

# Females in disney movies



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Children are introduced to Disney movies at a very young age. Due to the fact that children often choose role models to look up too, it is reasonable to assume that they often aspire to be just like their favourite Disney characters. Since the majority of young, female characters within Disney movies are expected to portray the stereotypical roles of women, this can have a negative impact on young girls who grow up watching Disney movies.

The stereotypical roles that are portrayed by the female characters in Disney movies include: performing household chores, being dominated by the male figures in their lives, as well as portraying the ideal body image of a woman. A common stereotype placed among women is that it is their responsibility to perform the household chores. Rather than go to work and bring home a pay check as the men do, they instead stay home where they cook and clean. This is represented in many Disney movies, especially the more earlier ones. In the movie Cinderella, Cinderella herself acts as the maid of the household.

She cooks, cleans, and performs all other housekeeping tasks. Snow White is another Disney character that portrays this stereotype. Without being asked, Snow White cleans up after the seven dwarfs. Therefore, a young girl who watches Disney movies such as Cinderella and Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs may get the wrong impression of what is expected of her later in life. Even in the more recent Disney movies that were created after equality rights for women started to increase and women began performing all the jobs that men once did, this still did not change.

The female characters that were not cooking and cleaning, did not show evidence that they had another job that earned them money or any future plans of getting a job. Another common stereotype that is placed among females is that they are dominated by the male figures in their life and that the males have a sense of ownership over them. The majority of Disney movies whose main character is a female, have a fatherly figure in them. In these movies, it is common for the fathers to forbid their daughters from doing certain things and seeing certain people.

This is especially true when the daughters show evidence of going against the norm. An example of this is portrayed in Pocahontas. During the movie, Pocahontas's father demands that she marries Kocoum, a young man from her tribe. He also forbids her from seeing John Smith, the man that she would rather be with. Additionally, in The Little Mermaid, Arielle's father also does the same by forbidding her from leaving the ocean and from seeing Eric.

Fatherly characters are not the only males within Disney movies that show a dominating behaviour.

In Beauty and the Beast, the beast shows very aggressive and abusive behaviour towards Belle, who continues to be nice to him in hope that he will improve his behaviour. This provides a dangerous message to the young, female viewers. This is because it gives them hope that if they are in an abusive household, they have the ability to change the person for the better. Even in The Lion King that is based on animals rather than people, the female lions are seen weak and unable to stand up for themselves, without the assistance of a male lion.

The importance of men is also shown in the Disney princess movies. This is because it is the prince that saves the princesses and makes their dreams come true. The princesses depend on their princes in order to get a happy ending. When a child is young and new to the world, they want to learn how they are supposed to act as their given sex. Children learn this by studying how the people around them look and behave. Since today's society lives in a media based world, it is reasonable to assume that Disney movies have the ability to shape how young girls want to look.

Due to the fact that Disney movies portray the stereotypical body image of women, this can have a negative impact on young girls and their desire to portray the perfect image. The Disney princesses can all be described as flawless. They have the perfect body shape, hair, face, and smile. There are no princesses in Disney that go against this description or that can be described as unattractive. The characters that do go against this description are seen as being the villains. Often, the conflicts within Disney movies are a result of the villains being jealous the princesses.

An example of this is in *The Little Mermaid*. Ursula is jealous of Ariel's appearance and the attention it gives her. The Queen in *Snow White*, is also jealous of Snow White's appearance. This is because she wants to be considered "the fairest in the land", but Snow White has this title. The importance of beauty is also shown in *Snow White*, as it is her beauty that saves her at the end of the story. After biting into a poisonous apple, Snow White falls into a deadly spell. It is not until the prince comes and notices her beauty, that he kisses her and wakes her up.

In *Sleeping Beauty*, a similar event happens. Aurora had a curse put on her when she was a baby that on her sixteenth birthday from the prick of a spinning wheel's spindle, her and her kingdom would be put into a deep sleep. When this happens, it is only the kiss of a prince that wakes her and her entire kingdom up. Furthermore, in *Aladdin*, Jasmine uses her beauty to her full advantage by acting seductive and flirtatious around the males in order to gain their attention. This shows that women can use their body and appearance to manipulate males.

Additionally, in *The Little Mermaid*, Ariel drastically changes her appearance in order to be considered more attractive to Eric. Overall, this can cause young girls to believe that if they do not portray the ideal image of a woman or that of a Disney princess, they will not be noticed or live happily ever after with their prince. The female characters in Disney movies that do not have major roles tend to only be seen and not heard. For example, in *Mulan*, the female characters besides Mulan herself are only there for the pleasure of being looked at by the male characters.

They present themselves as geishas and have a certain image in which they must portray. Similar to this, in *The Lion King* after Mufasa dies, the female lions do not have a say in what goes on. Their opinions on survival are not taken into consideration by the new king. Overall, the stereotypical roles of women are portrayed throughout the majority of Disney's movies. Many of the female characters perform household chores, are dominated by the male figures in their lives, as well as portray the ideal body image of a woman.

It is obvious that these stereotypes can have a negative impact on the young girls who watch these movies. This is because it causes them to grow up thinking that what they see in the movies is the norm. They believe that in order to get their happy ending, they must portray what they see in the movies. Evidence of this is shown when children imitate the lives of their favourite Disney characters into their play time. It is not until children are older that they realize that Disney is based on fairy tales. They are meant to be dreamed and not lived.