



# Disney Setting and Changing Gender Stereotypes

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## Abstract

Disney has been enthralling audiences of all ages with its timeless stories of adventure, love, and bravery for almost a century. However, a vast tapestry of societal impact is hidden below the outermost layer of its animated masterpieces. Disney has a narrative power that goes much beyond simple pleasure; it has the extraordinary capacity to influence, mirror, and even subvert cultural standards. Disney's contribution to the establishment and subsequent modification of gender norms is among the influence's most noteworthy features.

This study aims to investigate the complex relationship that has developed between gender stereotypes and Disney's storytelling, both in the studio's products and in the larger cultural context.

This essay seeks to further this continuing discussion by examining the ways that Disney's narrative has both upheld and challenged conventional gender stereotypes. This study will examine how gender roles are portrayed, Disney characters' agency, and messages about gender equality are communicated through a thorough examination of a few Disney classics and recent releases.

Examining Disney's attempts to portray a broader range of identities and expressions of gender is also crucial, as the company increasingly recognizes the value of inclusivity and diversity in its narrative. This study will examine how Disney handles the challenging terrain of gender portrayal in the twenty-first century and how much these representations affect the opinions of its worldwide viewership.

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## Introduction

For more than eight decades, Disney has been an integral component of people's lives. It is linked to practically everyone, including parents, kids, teens, grandparents, and much more, not just because of what they watch but also because of their toys, clothes, and other possessions.

In the enchanting world of storytelling, few names resonate as profoundly as Disney. For nearly a century, The Walt Disney Company has been captivating audiences young and old with its timeless tales of heroism, love, and adventure. Yet, beneath the surface of its animated masterpieces lies a complex tapestry of societal influence. Disney's narrative power extends beyond mere entertainment; it wields a remarkable ability to shape, reflect, and even challenge cultural norms. One of the most intriguing aspects of this influence is Disney's role in setting and subsequently changing gender stereotypes.

From Snow White's gentle femininity to Mulan's fierce independence, Disney's characters and narratives have consistently exhibited evolving perceptions of gender roles. These portrayals are not confined to a single era or genre, but rather, they form a continuum that traces the progression of society's understanding of gender. This research paper seeks to explore the intricate interplay between Disney's storytelling and the evolution of gender stereotypes, both within the studio's productions and in the broader cultural landscape.

This paper aims to contribute to this ongoing conversation by delving into the ways in which Disney's storytelling has both reinforced and subverted traditional gender norms. Through a comprehensive analysis of selected Disney classics and contemporary releases, this study will dissect the portrayal of masculinity and femininity, the agency of Disney's characters, and the messages conveyed about gender equality.

Furthermore, as Disney increasingly acknowledges the importance of diversity and inclusivity in its storytelling, it is essential to examine the studio's efforts to represent a wider spectrum of gender identities and expressions. This research will delve into how Disney navigates the complex landscape of gender representation in the 21st century and the extent to which these portrayals impact the perceptions of its global audience.

Throughout the annals of human civilization, stories and folktales have been woven into the fabric of culture, serving as timeless narratives passed down to children and young minds. These narratives often laid the foundation for the creation of beloved cartoon characters. More than just a means of comforting and delighting a child's imagination, these stories served as conduits for imparting societal norms and values specific to their respective cultures. Embedded in these tales were lessons etched into the hearts and minds of children, leaving an indelible mark on their understanding of the world.

Children, in their formative years, gravitate toward characters they identify with the most, often turning these characters into idols. They aspire to emulate the actions and virtues of these beloved figures, seeking to embody their ideals. In this way, fairy tales become a vessel through which children discover the intricacies of proper conduct and their role within society.

However, as powerful as these tales are in shaping young minds, they also possess the potential to manipulate and influence children in less wholesome ways. The representation of certain groups within these narratives can significantly alter the outlook, behavior, and thought patterns of those groups. Notably, one demographic consistently represented in these stories is women.

Disney primarily targets children and young audiences. Consequently, its narratives possess significant influence over the formative years of individuals. Investigating how Disney's representations of gender affect young minds is crucial, as it provides insights into how these narratives shape the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of the next generation. Moreover, examining how children relate to and internalize Disney characters can offer valuable insights into the broader societal impact of these portrayals.

In recent years, discussions about gender equality, representation, and diversity have gained prominence in both the media and society at large [1]. Disney, as a media giant, is increasingly under scrutiny for its role in reflecting and shaping contemporary gender dynamics. This research aims to bridge the gap between theoretical discussions of gender stereotypes and real-world implications, particularly within the context of Disney's modern storytelling.

Disney operates on a global stage, adapting its narratives to suit various cultural contexts. Examining how Disney navigates the complex interplay between culture, entertainment, and gender representation is vital. This research will investigate whether Disney's narratives change significantly when presented to diverse audiences and how these adaptations contribute to the evolving discourse on gender stereotypes within specific cultural contexts.

The representation of gender in media, especially for young audiences, carries significant ethical and societal implications. Understanding the potential consequences of Disney's portrayals, whether empowering or constraining, can inform discussions on responsible media production and consumption.

## Literature Review

"I am a princess. All girls are."-Sara Crewe [2].

The American film and animation industry are dominated by Disney Animation. Not only do they influence and reach children through movies, but also through clothing, games, and toys. Disney has existed for more than 80 years, and during that time, they have influenced how gender roles are displayed in society. Disney is seen changing the way they portray their characters, particularly female ones, as modern culture evolves.

The representation of females and gender roles can be described in at least one of three ways when specifically focusing on Disney princesses. First, Disney princesses were initially depicted as the stereotypical domesticated damsel in distress. Snow White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty demonstrate this. The roles of female characters were shifted in a second portrayal, which made them appear rebellious and ambitious. Ariel, Mulan, and Rapunzel are the main characters in this picture. Last but not least, a final shift has taken place, and the female characters are now depicted as spirited and independent. Merida, Anna, and Elsa are all examples of this kind of portrayal. Through various studies and reviews of the literature, as well as the films themselves, Disney is seen gradually adapting to American culture and the changing times.

In a not-too-distant past, a man by the name of Walt Disney made a fantastic and ground-breaking change to the way fairy tales were told. Disney has been a part of the lives of millions of people for over 80 years, whether through love stories or fairy tales. The company that was founded by a man and a mouse is now the industry leader in animated films. They are compared to the culture and ideals of the area because they play a significant role in the entertainment industry.

Disney has been accused of stereotyping its characters, particularly female ones, for a number of years. This has put them in conflict with both the general public and their target audience. Gender roles and the meanings they carry are ingrained in society and can have an effect on how viewers view themselves and the people around them. According to Garnder (2015), the media already exerts a significant influence by portraying social norms and expectations.

The selection of Disney was based on the fact that throughout its history, the roles of men and women depicted in its films have represented social norms and expectations regarding gender roles and identity from a cultural perspective. As a result, Disney is an excellent example and representation of subsequent cultural trends and developments. Additionally, Disney is a great way to observe the influence of male and female behavioral norms' views and expectations.

Disney has been around for a long time and appears to still be at the forefront of the entertainment industry. The Disney

culture is constantly evolving, and with each era comes a new set of challenges. Do their values and depictions change in order to please viewers from decade to decade in order to please audiences? Research and descriptions of the influences of media and gender roles in general are required in order to ascertain the significance of Disney's shift [3]. Additionally, there must be certain movies or time periods that demonstrate a shift and change if Disney is undergoing change in order to adapt to the culture of its surroundings.

### Disney setting unrealistic standards

Disney has always been a brand that mainly focuses on children from the age of 4, and it has been selling typical gender stereotypes starting from children to teens, to young adults to old aged people for a very long time. The representation of classic Disney Princesses, that are, Snow White (1937), Cinderella (1950), The Sleeping Beauty (1959) has always propagated the idea of an ideal princess or rather, an ideal girl. The idea of girls being soft, well-dressed, and disciplined has been catered to the audience for a very long time. The notion of beauty got completely manufactured and the greatest example of that would be assigned a particular color to both genders, that is, pink for girls and blue for boys. Even, the toys that were being sold in a huge number catered to the idea that princesses are for girls whereas toys like cars and robots are for boys because they are more masculine in nature. The classic princess stories mostly focused on the idea of the princess falling in trouble, or struggling through life, and then a knight in shining armor comes to save her life. The very idea of "Damsel in Distress" has come from the Disney franchise. Parents might be able to get ideas for questions their children might ask if they are upset about a situation a child character is in. Disney movies can also teach kids about how unfair society is and how to accept differences based on race, religion, culture, and other factors.

The representation of women in the vast majority of Disney films is the first interesting aspect. Griffin and colleagues discuss how films from the 1940s and 1950s frequently depicted femininity in a very physical sense, with slim waists and long blonde hair for characters who met the traditional Eurocentric beauty standards. In the classic 1937 film Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, where Snow White leaves the castle without much resistance and finds the seven dwarfs working at the mine while Snow White is hiding from the evil queen, the characters were very passive and rarely engaged in any kind of work. This perception of women has changed in recent years, as strong female characters like Elsa have taken over in Disney films. When Elsa leaves her family's castle in Frozen (2013), one can see the dramatic transformation she goes through. She removes the gloves she was compelled to wear, drastically alters her appearance, opting instead for a bejeweled gown and open, flowing hair. She constructs her own magnificent ice castle with a snow monster serving as a guard, demonstrating that something she once considered to be her greatest weakness is now sheltering her and giving her strength. This is supposed to represent her progress toward becoming a woman who is more self-aware and no longer frightened of her power.

Sadly, these films are the exception rather than the rule. Gender

stereotypes and gendered behaviors are still very prevalent in Disney productions, but they have become more complex, according to a study conducted by Lara Descartes and her colleagues over time. The researchers argue that, despite including a wider range of gender roles, they have retained the conventional method and frequently include depictions that are at odds with one another [4]. For instance, in the 1989 film The Little Mermaid, the princess wants to discover new places and explore the sea and, later, the completely different world that exists on land. At the same time, she is portrayed as a damsel in distress because her father rescues her from Ursula, a wicked sea witch, and is the one who permanently makes her human. These out-of-date ideas about gender roles may be caused by the fact that, according to IMDb, 96.28% of Disney's directors were men up until 2014, and that Frozen was the first Disney movie to be directed by a woman. Perhaps this makes one wonder what the new feminist turn that Disney movies have taken is all about. According to Martin Griffin and his colleagues' research, Disney's growing pressure to create more accurate characters and the fact that it was beginning to affect profits led to this feminist turn.

When it comes to the idea of gender itself, Disney has always used a binary representation of gender, with no representation of gender minorities. According to Karin Martin's research, Disney's ambiguous stance on queer characters is exacerbated by the fact that, despite having a transvestite character like Mulan from the 1998 film Mulan, the toys that are sold are mostly of a feminine nature. Disney has mastered this by releasing highly marketed queer characters and then merely hinting at their sexual orientation or gender identity. This kind of queerbaiting can be seen in characters like Artie from Cruella 2021, who was advertised as a gay character during the promotional period, but Artie was just queer-coded and his sexuality was ambiguous in the movie. Similar to this, LeFou was promoted as Disney's first openly gay character in the film Beauty and the Beast's (2017) promotional materials. However, discussions of his sexual orientation were merely mentioned and received very little screen time. Ursula, who was modeled after the well-known drag queen Divine, is another example cited by Karin Martin. The fact that Ursula was modeled after a queer icon casts doubt on the portrayal of a cruel villain who is self-centered and tries to take advantage of Ariel at every turn. Children are frequently deceived by this quasi-representation, which fosters an atmosphere of miscommunication. Children have formed an understanding of gender and gender roles through media, according to research led by Bandura and many other social psychologists. If Disney is not inclusive, it will have a direct impact on children because they will not have an accurate representation of how gender could be defined.

The "heteronormative" nature of Disney films is brought up as an additional pertinent point by this. Media also plays a significant role in sexuality development, just as it does in gender development. Litsa Renee Tanner and her colleagues looked at 26 Disney movies and found that while 61.5 percent of the families adopted an "alternative" family structure, there were no parents of the same gender [5]. Even if these relationships are not essential to the main plot, the majority of Disney films feature two characters of opposing genders who are assumed

to be in a romantic relationship. This can be seen in Anna's relationship with Sven, which barely contributed to the main Frozen plot. Additionally, these films perpetuate the idea that "hetero-romantic" relationships are "magical" and "natural," which is how the term "one true kiss" originated. Because not a single Disney movie has openly depicted a queer relationship, this fosters a culture of heteronormativity in which children may assume they are heterosexual simply because it is all they have been exposed to. This creates a culture in which any sexualities other than heterosexuality are not even discussed, which can cause many children to have a distorted understanding of their own sexuality. According to Gidi Rubenstein, it can also cause children who are not heterosexual to have low self-esteem, high narcissism, and inadequate self-expression, which can cause psychological distress. It also gives the impression that being anything other than heterosexual is wrong and taboo.

After learning about the flaws in Disney films as well as the films mentioned above's persistent lack of diversity and representation, it might be a good idea to rethink the content that children watch. Disney is known for having little or no representation of people of color, in addition to gender and sexuality. Tiana is the only black Disney princess, and the majority of the movie is spent with her disguised as a frog. Pocahontas, a 1995 film, is loosely based on history. Some parts of the story have been changed to make it "less violent," downplaying the struggles of the native Americans. There is only one East Asian princess, Mulan, and one Middle Eastern princess, Jasmine, and that is all there is to race representation. The Aristocrats (1970), Dumbo (1941), Lady and the Tramp (1955), and Peter Pan (1953) are just a few of Disney's older films that have come under fire for being filled with racial slurs, as have CNN, MSN, and the Washington Post. In addition to race, a study by Sarah Coyne and her colleagues discusses how Disney films promote the idea of an "ideal" body type, which in turn leads to body dysmorphia.

However, Disney is undergoing a much-needed transformation, as evidenced by recent releases like *The Queen of Katwe* (2016), which tells the story of a girl from Uganda's slums who progresses to the World Chess Championship and is directed by Indian woman Mira Nair [6]. Another notable illustration of this is *Raya and the Last Dragon* (2021), in which the protagonist is a woman from Southeast Asia on a mission to rescue millions of citizens from her kingdom. The protagonist and the antagonist even hint at a queer relationship in the movie. As childhood is a time when an individual understands the workings of the social world, it is important that this understanding be broader than what Disney is currently displaying and inclusive. Surely, one can see the change that Disney is attempting to bring about and should do so.

According to Cheung and Mary R. Lewis, the conventional view of gender roles holds that males and females have distinct expectations regarding gender roles. Males were characterized as wanting to explore, being physically strong, assertive, emotionless, independent, athletic, engaging in intellectual activity, inspiring fear, brave, and so on. and praised for his leadership, advice, and physical attractiveness (masculine). Gender roles for women include the following: concerned with appearance (primping, for instance), physically weak,

submissive, showing emotion, affectionate, nurturing, sensitive, tentative, helpful, troublesome, fearful, ashamed, collapsing while crying, described as physically attractive (feminine), asking for or accepting advice or help, and victimized are all examples of these characteristics. Disney films like *Snow White*, *Aladdin*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Tangled* demonstrate this.

Children are not raised with the beliefs that boys prefer blue and girls prefer pink, or that strong men must save women. Instead, humans themselves create these differences and adopt these ways of thinking as children, and Disney films play a special role in this. Children's minds are being shaped by this discrimination based on gender. The binary nature of a woman's personality is another character trope that frequently appears in numerous Disney films.

The heroine is depicted as a young or adolescent who is fragile, gentle, kind, beautiful, loved by everyone, extremely feminine, domestic, and empathetic [7]. On the other hand, the antagonist is portrayed as a middle-aged woman who is vile, cunning, wicked, heartless, unpleasant to look at, and downright unpleasant to dislike. In the film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, Mother Gothel (Rapunzel), Ursula (The Little Mermaid), and the wicked Queen (Snow White) are all depicted as having fair skin, making her the most beautiful character.

### The princesses of Disney

The movie, *Snow White* (1937) is a perfect representation of the stereotypically weak princess. The story centers on a young girl who has been held captive by a wicked, envious queen who had planned to kill her or put her to sleep.

*Snow White* was raised to be a "good girl" from the time she was a child. She finally runs away and ends up living with seven dwarfs. According to Harrison (2012), women are regarded as naive, homemakers, and lacking in common sense. With the Dwarves, *Snow White* makes a deal; If she does the cooking and cleaning for them, they will keep her safe. Through this character, a common social stereotype about women is perpetuated: men are expected to work outside the home while women are expected to cook and do housework. *Snow White* is shown to be naturally beautiful, despite the fact that she is extremely thin, has unnaturally red rose-colored lips, has skin as white as snow, and has hair that is black as ebony and never looks bad. This is where the story's evil queen gets jealous of her. As a result, when she sees *Snow White*, the evil queen becomes extremely envious and becomes obsessed with how she looks in the mirror. Ms. Andersen writes in a UMW blog that the story "gives women mixed messages saying not to obsess about looks but be beautiful, and portraying a woman as the heroine, but still saying disobedience of the women's roles will lead to punishment" [8].

The dwarfs instructed *Snow White* not to let anyone in, and she broke the rule. She was punished when the evil queen tricked her into eating a red apple that poisoned her. The fact that *Snow White* is waiting for her true love to kiss her while she is slumbering in the glass coffin demonstrates the negative stereotype of women in relationships. Waiting for a man to come and save or assist her is all she is doing. This incident demonstrates that women



cannot help themselves and must rely on men to rescue them from adversity.

Women are portrayed from a sexual perspective in Aladdin. The stereotype that brown-skinned women are feisty, animalistic, and sexualized was perpetuated by Jasmine and other female characters in Aladdin. The vast majority of the women in this film were depicted dancing seductively and in provocative attire.

Young people who were watching this movie are exposed to a perilous message through these incidents. The message that is being conveyed here is that a girl's physical appearance is the only thing a boy will look for in a girl and that a woman's looks are her most valuable asset.

In 1959, the movie *Sleeping Beauty* came out. In this movie, a prince falls in love with a woman solely because of how she looks. The larger themes of true love, the significance of family, dreams and visions, feminism, the animate and inanimate, and human interaction in unfamiliar locations are all discussed in the film. Aurora, the female lead in this movie, is shown to be physically weak, shy, and dependent. The other female characters are depicted as witches and evil stepmothers. Even so, Merry Weather and the other fairies lacked the strength to safeguard the princess. The Prince, the male protagonist, is shown to be a courageous warrior, a strong decision-maker, and a true representation of masculinity.

The prince's role in rousing the princess from slumber with a true kiss in this movie also shows that women are socially dependent on their men. The princess fell ill for a hundred years after touching the spinning wheel, but the fairies were unable to save her. This demonstrates that women are innately incapable of protecting themselves from evil. Additionally, they failed in their duty to safeguard the princess.

The movie, on the other hand, presents a positive interpretation of good and evil. Princess Aurora's beautiful character exemplifies virtue, while Maleficent, a witch who was portrayed as ugly, exemplifies evil. This demonstrates that Aurora's beauty serves as a symbol of goodness and virtue, while Maleficent's ugliness serves as a symbol of evil.

The situation in *Cinderella* is almost identical to that in other films. The film was made in the 1950s. Girls have been captivated by Disney's *Cinderella* since childhood. They have been awestruck by the concepts presented in this film and have fantasized about being treated like princesses. Ella and both of her parents lead happy lives at the beginning of the story. Her life is turned upside down by her mother's death. *Cinderella*'s stepmother is cruel and jealous of her daughter's beauty after her father passes away. Later, she is forced to work as a housekeeper for her own family. When the prince decided to throw a ball and invited all the women. *Cinderella* also gets a chance to attend the ball thanks to the Godmother. *Cinderella* wins the prince's heart. The glass shoe, the main sign about *Cinderella* and with this, the Ruler sets the Duke determined to have the shoe took a stab at each young lady in the Realm, setting the Duke to task before the sun rises. They concluded that *Cinderella* was that one.

The binary nature of a woman's personality is another character

trope that frequently appears in numerous Disney films. The heroine, typically a young or adolescent, is fragile, gentle, kind, beautiful, adored by everyone, extremely feminine, domestic, and empathetic. The bad guys are on the other side of the spectrum: a middle-aged woman who is depicted as vile, cunning, wicked, heartless, unappealing, and completely unlikeable. Mother Gothel (in *Rapunzel*), Ursula (in *The Little Mermaid*), and the wicked Queen (in *Snow White*) are all examples of characters who fall into this category. They have been referred to as Disney's femme fatales, or sexually defined powerful women. *Cinderella*'s stepmother and stepsisters are important examples of people who oppose the protagonist's character. All of these "evil" women are there to make the innocent, naive heroine look like a charming damsel in distress who stands out from the other pretentious women and is perfect for being wooed. Additionally, they portray women as either "good" or "bad," with no in-between.

However, there are two Disney princess stories, *Mulan* and *Pocahontas*, that defy convention by presenting the female leads as strong, independent women [9]. Throughout the film, *Mulan* constantly defies stereotypes by either enlisting herself in her father's army (albeit disguised as a man) or only considering marriage for the honor it would bring to her family. In order to emphasize *Mulan*'s bravery and independence, the romance between her and Li Shang is put on hold. *Pocahontas*, one of Disney's native American characters, is depicted as a devoted, eminent, and mature woman. *Pocahontas*, loosely based on the historical figure, uses her shamanic abilities to help stop the war between the British and native Americans. *Pocahontas*, like *Belle* from *Beauty and the Beast* and *Mulan*, does not believe that she will marry, although she does not completely reject it.

Naturally, progress does not occur overnight. It was developed over extended periods of evolutionary thinking, and Disney has altered the playing cards somewhat. In terms of characters and plots, Disney and Pixar's most recent films have been more diverse. The heroines' romantic arcs also change in these films, instead focusing on self-discovery and passionate passion. The classic tale of a princess was given a fresh, much-needed twist by *Brave*. Disney's concept of beauty-long, flowing hair, doe-eyes, dazzling smile, hourglass figure-had been transformed into a more realistic representation of a woman, much to the delight of audiences and fans. *Merida*, the princess of *Brave*, had curly hair that was messy and tangled, freckles without makeup on her face, and a dress that was torn because she had spent days practicing archery, riding horses, and climbing rocks. *Merida*'s body was bulky, awkward, and embodied everything a preteen or teen girl should be.

She displayed discomfort on screen as she was squeezed into a dress that highlighted her curves and a slimming corset. Her gait was very comical and free, but it wasn't "princess-like." In addition, rather than finding a husband, she wanted to find herself and repair her relationship with her mother. After a brief period of attempting to "beautify" *Merida* by forcing her to adhere to the unrealistic body expectations that Disney is known to promote, the writers were forced to revert back to the version that we see on screen after *Merida* was so widely accepted by

audiences—clearly demonstrating that viewers in the 21st century demand something different from Disney's long-standing character stereotypes. Moana, Disney's most recent film, is yet another example of how audiences and critics alike applaud films that defy convention. Moana dislikes being called a princess, never accepts the limitations imposed on her by her family, and also takes Maui's (the demigod's) destiny of restoring the "Heart of the Sea" into her own hands. Instead of having curves that look like an hourglass, Moana has a healthy, lean body. In this film, the heroine gains confidence and leads the fight against her enemies, most notably her self-doubt, but marriage or even relationships are never mentioned. Moana proved to be an important and timely film for Disney because it featured a POC (person of color) in the lead role rather than a sidekick.

Without looking at the various male characters, the discussion about how Disney depicts gender stereotypes would be incomplete. The typical "manly man" is Gaston in *Beauty and the Beast*: All of Belle's village's young maidens were drawn to her because she was tall, white, burlesque, muscular, and covered in hair. Small, sometimes fat, and witty comic relief sidekicks are frequently given to the main male characters (e.g. Le Fou, Timon, and Pumba) who counteract the "hero's" masculinity. These sidekicks are given "feminine" characteristics, such as giving the hero advice and motivating him. They are frequently more sensitive and caring. In point of fact, the men in the majority of Disney princess films are portrayed as the ultimate "saviors." The Little Mermaid, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Snow White*) [10]. This perpetuates the idea that men always need to save women, which is detrimental to both male and female characters. It also introduces the notion that men are "superior" to women due to their superior skill set and characteristics.

In the end, Disney's long history of princess films has shown stereotypes that have only recently been dispelled. Disney films are progressive and open-minded when they are able to diversify their characters, plots, and themes. Modern audiences are encouraged by the new wave of Disney animated films to expect a more globalized and widespread approach to filmmaking.

*Cinderella* is shown as being tortured by her stepmothers in the movie. In this location, the prince sets out to wed the woman whose foot fits into glass heels that are delicate and delicate. He has no memory of the woman's personality or even her face from the night he danced with her. Like in other films, the protagonist in this one was shown to be slim and beautiful. On the other hand, the antagonistic characters, like her stepmother and stepsisters, are shown to be unattractive.

*Beauty and the Beast* is another Walt Disney film that shows gender stereotypes. Belle, the female lead in *Beauty and the Beast*, portrays one of Disney's most iconic princesses. The images of subservience, domestication, and inferiority that Belle's body reflects against the superiority of the powerful males are shown in this film. In a Disney movie, Belle seems destined to become an object because she is a woman and a princess. Belle remains at the mercy of the men in her life throughout the film. Gaston, the antagonist of the movie, is portrayed as her aggressive suitor.

Beast is viewed as her captor and destined true love, while

Maurice is viewed as her eccentric, social outcast father. She is a prize for Gaston to win. However, she is Maurice's property, just as a child belongs to a parent. She is subjected to Beast's overbearing appearance and hypermasculinity as a prisoner in place of her father.

This film, like other Disney films, has an alleged happy, fairy-tale ending. However, the message it conveys to young viewers is that women are nothing more than pawns in a man's game. Belle is the victim of abuse because of the characters' actions, which are representative of gender stereotypes. Belle finally appears content. She transforms into a princess at the conclusion, transforms Beast from his anthropomorphic form, and manages a whole castle filled with magical household items. Belle's appearance is intended to be naive, waiflike, and elegantly small. Her large eyes, snow-white complexion, and extremely slim waist represent the beauty of a princess. In the majority of Disney films, this is the ideal woman.

Comparatively, *Tangled* is a progressive Disney film that challenges gender roles and stereotypes in a small way. Rapunzel is not treated like the typical Disney princess who is waiting for her prince to come and rescue her and sweep her off her feet so that they can live happily ever after. However, Rapunzel also shares some characteristics with *Snow White*, such as being extremely thin and having skin that is white. In addition, Rapunzel flees from her evil stepmother Gothel, who kidnapped her from her parents and held her hostage in the tower her entire life.

In *Tangled*, as in most other films, the hero Flynn Rider must arrive to save Rapunzel from her evil mother. Rapunzel was able to experience the joy of freedom for the first time with his assistance. He was the first to emerge from that tower [11]. Flynn was the one who, in the end, found her real parents. Later, they became the next king and queen and lived happily ever after.

In the majority of Disney animated films, women were frequently mistreated. Children's minds were being influenced by these films to discriminate based on gender. Children's minds are being poisoned by gender stereotypes from childhood on, whether parents are aware of it or not. When they become members of society, the next stage of growth will begin. The majority of children spent their most precious time in their homes during this pandemic. The majority of parents at this time used Disney films to silence their children. Therefore, these films not only had a positive impact on children, but they also had a negative impact on them.

Disney is one of the largest media companies in the world, and its influence on popular culture is undeniable. For decades, Disney has been known for producing animated films that appeal to children and adults alike, but its portrayal of women has been a topic of controversy. In this literature review, we will examine Disney's portrayal of an ideal woman in its animated films and analyze how this portrayal has evolved over time. Disney's first animated feature, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, was released in 1937. The film tells the story of a beautiful young woman who is saved by seven dwarfs and ultimately finds true love with a prince. *Snow White's* physical appearance and submissive nature established a template for the ideal Disney

woman that would be repeated in subsequent films.

### Disney's portrayal of an ideal woman

Regardless of gender, today's youth have reached adulthood thanks to Disney films' fairy tales and romantic ideals. Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty all depict a time in history when women were seen as nothing more than troubled damsels who needed to be saved by a knight in shining armor.

Through rising feminism, movies like *Mulan* and *Tangled* represented rebellion against these stereotypes. Through the characters of Anna and Elsa, Disney's adored blockbuster *Frozen* demonstrates that women do not require men to save them. Women were portrayed as villains if they weren't damsels in distress, like Ursula in *The Little Mermaid*, Maleficent in *Sleeping Beauty*, and Cinderella's wicked stepmother. These demonic roles may have been associated with witch-hunting in the past.

However, *Maleficent* shows how the villain's role shifts from pure malice to being a product of their circumstances, which is interesting: *Mistress of Evil* (2019), as well as its 2014 prequel. As a result of this change, antagonist roles have become more relatable and realistic, indicating a paradigm shift in society. It is essential to keep in mind that the media are always both a tool for change and a reflection of society. Society is reflected in the media. As a result, media representations of gender stereotypes can be found in books, films, and television shows. There are typically only two images of women in media: bad and good.

Women portrayed as "good" are shown to be pretty, young, obedient, dependent on men, and devoid of their own identity. The classic Disney film *The Little Mermaid* depicts women literally giving up their identity for men. In order to live with her lover, Ariel transforms from a mermaid into a human. Disney depicts the "bad" women as female villains who hinder the happiness of other women and serve the patriarchy in the process.

Marvel movies frequently depict men in stereotypical roles of aggression, ambition, saving the world, and ruling it. This male savior complex is also depicted in the Disney world, where a prince's kiss can awaken *Sleeping Beauty* from her deep sleep. The same movie was remade from Maleficent's point of view; Maleficent's pure love lifted the curse rather than the prince kissing her. Again, this demonstrates how our society has begun to alter its perception of women.

In addition to the stereotypical roles, male and female characters in Disney films are given different amounts of dialogue. Analyzing Disney films, Carmen Fought and Karen Eisenhauer conducted a linguistic study that came to the conclusion that the Disney Renaissance Era (1988-1999) was dominated by men. Over 70% of the time, men spoke in films like *Aladdin*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Pocahontas*. However, female characters spoke 52% of the time in subsequent films like *Tangled* (2010), while male characters only spoke 26% of the time in *Brave* (2012). This shows that the frequency of gendered dialogue delivery has changed clearly.

Women are more than just pretty things that need to be saved. They have the same level of autonomy as men. It is essential to convey to the younger generation of both boys and girls that

women have lofty goals and aspirations in life. Disney's recent character, plot, and dialogue balance shifts indicate that they are moving in the right direction, despite the fact that they weren't always successful in this area.

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Disney released a series of films featuring female protagonists who were typically beautiful, passive, and in need of rescue. These films included *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *The Little Mermaid*. The heroines of these films were all physically attractive, with slender figures, flawless skin, and perfect hair.

In the 1990s, Disney began to introduce more assertive female characters, such as Belle in *Beauty and the Beast* and Jasmine in *Aladdin*. These characters were still conventionally attractive, but they had more agency and were less passive than their predecessors. Despite the introduction of more assertive female characters in the 1990s, Disney's portrayal of an ideal woman continues to be one that emphasizes physical beauty, passivity, and the importance of finding a romantic partner. This portrayal can be seen in films such as *The Princess and the Frog*, *Tangled*, and *Frozen*.

In *The Princess and the Frog*, the protagonist Tiana is a hardworking and ambitious young woman who dreams of owning her own restaurant. However, her ultimate goal in the film is to find true love and marry a prince, reinforcing the idea that a woman's ultimate success is tied to her ability to find a romantic partner.

In *Tangled*, the protagonist Rapunzel is physically attractive and has a singing voice that can heal wounds, but she is also naive and passive. Throughout the film, she relies on the male hero, Flynn Rider, to protect her and guide her through the world.

In *Frozen*, the sisters Elsa and Anna are both conventionally attractive, but their personalities are somewhat more complex than those of previous Disney heroines. Elsa, in particular, is an interesting character because she is initially portrayed as a villain but is ultimately redeemed. However, the film still reinforces the idea that a woman's ultimate goal should be to find a romantic partner, as both sisters end up in relationships with male characters by the end of the film.

Disney's portrayal of an ideal woman has had a significant impact on popular culture and the way that young girls view themselves. Studies have shown that exposure to Disney films can lead to a greater emphasis on physical appearance and a tendency to prioritize romantic relationships over other goals. For example, a study conducted by the University of Michigan found that girls who were exposed to Disney princesses were more likely to display gender-stereotypical behavior, such as an emphasis on physical appearance and a preference for traditional gender roles. In addition, Disney's portrayal of an ideal woman has been criticized for its lack of diversity. The vast majority of Disney heroines have been white, thin, and conventionally attractive, which sends a message to young girls that this is the only acceptable standard of beauty.

## The difference between male and female characters

Even though the roles of the male and female characters in the Disney Princess series have changed over time, the male characters have always been more androgynous, and their gender roles haven't changed much. The new princesses like, Raya, Moana, etc, have set a different notion for the audience by showing that they are capable of getting out of their problems all by themselves and they have also changed the idea of a perfect girl by doing acts that were perceived to be masculine before, like fighting with a dragon with a sword in hand (Raya And The Last Dragon). An examination of the media during early childhood is particularly important, as these years lay down a foundation for gender role development over time (Bussey & Bandura, 1999), and media may act as a key socializing agent for gender role development (for a review, see Signorielli, 2011). Children can interact with Disney characters in a variety of ways through the princess franchise, which includes movies, toys, clothing, and more. According to Orenstein (2011), parents generally enjoy Disney Princesses and consider them to be "safe" in comparison to other media models that are highly sexualized. Others, on the other hand, question this sense of security associated with the Disney brand and speculate that young girls may be particularly susceptible to adverse effects [12] Particularly, the principle line has been criticized for glorifying passive characters who need men to save them.

Disney has been a dominant force in popular culture for almost a century, and the setting and characters portrayed in Disney films have been instrumental in shaping cultural perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes. As society has evolved over the years, so too has Disney, with changes in the portrayal of gender roles and stereotypes in Disney films. This literature review will explore the ways in which Disney has set and changed gender stereotypes through the setting of its films.

## The setting of Disney films

Disney films are known for their vivid and fantastical settings, from the African savannah in "The Lion King" to the bustling city of New Orleans in "The Princess and the Frog." These settings serve not only as backdrops for the stories but also as reflections of the values and beliefs of the societies they represent. For many years, Disney films tended to reinforce traditional gender stereotypes, with female characters often relegated to domestic settings or presented as damsels in distress waiting to be rescued by male heroes.

Disney films are known for their captivating and imaginative settings that transport viewers to magical worlds filled with adventure and wonder. From enchanted forests to underwater kingdoms, Disney films have explored a wide range of settings that capture the imagination of audiences of all ages. This literature review will explore the various settings of Disney films and the impact they have on storytelling and audience engagement.

In their article, "Disney and the Art of Adaptation: From Fairy Tales to Fantasy," Kevin M. Scott and Siobhan M. Hart argue that the settings of Disney films are essential to their success. They note

that Disney films often take place in fantastical and exaggerated versions of real-world locations, such as the African savannah in "The Lion King" or the streets of Paris in "Ratatouille." These settings not only provide a backdrop for the story but also add depth and dimension to the characters and plot.

Another aspect of the setting in Disney films is the use of cultural references. In "The Cultural Politics of Disney's Animated Features," Ella Shohat and Robert Stam explore the use of cultural references in Disney films and the impact they have on the audience. They argue that Disney films use cultural references to create a sense of familiarity and identification for the audience, but also perpetuate stereotypes and reinforce cultural hegemony. For example, in "Aladdin," the portrayal of Middle Eastern culture has been criticized for perpetuating stereotypes and cultural appropriation.

However, Disney has also been praised for its efforts to diversify its settings and characters in recent years. In "Disney's Moana: A Case Study on Indigenous Feminism and the Decolonization of Cultural Production," Katie Foss and A. Javier Treviño explore the use of Polynesian culture in "Moana" and its positive representation of indigenous culture and feminism. They argue that "Moana" represents a shift in Disney's approach to storytelling, one that values diversity and inclusivity.

The setting of Disney films plays a crucial role in storytelling and audience engagement. The use of fantastical settings, cultural references, and diverse representation all contribute to the success of Disney films. While Disney has been criticized for perpetuating stereotypes and cultural appropriation in some of its films, recent efforts to diversify its settings and characters have been praised. As Disney continues to create new stories and worlds, the setting will remain a key aspect of its storytelling formula.

## Gender stereotypes in Disney films

Since its founding in 1923, The Walt Disney Company has produced numerous films, television shows, and other forms of media that have been popular with children and adults alike. However, the company has been criticized for perpetuating gender stereotypes through its portrayal of male and female characters. This literature review will examine the ways in which Disney has set gender stereotypes through its media, with a focus on its portrayal of male and female characters.

A new gender stereotype is when Disney doesn't directly objectify female characters or make them dependent on male characters, but still treats men differently because of how they view women. To deliberately demonstrate to the audience that it was a feminist film, rather than being a good story in which the main character happens to be a woman, Disney restricts or exaggerates the abilities of the female characters. For instance, when Disney released Frozen in 2013, they asserted that they had already escaped the conventional bias because the film is about sisterhood rather than the conventional love story in which the prince saved the princess. Scholars, on the other hand, have pointed out that Frozen depicts dependent and delicate characters in a less radical way than Disney's stereotype of female characters.



Even though Elsa and Anna are stronger and more independent than the other female characters, they can't use their independence to get away from her or challenge her status as an object. The female characters in *Frozen* are formulaic, and they were made for a movie with a female theme. After 2013, Disney films purposefully emphasize the strength of women. Instead of being shackled to the idea that all women are like this, women should be complex and multifaceted, each with their own personal vulnerabilities, traumatic experiences, and flashpoints. For instance, the heroine of *Captain Marvel* is completely mythologized and devoid of a human arc of light.

A successful film with a female protagonist does not place an intentional emphasis on female empowerment or the fear of male empowerment. Male and female gender roles are prominent in Disney films. The way female characters have been portrayed has undergone the most significant transformation throughout Disney's history.

The portrayal of females and their orientation jobs can be depicted in something like one of three different ways. First, Disney princesses were initially depicted as the stereotypical domesticated damsel in distress. *Snow White*, *Cinderella*, and *Sleeping Beauty* demonstrate this. The roles of female characters were shifted in a second portrayal, which made them appear rebellious and ambitious.

Ariel, Mulan, and Rapunzel are the main characters in this picture. Last but not least, a final shift has taken place, and the female characters are now depicted as spirited and independent. Merida, Anna, and Elsa are all examples of this kind of portrayal.

The various films' different depictions of women coincide with the cultural trends that were taking place at the same time. Over time, social norms and expectations regarding female gender roles have evolved. As a result, the media transforms into a visual representation of the social norms that are expected in the culture and society that surrounds it.

The analysis indicates that Disney still has a long way to go in terms of gender equality in its films, particularly with regard to its female characters. Disney can use these three suggestions to avoid gender stereotypes when presenting a female character. Disney must first and foremost demonstrate the diversity of female characters' ages to the audience, dispel ageism, and embrace the positive aspects of aging. Disney should acknowledge that women of all ages, including middle-aged and elderly women, possess their own charms, despite the fact that teenage women are attractive in terms of physical attractiveness and other aspects. As a result, Disney will not give the female characters age anxiety, which means that gender stereotypes will be completely eradicated. In addition, Disney should learn to tell a story in which the main characters are women rather than exaggerating women's abilities in order to appeal to female audiences.

## Historical context

Disney's portrayal of gender roles and stereotypes has been a subject of debate for many years. While Disney's films are often lauded for their imaginative storytelling and stunning animation,

they have also been criticized for their portrayal of gender roles, particularly in the early years of the company.

Walt Disney Productions was founded in 1923, and during the 1930s and 1940s, the studio produced some of its most iconic films, including *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Pinocchio* (1940), and *Cinderella* (1950). During this period, gender roles were firmly entrenched in American society, with men as breadwinners and women as homemakers. Women were expected to be passive, nurturing, and submissive, while men were expected to be dominant, assertive, and independent.

Disney's films reflected these societal norms and reinforced traditional gender roles. Female characters were often portrayed as helpless, submissive, and in need of rescue by male characters. Male characters, on the other hand, were portrayed as strong, brave, and independent. This reinforced the idea that men were supposed to be the protectors and providers, while women were supposed to be passive and dependent.

One example of this can be seen in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, where the titular character is portrayed as a passive and naive young woman who relies on the protection and support of the seven dwarfs and Prince Charming. Similarly, in *Cinderella*, the heroine is portrayed as a victim of her stepmother's cruelty, who is saved by the intervention of a fairy godmother and a handsome prince.

In the 1950s and 1960s, there was a shift in American society towards gender equality and the women's liberation movement. However, Disney's films continued to reinforce traditional gender roles, with female characters still portrayed as passive and in need of male protection. This is evident in films such as *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) and *The Little Mermaid* (1989).

In *Sleeping Beauty*, the heroine Aurora is placed under a spell and must be rescued by Prince Phillip, who defeats the evil Maleficent. In *The Little Mermaid*, Ariel gives up her voice and her mermaid tail to be with Prince Eric, reinforcing the idea that women should sacrifice their own desires and identities for the sake of a man.

However, in more recent years, Disney has made efforts to address some of these gender stereotypes in their films. For example, in *Mulan* (1998), the heroine takes on a traditionally masculine role and becomes a warrior, while in *Frozen* (2013), the relationship between sisters Elsa and Anna is central to the story, rather than a romantic relationship with a male character.

The historical context of Disney's gender stereotypes is deeply rooted in traditional gender roles and societal expectations of the time. While the company has made progress in recent years towards more gender-inclusive storytelling, the legacy of these stereotypes continues to shape popular culture and impact the way we think about gender and identity.

Before delving into the specific ways in which Disney has set gender stereotypes, it is important to examine the historical context in which these stereotypes have arisen. Disney was founded in the early 20th century, a time when gender roles were much more rigidly defined than they are today. Men were expected to be the breadwinners and protectors of their families,

while women were expected to be homemakers and caregivers. These gender roles were reinforced by popular media of the time, including films and television shows.

### Disney's early films

Disney's early films are considered some of the most iconic and influential works in the history of animation. They include classic titles such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Pinocchio* (1940), *Fantasia* (1940), and *Bambi* (1942). This literature review will explore the critical reception and historical significance of these films, as well as their cultural impact and lasting legacy.

At the time of their release, Disney's early films were met with both commercial and critical success. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, for example, was the first feature-length animated film and became a box office hit, grossing over \$8 million in its initial run. Critics praised the film for its technical innovations, such as the use of multiplane cameras and the integration of music and storytelling.

Similarly, *Pinocchio* was well-received by critics and audiences alike, and is often considered one of Disney's greatest achievements. The film's animation, music, and storytelling were praised for their depth and complexity, and the film was nominated for two Academy Awards. However, not all of Disney's early films were universally acclaimed. *Fantasia*, for example, was met with mixed reviews upon its release, with some critics finding the film overly ambitious and self-indulgent. *Bambi*, while popular with audiences, was criticized by some for its sentimental portrayal of nature and its perceived lack of a coherent narrative.

Despite some critical misgivings, Disney's early films have had a lasting impact on the animation industry and popular culture as a whole. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* is often credited with kickstarting the animated film genre, paving the way for later classics such as *Cinderella* (1950) and *The Little Mermaid* (1989).

*Pinocchio*, meanwhile, is remembered for its groundbreaking animation techniques and for setting the bar for future animated films in terms of visual storytelling and character development. The film's legacy can be seen in later Disney classics such as *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) and *The Lion King* (1994).

Disney's early films also had a significant impact on popular culture, both in the United States and around the world. The characters and stories from these films have become ingrained in the cultural consciousness, with *Snow White*, *Pinocchio*, and *Bambi* remaining iconic figures in American pop culture. The influence of these films can also be seen in contemporary animation and filmmaking. For example, the use of music as a central storytelling device in *Fantasia* has been emulated by filmmakers such as Wes Anderson, who incorporated a similar approach in his film *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014).

Disney's early films remain influential and beloved works of animation that continue to captivate audiences and inspire filmmakers. Despite some critical misgivings at the time of their release, these films have become an integral part of American popular culture and continue to set the standard for animated storytelling and filmmaking.

Disney's early films, including *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) and *Cinderella* (1950), have been criticized for perpetuating traditional gender roles. In both films, the female protagonists are passive and submissive, waiting for a prince to come and rescue them from their miserable lives. The male characters, on the other hand, are strong and heroic, saving the damsels in distress and providing for their families.

In *Snow White*, the titular character is depicted as a naive and innocent young woman who is forced to flee from the evil queen. She is taken in by seven dwarfs, who become her protectors and caretakers. The dwarfs are all male and each has a distinct personality trait, reinforcing the idea that men are complex and interesting while women are simple and one-dimensional.

Similarly, *Cinderella* is a classic example of the "princess" archetype that Disney has popularized. The character is kind and gentle, but ultimately helpless without the intervention of a man. Her stepmother and stepsisters are portrayed as cruel and jealous, perpetuating the stereotype of women being catty and competitive with one another.

### Disney's contemporary films

In more recent years, Disney has made efforts to portray its female characters as stronger and more independent. Films like *Mulan* (1998) and *Brave* (2012) feature female protagonists who are skilled fighters and capable leaders. However, these films still perpetuate gender stereotypes in other ways.

In *Mulan*, the titular character disguises herself as a man in order to fight in the army and save her father's life. While this is certainly a feminist act, it also reinforces the idea that women must act like men in order to be taken seriously. The film also features a number of male characters who are portrayed as bumbling and incompetent, reinforcing the idea that men are not as competent as women.

*Brave*, on the other hand, features a strong female protagonist who defies traditional gender roles by refusing to marry and pursuing her own goals. However, the film has been criticized for its portrayal of the main character's mother, who is a strict and controlling figure. This perpetuates the stereotype of women being overly emotional and irrational.

Disney is known for producing a variety of films for all ages, including contemporary films that have gained a significant following. In this literature review, we will explore various perspectives on Disney's contemporary films, analyzing their impact, success, and reception. One of the most popular contemporary Disney films is *Frozen* (2013), which has gained a huge following among children and adults. The film has been praised for its feminist themes, including strong female characters, and its emphasis on sisterhood. Critics have also noted the film's success in challenging traditional Disney princess narratives and its impact on popular culture.

Similarly, *Moana* (2016) has also been well-received for its depiction of strong female characters, diverse representation, and portrayal of Polynesian culture. Scholars have noted the film's emphasis on ocean conservation and its potential to inspire environmental activism among children. Disney's live-

action remakes of classic animated films have also garnered significant attention. The 2019 live-action adaptation of *The Lion King* received mixed reviews, with some critics praising the film's stunning visuals and others criticizing it for lacking the emotional depth of the original.

In recent years, Disney has also produced a series of successful Marvel Cinematic Universe films, such as *Black Panther* (2018) and *Avengers: Endgame* (2019). These films have been praised for their diverse casting and storytelling, as well as their ability to create a shared universe among multiple franchises. Despite the success of many of Disney's contemporary films, there has also been criticism regarding the company's dominance in the entertainment industry and its impact on smaller studios and independent filmmakers. Some have also criticized the company for its lack of diversity in its executive leadership and casting decisions. Disney's contemporary films have received both praise and criticism for their storytelling, representation, and impact on popular culture. As the company continues to produce new films, it will be interesting to see how it navigates these issues and responds to changing audience expectations.

### Disney's male characters

While Disney is often criticized for its portrayal of female characters, the company's male characters have also perpetuated gender stereotypes. Male characters are typically portrayed as strong, brave, and capable, with little room for vulnerability or emotion.

In films like *Aladdin* (1992) and *The Lion King* (1994), male characters are portrayed as adventurous and daring, while female characters are relegated to secondary roles. In *Aladdin*, the titular character is portrayed as a "street rat" with a heart of gold, while Princess Jasmine is depicted as a passive and obedient figure.

Gender stereotypes are cultural beliefs about the roles and characteristics that are appropriate for men and women. In Disney films, these stereotypes have been evident in a number of ways. Female characters are often portrayed as physically weaker and more emotional than their male counterparts, while male characters are presented as strong and dominant. Female characters also tend to be more passive, waiting for male characters to take action or solve problems. This reinforces the idea that women are less capable than men and need to be protected or guided by them.

Disney is known for creating some of the most beloved animated movies of all time. However, the portrayal of male characters in these films has been a topic of discussion and debate for years. In this literature review, we will examine some of the research that has been conducted on Disney's portrayal of male characters in their movies.

One of the earliest studies on this topic was conducted by Emily Wierszewski and Elizabeth Cramer in 2011. They analyzed the portrayal of masculinity in 15 Disney movies released between 1989 and 1999. The authors found that while male characters were often portrayed as strong and heroic, they were also frequently characterized as aggressive and dominant, with a

tendency to use physical force to solve problems.

Another study conducted by Anthony S. Ramirez and Tara L. Kuther in 2014 looked at the portrayal of masculinity in four Disney movies released between 1991 and 1999. The authors found that male characters in these movies were often shown as physically strong and emotionally distant, with a focus on traditional masculine traits such as bravery and self-reliance.

In 2016, Lindsey M. Stephens and Nancy Signorielli conducted a content analysis of 30 Disney movies released between 1937 and 2013. They found that male characters were typically portrayed as physically strong, dominant, and aggressive, while also exhibiting traditional masculine traits such as bravery and leadership. However, male characters were also shown to be emotionally vulnerable and capable of expressing love and affection.

A more recent study conducted by Caitlin L. Ryan and Sarah M. Coyne in 2020 analyzed the portrayal of masculinity in six Disney movies released between 2009 and 2016. The authors found that male characters in these movies were portrayed as emotionally complex and capable of expressing a range of emotions, including vulnerability and compassion. However, they also found that male characters were still shown as physically strong and dominant. While there have been some shifts in the portrayal of male characters in Disney movies over time, the traditional traits of physical strength, bravery, and leadership are still heavily emphasized. However, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of emotional vulnerability and the expression of a wider range of emotions in male characters in recent years.

### Changing gender stereotypes in Disney films

Disney, a leading media and entertainment company, has been known for its iconic characters and storytelling that has entertained generations of children and adults worldwide. However, Disney's portrayal of gender roles and stereotypes has been a subject of debate over the years. The company has been criticized for perpetuating traditional gender roles and stereotypes, which limit the portrayal of women in leadership roles and men as stoic and emotionless. However, in recent years, Disney has made efforts to change gender stereotypes through its characters and storylines, creating more gender-neutral and diverse representations in its content. This literature review aims to explore Disney's role in changing gender stereotypes through its films and other media, including television shows and theme parks.

Gender stereotypes are societal beliefs and assumptions about how men and women should behave and present themselves based on their gender. Stereotypes are often based on cultural norms and expectations and can influence individuals' perceptions and behavior. Traditional gender roles portray men as dominant, strong, and unemotional, while women are seen as nurturing, emotional, and submissive. These stereotypes are often perpetuated in media and entertainment, including films, television shows, and advertisements, influencing children's perceptions of gender from an early age.

Disney has been accused of perpetuating traditional gender roles and stereotypes, with male characters often portrayed as heroes

who save the day, while female characters are portrayed as princesses who need rescuing. The female characters are often presented as passive, nurturing, and focused on finding a partner, while male characters are shown as active, brave, and assertive. Critics argue that these portrayals limit the representation of women in leadership roles and reinforce traditional gender roles, making it difficult for children to imagine themselves in roles that defy these stereotypes.

Disney has made significant efforts to change gender stereotypes in recent years, recognizing the importance of diversity and inclusivity in media and entertainment. The company has introduced more diverse and complex characters that break traditional gender roles, representing individuals from different races, ethnicities, and sexual orientations. For example, in the film *Moana* (2016), Disney introduced a strong female protagonist, Moana, who defies traditional gender roles by taking on a leadership role in her community and embarking on a journey to save her people. Moana's character is not defined by her gender, and her story shows that anyone can be a hero, regardless of their gender.

Disney has also introduced more diverse and complex male characters that break traditional gender stereotypes. In the film *Frozen* (2013), Disney introduced the character Kristoff, who defies traditional male gender roles by being emotional, nurturing, and caring. Kristoff's character challenges traditional gender roles by showing that men can be sensitive and nurturing without compromising their masculinity.

Disney has also made efforts to create more diverse and inclusive storylines that challenge traditional gender roles. For example, in the film *Mulan* (1998), Disney introduced a female protagonist who takes on the role of a warrior to save her father and her country. Mulan's character challenges traditional gender roles by showing that women can be strong and independent, and can excel in male-dominated roles.

Disney has also made efforts to change gender stereotypes through its television shows and theme parks. In the television show *Doc McStuffins* (2012-2018), Disney introduced a young girl who aspires to be a doctor, breaking traditional gender roles by portraying a girl who is interested in science and medicine. In Disney's theme parks, the company has introduced more diverse and inclusive attractions, including attractions featuring female superheroes and characters from diverse backgrounds.

In recent years, Disney has made a concerted effort to challenge and subvert traditional gender stereotypes in its films. This has been evident in the portrayal of female characters as strong, capable, and independent, as well as in the increased representation of characters from diverse backgrounds. In "*Mulan*," for example, the titular character defies gender norms by disguising herself as a man to join the army and protect her family. In "*Frozen*," the relationship between sisters Anna and Elsa is the focal point of the story, rather than a romantic relationship with a male character.

Disney has changed the way it depicts women, especially their princesses, over time to reflect the times and cultural norms. It is not known if or how Disney has adapted to the shifting values

and beliefs regarding social norms and gender roles, despite the fact that it is already known that they are a significant leader in the entertainment industry. As a result, from the 1937 release of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* to the 2013 release of *Frozen*, I propose conducting research on cultural shifts and trends through literature reviews of previously published articles and journals on these subjects.

The culture and social ideals of various time periods in America will be the primary focus of the research that will be carried out through a variety of literature, journal articles, and the movie itself. This will be accomplished by concentrating on eight of the original fairy tales about Disney princesses to represent significant eras and changes in Disney animation. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Mulan*, *Tangled*, *Brave*, and *Frozen* will be the eight Disney films. Because they were released at various times and represented various ideals, these eight films were chosen for in-depth review and research. What remains to be discovered includes the reasons for the significance of media influence and society's influence on gender roles.

What cultural expectations or stereotypes have existed throughout the United States' history? Additionally, how does Disney alter how stereotypes of characters are portrayed? Does the American film industry actually reflect the country's evolving values and beliefs over time? In addition, what are the primary characteristics that set the Disney princesses apart, and did these characteristics actually evolve over time or remained the same?

### Contribution of media

Technology, advertising, and a variety of media, including music, video games, movies, and television, dominate America's culture and time. This way of life and its impact on the world around them are ingrained in the children and adolescents of this generation. One of life's most important aspects has become the influence of television alone. 116.4 million homes in the United States have one or more televisions, according to statistics (Newswire, 2015). Additionally, according to Tonn (2008), the average American spends 250 billion hours per year watching television.

Even though this is older research, McGhee and Fruch suggest that a child's knowledge and understanding of the expected behaviors and characteristics of males and females may be influenced by how much television they watch (1980). In addition to providing entertainment, watching television has other effects; it affects how we feel about ourselves and other people [5]. According to Palmer (2013), the thousands of images, sounds, and words that viewers see flashed or playing on a screen have an impact on their identities as well as their relationships, blurring the lines between reality and fantasy.

According to Tonn [5], some children believe that the entertainment shown on television is real and accurately depicts life [5]. Children frequently make comparisons between their lives and the characters in the show. Additionally, they are influenced by social norms, which results in intolerance among their peers (Palmer, 2013). A child's sense of self is frequently entwined with the overwhelming influence of pop culture.



Disney is a well-known entertainment conglomerate that has produced numerous movies, TV shows, and other media content over the years. While Disney's media has been praised for its ability to entertain and inspire children and adults alike, it has also been criticized for perpetuating stereotypes that can be harmful. This literature review will examine how the media contributes to the circulation of Disney stereotypes.

Disney has a long history of perpetuating stereotypes in its media content. Some of the most common stereotypes found in Disney media include gender stereotypes, racial stereotypes, and cultural stereotypes. For example, female characters in Disney movies are often portrayed as passive and in need of male rescue. In addition, characters of color are often relegated to secondary roles, and cultural traditions are often simplified and presented in a caricatured manner.

The media plays a significant role in perpetuating Disney stereotypes. One way in which media contributes to the circulation of these stereotypes is through the use of marketing and advertising. Disney products and merchandise often reinforce stereotypes found in their media content. For example, Disney Princesses merchandise is marketed primarily to young girls and reinforces gender stereotypes by promoting traditionally feminine activities such as playing dress-up.

Another way in which media contributes to the circulation of Disney stereotypes is through the portrayal of characters in movies and TV shows. The media has the power to shape how audiences perceive different groups of people. When characters in Disney media are depicted in stereotypical ways, it reinforces those stereotypes in the minds of viewers. For example, the depiction of African-American characters as lazy or unintelligent in some Disney movies can contribute to negative stereotypes about this group of people.

Finally, the media can contribute to the circulation of Disney stereotypes by influencing the way that people talk about and interpret Disney media. For example, when critics and commentators discuss Disney movies and TV shows, they often focus on the stereotypes present in the content. This can reinforce those stereotypes in the minds of viewers and lead to a greater acceptance of them.

The media plays a significant role in the circulation of Disney stereotypes. Through marketing and advertising, the portrayal of characters, and the interpretation of media content, the media can reinforce harmful stereotypes and contribute to a greater acceptance of them. It is important for media creators and consumers alike to be aware of these stereotypes and work to challenge and subvert them wherever possible.

## Disney and gender balance

Disney is one of the most recognizable and successful entertainment companies in the world. With a diverse range of media properties, from theme parks to movies and television shows, the company has a significant impact on popular culture. However, like many industries, Disney has faced criticism for its representation of gender in its media properties. In this literature review, we will explore the research on Disney and gender

balance to gain a better understanding of how the company portrays gender and how it may be impacting audiences.

Several studies have analyzed the representation of gender in Disney media, and the findings suggest that there are significant imbalances. For example, a content analysis of 26 Disney movies found that male characters spoke three times as often as female characters, and male characters were more likely to have agency and be portrayed as heroes (Haddock & Zimmerman, 2010). Similarly, a study of 30 Disney Channel shows found that male characters were more likely to be portrayed as leaders and problem solvers, while female characters were more likely to be portrayed as followers and helpers [9].

The gender representation in Disney media has the potential to impact audiences, particularly children. For example, research has shown that exposure to gender-stereotyped media can lead to the internalization of gender stereotypes and the reinforcement of gender roles (Signorielli, 2001). Additionally, exposure to media with limited female representation can impact girls' self-esteem and limit their aspirations (Aubrey & Taylor, 2009). Therefore, the imbalanced representation of gender in Disney media may be contributing to gender inequality and limiting the opportunities available to girls and women.

In recent years, Disney has made efforts to improve the representation of gender in its media properties. For example, the movie "Frozen" featured two female leads, and the TV show "Doc McStuffins" featured a female African American protagonist. Additionally, Disney has partnered with organizations like Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media to improve gender representation in media. However, research suggests that there is still room for improvement, as some recent Disney movies have been criticized for their representation of gender [11].

Overall, the literature on Disney and gender balance suggests that there are significant imbalances in the representation of gender in Disney media. These imbalances have the potential to impact audiences, particularly children, by reinforcing gender stereotypes and limiting opportunities for girls and women. While Disney has made efforts to improve gender representation in recent years, there is still room for improvement. Future research should continue to explore the impact of gender representation in Disney media and evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to improve representation.

Gender has been a topic of interest in both academic and popular discussions in recent years. The representation of gender in media and popular culture has been a significant area of research, and Disney, as a major media and entertainment company, has been a subject of scrutiny in this area. This literature review will examine some of the key studies and debates surrounding Disney and gender.

One area of research has focused on the representation of gender in Disney films, particularly in the portrayal of female characters. In her book, "From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture," Elizabeth Bell argues that Disney films tend to present a narrow and limiting view of femininity. She notes that female characters in Disney films are often passive, dependent on male characters, and defined by their physical appearance.

Other scholars have also criticized Disney films for perpetuating gender stereotypes, such as the idea that girls should be sweet and submissive, while boys should be adventurous and assertive.

However, some scholars have taken a more nuanced view of Disney's representation of gender. Sharon R. Mazzarella, in her article "Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in Disney's Animated Feature Films," argues that Disney films can be read as a site of negotiation and struggle over gender norms. She notes that while some Disney films do reinforce traditional gender roles, others challenge them, such as *Mulan*, which features a strong and independent female protagonist who defies gender expectations.

Another area of research has focused on the merchandising of Disney products and its impact on gender identity. Stephanie A. Shields, in her article "Cinderella and Princess Culture," argues that Disney's marketing of princess products reinforces gender stereotypes and promotes a narrow view of femininity. She notes that Disney's princess products tend to focus on appearance and materialism, rather than on the development of character or skills. Other scholars have also criticized Disney for marketing products that perpetuate gender stereotypes, such as the idea that girls should be interested in fashion and beauty, while boys should be interested in action and adventure.

In recent years, Disney has faced criticism for its representation of gender and its treatment of female employees. In 2018, former Disney Channel star Zendaya criticized the company for its lack of diversity and representation in its programming. Other critics have accused Disney of underpaying its female employees and failing to promote women to leadership positions.

Research on Disney and gender has revealed a complex and often contradictory relationship between the company and gender norms. While some scholars have criticized Disney for perpetuating gender stereotypes, others have argued that the company's films and products can be read as a site of negotiation and struggle over gender norms. Regardless of these debates, it is clear that Disney's representation of gender has a significant impact on popular culture and the ways in which children learn about gender roles and expectations.

### Impact on children's mind

The impact of gender stereotypes in media, particularly in children's media, has been an ongoing topic of discussion for many years. One of the most influential and pervasive media companies in the world is The Walt Disney Company, with its vast array of movies, television shows, and merchandise targeted towards children. Disney has been criticized for perpetuating gender stereotypes in its media, including the portrayal of female characters as passive and submissive, and male characters as aggressive and dominant. This literature review examines the effect of Disney gender stereotypes on children, including their beliefs about gender roles and behaviors, and their perceptions of themselves and others.

Gender stereotypes are widely accepted beliefs about the characteristics and roles that are considered appropriate for males and females in a given culture. According to media

scholars, children's media, including Disney, often reinforces traditional gender stereotypes. For example, in classic Disney movies like *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, and *Sleeping Beauty*, female characters are typically portrayed as helpless and dependent on men to rescue them. Male characters, on the other hand, are depicted as strong and powerful, with the ability to save the day.

Disney's more recent movies, such as *Frozen* and *Moana*, have attempted to break away from traditional gender stereotypes by featuring strong and independent female characters. However, some critics argue that these movies still reinforce gender stereotypes in other ways, such as through the portrayal of female characters as emotional and nurturing, while male characters are depicted as rational and logical.

The impact of Disney gender stereotypes on children has been the subject of numerous studies. Research has shown that exposure to gender stereotypes in media can shape children's beliefs about gender roles and behaviors, and can influence their attitudes towards themselves and others.

One study examined the impact of Disney movies on children's gender role attitudes. The study found that children who watched Disney movies with traditional gender roles were more likely to have stereotypical views of gender roles, while children who watched movies with non-traditional gender roles were more likely to have non-stereotypical views of gender roles [12].

Another study looked at the impact of Disney princesses on young girls. The study found that girls who identified with princesses were more likely to adhere to traditional gender roles, such as being nurturing and passive, and were less likely to engage in physical activities that were considered "masculine."

Research has also shown that exposure to gender stereotypes in media can affect children's self-esteem and body image. Girls who are exposed to media that emphasizes thinness and beauty as the ideal can develop negative body image and low self-esteem. Boys who are exposed to media that emphasizes muscularity and toughness as the ideal can develop body dissatisfaction and engage in risky behaviors, such as substance abuse and aggression.

Furthermore, exposure to gender stereotypes in media can also influence children's social and emotional development. Boys who are exposed to media that promotes aggressive and dominant behaviors may be more likely to engage in bullying and other forms of aggression. Girls who are exposed to media that promotes passive and submissive behaviors may be more likely to have low self-esteem and difficulty asserting themselves in social situations.

The effect of Disney gender stereotypes on children is a complex and multi-faceted issue. While Disney has attempted to break away from traditional gender stereotypes in recent movies, its media still perpetuates many traditional gender roles and behaviors. Research has shown that exposure to gender stereotypes in media can shape children's beliefs about gender roles and behaviors, and can have negative impacts on their self-esteem, body image, and social and emotional development.

## Political economy of Disney

Disney is a global entertainment and media conglomerate that operates in various segments including media networks, parks and resorts, studio entertainment, consumer products, and interactive media. Over the years, scholars have analyzed the political economy of Disney, focusing on its business practices, cultural impact, and influence on politics and policy. This literature review summarizes some of the key findings and themes from existing scholarship on the political economy of Disney. Several scholars have analyzed Disney's business practices, particularly in terms of its market power and corporate strategy. For example, Susan Christopherson (2010) argues that Disney's dominance in the entertainment industry is due to its control of intellectual property rights and its ability to cross-promote its products across various media platforms. She also notes that Disney's aggressive expansion strategies have contributed to the homogenization of cultural products worldwide. Similarly, Janet Wasko (2011) discusses Disney's global expansion and its use of vertical integration to control all aspects of its products, from creation to distribution.

Disney's cultural impact has been the subject of much analysis, with scholars examining the ways in which its products shape social norms and values. For instance, Henry Giroux (2002) argues that Disney's animated films promote a conservative ideology that reinforces gender and racial stereotypes, while also promoting consumerism and conformity. Similarly, Roberta Pearson (2005) explores the cultural significance of Disneyland as a site of American mythology, noting that it reflects and reinforces dominant cultural values.

Scholars have also studied the political influence of Disney, particularly in terms of its lobbying efforts and relationships with government officials. For example, Kevin Yelvington (2002) discusses Disney's involvement in shaping tourism policy in the Caribbean, arguing that the company's economic power and political influence have allowed it to shape policy in its favor. Additionally, Robert W. McChesney and John Nichols (2010) analyze Disney's role in shaping media policy, arguing that the company's lobbying efforts have helped to consolidate media ownership and restrict competition in the industry.

Existing scholarship on the political economy of Disney has explored the company's business practices, cultural impact, and political influence. Scholars have analyzed Disney's dominance in the entertainment industry, its use of intellectual property rights and vertical integration to control all aspects of its products, and its global expansion strategies. Additionally, scholars have examined the ways in which Disney's products shape social norms and values, as well as its political influence and lobbying efforts. Overall, the literature suggests that Disney's economic power and cultural influence have significant implications for politics, policy, and social norms.

Disney is a multinational media and entertainment conglomerate that has been successful in generating substantial profits through its various business operations. This literature review aims to provide an overview of the profit-making structure of Disney by examining key factors that have contributed to its financial success.

One of the primary factors contributing to Disney's profitability is its diversification of business operations. Disney has a range of business segments, including media networks, parks and resorts, studio entertainment, consumer products, and interactive media. This diversification has enabled Disney to offset any fluctuations in one area of its business with revenue generated from other segments, which has contributed to its overall profitability.

Disney has a strong intellectual property portfolio, including iconic brands such as Mickey Mouse, Disney Princesses, Marvel, Pixar, and Star Wars. These brands have high recognition and appeal, making them valuable assets that generate significant revenue through merchandise sales, licensing deals, and theme park attractions. Disney has a history of making strategic acquisitions that have contributed to its growth and profitability. For example, its acquisition of Pixar in 2006 brought in valuable talent and expanded Disney's animation capabilities, resulting in hits such as *Toy Story 3* and *Frozen*. Disney's acquisition of Marvel in 2009 also expanded its intellectual property portfolio, leading to the creation of successful franchises such as the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

Disney's theme parks and resorts are a significant contributor to its profitability. Disney has a global network of theme parks that generate revenue through ticket sales, merchandise sales, and food and beverage sales. Additionally, Disney's resorts provide a range of accommodations and entertainment options that generate additional revenue streams. Disney's strong marketing and branding efforts have also contributed to its profitability. The company has a reputation for creating high-quality content that resonates with audiences of all ages, resulting in strong brand loyalty. Disney also uses a range of marketing strategies to promote its products and services, including social media campaigns, television advertisements, and influencer partnerships.

Disney's profitability is a result of a range of factors, including its diversification of business operations, strong intellectual property portfolio, strategic acquisitions, theme parks and resorts, and strong marketing and branding efforts. These factors have enabled Disney to generate substantial revenue and maintain a strong position in the entertainment industry.

The ideology of Disney is a complex and multifaceted subject that has been explored by numerous scholars and critics over the years. In this literature review, we will examine some of the key themes and debates surrounding Disney's ideology. One of the central themes in the literature on Disney is the company's role in shaping cultural values and norms. Many scholars argue that Disney's films and theme parks promote a particular vision of American culture that emphasizes traditional family values, individualism, and consumerism. For example, in their book *"The Mouse That Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence,"* Henry Giroux and Grace Pollock argue that Disney's cultural products have played a significant role in shaping the "Disneyfication" of American culture, where superficiality and commercialization are prioritized over deeper values and meanings.

Others have argued that Disney's ideology is not as simplistic as some critics make it out to be. In his book *"The Disney Middle Ages:"*

A Fairy-Tale and Fantasy Past," Tison Pugh argues that Disney's films often challenge traditional gender and class roles, and offer a more nuanced vision of history and culture than some critics give them credit for. Another area of debate in the literature on Disney's ideology is the question of cultural imperialism. Many critics have accused Disney of exporting American cultural values to the rest of the world through its films and theme parks. For example, in their book "Disney and Its Worlds," J.P. Telotte and Mark John Isola argue that Disney's global reach has allowed it to "create and disseminate a particular worldview that emphasizes American values, tastes, and attitudes."

Despite the criticisms, there are also those who argue that Disney's ideology can be a force for good. In her book "From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture," Elizabeth Bell argues that Disney's films can be read as offering a counter-narrative to dominant cultural values, and can provide a space for children to explore complex social issues. The literature on Disney's ideology is complex and multifaceted, reflecting the diverse ways in which the company's cultural products have been interpreted and contested over the years. While there are certainly criticisms to be made of Disney's cultural influence, there are also those who see value in the company's ability to provide a space for exploring important social and cultural issues.

### Interconnection of research themes with objective

For numerous decades, there has been an ongoing debate surrounding the impacts of media. The potential sway that media holds over its audience has remained a subject of extended discourse. This argument has ranged from viewing media as a direct influencer, where the values and messages conveyed by media directly shape the values of its viewers, to asserting that media's ability to influence the public is minimal. Given the widespread presence of media, it is acknowledged as an actively influential factor in our lives. Due to its role in shaping people's perceptions of society, extensive research has been dedicated to examining the specific messages propagated through television programs, movies, advertisements, and musical genres. Notably, certain themes presented in the content produced by the Walt Disney Company have attracted heightened scrutiny.

The content of Disney movies, particularly their impact on children, especially young girls, has come under scrutiny due to the physical, social, and behavioral attributes they endorse, aligning with notions of male dominance. Disney's portrayal of female characters in their films frequently garners criticism for perpetuating stereotypes and depicting characters in unrealistic ways. This study is dedicated to exploring the prominent Disney Princess characters and their influence on gender stereotypes. The analysis delves into two specific princesses, namely Snow White and Merida, utilizing content analysis as the methodology.

The examination of gender stereotypes within the animated films, particularly focusing on the 10 highest-grossing Disney princess movies, which are, Cinderella, Snow White and the seven dwarfs, Beauty and the Beast, The Sleeping Beauty, Aladdin, Moana, Brave, Raya and the last dragon, Frozen, and Mulan, indicates an evolution of these stereotypes over time.

The research on this topic starts with introducing people to the already set stereotypes by Disney which have been glorified for years. Through the topics of the research, I have tried to understand how such minor particles, like cartoon characters, have a deep impact on people's minds. After describing the unrealistic standards set by the franchise, I've introduced the princesses of Disney who have always been a sideline even after being the main character of the movies. Through the characters, I have tried to bring out the savior syndrome that the characters in Disney faced, and also it gives a deep understanding of the cultural setup of the society and helps us to understand the characters in depth. The detailed explanation of the characters takes us to the ideal portrayal of a woman according to Disney, where the franchise sets a certain standard for the women of society in order to be "perfect". These standards are not only in terms of physical appearance, but also behavioral, psychological, and emotional. This topic also deals with the changes that occur to people's mentality when they start to resonate with those characteristics of an "ideal woman". Disney was setting certain formulas to womanhood as well as manhood and it was clearly visible in the society. This further takes us to the barrier between the male and female characters of Disney, which are poles apart from each other, yet very similar in each classic Disney movie. This differentiation in characters helps us to understand how certain elements like color, tonal range, eating habits, etc., play into our psychology and create a set of gender stereotypes that are harmful to both genders equally. Then we delve into how and in what cultural setup these Disney movies were set so that we can further understand the history of Disney and the roots of these gender stereotypes. We also talk about how Disney is trying to change the stereotypes through its new-age movies and to draw a clear distinction, I have talked about the classic Disney princess movies and the new-age princess movies separately. To understand gender bias, we have to look into both sides of the coin and that's why we talk about the male characters as well as what kind of an impact they are leaving on the audience, and how patriarchy has a big role to play in it, also this is where the research gap lies as the male perspective has not been really talked about. We end the review by discussing the Political Economical background of Disney and how media has not only glorified but propagated the stereotypes among the audience, which gives us a deep understanding of how these big organizations like Disney function.

### Research gap

The existing literature on Disney's portrayal of gender stereotypes has brilliantly explained how these stereotypes have been established and how these have been normalized through several years. However, a significant research gap is found on how Disney is also trying to change the present stereotypes through its movies like Brave, and Frozen. Additionally, there is even less research on how these stereotypes are affecting males. One of the reasons for this research gap is that Disney is a very private company and does not release much information about its research and development process. Additionally, Disney movies are often seen as children's entertainment, and therefore, not taken as seriously by researchers. However, it is important to remember that Disney movies have a powerful influence on



children's perceptions of gender roles. Though there are articles which talk about how these stereotypes have an impact on both the genders, but it still lacks some profound study and how the franchise is trying to change the existing narratives and perceptions still remains unexplored. This research paper aims to bridge the gap by studying how the stereotypes have been created and how they are being changed through the movies and how it has an impact on both the genders.

## Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework that underpins this research paper draws upon a multifaceted array of theoretical perspectives and concepts to provide a comprehensive analytical foundation, with a focus on the influence of Disney films on viewers' perceptions of gender and gender roles.

The first key theoretical component is Social Cognitive Theory, as proposed by Albert Bandura, which emphasizes the significance of observational learning and cognitive processes in influencing individuals' behaviors and beliefs. In the context of this research, this theory elucidates how viewers, particularly children, engage in the observation and internalization of gender representations depicted in Disney films, thereby shaping their own attitudes and behaviors concerning gender roles.

Additionally, the framework incorporates Feminist Theory to examine the historical progression of gender portrayals within Disney films and their alignment or divergence from feminist ideals. This lens facilitates an exploration of the power dynamics between male and female characters and offers insights into potential implications for gender equality.

Media Effects Theory, as proposed by scholars like Gerbner (1998), is another vital element of the theoretical framework, allowing for an examination of how media content, including Disney films, can exert both immediate and prolonged effects on viewers. This perspective is instrumental in comprehending how exposure to certain gender stereotypes in media can mold viewers' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors, ultimately contributing to the shaping of broader societal norms.

Furthermore, the framework integrates Intersectionality theory, as introduced by Crenshaw (1989), to recognize that gender stereotypes in Disney films are not universally experienced, as various factors such as race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality intersect with gender, leading to distinct interpretations and experiences of Disney's portrayals.

Cultural Studies perspectives, as outlined by Hall (1980), are also woven into the framework to scrutinize Disney films as products of their cultural and historical contexts. This approach enables an exploration of how societal norms, values, and power structures are both reflected and reinforced through Disney's storytelling.

Critical Media Analysis techniques, including semiotics (Barthes, 1964) and content analysis, are incorporated to dissect the visual and narrative components within Disney films. By employing these methods, this research aims to identify specific symbols, representations, and storytelling techniques contributing to the portrayal of gender roles and stereotypes.

Lastly, the framework encompasses principles of Media Literacy, as advocated by Aufderheide (1993), emphasizing the importance of equipping individuals, especially young viewers, with the skills required to critically analyze and deconstruct media messages, including those related to gender in Disney films.

Through the integration of these multifaceted theoretical perspectives, this paper seeks to offer a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of Disney's role in shaping and potentially transforming gender stereotypes, thereby enhancing our understanding of how media content can influence and reflect societal perceptions of gender. This approach incorporates the works of several prominent theorists and scholars in the fields of psychology, feminism, media studies, and cultural studies to provide a well-rounded theoretical foundation for the research.

## Methodology

The research design has been carefully constructed to provide a nuanced understanding of the subject matter. We have employed a qualitative methodology as it allows us to delve deeply into the lived experiences and perceptions of both the media content and the audiences. Content analysis serves as the foundational step, enabling us to systematically examine and categorize gender stereotypes within Disney's media content, spanning films, TV shows, and advertisements. Subsequently, survey and in-depth interviews provide a dynamic platform for engaging with participants, allowing us to explore their perspectives, reactions, and interpretations of Disney's portrayal of gender roles.

The process of sampling has been meticulously designed to ensure representation and diversity. Our participants for survey and interviews are selected based on criteria that ensure a variety of viewpoints and experiences. Ethical considerations are paramount, and informed consent will be obtained from all participants.

Data collection will encompass a comprehensive analysis of Disney's media content, including the identification of recurring gender stereotypes. Survey questionnaires will be circulated to understand the impact of Disney on a broader audience. In-depth interviews will offer a more personal exploration of individual perspectives and experiences related to Disney's portrayal of gender.

The subsequent data analysis phase will utilize thematic analysis to extract meaningful insights from the qualitative data gathered. Our results section will present the findings of the content analysis, highlighting the identified gender stereotypes and any observed changes or transformations over time. Additionally, we will summarize the key findings from in-depth interviews, shedding light on the audience's perspectives regarding Disney's role in shaping and changing gender stereotypes.

In the discussion section, we will interpret the results within the broader context of existing literature on gender stereotypes in media, considering the potential implications of Disney's portrayals for societal norms and values. We will also acknowledge the limitations of our study, such as sample size and potential bias, and offer suggestions for future research in this important domain. In conclusion, this research endeavors to contribute

valuable insights into the intricate relationship between Disney's media content and the evolving landscape of gender stereotypes in contemporary society.

### About field of study

The field of research for this paper resides at the intersection of three significant domains: "Movies", "American Multinational Mass Media", and "Audience perspective". These intertwined fields offer a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex relationship between Disney's cinematic narratives and the evolving perceptions of gender stereotypes within the broader context of global mass media.

The first aspect, "Movies," encompasses a rich landscape of cinematic studies. Within this field, scholars explore the art, history, cultural impact, and societal implications of films. Researchers in this domain employ diverse methodologies, such as film analysis, visual storytelling studies, narrative theory, and audience reception analysis, to dissect and comprehend the multifaceted world of cinema. In the context of this research paper, the study leverages the "Movies" field to critically analyze Disney's animated films, providing insights into how this medium contributes to the construction and transformation of gender stereotypes.

The second aspect, "American Multinational Mass Media," encapsulates the enormous influence exerted by media conglomerates, like The Walt Disney Company, on a global scale. It encompasses the study of media conglomerates' reach, power dynamics, and strategies for content creation and distribution. Researchers within this domain scrutinize how these entities shape cultural narratives, influence public discourse, and navigate the complexities of media regulation. In the context of this research paper, the examination of Disney's role as an American multinational mass media corporation is pivotal, as it enables the exploration of how a media giant with worldwide reach can impact and potentially alter societal perceptions of gender.

The third aspect, "Audience perspective" will be gained through the in-depth interviews and surveys which will give us an insight to the audience's understanding of stereotypes and gender roles.

This research field as a whole addresses pertinent questions related to the media's role in reflecting and shaping societal norms, values, and beliefs, particularly concerning gender. It underscores the significant influence of mass media on culture and society and the responsibility that comes with it. Furthermore, it recognizes the global nature of contemporary media conglomerates and their capacity to disseminate narratives and stereotypes beyond national borders, making it an essential domain for understanding the far-reaching implications of media content on a global scale.

### Population

The population for the research paper is intentionally broad, encompassing individuals of all age groups and backgrounds. The rationale behind this inclusivity is rooted in the far-reaching influence of Disney's narratives and characters. Disney productions have a global audience, capturing the attention of not only children but also adults across generations.

Disney's portrayal of gender stereotypes has the potential to shape societal norms and perceptions, making it relevant to people of all ages. Children, in particular, are highly susceptible to the messages conveyed by Disney characters, as these early exposures can mold their understanding of gender roles. Simultaneously, the impact of Disney's evolving approach to gender can resonate with older generations, leading to reflections and discussions on the shifting paradigms of their time.

By involving a diverse and comprehensive population, this research paper aims to gain insights into the nuanced ways in which Disney's representation of gender influences individuals' perspectives, attitudes, and cultural perceptions. This broad approach ensures that the study captures the full spectrum of how Disney's influence extends across different age groups, making it applicable and informative to everyone.

### Sample/Unit

To comprehend whether a movie's impact on the audience's behavior is influenced by the understanding of the film, one seeks an audience-centric viewpoint in response to the aforementioned movies. It is advantageous to target audiences of all age groups to explore whether age, or the specific era of an individual's birth, may be deemed a variable affecting the influence that long-standing character stereotypes have on the audience's perception.

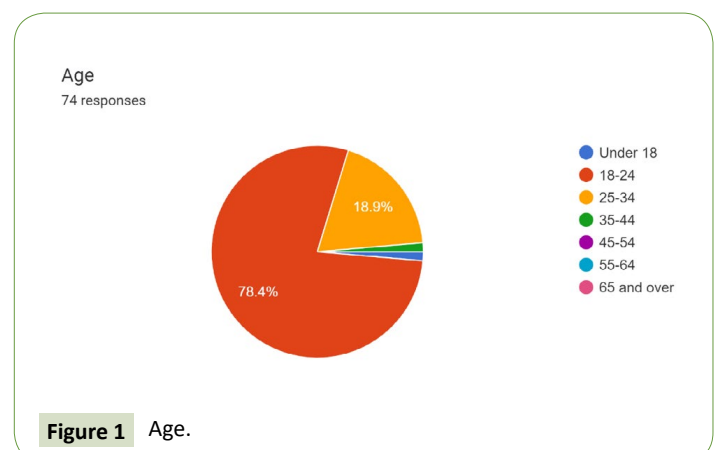
Apart from the general audience's point of view, an expert understanding of Gender and its stereotypical representation have to be acquired that would help in the analysis of the whole study.

## Results and Data Analysis

### Q1) Age (Figure 1)

#### Q2) Gender

The pie chart shows the gender distribution of respondents to a research study on Disney and changing gender stereotypes. The majority of respondents are female (52.1%), followed by male (46.6%) and non-binary or prefer not to say (1.3%). This data is relevant to the research topic because it shows that the majority of people who are interested in this topic are female. However, a significant number of male respondents are also interested,



suggesting that the conversation about gender equality in Disney films is important to a wide range of people.

The pie chart could be used to support the argument that Disney films have a significant impact on children's perceptions of gender roles, explore the changing attitudes towards gender roles in society, and identify areas for further research (Figure 2).

### Q3) Educational level

The pie chart shows the education level of respondents to a research study on Disney and changing gender stereotypes. The majority of respondents (52.7%) have a bachelor's degree, followed by those with some college (40.5%). This data is relevant to the research paper because it shows that the majority of people who are interested in this topic have a high level of education. This is likely because people with higher levels of education are more likely to be aware of and interested in social issues such as gender equality.

The pie chart could be used to support the argument that people with higher levels of education are more likely to be aware of and critical of gender stereotypes in Disney films. The research paper could also explore the relationship between education level and attitudes towards gender equality, and identify areas for further research (Figure 3).

### Q4) Have you ever watched Disney movies or TV shows?

The pie chart shows the results of a survey on whether people have watched Disney movies or TV shows. The vast majority of respondents (95.9%) have, while only a small minority (4.1%) have not. This data is relevant to the research paper on Disney settings and changing gender stereotypes because it shows that

Disney films and TV shows are pervasive in popular culture and have a significant impact on people's perceptions of gender.

The pie chart could be used in the research paper to support the argument that Disney films and TV shows have a significant impact on children's perceptions of gender roles. It could also be used to explore the ways in which Disney films and TV shows have contributed to changing attitudes towards gender roles over time.

Overall, the pie chart provides a valuable snapshot of the prevalence of Disney films and TV shows in popular culture and their potential impact on people's perceptions of gender (Figure 4).

### Q5) How often do you watch Disney content (e.g., movies, TV shows, theme park attractions)?

The pie chart shows the frequency with which people watch Disney content. The majority of respondents (60.8%) watch Disney content frequently or occasionally, suggesting that Disney films and TV shows have a significant impact on people's perceptions of gender.

The pie chart could be used to support the argument that Disney films and TV shows have a significant impact on children's perceptions of gender roles. The research paper could also explore the ways in which the frequency with which people watch Disney content has changed over time, and how this may have impacted people's perceptions of gender.

Overall, the pie chart provides a valuable snapshot of the frequency with which people watch Disney content and its potential impact on people's perceptions of gender (Figure 5).

Gender  
73 responses

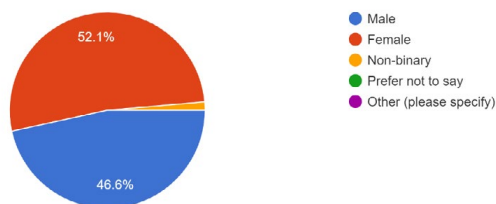


Figure 2 Gender.

Have you ever watched Disney movies or TV shows?  
73 responses

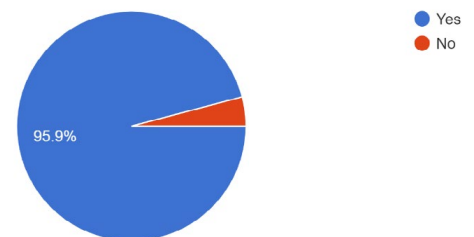


Figure 4 Have you ever watched Disney movies or TV shows?

Education Level  
74 responses

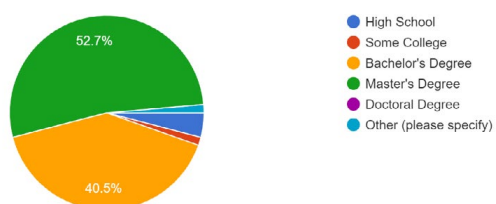


Figure 3 Educational level.

How often do you watch Disney content (e.g., movies, TV shows, theme park attractions)?  
74 responses

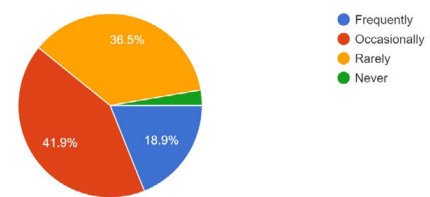


Figure 5 How often do you watch Disney content (e.g., movies, TV shows, theme park attractions)?

**Q6) On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being "Rarely" and 5 being "Frequently," how often do you engage with Disney media (e.g., movies, TV shows, or merchandise)?**

The graph shows that the majority of respondents (60.8%) engage with Disney media frequently, occasionally, or sometimes. This suggests that Disney films and TV shows have a significant impact on people's perceptions of gender, especially in children.

The graph could be used to support the argument that Disney films and TV shows have a significant impact on children's perceptions of gender roles. The research paper could also explore the ways in which the frequency with which people engage with Disney media has changed over time, and how this may have impacted people's perceptions of gender (Figure 6).

**Q7) Using a scale of 1 to 5, how strongly do you agree or disagree that Disney media often reinforces traditional gender roles and stereotypes?**

The bar chart shows that a majority of people (32.5%) believe that Disney films and TV shows reinforce traditional gender roles and stereotypes. This suggests that Disney media may be having a negative impact on people's perceptions of gender.

The bar chart could be used to support the argument that Disney films and TV shows have a significant impact on children's perceptions of gender roles. The research paper could also explore the ways in which Disney films and TV shows can be used to promote gender equality, such as by identifying specific Disney films and TV shows that depict female characters in positive and empowering roles (Figure 7).

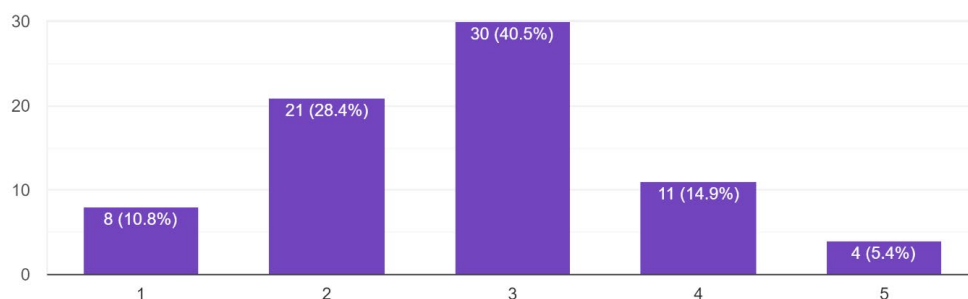
**Q8) On a scale of 1 to 5, to what extent do you agree that there have been positive changes in the representation of gender roles in Disney media over the past decade?**

The bar graph shows the results of a poll asking people to rate the extent to which they agree that there have been positive changes in the representation of gender roles in Disney media over the past decade. The poll used a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree.

The graph shows that the majority of respondents (35.6%) agreed that there have been positive changes in the representation of gender roles in Disney media over the past decade. 27% of respondents were neutral, and 20.3% disagreed. A small percentage of respondents (9.6%) strongly agreed with the statement, and 6.8% strongly disagreed.

On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being "Rarely" and 5 being "Frequently," how often do you engage with Disney media (e.g., movies, TV shows, or merchandise)?

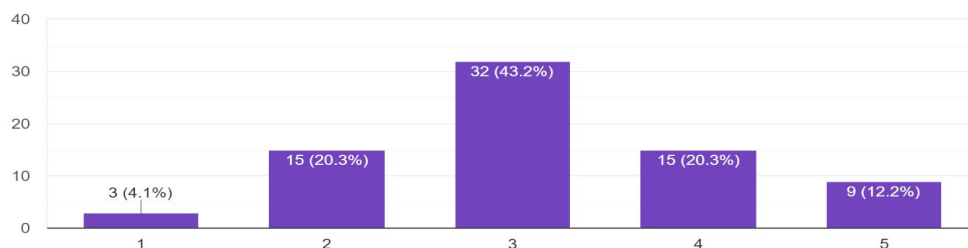
74 responses



**Figure 6** On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being "Rarely" and 5 being "Frequently," how often do you engage with Disney media (e.g., movies, TV shows, or merchandise)?

Using a scale of 1 to 5, how strongly do you agree or disagree that Disney media often reinforces traditional gender roles and stereotypes?

74 responses



**Figure 7** Using a scale of 1 to 5, how strongly do you agree or disagree that Disney media often reinforces traditional gender roles and stereotypes?



This graph suggests that there is a significant number of people who believe that Disney has made positive progress in the way it portrays gender roles in its media. This is encouraging, as it suggests that Disney is listening to feedback from its audience and taking steps to be more inclusive.

However, it is important to note that the graph also shows that a significant number of people believe that Disney needs to do more to promote positive and inclusive representations of gender. This is understandable, as Disney has a long history of perpetuating harmful gender stereotypes (Figure 8).

**Q9) Using a scale of 1 to 5, how much influence do you think Disney has on children's perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes?**

The bar graph shows the results of a poll asking people how much influence they think Disney has on children's perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes. The poll used a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being not much influence and 5 being a lot of influence.

The graph shows that the majority of respondents (39.2%) believed that Disney has a lot of influence on children's perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes. 31.1% of respondents believed

that Disney has some influence, and 21.6% believed that Disney has not much influence. A small percentage of respondents (1.4%) believed that Disney has no influence at all, and 6.8% were unsure.

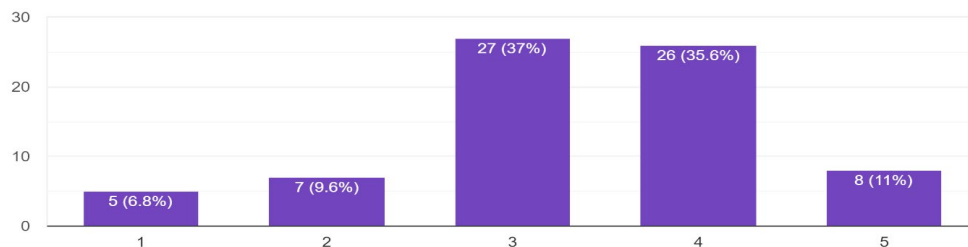
This graph suggests that there is a significant number of people who believe that Disney has a significant impact on children's understanding of gender roles and stereotypes. This is concerning, as Disney is one of the most popular and influential media companies in the world. Its content is consumed by children and adults alike, and it can have a powerful impact on people's understanding of gender roles (Figure 9).

**Q10) On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 5 being "Strongly Agree," do you believe Disney has a responsibility to challenge and modify traditional gender stereotypes within its content?**

The bar graph shows the percentage of people who believe that Disney has a responsibility to challenge and modify traditional gender stereotypes within its content. The data was collected from 74 people, and the responses were on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 5 being "Strongly Agree."

On a scale of 1 to 5, to what extent do you agree that there have been positive changes in the representation of gender roles in Disney media over the past decade?

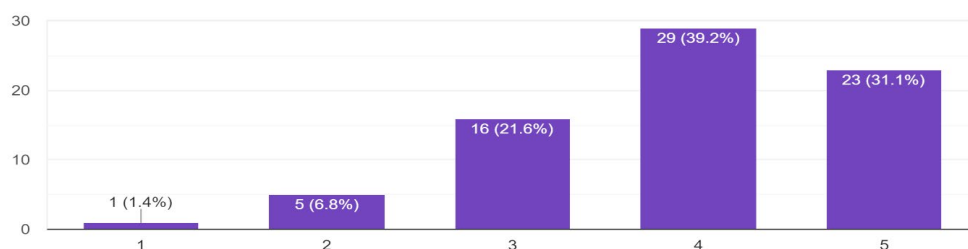
73 responses



**Figure 8** On a scale of 1 to 5, to what extent do you agree that there have been positive changes in the representation of gender roles in Disney media over the past decade?

Using a scale of 1 to 5, how much influence do you think Disney has on children's perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes?

74 responses



**Figure 9** Using a scale of 1 to 5, how much influence do you think Disney has on children's perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes?

The graph shows that 32.4% of respondents strongly agree that Disney has a responsibility to challenge gender stereotypes, while 29.7% somewhat agree. A total of 18.9% of respondents were neutral on the issue, while 12.2% somewhat disagree and 6.8% strongly disagree.

Overall, the graph shows that a majority of people believe that Disney has a responsibility to challenge gender stereotypes. This is likely due to the fact that Disney is a major producer of children's entertainment, and its content has a significant impact on the way that children view the world (Figure 10).

**Q11) On a scale of 1 to 5, how do you rate the evolution of Disney's portrayal of princess characters in terms of characteristics, aspirations, and narrative roles over the years?**

The bar graph shows the results of a poll asking people to rate the evolution of Disney's portrayal of princess characters in terms of characteristics, aspirations, and narrative roles over the years.

The graph shows that the majority of respondents (34.2%) rated the evolution of Disney's portrayal of princess characters as "good". 24% of respondents rated the evolution as "very good", 25% rated it as "average", and 16.4% rated it as "poor". Only 5% of respondents rated the evolution as "very poor".

This graph suggests that most people believe that Disney has made progress in the way it portrays princesses in its media. However, there is still room for improvement, as 41.4% of respondents rated the evolution as "average" or "poor".

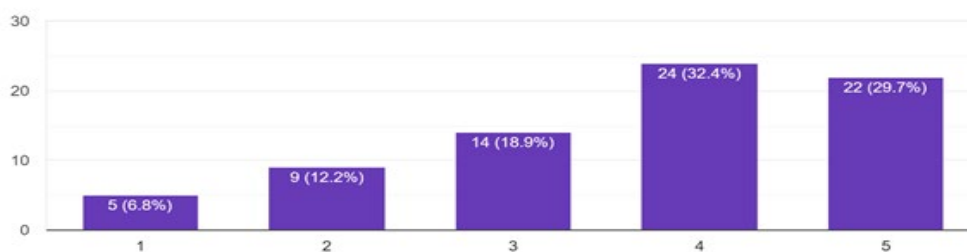
It is important to note that this poll is only a snapshot of public opinion on this issue. It is possible that the results would be different if the poll were conducted at a different time or with a different sample of respondents. However, the graph does suggest that there is a significant number of people who believe that Disney needs to do more to promote positive and inclusive representations of princesses (Figure 11).

**Q12) Using a scale of 1 to 5, how strongly do you agree or disagree that Disney includes characters who actively challenge conventional gender stereotypes?**

The bar graph shows the results of a poll asking people how strongly they agree or disagree with the statement "Disney characters actively challenge conventional gender stereotypes." The poll used a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree.

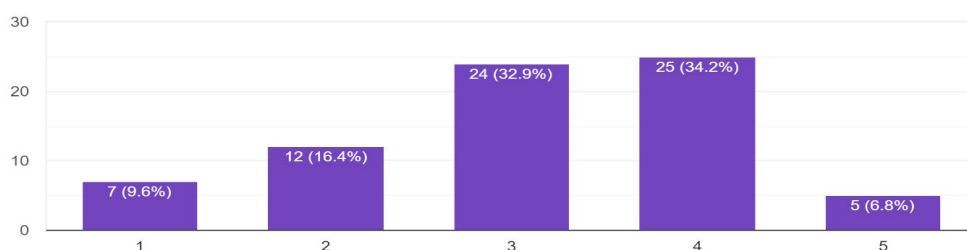
The graph shows that the majority of respondents (45.2%) were neutral on the statement, with 26% agreeing and 26% disagreeing.

On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 5 being "Strongly Agree," do you believe Disney has a responsibility to challenge and modify traditional gender stereotypes within its content?  
74 responses



**Figure 10** On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 5 being "Strongly Agree," do you believe Disney has a responsibility to challenge and modify traditional gender stereotypes within its content?

On a scale of 1 to 5, how do you rate the evolution of Disney's portrayal of princess characters in terms of characteristics, aspirations, and narrative roles over the years?  
73 responses



**Figure 11** On a scale of 1 to 5, how do you rate the evolution of Disney's portrayal of princess characters in terms of characteristics, aspirations, and narrative roles over the years?

disagreeing. A small percentage of respondents (12.3%) strongly agreed with the statement, and 5.5% strongly disagreed.

This graph suggests that there is no clear consensus on whether or not Disney characters actively challenge conventional gender stereotypes. Some people believe that Disney has made progress in recent years, while others believe that the company still has more work to do (Figure 12).

**Q13) On a scale from 1 to 5, to what extent do you believe Disney's portrayal of gender stereotypes reflects or shapes broader societal attitudes?**

The bar graph shows the percentage of people who believe that Disney's portrayal of gender stereotypes reflects or shapes broader societal attitudes.

The data was collected from 73 people, and the responses were on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 5 being "Strongly Agree."

The graph shows that 39.7% of respondents strongly agree that Disney's portrayal of gender stereotypes reflects broader societal attitudes, while 28.8% somewhat agree. A total of 16.4%

of respondents were neutral on the issue, while 11% somewhat disagree and 4.1% strongly disagree.

Overall, the graph shows that a majority of people believe that Disney's portrayal of gender stereotypes reflects broader societal attitudes. This is likely due to the fact that Disney is a major producer of children's entertainment, and its content is viewed by millions of children around the world (Figure 13).

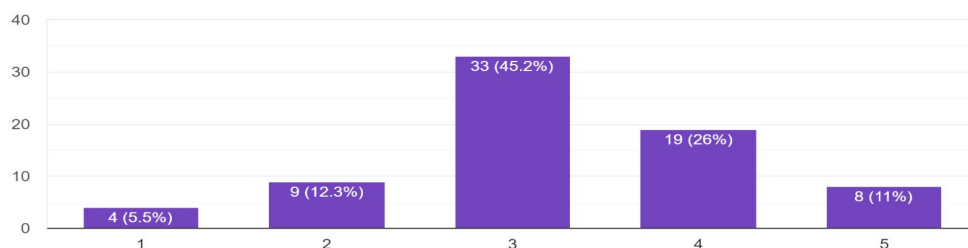
**Q14) Using a scale of 1 to 5, how often have you engaged in conversations with children about gender stereotypes depicted in Disney media?**

The bar graph shows the results of a poll asking people how often they had conversations with their children about gender stereotypes depicted in Disney media. The poll used a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being never and 5 being very often.

The graph shows that the majority of respondents (35.7%) had conversations with their children about gender stereotypes depicted in Disney media sometimes. 25% of respondents had conversations about this topic rarely, 21.4% had conversations very often, 12.9% had conversations never, and 6% had conversations always (Figure 14).

Using a scale of 1 to 5, how strongly do you agree or disagree that Disney includes characters who actively challenge conventional gender stereotypes?

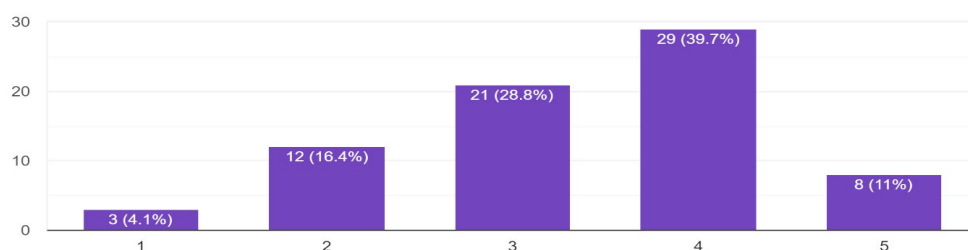
73 responses



**Figure 12** Using a scale of 1 to 5, how strongly do you agree or disagree that Disney includes characters who actively challenge conventional gender stereotypes?

On a scale from 1 to 5, to what extent do you believe Disney's portrayal of gender stereotypes reflects or shapes broader societal attitudes?

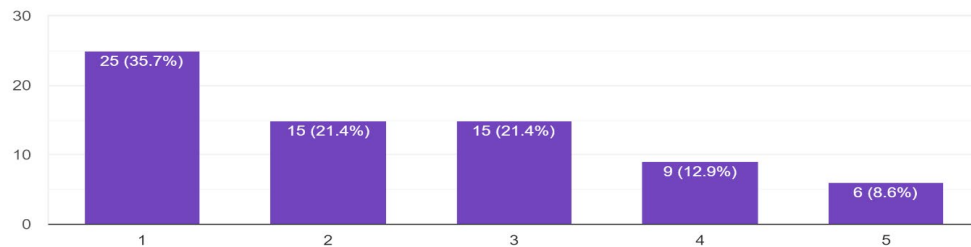
73 responses



**Figure 13** On a scale from 1 to 5, to what extent do you believe Disney's portrayal of gender stereotypes reflects or shapes broader societal attitudes?

Using a scale of 1 to 5, how often have you engaged in conversations with children about gender stereotypes depicted in Disney media?

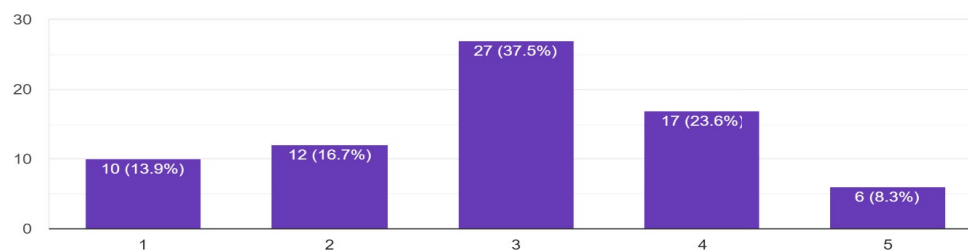
70 responses



**Figure 14** Using a scale of 1 to 5, how often have you engaged in conversations with children about gender stereotypes depicted in Disney media?

On a scale from 1 to 5, how positively or negatively do you perceive Disney's inclusion of LGBTQ+ characters and themes in its recent content in terms of impacting gender representation?

72 responses



**Figure 15** On a scale from 1 to 5, how positively or negatively do you perceive Disney's inclusion of LGBTQ+ characters and themes in its recent content in terms of impacting gender representation?

**Q15) On a scale from 1 to 5, how positively or negatively do you perceive Disney's inclusion of LGBTQ+ characters and themes in its recent content in terms of impacting gender representation?**

The bar graph shows the percentage of people who perceive Disney's inclusion of LGBTQ+ characters and themes in its recent content in terms of impacting gender representation. The data was collected from 72 people, and the responses were on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "Very Negative Impact" and 5 being "Very Positive Impact."

The graph shows that 23.6% of respondents perceive Disney's inclusion of LGBTQ+ characters and themes as having a very positive impact on gender representation, while 37.5% perceive it as having a somewhat positive impact. A total of 16.7% of respondents were neutral on the issue, while 13.9% perceive it as having a somewhat negative impact and 8.3% perceive it as having a very negative impact.

Overall, the graph shows that a majority of people perceive Disney's inclusion of LGBTQ+ characters and themes as having a positive impact on gender representation. This is likely due to the fact that Disney is a major producer of children's entertainment,

and its content has a significant impact on the way that children view the world (Figure 15).

**Q16) Using a scale of 1 to 5, can you rate Disney films or shows that have significantly challenged or reinforced gender stereotypes?**

The bar graph shows the percentage of people who rate Disney films or shows that have significantly challenged or reinforced gender stereotypes. The data was collected from 73 people, and the responses were on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 5 being "Strongly Agree."

The graph shows that 52.1% of respondents agree or strongly agree that Disney films or shows have significantly reinforced gender stereotypes. Only 19.2% of respondents agree or strongly agree that Disney films or shows have significantly challenged gender stereotypes. The remaining 28.8% of respondents were neutral on the issue.

This graph suggests that Disney has a long way to go in terms of challenging gender stereotypes in its content. While there have been some recent examples of Disney films and shows that have



challenged gender stereotypes, such as Frozen and Moana, the majority of Disney's content still reinforces traditional gender roles (Figure 16).

**Q17) On a scale of 1 to 5, have you observed variations in how Disney represents gender stereotypes across different cultural regions or contexts?**

The bar graph shows the percentage of people who have observed variations in how Disney represents gender stereotypes across different cultural regions or contexts. The data was collected from 72 people, and the responses were on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 5 being "Strongly Agree."

The graph shows that 44.4% of respondents strongly agree that they have observed variations in how Disney represents gender stereotypes across different cultural regions or contexts, while 36.1% somewhat agree. A total of 11.1% of respondents were neutral on the issue, while 6.9% somewhat disagree and 1.4% strongly disagree.

Overall, the graph shows that a majority of people believe that there are variations in how Disney represents gender stereotypes across different cultural regions or contexts. This is likely due to

the fact that Disney is a global company that produces content for a wide range of audiences (Figure 17).

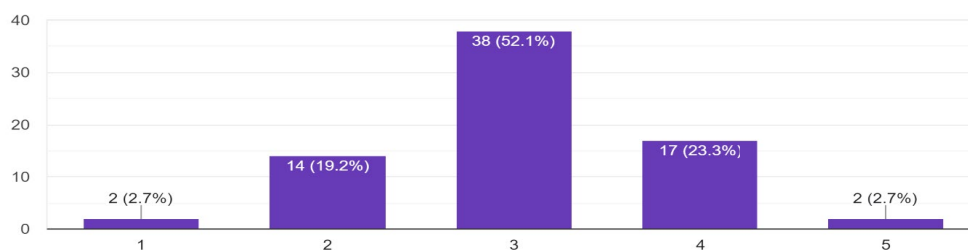
**Q18) Using a scale from 1 to 5, how much do you agree or disagree with recommendations to Disney on enhancing its portrayal of gender diversity and equality in its content?**

The bar graph shows the percentage of people who agree or disagree with recommendations to Disney on enhancing its portrayal of gender diversity and equality in its content. The data was collected from 73 people, and the responses were on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 5 being "Strongly Agree."

The graph shows that 53.4% of respondents agree or strongly agree with recommendations to Disney on enhancing its portrayal of gender diversity and equality in its content. Only 9.5% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree with these recommendations. The remaining 37% of respondents were neutral on the issue.

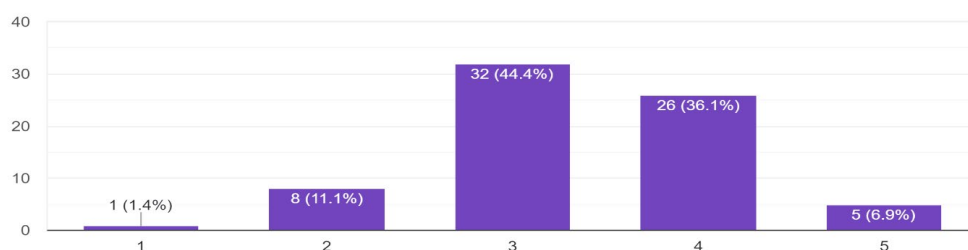
This graph suggests that a majority of people believe that Disney should do more to promote gender diversity and equality in its content. This is likely due to the fact that Disney is a major

Using a scale of 1 to 5, can you rate Disney films or shows that have significantly challenged or reinforced gender stereotypes?  
73 responses



**Figure 16** A scale of 1 to 5, can you rate Disney films or shows that have significantly challenged or reinforced gender stereotypes?

On a scale of 1 to 5, have you observed variations in how Disney represents gender stereotypes across different cultural regions or contexts?  
72 responses



**Figure 17** On a scale of 1 to 5, have you observed variations in how Disney represents gender stereotypes across different cultural regions or contexts?

producer of children's entertainment, and its content has a significant impact on the way that children view the world (Figure 18).

**Q19) On a scale of 1 to 5, how important do you think it is for parents, educators, and Disney as a company to aid children in critically analyzing and comprehending gender stereotypes in media?**

The bar graph shows the percentage of people who agree or disagree with recommendations to parents, educators, and Disney as a company on aiding children in critically analyzing and understanding gender stereotypes in media. The data was collected from 73 people, and the responses were on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 5 being "Strongly Agree."

The graph shows that a majority of people agree or strongly agree with recommendations to parents, educators, and Disney as a company on aiding children in critically analyzing and understanding gender stereotypes in media. Specifically, 68.4% of respondents agree or strongly agree with recommendations to parents, educators, and to Disney as a company.

This graph suggests that a majority of people believe that it is important for parents, educators, and Disney as a company to help children critically analyze and understand gender stereotypes in media. This is likely due to the fact that gender stereotypes can have a negative impact on children's self-esteem, confidence, and development (Figure 19).

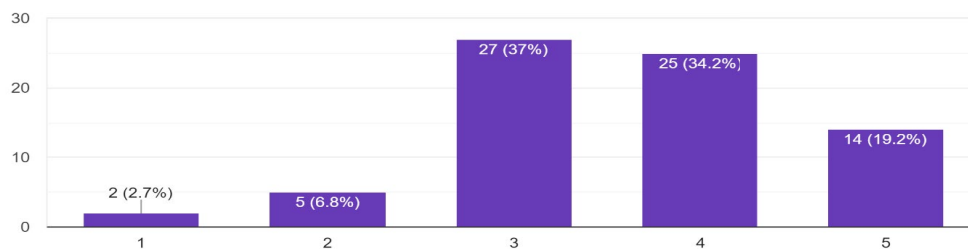
### Thematic analysis

In this section, the responses to the open-ended questions have undergone a thorough thematic analysis, with the data strategically categorized into distinct themes for interpretation and examination. The examination revolves around the overarching research focus on Disney's influence on setting and changing gender stereotypes.

Drawing attention to the consistent theme of festivals and celebrations across all four advertisements, this common element is explored in the context of female empowerment and independence.

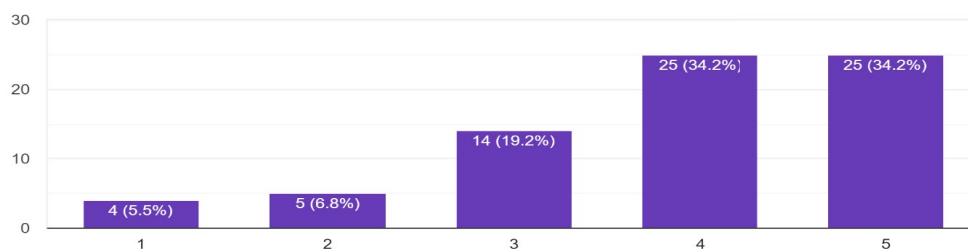
Thematic analysis involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data. In the context of this

Using a scale from 1 to 5, how much do you agree or disagree with recommendations to Disney on enhancing its portrayal of gender diversity and equality in its content?  
73 responses



**Figure 18** Using a scale from 1 to 5, how much do you agree or disagree with recommendations to Disney on enhancing its portrayal of gender diversity and equality in its content?

On a scale of 1 to 5, how important do you think it is for parents, educators, and Disney as a company to aid children in critically analyzing and comprehending gender stereotypes in media?  
73 responses



**Figure 19** On a scale of 1 to 5, how important do you think it is for parents, educators, and Disney as a company to aid children in critically analyzing and comprehending gender stereotypes in media?

research paper focusing on the movies Cinderella, Snow White, Raya and the Last Dragon, and Brave, the thematic analysis could uncover recurring themes related to gender representation and stereotypes in these films.

### Theme 1: Traditional gender roles

**Cinderella and snow white:** The analysis might reveal traditional gender roles where female characters are portrayed as passive and reliant on male figures (e.g., Prince Charming).

**Raya and the last dragon:** Examining the theme of leadership and independence in Raya's character, exploring how it challenges or adheres to traditional gender expectations.

**Brave:** Analyzing Merida's character and her defiance of traditional gender roles, emphasizing her independence and rejection of arranged marriage.

### Theme 2: Empowerment and agency

**Cinderella and snow white:** Identifying moments where the characters exhibit agency or empowerment, even within traditional frameworks.

**Raya and the last dragon:** Focusing on Raya's journey and leadership role as a source of empowerment, and whether it challenges traditional gender norms.

**Brave:** Emphasizing Merida's agency in determining her own destiny, defying gender expectations and asserting her independence.

### Theme 3: Evolving portrayal of beauty

**Cinderella and snow white:** Analyzing how beauty is portrayed and whether it aligns with traditional standards, exploring the impact on gender stereotypes.

**Raya and the last dragon:** Examining the representation of beauty in the context of cultural diversity, and its implications for gender norms.

**Brave:** Investigating the portrayal of beauty as it relates to Merida's character and challenging traditional notions.

### Theme 4: Relationship dynamics

**Cinderella and snow white:** Analyzing romantic relationships and how they contribute to or challenge traditional gender roles.

**Raya and the last dragon:** Examining the dynamics between characters, especially in the context of gender, and assessing how relationships contribute to the narrative.

**Brave:** Exploring Merida's relationship with her family and potential romantic interests and how these relationships relate to gender expectations.

### Theme 5: Cultural representation and diversity

**Raya and the last dragon:** Investigating how cultural diversity is portrayed and whether it challenges or reinforces gender stereotypes.

**Brave:** Analyzing the intersection of gender and cultural identity in the context of Merida's character and the Scottish setting.

### Theme 6: Progressive narratives

**Raya and the last dragon and brave:** Identifying elements in the narratives that challenge or subvert traditional gender norms and stereotypes, portraying more progressive and empowering messages.

This thematic analysis aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how Disney films, over different periods, represent and potentially challenge gender stereotypes in characters, relationships, and cultural contexts. It emphasizes the evolution of gender portrayals in Disney movies and the potential impact on societal perceptions.

### DATA interpretation and findings

#### Research Question-1

How is Disney changing the stereotypes through its recent movies?

In recent years, Disney has made commendable strides in redefining traditional gender stereotypes within its movies, reflecting a concerted effort to promote more inclusive and progressive narratives. Notably, several of its recent productions have deliberately challenged long-standing gender roles, presenting viewers with empowering and non-conventional character representations. The shift is exemplified through films like "Frozen" and "Moana," where the protagonists, Elsa and Moana, respectively, transcend the confines of traditional female roles, displaying strength, independence, and resilience. These characters are portrayed as assertive leaders, defying the typical narrative of helpless princesses awaiting rescue. Similarly, in "Raya and the Last Dragon," the eponymous heroine breaks the mold with her courageous and determined persona, embodying values traditionally associated with male protagonists. By showcasing dynamic female characters who embody agency, strength, and intelligence, Disney is effectively dismantling deeply ingrained gender stereotypes, imparting invaluable lessons about the importance of individuality and inclusivity to audiences, especially young viewers who are particularly impressionable. This concerted effort in their recent movies signifies Disney's commitment to fostering a more equitable and empowering media landscape where gender norms are no longer confined to outdated and limiting paradigms.

#### Research Question-2

**Does Disney's values and depictions change to please the audience from decade to decade?**

Disney has historically been criticized for reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes in its portrayal of characters and storylines. In its earlier animated films, such as "Cinderella" and "Sleeping Beauty" from the mid-20th century, female characters were often depicted as passive, awaiting rescue or fulfillment through marriage, perpetuating the idea of the damsel in distress. Male characters, on the other hand, were typically portrayed as strong and assertive, reflecting traditional notions of masculinity.

However, in more recent decades, Disney has shown a shift in its values and depictions, particularly in response to changing societal attitudes and expectations. The introduction of characters

like Mulan in 1998, who defied gender norms by taking on a traditionally male role in ancient China, and later characters like Merida in 2012's "Brave," who challenged the idea of the passive princess, exemplify this transformation. These characters are strong, independent, and assertive, encouraging themes of self-reliance and empowerment, which reflect the growing demand for more progressive and inclusive narratives.

This shift seems to suggest that Disney is conscious of the need to adapt to changing audience sensibilities and ideals of gender equality and empowerment. This adaptation may be driven by a combination of factors, including a desire to remain relevant and competitive in the entertainment industry and a response to the increasing demand for representation and inclusivity in media. Despite occasional criticism for perpetuating certain stereotypes, Disney's efforts to create more diverse and empowering narratives indicate a willingness to evolve its values and characters in accordance with the evolving social landscape.

### Research Question-3

#### What kind of impact did the stereotypes have on people's behavior and mind?

Disney has played a pivotal role in shaping the cultural landscape, particularly in relation to gender stereotypes. Through its influential films and characters, Disney has not only perpetuated traditional gender norms but has also initiated a gradual shift in the portrayal of characters, fostering a more inclusive representation. The impact of these stereotypes on people's behavior and mindset has been multi-faceted. On one hand, the perpetuation of gender stereotypes, such as the portrayal of females as delicate and in need of rescue or males as strong and dominant, has contributed to the reinforcement of societal expectations, thereby influencing individuals' perceptions of their own roles and capabilities. This reinforcement has, at times,

limited individuals' aspirations, leading to the internalization of these stereotypes and resulting in self-limiting beliefs. On the other hand, Disney's progressive approach in recent years, depicting strong female leads and diverse gender expressions, has started to challenge these established norms, fostering a more open and accepting mindset among audiences. This shift has contributed to a growing recognition of the need for diverse and inclusive representations in media, encouraging individuals to embrace a more expansive understanding of gender roles and possibilities. As a result, Disney's evolving portrayal of gender stereotypes has both shaped and challenged societal perspectives, prompting a reevaluation of ingrained beliefs and paving the way for more diverse and empowering narratives.

## Conclusion

- **Efforts to Challenge Stereotypes:** This statement highlights the findings of a survey, which suggests that the respondents or participants in the survey believe that Disney is actively making efforts to challenge and change the stereotypes that have been commonly held in society. In other words, Disney is seen as consciously working to depict characters and stories that don't adhere strictly to the conventional or traditional expectations and limitations associated with gender roles. This implies that Disney is acknowledged for its deliberate actions in presenting characters and narratives that break away from the typical and often restrictive ideas about how men and women should behave or be portrayed in media.

**Focus on Male Characters:** The study emphasizes the need for Disney to pay more attention to the portrayal of its male characters. This suggests that there might be an imbalance in the way male characters are represented, possibly perpetuating certain stereotypes that need to be addressed to create a more balanced and inclusive narrative.

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