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Nowadays cartoons are less male chauvinist and to find a husband is not important for their characters

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Women are as intelligent, agile, attractive, strong, and heroic as their male mates...or more. The profile of women who are the main characters of the most watched cartoons from the Walt Disney corporation has noticeably changed in the last few decades.

Women, who are not necessarily human, have nothing to do with mythical characters such as Snow White, Cinderella, or Minnie. A study carried out by Pilar Casares García, who is a teacher of the Department of Pedagogy from the University of Granada, shows that today's cartoons are less male chauvinist than those in the past, since the importance of female characters has become powerful, and balanced with the importance of the male character.

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To develop this study, Professor Casares has analysed 11 female characters belonging to the four most successful films of Disney in the last years: Treasure Planet, Lilo and Stitch, Atlantis, and The Emperor's New Groove. As stated by Professor Casares: "Although we have found that the main characters of the films, which are a combination of a hero and an antihero, are still male, it is true that the role of the woman has evolved".

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Most of women appearing in Disney films are young adults. According to Pilar Casares, "Old women appearing in the films, for example, Mrs Packard (from Atlantis), represent many negative stereotypes (loss of beauty, scepticism, disenchantment, lack of illusion...), despite being totally competent in their work. These women also represent the

ability and the efficiency of old people, as opposed to the idea that old people are incompetent and no longer useful".

End of the 'Barbie' woman

With regard to physical features, most of women who star in Disney films are beautiful or they have some kind of physical appeal. "There are well-proportioned and sculptural bodies, but the extreme slenderness or skinniness without a fine appearance, agility, or muscular power is portrayed as ridiculous". On the other hand, "it seems that 'Barbies' are avoided": the weight tyranny has been softened and, fortunately, anorexic bodies are conspicuous for their absence.

However, except in some situations, facial ugliness or body deformity are not allowed for important and kind characters, which are touchier for identification than the other ones. "Although the woman is still forced to have an attractive physical appearance, in agreement with the predominant canons of the present society, these canons are far from the message given some years ago by the Disney studios ("Beauty is inside")", states Professor Casares.

Through the analysis carried out by this professor, where there are some characters such as the Captain Amelia (Planet Treasure), Nani (Lilo and Stitch) or Kida (Atlantis), it appears that in current cartoons, unlike older ones, consider finding a husband or a partner to be important but not a priority. Nevertheless, "forming a couple, together with the situations lived by the main characters, communicate the importance of family to children".

Moreover, the woman is still a wife and mother but, at the same time, her presence is important both in the public and work environment, where she is a very qualified and competent professional.

Pilar Casares considers that both girls and boys can learn through female profiles appearing in the films. They see these profiles and they can perceive and assume some kind of message. Pilar Casares concludes by stating that, "it is necessary to bear this in mind in order to suggest educational strategies. Professional teachers can and must make a pedagogical use of the cinema".

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