

Original Paper

Femina Cartoonica: Gender Dimension of Disney Themes as a Pedagogy of Popular Culture

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Abstract

Disney project, as an all enhancing pedagogical project, offers interactive methods of learning for preschool children, and multidisciplinary, trans disciplinary, multicultural teaching methods on all levels of schooling, involving advanced levels of Gender studies, inside Social studies disciplines, on the upper educational levels.

Keywords

multicultural, Disney Pedagogy, Disney Heroes, Disney Heroines, Femina Cartoonica

1. Introduction

The discussion on the influence of the themes inside the Disney movies, and research projects developed around the idea, influenced pleads of new, and developed teaching methods for understanding the contemporary society, and developed gender roles system, in the popular culture.

Garden, and Sandlin in their e book *Teaching with Disney (2016)* emphasize that teaching Gender, in the classrooms, through the popular Disney pedagogies, offers multicultural perspectives on depiction of the teachers, and different females, inside the Disney world (Emperor's New Groove: Kuzco's Academy, Elena from Avalor (sister's teacher). *Femina Cartoonica* represents the notions of the female characters emancipation, influences inside the cartoon industry, mainly through the prism of the Walt Disney characters. As the emancipation of Women Human Rights from 1970-ties continues, the understanding of Women Skills, and Female heroines, changes from the patriarchal perspectives, to the different forms of emancipated female multicultural characters. Inside the literature, Disney Villains, male and females are mentioned, and developed. Negative side of Women Leadership in Fashion Industry, in the most celebrated Cruella de Vil (101 Dalmatians), and see urchins such as Ursula (Little Mermaid), Evil Queen (Snow White), Maleficent (1 and 2), are investigated by pleads of the authors such as Glen Dakin,

Victoria Saxon, Serena Valentino, Amy Davis, etc. The focus of this work is the emancipation of Disney female characters, and positive influences of this perceptions, on the feminist stance advancement, inside the focus group of the university students, of both genders.

2. Objectives

Multiculturalism in the classroom, through the prism of Disney characters, offers heroines that originate from all over the world, from Europe (Germany, France, Norway) to Saudi Arabia, Polynesia, South America, America, Latin America, China, Russia, and speak diversity of languages such as French, Russian, Arabian, German, Chinese Mandarine, etc, in the multinational surroundings. The obstacles, and problematic occurrences, are multiple, and unique for every Disney character, and if we are discussing the development of the Female characters, influenced by the feminism waves, there are differences in between the roles of Disney female characters, from 1950-ties, in comparison with his contemporary heroines (Merida, Mulan, Moana).

3. Methods

Investigation on Identification with Disney characters

Population sample: MA students of Sociology of Gender II, Sarajevo University, Faculty of Political Sciences, Department Sociology (MA).

Inherently to the research, the examinees were asked to find the most interesting Disney male, and Female character, after watching the short movies about Disney Heroes, and Disney Heroins, with the special requirement, not to mention the same character.

Inside the chosen sample, 30 % of students were males, and 70% were female students. The questions raised were:

- 1) What female Disney character do You find the most accomplished?
- 2) What Disney male Heroes do You find the most accomplished?
- 3) Do male students chose advanced female characters, or more patriarchal models?
- 4) Which female characters are chosen, and in what statistical measurements?

Inside the responds, on the choosing of the female characters, the repeating of the same character, was more often, when compered with the analyses of male character. This confirms, already constituted general hypothesis, that Disney's most accomplished characters, are his princesses, that are globally celebrated, and admitted into multidisciplinary investigations, inside the Social Sciences.

4. Results

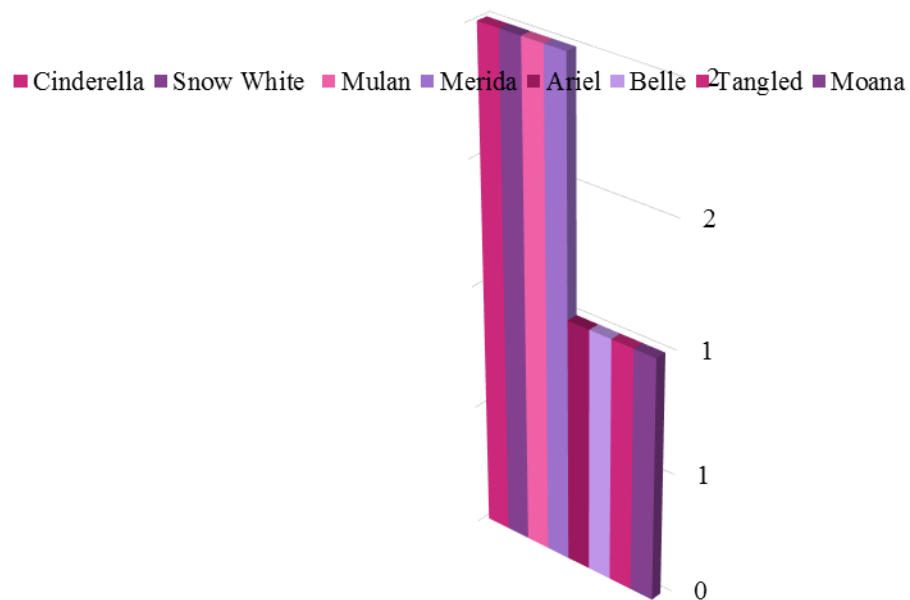


Figure 1. What Female Disney Character Do You Find the Most Accomplished?

Female students more often chose Disney Princesses, mainly Snow White, and Cinderella.

Only two female students had chosen the modern female characters, such as Merida, and Mulan.

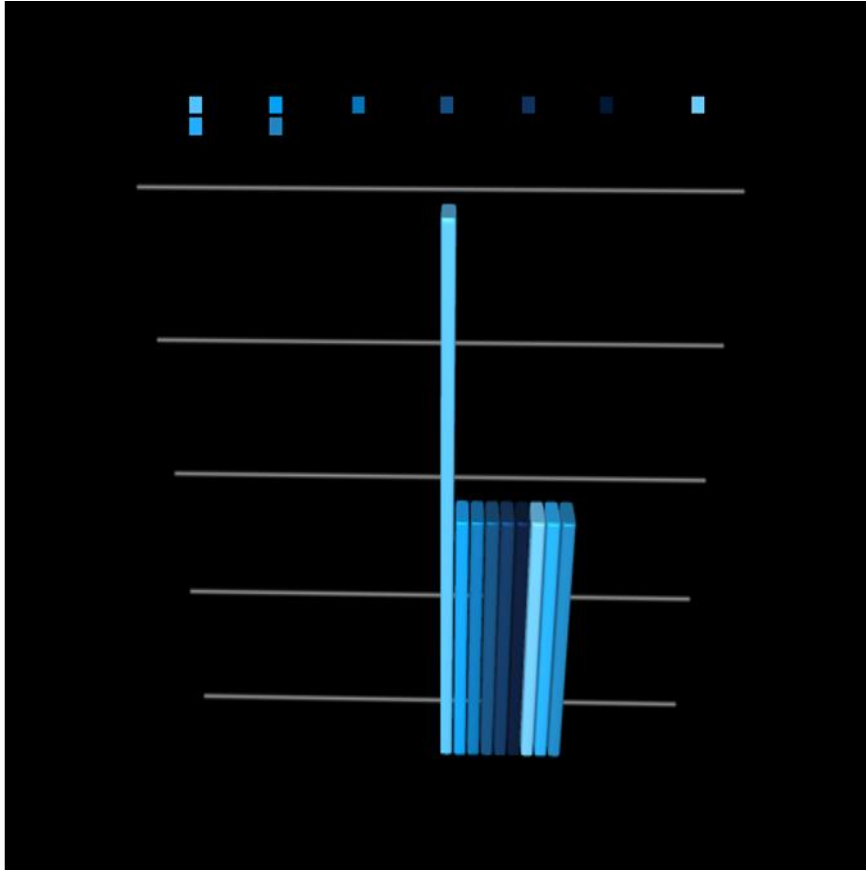


Figure 2. What Disney Male Heroes Do You Find Most Accomplished?

The research had shown that male students prevailingly chose four advanced female characters, rather than the ones, that are more patriarchal princesses, mainly only Mulan, Merida, or Moana are chosen. Not even one male student has chosen the traditional female character, that responds to gender stereotypes. The rest of the female students had chosen traditional female Disney princess characters, involving the trans human performativity (Supernaturality of Hair, and Animal transformativity).

Additional explanation for choosing these female characters can be found in the following explanations:

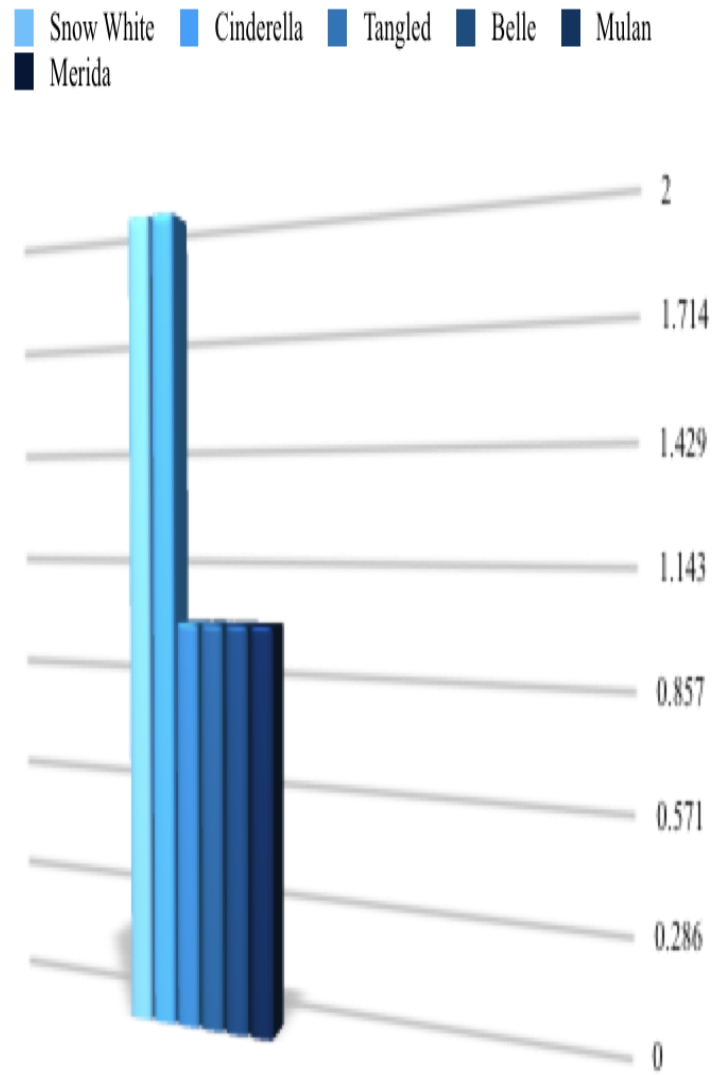


Figure 3. Do Male Students Chose Advanced Female Characters, or More Patriarchal Models?

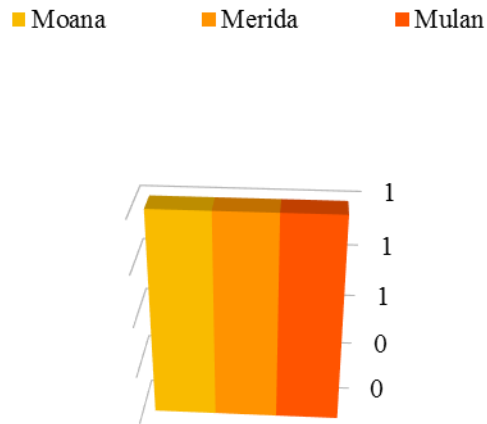


Figure 4. Which Female Characters Are Chosen, and in What Statistical Measurements?

Women Rights are Human Rights once and for all! (Hillary Rodham Clinton, Beijing Conference)

According to the interest based on the audience that influenced the high level network selling, the diversity of the most sold animated Disney princess, is somewhat different.

5. Discussion

The best earning female featured characters are less mentioned, while as the best sold male featured characters are well known. The over billion dollars earning Disney featured female Heroines, are Oscar winners Alice in the Wonderland (2010) for Best Art Direction, and Costume Design, and Frozen 1, won Oscar for Best Animated Feature Frozen 2, involving trans speciation themes, Beauty and the Beast, and Zootopia.

The only two Disney, male featured Heroes, that are 1 billion of American dollars success, are Lion King, and Aladdin. Lionel Bailly in the book *Lacan: Beginners Guide* (2009), in the chapter *Through the Looking glass: Mirror stage*, emphasizes the following notions on the Mirror Stage, since according to Lacan, the opposite is the truth: “at the Mirror Stage, the intellectual perception of oneself is alienating experience, and the beginning is the series of the untruths; but it is a necessary alienation that allows Subject access to the symbolic realm” (Bailly, 2009).

The “Me” formation, in Lacan’s theory “The making of ‘le moi’, after hearing his/her name pronounced (Moana, Mulan, Alice, Elsa, Belle, Aladdin, Kristof)”, it has heard its name before, but now, it affixes it to the image in the mirror” and identifies himself/herself: “That is Elsa. Elsa is me!” (Bailly, 2009) Bailly explains the most important maxima of Lacan’s, is that “ Human beings are very largely oblivious of their own subject. The ego is what person says about himself/herself: The subject is unrecognized self, that is speaking” (Bailly, 2009). On the question who is Moana, Mulan or Merida (The Brave), as female identities, or Aladdin, Kristof, even Gaston, Huntsman, Hercule, Tarzan, or Peter Pan, as male identities, is their own quest for identity. In the Lacanian *Mirror stage*: “the Subject is an active mind, that produces the concept itself, as the Other in the mirror, but it cannot recognize itself”. “The subject is the product of

the Subjects imaginary game, it produces unity, although not wholeness.” (Bailly, 2009). Moana: “What if that is not who am I”? Her voice wavered, as all the fears of disappointing her family, and people churned, in her stomach (Sutherland 2016) Merida as a subject, in her teenage age states: “My name is Merida. I’m the Princess of DunBroch, a kingdom in the Highlands of the Scotland” (Jones, 2012).

Kristin Schiele, Lauren Louie, and Steven Chen, in study entitled *Marketing feminism in Youth media: A study of Disney, and Pixar animation*, “through the thematic analyses of 17 Disney, and Pixar animated films (produced in between 1989 and 2018), and featuring female lead, or co-lead”, they analyze the messages transmitted to Young female consumers (Louie & Chen, 2020). Defining Disney production, according to Forbes’s list, as a “240 billion entertainment business encompassing film, television, theme parks, broadcast, character licensing, and merchandising” (2020), Chen, Louie, and Schiele, showed that most of the female heroins are in some form of identity quest, and passing through the mirror stage, of early self searching, and self understanding, (I will focus onto the ones mentioned by my case study group), through the some form of trans special element, such as Little Mermaid “makes Faustian bargain with a sea witch, to meet human prince on the land”, Belle “Offers herself to the Beast (prince under magic spell) to save her Father”, Rapunzel (with her trans human “magical hair”, is about to discover her true identity, after being closed, in the tower for so many years).

Especially celebrated, in my case study group, contemporary female Heroins such as Mulan, Merida, Moana (Sutherland 2016) represent “savior of father from death, through the transgendered identity, becoming the China’s greatest heroin”, or “searching her own path, through the archery skills”, trans humanly “answering the Oceans call to set the things right, after the demigod Maui reaches her island, Moana seeks out demigod, by her own quest on open seas”, the New Disney Heroins challenge the traditional patriarchal values, and in line with the Social studies notion, on the importance of the skilled female professionals, they practice their skills, rather than being subordinated component of patriarchal order.

6. Conclusion

The prestigious female Heroins Elsa, and Anna, offer the idea of sisterhood, as an universal principle, and when Queen Elsa makes a mistake (that causes infinite winter), her sister Anna makes things right, through the tremendous efforts (Louie & Chen, 2020). “Winter girl”/Elsa (Frozen) inside the literature, also had received the negative interpretations, related to the promotion of anorexia, and bulimia, and “girl frozen in time” (Holmes, 2015). Raja and the Dragon, as the newest Disney female character, inside the trans human, and trans special environment, admits the notions of female advancement, and in new adaptation of the Cruella, the deconstruction of patriarchalism as a project. Disney Film as a medium of Cultural Pedagogy, in Jack Zipes’s critic (Randall, 2016), *Breaking the Disney Spell*: But what the Disney spell mean? The great “magic of the Disney spell, is that he animated the fairy tale only to transfix audiences, and divert their potential Utopian dreams, and hopes, through the false promises, of the images he cast upon the screen. “(Bell, Haas, & Sells, 1995). Matusitz and Palermo (2014), in the article

entitled *The Disneyfication of the World*, offer the “Globalisation Perspective”, through the depicting of the differences, in between the Disneyfication, and Disneyisation, referring to the idea of the great companies such as Disney (Walmart, Coca-Cola) to impose them self globally, for the reason of the profit multiplication. Disneyisation is the Disney attribution to the shopping malls, and it in Baudrillard’s terms consists of “the double process of cannibalization (by host culture), and carnivalisation (by American cultural Hegemony)” (Roberts, 2020). Disneyland Parks, Films and Phenomenology of imagination, in contemporary Sociology, in Hong Kong, Tokyo, Shanghai Paris, and in California, Florida, as a form of Hyper urbanisation, and Hyperreality (Eco), inside the investigation field of Disney culture, reopen different forms of scientific conclusions, and nouvelle debates (Jackson, 2011). Supporting the feminism ideas, black history month ideas, and raising “responsible and inspiring campaigns around gender” Disney in 2016, inside multimedia (channels, apps, parks) “announced its Dream Big Princess Featurettes campaign” (Roberts, 2020), as a part of Women empowerment discourse, real girls stories vs. princesses”. Eco in his *Travel to Hyper reality*, precepts Disneyland, and Disney World as a “artificial cites dedicated to entertainment” (Eco, 1986). Baudrillard considers that “Disneyland, is presented as imaginary, in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact, all of and the America surrounding it, are no longer real, but of the order of hyperreal, and of simulation” (Baudrillard, 1988) and concludes that the “Disneyland is a paradise. Paradise is just paradise. Mournful, monotonous, and superficial though it may be, it is paradise. There is no other” (Baudrillard, 1998).

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