Study on Evolution of Disney Princess’ Gender Role Over Time -


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ABSTRACT

This study examines former studies, dated back to that of 1984, on the relationship between Disney Princess Franchise and the gender roles it hints in the movies. It considered through the classification for the films in current study, then re-defined periods of Disney Princess movies to obtain all thirteen current members of the franchise into the new classification system. In the third fraction of this article, the author specified in case studies of "The Little Mermaid" (1989), "The Prince and the Frog" (2009) and "Frozen" (2013) to explain the difference among gender roles of different periods for Princess movies with their character designs and plot arrangement.

Key Words: Princess, Gender Roll, Disney, Motion Pictures, Frozen, Elsa
迪士尼公主性別角色的演變——

以 1989 年的小美人魚、2009 年的公主與青蛙、
和 2013 年的冰雪奇緣為例

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關鍵字: 公主、迪士尼、性別角色、動畫、冰雪奇緣、艾莎
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Disney Princess Franchise

The Walt Disney Studio co. and its production have always been a reputation and an influence of classically-commercialized American culture. Among its works, the films and characters being included into the prominent Disney Princess franchise are certainly the ones that reflect American society's expectation on female roles and thus influence young girls most in their childhood. All the Disney Princesses are always beautiful, and possess good virtues and features American people values. They are dreams, fantasy friends, and role models to a large population of young American girls. And they even have an impact on children worldwide, as the Disney culture being sold to the whole world alongside with the unstoppable post WWII American culture. These heroines are like American dreams in little girls' version to audience outside the United States.

Films included in the Disney Princess franchise were not planned to become a series when they were first produced. They had been independent works of the Walt Disney animation studio through out the 20th century until in 2001, Andy Mooney, the chairman of Disney Consumer Products by then, announced nine princesses of the companies best seller animations to be featured in a line-up as a marketing campaign, targeted toward young girls, to sell medias and related product, bringing all nine princesses, even when some were created two or three more decades ago like snow white, back to the children media market, rose this strong princess phenomena still lasting nowadays. (Orenstein, 2006)

Since the first full-length animation "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" published in 1937, the most of the Disney princess animation movies were adapted from fairy tales of worldwide, such as Grimm's Fairy Tales or Andersen's fairy tales. For example, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" has its origin from Grimm's Fairy Tales, and "Cinderella" derived its story from well-known fairy tales "Cendrillon" by Charles Perrault. Up to date, the most recent princess animation "Frozen" in 2014 presents the adapted edition of "The Snow Queen" from Andersen's
fairy tales. Through the reproduction of these famous fairy tales, the studio lectures children with good virtues the princesses obtain and emphasizes values the major society by then identifies with. The films encourage their young audience, to live up to their guide by punishing the villains and rewarding the heroines. As values and ethics of America society changed along the development and history of the country, the characters and roles of princesses in these films evolved with time to conform to the identification of audiences, the relation of which forms our topic to study on in this essay.

1.2. Evolution of Princesses’ Images

With an intuitive observation on all the motion pictures in the Disney Princess franchise, the race, appearance and characters changing of the heroines can easily be seen. From all Caucasian roles of the early era to Indian and Chinese parts in the 1990s; from all blonde, Barbie-like Cinderella and Aurora to red-headed Merida with wild curls and freckles; and the heroines behavior, from passiveness to aggressively saving the world, Disney has been creating extremely different ideal types for its audience and indirectly the s. The following form lists all thirteen current members, four more have been added on since Andy Mooney in 2001, of the franchise, with the directors and animators that determined the heroines characteristics, and certain events or features of the princesses the author considers critical.

Table 1.2-1 Timeline of Disney Princesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Princess</th>
<th>Animation Name</th>
<th>Supervising Director</th>
<th>Characters, Behavior and Climatic Outcome</th>
<th>Supervising animator for the Princess’ Appearance design</th>
<th>Appearance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Snow White</td>
<td>Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs</td>
<td>David Hand</td>
<td>Victim with kind heart and tender approach to care for animals and others. Passively waited for others to</td>
<td>Hamilton Luske</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dark, short hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Red lips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Slightly chubbier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Animator</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Cinderella</td>
<td>Cinderella</td>
<td>Wilfred Jackson</td>
<td>Victim with kind heart and tender approach to care for animals and others. Passively waited for others to save her from her crisis.</td>
<td>Mark Henn</td>
<td>Caucasian Blonde Blue Eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Aurora</td>
<td>Sleeping Beauty</td>
<td></td>
<td>Victim with kind heart and tender approach to care for talking animals and others. Passively waited for others to save her from her crisis.</td>
<td>Marc Davis</td>
<td>Caucasian Blonde Blue Eyes Dressing in style of Spain in mediaeval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Ariel</td>
<td>The Little Mermaid</td>
<td>Ron Clements John Musker</td>
<td>Kind and friendly to talking animals. Rebelling from parent and initiate to want for more, change for love. First princess that does the persuasion as female role.</td>
<td>Mark Henn</td>
<td>Caucasian Red hair Green Eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Belle</td>
<td>Beauty and the Beast</td>
<td>Produced by Don Hahn</td>
<td>Kind, wise, curious, and loves reading. First film emphasizes the value of learning. First tough female role in Disney. She has her own standards for moral and courtesy. Actively saw the good inside beast's scary appearance, and save him.</td>
<td>animated by James Baxter and Mark Henn</td>
<td>Caucasian with smaller face, pointier chin than Other princesses Before. Brunette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Jasmine</td>
<td>Aladdin</td>
<td>Ron Clements John Musker</td>
<td>Tough, rebelling, kind and brave. Taking control over her life choice. Helped solved the crises with the the hero.</td>
<td>Mark Henn</td>
<td>Middle Eastern The first dark Princess. Dressing Persian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Pocahontas</td>
<td>Pocahontas</td>
<td>Mike Gabriel Eric Goldberg</td>
<td>55 animators went through the designing of her appearance during 5 years of production. First princess movie based</td>
<td>Glen Keane</td>
<td>Indian Figures designed closer to real human being than any other in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Character</td>
<td>Film</td>
<td>Director(s)</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Dressing</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Mulan</td>
<td>Mulan</td>
<td>Tony Bancroft, Barry Cook</td>
<td>Tough, rebelling, selfless. Saved the country by gaining equal power with men. Challenged gender roles in her story.</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Dressing in style of the Tang Dynasty while the story was set in the Han Dynasty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Tiana</td>
<td>The Princess and the Frog</td>
<td>Ron Clements, John Musker</td>
<td>Emphasizing the importance of saving and planning. The first heroine pursues beyond romance, and also the first civilian worked hard and became a princess.</td>
<td>Mark Henn</td>
<td>African-descendant, Thick lips. Dressing in 1920s New Orleans style.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Rapunzel</td>
<td>Tangled</td>
<td>Nathan Greno, Byron Howard</td>
<td>Tough and rebelling from the fake parent. Yet passively waiting for others to save her.</td>
<td>Glen Keane</td>
<td>Blonde, Green eyes, Looking more childish and cartoon like as her head is bigger than any other princesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Elsa</td>
<td>Frozen</td>
<td>Chris Buck, Jennifer Lee</td>
<td>Tough and weak at the same time. First princess that had been villain then back to become the heroine.</td>
<td>Wayne Unten</td>
<td>Danish, Strawberry, Blonde, Blue eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anna</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>First princess proving love at first sight can be wrong. Ended up with a happy second romance. Rescuer of the crisis.</td>
<td>Becky Bresee</td>
<td>Danish, Ginger, Green eyes, Freckles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.3. The Third Wave Feminism in the United States

Third-Wave Feminism is generally claimed to have been started from early 1990s and continued to the present. The term was created by Rebecca Walker (1992), who co-founded “Third Wave Foundation” that aims at encouraging young female activists and leaders. Based on the development of First and the Second Wave Feminism, Third-Wave Feminism focuses more on the perception that women are of different identification, including ethnicities, nationalities, cultural backgrounds, etc. (Heywood & Drake, 1997). After most western women retrieved the equal human rights on politics and laws and are financially independent, during this stage, feminism emphasized on a wider but more focused categories, such as rights of non-white women or queer, abolishment of gender stereo types of a culture, and defending of sex-related works.

Table 1.3-1 Timeline of Feminism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First-Wave Feminism</th>
<th>Second-Wave Feminism</th>
<th>Third-Wave Feminism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>19th ~ Early 20th Century</td>
<td>1960s ~1980s</td>
<td>Early 1990s ~ Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Issue</td>
<td>Legal Issues, e.g. Women Suffrage, De facto (unofficial) inequalities</td>
<td>Sexuality, family, the workplace, reproductive rights, De facto inequalities, and official legal inequalities</td>
<td>Queer theory Abolishing gender role expectations and stereotypes Defending sex work, pornography, reproductive rights, and sex-positivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin Countries</td>
<td>UK, US, Canada, Netherlands</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The development of Third-Wave Feminism that focuses on abolishing gender role expectations and stereotypes is of interests in our study. The change of concepts toward females’ gender roles in the US society can be observed based on Third-Wave Feminism among young females, which made huge distinction with Second-Wave Feminism through 1970s and 80s (Garrison, 2000).

As one of the most influential media affecting young girls of US society, Disney’s Princess Animation series play an important role on education and social value transmission of gender
expectation. Thus, we are encouraged to study the change of the role played by princess character in Disney's animation during Third-Wave Feminism period, from early 1990s to the present.

2. Current Studies

Many topics related to the gender roles and influence to the gender stereotypes of Disney’s Princesses have been studied. The earlier research or publication studied thoroughly on the princess modeling in the early films, including all princess films from "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" to "Aladdin", where the images of princesses seemed to follow a certain pattern and a conventional stereotype (Liang, 2010). And research on various aspects of influence of Disney's animated films were widely discussed in "From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture" (Bell & Haas & Sells, 1995), pointing out the educational and cultural impacts of Disney's films as well as gender construction of films of princess.

More recently, topics such as "Disney Princesses’ Effect on Young Girls’ Self-Images" (Bispo, 2014) and "Gender Role Portrayal and the Disney Princesses" by (England & Descartes & Collier-Meeke, 2011) pointed out the gender roles of and difference between prince and princess in Disney's Princess animation, or the effect they have made to the young audiences.

Based on current studies of Disney princess's gender roles and relations to the feminism, the author hopes to further include the newest princess film "Frozen" (2013) and focus on the change of value transmitted during Third-Wave Feminism period, namely, the difference of value in films between early 1990s and the present. Thus, the author contains the three representative films in the study to analyze the value transformation over time and creative adaption in each film that helped the convey of those values. The chosen films include "The Little Mermaid" in 1989 as the beginning mark of the period, "The Princess and The Frog" in 2009 as the first black princess film that reflects greatly on Third-Wave Feminism, and "Frozen" in 2013, which heavily converted the traditional types of previous princesses.
3. Research Analyst- Classification

Briefly discussed in paragraph 1.2 of present study, and as table 1.2-1 displayed, both the appearance and roles of the princesses evolve from time to time. Changes of animators design for the heroines' appearance can be subject to the beauty trend by then, or the artist's preference. But introduced in the very beginning of present study, the author believes the ethical messages and value the production team demonstrated in the films have a way more stronger impact on its audience, little girls, at their youth and hence lead to development of a new 'girlhood' that is largely defined by gender and the consumption of related messages and products of Walt Disney's company. (Giroux 1997, Lacroix 2004, McRobbie 2008, Orenstein 2006) A gradual evolution of the princesses' characters and their society roles, mostly gender roles, can be seen. After learning about the third wave feminism the author divided films of the franchise into four periods as followed.

First the early movie period in the mid-20th century, including "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" (1937), "Cinderella" (1950) and "Sleeping Beauty" (1959), in which every princess started up with a live under threats, but just by staying kindhearted and tender then their prince would come one day to rescue them from their miserable lives. While the heroines sit still waiting for true loves to come to them, the princes were the ones took initiative to elect their lovers. Those princesses had all the ideal traits that a prince would long for, such as beautiful appearance and maternal love. However, it love seemed unrealistic in works of the early princess movie period. It's always love at first sight when the princes chose to love the princesses for their charming appearance, and save them, the princesses had no choices nor second thoughts but to develop mutual love for the suitors.

Starting from late-20th century, it's the middle movie period. Princesses categorized into this period are Ariel in "The Little Mermaid" (1989), Belle in "Beauty and the Beast" (1991), and Jasmine in "Aladdin" (1992). These three heroines were all given the characters of bravery and wisdom in pursuing their true loves. They rebelled against the orders of their father, symbol of patriarchy, and ignored general values of the society, but followed their heart to choose their true
love. They also shared same features to have saved their lover, family or even the whole empire. It is their bravery and wisdom to take active change that earn them true love and have protected their lovers. The author can see from this period the roles of princesses became initiative and were endowed with abilities to change their destiny.

From "Aladdin" in 1992, a series of exotic and non-traditional animation were produced. Topics of Arabic fairy tales, American Indian history and Chinese historical legend were adapted to "Aladdin", "Pocahontas" (1995) and "Mulan" (1998). "The Princess and the Frog" (2009) also created the first black princess, which introduced black people's culture to the Disney's animation. Besides the purpose to attract more audiences from different cultural background and to present the concerns towards non-western countries, the multi-cultural and historical stories brought more variety and serious issues, other than the pursue of true love, to the princess animation. The princesses in animations carried responsibilities to protect their tribe, country or pursue their own dream, where the pursue of love and romantic happy ending became less focused. (Hubka, D., Hovdestad, W., & Tonmyr, L. 2009)

The first three categories are adopted from our major study material, Gender Role Portrayal and the Disney Princesses, by England, D.E., Descartes, L. & Collier-Meek, M. in 2011, as they have also adopted this theory from earlier studies in this field of relationships of Disney and gender role.

In Gender Role Portrayal and the Disney Princesses, (England, D.E. et al. 2011), the scholars went on explained, "Each of the Disney Princess movies feature a central female character, the princess, and a male character who is romantically linked with the princess. This study utilized a coded content analysis approach to examine these primary characters’ gender portrayals to reveal the roles present in this popular genre of films, and assess changes over time." (quoted from Gender Role Portrayal and the Disney Princesses, England, D.E. et al. 2011)

Obviously the key object that divided films into the grouping are the approach behaviors and relationship of the heroin with her romantic partner. But learning about the two latest new
princess movies makes the author believe it is time to come up with a fourth period of the Disney Princess franchise movies.

Merida from “Brave” (2013), Anna and Elsa from “Frozen” (2013) are the new princesses just came to the alliance lately. These three are nothing alike to princesses of former periods. Examine their behavior and roles in clinical he latest released animation, "Frozen", is brand new era of Walt Disney Picture's work. The characters setting of a princess animation adapted from fairy tales has seen a breakthrough. That characters being set as good should always keep good while those bad should be bad is no longer differentiated by a dualistic border. Elsa, adapted from Snow Queen, was transformed from a marble queen to a princess with characters of modern females, having great power no weaker than males, holding independence uneasy to be approached, but also with multi-facet sides of emotions. A closer glance at Elsa's characters and the impact of "Frozen" on the evolution of Disney's princess animations will be analyzed more detailed in the latter part.

Under the brief analysis of the evolution of Disney's princesses, the author is curious about the connection between the change of images of princesses and the trend over time.

4. Individual Case Analysis

In the introduction, the author had examined the differences among periods. Now this study will go on discuss further into three individual films, each selected from the three later periods of Disney Princess movies. They are Ariel from "The Little Mermaid" of the middle movie period, Tiana from "The Princess and The Frog" of "the most current film" period, and then Elsa from "Frozen" of the fourth period the author developed.

Before getting into the differences of films in different periods, it is also important to understand the classic elements of Disney Princess movies. Those elements are what made the franchise succeed, and how it made the princesses role model to children around the world. There are several interesting facts the author found common in almost every movies of the Disney Princess
Franchise: 1) Animal Friendly: the films always contain the leading lady’s singing and her talking animal friends. 2) Historical Setting: all films in the series were set in backgrounds of historical era; none of them were stories of modern society or fictions about future. The author suggests princesses are creations don’t exist under the system of democracy the United States build their nation on. Ironically, the American dream and idols of the new “girlhood” (Giroux 1997; Lacroix 2004; McRobbie 2008; Orenstein 2006) are actually conflicted to the main value for democracy, liberty and equility that the States of America based on. The production team might just attempt to visualize the Princess idol dreams by applying unrealistic background, making it more classic but dreamy for the young girl population to fancy.  And 3) Encouraging Dreaming: the secret to the heroines’ happy endings is always “believing in their dreams. “ The Walt Disney Company owns many different slogans for different occasions and product lines. The most famous ones are, “(Disney is) Where dreams come true”, “A dream is a wish your heart makes”, “Believing is just the beginning”, and according to the past Walt Disney himself, “I dream, I test my dreams against my beliefs; I dare to take risks, and I execute my vision to make those dreams come true.” Obviously, the happiness and hope in dreaming has always been the Walt Disney Company’s major product for sell and mission to achieve. (Bennis, W. and Ward Biederman, P., 1998)

And 4) Disney is famous for having catchy, well-composed music in their films. Most songs with lyrics summarizing and emphasizing good virtues that the team believes their young American audience should obtain. In present essay the author take the signature songs, i.e. theme songs, in each film as description of the main values the production team would like to give out in each motion picture.

Timeout Magazine, London has similar observation on Disney motion pictures as well. According to its critics, Catherine Bray, “There are three things classic Disney animations are supposed to have. One: belting showtunes. Two: a bit of danger and darkness amid all the schmaltz. And three: a conservative message wrapped up in a traditional feelgood happy ending.” (Bray, C. 2013)
4.1. The Little Mermaid

4.1.1. Background

"The Little Mermaid" (1989) was the 28th films of Walt Disney Animated Classics series, the main character Ariel being the 4th princess among Disney Princesses. "The Little Mermaid (1989) has a special place in Disney’s history since it is the first successful animated movie to be released since Walt Disney’s death in 1966." (Laura Sells, 1995) Amassing $84 million at the domestic box office during first release in 1989, "The Little Mermaid" gained positive respondence from the audiences and was viewed as huge success. It not only retrieved the markets of Disney's animations after a long depression of Disney's animated films during 1970s, but also became the reappearance of princess film after 30 years of vacancy since "Sleeping Beauty" in 1959. The importance of "The Little Mermaid" could be marked in the fact that it led the opening of "Disney Renaissance" era.²

4.1.2. Story & Adaption

The film adapted its story from Anderson's Fairy Tale "The Little Mermaid" of 1837. The original edition of the story talked about the main character little mermaid saved a prince during a great storm and fell in love with him. Despite the fact that the prince didn't even know the mermaid saved him and recognize another girl as his savior, the mermaid pursued the love of the prince at any cost, including sacrificing her voice to Sea Witch in exchange of the legs and in the end even giving up herself as a mermaid. She longed for the world of humans and the love of the prince while the prince ended up falling in love with another princess with whom he married. In the end, the mermaid gave up the option of killing the prince to return to a mermaid and brokenheartedly disintegrated into sea foam.

The adapted edition in Disney's film mimicked most of the story structure and roles except some plots and most of the ending. In the film, Ursula acted as the Sea Witch more actively, trying to

² Wikipedia- The Disney Renaissance, the era from 1989 to 1999
take over the Atlantica Empire of the sea and interfering between Ariel, the mermaid, and the prince Eric. However, against all obstacles, either from the obstruction of Ariel’s father Triton, the king of Atlantica, or tricks of Ursula, Ariel finally made Eric also fall in love with her and together saved the Atlantica empire and Triton from Ursula. Under the blessing from Triton, Ariel transformed to a human to be together with Eric.

4.1.3. Film Features in Characters/Design/Music

In the film edition of story, Ariel princess has more companions supporting her on pursuing prince's love and against obstacles from Triton or destruction from Ursula. Compare to the original fairy tale, interaction between the mermaid and the prince increased and love between them became real, which hence made the story more interactive and fascinating - it is no longer an one-sided love that ended up in a tragedy. Disney’s team transformed the story to a brighter story with attractive plots and more dramatic affects, and gave Ariel a happier ending as a reward of her efforts.

Also, if we take comparison with previous princesses in Disney's animated films, including Snow White, Cinderella and Aurora, we can see huge difference that Ariel being the first princess actively pursuing her prince. Ariel held her dream and belief in love, and tried her best on making the dream come true instead of passively waiting until a prince could find her. On the other hand, similar as previous princesses, Ariel was equipped with pure and kind hearts, thus many friends were willing to help and the prince fell in her.

The resources and money used in the production of "The Little Mermaid" excessed all the other Disney's animated films at that time. The new technique of making animation that using real motion of famous actors and actresses as reference of characters' animation was introduced in the production. Also, the team invested much in producing music in the film, where all of the songs were exquisitely composed by Alan Menken and Howard Ashman to fit the animation plots. The music not only added on film more vivacious elements but also acted as a delightful media to convey the value that the film wanted to express. For example, the most famous song "Under the Sea" of the film, which also won the Grammy Award in 1991, expressed a value of cherishing
things already owned (under the sea) and not overrating others’ belongings (on the land) by music and lyrics. The music acted both educationally and entertainingly and greatly enriched the film.

It is also interesting to mention the creation of Ariel's red-haired appearance, which made Ariel the first red-haired princess in Disney's animation. Originally, the animation team designed Ariel blonde, which was publicly admitted as the trait of a beauty, such as Cinderella and Aurora. However, since there was another mermaid movie "Splash" by Touchstone Pictures at the time, and due to the perfect match of red to the Ariel's shimmery green tail, which was also specifically recognized as "Ariel green", the team in the end decided to change Ariel to red hair. The unintentional design ended up giving Ariel an unforgettable appearance and also provided the option of various view of beauties.

4.1.4 Value

From the features analyzed above, it can be seen that as a commercially and creatively successful animated film, "The Little Mermaid" not only impressed the audience by its delicate visual design and animation of characters and scenes, but also by the change of the image of the princess in a fairy-tale-based animated film.

Firstly, the value that hardworking and being kind would bring positive rewards and success was expressed by the film. The Disney's edition of The Little Mermaid adapted the tragical ending of the original fairy tale to a happy ending for Ariel, which positively encouraged the young audience of the belief in working hard and pursuing dreams. In addition, through the plots and lyrics of music the emphasis on cherishing things by one's side and protecting the loved people was also conveyed.

Secondly, Ariel distinguished apparently from traditional princesses on the role she played in gender relationship. She actively pursued her lover while the scenes of their relation and interaction, including events happened between Ariel and Eric and how they cared about and dealt with each other, were emphasized and depicted in detail in the film plots. The stories of prince and princess after being together were mostly ignored in the older films of Disney's Princess series. From this point of view, the role of princess became more personalized with independent thinking and making of decisions. This change was in keeping with the
transformation of social value of American society over gender role during early 1990s, when Third-Wave Feminism had begun and the self-awareness of females was greatly aroused.

Thirdly, the production of the animated film by Disney Studio made a breakthrough in this film, both on animation production and music composition and fitting. The vivid design of the music and animation made the film attractive to target audiences, and made it effective enough to convey Disney's creation and value.

4.2. The Princess and The Frog

4.2.1 Background

“The Princess and the Frog” is a musical romantic fantasy-comedy animation produced by the Walt Disney Animation Studios in 2009. It was the 49th film in the Walt Disney Animated Classics series, 10th to the Disney Princess Franchise. It’s a grand production of the golden duo of Walt Disney Animation Studio, Ron Clements and John Musker. Those two had co-directed successful films of the studio, “The Little Mermaid“ (1989) and “Aladdin” (1992). With the duo of Disney’s middle movie period returning back to the studio, the production team decided to make “The Princess and the Frog” a work with all the old-fashioned Disney elements to make it classical and critical. As mentioned in the preface of Case Analyst, classic Disney films must contain animal friends of the heroine, lots of singing parts like a musical, and dreams, lots of big dreams coming to live in the story.  

4.2.2. Story & Adapted Features

Written and directed by Ron Clements and John Musker, the script was based on the novel “The Frog Princess” by E. D. Baker, which was in turn based on and reproduced from the fairy tale,

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3 From the Internet Movie Database (http://www.imdb.com/)

Film credits and information derived from the Internet Movie Database owned by Amazon.com, Inc.
“The Frog Prince” by the Brothers Grimm. Besides from the element, magic in kissing a frog, there’s almost no trail of Grimm’s version of “The Frog Prince” in this movie. Clements and Musker pretty much decided all the plot details in the purpose of touching the audience’s heart and reminding the Americans of the tolerating and adventurous spirits they first built the country with. The movie was released in September of 2009, and it was the time President Barak Obama had started his presidency for nine months. (And Mr. Obama had been a famous senator for 4 years before 2009.) It was the year the whole world and the American society realizing a big mile stone has been set in the progress of racial equality that had slowly evolved for more than a century. In the early planning stages, the production team simply decided, except for the historical animated pictures, Pocahontas, Disney had never had a classic series film setting in the United States, and “it’s about time to have it happen, about time to have a first African American leading role. “

The story was set in 1920s New Orleans, Louisiana. The film tells the story of a hardworking African descendent American girl named Tiana who dreams of owning her own restaurant. After kissing a prince who has been turned into a frog by magic, Tiana becomes a frog herself. She and the frog prince thus have to start an adventure together, seek for the cure for them to turn back to human.

4.2.3. Film Features in Characters/ Design/ Music

The production group first decided the film is going to be a musical-animation, happening in the United States, then Musker realized, New Orleans of the 1920s seemed to be the right timing and location for a musical to happen. [#] As New Orleans was one of the major business cities and the origin of American Jazz culture, the music, the dance moves in the films are all in styles of the Dixieland Jazz. New Orleans was first a French colonial until Napoleon sold it to the Federal Government of the United States in 1803. In the naming, lines and lyrics of the film, audience

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4 according to Clements and Musker interviewed by the Empire Magazine. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40QsGw5PaU&index=2&list=PLmH8-Jz8r9F6XezYPAJtf7PK76h8FLGUL)
and still see the trails of French colony left in this city. As for the attires of characters, it was the age American women started to free themselves from the restrictive garments. Chic but practical styles like Gibson style was on in the US by then. Tiana’s wealthy girlfriend, Charlotte La Bouff dressed in the Christy style as a debutant. (Hoobler, 2000) Every scene and movement in the film were casually lofty along with that New Orleans Jazz, most of which written by experienced composer Randy Newman, well known for his musical involvement in Pixar films such as A Bug’s Life (1998), Monsters, Inc. (2001), Cars (2006), and the Toy Story trilogy (1995, 1999 and 2010).  

It’s also an interesting question to consider how come Disney, the major animation studio representing American culture only had its first movie taking stage in the US. American Culture, as in culture of the United States, is famous for being a mixed culture. Its consist primarily of European culture, but also influenced by African, Native American, Asian, Polynesian, and Latin American cultures. Representing American culture, the Walt Disney Studio choose to base its work on cultures of different regions every time. From 1937 to 1991, every Disney Princess motion pictures took setting in Europe. Then starting from Aladdin (1992) princess Jasmine initiate as the first none Caucasian princess with beautiful dark-bronze skin and big eyes emphasizing liners. Then followed by Chinese Princess, Mulan, and more. Being culturally mixed is American culture. And even when the scene takes place in New Orleans, audience still sense the mixed culture in it. For example, Tiana was a greek name meaning “princess in English, Prince “Naveen” had an Southern Indian name to hint he’s a mysterious, exotic hunk, and Charlotte La Bouff was obviously French descendent.

4.2.4. Value

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5 according to Clements and Musker interviewed by the Empire Magazine.  
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40OQsGw5PaU&index=2&list=PLmH8-Jz8r9F6XezYPAJt7PK76h8FLGUL)
“The Princess and the Frog” emphasizes a virtue rarely brought up by Disney before, the hard-work Ethic. As described in the preface of Case Analyst, major lessons for young audience to learn from the cartoon are always in the signature song of the heroine.

In the lyrics of “Almost There”, Tiana said, “Fairytales can come true; but You gotta make 'em happen; it all depends on you. So I work real hard each and every day.” Still promoting Walt Disney’s main idea of “dreams do come true.” but putting more emphasis on self-effort. Correcting the wrong idea from the early and middle Disney movie periods or passively waiting for others to rescue the girl and make her dreams come true. Also, Tiana’s behavior of saving, planning and hardworking are all new values of the American society recent year due to recession in the States, while the luxurious and careless Charlotte La Bouff was a double to show the old reckless American consumption culture.

And then in the song “Dig a Little Deeper” by native Indian witch, Mama, it sang “Don't matter what you look like, Don't matter what you wear, How many rings you got on your finger, We don’t care. You’ve gotta dig a little deeper to get who you are. When you know who you are, you’ll know what you need. “For self development, everyone needs more further understanding about themselves and for relationships everyone needs to dig a little deeper into one another to see the characters and good virtues beneath their skin; for working ethic, people needs to think deeper to see the critical keys to things; and for chasing dream, if one haven’t got there, one need to keep on working hard and stick in a little longer for the dreams to come true.

According to actor Terrence Howard in the Interview with Movie Wed, “When Tiana turned into a frog, It’s all the sudden not just about Affrican Americans, poor families or rich people, its about all creation. All of the frogs, all of the animals, all of the dreamers, including the stars. Finally ( in the end of the movie )they all come together as a result of hard working and joint effort. That’s the message the film was about. That is why when they, Tiana and Prince Naveen, went to see the hoodoo witch, Mama, she didn’t change them back with a spell; she simply
reminded them that ‘you’ve got to dig it a little more deeper, forget about what you want, go after what you need’ that’s what the world need right now.”

4.3. Frozen

4.3.1 Background

Frozen is a 3D animation the Walt Disney Animation Studio produced and Walt Disney Pictures released in the year of 2013, as the 12th film of the Disney Princess Franchise. It features two princesses, Elsa and Anna, for the very first time, making them the 12th and the 13th princess to the line-up. Its roughly based on Andersen’s fairy tale “The Snow Queen.” Frozen had been a profound idea to the passed Walt Disney in the early period of Disney Princess movies. Yet it had been procrastinated till 2011 when Jennifer Lee, one of the co-directors of Frozen came up with the script the studio finally approve of. Having Mark Henn, character designer of Cinderella, Ariel, Jasmine, and Tiana, as the supervising animator, and Robert Lopez as its composer and songwriter, even if critics suggest there’s too many plot holes in the film, it was still a massive commercial success; it accumulated nearly $1.3 billion in worldwide box office revenue, $400.

4.3.2. Story & Adapted Features

“Frozen” is roughly based on Andersen’s fairy tale “The Snow Queen.” It had been an idea of the passed Walt Disney in the early period of Disney Princess movies. But the idea of embracing ice queen, the villain, wasn’t mature enough for the studio and the market in the society of the age was not ready for a character this complicated yet. So the idea was held back till 2011 when Jennifer Lee, one of the co-directors of Frozen came up with the script of having the rescuer in the original Ice Queen story to become Princess Anna, and from saving her lover to saving her beloved sister. Also Lee and the production team came up with the innovative idea of making Elsa the victim and the villain herself at the same time. The adaption of changing almost the whole story of Ice Queen ended up leaving several debatable plot holes in “Frozen”.

4.3.3. Film Features in Characters/ Design/ Music

6 Movie Wed interview with “The Princess and the Frog - Interviews with Anika Noni Rose and Bruno Campos, and Terrence Howard James” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iThh1VUoqXc)
The beautiful images and figure of the princesses by Mark Henn and the award winning theme song, “Let it Go,” were already enough for the audience to tolerate some lacks of logic in its plot. Nonetheless to mention how many revolutions the production team had done throughout the story. “Frozen” is a film full of first times in the history of Disney. It’s the first Disney Movie featuring two princesses in one motion picture. And also the first time having the leading character first as the villain then regaining control of herself and becoming the heroine saving the world. Something very worth noticing is that with Princess Anna’s love affairs, the film warned its audience of how reckless love at first sight could possibly lead to huge mistake. This lesson has never been emphasized by Disney, and it is even against the idea for romance of Disney Princess Movie in its early and middle periods.

4.3.4. Value

Within several first timers in this movie, there are also many important new values promoted in it. First is hinted in the scene when Anna passed a hostel in the forest to buy supplies for herself, the counter man recommended sauna to her. “Hello family!” said the counter man. There in the sauna room, were two adult men and three kids. There wasn’t any further explain in this, but present study take it as a hint and statement of Disney to accept and support same-sex marriage, and diverse family.

Second value, as discussed in the designing of the plot, is reminding children of the danger in fast love and crush at first sight. It encourages people to think more, before making decision on people. Extending the same message Disney’s been trying to give “Dig a Little Deeper” in “Princess and the Frog” of the former period for Disney Princess Movies.

And third is the importance of embracing true self. This one has always been a center value of Disney motion pictures. Yet with artist, Robert Lopez’s, effort, “Frozen” expressed this idea with extraordinary success in the award winning song, “Let it Go.” It’s so catchy and emotional that not only kids sing to it, as typical audience for animations, crowds of any society group would play it or sing it for both the external beauty of the melody, and the internal beauty in the meaning of its lyrics. Literally, the lyrics, “let it go” encourages people to stop caring what other people think of oneself, and embrace what one truly is. Through accepting the true self, one could also gain more control over one’s life and destiny. Due to the hint mentioned in the first point of this paragraph, some homosexual right group even take this movie and song as Disney’s promotion on normalization of homosexuality. (Kierran Petersen, BBC, 2014) Besides from the
unconfirmed message of homosexual culture, “Let it Go” has become the anthem of self-embrace.7

The last but not the least idea presented in this film, is that our heroine’s pursue for happy ending has gone beyond romance. In this study, the author categorized Scottish Princess Merida from “Brave”, and Princess, then Queen Else from “Frozen” to this fourth period, a new period of Disney movie, as the heroines no longer need a lover to complete their happy ending. It’s a whole new page to the evolution of sex role in Disney Princess movie series.

5. Comparison

On the aspect of love lives, Ariel was the first princess acting initiatively to pursue her love, Tiana didn’t put love on her priority for life goal, and Elsa didn’t even need to have a love life to be a heroine. The differences of the leading ladies’ love lives, and the gender roles in that were the critical reason the author came up with the new classification for Disney princess movies.

Another point of view to examine one gender role, is the behavior and part the heroine took in the climical crisis happened in her story. The little mermaid, Ariel, may be brave enough to change herself for her beloved one, but when it comes to disasters, she’s still the passive one waiting for male characters to save her from the threats of Ursula. Tiana was the one saving the prince and inspired him to be a more practical and responsible man, Elsa was the disaster herself but she learnt to control herself and was willing to sacrifice herself for her beloved ones, thus saving the world.

6. Conclusion

As the authors’ analysis based on the current studies of Disney’s Princesses animated films series and the background of Third Wave Feminism, more recent cases were further discussed in this study, including “The Little Mermaid” (1989), “The Princess and The Frog” (2009) and “Frozen” (2013). The overall results showed that the gender role played by the princess in the film changed

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over time, corresponding to the development of Third Wave Feminism, where princesses became more personalized in pursuing their goals regardless of their ethnicities or social status. The fetter of gender stereotypes was gradually released, from traditional points of view toward a beauty as blonde to that a princess should be always kind and perfect. As a result, in this research, the authors figured out the creative and cultural designs in each film that helped it to be more attractive to the modern audiences and effective in communicating the value and transform of the gender role.

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