

# Destiny Early Childhood

## Conditioning Children to View the World through Stereotypes

### Raising Young Children Based on Stereotypes

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Many individuals believe that children gain most, if not all, of their information from the classroom setting. Is this factual? In today's society, children (from birth) spend more of their time in front of the television (or any form of media) than they do interacting with humans (Santan et. al.). This speaks volumes because what this is telling us is that the media, rather than parents, are instilling socially accepted values into the new generation.

The question then becomes what exactly are these socially accepted values and how are they influencing the new generation? Data indicates, children are susceptible to the information being transmitted to them. From approximately age two, children begin to form their own perceptions of what it socially means to be of a particular biological sex. By the age of three, children already know which biological sex they are, and between ages three to five children begin relating the concepts of gender identity towards themselves (Aina, 2011).

Knowing this, we can begin to fully immerse ourselves into the knowledge of how children are susceptible to these social values/beliefs. The first step in understanding this is by taking a look at where children receive most of their information from. A large percentage of knowledge/information retained by children is a result of the media (Tanner et. al, 2003). The question then becomes, what form of media?

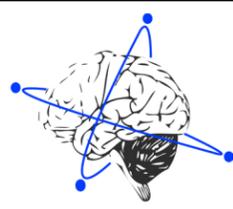
To answer this question, all one has to do is pay attention to what children watch the most. This would be Disney. The Disney Corporation plays a huge part in children's media as well as lives. In terms of their lives, Disney plays a role because much, if not all, of their clothing brands are geared towards children.

They have Disney themed bedrooms that children sleep in; there are Disney themed birthday parties, Disney themed food, etc. In short, children can become immersed in Disney at any point and time.



So, what is Disney portraying to children in terms of how individuals should look as well as how they should act? In many Disney movies, women are expected to stay at home and be housewives while the men are the ones who are depicted to be the heroes, save the helpless females, and be the ones who provide for the families. Similarly, this can be seen within many early childcare programs. How? It is very simple, simply take a look at which gender frequents a specific area. What do you see? Typically, only females chose to role play in the dramatic play area (or more widely known as the kitchen area) and the males choose to stay in the block area.

Is this simply a coincident? Or are these children being hardwired from birth to internalize and act upon what is socially acceptable? Are these socially acceptable values even values that should be internalized? When these Disney movies are analyzed we can see that not only are these movies gender bias, but the history that is portrayed is greatly romanticized.



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When examining the movie Pocahontas, Disney expressed the fact that a young Powhatan girl by the name of Pocahontas saved a European man from being killed. In doing so, they fell in love. However, according to history Pocahontas and John Smith did not like each other in any shape or form. Only after Pocahontas had died did John Smith invent the tale that we hear today (Chief Horse, year unknown). Likewise, the countless number of men and women that were brutally murdered by the Europeans are not shown. What is shown; however, is that Pocahontas willingly followed her love (John Smith) back to his home country. This scene is also fallacious.

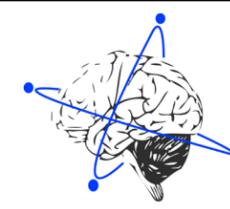
Similarly, the matchmaking service that paired women with men in order to have them married sooner depicted in the Disney movie Mulan does not exist in China. Correspondingly, the society that was depicted in which men dominated society does not exist. The men dominated society, in terms of men being the only ones able to defend the country (Sun C. F., 2015). When Mulan attempted to save her father from going to fight in the war, the general told her father to teach his daughter to “hold her tongue” whenever she was in a man’s presence. Is this really a movie that we would like young girls to be watching?

Correspondingly, another popular Disney movie speaks volumes to both young boys and girls. This movie is Aladdin. Many would question why this is, and for obvious reasons. Princess Jasmine was a young girl who refused suitors that her father (the Sultan) chose for her. However, Princess Jasmine was still depicted as being helpless and needed a male to save her. On the other hand, Aladdin or Prince Ali was portrayed as being homeless or a “street rat” who was captivated by Princess Jasmine’s beauty. In order to attain her love, Aladdin (along with Genie’s help) had to lie about who he truly was. Do we really want the new generation of males to watch this Disney movie and think that they have to lie to a woman in order to gain her affection?

Moving on to body images, Disney follows the distinct views of what is considered socially attractive. Women in Disney movies are portrayed as having a thin waist, big breasts, long eyelashes, etc. What does this say to children who are not skinny at a young age and struggle with their weight? Males on the other hand, are portrayed as having a muscular frame, tall, and generally being some type of warrior. What does this say to young men who have no interest in this type of frame and want to be artists or musicians? Similarly, when looking at women in society today, we can see that the belief that a thin waist is socially attractive is very evident.

Many women go out of their way to have “the perfect body” or as social media calls it “body goals”. They buy waist trainers to have their hips appear wider and their waist thinner, they get plastic surgery to enlarge their breasts as well as their butt, and a lot more. They pay others to turn themselves into a 21st century Barbie instead of accepting and loving the body that they were born into. Does this all stem back from what the media taught them was and still is socially attractive? Do we want to instill these social values into the next generation or do we want to teach them that they are perfect the way they are and that these social values don’t need to be followed? Do we want girls to grow up thinking that a man has to be the one to save them and that they have to be a housewife while the man has to be the provider?

Society is changing, the classical Disney movies represented a past that should remain right where it is...in the past. Now Disney movies are beginning to represent the era that we live in, in which women do not need a man to save her and women do not need to be married off in order to make a living. Disney may be realizing the societal changes...or it might be a way to profit; however, the new generation can get a chance to see what society represents. Though, it is also the parents as well as teachers duty to not let the media influence children into viewing the world the way it once was.



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Screen time is prevalent in many early childcare facilities. With the amount of time that children are spending in front of these multiple forms of technology, children are being influenced to view the world from these stereotypical views. Teachers need to find ways of cutting back or eliminating the technology in the classrooms in order to instill in children positive self images.

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