

# *The Research on the Characteristics and Influence of Stereotypes in Movies*

## *---Taking the Movie "Zootopia" as an Example*

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**Abstract:** Stereotypes exist in public life, and by analyzing the ways in which stereotypes are presented in movies and measures to reduce them in real life can have a sustained positive impact. This article takes the movie "Zootopia" as the research object, and uses literature research and case study methods to analyze the ways in which stereotypes are presented in movies, as well as the negative effects and related countermeasures against stereotypes. Through research results, it was found that the types of stereotypes in the movie "Zootopia" include gender stereotypes, occupational stereotypes, and racial Stereotypes. The negative effects of stereotypes include hindering the ideological development of young people, influence the direction of social public opinion and causes professional bias and makes it easy to generalize. The public can mitigate negative impacts through two channels: one is through movies such as using public figures and set contrasting personality, and the other is through real life such as using the Internet for Publicity and promote gender education.

**Keywords:** Zootopia, Stereotypes, Movies, Influence

## 1. Introduction

"Zootopia" is one of Disney's many masterpieces. The characters in the movie with different personalities and distinctive characteristics have left a deep impression on the audience. This article discusses the characteristics of stereotypes based on role setting. Stereotype mainly refers to a generalized and fixed view that people form about a certain thing or object, and generalizes this view to believe that this thing or the whole has the same characteristics while ignoring individual differences [1]. The stereotypes in movies are group-based, discriminatory, and false. Because the characters in this movie have distinct characteristics and personalities, and the movie is set in a city, which means there are many types and groups of characters, and it is also a very famous movie, this article uses *Zootopia* as an example to analyze stereotypes. This article is divided into two parts. The first chapter mainly discusses the basic information of the movie and the types of stereotypes presented. The second chapter mainly discusses the impact of stereotypes on people, as well as relevant strategies to reduce stereotypes. The author hopes to make some contributions through this research.

## 2. Overview of The Movie and Stereotype Characteristics

### 2.1. Overview of The Movie

*Zootopia* was released simultaneously in North America and mainland China on March 4, 2016. The movie features Judy the Rabbit and Nick the Fox. Judy the Rabbit is an optimistic and outgoing lively person who, through her struggles, becomes the first bunny police officer in modern animal city. Her colleagues in the police station always looked down upon her. To prove herself, she snatched a disappearance case from the Chief of Buffalo Police. With her extraordinary courage, she discovers the conspiracy behind the case, and then forces Fox Nick to embark on an adventure with herself; Fox Nick is a fox who makes a living by cheating and kidnapping in the Animal City. He was hurt by discrimination and prejudice when he was a child and gave up on his ideals. The story of Nick the Fox is the second main line of the entire movie. Nick, the fox who grew up at the bottom of the society in *Zootopia*, makes a living by cheating on the streets all day long. He is a smart street gangster who can only use popsicles to blackmail. As a social youth who grew up in Animal City, he has connections, knows how to communicate, understands social rules, is eloquent, and is smart and capable. As the plot develops, with the help of Officer Judy the Rabbit, Nick the Fox realizes the value of his life and becomes the first Fox Officer in Animal City [2], but they were set up by Judy and forced to cooperate with her to investigate the case and were involved in an unexpected conspiracy. The two protagonists became indispensable police officers in Animal City through self-challenge and persistence in their dreams, while defeating the bad guys who used the ferocious stereotype of carnivores to create panic and help the residents of *Zootopia* live in harmony.

### 2.2. Stereotypes Shown in Movie

#### 2.2.1. Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes refer to people's expectations, requirements, and general opinions about men and women in terms of behavior, personality characteristics, etc. In the movie, it can be seen from the character settings that in the opening stage play played by Judy and her friends, the cheetah representing fierce and wild carnivores is male, while the petite and pitiful herbivores are female. The perpetrators of crimes, such as thieves, fraudsters, and speeding drivers, are all males. Gender role differences are primarily the result of socialization. At different times, gender roles have different meanings. On the eve of entering the 21st century, it is of great theoretical and practical value to investigate the gender role stereotypes of college students, national civil servants, and corporate employees in my country [3]. This is a common view or stereotype about the character traits, appearance, behavior, and role of a certain gender. Judging from the top five personality traits of all subjects who have positive stereotypes about men and women, the most important personality traits for men are creativity, sense of humor, self-reliance, optimism, and ability; the most important personality traits for women are: Personality characteristics are: self-reliance, kindness, demure, gentleness, and elegance [4]. It can be seen from the character setting in the movie: in the opening scene when Judy and her friends perform a stage play, the cheetah, which represents the ferocious, wild carnivore, is male, while the petite and pitiful herbivore is a female. People who commit crimes such as thieves, cheaters, and speeders are all male.

#### 2.2.2. Occupational Stereotypes

Tall animals are considered suitable for leadership and professional and technical work because of their tough and fearless personalities, while petite animals are considered more suitable for service jobs. In the movie, city leaders, such as police chiefs, gang bosses, and mayors, are all tall

rhinoceroses, tigers, and lions, while petite animals can only go to street stalls to sell vegetables or records, or they can be ignored in name only. Relevant positions, such as the deputy mayor of *Zootopia*, Lamb, can only do chores for Mayor Lion and remind him of his schedule. He is a secretary: those who join the Boy Scouts are all powerful carnivores.

### 2.2.3. Racial Stereotypes

Racial Stereotypes Different species in the movie have different personalities and prejudices perceived by society. At the same time, this stereotype is also being broken. For example, foxes are cunning, sloths are slow to do anything, and rabbits can only Grow carrots on the farm, etc., also reflects that in reality, everyone has similar prejudices against people from different regions or people with different skin colors, reminding the audience not to be confused by so-called stereotypes. For example, there is a stereotype of the fox race in the movie. They are cunning and do all kinds of evil, which are the labels that are forcibly attached to them by society. Nick's "domestication" experience silently pronounced stereotypes such as "foxes are not trustworthy" and "foxes are vicious", making him unable to survive in an instant. What is particularly worth mentioning is that the "timid" rabbit and the "cunning" fox work together to solve crimes. From being prejudiced against each other to gradually building trust, from rivals to friends, from acquaintance to love, this story itself is a reflection of "Foxes and rabbits are enemies" and "carnivores and herbivores have different paths" which are a heavy blow to these stereotypes [5].

## 3. The Impact of Stereotypes and Countermeasures

### 3.1. The Impact of Stereotypes

#### 3.1.1. Hindering The Ideological Development of Young People

Anyone who does not conform to people's common stereotypes will be treated differently or even discriminated against or isolated, which is even more fatal for teenagers. This unfair treatment will hinder the physical and mental health of teenagers. For example, in the movie, Nick, who joins the Boy Scouts, is discriminated against, insulted, and bullied by his teammates just because he is a fox. Because in *Zootopia*, everyone thinks that foxes are very cunning liars and bad guys, it is very inappropriate for the fox to join the Boy Scouts. The stereotype of foxes caused a psychological shadow on Nick and also changed his life and outlook. Adolescents have different perceptions of traditional gender roles in society, family, and gender relations. Take research in China as an example. Chinese teenagers have the most stereotyped impressions of gender roles within the family. For example, 55% to 74% of teenagers agree that "a woman's greatest happiness is to find a good husband." 34% to 56% of teenagers agree that "the father is the most important person." The important task is to do a good job and have a successful career." Relatively speaking, adolescents' gender role stereotypes in social fields and gender relations are slightly weakened. For example, 9% to 31% of adolescents believe that "boys have priority in obtaining more educational opportunities than girls", and less than 10% of adolescents disagree. "Men and women should compete fairly in society" and "Women should have equal opportunities to hold leadership positions as men". 12% ~ 24% of teenagers agreed that "women should not be the first to express to men that she likes him [6]". It can be seen from this study that some teenagers have been deeply affected by society's regulations on gender roles, which limits the minds of teenagers because they are trapped by the roles prescribed by society, and these roles will be passed down from generation to generation. Once this stereotype has some loopholes, it will cause big social problems.

### **3.1.2. Influence The Direction of Social Public Opinion**

Many conservative people in Asia believe that tattoos mean that the person is not good, especially for girls. Under the double blessing of personality stereotypes and social stereotypes about tattoos, many people will subconsciously think that the girl has a chaotic private life and dropped out of school early, even if the reality is otherwise. In addition, character stereotypes will put shackles on men and women, restricting their behavioral and psychological freedom and health. For example, men must not cry and must be strong, and women must be gentle and considerate. The stereotype of being a housewife gives People are label, which invisibly limits people's lifestyle and personality. The influence of gender stereotypes is often subtle and long-lasting, and the holders are often unaware that gender stereotypes of men and women depend more on the socialization process. The formation of gender stereotypes is affected by the external environment, mainly in three aspects: social culture, family environment, and school education. Gender stereotypes affect the attitudes of students of different genders. The external environment also affects students' attitudes, and attitudes determine behavior. Here, we mainly discuss the factors influencing the formation of gender stereotypes [7].

### **3.1.3. Causes Professional Bias and Makes It Easy to Generalize**

Stereotypes can also occur when a small portion of a group does something impressive, thereby changing everyone's perception of everyone in the industry. For example, some individual massage parlors or foot wash parlors provide pornographic services. This will easily make people think that as long as they are massage parlors, pornographic services will be provided. This will greatly affect the social status of employees who are legally engaged in massage parlors. At the beginning of the story, Judy Rabbit suffers from the inherent prejudice of nature and society since ancient times: rabbits cannot be policemen. This kind of prejudice is just like the urban-rural differences and the gap between rich and poor that are imprinted in real life. Part of it is destined by nature, and part of it is the unfairness of reality itself [8].

## **3.2. Countermeasures Against Stereotypes**

### **3.2.1. Using Movies to Break Stereotypes**

(1)Using public figures. Judy is a rabbit in the movie, but everyone's stereotype of rabbits is that rabbits can not be policemen and can only grow carrots in their hometown, and when Judy successfully became an elite among the police, it changed people's stereotypes about policemen and rabbits. As a celebrity, Judy can be a good way to promote the idea of "breaking stereotypes". After that, more and more people Animals, such as Nick and carnivores, also break their stereotypes, and neither the direction of social opinion nor people's thoughts are bound by stereotypes. In reality, the author think people can also do some extensive publicity to the public about breaking stereotypes, such as movies on related themes, books, and celebrity examples, which can subtly change people's views. Identity construction is a dynamic process characterized by openness, variability, and fluidity. In the process of social members interacting with each other, individual identity can be modified, defined, or re-constructed through mixture and negotiation with members. In this process, individuals continue to participate in the construction and shaping of identity roles and experience strong ideological shock and identity anxiety [9].

(2)Set contrasting personality. Contrasting characters can create sharp contrasts and break stereotypes. For example, the sloth in the movie, as an ordinary employee, moves very slowly, whether in speech, movement, or expression. Especially when helping Nick and Judy check the license plate number, the way he speaks word by word is impressive. profound. However, his name was Lightning, which created a contrast. The subsequent plot made a second comparison. The wanted

criminal who often drove at speed was Lightning. The speeding sports car stopped in front of the audience. The moment Lightning took off his sunglasses, People have a new understanding of him. It turns out that sloths are not necessarily slow-moving animals with dull thinking. In the same way, Chief Cow, who usually looks fierce and is very strict with his subordinates, actually likes to secretly watch female stars dance. This can also break the stereotype that police chiefs must be boring.

### 3.2.2. Breaking Stereotypes in Reality

(1)Using the Internet for Publicity. Although some stereotypes have become deeply ingrained in people's minds, by constantly pushing videos to people that do not match the stereotyped characters in their minds, their views will gradually change. In 2016, a video of a male teacher singing at a KTV with his students was widely criticized. Many people believed that teachers should teach and should not be involved in any entertainment projects, otherwise, they would not be able to teach students well. From 2016 to today, every year there are media reports or videos posted on short video platforms about so-called teachers "not doing their jobs properly". Now the comment areas of such videos or articles are "Teachers are human beings too, and they also need to rest" and "This "Can enhance relationships with students". Everyone saw a different side of this matter and successfully broke people's stereotypes about teachers, so the public can strengthen publicity and break stereotypes by posting or supporting relevant videos from other creators on online platforms. Different stereotypes in society can use the advantages of online media to present their essence and truth.

(2)Promote gender education. We need to give people, especially children, a correct concept of male and female gender because human beings begin the process of gendering from birth. The famous psychologist Kohlberg proposed that children go through three stages in the process of acquiring gender roles: first, the basic gender identity stage, when children are about three years old, they can correctly indicate their gender; second, gender stability The sexual stage, in which children have realized that men are always men and women are always women; the third is the gender-firming stage, in which children have realized that changes in a person's appearance or activities are related to gender. It does not matter, they can not change into someone of the opposite gender. The determination of gender roles for men and women is conducive to the smooth growth and adaptation of children. However, it should also be fully realized that differences in gender roles do not determine differences in intelligence, personality, etc [10].

## 4. Conclusions

The portrayal and breaking of stereotypes in movies can help reduce the occurrence of stereotypes in people's lives. This article uses the critical discourse analysis framework to study the linguistic characteristics of animal discourse in "*Zootopia*" from three aspects: classification, influence, and countermeasures, and reveals the Stereotypes behind the discourse. The study found that all three classifications are reflected in movies, and the movies also successively reflect the impact of stereotypes and how to break stereotypes, calling on people to treat people of different races and people of different professions correctly and equally. Through research, it has been found that stereotypes in movies mainly include gender stereotypes, professional stereotypes, and racial stereotypes. Focusing on the types and potential characteristics of different stereotypes can help people better avoid such phenomena. Faced with the harm of stereotypes, the public can also pay more attention to the impact on teenagers and make full use of online media and other forms to mitigate the harm of stereotypes in movies and daily life. In this article, when analyzing "*Zootopia*", in addition to using the plot, the stereotypical impressions in the film are also presented through the positioning of the protagonist's identity, such as gender, profession, race, etc. "*Zootopia*" is not a movie that contains stereotypes, but by showcasing stereotypes and breaking them, the audience can

better understand their content and gain a sense of enjoyment, so this article takes this movie as an example, hoping to present the main idea of this article by analyzing its film content, such as plot, characters, storyline, etc. The author hopes to make relevant contributions to this field, and due to the lack of more case studies in this article, future scholars can focus more on different types of movies and the types of stereotypes they present, in order to explore ways to mitigate the impact of stereotypes.

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