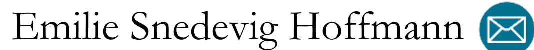
Diversity Dissected: Intersectional Socialization in Disney's *Aladdin*, *Mulan*, and *The Princess and the Frog*

Emilie Snedevig Hoffmann 

Chapter 1: Introduction

Once upon a time before radio, film, and television were invented, folk and fairy tales were considered a revered form of both entertainment and informal education. According to Jack Zipes, oral folk tales were used to both explain natural occurrences and create communal harmony by "bringing members of a group or tribe together and … provid[ing] them with a sense of mission" ("Breaking" 22). Literary fairy tales, he argues, were, at least in part, "written with the purpose of socializing children to meet definitive normative expectations at home and in the public sphere" as they were meant to bring on "the internalization of specific values and notions" (*Fairy Tales* 9). Although fairy tales are still written and read today, Maria Tatar holds that films have become "'the new matrix' for generating fairy tales" (229). Many of these films are retellings of classic stories "imbued with the values of a different time and place"; but Tatar notes that retellings are not necessarily "better" (that is, more modern, more inclusive, etc.) in respect to the norms and values they portray since they may also end up "reflecting the values of one class, ethnic group, or other social segment" (19).

Today the animated films of the Walt Disney Company are almost synonymous with fairy tale films (Zipes, "Breaking" 21). So much so that many children believe that these films are the original versions (Hurley 222; Ward 2). The company's productions have been objects of academic study for decades, and they have therefore been subjected to a wide range of methodological readings, many of which have had their basis in cultural studies or feminist theory. However, not many comparative intersectional analyses of Disney films have yet been carried out.

Since so many of the company's animated films are adaptations of classic folk and fairy tales – and accordingly, vehicles of socialization (Zipes, *Fairy Tales*; Tatar) – it is a shame that more of Disney's films have not been examined through the lens of intersectionality as this theory can examine

Leviathan: Interdisciplinary Journal in English (ISSN: 2446-3981), No. 5, 2019.
© The Journal Editors 2019

intersections between sociocultural categories such as gender, race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, etc., all of which are important constructs internalized in the socialization process. Since intersectionality, in the words of Devon W. Carbado et al., strives to bring "often hidden dynamics forward in order to transform them" (312), it seems a missed opportunity that it has not been applied to Disney films by more researchers. Carbado et al. believes "we should endeavor, on an ongoing basis, to move intersectionality to unexplored places" (305). This should be attempted even if that metaphorical place happens to be shielded by a "politics of innocence" (Giroux 45-48) that makes it difficult to critique. Resistance to critically engage with Disney's animated films has been observed in contexts ranging from high school to university students and has proved to be a global phenomenon (Berchini 81; Garlen and Sandlin 18; Inman and Sellers 41; Macleod 183). Even students in media literacy courses have been hesitant to critique Disney's films because they represent something the students "have loved and enjoyed since they were children," something they believe should first of all be considered pure entertainment (Sun and Sharrer 37, 45-46).

In this thesis, I undertake an intercategorical intersectional analysis of the representations of gender and race/ethnicity in Disney's animated films *Aladdin* (1992), *Mulan* (1998), and *The Princess and the Frog* (2009; hereafter *Princess*). These three films were chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, they were chosen because I believe that their representational intersectionality contains interesting socialization messages. Secondly, they were chosen because they are the only Disney fairy tale adaptions to feature people of color of both sexes as protagonists and because they therefore raise diversity questions of immense importance since representations in cultural productions, according to Kimberlé Crenshaw, play a part "in the reproduction of racial and gender hierarchy" ("Mapping" 1282). Thirdly, the three films were chosen because a comparative study of them allows for a discussion of the possible changes in representations of and socialization messages tied to gender and race/ethnicity from the release of *Aladdin* to the release of *Princess* 17 years later. Other animated Disney films are referenced throughout the thesis but an examination of the representations of and socialization messages about gender and race/ethnicity in all of their productions is beyond its scope.

Thus, focusing on the postfeminist sensibilities, colonial discourses, and intersectional representations of and messages tied to gender and race/ethnicity in *Aladdin, Mulan*, and *Princess*, I argue that although Disney attempts to promote seemingly universal positive messages about breaking free from society's expectations to discover a whole new world of possibilities, being true to one's heart in order to realize one's potential, and digging deeper to find that differences do not matter, Disney socializes their young target audience in accordance with the values of heteronormativity,

patriarchy, and white privilege in a racialized manner that conveys differing messages for different intersectional groups of children.

In order to argue this, I first provide background information about Disney and how they and others view them and their productions as agents of gender and racial/ethnic socialization. This outline is followed by theoretical delimitations of *socialization* and *intersectionality*. The former focuses on what socialization is, which role the media plays in this process, how one can use different theoretical frameworks to consider gender and racial/ethnic socialization, and on intersectional socialization. This leads into a demarcation of intersectionality that focuses on what it is and how it can be used as a theoretical framework. This theory chapter is followed by a methodological one in which I lay out the choices one has to make when planning an intersectional research project before I explain the rationale for this thesis. In the three analysis chapters that follow the method chapter, I analyze the films chronologically focusing on the representations of and messages about gender, race/ethnicity, and intersecting identities respectively. The analyses of *Mulan* and *Princess* are comparative as they are tied back to the preceding analysis/analyses. Following the film analyses, I make comparative conclusions about similarities and differences between them before finally reflecting on my thesis and its limitations in my discussion chapter.

Chapter 2: Background and theory

2.1 The Walt Disney Company and their productions

Founded as a cartoon studio in 1923 by brothers Walt and Roy O. Disney, the Walt Disney Company has since become one of the world's largest media conglomerates. The company not only creates animated and live-action films or television programs, it also owns multiple TV networks, publishes books, magazines, and comic books, produces music and musicals, manages theme parks and cruises, and of course sells themed games and merchandise all over the globe ("Disney History," "Fiscal" 1-14). In 2018, the company had a revenue of 59,424 million dollars ("Fiscal" 25-26) and ranked #72 on Forbes's largest public companies list as the highest-ranking entertainment conglomerate (Touryalai and Stoller). As of May 2019, 31 out of the 100 world-wide highest grossing films of all time were distributed by Disney; 9 of these were animated ("All-Time"). Considering the company's pervasive global popularity, it must be acknowledged that Disney and its animated films are a force to be reckoned with. According to Henry A. Giroux and Grace Pollock, though, "Disney is more than a corporate giant; it is also a global cultural institution that fiercely struggles to protect its mythical status as a purveyor of innocence and moral virtue" (93).

On their official website, Disney describes itself as "a leading diversified international family entertainment and media enterprise." This draws attention to how they brand themselves as wholesome and family-friendly. Their website has a section called "Policies and Approaches" containing documents that "represent[ ] all current policies and approaches on topics of relevance to [the] company and of interest to [their] stakeholders." An example is a document in which Disney expresses their goal to actively limit "the depiction of smoking in movies marketed to youth" ("Smoking"). This shows how they acknowledge the importance of their depictions in respect to children and young people. The section also includes a document called "Our Stories and Characters." In this, Disney conveys how they believe that their films' "themes and characters are universal, relatable and relevant to everyone" and that "[t]he Disney brand has always been inclusive, with stories that reflect acceptance and tolerance and celebrate the differences that make our characters uniquely wonderful in their own way." This is, in their own words, the "legacy" that they strive to live up to; therefore, they write: "Disney remains committed to continuing to create characters that are accessible and relatable to all children" across "the incredibly rich diversity of the human experience" ("Our Stories"). That they write "children" rather than "people," "families," or "individuals" illustrates that children all over the globe constitute their main target audience. Although creating stories to which such a diverse target audience can relate is certainly an amiable goal, and while Disney clearly believes they are continually fulfilling it, there are many who would argue that the representations of their animated films leave much to be desired and that the way in which they portray themselves is problematic.

C. Richard King et al. are clearly of this opinion as they argue, "[t]hough perhaps noble, the goal of delivering great or heartwarming stories falls short of the possibilities … [because] the only way these corporations [Disney, Pixar, DreamWorks, and Twentieth Century Fox] have found they are able to create stories that resonate with the audience is to constantly and consistently rehearse the same tropes and the same ideologies," ideologies King et al. find problematic since they offer only superficial alternatives to gender, sexual, and racial/ethnical norms (169, 167). Giroux and Pollock too are troubled by Disney; they believe their primary goal is "teaching young people to be consumers" in order to gain a larger profit and that they mystify their "corporate agenda with appeals to fun, innocence, and pure entertainment" (3, 6). Susan Hines and Brenda Ayres, along with Elizabeth Bell et al., argue that because Disney sells a calculated "magic" to children, scholars must attempt to "break the spell" (Hines and Ayres 3; Bell et al. 2-3); because in the process of socializing children to become consumers, the company creates films that, though they may contain mixed messages (Giroux and

Pollock 214; Ward 124), are ultimately sexist and racist sanitized versions of well-known myths and fairy tales in which "race and gender are primarily dramatic and stylistic devices" (Artz 120, 124-25).

Douglas Brode, who is against the elitist "academic demonization of Disney" he believes people like Giroux perpetuate, however, argues that Walt Disney was an early proponent of diversity and multiculturalism and that the counterculture he began has been sustained within the company after his death (14, 1-8, 13). According to Brode, "Disney films are ripe with respect for women" (10) and "[n]o one group was ever singled out for caricature or stereotyping in [them]" (2).

Although Brode, who Giroux and Pollock call a "Disney apologist" (241), is thus in opposition to the beforementioned scholars, both camps agree that Disney films may impact their audience, but not if the impact is positive or negative. It is widely acknowledged within Disney Studies that animated films have socialization potential (see, for instance, Artz, Bell et al.; Bethmann; Brode; Condis; England et al.; Garlen and Sandlin; Giroux and Pollock; Hines and Ayres; Hurley; King et al.; Lacroix; Ward) though there are those like Paul Wells, who argue that they constitute entertainment rather than education (143). Scholars like Giroux and Pollock do not deny that Disney's films may be entertaining or have artistic merit but insist that they must be interrogated (101), because, as Annalee R. Ward writes: Disney "provides many of the first narratives that children use to learn about the world," about what is right and wrong and about how one should live (1). Since, "animation is not an innocent art form" but "allow[s] the producers to exercise complete control" over which representations and messages they will contain (Bell 108; Layng 197), much scholarly attention has been payed to Disney's depictions of gender and race/ethnicity.

In respect to gender representation, Cole Reilly argues that there has been a "noteworthy evolution … in terms of offering progressively more substantive story arcs and [female] characters with agency" (52). Amy M. Davis too finds that "the increasing normalisation of feminist values within American culture was reflected in the Studio's attempt to create more interesting, dynamic female characters," and that this has resulted in "an image of women – and femininity – which although not perfect, is largely positive in its overall makeup" (218, 253). Ward contends that while the Disney heroine may "adopt some of the contemporary feminist attitudes, including being more vocal, being physically strong, and being self-sufficient … she only finds fulfillment in romantic love" (119). Thus, Ward explains, Disney films contain both good and bad messages (135). Mia Adessa Towbin et al. echo this sentiment (37-40) and find that while Disney's representations are improving, "[g]ender stereotypes continue to be portrayed," meaning that "[m]en are depicted as physically aggressive, non-expressive, and as heroic saviors, … [while] [w]omen are portrayed as beautiful, dependent on men,

and engaged in domestic responsibilities" (35). One way in which this dependence on male characters is expressed is through Disney's use of male sidekicks without whom heroines would often not succeed in their various undertakings (Bethmann 8-9). Dawn Elizabeth England et al. find that "[b]oth the male and female roles changed over time, but overall the male characters evinced less change than the female characters and were more androgynous throughout. The princess role retained its femininity over time, and was rewarded for that, but also expanded to incorporate some traditionally masculine characteristics" (566). However, this trend "toward less gender-based stereotyping over time in the movies fluctuated greatly and the progress was not necessarily sequential" (England et al. 564). Thus, although most scholars argue that Disney's gender messages have improved, most also argue that the improvement has not been linear and that the representations of gender and messages tied to them are still problematic.

In respect to the representation of race/ethnicity, Towbin et al. argue that while Disney, over time, has improved its attempts at accurately depicting other cultures (37), trying to move on from "the uncomfortable images of racial and ethnic difference so prominent (in retrospect) in some of the classics— such as the crows [James Baskett, Jim Carmichael, Cliff Edwards, and Hall Johnson] in *Dumbo* [1941], King Louie [Louis Prima] in the *Jungle Book* [1967], or the Siamese cats [Peggy Lee] in *Lady and the Tramp* [1955]" (King et al. 2), "non-dominant groups are [still] portrayed negatively, marginalized, or not portrayed at all" (35). Elena di Giovanni contends that Disney has had no genuine wish to spread information about other cultures in their 1990s productions and that this is evident in the Othering of these cultures (93). Eve Benhamou also notes that Disney's depiction of race relations since the 1990s has been ambiguous: "The promotion of multiculturalism remained rather superficial, and race in itself was not overtly dealt with" and "[i]n the 2000s, Disney reconstructed a colour-blind world in which race not only did not matter anymore, but seemed invisible" (161). Megan Condis reveals a continuum of Disney humanity "with white human [sic] at one end of the spectrum, animals at the other, and with non-white humans occupying an intermediate position," sharing characteristics with both white humans and animals (40). As such, while Disney's representations of race/ethnicity have changed over the years, they have not truly improved.

Because "[t]he individual Disney films act as chapters in the Disney book on what the world looks like or ought to look like" (Ward 118), it is of course important to consider not only what scholars have argued about Disney in general but also what has been written about the films that this thesis analyzes specifically.

Discussions of *Aladdin* have tended to focus, at least predominantly, on either gender (see, for instance, A. Davis; Layng; Reilly; Wynns and Rosenfeld) or race/ethnicity (see, for instance, Blauvelt; Borthaiser; Byrne and McQuillan; Di Giovanni; Felperin; Nadel; Macleod; Phillips and Wojcik-Andrews; Rahayu et al.; Wingfeld and Karaman; Wise) with only Erin Addison, Celeste Lacroix, Maja Rudloff, and Christiane Staninger considering both sociocultural categories. Addison and Rudloff do so in order to consider the role that gender plays in Orientalism, while Lacroix and Staninger intersectionally consider female characters of color and Arab women respectively. Lacroix's study may be described as intercategorial because it focuses on multiple groups, while Staninger's can be said to be intracategorical because it focuses on one specific group – these terms are discussed in the section "Working Intersectionally." Out of all these scholars discussing *Aladdin*, only A. Davis and Reilly are positive about it.

Analyzes of *Mulan* have also tended to focus on either gender (see, for instance, Byrne and McQuillan; Brocklebank; A. Davis; Limbach; Reilly; Schrefer) or race/ethnicity (see, for instance, Anjirbag; Di Giovanni; Dong, "Writing"; Ma; Tang; Wang and Yeh; Xu and Tian) with only Lan Dong (*Mulan's Legend*), Lauren Dundes and Madeline Streiff, King et al., Ward, and Jing Yin focusing on both. Although Dong (*Mulan's Legend*), Ward, and Yin discuss both sociocultural categories they do so primarily as separate themes, while Dundes and Streiff along with King et al. consider how they engage with each other intersectionally. Both studies can be described as intercategorical. Ward, who contends that *Mulan* contains mixed messages (96), and Lisa Brocklebank are the only somewhat positive scholars.

Scholarly work on *Princess* has tended to focus more on both gender and race/ethnicity (see, for instance, Breaux; Charania and Simonds; Condis; Dundes and Streiff; Gregory; Lester; Moffitt and Harris; Parasecoli) rather than solely on gender (see, for instance, Reilly) or race/ethnicity (see, for instance, Barker; Benhamou; Ferguson; Hebert-Leiter; Kee and Grant; Terry; Turner). This may be because the main character was Disney's first African American princess, something that sparked much discussion (see, for instance, Lester). The discussions of how the categories of gender and race/ethnicity engage have mostly been intracategorical studies focusing on African American women with Condis along with Dundes and Streiff standing out as intercategorical studies. Furthermore, these two studies, as well as King et al., are the only ones that actually proclaim using intersectionality. None of the scholars who have analyzed *Princess* express positivity about it.

It is interesting to note that no one except Condis has compared *Aladdin*, *Mulan*, and *Princess*. Though Dundes and Streiff compare the latter two, and although some scholars reference the other

films in passing during their discussions of one of them (see, for instance, Benhamou; Breaux; Dong, *Mulan's Legend*; Gregory; Xu and Tian), no comprehensive comparison of the three films has been carried out. My thesis seeks to rectify this. In order to do so, however, theory on socialization as well as on intersectionality must first be outlined.

2.2 Socialization

According to Joan E. Grusec and Paul D. Hastings, "*socialization* refers to the way in which individuals [throughout their life course] are assisted in becoming members of one or more social groups" (xi-xii; original emphasis). These social groups include, but are not limited to, those connected to the sociocultural categories of gender, race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, etc. Grusec and Hastings argue that using the "word *assist* [in their definition] is important because it implies that socialization is not a one-way street," but rather processes in which the individual being socialized can be selective about which socialization messages they choose to accept (xi; original emphasis). They write that socialization processes involve "a variety of outcomes, including the acquisition of rules, roles, standards, and values across the social, emotional, cognitive, and personal domains" and stress that "[s]ome outcomes are deliberately hoped for on the part of the agents of socialization, while others may be unintended side effects of particular socialization practices" (xi). These socialization agents can encompass "a variety of individuals including parents, teachers, peers, and siblings," as well as institutions such as schools, the media, the internet, the work-place, and general cultural institutions (Grusec and Hastings xii). This entails that films can act as socialization agents as suggested by Disney scholars.

Jeffrey Jensen Arnett argues that the media differs from other socialization agents, because while these agents are attempting to assist people in becoming members of specific social groups, "the goal of most media is profit, the bigger the better. Thus, the goal of the media is not necessarily consistent with and in fact may undermine the goal of the other socializers" (102). This, coupled with how the "media play an increasingly significant role as socialization agents in the lives of children and adolescents" and how it influences "beliefs, perceptions, behavioral scripts, and affective traits, bringing about lasting changes in personality" (Prot et al. 276-77) makes it important to consider media representations and messages as this thesis does.

The media can both provide initial information on or reinforce links between specific groups and certain characteristics that, through repetition, can lead to stereotyping (Prot et al. 283). Citing A. G. Greenwald and M. R. Banaji, Sara Prot et al. write that "[s]tereotypes are sets of socially shared beliefs about traits that are characteristic of members of a social category," and they explain that

through repeated exposure to specific representations, these links between characteristics and social groups can become automatized so that when a social group is activated so is a stereotype (283). Based on a survey of studies, Prot et al. conclude that there is strong causal evidence to support the hypothesis that "stereotypical depictions of women and ethnic minorities strengthen stereotypes" (278). While Prot et al. focus on women and ethnic minorities, Campbell Leaper and Timea Farkas draw attention to how the media perpetuate many male stereotypes too (552-53). Referencing results from studies on media influence and body image, they also note that "the effects of media exposure seem to be cumulative over time" (553).

On a more positive note, Prot et al. argue that "exposure to counterstereotypical media exemplars can reduce stereotypical attitudes" (287). However, citing how seeing the upper-middle class Huxtable family on *The Cosby Show* (1984-92) made many believe that affirmative action aimed at African Americans was no longer necessary, they stress that "even a very positive portrayal may contribute to misconceptions" (287). Thus, representations may have harmful consequences even if they were not intended to be negative. Using racist humor as an example, Crenshaw explains that there is an assumption "that racist representations are injurious only if they are intended to injure." Rejecting this, however, she argues that humor can intentionally or unintentionally subordinate and reinforce "patterns of social power" ("Mapping" 1293). This illustrates how "[i]ntersectional subordination need not be intentionally produced; in fact, it is frequently the consequence of the imposition of one burden that interacts with preexisting vulnerabilities to create yet another dimension of disempowerment" (Crenshaw, "Mapping" 1249). Keeping this in mind when considering media representations like Disney's is highly important, for as a socialization agent the media may both incidentally or actively counteract more positive socialization processes.

In summary, media representations are important for all children as they offer socialization messages both in the form of representations of the groups to which the children belong and to those to which they do not belong. In respect to the former, Dorothy L. Hurley writes that it "is critical to the formation of positive self-image [sic] in all children" that they see themselves positively depicted (226). Concerning the latter, Phyllis A. Katz asserts, "television offers the only opportunity to observe other-group members" for many white children (98).

As has been referenced throughout this delimitation of socialization, children belong to multiple social groups and are therefore socialized accordingly. For instance, that "[a]s children form cognitive representations of gender, or gender schemas, they begin to filter the world through a gender lens" (Leaper and Farkas 542); correspondingly, they are also simultaneously socialized to "acquire the

behaviors, perceptions, values, and attitudes of an ethnic group, and come to see themselves and others as members of such groups" (Phinney and Rotheram 11). The media's gender and racial/ethnic socialization messages can be considered by analyzing its representations as constituting postfeminist and colonial discourses that "do not reflect a pre-given reality … [but] *constitute* and *produce* our sense of reality" (McLeod 46; original emphasis). *Postfeminism*, a term "overloaded with different meanings," is used in this thesis to denote a sensibility within media culture "rather than an analytic perspective" (Gill 147-49). Cultural products may be characterized as postfeminist if they display a contradictory "double entanglement" with feminism, meaning that they contain both feminist and anti-feminist notions, that they take feminism "into account" only to show that it is no longer needed as gender equality is assumed (McRobbie 255-59). Other features of postfeminism, as defined by Rosalind Gill, include, but are not limited to: A focus on the connection between choice and female empowerment, on female individualization, and on femininity as a bodily property (149). These and other postfeminist notions connected to femininity and masculinity, as well as the concept of *camp*, are further explored as they are used to consider the depictions of gender in *Aladdin*, *Mulan*, and *Princess*. Because postfeminist texts hide their antifeminism behind an image of "girl power," it is important to consider the presence of such a sensibility in films primarily targeted at children. *Postcolonialism*, a term often used to refer to a critical concept comprising of a "variety of practices" (McLeod 3-4), is used to consider the portrayal of race/ethnicity in the films. Specifically, theories of colonial discourses, one of the "major areas of enquiry" within postcolonialism, are used to "call attention to the role which representation plays in getting people to succumb to particular ways of thinking" by considering how certain cultures and values are framed as "correct," while others are correspondingly devalued and depicted as Other (McLeod 21, 23-24). Notions from critical race theory, which is, according to Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, in part, concerned with the construction of social roles and relations of power with regard to race/ethnicity (5), are also used.

Though it is, of course, important to consider such processes as gender and ethnic/racial socialization in their own right, considering them as separate processes may be misleading, because an individual is never only one thing, never *only* a specific gender and never *only* a specific race/ethnicity. All individuals have intersectional identities.

Danice L. Brown et al.'s study of the connection between intersectional socialization messages received by female African American college students during childhood and adolescence and their sexual assertiveness and safe sexual practices as adults exemplifies how different socialization processes influence each other as they are "combined." Brown et al.'s study clearly illustrates how thinking about

socialization intersectionally can be highly beneficial since different types of socialization do not occur in a vacuum but rather take place simultaneously, informing each other in both positive and negative ways. Therefore, also considering media representations that influence socialization through the lens of intersectionality is an informed decision. To do that, however, an explication of what intersectionality is and how one works intersectionally is required.

2.3 Intersectionality

The term *intersectionality* is most often attributed to Crenshaw in which her groundbreaking article "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine" is often referenced (see, for instance, Carbado et al.; K. Davis; Dhamoon; Lykke, *Feminist*; McCall; Moser). In this article, Crenshaw denounces single-axis frameworks because she argues that they have a tendency to focus "on the most privileged group members," leading the experiences of African American women, the group she focuses on, to be marginalized in both feminist and antiracist theory as the focus falls on white women and African American men respectively (140). Crenshaw also argues against thinking about discrimination as "singular issues" (that is, viewing racism and sexism as separate issues) or as additive because "the intersectional experience [of discrimination] is greater than the sum of racism and sexism" ("Demarginalizing" 167, 140). The term *intersectionality* itself is taken from her analogy of traffic in an intersection – "Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them" (Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing" 149) – and it denotes the idea of considering the interconnectedness of different kinds of experiences and oppressions.

Though intersectionality may often be connected to Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins, Rita Kaur Dhamoon, Nina Lykke, as well as Leslie McCall argue that many have worked intersectionally, both before and after the publishing of her article, without necessarily using the term to describe their work or using other concepts and names to refer to the phenomenon of intersections (Collins 10-11; Dhamoon 231-32; Lykke, *Feminist* 67-76; McCall 1771). Though there are those, like Collins and Kathy Davis, who have commented on the difficulty of defining what intersectionality is (Collins 2-3; K. Davis 67-68), Sumi Cho et al. argue that we should focus more on what it *does* rather than what it *is*; and they write that "what makes an analysis intersectional is not its use of the term … [but rather] its adoption of an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power" (795). Lykke too admits that there are many different interpretations of

intersectionality but attempts to give a "broad umbrella-like definition" (*Feminist* 50). Seemingly focusing on what intersectionality can do, Lykke defines it as:

> a theoretical and methodological tool to analyze how historically specific kinds of power differentials and/or constraining normativities based on discursively, institutionally and/or structurally constructed sociocultural categorization such as gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, age/generation, dis/ability, nationality, mother tongue, and so on, interact, and in doing so produce different kinds of societal inequalities and unjust social relations (*Feminist* 50).

This definition shows that this theoretical framework can encompass many categories of difference – not only race and gender, the categories that Crenshaw highlights. Reflecting on her work, Crenshaw explains that she "made no attempt to articulate each and every intersection either specifically or generally" but also argues that her focus on a particular dynamic of race and gender does not exclude the possibility of examining other dynamics of social power using intersectionality ("Postscript" 231). Though this possibility is clearly outlined in Lykke's definition, she warns against the desire to list "an open-ended line" of intersections to examine in one's research. Although it may be "rhetorically seductive" to do so, defining "a limited number of important intersections" to investigate, like Crenshaw does, is the only way to avoid black boxing (Lykke "Intersectional" 210). "Black-boxing," Lykke explains, "means that concepts turn into rhetorical devices, something that people refer to without reflecting on implications and contexts," because the listing of intersections decontextualizes sociocultural categories and moves the focus away from analyzing how these categories of difference actually engage ("Intersectional" 210).

Lykke's definition shows that the idea of considering how different sociocultural categories influence each other to produce differential oppression, which Crenshaw points out is necessary when considering the intersectional experiences of African American women, is at the core of the theory. Mari J. Matsuda argues that although all types of oppression are not the same, they often share certain characteristics; about how she considers this complexity she writes:

> The way I try to understand the interconnection of all forms of subordination is through a method I call "ask the other question." When I see something that looks racist, I ask, "Where is the patriarchy in this?" When I see something that looks sexist, I ask, "Where

> is the heterosexism in this?" When I see something that looks homophobic, I ask, "Where are the class interests in this?" (1188-89).

Matsuda's musings on how to think about interconnected oppression combined with how Lykke's definition does not include an outline of methods highlights the idea that intersectionality is a way of thinking and working critically in a way that accommodates several sociocultural categories simultaneously.

Lykke's definition of intersectionality makes the important point that sociocultural categories are, to a large extent, socially constructed. Lykke argues that they are "effects of *processes of interpersonal communication* rather than fixed identities that individuals 'have' or 'are'" (*Feminist* 51; original emphasis). The idea that people are not inscribed with fixed identities at birth was, in respect to gender, first articulated by Simone de Beauvoir and is encapsulated in her famous quote: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (295). De Beauvoir argues that "in human society nothing is natural and that woman, like much else, is a product elaborated by civilization" (734). Even though de Beauvoir is mostly concerned with the distinction between the categories of biological sex and socially constructed gender, she also notes that other sociocultural categories – the "much else" mentioned in her quote, the "peculiarities that distinguish human beings from one other" (737) – are products of human relations as well. For de Beauvoir the relations that produce these categories are not equal, and she argues that "[w]oman is determined by … the manner in which her body and her relation to the world are modified through the action of others than herself" (734). Although the outcome of these actions is not "predetermined for all eternity," and though the actions may produce quite different results if they "took a different direction" (734), they are ultimately imposed on the individual by others, according to de Beauvoir. This understanding is quite different from the one Lykke expresses when she argues that the construction of sociocultural categories is an interpersonal process and thus highlights that there is, at least, some agency in the process. The idea of partial agency in the production of difference is also present in Judith Butler's conceptualization of gender as performative. She argues that gender performativity does not consist of singular acts but rather becomes effective through the repetition of actions that leads to their normalization (xv). She writes that "the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence" (33). Thus, she does not see gender as "simply a self-invention" (xxv), something that can be performed with full agency by an individual, because individuals will be influenced by societal norms. Unlike what de Beauvoir suggests, the individual does play a part in the process because gender, according to Judith

Butler, is "a doing" that creates gender identities as "[t]here is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (33). The conceptualization of sociocultural categories as "doings" is also explored by Candace West, Don H. Zimmerman, and Sarah Fenstermaker. In "Doing Difference," West and Fenstermaker write about gender, race, and class as "categories of experience" and argue that they are *always* experienced, that they are omnirelevant (13, 25). West and Zimmerman's theory of "doing" contends that though "it is individuals who do gender [or other types of difference], the enterprise is fundamentally interactional and institutional in character, for accountability is a feature of social relationships" (136-37). *Accountability* is the notion that all human actions are evaluated by interlocutors in accordance with culturally normative standards in a given relation and situation, whereby actions are deemed "unremarkable," if they are in accordance with the standards, or "remarkable," if they are not (West and Zimmerman 137). West and Zimmerman argue that gender differences constructed through interaction are repeated and reinforced until they become essentialized routine resulting in ideas of appropriate or inappropriate gender behavior (137, 146). Like Judith Butler, they focus on the importance of repetition, but unlike her, they have a more relational approach, something that Judith Butler acknowledges that she has not looked much into (xxiv). West and Fenstermaker argue that "while race, class, and gender will likely take on different import and will often carry vastly different social consequences in any given situation, we suggest that how they operate may be productively compared" (22). This seems to be the underlying assumption in Lykke's definition of intersectionality as well.

Although Ingunn Moser agrees that categories of differences are socially constructed, she disagrees with West, Zimmerman, and Fenstermaker about the omnirelevance of these categories. Studying disabled people in Norway, she finds that "[s]ometimes, [sociocultural categories] seemed to work together, sometimes against each other. At other times, they simply seemed irrelevant – or actively were being made irrelevant" (539). Therefore, Moser wants to propose using the metaphor of "interference," rather than that of "interaction," because it "encourages us to look for the coming together, the combination, but also the disturbance, clash, or neutralization of different ordering processes and enactments – the wave motions – in which such positions, identities, and differences emerges" (543-44). Using this metaphor, she argues, will make it easier to realize that "the interferences between different enactments of difference are complex, contradictory, unpredictable, and often also surprising and that they defy simple conclusions about their effects and politics" (556). Her notion, she argues, will make it clearer that "[d]ifferences often are mobilized to challenge the domination to

which other processes of differentiation subject [people]" (557). Although Lykke, in her definition, uses the notion of "interaction" that Moser objects to, she argues that it is actually preferable to use the term "intra-act" rather than "interact." *Intra-act*, she writes, "refers to the interplay between non-bounded phenomena, which interpenetrate and mutually transform each other while interplaying"; *interact* denotes "something that takes place between bounded entities, clashing against each other but not generating mutual transformations" ("Intersectional" 208). This concept of non-bounded categories being transformed, being made and unmade, imbued in the notion of intra-action seems to be supported by Moser's research and is therefore taken as a revision to Lykke's definition.

Although it is, as previously discussed, acknowledged within intersectionality that categories of difference are social constructions, their realness must also be recognized, for as Crenshaw writes, "to say that a category such as race or gender is socially constructed is not to say that that category has no significance in our world" ("Mapping" 1296). Ruth Frankenberg agrees and writes that categories of difference are "'real' in the sense that [they have] real, though changing, effects in the world and real, tangible, and complex impact[s] on individuals' sense of self, experiences, and life chances" (11).

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Working intersectionally

As has been asserted, intersectionality is conceptualized as a mode of critical thinking concerned with how experienced, constructed sociocultural categories are relationally done and undone that does not carry any inherent object of study or any given methodology.

In respect to the former, Collins describes how intersectional research projects typically use the theory in three different ways: Intersectionality is the object of study itself, intersectionality is used as an analytical strategy "to produce new knowledge about the social world," or intersectionality is used as a form of critical praxis in connection with social justice work (5). About the second type of project, Collins writes: "[T]his approach uses intersectional frameworks to investigate social phenomena, e.g., social institutions, practices, social problems, and the epistemological concerns of the field itself" (5). She thus seems mostly concerned with using intersectional theory within the social sciences.

When defining the object of study in an intersectional research project, it is important to bear in mind Lykke's advice about avoiding black boxing and focusing on a select number of intersections in a specific context. Otherwise, "intersectionality is reduced to a black box, a machine for throwing more and more new categories on the table," and the research project runs the risk of becoming superficial (Lykke, "Intersectional" 210).

In reference to methodology, McCall describes a conceptual spectrum of approaches to the use of sociocultural categories as analytical categories within intersectionality. At one end of the spectrum, one works anticategorically and attempts to fully deconstruct representational categories because they are viewed as "simplifying social fictions that produce inequalities" (1773). This is the type of approach Frankenberg is writing up against when she argues that categories of difference are real rather than fictious. At the other end of the spectrum, McCall describes how one may work intercategorically by using existing analytical categories strategically "to document relationships of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions" (1773). One thus looks at how intersections of sociocultural categories affect social behavior and the distribution of power. The intracategorical approach falls in the middle of this continuum, and in such an approach, one uses sociocultural categories to analyze how specific representations are produced, reproduced, and resisted both materially and discursively (McCall 1773, 1783). One thus examines the meanings and boundaries of the categories themselves. The articles by Crenshaw focusing on the intersectional identities of African American women as well as those within Disney Studies focusing on one specific group are examples of projects using an intracategorical approach. In both the intercategorical and the intracategorical approach, one may be highly critical of the constructed nature of the analytical categories one uses while also acknowledging "the stable and even durable relationships that social categories represent at any given point in time" (McCall 1774).

Because intersectionality can study categories of difference in many different contexts, one can use different disciplines to inform intersectional research projects. Lykke argues that when working crossdisciplinarily within intersectionality, one may do so in three different ways depending on how one wishes different theoretical frameworks to interact. One may work multidisciplinarily, which entails using different tools, theories, and methodologies additively in a way in which they "are not challenged or brought into dialogue with each other" (*Feminist* 26). This approach thus maintains disciplinary boundaries. In contrast, one may work transdisciplinarily, which entails dissolving disciplinary boundaries entirely. In such an approach, Lykke writes, one "moves the research process beyond the disciplines and into new fields of theorizing, and poses questions to which no traditional discipline can claim 'ownership'" (*Feminist* 27). An approach that conceptually falls between the beforementioned is the interdisciplinary approach. In this approach, disciplinary borders are transgressed but not dissolved. As Lykke explains, "[t]he heterogeneity and differences between disciplines are marked as in multi-disciplinary research, *but* in a dialogue that is open toward new and emerging theoretical and methodological synergies" (*Feminist* 27; original emphasis).

In conclusion, when planning an intersectional research project, one has to make methodological decisions in respect to the object of study, the approach to analytical categories, as well as to the use of theoretical frameworks. The choices for this thesis are discussed next.

3.2 Delimitation of my research project

This thesis' object of study is the representations of and socialization messages about gender and race/ethnicity in *Aladdin*, *Mulan*, and *Princess*. It examines how these categories of difference intra-act to create intersectional representations and socialization messages. Because the films, as previously discussed, have never been comparatively studied in depth before, the thesis is comparative in nature. Only two categories were chosen because one, as advised by Lykke, must select a finite range of categories to investigate in order to avoid black boxing. I chose gender and race/ethnicity because they are important categories of difference, for as Nira Yuval-Davis argues, "while in specific historical situations and in relation to specific people there are some social divisions which are more important than others in constructing their specific positioning, there are some social divisions such as gender, stage in life cycle, ethnicity and class which tend to shape most people's lives" (160). As such, the categories constitute important parts of children's socialization. Though gender and race/ethnicity are the main foci of my analysis, I reference other categories of difference such as class and sexuality when relevant.

In reference to Collins' categorization of intersectional research projects, I use intersectionality in order to create new knowledge about social phenomena, specifically about cultural products in the form of animated Disney films. Rather than using intersectionality to examine lived experience, my project thus focuses on fictional representations. If intersectionality is only used within the social sciences, as Collins' seems to suggest it should be, important humanistic discussions about media representations that may impact children's socialization will never be had. This would constitute a missed opportunity, because academics can "use intersectionality to illuminate and address discriminatory situations that would otherwise escape articulation" (Crenshaw, "Postscript" 233). Also, Carbado et al.'s proposition about how the theoretical framework can and should be applied to new areas of study must be heeded since "[n]o particular application of intersectionality can, in a definitive sense, grasp the range of intersectional powers and problems that plague society" (Carbado et al. 305). Representational intersectionality is important because the way real people are treated may be linked to how they "are represented in cultural imagery" (Crenshaw, "Mapping" 1282). Since Disney is a powerful creator of cultural imagery, using intersectionality to consider the problem of sameness and

difference in their representations and messages may give us a more multidimensional understanding of their potentially discriminatory films.

In order to produce such knowledge, *Aladdin*, *Mulan*, and *Princess* are analyzed in chronological order. The analysis of each film is organized into three separate sections. The first one focuses on the representation of gender and the socialization messages tied to it and uses postfeminist theory. The second section analyzes the representation of and socialization messages connected to race/ethnicity by using concepts from postcolonialism and critical race theory. The last section considers how representations of gender and race/ethnicity intra-act to create intersectional socialization messages. As such, I use what Lykke characterized as an interdisciplinary approach to working crossdisciplinarily by using different theoretical frameworks and bringing them into discussion with each other. I hope to show how the socialization messages tied to gender and race/ethnicity specifically gain new meanings when they are considered intersectionally. In my intersectional analyses, I use an intercategorical approach to examine the power relations between characters as they are created by their intersectional identities. These power relations are studied by analyzing intercharacter relations as well as by comparing story arcs. I opted to use this approach as it has not previously been applied to all three films in depth and because intersectional studies of the individual films have tended to be intracategorical rather than intercategorical. In an intercategorical project, "[t]he subject is multigroup, and the method is systematically comparative" (McCall 1786), but my study is not multigroup but rather "multicharacter" as individual characters are contrasted. Though the films are continually compared throughout my analyses, I also contrast them at the end in order to make concluding remarks about their differences and similarities.

While there is a wide-spread belief that minority status provides "a presumed competence to speak about race and racism" (Delgado and Stefancic 11) or other types of discrimination, I believe that I, despite my status as a white, Western, middle-class cis woman, am still capable of undertaking an intersectional research project such as this one. The framework of intersectionality has made me attentive to how my personal intersectional identity in some respects privileges me and has as such made me attentive of trying not to perpetuate white gaze discourses and of approximating neutrality but of course never claiming it. Furthermore, because my object of study is fictitious, I am not presuming to know of or speak about the discriminatory experiences of real people. Rather, because fiction allows us to see things from the perspective of others, I examine representations of such experiences.

Chapter 4: *Aladdin* – A whole new world or a rehash of stereotypes?

4.1 Gender representations and socialization messages

Aladdin was directed by Ron Clements and Jon Musker. In the rags to riches story of titular character Aladdin (Scott Weinger), who finds a magic lamp, his love interest princess Jasmine (Linda Larkin) plays a big part, and the discussion of gender in *Aladdin* therefore starts by examining her.

Jasmine was presumably created in the hopes of embodying "the strong, independent young woman, the new ideal" (Staninger 66), to be a character who, unlike Disney's original three princesses Snow White (Adriana Caselotti, *Snow White* [1937]), Cinderella (Ilene Woods, *Cinderella* [1950]), and Aurora (Mary Costa, *Sleeping Beauty* [1959]), had a more complex personality and wanted freedom, adventure, and to be a "doer" (Reilly 53-54). A. Davis describes Jasmine as a positive role model: Independent, intelligent, witty, strong, well-balanced, a good judge of character, and a woman who expresses her sexuality comfortably and maturely (182, 185). However, Jasmine's story arc is decidedly postfeminist and thus contains both feminist and antifeminist notions.

As previously noted, Gill claims that, in postfeminist media, the (sexy) body is presented as "women's source of power" (149). This is apparent both in Jasmine's character design as well as in her actions. Many scholars describe Jasmine, with her large eyes, long hair, big bust, and tiny waist, as an Arab Barbie who embodies a harem woman stereotype (Addison 12; Lacroix 221; Rudloff 130; Staninger 68), a stereotype also seen in the film's unnamed young women, who all wear belly dancer outfits. Jasmine's character design perpetuates unhealthy beauty standards, while her revealing costume both eroticizes and exoticizes her. Furthermore, she uses her sexuality as a weapon against men (Rudloff 130). She does so on two occasions, swaying her hips seductively as she plays into the postfeminist notion of being a sexual subject who presents herself "in a seemingly objectified manner because it suits [her] liberated interest to do so" (Gill 151). The former occasion occurs when Jasmine punishes Aladdin for treating her as a prize to be won by ridiculing him (00:54:03). The latter when she distracts the villain Jafar (Jonathan Freeman) by pretending to be in love with him (01:13:19). This latter occasion marks Jasmine as the only Disney princess to kiss a villain. The distraction only works for so long though; it distracts Aladdin too, undermining his rescue plan and unmasking that this female sexual power is difficult to control. When Jasmine tries to assert power in non-bodily ways, as when she attempts to pull rank and demand that the leader of the Royal Guards (Jim Cummings) release Aladdin (00:22:16), she is shown to be unsuccessful. As such, Jasmine appears neither strong, nor as someone who expresses her sexuality in a healthy way. The concerning socialization message is that fickle sexual femininity is a woman's only power source.

Notions of being oneself and making personal choices to become empowered "are central to the postfeminist sensibility" (Gill 153) and to Jasmine's story arc. Forced to lead a protected life within her father the Sultan's (Douglas Seale) palace, she dreams of self-actualization – of seeing the world, making new friends, but most importantly of marrying for love. "If postfeminism is all about choice," Bonnie J. Dow writes, "then one of the most crucial decisions a woman can make is to choose the right man" (127). Jasmine desperately wants to choose her own husband but the law states that he must be a prince. Frustrated with her position's lack of opportunities for individual choice, she says angrily: "Then maybe I don't want to be a princess anymore" (00:13:17). However, after sneaking away, a feat only accomplished by the help of her male pet tiger Rajah, Jasmine discovers that she knows nothing of the real world. When Aladdin, who saves her from being behanded, is captured and Jasmine fails to free him, she returns home and does not attempt to escape her role as princess again. Though choice is a central theme in postfeminist cinema and in *Aladdin*, "there are clear and relatively conventional (that is, limited) choices to be made by female characters" (Tasker 75). As such, Jasmine cannot choose not to be a princess because she does not know how to make it on her own, and therefore, she cannot choose not to marry (Addison 18). She does not question this. Also, after she chooses Aladdin in the final scene, all her other self-actualization projects are forgotten. Her empowerment has to do solely with choosing a male partner and is thus highly problematic from a feminist standpoint as it suggests to viewers that this is the most important, and perhaps only, choice a woman can make and that "women may speak of freedom, but they really want to be taken care of" (Lyang 102). Thus, scholars may be correct when they argue that *Aladdin* is a pseudo-feminist text rather than a feminist one (Addison 17; Byrne and McQuillan 136-37; Staninger 65). However, rather than using this label, it is more appropriate to understand the film as a postfeminist text that, even with its antifeminist notions, does feature a more active heroine and a more sensitive hero, who is now discussed.

Jasmine's love interest, Aladdin, is a strong, athletic, street smart "diamond in the rough," who, like Robin Hood (Brian Bedford, *Robin Hood* [1973]), steals only what he needs in order to survive and then happily gives away what little he has in order to help starving street urchins (00:09:36). Aladdin is reminiscent of the 80s *New Man* described by Stephen Cohan as tough but tender, masculine but sensitive (181). His sensitivity, self-doubt, and goofiness around Jasmine show that he is "tamed by the accepted gender notions of our time" (Li-Vollmer and LaPointe 104). Expressed differently, Aladdin is a postfeminist hero. Postfeminist masculinity, like postfeminism in general, is both feminist and antifeminist because it takes feminism into account, while it simultaneously reinforces patriarchal

discourses (Rumens 245). Aladdin is shown to be adhering to feminist sentiments when he, after Jasmine has told him that her father is forcing her to marry, with outrage exclaims: "That's awful!" (00:21:08). However, Aladdin also displays questionable behavior such as repeatedly lying to Jasmine and invading her personal space. Furthermore, he perpetuates patriarchal discourses of female objectification when he tells Jasmine: "You aren't just some prize to be won" (00:54:45). By saying "just," Aladdin is essentially saying that women are, at least partially, prizes to be won. This antifeminist sentiment is left questioned.

As a sensitive New Man who becomes close friends with the male Genie (Robin Williams), Aladdin runs the risk of being perceived as homosexual, because this type of character "could always turn out to be a closet case" (Cohan 182). In order to refute this, *Aladdin* features several homophobic jokes that serve to reposition heterosexuality as the norm and ideal. One such joke is uttered by Genie, who says that even though he is "kind of" fond of Aladdin, he doesn't "wanna pick out curtains or anything" (01:01:38), signaling that the idea of two men living together is a joke. Another instance occurs when Aladdin has saved the Sultan, who then says: "You brilliant boy. I could kiss you," makes a puking sound, and continues "I won't. I'll leave that to my …" and points to his daughter (01:03:29), signaling that the idea of two men kissing too is a joke. Homophobic humor, which is injurious whether it is intended so or not, can, as exemplified here, serve to disavow homoerotic potential between characters (Hansen-Miller and Gill 44). Also, "any suggestion of 'feminine weakness' in the heroes can be easily dismissed by the appearance of a villain who can better the heroine in womanly display" (Li-Vollmer and LaPointe 104), which is why I now turn to the Royal Vizier.

Jafar serves to reinforce Aladdin's heterosexuality by embodying a camp sensibility. *Camp* can be defined as the interplay between incongruous juxtaposition such as feminine-masculine, gay-straight, rich-poor, etc. and is "contextually situated 'incongruous contrasts' between cultural polarities where … humor is derived through the interplay of these dominant and subjugated subject positions" (Letts 150). Although Jafar is clearly a man, he is highly feminized. Matching "fashion's current standards of female beauty", he has high cheek bones, plucked eye-brows, and a tall slender body and looks as if he may be wearing make-up, (Li-Vollmer and LaPointe 97-98). Furthermore, he is the only important male character in the film to wear robes; even the princess wears pants. Jafar's character design is reminiscent of *Sleeping Beauty's* Maleficent (Eleanor Audley); both wear long, billowing robes and headdresses, carry a magic staff, have a bird familiar, and turn into giant serpents. These similarities with the villainess render Jafar effeminate and reminiscent of someone in drag. His humor which consists mostly of sarcastic remarks and puns signifies his campiness too as "[c]amp humor laughs at

any form of essential thought" (Mallan and McGillis 5-6). Though Genie's many jokes and momentary transformations into women (00:41:18, 00:47:47, 00:47:59, 01:15:32) are arguably also campy because they question essentialism, they only constitute "temporary subversion[s] of 'normality'" (Mallan and McGillis 12). They may be considered temporary subversions, because Genie is not truly questioning gender normativity. Rather, he is willing to give up on his freedom dreams in order to ensure that Aladdin and Jasmine can be together. "Hey, it's only an eternity of servitude. This is love" (01:19:11), he says as he shows his support for heterosexuality. Jafar's continuous campiness, single status, and attempts to keep Aladdin and Jasmine apart, however, signify him as deviant, and the main characters' uncampy, normative gender behavior is made to seem positive in contrast. This reinforces messages of heteronormative, heterosexual coupling. Will Letts describes how *camp* has the potential to satirize mainstream culture but also to "help delimit and sharpen our focus on the dominant ideology of heteropatriarchy" (149-51). The latter appears to be its main function in *Aladdin* in which mainstream – that is, American – culture is not satirized but rather invoked as humorous through Genie's jokes and in which continuous campiness is equated with evil.

Jafar serves as a contrast to Aladdin both by being campy and deviant as well as by being blatantly sexist and antifeminist. This is shown when he says to Jasmine: "You're speechless I see. A fine quality in a wife" (01:02:03), showing that he, unlike Aladdin, does not believe that women should share their opinions. And when he raises his hand to strike her saying: "I'll teach you some respect" (01:12:46), signaling that he believes men to be superior as they are in a position to teach and punish women. That Jafar, the film's most sexist character, is one of the most noticeably Arab characters is significant and is explored further in the following section.

In summary, *Aladdin*, as a postfeminist text, portrays women as having few meaningful choices in life and as having only their bodily sexuality as a source of power. It leaves many antifeminist notions, such as patriarchal discourses of female subjectification, homophobic humor, and the connection of campiness with evil, unquestioned. As such, the film's gender representations may be harmful to the gender socialization of both girls and boys who may be given the impression that such notions are normative and not harmful to everyone and especially to minority groups.

4.2 Racial/ethnic representations and socialization messages

Although today's relationship between the West and the Middle East cannot be labeled as colonial, it can be described in imperialistic or neocolonial terms, because "Western nations are still engaged in imperial acts, securing wealth and power through continued economic exploitations of other nations"

(McLeod 9). Such acts are justified through discourses that portray the West as superior and entitled to exercise power over others (McLeod 20). Edward W. Said argues that the specific colonial discourse of Orientalism serves to construct a binary opposition between the Orient and the West, ensuring Western superiority (2-3). Orientalism achieves this by depicting the Orient as a timeless and unchanging place, both strange and fantastical, and by portraying the inhabitants of the Middle East as hook-nosed, camel-riding people who are terroristic, murderous, and violent, on the one hand, and sexual and exotic, on the other (McLeod 53; Said 96, 108).

As many scholars have noted, *Aladdin* clearly draws on this colonial discourse by depicting the fictional city Agrabah as a place of magic and danger with evil, violent men, beautiful harem women, acrobats, sword swallowers, and fire walkers (Addison 7; Blauvelt; Felperin 138-39; Macleod 180-82; Rudloff 125-26). The lyrics of the opening song "Arabian Nights" set the tone for the film by being framed through the white gaze and by reproducing an Orientalist discourse. The former is apparent in the very first line, "Oh, I come from a land, from a faraway place" (00:00:30), which positions the setting as far away from the West (Rahayu et al. 26) and the story as watched from a Western perspective even though it is told by a narrator, the Peddler (Robbie Williams), who, owing to his accent and enormous turban, is perceived as a local Arab. The setting and its inhabitants are immediately Othered as a result of this white gaze which assumes the centrality of white, Western people (Deep Green Philly), and it acts as a hint "at the American culture's position of supremacy over the narrated Other" (Di Giovanni 97). This Othering is also achieved by portraying the inhabitants of this "faraway place" as violent. Many discussions of *Aladdin* (Blauvelt; Giroux and Pollock 109-10; King et al. 142-43; Macleod 184-85; Rahayu et al. 26-27; Rudloff 125-26; Staninger 68; Wingfield and Karaman; Wise 105) have focused on how the original lyrics "Where they cut off your ear / If they don't like your face" were changed to "Where it's flat and immense / And the heat is intense," while the following line "It's barbaric, but hey, it's home" was left unchanged (00:00:37). As expressed by King et al., "[t]his half measure allowed Disney and much of its audience to picture Arabs as barbaric others, but without the overt and violent tones" (142-43). As such, the song constitutes an instance of what in critical race theory is called a *microaggression*, a small act "of racism, consciously or unconsciously perpetrated" (Delgado and Stefancic 2).

As previously mentioned, the film's main villain Jafar is depicted as a violent man. So are the antagonistic Royal Guards and the thief Gazeem (Charlie Adler), who says casually that he has had to "slit a few throats" (00:03:08). These evil characters all have dark beards and crooked noses, signaling their Arab ethnicity to the viewers and creating a link between being evil and being dark that socializes

children to connote darkness with being evil (Hurley 224). This is underscored by Jafar's introduction as "a dark man [who] waits with a dark purpose" (00:02:50). In comparison, the film's hero Aladdin is the only male character not to have a beard, and he and Jasmine's noses are much straighter. Many scholars have commented on this opposition between the film's evil Arab characters and the westernized main characters (Addison 9-10; Byrne and McQuillan 73-74; Giroux and Pollock 109-10; King et al. 141-42; Macleod 182-83; Rahayu et al. 29-30; Rudloff 126-27; Staninger 68-70; Wingfield and Karaman) by pointing out how Aladdin and Jasmine look like a "dark haired Ken and Barbie" (Staninger 68), while Jafar looks like a mix of the caricature drawings of Saddam Hussein and Ayatollah Khomeini (Byrne and McQuillan 76; Macleod 182, 186), and how the good characters sound American, while the evil ones sound either British or foreign (Macleod 182). Aladdin's westernization, which throughout the film is expressed through his desire to achieve the American Dream by realizing his "diamond in the rough"-potential and becoming rich and powerful (Rahayu et al. 28-29), is complete by the end, when he says: "Call me Al" (01:21:08), rejecting his Arabic name and achieving relative whiteness. Whiteness is not simply a matter of skin color, rather it is a cultural construct connected to believing in freedom and liberty, appropriating a "lifestyle of power and plenty," and having the ability to consume (Grewal 9, 17). As such, anyone may potentially pass as white through a "consumer citizenship" and through an adoption of culturally white values (Grewal 7). Thus, passing is not restricted to physically being identified as a member of another ethnic group. Aladdin, Jasmine, and Genie's search for freedom and individualistic self-actualization partly allow them to pass as white. However, because Jasmine is simultaneously highly sexualized by the Orientalist discourse that depicts her in a revealing harem outfit, her passing becomes less convincing than Aladdin's.

As has previously been alluded to, both Aladdin and Jasmine's characters take feminist notions into account in a way that Jafar, "the law," or the Royal Guards, who are determined to differentiate between Aladdin "the street rat" and Jasmine "the street mouse" (00:22:11), do not. While Staninger argues that Aladdin and Jasmine's westernization, which includes their postfeminism, is created in order to cater to Americans and to American feminists in particular (68), Christopher Wise interprets *Aladdin* as wanting to show how Islamic law "is archaic, stultifying, terroristic, evil, and corporeal: It may cut off your head just as easily as your hand" (107). These two readings are not mutually exclusive as the "stupid old law" that dictates who Jasmine can marry (01:18:51) is placed firmly within an Islamic setting where Allah's name is invoked multiple times (00:04:08, 00:13:22, 01:03:25) and where people who fight against this law, namely Aladdin, Jasmine, and Genie, are westernized. As Addison argues, the neocolonial discourse of *Aladdin* updates older Orientalist discourses to focus more on gender and

uses Jasmin's story arc to criticize Islamic gender roles (8, 19). Thus, in *Aladdin*, sexism, through its primary association with Arab characters and arbitrary Islamic law, is portrayed as something decidedly Middle Eastern. Western society, in contrast, is invoked as egalitarian because Orientalism constructs the West in binary opposition to the Orient and because "[t]he representation of other cultures invariably entails the presentation of self-portraits" (Richards qtd. in McLeod 49).

In summary, *Aladdin* presents a highly Orientalized neocolonial discourse that expresses binary and stereotypical views of the Middle East because Arab-looking characters and "the law" are portrayed as evil and sexist, while good characters are westernized. As such, there is no positive cultural currency of Arab culture (Hurley 226-27) in this "advertising of Western culture" (Borthaiser). This is highly problematic for children of Arab heritage as they are taught that they would be better off adopting Western values, as well as for non-Arab children, who may develop stereotypical views of Arab people as violent and sexist or have such stereotypes, quite common in western media (Blauvelt; Wingfield and Karaman), reinforced through repetition.

4.3 Intersectional representations and socialization messages

Although all the characters of *Aladdin* are racially/ethnically characterized as Arab, there are marked differences between them in respect to their racialization, gendering, and class affiliation. The intra-actions of these categories of differences produce specific intercharacter power relations that are now examined.

As a princess, Jasmine's class affiliation privileges her with a materially comfortable lifestyle but offers her no real power. She cannot decide how or whom she will spend her life with, she will never rule as sultana in her own right as Aladdin will rule (01:03:45), and she has no power over the Royal Guards, who take their orders from the non-royal Jafar rather than from her even though he is below her in class. Jafar's gender, however, provides him with an authority that Jasmine does not possess as her only source of power is her fickle female sexuality. Her class stature is even undermined by her own father, who says that he not only wants her to get married because of the law, but that he wants "to make sure [she is] taken care of, provided for" (00:12:45). One would assume that her class privilege would ensure this even after his death, but the Sultan's comment suggests that class does not matter as much as gender. That the comment is spoken by Jasmine's worried, well-meaning father as he carefully strokes a pet bird and protectively places it back in its gilded cage makes it seem as if his sentiment is purely one of love and not of patriarchy at all. However, as Giroux and Pollock point out, "Disney's construction of weak or stupid fathers," like the Sultan, Maurice (Rex Everhart) from *Beauty*

and the Beast (1991), and Professor Porter (Nigel Hawthorne) from *Tarzan* (1999), "works to make patriarchy appear unthreatening" (108). The Sultan – a small, round man with a white Santa Claus beard – who is optimistic, naïve, unperceptive, easily exited, and who prefers playing with his model city to ruling, is decidedly unthreatening. Throughout the film, he talks about the law as if he cannot do anything about it, however, the Sultan, like the patriarchy, is powerful, and in the end, he changes it with the comment: "Well am I sultan or am I sultan?" (01:20:52). Seeing as he was always the sultan, he always had the power to change the law but decided only to do so once he had deemed that the right suitor for Jasmine had appeared. Even though this suitor, Aladdin, is of a lower class than Jasmine, the Sultan says that Aladdin has proven himself as far as he is concerned. This must refer to Aladdin's ability to rescue Jasmin and thus take care of her. As Moser argues, "[w]orking to undo some difference often rests on the making of others" (557), and here undoing Aladdin and Jasmine's class difference depends on making their gender difference clear by signaling that Jasmine, as a woman, needs a man to save her. The intersectional socialization message created by this representation of how class and gender intra-act in the film is that gender will always take precedence in the lives of women, or at least in the lives of Arab women, because Jasmine is a racialized character whose Orientalist sexual objectification, to use Moser's term, "clashes" with her postfeminist sexual subjectification in such a way that she does not pass as white as seamlessly as Aladdin.

The entanglement of the postfeminist notion of female empowerment through individual choice connected to Jasmine's story arc and the neocolonial discourse that associates Arab culture and Islamic law with sexism and antifeminism creates an intersectional socialization message for Arab girls that they should want to escape the confinements of Arab culture in order to become happy, liberated women. The message for everyone else is that Arab girls desire this type of liberation. As such, getting a fairy tale ending depends on adopting Western values. This is arguably shown to be true for Arab boys as well because Aladdin's story arc shows that liberating oppressed oriental women and aspiring to achieve the American Dream of freedom and wealth will ensure a happy ending. Through Aladdin's relative whiteness this socialization message extends to non-Arab boys as well. This message plays into a white gaze discourse of "white saviors" that rescue inferior Others (Deep Green Philly), because Arab women in *Aladdin* are Othered through a gendered Orientalism that portrays them as both objects of sexual desire – a trope connected to many female Disney characters of color (Lacroix 219) – and victims in need of rescuing (Addison 12-13; Rudloff 127-131). These intersectional socialization messages connected to the intra-actions of gender and race/ethnicity perpetuate Western privilege, valorize Western values, and disseminate a modified version of the discourse of how "white men are

saving brown women from brown men" (Spivak 296) in which brown men who can pass as white, in the way Aladdin does, save brown women.

Though the good westernized characters who champion heterosexuality all dream of freedom, the nature of the freedom they are awarded varies according to gender. For Aladdin, freedom is the American Dream – as he dreamed (00:11:34), he becomes rich and gets to live in a palace. After being released by Aladdin, Genie achieves freedom, finally gets to be his own master, and is "off to see the world!" (01:20:18). Jasmine, who too dreamt of seeing the world, however, is, as previously discussed, only provided the freedom of choosing her own husband. This, in turn, provides the Sultan with freedom as he no longer has to worry about ruling Agrabah or about who will provide for his daughter and is as such free to play. This "distribution" of happy endings connected to freedom supports Addison and Ward's claims that freedom for women is connected to romance, while it for men is more connected to other opportunities, because romance is central to the lives of women, while it is only a part of life for men whose most important task is self-actualization (Addison 17-19; Ward 116-19). Freedom is thus a gendered concept. Characters like Jafar and his parrot sidekick Iago (Gilbert Gottfried), who are not motivated by the pursuit of freedom but strive to become more powerful and exact vengeance over those they feel have wronged them, are not given happy endings. Rather, they are given the opposite of freedom as they become enslaved inside the magical lamp. Happy endings are reserved for those who are good, meaning that they adhere to Western values and heteronormative, heterosexual coupling, and not for those who, like Jafar, are evil and deviant because of their racialization and continuously enacted campiness. These intersectional socialization messages connected to the intra-actions of gender, race/ethnicity, and sexuality thus valorize Western values and heteronormativity as they show who is deserving of happiness.

In conclusion, *Aladdin* produces representations of intersectional power relations that depict Arab women, embodied by Jasmine, as powerless and in need of rescue, Arab men who do not buy into Western values, embodied by Jafar, as violent, power hungry, and underserving of happiness, and Arab men who do adhere to Western values, embodied by Aladdin, as heroes deserving of happiness. These representations create socialization messages that push both a devaluation of Arab culture and a devotion to a Western concept of happiness as freedom that is both gendered and racialized. Single characters can of course not be used as stand-ins for real social groups and their lived experiences as this analysis could seem to suggest, but this is not what I claim. The representations of these characters, and thus of the groups that they represent, send certain messages to viewers that, however askew they

may be, must be considered because they, as Crenshaw argues, may influence how people think about these groups and thus how they act towards them ("Mapping" 1282-83).

Chapter 5: *Mulan* – To which heart should one be true?

5.1 From *Aladdin* to *Mulan*

Mulan, which was directed by Tony Bancroft and Barry Cook, tells the story of a young woman, Fa Mulan (Ming-Na Wen), who takes her father's (Soon-Tek Oh) place in the army in order to protect China from a Hun invasion. Because *Aladdin* and *Mulan* display many similar postfeminist sensibilities, neocolonial discourses, and intersectional socialization messages, it is strange that the two have never been compared. I therefore undertake such a comparison.

5.2 Gender representations and socialization messages

Unlike most Disney films, *Mulan* draws attention to the constructed nature of the category of gender. It does so mainly through Mulan's cross-dressing because female cross-dressing narratives draw attention to the difference between biological sex and socially constructed gender and thus to the constructed nature of gender stereotypes (Flanagan 44). However, even though the film attempts to highlight gender performativity, "Mulan's cross-dressing is a temporary act, a necessary stage before gender roles (and happiness) can be reinstated" (Schrefer 14). As many scholars have noted, the gender performance conflict expressed in "Reflection" in which the heroine sings that she cannot "pass" for a perfect bride or "play the part" of a perfect daughter (00:11:58) as well as Mulan's unsettling of gender binaries through her cross-dressing appear to be forgotten by the end of the film when she returns home to her family and presumably marries Captain Li Shang (BD Wong). The ending reinforces heteronormativity, reimposes the patriarchal order, and compromises the feminist message that questions women's limited choices (Byrne and McQuillan 165; Dundes and Streiff 40; Flanagan 46; Limbach 115; Schrefer 7-8, 27). The socialization message seems to be that temporarily challenging gender roles is acceptable if one returns to "normalcy." This mirrors the trend that "moments of 'difference' are themselves, in the end, reinscribed within a more traditional framework" (King et al. 115). *Mulan* thus "has an insidious quality by packaging traditional gender roles in an illusion of female strength" (Dundes and Streiff 41), by being postfeminist. *Mulan* as a postfeminist text is presently discussed.

Unlike Jasmine, Mulan is not sexualized, nor does she overtly use her body as a weapon. As such, *Mulan* does not share *Aladdin's* clear connection of female power and sexuality. However, in the

sequence in which Ling (Gedde Watanabe), Yao (Harvey Fierstein), and Chien-Po (Jerry Tondo) don women's clothes in order to sneak into the palace, it can be argued that "women (or men dressed as women) use their sexuality to prevail" (Dundes and Streiff 39). It is so both because they put on the outfits to appear feminine, and thus less threatening, and because they use the fruit used to simulate breasts, and thus their womanhood, against the Huns. Sexuality and femininity in the form of symbols become weapons in this scene as well as in the one in which Mulan uses her fan to disarm the Hun leader Shan Yu (Miguel Ferrer). Also, when Mulan is looking for someone to help her warn the Emperor (Pat Morita) of the impending Hun attack, she only asks men though there are many women in the crowd (01:08:13). This shows that she does not believe that a woman would have the power to help her. Thus, this film, like *Aladdin*, suggests to viewers that a women's greatest source of power is her femininity and sexuality.

As could be expected, self-actualization and female individualization are major themes in *Mulan*. This is shown when the heroine in "Reflection" sings that she wants to show who she is inside, and when she confesses to her dragon sidekick Mushu (Eddie Murphy) that she joined the army for herself so she could prove that she was worthwhile (01:02:42). The notions of being oneself and making choices are, as previously explained, central to the postfeminist sensibility, to Jasmine's story arc, and as it turns out to Mulan's. According to Gill, one of the issues connected to female individualization is the reprivatization of issues, the tendency in postfeminist texts to frame experiences of discrimination "in exclusively personal terms" (153). Gwendolyn Limbach notes that "[r]ather than critiquing the institution that requires a proper wife to be only silent and beautiful, the film instead focuses on the crisis an individual experiences when she does not meet the requirement" (118). Such reprivatization is also present in *Aladdin*, in which it is only Jasmine's personal issue of having to enter into an arranged marriage that is discussed. Neither film has any other important female characters that take similar issue with society's expectations; in *Mulan* the other smiling girls going to see the Matchmaker (Miriam Margolyes) appear happy to be going (00:08:50). As such, neither Jasmine's nor Mulan's defiance include "a political agenda calling for women's rights" (Dong, *Mulan's Legend* 184). Yin argues that "[f]eminism is less threatening and more acceptable to the Western audience if non-Western women are being rescued from, or are willing to fight against, their traditional cultures" (293) as in *Aladdin* and *Mulan*, but it seems as if feminism is only less frightening to a male audience if it is also individualized.

Like *Aladdin*, *Mulan* displays a double entanglement with feminist ideas; it appears to be all about female empowerment, while it in fact contains highly problematic sentiments. Rather than accept the Emperor's offer of a prestigious position on his personal council and perhaps improve women's

societal standing, Mulan chooses to return home to her family with the words, “I think I’ve been away from home long enough” (01:17:27). No real explanation is given for her decision, but it is not an entirely surprising turn of events since *retreatism* is an established narrative within postfeminist media culture. Diane Negra argues that such narratives are part of a culture that idealizes motherhood and questions the female personality in a corporate setting, and she describes it as “fantasies of hometown return in which a heroine gives up her life in the city to take up again the role of daughter, sister, wife or sweetheart in a hometown setting.” Such narratives are problematic because they teach girls that fulfilling domestic duties (that is, being a good daughter and finding a partner) constitutes a happy ending (Dundes and Streiff 41). Ward finds it positive that Mulan is not driven by romance but by self-discovery (108), and while this may be true for most of the film, she does have romantic aspirations for she is visibly upset when Shang does not express romantic interest in her but rather gives her a compliment from one soldier to another, saying: “You fight good” (01:18:11). Because Mulan does not initiate a relationship, the audience is taught that only men should pursue potential partners. That the pressure or desire to find a husband is not only coming from outside Mulan but also from within normalizes narratives of female gender anxiety about not finding a man. Grandma Fa (June Foray) expresses society’s views clearly when she says: “Great! She brings home a sword. If you ask me, she should’ve brought home a man” (01:19:58). Shang does show up though, and Grandma Fa’s comment about his staying forever signals the possibility of an impending marriage. A. Davis argues that although Mulan’s marriage to Shang will make her the perfect bride and daughter society wanted her to be, the fact that it is her choice “is important for the theme of the film” (199). A. Davis’ comment highlights the postfeminist notion of choice as empowering, and although she sees it as a positive thing, Gill is troubled by “the way in which [women] seem compelled to use their empowered postfeminist positions to make choices that would be regarded by many feminists as problematic, located as they are in normative notions of femininity” (162).

Mulan’s love interest Shang is, according to England et al., one of the most traditionally masculine Disney heroes. He is a “unemotionally stoic, physically strong, assertive, athletic” leader (552, 564), and unlike Aladdin he does not share his concerns or dreams about the future with others. That Shang is hypermasculine and not a sensitive New Man allows him to act as a counterweight to Mulan, who spends most of their time together dressed as a man and is one of the heroines who performs the most masculine activities (England et al. 563). Disney needs Shang to be more manly than Mulan so his masculinity is not questioned. For this reason, Shang does not cross-dress in order to save the Emperor. Male cross-dressing, unlike female cross-dressing, “signifies a loss of subject

agency and social status" and is not used to challenge gender conceptions but rather to entertain (Flanagan 53). That Ling, Yao, and Chin-Po's cross-dressing is used as comic relief is evident from the humor derived from Yao's comment about whether his dress makes him look fat, his tripping because of it, and them being called "ugly concubines" (01:10:52). Victoria Flanagan explains that "while female characters (and implied readers) are encouraged to experiment with gender, boys are actively discouraged from doing the same" (54). As a result, male non-conforming gender behavior is demonized and "an outdated and patriarchal form of gender binarism" that suggests that femininity is inferior is validated (Flanagan 54; Leaper and Farkas 543). The gender socialization message is that you can only be a true hero if you adhere to masculinity at all times. This message is underscored by Shang's song "I'll Make a Man Out of You," which contains problematic gender notions as it suggests that men must be athletic, strong, forceful, and mysterious (that is, unexpressive) in order to be considered men, and which repeats the mantra "Be a man!" over and over (0:38:06).

Disney also tries to ensure that Shang's heterosexually cannot be questioned by continually differentiating visually between him and Mulan when she poses as a man. Even though both wear military attire and ride horses; Mulan's scarf and hair tie are green, while Shang's are red, and her horse is black, while his is white. Not only are the characters displayed as different from each other, they are also shown as complimentary, hinting at a possible romance between them. Shang and Mulan's differentiation can be viewed as another display of the film's postfeminist sensibility since a focus on sexual difference is often accentuated in such texts due to the belief that men and women, even when they pass as male, are fundamentally different (Gill 158). Like Aladdin's, Shang's masculinity and heterosexuality is reinforced by having an antagonist that embodies a camp sensibility too.

Chi Fu (James Hong), the Emperor's advisor, is a male, but feminine, bureaucrat, who speaks in a high-pitched drawling voice, wears his bathing towels like a woman, squeals when he is frightened, and hides rather than fights. Effeminate behavior like his invokes "the stereotypical queer," someone who is something other than normal, homosexual, or both and allows viewers to define who can be considered normal in opposition to the transgressor (Li-Vollmer and LaPointe 103, 92, 90). This ensures that Shang's behavior, which might otherwise be interpreted as homosexual (Schrefer 15-16), is normalized by comparison. If Chi Fu's behavior was not enough to convince the viewer of his sexual deviancy, Yao, during "A Girl Worth Fighting For," sings conspiratorially to Mulan: "Yet the only girl who'd love him is his mother" (00:49:25), hinting that Chi Fu is undesirable to females and possibly asexual or homosexual. Like Jafar, Chi Fu's continuous campiness and single status signifies him as deviant in comparison to the heterosexual Shang and the temporarily campy Mulan and thus serve to

reinforce heteronormativity and devalue non-conforming gender behavior. This is also achieved through the character of the Matchmaker. She is reminiscent of *The Little Mermaid's* (1989) Ursula (Pat Carroll), who too grooms a heroine for a hetero-patriarchal life to which she "stands in stark opposition" (Letts 153), because both characters are single, have large bodies, and wear exaggerated make-up reminiscent of drag queens. As Mingwu Xu and Chuanmao Tian note, the Matchmaker, who even accidentally draws a beard on her own face (00:10:19), "is a manly woman who reminds us of a circus clown" (197). Like Ursula's, the Matchmaker's body is ridiculed because it breaks beauty norms. As Beatrice Frasl argues "the vilification of bodies that are not conventionally 'beautiful' or 'attractive' is a common element of postfeminist texts" (346-47) and it serves to underscore how Mulan, even though she is criticized by all around her, is still more feminine than the Matchmaker is. As such, she acts as a point of comparison for Mulan's femininity like Chi Fu does for Shang's masculinity. The vilification of the Matchmaker and Chi Fu thus reinforces conventional beauty standards and behavior for both women and men. As in *Aladdin*, the campy antagonists are some of the most sexist and antifeminist characters. This is exemplified through Chi Fu's calling Mulan "a treacherous snake" and "a creature" and saying: "'Tis a woman. She'll never be worth anything" (01:00:31, 01:15:33, 01:15:36). It is also expressed through how the Matchmaker is stifling to female empowerment and individualization because she expresses how women must look and behave a certain way and how they can only aspire to be wives. Like evil characters were closely tied to being Arab in *Aladdin*, so are these characters deeply connected to Chinese culture and law.

In summary, *Mulan* too is a postfeminist text that through different types of cross-dressing portrays being a woman as inferior to being a man. Though it raises questions about the stability of gender categories and women's opportunities in patriarchal societies, it reinforces heteronormativity in the end, suggesting that women should not work but be satisfied as daughters and wives. Campiness is again primarily connected to antagonism as the challenging of gender norms must only be temporary. As such, *Mulan* may be harmful to the gender socialization of all children, who may be given the impression that the film's notions are acceptable.

5.3 Racial/ethnic representations and socialization messages

In line with the colonial discourse of Orientalism, China is, as the Middle East was in *Aladdin*, within the first ten minutes, established as a strange and different place with ancestor worship and pet crickets. Scholars note that Disney uses well-known markers of Chinese culture such as historic sites like the Great Wall and the Forbidden City as well as stereotypical elements such as dragon imagery, lanterns,

fireworks, calligraphy, and martial arts to invoke the setting (Anjirbag 236; Dong, *Mulan's Legend* 170; Dong, "Writing" 229; Ma 153). In doing so, Disney "accentuates the Otherness of non-Western materials so as to cater to the Western audience's desire for exoticism" (Yin 290) and conflates Chinese history and cultures (Tang 152; Yin 296), thus creating their own version of China. The inhabitants of this China are depicted in accordance with Orientalist stereotypes such as "the effeminate Oriental male," "[t]he perfidious Chinese," and "the inscrutable Chinese" (McLeod 53; Said 108). The first and second stereotype is most clearly embodied by Chi Fu, who, as previously discussed, is highly feminized. He is also the first to turn on Mulan when her sex is revealed, throwing her into the snow even though she has just saved them all (01:00:30), showing that he, unlike Shang, who will not kill someone who has saved his life, is disloyal. The third stereotype is embodied by the Emperor, who speaks in a metaphorical way that is difficult for the others to understand. This is shown when he says to Shang: "The flower that blooms in adversity is the most rare and beautiful of all," but then has to explain that he is referring to Mulan when Shang does not understand (01:18:35). The proverbs that the Emperor uses are not actual Chinese sayings but had to be freely translated in the Chinese version of the film (Xu and Tian 197). As such, the "proverbs" are based on stereotypes of Oriental wisdom rather than on actual Chinese culture. They serve to subtlety Other some characters because more westernized characters do not understand them. *Mulan* also contains instances of more blatant Othering directed at the film's "true" villains, the Huns. They are animalistically portrayed as having greyish skin and fingers like talons and as climbing trees with ease, hanging upside down, and sniffing things. Though these caricatures are undoubtedly problematic, it should not distract from the negative portrayal of Chinese society that *Mulan* perpetrates.

As in *Aladdin*, society is portrayed as sexist, antifeminist, and as something to which the main characters object. Sexism and antifeminism are conveyed through the songs "Honor to Us All" and "A Girl Worth Fighting For" both of which contain many problematic notions: Women are only able to make their families proud in one way (that is, by marrying and having children), women have to be thin and silent, and women are inferior to men as they are called "girls," while men are called "men." They thus contain stifling, antiqued gender conventions (Anjirbag 239; Dundes and Streiff 40). Sexism and antifeminism are also shown through the characters' speech. When the new recruits are not living up to Shang's expectations, he asks if their families send him daughters when he asked for sons (00:38:14). When Mulan does not want to play fight with Ling and Yao, they ask her why she is being such as girl (00:43:57). And when Mulan saves the soldiers, Mushu says she is the man (00:58:57). All of these utterances perpetuate patriarchal discourses of male superiority. Although they are uttered by

Chinese characters, and thus become connected to Chinese culture, the connection of culture and sexism is not as clear-cut as it was in *Aladdin*, because expressions like the latter two are common in English and are thus connected to American culture as well. However, as in *Aladdin*, "the law" – something decidedly culturally rooted – is portrayed as sexist and antifeminist. In *Mulan*, the punishment for women joining the army is death. When Shang hesitates to carry out this punishment, Chi Fu, who becomes connected to Chinese law, says: "You know the law" (01:01:03). Although American culture may be described as linguistically sexist, the Western viewer can rest assured that at least they do not have laws like that. As Yin argues, by constructing Chinese culture, and law I would add, "as an Oriental tyranny," Disney serves to reinforce the assumption that gender oppression is a non-Western issue, that is, "[b]y blaming the cultural Other, Disney manage[s] to avoid attending to those problems in U.S. society" (293). As in *Aladdin*, the Oriental discourse of *Mulan* serves to reinforce binaries between the East and the West. In this film, the main characters are highly westernized too.

Mulan is an underdog, who, like Aladdin, desperately wants to prove her worth. She too dreams of achieving the American Dream of self-actualization, proving again that the subject of this ideal need not be territorially American (Grewal 7-8). Mulan's values are distinctly Western (Ward 106), and unlike in the Chinese poem on which the film is based, she joins the army partly for herself to go on a "daring personal adventure" (Dong, *Mulan's Legend* 178). Mulan, as a representative of Western self-expression, is the outsider of and opposer to Chinese society (Anjirbag 239; Yin 291). "Mulan becomes a superheroine modeled on American archetypes, except for her Chinese body" (Dong, "Writing" 230), and in a film without any white characters, she, like Aladdin, becomes a surrogate for a white protagonist (Yin 294). By displaying the behavior of a typical American teenager as she slouches, pouts, and decides to run away from home after her father has yelled at her (Ma 157), by embodying Western values, and by being heroic in opposition to the denounced Chinese culture (Yin 290), Mulan, like Aladdin, passes as white. According to King et al., her performance of individualism is what grants her acceptance in mainstream – that is, white, Western – culture because it provides her with the status of being "honorary white" (102-103). For white animated characters, they argue, individualism is always assumed (King et al. 103), but it is not so for the Chinese characters in *Mulan* who place honor above all else. Mulan, however, questions this and places her self-actualization higher than possible dishonor to her family. As has already been discussed though, she seemingly gives into society's expectations at the end. This entanglement of gender and race/ethnicity is explored in the intersectional analysis.

Mushu does not pass as white even though he, like Mulan, strives to prove himself. Rather, he is, through his way of speaking and because he is voiced by Murphy, perceived as African American.

According to Elanor Byrne and Martin McQuillan, he continues "the classic Disney formula for racial representation" of having minority ethnicity token sidekicks (104-05). They note similarities between Mushu and Sebastian (Samuel E. Wright), the crab from *The Little Mermaid*, who is, because of his Caribbean accent, also perceived as African American. Both characters are small, red, provide comic relief, and "reproduce the early elisions of blackness with children, humor and harmlessness" (Byrne and McQuillan 105). While Sebastian helps ensure Ariel's (Jodi Benson, *The Little Mermaid*) happiness and seems as if he has few aspirations besides helping her (Hurley 226), Mushu admits: "I risked [Mulan's] life to help myself" (01:03:35). Although Mushu ultimately plays a big part in defeating Shan Yu and is as such needed by Mulan, his primary function in the film is, as Byrne and McQuillan pointed out, to provide comic relief. Through Mushu's anachronistic, Western jokes which include a Mongolian Barbeque-joke, a Batman reference, and an embodiment of an Evangelical television preacher (01:11:20, 01:14:00, 00:27:25), the narrating American culture is made explicit, and the jokes serve, as Jenie's jokes do in *Aladdin*, as the conveyers of humor (Di Giovanni 99, 93). It should be added that the jokes reinforce racial/ethnical hierarchies as Western culture is portrayed as funny and contemporary, while Chinese culture is portrayed as boring and archaic. Jun Tang suggests that non-Chinese elements such as Mushu's jokes are included in order to appeal to a broader audience (149); I would argue that having token ethnic sidekicks serve the same purpose.

In summary, *Mulan*, like *Aladdin*, contains a stereotypical neocolonial discourse steeped in Orientalism that presents Chinese culture and law as different and exotic as well as archaic and sexist. Although it, in exception to African American-coded Mushu, only features Chinese characters, the main character passes as white because she stands in opposition to this society. As such, non-Chinese children may develop stereotypes about Chinese people and possibly Asian people in general, and Chinese children are taught that they are better off adopting Western values.

5.4 Intersectional representations and socialization messages

As in *Aladdin*, the intra-actions of categories of difference produce specific intercharacter power relations in *Mulan* because the characters differ in respect to their racialization and gendering. These differing intersectional socialization messages are now examined.

Like *Aladdin* taught Arab children that they should adopt Western values in order to live happily ever after, the intra-action of postfeminist notions of female empowerment through individual choice connected to Mulan's story arc and the neocolonial discourse that associates Chinese culture and law

with sexism and antifeminism teaches Chinese children that they should, as the end credit song expresses, "be true to [their] heart[s]" (01:21:44) and adopt Western values if they wish to be happy.

Mulan embodies Western notions of self-actualization as well as postfeminist notions of female individualization that lead her to temporarily rebel against the society to which she belongs. Unlike Jasmine, Disney does not subject Mulan to an Orientalist sexual objectification through an intra-action of gender and race/ethnicity, and as such she does not in the same way need rescuing by a white man or a man passing as white. Mulan, who passes as a man and who achieves relative whiteness, can save herself and others, including her love interest. Through her happy ending Chinese girls, or more broadly Asian ones, are taught that adopting Western values and defying "archaic" cultures and laws as Mulan does is the way to happiness. However, through the ending, female viewers are also taught, as they were by *Aladdin*, that happiness does not necessarily entail a complete freedom of choice. For although Mulan passes as white, she ultimately passes specifically as a white postfeminist woman, and as has been previously noted, the most important choice in a postfeminist woman's life is that of a male partner. As King et al. argue "the white individualism and citizenship granted [Mulan] is also gendered, for in the end, after singlehandedly saving China, she is able to gain a husband" (102). Postfeminist retreatism narratives, like the one that allows Mulan to return home to her family and gain a man, are not available to all women for as Kimberly Springer notes, they are not afforded African American women (269). While this is explored further in relation to *Princess*, it is worth noting that retreatism narratives are highly racialized and that Mulan is supposedly only afforded one because of her relative whiteness. Because she passes as white, she is, like other non-royal Disney heroines, including Cinderella and Belle (Paige O'Hara, *Beauty and the Beast*), allowed a fairy tale ending that does not require her to work. Further research on retreatism narratives in texts featuring Asian women as main characters would of course be needed to make a definitive conclusion. What can be concluded though is that through the intra-action of race/ethnicity and gender, Mulan's happy ending socializes according to a racialized heteronormative standard that obligates women in general to settle down and get married, white women or women who pass as white in particular to not work, and Chinese and Asian girls to adhere to Western values if they want to live like *real* Disney princesses.

Chinese boys too are taught that they should adopt egalitarian Western values and take a stand against archaic, sexist cultural practices like Shang does when he refuses to execute Mulan. They are taught that adhering to Western values is the right thing to do through the juxtaposition between the endings granted Shang and Chi Fu as exemplified through their last scenes in the film. While the last close-up of Shang shows him smiling down at Mulan as he accepts her invitation to stay for dinner

(01:20:33), the last one featuring Chi Fu shows him fainting at the thought of Mulan replacing him on the Emperor's council (01:17:21). Shang is clearly awarded a happy ending, while Chi Fu, though he is in fact not replaced by Mulan, is punished in the sense that his last moments on screen are meant to be humiliating to his non-existing, or at least fragile, masculinity. As such, the only important difference between the two characters is not their different racialization where Shang, unlike Chi Fu, is offered a slimmer of relative whiteness because of his more Western values. They also, as previously noted, differ greatly in respect to their displays of gender behavior. This too is seen in these final scenes. Using Matsuda's method of asking the other question in respect to the representation of the two characters, it becomes clear that in these scenes, Shang is engaging in gender-confirming heterosexual flirtation, while Chi Fu displays yet another moment of effeminate behavior. As such, while the former is decidedly masculine, the latter is quite feminine. Through the juxtaposition between these characters, Asian boys are thus taught that in addition to adopting Western values, they need to be normatively masculine in order to gain happy endings. The bitter Chi Fu, like other campy villains, functions as what Letts calls an amusing non-alternative that viewers should not want to be like (156). They should not want to be like Chi Fu; he is depicted as a backwards, deviant, and unhappy character. Dundes and Streiff argue that he is not simply another campy villain but that he is vilified according to specific male Asian stereotypes of being "asexual, effeminate, and homosexual" (39). His vilification is thus intersectional. As previously noted, the other characters do not believe Chi Fu to be attractive to women, whereas Mulan is shown to be attracted to Shang (00:36:48). Chi Fu is also much physically weaker than Shang is, as shown when he struggles to carry the box containing the heavy disks that Shang holds up high without any trouble (00:37:14). The two disks, according to Shang, symbolize strength and discipline, signaling to the viewer that he, unlike Chi Fu, possesses these masculine virtues. Mulan is the first recruit to successfully pass Shang's test of manhood by retrieving an arrow from the top of wooden post while carrying the disks, showing that she too embodies these traits. In a narrative in which the female main character successfully passes as a man by, among other things, completing such as test, Chi Fu's non-conforming gender behavior becomes a stark contrast – if being a man is so easy that women can do, Chi Fu should be able to do it too. Because he is not, though, he is not given a happy ending. The intersectional socialization message tied to this intra-action of race/ethnicity and gender is thus that Chinese boys, or more broadly Asian ones, should, in addition to adopting Western values, display traditional masculine behavior. Thus, *Mulan* socializes boys according to racialized heteronormative notions too.

In conclusion, *Mulan's* intersectional socialization messages devalue Chinese culture, Asian race/ethnicity, and non-conforming gender behavior and applaud adherence to Western values and heteronormativity as shown through the narratives of Mulan, Shang, and Chi Fu. The heart to which Asian children should be true is a heteronormative, Western one. That both *Aladdin* and *Mulan* seem to be teaching children that it is only acceptable to be something other than white if one attempts to achieve relative whiteness is highly problematic because it, as Yin argues, reinforces racial and cultural hierarchies (286). As expressed on their website, Disney likes to point out how their films express universal values, however, according to Yin, universalization is a distinctly Othering procedure that projects "the values of the dominant group as the natural or unmarked standard against which alternatives are evaluated and judged"; it "works as a mechanism of exclusions that perpetuates the existing hierarchy of discourse and power structure" (289-90), a structure that valorizes Western values.

Chapter 6: *The Princess and the Frog* – Digging deeper and finding worrying content

6.1 From *Aladdin* and *Mulan* to *Princess*

Like *Aladdin*, *Princess* was directed by Clements and Musker. It tells the tale of a young African American waitress, Tiana (Anika Noni Rose), who dreams of opening her own restaurant but is transformed into a frog when she kisses the cursed Prince of Maldonia, Naveen (Bruno Campos). Unlike *Aladdin* and *Mulan* both of which take place in foreign countries in unspecified time periods, *Princess* is set in 1920s New Orleans and features both characters of color as well as white characters. Taking these differences into consideration, it is interesting to compare the film to the others.

6.2 Gender representations and socialization messages

Princess contains one of the rare instances of female friendship that had not been seen since (or before) *Pocahontas* (1995). Tiana and her best friend, the white, upper-class Charlotte "Lottie" La Bouff (Jennifer Codie), are very different though, possibly so multiple gender socialization messages may be expressed. Tiana is a modestly dressed, serious, and hard-working young woman, who does not have time to dance or settle down – it is "just gonna have to wait a while" (00:13:07). As a result, her friends call her out on always working, her love interest calls her "one of the guys," and her mother Eudora (Oprah Winfrey) berates her for not wanting to have a family (00:09:33, 01:07:14, 00:13:18). The sexualized southern belle Charlotte, on the other hand, looks like Marilyn Monroe, wears low-cut

dresses and a lot of make-up, and is easy-going, excitable, and "entirely dedicated to the pursuit of marriage" (Charania and Simonds 70). Although other characters shake their heads at her (00:02:04, 00:21:58, 00:23:03), none of them scold her for her behavior. One of *Princess*' main messages is that what you want may not always be what you need. As shown through Tiana's dream sequence, she dreams of self-actualization through owning and working in her own restaurant. She *wants* to work hard to make this dream come true. However, that this, through the reactions of the other characters, is not shown to be positive is in line with a common trope in postfeminist media culture that women should not only want to work (Negra). Tiana has to learn that she *needs* a man too, and by the end of the film she does. "My dream wouldn't be complete without you in it," she says to Naveen (01:19:58). It goes deeper than that though; her dream would not even be possible without him. As Richard M. Breaux notes, "[i]n the end, Tiana (like Mulan) proves to be strong and independent, but ironically, her strength and independence are not complete without a man, for in the end, she marries Prince Naveen and opens her restaurant 'Tiana's Palace' because Naveen, along with Louis the alligator … persuade the Fenner Brothers [Corey Burton and Jerry Kernion] to finally sell the mill to Tiana" (404). As such, it does not seem as if "Tiana's success depends solely on her own actions" (Terry 480); as a woman she needs a man. However, Charlotte, who acknowledges from the beginning that her happiness depends on getting a man, is not portrayed favorably either. Rather, she is shown to be desperate. When she thinks that Naveen, who she intends to marry, is not going to show up to her ball, she is depicted as a screaming mess who is "sweating like a sinner in church" and has mascara smeared all over her face (00:21:55). Also, in the end, when Charlotte is seen dancing with Naveen's six-and-a-half-year-old little brother, she is shown to be quite predatory as she says: "Well I've waited this long!" (01:26:16), suggesting that she intends to groom and marry the young prince in order to make her dream of becoming a princess come true. That Charlotte's desperation is being ridiculed is clear when she, as she reapplies her mascara, holds her eye open in a way that looks quite frightening and says that she thought wishing upon stars, like she does, was only "for crazy people" (00:24:28), signaling to the viewer that she is in fact crazy to be acting as she does. As such, the postfeminist socialization messages connected to Tiana and Charlotte's story arcs are that women, because they need men, should not only want to work as this makes them boring and unhappy, but that they should not only be interested in finding a man either because this makes them desperate and ridiculous.

Like Mulan, Tiana is not sexualized in the same overt way as Jasmine. However, *Princess* does display the same postfeminist sensibility that equates female sexuality and power. After the Fenner Brothers have declined Tiana's offer to buy the old sugar mill and told her that she will need to find

more money, she feels so desperate that she decides to use the only source of power she has left, her body, in order to ensure that she gets the money. As such, it is not until Naveen, who has been turned into a frog by Dr. Facilier (Keith David), promises her a reward that she helps him. Because her help consist of her kissing him, Tiana is essentially selling her body by helping him in exchange for an implied monetary reward. Charlotte too is willing to use her femininity and sexuality in order to make her dreams come to true. After Naveen, who is really Naveen's valet Lawrence (Peter Bartlett) transformed, shows up to her ball, she begins her quest to seduce him by fixing her make-up and repositioning her dress so it accentuates her cleavage. Like Jasmine, Charlotte embodies the female postfeminist sexual subject who presents herself in an objectified way because it suits her interests. Sexual subjectification becomes tied to self-surveillance, another common aspect of postfeminist texts (McRobbie 260), as Charlotte has to monitor her looks to make sure that she is appealing to men. This shows how sexual subjectification is highly problematic as it constitutes an internalization of the objectifying male gaze (Gill 151-52). The harmful socialization message is that a woman's power is tied to her sexuality. While *Princess* teaches viewers that women need men, it does not portray its male main character as particularly powerful.

Naveen is neither a sensitive New Man like Aladdin nor a hypermasculine leader like Shang, rather he is a *New Lad*. Such characters are hedonistic, often do not have jobs, and have an ethos of not taking things to seriously (Hansen-Miller and Gill 37, 42). Because Naveen is a womanizer who says he has dated thousands of women, who tells Ray the firefly (Jim Cummings) not to settle down too quickly, and who is even called a playboy (01:07:23, 00:48:13, 00:19:27), he fits the New Lad-category of *the Player*, a man "who has refused and renounced monogamy [but] is compelled to re-examine his perspective on the matter" (Hansen-Miller and Gill 41). David Hansen-Miller and Gill explain that the resolution to Player-narratives "seem to be that masculine hedonism and self-interest and feminine self-sacrifice and responsibility temper each other, in turn producing a modern mode of potentially egalitarian adulthood" (46). This is the message of *Princess* as well, for by the end, Naveen has learned the importance of caring for others and working hard, and Tiana, who was willing to give up her dream to be with him, has learned the importance of letting loose as shown through his helping her with renovating the old sugar mill and her finally dancing (01:25:29). That immaturity and "narcissism is resolved through renewed priorities of heterosexual commitment" is problematic because mature adulthood is equated with heterosexual monogamy (Hansen-Miller and Gill 41), suggesting to young viewers that the only right way to grow up is to settle down and adhere to heteronormativity.

Compared to other Disney heroes, New Lad Naveen is a clueless and weak hero, who does not attempt to take on the villains, and who relies heavily on his love interest (Dundes and Streiff 45), because he, as he says: "Doesn't know how to do anything" (00:54:32). Such characters "offer up a depiction of masculinity as fallible, damaged, and distinctly unheroic" (Hansen-Miller and Gill 42), and Naveen's relative weakness serves to make Tiana stronger. As such, "there seems to be a message," in postfeminist texts, "that men must be weak in order for women to thrive" as "girl power" is achieved by pairing a strong female character with a weak or foolish male one (Macaluso 227-28). This is a dangerous message for both girls and boys as it implies that coexistence as strong individuals is not possible (Macaluso 228). It implicitly normalizes masculine superiority as well. Such patriarchal sentiments are also normalized by how, though Naveen is not nice to Tiana, she still falls in love with him and does not question most of his problematic behavior, which includes him calling her "waitress" rather than using her name and not helping with anything until she forces him. Because Tiana is teaching Naveen "the right way" to live, his behavior is ironically portrayed as silly – as if he does not know any better – and not as degrading. This is seen by how rather than calling him out on it, Tiana simply ironically says: "Poor baby" (00:54:24). This shows that "in postfeminist media culture irony has become a way of 'having it both ways', of expressing … unpalatable sentiments in an ironised form, while claiming this was not actually meant" (Gill 159). This normalizes such sentiments and sends the message that women, like Tiana, should tolerate such treatment because they can change the men who perpetuate it.

Like *Aladdin* and *Mulan*, *Princess* too features campy villains. The first is the film's main villain, Dr. Facilier, who, like Jafar and Chi Fu, sports a thin black moustache and, like Jafar, is tall, thin, and able to use magic to transform things, thus poking fun at essentialism. His costume consists of a long jacket, a high hat, a cane, and a shirt that shows his midriff; it is essentially like a *pimp*-version of Jafar's robes, headdress, and staff getup. The film's second campy character is the antagonist Lawrence, who, like Chi Fu, is ridiculed and, as Meredith Li-Vollmer and Mark E. LaPointe would say, "sissified" through his lisping speech, high-pitched voice, and tendency to scream and run away from danger as exemplified by how he flees from Charlotte when his deceit is revealed (01:18:47). Both of the villains also display excessive hand gesturing, a trait often associated with campiness (Li-Vollmer and LaPointe 101), and Dr. Facilier's fluid way of moving and his swanky dance signify him as deviating from traditional masculinity (00:17:45). Like most other Disney villains, Dr. Facilier and Lawrence are both single and childless, a deviance that Joseph Tobin suggests children equate with being evil (qtd. in Li-Vollmer and LaPointe 95-96). Like Jafar and Iago, Dr. Facilier and Lawrence are motivated by power

and revenge rather than heterosexual love, but when Dr. Facilier tries to appeal to Tiana's ambitious side by reminding her of "all those nay-sayers who doubted [her]" it does not work, because she realizes that heterosexual love is more important than power and revenge – even though her father James (Terrence Howard) did not get what he wanted, "He had what he needed. He had love. He never lost sight of what was really important and neither will [she]" (01:16:06). Like Jafar, Chi Fu, and the Matchmaker, *Princess*' campy villains' function is, as Letts suggests, to make heteronormativity "seem even more desirable" (156).

In summary, *Princess*, like *Mulan* and *Aladdin*, contains many problematic postfeminist notions such as women needing men despite its portrayal of men as rather clueless. Once more campiness is connected to being evil and unhappy in order to support traditional gender roles. Thus, the film, like the other two, may be harmful to the gender socialization of children of all genders because heteronormativity is valorized.

6.3 Racial/ethnic representations and socialization messages

Not unlike how the first ten minutes of *Aladdin* and *Mulan* depict the Middle East and China as exotic places, the setting of *Princess* too is invoked as different and strange. New Orleans is, in "Down in New Orleans," described as a place with music, pretty women, and magic (because voodoo is depicted as such rather than as the religion it is). It is shown to have exotic food such as gumbo, hush puppies, beignets, and jambalaya that, because culinary tourism offers a safe way to enter the life of the Other, satisfies the "mainstream desire for novelty and excitement" (Parasecoli 454-57). Like "Arabian Nights," "Down in New Orleans" positions the film as seen from an outside (and Northern) perspective as it takes place "*Down in* New Orleans," "In the *South Land* … / *Way down* on the river" (00:07:06; emphasis added). That the film starts by showing an affluent neighborhood – later described as the "Stately homes and mansions / Of the sugar barons and the cotton kings" – which is juxtaposed with the humble cabins of Tiana's African American neighborhood, suggests that the first place is normative within the film, whereas the second is Other. As such, this film is also seen through the white gaze. Because *Princess*' racial/ethnic discourse centers on minority culture people in American society, rather than on people in other countries, it cannot as such be described as Oriental or strictly neocolonial in the same way as the ones in the other films. However, it does share their Othering, white gaze tendencies because it too functions to make people "succumb to particular ways of thinking" (McLeod 21). Therefore, the discourse is viewed as a colonial discourse. It is worth noting

though that, probably owing to how it centers on the creators' native country, the discourse is not as decidedly negative as the ones in *Aladdin* and *Mulan*.

Even though the story plays out during the Jim Crow era, the systematic oppression of segregation is only hinted at by having African Americans sit at the back of the tram and having the only African American people at Charlotte's ball be the payed help consisting of the caterer Tiana and the musicians. Within critical race studies, the power of stories to name types of discrimination, which once named can be combated, is regarded as highly important (Delgado and Stefancic 50). However, in *Princess*, racism is never directly acknowledged. Rather a sanitized version of the South where children of all colors can play together, where African Americans – who may be poor and discriminated against – are nonetheless happy, where white people are wealthy but harmless, and where past suffering is generally ignored is depicted (Benhamou 160; Ferguson 1232; Hebert-Leiter 975). King et al. argue that the film's "historical setting is an important means of distancing difference, allowing audiences to recognize and even name racism as a problem without having to think ill of the present" (160), however, seeing as the film muddies the waters around discrimination, this is not the case. The most significant way that the film blurs the issue of racism is by having African American and white characters utter similar problematic sentiments. When the white Fenner Brothers decline Tiana's offer with the comment, "A little woman of your … background would've had her hands full trying to run a big business like that. You're better off where you're at" (00:23:40), it is not clear whether they are referring to her African American heritage or her working class identity. As such, it is not clear if the microaggression is one of racism, classicism, or both. The Fenner Brother's sentiment mirrors that of the African American cook Buford (Michael Colyar), who ridicules Tiana's intention of buying the sugar mill by saying that she has as big of a chance of running a restaurant as he does of winning the Kentucky Derby (00:09:40). That people of different racial/ethnical backgrounds share sexist viewpoints of women's abilities make the Fenner Brother's possible racism "coded more vaguely as class struggle" because the conflation of racism and sexism in a sense works to erase race (Kee and Grant 75; Turner 88). Issues of racism are also blurred by having two villains, one African American and one white, who are motivated by the same things – gaining power and getting revenge. Dr. Facilier says to Lawrence: "Aren't you tired of living on the margins, while all those fat cats in their fancy cars don't give you so much as a sideways glance?"; he answers: "Yes I am" (00:30:57). As Benhamou argues the two sharing this discontentment "tones down [Dr. Facilier's] potentially subversive voice in this sanitized picture of the Jim Crow era" (160) as the narrative is not about an African American man fighting an unjust system, but rather about an evil man who wants money. Neither is the narrative

about Tiana or other good characters taking a stand against a racist, sexist, or classist society because her experiences of discrimination are, as were Jasmine and Mulan's, framed in strictly personal terms. Rather, the message that Disney wants to express with *Princess* is, as some scholars argue, one of colorblindness; anyone, no matter their race/ethnicity, can achieve the American Dream in the merit-based society of the United States (Charania and Simonds 70; Kee and Grant 74-76; Turner 83-94).

"Don't matter what you look like / Don't matter what you wear / How many rings you got on your finger/ We don't care, no, we don't care! / Don't matter where you come from / Don't even matter what you are" (01:00:30), sings the blind Mama Odie (Jenifer Lewis) in "Dig a Little Deeper," indirectly denouncing all categories of difference. Her blindness is both literal and metaphorical; she does not see or care about differences between people. Although it is of course a positive message that no one should discriminate, this is not exactly the message that *Princess* is sending. Rather, the film is suggesting that everyone should be colorblind. This is problematic considering how colorblindness "can be perverse, for example, when it stands in the way of taking account of difference in order to help people in need" (Delgado and Stefancic 27). Fabio Parasecoli argues that it is an ironic choice to have Tiana buy an old sugar mill "since sugarcane cultivation and sugar production were deeply intertwined with slavery and labor exploitation in Louisiana" (462), but I believe it is a calculated choice. By having a hardworking African American woman buy what is essentially a symbol of slavery and racial oppression, Disney sends the message that racism is not an issue since previously exploited people are doing so well that they are able to take control of what was once in control of them. A rationale follows that since racism was not an issue in 1920s New Orleans, it is not an issue today. This is obviously a highly problematic portrayal of the past, and as Jennifer L. Barker argues, "it is unlikely that Disney will ever try to produce animated films that focus on a serious engagement with reality or history; the sanitized aesthetic ('something for everyone') necessary to appeal to broader markets is fundamentally incompatible with a realistic representation of history" (483).

The unrealistic portrayal of the past, however, is not the only issue connected to race/ethnicity in *Princess* as socialization messages tied to individual characters are also quite concerning. In their audience reception study, Kimberly R. Moffitt and Heather E. Harris find that African American mothers with daughters thought it was problematic that Naveen's race/ethnicity is so ambiguously portrayed (66). This ambiguity, on which several scholars comment (Benhamou 161; Gehlawat 423; Turner 93), could have been created because Disney is afraid of reinforcing racist stereotypes about sexualized, indolent African Americans since Naveen is both lecherous and lazy (Charania and Simonds 70). This attempt at avoiding stereotyping is a possible explanation for this ambiguous

racial/ethnic coding as well for the continuous connection of Tiana and her father with hard work, for "[i]n terms of Black stereotypes", Tiana, and her father I would argue, "are the antidote to the 'lazy Negro'" (Barker 494). Both adhere to classic American ethe of making your own luck, not accepting help from anyone, and aspiring to achieve the American Dream by becoming independent business owners. Moffitt and Harris also find that the mothers were bothered by how Tiana spends most of her time on screen as a frog (65). Unlike any other Disney Princess, Tiana spends 2/3 of her film as an animal (00:28:23-01:24:12). This perpetuates Disney's tendency of having African American or African American-coded characters as animals, a tendency that problematically connotes blackness with bestiality (Gehlawat 427). This was seen with Sebastian and Mushu and is arguably also seen with *Princess'* jazz-loving alligator Louis (Michael-Leon Wooley), who, like the other two, is voiced by an African American actor. Compared to Tiana, Louis has a more pronounced dialect and is as such more racialized than her, allowing him to play the part of the ethnic sidekick, which is, as previously discussed, part of the Disney formula. This role is also performed by the Cajun Ray, who has a distinct dialect and is coded as underclass through his bad teeth and shabby wings. As Maria Hebert-Leiter argues, the film uses "the Cajun as other to erase racial difference and claim a place for Tiana in the mainstream national imagination" (968), a place she does not achieve through passing as white in the same way as Aladdin and Mulan. This is explored further in my intersectional analysis.

According to Sarita McCoy Gregory, *Princess*' main message is one of black humanity, achieved by caricaturing white or white-coded characters such as Ray and the incompetent Frog Hunters (Ritchie Montgomery, Don Hall, and Paul Briggs) (439-41), who, with their heavy dialects and lack of shoes, are coded as underclass too. However, the conflation of blackness and bestiality as well as the connection of being dark with being evil, seen in the character of Dr. Facilier, who like Jafar, is presented as a dark and evil "Shadow Man," work against a message of black humanity. Rather, the caricaturing of some white characters, namely the underclass ones, is seemingly used to downplay notions of white privilege that might otherwise present themselves as the film could, as several scholars argue it should (Dundes and Streiff 42; Parasecoli 462), be seen as reinforcing the stereotype of well-meaning white people helping deserving African Americans. This too is further explored in the intersectional analysis.

In summary, although not Oriental, the colonial discourse of *Princess* is filtered through the white gaze and presents a worrying, colorblind version of the past. It shows a sanitized Jim Crow South where white privilege is downplayed in order to sell the message that everyone, then and now, can achieve the American Dream if they work hard enough. Thus, American society is presented more

positively than Arab and Chinese society were in *Aladdin* and *Mulan*. *Princess* neglects engaging with issues of racism and as such gives the impression that it is not an issue. As such, it may be harmful to children of all races/ethnicities as children belonging to struggling groups will be given the impression that their hardships are their own fault, while children belonging to affluent groups will be given the same impression and therefore assume that affirmative action is unneeded.

6.4 Intersectional representations and socialization messages

Princess features multiple characters of different races/ethnicities as well as several important female and male characters, but there are marked differences between them in respect to the power they are rewarded and the behavior they are allowed to display. The power relations between the characters produced through the intra-actions of categories of difference are now examined.

The power that Charlotte has over her father, Eli "Big Daddy" La Bouff (John Goodman), the *de facto* king of New Orleans, makes him dub himself "Mr. Pushover" (00:03:21), downplaying the power he actually possesses. Like the Sultan, this good-natured and round-bellied character fits the role of the unthreatening, placid Disney father – a role, which as previously discussed, obscures patriarchal power. However, because Big Daddy is also white, downplaying his power obscures the power of white privilege as well. Although he is shown to be benevolent towards Tiana and Eudora, he is clearly, because of his skin color and place within the community – solidified by him being named king of the Mardi Gras parade five years in a row – in a higher position than they are. This is shown through his calling them by their first names, while Tiana calls him Mr. La Bouff. The obscuring of white privilege is also achieved through Charlotte's character. Even though Tiana berates Naveen for his lack of modesty and ability to take on responsibility and sings to him: "I've worked hard for everything I've got / And that's the way it's supposed to be" (00:38:45), she says no such thing to Charlotte, who is never shown to be either modest or responsible. Neither is Charlotte told, like Tiana is by James, that wishing on stars is fine but must be followed up with hard work. As such, "[w]hite people are encouraged to think that they have no limits while the narrative of people of color is more rooted in the real world with greater limitations" (Dundes and Streiff 46). Charlotte is allowed behavior that is not deemed acceptable for either working-class African American Tiana or for royal racially/ethnically ambiguous person of color Naveen. As such, white privilege is normalized, and race/ethnicity is shown to take precedence over class affiliation in the lives of people of color. The intra-action of race/ethnicity, class, and gender seem to reinforce each other's power for rich white men like Big Daddy.

Neither Tiana nor Naveen are allowed to pass as white even though she, like Aladdin and Mulan, dreams of self-actualization and of achieving the American Dream and even though he, at first, is living in a privileged, carefree way similar to Charlotte. The presence of white characters, not seen in *Aladdin* or *Mulan*, seems to make it impossible for characters of color to achieve relative whiteness. This is seen in Naveen's story arc which is all about him learning to be responsible and work, as well as through Tiana's narrative. She is the only Disney princess dedicated to "economic self-betterment" and in her wildest dreams she is still working (Dundes and Streiff 42; Gehlawat 427; Parasecoli 462). So too is she working at the end of the film. Though Tiana is now wearing a tiara and a new fancy dress rather than a waitress uniform, and though she is now a princess by marriage, she is still seen serving Charlotte and her father food. Dundes and Streiff argue that "her fairy tale ending falls short of what viewers would expect for a conventional princess" because she does not exercise power over anyone and because she does not become equal with Charlotte or Big Daddy, who are still paying her for her services (42). Unlike Mulan, who declines working for the Emperor to return home, no such opportunity of retreatism is offered Tiana. This displays the tendency within postfeminist media culture that African American women are not featured in retreatism narratives but are shown remaining in the workspace "in racially prescribed ways," that is, in "an appropriately black small business enterprise (e.g., a beauty shop or soul food restaurant)," where they can show that they know their subordinate place in society by serving white people (Springer 269, 272-73). This shows that although there are postfeminist representations of women of color, as the analyses of the films have shown, these women are, most often, included in postfeminism "in specific and limited ways" (Jess Butler 47-49). Tiana's narrative fits Springer's characterization to a tee and it allows Tiana to be an African American postfeminist woman and to achieve the American Dream in a racially/ethnically acceptable way, a way that does not challenge white privilege. Thus, she is not allowed a retreatism narrative like Mulan because she cannot pass as white. Though Tiana becomes an actual princess, her working-class identity stays intact because she, as an African American woman, is not allowed a retreatism narrative. As such, for her, the intra-action of race/ethnicity and gender take precedence over class affiliation.

Furthermore, Tiana, as previously described, spends a large amount of time as a frog. Ajay Gehlawat writes: "When (human) characters become animals it is seen as reflecting some character flaw – think, for instance, of Pinocchio [Dickey Jones, *Pinochio* (1940)] and his friends becoming donkeys, or of Beast [Robby Benson, *Beauty and the Beast*], and the reason he is a beast-man" (418). But the hard-working Tiana's only fault, according to the other characters, is that she works too hard. As such, Dundes and Streiff argue that her time as a frog lacks broader meaning (43). However, in the

moments leading up to her kissing Naveen, he continually and uncorrected calls her "princess." As such, her transgression seems to be trying to pass as a princess, a role presumably reserved for white women as shown through Charlotte's fairy tale book (Condis 50). In the film, royalty when assumed by people of color does not equal power. Looking like a princess does not make Tiana one and therefore does not provide her any transformative power. Naveen, though he is a prince, has no money or power and must marry a non-royal white woman in order to regain both. And Dr. Facilier, who says to Naveen that he too has royal blood, has no money or power either. In fact, his royalty is ridiculed by him showing that his supposedly royal mother is an ugly shrunken head (00:19:15). Furthermore, that Naveen is the prince of a fictional country rather than a real one adds to the mockery of people of color assuming positions of royalty. As such, the socialization message is that African Americans and other people of color who cannot pass as white must not attempt to live or rise above their station but must always be subordinate to white people. For these people, class cannot trump race/ethnicity as a category of difference as it is shown to be the more important category in the character's relations.

This intersectional socialization message is also shown through the villains' story arcs. Though Dr. Facilier is only one of the film's villains, he is shown to be the more nefarious one as he is clearly in charge of Lawrence as exemplified through his manipulation of him as well as his threatening behavior towards him (00:30:36). Of the two, Dr. Facilier receives the harsher punishment at the end of the film; he is taken to "the other side," while Lawrence is simply arrested. Dr. Facilier, who wants to dethrone Big Daddy as *de facto* king (00:46:24), arguably receives the tougher sentence because the idea of Lawrence, a white man, becoming rich and powerful is not as threatening as Dr. Facilier, an African American man, achieving the same as the latter threatens white privilege. Through his punishment, the message that people of color should not wish to exercise power over white people is reaffirmed. Furthermore, unlike Tiana, Dr. Facilier is not willing to work hard in order to achieve his dream, preferring to use helpers and magic instead. Tiana declines his offer of using magic, in part, because she realizes the importance of heterosexual coupling, but also because she has been taught by her father that people of color must work hard to realize their dreams and are not entitled to the easy way (that is, using magic or wishing on stars) allowed white people (Dundes and Streiff 43). Dr. Facilier's transgression of trying to take the easy route rather than working is part of the reason for his harsher punishment. Unlike Naveen, who acknowledges that he, as a person of color, has to work, Dr. Facilier does not learn his lesson. The reason Naveen learns the lesson is because Tiana teaches him. However, Dr. Facilier, as a campy, single villain, does not have a female partner to teach him this

lesson. As such, his harsh end is, in part, a punishment for not engaging in heterosexuality. By taking Matsuda's lead and asking the other question, one can see that both heteronormativity and white privilege are reinforced through Dr. Facilier's story arc. Thus, in juxtaposition to Big Daddy's story arc, the audience is shown how race/ethnicity, class, and non-conforming gender behavior can reinforce each other to create a lack of power.

In conclusion, the intersectional socialization messages of *Princess* make the message that what you want is not necessarily what you need highly suspect because although the message is hidden behind an air of colorblindness, it is in fact both racialized and gendered. Mama Odie sings: "When you find out what you are / You find out what you need" (01:01:08), suggesting that it is not *who* one is as a person, but rather *what* one is – be it a woman or a man, of color or white, or working-class or upper-class – that decides what one needs and thus how one should live. *Princess* teaches that women need men, that men of color need women of color, and that rich white people, embodied by Charlotte and Big Daddy, should keep being in charge and dreaming of better futures, while people of color, no matter their class affiliation, embodied by Tiana, James, Naveen, and Dr. Facilier, should work hard rather than dream and should be submissive rather than assertive. People of color living in the United States, no matter their gender or class, should not attempt to pass as white or assume positions of power, the film suggests. They may think they want to, but Disney knows that this is not what they need. As such, *Princess* reaffirms both patriarchy and white privilege and is harmful to all minority children and not only African American ones though they are singled out by the narrative.

Chapter 7: Comparative conclusions

My analyses of *Aladdin*, *Mulan*, and *Princess* have illustrated that though the films span a 17-year release period, they have many similarities. Although they feature more active heroines than Disney's early films and could be seen as creating more positive role models for girls, these films are decidedly postfeminist as they contain antifeminist sentiments, equate female sexuality with power, and teach girls that they need men in order to be happy. Also, the films create their strong female characters in problematic ways by placing them in sexist and antifeminist societies as in *Aladdin* and *Mulan* or by having their love interest be weaker as in *Princess*. As King et al. write: "Alternatives in one arena," such as strong female characters, "are made possible through exclusions and distortions in another" (167), such as the representations of other cultures or characters. The distortions in these films also include juxtaposing campy villains with likable characters that are either strictly heteronormative or only temporarily campy. This is concerning because when campy qualities "are marked as only apparent,"

or at least only *continuously* apparent, "in evil characters, then a stigmatized standard of human behavior is being created and promoted" (Putnam 148). Thus, through their representation of gender in the films, Disney incidentally or actively counteracts their positive socialization messages of female empowerment and being oneself by socializing according to a heteronormative, postfeminist sensibility that may be harmful to girls and boys alike as it demonizes non-conforming gender behavior. Disney possibly does this because they are a company first and a socialization agent second and because their primary interest as a media conglomerate is to increase their profits – something that can be achieved by selling heterosexual love stories (King et al. 166), creating "strong" heroines, and portraying ethnic minorities. Diversity is a lucrative business strategy in which gender and ethnicity/race become mere commodities (Anjirbag 232; Banet-Weiser 203, 216-17; Hines and Ayres 232).

Although Disney has as such made an effort, or at least an attempt, to represent non-Western and minority cultures in the films, bad representation is as damaging as absence (Breaux 399-400). For as Marvin Wingfield and Bushra Karaman argue, "[e]thnic stereotypes are especially harmful in the absence of positive ethnic images." Seeing as both *Aladdin* and *Mulan* are steeped in Orientalism and have westernized main characters, they are lacking positive ethnic/racial representations. Though *Princess* is somewhat more positive, or at least ambiguous, in its portrayal of people of color and decidedly more positive in its portrayal of American society, it leaves much to be desired as it creates misconceptions about the past and about groups of people. For instance, in its attempts to avoid stereotyping African Americans as lazy, it creates positive stereotypes about them as happy workers instead – as King et al. argue though, "positive stereotypes are still stereotypes" (King et al. 158) and are as such harmful.

Furthermore, my intersectional analyses have shown that Disney offers the message that only people of color living outside the United States, such as those living in the Middle East or Asia, may achieve relative whiteness by adopting Western values, while those living within the United States must accept differential treatment and not attempt to achieve or exercise power. If this representational difference is taken to be intentional rather than incidental, it can be understood through critical race theory's racialization thesis and the idea of interest convergence. The racialization thesis holds that "each disfavored group … has been racialized in its own individual way and according to the needs of the majority group at particular times in its history" (Delgado and Stefancic 79), while the interest convergence thesis states that "large segments of society have little incentive to eradicate [racism]" (Delgado and Stefancic 8). As such, Disney racializes, that is, depicts, groups of people of color differently because it suits their interests to do so. Portraying groups differently by sexualizing some

but not others and depicting some as violent and others as effeminate caters to a Western audience as it plays into known stereotypes and meets a demand for exoticness. It makes sense for Disney to promote Western values to groups outside the United States; these people's adoption of such values broadens Disney's pool of potential customers as it creates more consumers of Western culture. It also makes sense for the company to represent foreign cultures in a negative way because it pushes this adherence to Western values. The portrayal of a colorblind American society in *Princess* fits into this narrative perpetuated in *Aladdin* and *Mulan* as it positions the West as an ideal to be pursued. It also works to show how American society is good and does not need to be changed. It is presumably not in Disney's interest to change gender or racial/ethnical hierarchies globally or within the United States because they are financially successful as things are, and thus they do not attempt to do so. If broadened, the theory of interest convergence may explain Disney's potentially intentional patriarchal and heteronormative tendencies too, as these together with white privilege form the foundation of power on which companies such as Disney are built.

In conclusion, Disney's representations and messages tied to gender and race/ethnicity have not changed noticeably from *Aladdin* to *Princess* though there are differences in the way in which different intersectional identities are portrayed. Changes have not been marked because profound change has not been in Disney's corporate interest. Michelle Anya Anjirbag writes: "There will always be tension between the corporation's mandate to not only protect but increase its profit margins, and the assertions of the marginalized to their right to accurate and ethical representation" (242), and in these films, the former was prioritized over the latter.

Chapter 8: Discussion

Throughout my analyses of *Aladdin*, *Mulan*, and *Princess* – three chapters from the Disney book on how the world looks or should look (Ward 118) – I have called the films' representations and socialization messages connected to gender and race/ethnicity "concerning" and "problematic" several times and argued that Disney in them socializes in accordance with values of heteronormativity, patriarchy, and white privilege. However, how does one asses Disney fairly and how much can one expect from them? The extent to which Disney can be progressive in their storytelling will always be limited by their corporate attempts to reach the largest audience possible, which entails including "something for everyone" (Ward 96) and not alienating the mainstream – that is, white, heterosexual, and American – audience. As such, even though the company has become more inclusive and attentive to its representations and messages since its conception, as shown through their website, Disney will

probably never create truly progressive narratives – that is, narratives that attempt to be progressive in more than one arena and attempt to do so without compromising other parts of the narrative as was the case in these films. Such narratives are presumably deemed too risky in respect to Disney's identity as a creator of wholesome family entertainment. However, though audiences are thus not entitled to expect progressive or subversive stories from Disney, they are allowed to expect narratives that display acceptance and tolerance and which celebrate difference because Disney actually, as previously discussed, promises this ("Our Stories"). Since Disney contends that they have "always" created stories that do this ("Our Stories"), it must be the standard to which all of their productions, despite their release date, are held. This is what I have done in this thesis, which as such finds the three films lacking because behavior that is deemed non-conforming is ridiculed and penalized rather than accepted and because difference is relationally hierarchized rather than celebrated.

There are of course those, like Brode (8-10), who argue that one can or should not "judge" older cultural products according to the standards of today. To people of this opinion, my intersectional analyses of films from 1992, 1998, and 2009 may seem steeped in hindsight or as overanalyzing what was at the time considered "harmless fun." However, all readings unavoidably read "a past text in the light of present concerns," and reading past texts critically in this way allows us to engage with them rather than either reject them, like Giroux and Pollock seemingly wish to do with Disney's films, or place them on a pedestal, as Brode does (McLeod 182). As such, using intersectionality to consider the films' socialization messages cannot truly be considered as overanalyzing them, nor as taking them out of their context, because it merely entails considering them in a more multifaceted way and doing so in reference to Disney's own criteria as well as in reference to the film's present-day context as they are still being watched today. Delgado and Stefancic explain that hate speech, and arguably also other types of problematic representations of people, is often "not perceived as [hateful or problematic] at the time" and that trying to address such issues later on can make others perceive one as "humorless or touchy" (34). However, many minority groups took issue with these three films already upon their release, and since questions of the right to ethical representation have only gained importance since then, critical engagement with films such as these should be not left in the past.

Though this thesis has as such critically investigated these films, it cannot, nor attempts to, make any definitive conclusions about whether the problematic representations and messages of *Aladdin*, *Mulan*, and *Princess* are incidental or intentional. However, it must be acknowledged that cultural products, as Anjirbag points out, may perpetuate negative stereotypes, or negatively infect children's socialization I would add, whether they intent to or not (232). If one limits a text's potential to authorial

intent, one can lose sight of how people, as Robin Redmon Wright notes, may learn from texts no matter what the authors' intentions are (139). Also, even though socialization is, as previously asserted, not a one-way street, but a process in which children do not uncritically accept all messages presented to them, and while "it is possible for negative messages to be overridden by other influences in a child's life" (Ward 5), that concerning representations and messages "are there in the first place" does, as Ward argues, raise "warning flags" (5). As such, even though children's socialization process may not be directly negatively affected by films like the ones discussed in this thesis, the possibility that they might *is* there and therefore such films need to be paid scholarly attention. A theoretical study such as mine could, in order to investigate their concrete, rather than potential, intersectional socialization effects, be supplemented by audience response studies to see how children actually perceive the films. A practical dimension such as this has, however, been beyond the scope of this thesis as well as my academic training. Discussions of cultural reception should not eclipse those of cultural production though, and theoretical studies such as this thesis have merit too.

However, it must be recognized that there may be a discrepancy between my empirical material – the films that I study – and the intercategorical approach that I use to do so. An intersectional research project using such an approach normally, as previously stated, focuses on the comparison of the power relations between multiple groups of people rather than on those between individuals. However, the approach is also typically used within the social sciences rather than in the humanities – that is, the approach is most often used to investigate structural intersectionality rather than what Crenshaw calls representational intersectionality. In this thesis, though, individual characters have been analyzed as embodying and representing groups with specific intersectional identities because the object of study is the representations of power relations between such groups and the messages tied to these. Examining intercharacter relations rather than intergroup ones is arguably a necessary modification to or appropriation of an intercategorical approach that must be made when the object of study is representational intersectionality rather than structural intersectionality, because cultural products such as television shows or films often do not feature multiple important characters that share the same intersectional identities. However, as illustrated by Prot el al.'s description of how people who watched *The Cosby Show* came to believe that affirmative action was no longer needed because the Huxtable family was so successful, audiences do view characters as representative of groups. As such, interpreting intercharacter power relations as representative of intergroup ones, as I have done, is not the biggest leap seeing as viewers do so as well. Thus, the proposed discrepancy does not invalidate my findings, but it does suggest that appropriations to intersectional theory must be

made and discussed when the theoretical framework is used to investigate representational intersectionality of cultural products, because although fiction and social reality mutually inform each other, they do not directly correspond and must therefore be analyzed differently. Interestingly, neither Condis, Dundes and Streiff, nor King et al., the scholars who write that they use intersectionality in their studies, interrogate this question.

Commenting on the scope and possible limitations of my findings, it must also be acknowledged that the intersectional intercharacter power relations that have been explored in the thesis may be influenced by categories of difference that have not been discussed at length. Sociocultural categories such as class and sexuality were occasionally referenced in the analyses, but these as well as other categories like age potentially play greater roles in the shaping of power relations in the films than this thesis has previously recognized. While complexity in intersectional research projects using an intercategorical approach is achieved by adding additional categories to one's analysis (McCall 1786-87), this must, as asserted in reference to my discussion of black boxing, not be done excessively and must not be done at the expense of doing an in-depth analysis of the intra-actions of a select number of intersecting categories. As such, gender and race/ethnicity were chosen as the thesis' primary foci. This has of course excluded discussions about other potential, and perhaps more positive, intersectional socialization messages such as the one created through the intra-actions of gender, sexuality, and age. In the films, Disney acknowledges that young people of both genders have sexual desires. They convey this message through moments in which the films' main characters are shown to be physically attracted to each other or to be flirting (*Aladdin* 00:17:09, 00:19:59, 00:21:22; 00:59:16; *Mulan* 00:36:48; *Princess* 00:08:35, 00:08:57, 00:26:01). The message is positive because it normalizes rather than stigmatizes young people's sexual desire and teaches children that sexuality is nothing to be ashamed of. Another possible positive message is that Disney, through the intra-actions of class, race, gender, and age, conveys the message that young people, no matter their background, are resilient and autonomous individuals because main characters overcome challenges without much help from their parents. This positive message is quite individualistic, though, and is as such perhaps mainly positive from a Western perspective.

The choice of the specific films has of course impacted my thesis' findings as well. Considering *Aladdin*, *Mulan*, and *Princess* comparatively and as parts of Disney's worldview yields results that may not be arrived at if they are considered individually. Although Disney may not intend for viewers to consider their individual films as part of a bigger narrative about how the world looks or should look in this way, their authorial intent does not, as previously discussed, entail that viewers do not consider

the films in this way, nor that scholars should not do so either. However, it must be noted that the socializing Disney narrative, which I, in reference to these specific films, argue is a racialized one of heteronormativity, patriarchy, and white privilege, might look different if other films were included in the analysis. Further studies are certainly needed in order to make general conclusions about the socializing narratives of Disney's animated films, and therefore this thesis has, by using a modified intersectional framework, investigated the socialization messages of a few films with reference to the categories of gender and race/ethnicity.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

In this thesis, I have investigated the intersectional socialization messages connected to the intra-actions of gender and race/ethnicity in *Aladdin*, *Mulan*, and *Princess*. In order to comparatively examine Disney's representational intersectionality, I analyzed each film's gender and racial/ethnical socialization messages as postfeminist and colonial discourses separately before seeing how these intra-acted to create differing intersectional intercharacter power relations. Based on my analyses, I conclude that Disney, as a media socialization agent, intentionally or incidentally socializes children to adhere to notions of heteronormativity, patriarchy, and white privilege. Heteronormative and patriarchal sentiments are expressed through the films gender representations. The films display postfeminist sensibilities by equating female power with femininity and sexuality exclusively as well as by showing and telling that women are inferior to and dependent on men. The films' gender messages serve to promote heteronormativity and heterosexuality by equating campiness and non-conforming gender behavior with villainy and by displaying homophobic humor that devalues especially male homosexuality. As such, the gender socialization of the three films is deemed to be potentially problematic to children of all genders. The analyses of the films' representations of race/ethnicity showed that Disney portrays non-Western cultures as well as minority cultures in highly problematic ways because they contain binary and stereotypical Orientalist discourses and because they assume the centrality of white, Western people and are as such filtered through the white gaze. *Aladdin* and *Mulan* depict the Middle East and China as archaic and sexist societies to which their westernized main characters stand in stark contrast and opposition. These westernized characters achieve relative whiteness through their adherence to traditional Western values, and children of color living outside the United States are as such socialized to adopt such valorized values in order to live happily ever after. However, characters of color in *Princess* who too are motivated by self-actualization are not allowed to pass as white. As such, when the three films are considered together, Disney's racialized

message that only people of color living outside the United States are allowed to achieve relative whiteness and the privilege and power connected to it emerges. My intersectional analyses of the films have revealed that Disney portrays diverse intersectional identities very differently – for instance, Arab women are highly sexualized, while other groups of women are not, and the masculinity of Asian men is questioned in a way dissimilar to other groups of men. My intersectional analyses have also highlighted how certain categories of difference, such as gender in the case of women and race/ethnicity in the case of people of color living in the United States, are shown to be the most important ones for different groups of people. The intercategorical approach that I used has exposed unequal distributions of power and happy endings in Disney's productions that privilege characters with heteronormative gender behavior over those with non-conforming gender behavior and white characters or characters that pass as white over characters of color that do not achieve relative whiteness. As such, I find that *Aladdin*, *Mulan*, and *Princess* contain many concerning socialization messages that may be harmful to children of all identities. Seeing as Disney is remaking both *Aladdin* (2019) and *Mulan* (2020), it will be interesting to see how these new live-actions adaptations will compare to their animated 1990s counterparts – especially whether there will be significant changes in respect to their intersectional representations and their socialization messages.

Works cited

Addison, Erin. "Saving Other Women from Other Men: Disney's *Aladdin*." *Camera Obscura*, vol. 31, 1993, pp. 4-25.

Aladdin. Directed by Ron Clements and John Musker, performances by Scott Weinger, Linda Larkin, Jonathan Freeman, Jim Cummings, Douglas Seale, Robin Williams, Charlie Adler, and Gilbert Gottfried, Walt Disney Animation Studios, 1992.

Aladdin. Directed by Guy Ritchie, Walt Disney Animation Studios, 2019.

"All-Time Box Office Top 100." *Filmsite*, filmsite.org/boxoffice.html. Accessed May 2019.

Anjirbag, Michelle Anya. "*Mulan* and *Moana*: Embedded Coloniality and the Search for Authenticity in Disney Animated Film." *Social Sciences*, vol. 7, no. 11, Nov. 2018, pp. 230-44. *Open Access Journals*, doi:10.3390/socsci7110230.

Arnett, Jeffrey Jensen. "Socialization in Emerging Adulthood: From the Family to the Wider World, from Socialization to Self-Socialization." *Handbook of Socialization: Theory and Research*, edited by Joan E. Grusec and Paul D. Hastings, 2nd ed., The Guilford Press, 2015, pp. 85-108.

Artz, Lee. "The Righteousness of Self-Centred Royals: The World According to Disney Animation." *Critical Arts*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2004, pp. 116-46. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi:10.1080/02560240485310071.

Banet-Weiser, Sarah. "What's Your Flava?: Race and Postfeminism in Media Culture." *Interrogating Post-Feminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture*, edited by Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, Duke UP, 2007, pp. 201-26.

Barker, Jennifer L. "Hollywood, Black Animation, and the Problem of Representation in *Little Ol' Bosko* and *The Princess and the Frog*." *Journal of African American Studies*, vol. 14, no. 4, Dec. 2010, pp. 482-98. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/41819268.

Beauty and the Beast. Directed by Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, performances by Rex Everhart, Paige O'Hara, and Robby Benson, Walt Disney Animation Studios, 1991.

Bell, Elizabeth. "Somatext at the Disney Shop: Constructing the Pentimentos of Women's Animated Bodies". *From Mouse to Mermaid. The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*, edited by Elizabeth Bell et al., Indiana UP, 1995, pp. 107-24.

Bell, Elizabeth, et al. "Introduction: Walt's in the Movies". *From Mouse to Mermaid. The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*, edited by Elizabeth Bell et al., Indiana UP, 1995, pp. 1-17.

Benhamou, Eve. "From the Advent of Multiculturalism to the Elision of Race: The Representation of Race Relations in Disney Animated Features (1995-2009)." *Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, vol. 2, no. 1, Oct. 2014, pp. 153-67. *Warwick*, doi:10.31273/eirj.v2i1.106.

Berchini, Christina. "'I don't think Disney has anything to do with it': Unsettling Race in a White English Classroom." *Teaching with Disney*, edited by Julie C. Garlen and Jennifer A. Sandlin, Peter Lang, 2016, pp. 81-93.

Bethmann, Jen. "The Disney Princess Sidekicks: Men Still Necessary to the Disney Princess Narrative." *Media Report to Women*, vol. 45, no. 2, Spring 2017 pp. 6-11. *ProQuest*, search-proquest-com.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:12048/docview/1906364683?accountid=14468.

Blauvelt, Christian. "*Aladdin*, Al-Qaeda, and Arabs in U.S. film and TV." *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 50, Spring 2008. *Jump Cut*, ejumpcut.org/archive/jc50.2008/reelBadArabs/text.html.

Borthaiser, Nóra. "'A Whole New World(?)' – Rereading Disney Animations of the Early 1990." *AMERICANA - E-Journal of America Studies in Hungary*, vol. 4, no. 1, Spring 2008. *AMERICANA - E-Journal of American Studies in Hungary*, americanaejournal.hu/vol4no1/borthaiser.

Breaux, Richard M. "After 75 Years of Magic: Disney Answers Its Critics, Rewrites African American History, and Cashes in on Its Racist Past." *Journal of African American Studies*, vol. 14, no. 4, Dec. 2010, pp. 398-416. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/41819263.

Brocklebank, Lisa. "Disney's *Mulan*—the 'True' Deconstructed Heroine?" *Marvels & Tales*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2000, pp. 268-83. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/41388562.

Brode, Douglas. *Multiculturalism and the Mouse: Race and Sex in Disney Entertainment*. U of Texas P, 2005.

Brown, Danice L., et al. "Safer Sexual Practices Among African American Women: Intersectional Socialisation and Sexual Assertiveness." *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, vol. 20, no. 6, 2018, pp. 673-89. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi:10.1080/13691058.2017.1370132.

Butler, Jess. "For White Girls Only?: Postfeminism and the Politics of Inclusion." *Feminist Formations*, vol. 25, no. 1, Spring 2013, pp. 35-58. *Project Muse*, doi:10.1353/ff.2013.0009.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2002.

Byrne, Elanor, and Martin McQuillan. *Deconstructing Disney*. Pluto Press, 1999.

Carbado, Devon W., et al. "Intersectionality: Mapping the Movements of a Theory." *Du Bois Review*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2013, pp. 303-12. *ProQuest*, search-proquest-com.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:12048/docview/1473906657/73C691FF34EF4E01PQ/5?accountid=14468.

Charania, Moon, and Wendy Simonds. "*The Princess and the Frog*." *Contexts*, vol. 9, no. 3, Summer 2010, pp. 69-71. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/41960783.

Cho, Sumi, et al. "Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis." *Signs: Journals of Women in Culture and Society,* vol. 38, no. 4, 2013, pp. 785-810. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/10.1086/669608.

Cinderella. Directed by Clyde Geronimi et al., performance by Ilene Woods, Walt Disney Animation Studios, 1950.

Cohan, Stephen. "Queer Eye for the Straight Guise: Camp, Postfeminism, and the Fab Five's Makeovers of Masculinity." *Interrogating Post-Feminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture*, edited by Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, Duke UP, 2007, pp. 176-200.

Collins, Patricia Hill. "Intersectionality's Definitional Dilemmas." *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2015, pp. 1-20. *Annual Reviews*, doi-org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:12048/10.1146/annurev-soc-073014-112142.

Condis, Megan. "She Was a Beautiful Girl and All of the Animals Loved Her: Race, the Disney Princesses, and their Animal Friends." *Gender Forum – An Internet Journal for Gender Studies*, no. 55, 2015, pp. 39-54. *Gender Forum – An Internet Journal for Gender Studies*, genderforum.org/gender-animals-animality-issue-55-2015/.

The Cosby Show. Created by Edwin B. "Ed." Weinberger et al., The Carsey-Werner Company, 1984-92.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989, pp. 139-67. *HeinOnline*, heinonline-org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:12048/HOL/Page?collection=journals&handle=hein.journals/uchclf1989&id=144&men_tab=srchresults.

---. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 43, no. 6, July 1991, pp. 1241-99. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/1229039.

---. "Postscript." *Framing Intersectionality: Debates on a Multi-Faceted Concept in Gender Studies*, edited by Helma Lutz et al. Ashgate, 2011, pp. 221-33.

Davis, Amy M. *Good Girls and Wicked Witches: Women in Disney's Feature Animation*. Indiana UP, 2006.

Davis, Kathy. "Intersectionality as Buzzword. A Sociology of Science Perspective on What Makes a Feminist Theory Successful." *Feminist Theory*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2008, pp. 67-85. *SAGE Publications*, doi-org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:12048/10.1177/1464700108086364.

De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. Vintage, 1997.

Deep Green Philly. "Withering Under the White Gaze: The Hart Family Tragedy." *Medium*, 8 Apr. 2018, medium.com/@DeepGreenPhilly/withering-under-the-white-gaze-the-hart-family-tragedy-bb02416bb0ad.

Delgado, Richard, and Jean Stefancic. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*. 3rd ed., New York UP, 2017.

Dhamoon, Rita Kaur. "Considerations on Mainstreaming Intersectionality." *Political Research Quarterly*, vol 64, no. 1, Mar. 2011, pp. 230-243. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/41058336.

Di Giovanni, Elena. "Disney Films: Reflections of the Other and the Self." *Culture, Language and Representation*, vol. 4, 2007, pp. 91-109. *Open Access Journals,* e-revistes.uji.es/index.php/clr/article/view/1335/1179.

"Disney History." *D23 The Official Disney Fan Club*, d23.com/disney-history/. Accessed Feb. 2019.

Dong, Lan. *Mulan's Legend and Legacy in China and the United States*. Temple UP, 2011.

---. "Writing Chinese America into Words and Images: Storytelling and Retelling of The Song of Mu Lan." *The Lion and the Unicorn*, vol. 30, no. 2, Apr. 2006, pp. 218-33. *Project Muse*, doi:10.1353/uni.2006.0020.

Dow, Bonnie J. "The Traffic in Men and the *Fatal Attraction* of Postfeminist Masculinity." *Women's Studies in Communication*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2006, pp. 113-31. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi:10.1080/07491409.2006.10757630.

Dumbo. Directed by Ben Sharpsteen et al., performances by James Baskett, Jim Carmichael, Cliff Edwards, and Hall Johnson, Walt Disney Animation Studios, 1941.

Dundes, Lauren, and Madeline Streiff. "Reel Royal Diversity? The Glass Ceiling in Disney's *Mulan* and *Princess and the Frog*." *Societies,* vol. 6, no. 4, Dec. 2016, pp. 35-48, *Open Access Journals*, doi:10.3390/soc6040035.

England, Dawn Elizabeth, et al. "Gender Role Portrayal and the Disney Princesses." *Sex Roles*, vol. 64, 2011, pp. 555-67. *Springer Link*, doi:10.1007/s11199-011-9930-7.

Felperin, Leslie. "The Thief of Buena Vista: Disney's *Aladdin* and Orientalism." *A Reader in Animation Studies*, edited by Jayne Pilling, Indiana UP, 1997, pp. 137-42. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16gz839.16.

Ferguson, Josh-Wade. "'Traded it off for that Voodoo Thing': Cultural Capital and Vernacular Debt in Disney's Representation of New Orleans." *The Journal of Popular Culture*, vol 49, no. 6, 2016, pp. 1224-40. *Wiley Online Library*, doi-org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:12048/10.1111/jpcu.12486.

"Fiscal Year 2018 Annual Financial Report." *Walt Disney Company*, thewaltdisneycompany.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/2018-Annual-Report.pdf. Accessed Feb. 2019.

Flanagan, Victoria. *Into the Closet: Cross-Dressing and the Gendered Body in Children's Literature and Film*. Routledge, 2008.

Frankenberg, Ruth. *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*. U of Minnesota P, 1993.

Frasl, Beatrice. "Bright Young Women, Sick of Swimmin', Ready to … Consume? The Construction of Postfeminist Femininity in Disney's *The Little Mermaid." European Journal of Women's Studies,* vol. 25, no. 3, 2018, pp. 341–54. *SAGE Publications,* doi:10.1177/1350506818767709.

Garlen, Julie C., and Jennifer A. Sandlin. "Introduction: Popular Culture and Disney Pedagogies." *Teaching with Disney*, edited by Julie C. Garlen and Jennifer A. Sandlin, Peter Lang, 2016, pp. 1-24.

Gehlawat, Ajay. "The Strange Case of *The Princess and the Frog*: Passing and the Elision of Race." *Journal of African American Studies*, vol. 14, no. 4, Dec. 2010, pp. 417-31. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/41819264.

Gill, Rosalind. "Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility." *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2007, pp. 147-66. *SAGE Publications*, doi:10.1177/1367549407075898.

Giroux, Henry A. "Memory and Pedagogy in the 'Wonderful World of Disney'. Beyond the Politics of Innocence." *From Mouse to Mermaid. The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*, edited by Elizabeth Bell et al., Indiana UP, 1995, pp. 43-61.

Giroux, Henry A., and Grace Pollock. *The Mouse that Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence*. 2nd ed., Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010.

Gregory, Sarita McCoy. "Disney's Second Line: New Orleans, Racial Masquerade, and the Reproduction of Whiteness in *The Princess and the Frog*." *Journal of African American Studies*, vol. 14, no. 4, Dec. 2010, pp. 432-49. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/41819265.

Grewal, Inderpal. *Transnational America: Feminism, Diasporas, and Neoliberalism*. Duke UP, 2005.

Grusec, Joan E., and Paul D. Hastings. "Preface." *Handbook of Socialization: Theory and Research*, edited by Joan E. Grusec and Paul D. Hastings, 2nd ed., The Guilford Press, 2015, pp. xi-xiii.

Hansen-Miller, David, and Rosalind Gill. "'Lad Flicks': Discursive Reconstructions of Masculinity in Popular Film." *Feminism at the Movies: Understanding Gender in Contemporary Popular Cinema*, edited by Hilary Radner and Rebecca Stringer, Routledge, 2011, pp. 36-50.

Hebert-Leiter, Maria. "Disney's Cajun Firefly: Shedding Light on Disney and Americanization." *The Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 47, no. 5, 2014, pp. 968-77. *Wiley Online Library*, doi-org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:12048/10.1111/jpcu.12182.

Hines, Susan, and Brenda Ayres. "Introduction: (He)genemony Cricket! Why in the World Are We Still Watching Disney?" *The Emperor's Old Groove*, edited by Brenda Ayres, Peter Lang, 2003, pp. 1-12.

Hurley, Dorothy L. "Seeing White: Children of Color and the Disney Fairy Tale Princess." *The Journal of Negro Education,* vol. 74, no. 3, Summer 2005, pp. 221-32. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/40027429.

Inman, Joyce Olewski, and Kelli M. Sellers. "The Disney Princess Dilemma: Constructing, Composing, and Combatting Gendered Narratives." *Teaching with Disney*, edited by Julie C. Garlen and Jennifer A. Sandlin, Peter Lang, 2016, pp. 39-50.

The Jungle Book. Directed by Wolfgang Reitherman, performance by Louis Prima, Walt Disney Animation Studios, 1967.

Katz, Phyllis A. "Developmental and Social Processes in Ethnic Attitudes and Self-Identification." *Children's Ethnic Socialization*, edited by Jean S. Phinney and Mary Jane Rotheram, SAGE Publications, 1987, pp. 92-99.

Kee, Jessica Baker, and Alphonso Walter Grant. "Disney's (Post?)-Racial Gaze: Film, Pedagogy, and the Construction of Racial Identities." *Teaching with Disney*, edited by Julie C. Garlen and Jennifer A. Sandlin, Peter Lang, 2016, pp. 67-79.

King, C. Richard, et al. *Animated Difference: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Contemporary Films for Children*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2010.

Lacroix, Celeste. "Images of Animated Others: The Orientalization of Disney's Cartoon Heroines From *The Little Mermaid* to *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*." *Popular Communication*, vol. 2, no. 4, 2004, pp. 213-29. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi:10.1207/s15405710pc0204_2.

Lady and the Tramp. Directed by Clyde Geronimi et al., performance by Peggy Lee, Walt Disney Animation Studios, 1955.

Layng, Jacqueline M. "The Animated Woman: The Powerless Beauty of Disney Heroines from Snow White to Jasmine." *The American Journal of Semiotics*, vol. 17, no. 3, Fall 2001, pp. 197-215. *ProQuest*, search-proquest-com.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:12048/docview/213749805?accountid=14468.

Leaper, Campbell, and Timea Farkas. "The Socialization of Gender during Childhood and Adolescence." *Handbook of Socialization: Theory and Research*, edited by Joan E. Grusec and Paul D. Hastings, 2nd ed., The Guilford Press, 2015, pp. 541-65.

Lester, Neal A. "Disney's *The Princess and the Frog*: The Pride, the Pressure, and the Politics of Being a First." *The Journal of American Culture*, vol. 33, no. 4, Dec. 2010, pp. 294-308. *Wiley Online Library*, doi-org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:12048/10.1111/j.1542-734X.2010.00753.x.

Letts, Will. "Camp Disney: Consuming Queer Identities, Commodifying the Normative." *Disney, Culture, and Curriculum*, edited by Jennifer. A. Sandlin and Julie. C. Garlin, Routledge, 2016, pp. 148-60.

Limbach, Gwendolyn. "'You the Man, Well, Sorta': Gender Binaries and Liminality in *Mulan*." *Diversity in Disney Films: Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Disability*, edited by Johnson Cheu, McFarland, 2013, pp. 115-28.

The Little Mermaid. Directed by Ron Clements and John Musker, performances by Pat Carrol, Samuel E. Wright, and Jodi Benson, Walt Disney Animation Studios, 1989.

Li-Vollmer, Meredith, and Mark E. LaPointe. "Gender Transgression and Villainy in Animated Film." *Popular Communication*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2003, pp. 89-109. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi:10.1207/S15405710PC0102_2.

Lykke, Nina. *Feminist Studies: A Guide to Intersectional Theory, Methodology and Writing*. Routledge, 2010.

---. "Intersectional Analysis: Black Box or Useful Critical Feminist Thinking Technology?" *Framing Intersectionality: Debates on a Multi-Faceted Concept in Gender Studies*, edited by Helma Lutz et al., Ashgate, 2011, pp. 207-20.

Ma, Sheng-mei. "Mulan Disney, It's Like, Re-Orients: Consuming China and Animating Teen Drama." *The Emperor's Old Groove*, edited by Brenda Ayres, Peter Lang, 2003, pp. 149-64.

Macaluso, Michael. "Postfeminist Masculinity: The New Disney Norm?" *Social Sciences*, vol. 7, no. 11, Nov. 2018, pp. 221-30. *Open Access Journals*, doi:10.3390/socsci7110221.

Macleod, Dianne Sachko. "The Politics of Vision: Disney, *Aladdin*, and the Gulf War." *The Emperor's Old Groove*, edited by Brenda Ayres, Peter Lang, 2003, pp. 179-92.

Mallan, Kerry, and Roderick McGillis. "Between a Frock and a Hard Place: Camp Aesthetics and Children's Culture." *Canadian Review of American Studies*, vol. 35, no.1, 2005, pp. 1-19. *Project Muse*, doi.org/10.1353/crv.2006.0005.

Matsuda, Mari J. "Beside My Sister, Facing the Enemy: Legal Theory Our of Coalition." *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 43, no. 6, July 1991, pp. 1183-92. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/1229035.

McCall, Leslie. "The Complexity of Intersectionality." *Signs: Journals of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 30, no. 3, Spring 2015, pp. 1771-800. *JSTOR*, jstor-org.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:12048/stable/10.1086/426800?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.

McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. 2nd ed., Manchester UP, 2010.

McRobbie, Angela. "Post-Feminism and Popular Culture." *Feminist Media Studies*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2007, pp. 255-64. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi:10.1080/1468077042000309937.

Moffitt, Kimberly R., and Heather E. Harris. "Of Negation, Princesses, Beauty, and Work: Black Mothers Reflect on Disney's *The Princess and the Frog*." *The Howard Journal of Communications*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2014, pp. 56-76. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1080/10646175.2014.865354.

Moser, Ingunn. "Sociotechnical Practices and Difference: On the Interferences between Disability, Gender, and Class." *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, vol. 31, no. 5, Sep. 2006, pp. 537-64. *SAGE Publications*, jstor.org/stable/29733956.

Mulan. Directed by Tony Bancroft and Barry Cook, performances by Ming-Na Wen, Soon-Tek Oh, BD Wong, Gedde Watanabe, Harvey Fierstein, Jerry Tondo, Miguel Ferrer, Pat Monita, Eddie Murphy, Miriam Margolyes, June Foray, and James Hong, Walt Disney Animation Studios, 1998.

Mulan. Directed by Niki Caro, Walt Disney Animation Studios, 2020.

Nadel, Alan. "A Whole New (Disney) World Order: *Aladdin*, Atomic Power, and the Muslim Middle East." *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film*, edited by Matthew Bernstein and Gaylin Studlar, Rutgers UP, 1997, pp. 184-203.

Negra, Diane. "'Quality Postfeminism?': Sex and the Single girl on HBO." *Genders*, vol. 39, 2004. *University of Colorado Boulder*, colorado.edu/gendersarchive1998-2013/2004/04/01/quality-postfeminism-sex-and-single-girl-hbo.

"Our Stories and Characters." *Walt Disney Company*, thewaltdisneycompany.com/wp-content/uploads/Our-Stories-and-Characters.pdf. Accessed Feb. 2019.

Parasecoli, Fabio. "A Taste of Louisiana: Mainstreaming Blackness Through Food in *The Princess and the Frog*." *Journal of African American Studies*, vol. 14, no. 4, Dec. 2010, pp. 450-68. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/41819266.

Phillips, Jerry, and Ian Wojcik-Andrews. "Telling Tales to Children: The Pedagogy of Empire in MGM's *Kim* and Disney's *Aladdin*." *The Lion and the Unicorn*, vol. 20, no. 1, June 1996. *Project MUSE*, muse-jhu-edu.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:12048/article/35307.

Phinney, Jean S., and Mary Jane Rotheram. "Introduction: Definitions and Perspectives in the Study of Children's Ethnic Socialization." *Children's Ethnic Socialization*, edited by Jean S. Phinney and Mary Jane Rotheram, SAGE Publications, 1987, pp. 10-28.

Pinocchio. Directed by Ben Sharpsteen et al., performance by Dickey Jones, Walt Disney Animation Studios, 1940.

Pocahontas. Directed by Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg, Walt Disney Animation Studios, 1995.

The Princess and the Frog. Directed by Ron Clements and John Musker, performances by Anika Noni Rose, Bruno Campos, Jennifer Codie, Oprah Winfrey, Corey Burton, Jerry Kernion, Keith David, Peter Bartlett, Jim Cummings, Terrence Howard, Michael Colyar, Jenifer Lewis, Michael-Leon Wooley, Ritchie Montgomery, Don Hall, and Paul Briggs, Walt Disney Animation Studios, 2009.

Prot, Sara, et al. "Media as Agents of Socialization." *Handbook of Socialization: Theory and Research*, edited by Joan E. Grusec and Paul D. Hastings, 2nd edition, The Guilford Press, 2015, pp. 276-300.

Putnam, Amanda. "Mean Ladies: Transgendered Villains in Disney Film." *Diversity in Disney Films: Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Disability*, edited by Johnson Creu, McFarland, 2013, pp. 147-62.

Rahayu, Mundi, et al. "*Aladdin* From Arabian Nights to Disney: The Change of Discourse and Ideology." *LiNGUA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa dan Sastra*, vol. 10, no 1, June 2015, pp. 24-34. *Open Access Journal*, ejournal.uin-malang.ac.id/index.php/humbud/article/view/3030.

Reilly, Cole. "An Encouraging Evolution Among the Disney Princesses?: A Critical Feminist Essay." *Teaching with Disney*, edited by Julie C. Garlen and Jennifer A. Sandlin, Peter Lang, 2016, pp. 51-63.

Robin Hood. Directed by Wolfgang Reiterman, performance by Brian Bedford, Walt Disney Animation Studios, 1973.

Rudlofff, Maja. "It's Barbaric, But Hey, It's Home: Disneys *Aladdin* – Uskyldig Underholdning eller Orientalistisk stereotypi?" *Kosmorama*, vol. 52, no. 237, 2006, pp. 123-33. *Det Danske Filminstitut*, kosmorama.org/kosmorama/arkiv/237/its-barbaric-hey-its-home.

Rumens, Nick. "Postfeminism, Men, Masculinities and Work: A Research Agenda for Gender and Organization Studies Scholars." *Gender, Work and Organization*, vol. 24, no. 3, May 2017, pp. 245-59. *Wiley Online Library*, doi:10.1111/gwao.12138.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Repr. ed. with a new preface, Penguin Books, 2003.

Schrefer, Eliot. "Donning Her Father's Armor: Introspection and Gender Disjunction in Disney's *Mulan*." *Animation Journal*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2002, pp. 4-35.

Sleeping Beauty. Directed by Clyde Geronomi et al., performances by Mary Costa and Eleanor Audley, Walt Disney Animation Studios, 1959.

"Smoking in Movies." *Walt Disney Company*, thewaltdisneycompany.com/wp-content/uploads/Smoking-in-Movies.pdf. Accessed Feb. 2019.

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Directed by David Hand et al., performance by Adriana Caselotti, Walt Disney Animation Studios, 1937.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, Macmillan Education, 1988, pp. 271-313.

Springer, Kimberly. "Divas, Evil Black Bitches, and Bitter Black Women: African American Women in Postfeminist and Post-Civil-Rights Popular Culture." *Interrogating Post-Feminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture*, edited by Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, Duke UP, 2007, pp. 249-76.

Staninger, Christiane. “Disney’s Magic Carpet Ride: *Aladdin* and Women in Islam.” *The Emperor’s Old Groove*, edited by Brenda Ayres, Peter Lang, 2003, pp. 65-77.

Sun, Chyng Feng, and Erica Scharrer. “Staying True to Disney: College Students’ Resistance to Criticism of *The Little Mermaid*.” *The Communication Review*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2004, pp. 35-55. *Taylor & Francis Online*, doi:10.1080/10714420490280189.

Tang, Jun. “A Cross-Cultural Perspective on Production and Reception of Disney’s *Mulan* Through Its Chinese Subtitles.” *European Journal of English Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2008, pp. 149-62. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi:10.1080/13825570802151413.

Tarzan. Directed by Kevin Lima and Chris Buck, performance by Nigel Hawthorne, Walt Disney Animation Studios, 1999.

Tasker, Yvonne. “*Enchanted* (2007) by Postefeminism: Gender, Irony, and the New Romantic Comedy.” *Feminism at the Movies: Understanding Gender in Contemporary Popular Cinema*, edited by Hilary Radner and Rebecca Stringer, Routledge, 2011, pp. 67-79.

Tatar, Maria. *Off with Their Heads: Fairy Tales and the Culture of Childhood*. Princeton UP, 1992.

Terry, Esther J. “Rural as Racialized Plantation vs Rural as Modern Reconnection: Blackness and Agency in Disney’s *Song of the South* and *The Princess and the Frog*.” *Journal of African American Studies*, vol. 14, no. 4, Dec. 2010, pp. 469-81. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/41819267.

Touryalai, Halah, and Kristin Stoller. “Global 2000: The World’s Largest Public Companies.” *Forbes*, 6 June 2018, forbes.com/global2000/list/.

Towbin, Mia Adessa, et al. “Images of Gender, Race, Age, and Sexual Orientation in Disney Feature-Length Animated Films”. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, vol. 15, no. 4, 2004, pp. 19-44. *Taylor and Francis Online*, tandfonline-com.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:12048/doi/abs/10.1300/J086v15n04_02.

Turner, Sarah E. “Blackness, Bayous and Gumbo: Encoding and Decoding Race in a Colorblind World.” *Diversity in Disney Films: Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Disability*, edited by Johnson Cheu, McFarland, 2013, pp. 83-98.

Wang, Georgette, and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh. “Globalization and Hybridization in Cultural Productions: The Cases of *Mulan* and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.” *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 8, no 2, 2005, pp. 175-93. *SAGE Publications*, doi:10.1177/1367877905052416.

Ward, Annalee R. *Mouse Morality: The Rhetoric of Disney Animated Film*. U of Texas P, 2002.

West, Candace, and Don H. Zimmerman. “Doing Gender.” *Gender and Society*, vol. 1, no. 2, June 1987, pp. 125-51. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/189945.

West, Candace, and Sarah Fenstermaker. "Doing Difference." *Gender and Society*, vol. 9, no. 1, Feb. 1995, pp. 8-37. *JSTOR*, jstor.org/stable/189596.

Wingfield, Marvin, and Bushra Karaman. "Arab Stereotypes and American Educators." *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, 1995. *Wayback Machine*, web.archive.org/web/20070405005650/http:/www.adc.org/index.php?id=283.

Wise, Christopher. "Notes from the *Aladdin* Industry: Or, Middle Eastern Folklore in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." *The Emperor's Old Groove*, edited by Brenda Ayres, Peter Lang, 2003, pp. 105-14.

Wright, Robin Redmon. "Unmasking Hegemony with *The Avengers*: Television Entertainment as Public Pedagogy." *Handbook of Public Pedagogy: Education and Learning Beyond Schooling*, edited by Jennifer A. Sandlin et al., Routledge, 2010, pp. 139-50.

Wynns, Scarlet L., and Lawrence B. Rosenfeld. "Father-Daughter Relationships in Disney's Animated Films." *Southern Communication Journal*, vol. 68, no. 2, Winter 2003, pp. 91-106. *ProQuest*, search-proquest-com.ez.statsbiblioteket.dk:12048/docview/226931793?accountid=14468.

Xu, Mingwu, and Chuanmao Tian. "Cultural Deformations and Reformulations: A Case Study of Disney's *Mulan* in English and Chinese." *Critical Arts*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2013, pp 182-210. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi:10.1080/02560046.2013.783956.

Yin, Jing. "Popular Culture and Public Imaginary: Disney vs. Chinese Stories of Mulan." *The Global Intercultural Communication Reader*, edited by Molefi Kete Asante et al., Routledge, 2014, pp. 285–304.

Yuval-Davis, Nira. "Beyond the Recognition and Re-distribution Dichotomy: Intersectionality and Stratification." *Framing Intersectionality: Debates on a Multi-Faceted Concept in Gender Studies*, edited by Helma Lutz et al., Ashgate, 2011, pp. 155-70.

Zipes, Jack. "Breaking the Disney Spell". *From Mouse to Mermaid. The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*, edited by Elizabeth Bell et al., Indiana UP, 1995, pp. 21-42.

---. *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion. The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2006.