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## A Comparative Study of Gender Roles in Animated Films

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*Abstract* - Gender stereotyping always has and still exists in our society. However, this issue is getting conspicuously serious as gender stereotyping has now reached the young masses, who are much more accustomed to the easy, seemingly effortless influence of the mass media. In this study, the researchers have collectively delved into gender roles in animated movies, specifically. The objective of this research is to comprehend how gender perspectives and gender favouritism influence a particular film's image of the world and the way narratives are being organized to emphasize the impact of male characters in movies, conducted through the research method of content analysis. The results point to the glaringly obvious scarcity of female characters as compared to male characters. As such, it is safe to assume that the presence of gender equality borders from slim to absolutely none. Should this problem persist, there is a plausible, almost certain chance that youngsters these days will undoubtedly have a skewed viewpoint on gender roles and hence, will only push the effect of gender stereotyping deeper while simultaneously leaving a dent on the hard, dim fight for gender equality.

*Keywords* : comparative, gender roles, animated films, stereotype

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# A Comparative Study of Gender Roles in Animated Films

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**Abstract** - Gender stereotyping always has and still exists in our society. However, this issue is getting conspicuously serious as gender stereotyping has now reached the young masses, who are much more accustomed to the easy, seemingly effortless influence of the mass media. In this study, the researchers have collectively delved into gender roles in animated movies, specifically. The objective of this research is to comprehend how gender perspectives and gender favouritism influence a particular film's image of the world and the way narratives are being organized to emphasize the impact of male characters in movies, conducted through the research method of content analysis. The results point to the glaringly obvious scarcity of female characters as compared to male characters. As such, it is safe to assume that the presence of gender equality borders from slim to absolutely none. Should this problem persist, there is a plausible, almost certain chance that youngsters these days will undoubtedly have a skewed viewpoint on gender roles and hence, will only push the effect of gender stereotyping deeper while simultaneously leaving a dent on the hard, dim fight for gender equality.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Hollywood Blockbuster has managed to shape the American cinemas including the animated films. Animation can create images that seem real to the viewer. Many 3D animations are very believable and are commonly used as visual effects for recent movies. Nowadays, there are many computer-animated movies show fantasy characters such as Shrek, Monsters Inc., machines character likes WALL-E, Robots, Cars, animal characters such as Finding Nemo, Ratatouille, A Bug's Life, Ice Age, or cartoon-like humans which referring to The Incredibles, Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius, Meet the Robinsons, Up. Well for the movie Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within is often mentioning as the first imitation movie to attempt to show realistic-looking humans. Despite the popularity of animated films, the influence of such films towards youth has not been examined. Therefore in this research, researcher is focusing on the Hollywood blockbuster animated films. No one can argue that viewing again and again an imbalanced fictional "world" where females are often underrepresented or unmotivated can be good for

young females or young males. Females take up half the space in society, yet, especially in films aimed at children and youth they appear much less frequently than do males.

### a) Research Hypotheses

- i. There is no equality of gender on the characters based on Hollywood blockbuster animated films.
- ii. Female characters have more positive portrayals compared to male characters.
- iii. Male characters have more frequency of appearance than female characters in the Hollywood Blockbuster Animated Films.
- iv. For every speaking female character in the animated films there are three male characters.

### b) Methodology

In this research, researcher will select six Hollywood blockbuster animated films from the year of 2006 to 2008. They are Cars (2006), Happy Feet (2006), Ratatouille (2007), Wall • E (2008) and Kung Fu Panda (2008). A coding sheet will be created to analyze these animated films. Only speaking characters will be coded. Furthermore this method has also been proven useful in the past for understanding the content of both print advertising and television commercials (e.g., Gross and Sheth 1989; Hoy and Shaw 1982; Resnik and Stern 1977; Stern and Resnik 1991; Tansey, Hyman and Zinkhan 1990). There are two types of variables which is independent variables and dependent variables. (Mass Media Research, 2006).

### c) Independent Variables - Characters in Hollywood Blockbuster Animated Films

When researchers are not able to actually control and manipulate an independent variable, it is technically referred to as a status variable (e.g., gender, ethnicity, etc.). Even though researchers do not actually control or manipulate status variables, researchers can, and often do, treat them as independent variables (Heppner, Kivlighan & Wampold, 1999).

### d) Dependent variables - Gender Stereotype

The dependent variable in this research is gender stereotype. This is because the gender stereotypes are not manipulated by the researcher. Besides it helps to figure out how the characters in the animated films are being portrayed either negatively or positively based on their gender.

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## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender stereotyping is always and still existed in our society, however this issue has getting serious as the gender stereotyping now has already reach to the children. Gender stereotypes are a sign of gender inequality. According to Berry and Segall (1992), gender stereotypes are widely shared beliefs within a society about what males and females are generally like as have been studied for decades in western societies. A common finding is that these stereotypes of males and females are very different from one another, with males usually viewed as dominant, independent, and adventurous and females as emotional, submissive, and weak.

Children has different ways to conceptualize gender where depending on their stage of development, but viewing gendered content can be assumed to affect children's personal gender schemas ( O'Bryant & Corder Bolz, 1978). There was several theoretical perspectives support the idea that media influences on children's gender acquisition. One of the theory is cultivation theory suggests that television exposure helps develop concepts of social behavior and norms (Graves, 1999). Second, the constructivist approach suggests that viewing role depictions contributes to a child's understanding of gender (Graves, 1999). Then, the priming effects theory suggests that media messages prime and influence thought processes after viewing (Klein et al, 2000).

In today's society, media is a major influence in shaping stereotypes and attitudes. The Children's Television Act of 1990 has required broadcasters to provide educational and informational programs. It is possible that prosocial values which including the reduction of gender stereotypes in the content of children movie. This is because television programs has the power to amend the kinds of beliefs that children hold about males and females and their beliefs about what constitutes appropriate behaviors for the two genders.

According to Barner (1999) found that males engaged in a wider range of behaviors in educational television programs than females. The kinds of behaviors expressed by male and female television characters often reflected gender stereotypes. Specifically, male characters were depicted as more active, constructive, dominant, aggressive and attention seeking whereas female characters were depicted as more deferent, dependent and nurturant (Barner, 1999).

Besides, heroic roles and instrumental helping are more consistent with the male role than the female role (Eagly & Crowley, 1986) and boys were preferring superhero roles more than do girls (Ruble & Martin, 1998). Therefore male may have more opportunities to observe and to identity with heroic role models than female. Additionally, girls were more likely than boys to

express feelings in the reports, even feelings of anger that are a traditional emotional outlet for boys (Ruble & Martin, 1998). The traditionally masculine behaviors remain more powerful than traditionally feminine behaviors and those females can engage in and embrace nontraditional behaviors more readily than can males (Ruble & Martin, 1998).

Hedrick, Brookes and George (2008) had examined the effects of Disney movies on viewers' attitudes toward women's abilities in leadership positions. They found that, the portrayal of women can influence the viewer to have either positive or negative attitudes toward women's abilities. The result showed that the male participants did support the hypothesis regarding media effects on gender. Although a female is portray as a heroine or the female has positive characteristic, males still will think that women is weak and vulnerable. Furthermore when a female was portraying as a weak women, they will strongly agree that male is more capable than female.

Tobin, Haddock and Zimmerman (2003) who studied how gender and stereotypes were portrayed in twenty-six animated Disney films. They had found four themes that defining womanhood which is include: a woman's appearance is valued more than her intellect, women are helpless and in need of protection, women are domestic and likely to marry, and overweight women are ugly, unpleasant, and unmarried.

The Kaiser Family Foundation found that majority of children have access at least one of G-rated movie video or DVDs at home per day. Due to children tend to repeatedly watch the same movies, the content in G-rated videos and DVDs may have a particularly strong influence on children's social learning about gender. Children who ages zero to 11 years old will have a strong impact on the gender imbalance because they are more impressionable. For children, images and stories help to influence the important developmental task of understanding what it means to be male or female. The TV research suggests that television viewing can have an impact on developing or possibly reinforcing children's stereotypical attitudes and beliefs about gender. With repeated television viewing of characters engaging in traditional sex roles, a child's gender expectations for his/her own sex or the opposite can become simplified, skewed, and stereotypical in nature. These effects are particularly problematic when we consider that females are seen less frequently than males on television (Aubrey& Harrison, 2004, Sternglanz & Serbin, 1974).

Helleis (2004) had done a study to determine how gender roles and sex frequency appear in children's literature, both in the past and the present. He found that, males rather than females were more often dominant characters and portrayed more positively were found in this study. Result showed that the roles of male characters are usually adventurous and exciting

whereas the roles of female characters are in need of help from a male (Temple, 1993). Male have more strength, power and they are always the hero for most of the stories that are being examined. However, more female were represented in stories in the area of beauty. Besides, the sexual and gender stereotypes and biases are injurious to both males and females. Male dominance was clearly prominent in almost all of the stories and a male bias was demonstrated in the main characters and titles. In determining beauty, the criterion was the importance placed upon the character to possess beauty.

### III. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

#### Part I : Hollywood Blockbuster Animated Films

##### a) *Cars (2006)*

There are 27 characters in this animated film. 19 of the characters are male and the other eight characters are female. There are only one male and female characters playing as the major roles. While the other 18 of male characters and seven female characters are minor roles in Cars.

Researcher found out that most of the characters having positive characteristic in this animated film. The male characters in this animated film show the characteristic of independent, shy, responsible, polite, kind, heartless, arrogant, and selfish. While for the female character, they have the characteristic of independent, responsible, helpful, and kind. The negative characteristics such as irresponsible, heartless, arrogant, and selfish are showed by male characters. As the researcher found out, the female characters in Cars have only positive characteristic. Therefore the only female character is being portrayed positively in this animated film.

The main character in this animated film is, Lightning McQueen. He has the highest frequency of appearance in the film where he had appears for 39 times. The second highest appearance in this film is Mater he appears for 24 times. Sheriff appears for 23 times. Next, Ramone's frequency of appearance is 22 times. Guido, Luigi, Filmore and Red, the four of them appears for 21 times in the animated film. While only female who play the major role in this animated film, Sally Carrera appears for 19 times. Then Lizzie, the other female character appears for 17 times. Doc Hudson has 15 times of appearance. Both Strip Weathers and Chicks Hicks had appears for 11 times. After that, Mack has 10 appearance in this film. Text Pinoco, Strips Weather's boss have five appearance. Strip Weathers' wife Lynda Weathers appears for four times. Kori, Frank, Mia, Tia, Fred, Bob Cutlass and Darrell Cartrips, these character's frequency of appearance in the film are only two times. Van and Minny, both had the least appearance where they only had one time appearance in overall of the film.

The differences between the character's with the highest frequency of appearance and the lowest frequency of appearance is 38 times. Lightning McQueen, male main character has 20 times more appearance than Sally Carrera, female main character.

##### b) *Happy Feet (2006)*

In total, 21 characters are found in Happy Feet. There are 17 of male characters in this animated film. Out of 21 characters, there are four female character overall. Then in the film, there is only one male characters playing as the major roles and the other 16 of the male characters are playing the minor roles. While for the female character in the film, only one female play as major role and the other three of them are minor roles in the animated films.

For this animated film, researcher also found out that most of the characters have the positive characteristics. The male characters in this animated film show the characteristic of independent, brave, shy, responsible, helpful, polite, intelligence, kind, heartless, arrogant, selfish, greedy and evil. While for the female characters, they had shown the characteristic of independent, brave, responsible, helpful, polite, and kind. Therefore from the results that the researcher gets, female are being portrayed positively in the film where they show female characters are independent, brave and etc. The male characters who are the bad guys in this animated film showed the negative characteristic such as heartless, arrogant, selfish, greedy and evil.

Mumble is the main character in the film therefore he has the highest frequency of appearance where he had appear for 49 times. The second highest appearance in this film is Ramon and Raoul which he appear for 21 times. Nestor, Rinaldo and Lombardo appears for 20 times. Then Gloria and Memphis appears 13 times in the film. After that, Lovelace appears for 12 times. Norma Jean, she appears for 11 times in the film. Next, Noah the Elder appears for six times. Seymour and Miss Viola Snow frequency of appearance in the film are five times. Maurice has appears for two times in the film. Lastly, Ms. Astrakhan, Boss Skua, Dino, Vinnie, Frankie, Leopard Seal and Trev has only one appearance in the film.

The differences between the character's with the highest frequency of appearance and the lowest frequency of appearance is 48 times. Mumble, the male main character has 36 times more appearance than Gloria, female main character.

##### c) *Ratatouille (2007)*

In total, 15 characters are found in Ratatouille. There are 14 of male characters in this animated film. Out of 15 characters, there is only one female character overall. Then in the film, there are two male characters playing as the major roles and the other 12 of the male characters are playing the minor roles. While for the only female character in the film, she plays as one of the

major role in the film. Researcher found out that most of the characters having positive characteristic in this animated film. The male characters in this animated film show the characteristic of independent, brave, shy, responsible, helpful, intelligence, kind, justice, dependent, timid, weak, irresponsible, heartless, arrogant, selfish, greedy and evil. While for the female character, she has the characteristic of independent, brave, responsible, helpful, justice, and kind. Since the villain in this animated film is a male character, therefore the negative characteristic such as irresponsible, arrogant, selfish, greedy and evil are shown by him. As the researcher found out, the female character in *Ratatouille* have only positive characteristic. Therefore the only female character is being portrayed positively in this animated film.

The main character in *Ratatouille*, Remy has the highest frequency of appearance in the film where he had appears for 43 times. The second highest appearance in this film is Alfredo Linguini, he appears for 38 times. Skinner, the villain in the film appears for 26 times. While the only female character in this animated film, Colette Tatou appears for 22 times. Emile, Remy's brother appears for 19 times and their father, Django appears for 15 times. Next Auguste Gusteau and Lalo both appears 13 times in this films. Horst, the sous chef in the film appears for 11 times. While the food critic, Anton Ego and Pompidou both appears for 10 times. Mustafa and Larousse, both of them appears for nine time. Lastly the health inspector appears for four times and the Lawyer appears for three times.

The differences between the character's with the highest frequency of appearance and the lowest frequency of appearance is 40. Colette Tatou is the only female character in the film and she appears for 22 times. Remy, male main character has 21 times more appearance than Colette Tatou, female main character.

#### d) *Wall-E (2008)*

For this animated film, there are only seven characters in it. Out of these seven characters, there are five of male characters in this animated film and two female characters. There is only one male character as the main character and the other four male characters play as minor roles in this animated film. Next, there are one female character play as the major role and another female character are playing the minor role.

For this animated film, the male characters in this animated film had showed the characteristic of independent, brave, shy, responsible, helpful, polite, intelligence, kind, justice, dependent and irresponsible. While for the female characters, they had shown the characteristic of independent, brave, responsible, helpful, kind and dependent. The villain in this animated film is a male character and he is a robot. As the researcher found out, the female characters in *Wall-E* have the positive characteristic.

The main character in this animated film, *Wall-E* has the highest frequency of appearance where he had appears for 42 times. The second highest appearance in this film is Eve, which she appear for 32 times. Captain McCrea, appears for 16 times in the film. The bad guy in this animated film, Auto overall appears for 13 times. For John and Mary, they both appear for six times. Lastly, Sherlby Forthright appears for five times. The differences between the character's with the highest frequency of appearance and the lowest frequency of appearance is 37 times. *Wall-E* has 10 times more appearance than Eve in this animated film.

#### e) *Kung Fu Panda (2008)*

There are 12 characters found in *Kung Fu Panda*. Out of 12 characters, there are 10 male characters and two female characters in this animated film. Then in this animated film, there are two male characters playing as the major roles and eight of the male characters are playing the minor roles. While for the female characters in the animated film, both of them play as the minor roles. There are no female as the main characters in *Kung Fu Panda*.

For this animated film, the male characters in this animated film show the characteristic of independent, brave, strong, responsible, helpful, polite, humble, intelligence, kind, justice, timid, weak, irresponsible, heartless, arrogant, selfish, greedy and evil. While for the female characters, they had shown the characteristic of independent, strong, responsible, helpful, and kind. The villain in this animated film is a male character. The villain which is Tai Lung is independent and strong. He also showed the negative characteristic such as irresponsible, heartless, arrogant, selfish, greedy and evil. As the researcher found out, the female characters in *Kung Fu Panda* have the positive characteristic. Therefore both of female characters are being portrayed positively in this animated film.

The main character, Po has the highest frequency of appearance in this animated film where he had appears for 27 times. The second highest appearance in this film is Master Shifu, which he appear for 20 times. Tigress, one of the female characters in the film, she appears for 16 times. For Monkey and Crane, they both appear for 15 times. Mantis and Viper, another female character appears for 14 times in the film. Tai Lung, the villain in the film and Master Oogway both appears for seven times. While Mr Ping and Zeng appears for five times and four times overall in the film. Lastly Commander Vachir has the least appearance, he only appears for one times overall in the film.

The differences between the character's with the highest frequency of appearance and the lowest frequency of appearance is 26 times. Po, the male main character has 11 times more appearance than Tigress, female minor character and 13 times than Viper, the female minor character in this animated film.

## Part II: Character's Analysis

There are total of 103 characters in six of the Hollywood Blockbuster Animated Films. Out of this 103 characters, they are 79 males characters, and only 24 of them are females characters. From the above chart, researcher can clearly see that male characters are more dominant in these animated films whereby there are lesser female characters found in these six animated films compared to male characters.

There are total of 24 female characters in six of the Hollywood Blockbuster Animated Films. Out of this 24 female characters, they are only five characters are playing the major roles, and the other 19 of them are playing minor roles. Out of these six of the animated films, there are not more than one female is playing as the major character inside the films.

There are total of 79 male characters in six of the Hollywood Blockbuster Animated Films. Out of this 79 male characters, they are 11 male characters are playing the major roles, and the other 68 of them are playing minor roles. It is clearly sees that out of these six animated films that the researcher analyse, every animated films will have at least one major roles for male and more than three minor roles for males. This figure is much higher compared to the female.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Dr. Stacy, a researcher from the Annenberg School for Communication (ASC) at the University of Southern California (USC) had developed a formula for identifying which of the films could be characterized as having gender balance. Any film with a gender ratio of less than 1.5 to 1 (regardless of which gender had more characters) was labeled as balanced.

Balanced films include characters of one gender no more than 1.49 times more frequently than characters of the other gender. Imbalanced films include characters of one gender 1.5 to 2.99 times more frequently than characters of the other gender. Significantly Imbalanced films include characters of one gender 3.0 to 4.49 times more frequently than characters of the other gender. Substantially Imbalanced films include characters of one gender 4.5 to 6.99 times more frequently than characters of the other gender. Grossly Imbalanced films include characters of one gender 7 or more times more frequently than characters of the other gender. Therefore researcher can use this formula when doing this research.

Therefore according to the formula that Dr. Stacy created, Cars, and Wall-E are considered as Imbalanced films. While for Happy Feet, it is considered as a Significantly Imbalanced film. Then Kung Fu Panda is a Substantially Imbalanced film and lastly Ratatouille is a Grossly Imbalanced film. Therefore none of the animated films that the researcher analyzes is a balanced film.

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