

Viewing Female Depiction in *Frozen 2*

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Abstract

Disney is one of the biggest animation companies in the world. They have released many animations since then until now. One of the most popular animations is the princess series. Until 2020, Disney has released fourteen princesses from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* to *Frozen 2*. Gender role depictions of the female character(s) were examined with a focus on their behavioral characteristics in the films. The English subtitle of *Frozen 2* was used to find out the attitudinal expressions about the female characters. In order to make the research easier and more accurate, a concordance tool named *Antconc* was used to collect the data and create a corpus. Results found that the most recent princess series entitled *Frozen 2* showed the female characters depicted as a precious person who was willing to sacrifice herself for others, kind, heroic, fearless, and full-of-spirit. However, Disney also depicted the female characters as liar and trouble maker. In this case, Disney keeps showing that females cannot be seen using the traditional gender's perspective anymore. A Female is not only feminine, but she also can be masculine as a man.

Keywords: Attitude, Disney, Female, Gender, Princess.

INTRODUCTION

The film is one of the mass media which has developed fast. Until this moment, there are many kinds of a film shown to people around the world. According to its genre, at least there are 24 kinds of the genre. From those 24 genres, the genre which has the greatest amount among others is animation (IMDb, 2019). Talking about animation film, we have known if Walt Disney Company is one of the biggest animation companies. It has produced many animation films. The first animation made by Disney was *Steamboat Willie* in 1928 (The Walt Disney Company, 2019).

Among those animation films that have been made by Disney, the princess series becomes one of the most popular among children and the young generation (Guo, 2016). The phenomenon of Disney and its princess films have been acknowledged as an influential factor on young generation's media and product consumerism, which is contributing to a new girlhood that is principally described by gender and the consumption of correlated products and messages (England, Descartes, & Collier-Meek, 2011). In spite of the fact that Disney Princess films are

made in the United States and the phenomenon is American, Disney has a powerful international existence and marketing efforts (Disney International, 2010). Because of that, Disney Princess films and their gender role representation also have important effects on international's young generation's media (Hubka, Hovdestad, & Tonmyr, 2009).

The first Disney Princess has released in 1937 entitled *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*. However Disney represents female characters in the film as "passive, soft-spoken sweethearts with tiny waists and dreams of marrying a prince." (Seybold, 2020). Besides those depictions, Disney also started the trend of a domestic girl who turned out to be a "damsel-in-distress" depending on a prince to come to save her (McKenzie, 2015). The domestic work appeared in *Snow White* such as doing dishes, cleaning, cooking, and being a figure of a mother for the dwarfs. This depiction that was represented by Snow White was only to emphasize the expectations of women as homemaker. Snow White originally is a story about a young girl who tried to discover about herself, however instead showed a depiction about what a

young girl is, in this Snow White film showed the idea of domesticity (Garabedian, 2014).

The next series *Cinderella* (1950) also follows the same principle as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, where *Cinderella* has a romantic theme with playful music, and cute little helping animals. The story of *Cinderella* was not a kind of media reinforcement of gender roles like others that appeared during the 1950s. In *Cinderella* can be seen showed a woman who desired to be in the home doing domestic works such as home cleaning and cooking in order to make other people happy. In spite of the fact *Cinderella* was often depicted enjoying her house-working, she still dreamed about being happily ever after. Also, in this film, only a prince can save *Cinderella*. In another word, *Cinderella* was a picture of the typical damsel-in-distress (McKenzie, 2015).

Furthermore, Disney keeps depicting the female character as passive and damsel-in-distress in the next princess series entitled *Sleeping Beauty*, which was released in 1959. The story is about a princess who was cursed by a cruel fairy and only "true love's kiss" can save her life. This third princess series created by Disney is the same as the previous princess stories, where the female characters cannot solve their own problems and at the end of the story will always be saved by the princes. Thus, it can be concluded from those Three Princess series that Disney tried to reinforce the idea that the ideal woman is fragile and incapable to save her own life. Also, the woman was depicted instead of taking care of herself, woman relied on a hard-working man to take care of her.

On the other hand, there was a change in the way Disney depicted female characters in their next princess series. Thirty years later after *Sleeping Beauty* was released, Disney released their fourth princess film entitled *Little Mermaid* (1989). Intentionally around the 1980s, the second wave of the feminist movement got a good result. According to McKenzie (2015), most of the major demands of the women's rights movement had been won. It can be seen women being accepted in college and also women can go to the

workplace. Since this cultural change happened Disney also started to change the depiction of the female character in their princess series. The first change can be seen in the *Little Mermaid* film. The pattern that changes in *Little Mermaid* was the main female character tried to break her societal bonds and expectations (Garabedian, 2014). The female character in *Little Mermaid* is depicted as ambitious, brave, had a sense of adventure, and rebellious. However, even though the female character was depicted as a rebel and attempted for what she wanted, her story at the end fell back on her need for a prince (Garabedian, 2014). Moreover, her story also was focused on finding true love.

Two years later after *Little Mermaid* was released, Disney released their fifth princess series under the title *Beauty and the Beast* (1991). This story told about a girl who ended up falling in love with a prince cursed into a beast by a witch. Similar to the depictions of the female character in *Little Mermaid*, in this story, the female was depicted as strong, brave, and had a sense of adventure. Furthermore, this Disney princess series "was the first to show very high rates of intellectual activity as she read books frequently" (McKenzie, 2015, p. 564). However, due to her hobby as a bookworm, the people labeled her as a strange person and she served to be separated from other villagers. In this story, the female character did not only rely on the prince to save her life anymore, but the female character depicted her as a savior for her prince from the curse. However, even though the depictions of female character has been developed than before, the center of this story was finding true love, definitely similar with *Little Mermaid* story. From *Little Mermaid* and *Beauty and the Beast* can be concluded that a woman cannot live happily without a man.

The next year Disney released another princess series with the title *Aladdin* (1992). In *Aladdin*, the main focus was on finding true love, similar to the two previous princess series, *Little Mermaid* (1989) and *Beauty and the Beast* (1991). It told about a man who fell in love with a princess and he asked for a favor from a genie. However, the depiction of a female character in this movie went back to the depictions of females in the

earlier princess series (*Snow White*, *Cinderella*, and *Sleeping Beauty*). The princess in this film was shown as “physically weak, highly affectionate, and troublesome” (England, Descartes, & Collier-Meek, 2011, p. 564). Additionally, England et al. (2011) described the female character represented as the princess who used blatantly sexuality and embroidered femininity in order to seek Aladdin’s help to save her life.

However, after Disney released *Aladdin*, Disney also brought another princess story entitled *Pocahontas* (1995). This movie told about the life of an Indian princess who also the daughter of the tribe chief. The female main character in this movie was forced by her father to marry the man that has been chosen by him because the father wanted to find a new chief to replace him. Unfortunately, the female character declined to follow her father’s command. She did not want anybody to choose her life path. Furthermore, she is depicted as an independent girl, responsible, brave, and wise. She was also shown fighting with the guy from her tribe because he wanted to kill the female’s lover. From this film was revealed that the female showed an act of masculinity and denied social stereotype about a woman. She showed her power when she protected her tribe and her lover. However, in spite of the fact that she was depicted as an independent and strong figure, Disney kept showing that the female still needed a man’s love to create her happily ever after life (Aryangga & Nurmaily, 2017).

After releasing *Pocahontas* with its brave and strong female depictions, there was another princess series whom also as strong and as brave as the female character in *Pocahontas*. The eighth princess series made by Disney was *Mulan* (1998). In *Mulan*, the female character is depicted differently from the female depictions in the early princess series. The female character in *Mulan* was brave, independent, and did not focus on finding love. The story of *Mulan* was totally different from the early princess series created by Disney. The female character broke out the society’s stigma about gender role to follow her own life choice because she thought that she was much more than

what society told her. In this story, the female main character did not fight for love a man’s love, but for her family. By doing so, she won over a man’s heart and creating her happily ever after life. From this case, Disney finally can depict a female character as strong, independent, and not need a man to save and to solve her problem.

Eleven years later, Disney released again their new princess series entitled *The Princess and the Frog* (2009). This story became the first animated feature with an African American princess. This story told about a working-class African American young girl who struggled to open her restaurant in New Orleans (Gehlawat, 2010). The female figure in this story is depicted as a hard-worker, independent, and strong. The female character of this film obviously stated that a combination of hard work and dreaming can make us reach our life’s goals. However, in this story, the female character still needs a man’s favor to reach her goal. Both of the female and the male characters here often overcoming problems together and also fostering friendship. Thus, this film contained mixed gender messages because the female character sometimes can overcome her own struggle which was determined as a non-traditional gender portrayal, on the other hand, she also needed a man’s help to overcome it which was determined as traditional gender portrayal. In conclusion, the female figure was still depicted needed a man to help her overcome the trouble even though she was portrayed as strong and independent.

A year later, another princess series released. It is called *Tangled* (2010). Until this era, the depictions of the female character in the Disney princess series have developed from the passive character into the active character. In this film, the female character was also depicted as the character who wanted so much more than the life she was living. She had a natural adventure sense and thought. She always wanted to get her freedom and explored the world on the outside. However, this movie tends to fall back with the classic princess series before this film was released. Because the female character was helped by a man to escape from the tower. In spite of the fact

that *Tangled* had aspects of Disney's damsel-in-distress thing, the female character of this film did a sacrifice to save the man's life using her magical hair.

From the very first beginning of the Princess series, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* until *Tangled* which was released in 2010, there were some transitions of female depictions. In the earlier princess series, the female main characters were depicted as passive and damsel-in-distress, then Disney changed the depictions of the female main characters in the next films became more active and independent. However, a heterosexual romance was unavoidable and often became the central focus of the films.

In another hand, two years later Disney released a new film that would completely break the stereotypes of all the female depictions in the previous Disney princess series. The film's title is *Brave* (2012). With the release of *Brave*, Disney would show the audiences that a female did not need a man or marriage to get her happiness. A female can be independent, unique, and realizing that she is worth much more than just marry a man and have babies (McKenzie, 2015). *Brave* was a story about a Viking princess who was clever, independent, and strong-willed that refused to be anything else but herself. She declined to be restricted by the bond of marriage (Garabedian, 2014). The female main character of this film went after and sought her own destiny, instead of just sit and wait for it to happen. Moreover, the female in this film was different from the female depictions in the previous princess series because she personified the 21st-century young girl (Masri, 2013).

Not long after releasing *Brave*, Disney released another princess film that also broke the gender traditional expectations and labels. In 2013 Disney their 12th princess film entitled *Frozen*. After releasing *Brave* with its female character which depicted the most independent female figure, *Frozen* Disney included two strong female main characters, both of them are sister. Unlike previous Disney princess films, the main focus of this film was about the growth and development

of the relationship between those two female main characters, which were sisters. Even though one of the female characters was surrounded by men, she did not depend on them to solve the problems. Also, albeit this story has a romance story within it, but it did not become the focus. Thus, from this movie, Disney emphasized that family is more important than anything else.

Then three years later Disney continued their tradition of Disney princess films that maintain showing gender stereotypes. The 13th film is entitled *Moana* (2016). It told about a girl from an island seeking to prove to her overprotective father that she was independent. The female main character in this film was not a white, but a Polynesian (Streiff & Dundes, 2017). Moreover, this film differed from the previous non-white princesses' figure such as in *Moana* and *the Princess and the Frog* "subject to orientalization" (Lacroic, 2004). This film got many critics praised the female main character as a brave heroine with a commitment to save the world without romantic interferences and also a sense of humor within the film (Dunsmore, 2017).

From that explanation above, we can conclude if Disney has successfully developed the female depictions from the traditional perspective, to be a more modern one. Besides those thirteen princess series, in 2020 Disney released their most recent princess film entitled *Frozen 2*. This film was the second series from *Frozen* in 2013. Thus, the author of this research tried to examine the female depictions in this recent princess film, whether the female depictions same as the previous series or fell back to the earlier female depictions, or be more modern.

Disney princess series tends to bring gender stereotype issue. Gender stereotype limits women basically to act feminine, not masculine. Where in fact, being feminine is not always identic with a woman and masculine is not always identic with a man. Halberstam (1998:7) stated regarding gender that "it is crucial that masculinity does not belong to men, has not produced by only men, and does not properly expressed male heterosexuality. What we call 'masculinity' has also been produced by

masculine women." This point of view is also applied in recent Disney princess series where the female main character or the princesses depicted as rebel and strong. Furthermore, to explore more about the female depiction in the most recent princess film released by Disney, this study uses a theory of attitude which is the part of appraisal theory proposed by Martin and White.

Martin and White (2005) explained attitude as a system of interpersonal meanings that offers an analytical outline to systematically classify and identify attitudinal expressions. Attitudinal expressions can be divided into 3 types, the first is affected. It concerns with expressions of emotions, by registering positive and negative feelings: "do we feel happy or sad, confident or anxious, interested or bored?" (Martin & White, *The Language of Evaluation*, 2005, p. 42). Affect is also divided into 4 sub-category, they are dis/inclination, un/happiness, in/security, and dis/satisfaction. In the following examples below, the word or words in italic are included as representing positive and negative expressions of effect.

- (1) The princess is *sad* [-unhappiness].
She is a *cheerful* [+happiness] girl.

Then, the second attitudinal expression is judgment. It refers to the attitudinal evaluation of human behavior and is divided into "personal judgments of admiration or criticism and moral judgments of praise or condemnation" (Martin & Rose, 2007, pp. 67-68). In personal judgments of admiration or criticism is divided again into three parts, normality (how special someone is), capacity (how capable someone is), and tenacity (how dependable someone is). Then, moral judgments of praise and condemnation are also divided into two parts, they are veracity (how truthful someone is) and propriety (how ethical someone is). The sentences below are examples of judgment.

- (2) The princess is *smart* [+capacity] and strong [+capacity].
Cinderella's stepmother is *cruel* [-propriety] and *evil* [-propriety].

After that, the third attitudinal expression is appreciation. It usually evaluates the appearance or physical traits. It is also divided into three parts, the first is a reaction (do they catch our attention or do they please us?), composition (balance and complexity), and value (how innovative, authentic, etc.). The following below are the examples of sentences that contain appreciation.

- (3) As we know that Snow White is a *beautiful* [+reaction] princess.
The princess is very precious [+reaction] for her family and people.

The implication of this research is highlighting the effects of media exposure may possibly have on gender acquisition. By watching gendered content, such as the princess series in Disney, possibly influence a child's and/or a young generation's gender development. Because viewing gender roles' depictions contributes to their understanding of gender and also the media exposure can favor to develop a child's and/or a young generation's perception of social behavior and norms toward gender (Graves, 1999; Martin et al., 2002).

Talking about children's media contained gender role portrayal, there were some useful researches that investigate that issue. The first research was done by Thompson and Zerbinos (1995). They examined 175 episodes from 41 different cartoons in an American television station and found that the programs had gender-stereotyped issues. The study found that even though female and male characters were depicted stereotypically, cartoons released after the 1980s showed less stereotypical gender behavior than cartoons released before the 1980s. Thus, the authors conclude that the portrayal of gender in media changed over time.

The second research was conducted by Leaper et al. (2002). They did a content analysis of gender-stereotyped character depicted across four genres of television cartoon programs, those channels were traditional adventure, non-traditional adventure, educational/family, and comedy. The result of this research found that television programs had much stereotyped issues

but the level of the gendered issue was differed by the genre. Adventure cartoons showed the most gendered-stereotypical characters, while educational/family cartoons showed the less.

METHODOLOGY

This research includes corpus linguistics as a tool to collect the data using a concordance tool named *Antconc*. This tool can help to create our own corpus. Then the data used for this research is the subtitle from *Frozen 2*. Then the writer put the

English subtitle of *Frozen 2* into *Antconc*. After that the writer input any female noun such as “she, her, mother, princess, sister” in the search term column then chose the concordance panel. The next steps were choosing number 5 left and 5 right to find out the window collocate, and the last was choosing the suitable sentence based on the female noun. After the data was collected, then the writer analyzed it using attitudinal expressions and the final step was interpreting the result.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1
Data of Female Depiction in Frozen 2

No	Pronoun & Noun for Female	Sentence	Attitudinal Expression	Sub-Category
1	She	She promised me we'd do this together!	- JUDGEMENT	TENACITY
		She's saving him.	+ JUDGEMENT	CAPACITY
		She saved her enemy.	+ JUDGEMENT	CAPACITY
2	Her	Her good deed was rewarded with you.	+ JUDGEMENT	CAPACITY
		I was just so desperate to protect her.	- JUDGEMENT	CAPACITY
		I won't let anything happen to her.	+ APPRECIATION	VALUATION
		I swore that I wouldn't leave her side.	+ APPRECIATION	VALUATION
		Anna, I am worried for her.	- JUDGEMENT	CAPACITY
3	Princess	Princess Anna of Arendelle my feisty, fearless, ginger-sweet love.	+ JUDGMENT	CAPACITY
4	Mother	Because our mother saved our father.	+ JUDGEMENT	CAPACITY
		Mother saved Father's life that day.	+ JUDGEMENT	CAPACITY
5	Sister	My sister gave her life for the truth.	+ JUDGEMENT	CAPACITY

From Table 1, the highest number of attitudinal expressions' sub-category was judgment. There are ten sentences that contained judgment within them; seven sentences contain positive judgment and three sentences contain a negative judgment. Also, there are two sentences that contained appreciation and all of the sentences contain positive appreciation. In conclusion, the

female character(s) in this film is mostly evaluated based on their behavior. Further explanation will be discussed below.

Female Depictions in Frozen 2 (positive judgment)

Sacrificing

The depiction of the female characters who did sacrifice is not a new thing. Since *Little*

Mermaid, Disney depicted the female main character sacrificed her life for her lover. On the other hand, in this film, the sacrificing is not for a man, not for a romantic reason. An example of the depiction of females in *Frozen 2* is provided below.

(4) My sister gave her life for the truth

From the example above, there is an explicit clause “gave her life” which means sacrifice. However, in this film, the female character did not sacrifice herself for a man or for a romantic reason. Thus, the depiction of a female character in this film becomes a positive evaluation.

Kind

Basically, the protagonist character of a film always depicts as a kind person. It is also shown in this movie. The example is given below.

From the example above, there is a phrase “good deed” that obviously contains positive judgment within it. That phrase explicitly shows if the female character in this film is a kind person.

Heroic

Heroic is not always correlated with man, however, a woman also can do something heroic. The examples are given below.

(5) Mother *saved Father’s life that day*

The sentence above shows that there is a woman who can save a man’s life. If we talk about princess life, the female figure in the earlier princess series will always be the one who was saved by a man or prince. However, since the development of feminism, Disney began to show the stronger female figure. Apparently, the female depiction in *Frozen 2* also shows that woman also can save other people’s lives, not only be saved by other. From this film, Disney tries to show that woman is strong and can be as heroic as a man.

(6) She *saved her enemy*

The sentence above is an example of another heroic action done by a woman. Similar to the previous sentence, the female character of this movie saved someone’s life. However, in this case, the one who was saved was her enemy. Commonly “enemy” is always depicted as an evil

person who does a bad thing to other people. Instead of punishing her enemy, the female character in this film chose to rescue or save her enemy. Besides being kind, this action also can be categorized as heroic.

Fearless and full-of-spirit

From the sentence above we can see directly the depiction of the female character in the movie. The speaker explicitly mentioned that the female character was a feisty and fearless person. According to the previous explanation if the depiction of a female character in Disney’s princess series is not as traditional as before, thus, in this section we can see if Disney depicts the female character as a strong creature. From those examples above, we can conclude that female in *Frozen 2* based on positive judgment is depicted as someone who willing to sacrifice herself, whom also kind, heroic, fearless, and full-of-spirit.

Female Depictions in *Frozen 2* (negative judgment)

Liar

Besides depicted in a positive way, in this film the female character also depicted in a negative way. The example is shown below.

(7) She *promised me we’d do this together!*

From this sentence, we can see if the female character broke her own promise. Because the sentence is in a past form which means the event has been done. Also, there is an exclamation mark in the final sentence that also emphasizes that the speaker was angry. The female character promised to do something together with the speaker in the past, however she did not fulfill it. That is why the speaker looks angry. Moreover, this sentence contains negative judgment with tenacity as its sub-category, because it talks about “how truthful someone is”. Thus, according to the sentence above, the female character in *Frozen 2* depicts as an untruthful person or a liar.

Trouble Maker

The second negative judgment about the female depiction in *Frozen 2* will be shown below.

(8) *I was just so desperate to protect her*

The sentence above explains the desperation of someone caused by the female character. The speaker of this sentence was also a female, in more detail, she is one of the female main characters. From the sentence above, we can see if another female main character causes problems until her sister “desperate” to protect her. Thus, according to the sentence above, we can say if Disney tried to depict one of the female main characters as a trouble maker. Also, from these examples, based on negative judgment the female character in *Frozen 2* is depicted as a liar and trouble maker.

Female Depiction in *Frozen 2* (positive appreciation)

After depicted from the behavioral side, this section talks about the depiction based on appearance. Based on Table 1, all sentences contain positive appreciation within them.

Precious

There are two sentences that contained a positive appreciation of the female character. The first example will be showed below.

(9) *I won't let anything happen to her*

That sentence contains positive appreciation with valuation as its sub-category. The sentence above evaluates the female character based on her value. If we see the sentence, we can assume if the value of the female character is precious for the speaker, since the speaker did not want anything to happen to her. Another example showed about how precious the female character in this film is shown below.

(10) *I swore that I wouldn't leave her side*

In that sentence, the speaker even used “swore” as emphasizing that the speaker would not leave the female character’s side since she is precious. If someone is precious enough, other people usually willing to protect and stay beside her. That is why those two sentences above showed that the female character in *Frozen 2* is a precious person.

CONCLUSION

Until this year, Disney has launched many animation series, one of them is the princess series. In releasing their princess series, Disney always put gender issues within them. In the earlier princess series, the female characters were depicted as passive and damsel-in-distress. Then they change the depiction a little bit, the female characters in the following princess series were not as passive as before. The female characters became more active and tend to be rebellion to get their freedom. However, at the end of the story, Disney always puts a romantic sense between the heterosexual couple which depicted that women will only be happy if they finally can marry their man. Time goes by, Disney keeps releasing their new princess series. In the next following princess series, the depiction of female character developed more. The female is depicted to be more strong and more independent. The romance was not the focus of the story anymore. Furthermore, the most recent princess series, *Frozen 2* (2020), which is also the second series of *Frozen* (2016), depicts the female character(s) to be stronger than before. According to their behavior, the female characters are depicted as someone who is willing to sacrifice her life for others, kind, heroic, fearless, and also full-of-spirit. On the other hand, they also portray as liar and trouble maker. From the appearance evaluation, Disney depicts the female characters in *Frozen 2* as someone who is precious to others.

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