

Role of Gender Essentialism in the World of Children

P. Shelonitta

Anna Adarsh College for Women, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9938-0135>

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Abstract

The paper titled, Role of Gender Essentialism in the world of children showcases how gender roles are planted in the minds of young minds. Gender Essentialism involves the stereotypical practices which were followed from ancient civilizations, without analyzing and discarding the toxic elements behind it. It involves the idea that certain ideas as of chastity, patience, virtue, gentleness are the feminine trends while anger, pride, ego, attitude are viewed from a male angle. This paper does try to bring out the gender politics which is seen in society as a social manipulation game transformed by the mainstream media.

Keywords: Gender roles, Gender essentialism, Children, Gender politics, Society.

Gender essentialism is the widely discredited and outdated idea that men and women act differently and have different options in life because of intrinsic or essential differences between the sexes. In other words, it is the idea that men and women are fundamentally different for unchangeable reasons. It is often used to excuse gender-based biases in society. For example, it can be used to justify the idea that jobs traditionally held by women are often accorded less respect and lower pay. Gender essentialism is both informed by gender stereotypes and reinforces them. It can have numerous effects on society. 61% of children try to copy stunts after they have started watching cartoon programs, 45% of children want to be called like their favorite cartoon character, 52% of children want their birthday party to be organized on the theme of their favorite cartoon character

This research paper tries to explore the presence of Gender essentialism in the world of children. In cartoons, animated movies and the animated series meant for kids one could see gender essentialism on a prominent note. Commencing from the 1959 version of Sleeping beauty, an animated musical fantasy film. Wit and Intelligence are not required for the princess. When the #me too campaign was on the peak, a mother named Sarah Hall who dwells in Northumberland Park, said that the episode where the sleeping beauty was asked to be kissed by the Prince sent a wrong message to the social world.

"In today's society, it isn't appropriate - my son is only six, he absorbs everything he sees, and it isn't as if I can turn it into a constructive conversation. I don't think taking Sleeping Beauty books out of circulation completely would be right. I think it would be a great resource for older children, you could have a conversation around it, you could talk about consent, and how the Princess might feel. But I'm concerned about it for younger children, [and] would welcome a conversation about whether this is a suitable material."

Dr. Joseph Murphy who has penned a bestseller “The Power Of Subconscious Mind,” has transformed many lives on a global scale. According to Murphy, one can say that thoughts that were programmed in the minds of young kids determine the quality of adults they will tune into. Does this mean unconsciously our society is transforming the minds of the innocent kids into a grave for morality? Cinderella or The Little Glass Slipper is a folk tale that is said to young girls in their bedtime. To put in simple narrative, the story is all about a passive, sweet girl who does the chores for her evil aunt and step-sisters is waiting for her Prince Charming. And she gets help from a Fairy Godmother who is made to give her fancy clothes for attending the ballroom. This showcases the lack of identity in the character trait of Cinderella. Why wasn’t she shown as a person of strong character? She accepted all means of torture, this portrays the typical feminine side. This is not only a shout from the girl side, but petty small boys who fall into the trap of the marvel universe. Boys are shown to be the strong superheroes, even from the day of their birth Father is their superhero, not their mothers. There was an incident in Indonesia, where a boy jumped from the top of a building when he tried to imitate the behaviors of Spiderman. Characters like Tarzan from Tarzan of the Apes by Edgar Rice Burroughs, He-Man, Chota-Bheem, Crayon Shin-chan from the Manga series are shown to be the typical male dominant ones. Female sensibility seems to be lacking in the world of these series.

In abroad Gender revealing ceremonies are very popular. In India issues like a man grinding his pregnant wife after getting suspicion on the gender of his blood in her body is pathetic. But abroad they conduct a big ceremony revealing the gender. One could see that Boy is represented through the color Blue and girl through the color Pink. This showcases the impact, color Blue is said to be associated with work and productivity. It was found that when Blue color was painted in the office, employers were more productive. On the other hand, Pink color symbolizes nothing but a tender, soft woman. Even the pregnant woman abroad are made to wear Pink for the feminine warmth.

Rapunzel is a German fairy tale in the collection compiled by the Brothers Grimm, and first published

in 1812. The character Rapunzel is shown to be a girl who has long hair. Hair is always seen to be an important aspect of a woman. While we trace the historical backdrop in ancient days woman’s hair was shaved after finding the sexual relationship with the German soldiers. This sends a bodily alert of shame in their mind-set. Even in Bible one can find the reference to the hair of a woman, “And every woman, who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered, dishonors her head; for she is on a level with whose heads are shaven” (1 Corinthians 11:15). Thus Hair which is a predominant physical reference to a typical girl. Even the prince is lured by her singing abilities which are very conservative of a feminine attribute. Dancing and Singing were allotted for girls in classical days and even in contemporary society.

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs is another nineteenth-century German fairy tale that has been marketed by Disney and other trade-ups for financial gain. It deals with the magic mirror concept, which assures the ideology that in the end beauty is important for a girl. This concept of beauty is scary, Barbie dolls and Cinderella faced the same sort of issue. After facing communal issues these people made the right efforts and made Black Cinderella and beefed Barbie dolls instead of the thin dolls. This is due to the bodily image perspective that a woman must be in the right proportion.

In the high star cast of Maleficent, a dark fantasy that was loved by the American kids made it into the gateway of feminine sensibility. There are Disney movies which targets female audiences to gain an uproar in the box-office collection. One such movie became the Maleficent. Even the strong mother is shown to be the victim of motherhood, when casting strong leads as Angelina Jolie it is very significant to check the social message it sends to society. As actors are seen to be strong influencers among the youth who are trapped in the glam world. In Spider-Man 2 one could spot the damsel in distress concept for the umpteenth number.

In Marvel Universe, one can find the statistics of the male-dominant universe despite two leading ladies, Scarlet Witch and Black Widow. But still, men dominate the world Sexual diversity is not spotted in the marvel universe. Any typical marvel hero will

have a girl in his life as a sidekick. She will love him and he will be saving her from the rest of the world. Even after decades, Damsel in distress concept keeps on doing rounds on the amusing internet.

Creating a better future for this generation involves loaded courage in transforming the treasures of knowledge through books. Reading is said to change brain activity on a larger spectrum. It can make a kid think and critically reflect. Imitation is an art that can be easily mastered by the kids of any generation. Self-help books can be given as a replacement for the girls and boys, instead of a tech built framework. If the kid demands edutainment, even a podcast or an audiobook can do wonders in a wider context. Modes of amusement have become a place to do trade rather than to cultivate moral discipline. One good way of cultivating moral discipline is to stay away from the sources which can manipulate young minds through colorful, bright colors. Business trade in unhealthy foods, by using the pictures of the superheroes is the current era. Not everyone has moral responsibility as Popeye, the sailor man. Popeye made every kid to grow fond of spinach yet now the superheroes are marketing the junks. Even to visit Disney World, one needs to pay a whopping sum. This can itself be seen as the best example to bring on the marketing side of the entertainment industry. It is better late than never, to

start the practice of going back to the roots to create impressive personalities. But one needs to take the weed of gender roles in categorizing emotions and physical abilities for a specific gender. This would result in a successive output.

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Author Details

P. Shelonitta, Anna Adarsh College for Women, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India, **Email ID:** shelonitta1697@icloud.com.