



## **The Study of Female Gender Roles through Characters of Disney Princess**

Wigran Namphadorn

English Program, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University, Thailand  
E-mail: nwigra@kku.ac.th

### **Abstract**

Female gender roles can simply be observed in media. It was not only that the media was the reflection, but was it able to set a role model for adolescences to follow as well. Disney Princess was a successful cartoon figures and product line with it undeniable irresistible influence. These many princesses released by Walt Disney's motion pictures have offered far beyond a girlish dream to entertain, but they also represented female gender roles. Moreover, it is noticeable that once each new princess was released there was changes in their female gender roles. This descriptive study is aimed to 1) analyze characters of Disney Princess and 2) analyze dynamic of female gender roles presented through Disney Princess of different period of time. The characters of the princesses were analysed based on the dialogues, setting, actions, appearance, and comparison of the characters to other characters to investigate their female gender roles which later categorized based on the matched characteristics of each princess. The analysis of qualitative data of found that the characteristic related to the period of time the motion pictures were released and divided female gender roles of the Disney Princess into three categories: 1) traditional female gender roles, 2) independent female gender roles, and 3) deconstructed female gender roles.

**Keywords:** Character Analysis, Disney Princess, Female Gender Roles, Motion Picture

## บทคัดย่อ

บทบาทหน้าทีของเพศหญิงสามารถพบเห็นได้ทั่วไปในสื่อ สื่อนี้ั้ไม่เพียงแต่เป็นภาพสะท้อนแต่ยังสามารถเป็นแบบอย่างให้กับเยาวชนได้ด้วยเช่นกัน ตัวละครเจ้าหญิงของดิสนีย์เป็นทั้งตัวละครและธุรกิจสินค้าที่ประสบความสำเร็จที่มีอิทธิพลอย่างปฏิเสธไม่ได้ ตัวละครเจ้าหญิงจากการ์ตูนดิสนีย์จำนวนมากมาเสนอประเด็นข้ามไปไกลกว่าแค่เพียงความฝันของเด็กสาวเพื่อความบันเทิง แต่ยังรวมไปถึงการเป็นภาพตัวแทนของบทบาทหน้าทีของเพศหญิง และสังเกตได้ว่าแต่ละตัวละครเจ้าหญิงที่ถูกนำเสนอออกมาในละครสมัยก็มักจะมีการเปลี่ยนแปลงของบทบาทหน้าทีของเพศหญิงด้วย การศึกษาี้เป็นการวิจัยเชิงพรรณนาซึ่งมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1) วิเคราะห์ลักษณะตัวละครของเจ้าหญิงดิสนีย์ และ 2) วิเคราะห์พลวัตของบทบาทหน้าทีของเพศหญิงที่นำเสนอผ่านตัวละครเจ้าหญิงดิสนีย์ในยุคสมัยที่แตกต่างกัน การวิเคราะห์ตัวละครเจ้าหญิงใช้บทพูด ฉาก การกระทำ รูปร่างลักษณะ และการเปรียบเทียบกับตัวละครอื่นเพื่อค้นหาบทบาทหน้าทีของเพศหญิงซึ่งในลำดับต่อไปจะได้รับการจัดเข้าหมวดหมู่ตามบุคลิกลักษณะที่ตรงกันของตัวละครเจ้าหญิงแต่ละตัวละคร การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงคุณลักษณะ พบว่า บุคลิกลักษณะของตัวละครซึ่งมีความเชื่อมโยงกับช่วงเวลาทีภาพยนตร์ออกฉาย และได้จำแนกบทบาทหน้าทีของเพศหญิงเป็นสามรูปแบบคือ 1) บทบาทหน้าทีของเพศหญิงแบบดั้งเดิม 2) บทบาทหน้าทีเพศหญิงทีเป็นอิสระ และ 3) บทบาทหน้าทีเพศหญิงทีรื้อสร้าง



## 1. Background and Introduction

Motion picture is a mass media entertainment that is easily accessible and undeniably popular. Not only was the motion picture itself influential in terms of entertainment, the popularity of each movie can also be engaged to other businesses when used as a trademark to construct increases of value for products, adapted to tourism and service business such as theme parks or restaurants decorated in the theme of famous movies, and enhancing local businesses and tourism around the filming locations – not to mention the making of sequels or later episodes. This means the enormous financial circulation for production and payments from the fans and followers of the business line. One of the most apparent example of the extension of entertainment to other businesses can be observed from the case of Walt Disney (About the Walt Disney Company, 2018).

Disney is a world class entertainment business line that was founded by Walt Elias Disney, the American man who brought “*Mickey Mouse*” to life and the heart of the people in 1932. Since 1966, lung cancer had taken him since but his business lives on, especially the Disney’s animations. The success of Walt Disney is evidenced by countless iconic characters that can be seen not only on screen but literary all around such as Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Winnie the Pooh, Peter Pan and the list can go on and on. Of all the icons, “*Disney Princess*” is the excellent illustration of how these mere childish cartoon can go further beyond screens to become the business trademark and the domination lively and broadly affecting economics and society (Rackl, 2009).

Disney motion pictures that brought the many princesses to life and fame were based on variety of tales, folklore, and myth. The original literature was interpreted and adapted to make into movies that was able to catch on their audience and become world classic; for example, Snow White and the Seven Dwarves, Cinderella, Pocahontas, Mulan, and Moana – to name a few. This adapted version of the old literature is more understandable and responsive to the modern ideologies of the era when each of them was in theater. This clever adaptation is surely one of the reason that Disney animation is so much welcome every time a new movie is released.

Most of the literature that Walt Disney chose to transform to be their animations already presented female as the main character. In some cases, the female characters were interpreted and brought to become the leading characters who were fighting against external conflicts or struggled through internal conflicts, or both. Moreover, the images that were presented through Disney’s vividly represented female gender roles. When compared, it is observable that female gender roles as represented through Disney’s characters were dynamic and subjected to be adapted to trends and social dynamics of each time the movies were in theater. Notwithstanding the change of the characteristics of the princesses according to the change of society, their roles and images do impact on social values and lifestyles of their audience as well.

Hence, this study discusses 1) the investigated female gender roles represented through Disney’s Princesses and 2) the changes and developments of female gender roles represented through Disney’s Princesses of each period of time.

### 1.1 Female Gender Roles

Gender roles are sets of behavior expected to be expressed according to gender or sex of individual. Fundamentally, the concept of gender role was defined based on masculinity and femininity. The expectation of gender roles can be varied due to many factors such as religion, culture, or other factors. While WHO questionably defines gender role as “*socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women*”. Even so, this had set a criteria and influenced mindsets of individual to have certain



expectation of how each gender should behave. Therefore, feminist movement had put an effort to eradicate the traditional female gender roles to set themselves free from oppression as they believed that the traditional female gender roles were set under the influence of patriarchy which denied right and power of women.

When media played crucial roles in the modern world, female gender roles were also presented through media. Not only was the image in media a reflection, it was somehow able to set the model of gender roles, too. Many male characters smoked cigarettes and drink liquor while females wore high-heels and make-up, for instance. To adolescence who easily had confusion or finding a role model of how they should express themselves to society, the influence on media was then able to push them to have certain characteristics (Wood, 2007).

## 1.2 Disney Princess

The Walt Disney's hold a franchise of consumer products and the female protagonists from its animation are adopted to be created in a form of product such as dolls, home decorative furniture, costumes, and so many mores. Only some of the female protagonists with leading roles in the animation are selected to be the member of the Disney Princess Line. Since 2000 to 2017, several classic characters are officially announced to be included in the line which are 1 (**Snow White** from "*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*" (1937), 2 (**Cinderella** from "*Cinderella*" (1950), 3 (**Aurora** from "*Sleeping Beauty*" (1959), 4 (**Ariel** from "*The Little Mermaid*" (1989), 5 (**Belle** from "*Beauty and the Beast*" (1991), 6 (**Jasmine** from "*Aladdin*" (1992), 7 (**Pocahontas** from "*Pocahontas*" (1995), 8 (**Mulan** from "*Mulan*" (1998), 9 (**Tiana** from "*The Princess and the Frog*" (2009), 10 (**Rapunzel** from "*Tangled*" (2010), and 11 (**Merida** from "*Brave*" (2012). However, this study includes other three princesses due to their princess quality according to the story and their success and influence on media and lifestyle of people in the present time. These three more characters include 12 (**Elsa** and 13 (**Anna** from "*Frozen*", and 14 (**Moana** from "*Moana*". Even though they are not yet included in the Disney Princess Line by now, Elsa and Anna have their own product line since these characters are very famous and the animation itself was too successful to let its business potential limited in the group since they are strong enough to hold their own franchise. While Moana may be not as successful as the two *Frozen* sisters and she was not really called a princess, the Disney Princess Line is about to welcome this daughter of the village's chief as the new member of the troop for her inspiring characteristic of a female protagonist of the new ideology.

## 1.3 Character

Character is a crucial element of literature. Readers and audience look in to the life of a character, learn the experience, and feel for them as if watching a life of a person who enjoys, likes, hates, struggles, and other mores actions and reactions towards whatever they are facing.

In the case of Disney Princess, they are classified as a protagonist – the central character of the plot. Basically, there are two methods to present the character to audience: showing or telling. By telling, authors directly explain and give comments of personality, actions and thoughts of his characters. However, some author prefers to gradually reveal the characters through what they do and say and readers need to be attentive to the actions and dialogues. Not only actions and dialogue, some details of a characters can also be hinted in name, setting, appearance or comparison of the characters to other characters, too (Delaney, D., Ward, Ciaran. & Fiorina, C. R., 2003).

## 2. Data Collection and Data Analysis



The data was collected from 13 Disney's motion pictures as previously mentioned to find out the female gender roles of the princess characters. While each movie was played, the each princess was observed for her *dialogue* to find out her personality and attitude. The analysis of the character's dialogue mainly focused on the original theme soundtrack of each motion picture was aimed to represent the personality and attitude of each princess. Moreover, their *actions* and *appearance* were also spotted as well as the *setting* of each scene. The *comparisons* of the princess character to other characters in the movie each princess was featured were gathered for the analysis to discover the female gender roles. Additionally, each character was investigated in their history background and the period of time her movie was released. The qualitative data obtained were gathered and examined descriptively to find out about their character which exhibited the female gender roles. The role of each princess will be categorized to find the shared features of each princess character. The results of the analysis were described as follows.

### 3. Results of the Study

#### 3.1 Female Gender Role Represented Through Characters of Disney Princess

**3.1.1 Snow White** :Snow White and the Seven Dwarves was released in 1937 and that make Snow White the first Disney Princess that appear to audience .While she was entitled princess, her image was usually presented that she was doing housework .Snow White usually stayed in, cleaning, cooking and taking care of the dwarves .She is friendly and naïve, befriending with wild beast but letting the evil old hag in and biting the poisonous apple .The characteristics of Snow White represent the traditional female gender roles quite explicitly .A woman is nice and friendly .Their space is at home since their responsibility are the house chores .The poisonous incident portrays that women are passive since they cannot get themselves out or cope with problems since they have to wait for a man to help them out .In terms of appearance, Snow White represent the ideal beauty as described by the magic mirror that “*Lips red as the rose .Hair black as ebony .Skin white as snow –The Fairest of them all*”.

**3.1.2 Cinderella** :The movie was released in 1950 and Cinderella was good at portray the image of women during the time .Cinderella was a dream to many women who were stuck with the domestic works, serving her family and hoping one day she would find a prince who would choose her to be his bride, so they would live happily ever after .Cinderella's story represented the social space of a woman that is limited in the house with the house works that she is responsible for .Not only that a woman is depressed by society, in the case of Cinderella, especially, she was depressed by other females of higher position, the stepmother and the stepsisters, too .The opportunity to get out of the house to change her life by joining the royal ball and meeting with Prince Charming can be made happened only by the magic of her fairy godmother .From the plot, it can be assumed that Cinderella represented idea that a woman has to carry on with her duties and waits for her dream to come true as suggested in one of the soundtrack song of Cinderella )1950“ (*A Dream Is a Wish Your Heart Makes*”

**3.1.3 Aurora** :The princess appeared in the movie “*Sleeping Beauty*” )1959 .(The princess was kept in the safe place by her fairy godmothers to protect her from the curse .She; however, was cursed as she was predestined to .She was sleeping until she was awakened only by a true love kiss of the Prince Phillip, the true love she met only once. The plot suggested that a woman cannot resist her destiny and in the hard time she cannot do anything but waiting for a



prince to rescue her .The faith in love at first sight and that love conquers all were also presented .

**3.1.4 Ariel** :The mermaid princess was slightly different from the previously mentioned princesses“ .*The Little Mermaid* ”was in theater in 1989 and this princess represented females ’devotion to what they really wanted in life .In this case it was Love .Another step away from traditional princess was observed when a woman left the passive personality behind now has the courage to stand up for what she wants .Ariel sacrificed her voice and her life in the sea in exchange with legs since she wishes to live on land and with her prince, Eric .Ariel portrayed a more courage image of a woman who was fighting for what she really wants .However, the fact that what she really wants in life is love from Eric suggested the fact that men still have the privilege over women .Since the prince does not have to lose anything while the female protagonist left her friends and family .Especially, she gave up her voice which signified the right to speak .To assume, a woman should remain silence and behaved to be loved.

**3.1.5 Belle** :In “*Beauty and The Beast* )”1991(, **Belle** represented a totally different representation of a woman .Even though she was illustrated with the image of a housekeeper, a friend to the wild beasts, and a beautiful woman with ability to sing .This quality seemed to be typical for Disney princesses, but the personality that made her different was her passion for reading .This enhanced the image of educated and clever woman and this personality has never been presented by any other princesses before .The **Beast** represented the harsh and rude personality of man and Belle managed to kindly calm the beast down .Intelligence and patience were added up to other typical Disney princess qualities and signified that woman can be gentle, good at domestic works, beautiful, and can yet be smart .She did not have to surrender to her destiny and she did not have to be forced to marry a person she did not want to .To be in love she had to take time and proved that the man was qualified to her preference .Apparently, woman can choose and did not always need men to rescue them .By the other way round, she too can save a man from his unfortunate situation .

**3.1.6 Jasmine**“ :*Aladdin* ”was released in 1992, but Princess Jasmine was not the leading character like Aladdin was himself .Even so, she was created to display the female figure of 20<sup>th</sup> century who would prefer to follow her heart, especially about marriage .According to the arranged marriage, she had to be married to a prince as assigned by her father, the Sultan .The ride on magic carpet symbolize her choice to be free and choosing herself over her family and the royal duty .Not only did she not surrender to the oppression on her femininity, she also found that the femininity is useful .For example, when she used her female body to distract the villain Jafar to help the hero Aladdin .It can illustrate that being a woman can be under-privileged but there were some situations when female quality can be used in negotiation .

**3.1.7 Pocahontas** :In 1995 when Pocahontas was released it was a big surprise for Disney’s fan .Unlike the other traditional write princesses, Pocahontas was a Native American, the only daughter of the Chief of her tribe .The character of Pocahontas has marked acceptance of global racial diversity .This coppered skinned female character demonstrated how people discriminated one another .The tribal people were insulted and discriminated by European explorers .Not only was she discriminated by the white skinned, she was also oppressed by the rules of her tribe too .Even so, she is rebellious enough to defy all rules set by humans of any group .She preferred to befriend to trees and animals and respected the rules of nature as described in the original soundtrack “*Colors of the Wind* .”One of the outstanding aspect presented in





Pocahontas was that she chose the responsibility and her people over love. It can be said that she was the first Disney Princess that her story did not end “together happily ever after”, but still understandable and satisfactory. The sequel of “*Pocahontas*” was made and yet confirmed that she belonged to where she belonged and there was no need to pretend to be one of the group that she did not belong. The character of Pocahontas exhibited the fact that being a woman was beyond house chore and dreaming of a prince.

**3.1.8 Mulan** :The Chinese folklore of Mulan the female warrior was transformed to Disney’s motion picture in 1998. In China where traditions and customs were so strict and female oppression was known, Mulan was expected to get married. When she got married, that implied she would “*Bring Honor to Us All*” as written in the song lyric. However, she would scarify herself to serve in the army instead of her father even though the idea was not accepted since it was against the ancient tradition to do so since a woman can only serve her own family by becoming a daughter in law and serve her husband’s family well. Mulan was a woman who challenged typical gender roles, not only traditionally but also physically, because to serve in an army, she had to defy her own physical limit. “*Mulan*” gave clear signal that women were capable of everything just like men since Mulan was successful in the army, her family was happy and proud of her, and yet, though inexplicitly, she found the love of her life. The fact that her love with General LI Shang was inexplicit signified the fact that woman did not have to devote her life to love any more like some previous princesses while she was able to serve the country and her family. As a result, they can find self-esteem in other aspects in life.

**3.1.9 Tiana** :The great breakthrough of female stereotype in Disney’s cartoon was in “*The Princess and the Frog*” in 2009. Tiana was African American female. Her dream was to own a restaurant, not being married to a rich charming man. In fact, she was cursed to become a frog and she was the one who had to save the cursed frog prince. Together, they helped each other to find the cure. It was true that Tiana’s duty involved with kitchen, but that was her job that she earned her living and income, not a born-to responsible like other previous princesses. She dreamed of running her own business rather than being supported by a man and her charm was not particularly presented by her appearance but by her personality. It can be observed that Tiana is more independent and had clear goal of life which was not involved with being married or serving domestic work anymore. She was not the princess in danger waiting for a prince to rescue her; instead, she fought for herself and her dream and along the way, she was strong and kind enough to rescue others.

**3.1.10 Rapunzel** :The traditional Rapunzel was captured in the tower and waiting for a prince to rescue her. The Rapunzel in “*Tangled*” 2010 (was different that once she found that there was nothing more for her on the tower she found her way down and chose to take adventurous journey to explore what she actually deserved. The leading male character is prince but a thief from whom Rapunzel learn the fact of life and she too brought him to learn the new perspective about life as well. Her escape from the tower was so the symbolism of women escaping to be free from social tradition where she was oppressed and exploited. Long hair signified femininity, so Rapunzel decided to cut it short despite its magical power because she would rather live a non-magical life yet peaceful and independent.

**3.1.11 Merida** “ :*Brave*” 2012 (was not anymore about love or dream. Merida was a princess and she was just like many princesses that she was betrothed to the son of one of her



father's allies .Stubborn as she was, she preferred to enjoy her archery game .Her parents still complied with the tradition and they tried to convince their daughter .One thing led to another, her queen mother was cursed to become a bear .Merida finally lifted the spell after she and her mother shared their feelings and get to understand each other at the end of the story .This plot led Merida to further stage beyond traditional female gender roles .Since her betrothed prince was only one year old, "Brave "was not at all about male-female relationship .It was about family relationship especially mother and daughter relationship .When women of different generation were trying to understand each other .Merida's appearance was different from the concept of traditional definition of beauty .Her frizzy red hair symbolized her stubborn personality that she always disobeyed to her parents who wanted her to behave like a lady .She was skillful at archery since she was young which breakthrough the female stereotype and gender role.

**3.1.12 Elsa and Anna“ :*Frozen* )”2013** (was phenomenal and brought the sister princesses to the hearts of Disney's fans until present .This motion picture is another example to portray that female gender roles can be more than a wife or a housewife who cannot live her life without a man to support .Elsa was the rightful heir to the throne after the death of her parents . However, she was threatened by her own ice magic power which she was with and kept as a secret .This power used to be a gift and then has turned to be a threat after she accidentally attacked her sister, Anna .Since then she was uncomfortable with her power and tried to hide it away as suggested by her parents .At last she accepted who she was and learned how to control the power and make use of it instead of cover it up .While Anna was an ordinary girl who was missing her sister after Elsa hide away from people because she was scared of her power .Anna never understand the personality of her sister and became lonely after her parents passed away . When she met Prince Hans she felt in love with him since he was a first friend in forever because she has been alone since Elsa locked herself up in a room. Finally, they learned that the true love can be something else beyond the passionate love between male-female .Sisterhood can be the source of true love and even more powerful than male-female relationship .In "*Frozen*", the two sister presented the perspective that women do not have to dedicate their lives to love and men . Family was also important and the bonds of siblings should be cherished .Elsa demonstrated the fact that woman too can be a good leader .Female leaders like Elsa might be different in her personality; however, she can a good leader who win the hearts of the people .The image of these two sister princesses can show another perspective of female gender roles.

**3.1.13 Moana“ :*Moana* )”2016** (released the latest princess from Disney .The teen age princess with her duty to carry on with the status of the Chief of the village after her father had always wondered about her destiny .She finally sailed out by herself to accomplish her task in the sea .The image of Moana was again not a traditional concept of beauty .She was an islander who had dark tanned skin and rather plump body .The story did not involve with male-female relationship but confusion in a girl's decision between her adventure and her duty to the village . Moana did not have to prove her quality to become the leader, in fact, the position as a leader of the community was pass on to her which was against the traditional female gender role who usually played supporting roles rather than leaders .Moana learned to accept herself and realized that she can be the leader while being herself .As a result, this image of the new princess was rather contrast to the traditional image .The picture or signification of domestic works were not presented in the cartoon .Instead, the image of adventurous and courageous personality was presented, similar to other male heroes.





### 3.2 Dynamic and Development of Female Gender Roles

From the study of the Disney Princess characters, the female gender roles were changing according to the age when each character was released. Observing the main characteristics, female gender roles from Disney Princess can be categorized into three stages; namely, 1 (*traditional female gender roles*), 2 (*independent female gender roles*), and 3 (*deconstructed female gender roles*).

**3.2.1 Traditional Female Gender Roles** in this study refer to the female gender roles that is as expected to be observed from women. It is the stereotype that many people expect women to be. The princesses that present this type of gender roles are Snow White, Cinderella and Aurora.

Physically, they are made to be beautiful and sweet. Snow White, whose appearance was described in a list, has black shiny hair, snow-white skin, and red lips. Aurora was blessed with the gift of beauty by her fairy godmother was known as Sleeping Beauty. While Cinderella was not specifically described on how beautiful she is, on the ball night her fairy godmother provides her with the most beautiful ball gown and glass slippers. All in all, beauty is the quality of all the three princesses.

Another point is that they all were also presented with the image of a woman working with domestic works. They were cleaning, cooking, and washing inside of their residences where they were safe and their prince will finally come to find them. Whenever, they were out of their place, trouble usually happen, for example, when Cinderella went to the Royal Ball, she almost cannot return home by midnight, and when the hunter received the order from the Queen to kill Snow White, he decided to do in in the woods.

One more qualification is that their personality is nice, sweet, innocent and friendly. They are friends to people and animals and never suspect of any harm or danger that was coming to get them in to trouble. Their positive thinking and believe that their dream would come true was one of the personality that brought them happiness and happy ending.

Finally, they believed in love and the man who would be the love of her life will be supportive and they would live together happily ever after. The song always suggested the attitudes of the princesses "*I'm Wishing*" and "*One Day My Prince Will Come*", the two song from "*Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*" was sung by Snow White and that was the illustration of her perspective in life. In Cinderella, "*A Dream Is a Wish Your Heart Makes*" exhibit that she always believes that her dream will come true and it did come. "*Once upon a Dream*" in Sleeping Beauty also gave a hint that the princess believed in a dream that she had of a prince.

To conclude, the traditional female gender roles are presented through physical beauty, domestic work responsibility, kind and gentle personality, and strong belief in love and marriage. The princesses found to present the female gender roles are Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora.

**3.2.2 Independent Female Gender Roles** in this study refers to the characteristics of the princess who portrayed the traditional female gender roles in terms of beautiful appearance and expectation towards love and marriage; however, they displayed more independent personality. From the analysis of Disney Princess, the princesses in this categories included Ariel, Belle, and Jasmine.

To begin with, the princesses in this group still had impressive appearance and being desired by men. Belle and Jasmine were flirted by the villains and their physical appearance were outstanding compared to other women in the cartoon. Prince Eric was attracted to Ariel once he



saw her and tried to talk to her while she was unable to speak .Hence, it can be assumed that the princesses were still attractive in their appearance.

However, they were not anymore presented by a housewife image .Despite the duty of domestic housework, the focus of the character of Belle was the portrait of a literate woman who had strong passion in reading and learning new things .Jasmine and Ariel were really princesses, so they did not have to worry about the house chores .

Also, it was noticeable that these princesses were gentle and kind, but they can also be smart and tricky .They can cope with problems by themselves and from time to time they were able to support and get the prince out of troubles .Through time, she taught the Beast to learn the new perspective and later was able to lift the spell .Jasmine knew how to distract the villain to save Aladdin, for instance.

Apart from the traditional qualities, the princesses in this category showed their independent personality .They were not passive, surrendered to their destiny and waited for dreams to come true .Belle sacrificed herself to let her father be free and herself be captive in the castle of the Beast .Ariel gave up her voice to take a chance with her love with Prince Eric and Jasmine disobeyed her father's plan to have her married to a prince because she found the love in Aladdin .

In conclusion, these princesses are attractive in their appearance like before, but their lifestyles were not dependent on domestic works anymore .Love and marriage still had influences on their decisions in life .Except for Belle who did not see love and marriage as priority, but she did not decline to be married to the prince after they had spent time to learn about each other . However, there were some differences .They tried to avoid being oppressed by traditional social ideology especially patriarchy rather than being passive like the previous princesses .They did not wait for help or dreams came true anymore; instead, they were willing to struggle through challenges to accomplish their goals .

**3.2.3 Deconstructed Female Gender Roles** referred to the characteristics of the Disney Princess that were different from traditional qualities .Their appearances did not comply with traditional concept .Their life goals were not being married to a prince in their dreams and instead of waiting around for their dreams to come true, they struggled to obtain it. The princesses who were included in this group were Pocahontas, Mulan, Tiana, Rapunzel, Merida, Elsa, Anna, and Moana .

First of all is the appearance of the princesses .Pocahontas, Mulan, Tiana, Merida, and Moana had proved that the concept of beauty did not have to be described as white European woman with slim shape and long straight or curly hair who was well-behaved like a lady .Beauty can be found in the look of Tribals, Asians, African Americans and any other races, and they do not have to be so slim to be attractive .Even though Rapunzel, Elsa, and Anna seemed typical in their appearances compared to previous princesses, their beauty were not a focus in the plot.

While the goal in life of the previous traditional princesses were love and to be married, these deconstructed princesses had other goals .It was true that Pocahontas was in love with Captain John Smith but she chose her family and friends in her tribe .Mulan had never think about marriage, in fact, she repelled it .Additionally, she was willing to replace her father to serve the country in the army .Tiana wished to have a business of her own and she worked to collect money to fulfil her dream .Rapunzel wanted to set herself free from the life on the tower .Merida also denied the arranged marriage and learned to cherish family and relationship with her mother .Elsa and Anna learned at last that family bond, especially with their sister can overcome all obstacle and was even more important than male-female relationship .The last princess Moana had to made decision to

choose between the village and her adventure in the sea and there were no male-female love and marriage involved with the plot at all .And with all achievements, they had to struggle for it .Despite of magic and supports from allies, the princesses still had to fight hard with physical strength and courage .

The data analysis is compacted in table 1 below.

Table 1: Conclusion of Data Analysis

<b>Princess</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Categories</b>
Snow White From “ <i>Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs</i> ” (1937)	Princess (birth)	<b>Actions:</b> doing house chores/ damsel in danger/ <b>Dialogue:</b> “ <i>Someday My Prince Will Come</i> ” <b>Appearance:</b> “ <i>Lips red as the rose .Hair black as ebony .Skin white as snow –The Fairest of them all</i> ” <b>Setting:</b> at home/ kitchen/ garden <b>Compared characters:</b> the Queen	<b>Traditional Female Gender Roles</b> -Physical beauty, -Domestic work responsibility, -Kind and gentle personality, -Strong belief in love and marriage. -Passive
Cinderella From “ <i>Cinderella</i> ” (1950)	Princess (birth)	<b>Actions:</b> doing house chores/ damsel in danger/ <b>Dialogue:</b> “ <i>A Dream Is a Wish Your Heart Makes</i> ” <b>Appearance:</b> Young and beautiful <b>Setting:</b> at home/ kitchen/ garden <b>Compared characters:</b> The stepmother and The stepsisters	<b>Traditional Female Gender Roles</b>
Aurora From “ <i>Sleeping Beauty</i> ” (1959)	Princess (birth)	<b>Actions:</b> doing house chores/ damsel in danger/ cursed to be sleeping <b>Dialogue:</b> “ <i>Once Upon a Dream</i> ” <b>Appearance:</b> Young and beautiful <b>Setting:</b> at home/ kitchen/ garden <b>Compared characters:</b> the Wicked Maleficent	<b>Traditional Female Gender Roles</b>
Ariel From “ <i>The Little Mermaid</i> ” (1989)	Princess (birth) / Mermaid	<b>Actions:</b> wishing to have legs and live on earth/ finding true love <b>Dialogue:</b> “ <i>Part of That World</i> ” <b>Appearance:</b> Young and beautiful <b>Setting:</b> palace/ on earth <b>Compared characters:</b> Ursula	<b>Independent Female Gender Roles</b> -Attractive appearance -Not dependent on domestic works -Love and marriage still had influences but may not be priority



			-Struggling from being oppressed by traditional social ideology especially patriarchy -Challenges to accomplish their goals
Belle From “ <i>Beauty and the Beast</i> ” (1991)	Villager/ Princess (by marriage)	<b>Actions:</b> reading/ taking care of father/ teaching the beast <b>Dialogue:</b> “ <i>Belle</i> ” <b>Appearance:</b> Young and beautiful <b>Setting:</b> on house/ library/ palace <b>Compared characters:</b> Beast	<b>Independent Female Gender Roles</b>
Jasmine From “ <i>Aladdin</i> ” (1992)	Princess (birth)	<b>Actions:</b> wanting freedom/ finding true love <b>Dialogue:</b> “ <i>A Whole New World</i> ” <b>Appearance:</b> Young and beautiful/ Middle-East look <b>Setting:</b> palace <b>Compared characters:</b> -	<b>Independent Female Gender Roles</b>
Pocahontas From “ <i>Pocahontas</i> ” (1995)	Chief’s daughter	<b>Actions:</b> protecting her village and people/ falling in love with foreign man <b>Dialogue:</b> “ <i>Color of the Wind</i> ”, “ <i>Grandmother Willow</i> ”, “ <i>If I never know you</i> ”, “ <i>Where do I go from here?</i> ” <b>Appearance:</b> Young and beautiful/ Native American look <b>Setting:</b> woods <b>Compared characters:</b> Captain John Smith and other European people	<b>Deconstructed Female Gender Roles</b> -different appearance -beauty is not a focus -pursue personal goals -appreciate other type of relationship rather than love and marriage
Mulan From “ <i>Mulan</i> ” (1998)	Villager	<b>Actions:</b> protecting her country and father/ disguise to be a man <b>Dialogue:</b> “ <i>Reflection</i> ” <b>Appearance:</b> Young and beautiful/ Asian look <b>Setting:</b> soldier camp. war <b>Compared characters:</b> Other women	<b>Deconstructed Female Gender Roles</b>
Tiana From	Ordinary girl/ Princess (by marriage)	<b>Actions:</b> trying to start her business <b>Dialogue:</b> “ <i>Almost There</i> ”	<b>Deconstructed Female Gender Roles</b>

“The Princess and the Frog” (2009)		<b>Appearance:</b> Young and beautiful/ African American look <b>Setting:</b> Restaurant/ in house <b>Compared characters:</b> Charlotte	
Rapunzel From “Tangled” (2010)	Princess (birth)	<b>Actions:</b> finding her true identity, fight for freedom <b>Dialogue:</b> “When Will My Life Begin”, “I’ve Got a Dream” <b>Appearance:</b> Young and beautiful <b>Setting:</b> On the tower <b>Compared characters:</b> Stepmother	<b>Deconstructed Female Gender Roles</b>
Merida From “Brave” (2012)	Princess (birth)	<b>Actions:</b> fight for her freedom/ refusing arranged marriage <b>Dialogue:</b> “Touch the Sky” <b>Appearance:</b> Not an ideal appearance of a princess <b>Setting:</b> Palace/ woods <b>Compared characters:</b> Mother	<b>Deconstructed Female Gender Roles</b>
Elsa from “Frozen” (2013)	Princess (birth)	<b>Actions:</b> fight for her freedom/ adapting to the curse <b>Dialogue:</b> “Let It Go” <b>Appearance:</b> Young and beautiful <b>Setting:</b> Palace/ Ice Palace <b>Compared characters:</b> Anna	<b>Deconstructed Female Gender Roles</b>
Anna from “Frozen” (2013)	Princess (birth)	<b>Actions:</b> falling in love/ adapt to her sister <b>Dialogue:</b> “Love Is an Open Door” <b>Appearance:</b> Young and beautiful <b>Setting:</b> Palace <b>Compared characters:</b> Elsa	<b>Traditional Female Gender Roles and Deconstructed Female Gender Roles</b>
Moana From “Moana” (2016)	Chief’s daughter	<b>Actions:</b> Protecting her village/ finding her passion in life <b>Dialogue:</b> “How Far I’ll Go”, “I Am Moana” <b>Appearance:</b> Not an ideal appearance of a princess <b>Setting:</b> Village/ Ocean <b>Compared characters:</b> Maui	<b>Deconstructed Female Gender Roles</b>

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the study draw the conclusion that the Disney Princess’s characters represented female gender roles in various perspectives. The expected roles of woman are to be a caretaker of house chores. They were supposed to long to be a wife and to take care of her man and family. Her coming out of the house for an adventurous journey was usually denied and





whenever she left her house, it seemed that she usually endangered and finally will be saved by the man.

However, characteristics of Disney Princess has changed along with the passing time representing the changing of female gender roles since early 20<sup>th</sup> century until now. The early Disney Princesses such as Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora had traditional female gender roles as they were influenced and representing the traditional point of view of female gender role that was limited to house chores and waiting for prince to rescue and support as a “*Damsel in Danger*” .Since they were designed to be helpless, the prince who came to rescue her from any danger either a witch or the stepmother at the end of the story was the guarantee of the ever after happy ending.

Later on, the next generation of the princesses exhibit developments in their characters .Ariel, Belle, and Jasmine were more independent and willing to fight for what they wanted .However, they maintained the attractive appearance and their wish for love and marriage . They seemed rebellious and their actions and attitudes were not welcome by other characters. After all the fights and struggles, with the support from their men, their adventure turned up to lead to a happy ending and marriage, eventually.

Finally, the later generation including Pocahontas, Mulan, Tiana, Rapunzel, Merida, Elsa, Anna, and Moana whose beauty, life goal, and life style were deconstructed to be much different from the previous two groups .Their appearances and the concept of their beauty were demonstrated in alternative aspects. Pocahontas was tribal while Mulan is Asian and Tiana was African American. Moana and Merida were rather full figured when compared to the princesses from previous generations. Their life goal was not anymore finding true love instead they paid more attention to friends and family while romance can be an additional gift along her journey.

The representation of Disney Princess suggested dynamic of social ideology .As previously mention, media was not only reflection but also the role model .Many children or even adult had the Disney Princess as a role model from their outfit to their attitudes .Thailand was not exception, young Thais and adolescences were inspired by Disney Princess .In fact, we usually had a lot of media claiming themselves to be reflection of society .If media can influence and become role model for audience, it should be time to use media to guide the trend and influence the community to the appropriate path .

This study was a reflection of how the world had changed and the roles of women had been moving continually. It was suggested that the further study can move the focus on the female gender roles as a reflection from Disney’s Villains since they were usually the rebels who went against the path of social norm, so they were seen as bad women. The study can be further to the comparison between the princess and villain characters so the broader views were obtained to fill up the knowledge gain for this recent study.

## 5. References

*About the Walt Disney Company*. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.thewaltdisneycompany.com/about/>

Arbver, S) .2003 .(*Gender and ageing :Changing roles and relationships* .S .Arber, K . Davidson & J .Ginn )Ed .(.Maidenhead :OpenUniv .Pr.

Beasley, C) .2005 .(*Gender & sexuality theories, critical thinkers* .London :SAGE.



- Clement, R. & Musker, J. (Producer), & Clement, R. & Musker, J. (Director). (1992). *Aladdin* [Motion Picture]. United States of America: Walt Disney Pictures & Walt Disney Animation Studio.
- Coast, P. (Producer), & Cook, B. & Bancroft, T. (Director). (1998). *Mulan* [Motion Picture]. United States of America: Walt Disney Pictures & Walt Disney Animation Studio.
- Conli, R. (Producer), & Greno, N. & Howard, B. (Director). (2010). *Tangled* [Motion Picture]. United States of America: Walt Disney Pictures & Walt Disney Animation Studio.
- Del Vecho, P. & Musjer, J. (Producer), & Clement, R. & Musker, J. (Director). (2009). *The princess and the frog* [Motion Picture]. United States of America: Walt Disney Pictures & Walt Disney Animation Studio.
- Delaney, D., Ward, Ciaran. & Fiorina, C. R. (2003) *Fields of vision: Literature in the English Language*. Essex :Pearson Education Limited.
- Del Vecho, P. (Producer), & Buck, C. & Lee, J. (Director). (2013). *Frozen* [Motion Picture]. United States of America: Walt Disney Pictures & Walt Disney Animation Studio.
- Disney, W. E. (Producer), & Hand, D. et al (Director). (1937). *Snow white and the seven dwarfs* [Motion Picture]. United States of America: Walt Disney Production.
- Disney, W. E. (Producer), & Geronimi, C., Luske, H, & Jackson, W. (Director). (1950). *Cinderella* [Motion Picture]. United States of America: Walt Disney Production.
- Disney, W. E. (Producer), & Geronimi, C. et al (Director). (1959). *Sleeping beauty* [Motion Picture]. United States of America: Walt Disney Production.
- Musker, J. & Ashman, H. (Producer), & Clement, R. & Musker, J. (Director). (1989). *The little mermaid* [Motion Picture]. United States of America: Walt Disney Pictures & Walt Disney Animation Studio.
- Pentecost, J. (Producer), & Gabriel, M. & Goldberg, E. (Director). (1995). *Pocahontas* [Motion Picture]. United States of America: Walt Disney Pictures & Walt Disney Animation Studio.
- Rackl, L. (2009, September 27). *Walt Disney, the man behind the mouse*. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20091003001653/http://www.suntimes.com/lifestyles/1790811%2Cdisney-walt-museum-san-francisco-092709.article>
- Sarafian, K. (Producer), & Andrews, M. & Chapman, B. (Director). (2012). *Brave* [Motion Picture]. United States of America: Walt Disney Pictures & Pixar Animation Studio.
- Shurer, O. (Producer), & Clement, R. & Musker, J. (Director). (2016). *Moana* [Motion Picture]. United States of America: Walt Disney Pictures & Walt Disney Animation



Studio.

Stein, A) .2002 .(*Sexuality and gender* .C.L .Williams & A .Stein )Ed .(.Malden, Mass :  
BlackwellPub .

"*What do we mean by "sex " and "gender"?* ."(2015) .Retrieved from [https://www.legal-  
tools.org/doc/a33dc3/pdf/](https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/a33dc3/pdf/)

Wood, J .T) .2007 .(*Gendered lives :Communication, gender, and culture* .Belmont, CA :  
Thompson/Wadworth.