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**Shaping Young Minds Through Animation: Identity, Emotions
And Reality In Disney's Frozen 2013**

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Dedication

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the role of animated films in shaping the psychological, social, and cognitive aspects of children, focusing on their impact on identity formation, emotional development, and the understanding of reality and fantasy. The study's significance stems from the increasing presence of animation in children's lives and the cultural and value-based messages it conveys, influencing their perception of the world. The study employs a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach based on theoretically guided textual analysis, using *Frozen* as a case study. The theoretical framework integrates film semiotics, structural and developmental psychology, media theories, and cultural studies to analyze how meaning is produced within the film and its impact on the child viewer. The study draws on several theories, including cultural implantation theory, social learning theory, and the cognitive development theories of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. The analysis encompasses the film's narrative structure, character design, emotional representation, and the socio-cultural messages it conveys. Thus, the study concludes that animation is more than just a form of entertainment; it plays a significant role in shaping children's awareness, values, and social perceptions. The findings also confirm that animated films possess cultural and ideological dimensions that warrant analysis within contemporary literary and cultural studies.

Keywords: Animation, Children, Identity, Emotional development, *Frozen*, Reality, Semiotics.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

SEL	Social Emotional Learning
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General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

Animation has long served as one of the most powerful media through which young audiences first encounter complex social, emotional, and cultural ideas. Since Walt Disney's pioneering work in the mid-twentieth century, animated films have evolved from simple entertainment into richly layered narratives that address the deepest concerns of childhood: questions of identity, belonging, fear, love, and self-discovery. Walt Disney Animation Studios' *Frozen* (2013), directed by Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee, represents one of the most commercially and critically significant animated features of the twenty-first century. Grossing over one billion dollars worldwide and winning the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature, the film introduced two female protagonists (Elsa and Anna) whose journeys depart meaningfully from earlier Disney conventions and raise compelling questions about how modern animated cinema shapes the emotional and identity development of its young viewers (Buck & Lee, 2013).

Animated films do not merely entertain; they operate as informal pedagogical tools that expose children to narrative scripts for understanding themselves and others. Scholars in media studies, developmental psychology, and cultural studies have argued that the stories children consume in early life help to constitute the frameworks through which they later interpret social experience (Buckingham, 2003; Giroux, 1997). In this sense, a film watched repeatedly during childhood is not a passive object but an active participant in development. The present study takes this premise seriously and subjects it to close scrutiny through the specific case of *Frozen*.

2. Statement of the Argument

Despite the substantial body of scholarship on Disney animation and its cultural effects, a precise analysis of how *Frozen* simultaneously constructs identity and represents a broad emotional spectrum for child audiences remains underexplored. Existing studies tend to address either gender representation or emotional content in isolation, without examining the mechanisms through which both dimensions converge to shape young viewers' developing sense of self. This

thesis argues that *Frozen* employs a sophisticated repertoire of visual, narrative, and musical strategies to construct identity positions and emotional scripts that its primary audience of children internalises, contests, and appropriates in the course of identity formation (Bandura, 1986; Erikson, 1968). The film is, in this respect, not merely a cultural artefact but a pedagogical one.

3. Research Questions

The present research is guided by the following questions:

1. How does *Frozen* construct identity for its two central protagonists, Elsa and Anna, through visual design, narrative structure, and character arc?
2. What range of emotions does the film represent, and what strategies (visual, musical, and narrative) does it deploy to convey these emotions to a child audience?
3. In what ways does the emotional and identity content of *Frozen* reflect, challenge, or reproduce established conventions of Disney animated cinema?
4. What implications do the identity and emotional scripts embedded in the film carry for young viewers' self-understanding and emotional development?

4. Literature Review

A substantial body of scholarship informs the present inquiry. The five studies reviewed below have been selected because they address the intersection of animation, identity, and emotional development most directly, and because they illuminate through their gaps the specific contribution this thesis makes.

Hine et al. (2018) conducted a quantitative content analysis of speaking time, leadership behaviours, and emotional displays assigned to female and male characters across Disney animated films released between 1989 and 2016, including *Frozen*. Their findings confirmed that although recent films allocate more screen time and agentic behaviour to female protagonists, male characters continue to dominate verbal interaction and leadership roles across the corpus. On the emotional dimension, female characters are more frequently coded as expressing fear and sadness, while male characters express more anger and pride. The study is

rigorous in its quantitative scope and provides a useful baseline for understanding macro-level patterns in Disney gender representation.

However, Hine et al. (2018) confine themselves to frequency counts and do not examine the narrative or visual mechanisms through which emotional coding is produced. They do not analyse how a specific film constructs identity through the sustained development of individual characters across a ninety-minute arc. The present thesis addresses precisely this gap: rather than aggregating across a corpus, it performs a close, film-specific reading of *Frozen* that attends to the particular cinematographic, musical, and narrative strategies through which identity and emotion are co-constructed for child audiences.

In “The Princess and the Magic Kingdom”, Do Rozario (2004) traces the evolution of the Disney princess from Snow White through the early twenty-first century, arguing that princess figures have progressively acquired markers of agency, competence, and complexity without fully abandoning their structural dependence on romantic resolution. The study provides a theoretically sophisticated account of how Disney heroines function as cultural icons modelling normative femininity across generations of viewers, drawing on feminist cultural theory and close textual analysis.

Do Rozario’s analysis predates *Frozen* by nearly a decade and therefore cannot account for the film’s specific departures from the romantic-resolution template it describes. Moreover, the article does not engage with developmental psychology or with what emotional development research tells us about how princess models are received by child audiences. The present study brings the developmental dimension into direct dialogue with textual analysis, asking not only what identity the film constructs but also how that construction relates to the cognitive and emotional capacities of its young viewers.

Whelan (2012), in her doctoral dissertation *Girl Power and the (Dis)empowerment of Girls in Disney Films*, examines how post-feminist discourses of empowerment operate in Disney animation to construct female identity as simultaneously liberated and contained. Drawing on

discourse analysis and feminist media theory, Whelan argues that Disney's progressive surface representations are frequently undermined by narrative structures that reconfirm patriarchal values. The dissertation is notable for its attention to ideological contradiction and for treating identity not as a simple product of representation but as a contested, unstable achievement.

Despite its theoretical richness, Whelan's work does not address emotion as a distinct analytical category. The emotional content of animated films, the specific feelings characters experience, display, and resolve, is treated implicitly rather than systematically. Nor does the dissertation engage with the growing psychological literature on children's affective learning through narrative. The present thesis treats emotion as a category of equal analytical weight to identity, arguing that the two cannot be disentangled in *Frozen* and that the film's emotional arc is itself the primary vehicle through which identity positions are transmitted to child audiences.

Coats (2018), contributing to *The Cambridge Companion to Literature for Children*, offers a psychoanalytically informed overview of identity formation in children's literature and media, arguing that narrative fiction, including animated film, provides the symbolic material through which children work through Eriksonian psychosocial tensions. Coats draws on Lacan and Winnicott alongside Erikson, positioning children's stories as transitional objects that mediate between the inner world of the child and external social reality. The framework is theoretically sophisticated and explicitly relevant to the present study's concern with how animated narrative shapes identity.

Coats' analysis operates at a high level of abstraction and does not offer close readings of specific films; *Frozen* is not mentioned. The theoretical framework, while powerful, remains disconnected from the specific visual and musical grammar of animated cinema. The present study bridges Coats' psychosocial theoretical framework and medium-specific film analysis, demonstrating how animation's formal properties, color, song, character design, and narrative structure, are themselves the mechanisms through which the identity and emotional themes illuminated by the framework are enacted for young viewers.

Kushala (2026), in the article “Abjection on Ice: The Unique Representation of Abjection in *Frozen*”, published in the Algerian peer-reviewed journal *Atras* (University of Saïda), examines the film through the psychoanalytic lens of abjection theory as developed by Julia Kristeva and Barbara Creed. The study argues that Elsa embodies the ‘abject’ , a figure who transgresses the boundaries of the symbolic patriarchal order , and that the film represents a significant departure from earlier Disney conventions by ultimately integrating rather than destroying its abject protagonist. Drawing on Kristeva’s notion of the maternal as abject and Creed’s concept of the ‘monstrous-feminine’, Kushala traces how Elsa’s ice powers, spatial isolation, and eventual reintegration into Arendelle function as markers of abjection resolved in a positive direction. The study also compares Anna and Elsa as embodiments of the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ feminine within the symbolic order.

Kushala’s analysis, while theoretically sophisticated and directly focused on *Frozen*, operates exclusively within a psychoanalytic framework and does not address children as an actual audience. The study treats the film as a text for adult feminist-psychoanalytic critique rather than as a cultural artefact consumed primarily by young viewers whose identity and emotional development are at stake. It does not engage with developmental psychology, media studies, or the specific emotional scripts the film transmits to child audiences. The present thesis builds on Kushala’s valuable psychoanalytic reading of Elsa’s identity construction but extends it by connecting that construction to the emotional learning of actual child viewers, situating the analysis within a broader framework of how animation shapes young minds.

Taken together, the studies reviewed above have mapped important aspects of gender representation in *Disney* animation, the evolution of the Disney princess archetype, the ideological tensions of post-feminist empowerment narratives, the psychosocial functions of children’s narrative fiction, and the psychoanalytic dimensions of Elsa’s identity as an abject figure. What none of them has done is bring these strands into a unified analysis that (a) focuses specifically on *Frozen* as a case study, (b) treats identity and emotion as co-constitutive rather than separate

analytical categories, (c) reads the film's medium-specific formal strategies , colour, cinematography, music, and character design ,as the mechanisms through which these scripts are constructed, and (d) anchors the textual analysis in developmental psychology to account for the actual child audience for whom the film's emotional and identity content carries the most consequence. This thesis fills that gap.

5. Aims of the Study

This study aims to:

1. Identify and analyse the narrative, visual, and musical strategies through which *Frozen* constructs distinct identity positions for its two central protagonists.
2. Map the emotional landscape of the film, cataloguing the emotions depicted and the formal techniques used to represent them.
3. Examine the relationship between the film's identity and emotional content and established theories of child development and affective learning.
4. Assess the extent to which *Frozen* marks a genuine departure from earlier Disney conventions in its treatment of female identity and emotional complexity.

6. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it contributes to debates at the intersection of media studies, developmental psychology, and cultural studies by proposing an integrated analytical framework that treats animated cinema's formal properties as identity-forming mechanisms. Practically, it offers educators, parents, and media professionals a richer understanding of what *Frozen* is doing when children watch it repeatedly, and what conversations might usefully accompany such viewing. Given the film's extraordinary global reach and its particular popularity in the Algerian higher-education context, the study also contributes to locally relevant media literacy discourse (Buckingham, 2003).

Moreover, the methodological approach developed here , close textual reading of animation as a medium-specific system of meaning , is transferable to the analysis of other

contemporary animated features. At a moment when streaming platforms make animated content available to children on an unprecedented scale, rigorous analytical tools for understanding what such content communicates are more necessary than ever.

7. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in textual analysis. The primary data source is the film itself *Frozen* (2013) which is subjected to systematic close reading across three analytical dimensions: narrative structure, visual and cinematographic design, and musical composition. Each dimension is analysed separately before the three are brought together in an integrated interpretive argument. The analytical procedure draws on film studies methods (Bordwell & Thompson, 2013), and frameworks from developmental psychology and media studies as outlined in the literature review.

Secondary data consists of the scholarly literature reviewed above, supplemented by relevant work in developmental psychology, cultural studies, and animation studies. The study does not involve human participants and requires no ethical clearance beyond that implied by the academic use of a commercially available film.

8. Structure of the Study

This dissertation is divided into three chapters. Chapter One establishes the theoretical scaffolding of the study, surveying major frameworks in media theory, developmental psychology, and animation studies that collectively explain how children engage with animated content and why it matters. Chapter Two narrows the focus to the three central concerns of the thesis, identity formation, emotional development, and the fantasy–reality boundary, drawing on psychosocial theory, emotional competence research, and critical media studies to build the analytical vocabulary applied in Chapter Three. Chapter Three constitutes the core analytical contribution of the thesis. It applies the frameworks developed in the preceding chapters to a close reading of *Frozen*, examining in sequence the film’s construction of identity, its representation of the emotional spectrum, its deployment of medium-specific formal strategies, and its positioning

relative to Disney's historical conventions. The dissertation concludes with a General Conclusion that synthesises the principal findings and reflects on their implications for media literacy education and future research.

CHAPTER ONE

Understanding Animation and Child Development

Theoretical Frameworks

Introduction:

Animation is a crucial area of research in media and childhood studies, given its growing role in shaping children's cognitive, social, and emotional experiences. Animation is no longer merely a form of entertainment; it has become a complex cultural and educational medium that contributes to the transmission of values and meanings, influencing how children perceive the world around them. With the widespread availability of visual content, there is a growing interest in understanding how children interact with this type of media and its impact on their development and behavior.

This chapter adopts a theoretical approach that combines media studies with developmental psychology theories, aiming to provide an analytical framework that explains the child's relationship with animation. On the one hand, media influence theories help clarify the nature of the interaction between the child and the content, whether through direct, cumulative, or observational learning processes. On the other hand, cognitive and social development theories offer a deeper understanding of the child's cognitive abilities and their limitations, and how they process the visual symbols and narratives presented in animation.

This chapter also examines animation as a narrative and educational medium characterized by unique aesthetic and technical features that enable it to simplify complex concepts and make them more accessible to children. Analyzing its visual and narrative elements helps reveal the mechanisms by which meanings are constructed and values are instilled, both directly and indirectly.

Accordingly, this chapter aims to establish a comprehensive theoretical foundation that facilitates understanding the various dimensions of animation's impact on children. This is achieved by linking the nature of the media with the characteristics of the child-oriented audience, thus paving the way for a more in-depth analysis in subsequent chapters.

1.1. Media Theories and Children's Engagement with Animation

This section will focus on presenting and analyzing the most prominent media theories that have addressed children's relationship with visual content, particularly animation, by tracing the evolution of the understanding of media's impact on young audiences. It will first examine early theories of media influence that viewed the child as a passive recipient directly affected by the content, highlighting the most significant criticisms leveled against this perspective. It will also explore cultivation theory, which explains the role of prolonged media exposure in shaping children's perceptions of the world, and connect this to the content of animation.

Then, the focus will shift to social learning theory, which highlights how children acquire behaviors through observation and imitation, especially through cartoon characters. Finally, it will move to modern approaches that view children as an active audience capable of interacting with and interpreting content in diverse ways, thus opening the door to a more nuanced understanding of their relationship with animation.

1.1.1 Early Media Effects Theories: The Hypodermic Needle Model

Early media effects theories emerged in the early twentieth century as scholars attempted to understand the power of mass communication. One of the earliest and most influential models was the Hypodermic Needle Theory, also known as the Magic Bullet Model. This perspective conceptualized audiences as passive recipients of media messages, assuming that media content could be directly “injected” into the minds of individuals, producing immediate and uniform effects.

According to this model, audiences were believed to respond automatically to media messages without critical reflection. Within this framework, children were considered particularly vulnerable to media influence due to their limited cognitive maturity and developing critical thinking skills. They were perceived as more likely to internalize media messages without questioning their meaning or intent (McQuail, 2010).

Despite its historical significance, the Hypodermic Needle Model has been widely criticized for oversimplifying media effects. It neglects individual differences, social and cultural contexts, and the active role of audiences in interpreting media content. Subsequent research in media studies demonstrated that media influence is far more complex and mediated by psychological, social, and environmental factors (McQuail, 2010).

Although contemporary scholarship no longer supports the deterministic assumptions of this model, it remains important as a historical starting point in discussions about children's media exposure. In the context of animated films. This early framework would suggest that children directly absorb the behaviors, values, and emotional expressions displayed by animated characters. However, later theories offer more nuanced explanations of how young audiences engage with and interpret animated narratives.

1.1.2 Cultivation Theory and Long-Term Exposure:

Cultivation Theory was developed by George Gerbner and his colleagues during the 1970s as a media theory that explains the long-term influence of television and media content on individuals' perceptions of reality (Gerbner et al., 1994). According to this theory, people who are repeatedly exposed to media messages over a long period may gradually begin to perceive the world in ways that reflect the images and values presented by the media (Gerbner et al., 1994). Unlike early media theories that focused on direct and immediate effects, Cultivation Theory emphasizes that media influence is cumulative and develops slowly through continuous exposure (Gerbner et al., 1994).

The theory suggests that audiences, especially children, are influenced by repeated patterns, themes, and representations shown in media productions such as television programs and animated films (Gerbner et al., 1994). Since children spend considerable time watching cartoons and animated content, these productions may contribute to shaping their understanding of social behavior, family relationships, gender roles, emotions, and moral values (Gerbner et al., 1994).

Through continuous exposure, children may start adopting certain attitudes or expectations that reflect what they frequently observe in media content (Gerbner et al., 1994).

In addition, Cultivation Theory explains that media messages can influence children's perceptions of what is considered normal or acceptable in society (Gerbner et al., 1994). Animated films often portray heroes, friendships, conflicts, and emotional reactions in repeated ways, which may affect how children interpret real-life situations and interpersonal relationships (Gerbner et al., 1994). As a result, media content can play a role in shaping children's emotional responses, communication styles, and understanding of identity over time (Gerbner et al., 1994).

Unlike the Hypodermic Needle Model, which assumes that audiences passively receive media messages and are immediately affected by them, Cultivation Theory presents media influence as a gradual and long-term process (Gerbner et al., 1994). The theory recognizes that the effects of media exposure accumulate through repetition rather than through a single viewing experience (Gerbner et al., 1994). Therefore, children who are frequently exposed to similar themes and messages in animated films may progressively internalize these representations and incorporate them into their perceptions of reality (Gerbner et al., 1994).

However, despite its importance in media studies, Cultivation Theory has also received criticism from researchers and scholars (Gerbner et al., 1994). Critics argue that the theory tends to assume similar effects on all audiences and does not fully consider individual differences among viewers (Gerbner et al., 1994). Children do not always interpret media content in the same way because their understanding is influenced by factors such as age, education, personal experiences, family environment, and cultural background (Gerbner et al., 1994). Consequently, while repeated exposure to animated films may influence children's perceptions and attitudes, the impact of media content may vary from one child to another depending on their social and psychological context (Gerbner et al., 1994).

1.1.3 Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory, developed by Albert Bandura, proposes that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modeling rather than solely through direct experience. According to this theory, individuals particularly children acquire new behaviors, emotional responses, and social norms by observing role models within their environment, including those presented in media content (Bandura, 1977).

Observational learning involves specific cognitive processes such as attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation, which determine whether a modeled behavior will be imitated (Bandura, 1977). This perspective emphasizes that children are not passive recipients of information; rather, they actively process what they observe before reproducing it.

In the context of media and animated films, characters can act as symbolic models that influence children's understanding of identity, emotions, and social relationships (Bandura, 1977). Through repeated exposure to animated narratives, children observe how characters express different emotions such as fear, happiness, anger, love, and sadness, which contributes to shaping their emotional awareness and social behavior (Bandura, 1977). Animated content may also present moral lessons and behavioral patterns that children can imitate after identifying with certain characters (Bandura, 1977).

Furthermore, Social Learning Theory suggests that children are active participants in the learning process rather than passive receivers of media messages (Bandura, 1977). They interpret and evaluate what they observe before deciding whether to imitate or reject a behavior, depending on their cognitive development and personal experiences (Bandura, 1977). This explains why children do not always respond in the same way to identical media content (Bandura, 1977).

Despite its contribution to understanding media influence, the theory has been criticized for underestimating the role of cultural and social context in shaping interpretation

(Bandura, 1977). Not all observed behaviors are automatically reproduced, as children may reinterpret media messages according to their environment, maturity, and lived experiences (Bandura, 1977).

1.1.4 Children as Active Media Audiences

The concept of children as active media audiences emphasizes that children are not passive recipients of media content; rather, they interpret, evaluate, and negotiate meanings from what they watch. This perspective, rooted in the Uses and Gratifications approach, highlights the role of the audience in constructing personal and social meaning from media experiences (Livingstone & Bovill, 1999).

The Uses and Gratifications framework explains that children actively select media and interpret content to fulfill specific needs, such as entertainment, learning, and social understanding (Katz et al., 1973). Children view animated content for a variety of purposes, including amusement, exploration of social relationships, and imitation of characters, demonstrating that they are active participants rather than passive observers.

In animated films, children engage with characters and narratives in ways that reflect their developmental stage and personal context. They interpret moral lessons, social roles, and emotional experiences through the stories and actions of characters, allowing them to understand and navigate concepts of identity and emotion (Buckingham, 2000).

Empirical studies suggest that children often reconstruct or negotiate the meaning of media content in relation to their personal experiences, highlighting the active nature of their engagement (Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001). While this perspective emphasizes children's agency, it also recognizes that developmental stage and social context may influence the ways they interact with media (Valkenburg & Cantor, 2001).

1.2 Developmental Psychology and Children's Cognitive Processing

This section examines how developmental psychology explains children's cognitive processing and its role in shaping their understanding of media content. It focuses on how children's thinking abilities evolve with age, influencing their attention, memory, interpretation, and emotional comprehension. The section also highlights how cognitive development affects the way children process animated films, including their understanding of narratives, characters, and symbolic meanings. By drawing on key developmental theories, this part aims to explain how children's mental growth and cognitive limitations contribute to differences in media perception and interpretation.

1.2.1 Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development

Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development provides a fundamental framework for understanding how children process and interpret media content. According to Piaget (1962), children actively construct knowledge through interaction with their environment, progressing through distinct stages of cognitive development. This perspective emphasizes that children are active meaning-makers rather than passive recipients of information.

Cognitive development is driven by processes of assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration, through which children continuously refine their mental schemas (Piaget, 1962). These processes highlight the dynamic nature of learning, as children reorganize their understanding in response to new experiences.

Cognitive Processes in Piaget's Theory

Within Piaget's theory of cognitive development, several key processes explain how children learn and construct knowledge. Among the most important of these processes are assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration, which work together to support intellectual growth.

Assimilation

Assimilation is a cognitive process in which children integrate new information into their existing mental frameworks or schemas without changing the structure of those schemas. It allows the child to understand new experiences using prior knowledge, making learning more continuous and less disruptive. Through assimilation, children tend to interpret unfamiliar situations in a way that fits what they already know.

This process plays an important role in early learning because it helps children build confidence in interpreting their environment. It supports the idea that knowledge is not completely rebuilt each time, but rather expanded gradually. In Piaget's view, assimilation is a natural tendency of the mind to organize information efficiently.

For example, if a child already knows what a "dog" is, they may see a new breed of dog they have never encountered before and still identify it as a "dog" based on familiar features such as shape, barking, and movement. In this case, the child is using assimilation to fit new information into an existing category.

Accommodation

Accommodation occurs when existing mental schemas are not sufficient to explain new information, requiring the child to modify or create new schemas. Unlike assimilation, this process involves a change in the child's existing understanding. It reflects a deeper level of cognitive development because it forces the mind to adapt to new realities.

This process is essential when children encounter information that contradicts what they already believe. It allows them to reorganize their thinking and develop more accurate and complex mental representations of the world. Accommodation therefore leads to cognitive restructuring and learning progression.

For example, a child may initially believe that all animals that fly are birds. However, when they learn about bats, they discover that bats can fly but are not birds. As a result, the child modifies their schema and creates a new category for mammals that can fly, demonstrating accommodation.

Equilibration

Equilibration is the regulatory process that balances assimilation and accommodation. It is the mechanism that drives cognitive development by resolving conflicts between existing knowledge and new experiences. When children face situations that do not fit their current understanding, equilibration helps restore mental stability.

This process ensures continuous intellectual growth by pushing the child to either adjust their schemas or reinterpret new information. It acts as a self-correcting system that encourages learning through problem-solving and adaptation. Without equilibration, cognitive development would remain unbalanced.

For example, when a child learns that not all flying creatures are birds, they experience cognitive conflict. To resolve this, they adjust their understanding by reorganizing their knowledge about animals. This restoration of balance between old and new knowledge illustrates equilibration in action.

The preoperational stage (approximately 2–7 years) is particularly relevant to children's engagement with animated media, as it is characterized by symbolic thinking, imagination, and reliance on visual representations (Piaget, 1962). At this stage, children are highly responsive to animated narratives but may lack logical reasoning and perspective-taking abilities.

In contrast, children in the concrete operational stage (approximately 7–11 years) develop more advanced cognitive skills, including logical reasoning and an understanding of cause

and effect relationships, allowing for a more structured interpretation of narratives and emotional content (Piaget, 1962).

In the context of animated films, Piaget's theory helps explain how children at different developmental stages interpret characters, emotions, and narrative themes differently. Younger children may focus primarily on visual and emotional elements, while older children are more capable of understanding complex relationships, identity formation, and moral values embedded in the narrative (Piaget, 1962) .

1.2.2 Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how children's cognitive development is shaped through social interaction and cultural context. Unlike Piaget's emphasis on individual cognitive construction, Vygotsky highlights the fundamental role of language, social interaction, and cultural tools in the development of higher mental functions (Vygotsky, 1978).

This theory is particularly relevant to children's interaction with animated media because it explains how cognitive development occurs through social guidance, communication, and cultural representation. In this context, three key concepts help explain how children learn from and interpret animated films: the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), scaffolding, and language as mediation.

• Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD):

Central to this theory is the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the distance between what a child can achieve independently and what can be accomplished with guidance from adults or more knowledgeable peers. Learning occurs most effectively within this zone, where social interaction facilitates cognitive growth (Vygotsky, 1978).

- **Scaffolding:**

The concept of scaffolding explains how support provided by more knowledgeable others enables children to gradually develop independent understanding, as assistance is reduced over time (Vygotsky, 1978).

- **Language and Mediation:**

Language plays a crucial mediating role in this process, serving as both a tool for communication and a mechanism for structuring thought. Through interaction with others, children internalize cultural meanings and cognitive strategies (Vygotsky, 1978).

From this perspective, animated media can be understood as a cultural tool that mediates children's learning. Films provide symbolic representations of social relationships, emotional expression, and identity, which children interpret within their cultural and developmental context (Vygotsky, 1978).

Conclusion:

Therefore, this approach provides a coherent conceptual framework that enables a comprehensive understanding of the various dimensions of the relationship between children and animation, by integrating media and psychological approaches within a holistic analytical framework. This theoretical foundation allows for a deeper understanding of how meaning is formed in children, the nature of their interaction with visual and narrative content, and the extent of its influence on the formation of their representations and behaviors. It also contributes to highlighting the overlap between the characteristics of the medium and the characteristics of the child, reflecting the complexity and multifaceted nature of this relationship.

From this perspective, this chapter serves as a necessary reference point, paving the way for more detailed analyses in subsequent chapters. This theoretical framework will be employed in examining case studies, thereby enhancing the scientific understanding of the presence of animation in a child's life and its role in shaping their consciousness within a changing cultural and social context.

CHAPTER TWO

Identity, Emotion, and Reality in Animated Media for Children

Introduction

This chapter explores the interconnected dimensions of identity formation, emotional development, and the construction of reality in children's animation. It draws on psychological and cultural theories to examine how children identify with animated characters, develop emotional awareness, and engage with fictional worlds that often mirror real-life social structures. Additionally, the chapter considers how animation conveys implicit values and ideological messages, shaping children's perceptions of norms, roles, and behavior.

2.1 Children Identity Formation

The formation of a child's identity is a dynamic and complex process influenced by a range of psychological, social, and cultural factors. Identity is not innately formed but rather develops gradually through different stages of growth. In the early years, a child begins to develop an initial sense of self by distinguishing between "self" and "other." This awareness then expands to include social roles, cultural affiliations, and the values they adopt. The surrounding environment, including family, school, and media, plays a pivotal role in shaping this process.

In this context, animation emerges as a significant influence in the formation of a child's identity, given its ability to present engaging behavioral models and characters with whom children can easily identify. Through repeated exposure to these characters, a child may adopt certain patterns of thought or behavior or strive to emulate desirable traits such as courage, intelligence, or cooperation. These works can also contribute to shaping a child's understanding of concepts such as good and evil, success and failure, and gender and social roles.

The impact of animation extends beyond behavior to encompass the symbolic and cultural dimensions of identity. The imaginary worlds and visual symbols it present offer children a space to explore and express themselves, helping them understand their place within a broader social context. However, this impact is neither singular nor deterministic, as children remain active in interpreting what they see, influenced by their cultural background and developmental level.

Therefore, understanding the process of identity formation in children in relation to media content, particularly animation, requires a balanced approach that considers the interaction between the characteristics and content of the medium and the child's cognitive and social abilities. This allows for a more accurate analysis of the effects of this interaction on self-construction and its direction.

2.1.1 Psychosocial Theories of Identity Development

Erikson's stages of psychosocial development

Erik Erikson's psychosexual development theory involves 8 stages of development shaped by psychological, biological, and social aspects throughout the entire lifespan of a person. Every stage of development is described by two contrasting psychological inclinations, where one is positive and the other is negative. Stages occur as a person grows and faces decisions and critical moments in their childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, and late adulthood.

VIII								Integrity VS despaire
VII							Generativity VS stagnation	
VI						Intimacy VS isolation		
V	Temporal perspective VS time confusion	Self-certainty VS self- consciousness	Role experimentation VS role fixation	Apprenticeship VS work paralyses	Identity Vs Identity confusion	Sexual polarisation VS bisexual confusion	Leader and followership VS Authority confusion	Ideological commitment VS confusion of values
IV				Industry VS inferiority	Task identification VS sense of futility			
III			Initiative VS Guilt		Anticipation of roles VS roles inhibition			
II		Autonomy VS shame, doubt			Will to be on self VS self- doubt			
I	Trust VS mistrust				Mutual recognition Vs autistic isolation			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Figure 2.1. Erik Erikson 8 Stages of Development

Erikson emphasizes that every developmental stage builds on the success of the past stages.

Trust vs. Mistrust

Erikson suppose that lasting patterns for the trust-over-mistrust balance are established from a child's birth until around age two (18 months). He perceived trust establishment as the basis of a person's healthy personality and the key task within this initial stage. Also, the resolution of every psychosocial crisis leads to an ego quality, or basic strength (Greene, 2017).

Autonomy vs. Shame

Erikson argue that between 2 and 3 years of age, the child learns self-control or autonomy without losing self-esteem, which involves the holding or letting go issue. On the

contrary, shame the sense of being estranged from their parents or being exposed entails the child's feeling that they are a failure, thus causing low confidence (Greene, 2017).

Initiative vs. Guilt

During this stage, between 3 and 5 years, which arises from the will to assume roles or to chase things through play, the child cultivates a sense of purpose. Yet, if they are excessively thwarted (frustrated), a feeling of constraint or inhibition averts freedom of thought and expression from growing. At this stage, the child whose initiative is overly controlled or misfires, thus becoming unsuccessful, is likely to develop guilty feelings (Greene, 2017).

Industry vs. Inferiority

Between 6 and 12 years, the child faces the industry vs. inferiority issue or task. Erikson suggest that the primary task of this period is to attain an industrious sense, and the developing industry task involves enthusiastically building skills and carrying out meaningful work. In contrast, the child feels inferior or inadequate due to the feeling of not measuring up. The industry vs. inferiority difficulty can lead to a competence sense or, in combination with inertia, its opposite (Greene, 2017).

Identity vs. Confusion

This stage occurs from ages 12 through the early 20s, when the adolescent or teen grows into a young adult. The key task is to build a hard identity, which denotes the adolescent's sense of personal consistency as well as historical continuity. The process ends up in an explicit identity crisis, whereby, during adolescence, the individual struggles with the problem of how they should be themselves and how "to share oneself with another" (Erikson, 1959). The identity confusion is due to the sum total of unattractive and risky elements of identification (Greene, 2017).

Intimacy vs. Isolation

This stage, which occurs between 22 and 34 years, entails a mature individual's capacity to establish intimate relationships. The range of key relationships grows to encompass partnerships in love and friendship and includes both competitive and supportive aspects. Also, when a person shuts others out or becomes exclusive, this signals that they are unsuccessful in reaching intimacy. If the individual is not able to develop a positive self-identity in their teen years, they are likely to experience social isolation and loneliness (Greene, 2017).

Generativity vs. Stagnation

This stage, which occurs between 34 and 60 years, relates to founding and guiding the succeeding generation. The psychosocial crisis during this stage revolves around the person's ability to care for others. Generativity comprises creativity through a person producing a family, embarking on a career, or engaging in leisure activities. Failure to master this task leads to stagnation (Greene, 2017).

Integrity vs. Despair

This stage, which starts at around 60 years of age until death, relates to late-life occurrences. The psychosocial crisis issue involves how an individual can grow with integrity amidst looming mortality. The individual achieves integrity if they have little to no regrets, have led a productive life, and can deal with failures as they handle successes. However, a person who feels that they have not attained a sense of integrity or are unsuccessful feels as if they have wasted their life, thus developing a sense of despair.

2.1.2 Social Identity and the Identification with animated characters

Identification is a perceived association between characters and their spectators (Cohen, 2001). According to Cohen, one can hardly imagine any media text having any impact without identification". Identification with media character theory has both "affective (empathy)

and cognitive (understanding goals and motives, perspective-taking) components” (Cohen, 2001, p.302). Cohen has devised four dimensions of identification theory based on which one can have a deep influence on these media texts. These four dimensions are mentioned below:

Empathy or Sharing the Feelings of the Character

In this dimension of identification, children tend to share the feeling of the character. Children start being happy or sad with the character (Cohen, 2001).

Cognition or Sharing the Perspective of the Character

This dimension involves a cognitive aspect, and children are inclined to share the perspectives of the character. Cohen states that “Operationally this can be measured by the degree to which an audience member feels he or she understands the character and the motivations for his or her behavior” (p.312).

Internalize and Share the Goals or Traits of the Character

Children start to internalize the traits, motives, goals, and perspectives of their identified character. As Cohen states that this step is motivation. Children develop motivation through their involvement with the cartoon character to internalize their traits, motives, goals, and perspectives.

Absorption

It is the last dimension of the identification process in which children truly absorb the traits, motives, goals, and so on of their identified cartoon character. The theory of identification helps analyze the conversation data of children because Cohen positions that “in terms of age, it is generally assumed that children identify more strongly and are more influenced than adults by television role models” (p.311).

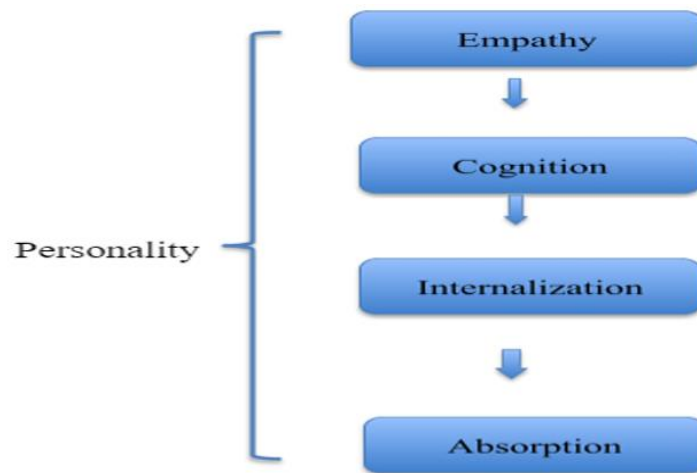


Figure 2.2. Identification with media character: Adapted from Cohen (2001).

The above-mentioned figure illustrates that children first develop a sense of empathy with their favorite cartoon character later it takes the shape of cognition then it leads to internalization which results in the absorption of the desired traits of their favorite character. After passing through these four steps a child's identity changes to some extent.

2.2 Emotional Development and Affective Learning Through Animation

Animated media, as defined across the literature, refers to visually dynamic content that uses the sequential display of still images often enhanced with sound, voice acting, and stylized motion to create emotionally engaging narratives for children (Furniss, 2008; Guo et al., 2020; Hunt, 2021).

In early childhood education, animated content has been shown to effectively model social behaviors, scaffold emotional understanding, and hold young learners' attention through symbolic storytelling and simplified emotional expressions. Animation's narrative clarity, visual expressiveness, and symbolic modeling make it especially appealing to young children, allowing them to observe and interpret complex emotional cues in simplified formats (Furniss, 2008; Hunt, 2021). SEL-themed animation has been shown to promote emotional literacy, social problem-solving, and behavioral. Media that reflects children's lived experiences, linguistic backgrounds,

and cultural norms is more likely to evoke emotional resonance, identity affirmation, and meaningful interpretation (Zhang, 2021; Moreno et al., 2019). Reader Response Theory reinforces this by asserting that meaning is co-constructed between the viewer and the narrative, with the viewer's cultural background mediating interpretation. This suggests that culturally familiar animated content may support deeper learning than foreign content, even when the behavioral messages are similar.

2.2.1 Emotional Representation in Animated Narratives

Expression of emotions through character design

In the animation, the expression is the soul of the character. By shaping the character's expression, the character can be given emotion and language ability. The simple expression change of the character can drive the atmosphere of the entire scene, and enhance the personal character and psychological activities of the characters. At the same time, flexible facial expression is the most impressive part of the animated film, and the soul of the whole film. The joy, anger, sorrow, and happiness conveyed by the expressions in each excellent animation work will make people feel the same. Therefore, it is very important to shape the character expressions. The tension of expression is easy to bring visual impact to the audience, which can make the psychological performance of the character very thorough and delicate, and then make the corresponding treatment through the expression of joy, anger, sadness, music and other changes in the features of the character. Visually, the audience and the characters have psychological resonance.

. Expression Techniques of Facial Expression Design

Association:

- Association shapes different characters by exaggerating facial expressions. It involves observing life's details to create new expressions based on existing images and concepts.

Personification:

- This technique gives life to characters by mimicking real facial expressions and behaviors. It transforms animals or inanimate objects into thinking individuals, enhancing their portrayal through language and actions.

Exaggeration and Deformation:

- Exaggeration adds humor and uniqueness to character expressions. While deformation enhances characters' expressions based on their script-defined traits, making them more vivid and engaging.

Use of color, music, and movement

Color

The application of color to each animation can vary in forming visuals. The many understandings and color categories in color theory can make color translation in visuals, especially animated films, so complex. However, the look and mood in films are not widely known as important elements in animated visual storytelling.

Music

Children perceived more consistent and subtle differences in the use of musical instruments, rhythm cadence and video–audio fit; there is also obvious differences in the perceptions of vocal skills, performance skills and musical style as well as emotional transmission. There are also seven elements that constitute animation music (use of orchestration, vocal skills, musical style, rhythm cadence, performance techniques, emotional transmission and video–audio fit) exerted varying degrees of influence on the audiences' evaluation of the animation film. Amongst these, video–audio fit was found to be the most important element, as it simultaneously affected the children' evaluation in terms of creativity, cultural meaning and preferences; audiences of different ages and professional backgrounds showed significant differences in evaluating animation films in terms of creativity, culture and preference; and differences in music

had a significant impact on audiences' perceptions and evaluations of facets of animation films, including the story content, role identification and spiritual fit.

Movements

Children are known to be especially attentive to rapid action animation, and motion. Recent studies show that motion pictures built in animations make picture movement exposure one of the strongest incentives for developing language and literacy skills in the preschool age even more effective (Snow et al., 1998). It is apparent from the literature that multimedia features in the new electronic formats of animation, as long as those additions are well matched to the verbal narration, boost the effects of stories on young children's story comprehension and word learning.

2.2.2 Empathy, Fear, and Moral Development

Children need emotional skills to form relationships with others. Indeed, the capacity to recognize and interpret emotions in others is a fundamental building block of social competence. Developmental psychologists and media scholars alike have argued that screen media play a crucial role in children's emotional development. Yet few studies address this larger issue, in part because researchers have given so much empirical attention instead to media's impact on maladaptive or antisocial behaviors.

Learning empathy through narrative engagement

Learning to feel empathy or share emotions with others is part of what makes children effective social agents. Empathic children are more sensitive to others and are more likely to engage in socially desirable behavior in groups. Empathy is typically construed as a developmentally acquired skill, dependent on a child's ability to recognize what emotion the other person is feeling and to role-take, or imagine the self in that person's place. Infants often respond to the crying of other babies by crying themselves.

Media, Fear, and Anxiety

Children can not only witness and share emotions experienced by media characters, but also respond directly to emotionally charged events depicted in the media. Much of the research on the media's capacity to evoke children's emotions has focused narrowly on its ability to arouse their fears and anxieties. Recent movies such as *Monster House*, *Corpse Bride*, and *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* are just a few examples of horror-filled content that is targeted to children. Classic Disney films such as *Bambi*, *Snow White*, and *The Lion King* can also be upsetting to very young children. Even programs not designed to be scary sometimes cause fear among younger age groups. *The Incredible Hulk*, for example, a television series featuring a large, green skinned creature that helps people, was so frightening to preschoolers that *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* screened a special segment to explain the Hulk's motives and make-up to young viewers.

Moral Development

Moral development in children follows a predictable developmental path. When presented with an ethical dilemma, children under the age of eight typically judge an action as wrong or incorrect when it results in punishment or goes against the rules set forth by authority figures.⁶³ As children mature, they begin to consider multiple perspectives in a situation, taking into account the intentions and motives of those involved and recognizing the often-conflicting rules inherent in moral dilemmas. In other words, their moral reasoning becomes more flexible and "other" oriented. Recent studies showed that children who watched a great deal of fantasy violence were more likely than light viewers to perceive justified violence as

morally acceptable. Heavy doses of fantasy violence also were linked with a child's ability to take on someone else's perspective. In particular, children heavily exposed to fantasy violence had less advanced role-taking abilities, which in turn predicted less sophisticated moral reasoning skills.

2.3 Animation, Reality, and the Construction of Meaning

The Concept of Reality in the Presence of Animation Work to express the fulfillment of the definition of a reality, a presence is needed whose form varies according to conditions and context. Every presence usually leaves traces, which are natural or artificial, left intentionally, or unintentionally. In this research, the formulation of the concept of reality was produced, related to the presence of an animation work. The presence of an animation work is determined by the stages it goes through before the animation work is finished, until after the animation work has been created (produced).

Components of Reality in Animation

The components of reality in animation are categorized into 3 categories of reality, namely objective reality, subjective reality, and inter-subjective reality. There are two more categories of the objective reality category, namely tangible and intangible, which included in the tangible category are visual and audial aspects. Visual aspects as tangible assets in animation projects can be in the form of character designs, vehicle designs, equipment designs, architectural designs, and visual effects. Audial aspects included in tangible assets are voice, sound effects, and music. Subjective reality and inter-subjective reality are types of reality that have a tendency towards the cultural studies paradigm. Where in subjective reality contains meaning and value. Meanings in question include aesthetic meaning, economic meaning, and social meaning. Whereas, what is included in the values are cultural values, symbolic values, and educational values. The nature of inter-subjective reality is critical thinking, where critical thinking is meant to investigate animation as an ideological representation, animation as a representation of power / domination / knowledge / mastery of technology. The assets in tangible assets are voice, sound effects, and music.

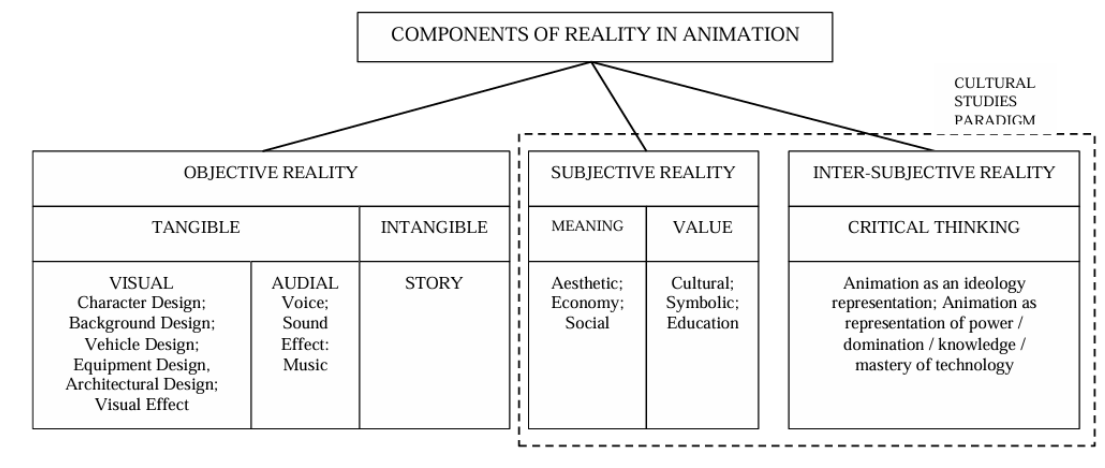


Figure 2.3. Components of Reality in Animation¹

2.4 Power, Culture, and Ideology in Children's Animation

Power in child animation is typically depicted through vibrant visual cues, exaggerated physical abilities, and imaginative transformations that grant characters control over their environment. It is often shown as the ability to fly, move with super speed, or cast magical, colorful blasts.

- **Transformation & Costumes:** Characters often undergo transformations, changing into special suits or acquiring magical items that signify a shift to a powerful state (e.g., "I have the power!").

- **Energy and Elements:** Power is frequently portrayed as elemental—lightning, fire, or bright, glowing energy that allows characters to defeat opponents or overcome obstacles.

- **Exaggerated Motion:** Fast-paced, dynamic animation highlights strength and speed, making characters appear invincible.

- **Environmental Control:** Characters with power can manipulate their surroundings, such as creating barriers, flying, or using technology/magic to solve complex problems.

- **Size and Presence:** Powerful characters are often drawn with more dominant, confident poses, or they may grow in size to intimidate foes

In her 2020 article, *A Worldbuilding Guide to Crafting Diverse Cultures*, Amelia Wiens emphasizes: ‘‘A key part of creating interesting worlds is creating diverse cultures that vary in some way from our own norms’’. It might be difficult to get out of our cultural biases to reconsider what we think and see as obvious (Wiens 2020). However, if the creator wants to use real-life cultures as the main source of inspiration, it’s heavily suggested to do thorough research. These adaptations should be justified with a reason and not accidental. (Noë 2021.) While the creator can create a whole new culture for their stories, real-life cultures have taken influence into fantasy world-building and its environments.

- Cultural coding: Animation widely uses culturally specific signs within universally available stories. *Spirited Away* combines Japanese mythological themes and visual conventions. These movies generate additional levels of meaning for those who are familiar with these references, yet remains reasonable for those without such cultural knowledge

2.4.1 Animation as an Ideological Text

Cultural transmission and socialization

In the introduction to his book, *Language and Ideology in Children’s Fiction* (1992), John Stephens claims that ‘writing for children is usually purposeful, its intention being to foster in the child reader a positive appreciation of some socio-cultural values which, it is assumed, are shared by author and audience’ and can involve ‘an attempt to perpetuate certain values or resist socially dominant values which particular writers oppose’ (p.3). In a similar way, filmic texts produced for children are usually didactic in nature, often overtly addressing particular issues and behaviors and providing directives to both the child and adult audiences as to how such issues or behaviors should be regarded or responded to. Such didacticism can be appealing to the adult audience as it provides moral certainty and external authority, thereby supplementing the parental role of educating and guiding children as well as defining and shaping value stances for adults to adopt. The advent of video and DVDs also means that children’s films are seen, and their

ideologies absorbed, not just in the theatre, but in the home, where purchased films can be repeatedly viewed in a similar way to a favorite book being read over and over again. However, despite the central role of the transference of ideology, and regardless of whether such a process is intentional or not, the ultimate aim of the corporately produced children's animated film is to create money, resulting in a profit.

Implicit messaging

Implicit information appears to be more difficult for young children to comprehend than explicit content. children may possess limited knowledge, experience, and cognitive capacity to enable them to understand a story (Ting and Yuying, 2017). This happens because children may not be equipped with related concepts (Vygotskaya, 1999)

According to Vygotsky's theory, children miss the meaning of concepts in animated movies that are not in their learning zone. Vygotsky (1978, p. 86) developed two concepts of "zone of proximal development (ZPD)" and "zone of actual development (ZAD)" to differentiate between the two levels of development. ZAD refers to the actual level of development that can be achieved by independent problem-solving. ZPD refers to the proximal level of development that is reached with the guidance or collaboration of an adult or a more capable peer (John-Steiner and Mahn, 2013). This means that children's cognitive development has a potential or capability that is restricted to the learning zone. Based on this theory, understanding concepts implied in the animations depend primarily on children's learning zone. Alternatively, according to reception theory, if a concept in a story is not in the child's learning zone, it does not necessarily mean that they would not be capable of having any other interpretations. Children interpret the text and the message based on their previous "schemas," which have been shaped by their cultural and historical context and "cognitive development" (Piaget, 1929)." Piaget assumed that children use these schemata to understand the things they see, hear, smell, and feel" (Valkenburg, 2004, p. 18).

Conclusion

In this chapter we have looked at many ways that animated media affects children's knowledge of their own identities and experiences; their emotional lives; and their perception of social realities. We combined three types of study (psychological, narrative, and cultural) to show that animation acts as an important medium for children to understand who they are and the world around them.

From an identity perspective, this study illustrated that children's engagement with animated characters reflects many aspects of psychological development and social identity theory. Children use their identification with characters to establish their individual identities while they are also absorbing representations of gender, culture, and social roles. Furthermore, diversity in animation either reinforces or challenges current stereotypes and norms depending upon whether diverse representations exist within animated content.

Regarding reality and meaning construction, this study supported the idea that although animated worlds are fictional, they have an inherent logic and coherence as stories. This internal logic enables children to become emotionally invested in characters and stories and therefore blur the lines between fantasy and reality. Consequently, animation serves as an educational environment for children to develop their ability to analyze causality and effects from events in a story as well as how people interact socially and emotionally.

Lastly, this study reinforced the notion that children's animated programming contains ideological messages regarding cultural beliefs, moralities, and behaviors. Animated programming can serve as a vehicle for transmitting cultural values such as respect for authority, acceptable behaviors and moralities. However, with globalization and increased access to international media sources there are implications to how ideologies are transmitted and/or modified based on the cultural context.

CHAPTER THREE

Shaping Young Minds Through Animation: *Frozen* as a Case Study

Introduction

This chapter adopts a theory-driven textual analysis of *Frozen*, grounded in an interdisciplinary framework that combines film semiotics, constructivist developmental psychology, and cultural studies. Through this approach, the chapter explores how meaning is constructed within the film and how these meanings may influence young audiences. By analyzing the narrative structure, visual style, character representation, and underlying ideological messages, the study seeks to examine how the film engages children not only through storytelling but also through processes of psychological and cultural formation.

The chapter begins by justifying the selection of *Frozen* as a case study and situating it within the broader context of contemporary animated films for children. *Frozen* was selected due to its global cultural impact, commercial success, and thematic complexity. As one of Disney's most influential contemporary animated films, it provides rich material for examining identity construction, emotional representation, and ideological messaging in children's media. Its widespread popularity among young audiences further reinforces its relevance as a text through which children's psychological and cultural development may be explored.

Released in 2013, *Frozen* tells the story of two royal sisters, Elsa and Anna, whose relationship is shaped by Elsa's magical ability to create ice and snow. After accidentally revealing her powers during her coronation, Elsa isolates herself from society out of fear and anxiety, while Anna embarks on a journey to restore both their relationship and harmony within the kingdom. Throughout the narrative, the film explores themes of identity, emotional regulation, sisterhood, fear, self-acceptance, and love. By combining fantasy elements with emotionally driven storytelling, the film presents experiences and conflicts that resonate with children's emotional and social development.

The chapter then examines *Frozen* as an animated text, focusing on its narrative and aesthetic features before moving to a detailed analysis of identity construction through its main characters. This is followed by an exploration of emotional socialization, highlighting how the film represents emotions and encourages empathy among young viewers. The discussion further considers the relationship between fantasy and reality, emphasizing how imaginative storytelling facilitates children's meaning-making processes. Finally, the chapter addresses the ideological and cultural dimensions of the film, including its role in conveying social values and its broader influence as a global media product associated with the Walt Disney Company.

By bringing these elements together, this chapter aims to demonstrate that *Frozen* is not only a popular animated film but also a significant site of analysis for understanding how animation contributes to shaping children's perceptions, emotions, and identities.

3.1 case study selection:

Why *Frozen* Was Selected as a Case Study

The selection of Disney's "*Frozen*" as a case study was based on the comprehensive manner in which the film portrays identity development, emotional experience, and the construction of personal reality through the evolving relationship between Anna and Elsa. The narrative unfolds across a continuous chronological timeline, spanning from early childhood to adulthood, thereby providing valuable insight into how individuals develop their identities in later life through formative childhood experiences. In this respect, the film offers an ideal framework for examining the long-term influence of childhood experiences on both personal and emotional development.

Furthermore, *Frozen* provides a significant opportunity to explore how internal conflicts associated with fear, repression, and self-acceptance are represented through both visual and narrative elements in film. Consequently, it provides a useful framework to analyze the ways in which childhood conditioning contributes to adult identity formation.

Finally, *Frozen* serves as a useful text for exploring how children respond to the presentation of complex emotional and social themes in animated films. The accessibility of these themes through animation enables young audiences to reflect upon issues related to identity, relationships, and emotions in ways that are both meaningful and understandable. As a result, the film offers an excellent opportunity to examine the extent to which animated media influences children's emotional awareness and social understanding.

Cultural impact and global reach of the film

On November 27, 2013, Walt Disney Animation Studios released its 53rd feature film, *Frozen* which quickly snowballed into an Oscar[®]-winning, \$1.29 billion blockbuster that continues to enchant fans around the world a decade later (The Walt Disney Company, 2023). Disney's *Frozen* has had a significant cultural impact, becoming a global phenomenon and influencing the landscape of contemporary animated films. The film's success has been attributed to its compelling characters, memorable soundtrack, and themes of empowerment and self-discovery. *Frozen* has not only attracted large international audiences but has also influenced popular culture, merchandising, and the broader entertainment.

At the center of *Frozen* are the two sisters, Elsa and Anna. Elsa, the Snow Queen with the ability to control ice and snow, and Anna, her determined younger sister, have resonated with audiences worldwide. Their relationship, characterized by love, conflict, and reconciliation, forms the emotional core of the narrative. Elsa's journey toward self-acceptance, symbolized by the song "*Let It Go*," has become one of the most recognizable moments in contemporary animation and has been widely interpreted as a message of individuality and emotional liberation.

The music of *Frozen* has also contributed significantly to the film's popularity and cultural reach. Composed by Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez, the soundtrack includes several emotionally resonant songs that support the narrative development of the characters. "*Let It Go*," performed by Idina Menzel, received widespread acclaim and won the Academy Award

for Best Original Song (Martens, 2014) Other songs, such as “Do You Want to Build a Snowman?” and “For the First Time in Forever,” also contributed to the film’s enduring popularity.

In addition, *Frozen* challenges certain traditional gender roles commonly associated with earlier Disney princess narratives. Unlike many classic Disney films that primarily emphasize romantic love, *Frozen* focuses on the bond between sisters and highlights themes of self-discovery and personal growth. The portrayal of strong female characters who prioritize family relationships and self-empowerment over romantic attachment contributed to broader discussions surrounding representation and gender in contemporary.

The success of *Frozen* also had a considerable impact on merchandising and consumer culture. The characters of Elsa and Anna became highly recognizable figures associated with a wide range of products, including toys, clothing, accessories, and home décor demonstrating the film’s commercial reach and cultural visibility. The popularity of the franchise also extended to Disney theme parks through attractions such as *Frozen Ever After* at Epcot, as well as themed performances and events at Disneyland and Disney World (Disney Parks, 2026).

Furthermore, *Frozen* influenced the broader animation industry by encouraging the production of animated films featuring strong female protagonists and themes related to empowerment and identity. The commercial success of the film demonstrated the viability of narratives that depart from more traditional storytelling patterns. As a result, greater attention has been given to inclusivity and representation within contemporary animated cinema seen in media studies journals and post-2013 animation industry reports. Within this context, the film can be understood as part of a broader industrial trend in which animation functions not only as a form of artistic expression but also as a significant driver of global media consumption and merchandising markets (Statista, 2025). This success prompted studios to greenlight more animated projects centred on strong female leads, such as *Brave*, *Moana*, *Raya and the Last Dragon*, and *Encanto*.

In conclusion, *Frozen* has had a substantial cultural impact and has become one of the most influential animated films of the contemporary period. Through its themes, characters, and music, the film achieved widespread international recognition and influenced both popular culture and the entertainment industry. At the same time, its emphasis on identity, emotional expression, and female relationships contributed to ongoing discussions concerning representation in animated media. The continued popularity of *Frozen* highlights its significance as an important cultural text in contemporary animation. (Mickey's Clubhouse, 2024)

Relevance to identity formation, emotional development, and constructions of reality

Frozen functions as a symbolic resource through which children negotiate identity, emotional regulation, and social norms. The significance of Disney's *Frozen* (2013), for children's identity formation, emotional development, and ways of constructing reality, lies in its departure from classic fairy-tale archetypes with a greater emphasis on self-acceptance, relationship building through sibling bonding, and breaking down established boundaries regarding socialized masculine and feminine roles. Elsa's path toward empowerment illustrates a modern form of psychological self-realization. The same can be said for Anna, who demonstrates the strength of resilience and the need to develop emotional vulnerability, and thereby creating a story that supports developing emotional awareness beyond the common romantic rescue narrative.

1. Identity Formation: Self-Awakening and Resistance

Frozen redefines the traditional "damsel in distress" trope by centring on female self-discovery and identity formation through its dual-protagonist structure. The narrative's core revolves around questions of self-definition, as both Anna and Elsa embark on personal journeys to answer "Who am I?"—highlighting themes of self-awakening and resistance to imposed roles.

- **Dual Protagonists:** Both Anna and Elsa serve as leads, shifting focus from external rescue to inner transformation.

- **Self-Awakening:** Elsa's struggle with her powers symbolizes the journey of embracing one's true self, despite fear or societal pressure.

- **Resistance:** The sisters challenge expectations, rejecting passive victimhood in favor of active self-definition and agency.

- **Identity Exploration:** The film repeatedly raises and explores the question of identity, making it central to the story's arc.

In summary, *Frozen*'s narrative elevates questions of identity and self-definition, offering a modern take on female empowerment and growth.

2. Emotional Development: Coping, Trauma, and Connection

While the film explores complex emotional landscapes, it demonstrates that emotional health is fostered not by avoiding fear but by actively confronting it. Rather than advocating isolation as a means of coping, the narrative underscores the necessity of engaging with difficult emotions to promote genuine connection and healing.

3. Constructions of Reality: Subverting Tropes and Gendered Power

Frozen acts as a critique of old-fashioned Disney storytelling, promoting a new construction of reality where women are active agents rather than passive beneficiaries of male protection. The narrative encourages children to rethink gender roles and the nature of love, prioritizing female bonding, self-reliance, and emotional honesty.

3.2 *Frozen* as an Animated Text for Child Audiences

3.2.1 Narrative Structure and Genre

One of the reasons *Frozen* was chosen as a case study is that the film is a genre-redefining text. It operates as a hybrid genre, combining elements of:

- the fairy tale
- the musical
- the family drama
- and, to a lesser extent, romantic and comic genres

This hybridity enables the film to function on multiple interpretive levels, particularly for child audiences who engage with the narrative both emotionally and ideologically. The subsequent sections examine each of these genre elements in detail.

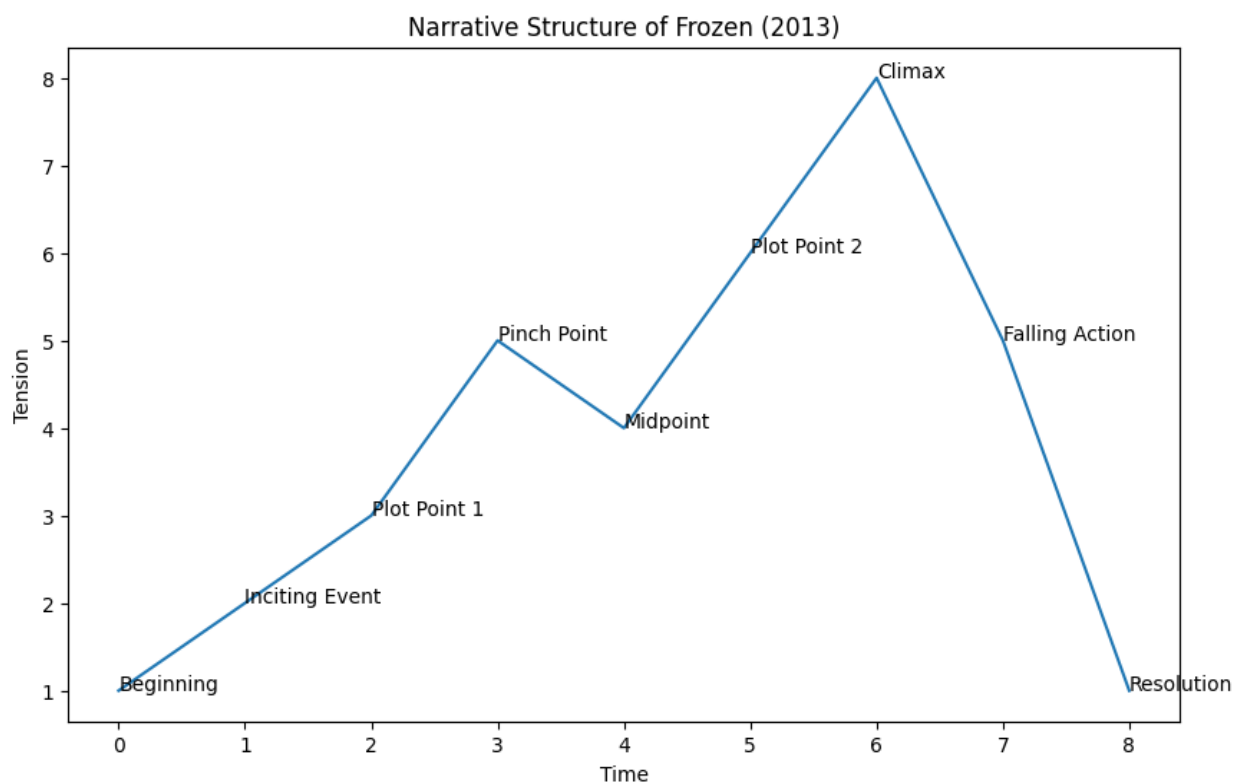


Figure 3.1. Narrative structure of *Frozen* 2013

Inciting Incident

During their childhood, Elsa unintentionally injures Anna with her uncontrollable ice powers while they are playing. Although Anna is healed by the trolls, the incident instills fear in their parents, who decide to isolate Elsa and conceal her abilities. Anna's memories of the magic are altered, creating emotional distance between the sisters and establishing the central conflict of fear versus connection.

First Plot Point

Years later, Elsa's coronation brings the palace gates open (incorrect structure: "brings the palace gates open") (correction: leads to the opening of the palace gates) for the first time in years. This event reunites the sisters but also exposes their emotional disconnect. Anna, eager for closeness, quickly forms a bond with Prince Hans and agrees to marry him. Elsa, overwhelmed and fearful of losing control, rejects the proposal, escalating tension and setting the narrative into motion.

First Pinch Point

The confrontation between the sisters intensifies when Anna pressures Elsa, leading to an accidental public display of Elsa's powers. This revelation forces Elsa to flee Arendelle, unintentionally plunging the kingdom into an unnatural winter. The stakes become clear: Elsa's internal struggle now has external consequences.

Midpoint

Anna, accompanied by Kristoff, Sven, and Olaf, reaches Elsa's ice palace. In this pivotal moment, Anna attempts reconciliation, but Elsa's fear dominates. Her panic results in another accidental injury this time striking Anna's heart. The narrative shifts here, as the emotional conflict becomes physically life-threatening.

Second Pinch Point

Anna's condition deteriorates, symbolized by the gradual freezing of her body. This reinforces the urgency of the situation while Elsa, isolated in her palace, continues to spiral emotionally, unable to regulate her powers. Both sisters are trapped one physically, the other psychologically.

Third Plot Point

The trolls reveal that only an act of genuine love can save Anna. This revelation redirects the narrative toward what initially appears to be a conventional romantic resolution.

Meanwhile, Elsa is captured and brought back to Arendelle, placing all central characters in immediate proximity for the final confrontation.

Climax

The narrative reaches its peak as Hans reveals his true intentions, exposing the illusion of romantic salvation. Elsa, overwhelmed by grief and guilt, loses control entirely, intensifying the storm. The apparent solution romantic love is dismantled at this critical moment.

Climactic Moment

In a decisive act, Anna chooses to save Elsa rather than herself, sacrificing her own chance of survival and prioritizing familial love over romantic fulfillment. This act ultimately embodies the concept of “true love” that the narrative has been building toward.

Resolution (Denouement)

Anna’s sacrifice breaks the curse, demonstrating that love specifically selfless, familial love is transformative. Elsa gains mastery over her powers through emotional understanding rather than repression. The kingdom is restored, and the sisters’ relationship is rebuilt on openness and trust, signaling a redefined notion of identity and connection.

Fairy-tale framework and Disney’s Adaptations

When asked to define fairy tales, one would generally characterize them as old stories. This makes them part of a broad category of narratives known as traditional literature. Traditional literature refers to a collection of socio-cultural stories produced by anonymous storytellers, intended for and enjoyed by both children and adults alike, and transmitted orally across future generations. Thus, it is considered “a cumulative record of our history” (Zeece 37).

Having originated thousands of years ago, fairy tales traveled from continent to continent and from generation to generation through oral transmission. Until these tales began to be recorded by writers, it was impossible to determine the accuracy of the versions that had been passed down over the years in relation to the “original” narratives. As stories are retold across

generations, they inevitably evolve through the addition, omission, or modification of certain elements and details.

In *Essentials of Children's Literature*, Carl Tomlinson and Carol Lynch-Brown define “retold tales” as “a version of a tale that is obviously based upon an earlier, well-known tale but in which the language and bits of the plot have been altered to modernize or further dramatize the story” (97). Consequently, modifying or adapting an existing or “original” wonder narrative is considered a fairy-tale retelling or revision.

Such revisions may involve translating a tale, changing characters’ names into a target language, adding certain elements, omitting others, and adapting aspects that the reteller may not appreciate in the original version. These changes are often made to reshape, redefine, or reframe the narrative according to the reteller’s own perspective.

In the context of fairy-tale adaptations, the transformation of a tale into a film is referred to as a “fairy-tale film.” Due to his extensive interest in fairy tales, Jack Zipes published *The Enchanted Screen: The Unknown History of Fairy-Tale Film* (2011), in which he argues that fairy-tale films are often disregarded and not fully recognized as a legitimate film genre (xi).

Zipes defines a “fairy-tale film” as one that “re-create[s] a known tale or to create and realize cinematically an original screenplay with recognizable features of a fairy tale”. A fairy-tale film therefore involves transforming an oral or literary fairy tale into an audiovisual cinematic form while preserving essential fairy-tale elements such as characters, plot, magic, and wonder. At the same time, certain aspects may be adapted or modified to suit contemporary audiences and cinematic purposes.

Subversion of traditional “true love” tropes

For decades, many Disney narratives followed the conventional idea that a prince’s kiss would break a spell and rescue the heroine. However, *Frozen* subverts this traditional expectation in one of the film’s most significant moments.

Throughout the narrative, the audience is led to believe that Anna will be saved through a conventional romantic act of true love. The film deliberately builds tension around the possibility that a prince’s kiss might reverse the curse threatening her life, thereby reproducing the classic fairy-tale structure familiar to audiences.

However, when the climactic moment arrives, the film presents an alternative understanding of love and sacrifice. Rather than waiting to be rescued, Anna chooses to sacrifice herself in order to protect her sister Elsa. This selfless act, portrayed as an expression of genuine love, ultimately breaks the spell.

	
Anna and Hans (Romantic Conception of True Love)	Anna and Elsa (Reconceptualization of True Love Through Sisterhood)
This image depicts Anna’s initial belief in the conventional fairytale notion that romantic love, embodied by a prince’s kiss, constitutes “true love.” Her expectation refle	In contrast, these images illustrate the film’s subversion of the tradition

cts the traditional narrative structure established by earli er Disney films	al trope by centering the act of true love on the bond between sisters. Anna’s self-sacrifice to save Elsa, and their subsequent e mbrace, foreground a broader and d eeper understanding of loveone roo ted in familial loyalty and selflessn ess.
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Figure 3.2. Subversion of traditional “true love” tropes

By redefining the meaning of “true love,” the film shifts the emotional center of the narrative from romantic relationships to the bond between two sisters. This reinterpretation contributed significantly to the global resonance of *Frozen*, as it challenges traditional fairy-tale assumptions and emphasizes that love may take forms beyond conventional romantic ideals.

Musical storytelling as emotional guidance

*Born of cold and winter air
And mountain rain combining
This icy force both foul and fair
Has a Frozen heart worth mining
Cut through the heart, cold and clear
Strike for love and strike for fear
There’s beauty and there’s danger here
Split the ice apart
Beware the Frozen heart*

The film opens with “Frozen Heart,” a conventional opening number typical of Disney musicals. Through ominous lyrics, heavy rhythmic percussion, and foreshadowing, the song establishes emotional suppression through the metaphor of a “Frozen heart,” which is presented as both dangerous and alluring. It introduces the central image of emotional repression as a heart

that is “cold and clear” yet also “foul and fair,” suggesting the dual nature of emotions when they are suppressed or misunderstood.

The repeated warning, “Beware the *Frozen* heart,” functions as a caution against concealing one’s true self and emotions, a tendency that leads to isolation, as later exemplified through Elsa’s character. In this way, the song frames emotional control as a fragile balance between harm and beauty, setting up the film’s broader exploration of emotional repression and its consequences.

The next two songs show Anna and Elsa to be differently embodied in animation and music,

Elsa?
Do you wanna build a snowman?
C'mon, let's go and play
I never see you anymore
Come out the door
It's like you've gone away

We used to be best buddies
And now we're not
I wish you would tell me why

Do you wanna build a snowman?
It doesn't have to be a snowman
Go away, Anna
Okay, bye

The song illustrates the consequences of Elsa being told to “conceal, don't feel,” modelling how fear-based emotional repression can damage relationships since it helps children understand complex emotions like loneliness, grief, and the impact of social withdrawal by depicting the consequences of emotional isolation and the longing for connection shown in Anna’s persistence in knocking despite being ignored that shows emotional resilience and a refusal to give up on a relationship.

‘For the First Time in Forever’ continues this delineation of the two characters as high-spirited princess and cautious queen. When both Elsa and Anna grew up, Elsa is about to have her

coronation, During the party that follows, Prince Hans and Anna sing 'Love Is an Open Door', both songs address the basic human need for love and belonging. Anna's enthusiastic response to feeling seen reflects a child's need to feel understood and accepted, particularly after a period of loneliness.

Still frightened by her own power, but alone and unburdened of her secret, Elsa sings the song that most defines her. '*Let It Go*'. In her research titled [*IMPACT OF SOUNDTRACK IN ANIMATED MOVIE ON AUDIENCE: A CASE STUDY OF "LET IT GO" IN "FROZEN"*] Zhige Liu2016 found that[The most influential part of the song Let It Go is the lyrics. It has a direct and significant impact on most of the participants (71.4%)]. The lyrics emphasize themes of emotional release and self-acceptance; however, they are not reproduced here.

*And the fears that once controlled me can't get to me at all
It's time to see what I can do
To test the limits and break through
No right no wrong no rules for me
I'm free
....
Let it go let it go
That perfect girl is gone
Here I stand in the light of day
Let the storm rage on
The cold never bothered me anyway*

"**Let It Go**" acts as a powerful tool for child emotional guidance by using musical storytelling to transform internal turmoil fear, shame, and pressure into liberation and self-acceptance. Through dramatic musical shifts and relatable lyrics, the song helps children understand that feelings are meant to be felt rather than bottled up.

"*Let It Go*" resonates deeply due to its uplifting message of self-empowerment. Its influence extends beyond children to individuals navigating crises in their lives, making it a potent force for positive change. Its empowering message of self-acceptance and embracing one's unique identity has resonated deeply specially with children.

3.2.2 Visual Style and Character Design

Distinct visual coding of Elsa and Anna

Children can learn about identity through visual style and can easily associate such stylistic choices with character identity, since Disney studios frequently employ color psychology and color harmony in storytelling. Colors are often used to signal characters' personalities as well as their development over the course of the narrative.

In terms of color typology, Elsa can be associated with a Cool/True Winter or Bright/Clear Winter palette, while Anna can be associated with a Warm/True Autumn or Warm/True Spring palette.

At the beginning of *Frozen*, particularly around the coronation sequence, Elsa is dressed in Deep/Dark Winter colors. These tones appear somewhat heavy for her color type, as she would typically require greater brightness in chroma and less darkness in value. This visual heaviness may be interpreted as reinforcing the character's emotional constraint and internal burden; however, the filmmakers may have intended this effect to reflect her psychological state at this point in the narrative.

Within the story, Elsa experiences stress and emotional distress, and to some extent appears constrained by the secret she is forced to conceal. She is portrayed as cold, distant, and reserved, carrying significant emotional weight. When she sings "Let It Go," she symbolically releases this burden, and her visual appearance shifts from darker, restrictive clothing to a bright, icy, and sparkling dress that aligns more closely with her perceived natural colorings. This transformation visually represents a release of emotional restraint and an emergence of her authentic self. Following this change, Elsa appears more confident, independent, and self-assured.

In contrast, Anna can be interpreted as belonging to a Warm/True Autumn or Warm/True Spring palette. Warm color schemes are often associated with friendliness and

approachability. Characters with such palettes are frequently portrayed as sociable, expressive, and energetic, which aligns with Anna's personality. Unlike her sister, Elsa is more introverted, reserved, and emotionally contained. This contrast is reflected in the filmmakers' use of a cool palette for Elsa and a warm palette for Anna, reinforcing their differing emotional and narrative roles.

Anthropomorphism and comic relief (Olaf, Sven) as emotional mediators

Olaf's role in *Frozen* may initially appear to function primarily as a sidekick or source of comic relief upon first viewing the film. Even so, his name itself can be interpreted as indicative of his function in providing humor, as it phonetically resembles "oh laugh." Elsa has always desired closeness with Anna; however, due to her powers, she is forced to remain distant from her. For this reason, she creates Olaf, and he is consequently often associated with Anna throughout the narrative.

Olaf provides humor through his fascination with summer a dream that naively disregards his own inability to survive heat thereby symbolizing pure optimism and an innocent desire for "warm hugs."

Sven, as Kristoff's loyal companion, provides a grounded, largely non-verbal presence that subtly guides Kristoff's actions and reflects his inner thoughts, acting almost as a moral compass while also embodying loyalty and affection. Through his expressive, anthropomorphic behavior, Sven creates a safe emotional space that balances Kristoff's reserved personality. Similarly, Olaf contributes through humor and innocence, helping to offset the film's darker emotional themes such as isolation, fear, and abandonment. Together, these characters mediate emotional tension by lightening the narrative tone and making complex feelings more accessible to younger audiences. At the same time, they serve as emotional bridges within the story particularly Olaf, who symbolizes warmth, memory, and the enduring bond between Anna and

Elsa thereby reinforcing the film's central themes of love, connection, and emotional understanding.

3.3 Identity Formation in *Frozen*

3.3.1 Elsa and Identity Conflict

This section analyses Elsa's character through the lens of Social Identity Theory in psychology (*Tajfel & Turner, 1979*) **Chapter 2.**

Elsa's struggle with self-acceptance

From the beginning of the film, it is clearly seen that Elsa is born with a magical power to control ice and snow, but due to the unpredictable nature of her magic power, she always remains in fear. Elsa does the thing which she is **afraid of**, that is she unintentionally reveals her power in front of the public and strikes Anna. Throughout the movie, Elsa struggles with her power and in doing so she unintentionally leaves her kingdom in eternal winter, and also strikes her sister Anna. Her power becomes evil and uncontrollable because from her childhood no one supports it. Instead, her parents asked her to "conceal it, don't feel it, don't let it show" a directive that reinforces repression and contributes to her internal conflict.

Fear of difference and social rejection

Elsa attempts to conceal her unusual powers in order to appear "normal," as she fears that she may harm those around her. Social Identity Theory, developed by Henri Tajfel, explains how individuals define themselves through their membership within social groups. In the film, Elsa struggles with a fear of difference and seeks to identify herself within what is perceived as normal society, including within her own family.

At several points in the narrative, the King's treatment of Elsa reinforces her anxiety regarding her powers. Elsa lives in fear because anything she touches may unintentionally freeze

due to her magical abilities. As a result, the King instructs her to wear gloves as a form of protection and as a means of preventing accidental harm caused by her powers.

King: The gloves will help.

King: See? You're good Conceal it.

Young Elsa: Don't feel it.

Young Elsa & King: Don't let it show. (Nathan & Roman, 2013)

Passage above shown that Elsa was scared on how the king treated her. The king suggested her to wear gloves so that she will not accidentally show her power and tried to calm her down from her fear. The King brainwashed Elsa to be calm and everything will be fine. The psychological conflict had huge effect on Elsa communication with her own family. She tried to distance herself with other people around her Because of the conflict with her own fear.

Elsa: I'm scared. It's getting stronger.

King: Getting upset only makes it worse

Elsa: No. Don't touch me.

I don't want to hurt you. (Nathan & Roman, 2013)

Passage above shows on how Elsa decline her parent intention for wanted to hug her. The reason why Elsa doesn't want her parent to hug her was because she was afraid that she might hurt her own parents if she touches them with her hand So that she distanced herself away from her family in order to not hurting them accidentally.

“Let It Go” as a moment of identity assertion

Elsa's identification of herself in the ice castle is seen as a triumphant moment as seen through her singing the now iconic *Let It Go* song, where she sings, 'It's time to see what I can do, to test the limits and break through. No right, no wrong. *No rules for me... I'm free*'. It was the turning point for Queen Elsa, marking her transition from a life of fear, suppression, and "concealment" to embracing her authentic self, power, and independence. Fleeing into isolation after revealing her ice powers during her coronation, Elsa uses the song to break free from the "perfect girl" persona and the "good girl" rules imposed by her parents, transforming her appearance and creating a new reality where she no longer has to hide. The song functions as a

self-declaration, where Elsa fully accepts her powers as a core part of her identity, no longer viewing them as a "curse" but as a natural part of herself. Symbolically, letting go of her gloves, which represented the suppression of her powers and identity. While the song is a moment of profound empowerment and freedom, it is also a moment of intense isolation. Elsa mistakenly believes that creating distance from society is the only way to express her identity safely without harming others.

3.3.2 Anna and Relational Identity

Identity formed through connection and empathy

Anna's identity is constructed through a relational framework, meaning her sense of self is not defined by individual ambition or isolation, but rather through her connection to others and her capacity for empathy first developed in her childhood when she was in need to be close to her sister, being shut out by her sister and losing her parents made her develop an anxious attachment style," meaning she desires intense connection, warmth, and love. Her identity is tied to being "the one who cares" and connects. This is a direct contrast to her sister, Elsa, whose identity is initially shaped by fear and isolation, and it highlights how Anna's character matures through her relationships and her ability to put others' needs before her own.

Emotional openness vs. emotional repression

Anna's "Anxious for Connection" Unlike Elsa, Anna does not shy away from expressing her feelings of fear, love, or sadness. She remains open to connection despite repeatedly facing rejection and heartbreak.

When Anna tells Elsa about her engagement, saying that she and Hans want Elsa's blessing. Elsa reacts with shock:

"You can't marry a man you just met."

This conversation reveals the differences in the sisters' personalities, as Anna chooses to remain open to love and relationships, whereas Elsa chooses instead to repress her emotions, including her expression of affection toward her sister.

Growth from dependency to self-sacrificial agency.

During her childhood, Anna developed an anxious attachment style caused by her emotional dependence on receiving affection from her sister, especially after her parents' death. She experiences profound loneliness and eventually admits to Elsa that she can no longer continue living in the same manner, thereby implying her fear of abandonment and isolation: "Elsa, please, please. I cannot live like this anymore!" (Buck & Lee, 2013, 00:27:05 – 00:27:08).

Elsa : You sacrificed yourself for me?

Anna : I love you.

Olaf : An act of true love will thaw a Frozen heart.

Elsa : Love...will thaw... Love of course.

Anna : Elsa?

Elsa : Love. (Nathan & Roman, 2013)

In this scene, where Anna sacrificed her life in order to protect Elsa from Prince Hans because he was trying to swing the sword towards Elsa. This made Elsa cry because she saw her own sister froze into an ice sculpture. Elsa realized that only love could get rid of her fear.

3.3.3 Gender Representation and Role Models

Gender roles provide indications about the kind of behaviour that are is thought to be proper for each sex and are the result of interactions between people and their settings. Disney has been around for a long time and appears to still be a leader in the entertainment sector. The culture that surrounds Disney is ever-changing, and goes through different challenges with each era.

Reconfiguration of Disney princess archetypes

ANNA

Through the course of the movie, Anna's character frequently rejects traditional gender roles. Disney Princesses are typically portrayed as being meek, kind, obedient, timid, graceful, thin, and lovely. When a bystander exclaims, "I can't wait to see the queen and the princess!" Disney seemed to be acknowledging beauty standards that had been portrayed in its previous movies. I'm sure they're very beautiful," followed by another statement: "I bet they are beautiful!" then immediately displaying Anna asleep with messy hair, a strand stuck in her mouth, and a sloppy look on her face. Anna also defies the idea that a woman should be conscious of her weight when she says she wants to "stuff chocolate in her face" before meeting her Prince Charming. She defies the stereotype that women should be graceful by saying "*I don't know if I'm elated or gassy*".

Disney Princess characters from *Frozen* are unique from those from earlier films. This is evident in Elsa's persona, who was endowed from birth with ice powers. Elsa had to go through a difficult situation even at a young age because she was unable to control her powers. She ultimately had to be kept apart from her sister and alone in her room. This demonstrates Elsa's strength as a young woman even at such a young age. This is very dissimilar from traditional gender roles, where women are weak and depend on princes for assistance.

Female agency without romantic centrality

The movie studied is widely recognized for shifting the focus of Disney storytelling away from romantic, prince-rescues-princess narratives toward female agency, self-discovery, and sisterly bonds. The film subverts traditional tropes by cantering on the internal conflicts and empowerment of its female protagonists, Elsa and Anna. It establishes female empowerment over romance. Elsa is a rare Disney heroine who is defined entirely independent of a romantic interest. Her story focuses on her autonomy and developing self-acceptance, often framed as a substitution

for traditional romantic narratives. While Anna does engage in a subplot with Prince Hans, her story is defined by her bravery and commitment to her family, not just her desire for romance.

Absence of a male savior narrative

Challenging old Disney narratives, *Frozen* presents Anna as engaging with two male characters, neither of whom serves the purpose of saving her. Prince Hans, who initially appears as the romantic savior, is revealed to be a narcissistic antagonist. The second male character is the one she falls in love with without waiting for a savior from him; he only helps Anna, but he is not the ultimate savior. He does not stop the threat, defeat the villain, or break the curse. In contrast, he accompanies her while she searches for her sister Elsa, whose crisis is internal; her magical power is controlled only through self-acceptance, not through male intervention.

3.4 Emotional Socialization through *Frozen* (Scene-Based Enhanced Version)

The animated picture *Frozen* constructs emotional instruction through carefully structured narrative segments where feelings are not only conveyed through speech, but also via visual framing, physical movements, and musical expression. Emotional socialization implies the way youngsters acquire emotional meanings-such as dread, affection, guilt, and sympathy- by observing how figures behave in certain circumstances and how the tale responds to those sentiments.

From the very start of the film, emotional progress is established through the bond between Elsa and Anna. Their dynamic is not merely narrative, also visual: one is linked with ice, quiet, and command, and the other with warmth, motion, and emotional openness. This divergence becomes the chief emotional framework that directs the audience throughout the movie.

3.4.1 Representation of Emotions in *Frozen* (Childhood Scene - The Accident)

One of the most emotionally powerful scenes appears early in the movie during the childhood phase. The scene opens in a playful setting inside the structure, where Elsa and Anna

are happily using Elsa's ice **powers**. The light is warm, the movement is swift, and everything suggests innocence and delight.

However, this mood suddenly breaks when Elsa accidentally strikes Anna with her magic. The camera immediately switches tone: motion slows, the music grows tense, and the visual warmth vanishes. The parents hurry in, and the emotional intensity of the scene completely shifts to alarm and panic.

What is significant in this scene is not momentarily the accident itself, but the subsequent reaction. The guardians elect to isolate Elsa and manage her abilities. This decision visually signals the start of Elsa's emotional constraint. From this moment, fear becomes ingrained in her personality.

Subsequent shots confirm this transformation: the manor grows fixed thinner castle becomes visually colder, and more tranquil. Elsa is no longer observed playing; instead, she is displayed alone in vast areas that underscore emotional isolation. This visual isolation is quite vital because it permits viewers, particularly youngsters, to grasp fear not as a concept, but as a felt experience.

3.4.2 Emotional Regulation and Learning (Ice Palace Scene - "Let It Go" Sequence)

As Elsa matures, the film illustrates her attempt to manage her sentiments by completely suppressing them. This reaches its zenith when she runs away from Arendelle after exposing her powers, a point visually showed by her transformation of the frosted land.

The key scene here is the creation of the castle. The sequence starts with Elsa ascending alone into the mountains. The surroundings are empty, quiet, and visually stark. As she begins to embrace her freedom, the musical number "*Let It Go*" commences, and the entire setting changes into a bright articulation of her inner feelings.

The ice castle is more than a physical building- it is a psychological domain. It represents both freedom and solitude at the same time. On one side, Elsa is finally free to voice herself; on the other, she is entirely alone. This incongruity is key in comprehending emotional

regulation: voicing feelings without equilibrium still results in isolation.

Later in the narrative, the results of this emotional situation are revealed visually through continuous winter spreading across the kingdom. This is not merely a magical incident, but a symbolic portrayal of emotional imbalance affecting the society.

From a Albert Bandura viewpoint, Elsa becomes an example of what occurs when feelings are administered through fear and separation: command control, and outcomes reach beyond the individual.

3.4.3 Empathy and Moral Emotions(Final Act - Sacrifice Scene)

The concluding emotional transformation happens in the final section of the movie, clearly during Anna's sacrifice. In this sequence, the speed significantly slows down. The hues become chillier, the audio is minimal, and the emotional burden mounts.

As Anna offers herself to safeguard Elsa, the film completely redefines the concept of affection. It is no longer romantic or abstract it evolves into a behavior rooted in safeguarding and emotional duty. This instant is visually highlighted through close-up views and quietude, which oblige the viewer to concentrate entirely on emotional release.

At once, Elsa's response becomes central. She finally comprehends that emotional mastery is not about constraint, but about bonding. The second Anna is rescued marks a shift from fear- based sentiments to empathy-based comprehension.

From a sociocultural view, this final shift demonstrates how moral feelings are acquired through trial and observation. The film guides audiences to realize that sympathy is not purely inherent, but **formed** through emotional **stories**.

3.5 Reality, Fantasy, and Meaning-Making in *Frozen*

The animated feature *Frozen* constructs a narrative world where unreality and reality are always tied together. Although the story unfolds in an invented kingdom with powers the emotional encounters of the characters remain profoundly real and relatable. This merging permits children to interact with intricate real-life dilemmas such as fear, identity, and emotional differences through a safe imaginative framework.

In this sense, unreality is not presented as avoidance of reality, but rather as an instrument for comprehending reality. The film converts abstract emotional and psychological experiences into visible symbols that youngsters can easily understand and connect with their own lives.

3.5.1 Fantasy as a Safe Space for Real Issues (Elsa's Powers as Emotional Metaphor)

From the outset of the film, Elsa's capacities are not merely magical abilities—they operate as a visual analogy for emotional disparity and inner confusion. This grows evident in the childhood mishap scene, where her sentiments literally take corporeal form via ice. What is essential is how the film makes feelings external. Instead of stating, "Elsa is scared," the film shows her fear via uncontrollable ice spreading through the chamber. The magical component allows the interior emotional struggle to become observable.

Later, when Elsa separates herself in the mountains, the fantastic world becomes a locale where she can articulate what she cannot express in society. The moment she creates her ice palace during the "Let It Go" sequence is a prime illustration. The whole setting reacts to her feelings: obstacles ascend, snow descends, and the area reforms in real-time with her emotional

condition.

This fantastic space permits the audience to understand a real mental concept: emotional difference can feel isolating, yet it also defines identity. Children viewing this segment can interpret Elsa's powers not simply as magic, but as a symbol of emotions that are difficult to control. From a developmental standpoint, this corresponds with Lev Vygotsky's notion that symbolic systems (like fantasy) assist youngsters in understanding complex emotional events in a simplified and significant manner.

3.5.2 Narrative Realism and Emotional Believability (Arendelle Crisis & Emotional Consequences)

Even though the universe of *Frozen* is supernatural, the emotional outcomes are shown in a highly believable fashion. A compelling instance is when Elsa accidentally begins perpetual winter across Arendelle following her departure.

The film visually exhibits how unreality becomes actuality within the story's environment. The kingdom is gradually covered in ice, the ocean solidifies, and daily routines cease functioning. These scenes are significant because they link emotional imbalance to tangible results.

One striking sequence presents townspeople struggling with the sudden winter conditions. The camera zeroes in on very cold streets, *Frozen* boats, and individuals reacting with bewilderment and dread. Even though the source is magical, the emotional impact feels concrete and authentic. This is where unreality and actuality converge. Elsa's inner emotional state-fear, detachment, and lack of command-becomes apparent in the external world. The film is mainly suggesting that sentiments, even if internal, invariably influence the surroundings around us.

From a meaning-making viewpoint, youngsters are capable of connecting this fantastic occurrence to authentic emotional encounters: when an individual feel overwhelmed or estranged, it can affect bonds and social settings.

3.5.3 Identity, Fantasy, and Self-Understanding (Anna's Journey and Emotional Discovery)

Another essential layer of meaning-making emerges through Anna's journey. In contrast to Elsa, Anna traverses between fantasy and reality in a more shared and relational manner. Her choices are driven by emotional attachment rather than fear.

A central sequence is when Anna departs the castle to locate Elsa. The surroundings shift constantly: from the placid castle to dangerous snowy expanses. These varying settings mirror her emotional disposition — hesitation, determination, and optimism.

During her journey, she meets characters like Kristoff and Olaf, who introduce diverse viewpoints on trust, love, and survival. These exchanges help her comprehend emotional relationships in a more advanced way.

Olaf, specifically, functions as a symbolic fantasy figure that streamlines emotional realities. His innocent misunderstanding of love and warmth permits the film to convey intricate emotional concepts in a highly accessible manner for children.

Through Anna's journey, the film reveals that identity is not static. It is molded through trials, relationships, and emotional challenges. Unreality here becomes a structure that guides emotional feelings in structured way.

3.5.4 Final Integration: Fantasy Meets Feeling Reality (Final Scene - Thawing of Arendelle)

The closing part of the movie unites fantasy and emotional reality in a cohesive resolution. When Elsa ultimately grasps that love is the method for mastering her powers, the winter above Arendelle starts to soften.

This reshaping is not only magical but also symbolic. The dissolving frost signifies mental healing and re-establishment of connections. The camera displays liquid superseding solid water, sunshine coming back, and vitality recommencing in the kingdom.

The most important moment is not the enchantment itself, but the emotional transformation underlying it. Elsa no longer dreads her identity, and Anna's loving act finalizes the emotional cycle of the narrative.

From a psychological perspective, this finale demonstrates how feeling comprehension hints emotional understanding supports social healing. The fantasy aspect (magic solidifying and liquefying) turns into a visible medium for feeling processes like dread, approval, and recovery.

3.6 Ideology and Societal Messages in *Frozen* (Extended Version)

The animated feature *Frozen* builds its story not just as a fantastical tale, but also as a vessel of societal standards and ideological notions. These notions are not offered in a straightforward or instructional manner, but are woven into the protagonists' choices, emotional responses, and visual narration. Through its segments, the film conveys concepts about affection, selfhood, authority, and societal functions in a manner that is understandable to youngsters while still bearing deeper social significance.

What makes the ideological layer of the film significant is that it functions via emotion instead of direction. Rather than telling the viewer what to think, the movie displays emotional situations and permits meaning to be built through recognition and reading.

3.6.1 Norms, Values, and Social Roles (Extended Analysis) (Coronation Scene - Societal Demands and Oversight)

One of the earliest ideological sequences shows up during Elsa's crowning. The portion starts with a highly formal setting: the realm is readying for a public ceremony, guards are posted, participants are arriving, and everything is arranged per strict societal codes.

Visually, Elsa is shown wearing gloves, holding a restrained stance, and shunning physical contact. The gloves are more than attire; they become a representational apparatus for emotional stifling. They stand for the necessity to conceal an aspect of oneself to adhere to societal expectations.

During the ceremony, the camera repeatedly centers on Elsa's facial expressions. Even though she appears placid outwardly, slight visual particulars clenched hands, very small eye contact, stiff motion expose inner strain. This disparity between outer constraint and inner terror already presents the ideological clash between uniqueness and communal expectation.

(The Party Scene - Disrupting Social Order)

The ideological strain grows more evident during the gathering following the crowning. For the first time, Elsa is situated in a communal context where she must interact loosely with visitors. Nevertheless, instead of heartfelt openness, the situation progressively mounts her unease.

The decisive moment occurs when Anna publicly requests Elsa's sanction for her engagement. The engagement becomes emotionally intense, and Elsa loses command. The shift in illumination, music, and camera trajectories indicates emotional breakdown.

This part is ideologically important because it illustrates how shared pressure can help emotional instability. The hopes placed on Elsa as an *individual and sibling* fight with her inner

emotional state. When she ultimately reveals her abilities unknowingly, the film visually shatters the appearances of social structure.

The freezing of the grand hall signifies beyond mere magic it mirrors the collapse of mandated societal standards when emotional truth is held back for too long.

3.6.2 Power, Authority, and Emotional Governance (Extended Analysis) (Elsa's Escape - Forsaking Authority Framework)

Following the episode in the palace, Elsa runs away toward the highlands. This stretch is visually clear because it marks an alteration from *an ordered political space* to wild, ungoverned space.

As she departs from Arendelle, the surroundings shift: frosted views grow vaster, more deserted, and more visually imposing. This progression reflects her refusal of established authority and communal policing.

When she reaches the mountaintop and commences constructing her ice structure, the picture turns more expressive. The "*Let It Go*" episode is more than musical-it is ideological. It embodies the rejection of imposed identity.

The palace ascends swiftly, changing from empty space into a large symbolic construction. Yet, despite its elegance, it remains completely solitary. This visual paradox reflects an ideological message: liberty sans connection results in emotional isolation.

(Arendelle Under Winter - Power and Repercussions)

after Elsa's departure, the world of Arendelle enters a condition of endless cold. This evolution is not just environmental but also symbolic of interrupted emotional regulation. The frosted terrain displays barren marketplaces, struggling inhabitants, and halted ships. These visual components link emotional imbalance with societal outcomes. The film implies that singular feeling turbulence can affect collective well-being.

From an ideological viewpoint, this represents a move from conventional control-centered leadership to emotional accountability. Authority is no longer shown as dominion over others, but as the capacity to manage one's own emotional state in relation to the populace.

3.6.3 Disney's Societal Messaging and Feeling Ideology (Extended Analysis) **(Kristoff, Olaf, and Alternative Value Systems)**

Beyond Elsa and Anna, surrounding figures also add to the film's ideological architecture. Kristoff, for instance, embodies a more grounded and sensible outlook on bonds. His exchanges with Anna introduce a disparate *model* for feeling conduct-less idealized, more understanding.

Olaf, for example, serves as a symbolic sounder of purity. His grasp of affection, warmth, and friendship simplifies complex emotional notions into readily accessible discourse. In several instances, Olaf expresses concepts about devotion in an easy and child-like manner, which aids in translating abstract emotional ideas into plain meanings.

These characters combined make a complex ideological framework where diverse feeling perspectives live together.

(Final Journey - Feeling Truth vs Societal Expectation)

In the concluding episodes, ideological significance becomes fully apparent through action instead of spoken lines. Elsa's return to Arendelle is not presented as a political win, but as *emotional reconciliation and peace*.

When she finally comprehends that apprehension cannot govern her abilities, visible setting starts to transform. Ice formations disappear, motion resumes in the world, and communal living restarts.

The central ideological rule in these scenes is that emotional truth outweighs societal expectation. Elsa no longer performs a restricted character; rather, she acts according to emotional reality.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined *Frozen* as a significant animated text that contributes to shaping young minds through its multidimensional portrayal of identity, emotion, and reality. Drawing on a theory-driven textual analysis grounded in an interdisciplinary framework that combines film semiotics, constructivist developmental psychology, and cultural studies, the analysis has explored how the film constructs meaning and influences children's cognitive and emotional engagement with media. In doing so, it demonstrates that animation can function not only as entertainment but also as a powerful pedagogical and cultural tool.

The findings reveal that *Frozen* actively contributes to children's identity formation through its nuanced characterization. Elsa's internal conflict illustrates the struggle for self-acceptance and the negotiation of difference, while Anna's relational identity foregrounds connection, empathy, and emotional resilience. These representations broaden traditional understandings of gender roles and provide young audiences with diverse and meaningful role models.

In terms of emotional socialization, the film offers a rich emotional landscape through which children can learn to recognize, interpret, and regulate feelings. By portraying emotions such as fear, love, isolation, and empathy in ways that are both accessible and narratively significant, *Frozen* supports the development of emotional intelligence and moral awareness. It encourages children to view emotional expression as constructive, thereby reinforcing positive emotional learning.

Furthermore, the film's interplay between fantasy and reality highlights the importance of imagination in children's meaning-making processes. While rooted in a fantastical universe,

Frozen maintains a strong sense of emotional realism, allowing young viewers to relate the narrative to their own lived experiences. This balance enables the film to address complex real-world issues within a safe and engaging imaginative framework.

Finally, the chapter has shown that *Frozen* conveys implicit ideological and cultural messages regarding norms, values, and social roles. As a product of The Walt Disney Company, the film participates in the global circulation of cultural meanings, reflecting and shaping societal perspectives through subtle forms of soft power.

Overall, this analysis confirms that *Frozen*, through its narrative, visual, and ideological dimensions, contributes significantly to shaping children's understanding of identity, emotional experience, and social reality. By constructing layered meanings that resonate with young audiences, the film exemplifies how animation can play a formative role in children's development and worldview.

General Conclusion

This dissertation, entitled *Shaping Young Minds through Animation: Identity, Emotions and Reality*, has examined how animated cinema participates in the formation of children's understanding of themselves, their emotions, and the social reality around them. Through the case study of Disney's *Frozen* (2013), the research has addressed the central question of how animation, as a visual, narrative, musical, and ideological medium, contributes to shaping young viewers' perceptions of identity, emotional experience, and the boundary between fantasy and reality. Rather than treating *Frozen* as a simple entertainment product, the study approached it as a meaningful cultural text whose repeated reception by children can influence their processes of interpretation, identification, and emotional learning.

The main objective of this research was to analyse the mechanisms through which *Frozen* constructs identity and emotion for a child audience. More specifically, the dissertation aimed to identify the narrative, visual, and musical strategies used to build the identities of Elsa and Anna; to examine the emotional spectrum represented in the film; to relate these representations to theories of child development and media influence; and to assess whether *Frozen* reproduces or challenges established Disney conventions. These objectives were pursued through a qualitative textual analysis supported by media theory, developmental psychology, semiotics, and cultural studies.

The overall findings of the dissertation show that *Frozen* contributes to young viewers' meaning-making through several interconnected levels. First, the film constructs identity through contrast and development. Elsa's identity is shaped by fear, repression, isolation, and eventual self-acceptance, while Anna's identity is built around emotional openness, attachment, empathy, and relational courage. Together, the two protagonists offer children different models of selfhood: one centred on the struggle to accept difference, and the other centred on the value of connection and emotional loyalty. This dual representation broadens the traditional Disney princess model by

moving the narrative focus away from romantic rescue and toward sisterhood, emotional responsibility, and personal growth.

Second, the analysis has shown that the film represents a wide range of emotions in a manner that is accessible to children. Fear, anxiety, sadness, loneliness, joy, love, guilt, and empathy are not presented as isolated feelings but as forces that shape behaviour and relationships. Through facial expressions, colour contrasts, movement, music, and song, the film transforms inner emotional states into visible and understandable signs. In this respect, *Frozen* operates as a form of emotional socialization: it helps children recognize emotions, associate them with causes and consequences, and understand that emotional repression may produce harm while emotional expression, when guided by love and trust, can become a path toward healing.

Third, the dissertation has demonstrated that the film's fantasy elements do not separate children from reality; rather, they provide a symbolic framework through which real psychological and social issues can be explored safely. Elsa's magical powers, the *Frozen* kingdom, the ice palace, and the visual transformation of Arendelle function as metaphors for fear, emotional control, exclusion, and reconciliation. The fantasy world therefore becomes a pedagogical space where children can encounter complex themes such as difference, responsibility, family bonds, and self-acceptance in a form that is imaginative yet emotionally realistic.

Fourth, the study has found that *Frozen* also communicates ideological and cultural meanings. As a Disney production, the film participates in the global circulation of values, images, and behavioural models. It challenges certain earlier conventions by weakening the centrality of the male saviour and by presenting female characters as active agents in their own emotional and narrative resolution. At the same time, it remains part of a commercial and cultural system that packages identity, empowerment, and emotion within globally marketable forms. This means that

the film should be read critically: its progressive elements are significant, but they operate within the broader ideological framework of contemporary media industries.

The answer to the research question is therefore clear. *Frozen* shapes young minds not through a direct or mechanical effect, but through a complex interaction between media form, narrative structure, character identification, emotional representation, and the child's own developmental and cultural context. The film offers children symbolic models through which they may understand fear, difference, love, courage, and belonging. It encourages identification with characters who experience vulnerability and growth, and it translates abstract emotional conflicts into images, music, and narrative events that children can follow and interpret. Its influence is therefore formative, but not deterministic: children are affected by the film, yet they also actively interpret it according to their age, family environment, culture, and personal experience.

Taken together, the chapters of this dissertation support this conclusion. Chapter One established the theoretical foundation by showing that animation is a powerful pedagogical and semiotic medium, and that children's engagement with it can be explained through media influence theories, social learning, cognitive development, and visual literacy. Chapter Two deepened this foundation by examining identity formation, emotional development, fantasy, reality, ideology, and cultural representation in children's animation. Chapter Three applied these frameworks to *Frozen* and demonstrated how the film's characters, narrative arc, music, colour, fantasy, and ideological messages work together to shape children's understanding of identity, emotion, and social reality.

In conclusion, *Frozen* confirms the importance of studying animated films as serious cultural and educational texts. Its success does not lie only in its music, visual beauty, or popularity, but in its ability to transform complex psychological and social issues into a narrative that children can emotionally access. The film presents identity as a process of negotiation, emotion as a meaningful part of human development, and fantasy as a bridge to reality rather than

an escape from it. For this reason, animation should not be underestimated in childhood studies, media education, or cultural analysis. It remains one of the most influential spaces through which young minds learn to imagine themselves, understand others, and interpret the world around them.

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ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف دور أفلام الرسوم المتحركة في تشكيل الجوانب النفسية والاجتماعية والمعرفية للأطفال، مع التركيز على تأثيرها في تكوين الهوية، والتطور العاطفي، وفهم الواقع والخيال. تنبع أهمية الدراسة من تزايد حضور الرسوم المتحركة في حياة الأطفال، والرسائل الثقافية والقيمية التي تنقلها، والتي تؤثر على نظرتهم للعالم. تستخدم الدراسة منهجًا نوعيًا متعدد التخصصات قائمًا على تحليل نصي موجه نظريًا، مع اتخاذ فيلم "فروزن" كدراسة حالة. يدمج الإطار النظري علم العلامات السينمائية، وعلم النفس البنيوي والتطوري، ونظريات الإعلام، والدراسات الثقافية لتحليل كيفية إنتاج المعنى داخل الفيلم وتأثيره على الطفل المشاهد. تستند الدراسة إلى عدة نظريات، منها نظرية الغرس الثقافي، ونظرية التعلم الاجتماعي، ونظريات التطور المعرفي لجان بياجيه وليف فيجوتسكي. يشمل التحليل البنية السردية للفيلم، وتصميم الشخصيات، والتعبير العاطفي، والرسائل الاجتماعية والثقافية التي ينقلها. وبذلك، تخلص الدراسة إلى أن الرسوم المتحركة أكثر من مجرد شكل من أشكال الترفيه. يلعب دورًا هامًا في تشكيل وعي الأطفال وقيمهم وتصوراتهم الاجتماعية. وتؤكد النتائج أيضًا أن أفلام الرسوم المتحركة تحمل أبعادًا ثقافية وفكرية تستدعي تحليلها ضمن الدراسات الأدبية والثقافية المعاصرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الرسوم المتحركة، الأطفال، الهوية، النمو العاطفي، فروزن، الواقع، السيميائية.