

A Visual Analysis of Male Characters in Disney Animated Movies

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Abstract—This study investigates the visual features of male characters of nine Disney animated movies taken from the last three decades 1990-1999, 2000-2009 and 2010-2019. Aley and Hahn's (2020) framework of men's portrayal (developed from Goffman, 1976) is applied. The qualitative analysis reveals that the physical appearance of Disney male characters has changed over time. Body image changed from an unrealistic large body with big muscles to a realistic body type with logical body proportions. Heroes started to be seen as powerful gentlemen rather than heroes with physical strength. Moreover, the heroes, especially in third decade, no longer depended on their physical attire to reflect their ranks. This shift may indicate a change of how people tend to see heroes. In term of masculine touch, male characters used to touch their female companions in a controlling manner. However, in the second and third decade, their touch started to change to protection rather than control. Finally, eye withdrawal remained the same over time because men withdrew their eyes for reasons connected to man's nature and feelings.

Index Terms—Disney, gender, males' physical appearance, multimodality

I. INTRODUCTION

The study applies a qualitative analysis to male Disney characters in Disney animated movies. It traces the evolution of male Disney characters' visual features over the last three decades: 1990-1999, 2000-2009 and 2010-2019. Hence, nine Disney animated movies (three movies from each decade) are analyzed qualitatively. It is worth mentioning that in these movies, the main characters are females while the male characters generally have smaller roles.

Aley and Hahn's (2020) framework of men portrayal (based on Goffman, 1979) is adopted to examine the male characters' visual features. Thus, the present study addresses how they are physically portrayed with reference to body shape and other visual aspects.

A. Animation and Disney

Animate as a word came from Latin *animatus*. When English borrowed it, it was given the meaning of 'liveliness' (Spencer, 1973, p. 454). However, the history of *animation* has started much earlier than cinematography which refers to motion photography of pictures where sequential real images are used to produce motion pictures (Spencer, 1973).

McLaughlin (2001) pointed out that 'stroboscopic' (an instrument for studying body motion) was introduced to study modern animation in 1833 and this, in turn, developed the basis of cinematography afterwards. Then, in 1920, several cinematic techniques were developed in animation, e.g. stop-motion and drawn animation (Lenburg, 2009). Perhaps, the most prominent animation technique in the 20th century was the *traditional animation* (Lenburg, 2009). However, to cope with the latest developments, Masson (1999) maintains that even cinematography has been digitalized and thus, computer animation gained more popularity as it produces three-dimensional pictures, compared to the traditional two-dimensional motion-picture¹. On the other hand, animation differs from cartoon in that the latter is often a two-dimensional non-realistic drawing used as a motion-picture, whereas, animation is usually a three-dimensional motion picture (Walasek, 2009).

Gabler (2007) pinpoints that Walt Disney started his drawn animation experiments in his parent's garage in the late 1920s and finally he developed his famous character, Mickey Mouse. Nevertheless, Thomas (1958) stated that it is the movie *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* that had revolutionized Disney's animated films in 1937. Accordingly, Disney as a company started producing more feature-length animations. *Alice in Wonderland*, *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Peter Pan*, *Lady and the Tramp*, were all successful Disney classics that were produced in 1950s. According to Gabler (2007), despite Walt Disney's death in 1966, the production company did not stop producing box-office successful animated movies.

¹ "In traditional 2D animation, everything was hand-drawn, frame by frame. In 3D animation, you animate your characters and objects in a 3D environment using 3D animation software to manipulate these characters and objects. While drawing is an added benefit, it is not a necessity in 3D animation" (Jones, The differences between 2D and 3D animation). Where can oe find this reference?

While some production companies kept producing movies with certain themes that targeted certain audiences, Disney responded to audiences' desires. Thus, Disney animations became suitable for all age groups, not just children (Wasko, 2013, p. 212).

Having provided a good account of Disney and Animation, we now address *multimodality* due to its importance in any analytical study of animation movies.

B. Research Questions

The study provides a visual analysis of characters in Disney animated movies throughout 1990-2020. The study also reveals the changes in the visual features of these characters over time. Thus, the study seeks answers to the following research questions:

1. What visual features do male characters in Disney animated movies have?
2. Have these visual features changed over time? If yes, how?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent gender and language studies have adopted multimodal analyses. Tsakona (2008) examined the multimodal theory of humor in language and image interaction of cartoons. The study aimed to show that cartoon's humor is not easy to be fully understandable all the time, so the audience should notice all verbal and visual details of every cartoon. The general theory of verbal humor (GTVH) framework of analysis was used. Special attention was given to contradictions, exaggerations, and metaphors such as humorous mechanisms and the hyper-determination of humor which seemed to be the result of verbal and visual interactions. The analysis showed that the visual mode's non-linearity² and its inherent potential resulted more in complex messages which were not that easy or possible to deliver the verbal mode without missing the joke's meaning. Certain verbal mechanisms were usually combined with specific visual mechanisms, such as the puns that were usually applied to the literal and metaphorical meaning of a word/phrase.

Hibbeler (2009) shed light onto the representations of male characters and representations of masculinity in Disney animated feature films. She suggested that Disney films did not appear to be making progress toward more accurate and positive representations of male characters. Male heroes and major characters were presented as youthful, skinny, sexually and romantically involved, assertive, and with family patterns not frequently seen in society. These male character depictions are quite stereotypical in nature, and they may not offer young males with healthy role models for gender development. It is worth mentioning here that Hibbeler's study was based on 22 films that covered a very broad period (1930-2007). In spite of the fact that some of the selected films cover the first and second periods of our study, it is important to include films from the last decade (2010-2020) since the technological and social revolutions that the world has witnessed changed a lot of people's perceptions of many things including gender roles (cf. Etzkowitz et al., 2010).

Wahyuningsih (2018) conducted a study on students at Stain Kudus, Indonesia (age not mentioned). The results revealed that women were politer and used expressive gestures in their speech by moving their faces, hands, and other parts of bodies, while men used fewer gestures.

Gendered power depictions in movie posters were addressed by Aley and Hahn (2020). The researchers stated that mass media were often explicit in their portrayal of society's gender expectations. For instance, when it comes to portraying social weight, males were shown as more confident and authoritative while women were more commonly shown as naive and quiet. The researchers carried out a content analysis of the gendered power depictions in movie posters of 152 popular American animated children's feature films which covered a period of 80 years. The study revealed that main characters were mostly males who were portrayed as more powerful. When it comes to the portrayal of gender roles in popular cultures, Goffman (1976, 1979; cited in Aley & Hahn, 2020) stated that media portrayals of men and women are not based on reality, but on what society wants us to believe they are. Among Goffman's concern was the media's depiction of gender interactions, particularly those in which males were shown as having authority over females. Goffman (1979) classified the nonverbal portrayals of power of both genders as follows: *body height, use of hands, eye stare, facial expressions, head posture, and body positioning*. Accordingly, Goffman analyzed how male and female characters were shown in ads. (Goffman, 1979). Goffman found that males were portrayed as taller and stronger than females since physical height was believed to correlate with social weight such as power and authority. By contrast, female Disney characters' language was characterized by hypercorrect grammar, super polite forms and hedges.

Al-Yasin (2020) studied the physical and visual features of female Disney characters. She pointed out that the typical image of a Disney princess has been perfect body, beautiful face and flawless hair. Al-Yasin studied only two visual features: *Body image* and *dress*. She found that body image changed from an unrealistic body type with large breasts and tiny waist to a realistic body type with logical body proportions. Moreover, over the years, their hair started to look more realistic and it goes through factors that may lead into its messiness. In a nutshell, change was mainly present in female Disney characters' visual image. The characters evolved from a fantasy-like image into a realistic image the audience can relate to in real life. It is worth mentioning that the portrayal of male characters was totally missing in Al-Yasin's study.

² Non-Linearity means that multiple factors could be responsible for the humorous situation. For instance, a humorous situation could be created by the actor's *costume, his/her stuttering, diction, gestures* inter alia.

In conclusion, it is noted that previous literature has investigated different issues in relation to women and men's visual image which are portrayed as stereotypical to men and women. This study focuses only on men's visual image in terms of relative size, masculine touch, function ranking and licensed withdrawal.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Corpus and Data Collection

The corpus of the present study consists of nine Disney animated movies from the last three decades (three movies released from 1990-1999, three from 2000-2009 and three from 2010-2019). The average length of each movie is 80-100 minutes. The movies were selected on the basis of their popularity according to Netflix³. Table 1 provides information on the selected movies with their release date and duration:

TABLE 1
OVERVIEW OF THE SELECTED DISNEY ANIMATED MOVIES

Title	Release Date	Duration	Title	Release Date	Duration	Title	Release Date	Duration
Beauty and the Beast	1991	1h/24 min	The Emperor's New Groove	2000	1h/18 min	Tangled	2010	1h/40min
Pocahontas	1995	1h/21 min	Mulan 2	2004	1h/18 min	Frozen	2013	1h/42 min
Mulan	1998	1h/28 min	The Princess and the Frog	2009	1h/37 min	Moana	2016	1h/43 min

The researchers collected the data from Netflix database and watched several films. They found certain films fit selection criteria and selected nine films. All these films physically incorporate important and clear male roles. By contrast, the study excluded other Disney movies, like Cinderella, because the male characters have minor roles. Only scenes relevant to male visual features were examined.

B. Data Analysis

Aley and Hahn's (2020) which was informed Goffman's (1979) multimodal framework of men's portrayal is adopted to study the male characters' visual features. Table 2 presents an overview of this framework.

TABLE 2
OVERVIEW OF ALEY AND HAHN'S FRAMEWORK OF MEN'S PORTRAYAL

No.	Categories	Description
1.	Gender presence	The male or female main character is present in the movie poster
2.	Gender balance	The balance of gender across characters in the movie poster
3.	Relative size	The male's height compared to that of the female
4.	Function ranking	This involves the hierarchy of function. Men are usually shown to be leaders or knowledgeable giving instructions to women.
5.	Masculine touch	Men often use their hands or fingers to grasp, hold, or manipulate an object in a different way than women.
6.	Ritualization of subordination	When an individual (a) lowers their physical body while another individual remains standing, (b) lays in a prone position on a bed, couch or floor, (c) bends legs, arms, back, or head in "cute" or "innocent" manner, (d) plays, skips, jumps, runs, or performs any childish activity, or (e) when another individual holds the elbow, shoulder, or hand in a possessive manner.
7.	Licensed withdrawal: (a character appears to be mentally removed from the scene) (p. 503)	When the character: (a) looks sentimentally overwhelmed. (b) does not make eye contact or stares off in a different direction. (c) covers fully or partially their face or any part of their body.

It is worth mentioning here that Aley and Hahn (2020) developed this framework for both men and women.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section answers the two research questions: 'What visual features do male characters in Disney animated movies have?' and 'Have these visual features changed over time? If yes, how?' The first question is answered by providing visual examples from the data of the present study and discussing them in light of Aley and Hahn's (2020) framework of man portrayal (based on Goffman, 1979). The second question is answered by providing a comparison/contrast between how these male visual features are portrayed in Disney movies over the three decades of the study. The analysis is solely qualitative, i.e. the quantitative analysis of relevant pictures in each movie of the three decades may be the focus of further research.

The study investigates four visual features: relative size, function ranking, masculine touch and licensed withdrawal. The other three features have been excluded (gender presence, gender balance, and ritualization of subordination)

³ Netflix, Inc. "is an American subscription streaming service and production company based in Los Gatos, California. Launched on August 29, 1997, it offers a film and television series library through distribution deals as well as its own productions, known as Netflix Originals".

because they are either irrelevant (related to posters) or inapplicable to Disney animated movies that are targeted at children as is the case here. Thus, the features that are studied are presented in Table 3 below, taken from Table 2 above.

TABLE 3
TARGET MALE PHYSICAL FEATURES (TAKEN FROM ALEY AND HAHN, 2020)

Categories	Description
<i>Relative size</i>	The male's height compared to that of the female
<i>Function ranking</i>	This category involves the hierarchy of function. Men are usually shown to be leaders or knowledgeable giving instructions to women.
<i>Masculine touch</i>	Men often use their hands or fingers to grasp, hold, or manipulate an object in a different way that women.
<i>Licensed withdrawal:</i> (a character appears to be mentally removed from the scene) (p. 503)	When the character does not make eye contact or stares off in a different direction.

A. Relative Size

This section mainly studies how male characters are portrayed in the movies in terms of their body size in comparison to their female counterparts in those movies. In specific, male's height and their shoulder's width will be looked at. In this context, Aley and Hahn (2020, p. 503) posited the following:

Relative size is determined by examining the physical height of the individuals depicted in relation to each other. Because physical height is believed to correlate with social weight (i.e., power, authority, office), the tallest individual portrayed is assumed to have *the most* power.

(a). Relative Size in Movies of the First Decade 1990-1999

Figures 1-3 below display how male characters are presented in Disney animated movies from the first decade. These figures show the relative size of male characters in comparison with their female counterparts.



Figure 1. Gaston From *The Beauty and the Beast* (1991)



Figure 2. John Smith From *Pocahontas* (1995)



Figure 3. Li Shang From *Mulan* (1998)

It can be noted from these Figures that the three Disney male characters from the decade 1990-1999 have a few things in common regarding their relative size. For instance, all three characters are obviously taller than their female

counterparts. In terms of their shoulder width, it is also obvious that their shoulder width is almost twice as that of the female characters in those movies. Recall that Aley and Hahn (2020) associated the characters' size with their social status. In the three movies, the male characters have socially high ranks: Gaston in Figure 1 was a professional hunter. And people used to fear him. So, he led people to get rid of the beast. In Figure 2, John Smith was a prince, explorer and English soldier, while Li Shang, in Figure 3 was a Chinese army leader. It seems that Disney Studios at that time attempted to display an unrealistic masculine body image of male characters (tall, muscular with wide shoulders), an implication of an ideology of what a man should look like.

(b). *Relative Size in Movies of the Second Decade 2000-2009*

Figures 4-6 show male characters in the second decade in terms of size.



Figure 4. The Emperor and Kronk From *The Emperor's New Groove* (2000)



Figure 5. Li Shang From *Mulan* (2004)



Figure 6. The Prince Naveen From *The Princess and the Frog* (2009)

As shown in Figure 4, the Emperor, who is the main character, is neither tall nor muscular. Rather, the witch (Yuzma) is taller than him. Moreover, Kronk, the bad guy, Yuzma's assistant is shown to have a huge body with big muscles. In other words, the main character is associated with power and intellects rather than with physical strength which is started to be associated with bad characters who depend on their bodies rather than on their minds. As for Figure 5, Li Shang has the same big body with great muscles as in *Mulan* (1) as it is hard to change the main character. Finally, Prince Naveen in Figure 6 has the normal male height, i.e. his body is not a presumably typical hero body with wide shoulders and big muscles. This indicates that in the 2000s scriptwriters started to show their male heroes as witty or attractive regardless of height and muscles.

(c). *Relative Size in Movies of the Third Decade 2010-2019*

The figures from the third decade show that the male heroes do not have as big bodies as heroes used to have in the first decade.



Figure 7. Flynn Rider From *Tangled* (2010)



Figure 8. Kristoff From *Frozen* (2013)



Figure 9. Maui From *Moana* (2016)

Except for the demigod Maui, the other two heroes have handsome bodies rather than fully muscular ones. In other words, heroism started to be defined in terms of power, gentleness and other good traits rather than with physical strength. As for Maui, he is portrayed as a physically strong man. He is large, excessively muscular, with a dark complexion, and tattoos imprinted throughout his skin. However, by the end of the movie, Moana turned him into a gentle man rather than a strong savage man.

B. Function Ranking

Aley and Hahn (2020) state that function ranking refers to the behaviors of the characters. It assesses the roles of the characters based on the task they are performing, e.g. a doctor examining a patient. "Social weight, or power, is given to the individual whose task relates to the most important rank of the scene" (p. 504). Under this category, men are usually shown to be leaders or knowledgeable giving instructions to women.

(a). Function Ranking in Movies of the First Decade 1990-1999

The heroes in the first decade all have a socially high rank position. The Beast in *The Beauty and the Beast* is a prince, John Smith in *Pocahontas* is an English leader who fights the Red Indians, whereas Li Shang in *Mulan I* is the Chinese commander.



Figure 10. The Beast From *The Beauty and the Beast* (1991)



Figure 11. John Smith From *Pocahontas* (1995)



Figure 12. Li Shang From *Mulan I* (1998)

It is worth mentioning here that the three movies depict past events: *The Beauty and the Beast* was set in the 19th century France, *Pocahontas* in the 17th century America, and *Mulan I* sometime between 4th-6th AD⁴. Below are three pictures from those three different eras that show how people in such ranks looked like.



Figure 13. A Comparison Between The Beast and a 19th Century Prince



Figure 14. A Comparison Between John Smith and a 17th English Warrior



Figure 15. A Comparison Between Li Shang and an Ancient Chinese Warrior 3-D Model

⁴ Wikipedia.

(b). *Function Ranking in Movies of the Second Decade 2000-2009*

Figures 16-18 show the high ranks that male characters had in the 2000s Disney animated movies.



Figure 16. Kuzco the Emperor From *The New Emperor's Groove* (2000)



Figure 17. Li Shang From *Mulan II* (2004)



Figure 18. Prince Naveen From *The Princess and the Frog* (2009)

Figure 16 represents a 15th century Peru emperor, whereas Figure 17 embodies a 4th-6th AD Chinese commander (as mentioned earlier), and Figure 18 embodies prince Naveen once as a handsome prince wearing a prince's suit and once as a common person who is wearing nicely and youthfully to attract women. Below are comparable pictures of these heroes and what people of similar ranks used to wear.



Figure 19. A Comparison Between Kuzco, the Emperor, and a Peruvian Emperor



Figure 20. A Comparison Between Prince Naveen and Prince of Wales Fashion Icon 1920s

Figure 19 shows that Peru emperors used to wear extravagant scarlet fringe long gown. The emperor also wears a wreathed turban helmet-like cap. His coat was covered with jewels and pieces of turquoise. He also wears heavy earrings and his shoes were made of leather and fur⁵.

Figure 20 shows that princes, after 2000s, started to wear like common people, i.e. a cap, a tie, a sweater or a vest and a shirt with high waist pants. Royal clothing was confined only to special occasions such as weddings.

(c). *Function Ranking in Movies of the Third Decade 2010-2019*

In the third decade, it became hard to distinguish people's rank depending on what they wear. Figures 21-23 show the main male characters of the third decade Disney animated movies.



Figure 21. Flynn Rider From *Tangled* (2010)

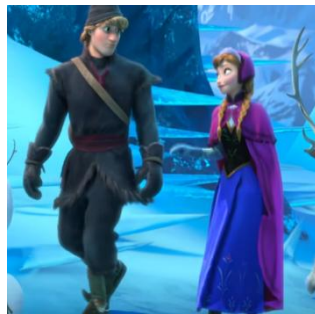


Figure 22. Kristoff From *Frozen* (2013)



Figure 23. Maui From *Moana* (2016)

In Figure 21, Flynn, a thief and adventurer, wears like a handsome young man. The movie is set in the 1700s, and the main character is an ordinary person instead of being a prince. In *Frozen* (2013), a movie set in 1843, Kristoff is also an ordinary person, ice harvester, who wears normal clothes. By contrast, Maui, in Figure 23 has a body full of tattoos.

⁵ www.tierravivas.com

Since the movie is set 2000 years ago, he is wearing like a man from the stone age. He wears a necklace and a banana leaf skirt. Thus, it is hard to tell that this person is a demigod.

In general, the scriptwriters in the 2010s no longer depended on the people's physical appearance or attire to tell their ranks. This shift perhaps made a remarkable change of how people need to see heroes. In other words, an implicit message may read as follows: since these ordinary people were heroes, anyone of the audience can become a hero.

C. Masculine Touch

Aley and Hahn (2020) and Goffman (1979) found that men often use their hands or fingers to grasp, hold, or manipulate an object in a different way than women. The researchers maintained that the feminine/masculine touch is measured by observing how individuals use their hands. Goffman (1979) observed that when somebody touches others' bodies lightly, it may convey the idea that the 'toucher' is fragile or precious, while firm grips show an obsessive use of the object or the other individual. Women, by contrast, use their hands or fingers to cradle or caress. "Lightly touching or stroking oneself is also considered to be a display of feminine touch. In contrast, masculine touch involves firmly holding, grasping, or manipulating an object or another person and is seen to be used more by male characters" (Aley & Hahn, 2020, p. 503). The researchers added that these features (relative size, function ranking, masculine touch and licensed withdrawal) reflect gendered power as men use them to exercise their power over women (Aley & Hahn, 2020, pp. 504-506).

(a). Masculine Touch in Movies of the First Decade 1990-1999



Figure 24. Masculine Touch in the 1990s

As can be seen, the 1990s Disney animated movies all show men as having power over women through the way they touch them. For instance, Gaston in *the Beauty and the Beast* is gripping Belle's hand so tightly that she is terrified. The same applies to the 3rd picture where Li Shang is grabbing Mulan from her chest in front of everybody in a humiliating way. This is perhaps Li Shang, the army leader, who thinks he can overpower anyone else under his command. However, in the middle picture John Smith is gently holding Pocahontas. Nonetheless, he is still in a power position as it is him who is taking Pocahontas out of the boat.

(b). Masculine Touch in Movies of the Second Decade 2000-2009



Figure 25. Masculine Touch in the 2000s

In the second decade, it is very evident that the masculine touch turned into a gentle one though still showing the male's power. For example, Pacha in *the Emperor's New Groove* is reassuring his wife that he will come back soon. He touches her shoulder in a gentle way to calm her down as she is pregnant and worried about his journey to the Emperor. Li Shang in the 2nd picture is holding Mulan's hand in a loving way as he is asking for her hand. Similarly, Prince Naveen is leading the dance by holding his date's hand. In general, in the three pictures, it is the male character who gives reassurance, proposes or leads through touch.

(c). Masculine Touch in Movies of the Third Decade 2010-2019



Figure 26. Masculine Touch in the 2010s

The third decade is similar to the second in that the males touch shows affection. In the 1st picture, Flynn Rider is gripping Rapunzel to protect her from the other gangsters who are trying to catch them. In the second picture, Kristoff is holding Anna in his arms as she is as cold as ice, while in the 3rd picture Maui is embracing Moana very tightly as they say goodbye to each other.

However, the third decade shows protection in addition to affection. In other words, the men's power over women changed from controlling to protecting. Nevertheless, controlling and protecting are both ways of exercising power upon others.

D. Licensed Withdrawal

Aley and Hahn (2020) state that "licensed withdrawal is depicted when a character appears to be mentally removed from the scene. It is also seen when a character appears to withdraw from situations or others in the scene" (p. 503). The present study focuses on licensed withdrawal related to making eye contact with other characters or staring off into the distance. However, it does not consider licensed withdrawal related to 'appearing emotionally overwhelmed', or 'covering or partially covering their face or body as if hiding' because these two apply more to female characters.

The following sub-sections address eye withdrawal in the three decades:

(a). Eye Withdrawal in Movies of the First Decade 1990-1999



Figure 27. Eye Withdrawal in the 1990s

In the left side picture, Gaston plops down in the chair and raises his mud-covered feet and puts them on Belle's book. He stares away and starts bragging about his hunting skills. In the middle picture, John Smith was alone with Pocahontas on the hill and after they started feeling love towards each other, John Smith started telling her about his plans and dreams. In the last picture, Li Shang was preparing himself and his army to a battle. Mulan interrupted him but he stared off as a sign that he has more important things to do than listening to her.

(b). Eye Withdrawal in Movies of the Second Decade 2000-2009



Figure 28. Eye Withdrawal in the 2000s

In the picture on the left, the emperor looked away from the old man out of anger because he threw off the emperor's groove (sneaked into the palace). Therefore, the guard grabs him and kicks him off the palace. In the middle picture, Li Shang was worried about the war and about his people. So he turned his face away to hide his feelings from his wife (Mulan). In the third picture, Lawrence, one of Naveen's servants, told him to find himself some work as dancing will not make him any good. Naveen looked away mockingly as a sign of disrespect or negligence to the servant.

(c). Eye Withdrawal in Movies of the Third Decade 2010-2019



Figure 29. Eye Withdrawal in the 2010s

In the left side picture, Flynn Rider was telling Rapunzel a story about a rich man and an orphan (himself). He felt desperate about his poverty and so he stared off and looked thoughtful. In the middle picture, Kristoff was telling Olaf (the snowman) and Anna about the summer. Then, he happily opened his arms and looked up to tell them how lovely summer will be. In the last picture, Maui was bragging about his powers to Moana. So, he stared off and told Moana that she did not get a chance every day to meet a hero.

V. DISCUSSION

A. Visual Change Over Time

First, comparing the relative size in the three decades, it can be noticed that the three main characters in the first decade Gaston (*Beauty and the Beast*, 1991), John Smith (*Pocahontas*, 1995) and Li Shang (*Mulan I*, 1998) are remarkably huge in size and shoulder's width. This image has changed in the second decade as the Emperor is skinny and Prince Naveen is a person of average size. As for the third decade, there is some sort of a compromise as Flynn Rider in *Tangled* (2010) and Kristoff in *Frozen* (2013) relatively have an above average body size, whereas Maui in *Moana* (2016) has a very huge body due to him being a demi-god.

In sum, the stereotypical image of the huge hero in the 1990s has changed into an average person in the 2000s (except for Li Shang (*Mulan*, 1998, 2004) who remained the same). The third decade is not different from the second in that the hero does not need to be remarkably huge (except for Maui, the demi-god). As a result, heroes no longer have much huger bodies than their female companions. In the late movies, heroes have average height and size in comparison to average heroines.

Second, function ranking has also changed over time. Comparing the three decades, it is evident that the 1990s show the typical hero with typical clothes that show their ranks (princes and war leaders). In the second decade, the heroes maintain function ranking, but we start to witness a shift in their attire (e.g. Naveen in the *Prince and the Frog*, 2009). By contrast, in the 2010s movies, the main male characters do not have any function ranking (whether royalties or war leaders). Rather, they were common people with heroic acts.

Third, the masculine touch has showed some change as well. In specific, the third decade shows protection in addition to affection. In other words, the men's power over women has changed from controlling to protecting. Nevertheless, controlling and protecting are both ways of exercising power upon others.

The last visual feature is eye withdrawal. It seems that this is the only feature that has not shown a consistent change over time since in the three decades' men withdraw their eyes for reasons (e.g. bragging, hoping, feeling desperate, anger, etc...) that are connected to man's nature and feelings.

B. Visual Comparisons With Previous Studies

The subject of males' portrayal in movies in general has barely gained attention. In specific, the four categories applied in this study (relative size, function ranking, masculine touch, and eye withdrawal) were only handled in two studies (Goffman, 1979; Aley & Hahn, 2020), while other studies touched on other minor physical/ visual aspects as shown below.

First, Goffman (1976, 1979) finds that media portrayals of men and women are not based on reality, but on what society wants us to believe they are. Goffman (1979) classifies the nonverbal portrayals of power of both genders as follows: *body height*, *use of hands*, *eye stare*, *facial expressions*, *head posture*, and *body positioning*. He reports that males are portrayed as taller and stronger than females since physical height is believed to correlate with social weight such as power and authority. This study agrees with Goffman's to some extent since, as shown above, body size appeared to play part in showing authority especially in the first decade.

On the other hand, Al-Yasin (2020) studied the evolution of female Disney characters' linguistic and visual features of the last three decades. Unfortunately, Al-Yasin did not make any physical comparison with male's physical appearance. Tsakona's (2008) study, on the other hand, examined the multimodal theory of humor in language and image interactions of cartoons. The researcher found that verbal and visual interactions can both play part in conveying humor. Hibbeler (2009) found that male heroes were usually presented as youthful, skinny, sexually and romantically involved and assertive. Wahyuningsih (2018) found that men used fewer gestures. Scharrer and Blackburn (2018) concluded that male characters were often portrayed as unemotional, aggressive, dominant, and/ or tough. The current study cannot be compared to any of the previous studies as the factors/ variables under study are different.

Finally, Aley and Hahn (2020) studied movie posters of 152 popular American animated children's feature films which covered a period of 80 years. The researchers found that mass media depicted both genders according to the society's gender expectations. For instance, in terms of social weight, males were shown as more confident, powerful and authoritative while women were more commonly shown as naive and quiet. Furthermore, "when prominent female characters were present, they were portrayed as smaller, less socially important, and less powerful than male characters" (p. 503). Aley and Hahn did not find evidence that gendered power dynamics depicted in movie posters had changed over time. By contrast, the current study did find that the depiction of males' physical appearance had changed in terms of their relative size, function ranking and masculine touch.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main aim of the present study was to study male Disney characters' visual features from 1990-2020. Body image of Disney male characters has changed over time. It changed from an unrealistic large body with big muscles to a realistic body type with logical body proportions. Heroes started to be seen as powerful gentlemen rather than heroes with physical strength. Moreover, the heroes, especially in third decade, no longer depended on their physical attire to reflect their ranks. For example, Prince Naveen used to wear very casual clothes like ordinary people at that time. This shift may indicate a change of how people need to see heroes. In terms of masculine touch, male characters used to touch their female companions in a controlling way. However, in the second and third decade, their touch started to change to protection rather than controlling. Nevertheless, controlling and protection are both ways of exercising power over others. Finally, men's eye-withdrawal did not seem to have changed over time because in the three decades, men withdrew their eyes for reasons that are connected to man's nature and feelings.

To sum up, visual features of male's Disney animated characters have generally changed in the second and third decade, i.e. after 2000s. This change was triggered by the fact that these characters started to have bigger roles since then. Heroes started to show up as people of average size with informal clothes with no function ranking. Furthermore, men started to touch their female companion in affectionate protecting way.

As the present study investigated the evolution of male Disney characters' visual features over the last three decades, future research may address the same features categories in Arab movies.

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