**Abstract**

It is a known fact that the primary target of Animated Features in the film industries, are children. Animation has brought new worlds and characters to the imaginations and minds of children. But what do these worlds say about roles in society? And what do these characters teach children about gender, race, and ethnic background? That is the very focus of this research paper. Over the past decades, the art of animation has evolved as well as the audience in today’s society. Books, essays and other document have been written on this very issue. Studies have been conducted to examine its effects on the audience and the film industry as well. The biggest focus is on the role of women in Animation. The idea that a women’s life is not complete without a man is present in many Animated Disney films and is the entire plot of one movie; The Little Mermaid. The Little Mermaid also presents how beauty is drawn on the big screen; sexy, petite but not complete without unrealistic hip and waists sizes. Which proves the fact that animated females are much more likely to be shown as sexy. Animation also creates unrealistic expectations and demeaning stereotypes on other subjects. Companies focusing on Animated Features and are global can influence on young minds of each generation .These very companies will need to understand this is frowned upon. And they will need to broaden their aspects if they wish to appeal to a wider variety of audiences.

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| The History and Societal Impact of Prejudice in Children’s Animation |
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# Introduction

Since the introduction of “Gertie the Dinosaur” by Winsor McCoy in 1914,[[1]](#footnote-1) children have been drawn instinctively to animation as a form of entertainment. Unlike previous forms of amusement, such as circuses and vaudeville, which were limited to single events at a certain point in time, motion picture animation has provided the same exact experience at multiple locations and numerous times to an exponentially larger audience. With its target as children, notions of race, culture and gender roles are sublimely promoted in these films. From an early age, children are being taught about societal roles, different cultures, aspects of courtship and racial profiles. In children’s animation, these topics are presented in a distorted manner and without factual merit. In fact, these films promote an unrealistic impression of the race, gender, ethnic cultures, and social hierarchy. Since this media is viewed at developmental life stages, the results of these messages have been especially detrimental to girls and minorities as well as creating a negative impression to the wider audience.

With destructive implications as cited, why is the motion picture industry still promoting these stereotypes? How have these depictions impacted the identification and self-image of societal groups? These stereotypes are being cemented in children’s minds prior to entering preschool, reinforced through grade school as what a person’s role, image and capacity are based on their gender, race and ethnic origin. This research paper will explore the types of stereotypes typically found in children’s cartoon and what are their impacts in terms of outward and inward awareness and consciousness.

# The Impact of Gender Typecasting on Girls and Young Women

In the majority of animated films, women are seldom portrayed as a heroine or in a powerful role. Women typically are casted as victims or princesses. Their characters are in need of being rescued or have been provided with an effortless lavish lifestyle. This creates an unrealistic impression in which women are not required to work, to study, or establish their own identity. Their value is determined by the males they are associated with, whether it is their father or rescuer. For females, this produces an impractical view of themselves and reinforces the belief that women are dependents. As the role of women in society advances, this perspective generates additional obstacles for women as they navigate business and commerce.

# The Beginning

In 1932, Fleischer Cartoons introduced the world to one of the first animated female characters, Betty Boop.[[2]](#footnote-2) Created in the Jazz Age, artists developed Betty as a dumb but sexually provocative character. With an endearing persona, she was capable of delivering lines like “I guess the people who moved out don’t live here no more!” She had the traits of a speakeasy girl with a heart of gold.[[3]](#footnote-3) Viewed as a sexual tease, who often found herself in compromising situations, she was a sweet but drawn overly suggestive. She exposed a large amount of cleavage and wore a short dress that showed off her garter. In “Boop-Oop-A-Doop,” the lecherous ringmaster fondles her legs and behind.[[4]](#footnote-4) In “Bamboo Isle,” Animator Shamus Culhane drew Boop topless doing a hula with her top only garnished with flowers. Although Paramount and the Fleischer Brothers were upset at the sequence, the segment was not cut.[[5]](#footnote-5) When asked about the origin of the blatant sexual nature of the Betty Boop cartoons, Culhane said it reflected the lives of many of the single young men who worked at the studio. He recalled they drank a lot and many spent their weekends with prostitutes.[[6]](#footnote-6) Another Fleischer animator, Myron Waldman recalled “Betty was pretty provocative, with her garter and short dress, and we were conscious of it.” Culhane’s only explicit direction from the Fleischer Brothers regarding animation of Betty Boop was “Just don’t bounce the tits.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

The innocent yet sexy enticing female image of portrayed by Betty Boop is repeated in “The Little Mermaid”. The star of the film is Ariel, a 16-year old mermaid with bright red hair and wide innocent eyes. Her body is petite but her attire is bare and minimum. The ratio between her waist and hips are unrealistic. It appeared for many critics that the artists created an animated child sex symbol.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Females cartoon characters are almost four times as likely as males to be shown in sexy attire. In addition, presentations of female characters in animated contexts are more likely to be shown in sexually revealing attire than human actors.[[9]](#footnote-9) Females in animated stories are more likely to have small waists and unrealistic body shapes than live action female characters, Twenty-two percent versus one percent. Comparing animated and live males where unrealistic muscular physique is 12.5 percent to 0.5 percent. Clearly, animation appears to favor highly sexualized female characters with unrealistic body ideals.[[10]](#footnote-10) Girls receive more specific media messages about unrealistic ideals for weight and appearance then boys do. Girls are much more concerned about being too fat and about their overall appearance.[[11]](#footnote-11)

# Romance, Relationships and Reality

Couple relationships and romantic expectations had its origin on December 21, 1937 when Walt Disney premiered “Snow White and Seven Dwarfs.”[[12]](#footnote-12) The main character, Snow White, falls in love at first sight. The idea that love is easy and requires no work was demonstrated in Disney’s first classic as Snow White wins her prince by sleeping. When asked if it was hard to fall in love, Snow White replies “It was easy.” This theme is repeated in other Disney films: “Cinderella,” “Sleeping Beauty,” “The Jungle Book,” “The Little Mermaid” and “Pocahontas”. In “The Little Mermaid,” Ariel falls in love with Prince Eric at first sight, and he falls in love with her only after hearing her voice. In “Pocahontas,” John Smith and Pocahontas fall in love based on appearance, as they did not speak the same language. Female animal characters falling in love were more prevalent. This includes “Bambi,” “Lady and the Tramp,” “101 Dalmatians,” “The Sword in the Stone,” “The Aristocats,” “Fox and the Hound” and “The

Lion King.”[[13]](#footnote-13) In most of these movies, the common message was the notion that when a man and a woman meet, they almost always fall in love.[[14]](#footnote-14)

By contrast, “Mulan,” “Tarzan,” and “Beauty and the Beast”, the main characters did not fall in love with each other until after they had gotten to know each other. In each case it took a convenient twist and the entire movie. In “Mulan,” when Lee Shang thought Mulan was a man, they were only friends. However, he falls in love after he learned she was a woman. Tarzan and Jane had to work for several days to overcome their language barrier and to get to know one another. In “Beauty and the Beast,” it took conflict and strive for Belle and the Beast to realize their feelings.[[15]](#footnote-15)

One of the strongest cases on the demeaning of women in relationships is Walt Disney’s “The Little Mermaid.” To be with her love, Ariel trades her most valuable possession, her voice, for entrance into his world. The sacrifice is all hers. To fit in his world, Ariel must perform an act of self-mutilation. She must lose her fins in order to gain legs for conformity in his world. To achieve this, she is required to give up her voice, a loss of self. In the scene where Ursula, the sea witch, convinces Ariel that her voice will be useless, she says, “You’ll have your looks! Your pretty face! And don’t underestimate the importance of body language!” The message is that a woman is not complete without a man and self-sacrificing is an acceptable quality for a woman even when it involves self mutilation to achieve these goals.[[16]](#footnote-16) Images of perfect females result in fatal self conceptions because the standard idea of beauty is impossible to reach. Eating disorders and heighten plastic surgery among young teenage girls compared to teenage boys are a consequences of female images in the media.[[17]](#footnote-17)

# Female Identity

The construction of gender identity for girls and women represents one of the most controversial issues in animated films. In many Disney films, the female characters are constricted within narrowly defined inferior gender roles. Often female characters are ultimately subordinate to males. They define their sense of power and desire exclusively in terms of dominant male narratives. In “The Little Mermaid,” Ariel is a metaphor for the traditional housewife in the making narrative. When Ariel loses her voice, it is not so bad since men don’t like women who talk. The message is dramatized when Prince Eric attempts to kiss his true love even though she has never spoken to him. Ariel is rewarded with womanhood by marrying the right man. This is only achieved by renouncing her former life under the sea. In “Aladdin,” Princess Jasmine’s life will only be defined by marrying a man. Her father, the Sultan, believes that her happiness will be insured only after marriage. While in “Beauty in the Beast,” Belle starts off as a strong and independent woman, yet her feminist character diminishes as the film progresses. Although a captive in the castle, she is free to roam but does not escape at first. Upon her failed escape, she is rescued by Beast. In the end, she becomes a member of his household.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Female subordination returns in “The Lion King,” All of the rulers of the kingdom are males reinforcing the assumption that independence and leadership are tied to patriarchal entitlement and high social standing. The dependency that the beloved lion king, Mufasa, engenders from the women of Pride Rock is unaltered after his death when the evil Scar assumes control of the kingdom. Lacking any sense of outrage, independence or resistance, the female felines hang around to do his bidding.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Animation has had a detrimental impact on the depictions of women in society. It negatively affects not only children but our social structure and societal expectations. The subliminal cementing of these representations not only creates barriers of understanding and comprehension, but prevents a healthy development for self-awareness and social mobility.

# Racial Stereotypes in American Animation

With the lack of racial and ethnic diversity in animation, cartoonists often develop characters that emphasize the negative and exaggerate physical differences. Minority characters are depicted as barbaric, cruel and dumber than their white counterparts. Attempts to develop these characters are often fall in typical typecast roles as servants, villains or sidekicks. Since many ethnic groups tend to gravitate in the same social and geographic circles, animation is the first exposure for many children to minorities. In addition, for minorities, animation is the first revelation on how others view them.

# African American Stereotypes

In 1930, Amadee Van Beuren produced a cartoon “Dixie Days,” It used minstrel songs and depicted African Americans as animals. The animators constructed broad visual stereotypes that represented African Americans as simple one-dimensional creatures. Slave animals, mostly dogs, wore ragged clothes and lazily picked cotton. A watermelon transforms itself into a slave face and a group of chained slaves skip along happily singing while holding a sign that reads “Slave Auction today.” In the middle of film a slave girl named ‘Topsy’ was depicted as a monkey.[[20]](#footnote-20)

The success of “Dixie Days” gave rise to more racially toned cartoon. Later that year, the Fleischer Brothers’ introduced their “Talkartoon” episode “Ace of Spades.” It was the first portrayal of African American urban characters. The film consisted of black vaudevillian gags and minstrel melodies. The black urban caricatures were card sharks and gamblers.[[21]](#footnote-21) Van Beuren’s 1932 Tom and Jerry cartoon, “Plain Dumb,” had characters, Tom and Jerry, escaping African natives by merely blackening their faces.[[22]](#footnote-22) Even though, neither Tom nor Jerry adored themselves with the grass skirts similar to the natives.

At Disney, African Americans faired slightly better as in the 1935 cartoon “Three Little Kittens.” Walt Disney illustrated a black female cook as a hefty, servile “mammy” figure. In a new twist, the she is religiously devout and sings about her faith while going about her chores “Gwine to heaven when eyes die / Dis sure am a scrumptious pie!”[[23]](#footnote-23) Although Disney never shows her face, the animators show her hands and legs.

In 1940, Disney released “Dumbo,” which had African American animal characters. The crows use a distinct African American Vernacular English (AAVE) speaking style. They were portrayed as unemployed and simple with no purpose in life other than to make music and be happy. The obvious comparison was the driven and determine circus mouse, who spoke in mainstream United States English (MUSE). [[24]](#footnote-24) Disney continued the trend of using racially coded animal characters with distinctive African American speech in “The Jungle Book.” In the film, King Louie and his monkey subjects acted anything but royal. They had no rules and occupy their time by having fun and singing.[[25]](#footnote-25) The bear and panther, who are rescuing the young jungle boy, spoke in clear mainstream U.S. English.

Yet no controversy around racial imagery was greater than the one that surrounded Disney’s “Song of the South.” It is the best-documented occurrence of public resistance to racism in animated film. The film opened in New York City just prior to Thanksgiving 1946. Time magazine called Uncle Remus “a character bound to enrage all educated Negros and a number of damn Yankees.” In the same week, Walt Disney called a press conference to deny there was anything that would cause antagonism in the film and any controversy would come from radicals “who just love stirring up trouble whenever they can.” For many, the film was well received and few reviewers were critical of the racist content, the New York Times said “No matter how much one argues that it’s all-childish fiction, anyhow, the master and slave relationship is so lovingly regarded in your yarn, with Negros bowing and scraping and singing spirituals in the night that one might almost imagine that you figure Abe Lincoln made a mistake”. [[26]](#footnote-26)

Several leaders of the black community from Harlem’s U.S. Representative to the Executive Secretary of the NAACP spoke out against the motion picture. An integrated line of picketers protested outside theaters with signs that read “We fought for Uncle Sam not Uncle Tom.” Ebony magazine ran a full page attack against the film.” [[27]](#footnote-27) Interestingly, Disney had hired a Dartmouth Professor of Film Studies, Maurice Rapf, a noted liberal with the hope to avoid any potential problems. Rapf agreed to join the production with the proviso that he could make changes. However, Rapf quit after seven weeks due to conflicts over racial clichés. His name still appeared on the credits

Yet, stereotypes of African-Americans continue to persist in the 21st century with DreamWorks’s “Shrek.” The character of a donkey, known only as “Donkey,” blackness rings out loud and clear. It conveys the historical stereotypical ideas of African-Americans. Donkey is a sidekick, an unwanted chatterbox. He symbolizes the slave, clown and native. He is voiced by Eddie Murphy, an American black actor with a distinctly black voice. The other characters, Shrek and Fiona, were voiced by white actors. Donkey is introduced in the story in a scene reminiscent of slave auctions. He escapes the slave auction and becomes a fugitive. The image of slave and master is easily conjured. Donkey is clearly second class, servile to the needs and Shrek. He intellectual and emotional limits make him simple, childlike and somewhat savage as he is the only character with explicit sexual fantasies.**[[28]](#footnote-28)**  Eddie Murphy also voices another stereotypical animated character in “Mulan”. As Mushu, Murphy is a constantly failing ancestral dragon, He is subservient to Mulan, the story’s main character. Since Mulan is Asian, this denotes the America’s unwritten racial hierarchy.[[29]](#footnote-29)

# Asian Stereotypes

Caricatures of Asians were most offensive during the war with Japan. Paramount released a significant number of Popeye anti-Japanese cartoons. Many of these films were produced my Max Fleischer, including: “You’re a Sap Mr. Jap,” “Scrap the Japs,” and “Seeing Red, White and Blue.” Grotesque images of Japanese sailor and soldiers were in Tokio Jokio.[[30]](#footnote-30) In “Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips,” Bugs is shown handing a Japanese soldier an ice cream bar with a grenade inside it and saying, “Here’s one for one, monkey face.” [[31]](#footnote-31)

In “Lady and the Tramp,” Siamese cats are negatively portrayed as Asians. They have features such as slanted eyes, buckteeth and heavy accents. They are depicted as sinister, cunning and manipulative.[[32]](#footnote-32) The music in accompanying the song they sing has a strong Asian influence. The cats terrorize the house by destroying property and having it blamed on the American-like Lady.[[33]](#footnote-33) Another Disney film “The Aristocats,” depicts another Siamese cat who plays the piano with chopsticks, wears a cymbal as a hat, is cross-eyed and bucktoothed. He has a maniacal laughs and sings out “Oh boy, ferras, ret’s rock this joint!” He is a compilation of offensive stereotypical Asian characteristics. [[34]](#footnote-34)

# Hispanic and Native American Stereotypes

Hispanic and Native American characters have a smaller yet significant role in animation. In “Oliver and Company”, a Chihuahua named Alonzo is typecasted as a Latino troublemaker, at one point in the film he talks about stealing cars. In “The Lion King”, the hyenas clearly speak with racially coded accents using nuances associated with urban Black and Latino youth. This is in comparison to the heroic characters of Simba, Nala, Timon and Pumba whose speech pattern is MUSE.[[35]](#footnote-35) Native Americans were viewed as savages in Peter Pan. The characters were crudely illustrated with large broad nose, exaggerated features with simple and slow speech patterns. The film contains the song “Why is the Redman red?”[[36]](#footnote-36)

# Arab and Persian Stereotypes

Arab and Persian characters did not appear significantly in animations until Disney’s “Aladdin.” From the opening song to the accents of the characters, the film depicts Middle Eastern culture as savage and cunning. Even the heroic figures in the film display cunning or argumentative personalities. When Aladdin and Abu are trapped in the “Cave of Wonders,” they trick the Genie to free them without using a wish. In another scene, Aladdin, rather than reveal his true self, continues to pretend to be a prince and lies to Princess Jasmine. Princess Jasmine is reactionary, immature and short tempered.[[37]](#footnote-37) Most of the children in the film are poor and give the idea that Middle Eastern countries are impoverished and uncaring. Early in the film starving children are digging through garbage for food. No one but Aladdin helps them by giving them stolen beard. Another child receives an unpaid apple from Princess Jasmine only to be threaten to having her hand chopped off by the street vendor. The image is that children in this part of the world are poor and beggars. The street vendor speaks with a heavy foreign accent as do all of villains in the film. Aladdin and Jasmine speak in standard American English.[[38]](#footnote-38) The “bad” Arabs have exaggerated features reminiscent of the Indians in “Peter Pan,” These images reinforced images transmitted the opening song, “Arabian Nights.” The lyrics of the offending stanza states “Oh I come from a land-From a faraway place-Where the caravan camels roam. Where they cut off your ear – If they don’t like your face. It’s barbaric, but hey it’s home.” Yousef Salem, a spokesman for the South Bay Islamic Association characterized the film as “All of the bad guys have beards and large, bulbous noses, sinister eyes and heavy accents, and they're wielding swords constantly. Aladdin doesn't have a big nose; he as a small nose. He doesn't have a beard or a turban. He doesn't have an accent. What makes him nice is they've given him American characteristics.”[[39]](#footnote-39)

# Jewish Stereotypes

The negative animation of Jews was belief for two main reasons. Many animators did not want to be associated with the anti-Semitic events occurring in Europe during the 1930s, the power of Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the financial power of the league members. ADL requested to preview all films for anti-Semitic content so they could advise local and state censors before the films were released. Ironically, some images did occur as the result of in-house gags between Jewish staff members from rival Jewish neighborhoods in New York City.[[40]](#footnote-40) Disney generally avoided Jewish images. However, in the original version of “The Three Little Pigs,” the wolf is shown as a Jewish door-to-door brush salesman who speaks with a thick Yiddish accent, a large crooked nose and a black hat. In the late forties, the studio replaced this sequence.[[41]](#footnote-41)

# French Stereotypes

No other European culture has been animated as much as the French. Disney studio has recently used France as a backdrop in numerous films such as “Beauty and the Beast” and “Hunchback of Notre Dame.” They have French elements in “Monsters, Inc.,” “The Little Mermaid” and “Aladdin.” However, unlike non-Western characters, French characters do not carry demeaning stereotypes. French men are mostly illustrated as thin or muscular. They have pencil moustaches, wear berets, carry baguettes, smoke, drink wine and fraternize with women. French women, despite the non-animated stereotype of being hairy, unshaven and smelly, are drawn as attractive, flirty, elegant and stylish.[[42]](#footnote-42)

Lumiere from “Beauty and the Beast” is the animated character is most matches the stereotypical French man. He is suave, flirtatious, slender, has savior faire and uses the phrase “Sacre Bleu!” The French villain in the film, Gaston, does not speak with a French accent or carries any of the French stereotypes. In “Monsters Inc.,” two protagonists open a door and stumble into a French room. The décor is very French with large windows, hardwood floors, and through the windows a clear view of the Eiffel Tower, There are no human present in the scene, but there is a poster that reads “Tour de France.” The room is immaculate. From the brief encounter with French culture, viewers can conclude that the French are clean and neat, and have beautiful monuments.[[43]](#footnote-43) French accent is associated with wealth, elegance and culture.[[44]](#footnote-44)

Only in the “The Little Mermaid” has Disney created a negative and outrageous French character. Chef Louis is short, chubby, long pencil moustache, big red nose and gappy teeth. Armed with a heavy accent, he portrayed as inept, incompetent bumbling fool. He fights with the food, catches himself on fire and destroys the kitchen. [[45]](#footnote-45)

Animation has created demeaning depictions of minorities in society. It negatively affects not only children but our societal structure and expectations. The subliminal cementing of these representations not only creates barriers of understanding and comprehension, but prevents a healthy development for self-awareness and social mobility.

# Child Development and Media

The early years of a person’s life are the most fertile time for brain development in many areas including language and emotional intelligence. As parts of the brain grows and connects, the total mass of brain tissue increases rapidly. There is an increase of fifty percent in the first two years. By four years of age the brain has double in size. For the next ten years, the types of experiences and events the child is exposed to will largely determine which regions of the brain will be the most developed.[[46]](#footnote-46)

Erik Erikson, a prominent psychoanalysis, believed that at an unconscious level, people form basic beliefs about themselves and their relationships to society. These basic beliefs influence our choices throughout our existence including choice in our development.[[47]](#footnote-47)

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| Erickson’s Psychological Stages[[48]](#footnote-48) | | | |
| Age (approximate) | Principal Challenge | Adequate Resolution | Inadequate Resolution |
| 0 to 18 months | Trust versus Mistrust | Basic sense of safety, security, ability to rely on forces outside of oneself | Insecurity, anxiety |
| 18 month to 36 months | Autonomy versus shame of self-doubt | Perception of self as agent, capable of controlling one’s body and making things happen | Feeling of inadequacy about self-control and control of events |
| 3 to 6 years | Initiative versus guilt | Confidence in oneself as being able to initiate and create | Feeling of guilt over one’s limitations and abilities |
| 6 years to puberty | Industry versus Inferiority | Perceived competence in basic social and intellectual skill and self-acceptance | Lack of self-confidence , feeling of failure |
| Adolescence | Identity versus role confusion | Comfortable send of self as a person both unique and socially accepted | Sense of self as fragmented, shifting, unclear sense of self. |

Between eighteen and thirty-six months, children are rapidly learning to walk and talk. This increasing level of interaction with the world is laden with opportunities to directly influence outcome. To develop a sense of independence and self awareness, children try to do things on their own. Too much restriction or criticism leads to self-doubt. Children enter this stage with a general sense of trust in the world. Restricts communicated to children at his stage will hinder their development. It will cause delay in mastering new tasks as their confidence level is being formed.[[49]](#footnote-49)

From three to six years, children begin to initiate activities rather than just respond to other elements. Based on genetics and events in the previous life stage, children will become more purposeful, wanting to choose what to wear, what to eat and how to spend their time. Environment plays an ever increasing role, stronger and constricting influences can result in the child feeling overcome by inadequacy and guilt.[[50]](#footnote-50)

Prior to entering preschool, the majority of time spent by children is in leisure or discretionary activities. Of which seven hours each day is spent with media. A majority of the time is spent watching television with an additional two hours on the computer or playing video games. In the past decades, time spent playing has decreased and is replaced by media-oriented activities. Overall, children spend twice the amount of time with media than they do with family and friends and six times more than they spend in physical activities.[[51]](#footnote-51)

Learning is heavily influenced be the environment. The acquisition of knowledge occurs through the exchanges one has with various socializing agents on a daily basis. In a contemporary context, these agents of socialization include television and other electronic media. The maturation of if the child influences how much and to what a child completely understands what is viewed. Children, particularly preschoolers and younger children are vulnerable to distortion and misrepresentations. Furthermore, the potential risk is that young viewers are likely to fill in their incomplete representations with stereotypes taken from the image they view in children’s programming including cartoons.[[52]](#footnote-52) Because of their developmental immaturity and vulnerabilities, children are a special audience for television [[53]](#footnote-53)

Emotions are the building blocks of consciousness. Children are more passive victims of their senses than adults. They more readily tap into their emotions when watching televised material. Because of a lack of previous experiences and limited cognitive development, children are not able to interpret presented events in a sophisticated manner, but instead rely on their senses in the here and now. They feel both positive and negative emotions more intensely than do adults, because they have fewer filters with which to dull them. Children, especially young children, do not have the maturity necessary for evaluating television programming on the basis of their social or intellectual merits. The child’s enjoyment is based largely on their immediate, affective responses to what they are watching.[[54]](#footnote-54)

Images of various and diverse groups are often based on stereotypes rooted in the experiences of those persons who create the programming or caricatures. When children are exposed to a steady diet of these stereotypic messages and images, their understanding of themselves and the world around them is conceptualized accordingly. The more time viewers spend with television, the more likely their conceptions about the world and its people will reflect what they see on television.[[55]](#footnote-55)

Children learn about their gender identities and ethnicities through their bodies in relationships with other people and cultural texts of representation such as media. As Henry T. Sampson writes “Depicting minorities as derogatory stereotypes were the universal practice at all cartoon companies before 1960. Within a multicultural society, cartoons can offer a convenient and power opportunity for the dominant majority to legitimately express many of their prejudices and role definition towards a less powerful minority”.[[56]](#footnote-56) This important is since children for minority and immigrant groups are heavy viewers of television. [[57]](#footnote-57)

# Conclusion

Stereotyping in animation has detrimental effects. They cause children to classify the world around them according to the terms and categories provided by television’s false reality. Depictions of minorities and gender are biased, overly narrow, lack diversity and reinforce their attitudes toward stereotyping through television.[[58]](#footnote-58)

Given the stage in the child’s development and the lack of ability to divide what is real and unreal, stereotypes and gender casting displayed in animation have a profound impact on their views, attitudes about themselves and others. Animators need to understand and police themselves to insure that their caricatures do more than just entertain but convey the proper message of diversity. Children are easily influenced and shaped. They have not developed the ability to determine what is real or fantasy. They cannot decide if an image is exaggerated or with the proper context. Children’s development has not progressed to a point of understanding what fiction is and what isn’t. For this reason, the impact of animation, the primary medium of popular media, needs to understand that it is more than entertainment.

With the exception of Public Televisions with characters like “Dora the Explorer”, there have been few changes in children’s animation since the days of “Betty Boop” and “Dixie Days.” Despite the Civil Rights Movement of the nineteen sixties and the rise of feminism in the nineteen seventies, animation is still trapped in a time warp. Animator need to include more females and minorities as primary and secondary characters. Provide female characters with greater aspirations beyond romance. Develop the inner personalities of female and minority characters. Until then the ill effects of this entertainment will be lasting and destructive.

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