

YOU ONLY HAVE TO BE BRAVE ENOUGH TO SEE IT: EVALUATION OF GENDER ROLE PORTRAYAL IN DISNEY PRINCESS MOVIES IN VIEW OF WAVES OF FEMINISM

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Gender Role In Media

In media, men are depicted as robust and work in jobs that demand excessive amounts of physical strength or in areas that are conventionally employed by an intellectual, upper-middle-class gentleman, such as medicine, law or finance. Men are also characterized as either good or bad, but both with aggressive behaviors.

In media, women's attributes are focused mostly on beauty or physical attractiveness and traditional family roles. First and foremost, for a woman, it is of utmost importance to properly administer the roles of a wife and mother, as displayed by the media. For out of home-work, acceptable choices were teacher, secretary or waitress.

The media is considered as one of the most prevailing sources of gender concepts. Several studies have identified that heavy media use correlates with more traditional ideas of gender roles.

Since children and teenagers are the major audiences of Disney movies, the more gender stereotyping being displayed in their movies, the greater similar gender expectations children have for themselves and the opposite sex.

When similar portrayals of gender roles are being repeated consistently, the audience considers that as a "normal" gender role.

Children's interpretation of Disney princess gender roles exhibited four themes: beauty; focus on attire and accessories; princess-like body movements; and exclusion of boys.

- During early 19th century, the first wave of feminism surfaced with the aim to claim women's right to vote.
- Disney's classic princesses hit the theatre during the first wave of feminism and resemble the feminine roles of that period.
- It is noticeable that the princess movies of that time did not depict women's struggle for their voting right in any way.

- The second wave of feminism began in the 1960s and continued till the 90s. Sexuality and reproductive rights were dominant topic of this phase along with equal rights amendment of the Constitution that guaranteed equality in the society.
- The shift of their storyline from helpless passive princesses to mature women with a hint of rebellion resembles with this wave.

- Feminists of third wave rebelled against their ancestors of first and second wave feminists and in reclaiming sexual objectification as women's rights.
- Modern princesses like Merida and Moana, representing a balanced physical outlook, character and heroic attributes, echo the third wave of feminism.

First Wave of Feminism



The classical princess

- The first three princesses of Disney, Snow White, Cinderella and Aurora. Developed during the years 1939 to 1959.
- Marriage to their Prince Charming is their true liberation.
- These women might occasionally lament their domesticity, but mostly they seem to be content with one or the other kind of domesticity.

Second Wave of Feminism



An Attempt of Come Back with the Renaissance Princess

- Ariel from the *Little Mermaid* (1989), Belle from *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), and the title characters of *Pocahontas* (1995) and *Mulan* (1998).
- The renaissance princesses fight against the system and are not as passive and domesticated compared to the classic ones. They still adhere to similar old values and belief system.

Third Wave of Feminism



The Progressive Princess

- Tiana from the movie *The Princess and the Frog* (2009), Rapunzel from *Tangled* (2010), Merida from *Brave* (2012) and the title character of the movie *Moana* (2016).
- Princesses illustrate the essence of individuality, bravery, and power, as opposed to the classical ones. The modern princesses are saving the world without being dependent on any male counterpart.

Introduction

- Disney's princess phenomenon was identified as a powerful influence on children's media and product consumerism, which ultimately contributes to a notion of girlhood as portrayed by these characters.
- From the first princess movie published in the 30s, till now, society has changed a lot, and Disney has modernized their princesses in movies like *Tangled*, where Rapunzel adheres to a more liberated character.
- In this study, this shift in princess character attributes will be analyzed in light of feminism, gender roles and an elaborative study of past versus modern princesses.
- This study is interested in examining traditional masculine (e.g., athletic, brave) and traditional feminine (e.g., helpful, nurturing) characteristics exhibited in different periods of Disney movies.
- This study identified whether the recent uprising, and previous waves of feminism, have any influence on these movies and to what extent the characteristics of princesses changed from past to new princess movies

Conclusion

- Compared to earlier centuries, women's rights and facilities have developed tremendously due to movements of women who stood up against extortion and inequalities.
- Instead of supporting the rise of feminism, the media have always been accused of favoring patriarchy.
- Although feminism is a thriving concept today, the argument still prevails whether this is just a concept or reality. The implication of feminist theory in mundane life is still a vision in many parts of the world. Although Disney's recent attempts to rise traditional roles holds some positivity, breaking the stereotypes that have been built throughout past decades will not be easy.
- It is hopeful that the current generation has started to inspect media contents as oppose to bluntly relying on them. Numerous knowledge-sharing avenues have brought like-minded populations together to rise about media's mind-shaping elites.
- The more connected human society becomes in terms of conceptualizing socio-cultural changes across the layers of gender dimensions, the more positive changes will be observed in media. Ultimately, it is in the hands of this generation to shape a balanced future for society.

