picture in terms of numerical

	Numbers of characters	
	Pre-1980 mean	Post-1980 mean
Variable (unit of analysis = cartoon; n = 110)		
Female leads	0.29	0.90
Male leads	1.68	2.07
Female minor characters	0.25	1.45
Male minor characters	1.75	4.31
Gender-neutral characters	0.07	0.91

Table 3 - Significant ($p < .05$) comparison of Pre- and Post- 1980

representation of male and female characters, there has also been an increase in the display of gender-neutral characters than in the past (*Table 3*²³).

In order to have a better understanding of how this change occurred, it is appropriate to analyze the differences generated by cartoon types (Streicher, 1974). When taking into consideration “chase-and-pratfall” cartoons, such as Looney Tunes²⁴, the ratio between male and female characters is extremely high. In this category females did not appear at all, or needed to be rescued. Moving to “continuing adventure” cartoons, such as superheroes series, female characters are usually presented in a stereotypical way and tend to fall in love with the protagonist superhero. When, in few cases, female superheroes are displayed, they are frequently cause of trouble, eventually solved by male protagonists. The third cartoons’ category is “Teachy-preachy” (Smurfs²⁵-like). In this group, male dominance is still present, but females appeared in more important roles compare to females in other types of cartoons. Thompson and Zerbinons (1995), found that chase-and-pratfall cartoons have the smallest numbers of female leads and minor characters, followed by continuing adventure and, finally, tetchy-preachy ones (*Table 4*²⁶). No differences were noted among cartoon types in regard of the number of male leaders. However, the former category had fewer male minor characters than the other two.

Variable	Continuing adventure (<i>n</i> = 50)	Chase and pratfall (<i>n</i> = 90)	Teachy preachy (<i>n</i> = 35)
Numbers of characters (unit of analysis = cartoons)			
Female leads	0.67 _a	0.31 _b	1.26 _c
Female minor characters	1.27 _a	0.40 _b	1.89 _c
Female minor characters	4.84 _a	2.23 _b	4.20 _a

Table 4 - Significant ($p < .05$) differences among cartoon types in terms of number of male and female characters

Variations of male characters concerned traits and attitudes. Continuing adventure showed males as hardier compared to the other genres. Chase-and-pratfall mostly portrayed non-

²³ Thompson and Zerbinos, 1995.

²⁴ Looney Tunes is Warner Bros cartoon series, broadcasted between 1930 and 1969

²⁵ The Smurfs is an American-Belgian animated fantasy-comedy television series, produced between 1981 and 1989

²⁶ Thompson and Zerbinons, 1995.

stereotypical male characters, least competent, technical and responsible (Thompson and Zerbinos, 1995). The “teachy-preachy” males were broadcasted as most emotional, romantic, affectionate, sensitive and helpful (Thompson and Zerbinos, 1995). On the other hand, this category favored a more stereotypical image of female characters, who were less competent, responsible and active. Differently, in continuing adventure cartoons, females were pictured as most intelligent and least domestic (as shown in *Table 5*²⁷). Over the years, and especially after the 1980s, the ratio of production of cartoon types has change in favor of “continuing adventure” and “teachy-preachy” ones. The decrease of “chase-and-pratfall” typed cartoons, may have been caused by the antique image of males’ traits and habits shown in them. The stereotypical aggressive, guiding, leading and proud character was not associated with males in society. “Chase-and-pratfall” males did not balanced out stereotypical images with positive, typically female, traits (Thompson and Zerbinos, 1995). Thus, while most of cartoons pre-1980 were “chase-and-pratfall”, the majority of cartoons broadcasters after 1980 belong to the other two categories.

Variable	Continuing adventure (n = 50)	Chase and pratfall (n = 90)	Teachy preachy (n = 35)
Character analysis (unit of analysis = lead character)			
Female intelligence	4.45 _a	4.07 _{a,b}	3.88 _b
Male nonstereotypicality	2.14 _a	2.84 _b	1.94 _a
Male unemotional	2.85 _a	3.19 _a	3.71 _b
Female unemotional	3.76 _a	3.61 _a	4.67 _b
Male warmth	3.35 _a	3.24 _a	4.29 _b
Female warmth	4.03 _{a,b}	3.79 _a	4.56 _b
Male importance	4.33 _{a,b}	4.01 _a	4.48 _b
Male unaffectionate	2.70 _a	2.78 _a	2.03 _b
Female unaffectionate	2.27 _a	2.00 _a	1.36 _b
Male incompetence	1.89 _a	2.63 _b	1.97 _a
Female incompetence	1.85 _{a,b}	2.43 _b	1.88 _a
Male sensitivity	3.39 _a	2.88 _b	3.89 _a
Male untechnical	2.43 _a	2.98 _b	2.54 _a
Female untechnical	2.65 _a	2.50 _a	3.50 _b
Male irresponsibility	2.20 _{a,b}	2.72 _a	2.23 _b
Female irresponsibility	1.65 _a	2.36 _b	1.44 _a
Female undomestic	3.47 _a	2.75 _{a,b}	2.06 _b
Male helpfulness	3.43 _a	3.10 _a	3.89 _b
Female helpfulness	4.00 _a	3.10 _b	3.97 _a

Table 5 - Significant ($p < .05$) differences among cartoon types in terms of characters traits

²⁷ Thompson and Zerbinos, 1995.

A content analysis of gender stereotypes on Disney Princesses²⁸

“Women take care and men take charge”

-L. Hoyt

From a parental perspective, Disney animation movies have always been considered as quality family entertainment (Buckingham, 1997). Due to its marketing power, the probability that children will see one or more Disney movies is quite high (Do Rozario, 2004). For decades, the animated²⁹ genre has been very popular and commercially successful all over the world. In the 20th century, when animation started to develop, it was extremely difficult and time consuming. In 1937, Walt Disney introduced a new and innovative technique in the animation context. The transformation from manual drawing and assembling, to a computer basis one, brought animation movies and cartoons to grow exponentially. One of the most popular and marketable Disney lines is composed by nine movies. The Disney Princesses line was created in 2001 as an advertising campaign targeted toward young girls (Orenstein, 2006). Of notable interest is the research carried out by Elizabeth England et al. in 2011, which examines the nine princesses scripts.. The movies are divided into three groups according to the year of production. The early movies, the middle movies and the most current films. The former category includes three movies released between 1937 and 1959. These are *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937), *Cinderella* (1950) and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959). Three decades later a group of five movies started to be delivered: *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992), *Pocahontas* (1995) and, finally, *Mulan* (1998). The latter group includes one movie: *The Princess and the Frog* (2009). Since the publication of this study dates back to 2011, the latest Disney Princess movie *Frozen* (2013) has not been taken into consideration. Each of the Disney Princess movies feature a central female character, the princess, and a male character who is romantically linked to the princess (England et al., 2011). While in the former and central group, the male character is strongly conformed with the

²⁸ based on the study conducted by Elizabeth England et al. (2011) on “gender role portrayals and the Disney Princesses”

²⁹ The term *animated*, concerns the graphic representation of drawn pictures to show movement (England et al., 2011)

ideal prince, in the latter production(s), the male character comes from a different environment and does not “incarnate” the expected egalitarian prince. Gender roles can be stereotypical, neutral or counter-stereotypical to traditional gender roles (Durkin, 1985). The characteristics of interest of this research are the ones underlying typically feminine and traditionally masculine characteristics. These are exhibited by the prince and princesses characters through their behavior and actions (England et al., 2011). Moreover, of particular interest in light of this content analysis are the so-called rescue scenes. In such situations, behaviors of both male and female characters are taken into examination, on whether the protagonist was rescued or performed the rescue. Disney films specifically have been shown to portray some stereotypical depictions of gender; The focus point when looking at the heroines fell on their sexuality (Lacroix, 2004). Additionally, display of female characters was found to follow a rhetoric of imaginary beauty: small waist, pale skin tones and delicate limbs. Wiserman (2001), in reviewing sixteen Disney movies found that the presented gender images were not current with societal developments in gender equality. England et al. (2001) used a coded content analysis in which prince and princess behaviors and characters were coded separately. The character was assigned one code every time they (a) were mentioned as possessing a certain characteristic or (b) if exhibiting their behavior. Masculine characteristics included behaviors such as, but not limited to, curiosity about the princess, willingness to explore, physical strength, assertion, non-emotional, independence, leadership and bravery. On the other hand, feminine characteristics included physical weakness, submission, affection towards the prince and other characters, fear, physical attraction, victim (England et al., 2011). Movies were analyzed in a chronological order, according to their group (*Table 6*³⁰). Data analysis demonstrated that princesses exhibited more feminine than masculine characteristics in each of the three groups. However, princesses showed an increasing percentage of masculine characteristics in latest movies rather than in the first two groups. The ratio between masculine and feminine characteristics exhibited by the princesses decreased over time, from a 89% of princesses’ behavior in early movies, moving to a 58% in middle movies, up to a 53% in most current films. Although the princesses’ characteristics differed in the three phases, princes’ ones were not significantly affected by this change of picture. Princes were slightly more masculine in early movies (51% coded characteristics) than in middle and current movies (60% coded characteristics). Except for *Aladdin*, in middle movies princes were shown more frequently and displayed more masculine characteristics than feminine ones (England

³⁰ England et al., 2011

Film	Year	Prince			Princess		
		Masc.	Fem.	Total	Masc.	Fem.	Total
Early Films							
<i>Snow White</i>	1937	12	10	22	13	137	150
<i>Cinderella</i>	1950	2	5	7	42	187	229
<i>Sleeping Beauty</i>	1959	59	52	111	10	76	86
Middle Films							
<i>The Little Mermaid</i>	1989	78	52	130	101	161	262
<i>Beauty and the Beast</i>	1991	54	31	85	77	87	164
<i>Aladdin</i>	1992	63	109	172	50	77	127
<i>Pocahontas</i>	1995	117	95	212	105	130	235
<i>Mulan</i>	1998	49	12	61	88	120	208
Most Current Film							
<i>Princess and the Frog</i>	2009	60	129	189	81	93	174

Table 6 - Coded characteristics for the prince and princess characters in the Disney princess movies

2001). Middle and modern movies displayed princesses with a higher number of masculine characteristics rather than feminine ones. This change in trends suggests a chronological movement towards a more androgynous princess, especially in regards to *Princess and the Frog*. Throughout the findings it is deductible that the three Disney Princesses e.g. *Snow White*, *Cinderella* and Princess Aurora from *Sleeping Beauty*, were frequently affectionate, fearful and displayed following the canons of ideal beauty. In this first cycle of movies, princesses tended to be more assertive in regards of children and animals than with other characters. Moreover, masculine figures such as fathers, were more likely to be assertive to princesses than princes. In these first three movies princes portrayed typically stereotyped characteristics and behaviors. In addition, it must be taken into consideration the alterations of perceptions in society. When the first cycle of Disney movies was released, gender expectations of society were less complex; With the rise of feminism in the 1970s the situation has become more complicated (Ferre et al., 2007). Women used to take care of the house and the children (Coltrane and Shih, 2010), and these skills were showcased by early princesses, such as *Cinderella* and *Snow White*. Following the evolution of the role of women in modern societies, in which they are expected to maintain feminine traits, but at the same time to incorporate aspects of male “traits”, such as assertiveness (Coltrane, 2004), Disney Princesses movies started displaying a different female protagonist, as seen in *Pocahontas* and *Mulan*. At the same time, the prince character has evolved and become more complex over time. Differently from

early princes, rarely shown, middle male characters were more present. An exceptional case is *Aladdin*, who becomes the focus character of the movie. Rather than being a princess movie, it is a prince-dominated story, in which the princess become a secondary character.

It is important to consider the importance of domestic work in the narrative, throughout all Disney Princess movies. Domestic work is a prevalent theme among all films. The first three princesses were frequently shown in domestic environments taking care of house chores. In *Cinderella*, the princess did domestic works as an act of submission. She accepted, without complaint the hard labour assigned by her step-mother. Regardless the difficult situation in which the princess found herself, during the whole script *Cinderella* kept singing and smiling. (England et al., 2011). The fact that male characters were not expected to do domestic work is mostly clear in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*. The princess “saved” the dwarves, cleaning their house and cooking, in a traditionally feminine way. She was portrayed as a surrogate mother. In later movies, princesses were little shown doing domestic work and house chores. With the release of *Little Mermaid* in 1989, the princess’ figure started to challenge traditional gender roles. At the same time, in this movie the prince showed non-traditional masculine characteristics such as affection and emotions. In 1991, this different approach in the display of prince and princess became even more delineated. With the release of *Beauty and the Beast*, princess Belle achieved traditional masculine traits such as bravery. Still maintaining feminine characteristics as nurture, Belle was portrayed as more assertive than her prince, undefended and fearless. Similarly, the prince presented typically feminine traits as emotionality. Furthermore, Belle was the first princess undertaking intellectual activities as she frequently read books. *Pocahontas* and *Mulan* presented very contradictory gendered messages as well (England et al., 2011). These two princesses were the most “masculine” ones of all Disney Princesses. They were presented in a stoic way: unemotional, strong, assertive, athletic and with leadership attributes. Moving to the last group, the movie *Princess and the Frog* portrayed a prince and princess who were able to accomplish their dreams separately, and together, eventually culminating in a fulfilling romance.

Overall, trends toward less gender-based stereotypes over time in the movie fluctuated greatly and the progress was not necessarily sequential (England et al., 2011). Having high rates of traditionally feminine behaviors displayed only by the female central characters in the most recent movies does not suggest progress towards gender equality (Wiserma, 2001). However, middle and

most current movies may indicate that gender might be depicted less stereotypically in future movies, as attributes such as physical strength and actions like performing the powerful final rescue were more likely to be exhibited by these later princesses (England et al., 2011). Whereas the latest princesses performed more active roles in the final rescue of the movies, the princes still performed most of the climatic rescues. A princess has not yet performed the final rescue without the involvement of the prince (England et al., 2011). The latter piece produced by the Disney Princesses line, *Frozen* (2013) confirms what previously stated. Although the final rescue is performed by Princess Anna, the prince covers a central role in helping the princess saving her sister. When taking into consideration *Frozen*, it is clear that stereotypical gender role portrayals are still present, but it is also arguable that changes have occurred. In this movie there are two female protagonists, Princess Anna and Princess Elsa. Their very different attitude towards life put them in a conflictual sister-relationship, which is finally solved with the help of the “good” male character. The implications of this study have been suggested by the theoretical perspectives that highlight the effects that media exposure may have on gender acquisition (England et al., 2011). These theoretical perspectives suggest that viewing depictions of gender roles contributes to a child’s understanding of gender and that media exposure helps develop a child’s concepts of social behavior and norms (Martin et al., 2002). The impact of the Disney Princess “phenomenon” in the lives of young girls is the focus of many discussions and the quantitative results and subsequent implications of this study are intended to inform and promote further discourse (Do Rozario, 2004). Media targeted toward young children can serve as positive influences (Calvert and Huston, 1987) and a mean for addressing stereotypical gender roles (Leaper, 2000). Disney can and may play an important role in fostering this growth and development in the future (England et al., 2011).

Positive effects of media on gender socialization

Just as stereotypes in the media increase stereotype thinking by consumers of those media, exposure to counter-stereotypical media exemplars can reduce stereotypical attitudes (Bodenhausen et al., 1995). Media also can have positive effects on gender role socialization and gender stereotyping. Repeated TV appearances of women in traditionally male occupations can lead to

more open attitudes in preteen girls towards considering these occupations (Wroblewski & Huston, 1987). Watching movies and cartoons disseminating pro-equality messages may lead to more positive attitudes and behavior toward women (Greitemeyer et al., 2012). Although most research has focused on potential negative effects of some types of Media, it is equally important to examine positive effects of a 'healthy' Media diet (Warburton & Highfield, 2012). In the short-term, Media use affects behavior through priming cognitions and eliciting affect, increasing arousal and prompting imitation (Anderson et al., 2003). In the long-term, media influence beliefs, perceptions, behavioral scripts and affective traits, bringing about lasting changes in personality (Gentile et al., 2007). Significant effects of media use have been demonstrated in a wide range of domains of socialization, including violence, helping, and education. Even though time with entertainment Media can harm school performance (Anderson et al., 2007;), educational Media can improve a variety of academic skills. Longitudinal studies have shown that educational television can have long-term educational benefits (D. Anderson et al., 2000). Educational program viewing predicts development of reading competencies in early and middle childhood (Ennemoser & Schneider, 2007). Viewing educational programs at a preschool age can be associated with better grades and reading more books in adolescence (D. Anderson et al., 2000). An example of educational cartoon programs can be identified in *Sesame Street*³¹. The vision of such program could stimulate children's values about racial harmony, cooperation, kindness, as well as their competences in algebra, and English. *Sesame street* has been shown to improve the reading and learning skills of young viewers (Paediatr Child Health, 2003). Some public television programs stimulate visits to the zoo, libraries, bookstores, museums and other active recreational settings, and educational videos can certainly serve as powerful prosocial teaching devices. Additionally, interactive shows that prompt children to actively engage, such as *Blue's Clues* and *Dora the Explorer*, may be especially effective teachers (Linebarger & Walker, 2005). Thus, not all media content has a negative impact of the socialization of individuals. It mostly depends upon the source of broadcast and on the structure of the movie or cartoon.

³¹ Sesame street (1969-1970) was developed for preschool audiences at a time when America was focused on fighting the War on Poverty, and the Children's Television Workshop creators were interested in gaining the attention of poor and minority child audiences who had less access to educational experiences and who stand to benefit most from viewing stimulating programming. Specific educational goals were set to promote cognitive development, and production techniques were designed to maximize children's visual attention (Arnett, 2007).

Chapter three

A coded content analysis³²

This study is based on an analysis of six popular television cartoons, broadcasters between 1969 and 2013, in regards to their portrayal of gender stereotypes. Four episodes of each cartoon movie were downloaded and coded for the numbers of males and females characters, physical characteristics, roles in rescuing and dilemma-solving and stereotyped jobs throughout each program. My research project has been developed on the basis of Thompson and Zerbinos (1995) work on gender representation in children's cartoons. Behaviors, communication characteristics and total talk time of male and female characters have been coded.

3.1 Introduction

Children start watching television from a very age, about eighteen to two years old (Thompson and Zerbinos, 1995). In addition to the models of behavior provided by parents and peer groups, a further reinforcement of acceptable and appropriate behavior is show to children through Media, in particular television (Witt, 1997). Thus, its claimed that portrayals of male and female characters in children cartoons can be understood as models for performing gender-based behaviors by children. Although gender representation has evolved and ameliorated throughout the years, there is still unbalanced representation of female to male characters in animated cartoons for children (Weirsmas, 2000). The present research project has been conducted in order to explore the possible differences and further developments in the portrayal of gender stereotypes. If on one hand the research has confirmed stereotypes linked to physical appearance of male characters, on the other it has put to test the assumptions concerning female characters and their involvement in the plot. Although many stereotypes linked to the characters' gender still exist, in term of performing gender-expected behaviors, progress has been made in terms of ratio between males and females appearance.

³² inspired by previous researches such as Thompson and Zerbinos (1995) and England et al. (2011).

3.2 Method

The main aim of this research is to examine the gender portrayal of male and female characters in animated cartoons. The cartoons chosen are broadcasted through different channels: from Disney Channel to Cartoon Network. Cartoons and animated movies are transmitted in more than thirty countries all over the world, from Latin America, to Europe and North America. Thus, the language follows the one of the country: Spanish, English, French and Italian.

The methodology involved in my research project can be divided in two parts. The first one concerns the quantitative aspect which examines the numerical representation of female and male characters in the selected cartoons. A total of twenty-four episodes have been watched and coded, four for each cartoon movie. The second part deals with a content analysis of gender construction of the main characters, in regards of their social role, physical characteristic, portrayal and relations with opposite gender. The latter part of the research examines the perceptions of gender-related behaviors and practices of children. The research project counterposes two cartoons of the same type, produced and released in different years. The first dyad of cartoons fall into the “continuing adventure” category : *Mutant Ninja Turtles* and *Teen Titans*. The second group addresses the youngest public; it is in fact composed by two so-called educational cartoons, *Sesame Street* and *Dora the Explorer*. The latter group takes into consideration a specific typology of program: the live-action scripted teen sitcom. They are *Lizzie McGuire* and *Violetta*.

3.2.1 Cartoons

(1) *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (TMNT), first appeared in an American comic book and later, in 1987, became a TV series. It was soon catapulted into pop culture history. The property of the series belongs to Nickelodeon, which has, subsequently, developed a new animated TMNT television series following the big success of the cartoon on the big screen in 2012. The cartoons portrays four fictional teenage anthropomorphic turtles named after four famous Renaissance Italian artists, namely Raphael, Donatello, Leonardo and Michelangelo.

(2) *Teen Titans*, 2003, is an American animated TV series, produced by Warner Bros. Pictures Television Animated Distribution. The series was broadcasted by Cartoon Network. *Teen Titans*

soon became one of Cartoon Network's most beloved and critically acclaimed series, renowned for its character development and serious themes. It centers around five main superheroes: Robin, Starfire, Cyborg, Raven and Beast Boy. From many points of view they can be assimilated with TMNT, as both cartoons present urban superheroes who deal with all manner of criminal activities and threats and operate in favor of the well-being of people. The difference is that, while the TMNT were all male characters fighting against criminality, the *Teen Titans* are both males and females characters. In some aspects they resemble the *Fantastic Four*, by *Marvel*.

(3) *Sesame Street*. Most Americans born since the mid-1960s have a favorite "Sesame Street" skit (Tankersley, 2015). *Sesame Street* is one of the largest early childhood interventions ever to take place. It was introduced in 1969 as an educational, early childhood program with the explicit goal of preparing preschool age children for school entry. Millions of children watched a typical episode in its early years (Kearney and Levine, 2015). This show initially aired in 1969; its fundamental goal was to reduce the educational deficits experienced by disadvantaged youth based on differences in their preschool environment. It was a smash hit immediately upon its introduction, receiving tremendous critical acclaim and huge ratings. It cost pennies on the dollar relative to other early childhood interventions. Well-designed research studies conducted at that time, reviewed in detail below, indicate that the show had a substantial and immediate impact on test scores (Fisch and Truglio, 2001). *Sesame Street's* introduction generated a positive impact on educational outcomes through the early school years. In particular, exposed cohorts of students with better reception capabilities were more likely to be attending a grade that is appropriate for their age. This effect is particularly pronounced for boys and black, non-Hispanic children and those living in economically disadvantaged areas (Kearney and Levine, 2015).

(4) *Dora the Explorer*, is an American educational animated TV series (2000). The show is transmitted on Nickelodeon Network. "When this 12-year-old talks, millions of preschoolers around the world listen" (Associated press, 2008). In many ways, the *Dora the Explorer* cartoon follows in the footsteps of such public television greats as *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and *Sesame Street*. These shows, like *Dora*, managed to be entertaining, charming, and still teach children everywhere a number of valuable lessons which were about more than just your basic academic (Winstom, 2010). *Dora the Explorer* falls into the educational-cartoons category. In fact, it is able to teach many of the basics that children in the target ages should be learning, in an animated preschool classroom.

What makes this cartoon an extraordinary example of how television can have positive effects on children's behaviors and stereotypes is its approach towards minorities, especially the Hispanic one. In fact, it integrates a constant flow of Spanish vocabulary into each episode. Thus, introducing them to the Spanish language it presents to children different elements of the Latin culture. It does so in a subtle way, teaching its auditors that diversity is good and integration, instead of dividing people, can unify them.

(5) *Lizzie McGuire* is an American live-action scripted teen sitcom, which features an animated version of the main character, Lizzie. It premiered on the Disney Channel on 2001. The series follows 13-years-old Lizzie McGuire, a shy, compassionate and clumsy teen who dreams to fit in and be the popular girl at school, with the help of her two best friends Miranda and Gordo. The episodes center around Lizzie's life, as she deals with her family, the school and teen problems. The series is a mere representation of the American middle-school reality. Moreover, Lizzie has an animated *alter-ego* which represents her inner thoughts, addressing the audience directly in the manner of a Greek chorus. *Lizzie McGuire* represents all the stereotypical characters of the American high-school "society". If on one hand, Lizzie incarnates the "next door girl", the normal teenager, on the other Kathrine represents the popular girl, the one that Lizzie wishes to be like. In the same way Gordo, Lizzie's best friend, is the "nerd" guy who likes math and science, while Ethan, performs the role of the strong and athletic "teen", involved in sports and football captain.

(6) *Violetta* is an Argentine telenovela filmed in Buenos Aires, Argentina and produced by Disney Channel Latin America and Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA). It debuted in 2012. This cartoon falls into the category of the live-action scripted teen sitcom. While in the United States *Violetta* is distributed by Netflix, in the other forty-four countries of the world is broadcasted by Disney. The telenovela is composed by three seasons, which narrated the story of a teenager named Violetta. *Violetta* has not only been able to captivate girls from all over the world with its TV seasons. The line has taken a global perspective when a proper advertising and marketing campaign has been established around the telenovela. Disney has organized concerts as well as exhibitions. Furthermore, it has created a strong marketing franchise invigorating the popularity of this Disney production.

3.3 Data analysis and Findings

Results indicate a definite discrepancy between the number of male characters and the number of female ones as shown in *Table 7*.

Number of males and females	Mutant ninja turtles	Teen titans	Sesame Street	Dora the Explorer	Lizzie McGuire	Violetta
males	68	28	42	23	36	87
females	11	11	27	32	32	84
ratio of M/F (t)	t= 57	t= 17	t= 15	t= - 10	t= 4	t= 3

Table 7 - Differences among cartoons, examined in the research, in terms of male and female characters.

In order to better understand the significance of these data, two variables must be taken into account. On one hand it is appropriate to analyze these differences generated by the various cartoon types; On the other it is relevant to consider these discrepancies in a temporal dimension, that is to say before and after the 1980s. In regards to the first variable it is important to say that cartoon types have an effect on the portrayal of characters. The percentages of females in each cartoon tend to decrease when examining the “continuing adventure” type. The characters of *Lizzie McGuire*, *Violetta* and *Teen Titans* followed the four different gender types: the masculine male, the inadequate male, the delicate female and the more modern female. The “masculine” traits of characters fell back in the stereotypical representation of men in the American society, that is to say handsome, muscular, athletic, conservative style of dress and hairdo. On the other hand, the inadequate male shortfalls of many of these characteristics. He is usually skinny, intelligent, fearful and weak. Furthermore, these traits are not shown through actions, but also by bone structure, dress and hairstyle. In the same way the delicate female incarnates the stereotypical American girl- thin, elegant and popular, while the modern female represents intelligence and a “turn in tables” of the classical gender-based social roles and behaviors.

For the sake of having a clearer cognizance of changes between cartoon types and the temporal dimension it is appropriate to analyze more in depth the cartoons in pairs. First couple of cartoons reviewed is composed by *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (TMNT) and *Teen Titans*,

followed by *Sesame Street* and *Dora the Explorer* and finally by *Lizzie McGuire* and *Violetta*. The former pair of cartoons falls into the “continuing adventure” type. While the first one was broadcasted from 1987, the second is “on air” since 2013. The biggest difference between TMNT and *Teen Titans* is in the composition of the group of the main characters. The turtles are four males, *Teen Titans* instead is a squad composed of three males and two females. These two cartoons are the ones in which the ratio between male and female characters reaches its highest point. Furthermore, the female characters portrayed in *Teen Titans* - *Starfire* and *Raven* - fall into the two categories previously stated. *Starfire* represents the delicate and innocent female, lacking of intelligence and in need of help. She appears as the character who needs to be rescued and who is not able to compute the final salvage. Out of the two females, she is the prettiest and the one who falls in love with the leading male character, *Robin*. On the contrary, *Raven* falls into the more-modern female archetype. She is independent, mystical, assertive and the smartest character of all the superheroes. While the former female is dressed in pink and purple, the latter wears a grey catsuit. At the same time, the male characters fall into stereotypes. The merge between the three main characters gives life to the perfect male model of American society. Each of them possess a specific trait. *Robin* is the leader and the one who captures the attentions of the attractive female character, *Cyborg* is the strong, assertive and independent male, while *Beast boy* is the smart and “silly” character, similar to *Michelangelo* in TMNT. Another aspect of dissimilation between these two cartoons is in their relation and attitude towards society. While TMNT are mysterious and have no contact with humans, *Teen Titans* are an example for little children and can be considered proper “urban superheroes”.

Moving to the second group, *Sesame Street* and *Dora the Explorer* are cartoons which fall into the “educational” category. Important to notice is the difference compared to the other genres in terms of males/females characters ratio. Here, there is a discrepancy up to a point in which there are more female characters than male ones. In this category the evolution of the cartoon is the most prominent difference. Because these programs have been designed to “teach” children about different aspects of society, they are more likely to evolve, in terms of contents and structure, following the modernization of societal customs, traditions and beliefs. While back in the days *Sesame Street* had an outstanding role in the education of children and individuals, due to the fact that education was not accessible to everyone, *Dora the Explorer* mirrors a current problem, namely the hard integration of Hispanics into the American society. *Dora* was designed to merge aspects of

the two cultures and to brace children to face these differences with a positive attitude. The main character, Dora is an hispano-american girls who speaks “spanglish”, that is to say a mix between english and spanish. It is harder to identify gender-based stereotypes in this category of cartoons because the protagonists are constructed in the most neutral way possible. In *Dora the Explorer* the main character is accompanied in her adventures by four girls, one boy and their pets. The main difference spotted between these two programs is in the way in which they interact with the young audience. *Sesame Street* consults less the viewers than *Dora the Explorer* does. Furthermore, Dora translates the words from spanish to english and *vice-versa*. While *Sesame Street* is filmed in a studio, Dora and her friends in exploring the city are usually outdoor. In the latter cartoon the protagonists often compute a final rescue, which is performed by both male and female characters helping each other.

Finally, when investigating live-action scripted teen sitcoms, factors leading back to traditional gender-based stereotypes are more evident. In this specific case it is not appropriate to differentiate between sitcoms produced before and after the 1980s because both programs have been broadcasted in the last decade. Both *Lizzie McGuire* and *Violetta* present the four different gender types: the masculine male, the inadequate male, the popular female and the modern female. They both mirror the American society during middle school and high school. The pretty and popular girl is always portrayed as less intelligent and more male-appealing, with small waist, long hair, neat and involved in the social life of the school. The normo-type, especially in *Lizzie McGuire*, on the other hand is a discrete girl, quite good in school but at the same time not as popular as her opponent. The same situation is visible when taking into consideration the male characters. There is a juxtaposition between the normal and the popular. If the first one lacks of social popularity and fame, the latter shortfalls in scholar and thinking abilities. If Gordo is the portrayal of the inadequate male, “nerdy” and outside the social sphere of the school’s life, Ethan is the stereotypical american teenager, football captain, popular, physically strong and athletic. Because this category is designed for a “female” public there is a similar ratio between male and female characters. Furthermore, the characters represent models of society to which teenagers from all over the globe can personify themselves. They become icons. The fact that these characters are actual people helps the process of imitation by adolescents.

3.4 Conclusions

This content analysis reveals that some of the most popular cartoons are male-oriented, especially the ones falling into the “continuing adventure” category. Both males and females characters are portrayed in a stereotypical manner. While males are routinely place in leading position holding decision making power and possessing the “rescue” ability, females are shown as short falling in their ambition, lacking of decisional power and lacking the ability of solving situations. Overall, this research study has shown that stereotypic gender-base portrayals can be considered a reality in children’s and teenagers’ television programs. In the same way, it is important to keep in mind that over the years the picture has slightly changed in favor of a more neutral approach towards gender stereotypes. Finally, the nature of the cartoon plays an essential role in defining the social roles attached to male and female characters. The analysis of finding confirms what stated by Leaper (2002) in his research, namely the fact that educational cartoons are the ones showing less gender-stereotyped images of society. Similarly, “continuing adventure” cartoons portrayed the most gendered stereotypical characters. Although findings show the evidence in the discrepancy of representation of male and female and in their way in the cartoons, such stereotypical representation of reality should be avoided due to the flexible minds of children who’s expectations and behaviors towards society are strongly affected but the images pictured on TV.

Conclusions

Starting from the differentiation of the three basic concepts of sex, sexuality and gender disparate areas of individuals' perception have been explored. Having pointed out the importance of the socialization between humans and their learning throughout cultures behaviors, it has been possible to understand how the symbolic construction of social order influences social practices and beliefs. This theoretical framework, composed of different approaches towards gender socialization, has been a fundamental element for the codification of the variations influencing children development in gender socialization. *Chapter two* takes into account various agents impacting children from a young age, that is to say during their early stage of socialization, up to adolescence. Leaper and Friedman (2007), identify four crucial actors- parents, teachers and the school in general, peers and Media. While the first two are more important in the first phase of gender development, the two other influence children in later age. Precisely, Katz (1986) states that peers exercise more power over present gender preferences, while Media affect future expectations. This work aims to analyze the role that Mass Media cover in the socialization of individuals and their gender-based beliefs. Although the Internet has become a unique medium for the exchange of information and opinions, the television remains the most powerful intermediate for streams' diffusion. The televisions, as analyzed in *Chapter three* can have both positive and negative effects on children perception of society and on their approach towards others. Of remarkable interest is the mystification of the reality and the spread of gender stereotypes that arouses from Media content. Above all, the stereotyping of male and female characters. In order to have a better idea of how cartoons and movies may influence children beliefs and practices different studies have been reviewed. The prominent study on the subject is the one conducted by Thompson and Zerbinos (1995), who throughout a coded content analysis of 175 episodes of 41 different cartoons, collected datas showing "notable discrepancies between prominence and portrayal of male and female characters". Although both male and female protagonists were portrayed stereotypically, males were give much more prominence, appeared more frequently, engaged in more of almost all of the noted behaviors and talked significantly more" (Thompson and Zerbinos, 1995). Another important parameter in terms of the ratio of male and female characters and their pronounced masculine and

feminine characteristics has been the study on the Disney Princess movies conducted by England et al. (2011). Disney movies have followed a path of development, thus significant differences can be marked in the pre- and post- 1980. Princesses and princes have progressively assumed characteristics not closely related to their gender, hence debunking social expectations of gender-based behaviors. Finally, *Chapter four* presents a research analysis conducted on six popular television cartoons, broadcasters between 1969 and 2013, in regards to their portrayal of gender stereotypes. Four episodes of each cartoon movie were downloaded and coded for the numbers of males and females characters, physical characteristics, roles in rescuing and dilemma-solving and stereotyped jobs throughout each program. My research project has been developed on the basis of Thompson and Zerbinos (1995) work on gender representation in children's cartoons. Behaviors, communication characteristics and total talk time of male and female characters have been coded.

To conclude, it is realistic to say that Media play a major role in the socialization of individuals and on gender development. At the same time it is important to keep in mind that most children are not raised exclusively by television, without support from parents, teachers and other caregivers. As with a food diet, it is important to consider issues such as amount, content, and age-appropriateness when it comes to a media diet (Warburton, 2012). The Media Industry has revolved its way of handing out content to its young public. Carefulness must constantly be involved when exploring studies about socialization of individuals. Television content is not always negative, in fact children programs can promote counter-stereotypical attitudes (Bodenhausen et al., 1995). Moreover, Media can serve as tool for education and can help, together with the school, children 's development of certain behaviors and attitudes towards society. This study has shown as there are many components influencing children in their development of social behaviors, including the gender-related ones. Television can have a vital role in the process of learning of young children in both a positive and negative way. Of fundamental importance is to take into account multiple agents and especially the role of parents and their involvement in the Media use. Personalities are shaped not only by internal situations i.e. family, but also by external one. Thus the environment surrounding children during their life is a fundamental factor to take into consideration.

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Riassunto

Il processo di socializzazione di genere: un'analisi dell'influenza dei Media nella rappresentazione di ruoli e stereotipi sociali.

Il ruolo della donna nella società è sempre stato un cosiddetto “hard topic”. Le ineguaglianze legate al genere esistono nella maggior parte dei paesi del mondo. Non è una novità che le donne debbano superare degli ostacoli sociali per far parte di tutte quelle professioni, carriere ed ambiti strettamente legati al mondo maschile. Il rapporto tra le donne e la società ha vissuto un'evoluzione, specialmente a partire dal 1970. Nonostante le donne abbiamo iniziato ad occupare posizioni di spessore in ambiti socio-economici, la discriminazione nei confronti del “sesso rosa” rimane una grande problematica nelle più prominenti società moderne. La natura di queste discriminazioni risiede nel concetto di identità di genere. La divisione dei ruoli tra uomini e donne ha sempre sfavorito le ultime, segregandole in ruoli sociali strettamente legati alla sfera privata “della vita-la casa”. La divisione gerarchica del potere tra uomini e donne ha modellato le società e il loro concetto di ruoli sociali. Per avere un'idea più chiara della questione è importante tracciare una distinzione tra i tre concetti fondamentali alla base di questo processo di discriminazione. Il primo capitolo di questo elaborato esplora i tre concetti fondamentali di sesso, sessualità ed identità di genere ed il loro impatto nella costruzione di un ordine sociale.

Il concetto di sesso è correlato alle differenze biologiche tra uomini e donne. Con il termine “sesso” si intendono tutte le caratteristiche fisiche ed anatomiche degli esseri umani. Nel concetto di sessualità, invece, si passa da un ambito strettamente scientifico e biologicamente determinato ad un *framework* socialmente costruito. Prendendo in considerazione il concetto di sessualità è importante sottolineare il fatto che il termine non è legato ai cromosomi di un individuo, bensì alla sua identità, al suo stile di vita ed alle interazioni che quest'ultimo ha con la società. In altri termini, i comportamenti sessuali del genere umano. L'ultimo e più interessante concetto è sicuramente quello di identità di genere. Il termine genere nasce da una costruzione sociale e cognitiva che permette lo

sviluppo di un concetto di “se” durante il ciclo della vita di un individuo. Quando parliamo di identità di genere intendiamo le aspettative, i comportamenti sociali ed il modo di pensare di uomini e donne nella società. E’ quindi opportuno sottolineare la correlazione tra identità di genere ed il concetto di differenziazione di ruoli sociali. Il concetto di genere si riferisce, inoltre, alle pratiche sociali che distinguono mascolinità e femminilità. La natura socialmente costruita dei concetti di femminilità e mascolinità è alla base della divisione dei ruoli tra i due sessi, quindi il fondamento dell’oppressione della donna (Rubin, 1973). Pertanto, esplorando il concetto di identità di genere si prende in considerazione una prospettiva sociologica secondo la quale un semplice termine - genere - determina il fondamento per la costruzione di un ordine sociale.

Dopo aver chiarito la differenza tra questi tre concetti è opportuno prendere in considerazione il processo di socializzazione degli individui e la creazione di una identità soggettiva. L’apprendimento di norme e costumi culturali, dunque la socializzazione dei soggetti nella società può essere divisa in due fasi: la socializzazione primaria e la socializzazione secondaria. La socializzazione primaria si verifica durante l’infanzia e si propaga fino alla prima puerizia; durante questo periodo i bambini sono in grado di compiere distinzioni percettive degli attributi fisici e delle differenze di questi nei due sessi (Grusec, 2007), iniziano ad apprendere le etichettature di genere ed infine manifestano la conoscenza dell’appartenenza ad un determinato genere. La socializzazione secondaria ha luogo nella seconda puerizia. E’ durante questa fase che i bambini sviluppano il concetto di identità del proprio genere ed iniziano a comprendere l’esistenza dei cosiddetti ruoli sociali. A questo punto è corretto integrare a questo discorso il concetto alla base della Teoria dell’ Apprendimento Esperienziale, secondo la quale gli individui diventano “sociali” attraverso un processo di imitazione e comprensione di ruoli sociali: i bambini interiorizzano usi e costumi sociali attraverso l’osservazione di altri individui nella società. I loro comportamenti e le idee di identità di genere sono principalmente influenzati dai genitori, dai coetanei e dagli insegnanti. Un ruolo basilare nell’acquisizione dell’idea di “se” è quello dei Mass Media. Tra questi la televisione è fondamentale nella creazione di raffigurazioni stereotipate dei due sessi.

Devono essere presi in considerazione diversi fattori nell’analizzare lo sviluppo dell’identità di genere nei bambini,. Questi sono: fattori strutturali-sociali, i quali prendono in considerazione la divisione del lavoro e la prevalenza di società patriarcali; fattori interattivi-sociali, che influenzano le opportunità, gli incentivi e le esperienze alle quali i bambini hanno accesso; fattori motivazionali-

cognitivi che influenzano il criterio di interpretazione di pratiche sociali dell'ambiente che circonda l'individuo ed infine fattori biologici che si riferiscono alle differenze in termini fisici tra i due sessi e la loro rilevanza nel conseguimento di determinate mansioni. I fattori biologici comprendono anche l'influenza di ormoni maschili e femminili sul sistema nervoso degli individui. Tra tutti questi fattori un ruolo predominante spetta sicuramente a quelli strutturali-sociali, i quali esaminano come lo stato relativo degli individui nella società e il loro "potere" influenzano le loro prospettive personali ed i ruoli ricoperti nella società e le obbligazioni sociali che i ruoli istituzionalizzati impongono agli individui. Questo approccio non prende in considerazione soltanto il concetto di genere in termini di stato sociale, ma lo analizza anche in termini di etnia, razza e classe economica dei soggetti. Prima di analizzare i fattori interattivi-sociali è importante esplorare due teorie, ossia la Teoria Sociale-Cognitiva e la teoria Socio-Culturale, le quali enfatizzano il ruolo fondamentale delle interazioni sociali e delle attività giornaliere per l'acquisizione di una conoscenza culturale da parte dei bambini. Altresì il processo di socializzazione ha un impatto differente sui bambini a seconda dell'influenza che il gruppo sociale esercita sull'individuo. In generale, i bambini sono più propensi delle bambine a mantenere interazioni con i loro coetanei ed a rispettare i ruoli sociali che gli vengono imposti. I fattori cognitivi-motivazionali diventano quindi più critici per i bambini che per le bambine. Per quanto riguarda invece i fattori biologici esistono diverse teorie che affermano la responsabilità della "biologia" nelle differenze tra uomini e donne. Sebbene le differenze biologiche tra i due sessi siano tangibili, è importante prendere in considerazione il fattore "ambiente" nel quale gli individui crescono per comprendere eventuali alterazioni nella sessualità di questi ultimi.

A tutti questi fattori va sicuramente aggiunta l'interdipendenza tra identità di genere e stratificazione sociale. Nella formulazione della *Gender Schema Theory* (1981), Sandra Bem teorizza tre differenti lenti di analisi: polarizzazione di genere, androcentrismo ed esistenzialismo biologico. La prima si riferisce agli aspetti psicologici e sessuali che determinano le differenze tra uomo e donna; queste differenze hanno un impatto massivo nel principio organizzativo delle interazioni sociali nella società. La seconda teorizza la superiorità dell'uomo sulla donna ed implica un giudizio secondo il quale le esperienze maschili occupano un ruolo maggiore rispetto a quelle femminili. L'ultima lente di analisi, legittima le prime due e presenta le precedenti assunzioni come il prodotto di un inevitabile differenza biologica tra uomini e donne.

Il secondo capitolo esamina gli agenti causa di variazioni nello sviluppo degli atteggiamenti sociali nei bambini. Questi sono: genitori, insegnanti, coetanei e, infine, i Media. Il punto focale della ricerca diventa appunto il ruolo dei Mass Media nella creazione di una identità personale e, conseguentemente, di una identità di genere. Una parte fondamentale nella formazione di un individuo è la creazione di una identità. Questa può essere intesa come un serie di attributi, credenze, desideri e principi che gli individui assumono per distinguersi dagli altri. La formazione di una identità propria è una *task* saliente per bambini ed adolescenti. Questo processo è caratterizzato da una considerevole esposizione ai Media, in primis alla televisione. La televisione rappresenta, senza dubbio, lo strumento con più grande potere di socializzazione, sia in maniera negativa che positiva. L'aspetto interessante della relazione tra televisione e bambini è rappresentato dalla partecipazione: mentre guardano un programma i bambini hanno l'idea di interagire, anche se in realtà questo non accade. Un altro aspetto interessante è la concezione che gli individui hanno della televisione usata come mezzo per l'insegnamento. Se è vero che da una parte i piccoli spettatori possono imparare attraverso la televisione, dall'altra è importante ricordare che i bambini tendono a confondere le immagini del piccolo schermo con una pura rappresentazione della realtà. Un aspetto fondamentale diventa quindi la partecipazione dei genitori nell'uso dei Media. Il coinvolgimento parentale può assumere tre diverse forme: mediazione attiva, monitoraggio restrittivo e, infine, visione congiunta. La prima si riferisce ad un approccio esplicativo che i genitori assumono, discutendo con i propri figli il contenuto dei programmi televisivi. Inoltre, il monitoraggio attivo aumenta gli effetti positivi della televisione. Il secondo tipo di coinvolgimento, il monitoraggio restrittivo, interessa una regolamentazione che riguarda l'uso dei media ed il loro contenuto. Infine, la visione congiunta considera la visione della televisione come un momento di condivisione tra genitori e figli. Un'altra teoria utile per comprendere il ruolo dei Media come agenti di socializzazione è la "*General Learning Theory*", la quale analizza gli effetti del breve e del lungo periodo, legati all'esposizione ai Media. Questa teoria descrive il processo attraverso il quale gli stimoli esterni prodotti dalla televisione, alterano i comportamenti sociali nel breve periodo. Analizza anche gli effetti sul lungo periodo e come cambiamenti di tendenza, di attitudine e di comportamento possono essere causa di una ripetuta esposizione ad un determinato tipo di contenuto televisivo. Pertanto, gli individui apprendono comportamenti e attitudini attraverso interazioni sociali, di natura reale, ovverosia con altri individui, o di natura immaginaria e romanzata attraverso i Media.

La televisione può essere intesa anche come strumento per l'apprendimento e, per questa ragione, è importante esplorare in dettaglio le immagini trasmesse nei cartoni, ed in generale nei programmi per bambini. I cartoni sono, senza dubbio, una fonte di svago, ciò nonostante l'esposizione a determinate immagini può alterare l'opinione innocente dei bambini riguardo raffigurazioni stereotipate della società. Gli stereotipi possono essere di natura differente: legati all'etnia, al genere ed alla situazione economica. Le teorie socio-cognitive spiegano come la visione di contenuti nei Media possa influenzare la percezione della realtà di un individuo. Nello specifico, i Media sono ritenuti responsabili nella diffusione di modelli simbolici. Con il termine modelli simbolici si intendono tutti i soggetti, reali o romanzzati, in grado di alterare specifici atteggiamenti e convinzioni negli osservatori. L'esposizione prolungata a queste immagini potrebbe creare dei collegamenti associativi tra individui e caratteristiche stereotipate, fino a rendere queste associazioni automatiche. Quando la categorizzazione di un gruppo sociale viene attivata, conseguentemente anche gli stereotipi vengono attivati. Diverse ricerche condotte sui cartoni animati e sulle pubblicità per bambini hanno riportato una sotto-rappresentazione delle donne e di personaggi femminili, oltre al loro stato sociale inferiore rispetto ai protagonisti maschili e una debole dominazione della scena. Nel comprendere i motivi dietro questa rappresentazione distorta dell'immagine della donna possiamo considerare la televisione come una estensione delle sensazioni e delle credenze comuni nella società. Gli stereotipi di genere possono quindi essere analizzati come sintomo di un problema sociale.

Lo studio più importante sulla materia è stata condotto dalle ricercatrici Teresa Thompson e Eugenia Zerbinos, le quali nel 1995 hanno codificato 170 episodi di 40 differenti cartoni. L'analisi dei dati raccolti ha mostrato che il numero di protagonisti maschili eccedeva di due terzi quello delle protagoniste femminili. Non solo, i personaggi maschili superano di molto, in termini di numeri, quelli femminili; essi infatti sono rappresentati in una grande varietà di ruoli, occupando posizioni più importanti e risolutive. Inoltre, di maggiore importanza nello studio degli stereotipi di genere trasmessi dai media, è l'asse temporale lungo il quale i cartoni sono stati prodotti. Un cambio nella tendenza a rappresentare le donne come personaggi secondari è avvenuto dopo il 1980; le protagoniste femminili sono rappresentate più determinate, indipendenti e coraggiose. Da associare all'asse temporale troviamo un altro componente fondamentale, la tipologia di cartone. Differenze sono state riportate quando i cartoni analizzati ricadevano in una categoria piuttosto che in un'altra. I cartoni cosiddetti "chase-and-pratfall" ossia cacciare e cadere, come i *Looney Tunes* ed i *Puffi*,

sono quelli che registrano il tasso più alto di rappresentazioni su base stereotipata. Un'altra ricerca di rilievo sull'argomento è quella condotta da Elizabeth England ed il suo team nel 2011. Questo studio esplora lo sviluppo della rappresentazione dei personaggi femminili attraverso l'analisi della serie di film delle Principesse *Disney*. Tale elaborato mostra una evoluzione nella figura della principessa ed un distacco progressivo dal lavoro domestico e dalla sfera privata.

E' giusto considerare anche gli effetti positivi che i Media possono esercitare sull'apprendimento di norme culturali nei bambini. La televisione infatti, mostrando immagini ripetute di donne in occupazioni considerate prettamente maschili può indurre ad una visione più aperta della società.

Partendo dalla differenziazione dei tre concetti chiave di sesso, sessualità ed identità di genere, sono state esplorate differenti aree della percezione degli individui riguardo aspettative sociali. Dopo aver sottolineato l'importanza della socializzazione tra individui e la costruzione di un "ordine sociale", è stato opportuno prendere in considerazione i differenti agenti che influenzano questo processo sociologico. L'attenzione è stata incentrata sul ruolo occupato dai Media, in particolare la televisione. Questa può avere effetti positivi e negativi sulla percezione della realtà dei bambini. E' realistico affermare che i Media occupano un ruolo fondamentale nel processo di socializzazione degli individui e sullo sviluppo dell'identità di genere. Allo stesso tempo però è importante tenere in considerazione il fatto che i bambini non sono cresciuti solamente dalla televisione, senza il supporto di genitori e insegnanti. La quantità e qualità dei programmi diventano quindi una lente di analisi di vitale importanza. L'industria mediatica ha rivoluzionato il modo in cui i contenuti vengono presentati al pubblico, includendo una maggiore attenzione alla rappresentazione delle donne. Inoltre, la televisione occupa un ruolo di vitale importanza nel processo di apprendimento di determinati comportamenti e norme sociali. Questo studio ha mostrato che esistono differenti componenti che influenzano lo sviluppo nei bambini, di una identità personale e collettiva. Le identità non sono formate unicamente sulla base di situazione interne all'individuo, come la famiglia, ma anche da situazioni esterne. L'ambiente che circonda il bambino durante la crescita occupa quindi un ruolo centrale nella formazione della sua identità.