Exploitation in children's movies

Entertainment, Movie

Movies are meant to be help children learn life lessons visually and explore different areas of their imagination that they would have never seen otherwise. Children's movies should meant to have a positive message and subconsciously be educational to watch but for some Disney movies and fairytale stories this is not the case. The Little Mermaid by Jean Hersholt, " Puce Fairy Book" by Alice Major, " Forget Prince Charming" by June Callwood and the movie Brave are only some examples that could potentially have a negative impact on a child proven in the documentary " Sext up Kids" on CBC.

These movies and stories tend to give off an inappropriate message with unrealistic views that can create misleading expectations of the world and life for a young child. They also tend to have a negative mood that may encompass the child's thoughts and irreversibly affect their body image as well as self-esteem due to the privative development of their self-concept. Since these movies and fairytales tend to impact a child dramatically it can also cause them to have shaded views on society and life itself through the many bias topics such as sexuality and intimate relationships.

Overall, exposing children to some of Disney's explicit movies and fairytales can be harmful in their development. The hidden messages, themes or morals that a child must interpret in a movie allows them to analyze and compare the situations to real life expectations. In many Disney movies these morals or messages are not appropriate for creating a basis knowledge of life for a child. Many of the messages underlying the plots are unrealistic and have bad views on society, taking into account the tale of Snow White

and The Seven Dwarfs which is about one woman being shared within seven men.

One of the worst stories for an unrealistic message is the Hans Christian Andersen's version of The Little Mermaid which is about a fifteen year old girl realising self-sacrifice turns out to be rewarding, " Your suffering and your loyalty have raised you up in the realm of airy spirit, and now in the course of three hundred years you may earn your good deeds a soul that will never die" (Hersholt). This can mislead a child's judgement that if something may not go as planned that they can make it better by just quitting or giving up.

Disney also makes it seem as if romance and love is perfect ending in royalty, wealth and laughter but as " Forget Prince Charming" states, " Romantic novelists have the ideal all wrong" (Callwood 323). As children grow up the idea to look for physical characteristics rather than integrity, punctuality, compassion and humour consumes them. However, these happen to be the characteristics that will create a strong bond between two people while collaborated with negotiation and patience.

Furthermore, the underlying message is extremely important in teaching a child lessons through the course of their development especially when it comes to their socio-emotional life. Creating a foundation for a good body image and a child's self-esteem is important to developing independence and a positive outlook on oneself. In many of the Disney movies there happens to be princes and princesses who live a perfect life, creating the image that if an individual is not perfect from their looks, behaviour and personality they will not be accepted or find love.

In the " Puce Fairy Book", a girl is unable to fit the role a man expects her to, causing him to no longer have interest in her, " my foot was too big to fit into it" (Major 37). It is crucial for a child to realize they cannot be perfect but must be their unique self in order to be happy instead of constantly trying to take on the role that is not true to themselves. A bad body image can cause low self-esteem and a lack of confidence as shown in the movie Brave.

The main character Merida goes through a drastic body change. The once beautiful heroine who was of a healthy weight wearing appropriate clothing became a girl with a much skinnier waist and more revealing clothing. " Merida was beloved for her adventurous spirit, unique look and her disinterest in romance as her goal in life" (Gornstein), this will affect children's views on how they must look in society in order to feel accepted and give them the idea that they must change who they are in order to do so.

This lowers children's self-esteem because they have the mind set of how they must look due to media influences and once they become teenagers it can have drastic effects that may lead to anxiety, depression, bulimia, anorexia or other psychological disorders. In The Little Mermaid the main character also sacrifices her life under the sea, her voice and accepts a painful experience for the chance to be human.

This can also give children the idea that if they sacrifice certain aspects in their life such as food for weight loss, money for plastic surgery or steroids for muscle that they can be the deal person they want to be in order to be happy while being noticed. This is a very negative view on oneself because it is essential for an individual to accept who they are and feel comfortable in

their own skin in order to be truly happy. In addition to bad body image and low self-esteem Disney movies and fairytales can also cause negative views on sexuality and relationships. The negative views on life topics that Disney movies and fairytales add to sexuality and relationships give children false information about how they are in reality.

Many of the movies and fairytales have romantic royal endings as the couples walk into the sunset having everything turn out for the best. However, after being grown up individuals realize that not one relationship is perfect and people must work hard in order to accomplish a desirable outcome with a significant other, " The totality has to feel fair but real life is way too complex for a balance scale to be relevant" (Callwood 322).

The lust for relationships is another reason why individuals exploit their sexuality much more now starting at a much younger age. Beauty ends up taking over the lives of children because as it states in the " Sext up Kids" documentary on CBC, " Kids now grow up in a hypersexual world where pre-teen clothing has gone from sassy to seductive" (CBC). Disney movies have started this vision of sexuality through princesses and even certain dolls such as Barbies and Bratz because they have a specific figure, look, style and clothing.

This is also very degrading to women in the sense that young girls as early as seven according to " Sext it Up" feel like the less clothing they wear and the more they exploit themselves sexually the better chance of catching boys attention. Disney movies also add a gender stereotype on women especially in the Disney version of The Little Mermaid, " Ariel turns out not to

be the strong individual she was at the beginning and becomes another women in a heroes arms" (anastasiayiasemidmublog).

Young girls get the idea that women must be frail, sensitive beings who cannot be fully independent due the need of support by a man. This can affect how a young girl may act and portray her self-image. Overall, the negative views on life can dramatically affect the behaviour and thought processes of young children subconsciously about these sensitive topics. Adults may not realize how much movies may influence children as young as toddlers but children develop and learn through observing and imitating. Disney movies and fairytales can have a negative effect on a child and can have degrading long-term effects.

The messages behind most of the storylines are unrealistic and have derogative hidden messages or lessons giving children the wrong idea about what's important and appropriate in life. They also expose the audience of the movies to information that can lead to a bad body image causing low self-esteem which can irreversibly affect an individual as they move on in life. Lastly, the negative views concealed within the stories create an inappropriate outlook on certain topics such as sexuality, relationships and gender stereotypes.

It is important to expose children to educational positive appropriate life lessons that also demonstrate the reality of the negative aspects of life. However, this must be done at a certain time. The meanings and messages behind certain Disney movies and fairytales should be targeted for a more mature audience while teaching the younger children the fundamentals that will lead into to the more drastic realistic topics later on. Young children

should be given basic knowledge of life through these movies and not be exemplified through the irrational deficits that only teenagers begin to have to deal with.