

ABSTRACT

Walt Disney studio has been recognized as the premier American animated studio with a series of popular animated movies about lifetime adventures of numerous lead female characters. These movies are not only entertaining, but also express the development of core women's values in American society with the changes in the construction of female protagonists. Beside exploring the main features in the portrayal of lead female character in Disney animated movies, a closer look of how these portrayals reflect the differences in American women's values between two periods of time, from 1900 to 1990 and from 1990 to 2013 is analysed in this paper. Observation of artifacts is the primary method for data collection. For data analysis, the two key methods of feminist analysis based on feminist film theory and content analysis are adopted. The changes in Disney's depiction of lead female characters based on two main themes of identity and inequality vividly reflects the development in the perception of American women's values from 20th century to early 21st century. Gender identity is significantly developed in terms of Disney character's visual construction and the shift to the "new woman" model, breaking the conventional "woman sphere" of submissiveness and domesticity. The fight against inequality of Disney lead female characters also reflects the constant struggle of American women to diminish gender inequality in three main spheres of work, love and marriage, and education and training.